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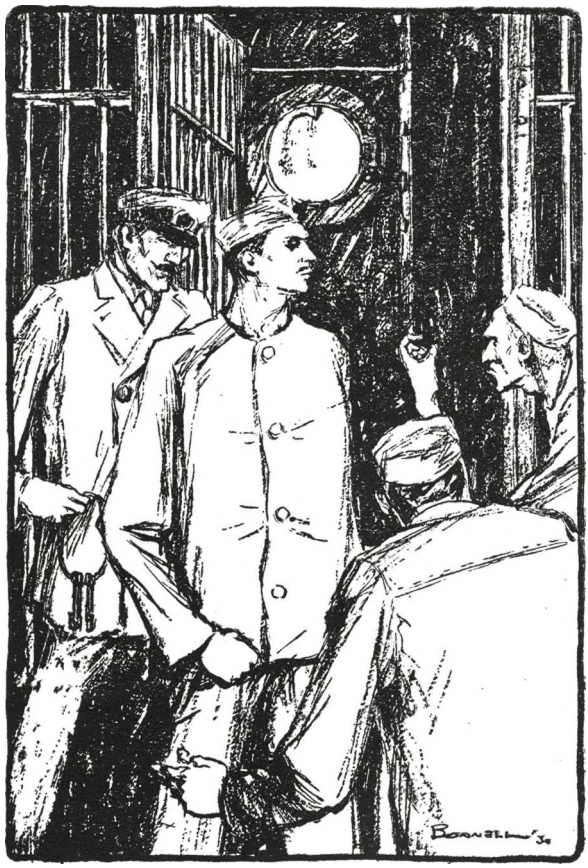
1930
for October 15th
VOL. LXXVI No. 3

*A. A. Proctor*
EDITOR



*Cover Design by Gerard C. Delano* *Headings by H. M. Bonnell*

Published twice a month by The Butterick Publishing Company, Butterick Building, New York, N. Y., U. S. A. Joseph A. Moore, Chairman of the Board; S. R. Latshaw, President; B. C. Dunklin, Secretary; Fred Lewis, Treasurer; A. A. Proctor, Editor. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Additional entry at Chicago, Illinois. Yearly subscription $4.00 in advance. Single copy, Twenty-five Cents, in Canada Thirty Cents. Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian postage, 75 cents. 



# STORM

THE WHEELHOUSE door rattled back, letting in a tremendous gust of spray and cold wind. Claubert, who stood by the forward windows, turned his glance a bit. It was the head keeper, the man directly in charge of the prisoners.

"*Mon Capitaine,*" he muttered hoarsely.

Claubert said nothing, waiting for this other man, for whom he had small liking and a bit of distrust. Now the keeper was coming toward him, bowlegs spread out to take the violent roll and pitch of the ship. He grasped at the hand rail along the windows and so stood secure beside the erect captain.

"Micin," he said, almost in a whisper, "is below, among them."

Still Claubert said nothing. The shorter man brushed the sleeve of the captain's heavy watch coat, as if to bring him to attention. But Claubert remained straight, quiet, his body slowly giving in answer to the motion of the wracking ship, his eyes on the jerking forecastle head, submerged by wave upon black wave. Then, as the head keeper's voice rasped on, Claubert turned and looked keenly down at the man.

"Micin is an ace—one of the greatest crooks in France; you must know that. And he has them all, the six hundred of them, to a man, under his thumb. What Micin says they do. What he thinks they think. And now he demands that they all be brought topside, on deck, out of the cages. It is his—Micin's—contention that the ship is sinking."

"She is not; will not."

"I know that. I told him that. He laughed at me, and those other apes—"

"Let him laugh."

"But, yes, *mon Capitaine.*" In the semi-darkness of the wheelhouse the head keeper's eyes had queerly become like bright gems. "I could do nothing else but let him laugh, for he has trapped one of your sailors in there, in the cage, somehow, and says he will kill the man in fifteen minutes—unless they are all allowed up on deck!"

*By*

ROBERT

CARSE

## *A Powerful Tale of a French Convict Ship*

The head keeper had expected, when he made his announcement fully known, that Claubert would curse, question, become terrifically excited or angry. But Claubert did none of these things. Quietly, he asked—

"How did Micin and his mates catch that sailor of mine?"

The head keeper made an expressive, violent gesture with his hands and almost lost his balance on the shuddering deck.

"It was the man who gives them the rice. The guard in that passage way, my man, had become a bit seasick—from the stench, the rotten air. He had gone to the foot of the ladder for a breath of clean air. It was then that it happened. Your sailor came too close. Through the bars, Micin caught his arm, then his throat. The sailor is the one who goes into the cages when they are on deck for their airing and hoses out the place. He had a key to Micin's cage in his pocket. Micin got that key and dragged the fellow into the cage."

"And your man, your roughneck, did not stop it?"

"He did not know about it until he heard the sailor cry out. Then it was too late."

"And Micin, this ace of crooks?"

"For some reason did not let those mad apes out into the passage. Perhaps it was because he feared my men, their guns—"

Claubert nodded wryly.

"You have talked with Micin?"

"Yes."

"And you made no attempt to get my man out?"

"No. I threatened Micin—them all—with a scourge of the chaut-chaut lead. He laughed and said at the first shot, he,

personally, would kill the sailor, then smash through a port deadlight and flood the ship. And I—"

"A tough one, this Micin," muttered the captain.

"What did you say, sir?" questioned the head keeper anxiously.

Claubert did not answer; he turned, strode aft with sure grace, picked up a telephone from its clips on the after bulkhead, spoke into it. Then he stood there, arms crossed, feet wide, waiting. The lee door chattered open; a half awake officer lurched in, the peak of his cap dripping brine spray.

"Take over, Lourel," said the captain. "Hold her as she goes now. I will be back soon."

The watch officer nodded wordlessly and took up his position behind the tense bodied wheelsman.

"Come," said Claubert simply to the head keeper.

They went together, Claubert pushing the other man before him through the wheelhouse door. Sprays that had the sharpness of knives hit them. For a moment as they stood poised at the ladder head they were right in the full fury of the storm. Then, his body set partly sidewise, the big captain was going down the ladder, the head keeper clumping more slowly after him. The ladder brought them to the main deck, where they poised for a moment while the ship rolled deeply, putting the bulwark all but under, moaning and shaking with the great force of the water shipped aboard. Then she righted herself, and the black flood rushed roaring across the deck, out through the scupperways, and the two men hurried aft.

Here, in the side of the house, was a heavily barred door with an electric bulb over it, in the light of which they saw a guard with a white, taut face and a drawn revolver.

"Open up," said Claubert.

"*Mais, M'sieur le Capita*—" began the guard, his lips working stiffly with fear.

"Open," said Claubert. "I know all that."

Waiting for the motion of the ship to help him, the guard swung open the great steel barred door. Claubert stared back over his shoulder at the wide eyed head keeper.

"Post all your men at both ladder heads, here and on the starboard side. I go alone."

He stepped instantly through and to the steel platform at the head of the long ladder. It was then that he heard the mad roaring and shouts of the six hundred convicts below. Like beasts being held for some great ancient Roman festival, he thought, and went on down the ladder, the nostrils of his cleanly cut nose contracting at the terrific stench which rose up, as if from some awful furnace.

At the foot of the ladder and the head of the second one stood two more guards. One held in each hand a revolver, and strapped over his shoulder was an army issue Lebel rifle. The other, a man with the heavy features, close set eyes and squat body of a Corsican, kept his spatulate fingers wrapped about the stock of a chaut-chaut auto-rifle ready for firing. It was he who managed to speak to the captain:

"They are mad, those animals. Listen, my Captain. No man—"

"Open," said Claubert.

THE CORSICAN and his companion stared, as if this man, the commander of the ship, were also mad. Claubert's eyelids very slightly contracted beneath the spray glistening vizor of his cap. The Corsican mumbled something in his throat, set down the chaut-chaut and unlocked the second door.

Claubert went through and down, very quietly, his bare hands gripping surely about the dirtied steel of the ladder rail. He was at the ladder foot; was on the deck where the six hundred odd convicts on their way to the Guiana prisons were caged. This was Claubert's ship; for six years he had been master in her and had served here under his predecessor as chief officer for five more. He knew, he thought now swiftly, every plate and beam, every

stanchion and deadlight in her. But this, to him now, was an entirely new world. Here, in his own ship, he was quite completely an alien.

Here, far down in her and close to her keelsons, the ship no longer heeled and pitched as she had topside. Here the storm was hardly felt or heard. In this place it was a different sort of storm, a different violence, man made, but equally as terrible.

On both sides of the ship, running fore and aft and flanking the central passageway, were the two vast steel cages holding the six hundred convicts. Every man of that six hundred was now against the bars facing the passageway, straining out, beating with hands and heavy wooden soled boots, yelling, screaming, cursing. Just for a moment, as he paused at the end of the passageway and under the light bulb there, so that its dim glow fell on the gold of his cap, shoulders and sleeves, did that bestial yelling stop. A sort of sigh passed over the six hundred, and there could be heard momentarily the roar and slam of the seas against the ship sides.

Then it began again, deeper, more fierce than ever. They cursed society, they cursed France, the judges and courts that had brought them here. And they cursed the captain, promising him an awful, indescribable death, calling him names which even he did not understand. And he walked calmly down the passageway between those reaching, filthy, clawlike hands, balancing himself to the slight swerve of the ship, head back, hands by his sides, long, heavy watch coat fully buttoned.

Halfway down the place, where the drinking water barrels were lashed and the sea water hoses coiled, was a gate into each cage. Here Claubert halted. He looked to his right, then to his left. Somewhat like a lull in a storm, the screams, oaths and shouts subsided.

"Micin!" cried the captain in a great, calm voice. "Where is Micin?"

Raucous, bawling laughter greeted him. The men close by made filthy, expressive gestures, showing their contempt of him and his weakness in having to come here, down to them, the renegades and offal of France, on their way to imprisonment and almost certain death in the fever swamps and jungles of South America. Claubert stood erect and silent, waiting, as some few minutes before he had waited on his bridge for the head keeper to speak. And then, suddenly, although there was no sign made, no shout given, a silence came over that six hundred.

"You asked for Micin, m'sieur?"

Claubert turned his head sharply to the right. The gray clad convicts had fallen back from the bars at that side. Only one man stood there. He was dressed like the rest, in the thick and awkward gray woolen jumper and formless trousers of the French convict. But from his feet he had jerked off the great wooden soled prison shoes, and he wore the black woolen prison cap as jauntily as he would a silk hat from the best hatter in Paris. This man was Micin, the ace of crooks.

"Yes," said Claubert in his quiet voice, "I asked for that man."

"I am Hippolyte Micin," said the one who stood alone at the bars of the cage.

He smiled and made a short, graceful salute with his fingers to his cap brim. And in that moment Claubert saw that Micin was as darkly handsome as the newspaper reporters and photographers had made him.

"I am Claubert, the captain of this ship." He looked keenly into the other man's eyes, on a direct level with his own, and found that they did not flinch, or mock him. "You wanted to see me?"

At that a vast shouting roar of laughter came from the six hundred, quiet too long, and from the dark shadows of Micin's cage half a dozen convicts thrust brutally forward a half dead man who wore the blue dungarees of one of Claubert's sailors. Micin wheeled on them, and he raised one hand, shoulder high. That laughter stopped, as if somewhere a great valve had been turned down. The six fell back out of sight, dragging with them the moaning, imploring sailor. Micin swung

around, and again he was smiling with perfect calmness and grace.

"I am sorry, m'sieur," he said, "but that has always been the way with rabble. I must ask you a question—"

"Wait!" said Claubert, suddenly finding all his nerves a-tingle with the thought of mental combat with this man. "This is my ship; I am its captain and, usually, its host. But, you—you travel free as guests of France. This is your place. You are the host; open, and I'll come in and talk with you."

For perhaps half a minute Hippolyte Micin stood immobile and silent, and in his dark, searching eyes was a bit of wonder and fear. Then he laughed softly and drew from his woolen trousers a huge key with which he unlocked the door to the cage.

"Enter, Captain," he said. "Micin, as host, must apologize, but—as you may understand, he has but small choice in the arrangement of his appointments."

"True," said Claubert, and he heard the steel gate clang to behind him. "And now, Micin, what is it that you wish?"

Micin lifted two brown, long fingers, carefully and thoughtfully to caress the little mustache he wore.

"I do not like to criticize," he said, "but the Mother France has given us a very poor vessel in which to be transported to the delights of Guiana. France thinks little of us, m'sieur; we are, they tell us, the scum and offal of the republic. And yet we have not been sentenced to death—but to exile and imprisonment, where a man may dream of escape, or a future beyond the bars. That is so, Captain?"

"That is so. And what is your fear, Micin?"

"That this ship will not reach St. Laurent. That she will very likely sink in the gale which is now upon us. And that we, as scum, as convicts, will be left here in our rat cages to drown as rats, while you and your crew—get safely away."

"It is a foolish fear you hold, Micin. This ship will not sink. And if, by the wildest chance, she might, there are boats for all, placed there by the orders of Mother France."

"But we will be given a chance at those boats?"

"I am here, as your guest, to tell you that is so. More I can not give you."

THE MAN before him slightly frowned, and Claubert could see in those dark, wide eyes a trace of hatred and of jealousy for him, who had owned the reckless daring to come here and save the life of one of his common sailors. Micin, the ace, the leader and hero of this pack, was jealous—bitter that another man had taken, even for a moment, his position in the limelight. And, for a fraction of time, fear entered Claubert's brain, then left it, for he had, he saw, figured Micin correctly.

Micin had suddenly held out his right hand; in it was the stolen, precious key.

"You have trusted me, m'sieur. And it is never beyond Micin to return a courtesy. Take that; take, also, your sack of bilge you call a sailor. He will die of fright among real men here. Now you had better go. Some of my sweet ones do not trust you as much as I do, and even I may be a bit foolish. But, we will see, *mon Capitaine*, hey?"

"Right," said Claubert precisely, himself angered just a bit that this handsome thief should have regained the upper hand in this strange play.

He grasped the comatose sailor by the neck of his jumper, heaved open the door of the cage and stood for a second there, Micin behind him in the door of it.

"Thank you," he said shortly.

"Thank you, sir," said Micin, and bowed from the hips as he pulled shut the gate. "Perhaps it will be our pleasure to meet again under different circumstances, *hein?*"

To this Claubert could say nothing, for he knew strangely that those words just uttered by Micin voiced his own innermost desire. He stood straight, holding the sailor with one hand, and with the other locked the gate with the key

Micin had given him. Then, while the tall, handsome thief coldly stared and the six hundred milled back to the bars to glare and scream at him again, he went slowly forward along the passageway and up the ladders to the deck.

There the head keeper and the guards stood, mouths agape. They were, he saw from their faces, stupefied by the fact that he had returned alive, and doubly so that he had brought the unfortunate sailor, also alive, with him. But Claubert gave them no time to question him. In his quiet, penetrating voice he made known three orders to the head keeper, who had taken over the quaking sailor, and then started along the inboard passageway toward the bridge.

He had not gone six feet when his ship mounted up under a breasting comber, swayed there for a brief and sickening time, and then rolled, over, over, over . . .

Claubert clutched out at the passageway hand rail, missed, went down, slamming his capped head against the bulkhead. Behind him, in the galley, he could hear the clatter and smash of mess gear, the hiss of boiling water, and loud cries. But even as he pulled himself to his feet, partly stunned, he did not think of those things. He thought of his ship, which he knew so well, and wondered why she had heeled so far over and not come back again.

A frantic figure with staring eyes was lurching toward him from a suddenly opened door. Fresh blood ran down through the streaked soot on one side of the man's face; his thin dungaree clothing bellowed and filled in the forceful sweep of wind through the narrow passageway. As if blind, he started to rush past Claubert and toward the bridge. It was the first assistant engineer, the man in command below, and Claubert caught him bruskly by the arm, halting that wild rush forward.

"What's the matter?"

"Matter? Main bearing gone. Just now. And that one—that last one—cracked her shaft, I think. The bridge telephone is gone; I was going to—"

"Where is the chief?"

"He is down there now."

"Tell him—"

The ship, which had been slowly, shakingly rolling back to her keel, was hit by another gigantic sea and flung sidewise with sickening violence. Captain and engineer were slammed up against the bulkhead side, locked tight in each other's arms for support. From below they could hear a great rushing boom—sea water sluicing down through the smashed skylights and fiddley to the hot boiler tops. Screams came from below, the screams of men in agony and in death. The assistant engineer shook Claubert with a sort of insane frenzy.

"You see?" he half screamed. "You see? That's what happens when they order us to sea half loaded and without ballast! I—"

Claubert tore the other man's tight locked fingers from his arms as if they had been strips of paper.

"You'll shut your head, get below, and bring all hands out of there!"

The engineer stared at him as if wholly uncomprehending and started to back slowly away. Claubert followed swiftly and very lightly slapped him across the cheek with the palm of his hand. The engineer raised his hand slowly to the place where that blow had struck. He shook his head; his lips worked; his eyes blinked. Then he looked at Claubert, and his eyes were calm and sane.

"I am sorry, sir," he said. "It is my first time like this."

He turned, dragged back the steel door that gave on to the engine room ladders, and went from Claubert's sight. Aft, on Claubert's right, beside the galley door, was a little, red painted general alarm box. With an elbow thrust, Claubert broke the glass, jerked down the lever inside. Then he turned and strode forward toward his bridge, going with great difficulty, for the ship had a permanent list to port now and the deck canted sharply beneath his feet.

The wheelhouse door was jammed with the shock and concussion of the seas

which had struck it, and he was forced to smash it before he could enter. Only the stolid Norman wheelsman was there; the mate, Mr. Lourel, he said, had gone below to see about the jury steering engine and gear aft, on the poop island. Claubert nodded silently and went on, past the wheel, to the after bulkhead and the inclinometer. The big needle hung far over to port, almost at the very end of the notched brass arc below it. A grunt, half audible, came from Claubert; that was bad.

Beside the inclinometer, flat on the bulkhead, was the black ship's bulkhead and compartment plan. Little, button-like, numbered bulbs glowed there, thus indicating the various watertight doors. They were all shut, as the board showed. Lourel had done that before he had gone aft, and that was good. She would last for some little time yet.

"*Mon gars*," he called quietly to the wheelsman, "lay aft and tell the mate to swing outboard the starboard boats, and all the port boats and life rafts he can use. I have given the general alarm; send them all to their boat stations—" They both ducked low; an awful wave rose up and smote the wheelhouse, smashing in the remaining windows there, flooding the place. "And send that head keeper up to me."

The Normandy man, who had been knocked flat by that blow, scrambled up and nodded, found his flat blue cap floating in the deck wash and went out the door Claubert had used. For the moment Claubert was alone. He dragged himself along the sloping deck until he came to the chart cases and racks in the starboard corner. From there he brought out three portable compasses, and from the pinned down chart he copied off three times the ship's last marked position, for the various ship's officers commanding the lifeboats.

Where, he wondered, was young Dossenq, his navigation officer? The lad should be here with him on the bridge now, helping him in all this. Then he remembered. Dossenq's room was on the port side, in the main house, amidships. Probably drowned in his bunk, the poor lad. For the first time that night Claubert cursed. Things like that should not happen. Dossenq was young, a good officer, affianced to a wealthy ship chandler's daughter in La Rochelle. But such things happened when a man went to sea.

The head keeper, bareheaded and soaked to the skin, stood in the doorway, holding himself erect, two holstered revolvers bumping at his hips. His thick lipped mouth gaped open; speech poured from him, high and shrill, heard above the snarling rush of the sprays, the dull thunder of the seas and the violent creaking noises of the foundering ship—

"How about them below?"

"Let them up; they are men also."

"But the boats! We have not half enough boats. The bosun, I met him on deck; he says six are gone, and there are only four lifeboats on the port side left. It is madness; we are honest men, with families. My wife, my daughter—"

CLAUBERT, braced there by the smashed binnacle case, looked coldly at this man. And then he smiled, half in sardonic derision and half in sympathy. He himself had nobody, nothing but his ship. And what this man had said was true in part; he and the others were honest, had families, and there was not place for all . . .

Claubert had seen thousands of convicts transported to Guiana; had helped transport them. Only too well did he know the tacit thought of all the penal officials in the Devil's Island colony: a dead convict was a good convict, and just one less to guard, feed, nurse, recapture, or put to the guillotine. And he knew from out of that bitter knowledge of his that half this shipload of violent men who were his charges, his cargo, now, would die of fever and of dysentery and of hopelessness during their first year in Guiana. But:

"Keeper," he said, "take my place, my boat. Let them out, by the dozen, at the

point of the auto-rifle. Shoot those who disobey. I'm going to try and send another wireless; our aerial carried away during the dog watches. Now, go!"

"So that is what you told Micin below —to get your sailor back? And now you keep your promise to a thief, a rotten criminal, a gutter dog?"

"Yes," said Claubert; no more.

The head keeper had made as if to start forward, hands groping for the holstered guns at his hips. But something in Claubert's eyes, in Claubert's face, withheld him, and at last, with a strange sobbing cry, he turned and went out into the howling blackness and treachery of the storm.

Claubert did not move. The wireless sending set, he knew, was of absolutely no use. The set itself was antiquated and weak, just fulfilling the government requirements. And without another aerial nothing could be done. To attempt to stream one at this time would be both senseless and suicidal. Anyhow, no ship could get near enough to help them now.

To one side of the chart table and racks was a locker drawer, Claubert's own. He unlocked it, drew from it a small, short barreled revolver. With a quick flip of his fingers he broke the thing, saw the round eyes of the cartridge ends, shut it again, dropping it into the side pocket of his watch coat. Then he went to the after windows of the wheelhouse and looked toward the boat deck, on the top of the main house, just aft of where he stood.

Big electric cargo clusters had been brought up from the storerooms by the crew, made fast overhead to stack guys and stays, so cast down a diffused, lemon colored light through the flickering sheets of spray which constantly swept the exposed deck. Lourel was there, he saw, and the other two remaining mates, as were the boatswain, the carpenter, most of the sailors and engine room force. Lourel was a competent man, a good sailor and officer; he was getting things done. Claubert was not needed there.

They were straining at the davit quadrants of one boat now, working her high outboard. There. Now they were piling into her, while Lourel and the two junior officers crouched with drawn revolvers and directed which men should get in and which stay out. Good order so far . . . These men knew Lourel—as they knew Claubert.

Apart from the straining knots of dungareed sailors and engine room men stood a group of men in dark blue uniforms and flat *képis*, the fifteen or so assistants of the head keeper; the men who were directly responsible for the welfare and conduct of the six hundred convicts. Claubert sought among them for the pot-like shape of the head keeper. The man was not there. The captain smiled faintly; he had been obeyed.

"*Mon Capitaine.*"

Claubert turned, his hand clamped down on the butt of the revolver in his watch coat pocket. It was the Norman sailor who had been on the wheel. The man was dressed in oilskins and seaboots now, from which brine streamed down in wide rivulets.

"What might it be?"

"M'sieur Lourel's word—the first boat is outboarded. He wishes his orders, the course."

"Take these." Claubert held out the three tightly cased portable compasses. "We were on 189° when she stopped. South America—Cayenne or Para, perhaps, are his best landfalls. Cuba, Porto Rico, are too far. And he will have the wind astern of him, steering south. That is all."

"Yes, sir."

The Norman nodded quietly; he was of almost the same seafaring stock as his commander and reacted in the same general way Claubert did. Now he ripped open three of the brass clips on his oilskinned coat, put the compasses inside, shut the coat, clumped about and was gone without further sign. Claubert stared thoughtfully after him. France needed men like that, he told himself. It was really too bad. As for himself, that did not matter; since he was fifteen, for seventeen years, he had given his strength,

his brains and loyalty to France. It was men like young Dossenq whom they would miss.

He looked aft again, thinking, strangely, of Micin and his encounter with him below, in those stinking, loathsome cages of the condemned. What was Micin thinking right now, he wondered. Then he leaned tautly forward and his mood of abstraction was gone. Lourel had accomplished the practically impossible, and put that first boat load in the water without springing a seam or smashing an oar. The second boat was now on the falls, lurching and banging downward, its crew, made oddly gnome-like by the great humps of their cork lifebelts, fending off with oar hafts and boat hooks. But it was not that which had suddenly brought Claubert to the alert.

The head keeper had just reappeared on the boat deck and he was alone. As best he might, clutching at ventilators, stack guys and bits of gear, he rushed along toward the remaining two deck officers. The light of one of the powerful cargo clusters fell fully upon them, and Claubert could see every expression and gesture of the man clearly. He was demanding haste, haste, and to emphasize his point, making a melodramatic and unmistakable gesture below, toward the convict cages. He turned to his own men, hands over his head, and waved excitedly to them, then at the boat they had frantically swung outboard over the canted and dangerous side.

A sort of snarl came from Claubert, standing there alone in the wrecked wheelhouse of his ship. He drew the snub revolver from his watch coat pocket, smashed the window before him with it. Carefully, he began to manœuver for a shot at the rounded back of the head keeper. Then he stopped.

Up over the ladders at the house ends, up through the companion scuttles, up, even along the dangerous and narrow fiddley ladders in the engine room airshaft came the freed convicts. Their rush was greater, more inexorable and more terrible to the men already on that deck than any sea. A few of them, unaccustomed to such a place, slipped, fell, rolled clutching out into space and at once to their deaths. But the others, hundreds of them now, kept on, in a compact line, toward the men who faced them, screaming, shooting . . .

With a violent rush the two young junior officers had let their boat go as those first heads came over the break of the deck. Fascinated, Claubert watched its rushing descent downward, thrashed in at one moment against the black incline of the ship's side, cast far out by the whip of its davit falls the next, but going on, down, down, until the white-frothed waves had it, turned it, spewed it, and then held it, free and clear of the ship, its panting crew strained in an awful convulsion of energy over the oars.

CLAUBERT permitted himself a small, bitter smile. He himself was ready for whatever was going to come. The ship was doomed, could not live ten minutes longer. She no longer listed, but settled deeper and deeper in the hurtling seas, her watertight doors going one by one. He, Claubert, sailor of France, was to go down with his ship. He knew of no better way.

But, before he went, he was to see part of that Roman festival he had fancied before, when he had been below decks in the convict cage with Micin. On what was left afloat of the boat deck, bare handed men in prison gray were closing in on men with revolvers, rifles, small machine guns. A case of "dog eat dog," thought Claubert, watching keenly, remembering his acquaintance, the head keeper.

Above the furious sounds of the storm and the whimpering of the doomed ship, he could now hear animal shouts, shots, the awful racket of chaut-chaut rifles let loose in quick, fierce bursts. Half a dozen of the blue uniformed guards, he saw, were down on their knees, shoulder to shoulder, firing as fast as their pieces would operate. For their comrades toiling at the boat, they were a sort of screen of death.

But that screen could not last. It did not. Bare handed and unarmed, but as if occultly possessed of power over death, the gray wave of convicts slowly surged in on that red flamed line, obscured it, smashed it, obliterated it, and went on, to the men at the boats. For what was perhaps half a second, Claubert saw the little, bowlegged head keeper held high up over a convict's head, then thrown, kicking and screaming, out into the ebony welter of an oncoming sea. The man had failed in his duty, in his courage. And now he had paid.

Claubert swung sharply, pawing down for that revolver in his pocket. He was a second too late. Hippolyte Micin had the point of a Lebel rifle hard against his ribs. Behind the tall man stood others, crouched, silent, teeth exposed, like beasts. Claubert raised up his arms.

"Come, Captain," said Micin, "you are too good a man to die—yet. When men like us need experienced help, a pilot. And there is still a boat your men have left for us, or that we will take."

"From your brothers?"

"From others less fortunate than ourselves. Move, Captain!"

Claubert stood still, the hard, small muzzle of the rifle pressed against his diaphragm. Here was death in another guise, but still death. In his own mind, he who had already resigned himself to death, could not decide. It was, he knew, only a question of honor, and to a dead man honor was nothing. And he had done all he could. This was why, he recognized now, that Micin had let him live—above and beyond the reason that Micin had been somewhat awed by the captain's audacity in coming into such a place on such a trivial errand. And, perhaps—

"Come, Captain!" repeated Micin in a cold, sharp voice. "It is no time for debate. I am one of the brainiest and one of the handsomest men to ever decorate the boulevards of France, but I am no sailor and no pilot. You are those things. When you have served your purpose, perhaps I will kill you. I don't know; I have never had any liking for ship's officers—a shoddy mess, without brains. But is it *now*, or *then?*"

Captain Claubert looked full into Micin's eyes. And he read there the odd, unwavering and fierce light of the eager killer, although, he knew, that always before it had been Micin's proudest boast that he had killed no man.

Strangely, Captain Claubert found it hard to articulate; there was a sort of fever running through his veins. And life, which he had given up, had again become very precious.

"*Then*," he said, but could not smile.

"Ah!" said Micin through open teeth. To the others, "Take him, but handle with care. It is precious, this new toy!"

Down the ladders and alleyways of that sinking ship they bundled the captain, Micin, the ace of thieves, ahead with his rifle. But just as they came to the forward break of the main house and the ladders which led up to the boat deck, one of the convicts who guarded the captain shouted out to Micin. The tall ace turned and listened attentively to the man, then nodded.

The fellow, while Claubert watched him with wondering eyes, moved deftly across the deck, stopped beside a lowered steel boom, slashed from the underside its rope cargo fall. The rope in his hands, he battled his way back through the deck wash to Claubert, and very thoroughly lashed the captain with the two-inch rope. Despite his effort against it, a dull despair settled on Claubert. Here was a man who knew what he was about; the manner in which he had so securely made those bends and knots about his own body showed that. It meant in brief, that his—Claubert's—chance at escape or of any deception of this desperate group under Micin was now extremely small, if not wholly nonexistent. A half uttered curse came from his set lips.

Micin stared at him and understood. He laughed.

"No luck, hey, my Captain? Get on, up there!"

The convict-sailor dragged him by the

rope end; others in the group of six or eight pushed him, lifted him, and so he went up the ladder and to the boat deck, Micin leading. It was a place of madness and of death, that boat deck. Almost three hundred men, all of them convicts, battled there for the remaining few boats and life rafts. They fought like beasts, silently, terribly, without mercy and without reason, each man for himself.

In that scrambling, stumbling pack, Micin's well ordered group was like an impregnable island in a gale lashed sea. It beat back the waves of men who came forward, hurled them away, went on, to the one good lifeboat left. Swiftly, the convict-sailor, while Micin covered their backs with his rifle fire, showed his mates how to outboard the boat, start her downward on the falls. Then he gave a great warning shout to Micin, and the ace called back over his shoulder to them—

"Lower away—"

The convict-sailor, a burly, thickset man, hurled Claubert stiffly in between the midships thwarts and to the wet footboards. Others of the group followed, grasping for oars, boathooks, fall ropes. Then the thickset man and Micin sprang aboard, and the boat was battering down the shipside, little blue sparks outleaping as the wire falls raced through the steel block sheaves. The boat hit the water, hit the shipside, lifted up one gunwale dangerously, rolled higher up.

But the man who served as Micin's lieutenant knew what he was about. He kicked off the patent fall block triggers with a marlin spike end, dropped the equializer collars free to the boat bottom, shipped the big steering oar in its crotch. The boat banged evilly once more against that tilted shipside, then swerved up on an oncoming wave crest, dropped away beyond it, into the hollow of another sea, and so was free. A hoarse bark of command came from the man at the steering oar. The others pulled with unholy energy at their sweeps. And the boat swung slowly about; was head on to the seas; was riding them, leaving the ship astern.

Dark, almost unseen bodies suddenly cleft the waves about the boat—desperate, half insane men who had dived from the sinking ship. Some of them rose, to grasp at the hand rope bobbins and line. Claubert had always considered himself a toughened man, had always thought his nerves equal to anything. But now he shut his eyes. Into his ears stabbed the hoarse screams of those dying men, beaten away from the gunwale bars by oar blows. And his hands were lashed to his sides, so that he could not even lift them to his waist.

Some minutes later he opened his eyes and looked back. His ship, his command, the thing which had been his own, was gone. He could not see it; he had not heard the great, thunderous roar it must have made in passing. But it was gone. That he knew. He closed his eyes again, hearing about him the slow, careful movements of the men who were his captors as they obeyed the orders of the convict-sailor and rigged a rough sort of sea anchor. A coma of despair and utter lassitude settled on Claubert. He passed into a gray and chill oblivion.

WHEN he awoke there was a dirty yellow light on the bleak heaving immensity of the sea. Waves still hunched like vast, insatiate monsters in toward the boat, to pitch her upward, roll and beat her, then fall away aft. But the smothering bite of the sprays had gone from the wave crests and the wind no longer keened with its awful fury. The height of the gale had passed, he knew. He straightened a little where he lay so stiffly, and gazed around him in all directions.

Dull and very indistinct, a small bronze line wavered along the immensity of the sea, marking the horizon and the probable sunrise. That brief line was on his left hand, to starboard, which meant that they were headed, roughly, due south, toward the Guianas, or Venezuela, or Brazil—at least South America. He looked more closely at the men in the boat.

As best they might, they rested in ex-

hausted sleep, against the sides, the thwarts and big steel boxes holding food and water kegs. Only two men besides himself were awake. Those two sat in the stern sheets, and one was Micin, the other the convict-sailor, who held strongly in his hands the steering sweep.

Micin had seen his movement, the turn of his head, and was now coming toward him, crawling gracefully over the thwarts and between the huddled bodies of the sleeping men. From his waistband he took a knife and cut the bonds from the captain's arms and legs.

"Get up, you," he said, "and come aft. I would talk with you."

"Put your knife through me now, thief," said Claubert tonelessly. "I talk to nobody."

Micin laughed, not unpleasantly.

"Look," he said, "here's water, and some of the Republic's salted meat and biscuit for shipwrecked men. Eat that, drink, and then talk—or never at all."

Claubert made no movement toward the soggy scraps of food held out to him.

"Listen, goat!" said Micin; there was a new, terrifically chill note in his voice. "We are desperate men. And you are a fool, but a valuable fool. Unless you talk now, I will lash you as you were and leave you there, to starve, thirst and die. And we will take the greatest of pleasure in watching you."

He was silent, and for what was perhaps ten minutes those two strangely dissimilar and deeply hating men lay there, staring covertly into each other's eyes, trying to comprehend the other's thoughts, hopes, fears. It was Captain Roget Claubert who finally spoke at the end of that time, for he had once more decided that life might yet be very worth living, extremely worthwhile.

"What do you want?" he mumbled through his brined lips.

"This," said Micin swiftly. "The correct navigation and handling of the boat. As I told you before back on your own ship, my goat—"

A smile that cracked the brine crust on his face, and that was meant as insult to this other man, came about Claubert's mouth:

"But your mate, your assistant, there, seems fully competent to bring you in. Whoever trained the mug before he joined your mob made a good sailor of him."

"That is not all," said Micin in that same level voice. "The man is a common sailor, no navigator. You know to the exact mile where your ship was when she went down. And you are a clever enough man, without instruments, to rough out a course which will take us where we want to go. And that is not Cuba, nor to the Windward Islands—but to Brazil, on the Fever Coast, as they call it, between Cayenne and Para."

Claubert's mocking, weary smile returned.

"You are headed that way now. I can't do much more than that."

"Yes? Well, we will see to it that you try. And, if you are wrong, or if we think you went purposely wrong, we will give you the sort of death such as—you understand me, my captain?"

"You give me small choice," said Claubert quietly. "And if I put you squarely on the northern Brazil coast, what then, for me?"

It was now Micin's turn to smile, and that expression amazingly changed the man's entire personality for the moment, made him younger, far more charming and irresistible than Claubert had ever seen him.

"All my life," he said softly, "I have chased gold, in the gambling casinos, on the Bourse; then robbing banks, and even houses. And, I admit, luck has smiled upon me, but only fitfully. Hence, I am here. But, now that I am here, or perhaps because I am here, luck has smiled more goldenly than ever. You see that one, sleeping there? Paol, his name. It is his second ride to Devil's Island. He escaped, into the jungle, his first time out, and found gold—a lot of gold, along a river. He mined some of it, and then, because he was born a fool, must return to Paris and spend it. And they caught

him, and he is going back. Now, we are all going for it. And, if you play it on the square, and truly toss in your cap with our caps, we will make you a mate with us, let you in on that gold. That is the word of Micin; once before, I remember, you have heard it."

"Yes," said Claubert very slowly, very huskily, "yes. But I do not want gold. I want to return to France. You will give me your promise that if I pilot you right, you will free me, to return as best I can to France?"

Micin made a sound that was part laugh, part bark.

"I will do no such thing. You ask too much, my Breton pig. Now, do you steer us to Brazil, or do you starve and thirst, lashed tight to this boat seat?"

Claubert looked out over the vast gray surge of the sea for a moment, and his eyes were narrowed pin pricks of intense thought, as if, in this short space, he was appraising all that was behind him, and all that was ahead. Then:

"Give me that food you have. And tell your man to haul inboard his sea anchor. I will make a sail of the canvas in it."

Wordless but smiling, Micin obeyed.

That day, with the convict-sailor's help, he rigged for them a rude spritsail, sprung the thing, and set his course as the reddish sun rose for a short time through the cloud scud. Once during the afternoon as he sat at the steering oar and the convict-sailor slept, he thought he saw what was another boat under sail on his port hand. But he did not raise it again, and whether or not it was one of the lifecraft from his own ship, he was never to know. For not again during the following days did he sight any sort of craft, not even the smoke of a steamer bound for Martinique or Panama.

His ship had foundered on her fourteenth day out from Algiers, where she had picked up some colonial convicts bound for Guiana. But the passage out had been a rough and slow one; it would have been a nineteen day voyage, if successfully completed. Now, steering due south as he was, it would be at least a week or ten days before they would raise the coast of South America. And there were, counting himself, nine men in the boat. Enough food and water for all, if the boat's stores were in the required condition.

They were not. That Micin found out almost immediately. One of the water casks had been poorly shipped and bunged. What fluid it held was dark and unpalatable with sediment, and tasted strongly of brine. The other twenty-gallon cask was all right, but fully one half of the tinned salt meat and biscuit was spoiled, and Micin scornfully heaved it over the side.

His search and inspection of the supplies in the boat had awakened the sleeping convicts. Now they crouched, watching him with narrowed, hot eyes. When the first water keg was found spoiled, they growled deeply in their parched throats. When he cast tin after food tin overside, they cursed aloud, and dragged up their knives and stolen guns, looking eagerly aft at Claubert. But Micin stopped that, not even making the gesture to draw his holstered revolver.

"Shut your heads!" he snapped. "I'll make this fancy dog here pay, and don't forget it! He's taking us where we want to go. Bump him off—and you don't get there. Take a crack at him, and you're taking a crack at me. Don't forget it! Stuff that down your throats and like it."

They ate in silence, but Micin came aft, to where the tall, haggard faced man hunched over his steering sweep, and sat beside him, the revolver now in his hand.

"The boys got an idea you'd be good shark fodder," he said softly. "I think so myself; but that can wait. You steering straight?"

Claubert looked with blazing eyes at the man. It was the first time in his life he had ever felt utter futility and degradation. And to him, with his proud, sensitive nature, it was almost unbearably bitter.

"Watch the sun! You're not blind, thief!"

Micin started, and his thumb flicked back the hammer of the .32 he held. Then he laughed and slightly relaxed, letting the hammer softly down.

"That's so," he said. "Scum! But, just for that, you don't eat until night again."

He went forward then, leaving Claubert alone at the steering sweep. Claubert stared after him, as if he would follow, tackle the man from behind, batter that smiling head, smash those clean, handsome features, and die that way, content. But Claubert was a Breton, a man of the north, a man of naturally calm nature, one accustomed to waiting and thinking. He did not get up from the stern sheets and dive upon Micin's neck; he looked at the sun, and changed his grip on the steering sweep just a very little bit.

THE FOLLOWING day the remnants of the gale blew out and, ironically, the heavy, clumsy lifeboat lay motionless upon a completely calm and blazing sea. Claubert watched those others, as if he were the sole spectator at a strange and engrossing show. They in their turn stared at him, very much as though he had done this thing and was somehow secretly responsible for it. And then, cursing, jibing, Micin drove them to the oars, taking the stroke oar himself.

They rowed all that day, and the next, and for two days after it, day and night, the convict who had once been a navy sailor spelling Claubert at the steering sweep while the captain took his place at a sixteen foot oar. And in that time—Claubert knew, for he directed from his position on a forward thwart the other man's steering—they had made maybe seventy miles of progress, and no more.

On their sixth day away from the ship a fresh wind blew off the beam, and Claubert put the craft before it, halyard end in his hand, watching his sail fill and swell tautly under the thrusts. He went from long tack to tack, while the exhausted rowers lolled on the thwarts and foot boards, still watching him sharply. Micin held the former sailor in long, stealthy conversation in the bow, and then came aft to Claubert.

"You're pulling no tricks with these tacks and hauls, *hein?*"

Claubert laughed at him, and took great satisfaction in it.

"If I do, I go to the sharks, don't I? I thought Micin was smart—"

Micin's face, made more swarthy now by the first croppings of a small beard, became livid. Veins stood out on his bared throat. Just for a moment the smooth mask he usually held so well over his real personality cracked, and Micin, the man who had turned thief in his lust for gold, bared his teeth in a wolf-like snarl at Claubert, the man who was so honest. But control returned, and Micin, who boasted that he was the ace of crooks, had himself in hand.

"You heard right," he said through narrowed lips, and went back toward the bow.

That wind lasted only a few hours. Then it died, and a great sun that drew moisture smoking from the sea burned above the calm that set in. Micin sent them to the oars. And they rowed, for seven full days, dragging that clumsy, tremendously heavy lifeboat toward land.

Claubert had, before, vaguely hated and despised every one of them, as degenerates, as the worst type of living creature. But now, slowly, he was forced to admire them, all of them. It did not change his inner resolve, his own personality and purpose, but it wrung from him a grudging admiration. He was a sailor, born of people who had been seagoing since history had first recorded their existence. He prided himself on his strength, his great reservoirs of physical energy.

These men, though, over half of whom had never more than seen the sea before, toiled as well as he, toiled until they dropped gasping and retching over their oars. And Claubert toiled with them, to the utmost of his great energy, as eager as they to reach land, to see an end to this thing.

Micin had picked his crew well; beside

Paol, the bearded old *relegué* who had found and lost his gold, there was the former sailor, and half a dozen more of his general type, most of them men who had been sentenced for their toughness from the penal battalions of Africa to the Guiana prisons. Among them was one youngster, a beady eyed, white skinned youth, fresh from the houses of correction, whom Micin had brought because of the lad's great, whole souled admiration for the ace of crooks.

It was this one who went mad first, under the awful strain of the labor, the terrific sun, the monotony of hour upon hour at the heartbreaking oars. He gave no sign of it until the last; then plunged his knife into his heart and flung himself silently over the side, where the great, deep sea sharks trailed so steadily.

That suicide had a depressing and unsettling effect on the other men, brought forcefully to their attention an idea they had hitherto held back from their consciousness. It preyed upon them, was always with them, danced before their bloodshot, staring eyes, as a mirage would play before the eyes of a thirsting man in the desert. Micin realized that, and exhorted them, pleaded with them, warned them that they had enough food, enough water, and that land must be ahead—somewhere.

But those promises and vague facts could not alone keep men sane. So, at the point of the knife, Micin questioned Claubert. And, honestly, the captain told them: according to his calculations, land, the mainland of South America was just one day beyond the horizon. One day—twenty-four hours more—and they would make their landfall, be there.

They toiled on, weak with bad water and dysentery, bluish splotches and boils on their bodies from the first stages of scurvy, their teeth loosening in their flaming gums. And that night, as the tropic dusk fell so swiftly, a fresh breeze sprang up from the northward, and Claubert broke out his sail.

None of them, weary as they were, slept that night. Dawn broke with a gorgeous gold and crimson flaming, and found them all gaping forward, over the rounded bow, toward the south and the great glistening curve of the horizon, where land must be. It was not there yet. The sicker men began at once to grumble and curse, make furtive gestures toward Claubert.

Micin and the former sailor stopped them; with this following wind they would probably raise it by noon at least. Any number of times that morning men cried out, hallucinated into believing they had seen it. But then the old sailor swore repeatedly that he had seen the first high land haze, and Claubert, nerves rasping with anxiety and hope, knew that the other was right.

By an hour past noon they could see it. Nothing yet but a low bluish blur, but there—land! Salt tears coursed down their cheeks; they slapped one another's backs, sang, gestured, made jeering grimaces of contempt and supremacy toward the sky and the steadily blazing sun. They had won—they were free—they had beaten life.

Now a mouthed guttural exclamation came from the old sailor. Their gazes followed his extended arm. The direction and nature of the seas were changing. The seas themselves were getting larger, were striking the craft on the quarter, then on the beam.

The old sailor and Micin came aft.

"A quarter gale, huh?" grunted the forecastle hand.

"Exactly. And it will swamp us like this—in ten minutes."

Micin looked keenly from one to the other, driving his alert brain to understand these things which were still half mysteries to him. At last he centered his gaze on the old sailor:

"What does it mean, Jules? Can we make land here?"

"No—no more. Not until this stops."

"Why not?"

"Look at it. And this ain't no battleship."

"What then?"

"Run before it, and hope to beat it out.

That lousy sea anchor wouldn't even keep us here. We got to run along the land, until we can turn about, come back."

He looked up at Claubert, the captain and commander of ships, who was staring with enigmatic eyes off at that distant and now unobtainable land.

"Change your course, you! Before you sink this tub!"

He hunched a bit nearer and swept into his hand his long, keen knife. His voice, when he spoke again, lashed with a strange, new fury:

"Change your course, you! You seem to like that hunk of land too much!"

Claubert brought his gaze levelly to the man's glowering, suspicious face, and then he smiled quietly.

"I like any land, right now. This is too bad."

And as he spoke he let go the sheet halyard of the straining sail, put down the long steering sweep and surely brought the boat about, so that the mounting seas were once more astern, and the wind full at his sweating back.

From then on the thing entered into the realm of an awful nightmare. The seas towered behind them, crashed down, driving her dizzily forward before them, but hurling heavy sprays inboard, to almost waterlog and sink her with every one. Constantly they bailed, bailed, bailed. The boat lay lower in the water; no longer cleanly took the rise of the seas ahead, but waddled through them, her gunwale bars scant inches from the cresting lips of the combers. Micin himself heaved overside the bulky, heavy water casks, two of the big steel food boxes, all the other gear which would possibly lighten her. If they were to live, they were to live and make land. But, if they were to die, they were to die, here, in the center of this chaos of wind and water, and food would not help them.

The sun had gone behind a low lying cloud. The world was a place of dull gray light and night-like shadows. They were cold, numb with the sharp wind, the pain and weariness of their exhaustion. And there was no sign of the storm's abating.

Paol, the man who knew of gold, went with two others to where Micin and the former sailor bailed desperately. In the howling of the gale, Claubert could not hear what they said, but he could tell, from their faces, and from the countenances of Micin and the sailor, what those two wished. And he, crouched alone, steering them through this thing, for some reason preserving his life and their own, was forced to smile bleakly. For Micin and the old sailor were coming aft.

They hunkered beside him as best they might, and Micin bawled into his ear:

"Run for land! Chance it! This can't go on! We'll be bound for Africa on this course!"

Claubert inclined his head, indicated that the old sailor help him carefully buck the big steering sweep down, slowly, bit by bit bring the craft about on a quartering course for the hidden land. It was a dangerous task, very close to the impossible. They did it. There was the land, and the jungle, a thick jade wall, fronds of coco palms and banana trees whipping away like weird birds in the fury of the gale. And, on the little strip of flat beach before the jungle, the combers were piling twenty feet high in a white maelstrom.

THEY looked from one to the other. It did not take a sailor to know that no boat could possibly live through that and reach land. It was impossible; it meant death. Even now Claubert and the old convict were battling the boat about, fighting her out to sea and comparative safety again.

A fragment of a shout came from forward. They looked that way. Paol, the man who knew where gold was in this jungle, was standing up. And Paol's face was the face of a man suddenly gone insane. This, this last blow from fate, Paol could not stand. He threw his arms high, bawled at the storm, the seas and flung himself into a comber that never brought him to the surface again.

It was in that night that Claubert,

without his consciously knowing it, came to think and feel fully with these other men, to see and dream as they dreamed. It was impossible that he should do otherwise. For they were seven men against the storm; no more; no less. No longer were they convicts, no longer was he a righteous man and a prisoner here. No longer, even, were they separate personal entities, or Frenchmen. They were small, individual forces, combined against the fury of their common foe, the sea, the storm. And, side by side, they battled so, not knowing now where they were going, and, if they won, what there was for them to live for.

The following day, past noon, the gale abated. The seas ran more slowly, the wind fell away. On the starboard hand, close in, a long, flat headland, overgrown with gray, tortured mangroves, ceibas and arrow-hearts, thrust out into the sea. Claubert had run this coast for some fifteen years. He knew that headland. It was in Brazil.

He changed his course when it was abaft, ran in, around it, seeking a place to land, while the others, vague shadows of men, tugged clumsily at the oars. The ground swell came off to meet them, drive them back, out into the open sea, and the way they had come. Four bitter times they were thrown back; on the fifth they conquered.

The waterlogged boat bogged in the beach ooze and backwash of the ground swell long yards from the actual shore. Unwilling and afraid to wait for the tide or one great wave which would bear the boat farther in, they slipped overside, man by man, and each man for himself.

It was then that Claubert felt his pitiful weakness. Too long had his brain, his courage, dominated his body, his muscles. He was through. Over this he could not conquer. For a time he had crawled, wallowed and swam after the others. No more. He raised his head; a sort of croaked moan and cry came from him. His arms lifted in a last awful and futile gesture. Then, slowly, he began to slip forward into the stinking stuff that sucked and held so powerfully about his limp, aching thighs.

The others were on the beach, safe. He could hear them talking—talking about him. Their words pierced his brain like light coming into a dark, hot room. There was first the voice of the old sailor:

"He is stuck, that one. He'll die there."

Then Micin:

"Let him. I lose some pleasure, but save a shell!"

"*Par le bon Dieu!*" That was one of the others. "He is a man. We're men—free men. He brought us here. He is all right, that one!"

He heard no more. His chest, his arms, his head and mouth were forward in the stuff now. His brain was an aching, reeling void of blackness and pain. But he could feel their hands upon him, the hands of several men, dragging him up, out and back, into life.

They lay on the beach, huddled like children together for warmth from the wind. The sun beat at them; the mosquito swarms had already whined out from the jungle to torture their sleep. The scorching sun awoke them and they blinked up at this land of their freedom.

Big black vultures drifted in slow arcs high overhead in the now cloudless sky. In the jungle, macaws, parakeets and red howler monkeys kept up a continual irritance of sound. Near them, in the jungle fringe, a stubby banana tree stood. Its clusters of fruit were yellow ripe, as if put there for them alone.

Micin got up and staggered over to it, came back with his mud crusted arms laden with the bunches. Some of them reeled upright as he cursed and called them, reached out their hands for the food. He stood over one man; kicked out savagely. That man awoke; looked up. That man was Claubert; he stared, first, out to sea.

"The boat is gone," he mumbled.

The others, eating, laughed. About that they no longer cared.

"Where are we, you?" croaked the old sailor.

Claubert looked at the man, slowly shook his head. Micin still stood above him, and now his fingers caressed a revolver he had carried ashore high above the mud.

"Where are we, you?" he asked, stooping a bit forward.

Claubert looked not at him, but at the others, who had, also, come through storm with him, and had saved him from the sea. Then he looked at Micin, right above him.

"You ask me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"I'll tell you, then. This is Brazil. That, out there, is Punta Ahorlera. Where I put you in first—was twenty miles from Cayenne, in French Guiana. . ."

A hissing sigh, like that of released steam, came from the men, even from Micin. Then Micin stood up, straight and back a bit from this other man.

"So?" he said. "So, my Breton pig!"

The revolver was now at his hip; his thumb had brought back the hammer. Then, abruptly, his face darkened, mottled with a mad sort of rage; he hurled the revolver from him.

"No, I will have the great pleasure of killing you, slowly, with my hands! Get up!"

In Micin's face, in the supercilious light in his eye, Claubert fleetingly read the reason for his surprising change of front. To beat him down, to reduce him with his fists till he begged to be permitted to serve under him, even as those men looking on must serve such a man, that was Micin's intent. To prove unmistakably that an outlaw of France might be a better man than a loyal son!

"You are almost a real man, Micin," said Claubert, and got up.

Micin charged him, striking at him with great, whistling blows. Claubert knew nothing of boxing, and if he had, he would not have used the knowledge. He met the other man body to body, blow for blow, fully believing that when he was through he would be killed anyhow. But in this, this one chance with Micin, the gods had been kind.

They fought for half an hour. Over the mangrove roots; out into the mud; even into the sea and the jungle fringe. Both were cut to ribbons, bleeding from bodies, faces, eyes. And the remaining men watched them, spellbound, voiceless with satisfaction at the sheer giving and taking of the blows.

Claubert was heavier, a bit bigger. Micin was swifter, though, and knew something of the science of using his hands. Time upon time he battered Claubert down, then kicked him with his bare feet, kneed him in the back, buried him, squirming and lashing, in the mud.

Until Claubert, rising from one of those awful falls, met the bowling inrush of the other man with a head thrust of his own. His square blond head met the tapering point of Micin's chin. Micin sprawled back, very much as if the other had pierced him with a knife. He fell. He stayed there.

Claubert smiled, with his pulped lips and bleeding eyes. He looked at the five, who sat still now, openly bewildered, dazed. Claubert tried to speak; no words would come, yet. Panting and staggering, he reached down and found Micin's revolver, the heavy cartridge belt. Then again he looked at the five and fully understood.

He advanced a little toward them, those five men who had fought through storm, conquered the sea with him and saved him from the sea. They were bewildered now; they were dumb. Micin had been their god; when he had fallen they had fallen. Or so it seemed now. That would not last; but in this moment, now, fear was upon them—as they looked at Claubert, who had brought them out from France, had always led them . . .

"No!" Surprisingly, the word came from him. "No. You have earned it. It is yours—freedom."

He looked at them. They did not yet fully understand, these who had once lost caste and honor, just as he had lost his ship. Through the blind movement of a fate that would always be inscrutable to all of them, even him.

Now they looked up, and he read in their eyes their desire that he go on, commanding them, leading them—anywhere into this new freedom he had said was theirs. But, as he slowly buckled on the cartridge belt and caught up one of the rifles there, he knew that he could not. Freedom had come to them. But not to him. There was yet, for him, the call of command, of his country, and other ships.

He raised his hand to his forehead in brief salute to them.

"*Au 'voir*, sons of France!" There was pity, there was humility, and pain, in his voice as he said it. "Good luck!"

His hand dropped to his side. They still stared up, again bewildered, frightened and awfully alone. But then the jungle to the west had him, and he was gone.

# TAVERN *of the* SEAS

By LAWRENCE G. GREEN

TABLE BAY, once known to sailormen as the "Tavern of the Seas," is still a place where queer and daring craft call for refreshment, and where strange cargoes are shipped.

While gold and diamonds are the most famous of South African freights, other cargoes suggesting romance still pass through this great seaport in the shadow of Table Mountain.

Tiny, gray hulled steamers with barrels at their mastheads and harpoon guns in their high bows are now preparing for their Antarctic adventures.

Sailing ships as graceful as any China tea clipper may still be seen in Table Bay docks. These are the fishing schooners, tall three-masters that once sailed the Newfoundland Banks, now catching barracuda off the coast of Southwest Africa.

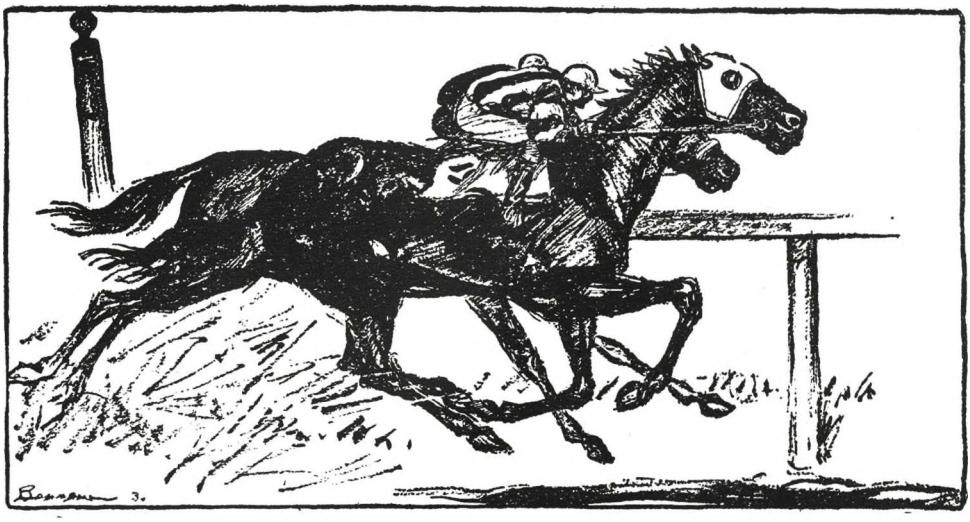
Soon the wharves will be stacked with cases of South African fruit for export. Dangerous stowaways sometimes take passage with this fragrant cargo. A puff adder from some lonely farm on the veldt was killed on a London quay not long ago. Scorpions and tarantulas find their way into the crates; while coffee beans are often accompanied by a centipede whose attack is almost sure death.

More deadly still—if it had gone astray—was the recent shipment of a case of tubes containing tropical disease germs to a British research institute.

Sugar from Natal may be a dangerous cargo. Ten men were gassed in the hold of a South African liner some time ago as a result of sugar fermenting.

Frogs' skins often appear on bills of lading. They are worked up into a soft leather which is used for bookbinding. Cape Town, of course, sees many wild animals shipped to the zoos of the world every year. Usually a lion, a buffalo or buck gives no more trouble at sea than a cow or sheep. But when a cargo of zebras broke loose recently, during heavy weather in a ship off the Cape, there was feverish excitement on board, and a good many minor casualties. They were finally lassoed and shut up in their pens again.

I saw a few cases with Chinese marks dumped on to a wharf the other day. They were filled with food for the Chinese community in Cape Town—sharks' fins, dried dog, sea slugs and bad eggs.



# *The* GAME

## *A Story of the Kentucky Racetracks*

By THOMSON BURTIS

THE morning weather was clear and blue. The Kentucky air was crisp and seemed to crackle with the taut anticipation that hung over the vast reaches of Churchill Downs. Surrounded by their covered runways, the long line of stables hummed with activity, and words flung from jockey to groom and from stable boy to trainer, came quick and sharp, as if each of the horsemen was laboring under a tremendous strain.

Even the clockers, perched like so many crows on the track railing, were leaning forward tensely, their bronzed faces drawn and eager. It was the day before the Derby, and as one horse after another pranced forth on the track for a last workout the eyes of every beholder followed it as fiercely as if the fate of nations rested on its condition and action.

Sparrow Hogan was not immune to the ill repressed excitement about him. Despite himself, he felt unaccustomed tingles going up and down his spine, and he felt it necessary to have a fierce contempt for himself because of it.

"What am I getting all steamed up for?" the little jockey jeered. "The Derby is in the bag already, and these guys know it. Commander'll win in a walk."

Dressed in riding boots, breeches and sweater he was standing near Commander's stall. His slight figure made him look even younger than he was, but

his face, with its gray eyes set a little too close together, made up more than the difference. It showed the hard bitten lines of experience, and even of wisdom—of a sort.

Sparrow Hogan had been kicked around the outlaw tracks of America since he was twelve. At fourteen he had been taught by old Pop Claymore how to ride and at sixteen he had learned how to lose races with such artistry that detection was next to impossible. From then on he had been steeped in every crooked dodge of the turf, from doping a horse to using a battery. Where he would have ended if he had kept on is not pleasant to think about, but fate had thrown him across the path of Jim Houston and Commander. Jim Houston had given him a job as jockey, and Commander had given him, for the first time in his brief but bitter years, something to love.

It was easy to understand why a boy brought up on the tracks should love a glorious horse like Commander. It was not so easy to understand why the horse's lean and taciturn owner should hire a jockey with Sparrow's reputation. Jim Houston was straight. Still, there had been stories about him down—where was it? Perhaps there was nothing to them. Or perhaps there was something, and he knew that if given a chance a man might turn to the right, and was willing to pass on that chance himself.

No one understood Jim Houston—least of all Sparrow—but in any case Sparrow's conduct on the track had been irreproachable since the alliance was formed. All Sparrow asked was to ride Commander. Devotion to his magnificent mount seemed to wipe clean the badly scrawled slate of the past. He had already ridden the stallion to four glorious victories and people had almost stopped speculating about him and his silent Texan boss. Tomorrow, he told himself, he was going to ride Commander to the most glorious victory of all. Perhaps then they would stop speculating altogether.

"All right, Sparrow."

Sparrow turned at the sound of the drawled words and walked a step or two forward to meet his boss. Jim Houston was leading Commander, fully saddled, out of his stall.

"Work him an' easy three-quarters," Houston said slowly. "About 1:15, say."

Sparrow nodded, and suddenly his hard little eyes became soft.

"Well, well, well, boy—let's see how you're feelin' this morning," he said, as one narrow hand caressed Commander's velvet nose. "Pretty soft for you—nothin' to do but walk around the track this morning. God, I wish I'd been a horse."

Houston gave him a leg up, and Sparrow noticed that the Texan's lean face, tanned to a mahogany shade, was more serious than usual, and that was very serious. Houston's deep set brown eyes were brooding, somehow, and the feeling which the weazened little rider had always had about his taciturn boss seemed to strengthen as he glanced at Houston's face.

For more than a year now Sparrow had been in the Southerner's employ, and yet there had always been an insuperable barrier between the aloof Houston and the sharp faced jockey. Commander was the one and only horse in Houston's stable, and together the two men had developed an ungainly, lanky two year old into the conceded king of the turf which Commander was that day.

Dozens of nights both men had slept in the stable with the thoroughbred, and together they had traveled tens of thousands of miles in Commander's box car, and many a time they had gone supperless to bed, because there was not money enough to buy themselves food. Despite all that, though, Sparrow called him "Mr. Houston," and the twenty-five year old rider and the thirty year old Texan had nothing in common except one thing. That was Commander.

"What's the matter?" Sparrow asked him. "You ain't looking like a guy that's got the Derby in his pants pocket."

A fleeting smile lightened the solemnity

of the tall Texan's face for a moment.

"Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, Jock," he drawled.

Sparrow forgot his boss as he guided the black stallion out on the track. The moments which made his day complete were just ahead of him.

When he was astride the thoroughbred he was no longer a sharp faced, flinty eyed, hard little gamin of the turf—he was a king. A thrill went through him as the mighty muscles below him started to work, and Commander, with that matchless stride of his, started eating up the distance which he was to run.

Subconsciously Sparrow knew that a hundred pairs of eyes were on the great thoroughbred, just as he knew that his mount was in the sporting headlines of a thousand papers that morning. All this was merely a background, however, for the happiness which filled him amounted to ecstasy as he crouched low over Commander's arching neck and whispered into the horse's ear.

IN A few minutes Sparrow would be back in the mundane world again. Just now he was a superior being as the crisp morning air whipped his face and the track flowed behind him under Commander's thudding hoofs. He pulled up the horse at the end of six furlongs, but Commander was crying to run.

"Come on now, Stubborn," Sparrow told him. "Don't make me saw your mouth off. Ain't you got no sense? You got plenty runnin' to do tomorrow."

Then, with a shock so unexpected that it left him physically sick for a moment, he felt a change in Commander's stride. It was ever so slight a one, but to Sparrow, who was a part of Commander when he was riding him, it was as obvious as though the stallion had fallen. Commander had the hint of a limp—the off front foot.

"It can't be true," Sparrow raved to himself as he ran Commander down to an easy canter.

Sparrow felt paralyzed for a moment, and it was an eternity of time before he was back at the stables. Twice during that time he was sure he felt Commander favor that front foot—yet at other times the horse seemed to run with ease and perfection. Sparrow must be wrong, and yet there was anguish in his eyes as he dismounted within ten feet of Commander's stall.

Houston, his field glasses swinging at his side, was coming toward him with long unhurried strides, but the Texan's brooding brown eyes had an unaccustomed glow in them as they met the jockey's.

Out on the track four thoroughbreds were going through their paces, and for the moment no one had eyes for the top-heavy favorite of tomorrow's race.

"Didn't I see Commander limping a little?" Houston asked very slowly.

"Mr. Houston, I'm afraid you did," Sparrow said miserably.

Commander, his great black eyes still aglow with the joy of his run, was tossing his head as though the boundless energy within him had to have some outlet. It did not seem possible that there could be a single flaw in that glittering black body.

"Go and find Doc Wentworth," the Texan told him. "I'll cool him off and rub him down. And keep your mouth shut."

Sparrow nodded and sped away on his errand. He felt as though he were summoning a doctor in a life and death matter and that the whole bottom had fallen out of his world. It was a half hour before he was leading the fat, jovial veterinary into Commander's stall, and that half hour had been an ordeal greater than an illness of his own would have been to the bowlegged jockey.

A tall, distinguished looking, gray haired man, some friend of Wentworth's, was with them. Sparrow had not exchanged a word with either of them—somehow he was unable to talk.

"Well, well, well—I hope you're both wrong," the veterinary said cheerily, as they entered the stall. "Now, let's have a look."

He bent down and his experienced fingers briefly kneaded Commander's fetlock. Then he led the stallion around the stall twice. Sparrow's face was haggard and drawn as he saw Commander favor that foot; and Houston's face was like a mask through which burning eyes peered at the world.

Wentworth walked slowly to the door, the bottom section of which was closed, and leaned on it thoughtfully. He took off his glasses and polished them. When he turned to the silent trio his cherubic face was unwontedly solemn.

"Jim, I'm afraid there's no doubt about it. That leg ought to be rested. If you run him it is an even chance that he might break down for good."

Sparrow was as numb as though those quiet words were his own death warrant. He stole a look at Houston, but the Texan's eyes never left Wentworth's. Houston pushed his battered felt hat farther back on his head and ran his fingers through his thick black hair.

"A fifty-fifty chance you say?" he asked quietly.

Wentworth nodded.

"And in my opinion," he said bluntly, "you would be crazy to take that chance. Good Lord, what a spot you're in."

Again there was silence, as though the unspoken thoughts of the men in the stall were a tangible, physical entity hanging heavily in the air.

"Pardon me," came a hesitant voice. "I know nothing about racing, unfortunately—what did you mean about being in such an awful spot?"

"In this case it means far more than just losing a chance to win the Derby," Wentworth told his friend absently. "Almighty, a hundred thousand people—maybe half a million—will have their props kicked right out from under them by this."

"How, may I ask?"

Sparrow was but vaguely conscious of what they were saying. He was leaning against the wall, his eyes resting miserably on the dirt floor.

"It's like this," the veterinary explained. "On the Derby they have future books—a year ahead of time you can put down a bet at tremendous odds on any one of the two or three hundred colts which are eligible to run. You can get anywhere from a hundred to a thousand to one on any of them a year ahead of time. You bet on a horse to win, and if he doesn't run at all, which ninety per cent. of them never do, for one reason and another, you lose. People started taking a flyer on Commander here a year ago, and every month as the Derby came closer, and Commander showed himself a better and better horse, the bets increased, and the odds decreased."

"I see," murmured the gray headed gentleman.

"Within the last month or two," Wentworth went on, "since it became a certainty that Commander was the best horse in the race, and that he would certainly run, barring accidents, the betting became tremendous. I don't think it is any exaggeration to say that from Australia to London, including Americans in every town that has a bookmaker, there are thousands and thousands of bettors who have already got their money down, hook, line and sinker, on Commander, and if he don't run, they lose." Wentworth nodded.

"Which is exactly the reason why I have got to run him, breakdown or no breakdown." Houston said that as though every word had been wrenched from him with difficulty.

Sparrow's head snapped up as though it had been jerked back by an unseen wire. For a moment he could not believe his ears.

Wentworth glanced at the suffering Texan, started to say something and then changed his mind. What he finally said was—

"Never in the history of the American turf has any horse had such a fortune bet on him, nor so many thousands of people vitally interested in his winning."

"A fifty-fifty chance, eh?" Houston said as though thinking aloud. "I've got to run him."

"What do you mean, you've got to run him?" Sparrow exploded, and suddenly his small body was quivering and his light eyes were like diamonds in his sallow face.

"You mean to say you're gonna break down Commander?"

"I won't say I've finally made up my mind, but it wouldn't be fair to all the people who bet on him—"

"Who the hell cares about them suckers? You're gonna break down and break the heart of the greatest horse that ever stepped on a track since Man-O'-War? You can't do it, Mr. Houston, you can't! By God, I won't ride him, and there ain't anybody else that can! Any man that'll do that ought to be shot—"

"Sparrow!"

Houston's voice was like the crack of a whip, but the overwrought Sparrow Hogan could not be stopped.

"What right have you got to make Commander go out and ruin himself?" he raved. He was like a cornered beast, fighting to the last ditch for the only thing on earth he loved. "Who cares about what's bet on him? What's that got to do with you? You didn't ask them to bet, did you? It's their own funeral, ain't it? You can't do it, I tell you, and you won't do it!"

He was over beside Houston now, entirely unconscious of the two onlookers, or of anything else in the world, except Commander.

"Please, Mr. Houston, take it back. You're gonna send Commander out there tomorrow to break down and hobble around a pasture lot the rest of his life? God, I got every cent I ever had down on him, and I don't care. You got every cent you have down on him and you don't care, do you? Why, he ought to be winnin' stakes at Saratoga five years from now. It'll ruin you and ruin him."

He stopped as though unable to go on. He was helpless to give expression to all that was in his mind.

For a second Houston's shadowed eyes burned into his. Then two arms were gripping him by the shoulders.

"I know how you feel, Sparrow," the Texan said, and his voice was very gentle. "We'll have to think it over."

Suddenly Sparrow felt weak and limp, and without saying a word he wandered out of the stall and into the mocking morning sunlight. All around him the excited buzz of the stables seemed to accentuate the tragedy which surrounded him like a wall.

Horses were being cooled out and rubbed down; stable boys were chattering as they worked. Trainers and jockeys were talking to one another in low tones. Far across the track small figures were cleaning the vast reaches of the grandstand. The familiar life of the track, shot through now with that air of anticipation, was going on as usual.

Somehow the jockey had never felt so alone in his life. Houston was such an enigma to him that he felt utterly helpless to make him see the truth. There had been vague gossip the year before, concerning the silent Texan, to the effect that in the past he had been concerned in some big racetrack scandal on a Southern track, and under a different name. Perhaps that was the reason for his ferocious insistence on leaning over backward where honesty and honor were concerned on the track.

HOUSTON had never kept Commander's ability under cover in order to improve the odds on him. For instance, he had always given the public his honest opinion of his horse's chances, and as a result Commander had never paid even money in his racing career.

"Just a nut, that's what Houston is—a sucker, a sap—"

Sparrow's thoughts were a veritable maelstrom as he wandered around like a lost soul.

In a few minutes the three men came out of the stall, and his thoughts were broken into by Houston's voice:

"I'll be back in a couple of hours. Don't say anything to anybody and don't let 'em see Commander."

Sparrow nodded.

His eyes asked a question, but Houston did not answer it. He walked off across the track with the two men; he left behind him a cold eyed, thin lipped jockey who had suddenly come to hate him.

It was three hours before Houston returned, and Sparrow spent them in a sort of waking nightmare. For a few minutes of the time he was able to forget Commander and speculate about tomorrow's race, but the intervals when he was not obsessed with the crisis facing the stable were few and far between.

The crack three year olds of all sections of the country were entered, but there were three horses in the race which did not seem to have any business there. Had Sparrow had the slightest idea that he might ride in the Derby, he would have devoted a great deal of thought to the subject of why the Fern stable should enter Mouse and Far Star, and just where old Mike Lamson had got hold of Trocedero. As it was, he simply sat at the door of Commander's stall and glowered balefully at the world.

Jim Houston was no longer merely an enigma to him. He forgot that the Texan had picked him up and had him reinstated when he had been ruled off the track for pulling High Mountain. All Sparrow could remember was the inexcusable fact that the owner was capable of risking the ruination of Commander.

"Hello, Sparrow. Where's Houston?"

The heavy base voice brought Sparrow to himself with a start. He glanced upward to meet the bold black eyes of Slim Sutherland. Slim was six feet two and very slender, and now his thin sardonic face was decorated with a likeable grin, which was part of his stock in trade. Sutherland was very neatly dressed in blue serge, as always, and his manner was as casual as ever.

"I dunno. What the hell d'you want t'see him for?" Hogan responded.

Sutherland pushed his natty gray hat farther back on his head, exposing thinning black hair, and smiled indulgently.

"Got a little message for him and maybe a little business talk," he said.

"You ought to know better than to think that nut would ever have any business with you," Hogan said nastily.

He picked at his sandy hair with gnarled fingers as his eyes flickered over the tall form of the older man. Sutherland was leaning nonchalantly against the stable wall, nibbling on a straw with strong white teeth.

"Oh, I don't know," Sutherland said casually. "How's Commander these days?"

"Wouldn't you like to know?"

"You don't seem in such good humor," Sutherland told him mockingly.

The deep lines which ran from his nostrils to the corners of his mouth became prominent as he went on:

"The jockey that's supposed to trot up the stand tomorrow with a Kentucky Derby in his pocket—to have that wreath of flowers hung around his neck—to be written up in all the papers—ought to treat a caller with more consideration."

"Go to hell, will you?" snapped Hogan.

"I've been there. Huh! Here comes your boss now."

Sparrow looked around just in time to see Houston coming around the corner of the stable. As the Texan's eyes rested on Sutherland, his face hardened and his pace quickened.

"Hello, Jim!" Sutherland said easily. "Cigaret?"

He held out the package which he had just taken from his pocket, but Houston did not even glance at it.

"No, thanks," he said, in that drawl. "How come you're talking to my jockey? I know of nothing that I want to talk to the bookmakers about," he added, so deliberately that there seemed to be a space between each word.

Sutherland was not exactly a bookmaker—in fact, no one around the track knew exactly what he was. He seemed to be a betting commissioner at times and an intermediary for big bookmakers at other times, and at all times a suave and casual gentleman who kept his own counsel with extreme success.

Houston darted a glance at Hogan, an unspoken question in his eyes.

"He ain't been here more'n a minute," Sparrow said grudgingly. "He was inquirin' after the health of Commander."

"Right!" Sutherland said suddenly, and now his casual air had changed subtly into a sort of cool efficiency.

"I hear he pulled up with a limp this morning and that if he's run tomorrow, it might be the last time."

Sparrow's jaw dropped. Doc Wentworth could not have said a word, and he had guaranteed his friend. How could the mysterious Sutherland have learned that?

"Haven't you been around the track long enough to know a Derby pipe dream when you hear one?" Houston asked him.

Sutherland nodded.

"That's why I'm here," he said quickly. "Now listen, Houston, don't be a fool all your life. My principals have ways of knowing things. If you knew who they were, you would be as sure of that as I am. They are not local people either. Commander pulled up with a limp. If you run him, you may ruin him, and the chances are ten to one he couldn't win if he wasn't ruined. Now don't get me wrong. I know you, and I know the way you've raced, but listen. You bet your wad weeks ago on your horse, didn't you?"

"That's my business, suh!" Houston said solemnly, but his eyes were not good to see.

"Well, I'll get down to brass tacks," Sutherland said.

He glanced around him briefly, to make sure no one was within earshot.

"From any point of view, you're a fool to run your horse. He can't win, and you stand to lose a nag that can win a fortune for you when he's right again. Now, I'm going to add another reason why you shouldn't run. If you'll scratch Commander from the Derby, I'll hand you personally tonight twenty-five thousand dollars in cash."

Sparrow sat as though turned to stone for a moment, and then, before he had time to think, he felt his heart pound within him. Now the boss couldn't run Commander—he couldn't turn that down.

"I see," Houston said, and his eyes remained on Sutherland as though some magnetic attraction made him unable to take them away.

Sutherland puffed his cigaret calmly and returned the gaze without faltering.

"You wouldn't have dared to come to me with that offer if you hadn't heard a crazy rumor," Houston went on, as though thinking aloud. "If Commander runs and wins, half the big bookmakers of the country will go broke. I know that. And you figure that Commander's having a little limp would be an excuse for me to take the bookmakers' money."

"Your understanding is perfect, Jim."

Suddenly there was a change in the Texan which made Sparrow shrink back involuntarily. Houston's eyes seemed to roll in his head like those of a maddened horse, and his face was livid with fury. His big fists were clenched at his side, and there was raw murder mirrored in his contorted face and turbulent eyes. He was in a grip of such utter fury that he was unable to talk. He just stood there, trembling, apparently fighting for control of himself.

Sutherland remained leaning against the stable wall, but suddenly he was as motionless as a statue and his eyes were suddenly very bright and hard and watchful.

Houston seemed to relax. He expelled the air from his lungs with a sigh, as if relieving an internal pressure. He dropped his head wearily. The amazed Hogan sensed instinctively that that temper of Houston's had not always been controlled. Perhaps that was part of the reason for the Houston of today.

"The answer is no, Slim. Take it back to the crooks that employ you with my compliments, will you, and quickly?"

"O. K, Jim, but listen—" Sutherland had straightened now, and he took a step toward Houston, one long forefinger wagging to emphasize the words that seemed to crackle from his thin lips. "You're going to reget this. It's always better to do things nicely than the other way. Get me?"

"So long, Slim. I'm busy," Houston said quietly, and without another look or word, he disappeared into Commander's stall.

"Well, that's that. So long, Jock," Sutherland said easily, but his hawk-like face was harsh, and his mouth thinner than usual, as he strode away.

THE DAY dragged on endlessly for Sparrow Hogan. There was something about Houston which forbade the jockey to ask him even one question. They scarcely exchanged a word until it was almost time for the afternoon racing to start. Then Houston, who had bandaged Commander's leg and had been soaking it in a bucket, said:

"Go on into town, Sparrow. See a movie or something, and get your mind off of things. Uncle Zeke will stay with Commander, and I'll see you at the Kaymore around six." Which he did.

Sparrow had tried a picture, but somehow it did not interest him, and he had fallen into a heavy, dreamless sleep in his tiny room in a little side street hotel. Houston's knock on the door awakened him.

"Here's something that might interest you," the owner said slowly as he entered and tossed a paper on the bed.

It was called *Horse Sense*, and was a two for a cent racing sheet, published in Louisville. A glaring headline seemed to leap up and hit him between the eyes as he opened it.

COMMANDER TO BE SCRATCHED

were the words in letters more than an inch high. The sub-headline was:

> **Well Founded Rumor that Ring of Bookmakers Have Persuaded Owner of Derby Favorite to Scratch Horse. Bookies Would Lose Huge Fortune if Favorite Should Win. Excuse to be that Commander went Bad in Morning Workout.**

Sparrow's eyes fairly leaped down the column, which was set in heavy black type. The writer seemed to be certain of his ground, and had even included, in addition to the usual phrases, such as "from an unexceptionable source," the fact that a well known go-between of the bookmakers had been closeted in conference with Houston; approximate figures showing the amount that was in the future books on Commander, and the total amount, running into seven figures, which a few big bookmakers stood to lose if the topheavy favorite won.

"Liable to be on every sporting page in the country in a few hours," Houston said quietly. "See what they're up to?"

"No, not exactly," stammered Hogan.

"Over on the second page they've even got your past record," Houston went on. "Well, it's just incidental that you and I are plastered as a couple of crooks before the world, and that thousands of bettors around the country will be hating our guts by tomorrow morning."

"What do we care?" flared the jockey, his bead-like eyes glittering coldly. "Dumb suckers!"

"Well, even if we don't, the bookies have used us to make a fortune," Houston said quietly. "Don't you see that all these rumors will result in thousands of bettors running to cover, thinking that there's a good chance that we're crooks? They'll cover themselves by betting on some other horse, and even up the books for the layers. Out on the track tomorrow, they'll do the same thing. Bad leg or no bad leg, we've been used as come-ons, my boy."

Sparrow nodded. He could scarcely comprehend the whole thing yet. He was in a daze. Through the open windows there came the ceaseless drone of the crowded streets below. Louisville was surging with the hectic excitement of fifty thousand visitors and gripped by the automatic tension of Derby Eve.

The sidewalks were packed; the streets a solid mass of vehicles, and from dozens of private cars in the railroad yards to little rooms in private houses five miles from the center of town, an excited mob of humanity was thinking and talking nothing but the Derby. It was as if the mental

tautness of two hundred thousand people had crystallized and was marching through the open windows to batter down the owner and jockey of the horse which was in every one's thoughts and on every one's tongue.

"Well," Sparrow said suddenly, as though coming out of a coma, "'s'long as everybody around the world has had fair warning and cover themselves, there ain't no reason to run Commander."

"No, my boy, you're wrong," Houston told him gently.

It seemed that the ordeal of the day had softened the silent Texan and that disaster had made him less aloof.

"I know regular newspaper men, although they may not take what this scandal sheet says too seriously, are trying to find me, and I'm going to call them up now. I'll tell them the truth, which is all I can do. Doc Wentworth will tell them the truth. Then we've got to run the horse for our own good name and for the good of the game. There isn't a soul in the world would believe that the fifty-fifty chance of breaking Commander down is the only reason for scratching him now. The world will think that Doc Wentworth was bribed. Other veterinaries might say the same as Doc, and then again they could easily have the opinion that a tiny temporary weakness was so unimportant as to make scratching a horse, under the conditions, ridiculous."

He was almost pleading now for understanding, as though he needed some human being to confide in.

"Well, that's all hooey to me," Hogan told him savagely. "Hell, don't you think I want to ride the Derby winner? Don't you think I want to win dough? Don't you think I want the stable to have a bankroll? God, boss, it's Commander I'm thinking about—"

"I know, son. It isn't our fault exactly; it isn't Commander's fault; but we've got a bigger responsibility than you realize."

There was a quiet glow, as though he were some religious zealot, in Houston's eyes as he said that, but the resentful Hogan was as incapable of comprehending it as though Houston had said nothing. Silence reigned in the shabby little room for a moment and then Houston rose wearily.

"If we win tomorrow, by chance, we're goats anyway, Sparrow, and—"

"Which we won't," barked Hogan. "Commander'll be limpin' on three legs back to some pasture lot."

"Let's hope not. If we win, we'll be accused of starting all this to get longer odds, or else actually having taken a bribe and then been scared to go through with it because of the publicity."

"If Commander does break down where the hell are we?" Hogan interrupted with blazing eyes. "No horse—and dead!"

Houston nodded.

"But it's the only thing to be done," he said slowly. "Listen, son. You don't understand, I know, but I've lived a long time and I've had a lot of trouble in my life, just as you have."

THEN he went to the phone and successively called the sporting departments of all the Louisville papers.

Half an hour later two dozen racing writers, including those of syndicates and press associations, were gathered in one of the hotel parlors. Hogan, white faced and flinty eyed, sat hunched in a corner, as Houston read the brief statement he had laboriously written out in Hogan's room. Tall and lean, dressed in a cheap, ill fitting suit, new lines in his curiously ascetic face, he faced the cynical group before him, and said:

"I don't care to answer any questions at the moment. The statement will speak for itself, and I ask you gentlemen to get it word for word. Here it is: Commander pulled up with a slight limp in his off front foot after his workout this morning. Dr. Wentworth, a local veterinary, was summoned and gave as his opinion that while the weakness would not affect Commander's running in its present stage, nevertheless there was an even chance that a hard race might break down the

horse permanently. A few hours after this opinion had been given, and before I had fully made up my mind to run Commander anyhow, because of the tremendous public support already accorded him, I was offered the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars if I would scratch the horse.

"This amount was offered by a representative of unknown interests, presumably bookmakers, and was refused. Commander will be run in the Derby tomorrow for two reasons. One, to reassure the public that dishonesty in racing is the exception, rather than the rule; and secondly, in order that the thousands of sportsmen who have accorded Commander their support, shall, with a knowledge of all the facts, have a run for their money."

There was a profound silence as the Texan concluded, broken only by the busy scratching of pencils. Then Houston went on:

"I'll leave this copy here, in case any of you need it. Come on, Sparrow!"

Hogan rose automatically and silently followed his chief out the door. Behind them, the reporters looked at one another wordless. Then bald headed, bespectacled George Evers remarked:

"Well, if Houston has got a bankroll to shoot on his horse tomorrow, this lineup couldn't be more perfect to get real odds."

The same idea was approved and shared by a considerable proportion of the racing public. The evening papers hit the street with extras, and long before the pre-Derby merriment had reached its peak at midnight, approximately one hundred thousand people in Louisville alone were divided into several camps over the question of how Commander was being manipulated.

Many agreed with the newspaper men; others stuck stoutly to their belief that Jim Houston was on the level; other cynical souls were positive that a real conspiracy between owner and bookmakers had been uncovered, and that a perfectly sound Commander would either run a true race, paying abnormal odds, or else lose gracefully for some reason other than the stallion's physical condition.

Sparrow, the misery in him having submerged any desire to bask in the spotlight, crept into a movie theater, with his hat pulled low over his eyes, and sat there quietly in the shadows until eleven o'clock.

When he entered his room, he stopped short as the long, lean body of Mr. Slim Sutherland uncoiled from a chair.

"How did you get in here?" the jockey demanded.

"You left your door unlocked," Sutherland lied. "Shut it now. I've got something to say to you."

Hogan shut it and then proceeded to take off his shabby coat and cap and throw them on the bed as he asked—

"Well, what is it?"

"Listen, Sparrow, you're all broken up because that cross between a preacher and a nut is insisting on ruining a horse that you've helped to make what he is today. You don't want to run him and break him down, I know that. On the other hand, you're in a tough spot with the public, so just to make sure that you take good care of Commander and don't strain him any, or take any chances on his running so hard that that bad leg will get worse, I've got two thousand dollars in my pocket in cash, and eight thousand more to give to you tomorrow night, if Commander doesn't win."

Casually, as though it was his custom to carry that amount of money, the lanky Sutherland laid it out on the bed.

"Breaking down Commander will throw you out of a job, and this way you'll have coin and a job too. It won't hurt Commander to just canter around the track—" his voice trailed off.

He knew the seed had been planted and that any further persuasion he might have used would have been superfluous. Hogan hesitated briefly. He had not the slightest tendency to shrink from the thought of fixing any horserace, except one involving Commander, and suddenly he realized that the wild thoughts he had had of refusing to ride the horse he loved tomorrow were utterly ridiculous. He would have

to ride him in order to make sure that every precaution was taken to save him. Here was ten thousand dollars falling right into his lap as a reward for doing what he would have done in any event.

"You're on!" he said briefly.

"Good!" Sutherland said calmly. "Now, let me tell you something that'll make it easier for you. You know that Trocedero horse?"

Sparrow nodded.

"Well, unless the stop watch has lied for the last three months, Trocedero is five pounds better than any horse in the race—except Commander at his best."

"I knowed he had a good flight of speed," Hogan added.

Suddenly the world was a much brighter place than it had been before.

"Good flight of speed is right, and old Mike Lamson, who's supposed to be his owner, is hand and glove with Fox and Crane of the Fern stable. They've got Mouse and Far Star in there."

"I see!" snapped Hogan, and his little eyes brightened.

"And the whole outfit," Sutherland pursued, "has a good working understanding with my principals. They wouldn't object to seeing Trocedero win at all—at all."

"Gonna bet heavy on him, hey?"

"Well, possibly," Sutherland said sardonically, "or maybe they're holding bets on so many other horses that they would like to see Trocedero win. Be that as it may, what those two Fern stable dogs are in there for is to try and pocket Commander and give Trocedero a chance to win, even if Commander was at his best. Get me?"

"Sure," Hogan said contemptuously.

That stunt was one of the kindergarten lessons on the outlaw tracks.

"So all you've got to do," Sutherland told him, "is to take care of Commander's foot, and one of those two plowhorses will drop in a slot in front of him, and the other one at the side of him, and the papers can't see a thing, except that Commander was pocketed. Take him to the rail quick as you can, and with Mouse in front of him so that he can't get through, and Far Star on the outside of him—there you are. You'll even finish that way."

"Ye-ah! Looks O. K. to me." Hogan nodded. "Them two hounds won't be able to outrun a turtle after the first six furlongs anyhow. I'll just run Commander easy-like, and when it'll come time for him to make his run like he always does, I'll be in the pocket. May be able to save him that way."

SUTHERLAND got to his feet, scooping up eight thousand dollars of the ten that he had left spread invitingly on the bed. He looked down at the scrawny midget of a man before him, and suddenly his eyes seemed to probe into Sparrow's like two gimlets. His face was black and harsh and he talked through drawn lips that scarcely moved as he said:

"And no doublecrossing, mister. This outfit means business—plenty of business. The only reason we're trusting you at all, you little rat, is that you got just one decent thing about you as far as anybody knows. You don't want to see Commander break down. If you miss, you're sunk. Understand?"

Hogan's eyes dropped.

"Ah, what's the idea?" he mumbled. "I ain't doin' this for you. I don't give a damn about you and the ten grand. That don't mean nothin' except I was going to do it anyway."

Sutherland relaxed.

"O. K, kid. I'll see you at the corner of Fourth and Market tomorrow night at eleven o'clock sharp. Better get that two grand down on Trocedero. 'Night."

After he had left Sparrow picked up the two thousand dollars and locked it in his straw suitcase. It was a swell layout, he reflected, and if Commander were run easy and not forced to put every ounce of energy into his stride, he felt sure that he could pull his idol through without permanent injury.

Try to ruin that matchless horse, would they? Not if Sparrow Hogan knew it.

And ten grand dropping right in his lap, too. He would put that two thousand on Trocedero, who ought to be at least eight to one, if not more, and make a lot more dough than if Commander won. Save his horse; make money—truly, virtue was its own reward.

He sank into bed more weary than he had ever remembered being. He was nervously exhausted and fell into a sleep that was more like a coma.

FOUR o'clock on the afternoon of Derby Day, and Sparrow Hogan, one of a line of eighteen jockeys who carried the silks of the majority of the greatest racing stables of America, was filing down from the jockey room toward the paddock. He had forgotten the thousands of words, including even editorial comments, on the sport of racing stimulated by the Commander case, which he had read in the morning papers; he had forgotten the events of the day before; forgotten what the possible consequences of what he was about to do might be.

He scarcely thought of the races, strange as that might seem, because his mind temporarily had room for only one recollection. That was the fifteen minutes he had spent alone with Commander in his stall at one o'clock that afternoon. It seemed to him that the great black knew that the most glamourous race of the American turf was to be run that afternoon, and that the king of them all would come into his birthright within a few hours.

For fifteen minutes he had petted and crooned to Commander, chided him about his flashing eyes and tossing head, and it was as though he had entered apart with him to save him at all costs. Immersed in his thoughts, it was with the effect of a physical blow that he followed Larry Fanton out of the door and into the frantic maelstrom of excitement, which was Churchill Downs.

A narrow lane had been made through the close packed thousands in the vicinity of the paddock, and from the crowded infield to the jammed stands and promenade, came the electric buzz of eighty-five thousand people to whom the coming race was the climax of the sporting year. Millions in bets were represented in that vast throng, and even more important, months of almost fanatic interest and study were to have their justification, or be proven erroneous within the next few minutes. Transcending both of these was the mental state of the majority of the crowd—such a condition as only lovers of the thoroughbred can reach when one of their idols is about to show his mettle.

A hush seemed to fall over the mass of people around the paddock as the slender jockeys, every one of them tense and drawn with the knowledge that he was to ride for the most cherished honor a jockey can have, filed to the paddock. Not a one of those boys but would receive at least five thousand dollars if he won the race, Sparrow knew, but the honor that went with it meant even more to them. For an instant Sparrow's lips curled contemptuously as he thought—

"An' not a one of them with a chance if Commander was right!"

A second later he was standing alongside the glistening black and looking into the tortured eyes of Jim Houston. Without a word the Texan cupped his hands and gave him a leg up.

The first bandage that Commander had ever worn gleamed white against his black leg, and the stallion looked around at his rider, as though seeking one last minute of understanding. Sparrow patted his neck, and suddenly there were tears in his eyes as he realized that Commander, every superb muscle of him eager for the test, was not to have his day.

"There's nothing I can say, Sparrow, that you don't know," Houston said very gently. "They're all good horses. Run your race, regardless of anything, understand?"

Sparrow nodded, and suddenly as though all the nervous tension of the crowd had gripped him, he was conscious of a feeling within him which had never been there before except during his mo-

ments alone with or riding Commander.

Houston looked tough. It was not easy for him at that. He was a nut, but then he was human—

The Southerner was backing Commander out of his stall and the next minute, last in the line of eighteen of the country's greatest thoroughbreds, ridden by the premier jockeys of the American turf, Sparrow Hogan, former outcast of the outlaw tracks, was riding the most famous horse of the day down the roadway to the track.

Dozens of remarks, some imploring, some encouraging, were thrown at him from the men who lined the pathway, and a moment later, with Commander prancing eagerly under him, he was out on the glaring white ribbon which was the track. The roar of the crowd hit him like a blow, and then died abruptly into a sort of whispering silence.

Dale Boy, champion two year old of the East the year before, and representative of the Whitson string, the greatest stable in America, was leading the parade. Because Whitson's horses always were run to win, a storm of applause and encouragement greeted him. Almost every one of the thoroughbreds had enthusiastic supporters, and yet Sparrow Hogan knew that most of the eyes in the stand were concentrated on Commander.

Every nook and corner of the vast structure was packed with people, and twenty thousand more were in the infield. The promenade and clubhouse lawn were so crowded that a man could have walked on the heads of the people.

It seemed that as Commander made his way along that quarter mile stretch of overwrought humanity, silence followed in his wake. There were even hysterical insults thrown at the horse and rider, and Sparrow knew that every one of those eighty-five thousand souls was wondering what intentions were locked in the mind of Sparrow Hogan. They were speculating distrustfully on what the horse would do and what he was capable of doing.

"To hell with 'em!" Sparrow thought fiercely as he carefully turned his mount and cantered down toward the starting line a quarter of a mile below the stands. Ten grand in his pocket, and he'd save Commander in spite of hell and high water. God, he would like to have won the Derby—

He thrust that thought resolutely out of his mind. No use crying over spilled milk.

They were lining up at the barrier now for the mile and quarter test. Commander was on the very outside. The start was part way around the turn, which required the outside horses to run approximately a length and a half farther than the rail horses, but in this case it was a lucky break for Commander. There was no danger of his being kicked or jostled around too much. Mouse and Far Star, the Fern stable entries, were in Positions 7 and 12 respectively, and Trocedero had the rail.

He had not exchanged a word with Blake Allison and Charlie Sax, riding Mouse and Far Star, respectively, but there had been unspoken understanding in the looks they had cast at each other in the jockey room. Tiny Traymore, famous Eastern jockey, who had been imported to ride Trocedero, was apparently unconscious of any scheme to help his mount win. If he was, he gave no sign of it.

Rumors had reached the jockey room through the valets that Dale Boy was favorite at about three to one and that the odds against Commander were five to one. The rumors of scandal and injury which had flashed over a nation had had their effect. But the untold fortunes which had been dumped into the future books over the past year could not be withdrawn.

The horses milled and squirmed around as sweating assisting starters tried to handle the bad actors, but Commander, prancing with eagerness, was always ready for the barrier to be sprung. A death-like silence seemed to have fallen over the city of people up the track. There was the slightest of buzzes, broken occasionally by the half hysterical laugh of some woman; or a barking shout coming from some overwrought man. Then, as though

some god on high had pulled a string to release the emotions of the world, the barrier sprang.

A clap of thunder seemed to reverberate over the field, as eighty-five thousand throats yelled—

"They're off!"

There was a thunder of hoofs and a cloud of dust shot through with the excited shouts of the jockeys as the eighteen thoroughbreds got under way. Sparrow had deliberately paid little attention to the break, but Commander, like the equine genius he was, seemed to need no help from his jockey. He was off in the first flight, ears pricked forward and neck arched, as he flung himself forward.

That shout from the crowd had spread out into a continuous roar as the horses tore up the stretch. Sparrow took a firm hold on Commander, steadied him down and slowed him up. That did not seem at all strange in a mile and a quarter race. Horse after horse passed him as he eased Commander over toward the rail, picking his way through the crowded field.

Commander was fighting for his head. He seemed to be running soundly, and if his legs were bothering him, he gave no sign of it. In front of the madhouse—which was the stand—Sparrow had Commander fourth from the rail, and running eighth in the field. Lady Sue, a fleet filly, was leading, with Dale Boy, the favorite, second, and Trocedero third, lapped on Dale Boy. Slowly, Sparrow took back on Commander. He must keep him running so far within himself that the strain would be reduced to a minimum.

Now, three horses which had been between himself and the rail, were ahead of him, and he eased Commander over behind them, to find himself separated from the rail by Mouse.

"Good work," snarled Blake Allison. "Charlie, get back quick!"

Far Star was third from the rail, one of three horses which were leading Mouse and Commander.

Commander was fighting his rider like a mad horse. It was next to impossible to keep his head up and to slow his pace.

"Drop back—I'll swing wide on the turn," shouted Allison, and it seemed to Sparrow that every soul in the stands must be able to see what was going on, as he put every ounce of strength into his arms to slow Commander.

This was just a canter for the great black. He got him back until his nose was at Mouse's haunches. Blake gave his scraggly mount one pat with the whip, and Mouse leaped ahead, going wide from the rail as he started to take the turn. Sparrow swung Commander to the left, and the next instant the stallion was running squarely on the rail, with Mouse on the outside of him and a little ahead. Now, Far Star was dropping back, and halfway around the turn the formation was set. Commander's nose was two feet from Far Star's tail, both hugging the rail, and Mouse was running head and head with the stallion just on the outside of him.

EIGHT lengths ahead Lady Sue was still making the pace, with Dale Boy's and Trocedero's positions unchanged. Commander, Mouse and Far Star were gradually losing ground. Commander was not running within seventy-five per cent. of his capabilities, but Mouse and Far Star, while under wraps, were still not taking an exercise gallop.

"Now, I'm set," Sparrow thought to himself. "Anybody can see what a pocket I'm in, and nobody can blame me for not making a move yet."

They hit the back stretch, riding through a choking cloud of dust kicked up by the leading horses, and suddenly Sparrow's heart bounded as he felt Commander falter in his stride.

That leg again—no—perhaps it was just a little depression in the track. For an instant later, that matchless stride had fallen into its even rhythm again.

Sparrow's shoulders were aching and his wrists tortured him as he strained to keep Commander running easily. The black wanted to bound ahead and catch those other horses that were passing him

and drawing away from him, but with the reins wrapped tightly around his arms, Sparrow Hogan kept him from using the power that lay waiting his call.

"I'm getting by—I'm getting by," the pounding hoof beats seemed to be dinning into his ears.

Commander was running soundly; they were losing ground gradually, and that pocket was obvious to even the tyros in the stands.

As they hit the far turn there were but three horses back of the former king of the turf. Ten lengths ahead Lady Sue, with the pace beginning to tell on her, was dropping back, and amid the frantic shouts of the crowd, rolling across the infield like a tidal wave, Dale Boy took the lead, with Trocedero maintaining his position half a length back. Back of them, Sultan, the great distance runner, fresh from his triumphs at New Orleans and Tia Juana, was gradually creeping up, and the other jockeys were settling down to make their runs.

Sparrow was riding in a sort of daze. Only three-eighths of a mile to go now; Commander's leg was still all right.

No, it wasn't!

Again came that instant of faltering, but again the stallion recovered himself and once again was running straight and true. There was a different feel in his stride though, as though every time that foot hit the ground it hurt, but the horse would not give in to it.

"Damn it, get in here!"

It was a choked shout from Blake Allison. Mouse was bearing out around the turn. Before the surprised Sparrow could make a move to prevent it, Commander seemed to hurl himself forward as though shot out of a gun. That momentary opening, caused by Mouse's bearing out between the horses which had penned him in, had given him his opportunity. Commander needed no jockey in the midst of battle. He would win by himself if need be. In two mighty bounds he had passed Far Star. His ears were still pricked forward, but he was shaking his head savagely, fighting his rider, and it was as though he was cursing a friend he had trusted who was doublecrossing him.

A tingling thrill swept over Hogan. Just those few strides of Commander at his best, and there rolled over him the realization that the greatest horse he or anybody else had ever ridden was underneath him. Commander seemed to be pleading—fighting. Then there came an instant of utter comprehension to Hogan.

He was breaking Commander's heart!

Commander knew the job he was supposed to do, and suddenly it seemed as though Hogan, his whole starved life bound up in the animal below him, forgot everything but his love for his horse. Commander would prefer to run his race and die, rather than be disgracefully beaten, the horse seemed to be saying to him, and Sparrow Hogan settled down to ride with all the skill that eight years on the track had given him. It was as though all the dross had been burned away in that instant of hot realization of what Commander wanted; and now Sparrow was bending over his horse's head, talking incoherently as he urged him on.

The race had been an exercise gallop for Commander so far, a mere warmup, and as they swept around the turn he was running as he had never run before. Horse after horse they picked up, as a railway train might pass a line of automobiles. That peerless stride was carrying Commander two feet farther every jump than any other horse in the race.

Hogan, starry eyed, was a part of Commander, helping him on with every stride. As they hit the stretch and the roar of the crowd seemed to sweep down at them with withering force, Commander was fifth. His head was lower now, one ear cocked back as though to hear the ceaseless stream of encouragement which his rider was pouring into it. Somehow, Hogan knew that leg was hurting him, and yet Commander's stride was as true and strong as ever a horse's had been. Hogan was crouched lower now, and both Commander's ears were back and his neck extended as every atom of energy went into every stride.

He hurled himself down the stretch like a black cannon ball. Ahead of them, Larry Fanton had settled down to give Dale Boy all he knew. Trocedero's nose was at the Whitson horse's saddle girth, and slowly the big bay was gaining. Neither jockey knew that a black thunderbolt was bearing down on him from behind until at the eighth pole Commander was looking Trocedero in the eye.

Eighty-five thousand people were going stark mad. An avalanche of sound thundered down from the stands from the throats of apoplectic men and screaming women, and the universe was a veritable chaos of shouts and shrieks and frantic pleading.

No horse or man could fail to be carried out of themselves and into a species of madness in that terrific moment.

Trocedero was licked! The sight of that new rival had broken his heart and now, nose for nose, and stride for stride, Dale Boy and Commander were fighting it out. Fanton's whip rose and fell, and the great Eastern horse, eyes bloodshot and nostrils flaring, was doing his best. But alongside of him, a neck ahead and a sixteenth from the wire, a great black horse with his ears pinned back, his nostrils red and wide and his body lathered and strained, was like a raging demon who would not be denied. And astride him, lifted completely out of himself into a sort of transcendent skill and complete understanding, was a sharp faced waif of the tracks coming into his own.

Just a second more and it would be over.

Then, as though he was possessed of some supernatural sensitivity, the jockey fairly felt what was coming. Scarcely two jumps from the wire and a neck in the lead, he felt Commander's shoulder go down. Had Hogan not been prepared, his horse would have fallen.

He had broken down! That instant of faltering, and Dale Boy was eye to eye with him again.

"One more!"

It was a frantic shout into Commander's ear as Hogan rose in his stirrups and lifted a champion on. The black stretched out farther as those mighty haunches propelled him through the air in one last desperate leap. Commander's body seemed to rise three feet in the air, as though Hogan had communicated to him one last ounce of strength, and Commander gave all that he had to give.

Thousands of people swore that the thoroughbred did not have a foot on the ground as Sparrow hurled him under the wire and dropped his nose a safe six inches ahead of Dale Boy's.

Commander landed on three legs, staggered and almost went down. On his back Sparrow, cursing and crying, his ears deafened by a Niagara of cheers but his eyes blinded by tears, fought to keep him from falling. Before the pitifully limping Derby winner had regained his equilibrium, the jockey was off his back, trotting alongside him with one hand in his mane as the beaten field swept by.

There were wreaths and cheers and shakings of the hand for Sparrow Hogan after that, but he seemed to be aware of none of them. In the clubhouse he stripped off his silks and dressed in street clothes in a daze. Then he walked toward Commander's stall, with stiff mechanical motions of his legs, looking neither to left nor right. Outside the stall, but not too near it, a tall, slender figure stood squarely in his path.

"Well?" was all that Slim Sutherland said, but there was a world of meaning in the look that came from his cold gray eyes.

Sparrow reached in his pocket and held out an envelop.

"Here's your two thousand, Slim," he said huskily. "I—I win that much on Commander." Then, as the steely eyes continued to bore into him, "I couldn't help it, Slim! He wanted to win so bad. I couldn't let him down. Don't you understand? I never was up against nothing like that before. And I never will be again. I'm through with crooked stuff forever, so help me. Here, take your dirty dough! I hate the sight of it."

Slim Sutherland's mouth was like a cruel gash.

"Yeah?" he said. "Well, maybe I'm not through with you forever. I—"

He stopped with a jerk as a soft, slow drawl interrupted him. It was the voice of Houston, and it had things in it Sparrow had never heard there before. Tout and jockey turned to look with startled expressions at the tall Texan, who had so suddenly appeared as if from nowhere.

"Yes, you're through with him forever," Houston was saying. "I'll tell you why, too. Listen carefully, Sutherland. Harold Whitson has just bought a half interest in Commander for the stud and has hired me to train his Kentucky string. He said—never mind what he said!"

There was a quick gleam of pride in the Texan's eyes and a sudden lifting of the head that somehow made the hardboiled fixer, the veteran of a hundred shady deals, drop his own gaze to the ground.

"Anyway, I'm going, and Sparrow is going with me. And you know what will happen to you if you try any of your dirty work with any of Whitson's men, no matter who your backers are. Now beat it!"

"Aw," began Slim, but he did not finish what he was going to say, nor did he raise his eyes from the ground as he turned and hurried from the stables.

"Did you mean it, boss?" asked Sparrow, peering with his small eyes up at the other.

"Surely did," replied the Texan, with a grin that was like a boy's. "I'll show you Whitson's memorandum. Ten to one Commander won't run again, but maybe this is something bigger."

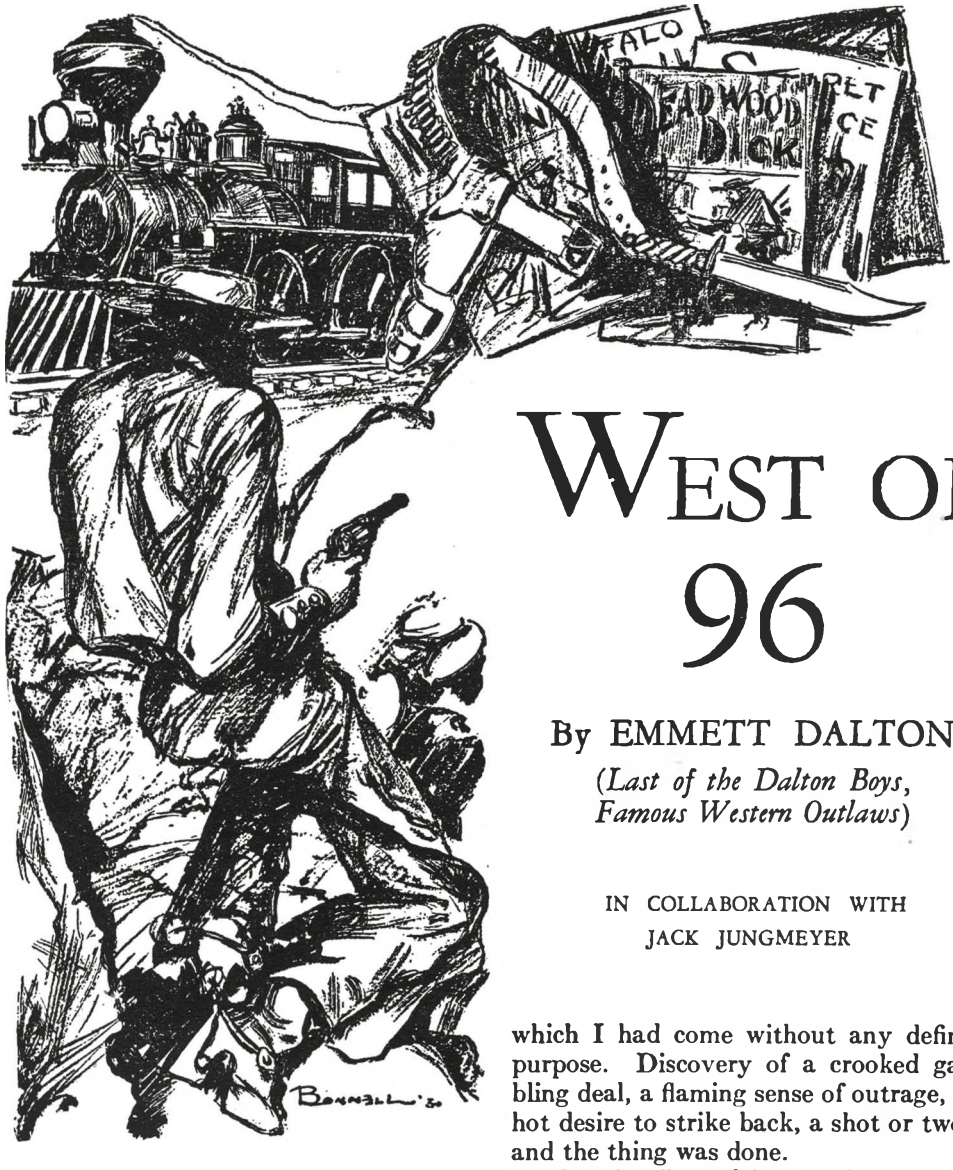
"I mean, did you mean it about taking me?"

"If you'll come. I certainly am going to have use for you."

"But you don't know. Why, I almost —I was going to— You won't want me when I tell you—"

The big man put his hand on the shoulder of the smaller.

"Yes, I do know. I heard what you said to Slim and I guessed the rest. I think maybe I would have known it anyway. That's why I want you to come along. I'm going to need—" the hand on the shoulder tightened—"some one I can trust."




# WEST OF 96

By EMMETT DALTON

*(Last of the Dalton Boys, Famous Western Outlaws)*

IN COLLABORATION WITH
JACK JUNGMEYER

## CHAPTER I

### ON THE GREAT DIVIDE

FORTY years ago I rode the first forbidden trail which was to carry me into the broad highway of outlawry.

I was then in my nineteenth year.

This first lawless act had not been deliberated. It grew out of a chance encounter in a remote desert community to which I had come without any definite purpose. Discovery of a crooked gambling deal, a flaming sense of outrage, the hot desire to strike back, a shot or two—and the thing was done.

After that I was fair game for any manhunter.

Swiftly the escapade carried me toward that dark fame which I shared for years with certain of my brothers and other stirrup companions known as "The Dalton Boys."

From here, presently, I shall cast back to gather all the threads of my own life and that of my ill fated comrades of the desperate fraternity in an authentic recital of events which marked


*Being the intimate story of the lives and adventures of this daring band; together with a commentary on the roughshod breed—the noted peace officers and outlaws who ranged the deadline of the last frontier*

the farewell of an epoch in frontier brigandage.

It is the first complete and valid record of the Dalton Boys. Our clan was the most spectacular and widely roving band of Border outlaws. Our forays were upon express trains and banks. And of these raids at least five were ranked as of first magnitude, the final one ending in the most deadly street battle of the West.

I begin the narrative with the New Mexican adventure because my share in the turbulent and tragic history of the Dalton maraudings runs sharply to and from that peak of my young manhood. From that red letter day I can best survey the evolution of an outlaw of the old school.

* * *

We were swinging across from Silver City toward Santa Rosa, five riders in the evening sun—my elder brother Bob Dalton, George Newcomb, Charlie Bryant, William McElhanie, and myself, the youngest of the party. We were on our way back to the Indian Territory, whence we had come on an

uneasy and aimless migration. Drifting.

What was to happen within the hour was an impulsive thing. But for days the ferment of explosive emotions had been churning within us. Bob Dalton, the dominant man of the little cavalcade, had recently resigned as U. S. deputy marshal in the Indian Territory in protest of what he considered unfair treatment by his superiors. He had wanted to get as far away as possible from the scenes of his former official duties. A considerable amount of unpaid wages was involved. The affair was galling him. And the rest of us, bound together in loose fraternity, had become infected by his morose mood. I believe all of us had a presentiment of impending trouble.

The sun swooped down a yellow sky behind the ramparts of the Great Divide. Mountain shadows enveloped us. Ahead across the saffron desert lights pricked out, dancing in the heat waves that still rose from the earth. We spurred our horses. Man and beast were hungry. We jogged into a large mining camp and had chuck at a Chinese restaurant. The Chinese steered us to a faro game in an adjacent saloon.

Like most saloons of the day, it offered the three prime diversions of the frontier oasis: drink, dancing and gambling. A Mexican orchestra was setting a tempo for the hectic life of the place—a rootin'-tootin' bedlam of miners, cowboys, professional gamblers and professional women all bent upon satisfying primitive passions. Stacks of gold and silver glinted in the gaming racks. Revolver butts shone from holsters. The light flashed from the teeth of smiling señoritas and their paler sisters.

Our crowd bucked the faro. I appointed myself lookout, having previously paid the price for what I knew about faro. It didn't take me long to discover that the game was crooked. Bob and the others had already lost considerable money. Quietly I tipped off the boys. This crude attempt to trim us served suddenly to fan a heated temper into flame. The crooked gambler in all times and places has aroused a violent sense of outrage in his victim. To be played for a sucker is probably the ultimate insult to a man's pride.

Casually we gathered at the bar. We looked at one another, and made our resolve.

"Hands up!"

I snarled it in unison with the other four. Our guns leaped out with one accord. The almost spontaneous action showed how neatly our minds were already attuned. We held the guns on the startled dealer, on the proprietor and the forty-odd patrons and hirelings of the place.

Hands up! The old barking dare of the frontier. The assertion of final and unequivocal resort to force. The readiness to make the issue deadly, if need be . . . Myself saying them for the first time in lawless exclamation—those fateful words.

Every hand lifted. We raked the crooked gambler's spoils off the table, from his rack. We were taking back our own, plus punitive damages.

"This may teach you how to treat strangers," said Bob Dalton.

With furtive courage some of the bolder señoritas were slipping money and jewelry into "ladies' purses." Here and there came the swift flash of a bright garter.

"No need o' that," drawled Newcomb with a polite smile at the apprehensive women hiding their gems. "None o' us fellers sports any rocks." We had no desire, and there was no need, to molest any but the faro dealer.

We backed to the door. In a moment we had mounted our horses. A fusillade to discourage pursuit, and we were storming out of camp.

The charter members of the Dalton band had set out upon their extensive career of outlawry . . .

THE FOLLOWING morning we were riding eastward toward the Neutral Strip, the lonely gateway to the Indian Territory. Leisurely we paced, not afflicted by any fretting sense of guilt. Meantime,

during the night, a mixed posse—mostly Mexicans—had set out in pursuit. The camp had felt its touchy frontier pride challenged.

Looking back from the lip of a deep arroyo, we saw the approaching whirlwind of the posse's dust. Presently they were drumming at our heels. We were considerably amazed. We hadn't counted on this spirited resentment. It was to be a fight, after all. Fair enough. That suited us. It's a soul stirring thing to go into action, if you like to fight, and none of us had ever been averse to it.

Seven of them: five of us. Unsheathing rifles, we defiled across to the far side of a brushy cañon. Following the course we had anticipated, the pursuers hove into view about one hundred and fifty yards away. They had evidently expected a running battle. Perhaps a volley or two would have satisfied their sense of duty. Seeing us come to bay, they became reluctant.

"*Vente, hombres—hay esta!*" shouted the leader, spurring forward. "Kill them!"

Bob opened fire. The rest of us followed suit. The leader's horse reared and whirled. By this time we had dismounted. As I leaped from the saddle our pack horse ambled dutifully up beside me. In the first return volley a rifle ball struck a frying pan in the animal's pack, ricocheted and dealt me a flesh wound in the right arm. The posse wavered. We mounted and charged across the cañon.

"*Retiro!*" bellowed the Mexican.

His fellows needed no urging. Before they gained the sheltering brush Bob's Winchester had taken toll of another horse. The rider hit the ground running. They were gone like rabbits in the chaparral. The honor of the mining camp had been vindicated as far as this posse was concerned.

Of our crowd I was the only one scratched. This was the first time my flesh had ever been scared by hot lead. The scar of it lies close to the deep, arm shattering furrow which a Coffeyville citizen gave me as a momento of my last fight some years later. It infuriated and somehow belittled me. I wanted to pursue the retreating posse and get satisfaction.

"Come on," restrained Bob. "Forget it!"

But it was not to be so lightly forgotten, this almost comic opera scrimmage on the fringe of the Staked Plains. I bathed my wound at a little *asequia* and bandaged it with a cud of tobacco. I said some rather harsh things to the faithful packhorse as we resumed our ride.

Report of the New Mexican episode spread like prairie fire. It gave us a certain "gang" identity and stamped us with dangerous repute. It raced ahead of us through the lonely lands into Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma. It spread westward to California where other Dalton brothers lived, soon to blaze up there in a disastrous flash.

I recollect a sudden disturbing thought as we jogged across the high plains with their swimming horizons. I was riding close behind Bob, three years my senior; Bob who was always so confident, valiant and decisive. Always we had trudged or ridden close together. Now I watched him in the saddle ahead of me, broad shoulders swaying easily to the horse's lurch, quiet, leading the way. The squeaking of the saddles made melancholy music.

"Where," I reflected, "are we going?"

Home, of course; back to the green hills and swales of Oklahoma; back to the main cluster of our scattered family.

"But not quite home any more," I thought.

Something had weaned me away. Maybe those shots back yonder. Maybe the long ride, which now seemed to be endless. Something had been severed. I was a man now. I had been up against the smoke. I looked at my bandaged arm. Got to go it alone now, along strange paths, me and my horse and gun.

"That suits me," I decided, answering some unspoken challenge.

The mountains of New Mexico huddled back along the western horizon, bleak and gloomy.

The very aspect of the land spoke of lawlessness. Here whining arrow, gunshot and bloodshed, and ravishment of every sort was an old familiar tale beside azure peak and red rock.

"Be free and bold, and take what comes!" The wind whispered it in the cholla and the greasewood, and my saddle creaked the refrain. It was a seductive invitation to a youth of nineteen who already accounted himself tough.

That was forty years ago. Now I am fifty-nine. Across the intervening span I look back upon that gangling young ghost of myself, rifled, spurred, dusty and a bit troubled as he rode beside his fellows; look back upon him and through him to childhood, recollecting what he was, what shaped him, from what breed he sprang—he and the blood brothers of the Dalton clan.

Of that marauding band I am the sole survivor. The rest have gone these many years, with their boots on. In fact I am one of very few yet alive of that whole elder school of Border outlaws whose kind rides no more. And now I have a yearning to tell truthfully the tale of the Daltons and others of the old-timers whose lives and exploits have been so often garbled, fantastically romanticized or vaguely related.

It will have dreadful and sinister things in it, of course; swift foray, desperate encounter and the ultimate tests of reckless manhood; hot saddles, cracking guns and last stands in a fated hour; fantastic courage and inglorious defeat—splendid things and mean, on both sides of the law's deadline. The sowing of black oats, and the terrible harvest.

And to leaven the wild antic of hair-trigger men the story also will have the romantic presence of women, gentle, stoic and tempestuous, whose lives were entwined with the destiny of outlawed Daltons.

The guns that once gleamed in our hands have long since rusted away. The antagonisms we then hotly pursued have vanished like a mirage. The cell in which I made expiation for fourteen years has been occupied by many succeeding "penitents" during the past two decades. The scars of battle are healed. There will be no whine or alibi or spleen in what I shall set down.

With that as my viewpoint, let us go back to a little Missouri community shortly after the Civil War, a region where many notorious marauders were cradled.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PHANTOM BLACK FLAG

THE "Black Oath," Quantrell's relentless wartime code, still crouched in the hearts of many Missouri folk when I was christened in that State in a little country church near Belton in 1871. The church was white, a weather beaten shanty. At the very hour when my mother tenderly held me out in her weary arms—I her eleventh born—for the pastor's sacrament, the James boys, the Youngers to whom I was related by blood, and a score of other middle country desperadoes were riding the dark highways. Hundreds of others, less bold, were skulking on the fringes of outlawry, even though they might be wearing the cloak of respectability.

Even in the country churches not all of the congregation slumbered while the preacher exhorted. Some would be keeping an eye peeled toward the hitchrack beyond the open windows for possible horsethieves, while others watched the door in apprehension of inquisitive officers. Hymn books and six-shooters made tidy belt fellows, while the fundamentalist congregations hearkened to the resounding gospel of a dire Jehovah. Many an approving "Amen!" rose from the throat of one time saddle fellows of the Quantrell host—the most fearsome legion of raiders.

But let me not seem to be too harsh on the grand old State of Missouri. There

was at this time an ebb tide of morals throughout the nation. Men seemed a bit weary of high scruple; after the terrible war, they stood unsteady, tending to fall back to a more primitive code.

My family is of Southern identity, on both sides. Louis Dalton, my father, was a Kentuckian; a farmer and stockman. He enlisted in the Mexican War, was a fifer boy in Taylor's army, and upon his discharge came to western Missouri, then still a raw frontier. His father, also a farmer and stock breeder, was a Tennessean, with family origin in Ireland. My mother was née Adeline Younger, aunt of the outlaw Younger boys. Her father was Colonel Charles Younger, a Virginian. He migrated to Missouri, where mother was born. Colonel Younger was a man of firm convictions, high moral courage and independent spirit; a zealot for any cause he espoused. As a Whig (the forerunners of the Republican party) he had come to believe that the holding of slaves was wrong. Hence, even before the war, he freed all his blacks—an act which was not at all popular in Missouri at the time. Good blood, stern courage, fiber: he transmitted these qualities to his children. My mother, who died at the age of ninety, had them to a high degree.

My parents were married in Missouri, and in that State the Dalton children, fifteen in all, were born. One of the marriage conditions imposed by Adeline Younger was that my father should give up his small saloon business at Westport Landing, now Kansas City. This he did without argument. He was himself a temperate man, and mother was the most rigid of teetotalers. After that he devoted himself to the acquisition of considerable acreage for a man of his time and locality.

Here in Cass County we lived until I was eleven. Here I went to the little red schoolhouse built by my father, named the Dalton School. Here rolled the pleasant prairie and the timbered hills of bluegrass Missouri; bluegrass and red clay and the sweet singing waters of the creeks. Our home was a big frame colonial, with plenty of yard and orchard; room for us fifteen Dalton children. The stables were large, with plenty of room for the horses and stock.

From earliest cubhood I helped with the chores of the farm. No loafers in our family. No coddling. Make your hands hard and your legs tough; learn to take care of yourself—that was dinned into us. A mother of fifteen must wean her fledglings fast.

And always in respite from the common labors I was straddling a horse to sally on pleasant adventures along country lanes and across the prairie, sweet with flowers, where the quail and prairie chicken and rabbits loitered.

Among that quartet of Dalton brothers whose lives were to run tempestuous courses, and of whom I was the youngest, Grattan early became the most pugnacious. Easily stirred to wrath, sensitive to challenge or fancied insult, with a chip always on his shoulder even in his school days, Grat took a wild joy in fighting. Later, coupled with indiscretion, this was to become an extremely dangerous trait.

Bill, next in the birth sequence to Grat, was the glib member of the family. He knew and commanded the adroit power of words. He could talk himself into and out of anything. Quick witted, he had also the saving grace of caution and tact—the politician born. Later he was to achieve some prowess along this line in California, and even after we got into trouble he made a Fourth of July oration which old-timers in Oklahoma still recall as a classic.

Bob shared some of Grat's pugnacity, but it was more effectively directed. He usually knew where he was going to land before he leaped. He could bank his fire against the time when a full head of steam was needed. Cool, deliberate, tenacious and fearless, he had a more balanced initiative than the rest of us. In his early teens these qualities gave unmistakable hint of the courage and reliability which later distinguished him as United

States deputy marshal in the Indian Territory, and finally as chief of our band when we jumped the traces.

WE WERE all tall, matured early and were physically well favored. Bob was accounted a handsome man anywhere. On horseback he was a figure, the saddle beau-ideal of romantic tradition. In him I had a vast pride and confidence, and between the two of us there was a peculiarly close bond which lasted to the moment when he went out to the crashing of the guns.

Mother Dalton was our disciplinarian. She did not shirk her responsibilities in any regard. She was the boss of the family, aggressive, determined and ambitious for her children. Like every frontier woman her capabilities were tremendous, although physically she was of comparatively small stature. She had been a bride at sixteen.

When the Border life began making its harsh demands, she met them with chin up and a steady light in her blue-gray eyes. Her tenderness was expressed in deeds, not words; the frontier woman had to learn to conserve her emotions. Zealously she looked after our needs, but there was little time for playfulness.

Dutiful, maternal, inexorably just, and thoughtfully mindful of her big brood of sons and daughters, she was yet of a stoic mold. If as youngsters my brothers and I gambled jackknives on our colt races and disputed the issue, both parties were apt to get a sound whaling. She was a stern umpire of our morals; a stickler for equity, even in petty matters.

My father was more lenient. Service in the Mexican War, he often reiterated, had given him enough fighting to last a lifetime. He was six feet one, and weighed over two hundred pounds—a jovial, easy-going man.

An orderly, united home was ours, proportioned to work and play, church and school, and encompassed by pleasant fields; nothing there to bend the twig awry. We were not hovel bred, or shanty cramped. The auspices were all for a future along respectable pattern.

And yet, while this countryside serenity would seem to have been ideal in promoting sound and blameless maturity, it must not be forgotten that this was also the "dark and bloody ground" of the Missouri-Kansas Border.

In these pleasant counties occurred those ruthless political clashes which served to bring on the world's most terrible civil struggle; political feuds which were uttered with a terrible swift sword. Here, out of obscurity arose that immortal farmer with his black beard and his piercing fanatic's eyes, John Brown, the embattled prophet of Ossawatomie, whose soul was to go marching on in the battle songs of abolition. And beside him, over there across the gleaming Missouri, that grim little legion of war scalawags, whose name was Jayhawker or Redleg, the men who rallied around Lane, the Kansas chieftain, as a spear thrust against possible slavery in the Sunflower State.

These drowsy hickory groves of my boyhood had often resounded to the thundering hoofs of their sanguinary raids. And on this side the Missourians, of opposite persuasion and equally zealous, had blazed with hatreds distilled of a great humanitarian dispute. The Lawrence, Kansas, massacre; the Independence, Missouri affair—so the score shifted—in raid and counter-thrust. The dark and bloody ground!

All this, you will understand, was still fresh as yesterday in the souls and minds of men. It had happened only a few years before. These were personal recollections that were told.

The outlaw Younger boys often ranged to the forefront of these dark and exciting anecdotes—Cole, Jim, John and Bob Younger—the famous corsair brotherhood bred of the war. They were my cousins. They lived in the rebel hotbed of West Missouri, not over a long day's ride from our home. Renegade scions of a distinguished family were these sons of wrath and lurid exploit. Colonel Henry

Younger, their father and my mother's brother, had won honorable standing as a judge in Cass County; everywhere his name was respected. Thomas Jefferson Younger, uncle of mine, served in the Missouri Legislature. Benjamin Franklin Younger, another uncle, was sheriff of St. Clair County. Men of substance and decorum. But it was the outlaw faction that fired my imagination. Why should not my boy's heart leap with pride when some grizzled old Johnnie Reb boasted how these bold kinsmen of mine, together with Quantrell and the James boys, had chased a thousand Redlegs back across the Border deadline?

And the James boys, Frank, and Jesse the redoubtable. Over and over I heard the account of their exploits; of the bomb hurled by Pinkerton men into their home, killing their eight year old brother and blowing off the arm of their mother; of the trussing of Dr. Samuels, step-father of the James boys, to a tree until his neck was twisted to permanent crookedness. Heard of how Frank and Jesse and others of their clan had dedicated their unerring guns to violence, and how they rode in the van of Quantrell's berserk crew. Lopsided chronicles, perhaps, because this was their stamping ground. Heard also, once and again, of the assassination of my maternal uncle, Henry W. Younger.

Henry W. Younger, despite the fact that he had voluntarily freed his slaves, was suspect in Kansas, because he lived in Missouri in the midst of slave holders. He had bought property across the line, and it was rumored that he intended moving there and running for the Kansas Legislature to help make it a slave State. One day as he drove peaceably home with supplies for his store at Harrisonville, Missouri, he was ambushed and killed by a band of Jayhawkers—stupid, zealous hoodlums who may have felt that they were thus supporting a cause.

In such a fashion the early portents of the war, the thunders of it and its aftermath were dinned into my ears—the strife of mind and might, of bushwhack and battle which flared along that Compromise Line where so many other non-political compromises were fomented.

I WAS eight years old when father brought home a fine bay mare. Katie was high-strung, speedy, and had an air.

"This mare," said father, "belonged to Jesse James."

The famous outlaw's mount had come into the hands of Smoot, a neighbor of ours. In the excitement of a James boys' raid, Smoot said, the horse had broken away from Jesse. In the retreat the raiders had encountered Smoot, had commandeered his horse and had told him he could have Katie in exchange, if he could locate her. He found her. She was too mettlesome for Smoot, and he sold her to dad. We took turns riding her up and down the countryside, with vast pride.

We kept her groomed like a polished buckeye. On her back celebrity had galloped.

"This horse," we boasted, "used to belong to Jesse James!"

Once before two "stock buyers" had stopped at our gate to palaver with father. They had an air of distinction, exciting our curiosity.

"Those men you saw that day were Jesse James and Cole Younger," explained my father, after the news came of the Youngers' disastrous foray on the bank at Stillwater, Minnesota. Mother, I recall, was bitter at the way her Younger nephews had been behaving. She wanted to keep the tale of their exploits from us.

We Daltons were the typical Missouri farmer family of the Seventies. There were peace, plenty and content in the home, the fields and the pastures of the Daltons.

Content, and yet a restlessness, too. The very soil beneath us seemed to heave Westward, tiding us along, for this was the time of the second great American homing wave.

Boys halted plows at the end of the

furrow to peer toward sunset. Young men leaped on ponies and, with scarce a backflung goodby, vanished into the farther West, or sold their horses for railway fares on the Frisco and the Santa Fé. Husbands, half apologetic, began painting alluring prospects of better lands in Kansas, Texas, the Indian Territory, Wyoming, Colorado and California. Within a few days they would be helping patient wives stow the household goods and the kids into wagons, to go bouncing off over buffalo wallows, scarcely dry, to the promised lands.

As they had reached maturity, my elder brothers, Frank, Littleton, Grattan and Bill, drifted away to California, Montana and Texas. And now my father, who had moved his family about in Cass, Jackson and Clay Counties, Missouri, was taking wing again. This time his objective was the half wild Indian Territory to the south.

## CHAPTER III

### A PRAIRIE SERENADE

WE MOVED in a wagon train. I helped drive the stock. It took us several weeks. The long marches beside the creaking wagons, the lilt of the cattle bells, the evening campfires, the beckoning horizon of the unknown toward which we bore—this was sheer delight to me. We settled eventually near the little village of Vinita, about one hundred miles east of Guthrie, where my father leased land from a Cherokee Indian. This was in 1882. The Cherokee country was then a vast expanse of wild grass, relieved by timbered hills and sweet water creeks. Settlements were few. The great rush of people which was to fill this alluring range didn't come until 1889, when the government opened old Oklahoma, which had been purchased from the Indians.

With pioneer zest we all pitched in and built a house, constructed a corral, and were at home again. This was a new and exciting country. We went to school with Indians. Wild creatures scampered in the high grass and lurked in the plum thickets. Even the cattle, infected somehow by a sense of new freedom, were harder to handle. The turbulent gulf winds and the coyotes under a spring moon made eery serenade. I rode across the prairies on my blue roan pony and yelled like the Indian boys who scampered beside me.

This was a country of no civil law, being yet a Territory. Ordinarily men judged one another by the weight and promptness of their word. Federal law was administered from Ft. Smith, Arkansas, westward, and later from Wichita, Kansas, southward. There was no injunction against carrying weapons. And while these remote communities generally conducted themselves in a civilized manner, it was commonplace to see men, even the leading merchants of Vinita, with six-shooters at their belts. Guns were part of the fashionable habiliments of the time, like a certain kind of hat, shirt or boot. Quite naturally then, I had to acquire a gun to be grown up and important.

I got my first weapon at the age of twelve. It was an old musket, with a kick like a cannon. I traded coonskins for it. And now, like great nations with much armament, I felt safe against assault. Always possession of a gun seems to sharpen some need for self-defense. And so, in anticipation, I riddled targets innumerable and great quantities of small game, acquiring in time considerable skill. Soon it became my sole ambition to possess the latest model firearm, and the best horse and saddle I could get. That passion for a swift horse and a good gun, more inordinate than the similar desire of most boys of my age—was some destiny beginning to take shape?

Two United States deputy marshals passed me one day.

"That Dalton boy," I heard one say to the other, "he's going to be a tough man to handle when he gets growed up." It pleased me. I strutted along behind them.

THE SPRING of 1887 was the most glorious season in all the world's weather annals. I don't care what the statistics may show. That was the year I met Julia Johnson, who was to be my first and last love; who was to remain friendly, gracious and loyal throughout stormy days and calm, and who, after I had spent fourteen years in prison, was to become my wife. She sits beside me now as I write, and bosses me with that gentle dominance which is the birthright of the Kentucky bred woman.

I was jogging along a country road, passing a little country log church. Through the open windows floated an old hymn, played on the wheezy organ. The music halted me. That such lifting melody could emanate from this meeting house surprised me. I rode close and peered in. With a deep penchant for roaming, I thought I knew every one of prominence by face or name within a radius of fifty miles of our home. But here was a girl I had never before seen, playing the organ. Suddenly I became extraordinarily devout. I tiptoed in to one of the rear seats. My view was obstructed. I sneaked up closer. Now I could glimpse her face in the little mirror that hung above the organ. My seat neighbor, another young fellow, also amazingly devoted, was competing for that angle of vision. As I edged up still closer, the black eyes in the mirror smiled a little. Julia Johnson was sixteen. She also was not entirely immersed in hymns on this spring Sabbath. After church I awkwardly managed to meet her. The Johnsons had moved in several miles from our place. Julia's father was a stockman. Of her four brothers, two later became sheriffs, one in this district, one in West Texas. The family had come to the Territory from Kentucky, via Texas.

The family became prominent in the neighborhood. The ranch was a stopping place for all sorts of transients. In the old Border fashion, Texas Johnson kept prodigal open house. Sometimes as many as a dozen visitors would bed down of a night in the ample haymows. The Johnsons were "raised poor", as they often said, without apology, but they were rich in friendliness and hospitality. Lucy, Julia's sister, was quite a local belle. Brother John could make the fiddle talk turkey at neighborhood gatherings. The Johnson boys and girls graced any dance or any company. It was mighty pleasant to stop off at the Johnson place.

A happy, energetic, sprightly young gypsy of the plains was Julia; child enough still to ride the old bell-cow in from the pasture with clownish antics; woman enough already to foresee the far goal of our friendship. "Blackie", her folks called her for her dark eyes and dusky hair, and the golden tan of much riding. Dark she was as a brown pansy . . . Gray now, as she leans over my shoulder and smiles tolerantly at my romantic retrospect; gray, but sprightly still.

AND NOW the penchant for drifting rose in my bones. It even overwhelmed my desire to remain near Julia. Without saying anything to my folks or my girl, I sold my horse and saddle for forty-five dollars, and bought a ticket to San Francisco. There was a railroad rate battle on. The fare to California was thirty-five dollars, with a thirty dollar refund at the terminus. A two thousand mile ride on a train for five dollars. It simply couldn't be resisted. I would go out and join my elder brothers.

Packing my single shot .38 pistol in preparation for Indian fighting and possible encounters with bad men in the Far West, and cramming other meager treasures into my cheap valise, I sneaked to the train. I hadn't dared confide in my mother; she would have thrown a wet blanket on such romantic nonsense. It took more nerve, this leaving my folks without saying goodby, than when I walked into the First National bank at Coffeyville, Kansas, with Bob, on our last and most desperate adventure . . .

## CHAPTER IV

### WEST OF 96

BACK from the impulsive and inconsequential runaway trip to California, I went cattle punching on the old Bar-X-Bar ranch near Pawnee, Oklahoma. This was then merely an Indian agency. The ranch covered many square miles of grazing land. The heydey of the great open range had passed. Barbed wire fences had begun to snake across the prairie. Plows had traversed the winding Chisholm Trail.

A little east of here the ninety-sixth meridian comes slashing down to cleave the earth with its imaginary line of longitude—that meridian of lawlessness which so long roughly bounded the eastern fringe of the wilderness. Among my saddle companions at the Bar-X-Bar were Bill Doolin, Dick Broadwell and Bill Powers, seasoned cowboys, expert shots, crack riders; roughshod men who were later to be identified with the Dalton band. Adjoining us on the south was the Turkey Track ranch. Among its riders was George Newcomb, who had dubbed himself The Slaughter Kid in honor of John Slaughter on whose Texas rancho he had once swung a riata, before Slaughter became the famous sheriff of Cochise County, Arizona. Other Turkey Track buckaroos were Charley Bryant, who was to die in a duel with Ed Short, noted United States deputy marshal, and Charlie Pierce, also doomed to cash in violently.

We rode line together, this sextet of able, rowdy punchers and myself, the kid of the outfit. Branded the calves. Wrangled the horses. Tested our shooting eye in matches. Among these boys I learned to speak the languages of the .45 with considerable accuracy.

The tempered toughness of the potential saddle bred outlaw did not always show on the surface. Bill Doolin, for instance, who was to cut a red swath across the Indian Territory and adjacent lands: A slow, deliberate, good natured fellow he was at this time, with his small, red thatched head topping his lanky stature, his drooping moustaches and his gander-blue eyes giving him a sort of woebegone look. A six-shooter looked like a toy in his big paw. Not much to talk or boast; a droll, drawling cow range comedian, when you got him started. Every one laughed at Doolin's awkward antics, and Bill grinned a little with them. But Bill Doolin became a sinister clown, and his six-shooter a deadly toy.


IN 1884 my brother Frank Dalton had been appointed U. S. deputy marshal out of Ft. Smith, Arkansas. He deserved and won great respect as a peace officer. To us younger brothers who were for a time to follow in his footsteps—Grat, Bob and myself—he was an heroic and exemplary figure; a rock of courage, integrity and disciplined behavior. As long as we were within reach of his voice, we regarded him as our family leader and counselor.

It was 1887 that Frank Dalton and another deputy, Jim Cole, attempted to arrest three whisky runners in the Arkansas river bottoms across from Ft. Smith. The bootleggers resisted. In the ensuing battle Frank was shot down in the first exchange of bullets, and was then killed as he lay helplessly wounded by a youth named William Towerly. Two of the smugglers, Smith and Dixon, and Smith's wife, who had struggled with the deputies, were killed by the officers. Towerly escaped, and was later killed at Atoka by pursuing deputies, but not before he had exacted another officer's life.

Into the organization of Border marshals brother Frank had led the way for us. Bob had already followed as a guard of prisoners, and posseman. Grat was soon to accept service. Following Frank's death, Colonel John Carroll, marshal at Ft. Smith, appointed Grat to fill Frank's boots. Bob immediately joined Grat as posseman, and soon thereafter was himself appointed U. S. deputy marshal by Colonel Yoe, who succeeded Carroll in the Ft. Smith district. Following my broth-

ers' footsteps, I left the Bar-X-Bar to work as guard under Bob.

Deputy marshals in those days were paid by the fee system. They were allowed ten cents per mile, one way, when serving papers or bringing in prisoners; forty cents a day for feeding a prisoner *en route;* two and a half dollars for reading a warrant, the same amount for the commitment, and proportionate fees for other services. The guardsman, paid by the deputy, usually averaged about two dollars a day.

Thus I became intimate with the law and its processes, sworn to uphold it, riding its shifting and far flung firing line. My .45 Colts and my Winchester rifle were indeed the very badge and voice of authority, subject, of course, to the orders of my superior. For a time my fighting was to be official.

## CHAPTER V

### HERDSMEN OF THE LAW

DEPUTY and guard, Bob and I began riding together. With us rolled the wagon of the law, to transport captives, a sort of prison caravan; a chuck wagon and extra horses comprised the rest of the equipment for the hard, grueling dashes or the patient trek after fugitives over a vast region of wooded hills, long grass pastures, creek bottoms, lonely houses and corrals, Indian wigwams and raw young prairie towns.

Federal court at Ft. Smith was in session every day except Sunday and holidays. We and other marshal parties brought in an endless grist for the grinding.

Isaac Parker was the Federal judge. For twenty years or more he occupied that frontier bench. He came to be known as "the hanging judge". During his tenure some one hundred and fifty men were sentenced to the rope, of whom about eighty were executed in the grim old prison yard. An ex-soldier, a grizzled, white whiskered and immaculate old Yank, he had long been a crony of that grim reaper whose scythe he whetted on the stone of courtroom justice. It was claimed by many of the attorneys that Judge Parker maintained a standing jury of "convicting" ex-soldiers in capital cases, and that whenever this somber-visaged panel appeared in the box the rope was already around the defendant's neck.

His black Prince Albert, emblem of authority, was a flapping scarecrow in lawless fields; the two hundred pound, six foot bulk of him was a battering ram of order on the Territorial Border.

Old man Malden was the hangman at Ft. Smith. He was a squat, black-bearded man with a tight lip and a brooding eye. A man set apart from his fellows by his macabre trade. Pitiable in a way, he was. Something hangdog in his gaze. Always peering at men with a dumb yearning to find a friendly glance, and always failing to find it. Five dollars per head was his wage. It was the marshal's official duty to spring the trap or have one of his deputies do so, but as none of them wanted the job, Malden did what the other deputy marshals would not do; deputies who would not bat an eye at the toll of battle, but who would not for any price pull the gallows trigger.

The scaffold at Ft. Smith stood in the prison yard. It was housed in a small, rusty shack. The trap was sprung by a lever. Its dull clank was a familiar sound in the jail pen, and its grisly echoes should have been an unquestionable deterrent to men of violence throughout the Territory. But how vain its iron warning, we field officers knew only too well. Always there was some one to step into the vacancy made by the gibbet.

"Get out your oil can, Malden," would come the invariable shout after a capital conviction. That was Malden's cue to oil the gallows hinges. And little enough time they had to get rusty.

IN AUGUST, 1889, Bob Dalton narrowly missed death in attempting to arrest Charley Montgomery, a local gun rowdy who fancied himself as a bad man, at Timberhills, Oklahoma. Previously ac-

cused of horse stealing and whisky running, he was now wanted on a warrant for robbery of Jake Bartle's store. Bob had Al Landers with him as posseman.

After an all day search they had discovered Montgomery standing in front of Lon Brown's cabin. Bob and Landers were prudent. Montgomery had plenty of nerve. As the officers crawled toward him he whirled and fired at Landers, then ran around the cabin. Bob, coming around the other way, ran into him pell-mell. Simultaneously and almost point blank the two fired. Montgomery fell dead, Bob was unscathed but the belch of the outlaw's gunpowder burned his face. Narrow escapes like this were just the breaks of luck.

In April, 1890, Deputy Marshal Cox was shot and badly wounded by Alex Cochran, one-eighth Cherokee Indian, at Claremore. Cochran was considered a good man when sober, but very dangerous when drinking. He had escaped. Bob, Grat and I had been assigned to the pursuit. On the streets of Claremore we met one of the leading merchants.

"Looking for Alex, I suppose?" he greeted.

"Yes," said Bob. "And if he'll come in and surrender I'll not even lock him up."

"No chance of Alex surrendering," declared the merchant, "until he finds out how Deputy Cox comes out. That breed is on the warpath."

A number of town idlers had gathered. With ill concealed antagonism they began making insinuations as to what Cochran would do to any officers trying to take him. Emboldened by this support, the merchant grinned derisively.

"If you want Alex so bad, Bob, why don't you take out after him? He was in my store a few minutes ago buying a box of ca'triges. And there—" indicating a distant horseman—"he goes riding down the road. Riding kinda slow, too, if you'll notice."

"You sure that's him?" asked Bob.

"Sure—don't I know his old roan horse!"

Commandeering a horse from a hitch-rack, Bob swung up, told Grat and me to get mounts and follow, and charged off after the disappearing rider. Racing up to within a hundred yards of the fugitive, Bob yelled to him to halt. Instead, the man spurred into a run. Bob dismounted and fired. The Indian wheeled and put on more speed. Twice more Bob pumped his rifle. Horse and rider fell. By this time Grat and I had come up. We found the man badly wounded; the last shot had taken him at two hundred yards. But it was not Alex Cochran. It was Alex's son, an innocent victim of the merchant's ghastly notion of a practical joke on the marshals.

This unfortunate occurrence first served to impress upon me the widespread hostility, sometimes open and sometimes dissembled, through which an officer of the law must move in pursuit of his duty. Here, as in all places, there was a large class of citizens who hated marshals. They hampered us at every possible turn—the type of citizen who is first to yelp for legal help when his own feet are trod upon.

This hatred or contempt is a galling discovery to the young officer. It rasps his pride of craft. It serves to lower his cool, dispassionate devotion to duty to the level of personal grudge. It puts a chip on his shoulder, and is the secret cause of much bullying and violence in the name of the law. The seasoned officer learns to ignore public animosity, more or less.

Grat and I were in camp on the river at Bartlesville when we were ordered to arrest a local boy who had wounded a fellow at a cowboy dance. We got word that he might be found at Texas Johnson's ranch. This was an exhilarating prospect. It would give me an official pretext to visit my girl. In fact, I had never before been so eager to make an arrest. I'm afraid it was my desire to strut before Julia's family, rather than dispassionate duty, which spurred me on. Another thing, too, I didn't like the idea of so many fellows hanging around Tex's

place, strolling out under the peach tree perhaps, of an evening.

It was dusk when we reached the ranch. Grat ordered me to come around the back way, while he approached the front door. As I scurried through the orchard I disturbed a host of chickens, ducks and guinea-fowl which roosted there. They raised a terrific squawking. In the midst of this bedlam I flung open the kitchen door and stalked in, six-shooter theatrically in hand. Julia and her sister were preparing supper. They let out a scream at my wild eyed appearance. Mrs. Johnson rushed in, alarmed. Tex Johnson appeared.

"Where is he?" I demanded loudly, naming the man.

I was being very tough. I hoped that I was being the very picture of official bravery in the eyes of Julia.

"Take it easy, young feller," drawled old man Tex. "There's nobody here except the family—and the chickens."

Sheepishly I sheathed my gun. We were invited to supper.

INDIAN outlaws, as a rule, were hard to take. Fort Smith, with its graveyard of desperados, inspired them with such terror that most of them, even if wanted for comparatively small offenses, preferred to shoot it out rather than go to trial. Hanging, furthermore, was for the red man a disgrace which followed him beyond the grave. If an Indian had committed a capital crime, you were almost certain to have to talk to him with bullets.

Bob Dalton organized the Indian Police for the Osage Nation and appointed me his posseman. This Osage corps, numbering eighteen to twenty splendid and seasoned men, all mounted and with Bob at their head, patrolled the north central region of the Territory. I could now count myself a seasoned line rider of the law.

The first rift which was to split one segment of the Daltons from law enforcement to law defiance was near at hand. It was not a sharp cleavage, but rather a gradual defection. In the Osage Nation Bob and I were in the jurisdiction of the Wichita, Kansas, Federal district. Pay for Bob's official duties began to be deferred. The U. S. marshal proffered many excuses why these dues were not forthcoming; the Government had not made the appropriation; the money would be along soon, and so on. In fairness to the marshal it must be said that he was only a symptom of conditions then existing. Indeed, he himself was often the victim of Governmental clumsiness in handling Territorial law enforcement. The red tape was particularly complex. It alienated many good men from the service.

The amount finally coming to Bob ran up to hundreds of dollars, a considerable amount for those days. Protests and pleas and polite demands were of no avail. Worried at first, Bob finally became bitterly disgusted. That unpaid sum represented hard, dangerous work. Turning over his account for collection to a good friend at Pawhuska, Bob resigned his commission. The money was never collected. It was a debt for which, among other things, Bob Dalton eventually took compound interest in vengeful retaliation.

At about the same time Grat Dalton also became disgruntled with his work as deputy out of Fort Smith. He, too, resigned.

Thus the three of us, Bob, Grat and I, said farewell to official arms, at a time when the entire Western country was passing through a singular period of lawlessness. On the one side railways, banks, and great corporations, many of which were lawlessly maneuvering for privileged booty; on the other train and bank robbers who lobbied with six-shooters. In the Indian Territory it required a sturdy moral nature to stand up against the insinuating temptations of the unscrupulous Eighties.

It was at this juncture that Bob suggested the westward swing through New Mexico which gave us our baptism in outlawry, as I related at the beginning of my story.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE WOMAN'S TOUCH

IN SILVER CITY, prior to the holdup of the gambling joint in the New Mexican mining camp, Bob had been introduced to Miss Eugenia Moore by Ben Canty, one time neighbor of ours in Missouri, and later city marshal in Silver City. Miss Moore had been reared not far from our old home place in Missouri. She had gone to New Mexico in search of health, and had been teaching school. A splendid young woman of twenty-two, intelligent and courageous, she was destined by the loyal friendship which quickly developed between her and Bob to become for a time an important figure in the Dalton outlaw aggregation.

It happened that she was a proficient telegrapher, and that fact became important. She was able to read those staccato messages which were presently to flash rumor and warning about the Daltons throughout the Southwest. Furthermore, her interest in telegraphy created friendships among station agents. She became, in a sense, our intelligence bureau. And she was the only woman, outside our family, in whom we placed implicit confidence during the most hectic period of our operations. Our safety often lay in what reached her ears.

Bob, accounted one of the handsomest men in Oklahoma in his day, had a definite fascination for women. He was a dashing figure. But he was no emotional spendthrift. A one-woman man, in his heart, notwithstanding his easy friendship with many. Eugenia Moore he loved with a deep devotion. And she reciprocated in kind.

It was no soft, simpering affair. The gallant girl who chose to entwine her fate with that of my brother before he turned bandit did not draw away afterward. She had no squeamish regrets. There were no tearful entreaties or fearful restraints when she discovered she had given her affection to an outlaw. As spirited as she was attractive, and tenaciously vital despite an encroaching malady, she was fit to be a raider's mate.

With reports of our New Mexican scrimmage having preceded our reappearance in home territory, the word began to go around that some of the Dalton boys were "going bad". Animosities engendered during our marshaling days were kicking back upon us with unfavorable interpretation. We were looked upon with suspicion.

Bob decided to visit our brother Bill near Paso Robles, California, to get away from old haunts for a time. If bitterness was dripping into our spirit, we were yet reluctant for the coming break. Miss Moore had come to Guthrie at Bob's suggestion. He sent her word to remain there until she heard from him again, and departed for California with William McElhanie, an old saddle companion of ours. Newcomb repaired to his claim near Guthrie.

Charley Bryant and I, taking the extra horses, were instructed to go to Jim Riley's big cattle ranch where Bryant had been employed, some sixty miles southwest of Kingfisher, Oklahoma. There we were to await future rendezvous.

Bryant and I rode the south line of Riley's range all that winter. Big Jim Riley, prosperous and well known Oklahoma cattleman, was then and always remained one of our most loyal friends.

Here on a remote fringe of the range, with a foreboding of trouble to come, Charley Bryant and I excavated a dugout. Out of a red clay bank we scooped a hole, roofed it over with branches and sod, burrowing like prairie dogs in tremendous industry.

Today, if you pass that way, you may still see a sorry gaping hole in the bluff, up where the Cedar Brakes slash off from the South Canadian River. That was once the lair of the Daltons, our headquarters and refuge for years.

Forty years ago the now empty hole was home and stronghold. Since then I have built many fine houses as a contractor but never one in which I took such building pride as in that first shelter fashioned with my own hands—the brave

little sod hutch amid the cedars of the wilderness. The grass ran pretty to the threshold. It had an ample fireplace at which we cooked. From the door a few strides would carry us to the cover of thick willow brush. Double deck bunks hugged the walls, and beside them were portholes through which a rifle might be trained.

A coffee pot, a skillet, tin plates and cups comprised the cooking utensils. Always a cache of grub was left here. Pocket knives we used to cut our meat, and fingers for forks. A spring bubbled up below the dugout, whispering its overflow down to the Canadian. Canned goods, which we got by the case, together with flour, soda, salt, bacon and beans, were always on hand. For fresh meat we killed an occasional calf, deer or wild turkey, then plentiful in the region.

The place met all specifications of the proverbial robber's roost.

We kept an old fiddle hanging on a peg. Later, after Grat had joined us and the Dalton band repaired here when the chase was hot, Grat and Bill Powers competed musically with the coyotes. Merry tunes, if not exactly classic. Whenever a fiddle string broke it was replaced by a strand of wire from the broom handle.

In a little brush corral we always kept several horses up, ready for flight or foray. Usually we had from twenty to thirty fine fast horses which ran in with the Riley stock. Riley's ranch-house, the nearest habitation, was fifteen miles away. There occasionally at roundups we had games of monte with the cowboys for big money stakes. Spurs, saddles, boots and other gear, as well as horseflesh, were also constantly changing hands in the gaming. Charlie Bryant once came out of a session with three saddles but no horse to ride. Most of us had already assumed fictitious names, and our identity was not known to these new and casual acquaintances.

One other secret camp we had, down in the black granite crags of the Wichita mountains. From these heights we could scan the country for miles around with field glasses, which were always a part of our equipment. Deer, turkey and small black bear haunted this remote retreat. Here and there an Indian wigwam wafted its thin spiral of smoke to the sky.

Of all those who hunted us for several years, none ever trailed us to these fastnesses or blundered upon them. The musty smell of the old dugout is still in my nostrils like a homesickness, and occasionally when the complexities of life in a city whang and jibber in my ears, I ache for that primitive hearth, the murmuring spring beside the door and a rowdy fiddled tune under the smoky glow of the lantern.

FOLLOWING his resignation as deputy marshal, Grat Dalton had gone to visit our brother Littleton on the latter's ranch near Fresno, California. Bob was already at Bill's place near Paso Robles, across the yellow San Joaquin valley from Fresno. It was not long before the names of Bob and Grat Dalton were spoken up and down that valley from Bakersfield to Merced. Bob's repute as an Indian Territory marshal and the report of the New Mexico affair had preceded him. Grat heralded his presence with gambling house fights and other personal encounters flaming out of his unquenchable lust for fighting.

"A pair of tough men, these Oklahomans," said the Californians. "But if it's trouble they're looking for they'll get it right here."

Now the stage was all set for the first big plot scene in that Dalton melodrama which was to be told with blending fact and fable in a hundred versions. What had thus far happened had been merely prologue. Now the characters were all in place, awaiting the cue of destiny.

THROUGH the golden foothills of California on a sunny February afternoon cantered a horseman. He halted a moment at the ranch of Bill Dalton to roll a cigaret and to pass certain news to his

neighbor. Bill and Bob Dalton and William McElhanie were standing in the yard.

"Heard about the train holdup at Alila?" asked the passing stockman. "Express car on the Southern Pacific was robbed. Bandits got clean away. Hell's poppin'. The railroad and express company are offering five thousand dollars reward. Big man hunt getting under way. Don't reckon them fellers would be comin' over this way, Bill, but you might keep your eye peeled." He galloped off into the pleasant hills.

"Wonder who made the haul?" speculated Bob, as the three digested the news.

"I don't know and I don't care," replied McElhanie. "But I sort o' wish I had. Sometimes I think it's better to take a chance that way than to go up against what you did marshalin' and get nothin'." They went about their ranch work again.

Presently McDonald, another of Bill's neighbors, came jogging over. He spoke with tactful concern.

"You boys know Ed O'Neill, the sheriff? Well, I just passed him and another feller down the road, headin' this way. Kinda figured you boys would like to know that. Them two didn't look to me like they was ridin' around for their health."

McDonald looked at Bob and McElhanie curiously. More he would not permit himself to say. But he managed to make his circumspect warning clear. In such fashion Bob and McElhanie got the first alarming inkling that they might be suspected of the Alila train robbery. Soon all central California was a-shout with the cry—

"The Daltons did it!"

The man driving up the road with Sheriff O'Neill was Bill Smith, an express company detective with a tough reputation. They were heading directly for Bill's ranch. O'Neill knew that Bob was stopping there, but did not know McElhanie.

"So they're looking for us," commented Bob. "In that case, the way things have shaped up, it won't make any difference that we had nothing to do with the Alila affair. The smart boys of the railroad and express companies are out to nail somebody. The little matter of innocence isn't going to interfere with arrest and conviction if they can manage it. It's generally known that we busted up a little game of faro over in New Mexico. And now they are ready to believe that we put on a bigger show. Well, they won't get us!"

"No," jibed McElhanie, "I'm not hankering to do a lot of explaining from behind jail bars—not to no railroad detectives. Let 'em try to get us!"

All these and subsequent details of the Alila case I learned afterward from Bob. He had realized the danger in a flash. He and McElhanie didn't waste a moment in planning prudent flight. The corporations that had already pronounced them guilty had acquired a reputation for ruthless dealing among many of the ranchers and small town citizenry. And if the corporations as a whole didn't deserve that indictment, many of their henchmen amply merited it.

In those days the Southern Pacific Railway virtually owned and politically controlled much of the State of California. Many judges, sheriffs and other officials bent the knee of fealty to it. It juggled men's fortunes and lives as it juggled many of the lands it had acquired in Government grants. Not far from the little town of Alila had occurred the battle of Mussel Slough, where the embattled farmers had thought it necessary to resort to guns to prevent ejection from lands they had long tilled under certain railroad promises.

This was the region in which the famous Sontag-Evans outlaw organization blazed up from the clinkers of Mussel Slough at just about this time. They rifled express cars in desperate assault, outraged by a sense of baffled justice, as they have told the tale. This was a day when men spat anathema at the railroad in the word "Octopus!" To be suspected by its zealous minions was to be more

than half convicted, as the case of Bob and Grat and Bill Dalton was to prove.

BOB AND McElhanie walked into the house to get their rifles and pack their belongings. But their plan for quick getaway was interrupted by the arrival of Sheriff O'Neill and Bill Smith. Bob's four year old nephew was in the yard as the officers drove up. A few minutes before Bob had told the boy he was going to Seattle.

"Uncle Bob's gone to Seattle," he announced when Smith questioned him.

And strangely enough this naive word of a babe seemed to satisfy the shrewd manhunter who was literally to drive Bob and Grat into outlawry. Nevertheless the two came into the house. Bob and McElhanie had gone into a blind bedroom off the main room and locked the door from the inside. There they waited tensely, rifles in hand. There was no way out except through the one door opening into the living room.

Audaciously, Bill Dalton invited Smith and O'Neill to remain all night.

"Well, if the sheriff wants to take the chance, I will too," Smith blandly agreed.

Bill and O'Neill had been social and political friends for years. Bill had handled the sheriff's campaign among the farmers of San Luis Obispo County. O'Neill was rated one of the best guitar players in the country. Bill ran him a close second. After supper the two eased off for a session of music.

Smith was a little annoyed. He kept parading across the room, nervously interrupting with leading inquiries about Bob. The gist of these, incorporated into his own answers, Bill Dalton spoke so loudly that the boys in the bedroom could surmise what was going on beyond the closed door. And from time to time Bill contrived to stress certain phrases in his carefully selected tunes in such a way as to warn the boys and somewhat ease off their tension.

A queer night's entertainment it was, with the merriest ditties sounding like a dirge to the two in the bedroom. Detective Smith, examining his gun like the typical Hawkshaw of novel fame, finally put the question of Bob's whereabouts bluntly.

"Last time I saw him," answered Bill truthfully enough, "he said he was on his way to Seattle."

"He won't get far," blurted the detective. "Neither will Grat get away with his Fresno alibi."

He boasted of what would happen to them when he caught them. When Big Bill Smith decided a thing was so the facts just had to match the theory. Brother Bill's expostulations that Bob hadn't left the ranch on the night of the holdup cut no ice with Smith.

"Let 'em try to trot out their alibis to the judge," he growled.

Smith was a stolid, truculent and relentless officer. He had an inordinate pride in his manhunting profession. Even among the railroad employees and express messengers there were many who detested him for his spying nature and his swaggering arrogance. But to give him his due, he had determination as well as bluster; a man to be feared, if not respected. In his anticipated arrest of Bob and Grat he took a savage joy. Just before leaving the house next morning, Smith said to Bill Dalton—

"Well, you'll soon be able to visit your brothers in the pen, because that's where I'm going to put them." To which Bill replied—

"I've felt the wind blow before."

"If it had not been in brother Bill's home I would have stepped out and cracked down on Smith," Bob told me later. "That man," he rasped, "is the only human I ever completely hated in all my life. And the hating started before I even saw him."

Sheriff O'Neill hazarded the guess that they were on a cold trail. Smith made no effort to search the house. If he had, there undoubtedly would have been plenty of fireworks. After the officers had driven off, Bob and McElhanie

bitterly outraged but helpless, saddled up and rode away. Flight for the time being was their only safety, even though they were putting the stigma of outlawry upon themselves by taking to their heels.

"We might as well have done the job, Bob," said McElhanie, as they spurred toward the mountains.

"Yeah," said Bob, "the consequences are just the same. They've put the runnin' iron on our hides."

## CHAPTER VII

### NEMESIS TAKES THE SADDLE

GRAT DALTON bore the first brunt of the consequences. He had already been arrested at Fresno before Smith and O'Neill appeared at Bill Dalton's ranch, although Bob then had no inkling of it. By the testimony of Littleton Dalton and a score of prominent citizens Grat proved that he had been playing poker at the Grand Central Hotel in Fresno before and during the time the Alila holdup was taking place one hundred miles away. Coincidentally the Grand Central Hotel was also headquarters for Detective Smith. Freed almost at once, Grat went to San Francisco. He laughed a little at his experience. But Smith wasn't satisfied. He rearrested him in San Francisco.

Smith tried this time to prove that Grat had been seen in the company of Bob and McElhanie at a time which would invalidate the previous alibi. Weren't Bob and McElhanie fugitives, and thus by implication self-accused? This was Smith's reasoning. Again Grat managed to free himself of the charge. But this time he didn't laugh.

Smith was Nemesis; a bulldog who wouldn't let go. A third time the notorious express detective took Grat into custody. And this time found a more congenial court, a magistrate reputed to have been on the payroll of the railroad company. Bail was fixed at a prohibitive figure. He was held for trial and forced to remain in jail. Buttressed by the powers of the law, Smith had unconsciously forged the links of the Dalton gang. Grat's predicament had demonstrated the wisdom of Bob's flight.

Bob and McElhanie skirting off through the California wilderness toward Oklahoma; Grat corralled and in imminent danger of being railroaded to prison; myself at Riley's ranch, hearing these shocking reports from the Coast and awaiting word direct from my brothers—this situation created a new fraternal bond among us, drawing us together into a fighting and avenging organization.

The escape of Bob and McElhanie from Bill Dalton's ranch quickly became known. Smith was beside himself with fury at having been thwarted. Bill, the respected rancher, himself had to bear the suspicious frowns of the corporation minions for not having surrendered his brother. Posses were out combing the hills and valleys for the two refugees.

"Bring in Bob Dalton!" was the spurring cry of the manhunt.

Eluding the trailing packs, Bob and McElhanie vanished into the wooded slopes of San Luis Obispo County. Several times they observed scurrying posses from these heights. Riding mostly at night, they proceeded along the Coast Range and crossed the desolate Tehachapis. Forced several times to sleep in snow, drenched by the seasonal rains and wolfing stray meals at isolated cabins, they came at length to the border of the drear Mohave Desert.

They spent a night at a shepherd's little camp; another with a prospector and his burros where coyotes skulked about the camp and the deadly side winder of the California desert bids the intruder beware. They plunged on across the great sandy wastes south of Death Valley, pointing toward Needles on the Colorado River. This passage was precarious enough to old-timers; to the uninitiated it was extremely hazardous. Water holes, little more than acrid seepage, are rare. Many of them are poisonous, edged by bones of hapless creatures.

Bob and McElhanie blundered along,

half delirious with heat, across the shimmering flats where the fantastic Joshua palms lift accusing fingers at the cloudless sky. Twisting wind devils and deceiving mirages encompassed them. Hollowly the empty canteens clanked against the flanks of the horses. McElhanie's horse was giving out.

"This is one place where a dollar ain't worth a whoop in hell," croaked McElhanie with cracked lips, trying for grim humor to relieve the dread.

They reached a section house on a railway. The foreman and his wife, believing them to be sheepmen en route to Arizona, gave them food—and water. There they left their spent horses and caught a freight train for Needles. Switching to a passenger train, they rode to Dover, Oklahoma, and temporary refuge. Big Bill Smith, they believed, had been shaken off the trail beyond the sinister desert.

Bill Dalton had managed to get me word that the boys were on the way back. Charley Bryant and I met them at Dover with horses and Winchesters. That night all of us rode over to Newcomb's claim near Guthrie, where he joined us. Setting out for the Creek country, we passed through Guthrie, where Bob stopped off to see Eugenia Moore and acquaint her with the situation. McElhanie went on to visit his sister in Arkansas, and never rejoined us.

FAR DOWN in the wild region of the South Canadian Bill Doolin, Dick Broadwell and Bill Powers, my old range buddies, were camped. We made tracks to join them. Bob and I rested at several cow camps. Soon the word was going around that the Daltons had turned renegade.

Detective Smith had telegraphed officers of Oklahoma and the Indian Territory to be on the watch for Bob and his companion. Big rewards had been offered for their capture dead or alive we understood. And because I had now been seen in Bob's company for the first time in many months, the rumor grew that I too was somehow implicated, and would have to be reckoned with in case of a showdown. Certainly I myself felt that from now on I would share Bob's fate, come what might.

It was becoming dangerous to be seen even in the more remote camps or a land where recently we had ridden secure under the badge of the law. Willy-nilly now we were on the defensive, on the other side of the line—on the dodge. We adjusted our minds, our wills and our viewpoint to the vigilant needs of hunted men.

Posting a "dead or alive" reward for a man performs some dark alchemy in his spirit. It places him beyond the pale. He becomes fair game for every potshooting hunter. Like a harried beast he goes to bay, mustering his primitive faculties to meet the outward threat. In quite a real sense he belongs thereafter to the living dead; and when death hovers so close inhibitions are lifted from ancient and terrible proclivities. The blood price upon his head checks all inner growth toward normal humanity.

Having trooped on both sides of the law's deadline, I have long considered the capital reward a very dubious expedient. Where in some instances it has served to effect a capture, it has also in many instances served to create criminal monsters of redeemable men.

In our early retreats along the Cimarron and the Canadian, envisaging the future with a feeling of confusion, I observed Bob pondering these things. Heretofore, although reticent, he had smiled often. Now he became grave and moodily silent. I knew he was girding himself; making those deeper decisions which were to swing his life into desperate swirls.

The assumption of leadership he had taken over as a matter of obvious fitness as soon as we had joined Doolin, Broadwell and Powers in the first tentative bonds of outlaw organization. This leadership was never challenged by any of his comrades. That implied complex responsibilities. He was thinking of us as well as himself. And welding the lives of others with his own clearly perceived

future was not taken lightly by Bob Dalton.

We were waiting for brother Grat to join us. We were hopeful rather than certain he would be acquitted in California when the facts were finally sifted. If ever I were deliberately to decide whether or not I was to go my way with Bob, this was the time to settle that question.

Realization came quite clearly that henceforth my life was to be very much in his keeping. It also came to me with a deep sense of responsibility that hereafter the lives of several Daltons would be a communal affair, one for all and all for one. When a group of individuals realize this they have already become a band, a clan, a gang. Blood ties and my close affection for Bob had predetermined my stand with the others.

Gaging him as a clan chieftain as well as a brother, I felt more than ever he was a man to tie to. If now at any hour we were to plunge into lawless ventures, having the game as well as the name, he would be dependable. For one thing Bob was not a boozer. Neither in these first days of our trouble nor in the later storms of battle and pursuit did he seek relief in whisky. He had only contempt for the desperado's trick of whipping up courage by artificial stimulants.

He kept his senses always at fine edge. There wasn't a doltish strain in him. Out of his sharpened wit and his unfailing courage grew that cool daring and genius for maneuvering without which the Dalton band would have been snuffed out much earlier than it was. It was characteristic of him to stand with his hands on his hips, the right hand near the butt of his pearl handled Colt .45, or with a Winchester in his grasp.

He never allowed any one to stride behind him without turning around, although he never doubted any of his intimate associates. Caution was a compass in him, pointing always to possible source of peril. From the first he insisted on almost military discipline. I would have followed him anywhere blindfolded. And in me he reposed an equal confidence. More than once in approaching a tight place he would say to me:

"Emmett, you and I will stick close together. When you're with me I never have to bother about what's behind me."

All of us had adopted the old slogan, "Watch your friends; you know what your enemies will do to you."

As a gang, prowling rather aimlessly, we did not yet have much cohesion. We gathered and split, drifted and reunited, here and there in the less settled regions, singly or in groups.

ONE MORNING Bob, Bryant and I had gone into camp on a rocky hillside on Salt Creek south of the Cimarron. We saw a party of men approaching, fanned out, squinting curiously toward the hills.

"Looks like a posse," surmised Bob.

Concealing our horses, we crouched behind a ravine bank. Bob swung up his field glasses and studied the approaching riders intently.

"Heck Thomas, Burril Cox, Tiger Jack," Bob enumerated. "And a fourth one I can't just make out yet."

For another long moment he leveled the glasses. Then with a rasping imprecation he dropped his hand to his gun—

"Big Bill Smith—sure as hell!"

We spraddled among the rocks, waiting with ready rifles as the posse came on. They halted now and then to palaver. At the point rode Tiger Jack, a Uchie Indian scout and noted trailer identified with the Light Horse Police of the Creek Nation.

Heck Thomas was a deputy marshal, an old acquaintance of ours with whom we had often faced danger on official trails. A romantic reporter had once dubbed him and two other Oklahoma marshals "The Three Musketeers," which used to ring pleasantly in his ears.

Burril Cox was a squint eyed squawman whom we had come to hold in contempt. And finally Bill Smith, flanked by the others and baying them on like a bloodhound.

"That big fellow in the middle there,"

muttered Bob, handing me the glasses, "that's Smith!"

I scanned him with curious hatred. Heavy, dark features, phlegmatic and sinister; eyes squinting toward the spot where we lay; Smith, who never forgot his rôle as sleuth and who strutted it heavy; dreadfully earnest and cold blooded—a Nemesis.

The California detective was taking no chances. It was in his record that he always went about with several aides. Once later on when he tried to play the bravo he dived headlong through a Visalia, California, picket fence bleating like a sheep when the bullets of old Chris Evans, famous Coast outlaw, singed his flesh.

Infected by Bob's accounts of Grat's persecutions at Smith's hands, I now had one of the few impulses in my life to annihilate a man as his face swam close in the magnifying field glasses.

Two hundred yards distant the posse dismounted awaiting Tiger Jack's guidance. Perhaps Smith was never to know how closely he bivouacked with death that May morning. Had it not been for the presence of Heck Thomas, whom we did not want to injure, we would have attacked the pack. But with the first shot it would have been every man for himself, friendship forgotten. So we lay and waited.

The Indian came on, patiently, with that canny trailing craft of his race. Within easy gunshot he halted. I am sure he had us roughly located somewhere ahead there in the rocks. But he returned to Smith, shrugging blandly.

Tiger Jack knew Bob's repute as a dead shot. We saw him and Smith arguing. Nothing that Smith offered would induce the Indian to remain. The redoubtable Tiger felt suddenly that his squaw had become heap sick.

"Maybe so I get to wigwam, 'nother little tiger in family," he announced solemnly.

It was the most plausible excuse he could contrive at the moment. Additional trailing fees were waved aside. He mounted his horse and lit out. Smith was furious. He sensed that we were near. Again with hands almost upon Bob he was to be cheated of his quarry. The others too grew suddenly reluctant. Most courage wilts under the shadow of probable ambush, even such courage as Heck Thomas possessed. Smith blustered at his comrades. But he followed with alacrity when Thomas and Cox set off in the dust of the retreating Indian.

This was the only time a posse ever tried trailing us on a cold scent. Usually officers and their posses were careful to look for us around depots, newspaper offices and in hotel dining rooms—any place they were certain we would not be found.

One other time I saw Bill Smith. In the guise of a railway land agent distributing seeds he came to our mother's residence near Kingfisher. He stood at the gate with a local express agent he had impressed. Bob and I were inside the house. Apparently convinced that we were not about, he made no effort to enter the home. After that he dropped out of the active hunt, relinquishing the Nemesis rôle to others.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE HONEYMOON HOLDUP

THERE is a strong tendency to do the thing of which one is accused, psychologists insist; the suggestive picture consummating in the act. Undoubtedly something like this was operating in our minds. Who first suggested the Whorton train robbery in the Neutral Strip I do not now recall. But after weeks of dodging and nerve trying suspense on the borderland between right and wrong we were discussing the thing as a definite plan.

For this project Bob had taken George Newcomb and Charley Bryant into his confidence. Both had been with us in New Mexico. They were crack shots and good riders, of a devil-may-care strain. Bryant was hopelessly ill, and it made him doubly reckless.

"Me, I want to get killed—in one hell-firin' minute of smoking action!"

Charley Bryant had said it as we lay in the Salt Creek ambush with guns trained on the Smith posse. It had been all Bob could do to restrain him. He had a tiger courage and a recklessness which had to be curbed even among reckless men; a sort of mocking contempt for life, his own most of all. This was due no doubt in part to the sickness which whispered in his veins. Charley was to get his moment of smoking action in due time, and to meet it with the verve of a true desperado.

In the Whorton affair Eugenia Moore, Bob's girl, became "particeps" to our activities. Through her knowledge of telegraphy and one of the local express officers who was related to her she learned that the express company expected a large shipment of money for one of the Guthrie banks on the date we had set for the Whorton robbery. Riding a horse which Bob had given her, she raced to our rendezvous, gave us explicit information and returned immediately to the cover of our friend's house near Guthrie.

You will question what manner of woman it was who thus actually associated herself with our lawless project. How shall we catalogue any man or woman exactly by our shifting standards? Affection, fortunately for some of us, hasn't much to do with rigid morals. The love which women bear their men—sons, husbands or sweethearts—usually transcends infirmities and transgressions, else the lot of the black sheep would be woeful indeed.

I have already indicated that Eugenia was no tame, spineless creature of soft conventions, and that the bond between her and Bob had become fixed before we stepped over the line. Now she was irrevocably partisan.

In this, our first train robbery, and in later depredations as well, a surcharged bitterness against express companies was the compelling motive. A blind striking back, if you will, at all corporate interests in any way related to the one that had saddled us with undeserved trouble. Grat was still awaiting trial in California. From report he seemed almost certain of conviction. Bob burned with wrath at the price on his own head. Whorton would be no mere wanton crime. In our disordered minds it had some elements of retributive justice—that "eye for an eye" which has been the frontier code across all the earth. And this feeling, untenable as it may seem to cool consideration, Eugenia shared.

If we made a big haul we would retire far from our old haunts, to South America perhaps, where we had vaguely contemplated cattle ranching. Bob and his girl had spoken of marriage. Part of the anticipated haul would underwrite the wedding. Whorton, in its conception, was to be a honeymoon holdup. The uppermost thought in the mind of every half sane outlaw is that some day he will make a big haul and retire to the land of "The Big Rock Candy Mountains."

On the way to Whorton we initiated a practise we were to follow with slight variation before every subsequent raid or perilous undertaking—an invocation to the gods of chance.

"I, for one, will go to the station and force the engineer to run the train down to the stockyard beyond the town," announced Bob. "One of you three will come with me. You can match dollars to see who it will be. Odd man is elected."

Newcomb was the odd man.

AT ABOUT 10:00 P.M. that night Bob, Bryant, Newcomb and I rode into Whorton, a little Santa Fé whistle station in the Neutral Strip. We hitched our horses beside the stockyard, half a mile south of town. Bryant and I took our stations beside the track. Bob and Newcomb meandered toward the depot and waited in the shadows. The Texas Express would come thundering in at 10:30 to make a brief stop. Most of the passengers would be asleep. They were not to be bothered.

At no time during their career did the

Daltons rob or molest passengers. Sleep had already descended upon the lonely little hamlet. Only the station agent and a few depot loungers were in evidence. One of them was curiously examining a reward poster in the waiting room.

"Feller'd make himself a right smart o' spendin' money if he was to turn in Bob Dalton's gang," he reckoned as his gaze clung to the black type.

"Ain't likely we'll ever get a crack at 'em," laconically replied the station agent. "They wouldn't be over in these parts."

He buckled on a revolver and went out to hoist the red stop signal as a whistle roared inquiringly down the northward track. Orders in his hand, the agent went out to meet the express. The loungers followed. They did not observe two men vaulting into the engine cab as the train started rolling toward the stockyards. Bob and Newcomb were commanding the engineer to stop at the designated spot.

"That's queer," said the station agent a minute later. "Train's stopping down by the stockyards. Found a hot box, maybe." Well, that was none of his business.

"Be funny if the Daltons was jumpin' that train right now," suggested the loquacious lounger.

"Sure would," replied the agent. "She always carries a load o' money." Hearing several shots down the track, the two rushed into the depot and extinguished all the lights.

Bob and Newcomb were at the moment marching the engineer and fireman around the express car. Bryant and I joined them. While we kept the engine crew covered, Bob leaped into the express car and commanded the surprised messenger to shell out. Curious heads popped out of coach windows and popped in again at the menace of our guns. A man with a big white sombrero and a gun belt shining across his waist stepped out on the smoker platform. I spotted him for an officer. I yelled at him to get his hands up quick and come down where I was. He came down with hands aloft and remained so during the proceedings. Later information led me to believe this man was Ransom Payne, U. S. deputy marshal, who was returning home to Guthrie from the Federal court at Wichita, Kansas, where he and a posseman had delivered Territorial prisoners.

But I must have been mistaken. Payne himself has been quoted as having retired to a sleeper berth at the time the train reached Whorton. There he heard our intimidating shots and at once concluded it was a holdup by the Daltons, according to this report. Whereupon he ran to the rear sleeper platform, leaped off and hid in the bushes, "to keep the Daltons from pumping my carcass full of lead." At any rate he did not get into action.

Meantime Bob was having trouble getting the messenger to open the big safe. He professed not to know the combination. Word had been circulated by the express company that these through money vaults were always closed and set at Gainesville, Texas, and at Kansas City, and the combination wired to the terminus, so that not even the messenger could open them *en route*.

The same report had been broadcast regarding all trains going through the Indian Territory. It was designed to reach the ears of outlaws and to give messengers greater immunity. Through her access to official circles, Miss Moore had learned, however, that this was merely a ruse.

When the obdurate messenger pleaded it as an excuse, Bob in final exasperation fired a stimulating shot close to his feet. The messenger opened the safe with alacrity. Together with the contents from the smaller way safe, he dumped the Guthrie shipment into a sack Bob carried. Simultaneously Newcomb and Bryant had sounded a volley of shots outside, again to warn back the restive train crew and the more inquisitive passengers. No resistance had been offered, and no one was injured. The haul amounted to approximately fourteen thousand dollars.

Backing away into the shadows as the train got under way, we slapped the heavy loot sack on a saddle and drifted. The man in the white sombrero had disappeared into the smoker. Not a shot spurred us on our way.

Regarding the amount of our plunder at Whorton and in later holdups, the newspapers always exaggerated the sum, and the express officials minimized it.

In retiring we cantered within a few yards of where Marshal Payne lay in the shrubbery, according to his version. He had his Colt in hand but did not fire, he said, "for fear that if I winged one, the others would return and kill me." The train, he asserted, hauled away without him.

Soon the station agent was chattering a wild tale along the wires. The man who scanned the reward poster stood by in awe. Riding west until daylight next morning, we came to a brushy creek where we alternately slept while one of us was hidden back on the trail to act as lookout. These precautions were part of our safety ritual.

NOW we were indeed outlaws. Whorton merely served to confirm the convictions of those who had ascribed the California train robbery to Bob and his associates. The hue and cry for Dalton scalps sounded across the land. Posses, genuine or self-styled sleuths, all the manhunting ilk, sniffed for our trail. Reward posters blossomed profusely in public places.

Casting back to recapture the emotions of that time, I cannot say that Bob and I were beset by any disturbing sense of guilt. The bitterness of our "cause" stifled any compunctions. We had rather a feeling of defiant exultation. We had hit back with an insensate revenge. The blood-money brand rested more comfortably on Bob's head. The Whorton adventure had restored his self-respect.

Bob and Eugenia did not take their honeymoon.

The trails just then were too hot to attempt a break. And the loot which loomed so large when we dragged it from the train dwindled to an insufficient sum when coolly calculated against anticipated needs. Bob's contemplated marriage and our fancied cattle range in an alien land became mere beckoning will-o-the-wisps dancing on toward other hopeful raids. The vision of safe retirement on forbidden gold is a great delusion. It is the common experience of the lawless that they never get enough money to kiss the game goodby. Stolen funds are always seen through a magnifying glass.

Two days after Whorton we slipped in to our dugout on the Riley range. We were gaunt from hard riding. The horses were fagged. For a time we holed up in the sod shelter, getting our bearings, charting the future. Pursuit cooled. The tranquil beauty of an Oklahoma spring enveloped us with a sense of security.

There were plenty others like us in that country, a loose federation of the hunted: bandits, horsethieves, rustlers, renegades of every sort, a collection of desperados; drifting, meeting, appraising one another, forming transient alliances; men almost wordless, men blustering with chips on their shoulders, singing their rogue chorus with bullet and drumming hoof and defiant halloo.

Many of these men, by boast or rumor, were from time to time accredited to membership in the Dalton gang, just as many depredations were ascribed to the Daltons which we did not commit. Thus the tradition became current, and still exists, that the Daltons were a band of from fifteen to twenty bearded ruffians riding wildly about the country, committing wanton atrocities and keeping several States in a reign of terror. Let me correct this false impression.

The Dalton Gang comprised the following men: Bob, Grat and Emmett Dalton, George Newcomb, Charley Bryant, Bill Powers, Charlie Pierce, Dick Broadwell, William McElhanie and Bill Doolin. These ten men are absolutely the only ones ever connected in any way with our lawless enterprises.

*All are now dead except myself.*

After the Coffeyville disaster Bill Doolin headed another band of his own, and with Doolin for a time rode Bill Dalton, the fourth outlaw member of our family.

The first death to occur in our outlaw ranks was that of Charley Bryant in whose pain racked body life was treasured very lightly.

## CHAPTER IX

### A SMOKING MOMENT

FROM our sod hutch Charley Bryant set off toward Mulhall, Oklahoma, to visit his brother. On the road his intermittent illness surged up and compelled him to stop all night at the little town of Hennessey. Seeking lodging at the one small hotel, he foolishly toted his Winchester with him. The suspicion of the proprietor was immediately aroused. Like other lodging house keepers he had been warned to be on the lookout for the Whorton robbers. At once he wired to Marshal Grimes at Kingfisher, fifteen miles away. Charley piled into the hay in an upstairs room with his clothes on and gun beside him. He was feverish; too sick to sleep, yet too tired to remain fully awake.

Heretofore Bryant had been connected with us only by rumor. He wasn't very smart, but he had managed to keep his tracks covered. Exposing his gun at Hennessey had been a dangerous lapse. Sickness undoubtedly had dulled his caution. The outlaw may not even indulge in relaxations in the sickbed as other men. While he still tossed on the bed next morning Deputy Marshal Ed Short was speeding up from Kingfisher to arrest him.

"If he is one of the Whorton train robbers he might be a dangerous man," Marshal Grimes had cautioned. "Hadn't you better take along some help in case of trouble?"

"I don't need any help," Short replied. "Leave it to me. I can tame any of 'em!" And in due time Short was hammering on the hotel room door. Bryant roused from his stupor. His door was locked.

"Who's there?" he rumbled.

"I'm U. S. Deputy Marshal Ed Short," rasped the marshal. "Open up here before I kick the door in!"

The shouting drew a crowd. The hotel proprietor watched from a discreet distance. Short was not unmindful of the audience. Bryant took up the Winchester that lay across his blanketed belly.

"I'm too sick to talk to you," muttered Charley. "And don't try to come in or I'll kill you," he added when the officer had announced his purpose.

A brief parley ensued. Coming to his full senses, Bryant probably figured he might manage an alibi.

"Look here, Short," he finally agreed, "give me your word that you won't handcuff me and I'll come along quietly."

"Sure," agreed the marshal, "and I'll even get you a doctor."

Bryant unlocked the door and made no protest or resistance as Short took his Winchester rifle and six-shooter. In about three hours the sick man was ready to be moved. Then Bryant squinted with amazement at the officer. Short was dangling a pair of handcuffs.

"Get up and slip these on," he commanded. "We're going to Wichita."

"I'll go," said the sick man, frowning with surprise, "but you said you wouldn't cuff me!"

"Never mind what I said," snapped the marshal. "Put 'em on!"

Bryant submitted to the trussing, but a sinister light was building in his bloodshot eyes. That bit of minor duplicity which to the man in irons seemed like a wanton insult signed Short's death warrant. Charley Bryant saw in a flash that the hellroarin' moment he had craved was near at hand. All at once he became very docile and quiet.

"You didn't really think I'd take you out of here without bracelets, did you?" chuckled Short. "My word! You got something to learn, young feller. Never take anybody's word."

The two men thus confronted, strangers

until this hour, were both game to the last degree. But neither at the moment knew what he had to deal with in the other. Ed Short was one of the noted officers of the old frontier breed. He never took anything from any man, whatever the odds. In personality and dogged courage he was not unlike several other official gunmen of wide repute who come to mind; Pat Garrett, for one, slayer of Billy the Kid. And if Short was not unlike the famous sheriff of Lincoln County, New Mexico, Bryant also was not unlike the notorious killer of that savage old feudal empire.

Indeed what was now in the making here in a little hotel room had a curious semblance of that earlier drama when Billy the Kid, shackled leg and hand, shot Deputy Bell with his own gun, killed Bob Ollinger, another deputy, with his and came to his fated hour with Pat Garrett. Charley Bryant looked with deadly hatred at Short as the latter led him limping and half nauseous with pain to the Hennessey depot.

"There's one man's word you *can* take," Bryant drawled, reverting to Short's light estimate of a pledge. "And this is it. I'm going to kill you the first chance I get, and don't you forget it. I'm sort o' particular about my word even if you ain't about yours. Yes, sir, Mister Ed Short, I'm going to kill you!"

"Not this trip, young feller!" The officer laughed easily.

THE NORTHBOUND train roared to a stop where Enid now stands. The marshal took his prisoner into the smoking car. The passengers stared curiously as the word went round that Short had captured one of the Whorton train robbers. Short surveyed the passengers with calm indifference. Word had come to him that some of Bryant's friends might attempt to stage a desperate rescue.

"Let 'em try it!" Short had answered.

Still, it might be wise to take Bryant up into the baggage car in case some damn fool tried to start something. Through the swaying train the marshal moved the handcuffed man. The baggageman stared at Bryant and Short casually. He knew Short. Prisoners detained in the baggage coach were no novelty to him.

"Here," said Short to the trainman, "you look out for this feller until I come back. I forgot a Winchester back in the smoker."

Short placed his revolver on a trunk beside the baggageman. The latter looked at it and said genially—

"Sure, Ed."

The officer went to get Bryant's Winchester. He closed the vestibule door behind him.

Bryant, sitting on a box at one end of the car, regarded the revolver on the trunk. The baggageman, satisfied that the prisoner was tractable, went on about his business as the train roared along.

"Kinda tough job a-rasslin' baggage, ain't it?" blandly inquired Bryant.

"Sure is," came the reply.

The fellow was sociable. Looked kind of downcast with those wristlets crampin' his arms. The baggageman started shifting a trunk. With one long, tigerish, slithering leap the outlaw gained the carelessly unguarded six-shooter.

"Don't make a move!" he snarled as the surprised messenger sprang toward his own Winchester hanging on the wall.

The man halted. Swiftly Bryant backed him into a corner, and himself secured the rifle.

"You can take a little rest from your work now," purred Bryant, getting his nerves under control. "You just sit down over there and take it easy. I'm not going to hurt you. I'm just aimin' to teach a feller a lesson in good manners; a feller that says no man's word is any good."

Short had been gone perhaps a minute. Seconds would count now. Keeping the baggageman covered, Bryant opened the vestibule door. He kept it slightly ajar with one foot. At his feet lay the Winchester. In both his closely manacled hands he held the six-shooter. The cuffs hampered him. He braced himself against the jamb, watching the closed door of the

smoker eight feet across the open platforms. Any moment now. A curious elation was upon the sick outlaw.

The marshal emerged from the smoker, carrying Bryant's Winchester. Bryant shoved the door wide with his foot. For one moment of ghastly surprise Short looked at Bryant and his leveled weapon in the manacled hands.

"Yes, sir, there's some things you can depend on, Mister Short," drawled the outlaw, as if he were just concluding a casual argument.

His revolver blazed a harsh punctuation. But that last taunt cost Bryant his life as well. Even as he had started speaking Short had snapped up the rifle. The roar of the two guns came almost simultaneously above the rattle of the train. Both men reeled and plunged crazily from the rocking platform, as the baggageman yanked wildly at the bell cord. Each had died from a shot out of his own gun in the hands of the other.

Charley Bryant had realized that swift moment of smoking action in which he wished to go out. And Short had had the fraction of a second to realize that some men do not speak in vain.

When Charley's brother Jim came to Hennessey to claim the body and its effects, eighteen hundred dollars which I know he had on him had disappeared. Some ghoul had not scrupled to take rifled express company money from a dead bandit's pockets.

We missed Bryant's twisted grin and his sardonic jokes at the sod house. But brigands may not mourn as others do . . .

## CHAPTER X

### TREACHERY MISSES FIRE

THE SCENE shifts west again, out to the shimmering California valley of the San Joaquin. After Detective Smith had failed to catch Bob and McElhanie he returned to the Coast and arrested Bill Dalton on a charge of aiding the fugitives to escape. Grat Dalton was still awaiting his long delayed trial.

They engaged W. C. P. Breckenridge of Merced to defend them. At the preliminary Bill was released. Grat had been in jail at Visalia almost six months before the case was finally called. The presiding judge had recently graduated from justice of the peace. The pomp of his elevation was still upon him, and a certain deference toward the powerful political corporation behind the prosecution.

Attorney Breckenridge had for years been the local counsel for the Southern Pacific Railroad in Merced County. Bill and Grat did not know this very material fact until after the trial.

But they did sense almost from the first day's session that there was a lack of zeal in Grat's defense. Almost it seemed like indifference. John Ahern, a prominent attorney and friend of Grat's, warned him that he was "being jobbed." All through the trial the examination of defense witnesses and cross-examination of prosecution aids was most perfunctory.

"When we get through we'll move to dismiss," placated Breckenridge whenever Grat urged some defensive measure or interrogation. "The court will have to grant it."

Grat became suspicious finally when the affair seemed to degenerate into a sinister farce. Anticipating an adverse verdict, he promulgated some defensive measures of his own. He whispered something into the ear of an old negro jail trusty, a cotton picking darky from the South. The negro's eyes popped, but he nodded and shuffled from the jail.

That night while the whole town was discussing Grat Dalton's probable conviction, and certain of the attorneys were rehashing phases of evidence at saloon bars, the black trusty edged up to Grat's cell.

"I'se sho' got it!" he muttered warily

"Well, hurry up, slip it in here—I haven't got much time," urged Grat.

"Can't right now," protested the negro. "It's sewed in de seat o' my pants."

"Back the seat of your pants up against these bars," commanded Grat.

And thus, while the trusty made pretense of casual lounging, Grat slashed the pants and extricated a sawblade. Within an hour he was cutting at the restraining iron.

Attorney Breckenridge became uneasy at some change in his client's demeanor. He undertook to sound him out.

"If you've got anything to break jail with," he suggested suavely, "you'd better give it to me. I'll hand it back to you after the trial if they convict you."

"No danger of that," laughed Grat. "You're so certain you're going to free me. Haven't I proved by the hotel register at Fresno and the testimony of twenty reliable witnesses that I wasn't within one hundred miles of the Alila holdup that night!"

The jury was composed wholly of the judge's friends. On the third day toward evening they brought in a verdict of guilty as "accessory before the fact." Sentence was to be pronounced later.

Convicting an accessory before the fact while no principal had even been arrested was something new in jurisprudence to us. But it was no surprise to Grat. And certainly none to Big Bill Smith. The detective seldom permitted himself the relaxation of a smile, but now he grinned in triumph.

"I told you I'd land you," Smith boasted.

"You haven't landed me—yet," retorted Grat. He too permitted himself a defiant little grin.

That night Grat and three fellow prisoners slipped out through the severed bars. They stalked straight to a clump of high weeds across from the jail where a friend had concealed a Winchester and ammunition. For several minutes Grat and his fellows stood there, indecisive, scanning the streets, the lighted saloon fronts and places where Visalia's night life clustered.

Grat was swiftly conjecturing where among these haunts he might find Big Bill Smith. Debating, rifle in hand, whether one great moment of satisfaction might not be worth more than freedom in flight. Every fighting nerve in him was tingling. Almost he surrendered to the berserk impulse. Then the chant of an old hymn rose in the stillness.

In a little church down the street a prayer meeting was in progress. Drowsy teams stood at the hitch-rack.

"Come on," urged one of the fugitives, "we can get horses there. What we waiting for, anyway?"

The four marched to the church. Grat selected a big team of powerful greys harnessed to a light buggy. They climbed in. Whirling out of town at full gallop, they headed west toward the little town of Goshen. The church hymn dwindled in their ears. The ribald noises from the saloons fell away.

THE FLIGHT did not draw immediate pursuit. At Goshen all but Grat caught a freight train. Grat drove on ten miles farther to the ranch of a supposed friend, one Middleton. The rancher agreed to drive the team to Tulare and tie it along the main line of the Southern Pacific. That would indicate the fugitives had taken a train there.

Next morning soon after the jail delivery had been discovered the team was found. As Grat had planned, Detective Smith assumed that the four had entrained at Tulare. He began burning the wires with descriptions and offers of heavy reward for Grat.

Grat and Middleton rode up into the Sierra foothills above the village of Sanger and pitched camp in a pine thicket, awaiting opportunity for my brother to slip away southward toward Oklahoma. Middleton's reputation was clear. He volunteered to act as scout for Grat. But the man's boasted friendship wasn't immune against the temptation of reward. The posters beckoned to him when he went to Sanger for provisions and cartridges. He wrote a note to the sheriff of Tulare County, fixing a meeting spot

where he would reveal Grat's whereabouts.

Four days later, making pretext of going to town for tobacco, Middleton set the sheriff and his posse on the trail.

Meantime another outcast had wandered into Grat's camp—a half starved greyhound. In common plight the two skirmished about the mountain side. Now they were resting beside the tent, Grat with rifle lazily across his knee, the hound contentedly at his feet. Over yonder in a grassy spot the saddle horse was browsing. The summer afternoon was wearing on. Soon be time for Middleton to be back with tobacco and fresh meat.

Suddenly the dog lifted his head and peered into the brush down the mountain side. He whined uneasily. His hackles rose and a furious bark broke the silence. Sensing danger, Grat urged on the hound while he himself backed cautiously into the cover of a gully bank. With explosive yelps the dog charged into the brush. A moment later six men, the sheriff and his posse, emerged from cover. With leveled rifles they strode forward toward the tent.

"Come out o' there with your hands up!" roared the sheriff. "We got you covered."

But even as he called the men with him riddled the canvas with a volley. Had Grat been in the tent, as it was supposed he was, he would never have had a chance to get his hands up. As the guns crashed the hound, still yelping furiously, flashed past the possemen's heels and dashed after Grat, who by this time was making his way down the gully.

Unwittingly the hound attracted the pursuers' attention to Grat's whereabouts. The officers whirled and caught a flash of the fugitive. Again the guns spoke so that the mountainside rang with the echoes. At one of the men who leaped behind a tree Grat sent several bullets, then slowly backed away—shooting at any moving object. The posse was whanging away wildly. Intervening shrubbery made the firing largely guesswork.

Suddenly the firing ceased. Sensing the need for quiet now, the hound held his tongue, hovering close to Grat's heels. Cut off from his horse, Grat circled down the mountain to where a farmer was plowing. The farmer was peering curiously up whence the rifles had bellowed. Befuddled and with that singular failure to finish the hunt which so often marks the vagaries of posses, the officers were driving away in a buckboard. Grat watched them a moment, then took the farmer unawares.

"Unhook your team fast," he commanded, "and strip the harness off that near horse!"

Fumblingly the farmer complied. Grat suspected that he also had taken a hand in tipping off his lair. But because he was never quite sure, he later sent back the fellow's horse. Middleton he never saw again. The unsaddled and hardly manageable horse bore Grat again into the foothills. The hound limped along. A posseman's bullet had caught him in the leg.

When the plowman's horse came to a winded halt Grat attended the dog's wound. That night he carried him to the home of Judge Grey, a well to do rancher near Merced.

For two weeks Grat lay hidden at the ranch. Judge Grey was an old friend of Grat's; he was also a brother-in-law of Attorney Breckenridge. The judge kept Grat informed as to the movements of the manhunters, and Sing, his Chinese cook, kept him well supplied with food. The Chinese understood he was not to divulge the presence of the secret guest. He savvied that Grat was "all same highbinder," and effectively forgot all his pidgin English whenever any visitors appeared at the ranch. Judge Grey's courageous hospitality was an oasis in a desert of relentless hatreds.

After the trial and Grat's jailbreak Attorney Breckenridge had gone to San Francisco and there died after a heavy debauch, Grat was told. It was rumored

that the lawyer had received five thousand dollars for making a merely perfunctory defense.

When Grat was ready to run the gantlet from California to Oklahoma to escape the farflung cordons of the railway company, Judge Grey provided a saddlehorse of remarkable stamina. Grat left the hound in Sing's keeping.

"That dog," he told the Chinese, "saved my life. I want you to treat him like a brother."

The California winter rains were drenching the Sierras as Grat skirted the lonely foothills between Merced and Bakersfield. His goal lay almost two thousand miles south and east. Well it was that his legs were saddle hardened and that his lean body was inured to grueling tests. Along dim trails he passed occasional shepherds and solitary Chinese still gleaning the gold gulches of '49. They stared a moment in dull curiosity at the hastening, furtive horseman. Deer coming down from the higher snowfields whistled at his passing. Bakersfield, hectic cowboy capital, waved him on into the gaunt Tehatchapis. The wild passes of this divide echoed his hoofbeats down across the Mohave Desert to the fringe of Los Angeles. There he paused just long enough to have his horse shod.

Through Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, riding always alone, the iron of his horse's shoes often worn thin, while the iron in his outraged and turbulent soul grew always harder. He lived precariously on small game, and often hungered. Once he wrapped the animal's feet thick in burlap to protect the tender feet for three days of flinty going. For the raw edges of his own spirit he wanted no protective blanket.

FOR BOB and me and those who had associated themselves with us, a number of other stirring and testing episodes were to intervene between the Whorton raid, the death of Charley Bryant and the termination of Grat Dalton's record making horseback flight from California.

At this juncture the Dalton Boys almost disbanded. Bob and I earnestly debated the matter. We actually came to a decision that if Grat were freed in California I would surrender and stand trial.

The California railroad and express companies contended that McElhanie was in reality I, Emmett Dalton. A direct charge lay against me as well as Bob in connection with Alila. If I could have had some assurance of a fair hearing, I was ready to submit myself for trial to clean the slate. In fact Bob and I had gone so far as to make conditional arrangements for bail bond with a prominent Oklahoman. He stood ready to give surety in any amount. Had Grat been fairly dealt with, the Whorton train robbery might have marked the beginning and the end of our renegade career.

The revulsion after our first train robbery had been punctuated by Charley Bryant's death. Bob's love for Eugenia, furthermore, was tugging him toward quieter ways. My own boyish regard for Julia, I now felt, must only be a memory to stow away. Once more the plan to go to South America came strongly to the fore. The other boys did not dispute the proposed split up.

It was agreed between Bob and Eugenia that she wait at Wagoner, Indian Territory, until he could effect plans to have her join him and me at Tampa, Florida. There they would be married and we would proceed to the Argentine.

Rigged as farmers instead of in the usual cowboy duds, with revolvers swung in arm holsters, Bob and I went to Springfield, Missouri, stopped several days with a friendly deputy marshal, took a train south and skinned precariously through several nets stretched for the Daltons. We proceeded into Louisiana.

"Bandit Grat Dalton Convicted In California."

The headline flashed it from a newspaper I had casually picked up. I handed it to Bob. He studied it a moment darkly; pondered for several min-

utes the forking of the roads which now presented themselves; the one leading to marriage and a safe refuge in Argentine, the other posted with the call of brotherhood.

"We're going back, out to California to take Grat out of jail, if it's the last thing we do in this world," he announced quietly.

Northward we sped again, through renewed halloo about the Daltons. At Memphis I was again reading a paper.

"Grat Dalton Breaks Prison," it screamed. "Believed to be heading back toward Oklahoma. Posses scouring mountains."

"They'll never take him alive," predicted Bob. "We'll meet him when he gets back. Come on, let's go home."

The words gave me a sudden pang.

"Let's go home."

From the time we had crossed the law's frontier we steered clear of the family nest. Home now, what there was left of it, was near Kingfisher, Oklahoma. Mother lived there with the younger children. Father, less and less concerned with family responsibilities, had been on one of his many rovings with a few racehorses along the county fair circuit in Missouri. He, too, was on his way home once more in 1890 when he died. For years he had seemed almost a stranger to us, always seeking greener pastures with that unquenchable wanderlust he had. He had passed on across the last frontier when we set out for Kingfisher.

## CHAPTER XI

### MOTHER OF OUTLAWS

THE MOTHER of outlaws may not set a lamp in the window for her prodigals, lest its flame of hope draw the destroyers of her sons. There was, however, a substitute for the proverbial window lamp as Bob and I approached through a dismal slanting rain. It was the glow of the kitchen stove. Mother was preparing supper. She was unaware of our coming. We saw her standing in the open door behind a faint curtain of the drizzling downpour. A gray mother, wrinkled like an old sweet apple.

The younger brother and two sisters still at home peered at us with affectionate confusion and odd embarrassment as mother embraced us, an arm for Bob and an arm for me.

"Have you boys come home, at last?" she asked timidly.

I saw her look long and searchingly at Bob. Did she have some premonition that this was the last supper he was ever to eat with her?

My young brother Sam had edged over to the window under the pretense that he was not hungry. He stood there peering out vigilantly into the murky night. He was standing guard against possible surprise, a boy of twelve, trembling with the tension of a great responsibility.

"Still raining?" asked Bob.

"Still raining," replied Sam. "But I can see the road plain. Don't look like any—anybody'd be riding much on a night like this."

We asked about Grat. Had they heard from him? And the marshals, had any of them been around lately? Yes, the local officers had been by the house several times. They had been very nice and considerate. But they didn't believe we had left the country. And now they were looking for Grat as well.

"When Grat comes along you tell him where to join us," said Bob naming a place. "We'll be waiting for him."

"You boys going—so soon?" mother asked.

"Got to be drifting along," said Bob.

"Well, keep up your courage, and get out of the country before you hurt any one. Seems it's too late now to do anything else."

She was standing in the door as we mounted and wheeled away. I had never seen her weep before. I felt unutterably cruel and despicable as our horses splashed through the muddy road. I saw her next from the cot where I lay fighting for life in a bullet riddled body.

Ill-gotten money goes fast. The bandit quickly loses all sense of values. We did not indulge in the carousals which are usually associated with the life of the brigand. But the outlaw, by the very nature of his circumstances, seldom can conserve his funds. We were nearly strapped again. Waiting for Grat, we needed money urgently. Pressure drove us to another train robbery—the lane that has no turning.

On the way to Riley's, after our flying visit home, Bob halted for a precarious half hour to see Eugenia Moore, then at Woodward. If she was dejected at the second postponement of the wedding and the flight to other lands, she said no word. She understood Bob's filial obligation toward Grat. Quietly she unpacked her trunk of its modest trousseau.

In the guise of a magazine writer gathering articles on the Oklahoma country—a rôle for which her talents fully equipped her—Miss Moore was enabled to interview railroad officials and responsible express employees. They frequently regaled her with tales about the Daltons.

She learned of shipments of money constantly passing over the "Katy", following the cotton harvest in the Southern States, and the approximate schedule of the gold trains during the coming weeks.

With that information as carefully checked up in her systematic mind as might be without arousing suspicion, she discarded the feminine finery of the news writer and donned a cowboy's garb. Riding mostly at night through a region infested by half civilized Indians and lawless men of every ilk, she made the hazardous two hundred mile trip from Wagoner to the dugout to give us the tip.

In camp with us at this time were George Newcomb, Charlie Pierce, Bill Doolin, Dick Broadwell and Bill Powers. Eugenia Moore, shaking dark coils of hair from under her cowboy sombrero, was like a vision from a remote world to these lawless bachelors in their shabby keep. We planned the raid on Lelietta, as Eugenia unfolded her information.

All one day she remained. And toward evening Bob rode out with her a way.

"Bob is a lucky devil," commented Newcomb with a sigh.

"This is a hell of a life," said Pierce.

## CHAPTER XII

### STOP SIGNALS

LELIETTA lies four miles north of Wagoner on the M. K. & T. in the Eastern part of the State. It was then a small flag stop. Bob had selected the spot with care. Coming in along the right of way after dusk, we spotted a man and woman lurking beside the track.

"Looking for something?" challenged Bob cautiously.

"Yeah; me and the old woman here are trying to find a little stray coal to warm the shanty," said the man. "We're camped over yonder by the siding. Looks like it might come on right cold. You fellers don't happen to be wantin' a man to do a job o' work?"

"Nothing that you could handle, stranger," replied Bob jocosely after his first quick suspicion had been allayed. "But if you'll wait up the track a piece you might find some coal after the Express goes through."

The two ambled off with curious backward glances. Soon they would have an exciting tale to tell.

We had a minute's strained suspense watching the depot semaphore to see if the Express was to be signaled to a stop by the station agent. We had heard that smart agents at lonely stations had been known to clear the line for a train at the last moment, under suspicious circumstances, and send it hurtling past chagrinned outlaws.

Four sharp blasts! The engineer was asking the question too. The semaphore swung. The ruby stop light glowed. The brakes squealed. . .

TO BE CONCLUDED

# TABOO *by* GEORGES SURDEZ

## *A Story of the Foreign Legion*

WHEN the news reached Saida that Old Man Durand, returned to Algeria after thirty months in the Tonkin, had been assigned to Captain Lartigue's company, there was keen interest manifested among the Legionnaires, but no doubt felt concerning the ultimate outcome. Undoubtedly the officer would clash with the famous second class private, whose many escapades were told with the same admiring amusement at the officers' mess as in the barrack rooms.

Young Lartigue had come to the Legion recently, to serve his period of two years colonial duty. He was reputed to be well connected, said to have a cabinet minister and a brace of senators up his sleeve. He was twenty-six, young for one of his rank in the French army, yet his outstanding achievements, aside from being born into

a military and political family, had been the writing of monographs on such subjects as: "The Morale of the New Army"; "Eighteen Months Service or Victory"; "The Psychology of the Trooper."

He was undeniably very brilliant; he dressed splendidly and was at home in the saddle. He danced the tango, which made him popular with the feminine population and rather to the contrary with the male element. Therefore, Durand was hailed as a providential avenger.

Jean Durand had first appeared in the Legion twenty-two years before. He had worn out hobnails on the rocky trails of Morocco in the wake of Gouraud and Mangin, had landed at the Dardanelles with the March Battalion, had roamed in all the queer nooks held by the corps—in Algeria, Morocco, Sahara, Syria and Indo-China. Years ago, he had been given the choice between the bottle and promotion, and had chosen the first without hesitation. It was claimed—erroneously, of course—that he had first said—

"Why wait years for promotion when a good souse feels like a general within an hour?"

He was dearly loved of gray bearded colonels and majors, considered a bane by subalterns. He was too proud of his status as a character, a type, what the Legion calls a "phenomenon." Never prosperous—privates of the Legion seldom are—he managed to find money for wine and seldom returned to barracks sober. But this was his privilege, and he was not plagued. His chiefs recalled his courage, saw the many medals on his breast, including rare specimens such as the Moroccan Ribbon with *both* clasps, and the Lebanon badge with the silver cedar tree.

Durand was the man who had been captured by border bandits in Tonkin, kept for months in a cage while a ransom was being arranged. He had emerged at Hongkong before payment was made, called at the French consulate to claim passage to Saigon, with a Chinese girl on his arm and a weird tale of escape to relate. He was the Legionnaire who had fought four British sailors single handed, in a brawl at Cholon. He was the Legionnaire who had dined with General Mangin and his staff as a reward for deeds well done. He was the man who had taken charge of a mounted company platoon when the officer had been killed and the surviving sergeant had gone mad.

What he had been before entering the Legion was generally a mystery. His name, Jean Durand, corresponds to the English John Smith. There were evil tongues that stated that he had known too much about the manufacture of sandals and the binding of books for a strictly honest man—those pursuits being taught in prisons. As a matter of fact, Durand had led a quiet life in a cabinet maker's shop near Paris until his legal stretch of military service had revealed to him his true calling. He had his own boasting to blame for other stories of his pre-Legion existence.

His face was that of a man of sixty, his skin burned dark, wrinkles converging to his eyes, a certain ageless wisdom gleaming in the blue pupils. His long mustache, for he had never sacrificed this traditional ornament to prevailing style, was streaked with gray and his closely cropped hair was silvery.

But medical corps officers admired his body. His muscles were springy, tough as steel; he carried no fat anywhere on his frame. His wind was excellent, his feet—more important to a soldier than valor—were sound. The sprees he had gone through, the diseases, the barrels of assorted fluids he had imbibed, his occasional ventures into the use of opium while in Asia, had left no wasting traces. Being neither modest nor shy, he was always ready to strip to evince his perfect condition, using the scars as starting points for long yarns.

The slash of a Chinese spear, the small pucker left by a Mauser bullet fired into him by an Anatolian regular, the slim, whitish kiss of an Arab *koumia*, the jagged rent of a Targui *tellak* would be explained, with full details, and never to Durand's discredit. As a matter of cold, precise record, he was but forty-five years old.

THE lieutenant-colonel commanding the garrison at Saida at the time was Old Man Rochelier, another veteran, who signed official papers with some sort of title added. He was of ancient, well established nobility, and had lived by the sword since his eighteenth birthday. He confessed, after hearty dinners, to having been a pale background character, when a mere lieutenant, to some lurid exploits of Durand's in the Algerian south. He openly liked and admired the private.

But he was fond of Lartigue also, seeing in him a bright prospect who would some day make a tolerable Legionnaire. He tried to nip the conflict before it started, by diplomatically warning Lartigue to close his eyes to minor slips from grace.

"He's vain as a peacock, but an excellent fellow. Take him by his vanity, Lartigue. Naturally, whenever he gets out of the barracks, he'll be brought in drunk—but if he knows you like him, he'll make no great trouble for you."

"No trouble?" Lartigue smiled. "Colonel— there are disciplinary measures—"

"Careful, young man!"

"Don't fear. I shall treat him like the others, severely, justly."

Rochelier scratched his sparse hair, smoothed the bald patch with his palm, smiling uneasily. He had done what was within dignity and duty; he could not be expected to go into details, inform Lartigue outright that any harsh punishment of Durand was impossible, that it would lead to mutiny on the men's part and to dreadful howls from the private's many high placed comrades, such as Colonel R—; General D—; and even Marshal L—!

How could any one as new to the Legion comprehend why Durand was taboo? So when Durand reported to the company, Lartigue accepted the proffered hand, but spoke too much.

"I've heard of you," he started.

He should have stopped then, for Durand, flattered by this admission of his fame, had a surge of friendliness—the wish to live and let live. But Lartigue sounded a warning note:

"You're a type, that much is understood. But to me a private is a private, and all are treated alike. I hope you understand that my first punishment will be rough enough to discourage all future scrapes."

"Understood, Captain."

Durand smiled, his mustache bristling high on either side of his aristocratic, high bridged nose. A red rag to a bull, heresy to a bigot, pork chops to a Moslem —were all small offenses compared to the words he had listened to. "A private was a private, the first punishment would sicken him of scrapes—"

This to Durand, who had been forced to paste pages in his military record to list the skirmishes, combats and battles he had shared!

He stretched out his leave that very night. He entered a place of amusement reserved for non-commissioned officers—and that on a night when the place was out of bounds to the Legion. He left behind him a trail of wrecked furniture, broken glass, splintered mirrors and wailing women. A patrol dragged him back at daylight.

Rochelier vetoed Lartigue's request for a court-martial, maintained the eight days' prison within barracks—sole punishment that Durand might bear peacefully.

"No use sending that report in, Lartigue. Durand is known. He has served twenty-two years; counting triple time for active warfare, double time for colonial sojourns, adding the annuities granted for wounds and citations, he counts sixty-eight years for the pension. And he is due to be discharged definitely within three years. Suggest court-martial for him and you only hurt your own reputation with us."

"He swore at me, Colonel."

"I know, I know. He's sworn at older men in his time."

Durand served eight days without protest. Going to the lockup at Saida was a pilgrimage for him. By scratching a match—for he managed to have both tobacco and matches despite orders—he could discern pompous phrases he had

scrawled on the walls twenty years before. He could sit, smoking, on the hard plank and think of the past—of men who had died, of others who had gone into that hell called civilian life, or who had become colonels and generals.

When freed, he felt the need of a change and, cool, respectful, he applied for leave. Lartigue turned him down. An hour after taps he climbed over the wall and made for the station.

He boarded a freight train for Ain-el-Hadjar, where he got drunk and caused his presence to be telegraphed to Saida. Before Lartigue could have him arrested he vanished, to bob up in Ain-Seffra, then in Bechar, greeted everywhere by old friends and rather more than half tight from morning to morning.

The police were seeking him everywhere, but he dodged about so quickly, was so well protected, that he contrived to reappear in Lartigue's office, by himself. He saluted gravely.

"Hear you're looking for me, Captain?"

HE DREW a month in prison for that spree, fifteen days' solitary. That was one-tenth the punishment asked by his captain. Theoretically, Durand had deserted. But, as the colonel at Sidi-bel-Abbes scribbled in the margin of the report, which Lartigue had sent over Rochelier's head, common sense should be used—any one who said Durand had deserted from the Legion was either new to the corps or plain crazy.

Lartigue did not feel far from madness. All his painfully acquired notions of military life, of discipline, had sunk out of sight in this ghastly business. He could not comprehend what sheltered Durand. And he raged in the privacy of his quarters, swore, called his lieutenants vile names because they seemed to be amused rather than angry at the fellow's behavior.

Such privileges were unheard of, irregular, base, criminal, utterly demoralizing to the company. Yet Lartigue had to admit that the men appeared to realize that Durand's was a case apart, that the general discipline did not suffer.

Durand was known as a splendid marksman, certain death to any man he selected for a target up to eight hundred meters. Yet on the rifle range, with Lartigue present, he could not score on the target, though the checkers reported that his bullets were neatly grouped in a corner of the canvas.

"You'll stop this monkey business, Durand!"

"Can't seem to hit it, Captain, honestly."

"Four days will help your eyes, eh?"

"Let's try it, Captain."

Lartigue shrugged and strode away. Lieutenant-Colonel Rochelier saw the signs of strain on the officer, and decided to interfere efficiently. He had Durand called to see him. The door closed, the old chief faced the veteran.

"You leave that youngster alone, hear me? You know he's a clever officer and a good guy, and you can't help liking him. At heart, he is fond of you—" Rochelier stretched the truth deliberately, for the good of the service. "He's told me so and just wants a way to end this foolishness. An old fellow like you should be ashamed of himself."

"You know how it is, Colonel. When he refused me leave, I got sore. And when I get sore, I can't think further than the end of my nose."

Rochelier waved his arms in derision.

"Can't think—can't think! May I remind you, Durand, that you are a soldier, that the Legion is a military unit after all, and not an insane asylum? I sent for you to inform you that you have reached the limit. I shall investigate the next mess, and if you are to blame, you'll wish you had quit in time."

"Yes, Colonel." Durand bristled under the threat.

"Yes, Colonel!" Rochelier imitated the private. "With that little tone that means more foolishness, eh? You know what I'll do? I shall ask for a mental examination, and I shall instruct the doctors. You'll be dismissed from the regiment as a nut.".

"Yes, Colonel," Durand acknowledged simply.

"That sounds better, much better. Remember this: You can fool that young man, Durand, but I have been in the Legion as long as yourself and I can think up a few tricks if I have to. Understood?"

"Yes, Colonel," Durand concluded, meekly.

"Fine!" Rochelier opened a closet, brought out a dusty bottle, filled two tumblers with rosy wine. "I hate to bawl out an old friend like you, Durand. That was a matter of service. Now, let's have a drink!"

Durand lifted the glass solemnly and faced Rochelier.

"To those who went on," he said very gravely.

Rochelier started, and in his mind appeared long forgotten faces, resounded long lost voices and laughter. Then, graves in the sand with rocks piled on them; in the thick, dark loam of the jungle, marked with sticks and foliage; and those who could not be buried, whose bodies had filtered back into the soil under the heat of the sun, or beaten by tropical rains. Men he had served with—men who had fought at his side or under his orders—Durand's friends, his chiefs, his comrades. There is no creature more given to sentimental gestures than an old soldier, and Rochelier's eyes were wet as he drank the toast. When he had set down the glass he said—

"Get out of here, now."

For a long time Durand mended his ways. Not from caution, but from a longing to please Rochelier. His toast had been sincere, devoid of personal calculation or striving toward the theatrical. Rochelier and he were old friends, and if the lieutenant-colonel thought Lartigue worthy of his esteem, material for a Legionnaire, Durand did not mean to stand in the way.

Unluckily for both, Lartigue had not disarmed. It was the captain who brought about the culmination of their quarrel.

AT TWO-THIRTY one morning, with the night dew fresh on the grass, the bugles sounded. Sergeants thumped through the long barrack rooms, announcing a night march and maneuvers. Durand deemed that such pastimes were not for one his age—were meant to teach the young recruits. He remained under blankets, luxuriously sprawled, and listened to the clamor of voices and the clatter of equipment.

"Blanks will be issued below, snap it up," a sergeant cried from the doorway.

The room corporal told him that Durand was not getting up. The noncom, Murkin, a young Russian, came to a stop near the veteran's cot.

"What's the idea?"

"I'm no boy scout. I've fired all the blanks I'm going to."

"You have? Is that so?"

"Sure. I've cut maneuvers for ten years, and nobody ever said a word about it."

"The captain will ask for you, I know that."

"Tell him I'm sick—that I have—malaria."

"You mean that?"

"Sure. I'll go to the hospital at nine and get a paper."

"You'll fake it?"

"Smart for a young sergeant," Durand approved sarcastically.

"After all, it's your funeral. I'll tell him."

Five minutes later every one snapped to attention. Lartigue, booted, belted, spurred, riding crop under one arm, entered like a gust of wind. At his heels trotted a young man of the medical corps, whose *képi* bore a single loop of gold over the *grenat* plush crown.

"Please examine this man immediately, Doctor."

Durand repressed a sigh when he identified the young man. He had fooled him once or twice with soldier's tricks and boasted about it carelessly. He could see the glint of satisfaction in the *toubib's* eyes, and pushed his tongue between his

teeth with a nasty hunch that all was not for the best. But when the doctor nodded gravely, he described his symptoms with growing confidence.

"I sweat a lot, Doctor, and my kidneys hurt something fierce. Right now, it feels like big bells ringing in my head. Must be malaria—had it first in the Sous, then I got it worse in the Tonkin—Bay of Along, that was—comes and goes. You understand, Doctor?"

"Your diagnosis is wrong," the doctor explained mildly. "I know your disease. It can be cured. I would suggest exercise out of doors—for instance, a good, long walk, p[illegible] food, no wine, no liquors of any sort."

"The wa[illegible] I feel, I couldn't go a mile, Doctor."

"Nonsense," the young fellow said with dangerous gentleness. "Nonsense! The fatigue would wear off gradually, and you would soon—"

Captain Lartigue listened, unsmiling. He snapped up his arm to glance at his watch.

"Pressed for time, Doctor. Is this man fit for duty?"

"Absolutely, Captain."

"Get up, Durand."

"I'm ill. My malaria—"

"Get up, Durand."

"Captain—"

"Get up, Durand!"

The private leaped out of bed and reached for his trousers. He knew when he was licked—and he trembled a bit at his narrow escape. He could see what Lartigue had tried to do: Get a refusal before witnesses. Drinking, pranks, were matters outside duty, tolerated, smiled at. But there is an article in the military code which makes it absolutely compulsory for an officer to bring before court-martial an inferior who refuses to obey after three orders. Not even the prime minister could have saved him from a prison sentence of long duration. He could visualize the splendid deposition that Lartigue would have turned out:

"Declared fit by a military doctor, refused to obey the orders of his captain, maintaining an insolent attitude even after the third repetition of the orders. Incident witnessed by forty-four privates."

He tumbled down the stairs with the others with a great pounding of boots; stood in line to receive his ten blank cartridges; took his place with the first section. He marched off. The drum corps was playing the time honored song:

"Today, we're having night marching,
Instead of snoring we're strolling—"

Four hundred boots hammered away in the heavy, sturdy, dogged Legion stride, less showy than the lilting, agile steps of *Zouaves* or *Tirailleurs*, but which grinds down distances remorselessly.

DURAND was neither tired nor sleepy. The pack was so familiar a burden that he walked easier under its weight, while his hands would have grown restless without a smooth walnut stock to caress. But he had been publicly humiliated. Rochelier or no Rochelier, somebody would pay for it.

Kilometers slid under foot; the dust rose from the hill trails. Saida had vanished behind them. Then came the pinkish transparence of approaching dawn, until the sun emerged, flooded the remote crests with molten gold, darted long dazzling arrows through the foliage of the trees. But Durand had no eyes for beauty, no rush of deep sentiments such as brought snatches of songs to the lips of the others. There was no justice left in the world; no respect for age, no consideration for long and loyal services. He, a Legionnaire grown gray in harness, had been handled like a recruit, caught like a foolish prankster. His revenge must be astonishing!

"Assemble—"

The troopers gathered around the knot of officers, and Lartigue, crisp, clear, somewhat pedantic, made his conference in rapid sentences.

"Theoretically, we are a battalion of a mobile group approaching the enemy—

theoretically, Berber mountaineers. We are cooperating with two other companies, each of which represents a battalion. While No. 3 Company circles the enemy's rear, No. 1 links with us at the fork of the trails—officers and sergeants will find the spot near Curve 1146. We shall advance from now on by combat groups, automatic rifles ahead, until the signal to halt. Recall that our intention is surprise, and avoid unnecessary noises. Have I been understood?"

There followed the vague, respectful murmurs of the sergeants.

"We must avoid the use of visual signals to maintain *liaison*, as the enemy is not yet aware of our presence!"

Durand spat in disgust as he resumed the march:

"The enemy is not aware of our presence." And that supposed foe Berber hillmen! Any one who had seen warfare in the Mid-Atlas would laugh. No sizable French unit could move unseen in regions where every casual goatherd was a volunteer spy for the mountaineers. No visual signals—Durand recalled the flares streaking the night during military operations. Theoretically sound, but practically stupid.

The expected company was not at the appointed meeting place. Lartigue paced nervously, after he had screened his sections, questioning his lieutenants with growing irritation. Durand knew why they did not enlighten him: They did not wish to underline his inexperience for one thing, and were not sorry to see his conceit abated for another. That other captain was an old-timer who had reached his position long since. But he took it for granted that Lartigue would credit him with some skill, and saw no necessity to manifest his presence until the first volleys announced that the circling company had completed its movement.

The young captain posted and reposted his automatics, wiped his hands on a silk handkerchief. Suddenly, he beckoned to Durand. The private advanced to the distance called for by regulation, presented arms with a precision that brought a nod of appreciation even from the unsympathetic and worried officer.

"The doctor said you needed exercise—"

"I feel much better, thanks, Captain."

"Think you could locate No. 1 Company?"

"Yes, Captain."

"Then do so—and inform the captain commanding that my company is in position at the appointed place and that we are waiting for him to arrive."

"War conditions, Captain? I mean may I leave my pack behind as usual in the field for *liaison* men?"

"Yes, yes! Be off!"

Durand shed his pack, which he gave in the keeping of a young private who promised to take care it was not lost. Then he set out at a trot—until he was out of sight of the company. He marched a half mile to the right, merely to check up on his judgment, and saw No. 1 Company sheltered behind a row of bushes. He noted with satisfaction that the captain knew his trade—had thrown out sentries to guard his rear.

Satisfied that he had been correct, he made no effort to fulfill his mission but, turning his back upon the Legionnaires, he walked for two or three miles. At last, he selected a shaded spot, hidden from the road by tree clumps. He sat down, leisurely drew his provisions from the *musette*-bag, disposed them on a folded newspaper.

HE CUT thick slices from the round loaf of coarse bread, spread white, creamy cheese with his pocket knife. He munched contentedly, washed down the huge mouthfuls with long, earnest pulls from the two-quart canteen. His fingers lingered lovingly on the cool, damp felt covering as the rich red wine trickled down his throat with an exquisite, acid rasp.

Then he scanned the newspaper, saw nothing worthy of interest. He rolled his coat into a pillow, stretched out com-

fortably, and was soon asleep. Shots brought him awake much later, but he recognized the duller detonations of blanks, recalled where he was and sank back to finish his nap.

Hours passed and the companies marching by on the road to Saida brought no further notice than a casual lift of the lids. When the heat dwindled he rose, finished his food, leaving a good pint of wine for the road. He fouled his rifle with one blank cartridge, then traded off the rest to passing natives for fruits and sour milk. The Arabs were delighted—they could use the shells to make noise at the Powder Feast, due soon.

Night had fallen completely when he neared the barracks. Sergeant Murkin, in charge, recognized him.

"You're in a mess for fair. Lartigue blew up when you didn't come back, and moved the company about, until the umpires rode over and said he had been visible for hours. He blames you for everything."

"Poor guy!"

"Go put up your rifle, change to white fatigues, and march to the lockup. You're under arrest, pending officers' council in the morning." Murkin frowned, evidently worried. "I wouldn't be too fresh, Durand. I think they mean business this time."

"A bet, Sergeant?"

"A bet—what bet?"

"Fortnight's pay against fortnight's pay that I get out of this without a day's jug?"

"Four hundred francs against forty?" Murkin hesitated, eyeing Durand speculatively. But he was a Russian, consequently unable to resist gambling—and he felt he took no great risk.

"All right—it's a bet."

Durand entered the trophy room of the regiment the next morning, to face his judges. He had an unusual, peculiar feeling, almost resembling fear, when he saw the stern faces before him. But he strode forward firmly, chin high, and came to a halt and saluted as only he could.

His bony face, the brown flesh tight on the cheeks, the seams of the skull showing plainly through the skin of his forehead, the steady glance of his steely eyes were impressive; evoked the hardened mercenaries of past ages. His *képi* was shaped true to the old style. The khaki tunic was caught in the blue sash-belt wound tightly round his waist. The brass buttons winked like so many tiny suns. Standing there he seemed to those who beheld him to have walked out of one of the late Mahut's sketches of Legionnaires.

Rochelier read the charges against him in a severe voice. Durand had been sent on an important mission and had not reported again during the day. Natives reported him asleep. This was disobedience, neglect of duty, deliberate crimes against discipline.

"Can you explain, Durand?" he concluded.

"Colonel, my throat was cut."

"Eh? Your throat was cut?"

"Colonel, my throat was theoretically cut five minutes after I left the company."

"What's this nonsense? Explain!"

"I count seven years of Morocco to my credit, Colonel. And I claim to know what's what there. There we were, supposed to be fighting mountaineers in their own country. The captain sent me out to establish *liaison* with a company without giving me the precise location. No patrols had been sent out to ascertain the absence of Berbers to our rear—we just knew what was on the road, no more. What chance did I have in bush country, isolated from others? That's why I say that my throat was cut, theoretically."

"Still, you should have understood that your mission was not necessarily connected with the maneuvers," Rochelier pointed out, without conviction.

"I asked the captain whether it was to be war conditions. He said yes."

"But, Durand, you had one chance in ten, at least, of getting through—a man of your ability!" The lieutenant-colonel was only half ironical.

"In maneuvers, Colonel, a man's just a man. Some soldiers are better than

others, yet maneuvers don't allow for that. It's gun against gun, soldier against soldier, judged by established statistics. Nothing is given to luck; not even the breaks that come in any rèal combat are allowed by the umpires."

"I presume you want me to consult the umpires?"

"Colonel, that would be just."

"Well—"

"I withdraw my charges—the man is quite right," Lartigue broke in abruptly. "It's a lesson I'll—"

"Captain Lartigue, I have the floor!" Rochelier shouted, thumping his fist on the table.

"I beg your pardon, Colonel." Lartigue saluted and sat down.

Rochelier inclined his head, fingering a sheaf of papers before him idly. Durand saw the faces of the others reddening with hard held amusement, and felt his case was won.

"Durand, you have a clever tongue," the lieutenant-colonel said softly. "As your captain withdraws his charges, I can only admonish you to watch your step. Don't try anything like this twice—it might not turn out well. Anything you would like to add?"

"Yes, Colonel," Durand said loudly. "I wish to thank my captain for his kindness in withdrawing the charges. That's a nice thing to do—a Legionnaire's action—"

"Get the devil out—" Rochelier bellowed, then he recalled dignity and concluded in cold words, "Legionnaire Durand, you are at liberty to leave."

The private saluted a last time, turned smartly and walked out. The door closed behind him. Durand was not punished, but that same afternoon, after decision by the officers' meeting, doubtless, his transfer was posted on the bulletin board near the gateway. He was assigned to Sidi-bel-Abbes, to the company commanded by Captain Choubel, twenty years of Legion, known far and wide as another phenomenon. He left Saida by autobus before night, with his glory untarnished, his fame increased.

LEFT in possession of the field, but none the prouder for it, Captain Lartigue set himself to the task of becoming an officer of the Legion, as distinguished from lesser officers in the *Zouaves*, *Tirailleurs*, *Coloniaux*, or line infantry—which was what he should have done in the first place; but wisdom seldom blooms uncultivated.

He was intelligent, as has been said, willing to learn, and Providence had granted him the precious gift of nerve. His baptism of fire, some months later on a red day in the Tazza sector, brought him in a single leap to a decoration, into the general esteem of the Legion in general, and that dearest of all possessions to a leader—solid, unswerving, blind devotion of those he commanded.

In him had lurked the precise blend of extravagant valor and reasoning caution that make heroes of officers. He ceased writing essays on military subjects. Out of the rarefied atmosphere of intellectual patriotism, out of all pervading rules and regulations, he drafted his neat, glossy creed. What had been in his soul from birth was allowed to grow, and he acquired the fiery, unreasoning zeal of the true professional soldier. The Legion, the flags of the Legion, the sacredness of the Legion—he learned to hear and speak those words without self-consciousness, without a faint, apologetic smile.

He was rapidly becoming something of a phenomenon in his own right when a *kaid* of the Beni-Ouriaghel tribe, which lives in the Riff Adjir, a certain Abd-el-Krim, turned from trouncing the armies of King Alphonso to pilot some one hundred and fifty thousand riflemen upon French Morocco. Naturally, the Legion was flung into the gaps, was battered by resolute attacking hordes, staggered, reeled, stiffened and held on. The impossible was expected and asked of the Legionnaires, and they answered this courteous faith by accomplishing more than was expected, more than was asked, as was due.

Superhuman feats followed one after

the other in a dazzling sequence. Impassable ridges were carried by storm under fire. The Legion fought one against ten and was on the verge of disaster. The odds doubled, and they bit with renewed strength, those mercenaries. At the Bibanes combats, the Sixth Battalion of the First Regiment went mad in a body, believed itself a division and gave the results of a division.

It was not logical, it could not be done, yet the facts are there for all to read, written in terse, matter-of-fact sentences in the annals of the corps. The pride of victory does not pierce through the stiff, printed lines, for part of Legion elegance is to do what others can not do, and then appear to consider the finished work usual.

The Legion did not complain, but even those who knew it best realized there were limits beyond which the test became too dangerous. Those units which had suffered most were withdrawn from the fighting sectors, patched up with detachments of recruits come fresh from the training bases, and sent into regions believed comparatively peaceful.

Lartigue's company was dispatched north of Tazza, in the Tsoul-Branes district. These tribes had been pacified for years, ever since Simon's columns had scoured rebellion from the land. The unexpected happened—Tsoul and Branes threw their lot in with the Riffi, and dashed in a powerful wave upon the advance posts. Like many others, Lartigue suddenly found himself submerged in the center of the uprising. He fought his way south, and was within a day's march of Kenitra when he received instructions to detach a section to occupy the blockhouse at El Mabrouk. The balance of the company was to join the mobile group being assembled at Camp Desroches.

Theoretically, Lartigue's place was with the bulk of his company. But the greater risk would be run by the isolated section, and as a Legion officer, Lartigue knew his job. Where men die is a chief's combat station. Moreover, he thus avoided choosing among his lieutenants the one who was to die, and he very likely found it easier to chance dying himself.

The blockhouse, he had been promised, would be relieved within a week by a rescuing force from Desroches. Seven days passed, two weeks, three weeks. The Riffi brought a field gun, captured from the Spaniards near the sea, manned by deserters. The walls of the blockhouse were battered down, and Lartigue ordered trenches to be dug inside their ruins.

There were nightmare days when the water ran short, and the wounded bit their lips to keep from moaning. Airplanes flew overhead, dropped blocks of ice, which were brought in and melted. The Riffi and their allies attacked by day and by night. The thousands of cartridges in the outpost dwindled; there were no more grenades.

The Riffi offered honorable surrender, for they made a very sincere effort to prove well organized, civilized foes. Lartigue sent back the first flag of truce with a refusal, and warned off the next attempt at parley with a few shots. He was not going to be the first officer of Legion to surrender while conscious.

A NIGHT came when hope vanished as the last cases of ammunition were broken open. The outpost was doomed. There were more wounded men than sound men. There were twenty Legion dead nearby in shallow graves and unburied enemies scattered on the slope. When the sun beat down, the whole vicinity stank like a glue factory. The horrible, all pervading smell of death oozed into all things, permeated the blankets, saturated the food, filtered into liquids.

Lartigue looked about him, read in the eyes of his men that they knew, that all efforts to conceal the truth were not only needless, but offensive. They had not enlisted to die on feather beds, after all.

He lighted a candle in a metal and glass cage, and composed a last message. The snipers outside could see the glow of the flame above the protecting stones; their bullets smacked continuously, whined,

screamed. Oddly, at this critical moment, the old soul stirred in Lartigue; he feared to grow melodramatic, sentimental. For he was a school officer, and the uncouth, picturesque phrases permitted others in such situations would lead to an accusation of affectation. He strove to be calm, simple.

> Supplies all gone, ammunition giving out. This position can not be held more than twenty-four hours longer. Unless otherwise instructed will dispose of blockhouse tomorrow night, at twenty o'clock.

While civilians still cling to dividing the hours according to morning and evening, military reports call for exact numbers. Lartigue underlined *twenty o'clock* twice. Then he read the message twice, and shrugged. It was too dry, too matter-of-fact, and his own rigid repression should not be considered against the beliefs of others. He sat for an instant, pencil poised, seeking the right words, the phrase worthy of repetition.

"We die, the Legion lives," he added rapidly. And he passed the note to his senior sergeant, Murkin, who had been with him since Saida.

"How's that, old man?"

"Neat, Captain." Murkin laughed. "Worthy of Choubel! He's out there somewhere, and will croak with jealousy when he reads this."

"I hope not," Lartigue said, smiling. "Have the signaler shoot this out immediately."

Left alone, he counted his cigarets, which he had been economizing. Nearly a hundred left—and the need for thrift was passed. Dispose of the blockhouse—that was easily done. There were some hundred kilograms of *chedite* for the purpose. That had been done by others, and he was not below the task. Mechanically, he consigned his impression in his diary, once kept to give him material for his little jobs on army topics.

The hammering of automatics drew him to the line of defense, where he used a Lebel carbine, shoulder to shoulder with the privates. He was not excited; he knew that the onslaught would fail. He had enough men left to beat off such attempts until twilight tomorrow. Even combat losses follow the law of averages.

When the rush was stemmed he visited the wounded, for he was also military surgeon for the time being. This over, he sought his cot, under a canvas supported by a fragment of wall. He was perfectly safe there; the field gun was never fired after dark.

"Wake me up if anything happens," he told Murkin, when the sergeant came to report that the message had been flashed with the signal lantern, and that no reply had come beyond an acknowledgment. Lartigue had grown so accustomed to shots and shouts that he was not certain to awake in an emergency.

He lay in the darkness a long time, pursuing sleep. His hand touched his chin, and for minutes he debated for and against the sacrifice of half of his water ration for shaving. Then he came to the conclusion that if he could spare a drop, the wounded had first claim. Shave—why? If the *chedite* explosion spared him, the natives would not.

At last he dropped into a heavy sleep.

Much later, Murkin was shaking him by the shoulder.

"Man's come through, Captain."

"What?"

"Man's come through from Kenitra."

"No joke, no joke—" Lartigue repeated stupidly.

While Murkin lighted the candle, a man in a white *gandoura* knelt near, pressed a paper into Lartigue's hand. The officer scanned the note rapidly.

"They're attacking tomorrow at ten—twenty-two o'clock," he informed the sergeant. "Say they did not dare use the usual signals because there's a chap with the Riffi who can decode. Expect their first elements will reach here by seven-thirty the following morning. Orders to hold out until then, at all cost. Guess we can." He addressed the messenger in Arabic, "Whatever reward was promised to thee for coming, I double it, friend."

"*Macash el Arbi, Koptan*," the other replied. "Cut out the Arabic, Captain.

Legionnaire Durand, Jean, Choubel Company, detached on mission."

Lartigue grasped Durand by the shoulders.

"Still a phenomenon, eh, you tramp!"

"Hens ain't laying square eggs, either, Captain. Say, what a time I had coming here. Collected a couple of guys on the way." Durand's voice resounded boastfully. "When I knew it was you jammed out here, they had to give me the chance. I made such a row they sent me to get rid of me."

"That offer goes, Durand—for the reward."

"Nothing doing, Captain — Durand works for art."

"No offense meant. If we get out of here, I'll get you whatever medal you lack, my word on that. Good job, Durand, good job."

"Don't worry about getting out of here, Captain," Durand explained. "They've got battalions and battalions—tanks, artillery, everything. We've been massing for a week now and we'll clean those slobs out of here like dust. Also, we've got to get out—I have a pension coming to me, you know, and I intend to collect some of it."

"A question, Durand?" Lartigue asked, smiling.

"Two hundred, Captain."

"You admit that there was a tenth chance, now?"

"You still remember that, Captain?"

"Not likely I'll ever forget it."

"No grudge?"

"No grudge. But, between you and me, with that conceit of yours, how come you denied yourself that tenth chance?"

"Hard to explain, Captain. But I'll try. You see, it was maneuvers, and you thought me just an ordinary private. Well, an ordinary private would have been killed—that time and tonight, too. This time, Choubel sent me, and he sent Old Man Durand, and Durand is—Durand. You get me, Captain?"

Lartigue did.

# The Big Boss

By RALPH R. PERRY

## *The Story of a Sea Feud*

FROM the point of Dougal MacTavish's chin the broad white weal of an old burn angled to the left ear, the lobe of which had been seared to a twisted knot. Otherwise he was as solid and sound as the engines among which he had passed his life—a short, broad shouldered, deep chested man of something more than middle age; whose bald head was so smooth and shiny that it might have been filed from a block of steel; whose eyes were direct in glance, and a clear gray-blue in color.

Dougal was seventy-two. Had that truth leaked out he would have been forced to retire, and against that calamity he struggled with grim, single minded purpose. If he permitted no waste and no carelessness in his engine room, it was for the reason that while his fuel and operating bills were low owners would forget that these competitive times demand young men. In the hard service aboard small freight ships fifty is old age. When a man passes sixty, if he makes a mistake and loses his berth he does not get another. Dougal knew that, and therefore he was resolved to die in harness aboard the *Melville*.

Not because of the money or any overmastering love of his work, but because he had to. Dougal was the last of the Mac-

Tavishes, save one; that one, his granddaughter Elsie, aged six, whose bonny, curly red hair tumbled all around her thin little shoulders.

All Dougal's thought and soul were centered on the little girl. He loved his engines because by serving them he served Elsie. He loved his friend, dour old Captain Stephenson of the *Melville*, but one of the reasons for that affection was the knowledge that old Stevie would never prefer a younger chief engineer. It is twelve years at least before a girl of six can marry or fend for herself. Twelve years make a man of seventy-two, eighty-four. While Dougal worked, his pay took care of Elsie. If he died, his insurance would do the same, but if he were discharged there would be no insurance, and idleness ashore would eat up his meager savings. The fear of discharge was always present.

That fear increased when old Stephenson became sick. When the old captain was carried ashore, and a new skipper, a young skipper, came to take over the *Melville* for the rest of the cruise, Dougal's forebodings mounted to terror. For friendship's sake, for Elsie's sake, he wanted Stevie back; moreover, he disliked Captain Carew from the instant the tall skipper, lean and straight as the foremast, jet black of eye and hair, came striding up the gangplank carrying a squawking red and green parrot.

What kind of skipper carries a pet? Now to be sure, Dougal had a tiny monkey in his own room, but he had purchased the tiny black beast in obedience to a scrawl from Elsie.

It was the first time Elsie had asked him for a present while he was away from home, and the heart supposed to pump machine oil had swelled; even the scar shared the faint flush of pleasure. Dougal had strode up the gangplank with the little monkey in his arms, and eyes glaring right and left, grimly defying any man to grin at him. Nevertheless a skipper with a parrot left him with a feeling of uneasiness.

The formal interviews with the new commander before the ship left port deepened both the old engineer's dislike and his dread. Captain Carew, he discovered, was anxious to show the owners a profit, but his methods were not those of old Stevie, or Dougal. Instead of economy and low costs, Carew's watchword was increased earnings—quicker passages, quicker turn-arounds, more tons of freight delivered every month.

Dougal doubted whether the profits under the new system would offset the increased costs, and it was certain the showing of economy he had made in his engine room would vanish if the captain had his way. Dourly he set himself in opposition to Carew's enthusiastic plans.

The *Melville's* engines were old, he objected. He could not increase speed. As to saving time in port by coaling less frequently, he had enough coal to get to the next port, and a reserve of fifty tons under the after well-deck besides. They were anchored in a French port; coal was a shilling a ton cheaper if they bought at a British island.

Carew's jet black eyes were hard before that conference was over. The desire for a younger engineer, who would cooperate with his scheme, was plain on the lean, dark face. Dougal saw it there. As for himself, he wanted old Stephenson back, and that was plain enough to see, too. The two men parted stiffly, neither willing to yield an inch.

THAT animosity should have arisen between them was unfortunate, for their desires were the same. The command of the *Melville* was the big opportunity of Carew's life, and if he was incisive and curt, the reason was that he was so eager to make a good record that he could scarcely sleep. He was much too highly strung to be tactful or polite. There was a girl in New York whom he could marry if he got a captain's pay. It was she who had asked him to bring her home a parrot. Her picture was on Carew's desk. Dougal saw it, yet how did he know whether the pert nosed, bobbed haired girl who stared

from the silver frame was the captain's sister or fiancée? In the old engineer's eyes, Carew was a daft young gallant who was keeping Stephenson on the beach, and whose ideas of running a ship were likely to take the bread out of wee Elsie's mouth.

The feud needed only a spark to set it alight, and as bad luck would have it, the weather was hot and still when the *Melville* put to sea. The ship was an oven. Every door was hooked open for air, and the heat made animals restless. Dougal was in the engine room when through the dull gray sheen of moving steel streaked a flash of green and scarlet plumage. Above the thump and clack of the engines echoed a raucous, inhuman shriek.

Dougal leaped to catch the captain's parrot. It swerved in midair. Wings beat against his face; a beak ripped a gash in his bald scalp.

"*Awrrk! Awrrk!* What the hell! What the hell! What the hell! *Awrrk!*" chanted the parrot.

The engineer was in no mood to submit tamely to insult aggravated by mayhem. From a tool rack he plucked an eighteen-inch S-wrench and penned the parrot into the space between the bulkhead and the high pressure cylinder. The wrench swung up—and hung poised. Not because Dougal had any loss of desire to do murder, but because the parrot was perched on the main steam pressure gage. All gages are expensive, and this one was absolutely necessary for the engineer to keep watch on the consumption of coal.

"Pretty Polly!" Dougal pleaded. "Move over on to something solid, damn ye!"

The blood welled from the scratch across the bald scalp. Dougal made a tentative, overcautious poke with the S-wrench which the parrot sidestepped with annoying ease.

"*Awrrk!* What the hell—hell—hell—hell!" it screamed.

"Dinna be takin' the words out of my mouth," growled Dougal.

"Shall I give it a poke?" cried an oiler, running with a can, the spout of which was three feet long. "I'll make it fly and you can hit it in the air."

"It's punishment I've in mind, not sport," Dougal snorted. "Couple on a hose and souse the screamin' deil! Look at yon, wull ye?" The parrot was snapping its beak and seemed about to take the aggressive. Dougal hefted his S-wrench hopefully. "Bird he may ca' it, but a flying bolt cutter, wi' a nasty heart an' a vocabulary that would shame a freethinker, is what it is. And the Old Man ca's it a pet!"

"Mr. MacTavish!" bellowed the skipper down the engine room hatch.

"Weel?" called the chief sulkily. He added under his breath, "Be handy wi' the hose, oiler. I'm na minded to let yon green and red hellion taste Scottish blood and never lose a feather."

"MacTavish!" bellowed the skipper.

His voice was brittle with rage. Disregarding engine room etiquette, he came running down the ladder, holding a monkey by the scuff of the neck. The little beast, scarcely more than eight inches long, with black fur and a gray face like that of a wicked old man, was chattering violently and scratching with feet and hands.

"MacTavish, take this monk of yours and wring its neck—or I will," he exploded. "The—the—dirty little varmint has been in my cabin."

"Yer frightening the poor beastie," retorted MacTavish mildly. "He's a playful little gillie."

"Playful?" Carew's black eyes glittered. "Playful be damned, sir! Understand this is no joke. That monkey of yours tore eight pages out of the log book and poured ink over my white uniforms. When I chased him he used my bed. Understand? Used my bed damn improperly and when I threw a shoe at him he broke my picture. Smashed the glass and dropped it in the puddle of ink. The only picture my girl would give me—"

"Ye shouldna have alarmed him," crooned MacTavish with satisfaction.

"Dinna be rough, now, Captain, for yer parrot has been usin' my head for a choppin' block."

"Don't hurt that parrot! It's a present—"

"For your girl? It should remind her of ye, language and disposition both," retorted the chief sarcastically.

But his animus against the bird had vanished. He was about to invite the skipper to get Polly off the steam gage, charitably hoping that the attempt would cost Carew a finger; but just then the oiler went into action.

Dougal MacTavish had trained his men to obey orders. In haste to square accounts before the skipper could rescue his pet, the oiler turned on the first hose he caught up. This happened to be a steam hose. With a roar a cloud of white vapor burst against the steam gage. Polly gave one scream; then a bedraggled bunch of green and red feathers dropped to the deck and lay still.

For an instant Carew gripped the monkey. His knuckles were white with desire to strangle it. Then by an effort of will he unclamped his tensed fingers, and the little beast scampered across the steel deck, climbed MacTavish's leg and buried its head under the engineer's dungaree jacket.

"MacTavish! I'm aware you wanted me off this ship, but I thought you too much of a man to kill a defenseless bird because I owned it."

"That wasna my intention," Dougal bristled.

"Don't apologize. The parrot's dead. I'll keep my own opinion of your motive. Since I'm here, I want to tell you there's a hurricane warning out."

"That has nowt to do wi' me. And I apologize for nothing," growled the engineer.

The presence of the oiler forced the two officers to control themselves, and their anger gnawed inward like acid.

"You refused to buy coal," Carew reminded.

"I'll na fail to gie ye steam."

Dougal MacTavish was enraged at what he regarded as an attempt to interfere with his department. It was his habit to save money by buying coal at the most favorable place, scraping his bunkers down to the steel, if necessary, to finish the runs between. He was very short of bunker coal at this instant, but in view of such emergencies he kept fifty tons in a small compartment in the after well-deck—a place impossible to reach from below decks, because it was surrounded by the cargo holds and difficult of access at all times. For the storage of reserve coal it was ideal, since shifting the fuel to the regular bunkers was such a task that the firemen would sweep the bunkers before they would undertake it.

MacTavish, however, did not want to try to get at this coal during a West Indian hurricane. He calculated swiftly. He knew to a ton how much the *Melville* carried in her bunkers; to a mile, almost, the distance to the next port. There was enough. Yes, even allowing for the reduced speed which a hurricane would make necessary, just enough. Then what did this black eyed skipper mean by talking of hurricane? Carew wanted him to shift coal so that the firemen could waste it; wanted to get him off the ship to get even for the death of a silly parrot.

"The coal is my responsibility, sir," said Dougal formally. "Your duty is to keep the ship on its course."

"I don't need you to remind me," snapped Carew.

Dougal's stubbornness gave Carew an opportunity to teach the engineer who the real commander of the ship was, which the young captain, seething with anger, was powerless to resist. The *Melville* was making short runs and was less than a hundred miles from the next port on her schedule. Carew, however, had made up his mind to alter the route and steam for another port a hundred miles farther away.

By doing so he would save time and money for the owners. The bit of navigation which had led him to this conclusion was intricate and technical, and Carew

was proud of himself for having figured it out. An old fashioned skipper would have considered his ports of call inviolate, yet the *Melville* carried no passengers or mail to limit her freedom of action.

One side of a hurricane is always more dangerous to shipping than the other. When Carew plotted the position of the storm, according to the wireless warnings, he had perceived that to go to the nearest port would force the *Melville* to cross the right hand, or dangerous semicircle of the storm, and might send her through the storm's center where there would be real danger of shipwreck. By changing course and making a longer run, he would pass through the left hand, or navigable semicircle. Reefs and islands would force him to run close to the center, but while the winds would be strong they would not endanger the old vessel.

By this stratagem he would avoid the possibility of damage to his ship and have better weather conditions for entering port and unloading at each place. The matter of a hundred miles extra distance seemed to him immaterial. To worry over coal would do MacTavish good. He was too stiff necked and cocksure to make a satisfactory chief unless he changed his tactics. That Dougal had his coal figured almost to the ton never occurred to the skipper. Ordinarily chief engineers have a much greater reserve than they will admit.

"Very well, Mr. MacTavish. The coal is your responsibility, and the course mine," Carew decided.

He picked up his parrot and climbed stiffly up the engine room ladder. The parrot was the first gift his fiancée had ever asked him for, and Carew was very much in love.

AN ENGINE room has no compass; the bridge, no means of estimating coal consumed. While the *Melville* steamed toward the hurricane neither MacTavish nor Carew observed anything which varied from the normal ship routine. The bridge throbbed to the steady beat of the engines. Below decks Dougal felt the long heave of the swell running before the storm. The sunlight on the engine room skylight changed to the dull gloom reflected from coppery green clouds. Rain beat on the glass in heavy squalls, and every minute the wind increased.

The heave of the swell became a succession of violent shocks as flattened seas charged the *Melville*'s bow. The creaking of straining frames grew shriller in pitch, until even amid the noises of the engine room Dougal was conscious of the laboring of the ship. The engines checked, or raced; the ship seemed to gather its strength, to wrestle, leap forward and fall back like a strong man plunging through waist deep snow.

All these were the normal signs of a gale increasing in fury. Dougal left instructions that he be called when the skipper stopped to pick up the pilot, which he judged would be about three o'clock in the morning, and went to sleep holding the trembling little monkey in his arms.

He was awakened by the first assistant engineer, a tall, hollow chested Welshman who was white to the lips. The gray light of dawn showed through the portholes of Dougal's room. The ship was straining in a storm of redoubled force.

"We're burning coal dust, Chief. There ain't two tons left," gulped the assistant.

"Where are we?"

"I don't know. Hove-to off the port, waiting for the weather to moderate, I reckon. Tell the Old Man we got to go in."

"Stephenson would have had us in five hours back," Dougal growled. "Go back to your work. I'll put a flea in Carew's lug."

The old engineer dressed with a faint premonition of trouble. It was seven o'clock, four hours after the time the *Melville* should have been in harbor, yet she did not feel as though she were hove-to The engines were making standard speed, instead of being slowed down. The monkey jibbered in terror and climbed to his breast whenever he put it down.

At last he buttoned the tiny creature inside his jacket and hurried to the bridge.

On deck the force of the wind drove his breath down his throat. He had seen a harder blow and higher waves in his fifty years of seafaring, but not often. This was one of those great storms that come once or twice in a decade. Spray flew all around the ship.

Through the spindrift old Dougal peered in the direction where land should have been. He hoped to catch a glimpse of storm whipped palms and the white shaft of a lighthouse; instead, two miles to leeward, breakers boiled on a submerged reef.

Dougal's hands crept to his jaw. Grimly, with firm pressure, he stroked the scar from chin to gnarled ear lobe. There seemed to be a weight on his chest. Near the *Melville's* proper port of call there were no submerged reefs. Across the bridge the skipper swayed to the violent pitching of his vessel. Perhaps the young fool did not know, Dougal thought. Perhaps he had miscalculated the leeway, or the force of the current.

The chief clutched the skipper's shoulder and pointed toward the breakers.

"Look yon, man! What's them?"

"First of the Cayman Reef. Be breakers to leeward of us now for the next forty miles," snapped Carew, whom the strain of an all night watch had made irritable. "What of it? I've got plenty of sea room."

"The Caymans!" gasped Dougal. "Man, ye're a hundred miles off your course."

"Would be if I were headed for Grenada, but I'm going to St. Lucia."

"You'll no," said Dougal grimly.

"Why not?"

"Because I've but two tons of coal, and when that's gone we'll be drifting on the Caymans."

Carew's jaw hardened.

"I suggested—you said the coal was your responsibility," he said.

"Could I ken ye were goin' gallivantin' over the Western Ocean?" Dougal retorted. "Weel I kenned ye were hot to be rid of me, but I didna think ye'd risk your ship to gie an auld man the sack. Dinna be denyin' that was in your mind."

"It was," Carew confessed. "You wanted to throw me off the ship to get the berth back for Stephenson, or you wouldn't have taken chances on your coal."

"Aye. And for mair reason than havin' auld Stevie back. Weel—let's leave bygones be bygones. Our bickering's put the ship in sore trouble."

"Maybe we can burn wood—rip up decks?" Carew suggested in desperation.

"Oh, aye, maybe. Ye'll be needing more steam than wood will give to claw off yon reefs," grunted the engineer.

Though it was true that by stripping the ship they might win clear, no owners would forgive an engineer who allowed himself to be caught in such a predicament. Dougal's job was in jeopardy and he was thinking of Elsie.

"Two tons of coal will last awhile. We needna be wrecking the ship right away," he remarked. "If ye'll put out oil bags to smooth the seas a wee, I'll be havin' a try for the reserve fuel."

"You'll never make it. When you've dug out a couple of tons the coal will shift and bury you."

"Maybe no," said Dougal tranquilly.

The steel gray eyes looked straight at the skipper. The man whose only love was supposed to be his engines, whose blood was reputed to be machine oil, had made up his mind. Job or no job, the insurance which would rear and educate Elsie remained. He doubted whether the coal could be shifted successfully, but if he failed he did not desire to survive the attempt.

"Gie me the chance, Skipper. The fault is most mine, bein' the older man, who shouldna hae been led astray by anger. It's for your ship—aye, and mair."

"I'll go with you."

"You'll no," Dougal contradicted in a tone that brooked no argument. "I said the coal was my responsibility."

A FEW minutes sufficed to make all the preparations that were possible. Oil bags prevented the seas from breaking over the deck, but did little to reduce the violent rolling and pitching of the vessel. Booms were rigged over the hatch so that as fast as Dougal filled a bag with coal it could be snatched away by a steam winch. He armed himself with a coal scoop and hung a whistle around his neck. One blast was to be the signal that the coal bag was filled; three blasts that the coal was shifting and the crew should come to his rescue.

"All ready," Carew reported.

The engineer unbuttoned his coat and handed the monkey to the skipper, smiling when the little beast fought to escape.

"He remembers ye wanted to wring his neck. Dinna be rough with him," he said. On second thought he pulled out his watch and passed that to the skipper also. Inside the case was a picture of Elsie, her name and address. "It's a guid watch. No need for it bein' broken."

"Is that all you're thinking of? Man, haven't you any nerves at all?" cried Carew wonderingly.

"All for the noo," said Dougal firmly. "Mayhap if ye look inside the case—aweel, I'll be gangin' along."

He departed on the run, flung open the hatch and jumped ankle deep into the coal.

Instantly a violent lurch of the ship flung him against the iron walls of the compartment. The impact dazed him. He dropped on both knees, pressing his hand to a jagged gash that had opened over his left eye. Another lurch threw him on all fours. The bag dropped through the hatch. He pulled himself upright by the rope, but the instant he stooped for his shovel he was flung face down in the black dust.

He rose to his knees, braced himself in the sliding coal and dug grimly with shortened shovel. The bag filled slowly. He blew once and it was snatched away, to be replaced by another. Dust in his nostrils, the strain of maintaining his position, the fierce labor with the shortened shovel were making Dougal pant. Nevertheless bag after bag was filled and was borne away. Each represented a hundred pounds.

He tried to keep track of the amount he dug, but lost count. Again and again he was thrown against the iron walls of the compartment. Blood trickled into his eyes. Dust choked him. He must have dug at least a ton, for he had gradually burrowed out a hollow from himself. Coal constantly slid down the sides upon him, as sand slides into a circular pit at the bottom of which labors an ant. Grimly Dougal eyed that powdery, black pile of coal, higher now than his head. He felt the *Melville* heel before a great wave. Coal showered upon him, and still the ship rolled as though she never meant to rise. She heeled ten degrees, twenty, thirty . . .

Dougal perceived the exact instant at which the black mass of coal started to slide upon him, but there was no escape. A wave of coal crushed him. Black grit pressed into eyes and mouth, and his breath was cut off.

Slowly, very slowly the *Melville* rolled back to an even keel, shaking off part of the coal that had buried him. He struggled feebly, and his head broke through the dust into the precious air. Coal covered him to the shoulders. He pulled one arm clear, and pawed like a dog, pushing back the black dust that slid and trickled down the slope of coal toward his mouth.

On deck whistles were blowing—three blasts, repeated over and over.

Dougal set his own whistle to his lips.

"Nae mon could do mair than me in sich a sea," he muttered, filled his laboring lugs. He blew one blast.

The coal bag, partly filled by the slide, was snatched away. They would think that he had filled it, that he was all right. When the next big wave came they would think he had been buried before he had had time to call for help. Let them

think. He had no desire for rescue, nor fear of death.

The hand above the surface ceased to paw the coal away from his lips. Dougal closed his eyes.

The fall of a light body on the coal, tiny paws that stroked his forehead, roused Dougal from his stupor. Shivering, chattering with fright, the monkey tried to climb on his bald head to escape the sliding coal.

"Poor beastie! It was better judgment to bide wi' the skipper ye hate than come to die wi' your ain master," Dougal muttered, yet his heart was touched.

His free hand groped to catch the little animal, only to fail. His muscles were leaden, his eyes dim.

Down upon the two leaped Carew. He dropped to his knees and dug at the engineer's head, sobbing curses under his breath. His hands were too small for the task. The coal slid back as fast as he displaced it. The skipper's whistle shrilled three blasts, and men ran to the hatch. They peered down, but in the narrow space there was no room for more than one man to work at a time. Carew was scraping with the shovel now, but still no more than holding his own.

"Damn you staring nitwits, throw down a sling!" he snarled over his shoulder.

Abandoning his efforts to keep Dougal's nose out of the dust, he seized the rope tossed him by the crew and burrowed into the coal, seeking to pass the line around Dougal's body.

Carew succeeded just as the ship heeled to the next big wave. A slide of coal half buried him. He fought clear holding the rope's end, took a hitch around the hook that held the coal bag, and blew his whistle once. For an instant he feared Dougal would be cut in half. Then the old engineer's body was dragged upward through the coal. Unconscious, limp, but with a grim smile still stamped on the scarred face, Dougal was swung through the hatch into the upper air.

Through the haze of coal dust Carew stared around for the monkey. The little beast was gone, buried by the slide. A dozen men were calling for the skipper to get out of the hole. A rope was thrown down to him, but instead of climbing he knotted it around his waist.

"You'll be buried!" shouted a sailor.

"If I'm buried, pull me out by the rope, you fool!" snarled the skipper. "MacTavish's monkey is still down here. He'd have died if it hadn't been for that damned little beast. It's earned a chance!"

CAREW flung himself on the coal, shoveling like a madman. He was seeking a glimpse of black, silky fur in the blackness. He filled bag after bag without finding it, until at last, the inevitable slide knocked him headlong and buried him with coal. He was dragged into the air, and when he caught his breath, fought to go back. Two men pinioned him—the chief mate and the tall, hollow chested first assistant engineer.

"Stop tryin' to kill yourself!" shouted the mate. "The barometer's begun to rise and the sea'll be calmer in an hour."

"We got coal enough for awhile. We'll pull through, sir," howled the assistant engineer. "The monkey's dead by now, sir. You can't help it."

"Oh, all right," agreed the skipper, staggering to his feet. "How's MacTavish?"

"Living, but still unconscious, sir."

"Damn if I know what report to make about this," Carew said. "Ship safe and McTavish O.K., eh? That's well. How much coal did I shovel?"

"Just four bags, sir, before the slide buried you. MacTavish got out twenty-six."

"I don't see how," Carew muttered. "I'd have burned up all the wood on the ship before I'd have worked in that compartment two minutes, except—when I looked down the monkey was trying to dig MacTavish out of the coal with its tiny little paws. None of the rest of us even guessed he was caught. Seemed to me I just *had* to get that monkey. Wish I could have."

"Yes, sir," said the assistant engineer, who was an unimaginative sailor and had no official report to bother him. A monkey was a mischievous little beast worth about five dollars, and that was all there was to it as far as he was concerned.

Carew, however, walked thoughtfully to the room of the chief engineer. On the way he opened the watch which had been entrusted to him. The picture of a little girl with curly hair falling around her thin shoulders, and an elfin, wistful, lovable face, gave him an insight into certain matters which puzzled him. Yet his problem was still unsolved. He sent the oiler who was caring for Dougal out of the room, then sat by the bed until the old man shuddered and opened his eyes.

As Dougal recovered consciousness he frowned and groaned as though disappointed to find himself safe in his own room.

"You got out enough coal to save the ship, Chief," said Carew promptly.

The bald head only wagged on the pillow.

"Does nae good," Dougal whispered.

Now that Carew had seen the picture of Elsie he believed he understood why the chief was disappointed at rescue, but he wanted confirmation of his idea. He waited until the engineer had recovered a little strength.

"MacTavish, how old are you?" he asked.

"Seventy-two," said the old man.

The skipper's lips parted in amazement. Then he nodded slowly.

"Yes, I think I see," he remarked half to himself, and added, "I was in the compartment after we'd pulled you out, shoveling coal to save your monkey. Sorry I couldn't. However, I know that it must have been the first big wave that buried you. Wasn't it?"

"Weel?" challenged Dougal. Weak as he was, the blue-gray eyes were like steel.

"Your head wasn't covered, either. I know how I felt when the slide buried me," pursued the skipper. "You could have blown your whistle. I've seen the picture of your little girl. Did you need your job—your insurance—that badly?"

"Aye," said Dougal.

"That was why you wanted me off the ship and Stephenson back?"

"Aye." In the old Scot's voice was no request for mercy. "What aboot it?"

A smile broke through the coating of coal dust that covered Carew's lean face.

"Why, just this: before the hurricane warning I got a wireless message from the owners informing me that Captain Stephenson had died of his illness. They intimated that if I did well on this trip I'd be confirmed in command, and asked me to make up my mind about my officers. You in particular. They felt you were somewhat old, but while Captain Stephenson lived they hadn't felt they wanted to make a change. I was going to tell you about Stephenson, but, well, that business of the parrot came up. I was sore, and I decided you were going to retire, all right."

The old engineer made no reply.

"Mac," Carew went on softly. "You're a stiff necked Scotchman and too close mouthed for your own good, but you're all man. As far as I'm concerned, first, any man that can get out twenty-six bags of coal to my four will never be too old to be my chief engineer. The job's yours as long as you want it."

The blue-gray eyes glowed. The dread of discharge that had harried Dougal for many years was gone. He drew a deep breath, like a man relieved of a burden.

"And second?" he asked. "There's aye a catch to good news."

"And second," said Carew, "when I get back to port I'm going to get married. I'll be confirmed as skipper all right when the owners learn how we ducked this storm. That'll also explain why we needed reserve coal. So I want you for my best man, and Elsie for a flower girl. Does that suit you?"

"Aye," said Dougal. On his bruised, scarred face a grin slowly developed. "I ken now my ain `sel'," he chuckled. "Worryin' makes a quick temper, but is it na grand, the things a mon will do for the sake of his womenfolk?"

*Continuing*

# THE DARK ROAD

*By*

HUGH PENDEXTER

## A Novel of

YOUNG Enos Halwood of Virginia found Plumstead, the family seat of his kinsmen, the Doanes, a hotbed of Toryism, his five cousins hard riding ruffians, nevertheless high in British favor because of their conscienceless methods of supplying Howe's troops in Philadelphia with horses.

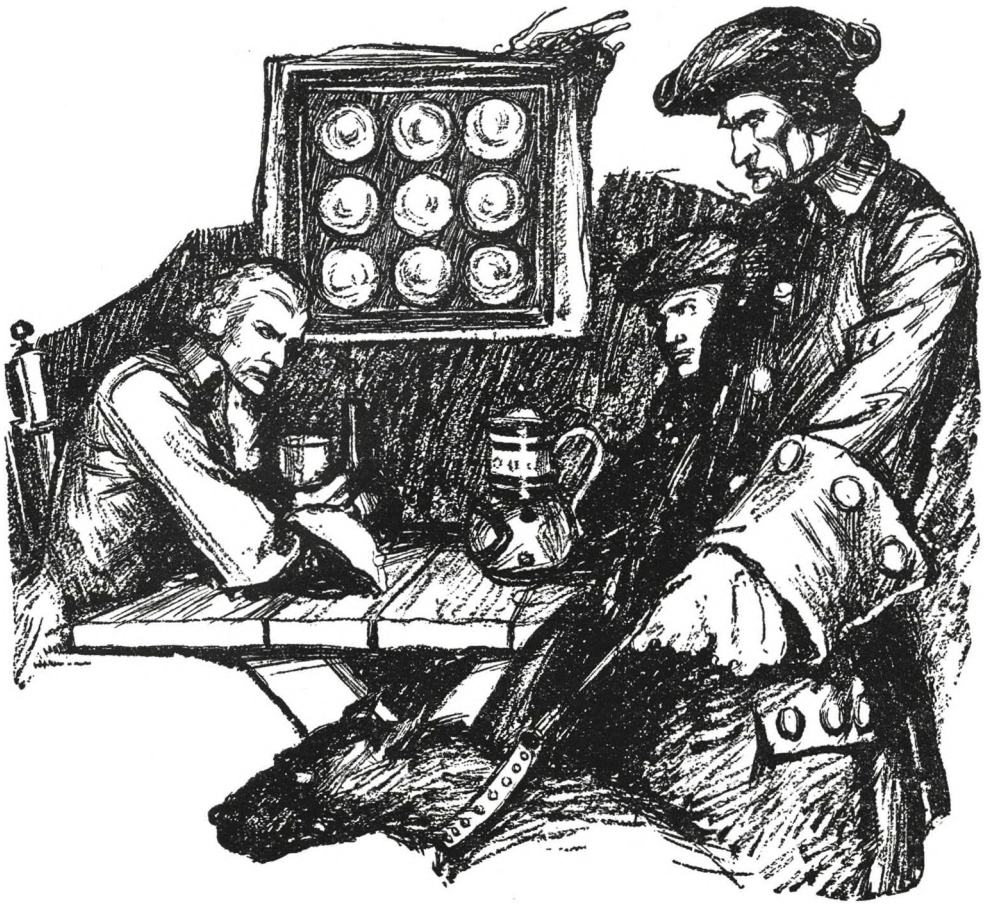
For the swaggering, drunken officers who visited the house Halwood had only disgust. It was impossible for the impetuous Virginian to stand their insolence, and he tossed one of them, a Captain Long, through a window.

Shortly after on the road to Philadelphia, Halwood fell afoul of the highwayman Captain Shatil. In a terrific fight the Virginian rescued from the outlaw Sam Lydyg, a deserter from the American army. Halwood was amused by the fellow's boast that he was the cleverest thief in the country, and advised him to return to the army with the horses taken from Shatil.

In the city the Virginian met up with his enemy, Captain Long. Hot words were exchanged and a duel was arranged, in which Halwood wounded the Britisher.

On his return to Plumstead the Virginian felt he could not continue in a position and atmosphere he detested. After telling Nancy Doane, his pretty cousin and his only confidante, he set out for the American camp at White Marsh.

General Washington suggested he would be of more use in Philadelphia, connected as he was with the powerful Tory family of Doane, and the Virginian concurred.



# *Old Revolutionary Days*

Two days later he found himself back in the city—supplied with a ring which had a counterpart on the finger of an unknown American agent, and contacted with Sam Lydyg who, at his request, had been detailed for his use.

Halwood, through the influence of Major André, with whom he was friendly, secured an appointment in the British intelligence; thus at one and the same time he was a spy in two armies.

"Howe's Ferret," Blidgett, head of the British secret service, was openly suspicious of his new recruit. The Virginian's first meeting with the man who was known as Captain Death because of his ghastly resemblance to a walking corpse, was unnerving. The Ferret came to Halwood's table in the City Tavern.

"I smell rebel!" he said. The Virginian's reaction was characteristic.

"Get out," he said, "or I will throw you out!"

Halwood secured lodgings in the house of an eccentric named Kinney when he learned that the Ferret resided there. Then he deliberately set about allaying the suspicions of the corpse-like creature.

One evening Major André told Halwood that he would be of more use in White Marsh. Inwardly quivering with excitement, the Virginian asked why.

"Because," answered André coldly, "we have word that the Americans will attack within two days!"

"Your informant is either a fool or he is selling you out. Some one is working against me. Give me the name of your man."

"Impossible," replied André. "But I can tell you that he will be here tomorrow morning. He has a hiding place between here and White Marsh."

Feverishly Halwood saddled his mare. There could be but one such place—the deserted manor house; and the man Captain Shatil . . .

Once again within the gloomy shades of the ancient house Halwood heard Shatil jeering at Syk, a timid follower.

"Afraid of dead men, are you? Well, I ain't!"

"Liar!" roared Halwood, springing from his hiding place.

Shatil snatched up his long pistol, and two weapons exploded as one. As the outlaw collapsed, Syk threw both hands over his head, waiting to be slaughtered.

BUT HALWOOD had finished his business and was feeling his way down the cellar stairs, softly making for the gray patch that marked the open door. Then he ran his best and again was in the saddle and riding furiously through the early morning for the shelter of Philadelphia. He was halted but once before reaching the stable, and a glance at his face under the rays of a lantern satisfied the sentry. After caring for his mare he went to his nearby room and slept until late in the morning.

His awakening was very disagreeable. He beheld Blidgett standing by his bed.

"How the devil did you get in here like this, without knocking?" he demanded.

"I have entered the apartments of high officers many times without knocking," answered the Ferret. "You were out of the city for two hours early this morning."

"Certainly. Some rascal has been sending in false reports. You have heard that the enemy will make a sortie against us?"

"Major André probably told you," sneered Blidgett.

"There will be no sortie. Your informant was a highwayman before he posed as a British spy. He has collected pay from both sides."

Blidgett's bony face was almost tinged with color, and the drawn lips, if possible, widened the perpetual grin. His voice was low as he said—

"If you can prove that, Mr. Halwood you have done us a service."

"Between now and tomorrow evening will prove it. You and Major André expect the American army to make an attack before sundown, tomorrow."

"Threat to attack," corrected Blidgett.

"The army will do neither. Their powder is so low they can not spare volleys for their dead."

"You have reported that already. I almost begin to believe it. Mark you this. No man who is playing straight need ever mind when and how I come and go. Only the guilty need to fear."

"I was naturally surprised to awake and find you in my room. Beyond that I do not mind."

"You believe it is necessary to have two lodgings?" asked Blidgett.

"It's convenient. There are men in Philadelphia who would be glad to know I was underground and who would be quick to send me there."

"Name them," grimly urged the specter.

"If I could do that I would take care of them myself."

"That's the right spirit, Mr. Halwood. When you want a job well done, do it yourself. The next thirty-six hours will be very interesting."

"Nothing will happen from the American camp," said Halwood with a yawn.

Blidgett bowed himself out and softly closed the door.

For the next thirty-six hours Halwood spent his time in taverns, waiting for Shatil's information to be tested. On the

second day he noticed the movement of troops, Grenadiers and Light Horse, to the northern outskirts of the city. Spectators were quick to gather when the soldiers in their brilliant uniforms maneuvered, and Halwood was an interested spectator.

He also was interested in beholding Mr. Kinney, his star gazing landlord, following the columns of soldiers. The old man, smothered by his long, tangled hair and bushy beard, carried a staff instead of a cane. Halwood gave him greeting, and Mr. Kinney replied:

"I can't just make out what's going to happen, but something is. The stars have been trying to tell me night after night. You opine the rebels can hold out much longer?"

Halwood laughed derisively, and answered—

"Against those stout fellows?" And he nodded toward some grenadiers swinging along behind midgets of drummer boys, who were shattering the street with their staccato march music, "World Turned Upside Down".

"It don't seem likely," mumbled the ancient, and he shuffled away.

The American troops failed to appear, and at dusk the troops returned to their quarters. At the City Tavern, at supper that night, Blidgett worked his way to Halwood's table, rubbing his bony hands softly. Bending low, he whispered:

"You were right, sir. By and by I would like to have a little talk with you".

"Any time before I awake in the morning," pleasantly said Halwood.

Later that evening General Howe and some staff officers, accompanied by a group of younger officers and a gay party of Tory ladies, looked in for a bit of gaming. Major André brought Halwood up and presented him.

"I remember hearing about you," genially said Sir William. "I wish you could make your brother Virginian behave. My soldiers are cursing him with rare heat for not keeping his appointment this afternoon. I am glad to hear good reports of you. A young man may climb high if he clings to the ladder tightly."

With that he was devoting his attention to roulette and trying a system which seldom won. Halwood, in the background, enjoyed the vivacity and beauty of the ladies, and especially admired Mistress Peggy Shippen. Sir William, like a boy at play, laughed inordinately at quip and jest, and ever had a bevy of women about him. Some of these, scandalously bold, appropriated his gold pieces to wager on the turn of a card. With England's gold chest behind him plus a fortune flowing in as his share of prize money, the commander-in-chief gave the impression of never having a care or a worry in all his life.

He was made for pleasuring and not for warring. Possessing unlimited personal courage, his love for dallying was ever an obstacle to British success in America. He had loved and gamed while besieged in Boston by a phantom army of farmers and shop clerks. He had let opportunity after opportunity pass unheeded while taking his pleasure in New York. His occupancy of Philadelphia was but a repetition of what he had enjoyed wherever his headquarters might be. Because of the plundering and ravishing of his mercenaries he was blamed for what he never had countenanced, and yet had not suppressed.

THE EVENING passed, as had so many others, entirely to Sir William's liking. Finally, wearying of gaming, he called for toasts. His Majesty was pledged with much gusto. Perdition to the rebels was heartily wished with more splashing of wine. Local belles were toasted. A pretty girl toasted, "All brave gentlemen!" As his potations increased Sir William rested a broad hand on the table occasionally, to correct his balance. He laughed immoderately as the jests increased. Blidgett was present, but kept far in the background, as if realizing his death's head was a poor adornment for such company. In a lull of the rapidly

accumulating toasts, Sir William straightened his elegant figure and gazed about for silence, holding a goblet half raised. The merry making suddenly ceased. Sir William, now speaking gravely, said:

"I give you the Northern army and its gallant leader, General Burgoyne. By this time may they have the enemy beaten."

Huzzas and shrill cries of approval greeted the toast. A forest of arms sprang up, some bare and lovely, with dimpled elbows, others picturesque with sleeves of velvet and similar fine fabrics, the masculinity softened by the cuffs of lace and the jeweled rings. Halwood's arm was up, although under his breath he was heretic.

As the arms began to bend, and the glasses approached eager lips, an orderly burst into the room as if propelled by some great force. His entrance was so rude as to attract attention, and his features were distorted, as that of one drunk, or suffering from a serious distemper.

Sir William's face darkened. He stared stonily at the intruder and exclaimed:

"Damme, André! Find out what the clodhopper wants . . . Now, my friends, we will finish our libation to—"

The toast was never finished. The orderly, losing all sense of propriety because of the news he was bringing, hoarsely announced—

"General Burgoyne and his army have surrendered to Gates!"

A blank volley of artillery in the long room could not have been more disastrous to the company's mood. Sir William's glass fell to the floor to shatter and spill its ruby contents. His jaw went slack, his gaze was uncertain as it blankly became fixed on the agitated messenger. The silence for the moment was intense. Arms dropped and let fall the brimming glasses, and there was a carpet of broken glass and spilled wine. Consternation and amazement left the gathering mute. The impossible had happened.

Sobered by the momentous news, Sir William broke from the circle, dramatically complaining—

"And he had the finest artillery train ever sent to any army!"

This was an anticlimax. André cried fiercely:

"It can't be true! Sir Henry Clinton must have sent heavy reenforcements from New York!"

The orderly tore open his coat, yanked out a paper and explained—

"The news in this was given by Sir Henry to the courier whom I relieved!"

"Surrendered! Burgoyne surrendered to riff-raff!" shrilly cried a beautiful girl.

Sir William now had control of himself. Ignoring his fair companions, he nodded to members of his staff. As he was leading the way from the room an officer declared angrily—

"Reprisal at once!"

"Only the bagging of Washington can offset it," said a white haired colonel.

"And before that must come Red Bank. A scurvy menace."

Halwood was not sure, but he believed the last was uttered by the commander-in-chief as he gained the door.

Halwood turned to depart, and all but bumped into Blidgett. The man's face, with three little wrinkles across the taut forehead, was terrible. New fires blazed in his sunken orbs. His voice trembled as he muttered:

"The dastard! To be outgamed, outtricked by a mob! What a creature to serve his Gracious Majesty!"

He seemed to be completely oblivious to his surroundings. Halwood did not believe the man was conscious of having spoken aloud. He brushed by the Virginian without seeming to see him.

The room was quickly deserted. Halwood walked to his lodgings near the stable, his mind in a turmoil of pride and wonder. Burgoyne had surrendered!

"Just a moment," softly called a voice. He faced about to find Lydyg at his heels. "I thought you might need me this night," whispered the cleverest thief.

"Make White Marsh. Tell what you've seen and heard. And add this." Halwood paused and glanced about to make sure no skulking figure was near,

and whispered, "Tell them I believe Red Bank will be attacked very soon. Ride hard!"

## CHAPTER X

### DANGEROUS WRITING

MOSES DOANE came to town with thirty stolen horses. He was resplendent in garments a cavalier might envy, if not for the stains left by spilled wine and rough riding. He was accompanied by his brothers, and for several days the king's gold littered the gaming tables and enriched the shops. With his bellowing voice and flamboyant manner, he was a prime favorite in all places of amusement. It was not until the spree had ended that Halwood could get him aside to inquire about his sister.

"Oh, Nance is all right," gruffly assured Moses. "Curse it! I should have more gold pieces than this." And he stared at the double handful dubiously.

"And Plumstead? Everything the same there? Have you seen Captain FitzPatrick recently?"

"Everything is just the same. Nancy is teaching the school. Hired a young man to teach, but he was fool enough to fall in love with her and she couldn't bide him. Cap'n Fitz is up to his old tricks. Doesn't bother with livestock. Afraid of fussing up his fine clothes. He's turning out to be a regular cut-purse . . . Now, now. Let me think. Something Nancy bid me do . . . Ah! I have it."

He fumbled in a pocket and fished out a folded and sealed paper, and handed it across the table, explaining:

"For you. She'd scalp me if I'd forgotten it. I'll be moving round while you're reading it."

They were seated in the dining room of the tavern. Halwood urged him to remain and eat, and hoped he would refuse. Moses pleased him by departing, soon to be followed by a riff-raff of both sexes, eager to drink his health so long as wine and punch was forthcoming, and prone to laugh behind his broad back.

Halwood eagerly tore open the thin packet, and to his consternation found it to consist solely of the message he had sent by FitzPatrick on the eve of the second duel, and the letter he had sent by Marshall. He was deeply hurt and thoroughly nonplussed. His first impulse was to saddle the mare, ride to Plumstead and demand an explanation. Duty and pride smothered this inclination, but left him with a peculiar, empty feeling. He mechanically tore the paper in tiny bits and allowed the particles to sift through his fingers to the table. Then he stared down at the little mound, benumbed. He was sitting thus, stupidly groping for some answer to the enigma, when a hand clapped him on the shoulder and caused him to lift his head with a jerk; he was in a state of mind bordering on senseless anger. Finding his gaze resting on the beaming countenance of André, he attempted to compose his features.

"Haven't but a minute," babbled the officer. "Just had to drop in on the chance of seeing you, to say that you hit the truth about no sortie being made. Damme if I can guess how you knew that! Tricks in all trades, I suppose." He paused expectantly.

"Surely there must be tricks in my trade, Major," Halwood said gloomily.

Lowering his voice the major said:

"It made Sir William remember you. I had told him what you said. If you'd be a bit more active, and fetch news of what *is* to happen, you'd make your fortune. Burgoyne's fiasco was an awful blow—but we'll soon offset it. We'll—"

"My dear Major, not a word about anything the army is to do," interrupted Halwood. "I appreciate your frankness, but I wish to be absolutely ignorant of any military plans. I'm only curious to learn what the rebels plan to do."

"Right down good sense, Halwood. Yet you'll know quite soon. All Philadelphia will know it. Now I must be off to find Captain De Lancey. What with official routine we find it hard to finish our last set of scenery. I'm working on a waterfall, and it's giving me the devil's own trouble. But the proceeds go for

charity, and winter will find poor folks suffering."

Halwood had accompanied him to the door, thinking to walk along with him for a bit; and then he remembered the litter he had left on the table. He turned back to clear it up, and found it had vanished. Despite his perturbed state of mind he was puzzled. No waiter had been near the table; none was in sight now. Such celerity on the part of a servant was quite amazing. The fellow naturally would have paraded his office and would have remained to receive a largess. Returning to the table, Halwood admired the thoroughness of the servitor. Not an iota of the débris had been overlooked. His new calling already had made him supersensitive to trifles, an acuteness based on the ever present fear of being discovered. As he stood looking about him he was further perplexed by the entrance of a waiter carrying a brush and crumb tray. The fellow came to a halt, as if surprised. Then he was apologetically saying:

"Sorry you took the bother, sir. I was coming to clean it up."

"Meaning the torn paper, of course. But one of you did clean it up?"

The man shook his head, and said:

"No, sir, if you please. I saw it from the serving room, and came as soon as I could. But if the bother wasn't yours, it doesn't matter, sir."

"Not a bit," agreed Halwood. Ah, but it did matter. Any such trifling incident that he could not understand might matter tremendously. As the fellow was returning to his serving room duties he called after him, "By the way, waiter, have you seen Mr. Blidgett this morning? I was rather looking for him."

"Yes, sir. He was in the kitchen a bit ago. Came to get some bones for his dog if the black beast be a dog. I'll see if he's gone."

Halwood felt fingers of ice closing around his heart as he waited for the man to go and return. The waiter was back almost immediately, and reported that the Ferret had gone.

Halwood nodded and took to the street. He suddenly was deciding he had been spending too many nights away from the Kinney house. He walked rapidly and let himself in without seeing, or hearing, the African servant. The trap was open, an evidence that Mr. Kinney was in, but not asleep. Halwood entered his room and threw himself on the bed and attempted to think. He endeavored to recall the exact wording of his letter to Nancy. He remembered enough to realize that in Blidgett's shrewd mind the communication would kindle suspicion. From all he had learned about the man, suspicion was sufficient to seal a suspect's fate.

HIS INQUIRY included the American spy whose identity was unknown even at Washington's headquarters. From nowhere the thought suddenly popped into his head that Mr. Kinney might be playing that rôle. He was not conscious of any mental processes in building up this wild theory. Yet it persisted in his mind. Given a householder, situated as was Kinney, with the head of the intelligence department of the British army as a tenant; and another, known in the official set, as a British spy, as a roomer, there might be many opportunities for learning the enemy's secrets. This line of thought moved along with the conviction that Blidgett had collected the bits of paper. There was no relevancy between the two lines of thought, unless the suspicion became an established fact, and Mr. Kinney's aid could be secured.

Halwood came to his feet and gained the hall. With no show of concealment he climbed the ladder. Just how he would begin his search for the truth he did not know, beyond inquiring which side in the war the stars seemed to favor. After an opening was secured he must trust to inspiration. But despite the open trap the cupola was empty. To secure some profit from his intrusion Halwood directed his attention to what he could see of the tangled growth in the garden back of the mansion. The premises had been neglect-

ed, and suggested nothing beyond an excellent hiding place in an emergency—especially at night. The upper story of Howe's house was visible. A big chimney stack, close to the dome, blocked all view in another direction. Nor did the other two sides offer anything of interest.

But Kinney had entered the little observatory without coming up his own flight of stairs. Now Halwood could realize that that former discovery should have prompted closer attention to the eccentric. The floor of the dome formed the ceiling of the third story rooms except where it extended to the edge of the wall next to the garden. There was no suggestion of a hidden entrance, unless it be on the garden side; and this conclusion focused his attention on the walnut dresser. There was dust on the top of it and on the drawer knobs. It was an awkward piece of furniture to hoist into the dome, only to be left unused. Gingerly passing his hands behind it, Halwood pulled it from the wall. It moved easily and almost without a sound. Craning his neck, he peered behind it, and found the answer to Kinney's unexpected entrance. The dresser covered a small door in the wall, sufficient in size to permit the passage of a man's body. Without investigating further Halwood believed the secret passage extended to the cellar, and thence into the tangled garden. Working with great care, he replaced the dresser and descended to his room.

A few minutes later he heard heavy, lagging steps on the stairs, and then the clumping of feet up the ladder. Mr. Kinney had returned, this time openly; and Halwood was thankful he had not arrived a bit earlier. While the discovery of the secret entrance was bound to arouse his curiosity, later it was put aside while he attacked his major problem.

Removing his shoes, Halwood entered the wardrobe and pulled himself up on the beams, intending to cross to Blidgett's side of the house. He was halfway on his journey when his progress was halted by a bell-like baying. Satan was on the third floor and clamoring about something. Halwood crouched low, half expecting to see the terrible beast appear at the other end of the opening. Suddenly the dog became silent, and in his place Blidgett was hissing commands. The narrow slot, close to the roof, acted as a sounding board. The presence of the Ferret precluded any further investigation. The baying of the unmuzzled beast warned against a visit under any circumstances unless the intruder came suitably prepared. Halwood knew he must not again act on an impulse, but approach the task with mathematical precision.

He returned to the wardrobe and made haste to change to a suit of green, with silver buckles and buttons. He had learned his lesson. He would not again ignore the necessity of finesse. With the fingers of Fate groping close to his neck he tiptoed down the two flights of stairs and gained the street, without seeing anything of the black slave.

He turned down High Street, and was civilly recognized by several officers on the grounds of General Howe's quarters. Major André, parting from Count Donop, a colonel of the Hessians, joined him, saying:

"Playtime is almost over. Something will happen soon. You will hear high praise of Donop."

"My dear Major! Please, not a word," warned Halwood.

"Tush. You almost are finical, my dear man. By the way, you look like a King's forester in that green and silver. Strike me blind if you haven't given me an inspiration for costuming in a new play we shall put on after the holidays! A background of green, under silver moonlight, hero disguised as a forester, blending with the backdrop. Sort of a will-o'-the-wisp, you know. He is there, but is he there? The audience can scarcely be sure at times just where he is as he moves about." In this vein he ran on, the occasion of Count Donop's interview with Sir William being entirely forgotten.

When their ways parted Halwood sauntered toward the tavern, apparently hav-

ing the entire day for idling. Near the tavern and in an excellent position for watching the entrance, he entered a book stall and examined the wares, always with an eye for those entering and leaving the hostelry. After fifteen minutes of such browsing had passed he beheld the gaunt figure of Blidgett enter the place, his head swinging from side to side. Halwood laid down two shillings, pocketed his purchase and walked across the street. He considered it of imperative importance that he know the Ferret's whereabouts for a certain period of time.

He found his man drinking rum with Moses Doane. By some unexpected charm, the master spy had reduced the head of the Doanes to the level of a companion. Moses was laughing immoderately at some spicy story of life behind the scenes, and was half drunk. Halwood watched them, and marveled at the Ferret's endurance in tossing off big bumpers of the potent liquor. The hour was unseemly for such sturdy potations. That Blidgett had a motive was as positive a fact as is a sum in addition. He had set himself to overcome the Bucks County man's antipathy, and for the time being he was succeeding. It was near midday when Blidgett rose and left Moses and took to the street.

HALWOOD advanced and seated himself opposite his kinsman. Sniffing the air, he casually greeted—

"Rather early for such strong drink, cousin."

Moses, between a growl and a chuckle, replied:

"It's that damned death head. When he came in I wanted to throw him and his bare teeth through a window. By the time he got through with his funny stories I was asking him to stay. He's the devil!"

"Being about headquarters so much he must have some rare stories," said Halwood. "I would have expected him to talk about the horse market. They are still in need of them."

"He touched on that," yawned Moses. "Touched on most everything." He worried his brows; then his heavy face brightened, and he was adding, "He give me some mighty good advice. Told me to fetch Nancy down here. Says she'll beat 'em all for good looks."

Halwood glared at him with murder in his eyes. But Moses was too much befuddled to read glances. He continued:

"Of course, this isn't any place for a country wench without any head. But Nancy isn't that sort. She's got a man's mind. She can be as cold and hard as any of her brothers. And, damme, even if she is my own sister, she's most fetching for good looks."

"Moses, you know she would never come here," said Halwood coldly.

Moses leered cunningly and, with a chuckle, said:

"That's where you don't know your book, schoolmaster. She's been hungry to come for some time. If she could git a housekeeper to run the Big House, she'd be here, willy-nilly as to what I might think. Cap'n Long's been to the house since you fought him. A fine, upstanding man. Nancy begins to see his true worth, I fancy."

Halwood choked back hot words and carelessly asked:

"What else did Blidgett talk about? At one time I had a notion he didn't like me overmuch."

"Wrong again, schoolmaster," said Moses, with a deep laugh. "He's fond of you as father is of his child. Asked all about your teaching school. Vowed it served Long right when you heaved him through the window. Said you was a man of high spirit and would dare to do anything. He laffed his bony head 'most off when I told him how you wrestled Cap'n FitzPatrick and won his clothes. Vowed that showed you had—nish—nish—Damn such outlandish words!"

"Initiative?" suggested Halwood.

"That's the very one! He said Nancy was foolish to let herself fall in love with Long when she could marry a general officer. Ye know, cousin, if it wan't for

his bony head, drawn back lips and hollow eyes, he'd be quite likable."

Halwood remembered young Spanger and grimaced to conceal a shudder.

"What else did he say about me, Moses?" he urged. "It's mighty important for my advancement to know just how I stand with him."

"Oh, he likes you a heap! Why, kinsman, he's positive you'll go high. Go high—his very words. You can marry well, same's Nancy. He had a notion you might be partial to Nancy; but I set him right. I knew from Nance's face she was mad with you about something, when she give me that sealed paper to hand you. I've fixed it all right for both of you, I fancy." The last was pronounced with drunken seriousness. "Nancy oughter marry a title, while you go high, like Blidgett said."

"Possibly it's so written," said Halwood, as he rose to leave.

In his mind he was seeing a gibbet and something dangling from the end of a rope.

He wandered about the town until the mid-day hour, and then returned to the tavern. He came early to secure a seat near the serving room; for he needed Lydyg sorely. The cleverest thief, however, did not show up until after another servant had brought him his dinner. Blidgett did not appear and, somehow, his absence caused additional fear. While forcing himself to eat, Halwood was visioning the ghoul-like figure bending over the torn bits of paper and, with the malignant ingenuity of the devil, piecing them together.

Not until the long room was practically deserted did Lydyg put in an appearance to help in clearing the tables. When he came to Halwood, the Virginian told him—

"I'm suspected."

"Blidgett?" whispered Lydyg, without moving his lips.

Halwood nodded his head.

"Saddle the mare and ride for White Marsh," advised the thief.

"That would mean I was licked for life. I'm staying here. I want you to watch Blidgett. I want to know when he's out of the Kinney house. I want to be warned, if I'm inside, against his returning."

"Lord bless you, sir! That's my job. You're planning to get something. It's no work for you."

"It's something I must do. There'll be no great danger if I'm not surprised while doing it. I can get into his side of the house from mine. I've been there. Strings strung across the halls and rooms to ring bells."

"And the devil dog!" added Lydyg, with superstitious fear in eyes and voice.

"I fear the master, not the beast. This is your work. He will leave his apartment this evening to look in at headquarters, if he follows his habit. I want to be warned if he returns to the house."

"I can whistle so our army in White Marsh can hear it . . . But he may be away only for a bit."

"You must warn me when he comes back. If luck's with me I shall not need much time; only long enough to find and carry away some torn paper."

"Why, sir, in five minutes I can bring out all the paper in the house!"

"And the dog?"

Lydyg winced. He could steal the landlord's heavy watch. It was in his pocket at that moment, waiting until a suitable reward should be offered. He could forge an order on the commissary and steal liquor under the noses of the officers and men at White Marsh. Perhaps he was the cleverest thief to be found in any army. But he feared the jet-black, panther shaped creature even more than he did its owner. Then he was remembering his rescue from the Cumberly mansion and his restoration to the army without suffering a whipping. Speaking quite firmly, he decided:

"Even the dog can't stop me. I'll bash in his head, some way."

"Which would be the wrong way. Blidgett must have no sure proof that any one has been in his side of the house. Let it be as I say. Get me a dozen feet of strong, light cord."

FOR the first time Halwood could remember since meeting Blidgett, the man kept indoors for the greater part of the afternoon. From a street corner, masked by a thicket of shrubs, Halwood watched the Sixth Street mansion. What added to his fears was the mental picture of the uncanny creature working with all astuteness and unending patience in putting together the tiny bits of paper.

Dusk came, and from his position behind the shrubs the Virginian saw Nero cease working at the front of the house. As the shadows thickened he drew closer to the mansion. At last he was rewarded by the sight of Blidgett coming along the side of the house. He had not used the front door. The dog was not with him. As he disappeared down the street another figure detached itself from the hedge nearby and startled Halwood by rapidly advancing toward him. He was greatly assured to hear Lydyg saying:

"I'll be watching both corners from across the street. I can see as good as a cat in the dark."

Without a word, Halwood hastened to the front entrance.

Blidgett's rooms were lighted. The well oiled lock worked almost noiselessly, and for the second time that day Halwood was mounting to the third floor with the slave none the wiser. The trapdoor was closed, an evidence that Mr. Kinney was not at home.

Gaining his room and removing his shoes, he fashioned a noose in the tough, flexible cord that Lydyg had procured for him, and then swung on the beams. He was prepared to light a candle, but the wall lamp at the foot of the top flight of stairs, on Blidgett's side of the house, illumined the end of his triangular shaped tunnel, and saved him the additional bother. As he cautiously made his way he heard the bell-like baying of the brute, rapidly growing louder. As he reached the end of his journey he was in time to see the beast enter the stairway, the black body seeming to undulate. The baying ceased, and the eyes glowed as the fearful animal discovered the intruder crouching in the opening, some eight feet from the floor.

Like a black meteor the dog left the head of the stairs and leaped like a panther. He snatched at the intruder as he passed the opening. The instant its velvet feet touched the floor, it leaped again. This time Halwood, now on his knees, was ready. As the front paws scuffled to secure a hold on the ledge of the opening, and the hind feet were clawing in frantic propulsion, the ready noose fell over the malignant, flattened head. As the beast dropped, the Virginian, in a sitting posture, leaned back and jerked his arms powerfully.

He remained sitting until the cord was no longer agitated and the slobbering jaws were still. It took but a moment to pull the dead beast into the opening. Then Halwood was at the top of the stairs. He descended as rapidly as the alarm cords would permit, and traversed the hall to the head of the first flight on his hands and knees. There were no obstructions on this flight, or in the rooms on the ground floor, that he could discover.

At the risk of being seen from the street he passed through the suite and found what he was looking for in the rearmost room. The torn bits of his rejected letters to Nancy Doane were on a polished table. A tall candle stood beside them.

Even in the stress of his nervous emotion, and his realization that the utmost haste was vital, he was forced to admire the patience and cunning of the indefatigable man. Already Blidgett had managed to put together the few words of the message written to Nancy on the night of the duel with Major Etwin. Not until a time of much more leisure did Halwood realize the Ferret had been quick to detect two different kinds of paper, and had, by that much, simplified his task. During the few hysterical moments Halwood was in the room he almost believed the man was a magician. Then the tall candle was reminding him that Blidgett intended but a short absence from the house, else the table

candle would not have been left burning.

The completed message was sentimental, but not incriminating. Of the second, and more composed, epistle, a portion of a sentence had been formed, which was harmless until completed. Halwood tipped the candle gently on its side and saw the tiny flame spread through the bits of paper, and smelled the burning wax of the polished boards. The fire was as eager to burn all secrets contained in the writing as the dog had been to destroy the intruder. Halwood was next prompted to indulge in a bit of excellent craft. He ran to the side door, through which Blidgett had departed, which was merely on the latch, and swung it halfway open. Then he hastened back to the third floor, and swung up over the rafters.

He had provided for the disposal of the dead beast before undertaking the adventure, the mode being suggested that morning by his visit to the cupola. With a half-hitch of the cord around a hind leg of the beast, he carried his victim across the house and carefully lowered it down into his wardrobe.

Pausing only to put on his shoes, he stepped into the hall, and scurried up the ladder into the observatory. All of the windows were movable, and one of these he opened, and risked a fall of three stories by straddling the sill and resting a foot on a ridge pole. Thus dangerously poised, he swung the dead beast into the maw of the big chimney and let it drop, cord and all.

All this had been accomplished with such nervous haste that he had had no time for fear. Now he was obsessed by the dread that the blaze of the candle would start such a fire as to call out the citizenry. He considered it vastly better that the house should burn flat, with no occupants in danger, than that he should swing as a spy. Now he was afraid of the all-revealing light, which he assumed the conflagration was throwing off. He pictured mobs of people, already assembled to mark his departure from the mansion. He crossed innumerable bridges which he never came to.

Hastening down the stairs, he softly opened the door and peered out. The street was quiet and appeared to be deserted. At the same moment he heard a shrill, wailing whistle. Slipping out, and keeping close to the wall, he reached the shrub studded grounds that extended to an adjoining estate. He ran through these into High Street, and mingled with the soldiers and citizenry, who were gathered at General Howe's house to enjoy an impromptu fête. He was quick to discover Major André, and exchanged bows with him. A rosebud of a girl clapped a crown of flowers and leaves on his hat. He removed his hat and wore his laurels on his bare head. Sir William appeared in the doorway and quickly sympathized with all the merriment, and announced that an official inspection of several taverns would be had. This jocose way of announcing a drinking bout was warmly applauded. Much gay confusion followed as the pleasure mad throng made ready for an assault on the best stocked cellars in the city. Halwood outwardly was one of the merriest, as he discovered Blidgett approaching. The Virginian expected to behold a man fair beside himself with anger. The Ferret, bowing right and left, revealed nothing of his feelings. As usual the tightly drawn skin resembled parchment. The sunken eyes glowed as light from a lantern was reflected in them. But his gait was as obsequious, his movements as furtive as usual.

"Must we always have death at the feast?" complained the young wife of an aged real estate magnate.

Sir William recognized the incongruity of the man's presence, although the Ferret seemed to possess the liberty of intruding on almost any scene. From the doorway he called out—

"Not looking for spies in this gathering, sirrah?"

"If it please you, Sir William, my dog has escaped from the house. I wish to make sure he is not here," explained Blidgett.

"But it does not please me, curse it!

That damned black beast! A hound of hell if there ever was one." The usually genial voice was edged with anger. "If you will keep such a creature at your heels, you should take great care he does not escape. Fortunately, my officers will protect us."

## CHAPTER XI

### SATAN RETURNS

THE *Evening Post* carried a reward offer of a hundred guineas for the return of Blidgett's dog. For several days the Ferret scoured the city, while his agents combed the surrounding country. His ghastly facial expression changed none, yet Halwood believed the master spy was greatly worried. He walked with his head held higher than usual, with the bony chin thrust forward, and the sunken eyes staring into every man's face.

Halwood happened to be leaving the Kinney house just as Blidgett came out the side door. As the two met the African came forth, walked to the street and stared up at the roof.

"What's the matter with you, black fool?" demanded Blidgett.

The slave's eyes glistened with fear.

"Just de chimbly, sah," he explained in a quavering voice. "De fire burn slow; de smoke go up slow."

Halwood's pulse increased; but Blidgett was not interested so long as the chimney on his side of the house was drawing satisfactorily. To Halwood he said—

"Shall we walk together?"

"Naturally, if you are bound for the tavern, or in that direction," promptly replied the Virginian.

Blidgett's deep set eyes flickered. He believed Halwood was the first man who was willing to walk with him.

"Folks keep away from me, damn them!" he remarked as the two sauntered along With a harsh laugh he added, "I have plenty of room. I've got that much out of life. You're wondering why I am what I am, a constant reminder of death."

"Your physical appearance is peculiar," Halwood frankly admitted. "But in your work it must be an advantage."

"Aye. I've scared many a poor devil into confessing and thrusting his head into a noose." There was an undercurrent of horrid elation in this avowal. He was quick to add, and Halwood was inclined to believe him, "But the honest man, honest with his country and the King, need never fear me. It's the traitor, the enemy spy, that I hunt . . . I've always had to carry this head. It was some strange disease, or else I was born wrong to begin with. My mother has told me I had a sickness that no man of medicine understood. Something happened to me earlier than I can remember. This grinning mouth is not play acting. The muscles of my face are paralyzed. I could not get work. No one would hire me; no one would work beside me. No one, when I was a boy, would play with me. I do not feel friendly toward the human race. My people were well-to-do. I read and studied avidly. I speak five languages as well as I do English. I was canny, and old in my head, when a child. I decided there was but one opening for me; that of informer. I decided to be the best in that line. His Gracious Majesty gave me a chance; the only man who ever offered me more than a side glance of aversion. Before that I worked for the French king and some of the German princes. My loyalty to his Majesty is my religion."

Halwood could have pitied the unfortunate creature, could he have washed from his mind young Spanger of the Light Horse, and could he have disbelieved that various other unfortunates had been summarily put to death by the merciless machine.

"Your lot has been hard," he agreed.

"I've had my revenge on the world," continued Blidgett. "Beautiful women have begged for mercy from me. Women who had sold their souls and their country."

"And you never have shown mercy to any human being," Halwood summed up.

"Never!" The word was a snarl. "Not once I'd proven a man's or a woman's guilt. Oh, they will remember me in Europe as well as England, for years to come . . . Why do you suppose my dog Satan ran away?"

The query came with the abruptness of the crack of a gun. It caught Halwood a trifle off balance.

"Good land! I haven't an idea."

"It's troubled me. I can not understand how I could be so careless as to leave the door unlatched. And that overturned candle."

"A candle was overturned?"

"Yes. It might have started a blaze that would have burned down the house."

"The dog must have jumped up and knocked it over. What other significance can you attach to it?"

"I'm still wondering. On its face, it's an unfortunate mishap. But if the brute knocked it over what was his motive? He never jumped, or leaped, except for a definite purpose. And why did he run away? And could I, such a methodical man, have failed to close the door tightly?"

"I'd say not," frankly admitted Halwood. "Possibly some one came to the door and started to open it. The dog leaped to meet the intruder, hit the table in his haste, and passed through the open door in pursuit of the visitor."

"Mr. Halwood, that's a very logical explanation. You take it for granted the candle was on a table?"

The Virginian saw the trap he was walking into. He evaded:

"Your query seems pointless. To be knocked over by the dog the candle must have been on the table. One wouldn't leave a candle on a chair. The dog scarcely could have dislodged it from a sconce."

"Of course. But if I had a caller, and Satan resented his entering without an invitation, what's become of the caller? No human being could encounter Satan and escape without receiving terrible wounds. The beast was unmuzzled, naturally."

"Really, Mr. Blidgett, it's an enigma. Travels in a circle. No sign of the visitor. No trace of the dog, dead or alive. The visitor, if there were one, must have bolted and the dog chased him. The only established fact is that the dog has disappeared."

Blidgett made no response for a bit. Then he said:

"He has vanished. He had just arrived from New York on a store ship. In his brute way he was glad to be with me again. But I shall find him, alive or dead, before I quit this city. If he escaped to the country the reward should bring me information as to that fact."

"Unless the country folk take alarm and shoot him," added Halwood.

"I'll give five hundred guineas to know the man who has done that!"

"Come, come. You can't hold the high justice and the law over all the people in America," remonstrated Halwood. "Your pet was only a dog."

"Nay, he was the devil," snarled Blidgett. "And I believe you are right in speaking of him as something that's finished."

THEY separated, Blidgett to pursue his calling of trailer of men, and Halwood to his usual lounging place, the tavern. Now that the Virginian believed himself to be safely established he had time to think of something besides himself. His conscience troubled him. The miserable inmates of the Provost Prison were on his mind. He knew they were dying like flies, and were being roughly buried in trenches. He turned to the one man in Philadelphia whom he trusted—the cleverest thief in the thirteen States.

He had eaten his breakfast in the Kinney house and at the tavern he was forced to wait until nearly the noon hour before he could take his usual table. There were but few other diners in the long room, and Lydyg was prompt to appear.

"I want you to visit the prisoners and distribute some hard money among them," murmured Halwood, as Lydyg

bowed his head to take his order. "I'll give you some gold. Does Cunningham know you?"

"No. He won't let me in. I have enough gold on hand. But I can't get in. If I get in I can't get out."

"I'll write a line to Cunningham, saying I want you to go through the prison and look for an American spy we're anxious to catch."

"Very good, sir. And for dessert? A tart?"

"Yes."

Taking his cue from Lydyg's query, he glanced up. Moses Doane was bearing down on him, his broad face reflecting a satisfied state of mind. He settled himself in the opposite chair and announced:

"Fortune smiles on me, Halwood. What think? Nancy hankers for town life. She's miles ahead of all women here for good looks."

Halwood was silent for a moment. Then he said—"If she were my sister I would not want her to be in Philadelphia."

"But she isn't your sister," said Moses with a chuckle. Then in a stern voice, "Please remember, kinsman, that she is a Doane. No one can come any game on her. These military dandies can flutter around all they will, but Nancy will never lose her head." Then his tone changed, and he was as exultant as a child as he bragged, "What profits we'll pull down! Who will question the stock I bring in once they've looked into that girl's eyes!"

"And she agrees to such a partnership, to act as charmer, so you may sell for fatter profits?"

"Damn you, no! But if she can't help charming men of high rank why shouldn't I take my profits because of their silliness?"

Moses ate his meal and was sullen of mood. Halwood finished first and retired to the parlor and wrote a few lines to Cunningham, referring him to Major André if he wished for a reference. He passed the paper to Lydyg as the latter was clearing the table.

Later in the day, while on his way to inspect André's progress with the waterfall, he met Captain Cunningham. The provost appeared to be laboring under suppressed emotion. He abruptly announced—

"I've been looking for you, Mr. Halwood."

"Yes, Captain. At your service."

"That agent you sent to the provost. Is he trustworthy, honest?"

"I'd trust my life in his keeping. He deserted from the rebel army after being whipped."

"Whipped, eh?" And Cunningham showed his teeth in a snarl. "I, too, was whipped after the rioting at Golden Hill. But I've paid back double for every bite of the lash!"

"You two seem to have something in common. But why ask me about his honesty?"

"Some one pouched a bag of gold from my office," said Cunningham.

"You don't mean to charge my man with the theft?"

"No, no. But I'm fair befuddled over it. He was in there for a few moments with me."

"And you decided he stole a bag of gold from under your nose?"

Cunningham was ready to recant.

"I don't believe it now. It was some of the loungers who hang out there.' I'll teach them a lesson they'll never forget... Did your man find the fellow he's hunting for?"

"He's positive he is not in the prison. I'll say good day." Halwood turned on his heel, but Cunningham detained him, saying—

"I'd rather you wouldn't mention my foolish suspicion, sir."

Halwood was much relieved. He did not care to have Lydyg brought to Blidgett's attention. He replied—

"We'll consider it dropped and forgotten."

Instead of continuing on to the theater, however, he turned back and hastened to the tavern. He killed time at the roulette wheel until Lydyg entered the dining room. Joining him, the Virginian fiercely demanded—

"You dare to steal while in the provost?"

Lydyg blinked his eyes, attempted an expression of virtuous indignation, then surrendered, and pleaded:

"But he's such a beastly beast. Those poor devils were even suffering for lack of water to drink—and that pig guzzling wine!"

"You took his bag of gold?"

Lydyg lowered his gaze, then confessed:

"Not to put too fine a point on it, I did, sir. But I handed it out among the prisoners along with what I had in my pockets. I was stealing, if you wish to call it that, for the American army. Even in the White Marsh camp the order is to forage clean. It really was foraging; not stealing, sir."

"Take that brute's hide, and welcome. What frets me is the danger I run if you call attention to me by such tricks."

"Good Lord! I'd cut my throat before I'd do you an ill turn!"

Halwood returned to the roulette wheel, but before he could place a wager the rattle of drums, playing "Turk's March," called him to the doorway. Major André was running up the steps to escape the crush of people following the troops. Colonel Donop was riding at the head of four battalions of Hessians, some twelve hundred in number, and marching with machine-like precision.

"Whither does this practise march wend its way?" lightly asked Halwood.

"Very poetically put, my dear fellow, but scarcely abreast of truth," said André. "Sir William is about to clear the river of the rebels. Colonel Donop goes to begin the good work by reducing Fort Mercer at Red Bank."

By a mighty effort Halwood controlled his emotion and said—

"He will have no difficulty, I assume."

André smiled as if amused, and answered:

"Not with only four hundred rebels to whip, protected by a half finished mud fort . . . Ah, there is our friend, going out to watch the sport."

It was the first time Halwood had seen the master spy on a horse. He was dressed in black, like an executioner, and he sat his animal exceedingly well. The horse was also black, and only the black dog was needed to perfect the suggestion of Death a-riding to the harvest.

"He loves battles?" asked Halwood.

"Only as an opportunity for picking up information from the wounded. A seriously injured fellow, beholding our Mr. Blidgett kneeling beside him, will be convinced he's seeing Death in person. He will babble freely . . . It will be finished by this time tomorrow, and then other posts will be taken. They are crossing the river at Cooper's Ferry and will camp at Haddonfield tonight. I'm glad for Count Donop. It gives him a chance once more to prove the worth of his Hessians."

With the major in a talkative mood, Halwood wished further to satisfy his curiosity. He began:

"My dear Major, what about Mr. Kinney? I suppose Blidgett has him indexed and labeled."

"Of a surety." Then the major's eyes quickened, and he confided, "That was a queer case. When we took over the city Kinney was a rank rebel. Before we knew the difference Blidgett was quartered there and the two walked much together. Blidgett converted him, I fancy. He's warm, or pretends to be, for the mother country, now."

HALWOOD passed down the steps and up the street. He had not foreseen this absence of the Ferret. It offered a rare opportunity. The man's quarters must contain many secrets it would be worth while to learn. Working his way through the crowd of the curious, now trailing after the troops, he hurried to the Sixth Street house and entered without seeing anything of the African. He mounted to his room and in two minutes was across the rafters and peering down the stairway.

This time the afternoon sun revealed

no threads across the stairs. Why had they been removed? A rug was at the foot of the stairs. It had not been there on any of his former visits. The way seemed to be open for him. But would the Ferret leave his apartment unprotected against visitation? Common sense answered with a negative. His plan for thoroughly examining the rooms suddenly vanished.

He returned to his room and opened the door in time to see the African in the act of closing the trap. The slave was greatly agitated. He swarmed down the ladder and begged huskily—

"Don' tell Massah Kinney I'se here."

"He must have seen you. He must be hearing you now," said Halwood.

The slave shook his head, his eyes rolling. In a whisper he said:

"He ain' dere. No make soun' laik sleepin' man. No make no soun'. Nero say *juju* man kill him. Lif' doah mighty sly. He no dere. He know Nero come, Nero git whip."

"How long you been with your master?"

"Nero come wif de army."

"Was Mr. Blidgett here when you came here?"

"*Juju* man wif Massah Kinney w'en Massah Kinney buy me."

Halwood was puzzled. A certain wild notion had invaded his mind.

"Go back to your work. Stop spying on your master. Don't forget and say you saw me here, as that will tell him you've been here."

With the observatory empty, the plan of searching Blidgett's rooms was now succeeded by another as vitally important. Ever since he last was in the house, Halwood had worried much about the chimney that drew poorly. Such a nuisance was sure to be investigated, and this was the only opportunity he might have to correct his error.

He found the streets nearly deserted as he hurried back to the tavern, the populace having followed the troops down to the river. Lydyg was sweeping the dining room floor. Halwood briefly outlined his plan and then returned to his room to watch and wait. As it grew dusk he descended to the kitchen for a pitcher of water. There was a smell of smoke in the room, and the slave again complained of the chimney.

"It's the west wind," said Halwood. "Trees shut it off from blowing across the top of the chimney and drawing the smoke out."

This was Greek to the slave, but by personifying the west wind as a *juju* the explanation appealed as being perfectly plausible.

Returning to his room long enough to leave the pitcher of water, Halwood ran up the ladder and opened the trap. If the secret door behind the dresser did not open for the next five or ten minutes the first stage of the adventure would be finished. Moving rapidly, he opened the sliding door and removed his shoes. Stepping out on the ridge pole, he edged along until he could reach down into the maw of the chimney. He shuddered as his fingers found the rope. Using both hands he lifted out the black dog and, without any hesitation, he swung it back and forth on the shortened cord until the pendulum motion seemed to be sufficient. Then he released his grip on the cord and the dark weight flew through the air. He heard the dull thud as it struck the ground behind a clump of lilac bushes.

In something of a panic he regained his room and put on his shoes and scrubbed his hands. It required much cleansing to remove the soot. Returning to the tavern, he performed more ablutions in the wash room with hot water. Lydyg did not wait on him that evening.

Moses and Abraham Doane stormed in, rollicking drunk. Major Etwin, walking with the aid of a cane, passed his table and nodded. Captain Long passed, his right arm in a sling to remove the weight from his wounded shoulder, and glared vindictively.

The Doanes were making for Halwood's table, but were invited by several officers to dine. They accepted an invitation two tables away and, while the clatter of dishes and the entrance of diners drowned

conversation, the Virginian discovered the Doanes, for some reason, were in high favor with the rank of the army. Captain De Lancey indolently lounged down the room, a flicker of amusement twisting his lips as he beheld the raiders and their gallant companions. He nodded to Halwood, who kicked out a chair. De Lancey dropped into it and with a languid air, a heritage of the Macaroni mode, began:

"Stap my vitals, Halwood! But where can you find such power as that of a pretty lady? Beauty in petticoats is a passport even for buffoons."

"I believe I catch your meaning, Captain; yet maybe I don't."

With a little backward jerk of the head, and speaking in a weary, bored voice, the officer elucidated:

"In the high regard of those who never noticed them before. Why? The dear pupil answers, because of a handsome sister and a certain miniature of her that has been seen in town."

"I believe I have identified the handsome young lady. No miniature can do her justice. What of it?"

"But this beastly town's just learned she's coming here for the winter. Our local belles are actually furious. Egad! Well they might be. I've seen none here to compare with her. She'll be the rage despite her comical brothers. She's bound to be a prime favorite at headquarters. Different type. Sir William likes them handsome, and if they have a pretty wit as well as beauty, he loves them."

"The young lady I'm thinking of has a very strong mind. Nor do I believe she has any Tory inclinations."

"Then Sir William will be crazy about her. He's fearfully intrigued by pretty rebels. He'd rather conquer one than to win a battle, almost."

Halwood nodded and, finding the subject very distasteful, turned the talk to the latest social news. The season's program, he learned, would include several theatrical performances, one being a play written by the now captive Burgoyne; weekly assemblies at the tavern; and the usual excursions outside the town until cold weather set in. With a little grimace De Lancey added:

"Confidentially, Halwood, seeing you are one of us, many would prefer more fighting and less wooing. This picnic sort of an existence is all right for a bit, but soldiering is a trade, and a soldier shouldn't be allowed to grow rusty. There's no chance of promotion in dancing with pretty girls, or in playing faro and roulette. Heresy for me to say this much, but I know you don't talk."

HALWOOD stayed at the tavern that night, and did not find any rest until near morning. He was ridden by his worries. He accused himself of criminal negligence for not sending news of the proposed attack by a second messenger, as a guard against the chance of the first message having been doubted because of the delay. When he quit his bed and descended to the dining room his face was as drawn as that of any young rake. Lydyg waited on him as usual, and Halwood noticed the fellow's hand was unsteady.

"You been carousing?" growled the Virginian from the corner of his mouth.

"I'm fair sick from fretting and worrying, sir," mumbled the cleverest thief. "Is the fort to be taken by surprise? Even if it isn't, how can four hundred stand against two thousand. We saw only part of the troops that went to the fighting. They talk this morning, even the kitchen help do, that all our forts on the river will be taken. Then they can turn about and crush General Washington."

"Damnation! Hush your tongue! Haven't I been thinking?"

There was excited expectancy in the city that day. People in the streets tilted their heads as if trying to catch the sound of cannon. At Howe's house in High Street there was much laughing and merrymaking, but beneath it all there was an undercurrent of nervousness. Sir William walked the grounds with his fair friends, jested a bit with his staff, and then withdrew. Some of the general

officers, in the privacy of their own set, complained bitterly that Count Donop should be allowed "to pick the plums"; that Hessians should have the honor of clearing the river.

That afternoon a thunderstorm passed close to the city, shadowing it with gloom. The hoarse thunder, as the lightning leaped from cloud to cloud, was like the bellowing of wild bulls. There was much fidgeting among the staff officers, although they talked with boisterous gusto.

Men along the river were first to receive the news. They dared not carry it to High Street, believing it must be terribly distorted. There is none more unpopular than the bearer of bad news. Before the city was prepared for the spectacle the van of returning troops were crossing the river. Many of these were sadly wounded. Gay regimentals were besmeared with dark stains. In rumbling country carts were brought the bodies of dead officers, while other carts were alive with the cries and groans of wounded men. As these first troops were wearily marched to their quarters the word was whispered throughout the city that the Hessians had paid a heavy price for the honor of reducing the rebel stronghold.

Halwood was on the grounds at the Howe house, chatting with men who cocked an ear and faced toward the river even while laughing with assumed gaiety at some humorous conceit. Halwood broke off in the middle of a sentence and with dilated eyes stared down the street.

"Demme!" shrilly exclaimed a young cornet. "Here comes Death riding a nag that's about to drop dead!"

The description was not unfitting. Blidgett, on his spent horse, was brutally belaboring his exhausted mount with a branch torn from a wayside tree. Never had he appeared more inexorable than then. His sunken eyes glowed like those of the Horsemen of the Apocalypse. The fixed grin seemed to be more distorted. His baleful gaze was on the doorway of the house, and he did not seem to note the presence of those on the lawn. His mount slumped down on its knees, and Blidgett leaped clear with the quickness and sureness of a cat, and hastened to the door.

Many were bitterly eager to hear his news, but none attempted to halt and question the man. They stared at the doorway through which he had passed without the ceremony of requesting an audience; and the door closed behind him. They were staring when the door slowly opened, and Sir William stood on the threshold, his florid face marked by sorrow and chagrin. He briefly told the silent gathering:

"Our army has met with a setback. Count Donop has been killed."

The door closed, and the startled auditors stared at one another, with none daring to express himself. It was not until Blidgett came forth that they learned any details. It seemed that again some one had blundered. Instead of catching the enemy off his guard, the assaulting troops had walked into a trap and had received an enfilading fire from galleries hidden behind the bush grown river banks. The fort, instead of being unprepared, was grimly waiting to loose withering volleys. And none seemed to suffer more over the defeat than did Blidgett.

"We were whipped," groaned the gaunt, stark caricature of a man. "When an officer and drummer approached the works and gave fair warning that no quarter would be given those who stood battle, we were whipped. A Colonel Greene, I believe it was, who answered with damnable insolence. We erected a battery within half a cannon shot of their works. Our task appeared to be easy. The outworks were unfinished. But their redoubt—ah, that accursed redoubt! It was a fort in itself. Our Hessian battery's cannonade was kept up for forty-five minutes. Then a battalion was sent to attack on the north where the ground was a marsh. The first advance post was not defended. Our brave fellows believed the rebels were frightened and were about to attempt a retreat. We rushed the redoubt. We were planting a flag on the

merlon, when grape and musket balls poured from the embrasures in front, and from a masked battery on our left. The assaulting column fell back. Another battalion under brave Count Donop assaulted the south side.

"This division passed the abatis, passed through the fosses, scaled the pickets, and mounted the parapet—only to be hurled back with great loss. We retreated to Haddonfield, leaving Count Donop and nearly four hundred soldiers behind. We tried to bring off the count's body, but it was too close to the works."

He ceased speaking and glared around the half circle of listeners.

Captain De Lancey voiced the curiosity of all by demanding bluntly:

"How could they defeat his Majesty's troops? How could they be so well prepared, with masked batteries and hidden river boats?"

"They were prepared! They must have been warned!" exclaimed Halwood.

Blidgett swept his burning gaze slowly over the group. His voice was a whisper as he declared:

"They were warned. The murderer of some four hundred of our brave men is in Philadelphia this minute, I'm convinced."

"In God's justice find him, then!" exclaimed De Lancey.

BLIDGETT faced about and stalked down the street, his bony head bowed low in deep cogitation. He turned the corner and proceeded to the house in Sixth Street. The iron was sunk deep in his soul as he brooded over this, the boasted reprisal for Burgoyne's surrender. As he drew near the house his old instinct, as a trailer of men, asserted itself. He lifted his head and stared at the mansion. Thick smoke was curling from the chimney in the landlord's side of the house.

After watching the smoke for a bit he entered his rooms and rapidly examined the traps he had laid. The dust on the doorknobs had not been disturbed. The table, seemingly carelessly strewn, had not been touched. Running up the stairs, he carefully lifted the thin rug at the bottom of the third story flight. The telltale dust beneath the rug bore no imprint. Satisfied no intruder had visited the rooms in his absence, he rang for the slave.

Nero, inwardly praying for *juju* protection, was prompt in responding, his eyes rolling and showing much white.

"The chimney draws better," said the Ferret. "Who fixed it?"

"Nuttin' fix um, sah. Some day she smoke in de cook room. Today she be good. Mebbe Massah Kinney fix um. Mebbe ol' witch fix um."

"What witch, fool?"

"Nero don' know." And the African's voice trembled.

"Your master in?" The black shook his head.

"I am visiting the roof."

"He don' laik—"

"Shut up! Be off."

With that Blidgett unbolted the door into the hall and nimbly mounted to the third floor, and to the observatory. He examined the circular room with great care, sniffing at times like a bloodhound. He studied the window which opened on to the wing containing the chimney stack. He confidently stepped over the low sill and easily balanced himself on the ridge pole.

Gaining the chimney, he made sure the top bricks were not loose, and with a sudden effort drew himself up until he could peer down into the smoke filled opening. Cursing the slave, and averting his face and holding his breath, he thrust down an arm and located the supporting rod. Although half choked, he persisted in examining the rod, his sensitive fingers trailing lightly back and forth; but he discovered nothing.

A metallic *spang* against the chimney, accompanied by a loud explosion, nearly caused the Ferret to lose his balance. As it was he saved himself by dropping astride the ridge pole, and in that posture he reached the open window and precipitated himself over the sill. Then he

studied what he believed to be the position of the hidden marksman.

His mood was deadly as he descended to the ground floor. After cleansing his hands and person he rang for the slave. When the black timidly responded Blidgett abruptly demanded—

"What people came to this house yesterday?"

"Massah Kinney in de mornin'. Upstair man when de sun git mos' home."

"How long was Mr. Halwood here?"

"Jus' long 'nough to put on new coat."

Blidgett returned to the top floor and with a thin key unlocked Halwood's room. He left the door open while he rapidly examined the wardrobe. The blue coat with silver buttons engaged his attention. On one arm was a dark stain that resembled soot. He rubbed his white handkerchief over this and got a trace of color—a dark brown. It was conclusive of nothing, yet it added to the sinister structure the Ferret was building in his mind.

Unsuspecting of the nemesis now deeply interested in him, Halwood stood before the tavern as the peddler of cheap jewelry came along with his tray, and whining his sing-song, "Buy! Buy! Buy!" He halted before Halwood and extended the tray.

"Carry the Red Bank news to White Marsh at once. Get the devil out of here. I said *no!*"

Major André, just arriving on the scene, smiled slightly at this display of impatience, and reminded—

"I suppose the poor devils must live."

"Not necessarily, my dear Major. Certainly not off of me. Any news, good or bad?"

"Some excellent news. It almost causes Sir William to forget our defeat."

Controlling himself by a mighty effort, Halwood forced his voice to sound casual, as he inquired—

"Something you're at liberty to tell?"

"Surely. All Philadelphia will be talking about it before bedtime. The Doanes' handsome sister has arrived. The brothers have taken a mansion in High Street, and are equipped with a flock of servants. Sir William saw her in her carriage, and actually walked into the road to meet her—What's the matter? You feel ill?"

"Nothing. Nothing. That is, nothing new. A stabbing pain I have at times to remind me I'm mortal." And Halwood pressed a hand over his heart.

After a few minutes of talk André entered the tavern. Almost immediately the Ferret had taken his place. Without any prefatory remarks he said:

"I want you to account for your time during the last two hours. It's of the utmost importance to you."

Halwood stared at him blankly. Then his eyes sparkled with amusement, as he said—

"My dear Blidgett, be it the block or the peerage, I must confess I've been playing faro and roulette for the last three hours."

"I'm glad to hear it," mumbled the Ferret.

He briskly entered the tavern and called the proprietors of the games one side in turn, and questioned each closely. They feared him as though he wore a forked tail, and both were quick to turn their minds inside out. It was true that Halwood had passed even more than three hours at the gaming table, as he had said.

Blidgett walked to the front of the tavern, his hands clasped at his back, his bony head thrust forward and swinging from side to side with a reptilian suggestion. He halted before Halwood and curtly announced:

"It was the most fortunate bit of gambling you have done, sir. Whether you won, or lost, it's most fortunate for you that you risked your gold."

"After startling me, and arousing my curiosity, can't you explain?"

The Ferret shook his head and said:

"I can tell you nothing, as you are not concerned in what I was forced to believe. But you are very lucky."

"Mayhap. But I'm ten pounds poorer than I was four hours ago."

"You are infinitely richer for having wagered your guineas. You still live."

Not until after dinner that evening did Halwood learn from Lydyg about Blidgett's adventure on the roof, and of the cleverest thief's great regret that he had missed his aim in firing at the King's master spy from a clump of bushes in a vacant lot.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE NEW BELLE

HALWOOD lost no time that evening in dressing in his best and repairing to the High Street house, where Nancy Doane and her brothers were to pass the winter. By the profuse use of gold Moses had almost overnight turned the empty mansion into an establishment of considerable pretensions. No doubt that much of the furniture and furnishings cost him but little, as the flight of Whigs from town left their homes unguarded against despoilers. An impeccable major-domo guarded the door and was overlord of the soft footed servants. The fame of Mistress Nancy's beauty had spread through the rank of the army now that Sir William had been impressed by her charms. The assembled company, the greater number of the men in splendid uniforms, presented a pleasing, colorful picture, while contrasting strongly with the dainty elegance of the women.

Halwood felt a little qualm of uneasiness as he remembered it was at the rear of the grounds, and bordering the Kinney property, that Lydyg had buried the panther-dog. He almost had a feeling that the dead brute might appear to accuse him. To add to his uneasiness of mind was the construction he was forced to place upon the return of his two letters to the maid. As his name was announced, and he entered the long double parlors, he was remembering his rôle as schoolmaster.

Nancy Doane, at the end of the room, was blocked from his view by a half circle of admirers. Some of these, such as Captain Long, had visited at the Plumstead home; others were beholding her for the first time. Had Halwood not known she was in Philadelphia he scarcely would have recognized the gorgeous creature. Surely this could not be the country girl who had mended a broken thill with her garters, and who always dressed with Quakerish sobriety. She had had her "head done". The towering, elaborate coiffure, snowy white, differed from the usual mode in that it was unadorned by the usual mélange of lappets, *poufs*, feathers, lace and other fantastic geegaws. Her hoop was a richly embroidered lustring of pinkish lilac, wreathed with pink roses, and had the three Prince of Wales feathers worked in silver at regular intervals, raised nearly an inch above the silk. The low cut bodice, sprigged with silver, revealed a bust of ivory; and the slim white throat was adorned by two ropes of pearls.

Halwood almost felt abashed as he stared at the beautiful girl. For the moment he was forgetful of his surroundings. He was aroused from his incipient stupor by a drawling voice—

"She hits us all, just like that." The speaker was Major André, and his voice carried.

Moses Doane lounged into the half circle, richly attired, albeit somewhat besplashed with spilled punch. He seized Halwood by the arm and projected him through the first line of admirers, and in his deep, booming voice announced:

"Here's our runaway kinsman, sister. He's gawked and gaped and lost his tongue."

The girl's oval face, lacking the usual heavy layers of cosmetics, was tinged with a flush of pink for the moment. She tapped a knee with the feathered fan, looked up into his worshipful countenance, and coolly greeted—

"I see you have prospered, Cousin Halwood, since you ceased teaching school."

This was received with smiles, and a loud chuckle from Captain Long. Halwood bowed, and raised her small hand to his lips and murmured—

"He who possesses the favor of your

acquaintance is rich beyond all other desires."

"You have yet to earn my favor, kinsman . . . Ah, Major André. And how does your new play progress?"

Halwood fell back, dismissed. His face was hot with shame; but his eyes blazed challenges to Long and all others who might smile too openly. He was conscious of André's pleasing voice, eagerly describing his latest achievement—scenery painting. Then others were pressing forward to secure the girl's attention. Discomfited, and fearing the amusement caused by his caustic welcome might lead him into a quarrel, he retired to the hall. He scarcely could believe such a change could be worked in one who was so naturally straightforward and so little given to indorsing the captious whims of the time and age. Despite his chagrin he maintained a decent poise, even though he believed he had been made ridiculous. A heavy hand clamped down on his shoulder. He wheeled, his eyes blazing, his mood ready for an instant meeting, let General Howe's orders be what they might. But it was Moses. The heavy face showed anger. With rough kindness he forced Halwood to a huge punch bowl and filled him a glass and one for himself, and in a low, rumbling voice said:

"Perdition on her and all her sisterhood! No one can tell how a woman will act up. She's had me guessing ever since she was born. A contrary, audacious young piece! God help her poor husband, whoever he may be! Never mind her uppity airs, Halwood. If her flounces and feathers go to her head, who cares a damn? Here's to our only friend, always the same—the punch."

"His Excellency, Sir William Howe," announced the major-domo at the hall door.

Immediately the officers drew apart, forming a lane, and Sir William, connoisseur of beautiful women, advanced up the room in all the rich regalia which became his military rank and his recent elevation to Knight of the Bath. Nancy Doane came to her feet as lightly as thistledown, and curtsied low.

HALWOOD took the opportunity to escape from the room and house, his feelings deeply wounded, his temper on the edge of violent resentment did he encounter an amused glance. As he hurried down the steps some one fell in beside him, and Blidgett's sibilant voice was murmuring—

"I witnessed your meeting with your kinswoman, and heard her words of greeting."

"If governments were no more stable than women there would not have been an England all these many years," growled Halwood.

"Wisely spoken," said Blidgett. "And when beautiful ladies give us cold glances it is time we seek advancement elsewhere. Woman ever is a captious, fickle creature. *Varium et mutabile* . . . Gold is the only mistress who never breaks faith."

"What the devil are you moralizing about?" impatiently demanded Halwood. "A young woman, very distantly related, remembers I was a schoolmaster. It's by."

"Excellent." And Blidgett's voice was incisive. "We'll speak of more serious things. Your friend, Major André, who is in high favor with the commander-in-chief, believes with me that it is time you went to the rebel camp and joined the army. You have done well while here, with one exception."

"Wherein have I failed?" sharply demanded Halwood. "The rebels at White Marsh have done nothing, just as I always said."

"That is negative news. You were right when you said no sortie would be made when we had positive information one would be made. But could you have informed us that the enemy at Red Bank knew of our coming and would employ the tactics of the ambush, that would have given us a victory. Ah, could you have told us that, we would have the river cleared of every rebel post, and that arch rebel, Washington, would be in flight, or captured."

"Could I have known ahead such a move was to be made I might have learned

something worth reporting," defended Halwood.

"We will not quibble. You have accepted service in our secret intelligence department. We are satisfied with your work. Now we must have positive knowledge as to where the rebels will make their winter camp. We wish to know, must know, how many are fit for duty, an exact report on their supply of munitions. A few weeks in their camp should reveal all this to you. You are ordered to depart in the morning for White Marsh."

Halwood believed he was suspected. He believed Blidgett still nursed the suspicion which had prompted him to gather up the fragments of the two letters returned by Nancy Doane. He promptly replied:

"It shall be as you suggest. There has been no time, as I have often told Major André, when I was not willing to go that length. But the manner of my going should be plausible. I wish it arranged that I be pursued to within sight of their pickets by some of your Light Horse."

"Excellent!" And Halwood heard the dry, bony hands rubbing together. "You shall escape to the rebel lines by the skin of your teeth. I'll have a bullet put through your hat before you start. The pursuers will load with powder only. You will return their fire with your pistols, and will use blank charges, or shoot wide. You better start so as to time your arrival shortly after sunrise. Of course you will change to more sober gear."

"How about getting intelligence through to you? You have provided for that, or is it left for me to arrange?"

"We have a man planted there whom you can trust. He is known as Red Schles. I will get word to him. He will approach you at the proper time."

"I shall seek a commission," mused Halwood.

"Excellent. I believe you will get one. I will be outside the town with some of the Light Horse when you start. Forget about pretty ladies—*the* pretty lady. She's brought here by her brother to protect him."

"From what?" Halwood was genuinely disturbed.

"From a firing squad, or the noose."

"But he's a rebel hater," warmly protested Halwood.

"Aye. But first comes his love of gold. He collected thirty horses after the rout at Red Bank and had them back here ahead of the troops, sold to our commissary department. I could hang him high as Haman if—"

"Yes? If what?"

"If his pretty sister hadn't caught and held the eye of Sir William. I'm helpless. Women have hampered our cause more than the rebel army. General Burgoyne could have reopened his northern line of communication and could have escaped the sluggard Gates, if he had not spent the precious hours in dalliance with the pretty wife of a commissary. We would have won the war in the Jerseys if our illustrious leader had not tarried in New York to worship Aspasia." Then he was clawing at Halwood's arm, and in his hissing whisper denouncing, "In this scurvy fashion is his Majesty served in America! I curse their high rank, their pretty clothes; and most of all I curse their weakness for women when the time calls for strength for the King. Curse them all for sluggards!" He checked himself by an effort, and warned, "He who repeats what Howe's Ferret says will never betray a second time."

"There is no danger of my talking. I wish you wouldn't keep threatening me. I shall sleep in my room near the stable tonight. I will be in the saddle at an early hour. If you think of further instructions you can tell me in the morning. If I find I am of permanent value in the rebel camp, I will request you to have a man remove my belongings from the Kinney house to save expense."

Blidgett chuckled deep in his throat and murmured:

"That sounds like a psalm singing Yankee talking. Yet it would be well if those in high positions would set an example in decent economy. Succeed, and I will give you a mansion to live in and

staff it with servants. His Majesty can endure the expense of your lodgings."

The Ferret turned back to the Doane house and Halwood went on to the tavern. The hour was busy and Halwood did not attempt to secure an interview with Lydyg. He ordered a glass of ale and cheese, and brushed his napkin to the floor when he saw Lydyg hurrying to the kitchen. Lydyg paused to restore the napkin and the Virginian murmured—

"My old room."

An hour later there came a soft tap on the door and Halwood extinguished the candle and opened the door, and Lydyg stepped inside. The Virginian rapidly explained the situation, told him to trust any bearer of the embossed ring, and concluded by saying:

"Go at once. You may be watched. Goodby, good luck."

He found the cleverest thief's hand in the darkness and pressed it warmly.

BY FOUR o'clock the next morning Halwood was outside the city, the last sleepy vedette behind him. Captain De Lancey rode from a clump of trees, gave greetings and explained rapidly:

"I'm detailed to speed you on your new path. May you find it pleasing in results. The Light Horse will give you a long start. When within two or three miles of White Marsh, rein in and breathe your mare until the troop comes up. Then make it a real race. Our Mr. Blidgett is sorry not to be here. Major André is sorry to lose your company, but wishes me to say he is glad you're going. Good luck, and a safe return when the work is finished."

Halwood shook hands and regretted the dual rôle made it necessary for him to deceive one whom it was so easy to esteem. De Laney detained him, exclaiming:

"I was forgetting the hat. Toss it on the grass so I can put a bullet through the brim." The pistol banged and the desired effect was registered.

With a final wave of the hand Halwood lifted the marc into an easy gallop. His spirits were low and his thoughts moody. Nor could he keep Nancy Doane from his thoughts. She was the sorriest item in all his broodings. That she should capitulate to a love of luxury and come to Philadelphia was nothing short of stark tragedy. His world was sadly upside down when he beheld the sun's red rim over the Jerseys. Lydyg, too, was much in the rider's meditations. In truth, next to Nancy Doane, he gave most of his thought to that loyal scamp.

The country people were out at the first light, busily harvesting their crops and endeavoring to secrete them from foraging parties of either army. The wise ones knew the Americans would be "foraging clean" long before another planting season. They also knew their pay for foodstuffs taken would be in the rapidly depreciating Continental currency, while the British paid gold. Many placed hard money before political sentiment, and hauled their surplus to town.

There was a suggestion of frost in the early morning air, and the hardwoods were splashed with fairy paint. If not for the war it would have been a glorious day, filled with many beauties. An hour's smart canter interrupted such reveries and caused Halwood to give heed to a familiar figure ahead. The old man was easily identified at a distance by his bushy beard, his long ragged hair, and his custom of walking with a long staff. Reining in, Halwood greeted—

"You're rather far from your telescope, Mr. Kinney."

"Aye. And far from the stars. Last night they had a sad story to tell."

"Bad luck for somebody?"

"For many. War and more bloodshed till a person is fair sickened."

"What do the stars say of your tenant, Mr. Blidgett?"

"I have not found his star yet. He's a good tenant. No drunken companions. Pays on the nail with the King's gold. But I'm glad his dog is gone."

"An evil brute," readily said Halwood.

"Some one was digging at the back of my grounds, late t'other afternoon."

This, although seemingly irrelevant, caused Halwood to give a little start.

"Probably after hidden treasure," he suggested. "So many citizens hid their valuables when the guns of Brandywine and Germantown told them the British were coming."

"Aye. Likely enough."

"You traveling far?"

"Aye. A goodish bit. Don't let me keep you. You must have important business to be so far from town at this hour in the morning. I caught the glimpse of sunlight on what looked to be a red coat on the last rise."

"Irregulars, most likely. Better take to the brush until they've come and gone."

With that Halwood urged his mount into a gallop, which he maintained until he was breasting Chestnut Hill. Now that he was within striking distance of the American camp he loitered until his quick ears caught the sound of thudding hoofs behind him. As he topped the hill he reined in and looked back. A score of the Light Horse were streaking after him. The leader had one arm in a sling. Halwood shielded his eyes from the sun's lateral rays and gazed more closely. The horsemen lessened their pace in ascending the hill. As they drew nearer Halwood recognized the scowling visage of Captain Long. The captain raised his long pistol and aimed at the silhouette atop the hill, and fired. Halwood was startled to hear the whistle of lead.

"Damnation! No blank charges in that weapon!" he exclaimed, and he touched the mare with his heel.

Long had disobeyed orders in shooting a ball; yet it was possible, even probable, he preferred shooting wide to drawing the ball. Near the foot of the hill the pursuit shortened again. Halwood turned and watched. There was a rippling volley, and he heard no lead. Then Long fired and the bullet passed close. There would be no identifying a mortal ball as coming from Long's pistol.

Halwood raised his weapon and fired pointblank. The officer's mount came to a plunging halt, reared, and then dropped to his knees, sending his rider into the bush growth. Although lacking their leader the mounted men swept on. Halwood raced toward the American lines; he heard the rattle of drums alarming the camp and flashed by an outpost, which snarled with musketry as the pursuers approached. With reins in his teeth and both hands held high above his head, the Virginian rushed on until he had passed a line of men deploying as skirmishers.

A sergeant ran up to him and demanded his name and business. Halwood furnished the information, and asked to be taken to an officer. The sergeant eyed him with much hostility and left him in charge of a guard. He had lost his animosity, however, when he returned, and said:

"Follow me, please. One of the men will look after your mount."

He led the way to a hut and the sentry stepped to one side. From within a hearty voice called out:

"Enter, enter! You are in time for some of the toughest beef ever eaten by any army."

Halwood passed through the low doorway and beheld General Wayne, immaculate in his personal appearance.

"So you return," greeted the general, motioning for Halwood to take a seat on a block of wood. "Why do you come?"

Halwood explained the situation. Wayne inspected him closely, then smiled and extended his hand, saying:

"I'll risk it that I am right in bidding you welcome. But do you know, Mr. Halwood, that one of our spies, identity unknown, has warned us that you had gone British? If your information about Red Bank had not been correct we must have decided you had turned your coat."

"And you do not know the person who misrepresents me so harshly?" demanded Halwood. "Who is he?"

"Ah, my friend, we would like to know that. But we do not. We've asked that many times. We can judge nothing by the handwriting, as there is none. All messages are printed. He has not duplicated your information to any extent, but

he tells the numbers and placements of troops, and the like, which you easily might have done."

Halwood's face reddened. He promptly admitted:

"No doubt that's true, sir. I have had the run of the place and can give you the name of Sir William's last mistress, and the young lady he is now hoping to seduce. But you never asked for the number and situation of the troops. I assumed you would not attack the town, and weren't interested. Did my unknown accuser tell you there is a British spy in this camp?"

Wayne shook his head, his eyes flashing.

"He is known as Red Schles."

"Prove your accusation, and we'll hang him before midday. I had to promise him fifty of the cat, well laid on, if he failed to be clean shaven on parade. How do you know he's an enemy spy?"

"Blidgett, head of the secret intelligence department, told me. Schles is the man who is to carry my reports to Howe's headquarters. You'll see, sir, it would be unwise to hang him. It would put my head in a noose if ever the enemy caught me. For their master spy gave me his name. I wish to send in *correct* information when such will do us no harm. Blidgett at times suspects me. If I can dispel that suspicion, return and hold on for a few months, I believe I can learn something very vital to our interests."

"Tell me everything, all the little things," said Wayne.

Halwood entered upon what proved to be a long recital. Before he had finished Wayne's eyes were flashing. At the conclusion the general exclaimed:

"It must have been tremendously exciting. To have rooms in the same house with this Blidgett! It was a master stroke!"

Halwood looked a bit dubious, and reminded:

"It was the Ferret's own plan, sir. Blidgett's name behind his back—Howe's Ferret."

"It's fortunate you accepted his suggestion. If there is a weak point in your plans it was the retention of a lodging apart from the Kinney house. Draw up to the table and my orderly will see you have some breakfast. I must report this to headquarters."

HALWOOD made a meal of tough, fresh beef, poor bread and a pitcher of water. At the end of an hour Wayne returned and announced:

"You will be given a commission. I will make you my orderly, so you won't be tied down by routine. In the meanwhile we will formulate a report which you will send out by Schles. He is often away, foraging. He is allowed to go as he always brings in cattle, a horse or two. You will be quartered with Captain Young in the hut back of this. Now you are free to move around and examine the camp."

After Wayne's orderly had made him known to Captain Young and had seen his pallet was furnished with blankets, he was left alone. He strolled around the camp and familiarized himself with its strength and weakness. While he was at the north end, and near the outpost, a man with red hair and a stubble of red beard, came up, and greeted him.

"You're just arrived from Philadelphia, sir. Or so the boys are saying. What's the news?"

"That our Mr. Blidgett said Sergeant Schles was the man who would see that my reports would get through to Philadelphia. My name is Halwood."

Sergeant Schles began pointing, as if describing the limits of the camp, and rapidly said:

"I knew you were coming. I had your name. We must be sly as the devil. See the tree a rod ahead? There's a hole in it. Put your message there. Then happen upon me, and say, 'A pleasant day, Sergeant.' I will attend to the rest."

The man hurried away, and Halwood sauntered by the tree and observed the small opening in the trunk, about five feet from the ground. He returned to his

quarters and slept on his blankets until dusk. On awakening he found Captain Young and another officer baking bread by the simple process of mixing flour with water, and spreading the dough on a flat rock before the fire. It was commonly called fire bread. A jug of fall cider served for drink. Halwood found his companions very affable, but unable to conceal their curiosity as to his exact status. He could only tell them he was in hope of getting a commission. After they had eaten their frugal supper, an orderly came to the door and announced—

"General Wayne will see Mr. Halwood."

Arriving at the general's hut, the Virginian found Wayne studying a packet of papers. Ceasing his work and motioning for Halwood to be seated, the general said:

"Another man from Philadelphia has been here while you were sleeping. He left two hundred dollars in gold for our military chest. He is your landlord, Mr. Kinney. He has given us gold before."

"I passed him on the road. A queer character."

"Yet rather prepossessing when he brings gold. He is a patriot."

"He has odd notions about the stars, sir. He finds we are in for a long war."

"Then God help us! I'm wondering if it would be wise to ask him to spy on that Blidgett?"

Halwood promptly and emphatically shook his head, and explained:

"The old man can't be very shrewd, and Blidgett can outguess the devil. There is but one important bit of news to be learned in Philadelphia."

He paused, not wishing to appear forward.

"Yes?" prompted Wayne.

"Information as to when the British will evacuate the city. They can not remain there indefinitely. Sir William shows no inclination to take any initiative."

Wayne mused over this statement and said:

"Perhaps you are right, Mr. Halwood. Such information would be invaluable to us, of course. How many men have they, for a rough estimate?"

"Twelve thousand, counting all arms of the service."

"You believe they will remain through the winter?"

"I have no doubt as to that. They have nowhere else to go, unless it be back to New York. And Sir William is enjoying life very much."

Wayne nodded, pushed forward writing material and said:

"You can report us as having eight thousand men, with two thousand Pennsylvania men about to return to their homes, their terms being up. Say that we lack shoes to a woeful extent, and are short of gunpowder. And that we plan to make this our winter quarters. If we do not bide here, we shall make our winter camp in Valley Forge, which is General Washington's choice. This first budget of news will be strictly honest. What we want is a fight. We want them to bring it to us. Our position is strong. We can whip them in a major engagement. That's what we desire, a decisive battle. But it must come before snow falls. You can truthfully add that we came near attacking the town while the troops were at Red Bank."

"It shall be ready for Schles tonight," murmured Halwood. "I'll write it here, if I may." Wayne nodded and left the hut.

It required but a few minutes for the Virginian to prepare his first secret dispatch. A short walk in the gloaming, and he had posted it in the tree. Then he sauntered about the camp, exchanging greetings. Sergeant Schles crossed his path and remarked—

"A fine night, sir."

"And a most pleasant day."

In the morning General Wayne informed him that Sergeant Schles was absent on a foraging expedition. The man was gone two days, and brought back several fine beeves and a cart loaded with swine. Halwood, now a lieutenant, congratulated him on his success. Schles closed one eye slowly.

SEVERAL weeks passed. Lieutenant Halwood was often absent with scout bands and foraging parties. He learned the country roads and byways intimately. More than one verbal message he sent to Lydyg by the man who posed as a pedler. Through Schles he sent quite exhaustive reports of all that was going on in the American army. All such news strictly adhered to the truth, and much of it could be indorsed by Sergeant Schles. At an early hour one morning the soldier, who outside the camp played the rôle of pedler, brought him a written message, which read:

> Got hold of some of Sir William's handwriting. I can write just like him. Am enclosing a sample for you. Heard drunken officers talking at the table. The army will move against White Marsh tonight, December 4. Saw the redhead talking with Blidgett down on the wharf. I have a hiding place between two piles of lumber and can move some distance unseen. I heard the redhead say, "I'll get proof that will cook him." I feel he was talking about *you*. I trailed him that night for some ways. I'm sure he hides in the Cumberly house. Folks keep clear, thinking it's haunted. I'll wind up his ball of yarn if I get a chance, but it must happen outside the town.

There was an enclosure, and the imitation of Howe's handwriting was in the form of a pass, which read:

> *To all Officers and Secret Agents:*
> THE BEARER OF THIS, MR. HALWOOD, IS NOT TO BE DETAINED, OR BOTHERED, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES.
> —SIR WM. HOWE.
> *Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's forces in North America.*

Halwood reported to General Wayne, who went to headquarters. He found an officer there, just arrived, who reported that a woman, Mrs. Lydia Darrach, had walked out from town to an outpost to give warning that the British were coming. She had obtained the information by overhearing the adjutant-general, quartered in her house, read aloud his orders to some officers.* General Wayne returned to his hut, and scarcely had arrived there when a soldier on outpost duty came to the door and handed over a sealed paper, saying—

"Another, sir, from the same man."

Wayne tore open the paper, and after a glance turned to Halwood, saying:

"Our unknown spy sends warning of the enemy's coming. From three different sources! It must be correct. Anyway, everything is in motion."

The camp was teeming with activity. General Washington and his staff rode out to secure first glimpse of the enemy. A courier from an outpost galloped up to report that the whole British army was on Chestnut Hill. General James Irvine, with his Pennsylvania Militia, went out to engage the enemy's advance guard at the foot of the hill. After a brisk engagement the militia broke and fled, leaving their wounded leader in the hands of the foe.

Sir William Howe was at the head of his army. Washington had posted his forces most advantageously, and waited for the enemy to attack. It was a wish close to his heart that the enemy would engage in a decisive battle. The dreary waiting for the British to come out and fight seemed to be ended. But Howe was unwilling to precipitate hostilities. Possibly he was remembering Red Bank. For four days hope ran high in the American army, with Howe constantly maneuvering to gain a position that would force Washington to attack. Then to the great disappointment of the Americans he suddenly retreated and returned to the city.

The near approach of winter, with the American army in no condition to keep the field, compelled Washington to seek winter quarters. His choice was Valley Forge, on the west side of the Schuylkill, at the mouth of Valley Creek. It was a gloomy, somber place, with the surrounding hills heavily timbered. Halwood heard Baron De Kalb pronounce it a wilderness. Others criticised it severely. But it was easily defended. It was central. It was close enough to the enemy to be constantly informed of enemy movements.

* A fact

The army moved there in the middle of December and erected log huts. Food, shoes, clothing, everything which tended to lessen suffering, was lacking. On Christmas Day, Halwood, now a captain, was called to headquarters, where Colonel Greene and General Wayne were in conference with the greatest of the Virginians. General Wayne turned from the table and said:

"Captain Halwood, we believe you can do more good in Philadelphia than you can here. Are you ready to go back?"

"Yes, sir."

"You believe it will be dangerous?"

"Very dangerous."

"You can start when?"

"Now, sir."

"What reason will you give that master spy, Blidgett?"

"That conditions here are unbearable, and that there is no likelihood of anything developing."

"You are willing to remain here?" spoke up Colonel Greene.

"Certainly, sir. I should prefer to remain."

From his corner General Washington said:

"I have a memorandum here, Captain Halwood, of your stating that the most important item of information to be expected from Philadelphia, is the news of Howe's intended departure. You believe you can be beforehand with that information?"

"I should do my utmost, sir."

"Colonel Greene, see what we can do in the way of finding some gold for Captain Halwood."

"If you please, sir, I can shift for myself," broke in Halwood.

"How?" demanded Colonel Greene.

"By permitting the secret intelligence bureau of the enemy to pay my living expenses. I am still on their payroll."

"If the captain can live off the enemy we will hoard our gold awhile longer," said General Washington. "Captain Halwood, I am convinced you can serve us better there than here. You have our best wishes for your personal safety and for your success."

An hour later, when he was about to ride, General Wayne sent for him. The interview was short:

"Sergeant Schles has gone foraging. Perhaps it would be better if he had been held in camp awhile." It was both a statement and a question.

"He will prefer to be ahead of me. I am confident I know where he goes to."

"It is time we hanged him."

"It might cause me trouble in town, sir. Let him have a day's start. I know his hiding place, but he does not know I know it."

"As you wish, but if he comes back, he hangs."

"If he returns here, sir, you will know he can do me no further harm."

## CHAPTER XIII

### SCHLES COMES AND GOES

PHILADELPHIA was in dire need of an extensive house cleaning, although, despite the dirt, the general health of the populace was excellent. Provisions were scarce and dear, and gold and silver went into hiding. Outstanding Tories, however, wanted for nothing that British store ships could supply. Howe's army in passing through Chester County seized supplies and live stock, giving certificates in exchange. These paper promises to pay were promptly honored in hard money when presented at headquarters. Even the disaffected had to acknowledge the superiority of English gold and silver over the practically worthless American currency. What appeared to be an unending stream of supplies was arriving from England. Never had the Delaware seen so much shipping. Some sixty large vessels were moored along the wharves at one time, with others anchored in the river.

Whereas the army had found empty stores when it arrived, now all were overflowing with goods, largely consisting of luxuries. Country folk were constantly

bringing in grain and livestock, exchanging the same for hard money. Washington's ragged force could not meet such competition.

The streets afforded a constantly changing panorama of life and color. Many countrymen came in to "see the sights", and to be impressed by England's might and riches. Such visitors were not molested, and they returned to their farms and hamlets to spread the propaganda of Britain's power. The agrarians gaped their fill at Lord Cornwallis' Grenadiers, who were purposely paraded to present an imposing spectacle.

The Hessians had aroused countrywide curiosity, inasmuch as the provincial press had depicted them as ogres. They were quite terrific in their enormous hats, their big boots and huge canteens, and awesome mustaches, the latter being blackened with shoe polish. Their rape of the Jerseys could easily be believed after beholding their theatrically fierce appearance.

Striking contrasts were not lacking: an abundance of luxuries and a scarcity of firewood. For the Tories there were stores, filled with fashion's latest modes; shops displaying a profusion of jewelry; assemblies, theatrical performances and banquets. Opposed to such gaiety was the misery of those outside the royal favor. The nethermost hell of suffering was experienced by the prisoners in the provost. The explosion of the *Augusta* man-of-war during the attack on Red Bank, had shattered the last of the windows in the Chestnut Street prison. No citizen could walk abroad without being constantly reminded of England's power. Besides the troops on the outskirts of the city there was the Artillery quartered in Chestnut Street, between Third and Sixth Streets, with the Forty-second Highlanders below Third, and the Fifteenth Regiment in Market Street.

Outside the prison it would be difficult to find a more worried, more woeful mortal than Lydyg. He stood in the greatest fear of the Ferret. He felt the implacable eyes burning through his mind whenever the master spy entered the tavern, or encountered him on the street. Life wore a different complexion when Halwood was in town. To Lydyg he was a god. He had outwitted Blidgett. With the Virginian absent, the cleverest thief suddenly discovered he was much afraid.

The adventure on the wharf, when he was ensconced between two stacks of lumber, and overheard Red Schles' boast about "cooking the goose" of some one, filled him with horror at first. Then, convinced that the threat was directed against his idol, the cleverest thief heard the call to service and submerged his personal fears. From the time of that eavesdropping Lydyg lived only to discover when Schles returned.

The man showed up unexpectedly just as Lydyg, finished with work for the night, was leaving the tavern. He saw the red hair in the light of the alley lantern and hurried forward to give genial greetings. Schles affected pleasure at the meeting, and explained—

"Thought to get a bite to eat and something to drink."

"Wait and I'll fetch out a roast duck and some rum," said Lydyg. "I know what it is to have empty pockets."

"My pockets ain't empty, my boy. When Red Schles hasn't a gold piece times have to be harder than they be now. But I don't want to be seen till I git the lay of the land."

"Who you dodging?"

"Nobody. I'm looking for Blidgett, the skeleton man. He mightn't want it known I was in town. I'm pretty important in his work."

They were standing closer now, and Lydyg caught the smell of rum. Schles, as a rule, was not loose of tongue. Lydyg sensed an opportunity. He said—

"Must be fine to be on the inside of things, and not be frightened by that bony scarecrow." His tone was envious.

"Scared? Who, me?" Schles laughed boisterously. "Listen, my boy. I know things that would put your eye out. See here. I can go to headquarters and ask for Blidgett'n' hear 'em say, 'Yes, sir.

This way, if you'll be so good, sir.'"

"Judas! Must be fine to mix with big folks!"

"Bah! If they be big it's all along of the work me'n' others of my kind do. But they git all the credit."

Lydyg motioned for Schles to keep back in the shadows, and then returned to the kitchen. When he emerged he had a roasted duck wrapped in a copy of the *Evening Post.* Under his coat was a stone bottle of rum. Rejoining Schles, he hurriedly advised:

"We'd better clear out. You'd better eat this noble duck down on the wharf. It's stuffed with oysters!"

"Good. We'll walk along. You carry it. See here, my boy, I know certain things about an uppity man that would send him kicking inside a noose. Knowing things gives a man power."

"Who is he?" whispered Lydyg.

"See anything green in my eye? When you know something that other folks don't know, you have power. You can trade your secret for gold. If other folks know it, it ain't worth a shilling."

"Just thought I might help you by seeing if he's in the tavern."

"Your head's thick, my boy. I ain't looking for him. I don't need any help. Anyway, he ain't in town. And I ain't speaking of Blidgett, now. I'm a day ahead of him."

"Must be grand to know things and live without working," sighed Lydyg. As they came to the mouth of the alley he proposed, "Let's have one drink to walk on."

HE PASSED over the stone bottle and Schles drank generously. Lydyg drank a mouthful with much gusto. As they took the street leading to the wharves Schles' bearing became more truculent. He walked with a swagger. Lydyg murmured—

"Wish I could git a good lay like what you have."

"I use my head— There's a sentinel ahead."

"Bear off to the right. We'll dodge him," whispered Lydyg.

"Dodge nothing! I can shove a piece of paper under his big nose that'll make him call me mister," Schles bragged. "Blidgett's pass will see me through hell."

"Judas! But that's fine! Turn here to the right. That's what I call power. This way. Keep close to me." He was leading the way to some tall stacks of long planks, and soon was boldly plunging into the darkness of a narrow slot.

"I can't see nothing," complained Schles, at his heels.

"It's light at t'other end. Lanterns on the boats, you know. Careful—we now make a turn."

The way led at right angles for a dozen feet and then continued toward the river. Now they could glimpse the bowsprit of a large vessel, the lights from which dimly illuminated the snug lane. Lydyg halted a dozen feet from the edge of the wharf and sat down. Schles did likewise and refreshed himself with a long drink, then ate some of the duck. His appetite, however, ran to liquor rather than to food. He retained the bottle and, between mouthfuls, boasted—

"How many men carry a pass, written and signed by Blidgett?"

"No one we know."

"Thick skull! Didn't I say I had such a writing?"

"Seeing 's believing," challenged Lydyg.

"Carry it in my right shoe. Won't disturb it now. This is good rum. I'll buy you a hogshead of it when a certain man comes to town."

"Blidgett?"

"Of course not, thick skull! I'll want Blidgett near when the man comes. Man I mean is a damned Yankee. I watched him— I heard things. I was s'picious when I was last in town. I told Blidgett." He paused and eased his throat with more rum, and continued huskily, "Since then I got simon-pure proof. Heard him talking. You never could guess who he talked with."

"I ain't clever like you be."

"Of course you're not. You wouldn't

be waiting on pigs in gay uniforms if you was. What if I said I heard him talking and telling his tale to General Wayne? Rebels call him Dandy Wayne."

"Then I'd say your man's a damn turncoat!" hotly replied Lydyg.

"You'd be right for once," acknowledged Schles. "And he'll pay the price. I'll make a fortune. Man's a fool to be a rebel. Old King George has no end of gold, and I fight on the gold side; not on the fire bread side. Our gay buck, Halwood—" He halted as if struck senseless. Then his eyes narrowed. The rum had not entirely smothered his common sense.

"Go on!" eagerly prompted Lydyg, drawing his legs under him until he was squatting on his heels. "So that's the buck you've been trailing!" As he spoke he picked up the duck and tore off a wing.

Red Schles let the bottle of rum drop from his hands. His eyes were fixed in a steady stare on the huddled figure before him. Brain cells, not yet benumbed by the liquor, opened and warned him that he had said too much; that his secret was worthless because another knew it. If his words were repeated and came to the Ferret's ears . . .

His mouth twisted to one side. In a steadier voice he told Lydyg—

"If you told any one what I've said—"

"What? Me talk?" indignantly exclaimed Lydyg; and he picked up the rum and made as if to pull the stopper with his teeth.

Red Schles' right hand stole under his coat and the twisted lips grimaced.

"Judas! Think I'd yawp what a friend told me?" continued Lydyg.

Schles slowly shook his head and said:

"No, you'll never blab what I tell, my boy. Drink made a fool of my tongue, but you won't blab."

"I'd say not!"

"You'll never tell nobody on earth," slowly continued Schles.

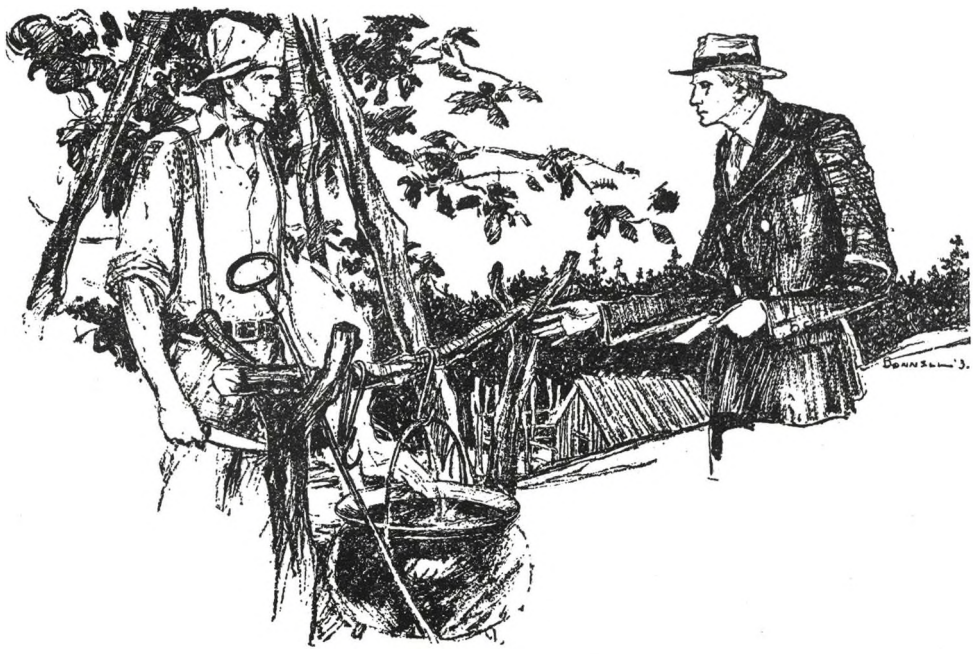
He had been shifting his position, gradually, and now he had his feet under him. His eyes, in the soft light, appeared to be filled with an awful fury. Lydyg's change of expression was like the removing of a mask. Both men slowly came to their feet, as if very weary, or indulging in a difficult bit of posturing. Then with a half smothered expletive Schles' hand was whipped from under his coat. It clasped a knife. The space was narrow; neither could retreat.

"Here's your pay for the goose, damn you!" whispered Schles.

He was amazingly quick, and the shock of his self-betrayal must have greatly eradicated the effect of the liquor. With lightning quickness the mortal weapon was thrust forward, only to take effect on the stuffed body of the roasted duck, now improvised as buckler; and in the next moment the stone bottle crashed down on Schles' red head.

TO BE CONCLUDED

*A Story of the Southern Pine Country*



# BREAD *on the* WATERS

By HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

UNCLE Steve Simmons had many pieces from the inside of his little tractor spread on a board. Seated on the end of the board, his short beard gripped in his hand, he was gazing solemnly at them, wondering just which, if any, were causing the trouble.

When it came to fouled sparkplugs or a worn out timer, Uncle Steve could spot the trouble at once; but his knowledge did not go much beyond that. He did not know even how to go about getting the parts back in the tractor. But somebody would be along after awhile who would know, or he could send for somebody who would come and help him. His faith was absolute.

The little saw mill was comparatively new, and the carriage and husk frame still glowed with red paint; but most of the belting was old and many times patched, and the edges were as tattered as the bottoms of a poor man's trousers. A towheaded youth, driving a rat tailed mule and a fleabitten white mare to a light four wheel dray, came in from the woods to the log ramp with a few small logs.

The youth paused in knocking out his chocks and Uncle Steve let his gaze wander from the contemplation of the tractor parts on the board as a smart little roadster turned in at the mill and drew up near the lumber ramp where the trucks

loaded—when there was anything to load. A young man in a blue serge suit, wearing a bright colored necktie and with his shoes neatly polished descended from the car and came striding briskly over to Uncle Steve.

"Goodright is my name," he said. "Lumber buyer for the Alabama office of Mason & Brown of Chicago."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Goodright. I was hopin' maybe you was from the consarn in Montgomery that sold me this here second hand, or third hand, or fourth hand tractor."

"Do you operate this mill?"

"I do when she's runnin'. She ain't runnin'."

"Oh, I see. Broke down."

"Ain't nothin' broke, that I kin find. But this here old lady chokes an' coughs an' sputters like she's got the asthmy. Thought I'd take some of her internals out an' look at 'em. Taken out everything that would unbolt; but now that I've got 'em out in daylight I can't tell nothin' 'bout 'em."

Silently Mr. Goodright removed his coat and rolled up his sleeves. Efficiently he went to work. First he returned the parts to their respective places, then with a wrench and a screwdriver he poked and pried and investigated. Presently he screwed up two nuts.

"I think that was your trouble," he said.

"What?"

"It was losing compression."

"You mean you've done got it fixed?"

"I think so. Let's see."

When presently they got the tractor cranked, Uncle Steve declared it ran like a sewing machine. He was very grateful to this young stranger who had helped him, and it never would have entered his head that one with a mechanical turn can no more keep his hands off a piece of machinery, when the opportunity presents itself, than a youngster can keep his hands out of the jam pot.

"What do you cut?" asked the young lumber buyer.

"Anything that I git orders for. When everything else runs out, I makes one-inch an' sends it over to that there roofer company in Doree. They dries it an' dresses it an' ships it up North. Right now I'm workin' on a little house bill, gittin' out some two-by-fo's. It ought to be finished today; but I promised a neighbor to go over this evenin' an' doctor his cow. She's bad off, so he says. But I think maybe she's jest swallowed her cud. Ef that's all ails her, I'll catch me a toad frog an' slip it down her th'oat an' she'll heave the cud right back up again. Now there was Sol Ingram's cow over to Santuck—"

But Mr. Goodright seemed not to be interested in cows who had lost their cuds.

"Is that all your timber will make—one-inch and two-by-fours?" he asked, glancing at the small logs that had been brought in on the dray.

"Why, no. This here is the Tom Ensley piece of timber I've sot down in. Best timber in the county. It'll make anything."

"Suppose we look it over."

"You have some nice timber, Mr. Simmons," Goodright said when they returned to the mill. "The short leaf is of a good grade and that patch of long leaf is fine—big enough, without being overgrown and doaty. What length stuff can you cut?"

"Nothin' over twenty-foot."

"I can pay you more money for longer lengths."

"But I'd have to lengthen my cable an' add mo' to my carriage track. I ain't got time to fool with them changes. Ain't you got nothin' twenty-foot an' under?"

Mr. Goodright left with Uncle Steve a very nice order at a fair price. When he returned a few days later to see how he was progressing with the order, Uncle Steve was not at the mill. He was over at Sam Rountree's dressing a hog. Sam was sick, and he had sent for Uncle Steve to come and help him out. Of course a man couldn't go back on a sick neighbor.

With the freshly scraped shoat suspended by its hind legs to the limb of a tree in the back yard, Uncle Steve was

just putting on the finishing touches when Goodright arrived.

"Why, hello," the old man called genially. "'Scuse my not shakin' hands."

"Mr. Simmons," the young man said severely, "I have just come by the mill, and the log hauler said I would find you over here. You haven't cut more than one truck load of that order I left with you."

"Jest about," Uncle Steve agreed with him. "I would have got another today, ef Sam hadn't sont for me. But he had the hog ready to be dressed when he was took down with the cramp colic. It's in fine shape, too. Penned an' corn fed for two months."

"Well, I can't wait on you for that order. I'm sorry; but I'll have to cancel it and place your balance with some of the other mills. You can send in what you've cut."

"That'll be all right, son," Uncle Steve said kindly. "Dorg Goodwin—he hauls my stuff for me—will take that load down tomorrow. I'll saw the other logs I have cut for the order into one-inch. Give me a lift with this here hog. I want to lay it on that bench over there, so's I kin cut it up."

"I'll be going now," Mr. Goodright said rather stiffly, when he had helped Uncle Steve place the hog to the old man's satisfaction.

"You ain't goin' nowhere," Uncle Steve told him, glancing up at the sun. "It's 'leven o'clock now. I'll have this here hog cut up in a jiffy. Then I'm goin' to take a mess of spare ribs home, an' you're goin' an' have dinner with us."

"I've got to see those other mills," Goodright demurred.

"You've got to eat, ain't you? An' it ain't every day you git a chance at a mess of fresh spare ribs like these, an' my wife, Melvy, to cook 'em for you. She'll have baked sweet potatoes, collard greens, cornbread, buttermilk an' good hot coffee. Hush yo' mouth, boy!"

And so Roy Goodright, lumber buyer for Mason & Brown, wholesalers, took his first meal with Uncle Steve and Aunt Melvy. It became a habit with him after that to drop by at dinner time, even when Uncle Steve was away from home, and several times he spent the night. The two old people accepted him as their friend, and they grew to love him, as they loved all men.

Then Dorg Goodwin, the truck driver, began to warn Uncle Steve about him. Dorg's work carried him among the other mills, and he hauled lumber regularly to Montgomery.

"You better watch him, Steve," he said. "He's a hard trader—plum' takes the hair off. An' he's a hard grader. I've hauled back mo' than one load, or piece of a load, to the mill, jest kase it wasn't right up to the specifications that the order called for. Has to be end trimmed an' edged up right to a gnat's heel, too, or his grader won't accept it."

"Waal, he always specifies that in his orders."

"He's a sharper, though, an' you better watch him, or he'll fling you one of these days. He don't think 'bout nobody but himself, an' the folks up North he works for. That's why they have lately made him manager of the Alabama office."

But Uncle Steve knew that Dorg was suspicious by nature and paid little attention to his warning.

THE FALL and winter passed. Spring came, then summer, and the farmers laid by their crops —the last plowing of cotton and corn before gathering time.

Uncle Steve, in his hit or miss fashion, was still cutting lumber for Roy Goodright. Seldom did he finish an order. Sometimes it was canceled before he got a chance to start on it. But always the old order was replaced by a new one. Uncle Steve appreciated this; but Dorg told him skeptically:

"He's only usin' you. You're always particular to cut yo' stuff jest so. He knows that what he does git will be to his likin'."

And now that the farmers began to need lumber for repairs, Uncle Steve

found it harder than ever to work consecutively on the orders placed with him by the lumber buyer. The other mills would not interrupt their operations to fool with the little miscellaneous stuff needed by the farmers; but a neighbor in distress always found sympathy with Uncle Steve.

"Did you ever stop to think, Uncle Steve," Roy Goodright once told him, "that these fellows have learned how to work you, that they've found out all they've got to do is play on your sympathies?"

And then, after keeping just ahead of the game for so many years in this shiftless fashion of doing business, Uncle Steve began to run into difficulties.

The roofer people at Doree had offered Tom Ensley a cash price for his timber, into which they wanted to move two mills in the fall. The price per thousand feet would not amount to as much as he was getting from Uncle Steve, who paid him so much a thousand feet, lumber tally, as the timber was cut; but, as he told the old mill man, Uncle Steve had been there with his mill for over a year and had scarcely made a dent in the timber, and Tom needed the money.

The loss of the timber would not have bothered Uncle Steve particularly. He could always find another patch somewhere. He always had. But the place in which he and Aunt Melvy now lived was more like home than any they had ever occupied. As is necessary with migratory mill men and their families, they had always set up housekeeping in any available shelter convenient to the mill. Sometimes it was an abandoned farm; sometimes an old cotton house was converted into a dwelling; sometimes a shack was built with freshly sawed lumber from the mill.

This time they had found an abandoned farm on a hill overlooking the mill seat, and the owner had been glad to accept a small rental for its use. The house was old but had been built of heart lumber and there was very little decay. A small barn had been repaired by Uncle Steve with lumber from the mill. The place was beautiful with large, shadowing oaks, crêpe myrtle trees and bridal wreath bushes. A Cherokee rose ran along a side fence. Aunt Melvy had added flower beds and planted morning glory vines at the porches. In the shaded backyard was a big well from which the water came up cool and dripping in the oaken buckets, suspended one on each end of a chain, which passed through a little wheel in the top of the well shed.

There was a nice garden spot, and there was a field which easily could have been made to produce four or five bales of cotton and several hundred bushels of corn. In the bottom was just the spot for a suger cane patch, which would yield at least a hundred gallons of molasses a season. And there was a swamp pasture in which a couple of brood sows and their young would have found a splendid range.

Wistfully the two old people spoke of these things and Uncle Steve promised that if he had a good year at the mill he would farm the place and get a piece or two of furniture for one of the rooms across the hall, so that their two grown daughters, working in Montgomery, could come out and spend their holidays.

But here was old man Hard Times stepping on his heels and blowing his foul breath on the back of his neck. And to cap it all, Tom Ensley was thinking of selling the timber to some one else. If he did, they would have to move.

ONE DAY Uncle Steve came home to dinner and found his young friend, Roy Goodright, seated on the vine shaded front gallery, slumped forward in his chair, his face buried in his hands. Beside him Aunt Melvy sat rocking slowly to and fro, fanning him with a big palm leaf fan. She was talking to him in a low tone, to which he made no reply; only shook his head now and then. As Uncle Steve came hastily up the steps, he groaned.

"What's the matter, Roy, got the toothache?"

"I'm in a terrible jam Uncle Steve," Roy said, looking up at the old man. "It's largely my fault, too, and will just about cost me my job."

"Why, how's that?"

"Had an order placed with a big mill down the State. They delayed a month before they started cutting on it, which I shouldn't have allowed. Then, just as they got started the dam which backs up their log pond blew out and they will have to shut down until the dam is repaired. The other mills cutting for me are pretty well filled up, and I don't seem able to place it elsewhere. I've got to begin shipping out that order next week. Got to rush it through, too."

Uncle Steve took a turn up and down the length of the gallery.

"By George, you kin give 'em a car next week! I'll cut it for you myself."

Roy laughed mirthlessly.

"Your intentions are good, Uncle Steve; but just about time you got started, some farmer would come to the mill with the old story that he had the roof off his cotton house and just had to have a few rafters and boards, and you'd stop whatever else you were doing and go right to cutting his bill for him."

"No I wouldn't! No I wouldn't! Not when you're in a tight like this, Roy. I'd make that old sister of a mill hum till you had a chance to git straightened out."

"The most important part of my order is longer lengths than you cut. Longer than any of the mills around here cut. Some of the long leaf timbers run up to forty feet. Afraid you couldn't help me, Uncle Steve, though I appreciate your interest. Here's the order; look it over."

Readjusting his glasses, the old mill man read the order.

"That's a humdinger," he said, slowly shaking his head.

He took another turn up and down the gallery.

"Cuttin' them big timbers will need mo' power than my rig has. But tell you what I'll do. Pete Halsey has cut out an' his rig is settin' over there in the woods. I'll borry his tractor an' hook it up alongside of mine. Then I'll lengthen out my cable and carriage track. Jest tell them people you works for to keep their shirts on an' not fire you nor do nothin' rash till they gives you a chance. I'll git you out of this here tight, or bust a hame string."

"Why, Uncle Steve, you couldn't even haul the logs to the mill to make that stuff with the team you've got."

"Waal, ain't Pete's drays settin' idle? He's sold his stock; but there's enough big mules amongst the farmers around here to haul anything."

At last hope seemed to be dawning in Roy's face.

"Uncle Steve, do you think you could do that? And *would* you do what you've been talking about?"

"Would I? Look here, Roy, you ain't never knowed me to lay down on a friend who was in a jam, have you?"

Roy was on his feet now, the light of hope in his eyes. They were both pacing up and down the gallery, planning, laying out the work to be done—the rearrangement of the mill, that portion of the timber first to be cut, log ramps in the woods, roads out of the timber, additional trucks to help Dorg Goodwin in hauling the lumber to Montgomery, where it was to be loaded on cars and shipped.

Suddenly Uncle Steve stopped abruptly and dropped his head, his beard gripped in his hand.

"I had done forgot, Roy. My wheels is blocked. I can't turn a spoke."

"What's the matter now?" the young lumber buyer cried in distress, selfish fear of having his hopes frustrated sounding in his voice.

"My credit is done run out. I been gittin' feed an' rations an' gas an' oil from three different sto's. When one got to crampin' me too hard for a settlemint I'd change to another. Now they've all done tuck out on me. They got all I had, but still they said it wasn't enough. I jest can't go on."

"Oh, I can attend to that, if that's all is bothering you. I can advance you enough to stave 'em off. Tell you what;

let me keep the books on this operation. I'll see the stores and arrange for your credit. Then you send me a copy of every order you send them for supplies. I'll pay the accounts myself, or give you a check to cover. At the end of every week, you can bring me in your payroll and a list of what you owe for log hauling, trucking, and so on, and I'll give you a check to cover that, too. You will have to close this as of Friday night, and bring it to me on Saturday morning, so that you can draw your money and pay off on Saturday evening."

There was a quality in Roy Goodright's manner that was new to Uncle Steve. His voice was sharp, peremptory, dictatorial. He ran rough shod over Uncle Steve's opinions, overrode his objections. The bits in his teeth, he was running away, and he was taking Uncle Steve with him. The old man had a sensation as if he were riding downhill behind a team that had got beyond control. For the third time Aunt Melvy called them to dinner.

They spent that afternoon in the lumber buyer's roadster visiting those upon whom Uncle Steve had decided to call for help. As profligate as he had been in giving of his time and labor to others, it was the first time, except for a small favor requested now and then, that the old mill man had asked for assistance. His neighbors responded to a man, and word was passed among them, reaching those whom he did not get a chance to see:

"Uncle Steve Simmons has done bit off mo' than he can chew, an' he's squallin' for help like a lost yearlin'. That there lumber buyer has got him tied up in a big contract that he can't handle by himself. We got to stand by him an' see him through."

Pete Halsey agreed to lend him not only his drays, tractor and a piece of cable, but part of his carriage track, a section of carriage and an extra block.

"I'll send 'em when the teams comes for the drays," he said. "Me an' Jo Tippins, my old sawyer, will be over tomorrow to help you change the mill. Better git Jo to saw for you. He's out of a job an' he's the best I know of."

With the two tractors hooked up to the mill and synchronized, the little mill had all the power that was needed. So many teams responded to Uncle Steve's call that after a few days he had to lay off some of them. The ramp was full of logs and there were a number dropped on the outside. It was Pete Halsey's suggestion that they run day and night.

"You can git enough extry logs in durin' the day time to run you till next mornin'. We can stand a few autos around with their lights on to see by. Since things is fixed up, I've about run out of a job around here, so I kin be yo' night sawyer. There's plenty of other help."

UNCLE STEVE eagerly accepted the plan. Here, yonder and everywhere, supervising things, keeping them coordinated and going at top speed, he was doing the work of two men. He had pledged himself to help his young friend out of trouble, but he did not know whether he was succeeding or not. Roy Goodright seemed just as worried as ever.

"They are squalling for deliveries," he said. "They might cancel on me at any time and have another and a better man than I am fill the balance of the order."

And he seemed never satisfied. No matter how hard Uncle Steve planned and schemed and worked and strived, he wanted to know if the old man could not do just a little more, in fact often made suggestions whereby Uncle Steve could do more. He was not as he used to be, either. He never came by for dinner any more—didn't have time, he said. In his visits to the mill, he was preoccupied, frowning. Walking through the woods with a pencil and paper in his hand, he made frequent notes of the standing timber that was left. He was constantly changing the schedule, and some of the new sizes he added were mighty hard to get.

One day Dorg Goodwin, the truck

driver, whose truck was waiting for two other trucks to finish loading and get out of the way, called Uncle Steve to one side. They were about the same age and had been boys together, and there was a strong affection between them.

"Steve," Dorg said, removing his old slouch hat and thoughtfully rubbing his head, "you're goin' too hard. You ain't never worked like this, an' you can't stand it. You are plumb wore to a frazzle. That there damn lumber buyer is drivin' you to death. I hope he's payin' you big money for the stuff you're cuttin'. This is the hardest order I've ever seen cut at any mill, what with them big, long timbers an' the heart specifications on the long leaf. How much is he givin' you a thousand for that there heart long leaf?"

"We didn't discuss no price, Dorg. But I reckin he'll treat me right. You see, he was in a mighty bad fix—'bout to lose his job an' all—an' I jest jumped in to help him out."

"Don't even know what you're gittin'?" Dorg looked at him in astonishment. "But surely you kin sorter figger it out when he pays you off every week."

Uncle Steve seemed embarrassed.

"Waal, it's this way, Dorg. He agreed only to pay operatin' expenses. I ain't got none of my part yit. But I gits plenty of rations out the sto's, along with the other supplies, an' kin manage all right. I ain't needin' it."

Dorg threw his old hat on the ground and stood upon it.

"That explains it. An' you can't say, Steve Simmons, that I didn't warn you right from the beginnin'. You know an' I know an' that there lumber buyer knows that this here piece of timber was the best in the county. He's studied it like a school boy studyin' his book. He knowed jest what could be got out of it. He's been studyin' you, too. He knowed that you was jest the sucker he needed for his purpose. He's shippin' this here danged high grade stuff up North at a price that will jest about cover operatin' expenses an' stumpage. His bosses will sell it at a whale of a profit; an' they'll pat him on the back an' maybe raise his wages for bein' a shrewd buyer. When it's all cut an' he's through with you, he'll throw you aside like a wrung-out dish rag. An' you won't have a hair to hang by. Me, I'm through. I won't stand for sich. I ain't goin' to haul another danged stick of lumber from this here mill."

"Dorg," Uncle Steve said, his voice trembling, "git yo' truck into the ramp an' start loadin'."

"Nary another piece!"

Uncle Steve clenched his hard, bony old fist and shook it close to Dorg's face

"Dorg, I ain't whupped you in thirty year; but that ain't sayin' I won't do it again." He spat in his hands, rubbed them together and again clenched his fists. "When I counts to three, ef you ain't got started, I'm goin' to sock you under the jaw an' knock you into the middle of next January. One, two—"

"Oh, waal—" Dorg picked up his hat —"seein' as you're nervous an' excited an' ain't rally responsible for what you're doin', I reckin I'll have to keep on humorin' you. But you needn't think, you old hickory nut headed fool," he added as they walked together to the truck, "that I'm skeered of you. Ef I wasn't so busy, I'd wallop the livin' tar out of you."

Grumbling, fussing, abusing each other, the two old men loaded the truck.

Though browbeaten by Uncle Steve into submission, Dorg nevertheless spread his infectious propaganda among the others. That evening when the night crew gathered, and the teams had come in with their last load of logs and the automobiles that were to furnish illumination were in their places, Pete Halsey mounted the end of a log and addressed Uncle Steve for all of them.

"Uncle Steve," he said, "it has jest come to our knowledge that you ain't gittin' a square deal out of this here business. When you undertaken to put over somethin' big an' called on us for help, they ain't a man amongst us could have looked the others in the face ef we hadn't came a-buck jumpin'. We are,

all of us, willin' to stand by you till the last horn blows; but they ain't none of us willin' to go on with this thing for the benefit of a damn shyster lumber buyer who is skinnin' you out of hide an' tallow. We're goin' to call a halt an'—"

Reaching a long arm, Uncle Steve caught Pete in the belt and pulled him from the end of the log. Mounting in his place, gesticulating with his clenched fist, he shouted shrilly:

"Pete Halsey, you nor nobody else is goin' to abuse a friend of mine an' git away with it. This here boy come to me in his trouble an' laid it at my feet—jest like every man jack of you has done, at one time or another. Did I shy off an' tell *you* that yo' difficulties was no affair of mine? No, I didn't. I shouldered 'em, an' I toted 'em to the best of my ability. That's what I done in Roy's case. I called on you, kase I needed help, an' you responded nobly. But ef there is ary weak bellied quitter amongst you, let him come forward an' acknowledge it, then depart hence right now. I want the rest of you, by a risin' vote, to let me know who's goin' to stand by me an' see me through."

The operation was resumed, full handed.

AND at last they had finished. So systematically had the timber been cut under Roy's directions, with orders to fit the logs, that the scrapping up took only a few days. The last log was sawed; the last piece of lumber had been hauled from the mill. As well as the special order stuff, he had taken the one-inch side boards, which were kiln dried and graded and dressed by a planing mill in town. They finished on a Wednesday and shut down the mill, and Roy was to come out from town for a last checking up and settlement with Uncle Steve.

When he did not make his appearance, Dorg was not the only one who tried to impress on the old mill man that he had been a sucker for a swindling game.

"Melvy," Uncle Steve said to his wife on Saturday morning, "the boys is raisin' the mischief because they think Roy has been playin' a skin game on me in this here lumber deal. They believe that he not only is not goin' to pay me anything over an' above expenses, but that he's not goin' to pay wages an' supplies for what we worked this week. They been ding-dangin' at me, an' they're all upsot because he didn't show up like he promised; but I reckin he's got mo' business to attend to than one little peckerwood mill."

"I see that you're upset, too, Steve. Maybe you oughter have put yo'self in on the list for some wages, like Dorg advised."

"Maybe so," he said gloomily. "They keep throwin' up to me 'bout Saul Haynie an' them others who cut for a solid month for some man who, after gittin' all their lumber, claimed he went broke, an' they didn't git nothin'—not even money to pay their hands with."

"I'd hate to think Roy would do you that way."

"So would I. But since I've come to think of it, he ain't like he used to be. He don't act the same."

"No, he don't, Steve. An' I don't know when he's been here to the house. What're you goin' to do?"

"I'm goin' down to Montgomery this mornin' an' demand money enough to pay off them boys, whether I git any for myself or not."

"It would sorter leave us in a bad fix, if he didn't pay you anything."

"It sho' would! He's kept the supplies paid up at the sto's, by givin' me checks to cover, accordin' to my list; but there's them old debts I owe 'em—nearly a thousand dollars, all told. They'll come down on me for that, soon's I quit tradin'. Pete Halsey wants to buy my rig; but he'd have to pay for it on time. An' how would I make a livin' 'thout a sawmill?"

"I wish we could stay right here," Aunt Melvy said, sighing.

"So do I, honey. So do I. But we'll have to move on. I reckin I kin trade for another patch of timber somewhere, somehow. But it's been a great game, helpin'

Roy out of his tight—ef I helped him. He never did show no easemint, an' he kept doggin' at me to do mo' than I was doin' already."

"Didn't he show no appreciation?"

"I don't help folks when they're in trouble for what appreciation they shows," Uncle Steve said rather stiffly.

"Well, don't be cross, honey. I'm goin' to town with you."

"I'll crank the flivver while you're gittin' ready."

The lady stenographer at the office told Uncle Steve that Mr. Goodright was in conference and could not be disturbed. The old man did not know just what that meant, but the word had an ominous sound. He thought that perhaps his friend was again in trouble. He sat down to wait.

On one side of the room in which he sat a door led to Roy's private office; on the other side, it opened into a big general office, in which sounded the constant clatter of typewriters and the *thump-thump-thump* of an adding machine. Several times the young lady went into this room and returned with papers in her hand, which she carried into Roy's office.

For more than an hour Uncle Steve waited. There was a straight laced hardness about this place that always made him uneasy when he came in on Saturday mornings with his lists to draw checks to pay off. Even the pretty young lady had a terseness of speech and manner. But never before had he been forced to wait like this. Perhaps she had been instructed to head him off. Through the past weeks Roy had been hard, cold, uncommunicative, and now, in spite of himself, the old man began really to fear that what his neighbors had said about the lumber buyer might be true.

"Young lady," he said at last, rising and stretching his cramped legs, "tell Roy Goodright that Steve Simmons is waitin' to see him. I don't believe you've ever told him."

She arose immediately and went into Roy's office.

"Mr. Goodright is sorry," she said when she returned, "but he can't see you now. You will have to come back after lunch."

THIS was Saturday, and Uncle Steve knew that the office was always closed at one o'clock on Saturdays. It must be true then, what his neighbors had warned him of about Roy. Well, the lumber buyer might beat him out of any just profits which were his due; but he'd be damned if he was going to beat those others out of their hard earned wages for the past few days' work.

Leaving him still uncertainly twisting his hat about in his hand, the young lady went into the general office. No sooner was she out of the room than Uncle Steve walked to the closed door of Roy's private office, opened it and went in.

Roy was seated at his desk, on which a lot of papers were scattered. Near him sat a well dressed, gray haired man; and Uncle Steve instinctively knew, by the cut of his clothes and by his general features, that this man was a Yankee from up North.

Roy appeared confused and embarrassed, as if he had been caught up to something, when he looked up and saw the old mill man.

"Why, hello," he said without any cordiality in his voice. "I told Miss Wynn to tell you to come back after lunch."

"She told me. But, waal, bein' in a sort of hurry, thought I'd come in an' git you to give me checks to kiver wages, supplies an' stumpage."

"All right," Roy said, seeming all out of humor. "Sit down."

He took the sheet of paper from Uncle Steve, made some notations on a pad, then pressed a button on his desk. When the young lady came in, he handed the memorandum he had made to her.

"Have these checks drawn for me right away, please," he said tersely.

"Uncle Steve," he said more good naturedly when she had withdrawn, "this is my boss, Mr. Mason. He has been

down with me all the week. Mr. Mason, this is the mill man I've been telling you about that I worked the trick on. He had a beautiful body of timber that would make anything; but he was piddling along doing nothing, because every time he got started some neighbor would come to him in distress about a sick cow, or a little house bill to cut, and he'd put down everything else and help him out. So I pretended I was in a terrible jam and worked on Uncle Steve's sympathies and he got busy and accomplished more than I ever dreamed was possible. He furnished me more than a million feet of some of the best timber I ever bought.

"Of course he couldn't have accomplished anything like that by himself; but I knew he could get help. You see, the farmers had laid by their crops and were idle. He had never refused a neighbor in distress, and when he called for help, the bread he had cast on the waters came floating back to him."

Uncle Steve was regarding Roy with growing astonishment.

"You—you mean you wasn't in no trouble?" he asked.

"Of course I wasn't! That was only a trick to get you going. And I had to keep up the pretense so you wouldn't stop."

Roy laughed heartily and slapped Uncle Steve on the knee, as if it were a great joke. But the old mill man only gazed at him with shocked, sorrowful eyes. To catch the boy at his rascality was bad enough, but to have him come right out and brag about it, then laugh about it was awful. Before he could formulate a reply, the young lady returned with the checks.

After he had given Uncle Steve the check to cover wages and the check for the store accounts and one for the stumpage, Roy said to him:

"Uncle Steve, out of your profits, I paid the old accounts you owed the three stores that had advanced you. It perhaps was rather a high handed procedure on my part, but I felt fully justified."

"Why, Roy," the old man said, smiling delightedly, "I'm plumb surprised. That was nigh a thousand dollars. I didn't know my profits would run that high."

"You didn't? Well, maybe not. You left everything to me and were so busy helping me out of my 'tight' that you didn't have time to think about much else. And of course you didn't have any idea of the true market value of the lumber you cut for me.

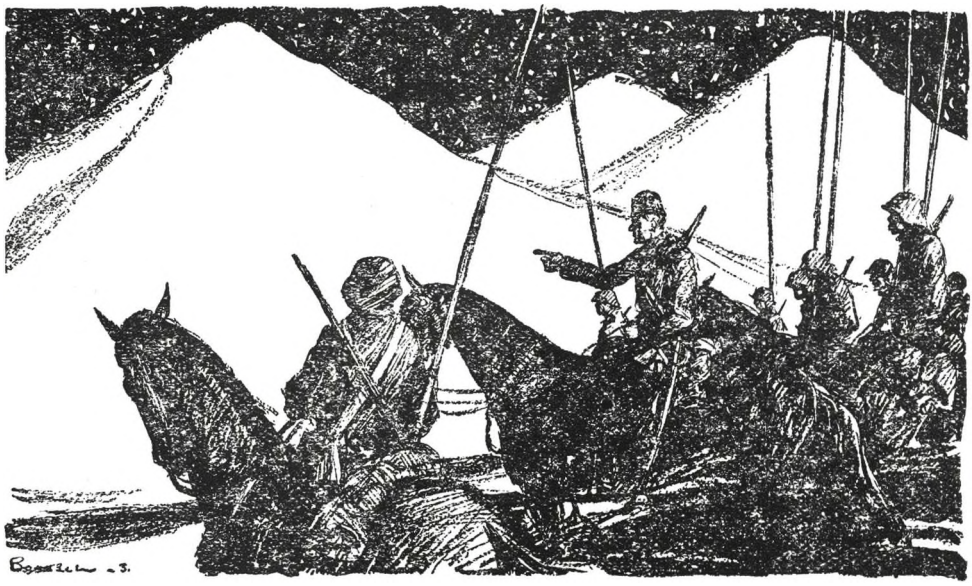
"Also, out of your profits, I bought the place where you are now living. I know how dear it is to Aunt Melvy's heart. That cost you three thousand dollars. Here's the deed to it, made out in her name. I wanted to go out with you this afternoon and give it to her myself; but your damned impatience has spoiled that part of it. I—I wanted to see the look in her eyes when she found that she had a —a home."

"She's down in the car waitin' for me now. You come right on an' give it to her yo'self. But, great guns, Roy, that there profit—"

"I certainly shall give it to her myself! Mr. Mason, you'll have to excuse me for a few minutes."

As he rose from the desk, he picked up a check and handed it to Uncle Steve.

"And here's the balance of your profit. As you'll see, it amounts to something over eleven thousand dollars."



# RUNNING THE GANTLET ON THE SINAI FRONT

By GENERAL RAFAEL DE NOGALES

*Author of "Four Years Beneath the Crescent"*

ON MARCH 24, 1917, if my memory serves me, Nicolai Bey, inspector of artillery of the Fourth Army, arrived at Beersheba, where interesting maneuvers were to be executed in his honor. I was stationed at Beersheba at that time, acting as the right hand man of Prince Essad, commander of the left wing of our expeditionary forces on the Sinai Front and, of course, would attend the maneuvers. But it did not for a moment enter my head that Nicolai Bey had no other motive in coming to Beersheba than to witness a more or less complicated parade. He and Colonel von Kress Bey, commander-in-chief of our expeditionary army, must certainly have something up their sleeves. They would get together—and come out with some interesting plan. I felt sure of this and hoped that I would be in it.

My hopes were not disappointed. In fact, they were gratified beyond my immediate expectations for, during the maneuvers, Von Kress called me aside and asked me if I was disposed to do some quiet but thorough bombing. Upon hearing my emphatic affirmative, Von Kress explained that he wanted me to dynamite the chief pumping station of the British pipeline, a giant device by means of which the British were bringing water from the Nile for the use of their armies, thus freeing themselves from the constant hazards of a water famine.

The British had established their vanguard at a bridgehead near Khan-Yunis, across the Wadi-Sheria. It seemed that

the general advance of the enemy forces on Gaza was imminent, and Von Kress, knowing that water, or the lack of it, is more powerful than artillery in the Sinai, planned to destroy their water supply at one stroke. The pipeline followed the coast of Palestine along the route of the British military railroad, and was thus protected by the heavy artillery of the British navy which, being able to outshoot ours, was an effective bulwark against a mass attack on the pipeline.

The main pumping station was supposed to be located in the vicinity of the enemy trenches and headquarters of Sheik-Zowaiid, a point about whose exact location I was in complete ignorance. But I accepted the commission, so far as Von Kress knew, as a matter of military duty; so far as I was personally concerned, with a great feeling of elation. Leading an "*offizier's patroulle*" on such a mission would give me a chance to do a little fighting on my own account, in good old Indian fashion— If you can't help yourself heaven may help you, but you don't deserve it!

Von Kress suggested that I start out in five or six days, but I insisted that leaving the next morning, at the head of an escort of half a dozen men. This promised a greater opportunity for success, and Von Kress agreed.

I would like to make clear that to lead an *offizier's patroulle* was considered by us as a great privilege, in fact, as a great honor which was only conferred on those who had distinguished themselves; for to lead a *patroulle* required much skill, lots of grit and considerable knowledge of military tactics.

On the *patroulle* which I was to lead depended, to a certain extent, the outcome of the First Battle of Gaza, which is considered the greatest battle fought during the World War in the Near Orient. During that memorable combat thirty thousand Turks defeated about sixty thousand Britishers, almost entirely veteran British and Australian contingents which had fought during the Dardanelles campaign.

Colonel von Kress, our commander-in-chief and the victor of the First and Second Battles of Gaza, volunteered on several occasions to lead such *patroulles* himself. And after the fall of Jerusalem, while the gross of the British cavalry was dashing along the coast of Palestine to cut off the retreat of General von Falkenhayn, General Herrgott (General God Almighty!) who was the chief of staff of our Fourth Army, led one of those *offizier's patroulles*" with an escort of only four cavalrymen. Unfortunately, while trying to jump a ditch, General Herrgott, who was only five feet five and rather corpulent—like a fair sized beer barrel—was thrown off his horse and landed head first in the ditch, where he remained stuck fast, his feet sticking out, until his escort managed to dig him out with the help of their swords.

My escort was composed of six picked lancers and my two orderlies, Mustapha and Tasim Chavush. I had come across Tasim in the Caucasus and had known him at once as the devil fighter that he was. They used to call him "Sheitanli", or devil incarnate. He would be a cutthroat if untamed, and as loyal as a Danish hound once he had been broken to respect. Realizing this, I grasped at the first show of insubordination on his part to strike him across the face with the butt of my gun, and after that Tasim had been unconditionally at my service. We understood each other perfectly!

He bossed my groom, Mustapha, and my cook, Mr. Silberstein, who had been a pawnbroker in Hoboken, N. J. and, when impressed into service in the Near East, had begged me to take him as my cook so that he could escape the work and starvation of a labor battalion. These, with our seven saddlehorses, our pack mule and Mr. Silberstein's donkey, constituted my campaigning household, and Tasim bossed it in a perfectly efficient fashion.

Mr. Silberstein's burro, known as "Arslanli" (the lion hearted one!) was the most vocal and sentimental of the whole family. He was a wonder of endurance

and willingness, about the size of a Texas mule, with ears half a yard long and the legs of an ordinary burro. When Mr. Silberstein absented himself temporarily, Arslanli would grieve and wail for him in a manner to break anybody's heart, or at least keep whole neighborhoods awake at night.

Arslanli was the cause of a slight delay in our getting started, for while we were trotting toward our quarters in Beersheba —a labyrinth of dusty narrow lanes, full of filth along its mudwalls and mudhouses, inhabited by Arabs with a ready eye for movable property—we were greeted by a chorus of burro music, as if the whole long eared population of the place were singing hymns and were shouting prayers. All of a sudden Tasim trotted to my side and said—

"*Eshekimis orda dir, Beym!*" which, translated from the Moslem, means, "Our burro is over there, Bey."

"What do you mean? We left him home this morning, and that is in the opposite direction."

"Yes, Beym," answered Tasim, "but he is over there now. May I go and fetch him?"

I allowed him to entertain his crazy notion and went on myself while he galloped off into the music. When I got to our quarters I found Mr. Silberstein in tears. He too felt sentimental about his faithful burro; a dirty Arab had stolen it while we were away. Mr. Silberstein had been pouring ashes on his bald head all day, but that did not seem to bring the burro back. Soon, however, the ashes bore their fruit, for Tasim appeared with the happy burro wagging his tail, a light of joy in his eyes, and braying like the trumpet of the angel Gabriel on the resurrection day.

Amid the chorus of all the donkeys in Beersheba Tasim's ears—longer in reach if not in size than any donkey's—had detected the moaning baritone of Arslanli; he had ridden straight to the thief's tent and rescued the animal unceremoniously. To celebrate the family reunion, our four chickens and a rooster mysteriously laid five eggs. And by then it was time to get busy making the necessary dispositions for our *offizier's patroulle*, on which we must set out almost at once.

IT WAS about seventy-five kilometers between Beersheba and the pumping station that I was to blow up. The first thirty kilometers would bring us to the last well in the desert, at Beer-Shenek. The journey after that would be a dry one and, so far as I was concerned, a dark one, for the ground was entirely unknown to me and, besides, we would have to advance through the night, get there in the night, do our work long before the first glimmer of the dawn brought the figures of men and beasts into sharp relief against the backdrop of the dawning sky. And, the task accomplished, we would have to make our way back in the dark at least to Beer-Shenek to save our skins. It was no joke to be caught near the British headquarters, and it would be positively disagreeable to be found admiring the sunrise near the imported waters of the Nile.

Very early the next morning we set out, careful to escape the excessive zeal of our own sentries, who, when in doubt, would rather take a chance of shooting friends than take a chance of letting enemies get by. This admirable spirit, as it proved, came very near causing me to die uselessly and somewhat sooner than I would have desired, for we had not trotted one hour on the mud road of Abu-Galiun when we rode under a volley and then heard the familiar "*Quim var?*" The splendid fellows had muttered the first challenge and fired almost immediately. The next challenge they shouted, probably in order that we might hear it even if we had been killed. I did not fail to congratulate the sergeant for his vigilance and thank him for his bad aim, which I knew to have been considerate, for he was in command of the best fighters and straightest shooters in the Imperial army.

Without further mishap, but advancing as far as possible through the indenta-

tions of the sand dunes to avoid being detected by enemy flyers—they could have seen us only if passing directly above our heads—we reached the vicinity of the Beer-Shenek well one hour after noon. One of my scouts reported a patch of tents in the distance. Crawling carefully to the top of a sand hill I made out quite a good sized Arab encampment. Arabs not directly under British officers always made a pretense of being free and friendly; but I knew that T. E. Lawrence was at work on the so-called Arab rebellion, and to these romantic nomads with itching palms the man with the money bag is as sacred as an emperor, especially when he is known to pay for all useful reports brought to him from whatever source.

If we rode into the Arab camp we would be greeted with great demonstrations of friendliness—in case we might be carrying cash to distribute—but we knew that this friendliness would be nothing but a business method of the desert—an investment first in our possible foolishness, and then in our capture by the British.

I therefore gave orders to my escort to camp unobtrusively in a depression of the sand level and be there until dark. As the hours wore away with no action and no movement anywhere save the rippling of the sand in the hot breeze and the maddening passage of the sun toward the west, Mustapha began to chafe about his diminishing water supply.

He knew of an abandoned well which must be somewhere in the neighborhood, he swore, and he asked permission to look for it. I told him to go ahead, but to keep within cover of the sand hills, for if I saw his head peering above one of them I would surely shoot him without further warning. So Mustapha crawled off smacking his parched lips.

The sun cooled toward the west, and Mustapha did not return. At first I did not worry. Water is often harder to find in the Sinai than a speakeasy in New York. But as time and the shadows lengthened, I decided to go myself in search of Mustapha. The breeze had obliterated all tracks for some distance, but after awhile I came upon the formless marks that pass for footprints in the thick, water-like sands of the desert. These I followed among the dunes for about a half mile.

The tracks undulated toward the east, losing themselves in the distance, and I was about to follow them when I caught sight of a moving object about fifty paces to the south over a smooth carpet of apparently untouched sand. I stood very still and observed what seemed like a stick protruding from the ground and waving slowly from right to left. A gleam of sunlight suddenly reflected from it showed it to be a gun pointing at the sky. Was it a mirage? Was it some crazy Bedouin aiming at imaginary birds? I approached with the greatest care—a rifle, even when pointing at the sky, is no object to leave uninvestigated in the desert.

As I drew nearer the gun continued its fantastic swaying motions, investing the whole event with a feeling of weird unreality. The Mexican desert had taught me how to make tracks without making noise, so that presently I found myself within two yards of the rifle, still pointing at the sky, still waving from one side to the other, seemingly as far from human agency as a tree in the wind. Yet, some hand was moving the rifle, some human being was close by, within a few inches of me, and that human being had a purpose, however strange, in moving the rifle in that manner. It was all as queer and as upsetting to a man's sense of reality as the gestures of a lunatic.

The swaying rifle had taken on the attributes of a human personality for me. I said to myself—

"I'll jump at it and grab it by the throat!"

I moved slightly, preparing to lunge. Then I heard a hoarse whisper, hot in the desert air, as if invisible lips were speaking close to my ear—

"*Quim var?*"

"*Quim var?*" the voice repeated. "If you put your head over the hole, I will

blow it off!" Even in my surprise I recognized the voice. It was Mustapha!

"It is I, Nogales Bey. What are you doing there, Mustapha?"

"Oh, it is you! Heaven be praised, Beym. I have been here for the past two hours in fear of my life and of making known your whereabouts."

Mustapha, in his assiduous search for water, had fallen into what was evidently a dried up well, with smooth, perpendicular walls.

"But why were you waving your gun in that crazy fashion?" I asked him while I helped him up by throwing him my belt.

"Ah, Beym, I fell into the hole, and I wanted to attract your attention if you were looking for me. But I could not speak, because it might have been someone else. I waved the rifle. If your face came to the top of the well, I would recognize it. If any other face came, I would shoot it."

"You're a good soldier, Mustapha. But what enemy could be around here?"

Mustapha's face grew serious and portentous.

"There is an enemy," he said.

"Where?"

"Come with me, Beym."

Mustapha led the way back to the spot from which I had caught sight of his rifle. I had completely forgotten the footprints I had been following, thinking them to be Mustapha's when my attention had been diverted. The footprints were still there, and they were evidently not Mustapha's, since he had not passed in that direction. I questioned him with a look.

"Yes," he said. "Come—slow."

We followed the tracks along the slopes of several dunes, then crawled cautiously to the top of one.

"Look," said Mustapha. "There."

NOT three hundred paces away a man in a dark *burnous* was stretched flat on his belly looking intently over the sand ridge. With my field glass I followed the direction of his eyes and was met by a sight of my own camp, which I had thought secluded from view except from the sky. The man in the *burnous* was watching the movements of my men with the steady attention of a wild beast observing its intended prey. He no doubt waited for us to break camp and march, so that he could divine our intentions and either report us, or prepare a trap.

I swept the sands with my glass to see if the man had any followers close at hand. About half a mile behind him I descried a camp of Bedouins, their black tents leaning against the dunes, slightly flapping in the breeze like the wings of gigantic bats.

The situation called for swift, if cautious, action. On how this rider—I now observed that a horse stood at the bottom of the sand hill—and his few men were dealt with might depend the success of Von Kress' plan of isolating the British from the all important water supply and of thus crippling their offensive power against Gaza.

Sending Mustapha back to my little camp to warn the men and have them in readiness for any course of action that might become necessary, I started on a detour eastward, so that I might come upon the spy unawares. As I picked my way through the sand hills I judged the sun for time. It was still far enough above the horizon to allow me two hours before the time when it would be safe to set out toward our goal.

I must have made a half circuit of half a league when I found myself within a hundred paces of the unsuspecting observer. Through my field glass I seemed to recognize something familiar about him. I could not tell exactly what caused this impression until I happened to notice the carbine lying on the sand at his side. It was of a peculiar shape, short, and silver mounted, and a red tassel hung from its butt which, even at that distance, I could see to be elaborately carved. Noticing the horse more attentively, I looked for a silver star on its lustrous black flank—and found it!

The man was one that had tried to pick me out of the saddle three weeks before during our retreat from Abu-Galiun

to Beersheba. It may be a coincidence to meet an old acquaintance in Times Square; but to meet one in the desert is fate.

Spurring my horse, I advanced at a gallop. The man in the *burnous* jumped into the saddle, fired, faced about and raced east, heading for what seemed to be a nearby ravine. His horse was good and managed the sand with its hoofs as if it had been the hardest turf. But my own bay horse, Dervish, a pure blooded Arab, gained ground on him, placing horse and man within range of my revolver. The rider was undoubtedly headed toward his camp, whither he expected to decoy me. I called upon my quarry to halt—once, twice—and then, as some Arabs made their appearance from the ravine, I fired. He fell headlong to the ground, and the horse, after lingering around his prostrate master for a few moments, galloped away.

The noble beast knew that his master was dead; otherwise it would not have deserted him. The approaching Arabs understood this sign and, turning, galloped away ungallantly, but not unshrewdly, for they probably expected me to follow them into an ambush.

Time pressed, and circumstances were becoming complicated, so I made my way back to my men as quickly as possible. I arrived to find my camp invaded by over a hundred Bedouins, of the "friendly" sort, mounted and on foot. They were cajoling the sentries and explaining that they merely wished to pay us a visit, a simple courtesy of the desert between neighbors.

One of them, a scarred veteran of many such "friendly" visits, a man who no doubt had made his living for many years by being "courteous" and "neighborly", seemed to be their leader. He was urging his men on, keeping them together, whispering here and there to his lieutenants. I rode up to him with three of my men, and after ordering all to retire, had a volley fired over the heads of the crowd. Nothing more was needed. They disappeared like chaff before a gale.

The Bedouins, in spite of their reputation for valor, are rather timorous; they never make a frontal attack if they can help it and, having a fine nose for smelling raw recruits, they always prefer to deal with them than with seasoned soldiers.

The Abu-Sacr Bedouins, and sundry other desert vermin that Lawrence praises in his very interesting book, "Revolt In The Desert", never deserved the slightest attention, so far as fighting went, from the Turks. To the latter, they were a joke. As "friends" and self-styled "allies", we could not shake them off, hard as we tried, during the first three years of the war. They were a regular pest around our camps. As enemies, later, they were quite harmless and much more comfortable.

Mr. Wilson, the British High Commissioner at El-Arrish, rendered us an invaluable service when he finally induced them by liberal grants of money, handled diplomatically by Mr. Lawrence, to join the Sheriff Hussein of Mecca. The practical idea behind this was merely to keep the Arabs from rejoining the Turks. Had the British known how things stood, they would have saved their money, for we were distinctly benefitted by having that rabble taken away from the neighborhood of our camps.

While they remained "friendly" in Palestine, they were armed to the teeth, and organized in corps of foot and horse, and their appearance certainly was imposing. But, somehow, they never got even within range of the enemy artillery, preferring to wait until nightfall to go about robbing, slaying and mutilating the British wounded, and doing deeds of valor against the dead *Inglis*. How could we take them seriously? If Mr. Lawrence had been a British regular army officer he would not have paid any attention to those Bedouins. As I say, they never got in range even of the enemy's artillery, but they certainly managed to get within range of his purse.

I find that the foregoing few paragraphs is the only way of explaining how more than one hundred Bedouins could vanish because eight Turkish soldiers fired a volley over their heads. A hundred

men are a hundred men. But Bedouins are Bedouins.

THERE was now no time to lose. Muzzling our horses so that they could not betray our presence to the enemy—whom we were now to approach at close range—by an extemporaneous venting of their sentiments, we pushed forward, south and west, guided in the waning light by the violet slopes of the Tel-el-Fara, which rises from the banks of the Wadi-Sheria near our lost fortress of Shelalleh. In front of us unrolled the reddish desert of the Amalekites, which we must cross and recross before another sunrise. Into this desert we now plunged—literally plunged, for its surface was like a sea of sandy waves tossed by a burning storm.

And on this sea we were mariners without navigating instruments, for in the excitement of chasing the Bedouins away I had dropped my compass and my flashlight and they had quickly disappeared, like grains of corn in a hencoop.

We marched obliquely across the gleams of the pole star, wending our way between the fires of Bedouin camps which flared all around us in the undulating vastness of the plain. All precautions were taken to make our passage secret—jingling chains removed from the bridles, cigarets forbidden on pain of instant death, conversation enjoined.

We progressed in single file, each rider about ten paces from the next. If we should lose our sense of direction in the dark we ran the risk of finding ourselves caught in the wire entanglements that the British had thrown up all around their camp at Khan-Yunis. If, again, we should deviate in an opposite direction, we would lose ourselves in the heart of the desert. With good luck, and infinite care, we might reach Tel-Rafa, or the rail line that joined Sheik-Zowaiid to the British encampment there—along which lay the pipeline—about one o'clock in the morning. There thirty kilograms of dynamite and a safety match would do the work. If success came of our effort the British army would have to march to Gaza on whiskies-and-sodas.

At the head of this ghostly cavalcade I rode on Dervish, raising my arm at frequent intervals to gage the angle of the pole star. The signs in the sky told us where to go; the signs on the earth—fires and the barking of dogs—told us where to keep away from. At last, near midnight, another sign in the sky warned us that we were approaching the neighborhood of our goal: the reflection of electric arc lights reddening the night. I felt confident that it came from the station of Tel-Rafa. Toward these lights we made our silent way.

The red glare on the sky grew in intensity, disquietingly, for I knew Tel-Rafa to be a mere outpost. We kept on, sharp on the watch now for the railroad and pipeline. Soon we found ourselves upon a marsh which, upon testing, we found to be saline. This was not on the cards. The maps which I had studied at Beersheba before leaving marked a lagoon to the south of Sheik-Zowaiid. Could the lights be those of the British general headquarters?

My men thought so, but they were eager to proceed against the power plant and the railroad. They were chuckling with anticipation of the enemy discomfiture. Placed as we were in the midst of the enemy's center, my men thought of our situation as a good joke. I had to warn them against laughing aloud.

We had no time to take a detour through the desert, but must pass close to the headquarters of the British army if we were to have an opportunity of carrying out our purpose. I gave the word and, with every sense alert, we pushed on.

Soon we noticed a change in the ground beneath our horses' hoofs. We were in a world of waste, the immense garbage plot that marks a stand of a modern army. The soil was more consistent, but damp, and we often crossed deep ruts made by artillery wheels. Abandoned barbed wire entanglements scratched us as we passed.

In the distance the door of a tent

flapped open occasionally, and we caught the glow from the interior. Whistles of locomotives and clatter of cars, floating on the breeze, told us that we were near tracks, probably near a repair shop, too. We were bunched together now, so as not to disperse unwittingly, and I saw that my Turks were grinning, as happy as children about to upset an apple cart. Then my horse kicked a tin can—a dog barked.

One dog answered another, and soon there was a chorus of howls—a raucous and tremendous lamentation, ringing in the night as if the end of the world of dogs were at hand. We veered and made away from this faster than we would from machine guns spitting through the bushes. We were now among apparently abandoned barracks—the fact was that the British army was massed in front of Gaza —but the howling continued. The noise was increased by the neighing of horses, and this was serious, for the dogs were Arabs, but the horses were British. Our own horses, being muzzled, could not reply.

SUDDENLY we came upon the occupied part of the camp. Almost in front of our noses we noticed a fair sized building with lighted windows, through which issued the sound of a piano or a pianola. If the inmates of that residence, or military casino, had suspected the breed of the nocturnal birds flapping their wings outside, they would probably have invited us to have a cocktail, and then to stand up against a wall and look pleasant. Therefore, we turned away to give it a wide berth.

Then we heard voices. Two men were coming toward us, talking in normal tones. We stood ready to bargain for our lives with our swords, as we did not wish to rouse the camp with shots. But the men passed us unconscious of our presence. We cut over an open space to a highway, where a cavalry patrol just missed us. They clattered around a curve just as we disappeared into the darkness on the other side. Luck is fairer than is commonly believed: After having misled us that night, it had evidently undertaken to save our skins.

It was now after three o'clock. We spurred northward in the general direction of the railway.

We had not gone a mile when we descried a figure racing wildly toward Sheik-Zowaiid. We chased it furiously and captured it. It was a Bedouin boy, perhaps innocently playing hide-and-go-seek with himself, perhaps rushing to headquarters to report a strange caravan and claim a reward. As his death would have served no purpose, we tied him to a stump, placed a lighted cigaret between his lips, tickled him in the ear to make him cheerful, patted him on the shoulder and passed on. This bit of desert diplomacy probably induced him not to yell for help and tell the enemy patrols what direction we had taken. The direction we took was in the direction of the locomotive whistles.

But we soon came upon something more tangible than whistles—a big, silent tent, flapping leisurely in the breeze. We had taken it for a dune, and so approached closer than we would have liked. We stood still, deliberating what to do, waiting to see if we had been detected. A shrill voice rang out, and then shouts of alarm to right and left. We heard a "Who goes there?" and several men came forth with lanterns.

I muttered the order to march, and in haste. An enemy patrol advanced toward us, but I am certain that they hadn't the least idea as to our identity and purpose. The venture in which we were engaged was too fantastic to appear credible to men secure in barracks, taking their ease surrounded by thousands of their fellows, backed by artillery and navy, drinking water from the Nile, hundreds of leagues away, and whisky from the hills of Scotland.

Meanwhile the military train that had been whistling pulled up, and out of its lighted coaches swarmed an armed horde. The pipeline would be on the other side of the tracks, and here was this train

right in our path, full of guns and soldiers, and blowing its whistle for more!

We drew back a few hundred paces, and I urged my men to get themselves to safety while I proceeded with Tasim to go around the train and dynamite the pipeline, or at least the tracks. They would not hear of being left leaderless in the midst of the enemy. It was a dilemma. The whole group could not hope to get to the pipeline undetected, on the one hand; and on the other, a leader can not abandon his men among the enemy any more than a captain can abandon his ship at sea.

In the direction of Sheik-Zowaiid a siren blared hoarsely, sounding an alarm. A faint glare of dawn in the far reaches of the sky decided me finally to return, as it would be impossible, even for one man, to do the job unobserved with the light pouring over the rim of the desert. The idea of exterminating with one volley the plucky enemy patrol, which was advancing toward us with their rifles in readiness, was repugnant to me. So I turned about and with my eight lancers at my back, I disappeared into the shadows of the desert, heavy hearted.

Daybreak found us hidden in the depths of a narrow cañon. My men lay fast asleep by their horses while I kept my eyes riveted on the edge of the desert, whence three enemy airplanes rose slowly and departed in an easterly direction. Shortly afterward a platoon of *hedyinsuaris*, mounted on fleet war camels, passed in the same direction, kicking up clouds of dust. They had missed us by an inch, *Allah Akbar, Allah Kerim!*

Finally, after hours that seemed years, and after putting to flight an English scouting party which had mistaken us for "Arab Volunteers", we reached Abu-Galiun at four o'clock that afternoon, and found a squadron of our Sixth Lancers awaiting us. In their company we returned to Beersheba.

And although through the circumstances mentioned above we had not been able to dynamite the aqueduct, we at least had established a record: we had covered in 36 hours over 160 kilometers, most of the journey across enemy territory, without watering our horses but once.

When we reached our headquarters Prince Essad Bey was sallying forth with the entire garrison of Beersheba to take part in the First Battle of Gaza.

The sight of the massed troops moving out to meet the enemy rested me. I mounted a fresh horse and a few hours later British shrapnel and shells were bursting over my head while the enemy planes kept buzzing about like a swarm of angry hornets, dropping bombs which burst with a tremendous roar, raising columns of dust and killing our horses by the score. And that night, after the fight was over, taking a final glance at the innumerable camp-fires which lighted up fantastically the surrounding desert, I wrapped myself in my cloak and rested my head on the flanks of my second horse, which was lying utterly exhausted at my feet. I slept soundly, for it had been three days and two nights since I had closed an eye: not since that morning on which I set out from Beersheba at the head of my eight plucky lancers to blow up the pipeline near the enemy headquarters at Sheik Zowaiid.

# SHADOWED

*The author of "Fombombo" and "Web of the Sun" gives us a new story of that strange criminologist, Prof. Poggioli*

*A Compilation from the Case: Ohio State University vs. Henry Poggioli, Ph. D. As made from the notes of the Rev. Mr. Lemuel Z. Bratton, by T. S. Stribling.*

FOREWORD BY THE COMPILER

THE resignation, or to put it baldly, the dismissal of Mr. Henry Poggioli from the docentship of criminal psychology at the Ohio State University, not only caused one of the widest and bitterest newspaper discussions since the Scopes trial, but it was a shocking disappointment to Mr. Poggioli's classmen and friends.

The actual article which Mr. Poggioli wrote for the *American Journal of Psychology* and which led to his academic downfall has been too widely circulated in America, and indeed throughout the civilized world, to need reproduction here.

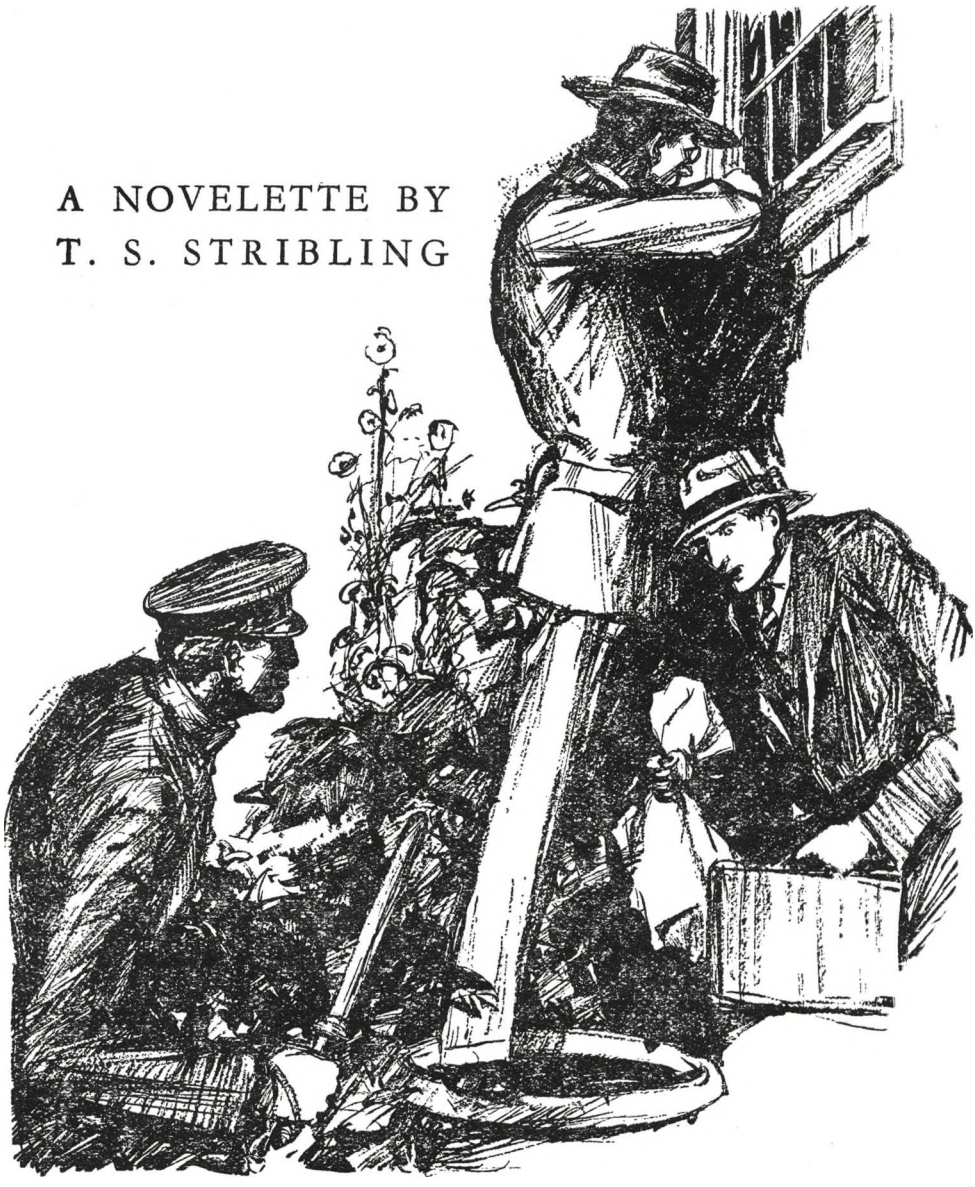
Mr. Poggioli's trial, which was transferred from Columbus to Dayton, Ohio, in what was perhaps an impossible attempt to obtain a fair and impartial trial, is a *cause célèbre* which will not soon be forgot in educational circles. The formal charge against him, of disrespect for the canons of the university, and scientific heresy, was, as every one knows, soon lost in personal bitterness and recrimination.

Something else also was lost: the strange and abnormal happenings on which Mr. Poggioli based his article and so involved himself in scandal and final dismissal. The educational world was so shocked that a docent in a leading university should be so lost to the conventions of his position as to assert in public print if not an actual belief in, then at least to hypothesize the possibility of the existence of a God; I say the educational world was so shocked that it has completely overlooked the amazing and sinister facts upon which Mr. Poggioli reached so unheard of a conclusion.

These facts it has been the good fortune of the transcriber to reassemble; not with an idea of reviving that bitter and acrimonious controversy, but simply to present the record to that broader court of public opinion before which even the regents assembled in Dayton eventually must bow.

The transcriber obtained these facts from the notes of the Reverend Mr. Lemuel Zimcoe Bratton, a Tennessee revivalist, who was closely associated with Mr. Poggioli in his defense. It was the Reverend Mr. Bratton, who, in the course of the proceedings, so amusingly wrung from the president of a great American

A NOVELETTE BY
T. S. STRIBLING



university the admission that though he had heard of the Bible he had never seen a copy.

The facts themselves, upon which Mr. Poggioli sought to base his defense, were ruled out of the evidence by the Dayton court on the ground that they had no bearing on the specific charges against Mr. Poggioli, of disrespect for the canons of the university and of scientific heresy. In this stand, however, even the counsel for the defendant felt the court was justified and made no serious effort to have the actual facts read into the record of the case.

This hiatus in public knowledge, the transcriber undertakes to fill. However, he must hasten to add that he has transposed the Reverend Mr. Bratton's notes both in time and space in order to enhance the dramatic and literary effect of the narrative.

THE GIRL from the office brought a card into the laboratory and, after standing among the cages of white rats for several moments, found a favorable opportunity to hand it to Mr. Poggioli.

The docent in criminal psychology took the card with a touch of protest in his manner.

"I have instructed you, Janet—" he began, then broke off, looking at the name—

CLAYMAN MORDAG

It was somehow a depressing four syllables. Poggioli drew his thumb across the engraving as a kind of test of his visitor's financial and social standing.

"I have told you, Janet," he continued on the sentence he originally had started, "that I don't want to waste time seeing people with cases. I'm not a detective. I'm a psychologist."

"Yes, sir, but—but they know you're a criminologist, too, Mr. Poggioli," ventured the girl.

"Well, what of that?"

"It—it seems to me," hesitated Janet, "that the trouble this Mr. Mordag is in would have something to do with criminology."

"About the same relation that a colicky baby bears to the mortality tables."

"Yes, sir."

"So you can go back to the office and tell him that I can't see him."

"I—didn't leave him in the office," said the girl.

"Where did you leave him?"

"In the cloakroom."

Poggioli came to a pause and looked at the girl.

"Why did you leave him in the cloakroom, Janet?"

"Well—he asked if I would mind if he waited for you in a room without any windows in it."

"And you put him in the cloakroom?"

"Yes, sir."

The docent in criminology glanced at the card again, then started for the front of the building.

"Really—really, Janet, that's the dumbest thing— Why, he won't be there!"

"Why won't he?"

"By now he has run through the pockets of the coats, and gone," forecasted the docent. "Janet, you are the—"

"I'll bet he has," cried the office girl, shocked at her own gullibility.

The two hurried toward the front of the building. As they went the docent ventured—

"It is barely possible the fellow is suffering from agraphobia—"

Janet made no reply to this. She had developed too much poise to inquire the meaning of a polysyllable in a psychological laboratory.

Poggioli went downstairs and found Mr. Clayman Mordag just inside the cloakroom on the first floor.

"Oh, you did come," ejaculated the visitor in a tone of profound relief. "The girl didn't think you would; I was about to give you up."

Poggioli looked over the stranger's thin face, sandy hair and high, narrow forehead.

"As a matter of fact," said Poggioli, seeing that the coats were safe, "I have just come down to excuse myself, Mr. Mordag."

The visitor became distressed at once.

"You aren't going to take my case?"

"Mr. Mordag, I have five hundred white rats in this laboratory on fifty different diets—"

"Mr. Poggioli!" exclaimed the thin man with a desperate note in his voice. "Isn't a man's life worth more than five hundred white rats?"

"Yes, yes," agreed the psychologist, withdrawing a little from the man's insistence. "But there are professional agencies for the protection of life and property, Mr. Mordag; the police, private detectives—"

The thin man lifted a protesting hand, glanced up and down the corridor.

"Mr. Poggioli, you might as well try to sweep out the air with a broom—a detective—" he shook his head—"I had hoped a psychologist might help me. If a

psychologist can't, or won't—" The man spread out his hands and dropped them.

"Are you in personal distress, or danger?" asked the docent, his curiosity aroused by the stranger's extraordinary manner.

"I am; I am indeed, Mr. Poggioli. Only this morning I barely escaped—" He broke off again in his disconnected fashion. "I am followed about all the time—everywhere I go—" He glanced up and down the hallway again and instinctively moved deeper into the doorway of the closet.

"You mean you are shadowed?"

"Yes; oh, yes—all the time."

"You don't mean here—at this moment?"

"Yes; every single moment of the day and—and night, too, I suppose."

Poggioli glanced around and then said in a somewhat different tone—

"Well, at this particular moment you may be sure that nobody is shadowing you."

Mr. Mordag smiled, the faint mirthless smile of utter disbelief.

"In the morning—when I get the note—you'll see."

SO MANY odd revelatory half-phrases cropped out in the visitor's remarks that the psychologist began trying to piece them into something coherent.

"If you would like you can stand completely inside the cloakroom door, Mr. Mordag. Yes, that's all right. Now you were saying something about this morning you barely escaped—escaped what?"

The sandy man was well inside the cloakroom now.

"Being poisoned," he said in a low tone.

"Who tried it?"

"The man who follows me."

"Do you know who he is?"

"Why, Mr. Poggioli, of course I know who my enemy is. His name—his name is—*La Plesse*." This last, the visitor concealed in the cloakroom whispered.

The psychologist pondered a moment or two.

"But he didn't succeed in his purpose?"

"No; he poured a tiny bit in my drinking glass. It just happened that my cat mewed for water while I was still in bed. I got up, took a little in the glass and poured it in the cat's saucer. When I glanced at it again—it was dead."

"Where are you staying?"

"At the Hotel Vendig, on the eighteenth floor."

"I suppose after the death of your pet you had the hotel authorities investigate to see who had been in your apartment?"

Mordag shook his head.

"Why, Mr. Poggioli, there is no more use in placing a guard to keep watch for him than—than to try to control the thoughts that pass through a man's mind."

The psychologist smiled.

"Your similes are expressive enough, Mr. Mordag, but let us hope they exaggerate the facts. Let me see—how long have you been in the Vendig?"

"I came there last night."

"Last night!" ejaculated the docent in surprise.

"Yes, I registered there last night—after midnight. I was traveling to New York on a through ticket. But at some city west of here our train stopped. When I felt it stop I looked out between the curtains of my berth and I saw him come in the door. By good luck he passed through into the car back of mine. So I dressed as quickly as I could, got my bags and got off here in Columbus."

"Then you believe after this, *he* got off here in Columbus also, followed you to the Vendig, found your room, put a potion in your drinking glass?"

Mr. Mordag stood nodding slowly and watching Poggioli with questioning eyes.

"At least you see why it is no earthly use for me to apply to the police, or the private detectives. When I tell them what happens they simply look at me as you are doing. Sometimes they tell me to call tomorrow; or say they are sorry they can't do anything for me; or that they are very busy."

"And just why did you think a psychol-

ogist—" began Poggioli curiously.

"Professor La Plesse is a mind reader," said the sandy man in his monotone.

"Oh, I see," nodded Poggioli, looking carefully at the man.

Clayman Mordag gave another of his wintry smiles.

"No, you don't see—I know what that means, too. Here, would you mind looking at these—"

He ran a hand into his coat pocket and drew out a leather case. He opened this and displayed a collection of newspaper clippings. They were theatrical columns clipped from a score or more of papers throughout the South and West. They began usually, "Professor La Plesse Mystifies Audience," or "Herman La Plesse Finds Long Missing Jewels." They were all of a tenor. Nearly every write-up bore a picture of the thaumaturgist himself, a heavily bodied man with a Van Dyke beard, and the wide face and full eyes of a strongly animal man.

"This—this," said Poggioli, tapping one of the notices, "is all right for a newspaper to run. And believe, too, if one has the taste for that sort of thing. But, Mr. Mordag, this building is the psychological department of the Ohio State University. Not only the instructors, but every undergraduate devotes himself to the best of his ability to strictly scientific material. Now, for you to ask me to investigate the doings of a charlatan—" Poggioli shook his head and handed back the clippings.

The visitor seemed somehow to sink into himself at this ultimatum.

"You mean," he said in a hopeless voice, "that how he got into my room and poisoned my glass isn't scientific material?"

"If he did that—if he could do it—yes. But to go off on a wild goose chase—Now, just for example, Mr. Mordag, suppose the faculty of the Ohio State University should investigate every sea serpent yarn it read in a newspaper . . ."

"I—I can show you the dead cat, Mr. Poggioli," faltered Mordag. "It—it's a Persian cat. It's still up in my apartment."

"I believe you have a dead cat in your room," admitted the docent, "but cats have fits and just die; and you are nervous and expecting— For instance, you are standing here in this cloakroom now because it has no windows."

"Yes, sir."

"You imagine you are being watched here at this moment while we are entirely alone."

"I know I'm being watched," admitted Mordag in a low voice. "My note will prove that in the morning."

"Well, now, that is the reason why I can't spend time investigating the death of your cat. You are not in a mental state to give unbiased evidence; and, moreover—"

AS POGGIOLI uttered this "moreover" he heard a faint step at the top of the stairs. Mordag started painfully and peered up the ascending flight. Poggioli himself was startled. He stepped out into the hall where he commanded a better view of the stairway. Then he called out sharply:

"Confound it, Janet—moving around up there like a ghost . . . Haven't you gone back to the office yet?"

The girl upstairs made no reply, but the two men could hear her walking away.

Poggioli looked at the sandy man's wide eyes.

"You see that's why you aren't reliable; you translate everything into this Professor La Plesse."

"N-n-no; I—I didn't think that," stammered Mordag. "N-nobody thought that b-but you, Mr. Poggioli. I—I knew it wasn't him. T-the noise just made me jump, t-that's all."

"Well, how did you know it wasn't he?" asked Poggioli.

"B-because when I—I see him, he—he don't make any more noise than the sunshine falling on a g-grave."

"I see," nodded Poggioli faintly amused. "It was my mistake."

"Yes, sir— You didn't really see anything up there, did y-you?"

"Just Janet."

"I—I'll bet it's in the note tomorrow morning."

"You've mentioned that once or twice, Mr. Mordag," observed the psychologist. "Just what do you mean by note in the morning?"

"I get a note from him every morning," said the sandy haired man, his uneasiness taking a new tack.

"You don't mean it?" exclaimed Poggioli with vivacity in his voice.

"Yes, I do. Why?" queried Mordag, catching the docent's hopeful inflection.

"Why, my dear man," cried Poggioli, "that puts the fellow squarely in the hands of the Federal postal authorities. You won't have to go an inch farther to lock him up in Atlanta anywhere from ten to twenty years."

"Why will the postal authorities do that?" asked Mordag, all at sea.

"For using the mail to threaten, blackmail or put in fear—"

"Oh, he doesn't use the mail."

"If he doesn't it seems the hotel management ought to catch him."

"He doesn't use the hotel boxes either—they're in my pockets."

"The notes?"

"Yes."

"Every morning?"

"Yes, I look for one every morning. If I can't find it, I—it makes me nervous. I—I just keep looking till I do."

"For God's sake!" ejaculated the psychologist. "He gets into your room every night—leaves a note in your pockets—"

"Yes, sir."

"You never see him when he comes in?"

"He doesn't come in till I'm asleep."

"Can't you pretend you're asleep?"

"Oh, Mr. Poggioli, you know Professor La Plesse would know it if I was pretending that I was asleep. That's ridiculous, Mr. Poggioli."

"Did you ever have any one else watch for him instead of yourself?"

"Y-yes, sir," explained Mordag, lowering his voice. "Last night I asked the matron on my floor to watch my door. I paid her three dollars to move her chair where she could see if anybody went in."

"And she saw nothing?"

"Nothing at all."

The docent in criminology pondered.

"Let me see, a bellboy brought up your bags; another, possibly, some ice water—"

"Some cracked ice," corrected the sandy man. "I'm Scotch."

"H - m- m — there were two chances there."

"Yes, but how would they know what to put in the note?"

"Have you got one of the things?"

For answer Mordag reached in his pocket and brought out a folded handkerchief. He handed it to Poggioli gingerly as if he were afraid of it.

His manner caused the psychologist to unfold the handkerchief with care. Inside was a strip torn from the edge of a newspaper. On this edge was written a message as cryptic as its mode of appearance. It bore the following rigmarole—

7200—2.37—3645—BLASHFIELD—
VINE—23—POPLAR—LOISETTE—VENDIG.

Beneath this was a sentence written in French.

The docent read the figures twice.

"Do you understand what this means?"

"Well, no-o—not all. My train was due to get into Columbus at 2.37 this morning—" He stood studying his own note over Poggioli's shoulder. "I'm rooming at the Vendig and I think the Vendig is on Loisette Street, isn't it?"

"Yes, and the station is on Vine," added the psychologist. "The other streets must have been on your route to the hotel."

"I suppose so—I hardly ever understand all of a note."

The docent had become interested in the missive.

"Look here, 7200 could easily be the number of the locomotive that pulled your train; 3645 Blashfield might be a street address."

"Yes, it might."

Suddenly Poggioli held the note perfectly still.

"Do you happen to read French?" he asked in a different tone.

"No, I don't know French."

"Do you know what this bottom sentence means?"

"No; what does it mean?"

"I was just asking you," said Poggioli. "I'm as ignorant as you of French—" He looked around him, then refolded the note in the handkerchief and placed it in his own pocket.

"This is more interesting than a dead cat," he said in a different tone. "I've decided to go down with you after all. Now I've got to run back up to the office for a moment and leave word that I'll be absent from the laboratory for three days."

"Three days!" ejaculated the sandy man, looking curiously at Poggioli. "Why three days?"

"Oh, I have to set a time limit and I might as well be liberal with myself." He turned toward the stairs.

"Do you want me to wait here for you?" called Mordag, with a sharp protest in his voice.

"Do you want to come with me?"

"N-no—not with the windows and everything—"

"Listen," said Poggioli cheerfully, "you stand here in the cloakroom. I'll lock the door from the outside and take the key with me. When you hear me put this key in the door again you may know that it is I, and you needn't feel jumpy about it."

"Well, all right," agreed Mordag.

The atmosphere the fellow had wrought caused Poggioli to look up and down the hallway in both directions. He would not have been greatly surprised to see a heavy man; but the corridor was empty. The docent started quickly up the steps listening intently as he went. On the upper floor it suddenly occurred to him that he had not searched the closet to make sure it was empty. He believed it was. He was morally certain it was empty, but the note Mordag had showed him was so extremely odd, and sinister—for the fellow to know the very locomotive number that brought Mordag to Columbus . . .

If this Professor La Plesse were hanging about the university waiting for Mordag to come out, it was not impossible for him to have secreted himself in the cloakroom. The sheerest possibility of caging the poor harried devil of a man with his arch tormentor stopped Poggioli, turned him around and sent him running back down the steps for another look into the room.

He paused at the door, tapped faintly and said in a low tone—

"I'm back just for a moment—"

The next instant a muffled scream broke from inside the door.

"Mr. Poggioli! Oh, Mr. Poggioli! Here he is—come at last!"

The psychologist jerked out his key, made two efforts before he unlocked the door.

When it was open he saw Mordag backed away among the cloaks, almost on the verge of collapse.

"What's the matter? Where is he?" cried Poggioli, breathing sharply.

"Oh—oh—that was you?"

"Yes, I just wanted to—to see if the cloakroom was empty; it struck me a man might be hiding—"

Mordag drew long, shaken breaths.

"No, no; he isn't in here. He—he doesn't have to get behind anything to—to hide. He just—melts away."

"I see," said Poggioli, giving a brief laugh. "I didn't know his habits."

He locked the door again and set off upstairs once more. On his way up he paused to reread the French at the bottom of the note. He had remembered it correctly. The sentence read—

"You have three more days to live"

## II

IN THE taxicab on the way to the Hotel Vendig Mr. Henry Poggioli attempted to soothe the nervousness of his client. He began talking about the five hundred white rats which he had in the university laboratory. He was experimenting, he said, on their diet. It was remarkable, the influence of diet on the functioning of both rats and men.

"Now you, for example—" proceeded the docent, warming to his theme—"if you would eat more rice—unpolished

rice—and fruits, you wouldn't be so jumpy."

"Not even if somebody were trying to kill me?" asked Mordag in a gray tone.

"Now, now," advised the docent, "get your mind off of that."

The taxicab in which the men rode, moved and stopped, in unison with a great flock of cars, to the stop and go signals of the traffic lights.

Poggioli observed his companion's nervous glances among the other motors, and finally he protested this also.

"Look here, Mordag; as a psychologist I advise you to shake off this continual edginess. You need a rest."

Mr. Clayman Mordag leaned back among the cushions in an attempt to relax, but every honk made him glance around.

"Listen," begged Poggioli. "At least don't watch the trucks. You know the fellow is not in a truck; nor a car, either, for that matter. It is extremely illogical, Mordag, for you to be afraid of meeting this La Plesse in a perfectly empty room and, simultaneously, in a street full of cars."

"If he wasn't in the house he is likely to be in the street."

Poggioli leaned forward with the satisfaction of a pedagogue cornering a pupil.

"That is just what I wanted you to say. There you introduce the theory of probability. At this moment there must be least two thousand cars in this street, divided into blocks containing about a hundred and twenty cars each. Now the probability that you are in the same block with this Professor La Plesse—that is, assuming that he entered a car at the same moment we did; which, within itself, is a ridiculous assumption; but assuming he did—the probability that he would be in the same block with you, is—let me see—a hundred and twenty into two thousand—"

But the docent did not work out this ratio because he saw his client was not listening. As a matter of fact, the scientist was not greatly interested himself. He sat quiet for a minute or two, trying to think up a more comforting line of dialectic. Finally he said—

"Look here, if La Plesse really gets into your apartment every night and seriously intends to commit foul play, why doesn't he just do it and have it over with?"

"I—I think he wants it to—to look like I—killed myself," said Mordag, wetting his lips.

"This might be indicated if on his first visit he had murdered you, but after you have advertised the situation to me and to the hotel force—"

"Maybe he really hopes to make me kill myself."

There was more color to this. Poggioli mused a moment, then said:

"If that's all, we can checkmate his whole plan of terrorism by a proper diet. It may interest you to know that suicides are recruited mainly from the meat eating nations. Now if you—"

"Or he may not want to kill me at all. He may be doing this just to torture me."

Poggioli gave up his attempt to interest Mordag in impersonal speculations on the situation.

"He may not want to kill you," he suggested dryly, "for fear of getting himself hanged."

The sandy haired man looked blankly at the psychologist.

"For fear of getting himself hanged?"

"Certainly; that's not a pleasant idea."

"Why, they couldn't hang him, Mr. Poggioli."

"Why couldn't they hang him?" demanded the psychologist, losing his patience.

"Because they'd have to keep him in jail for awhile—at least they'd have to keep him in a death cell for three nights before they hanged him, and—and he wouldn't stay; he'd just walk out."

POGGIOLI drew a breath, looked at Mordag, ready to break loose; then he blew out his breath because he saw it was no use. Then, after all, on the next reaction he did fling out—

"Mordag, you are the most complete imbecile!"

The sandy man lifted a hand.

"I know it, I know it," he cried nervously. "I don't expect anybody to believe it unless they've seen him do it hundreds of times, like I have."

"Get out of the cells of the condemned?" cried Poggioli.

"Once he got out of a death cell," said Mordag. "I believe it was at Leavenworth. Lemme see—" He reached in his pocket and drew out his leather case of clippings again.

"Put 'em up! Put 'em up!" snapped the psychologist. "And don't look at those damned things any more!"

Mordag put back his case,

"I thought you wanted to know where he did it."

"It was an exhibition trick, wasn't it—to draw a crowd to his performance. The sheriff wasn't really trying to hang him, was he?"

"No, of course not. But the understanding was that the turnkey would keep him in the death cell until after the performance at the theater that night—if he could."

"And he got out and arrived at the theater on time?"

"Yes, and they had the death watches and everything right by the cell. The men said they could see him lying on his bunk right up to ten minutes of nine—that was when he was to go on the stage. Then, all of a sudden, he wasn't there. And out he steps in the theater in full evening dress, a good fifteen blocks away, and went on with his performance—Here, I'll read you what the Leavenworth papers said—"

"For God's sake keep those clippings in your pocket, or chuck 'em out the window. You know how that was done, don't you?"

"No, of course I don't."

"By *famulii*."

"Family?"

"No, *famulii*—I mean confederates, assistants, helpers."

The sandy haired man picked nervously at the upholstering and glanced about at a passing car, then he said—

"I was his assistant for two years."

"Oh!" ejaculated Poggioli in an altered tone. "And you say you don't know how he did it?"

"Why, no-o. All I did was to put his tables and balls and boxes and things on the stage at the right time. Once I had seen him buried in the cemetery in a casket, and the casket in its box. And I thought sort of creepy, 'Well, you won't show up this time;' but when I gave his cue—you know, straightened the black velvet top on his table—out of the wings in his evening clothes he stepped, looking as good as ever."

"Then he had another helper."

"Rose."

"Who was she?"

"At that time she was the professor's wife."

"But she's not his wife now?"

"No—" Mordag stared for once absently into the crowded street— "No, she's not now."

Poggioli appraised the change that had come over the ex-assistant.

"Well," he suggested, "what about this Rose?"

"I know she didn't help him. We did the same things."

"You mean to say his own wife didn't understand his tricks?"

"No, she didn't. Why lots of times me and Rose talked about his tricks and wondered how he did 'em."

"She could have pretended she didn't know."

Mordag gave his momentary twist of a smile.

"I think she would have pretended to him before she would to me."

"Oh, I see." Poggioli nodded, looking steadfastly at his client. "And you say, I believe, that finally he—divorced her?"

"Yes," nodded the thin man, staring. "Rose and me were very good friends—she never really got along with the professor. You know he was one of those heavy men who—who really never need anybody much."

"I see; but you and Rose were—friends?"

"Yes, we were friends." A muscle in Mordag's lean cheek twitched.

"And that's the reason—well, of the trouble between La Plesse and his wife. That's why you jump off of the New York train at Columbus—and find your water glass poisoned next morning?"

"He didn't treat Rose right. You needn't look at me that way, sir, I—"

Here Mordag broke off his stammering defense. His jaw dropped. He stared at something in the street and gasped in a whisper.

"Oh, my God, sir—"

The fright of the man sharpened Poggioli's nerves. The whole street of cars were standing still under a red light. The docent searched among them,

"Which one's he in; where is he?"

"That blue car—right there . . ."

POGGIOLI saw a blue limousine. In it were three persons—a man, a woman and a child. The man was a heavily bodied person of the type who has become corpulent through success. He held a coin toward the child. As the little girl reached for the piece of silver the coin simply vanished, in full view, without any screening of the fingers whatsoever. It was an amazing enough trick to have made the docent marvel if the situation itself had not been so extraordinary. The psychologist heard the woman give a puzzled laugh and ask in French—

"How do you do that, Jacques? But that's a silly question."

The next moment the whistle blew and the parade moved forward.

Poggioli whirled and said to the chauffeur through the hole in the glass partition—

"Keep up with that blue limousine until you reach the first traffic cop, then stop!"

Mordag leaned forward and pulled at Poggioli's arm.

"For God's sake, don't do that. Turn off at the first corner; take me to a—a flying field."

The chauffeur had caught his fares' excitement.

"What do you want me to do, sir?" he called through the glass, at the same time watching the jam.

"Follow that blue car! Get to a cop! Mordag, the only way to end this situation is to end it!"

"The blue car," repeated the chauffeur.

"Yes—follow it!"

Just then a break in the traffic allowed the lane containing the blue car to pass rapidly up the street. The chauffeur attempted to edge his cab into this open lane. A protest of honking set up from the rear. He was forced back into his own path on pain of being hit.

"Damn the luck!" cried Poggioli, glaring at the cars with the right of way. "The damned egocentric American public; no matter how urgent a man's needs may be—life or death—no man in a car will give you an inch!"

He saw the blue car getting completely away. He pressed his face against the glass partition.

"Get the license number, chauffeur. Can you see it? Get it before he's gone."

Just then a lucky gap in the vehicles gave both men a view of the metal sheet. It was Ohio 143-734.

"Call it out to me," cried Poggioli through the glass. "I want to check up on it."

The driver called it out. The psychologist noted it down on an envelop.

"All right, my boy," he said, turning to Mordag. "That's the first step in Professor La Plesse's undoing. Hurry on, chauffeur, to that first officer you see yonder!"

The chauffeur aimed straight at the man in blue. The traffic guard jumped aside.

"Where are your eyes? Do I look like a speedway? Want to lose your license, you dumb fathead?"

Poggioli leaned out of the window and beckoned with such urgency the officer hushed his sarcasm and came to the car.

"What the hell do you want, stopping the traffic—"

"I want you to halt all the traffic—everything in sight—and arrest that blue limousine at the end of this block."

The guard looked up the street, then at Poggioli.

"Who are you?"

"A criminologist."

"A what?"

"Listen, the man in that blue limousine is a potential murderer!"

The policeman stared.

"Who did you say he had murdered?"

"Nobody yet, but he is going to murder—"

"Listen, what's your name and address?"

Poggioli gave it, then immediately wished he had not done so.

"Well, move along," ordered the bluecoat sharply, drawing out his summonses. "You can't hold up the traffic because somebody is going to murder somebody else. My Gawd, you'd never get a car through Columbus if you stopped traffic on that account!" He made a full arm swing at the chauffeur. "Move along; you ought to know better than to stop for a thing like that. Want to lose your license?"

The chauffeur jammed his accelerator so hard his car began bucking.

Poggioli was beside himself.

"Of all damnable systems—"

Mr. Mordag was immensely relieved.

"You wouldn't have got him if you had stopped his machine."

"The devil! Let up on that croak, will you? Driver, step on it; we've got to catch that car."

"Mr. Poggioli," pleaded Mordag, "let him go; I don't want to catch him."

"Well, I do. If I can get hands on him—"

"But the woman—the woman he had with him—"

"Woman, the devil. Step on it, chauffeur—and look out for the blue car!"

BOTH Poggioli and the driver were staring forward now as the taxicab stuttered at a great rate up the boulevard. They were passing car after car.

From the back of the car Mordag was exclaiming:

"But the woman was Arline! He's with Arline."

"Who is Arline?" asked Poggioli over his shoulder, giving about a quarter of his attention to his client.

"She's my cousin."

"Devil she is!" flung back Poggioli, not greatly interested in this.

"Yes. That night—the night he came into the dressing room and—and found us—he said to me—he said—"

"Say it; say it and stop stuttering!"

"He said, 'Mordag, I'm going to divorce Rose for this and I'm going to marry your cousin,' Arline Daupheny. And that's Arline with him; he done it."

"That's all right. I don't care if he married the Queen of Sheba."

"Yes, but he didn't even know Arline then—never heard of her. I don't think he ever heard of her. I'd never mentioned her to him."

"Oh, I see—another miracle he has worked." Poggioli peered ahead through the vibrating glass. "Now that man's miracles are one thing I'm not interested in. Do you see him, chauffeur?"

"No, sir; not yet."

"Yes, but that's why he's trying t-to kill me, sir," wailed Mordag. "I understand it now."

"Understand what now?"

"Arline's my cousin, I tell you. If I'm dead, she will be next in line to the Daupheny estate."

Poggioli turned around with a bit more interest.

"Oh, I see. So there's a financial end to this. How valuable is the Daupheny estate?"

"It's a sugar plantation—worth two or three hundred thousand."

"That's good," suggested Poggioli, with a bit more tolerance in his voice. "If I'm to run this man down, I'm glad his crime is complicated with a cold acquisitiveness."

"Of course, he wants me out of the way," went on Mordag in the empty repe-

tition of a frightened man, "so Arline will get the estate."

The chauffeur interrupted—

"Yonder's the blue car, sir—parked by that house with the silo."

"Turret," corrected Poggioli.

"They're getting out and going in," cried the chauffeur. "Look at 'em; all three are going across the lawn, sir."

"You don't pay any attention to them; you drive on to the air field!" cried Mordag.

But the chauffeur had, for several minutes, known enough to pay no heed to Mordag.

"Shall I turn in by 'em, sir?"

"Yes, but check the car number first; might be dozens of blue limousines."

"Right you are, sir," called the driver through the hole. "It's a pleasure to drive a detective that knows his line, sir." He waited a moment as he rapidly drew near the parked limousine. "Ohio 143-734, sir."

Poggioli looked at his envelop.

"Check," he called back.

The taxi roared on up to the pavement and stopped with such suddenness that Poggioli and Mordag were assisted in a swift exit to the curb. The chauffeur also jumped out.

The three men ran across a slightly neglected lawn to the house with the turret. There were no curtains in the windows. Instead, "to rent" signs looked out through their blank eyes.

Poggioli ran to the front door and laid a hand on the bolt. It was locked. He looked inside and saw the bareness of an uncarpeted hallway.

"They're fixing to rent it," hazarded the chauffeur. "Well, for pity's sake let's get away and let 'em rent it," pleaded Mordag, standing on the walk and staring at the house. "If they walked in meaning to rent it, why did they lock the door behind them?" asked the chauffeur.

"They saw us coming," suggested the psychologist.

"He didn't have any key," said Mordag. "He didn't need any. He opened it locked, and of course when he went in and pulled the door shut it was still locked."

"What's your boy friend talking about?" asked the chauffeur, looking at Poggioli.

"He's got a lot of very shaky information in his head," smiled the psychologist.

"It's a pleasure to chauffeur for a detective like you," said the taxicab man.

"Let's try the windows," said the docent.

"Which ones?" asked the chauffeur.

"Why, these right here," said Poggioli, going to the nearest light. "You walk around and try the windows on that side, and I'll try 'em on this."

The chauffeur started off with the enthusiasm of a young setter on his first field trial.

"If I see 'em, shall I yell?" he asked guardedly. "Or shall I break in and nab 'em, or call the police or what?"

"Come back to me without making any noise," advised Poggioli.

The two men set off testing windows. Mordag went with the psychologist.

"What are you going to do if you get him?" he asked apprehensively.

"Arrest him for attempted poisoning."

"Won't do any good to arrest him; he'll—"

"Yes, I know all that," replied Poggioli with patient satire; "but it annoys them to have to keep percolating out of jail. I don't care how good a sleight-of-hand man gets to be, percolating is hard work."

Mordag became silent and simply followed his adviser. Presently Poggioli felt sorry for him.

"Look here, Mr. Mordag," he began more seriously. "You don't seem to realize that you have changed from the rôle of a fugitive to that of a pursuer. Don't be nervous any more. By the time this Professor La Plesse has been given the third degree—"

THE DOCENT was interrupted by footsteps coming around the house. He became alert and the next moment a policeman turned the corner of the building.

Poggioli did not know whom he expected to see; possibly La Plesse himself; but the sudden appearance of the bluecoat was a little disconcerting. At the moment he was trying to pry a window open. He had an impulse to quit, but he felt the best thing to do under the circumstances was to keep on. So he continued running the blade of the knife under the bottom of the window trying to get at the catch which he could see inside.

"Can you get in here, Officer?" he asked, jabbing in the blade. "There's a murderer in this house."

The policeman simply looked at Poggioli and Mordag for a moment, then he said:

"Are you birds color blind? Can't you tell day from night?"

"I didn't want to come here at all," began Mordag in a complaining voice.

"Shut up," snapped the docent. "Officer, we've got to get in here at once; there's a man in here—"

The patrolman saw that Poggioli had only a pearl handled pen knife, with a blade rather short even for a penknife. He became less menacing. He said:

"Better shut up your jimmy and put it in your pocket. It's against city regulations to break open houses in Columbus with burglars' tools like that."

Poggioli put his knife in his pocket.

"Listen," he repeated earnestly, "there is a man in this house who has attempted to take this man's life. I want him arrested."

"Who are you?" interposed the office.

"This man's name is Mordag—Clayman Mordag."

"Don't *you* happen to have a name?" demanded the policeman. "If you wanted to call yourself up on the 'phone, who'd you ask for?"

"Your hypothesis is improbable to say the least of it," returned Poggioli with dignity, "but my name is Henry Poggioli, M.A, Ph. D. I teach criminology at the Ohio State University."

The officer stared, actually at sea now.

"Are you trying to show this man how to break into a house?"

"The devil! I'm after a criminal," cried Poggioli, quite out of patience with this mixture of ignorance and ill placed humor. "I expected you to help me instead of—"

The patrolman glanced up at the window.

"You say there's a gunman in there?"

"No, not a gunman; he's a sleight-of-hand performer."

"Thought you said he was trying to kill your pupil here?"

"This man isn't my pupil—"

"What is he?"

"He's a man whose life is threatened. He came to me as a psychologist."

"I thought you said you taught crime at the university?" cross-questioned the bluecoat shrewdly.

"I teach criminal psychology," stated Poggioli with the curved inflections of disgust.

"I see," nodded the officer, the docent's academic manner gaining a slight moral advantage over him. "Do you happen to have anything on you to prove what you are?"

Poggioli ran through his pockets and found two or three letters addressed to him in care of the university.

The officer considered these in connection with the fact that Poggioli was trying to jimmy a window with a rather short bladed penknife.

"Well, all right, you lads can go; but listen, Professor, you are not allowed to go to private houses outside the university grounds and try to teach your class how to jimmy—"

"Listen," cried Poggioli, "the academic phase of this incident weighs too heavily on your mind. I demand of you as an officer of the law that you help me break into this house and arrest the man inside for attempted murder."

The officer looked at the window again.

"Nobody lives here—it's for rent."

"I know that, but this Professor La Plesse, his wife and daughter, have just entered this house. I saw them go in."

"Professor La Plesse," repeated the officer. "Does he teach at the university too?"

"Yes," flung out Poggioli, goaded into sarcasm at last. "Murder is his specialty, and since you policemen won't let him use outside material, he was trying to kill this innocent member of his class . . . Come on, Mordag, what's the use staying here!"

The bluecoat followed the men around the building, not at all pleased at this.

"I'm a good mind to run you two in for attempted housebreaking . . ."

"Go on and do it," snapped the docent, not looking around.

"If the house wasn't as empty as a shell, and nothing in it to steal, I'd do it."

Poggioli made no reply. He and Mordag walked on around on the front lawn, where he came to a sudden halt.

"Why the blue car's gone!" he ejaculated in dismay.

"Thank God for that," cried Mordag, drawing a long breath.

"Which way did it go?" demanded the docent of the policeman. "Why didn't you tell us the car was gone instead of keeping us there talking?"

"When I came here," said the officer, "there wasn't anything at the gate but that taxi, so I came on in to see what was up."

The chauffeur was already around and was standing outside by his machine.

"Look here, see what happened?" called the chauffeur as Poggioli approached the gate.

The docent broke into a run, not knowing exactly what he expected.

"What is it?" he cried.

"Why look—" he pointed in dismay—"that cop's tagged my car!"

"You know better than to stop in front of a fireplug," reproved the bluecoat sharply.

"Well I'll be damned!" cried Poggioli. "Chasing murderers and the only cooperation the police will give you is to tag your car for parking in front of a fireplug!"

"Who's going to pay that fine?" inquired the chauffeur gloomily.

"We'll fight the case before the police judge, if he's got any sense at all."

The three men got into their respective places in the taxi. The policeman stood on the pavement, twirling his stick as he saw them off. He evidently considered that he had got the better of the situation.

"Where do we go from here?" asked the driver.

"Flying field," called Mordag.

"The Vendig," said Poggioli.

By this time the chauffeur had ceased to pay any attention to Mordag, who was paying the taxi fare, so he turned and started back down the boulevard toward the Vendig.

The docent rode along in silence. After the manner of men of theory, his personal frustration gave place presently to a gloomy philosophical outlook on the world in general. The ineptness of the policeman was exactly the sort of thing that permeated life at large. How bungling and aimless was the world of men compared to the scientific precision of his little community of rats in the laboratory. The aims and passions of men, taken as a whole, had absolutely no objective whatever. They crossed and blocked and thwarted each other. But his rats served their purpose with precision and with a sort of logical elegance. They lived to illustrate the effect of various diets. And it was a great pity, the docent thought, that the world at large could not have the same definition of direction as his five hundred rats. What the great torrent of life needed was some strict scientific supervision; a center, a focus, an experimental cleaning house, if life was ever really to mean anything. And here, weirdly enough, there drifted through Poggioli's mind the primitive folk notion of a god!

The psychologist straightened up.

"I declare!" he thought. "Fancy such an idea in the mind of an instructor in the Ohio State University!"

THERE was quite a stir at the Vendig when the taxicab drove up. The doorman ran out and asked if this was Professor Poggioli's cab. When he learned it was, he called out:

"Professor Poggioli has arrived! Professor Poggioli is here!"

Two or three men came running out of the hotel to the cab. One had a camera and began getting his head under his black cloth. Some one called:

"Hold that a minute in the cab door, Professor. Try shaking hands with Mr. Mordag."

Poggioli automatically tried shaking hands with Mordag.

"What for?" he asked.

"Picture for the *Times;* and a thousand thanks." He bobbed from under the cloth.

"Look here," cried the docent, moving hastily from in front of the camera. "I don't want my picture in the—"

A small man in a wine colored suit hurried up to the docent.

"Professor Poggioli, my name is Tapper. I'm with the *Dispatch.* The police turned in a remarkable story. I hurried up here to verify it. Have you been employed to discover the murderer of a cat?"

"That's right," nodded Poggioli hastily, beginning to back away.

"One moment. Have you any clues? Why did the man want to murder the cat? Was it a prize cat? Was it a case of one cat fancier jealous of another?"

"Correct! Correct!" The docent retreated with a feeling that he was being let down into a sensational quagmire.

"Look here," cried Mordag indignantly. "That poison was meant for me. I just happened to pour some water in the cat's saucer—"

Tapper turned to the sandy man.

"Oh, I see; and Professor Poggioli—"

"I'm not a professor," snapped the psychologist. "I am simply a docent."

"Pardon me, but I understand you ran the murderer to earth in a vacant house at 2714 Johnson Boulevard?"

"We saw him drive up to that number," said Mordag, "but while we searched for him—"

"Why, a Columbus policeman came up," interpolated Poggioli hotly, "and kept us answering questions—"

"Till the criminal got out the front way and drove off," concluded Mordag.

Mr. Tapper gave a snort, jerked out his handkerchief and muffled a rather long, keenish nose. A second later he asked soberly—

"What is your opinion of the general efficiency of the Columbus police, Professor?"

"I'd rather not go into that—not for publication."

"The real story here," said Mordag, "is about my room being entered every night and poison left in it. Does the *Dispatch* want a picture of me, too? The *Times* has got one."

"Who enters your room every night?" cried Tapper.

"Why Professor La Plesse.'

"La Plesse, La Plesse—where have I heard that name?"

"He's a sleight-of-hand man," explained Mordag. "He played Columbus about five years ago. Here, I've got a clipping out of the old *Times-Record*—"

"I knew it!" cried Tapper. "I never forget a name or a face. I remember they sewed him up in a sack and dropped him off the bridge."

"Sure, that was one of his stunts; here's the clipping."

"Say, keep my name out of this, Mr. Tapper," asked Poggioli in extreme discomfort.

"Leave it to my discretion, Professor. I understand the academic conventions—" he turned to Mordag as a more untrammeled news source. "Where did you first catch sight of the La Plesse?"

"Downtown."

"Then where did he go?"

"We followed him to the house out on Johnson Boulevard and lost him."

"M-m-m—did you get his car number?"

"Yes, we got that. It was 2—3—4—What was it, Mr. Poggioli?"

The docent drew out his envelop.

"Ohio 143-734."

"Bill, call up the department, see who owns that car and where he lives."

Bill went to a telephone booth.

Tapper turned to Mordag again.

"Now that's fine. We'll soon have a line on him. Say he comes to your room every night and tried to poison you? He turned to the cameraman. "Jimmy, give

us a shot of Mr. Mordag by himself."

The shot was given.

"Now how about a shot of the dead cat —spot where cat was poisoned, saucer, glass—they're not trick glasses, are they? I mean the sort a sleight-of-hand man uses?"

"No, they're the glasses the hotel furnished."

"Good! Come on, let's get the shots."

THIS sudden burst of publicity drove away Mordag's fear. He led the crowd toward the elevator. Poggioli followed with a feeling that it would be wise not to follow. He knew he ought to get away with as little notice as possible. Already he sensed the sort of story Mr. Tapper was going to write. But the reporter had the air of a man who momentarily expected to unearth wonders, and Poggioli wanted to see what Tapper was about to uncover.

The crowd, for it really was a crowd by this time, jammed into an elevator. Jimmy, with the camera and tripod, created quite a diversion getting inside. At the top Mr. Mordag squeezed out and pointed out the floor matron. He explained that he had paid her three dollars to watch his room, and she had seen nothing. Mr. Tapper was enthusiastic. He directed Jimmy to take a shot of the woman who had watched Mr. Mordag's apartment all night long and had seen nothing.

"We have a real mystery here," he said to the floor matron. "What's your name and address? Married? Live with you husband? How many children have you got? All right, now, Mr. Mordag, we'll look at your cat."

As Mordag led the way to his room, Poggioli deserted the crowd and went back to the elevator. The docent at least knew when he had enough. He was going back to the laboratory and write a note to Mordag withdrawing from the case. Then he would have Janet up on the carpet and when he was through with her, she would never, so long as she worked in the laboratory, bring him another card.

He was pushing the elevator button when he heard a single sharp thump in Mordag's room, and abruptly the chatter of the crowd ceased.

After an interval he heard a voice say—

"Where the hell did that come from?"

And Tapper's voice replied sharply:

"Don't touch it! Let it alone! Let the detective see it!

The docent turned and walked rapidly back to his client's apartment. The crowd was grouped around a knife that stuck, still quivering, just inside the entrance of Mordag's apartment.

The sandy man had lost completely his access of bravery.

"For God's sake!" he chattered, staring at the weapon. "Throw a knife at me—right through the ceiling!"

The crowd stared up at the ceiling.

"It couldn't come through the ceiling," said somebody.

Mordag looked at the man with the quivering open mouth of the terror-struck.

"Couldn't throw it through the ceiling! Why, I've seen him throw 'em through iron, wood, people—just anything."

"And not leave a hole?" cried the skeptic.

"My God, no! He don't leave a hole!"

Mordag walked feebly over to his bed, sat down on it gingerly as if afraid some knife might launch upward through the floor.

Mr. Tapper was writing rapidly. His man Jimmy was already training his camera on the knife.

Somebody said—

"Then he must be in the room right over this one."

This caused a diversion. Three or four men hurried up to the next floor to see what they could find.

"What happened?" asked Poggioli, looking at the knife stuck in the carpet.

"Just as Mr. Mordag entered his apartment," said Tapper, reading the words from the paper he had written, "a mysterious knife was thrown at the unfortunate man before the eyes of the whole crowd—" He broke away from his script

to say to Poggioli, "If he hadn't stepped back just when he opened the door to let me in, he'd 'a' got hurt."

"Where did the knife come from?"

"He says through the ceiling," said Tapper. "You understand, this is a sleight-of-hand man we're after." He began scribbling again and repeating aloud, "When interviewed concerning the mysterious assault, Mr. Mordag stated that his enemy, Professor La Plesse was an adept in Rajah Yoga and could throw knives through iron, wood, stone, without leaving any visible—" He broke off to ask, "Is that a regular conjurer's knife?'

"It's the sort he always used," said Mordag weakly.

"If he's in the upper story here, how could he have been in 2714 Johnson Boulevard?" queried Tapper.

"We were there and now we're here," said Mordag.

"Yes, but we saw *you* come in," said Tapper.

"Look what a crowd's in— You don't know La Plesse."

"That's true," admitted the reporter.

Poggioli stooped over the knife without touching it. Then he drew a chair, stood on it and examined the top of the door.

"I have a feeling that La Plesse didn't go to the trouble of flinging his cutlery through ferro concrete," he began.

"Mr. Poggioli, he can," assured Mordag earnestly. "I've seen him throw knives through a steel screen and stick 'em around a woman."

"I don't doubt that he can," said Poggioli. "But he didn't take the trouble to do it this time."

"One moment," interrupted Tapper. "How thick were those steel screens, Mr. Mordag?"

"About an eighth of an inch—I could roll them around on the stage."

"You never saw him throw a knife through six inches of concrete?"

"No, I never did."

"Here's a silk thread glued to the top of the door," said Poggioli. "It undoubtedly pulled the knife from the transom."

The docent handed the thread down in the manner of a pedagogue exhibiting a specimen. Every one passed it gravely from hand to hand.

"When the door opened it pulled the knife off the transom," repeated the docent.

This left the crowd flat. How the knife had got on the transom was a small mystery compared to flinging a steel blade through the ceiling. The thread finally came to Mordag on the bed, and he sat looking at it.

While every one was still talking the man named Bill came back from the telephone.

"Tap," he said, "Ohio 143-734 belongs to the Oldham Drive-It-Yourself Garage."

"And who did the floorman say was using 143-734 today?"

"He said nobody wasn't using it; he said it was standing there in the garage."

"Who did he say had been using it?"

"Nobody. He said that car was under repair and hadn't been out of the garage all week."

## III

MR. HENRY POGGIOLI did not give the information about the blue limousine having been on the streets and not having been on the streets at one and the same time the consideration that was really due it. He was so disgusted with Tapper, and Bill and Jimmy, the photographer, and especially with Clayman Mordag, for his cheap publicity seeking attitude, that he had decided to have done with the whole affair.

The docent was in his laboratory feeding his rats. As he went about this chore he thought of the crowd in the Vendig. Why did ordinary human beings wallow and grovel in a mystery of any description? Why did the Vendig aggregation want to believe that La Plesse had thrown a knife at Mordag through six inches of concrete flooring?

Men always had been like that, and it suddenly occurred to the psychologist that mankind as a whole must have

greatly benefited by this attitude of awe and passive acceptance of the miraculous, or the trait would not be so deeply ingrained in the human race. If that were true, then the awful, the mysterious, the unknowable must, on the whole, have bestowed upon the world of men some great and immeasurable good. And that, of course, was religion . . .

The psychologist was really amazed at his own inference, and he might have followed it heaven knows where, possibly to orthodoxy itself, had not Janet come into the laboratory and ended his train of thought.

The girl held a damp, newly delivered paper in her hand. She entered rather uncertainly and asked, without much hope for a good reception in her voice, if the docent were busy right then.

Poggioli said not only was he busy but that he had told her never to bring him another card—never.

"This isn't a card," said the girl. "It's a paper."

"Well, what about a paper?"

"The men in the office were talking. I—I've come to say, Mr. Poggioli, I'm awfully sorry I brought you that man's card."

"Let your repentance point toward the future. Don't bring me any more."

"Oh, I won't."

There was a pause and Poggioli said—

"Well?"

"Why I—I wanted to ask," stammered Janet, "do you really believe Mr. Mordag's name brought all this bad luck on him, or did you just tell the reporter that?"

"What! What!" cried the psychologist, reaching for the journal.

The girl pointed hastily at a subheading—

NUMEROLOGIST ASSERTS CLAYMAN MORDAG'S MISFORTUNES PRECIPITATED BY UNHARMONIZED MONIKER

"What is a moniker?" asked the docent, looking at Janet.

"It's a slang word; it means a person's name."

"Of course I didn't say such an idiotic—" He searched down the paragraph with his forefinger. "Here, it doesn't say I said it. It says Professor Wordenbaum, the famous international numerologist, said that."

"I didn't notice the exception," said Janet. "You said nearly everything else on the front page."

The docent stammered, hushed, saw the red streamer printed across the top of the page with a delicate goose flesh running over his skin.

PSYCHOLOGIST POGGIOLI SAVES CLAYMAN MORDAG FROM MURDERER'S VENGEANCE

Then followed a whole column of decks which read as if the public to which the paper catered were incapable of understanding an English sentence with the ordinary connectives and articles:

Celebrated Criminologist Pursues Poison Bug Along Johnson Boulevard.

Runs Miscreant to Earth in Deserted House. Explains Theory of Crime to Police at Back Door While Criminal Escapes Out Front.

Necromancer La Plesse Makes Second Attempt on Mordag's Life. Flings Knife Through Six Inches Concrete at Wife's Paramour.

Notes from Unseen Husband Found Daily in Mordag's Pockets.

Police Now Searching for La Plesse After Letting Him Slip Through Fingers Yesterday.

Last Seen Driving a Car on Johnson Boulevard While at Same Moment Car Was in Drive-It-Yourself Garage Undergoing Repairs.

La Plesse an Adept in Art of Hindu Magic.

Psychologist Poggioli of Ohio State Pits Western Science Against Eastern Occultism.

The second page of the paper was devoted to the elucidation of these multiple decks.

Mr. Poggioli laid the paper on a rat cage and swore with sincerity of sentiment and

variety of diction. He reached a conclusion finally with—

"Janet, don't you ever again, so long as you live—"

And the girl interrupted to say:

"Goodness, Mr. Poggioli, I wouldn't again for the world. Why they say in the office this has put off your professorship ten years, if it doesn't lose you your job!"

"It isn't my job I mind losing, it's my decency. Look—look at that page—" he flapped it with his hand— "it's full of me. And I told that lying rat of a Tapper—"

"Well, you don't have to take a commission like that any more."

"No, I don't. Nothing will ever move me again into such a quagmire of indecent sensationalism; money—love—ambition—Well, what in hell do you want?"

This last was not addressed to Janet, but to a blue capped telegraph messenger.

"I have a telegram for Professor Henry Poggioli. They told me in the office that he—"

"Well, I don't want it," snapped the docent, "if it's anything about this damned affair."

"I don't know what it's about," said the messenger. "I haven't read it, sir."

"Well I know; it's about this affair!"

Poggioli shook the paper at him.

The boy opened his eyes.

"Oh, are you that Mr. Poggioli?'

"Yes," said the docent. "I am even worse than *that* Mr. Poggioli; you might say, I am *the* Mr. Poggioli."

This went over the telegraph boy's head. He stood for a moment.

"Won't you sign for it, sir?"

"No, I tell you."

The boy blinked his eyes and scratched an ear.

"If you won't, sir, I'll have to keep on bringing it back every two hours until you do."

Poggioli looked at Janet.

"The Pilgrims came to this country to win freedom; now look what we've come to."

The boy took this to be a serious thrust at himself.

"The boss says I must make every effort to deliver them the first trip out to pep up the service," he explained apologetically.

"Hand it here," said Poggioli. "I never before heard of a telegraph messenger trying to pep up the service. Janet, I'm beginning to think the comic strips misrepresent these young men." He signed for the telegram and tore it in two.

THE MESSENGER caught his breath at this unusual reception of a telegram, but continued standing where he was.

"Well, do you want me to pay you anything?" asked the docent.

"Oh, no, sir; it was prepaid."

"Then what do you want?"

The boy blinked again at the torn envelop on the floor.

"Er—the regulations say, I'm to stand here, sir, till you read it and see if you want to answer it, sir."

"Well, I'll be damned . . . Janet, the American people are the slaves of system. System has elevated the message far above either the receiver or the sender. As far as the telegraph companies are concerned, the human race are merely points of origin and destination of the great central fact of telegrams. The obscure source from which telegrams spring, their equally nebulous recipients, the question of whether telegrams have a meaning, or are simply a fortuitous concourse of letters; these are probably points of acrid debate among telegraphic metaphysicians."

"Yes, sir," said Janet vaguely.

"Or take the point of free will. Since the receiver has no free will, has the sender any free will? Do telegrams hurtle over the wires in blind obedience to a mechanical necessity . . ."

"I never before heard of a gentleman not wanting to read his telegram, sir," said the boy.

"Certainly you don't hear of it, because the receiver's desires in the matter are what Huxley calls epiphenomenal."

And Poggioli stooped and picked up the

torn halves of his telegram. The docent read:

TAPPER READ FRENCH NOTES STOP WILL BE MURDERED TOMORROW NIGHT STOP EXPECTED YOU ALL MORNING STOP AFRAID TO LEAVE VENDIG STOP GOD'S SAKE COME
—MORDAG

The docent read it again.

"Who's it from?" asked Janet curiously.

"Him—" Poggioli nodded cityward.

"He wants you to come to him?"

Poggioli gave a long sigh.

"Yes, he's frightened nearly to death. He really thinks he's going to be killed tomorrow night."

"Poor man—and he looked so thin and bad, too, Mr. Poggioli, when he came here to see you."

"Any answer, sir?" asked the boy.

"Tell him I'm coming. Just say, 'Will arrive in thirty minutes—Poggioli.'"

The docent started for the cloakroom out front. He turned to the girl who followed him—

"And now you see, Janet, the sort of thing your damned cards get me into . . ."

At the Vendig Poggioli found a crowd collected before the hotel, and in the lobby. As the docent went up to the clerk's desk he caught bits of conversation. A voice was saying—

"What good will it do to change his name?" And another answered, "Why, that may be like faith healing; you just think it's going to do some good."

Near a marble column an oldish man was saying to a youngish man—

"He deserves what he gets—running off with the fellow's wife." And the youngish man, who probably was not married, said, "If a wife gets tired of her husband I say she's got a right to run off. She's not his property, is she?"

At the desk Poggioli had to wait a couple of minutes while the clerk finished telephoning. He was saying—

"The Vendig roof is a hundred feet long by fifty wide; an airplane never has been landed up there."

He glanced around and saw Poggioli, and ended his conversation. He came forward, offering a key to the docent.

"Mr. Mordag is expecting you. In fact, he has been telephoning down every two minutes to know if you had arrived."

"What's the key for?"

"To let you in his room; he doesn't open his door to anybody."

At the expression on the docent's face the clerk ejaculated—

"You can't blame him with a man like La Plesse floating around somewhere in the hotel!"

"You don't mean La Plesse—"

"Yes, Mr. Mordag saw him going into a room."

"What room?"

"1728. He saw him from the elevator."

"Isn't that the room under Mordag's room?" queried Poggioli in surprise.

"Yes; everybody was expecting him to be over Mordag's room."

"He wasn't registered under his proper name?"

"Oh, he wasn't registered at all. He wouldn't be, you know."

"Probably not," agreed the docent.

The clerk leaned across the counter and said in a low voice—

"It's my opinion La Plesse showed himself and raised all this publicity for a purpose."

"What purpose?"

"Why, to get the crowds milling in here so he can come in with 'em and go out with 'em, and never be noticed. He can go upstairs or come downstairs with the crowd, and how're you going to pick him out? Our house man has spoken to three or four gents who answer the description. One was from Pocatello, one from Ripon, California, one—"

"How did he get a key to 1728?"

"From what Mr. Mordag says he doesn't need any key."

"After Mordag saw the fellow, did some one go at once to 1728?"

"Certainly; quite a bunch. But the room was empty. It was mussed up; it had been occupied, but it was empty."

"You don't know who mussed it?"

"No, I don't know whether it was La Plesse or my last registered guest. You see, with twenty-two hundred rooms to be kept in order, and chamber maids soldiering or getting sick on you, you can't be sure a room is ready because it's checked ready."

Poggioli nodded understandingly.

"But may I ask you to go on up as quick as you can," suggested the clerk. "Mr. Mordag is in a bad way, Professor. He's on the edge of a breakdown. You know he thinks he's going to be murdered tomorrow night."

The docent took the key and went up to the eighteenth floor. At Mordag's door he announced himself through the panel and let himself in.

THERE were three men in the room; Mordag lying on the bed; a large man with puffy eyes and a pasty complexion sitting beside the bed, and Tapper very busy at a telephone.

The reporter lifted a hand genially at Poggioli and went on arguing into the instrument.

"But look here, Millman, one of your little Sanson-Brevuet monoplanes can light and take off inside a hundred feet . . ."

"Professor Poggioli!" cried Mordag, reaching his arms toward the docent. "I thought you had deserted me."

The man was so haggard and worn the psychologist was ashamed of ever having given up his case.

"I was delayed on account of my rats," he explained. "When I got your telegram I came right on."

"I had telephoned and telephoned—"

"Professor Poggioli," began the large pasty man, "I also am glad you have come. I needed a man of science to help me press my solution of this situation upon Mr. Mordag."

"I can't see what earthly good it will do," complained Mordag, at his nerve's end.

"Introduce us," suggested the docent.

"This is Professor Wordenbaum, Mr. Poggioli," said the sick man.

"I read of Mr. Mordag's plight in the papers," proceeded Professor Wordenbaum in an assured and greasy voice, "and I knew I could disperse his troubles, eradicate his difficulties, remove the financial, mental, moral and spiritual obstacles in his path toward success and happiness."

"What are you?" asked Poggioli, looking at the man.

"I'm a numerologist."

"What's a numerologist?"

The man presented a card. In the center in Old English script was a catch line—

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

And below it in one corner in small Roman capitals:

HAVAH WORDENBAUM
NUMEROLOGIST,
DEVISER OF FORTUNATE NAMES,
TRADE MARKS, PATRONYMS, MATRONYMS,
PSEUDONYMS, SLOGANS, MOTTOES, APHORISMS,
APOTHEGMS AND CORRELATED PHRASES.

"What do you want to do?" asked Poggioli in mystification. "Fix this man up a slogan?"

"Devise him a more harmonious patronym, so that every time he speaks it or it is spoken to him he will vibrate to the rhythm of success. I will tune his subconscious to opulence, power, harmony and realization."

"Realization sounds as if it ought to be good," said the docent.

Professor Wordenbaum looked a little carefully at the newcomer.

"What's wrong with opulence, power and harmony?" he asked.

At this point Tapper turned from the telephone.

"I told Wordenbaum that Mordag couldn't change his name bang-off like that without an act of the Ohio Legislature; and he can't, either."

"What name do you suggest?" asked the docent of the heavy man.

Professor Wordenbaum considered.

"Well, now, his original name, Clayman Mordag, is very unlucky. Look at what the words mean; Clayman, a man of clay.

Mordag, the day of death. Could anything be more unpropitious?"

"Can you better it?" inquired the docent.

"Now let me see; I would suggest 'Gaylord Morning.' That has bouyancy, optimism—"

"All right, he takes it," decided the docent at once. "Good day, Professor, and call around sometime next week and see how the new name is working."

Professor Wordenbaum was a little disconcerted at this swift decision.

"Well, all right," he agreed. "My fee is ten dollars a name."

"Mr. Mordag will be only too glad to pay you next week—if the name keeps him alive that long."

"Don't call him Mordag, call him Morning," coached the numerologist.

"Certainly; Morning—"

"And don't say if he is alive; make a positive assertion that he will be alive."

"Certainly; he'll pay you next week," asserted Poggioli positively, floating the pasty man toward the door.

"Go into this seriously, Mr. Morning," called back the professor as he went away. "Say to yourself, 'I am Gaylord Morning.' Write it on a piece of paper a hundred times. Inhale slowly and think, 'Gaylord Morning!' "

"I will," said the sick man. "It can't hurt me."

"Can't hurt you! It will cure you; dispel terror, danger, apprehension—"

"I'll do it," repeated Mordag.

"But look here," interposed Tapper. "It requires an act of the Legislature to change a man's name."

"Does it?" snapped the numerologist. "If I should call you a meddling, sharp nosed busybody, would the Legislature have to indorse that to make it true?"

"Do you call me that?" demanded the reporter sharply.

"No, I am simply trying to show you the power of suggestion requires no legal action. Language was used before laws were thought of. Well, good day, gentlemen. I'll be back for my fee next week, Mr. Gaylord Morning."

"I hope to God I'm here to pay it," said Mordag fervently.

When the man was gone, Poggioli turned to his client.

"What's this I hear about La Plesse being in this hotel?"

"He's just here," said the sandy man gloomily. "Of course he would come here."

"You saw him on the floor beneath this one?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you rather expected to find him the next story up, didn't you?"

"That's where he threw the knife from, sir."

AS MORDAG said this he got himself out of bed and walked across to the desk containing the hotel stationery.

"I got his note this morning as usual," he continued shakily. "Mr. Tapper here can read French. He read it to me." The ex-helper sat down at the desk and reached into a pigeonhole for the note.

"Let it alone, Mordag," said the psychologist. "I don't want to see it— That knife that dropped from the transom yesterday, did you ever see it before?"

The sandy man sat down and began writing weakly.

"Yes; it used to be one of his throwing knives."

"Used to be! Whose is it now?"

"Why, it's mine, sir."

"How came it yours?"

"He had fifteen of 'em, sir. He gave me one and Rose one when we broke up our act."

Poggioli looked at his client in amazement.

"Then at the time when the gravamen of—of your offense was fresh on his mind, he wasn't so terribly angry either at you or at Rose!"

"No, sir, not so terribly. At the hotel where we are all packing our things to leave, I happened to need a knife. He handed me this one and said I could keep it. Then he handed Rose one, too. He

said he thought it would make an appropriate gift for parting."

"And you haven't offended him in the meantime?"

"I haven't even seen him in the meantime, except, you know, just glimpses as he followed me around."

"Why, that's the most extraordinary thing—after a wait of two or three years, then grow angry enough to take revenge."

"I suppose so," murmured Mordag.

"Listen; in the meantime had you been brooding over the injury you had done him, Mordag?"

The sandy man winced.

"Mr. Poggioli, would you mind not calling me that name?"

"What name?"

"Mordag, sir."

"What do you want to be called?" inquired the docent in surprise.

"If you don't mind, Morning—Gaylord Morning."

Poggioli was amused and slightly contemptuous.

"Oh, all right—if I can remember to call you that."

"It can't do me any harm, sir, and it might do good."

He got up and walked slowly over to the telephone and called down and asked the clerk to change his name on the register. After a pause he straightened up and said—

"Professor Wordenbaum had it changed on the register as he went out."

Then he went over and laid down on the bed again, repeating—

"I am Gaylord Morning; I am Gaylord Morning—" in the queer voice of a man who speaks while he is drawing in his breath.

At this Tapper turned and hurried to another telephone which stood in the room and which Poggioli had not observed before. Tapper picked up the transmitter and said:

"Take this, Bill. . . . At the suggestion of Numerologist Havah Wordenbaum, Clayman Mordag has changed his name to Gaylord Morning. Professor Wordenbaum has in a way guaranteed Mr. Morning's new moniker to save his life as he supplied the name on a contingent fee of ten dollars, payable in event Mr. Morning lives to pay it. Psychologist Poggioli of Ohio State approved the change of names— Put that in a box on the front page."

"What's that?" cried the docent. "You say I approve such an idiotic—"

"Certainly you did," cried Tapper, turning from the telephone defensively. "I told Mr.—er—Morning it was all damned stuff and nonsense; but you advised him right off to do it."

"That was simply to get the fellow out of the room."

"You approved," persisted the reporter doggedly. "There's a human interest story in that, but if I say you did it just to get him out of the room, no story there. Anybody would have done that."

"But damn it, you will absolutely ruin my reputation—" The docent caught up the receiver from the second telephone. This proved to be a private wire to the *Dispatch* office. "Hello, who is this? . . . I want to speak to Bill—Tapper's assistant. . . . Yes, listen, this is Henry Poggioli, the psychologist in the Mordag—I mean Morning—case. I absolutely forbid you to quote me as approving the change of Mr. Morning's name. . . . Yes, I did sanction it, but that was simply to rid the apartment of— You will take it out or I'll sue you for libel. I'll—" Poggioli snapped down the receiver in its fork. "Damn you, Tapper, I'm half a mind to pitch you out that window!"

"Well, by Jiminy," cried Tapper spunkily, "other men have tried pitching me out of windows—"

AND the two men apparently were about to fight when Mordag called:

"Men, for God's sake, don't. You two are the only friends I've got now. If you get to fighting—"

"Well this damned little snake printed a paper full of libel about me yesterday and he's starting another edition today!"

"I never printed a line you didn't dic-

tate yourself, either in word or substance!" snapped the reporter.

"Listen," cried Poggioli, "either Tapper goes or I go, Mordag."

"Please, please, Mr. Poggioli, say Morning."

"All right, Morning— you, can decide which you want, me or Tapper."

The sandy man looked at his incompatible aides.

"Uh, M-Mr. Tapper," he stammered, "h-has thought of a p-plan that may s-save me if he can get—"

"I can get it," snapped Tapper belligerently. "I've just received assurance from the air field they have a helicopter coming over from Akron."

"A what?" ejaculated Poggioli.

"Helicopter," repeated Tapper impatiently. "It can light on the Vendig's roof. We plan to take Mr. Morning up tomorrow afternoon on an endurance flight. We mustn't let out a word so this La Plesse will have no idea of what is about to happen. Then we'll take Morning up and see if the magician can break into an airplane somewhere over Ohio and murder one of the passengers. I'm going to stay with Morning straight on from now till the flight ends."

The reporter's voice had become friendly again with enthusiasm over his plans.

"Did you think of this?" asked Poggioli, taken off his feet.

"No, it was Morning's idea. It hit me hard, however, and the city editor O.K'd it. We'll have a wireless in the plane. I'll keep in touch with the office and write the story as we go." The little man paused. "Won't you go along, Professor?"

"No, no, I couldn't."

"Listen, we'll say you suggested the whole idea. Think of the scareheads— Western Science Versus Eastern Occultism. Psychologist Takes Threatened Victim in the Air. Leaves Magician Stranded on Earth."

"I wouldn't go unless I was prepared to hand in my resignation at the university."

"I wish you would. Be a great advantage to have you if anything should happen up there. You know, if another airplane came and chased us; or La Plesse should—you know, just form in the air and shoot Mordag—we'd like a scientific explanation of it."

"For God's sake, don't call me Mordag!" squealed the sandy man.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Morning."

"I believe if both you men will remember to call me Morning, and I ever get up in that plane, I think I can live through tomorrow night."

"We'll both remember it, Mr. Morning. And you won't go with us, Professor?"

"No, I wouldn't think of it. I'd like to, but I can't. You say you are going to remain here with Mr. Morning in his apartment tonight, Mr. Tapper?"

"Yes; the city editor wants a line on whoever it is writes these notes."

"Will you have a policeman or some one to sit up with you?"

"No, we are afraid if you put two or three men in the room nobody would appear."

"He'll come and write the note," said Mordag with certainty. "And Mr. Tapper won't see him—you know, he'll just come in and write it in my pocket without being seen."

"You mean La Plesse will get into your pocket?" queried the docent.

"Oh, no; I mean he will cause the writing to appear in my pocket. Many a time I've seen him put a blank sheet of paper in a glass and pass his hand over it, and when he pulled it out it was full of writing."

"Don't you know how he did that?"

"No, I don't know how he did it."

"He had already written the message on the paper in invisible ink."

"Invisible ink wouldn't cause the notes to appear in my pocket every morning."

"Oh, no, I'm simply explaining the trick you saw him do; about how your notes get in your pockets—that's something else."

"It certainly is something else," assented Mordag in the greatest depression;

and he began repeating to himself in the odd tone of an indrawn breath—

"I am Gaylord Morning; I am Gaylord Morning—"

Since he was tacitly let out of his uncomfortable situation by the entrance of Tapper's flying machine, Poggioli made his *adieus*, expressed his sincerest well wishes and washed his hands of the whole matter. He went away from the Vendig in better spirits than when he had entered.

## IV

IT WAS highly characteristic of Mr. Poggioli, that after he had severed his connection with the Mordag mystery, it bedeviled him all night long. Not only did the enigma itself seduce him, but he wondered whether or not he had acted wisely in withdrawing from the problem. It Tapper attempted a world's record airplane endurance flight and at the same time preserved a victim from attempted murder, it would bring every one connected with it into nationwide publicity. And such publicity was so much money in hand. If he had gone up in the airplane he could have written a book, appeared in a motion picture, spoken over the radio, sold his name for a cigar brand . . . The docent could not help reflecting that he had thrown away a fortune.

As he passed through the office on his way to the laboratory, the girl, Janet, jumped up excitedly and followed the docent in among the rat cages. Evidently she had something on her tongue's end, but she bit it back. Finally she asked tentatively—

"Have you found out anything more about the Morning case?"

"You mean the Mordag case."

"The newspapers are calling it the Morning case now. He's changed his name for luck. I think that's silly."

"It's tommyrot."

"But those notes he gets aren't silly. I think they are the eeriest things I ever heard of; just imagine, getting a note every—"

"They aren't mysterious at all compared to that knife," growled the psychologist.

"Why aren't they mysterious?" demanded Janet, vaguely offended.

"Because La Plesse either puts them in Mordag's pockets—or he does not."

"Why certainly," agreed Janet, a little confused.

"Well, there you are; any proposition that can be reduced to one of two alternatives is not mysterious; it's simple."

"But how does he get them in there?" demanded Janet, ruffled.

"That's a detail—a trick of some sort."

The office girl gave a short laugh.

"I'll say it's a detail." She looked at Poggioli with a touch of satire, "Maybe you don't consider there is anything mysterious about this case."

"Oh, yes, there is—the knife."

"You mean the one thrown through the concrete ceiling—I don't believe that."

"Neither do I. I happen to know the knife was laid on top of the transom over Mordag's door. It was pulled off by a silk thread. I found the thread."

"Then that isn't mysterious either," said Janet, "That's just another detail."

"Certainly how the knife got on the door is a detail, but the knife itself casts the most mysterious complexion over this whole affair that has ever fallen under my observation."

Janet looked at him blankly.

"I don't see how a knife—just a knife—"

"Why the knife was given to Mordag by La Plesse."

"Yes; I read that in the papers yesterday evening."

"It was given to Mordag immediately after Mordag and La Plesse had had trouble over La Plesse's wife."

"So I understand; what's strange about that?"

"Why, it involves a paradox, a contradiction," ejaculated the psychologist. "For La Plesse to assume the ironic attitude of giving his wife and her lover a knife apiece when he has just been wronged, and send the couple about their

own devices, is, I think, one of the most cynical things I ever heard of a man doing."

"I—I suppose it is," hesitated Janet, "but it isn't mysterious."

"That part isn't, but look at this. Five years later he is imbued with such a hatred for Mordag that he is trying to kill him with all this red fire and melodrama."

"But La Plesse's wife will inherit a fortune if Gaylord Morning is put out of the way."

"That's true, but La Plesse was a popular magician and he must have had money. And then your genuine cynic would never turn into a murderer. Cynicism is a shield, not a sword. A cynic is a man who has no more fight left in him. Since life rides him hard, he says his galled withers are trifles; since he can't win love that love is ridiculous; since he can't keep a wife, that he never cared anything about her. Such a man would never go out and commit murder for a fortune. He would tell himself that fortunes were tiresome things and that he was glad he had none."

The office girl looked impressed.

"He would do that, wouldn't he?"

"Certainly. That is why the knife throws such a blank mystery over the whole affair."

"You don't believe the man who would give away a knife would now try to murder Mr. Morning?"

"I know he would not—but he did. Now that is what constitutes a mystery."

"Then what do you believe about it?" cried Janet excitedly.

"Personally, I don't believe La Plesse has anything to do with this."

The office girl was logically outraged.

"The idea of such a thing; the notes, the knife, the poison! You've got to account for them somehow. Besides that, you yourself saw La Plesse and his wife and child on Johnson Boulevard.

"They are details that will have to be worked out separately," said the docent.

"But La Plesse has followed Morning around from city to city."

Poggioli smiled.

"Suppose I should suggest to you that Mordag has been following La Plesse around from city to city . . . "

"What!"

The psychologist nodded slowly with the faint smile of one who deals in oracles.

"Exactly. Mordag, or Morning as you call him, was La Plesse's assistant. Mordag still carries around with him a pocket full of old newspaper clippings extolling the showman. The poor devil genuinely believes that La Plesse can perform any sort of miracle whatever. Now here are some of the things Mordag believes La Plesse can do; read your thoughts, get out of a grave, fling one object through another without leaving a trace, produce writing on blank paper without any physical means of doing so. And I feel sure that Mordag was hypnotized by La Plesse for exhibition purposes every evening for two years. When the helper was discharged, he was, you might say, left without his divinity."

"Why, Mr. Poggioli," ejaculated Janet with horror in her face, "that is the crawliest thing I ever heard of."

"Or take another theory; if La Plesse hypnotized Mordag for such a long time, it is within the bounds of reason that wherever La Plesse decides to go, Mordag automatically makes up his mind to go to the same place. That is why they are eternally meeting one another, on trains, in the street, in hotels. Mordag always chooses to stop where La Plesse is stopping."

"And doesn't know that he is doing it," ejaculated the office girl.

"No, he thinks he is trying to get away from the man—his conscious side thinks that, while his subconscious side is following him."

"That nearly makes me sick," cried Janet.

"That's merely a theory," said the docent. "It explains part of what we know. But if La Plesse really is trying to murder Mordag after having given him that throwing knife, I must say this

is the most blindly mysterious affair I ever encountered."

"So you don't believe the magician is after Mr. Morning at all?"

"I do not."

As the docent said this they heard the faraway tinkle of the office telephone.

The girl started, then said:

"They have been ringing for you, I don't know how long, Mr. Poggioli. The janitor said they were ringing when he swept out."

The docent frowned.

"It's something about that case."

"I imagine Mr. Morning has gone quite mad because you aren't with him."

Poggioli smiled.

"No, he and Tapper have hit on a plan that entirely dispenses with me."

"What are they going to do?" asked Janet.

"You'll see it in the afternoon papers."

Here the janitor entered the laboratory from the office.

"Mr. Poggioli, they've been calling for you about every three minutes since before I came. Shall I muffle the bell or will you answer it, sir?"

A curiosity moved Poggioli to know what Mordag wanted with him now.

"I'll answer it, Henderson," he said, and went out front to the telephone.

When he put the receiver to his ear a man's voice asked in nervous haste:

"Has Professor Poggioli come in yet? Has he a telephone? What's his street address? How can I get into communication—"

"This is Poggioli," interrupted the docent with a discomforting premonition.

"Thank God I've found you, Professor. This is Manderby, city editor of the *Dispatch*. You know more about this case, I believe, than any other man in town. You have *carte blanche* to hire anybody, draw on us for any amount, but run the murderer to the earth."

Poggioli's heart suddenly dropped into his chest.

"You don't mean Mordag has been killed?" he gasped.

"No; it's Tapper!"

"Tapper! What happened to—"

"La Plesse shot him through the window. We knew Tapper was a good friend of yours—the way he protected your name in his stories. You'll go, won't you?"

"Oh, yes; yes, I'll go. Starting right now."

He hung up. On his way out he said to Janet—

"La Plesse killed Tapper last night in Mordag's room."

"Oh, my Lord," ejaculated the girl. "The man who wrote—"

She followed the docent out to the door and watched him signal a taxi to the curb.

POGGIOLI motored to the Vendig, confounded by this swift and certain proof that Herman La Plesse had concealed himself in the hotel with murderous intent. He tried to construe some rationale that would transform a cynical man into a murderer, but failed.

As the psychologist approached the desk at the Vendig, the clerk turned to a tall athletic man standing nearby and said—

"This is Professor Poggioli, Mr. Olsen."

The two men shook hands.

"I'm with the *Dispatch*, in Tapper's place," explained Olsen in lowered tones. "I wanted to meet you in the lobby so I'd know it was you."

The docent nodded and started to the elevator with the new reporter.

The two men got out on the eighteenth floor.

"Have you any theories about this, Professor?" asked Olsen. "I've got to go through the case with you. I'd like to know what we're trying to do?"

"It has been a tentative theory of mine that Mordag was following La Plesse, and not La Plesse Mordag," began the docent.

"What?" ejaculated the reporter, staring at the psychologist.

Poggioli ceased his explanation and concluded with a perfunctory—

"Of course I'll have to discard that idea now."

"I should think so," nodded the reporter, "after what has happened to poor Tapper."

The two men went on to room 1827. Olsen produced a key and let himself and his companion inside.

In an easy chair by the bedside Tapper still sat. He might still have been watching except for his stonelike stillness. Under the covers of the bed, Poggioli saw the outline of a man's form which occasionally shook or jerked.

As the two men entered Olsen said in a lowered tone—

"I have brought Mr. Poggioli, Mr. Morning."

The man in bed put his face out from under the quilts and looked at the reporter. The thin man was ashen.

"W-when are you going to bring the h-helicopter, Mr. Olsen?" he chattered.

"Right away—at once," soothed the big man in the tone one uses to a child.

"You are really going to take me?" queried Mordag suspiciously.

"Of course I am."

The thin man looked at the figure sitting by his bed.

"Oh Lord—to kill him just to frighten me. What a fiend! I wish the airplane would come on."

Poggioli glanced at Olsen interrogatively. The big man shook his head slightly.

"The story is here now," he said, guarding his meaning as if Mordag were a very young child.

The thought came to Poggioli that fear would kill Mordag that night if nothing else did.

"Well," said Olsen in a muted voice, "nothing has been touched. Everything here is exactly like it happened."

The psychologist took in the ensemble —the body, the little hole in the window where the bullet had entered the room, the lesion where it had entered the skull, the place on the other side of the head where it had come out.

"Let's locate the bullet in the wall," suggested the docent, "and get its line of trajectory."

The reporter got his bearings from the window and the body and began searching for the bullet. But the closet stood in its path. The closet door was open and in the confusion of this closet the missile was impossible to locate.

"Get a window cord," directed Poggioli, "and we can approximate its line of flight by the wound and the hole in the window."

Mordag sat up in bed watching them with a colorless face. The two men used chairs, a walking stick, the throwing knife, and so maneuvered the line into position; one end pointing at the wound, the other at the hole in the glass. The line was leveled on a window across the court.

"Describe the location of that room to the desk clerk," suggested Poggioli, "and see if it was occupied last night." Olsen went to the house telephone and began talking. The psychologist turned to the man on the bed.

"Did you hear anything in the night, Mordag, a shot—"

"Mr. Poggioli, please—"

"I'm sorry—Morning— Did you hear a shot last night?"

"No, I went to sleep."

"He would hardly have heard it anyway, coming from a room across the court," interposed Olsen. He began talking to the office again. "A room on this floor on the opposite side of the court. . . . Has two windows in it. . . . What number? Oh, 1875. And you say it was empty last night? . . . Empty but locked. Well, we supposed it was locked; that's running true to form. . . . Yes, if you'll send the key up, we'll cross over."

HE PUT the instrument on its hook. Poggioli was examining the pane of glass itself. The ball had struck from the outside, taking off delicate slivers on the inside. It really had been shot from across the court. He gave up the examination.

"Well, let's go around to 1875 and see what we can find there."

Mordag began getting out of bed hurriedly.

"I'm not going to stay in here by myself. I'll go with you."

The ex-assistant was so shaken that Poggioli begged him to stay where he was, but his fear overcame his weakness.

"No, I can walk; I'm all right." He repeated, "I can walk."

"We're going to hunt for La Plesse," warned the psychologist, hoping to discourage him.

The cadaverous man gave the wannest twist of his skeptical smile.

"I'm not afraid of you finding him."

The two men helped Mordag get on his socks and shoes and tied his tie, then the three walked out of the room and started along the corridor that led around the court.

When the matron at the floor desk caught sight of the thin man, she threw up her hands.

"Poor Mr. Mordag—they've poisoned him at last!"

"No," said the docent, "it's the strain. He's under a terrible strain."

"Poor man," consoled the matron, arising from the desk and following the trio. "Here are the keys. The clerk telephoned me to go with you. Just pick out any room you want and I'll let you in."

"Thanks," said the docent.

"Have you found out anything new—what does Mr. Tapper think about it?"

"Mr. Tapper—" the thin man's mouth made mussitations of Tapper's name when Olsen said—

"Oh, Tapper remains hopeful of getting Mr. Morning out of his trouble; so do I for that matter."

The three men and the woman walked on around the turn in the corridor. As the room numbers neared 1875 Mordag became more and more nervous.

"There's not any use looking in that room," he complained. "You know he won't be there after he killed Mr. Tapper."

"What! What!" cried the floor matron.

Olsen turned sharply.

"Don't pay any attention to him," he advised significantly. "He has murder on the brain."

At this moment a door behind the group opened and a man came out into the corridor and walked past the four in the direction they were going. The searchers lined up along the wall to allow the man to pass. The stranger walked rapidly and was ten or twelve doors ahead when suddenly Mordag caught the psychologist's arm.

"O God!" he gasped, on the verge of collapse. "That's Professor La Plesse!"

A kind of shock traveled through Poggioli. He started forward.

"La Plesse! La Plesse! Stop there!"

The next moment Olsen and the docent began running. The man down the corridor broke into a sudden dash without a glance over his shoulder, and swung suddenly aside into a door. They saw him work a moment at a bolt and vanish suddenly into a room.

Poggioli dashed up to the door with Olsen at his heels. He tried the bolt and found it locked.

"Matron! Matron!" he shouted. "Come on!" He ran back to her and met her down the corridor while she fumbled at her keys.

"What room?" she puffed.

"What room, Olsen?" called the docent.

"The one we were hunting—1875."

The woman selected a key and Poggioli went running back with it.

"He won't be in there," chattered Mordag, stopping two or three doors down the hallway and staring after the men fearfully.

"Why," cried Olsen, "I saw him go in." The reporter twisted at the key in the lock. He looked at Poggioli. "He's holding the knob from the inside."

"What'll we do?"

"I believe I can break in the panel of the door . . ." Olsen looked at the convex hardwood finish of the clothes container.

"You won't find him if you break in," cried Mordag. "I've seen it tried before."

"But I tell you he's holding the door," snapped the newspaper man.

"He does that—holds it up to the very last second, then turns it loose and he's gone."

"Keep up the pressure," cried the psychologist. "As long as he twists against you you know he's there. Matron, go get help!"

THE woman went waddling down the corridor in a great hurry.

At that moment the lock on the door suddenly gave. The bolt snapped back and almost at once Olsen and the docent found themselves inside.

The room was one of those uncompromising cubicles with one door and two windows such as a single room in a large hotel usually is. It was obviously empty.

"Look in the closet," suggested Poggioli, glancing about the blank interior.

Olsen jumped for the knob of the closet and tried to turn it. This also stuck. Then after at least a half minute of straining, it gave way. The door swung open so suddenly that Olsen half fell. Poggioli stepped inside with hand out ready to grapple with anything inside, but beyond the musty warmth of an unaired closet he felt nothing.

The psychologist groped around, found the switch of the closet light, turned it on. The interior was empty except for two or three whisky bottles and an old shirt some guest had discarded.

The two men reentered the room. The window on the court was raised about six inches.

"That's where he went out," cried Olsen, running to it. "He tried to pull it down after him but didn't have time!" The reporter jerked up the sash and thrust his head out. He looked up and down. "He might be one of these human flies—"

"You don't see him?" asked Poggioli, running to the same window and looking out.

"No, but he's had time to climb down three stories and crawl in a window below."

Poggioli was somehow not at all surprised at the magician's escape. He looked up and down in the futile fashion of the reporter. Then he observed that the dust and soot on the window ledge and on the fillet of masonry below it were not marked. He reached down his finger and touched the film. It made a clear cut dot. Poggioli glanced at Olsen. The reporter was not watching and did not get the significance of the untracked dust.

The psychologist leaned out of the window, looking this way and that. Across the court, in one of the opposite windows, he presently picked out the form of Tapper still sitting by the bed. Just then the docent's fingers felt a little roughness on the outer edge of the ledge. He leaned out and looked at it. It was a bullet hole. He reached in his pocket, drew out his penknife. He began digging in the wood. Presently he touched steel and a few minutes later had the missile in his hand. He turned it about, looked at it.

"Olsen," he said slowly, "this is why we couldn't find the bullet in Mordag's closet."

"What do you mean?" asked Olsen, mystified.

"I mean La Plesse was standing in the closet across the court when he fired at Tapper. This is his bullet."

"But look, man," cried the reporter. "La Plesse's bullet entered that window across yonder, you can tell by the fracture of the glass."

"M-m-m, yes; that's true."

They heard a sound at the door and both men whirled.

It was Mordag. He was leaning against the side of the door giving an impression that he had crawled up the corridor to that point.

"You didn't catch him—he wasn't in here?"

"No."

"I—heard what you said. If—if he had already got into my room, why did he kill Mr. Tapper?"

"He advanced that idea merely on the strength of one bullet," explained Olsen comfortingly. "He found a bullet here in the window ledge; it may have been shot across the court a long time ago."

"And if he fired a bullet in my room, why didn't it wake me?" complained Mordag.

"Well, you might have been hypnotized," said the psychologist.

"Hypnotized?" cried Olsen.

"Hypnotized—" wavered Mordag.

"Yes, damn it, hypnotized," ejaculated the psychologist in an annoyed tone. "Merely because hypnosis is somewhat unusual, you want to rule it out of the evidence. He has hypnotized you, hasn't he, Mordag?"

"That was a long time ago, sir."

"Really," said Olsen, "this is getting too melodramatic even for the *Dispatch*."

There was nothing more to be found on that side, and the three men walked back to Mordag's room. Poggioli went at once to the window with a hole in it. The bullet seemed to have entered from the outside. He lifted the sash and looked at the outside of the pane. Then he saw the putty had been pried out of the mullions and the pane taken out and reversed. This reversed the apparent course of the bullet.

HE THEN examined the body of Tapper in the chair by the bed. A stain on the carpet which must have trickled down one of the chair legs fitted to a leg with no stain on it. The stained leg was at the opposite corner of the chair. He showed these things to Olsen.

"You see, the window pane and the chair have been reversed."

The reporter stood nodding slowly to these findings.

"That's one of the cleverest tricks I ever heard of."

"It seems to be a crime of some complication," admitted the docent. "For example, why should a man who can disappear so easily take all these pains to shift the direction of his bullet?"

"I don't think he disappeared so easily," said Olsen. "Climbing up or down a skyscraper isn't easy."

"He didn't climb a skyscraper."

"Why didn't he?"

"Because there were no marks on the dust on the ledge."

The reporter went blank.

"You—you don't suppose the fellow had some sort of pocket parachute so he could jump out?"

"No, I think you can rule that out."

"Then he escaped somehow inside the closet—it was really he holding that door?" inquired Olsen incredulously.

"Apparently — and, also, apparently that is how he entered this apartment last night and shot Tapper; through the closet. If he had ever come out of the closet, you know, Tapper, sitting there watching, would have moved."

Olsen pondered—

"Then I see just one thing left for us to do, Mr. Poggioli."

"What's that?"

"See if he comes out of this closet tonight."

"You mean, watch as Tapper did?"

"With greater precautions, of course. We understand it's dangerous now. We'll be on our guard."

At this point he was interrupted by a sudden knocking at the door. It startled all three of the men. The next moment the bolt clicked and the door swung open. Three policemen, the coroner, the hotel clerk, the floor matron, and behind them a rabble blocked off the room. One policeman kept the crowd out of the doorway.

"The paper is out," said Olsen in an aside to the docent. "We kept this quiet until the 1:15 edition."

Sure enough, from the court, they could hear a newsboy shrilling:

"Mysterious murder of reporter! Newspaper sleuth shot by Professor Herman La Plesse from empty room across court! All about the new murder in the Gaylord Morning mystery!"

## V

THE LATE evening editions of all the Columbus papers carried a revised version of the Tapper murder mystery. The origin of the bullet was located not across the court of the Vendig,

but in Gaylord Morning's own clothes closet. The coroner's verdict was that Tapper met death at the hands of an unknown person.

Newsboys were crying these new facts up and down the streets. Their calls echoed now plainly, now faintly, in the tall, chimney-like court of the hotel.

A drizzling rain set past the windows of Mordag's apartment, a gray descending veil with its suggestion of some melancholy eternity.

Three men sat in the apartment, watching the man in bed. Each was buried in his own thoughts concerning the sinister surroundings. The sick man was asleep.

"What I don't see," said Olsen at last, "is how Mr. Morning gets to sleep—expecting a terrible visitation the moment he drops off—yet he always does and seems to rest profoundly."

"Rests?" questioned the third man sitting by the bed—he was a physician

"Sleep is supposed to rest one," said Olsen.

"Look at him now; does he look like a man who has been getting rest?"

Both Olsen and Poggioli glanced at the emaciated figure on the bed. The man had grown more drawn even within the forty-eight hours Poggioli had known him.

"Is there really nothing physically the matter with him, Doctor?" inquired Olsen incredulously.

"Complete exhaustion, that's all. No organic weakness; heart, lungs, nerves normal within the physical limitation of his exhausted condition."

"So all that troubles him is shock and fear?"

"That's enough," said the physician dryly. "It has killed thousands of men and will kill thousands more. It would not surprise me greatly if he doesn't get through the night."

"Would the fact that he thinks he is going to die tonight have a bad influence?" asked Olsen.

"Why certainly."

"Even when he is sound asleep, as he is now?"

"I would hazard that his fear would operate more devastatingly, more uncontrolled asleep than awake." The physician stared out into the darkening drizzle. "It has sometimes occurred to me that what you might call reality is not the houses and air and men and women which surround us. They are more in the nature of walls cutting off reality, making us, for the moment, oblivious to reality."

"Then what is reality?" queried the reporter.

"It is our unconditioned selves, our subconscious. When we sleep we are lost in reality; possibly, when we die."

Olsen shook his big shoulders.

"I think I'll stick around with the unreal boys and girls as long as I can." He paused a moment and then added gloomily, "If he dies of simple fright after all this melodramatic prologue, that will be one hell of an anticlimax from a journalistic point of view."

The physician arose and smiled.

"There's a lot of journalistic waste goes on in the world . . . Well, I don't believe there is anything further that I can do here, and I certainly don't care to sit here all night considering the surroundings. You gentlemen mean to?"

"That is our intention," said Poggioli.

"You have a better courage than I have. I certainly hope nothing untoward happens tonight."

"Thanks, Doctor."

The medical man bowed slightly and let himself out the door.

Olsen looked after him in the gloom.

"Untoward—he hopes nothing untoward happens tonight. I like that untoward; it certainly is a hell of a decent wish he made us."

"Scholastic," said Poggioli.

The docent arose briskly.

"Well, let's make ready to receive our guest in event he does come, and try to see that nothing untoward does happen here tonight."

"What are you going to do?"

"First, I'd like to find out exactly what is in this room."

"What's the idea?"

"You may remember that was Mor-

dag's own knife that fell off the transom. It had been given to him by La Plesse."

"That's true."

"Well, doesn't it seem odd that a man who came into an apartment intending foul play should depend upon his enemy to furnish him a knife?"

"He visits the apartment every night; he knew about the knife."

"But he writes his notes on strips of Mordag's newspapers. Apparently if Mordag would just hide his things he would have this fellow checkmated."

Olsen nodded in the gloom and made a note in his book.

"I wonder if he has used anything else?"

"That's why I want to search the apartment—to find out."

THE TWO men set to work, paying no attention to the figure on the bed. There was no use in asking the thin man's permission. When Mordag had discovered no flying machine was to be provided him he had collapsed.

In the room was a box with a green cover. The docent searched Mordag's pockets, found his keys and opened the box. It contained a number of bizarre red and black suits which the thin man evidently had worn during his employment as the magician's *famulus*. A lower tray contained a *pot-pourri* of used magical equipment. Probably La Plesse gave his discarded equipment to his assistant.

In one compartment were bottles of chemicals, and among these was a vial of prussic acid.

The docent picked it up.

"This would have disposed of the cat without a quiver," he said.

Olsen looked at the tiny bottle in surprise.

"You don't really suppose La Plesse comes here empty handed?" he asked.

"He had a pistol last night," said the docent.

"Well, there's nothing more in this box. Let's see if we can find it somewhere else."

The room obviously contained nothing else, so they went into the closet. Here was a wardrobe trunk. The docent swung it apart and began going through the drawers. Pretty soon he paused with a whistle.

"All right, here it is."

"The gun—the automatic?"

"Yes, a .38; that's the caliber."

The reporter shook his head.

"That's ridiculous. You know a criminal wouldn't enter a room hoping to find a pistol to commit a murder with!"

"La Plesse didn't come into this apartment last night to commit a murder," argued the docent. "He came to terrorize Mordag. When he saw Tapper in here he resorted to violence."

"But how did he get this pistol if it was locked up?"

"Mordag says bolts and locks are not in his way. He probably got the automatic out of this trunk as easily as picking it up off a table."

"This may not be the gun after all," said Olsen. "There must be thousands of .38 automatics."

"No, it may not be." The docent drew out his handkerchief, made a twist and thrust it into the muzzle. The cloth came out clean. He said, "Smokeless powder leaves almost no fouling at all."

"You mean it may have been fired."

"It's clean, but I'm not sure."

"We could fire it, get its bullet and compare its rifle lines with the one you found."

"That would be microscopic work for a technical man," said Poggioli. "We couldn't get a report for another forty-eight hours."

"And this performance concludes tonight," said the reporter.

"Yes, and tonight I'm going to hold this particular automatic in my hand. If La Plesse shoots me he will have to bring something with him for once."

"I imagine," said Olsen slowly, "that he will bring it." After their search the two men fell silent. As night deepened in the windows on the court, the watchers could hardly distinguish each other.

At last Poggioli said—

"What had we better do about lights?"

"My idea is to stay as much in the dark as we can. Tapper had a bright light."

"There are two spots I want brightly lighted," said the docent in an undertone.

"Where's that?" inquired Olsen. "The closet and the door?"

"The closet's one," assented the docent softly, "but I don't believe he comes in the door—the matron never has seen him enter."

"How does he get in then?"

"Haven't the faintest idea."

"Well, we'll light up the closet."

The dark bulk of Olsen moved silently across the gloom and a moment later the closet was full of light. The reporter repassed against it in silhouette.

The light in the closet gave the creepy impression that it was about to be used and that it was really the entrance to the room.

"Look here," whispered Olsen. "He got out of the window on the other side. Better put our second light there."

"He got out of the closet on the other side," stated the psychologist. "You felt him twisting the bolt against you, didn't you?"

"Ye-es— Then he isn't human," ejaculated the reporter.

"Now you've seen dozens of illusionists do cabinet tricks on the very same principle," whispered the docent satirically, "but when you see a single instance off the stage, you say it isn't human."

"They were trick cabinets," said the reporter in an injured tone.

"You assumed they were trick cabinets."

"Why, they have to be."

"Did you ever hear of the fourth dimension?"

The reporter remained silent a moment.

"I hope you are not going to bring that in."

"Why not? We have every mathematical proof that it exists. It is mathematically no more difficult to step inside of a completely enclosed cube than it is to step inside a completely enclosed square drawn on the floor."

"Oh, my God!" whispered the reporter.

"That is if a man has the intelligence to do it, and, possibly, some practise."

The reporter gave a grunt of stifled mirth.

"Must be hell—getting the practise."

AT THAT moment a faint noise in the closet snapped off the low conversation. The psychologist arose noiselessly with that tightening of his muscles that precedes violent action. He moved around the closet door to see inside. The faint noise continued. Presently Poggioli stood looking steadfastly at something.

"What is it?" whispered Olsen at last.

"A mouse."

After another wait, the reporter whispered a trifle nervously—

"Well—what of it?"

"Why if a man should step through the wall it would be no more terrifying to the mouse than if he stepped through the door. What it feels isn't in our realm of consciousness at all."

"Of course not," agreed Olsen in a nervous tone. "I wish you wouldn't—" He broke off and finally added, "Expecting to be killed by a superman is bad enough. I don't want to sit here and wonder what a mouse would think about it."

"Excuse me, when I'm excited and nervous I—I think of things."

Both men broke off in a silence tense with listening and watching.

"I wish I knew the sort of tricks La Plesse could do," whispered Olsen. "I never realized before what a touchy job it would be trying to catch a—"

"By the way!" rapped out Poggioli in an undertone, "that second light—I want it over Mordag's bed."

"Mr. Morning's bed!"

"Yes, the person who visits this apartment has really never harmed Mordag in any way."

"No, that's true," agreed the reporter.

"Whoever it is comes in here writes notes, leaves poison, shoots poor Tapper; but the man he ostensibly wants to murder has slept through it all—slept."

"Hypnotized as you suggested," said Olsen.

"I don't know about that. At any rate

he has never received a scratch or a blow."

"What do you make of it?"

"At present I don't make anything of it. But that is my reason for wanting Mordag's bed in full light—his reading lamp will do."

The psychologist moved across to the bed to turn on the light when the faint noise stirred in the closet again. It caused both men to start, when at the next moment a blurred tapping began at the window.

Poggioli instinctively got the automatic out of his pocket.

"That's the buzzer of our private line," explained Olsen sharply. He strode across to it in the shadows.

"Hello . . . hello . . . hello . . ." he began saying in a barely audible voice. "This is Olsen, Mr. Morning's apartment. . . . What? . . . You don't mean—"

He broke off; Poggioli could see his bulk standing motionless with the receiver to his ear. Finally he turned to the docent and said in a bleak voice:

"Manderby, the city editor says—" he began speaking in the receiver again—"you say you have received a facsimile of the burial certificate by telegraph?"

"What is it? Who's buried?" cried Poggioli, staring at the shape of the reporter.

"Manderby's been tracing down La Plesse," whispered Olsen in a shocked voice. "The fellow died three years ago. He's buried in the cemetery at Olagoula, Louisiana."

The psychologist made a single step across and switched on the reading lamp at the head of Mordag's bed. The bed was empty.

What happened next Poggioli never clearly knew. Olsen shouted:

"He's in the closet! Got a gun! Dodge!"

The docent made a headlong leap to get out of range of the door. He heard two deafening reports. He saw Mordag firing the pistol from the brightly lighted small room. Olsen lunged at him from the shadows. His powerful form went straight into the thin man. The two crashed back into the closet out of sight.

Poggioli suddenly became aware that the pistol he had had in his hand was gone. He lunged into the closet where the two men were struggling. He saw Olsen trying to twist the automatic from Mordag, who was trying to fire it. Poggioli rushed in as the reporter wheezed out—

"For God's sake get that gun!"

The psychologist bent aside from the muzzle of the automatic, caught the body of the weapon and began trying to break it loose from the thin man's fingers.

Olsen suddenly loosed the gun hand and struck at the fellow's jaw, evidently hoping to knock him out. The next moment all three men were down on the closet floor with Poggioli being swung back and forth by the terrific arm that held the automatic. It might have been a beam of some machinery. The thin man was prodigious. Poggioli curled up and got the wrist in the crotch of his legs and began twisting the gun in the man's steely fingers. Olsen was under Poggioli trying to get a strangle hold on this devil of a man. The two had him at full length with his head out the closet door.

"Get a rope! Get a strip of sheet! Get something!" panted the reporter.

"Got to get this gun!"

"Hell, haven't you got that gun yet!"

"Not yet."

Olsen detached a hand from the business of choking the thin man and reached up to help.

The next moment Mordag began a swift crawling out of the closet and across the room by some inhuman movement of the muscles of his back. He went toward the bed. He dragged his captors sprawling after him with the resistlessness of a caterpillar.

"For Pete's sake!" yelled Olsen. "Let's hold him!"

At that instant the rail of the bed struck Poggioli's skull. His hold on Mordag broke. Half stunned, he tried to grab his legs but they whipped under the bed and out of sight.

The docent jumped to his feet. He grabbed Olsen, who he thought was hurt,

"Get up quick; he'll shoot from under the bed."

"No he won't," puffed the reporter. I've got his gun. I'm trying to see him."

"Why, he's right under the bed!" cried Poggioli, bending down.

"No, he isn't under here!"

"He's in the shadow."

"No, I see the light on the other side!"

Poggioli was now staring under the bed himself. He did see the light on the other side.

"Well, where in the devil—"

"His hand didn't wrench loose from mine," panted Olsen. "It sort of melted out—it left the gun in my fingers."

"Thank God you got that."

A rustle from the closet behind them caused Poggioli to knock his head on the rail and he jumped up and whirled. Then he stood on his feet, holding his bruised scalp and staring into the closet. Olsen was beside him with the automatic ready.

"It—it's that damned mouse again." The reporter shivered.

The big man turned back to the riddle of the bed and gave a gasp. Poggioli wheeled quickly.

Under the bedclothes, motionless, with his eyes fixed, lay Mordag. Olsen advanced with automatic ready, but as he leaned over the bed and touched the man's face with the back of his fingers he lowered his weapon.

In the closet the mouse pursued its tiny irrational gnawing at the foot of the clothes rack. And queerly enough while Poggioli looked at the dead man he thought of the mouse.

In reality the little rodent eluded him as completely as did his uncanny adversary on the bed. Their whole human tragedy was removed so utterly from the realm of the mouse. The struggle of the men with Mordag; the melting of Mordag's hand in Olsen's grip; his vanishing from beneath the bed; his reappearance under the cover smoothed out in the cold formality of death; all this had swirled about the tiny animal unknown, undreamed of while it pursued its meaningless nibbling on a piece of varnished wood. The universe of the mouse, whatever it was, stunned Poggioli with its unthinkable simplicity.

Olsen turned to the docent and began in a bewildered voice—

"What I don't understand—"

Then he hushed.

AFTERWORD

THE ACTUAL report which Mr. Henry Poggioli madeof this material in the *American Journal of Psychology* and which led to his requested resignation from the Ohio State University, need not be copied here. The article he wrote was as tedious as his adventure itself had been strange and diverting.

However it did embody an attempted explanation of the foregoing episode. And also it shows Poggioli's absurd blunder in university politics in setting down on paper what he really thought about the incident.

Afterward, at the trial in Dayton, Ohio, one of the greatest criminal lawyers in America tried to prove that Mr. Poggioli's written words did not mean what they appeared to mean; but he was not altogether successful in his attempts.

It is needless to state here that a docent in an American university could not afford to employ the best legal talent in America. And as a matter of fact that eminent counselor was furnished *gratis* by the American Society for the Advancement of Free Speech in America. For while not a single member of this society believed in the antiquated tenet Mr. Poggioli put forth, still, as the attorney so forcefully phrased it—

"The Society would spend its last dime in defending Mr. Poggioli's inalienable American right to express an egregiously incorrect opinion."

Still it was the advocate's equivocal tactics to soften Mr. Poggioli's expressions where he could. One sentence which the attorney found impossible to reduce to doubtful English was the following:

"The theory of dual personality will never completely cover this case, even if one gives to that theory the usual *miracu-*

*lous scientific stretch* which modern psychology is forced to give to all such cases in order to avoid a presumption, if not indeed a positive proof of the *survival of human personality after death.* (Italics, the transcriber's.)

"Take the classical psychological theory of split personality. According to that theory, the murderous half of Mordag's mind was aware of the normal half and was continually plotting to murder it. But the normal half was entirely unaware of this abnormal murderous half.

"Why should not have such intercerebral knowledge have been mutual? Materialistic psychology has no reply to make save that this does not fit the theory of materialism.

"How did the abnormal half of Mordag's split personality know the engine number of the train that bore him to Columbus, the name of every street which he passed in a closed taxicab after midnight? Conventional psychology answers: He noted these data subconsciously. That to the writer's mind is too flagrant an appeal to the miraculous to be admitted. He feels it is better to allow our modern materialism to fall flat than to have it propped up by such dubious miracles as that.

"Take the reappearance of Professor La Plesse in the blue automobile. That was probably an hallucination superinduced by Mordag's nervous apprehensions. But La Plesse's bodily reappearance in the corridor of the Vendig Hotel, his grip on the keybolt when Olsen attempted to turn it, proves that here La Plesse was a concrete physical fact. What sort of fact was he? A mediumistic exteriorization produced by Mordag to his own undoing without any relation to the surviving personality of the deceased La Plesse? Or was it, what would be far more rational and less supernatural, *the soul of La Plesse reassuming human form* to revenge itself upon Mordag?"

NOTE: In a conversation with the transcriber the eminent attorney for the defense said, "I knew my case was lost when I read that damning sentence."

"The final and completely insoluble riddle when viewed from the conventional angle is Mordag's assumption of magical technique in his death struggle. First, how did Mordag, if he were not a trained prestidigitator, take from the hand of the writer the automatic pistol? This was done at a distance and without the writer's being aware of its removal. It was a magician's trick, but Mordag was no magician. How did he drag two heavy men across the floor by the muscles of his back? How did his hand melt from Olsen's grip? How did his whole body melt into nothing under the bed and reappear a moment later, stretched out in death in the bed? All these are simple enough illusions for a practised thaumaturgist. But the writer repeats, Mordag was no practised thaumaturge!

"So here is the lion in the path of conventional psychology.

"Mordag's untrained brain, muscles, nervous system, must suddenly have assumed the technique of a trained adept in legerdemain. He had no practise, no instruction, no talent, and no reason for doing such a marvel.

"The conventional reply to this cercertainly will be, that in his work as a magician's *famulus*, his nerves, brain and muscle acquired all this training subconsciously by merely *watching* La Plesse.

"This explanation places such a vast burden on the reader's *faith* that the whole structure must fall.

"Faith certainly has its uses, but the writer does not feel that faith should be the sole touchstone of the materialistic theory. Reason should have its day in court, even if it should destroy some of the pious miracles, not to call them the pious frauds of science. Science can be only all the better for allowing reason to check up on the operation of beautiful scientific faith."

NOTE: This paragraph the counsel for the university alleged to be ironical and full of disrespect for science, which indeed was the gravamen of the action against Poggioli. But the counsel for the defense was able to prove to the court that all scientific advancement has been a product of pure faith acting under inspiration.

and the above was simply Mr. Poggioli's way of stating that well known fact.

Mr. Poggioli's article then went on to show how simply all these enigmas and riddles could be solved by accepting the hypothesis that Professor La Plesse's soul did survive his death. He further wrote:

"Not only can we explain how it was done, but why it was done. The facts cease to be an amorphous and incomprehensible riddle, but became a logical, straightforward course of action.

"La Plesse was a cynic, a passive wielder of sarcasm. He inhibited his grievance against Mordag with the sardonic gift of a knife.

"But at his death this repressed hatred broke all bonds and drove him to consummate his vengeance by taking demoniac possession of his ex-assistant's body. La Plesse's paradoxical situation of trying to slay the body of Mordag after he himself had relinquished it must have formed a horrible tantalization for his unquiet soul. To have committed suicide while he himself was in possession of Mordag's body was no revenge. That is why he pursued him with knives and poisons and what not, and finally frightened him to death with notes.

"This tragedy not only justifies the religious command to forgive your enemy quickly, but it strongly suggests the existence of an actual spiritual hell after death, for those who die unforgiving and unforgiven."

This ends the docent's fantastic paper.

THE EMINENT counsel for the defense used the following strange words in his peroration before the court:

"And may it please your Honor, last, but not least, this action is a true bill against our whole world of Western science.

"The aim of Occidental science, your Honor, has always been the mastery and subjugation of nature. Its aim is to make man supreme. It has sought to subdue every natural power to his dominion; the lightning that emblazons the tempest; the waterfall hurling seas over rainbowed heights must bend and toil for man.

"Now I submit to the discretion of the court does not such an attitude beget in the subconscious mind of man the impulse to subjugate, subdue or to deny every power that thwarts, estops or overshadows it?

"Scientists may not be aware of this profound anti-deistic tendency in their own psychology. But it is impossible for it not to exist.

"The persecution of this ignorant, ill-advised and perhaps insane young man, must show these scientists the enormous lengths to which the subconscious intolerance goes.

"I appear before you, your Honor, not representing this young man primarily, but as an advocate of free speech. My society clings to the ancient American belief that the expression of thought, even in a university, should be encouraged and not forbidden.

"Because who really knows where the truth lies hidden? Take the quaint old theology which this young man has so anachronistically resurrected—suppose it were true? Suppose by way of a momentary hypothesis, that every man and woman in this court room today possessed a soul (laughter). Then it would not be inapplicable for the regents and faculty of Ohio's great temple of learning to remember that once there was an angel named Lucifer, who vaulted in the face of Almighty God to his own eternal destruction; Lucifer, too, was a Bearer of Light."

ADDENDA: All evidence as to the facts of the case was ruled by the court as incompetent, as it did not bear on the point whether or not Henry Poggioli had committed scientific heresy. The decision of the lower court was affirmed. Mr. Poggioli lost his position in the Ohio State University and is now teaching in Tennessee.

# The CAMP-FIRE

*A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers*

IN HIS correspondence with me, Emmet Dalton stressed the fact that his purpose in writing his memoirs was, more than anything else, "to debunk the Old West." And thoroughly as he succeeds in doing this, the fact remains that his true story is quite as exciting as fiction. But to let Mr. Dalton speak for himself—

Hollywood, Cal.

It is usually boresome to hear one praise his own child but to the thousands of readers who appreciate truth and action in their reading, "West of 96" should please regardless of paternal acts. Aside from its historical value, it will have been the first authentic document ever transcribed from the lives of men and women who had an active part in many of the old West's most noted occurrences.

Not only have I gone into the origin, acts and destiny of the Dalton Boys and many old-time Western outlaws and officers, giving fact for fiction, but I have minutely described how many of the myths and fables of the old romantic West were brought into existence.

A FEW words then, may not be amiss as to my motive in setting down the accurate account of the lives and exploits of the Dalton Boys who, in their day, were among the most noted officers and outlaws along the last frontier.

It requires a peculiar type of courage to expose frankly and truthfully so much of the darker side of a man's life as I have finally brought myself to reveal about myself and those comrades whom I rode with. But I believe the adventures of the Dalton Boys of sufficient importance in preserving certain phases of the Older West to chronicle them accurately. Few, if any, of the old timers who rode roughshod are left to tell their personal tales, and even those who escaped violent deaths seem to have elected to keep

their lips sealed. First hand account of Western outlawry, by any one who had an active part in it, is therefore exceedingly rare. Instead there is a mass of distorting preposterous legends about it which I wish to correct.

All of the outlaw Dalton Boys are now dead excepting myself, and it was only by a miracle of fate that I survived the day of reckoning at Coffeyville, Kansas, October 5th, 1892. From that day through the grace of several splendid humanitarians and the steadfast devotion of the woman who is now my wife I have tried to live the average useful life. I approached the task of writing "West of 96" not boastfully but in a dispassionate, reflective mood, and I hope the story will be read with the same attitude.

I am delighted that a publication of *Adventure's* standing and wide appeal is to be the vehicle for my chronicle. I salute you, Camp-Fire readers and welcome friendly candid criticism.

—EMMET DALTON

QUOTING from a note by General de Nogales, who wrote "Running the Gantlet on the Sinai Front", in this issue:

New York City

Time and again I have been asked to write my opinion of the political and military value of Mr. Lawrence's book, "Revolt in the Desert". I have always abstained from doing so because, though I admire Mr. Lawrence as an Orientalist and a scholar and consider "Revolt In The Desert" one of the most picturesque books I have ever read about the War in the Near Orient, and more especially in Arabia and Palestine, I disagree with Mr. Lawrence on what he has got to say about the British superior officers—against whom I had the honor of fighting in the Near East during the World War.

I fought against Generals Aylmer and Townsend in Mesopotamia, and against Generals Murray, Dobel and Lord Allenby in the Sinai, and I must confess that those five British generals and their subordinate officers not only won our highest respect but also our greatest admiration, owing to their valor, their thorough sportsmanship and their great knowledge of military tactics.

MR. LAWRENCE essays to put in doubt the traditional valor of the Turkish soldier, who, according to all the British regular army officers I ever met, was a clean fighter and a gallant foe all the way through the war. And Mr. Lawrence rather undiplomatically remarks that he "had been siding (?) with the Arabs for two years in order to make his country win", a statement which has made him very unpopular with the Arabs, because it opened their eyes to the real reason why he had been distributing British gold so lavishly among them.

NINE hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand Turkish soldiers, even on the Palestine front never even suspected the existence of Mr. Lawrence. The only time that I ever heard Mr. Lawrence mentioned during the War was in an unimportant report by our intelligence department, stating that east of Akabah an English *comitadchi* by the name of Orens was accompanying some Arab marauders who were molesting our Hedjas Railroad around Amaan and Maan; whereas we were always well posted about the British and Arab regulars, the Gurkhas and the French artillerists who were in regular military style, advancing and attacking our garrisons and advanced positions along that railroad and the East Jordanland.

Mr. Lawrence's mission, according to the contents of his book, were limited almost exclusively to the job of paymaster, or distributing agent, of the money with which the British High Command tried to keep the Bedouins from rejoining the Turks.

—RAFAEL DE NOGALES

WITH his story, "Storm," appearing in this issue, Robert Carse enclosed the appended clipping from The New York *Times*. It drops a hint as to what started him off on this highly dramatic tale.

Lisbon, Portugal

The Colonial Office reported today that a serious mutiny among convicts on a Portuguese prison ship bound for the African penitentiary at Loanda, Angola, had been quelled only after desperate hand to hand fighting.

The reports said that the convict ship *Guinea* was conveying 126 long-term prisoners when the outbreak came. The ship was within five miles of the coast when the convicts made a wild dash for freedom, savagely attacking the guards and crew.

It was only after a desperate fight that the guards, who were armed with rifles and bludgeons, succeeded in overpowering the men and locking them up in the hold.

A second attempt at a breakaway was made as the *Guinea* was going into port, the convicts smashing their shackles and running on deck. They were again overpowered, this time by troops summoned aboard the ship by radio.

All the prisoners were finally transferred to shore under a strong escort.

TARANTULAS as big as a pie plate, but not very aggressive, according to this comrade.

Simmons, Ariz.

In regard to tarantulas:

Out here there are lots and lots of them. Any number can be found which will cover a pie plate

(slightly smaller than a dinner plate) when spread out. I have repeatedly poked them with a stick and have used every way and means possible to cause one to *jump* at me, but so far *none* has even made a move that looked as if the thing thought about jumping. They can move fairly fast on the ground however.

Also, I fail to find what looks like a regular mouth such as other insects have, unless it is well hidden. I did discover this: The tarantula has two downward curved reddish brown fangs, if they can be so called. They are very hard and I can readily believe that if the opportunity presented itself, the tarantula could sink those two "fangs" into an enemy just as a snake would do. Of course these two curved fangs are outside, and it may be that the mouth is deep in between them, as they must have some kind of a mouth. This member of the *arachnida* family is a very hideous and forbidding one regardless of how poisonous his "bite" may be.

Incidentally, we have a few of those nice long hardshelled centipedes, usually six to nine inches long. They mostly prefer an old stump for a home.

—JIM CALDWELL

GEORGES SURDEZ gives us an intimate glimpse of the Legionnaire who is the original of the character, *Durand*, in his story in this issue.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

Characters such as *Durand*, who figures in my yarn "Taboo", are part of Legion traditions. It was my good fortune to meet one or two in the flesh. Not the easiest of men to approach, as anything not altogether Legion fails to interest them. One of them became my friend, for no better reason than that I knew of his first lieutenant. As proof that I did not exaggerate in my sketch, a couple of anecdotes:

My friend—I might as well call him *Durand* here—had left the Legion early in 1922, to try civilian life. He reappeared at headquarters in a civilian suit, showing definite evidence of having drunk too deeply and slept in ditches. Three months' trial had been enough to sicken him of any life save that in the Foreign Regiments. He entered the colonel's office with a group of recruits, men in dilapidated uniforms, Russians from Wrangel's Army, then breaking up at Bone, Algeria. The colonel, who had been in turn *Durand's* lieutenant, captain and major, recognized him at once, but pretended to ignore him.

"Name, nationality, past occupation?" the colonel asked the first recruit.

"So and so, Russian, formerly major in the Hussars!"

"And you?"

"So and so, Russian, former colonel of Siberian Rifles!"

"And you?"

"So and so, Russian, ex-captain of Don Cossacks."

ACCORDING to their tales, these men were all officers. They ranged from captain to a general commanding a division, listed titles they were born to and honors they had acquired. *Durand* listened, with a faint smile of unbelief twisting the corner of his mouth. Finally, the colonel addressed *Durand*, roughly—

"And who are *you*?"

*Durand* stepped forward as the others had done, imitated the courtly salute to perfection.

"Ivan Duranoff, Colonel. I was generalissimo, commanding in chief all Russian Armies in the Field—"and as the colonel strove for speech, he struck an attitude, indicated the newcomers with a lordly gesture of one grimy hand, and introduced—"My staff!"

LESS than a year ago, *Durand* was convalescing in Oran after some pretended ailment. He found himself on the Place du Maréchal Foch, somewhat tipsy, and the thought of the long walk back to the villa for convalescents, where he was quartered, annoyed him. Therefore, he entered a taxi, gave the address. The chauffeur refused to move, *Durand* insisted, a policeman arrived.

"It's one in the morning," the chauffeur explained, "the villa is a long way off; there'll be sixteen francs on the meter and I don't think he has that much."

"He's calling me a beggar," *Durand* shouted, "I'll report you to the mayor. You insult a veteran soldier, who's given his best years to France, all campaigns, five wounds, citations, military medal! What's the use of bleeding for France when a dirty Algerian is allowed to insult you for your pains? Policeman, isn't it his job to drive people where they tell him?"

"The Legionnaire is right," the policeman stated gravely. "You are instructed by law to take any fare within city limits."

"Suppose he can't pay me," the chauffeur protested.

"Think I'm a deadbeat? Say, officer—what's he trying to do, argue with you?"

"What happens later is not my business," the policeman told the chauffeur. "I order you to take this Legionnaire to his destination, as the law instructs me to do."

THE chauffeur started off, whirled *Durand* to his destination. The old Legionnaire alighted and walked away.

"Eh, where's my money?" the chauffeur asked.

"Money?" *Durand* lifted his brows. "I owe you nothing. You refused to accept me as a passenger. Then you were requisitioned for military transport by the local police authorities, weren't you? That's foreseen in regulations, my friend. File a slip for payment with the mayor's office."

According to the letter of the law, *Durand* was quite correct. Probably, the chauffeur is still awaiting payment from official funds.

A NEW problem then confronted *Durand*. He had obtained leave for ten o'clock, what is termed "cinema leave," and was more than three

hours late. That made it unwise for him to report at the front gate. Yet the wall was high, and he needed help. He sought me out, and I consented to serve him as a stepladder. Unfortunately, the native night watchman appeared at this time, and it took a few francs to assure him we were not burglars. Naturally, it was not within *Durand's* principles to pay money to a native, and a former infantryman at that.

Next thing I heard was that *Durand*, whose absence had been signaled by the sergeant on duty, had cleared himself of possible blame by spinning a long story. He said that he had found me not quite myself, had been unwilling to leave me unprotected, at the mercy of a casual Arab prowler. The best proof he offered was that I had given considerable money away to a native who was threatening me. After seeing me safely home, he had climbed over the wall rather than answer indiscreet questions from a non-commissioned man.

"See," he explained when I reproached him with his ingratitude, "you're only a civilian and you can get as drunk as you like. As for me, they'd have cut my convalescence short, sent me back to Bel-Abbes with eight days tied on my rump. The captain's a friend of yours, and he'd want to shut my mouth about the whole thing, because you're married."

"He didn't believe you—"

"Sure, he didn't. But he couldn't make a fuss, because after all he knew you were mixed up some way." He hesitated, his conscience troubling him perhaps, then added, "I'll make it up to you. Want to know the inside story of the Graouz affair, in '18? Well, there was the Kaid's daughter—"

For *Durand* always paid his debts.

—GEORGES SURDEZ

APROPOS of the miracle man we heard about recently—that logging camp fellow who could create marvels out of bits of paper, cure the sick, and concoct an ambrosia known only to the Aztecs.

Macmera, B. C., Canada

Some years ago I had a kind of an odd lot store near a mining and logging camp; I had a lot of axes left over by farmer owners who had evidently bought them cheaply, as they were culls; not that the ax heads were no good, but the handles were very crooked. I sold a few only for the heads and charged 50 cents less than we could buy the ax elsewhere, to pay for the trouble of taking handles out.

There came into my place once a man, his name I have forgotten, but he was famous all over as a paper folder; could fold out of any scrap of paper all kinds of pretty seemingly impossible things. He also seemed to be able to do anything else, and to be a well of information on everything.

I said, only half in earnest to him, "I'll give you 75 cents for every ax handle you can straighten without splitting the ax or handle." I thought it was impossible to straighten a handle; with steam it needs to be taken off of the blade, and to do so you split the handle.

He took me up. And as there were fifty-seven axes, with handles like the letter C and S, also K almost, I never took him seriously, and am sorry to say I joked him a little too much about it. Anyway he took the axes away into the woods, in a borrowed wagon, and inside of a day, he returned with the whole 57 axes, all with handles straight. Some were a little scorched, so it looked like he had used fire. I paid him $42.75 because of joking on my part. He said that it was not steam; as he said steam straightened ax handles don't stay straight when in use; and he claimed the handles he had straightened would stay straight.

Also as he said he never took the handles out of blocks, the question is how did he do it? He said it was easy to do and nothing to it.

Can any of the *Adventure* readers give the solution? For it certainly is a useful thing to know and the handles did stay straight, at least those I was able to keep track of.

While around he made out of fish bones some really beautiful imitation butterflies. To come back to the folding of papers, he made all kinds of children's toys out of only folded paper, perfect sets of toy furniture, which sent the children wild.

—JERALD HACOMER

WHEN Raymond S. Spears wrote in recently, telling me he'd been chosen by the American Trappers Association as director of their new conservation project, I invited him to tell the members of Camp-Fire a little about what it hopes to accomplish. The subject of conservation is of course not limited in interest to the professional fur trapper. It concerns as well the sportsman, the tourist—every citizen, in fact, who has any real appreciation of nature. Most of us will find it hard to condone such arbitrary destruction of the wild creatures as Mr. Spears refers to in his letter appended:

Inglewood, Cal.

Regarding the conservation project of American Trappers Association: The thing I am watching with greatest interest is the definite turn in the tide, here in the United States, from trying to conquer and civilize the wilderness areas, into trying to use them as they are. My chief argument is that mountains, deserts, timber areas, those in which the varied geological, forest and other conditions prevent utilization for agriculture, grazing or other service, should and could be kept "forever wild," in the words of the New York State Constitution for the Adirondack Area.

My studies indicate that several times as many trappers could catch ten times or so the value of their present catch of fur if conservation were properly practised, in each region, according to conditions, species, sentiment. The prime fur trapping period is six weeks. In that time a professional would catch $100 a week, $600 worth of fur; now $200 or so is a fair catch for three months. But here rises the remarkable fact.

AS YOU know, I have for most of my life traveled and studied and written within these certain outdoor scopes.

The moment I consider the broad aspects of the matter, the educational project became supreme. No one who follows the track of a wild fox, or enters into conflict with coyote or gray wolves can remain indifferent to the enormous wave of admiration and astonishment as he learns the ways of these creatures, and is able to interpret their mental characteristics, habits. I have crawled on my hands and knees, trying to learn what was in the instinct or thought of wild creatures—have seen a trapper interpret the pugnacious spirit of a pekan by a paw's flip in the snow.

What a calamity it would be for the human race to lose that contact with wild creatures! We could afford to pay enormous sums in money for the privilege of retaining the cougar's feline example, the gray wolf's strange shrewdness, the fox's curiosity which overcomes his nervous fears, the southern mink's savage ability to avoid deadly lures. Even a muskrat trap line has upwards of 4,000 facts for us to learn. And a domestic rat invasion stretches a lot of human ideas.

SO MY project is to give outdoor adventures their own terrain; to give our cave and marsh and forest instincts their due period of intelligent development. If this adds $200,000,000 to our $65,000,000 fur product annually, then the cash income will pay the cost of keeping wilderness forever wild, though there be some transitory and unimportant losses in occasional raid on sheep by a coyote, who thereby becomes outlaw and fair prey for those who cope with such creatures. And no coyote should be condemned individually, especially not as a race, without fair trial. A singing coyote in the desert at a tourists' camp is worth $1,000 as an entertainment. And perhaps $10 is a fair price to put on such a song in the night.

You can see my trend through this—I know plenty, but before I can fully develop my project, I must find my own limitations, discern the objectionable features as regards each of the two or three hundred "wilderness areas" and probably inspect most of them personally in order to make sure my general suggestions are not in any particular locality detrimental to any local interests.

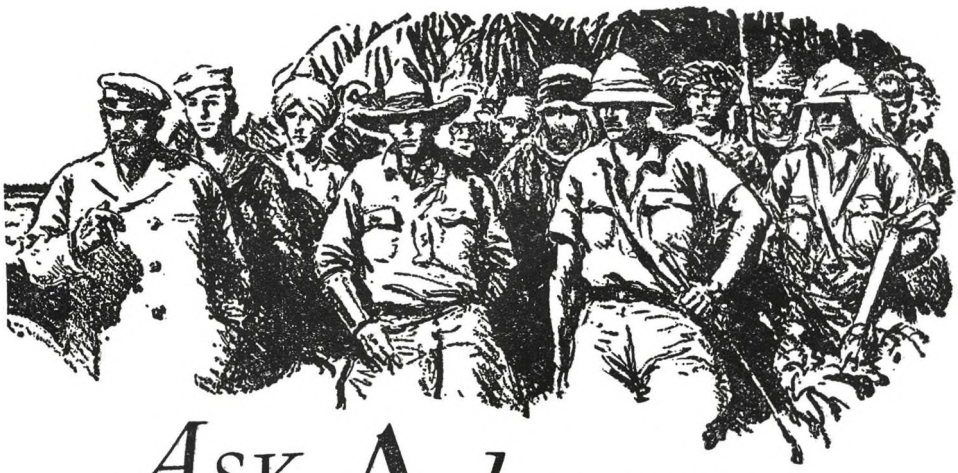
OUR points of contact as trappers are first with sportsmen. The furbearers are far more valuable commercially than as game, but the nature lovers, the men and women who love the outdoors are more important to civilization than those who make money out of wildcraft. This is axiomatic, though as a matter of fact trappers are mostly intense lovers of nature, and sacrifice incomes to be had at other occupations for sake of the pittances of trapline and wild camp. And there are angles of conflict that, compared to angles of agreement, which must be decided fairly and right for all concerned.

Cattle, sheep, in some regions poultry and other live stock, have rights and claims. The crops destroyed by many animals—gophers, prairie dogs, mountain beaver, woodchucks—must be weighed against the value of these animals as fur-animal food. Jackrabbits, cottontails, nuisances in alfalfa irrigation or Rochester, New York, fruit tree belts can be reconciled to wilderness areas where they alone, or deer, elk, antelope have prior claims. An animal like a buck deer can be a disaster in a truck garden but a priceless attraction in a forest. The state of Colorado devastates all its mountains of wolves and grizzlies and cougars, yet a pack of gray wolves in a wild range could well be worth $50,000 as an attraction for nature students, dude ranch patrons. We are too accustomed to damning a whole species for the misdemeanor of a crippled coyote, a gray wolf starved into attacking sheep or calves.

THE Biological Survey poisoned 50,000 square miles of territory in 1920—brags about it. They even are in cahoots with the Nevada Rabies Commission, which is accused of inoculating coyotes and turning them loose to attack other coyotes. They do, all right. They even climb into vehicles where a fellow is petting his sweetheart, and more stock, sheep and horses were destroyed by a rabies epidemic in Utah and adjacent states than by all the poisoning operations of the Biological Survey outside of certain districts. They kill everywhere, have ruined the fur industry in Oregon, Washington, Nevada—but of course, though their own reports show the scandalous shame, and local politics explains the tenacity of the poison scandal, we can not ourselves go to excesses. I have the data as regards some regions, but it is possible the Biological Survey, in some respects, has atoned for its follies in others. And I know that some of the personnel are not damned fools. So I am proceeding with caution and am only assailing the things utterly wrong. The poison squads handle a lot of money, and this phase will have to be investigated.

Now if out of this you find anything likely to interest Camp-Fire that's fine. It's a case where united thinking and careful progress is due. Of course, my notions must give way to genuine ideas—but I'm going to make them prove I'm wrong; the poison alone has cost us $100,000,000 annually in fur supplies, because it was not limited to regions where certain animals needed killing.

—RAYMOND S. SPEARS



# Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

## Fish

SOME fish are called by a different name in practically every part of the region in which they are found. Black bass, for instance. And the sea trout, which isn't a true trout at all, is a weakfish. But nevertheless sea trout has come to be a common name for it.

*Request:*—"1. We have here a fish called sea trout, but which I contend is a weakfish. Am I right?

2. Does a trout spawn in salt water? These do. Is any species of true trout found in these waters?

3. Can you give me the names and publishers of some good books on the study of fishes?"

—M. D. LUSK, Cedar Keys, Florida

*Reply,* by Mr. George S. Myers:—1. You can never go by the common name in telling what a fish really is. Some fish, like the black bass, are called by a different name in practically every part of the region in which the fish is found. That, by the way, is the reason why scientific names were invented, so that a naturalist could call an animal, fish, or plant by the same name everywhere.

Anyway, the common name for the weakfish along a large part of the Atlantic Coast is sea trout. A weakfish is not a true trout, however, and there are no salt water trout found in Florida. Therefore you are right that the sea trout is a weakfish, but you must also remember that "sea trout" is a well accepted name for the weakfish. In other words, you have a fish who has two common names.

2. No true trout (which belongs to the same family as the salmon) spawns in salt water. All of this family either spawn in the fresh water streams in which they are found, or if they are found in salt water (like salmon and some kinds of trout) they go up the rivers to lay their eggs.

As far as natural conditions go, no fresh water trout are found in Florida either. They may have been introduced in places where there is spring fed water, but Florida is mostly too warm for trout.

3. The best book for an amateur or even a good fisherman is "American Food and Game Fishes" by Jordan & Evermann, published by Doubleday, Doran & Co., Garden City, N. Y. It is a big book, full of pictures of the different kinds, and costs $4 or $5. It is to be found in most public libraries.

## British Army

THE battalion is the real fighting and administrative unit; the regiment furnishes the sentimental and recruiting appeal.

*Request:*—"Frequently when reading a story involving the British army I run across such names as 3rd Coldstream Guards, 17th Lancers, etc. Can you list for me or tell me where I can procure a list of the various British regiments, their names and numbers?"

—HARRY DAVID EMMERT, JR., Tulsa, Oklahoma

*Reply,* by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—There is so much historical precedent and tradition inter-

twined with the organization of the British army that the system is somewhat difficult for Americans to understand. But I think it will help you to follow the references in the stories if you remember that in the British army the regiment is purely a sentimental and recruiting unit. The real fighting and administrative unit is the battalion. Most regiments have two battalions, one at home and one overseas. But some of them have more and in time of war the number of battalions may be increased indefinitely. Battalions are handled much as regiments are in our service. That is, they are administrative units and can be brigaded together, irrespective of what regimental name they bear.

THE regimental names are drawn from many sources, and most regiments have two or more names. Thus the regiment which most of us have heard of as the Black Watch is also known as the Royal Highlanders and sometimes as the "42nd Foot." All these names have history and tradition behind them. Other regiments derive their names from their recruiting districts or from the place where they were originally formed. The Inniskilling Fusiliers is an example. In the cavalry the numerical designation is still prominently used, and usually with the term which designates the kind of cavalry, such as the example you mention, the 17th Lancers. Then the guard regiments, which as you know form a *corps d' élite*, serving in peace time as bodyguard for the soverign and as show troops, have special names. The five regiments of footguards are the Grenadiers, Coldstream, Scots, Irish, and Welsh. These have a total of 10 battalions, but the first two regiments named have three each, the Scots two, and the others but one battalion each.

If you are interested in further information I suggest you send seventy-five cents to Gale and Polden, Wellington Works, Aldershot, England, for a copy of a little book called "Regimental Nicknames and Traditions" which not only gives the name and nickname of each regiment in the British service but also a brief history of each.

## Ranger

GUARDIAN of the forest.

*Request:*—"1. What are the duties of a National Park Ranger?

2. What is the typical garb of a Ranger?

3. What kind of shelter does a Ranger house in?"

—EDW. C. MONCHAK, Ft. Hancock, New Jersey

*Reply*, by Mr. Frank Earnest:—1. The duties of a Ranger are to look after the forests and everything pertaining to them, such as counting the stock admitted on the Reserve, marking timber which is to be cut, fighting forest fires, making trails, looking after tourists and various other duties. There are different classes of Rangers. I am not sure about the salary, but I think $125.00 up per month.

2. The typical garb of a Ranger is Stetson hat, either boots or leggings, whipcord or corduroy breeches, and most any clothes which he personally fancies.

3. A Ranger lives in a house or a tent. They have cabins erected on the Forest Reserve at different Ranger stations but sometimes they find it necessary to use a tent when they are on trips away from the stations.

## Revolver

HINTS for quick drawing from a shoulder holster.

*Request:*—"I would appreciate any information on how to speed up a draw from a shoulder holster."

—VERL RIGSBY, Greenfield, Massachusetts

*Reply*, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—In drawing from the shoulder holster you slap the hand over the exposed butt of the gun, catching it between the thumb and first finger, and snap it downward and forward, from the spring of the holster. Practise doing this with the empty gun, and point it rapidly at your mark, trying to catch the sight as you level it out. After becoming proficient at this work, try it with the revolver loaded, and fire one shot at each try; you'll soon surprise yourself by your accuracy in this type of work.

## South Seas

ANOTHER side of the picture: squalls, hurricanes, rain and dangerous coral reefs.

*Request:*—"Myself and some friends, perhaps four to six, want to take a cruise to the South Seas, and would like to ask the following questions:

1. What type of boat would be the best? Schooner, sloop, lugger or what? And what sort of rig?

2. Where can we get the necessary charts, maps, etc.? Are all the islands charted?

3. Are supplies easy to get in the islands? Will we be out of regular lanes of travel?"

—J. H. JOHNSON, New York City

*Reply*, by Mr. James Stanley Meagher:—1. Whilst various types of boats and rigs are in use in the island waters the usual type for a cruise from America to the Islands is the schooner, two masted with jibs, foresail, mainsail, topsails, etc., with auxiliary power.

2. Practically all the islands and isles of the South Pacific are charted. Charts may be obtained from the Hydrographic Office, U. S. Navy. The cost is nominal. Write Captain C. S. Kempff, Hydrographer U. S. Navy, Hydrographic Office, Navy Dept., Washington, D. C. for catalogue of Mariners Charts and Books and order those you desire. In addition to charts you should obtain *Pacific Island Pilots*, Nos. 165 and 166, price 90 cents each. They give general sailing information on the locality.

3. You can obtain supplies in all principal islands

of the more important or well known groups. There are trading stores on most islands in such groups. Native fruits such as bananas can be obtained in nearly all islands of any size or where there are any number of inhabitants.

You need not be out of supplies at any time if you figure the amount needed between ports with a reserve for emergencies.

It is only when figuring on being a long time out in isolated places that you have to carry a large food supply. Owing to the heat and humidity there is some difficulty in keeping food fresh when out for long periods, and when you hear something popping down below it would probably be the canned goods swelling up and cracking open.

Mixed with the pleasure of cruising in the South Seas as in everything else there is inconvenience and a certain amount of hardships and danger. Insects, rain, frequent squalls, and a hurricane season add to the discomforts. Coral reefs often are the graveyard of many a good ship. However after visiting the principal ports such as Papeete, Tahiti and Suva, Fiji and cruising around a bit and picking up information here and there you should be able to get along all right, and anyway I wish you the best of luck.

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**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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**Salt and Fresh Water Fishing** *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping-outfits; fishing-trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

**Small Boating** *Skiff, outboard, small launch river and lake cruising.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, California.

**Canoeing** *Paddling, sailing, cruising; equipment and accessories, clubs, organizations, official meetings, regattas.*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, Copeland Manor, Libertyville, Illinois.

**Motor Boating** GERALD T. WHITE, 1055 Boulevard East, Weehawken, N. J.

**Yachting** A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Place, Chicago, Ill.

**Motor Vehicles** *Operation, legislative restrictions and traffic.*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

**Automotive and Aircraft Engines** *Design, operation and maintenance.* EDMUND B. NEIL, care *Adventure.*

**All Shotguns** *including foreign and American makes; wing shooting.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

**All Rifles, Pistols and Revolvers,** *including foreign and American makes.*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. 3, Box 75, Salem, Ore.

**Edged Weapons,** *pole arms and armor.*—ROBERT E. GARDNER, 835 Gladden Road, Grandview, Columbus, Ohio.

**First Aid on the Trail** *Medical and surgical emergency care, wounds, injuries, common illnesses, diet, pure water, clothing, insect and snake bite; first aid and sanitation for mines, logging camps, ranches and exploring parties as well as for camping trips of all kinds.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmswood Ave., Evanstown, Illinois.

**Health-Building Outdoors** *How to get well and how to keep well in the open air, where to go and how to travel, right exercise, food and habits.*—CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D.

**Hiking** CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, M. D., 821 Elmswood Ave., Evanstown, Illinois.

**Camping and Woodcraft** HORACE KEPHART, Bryson City, N. C.

**Mining and Prospecting** *Territory anywhere in North America. Questions on mines, mining, mining law, methods and practise; where and how to prospect; outfitting; development of prospect after discovery; general geology and mineralogy necessary for prospector or miner in any portion of territory named. Any question on any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic.* —VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

**Precious and Semi-precious Stones** *Cutting and polishing of gem materials; principal sources of supply; technical information regarding physical characteristics, crystalography, color and chemical compositions.*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 210 Post St., San Francisco, Cal.

**Forestry in the United States** *Big-Game hunting, guides and equipment; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States. Questions on the policy of the Government regarding game and wild animal life in the forests.*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

**Tropical Forestry** *Tropical forests and products; economic possibilities; distribution; exploration, etc. No questions on employment.* WILLIAM R. BARBOUR, care 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 Officers can not be answered. Maritime law.*—LIEUT. FRANCIS GREENE, U. S. N. R., 333 Fifty-fourth St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

**U. S. Marine Corps** CAPT. F. W. HOPKINS, 507 No. Harper, Hollywood, Cal.

**Aviation** *Airplanes; airships; airways and landing fields; contests; Aero Clubs; insurance; laws; licenses; operating data; schools; foreign activities; publications. Parachutes and gliders. No questions on stock promotion.*—LIEUTENANT JEFFREY R. STARKS, 1408 "N" Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

**Royal Canadian Mounted Police** PATRICK LEE, 3758 81st Street, Jackson Heights, New York City.

**Horses** *Care, breeding, training of horses in general; hunting, jumping, and polo; horses of the old and new West.* —THOMAS H. DAMERON, 7 Block "S", Pueblo, Colo.

**Dogs** JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

**American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal** *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

**Taxidermy** SETH BULLOCK, care *Adventure.*

**Entomology** *General information about insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects, etc.*—DR. S. W. FROST, Arendtsville, Pa.

**Herpetology** *General information on reptiles and amphibians; their habits and distribution.*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, American Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

**Ichthyology** *Fishes and lower aquatic vertebrates.*—GEORGE S. MYERS, Stanford University, Calif.

**Stamps** H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

**Coins and Medals** HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

**Radio** *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

**Photography** *Information on outfitting and on work in out-of-the-way places. General information.*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, New Jersey.

**Linguistics and Ethnology** *(a) Racial and tribal tradition; folklore and mythology. (b) Languages and the problems of race migration. (c) Individual languages and language-families; interrelation of tongues.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

**Old Songs That Men Have Sung** ROBERT W. GORDON. *Archive of American Folk-Song; Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.*

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**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.

**Swimming** LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 260 Washington St., N. Y. C.

**Skating** FRANK SCHREIBER, 2226 Clinton Ave., Berwyn, Ill.

**Skiing and Snowshoeing** W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

**Hockey** "Daniel," *The Evening Telegram*, 73 Dey St., New York City.

**Archery** EARL B. POWELL, 524 West 3rd St., Los Angeles, Cal.

**Boxing** CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH.

**Fencing** CAPT. JOHN V. GROMBACH, 445 West 23rd St., New York City.

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**The Sea Part 1** *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, small boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESENBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

**The Sea Part 2** *Statistics and records of American shipping; names, tonnages, dimensions, service, crews, owners of all American documental steam, motor, sail, yacht and unrigged merchant vessels. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all Government owned vessels.*—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESENBERG, 118 Uhler St., Mt. Ida, Va.

**The Sea Part 3** *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

**The Sea Part 4** *Atlantic and Indian Oceans; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.)—CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

**The Sea Part 5** *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.* —CAPT. DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

**The Sea Part 6** *Arctic Ocean. (Siberian Waters).*— CAPT. C. L. OLIVER, care *Adventure.*

**Hawaii** DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

**South Sea Islands** JAMES STANLEY MEAGHER, 4322 Pine Street, Inglewood, Calif.

**Philippine Islands** BUCK CONNOR, Universal City, California.

**Borneo** CAPT. BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

★**New Guinea** *Questions regarding the policy of the Government proceedings of Government officers not answered.*— L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS. *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

**Asia Part 1** *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States; and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York.

**Asia Part 2** *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, 706 Broadway, West New Brighton, S. I., N. Y.

**Asia Part 3** *Annam, Laos, Cambodia, Tongking, Cochin China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

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★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn., and DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

★**Asia Part 7** *Japan.*—SIDNEY HERSCHEL SMALL, San Rafael, Calif., and OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

**Asia Part 8** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

**Asia Minor.**—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

**Africa Part 1** *Egypt.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT.

**Africa Part 2** *Abyssinia, French Somaliland.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, 706 Broadway, West New Brighton, S. I., N. Y.

✠**Africa Part 3** *Sudan.*—W. T. MOFFAT, Opera House, Southport, Lancashire, England.

**Africa Part 4** *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, caravan trade and caravan routes.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY GIDDINGS, care *Adventure.*

**Africa Part 5** *Tunis and Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure.*

**Africa Part 6** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure.*

**Africa Part 7** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—W. C. COLLINS, care *Adventure.*

**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 5** *Scandinavia.*—ROBERT S. TOWNSEND 1447 Irving Street, Washington, D. C.

**Europe Part 6** *Great Britain.*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Avenue, W. C. 2, London, England.

**Europe Part 7** *Denmark.*—G. I. COLBRON, East Avenue, New Canaan, Conn.

**Europe Part 8** *Holland.*—J. J. LEBLEU, 51 Benson Street, Glen Ridge, New Jersey.

**Europe Part 9** *Belgium*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

**Europe Part 10** *Switzerland.*—DR. ALBERT LEEMAN, Kramgasse, 82, Bern, Switzerland.

**Europe Part 11** *France.*—CYRUS S. ROBERTS, care *Adventure.*

**Europe Part 12** *Spain.*—J. D. NEWSOM, care *Adventure.*

**South America Part 1** *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure.*

**South America Part 2** *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—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.*

**West Indies** *Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—CHARLES BELL EMERSON, Adventure Cabin, Orlando, Florida.

**Central America** *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—CHARLES BELL EMERSON.

**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, Coyocutena Farm College, La Libertad, Comayagua, 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, Bonaventure Ave., St. Johns, Newfoundland.

**Greenland** Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

**Canada Part 1** *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also homesteading in Canada Part 1, and fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 5 Howard Avenue, Binghamton, New York.

✠**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"), Box 522, Gen. P. O., 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, 1739 E. First St., Long Beach, Cal.

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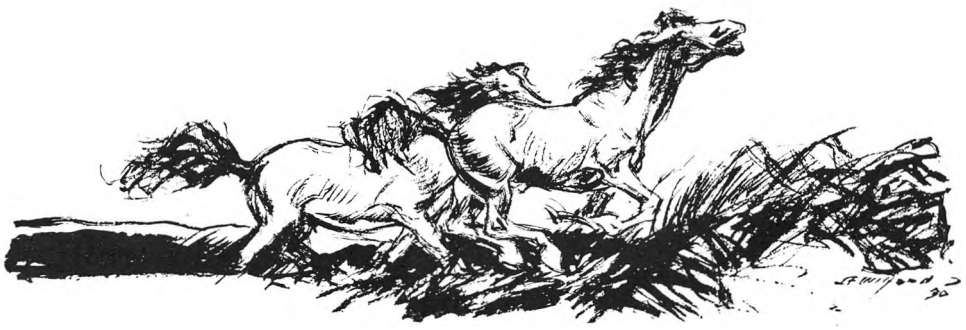


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