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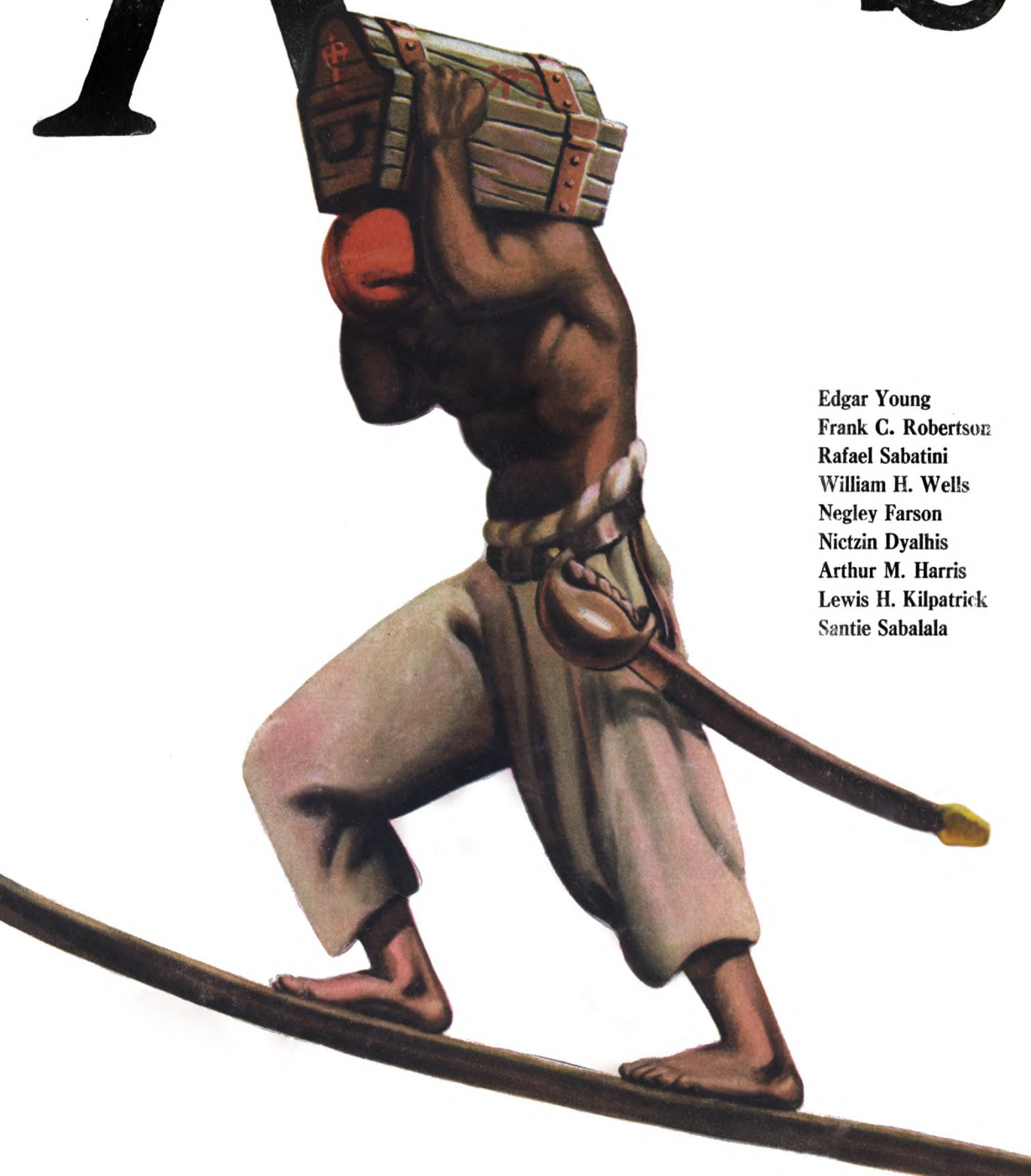

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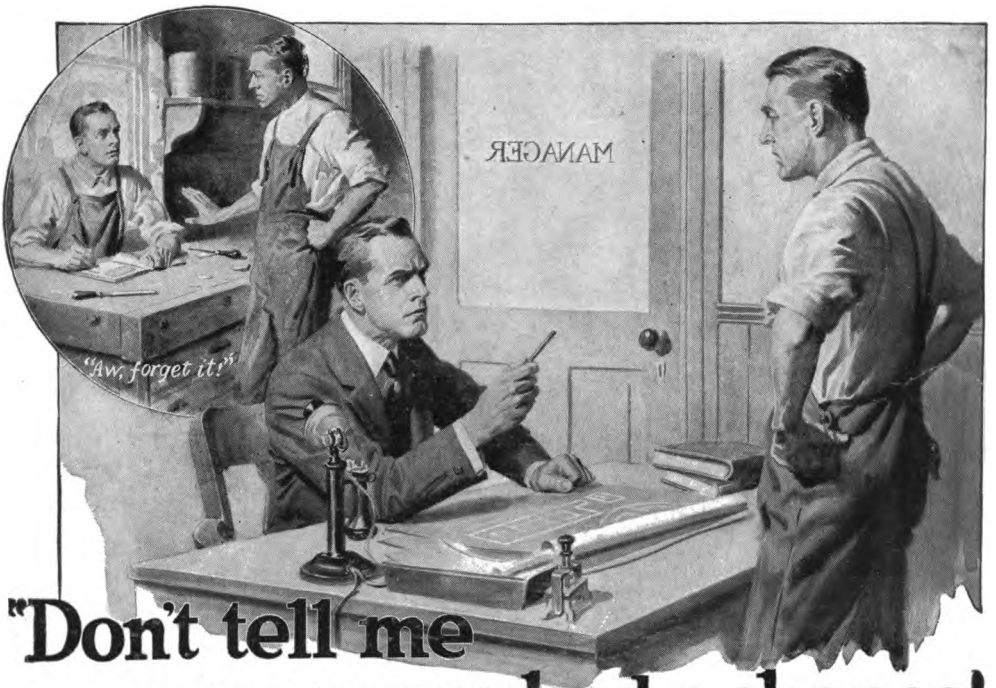

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Contents for November 20th, 1922, Issue

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(*Continued from preceding page*)

IN THE West of 1863, the forces of law and order were oftentimes in cahoots with the outlaws; shooting affrays and robberies were frequent, and men regarded each other with distrust. Especially was this true of the gold town, Virginia City. Into this atmosphere of unrest and violence came *Beach Content*, and he made strange friends. "TAMELESS DAYS," a new serial by Hugh Pendexter, will begin in the next issue.

"GIT out and keep going. We don't like sheep." That was the threat of the cattlemen to *Kirk*, a sheep herder. But *Skeeter Bill Sarg*, his sense of fair play overcoming his contempt for sheep, decided to throw in his lot with the *Kirks*. "FLAMES OF THE STORM," a novelette by W. C. Tuttle, complete in the next issue.

A YOUNG fellow with too much money for his own good gets a taste of life in the raw off the Solomon Islands, when, beset by cannibals and with a disabled schooner on his hands, he needs all the hidden manhood that is in him. "UNDER THE SKIN," a complete novelette by Albert Richard Wetjen, in the next issue.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

Don't forget the dates of issue for *Adventure* — the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month

Adventure
Nov. 20
1922
Vol. XXXVII
No. 5

SILVER ZONE

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by Frank C. Robertson

Author of "The Hole in the Rock," "That Finer Fiber."

CHAPTER I

THE HOMESTEADER

DAL SHOWALTER touched a match to the quivering kindlings in the little kitchen stove, and while the bits of flame were getting a strangle-hold on the chunks of dry quaking asp he tore the wrapper from his copy of the county newspaper, the Topaz *Avalanche*. He did not even glance at the news items from the surrounding settlements, nor the editor's frantic appeal for civic beauty which decorated the front page, but doubled the paper back to a column of legal notices on the inside.

Half-way down the page he found what he was looking for. It was only a small, unobtrusive little legal notice, but it meant more to Dal than anything that had occurred during his twenty-eight years of existence.

It meant nothing less, in fact, than the reward for five years of the bitterest kind of toil; the successful consummation of an unremitting struggle with the titanic forces of nature on an Idaho desert; a victory over avaricious cattlemen, and sly, sneaking sheepmen.

In brief, terse words the notice stated that on the fifteenth day of October, 1910, Dallas Showalter would appear before the Commissioner of the General Land Office at Topaz to make final proof that he had established a home, and made the necessary improvements to entitle him to a patent on a three hundred and twenty acre homestead. Here followed the names of four witnesses, any two of whom would be sufficient to establish proof. They had been hard to get, those four names—not because Dal had not complied with the law in every respect, but because Bill Hasbrouck, the most influential cattleman in the county, had declared that it would not be healthy for any one who helped Dal Showalter "prove up." Two of the four men named had consented to have their names

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published on the strict understanding that they would not be called to testify.

Dal threw the paper down and walked over to the stove. Automatically he filled the teakettle and put a quart of fresh spring water into the coffee-pot, into which he carefully measured four heaping tablespoonfuls of coffee. But his mind was not on his cooking operations; rather, it was upon Bill Hasbrouck. The cattleman had tried every way he knew, even to attempted murder, to drive him out. Could there be anything Hasbrouck could do in the next month, Dal wondered, to keep him from keeping that date with the Land Commissioner?

An irresistible desire to survey once more the scene of his success mastered him, and he walked to the door. He thrilled as he had always thrilled at the sight of the flat eighty, reaching from shoulder to shoulder of the cañon, from which the second crop of alfalfa had just been hauled. Another eighty on the bench was a softly swaying sea of yellow as the wheat stood ready for the binder. Dal decided that he must get at the harvesting immediately. Beyond the wheat the remainder of his homestead completely closed the only entrance to the natural pasture in Dish-pan Basin above—the clue to the undying hatred of Bill Hasbrouck.

Five years before when Dal had seen the possibilities of the ranch and filed upon it, he had less than a hundred dollars, and his cow-horse, old Spot. It had taken courage and hard work, and more irksome still, a complete separation from a somewhat frivolous, happy-go-lucky past. But now he had half of the place under cultivation, and his brand upon a nice-sized bunch of cattle. Once the title to the land was irrevocably his the reward would be ample.

Suddenly his eyes rested upon something white that moved just inside his pasture. His smiling brown eyes hardened, and he reached for his hat. On second thought he took down the .30-30 Winchester that hung across two pegs, then started toward the corral.

"What you goin' to shoot?" some one shouted from the road.

Dal looked up and saw the two neighbors who had agreed to help him submit his final proof—Thad Thompson and Brick Hardy.

"Guess I've got to shoot up them —— Basque sheepherders that's been stickin' around here," Dal replied. "See their sheep up there in my pasture?"

"Looks like they was inside all right," Thad agreed after a long squint in that direction.

"—— of a lot of respect they've got for the two-mile limit law," Brick broke in. "If you ask 'em who told 'em to herd in there they'll say they don't *sabe* no English an' let it go at that. Only way to talk is to smoke 'em up!"

"Those fellows up there couldn't *sabe* English a couple of weeks ago, but a few days afterward I happened to be in Topaz when the camp-mover was in for grub, an' he could talk as good as anybody. He's goin' to talk again today," Dal declared.

"Be careful," Thompson advised. "Ever since they convicted Goldfield Jack, this Sheepgrower's Association is out for blood. They don't care how much money they spend to convict anybody that kills one of their herders."

"An' every cussed one of 'em takes advantage of it to graze off the flowers in your front yard—if you happen to have any," Dal gritted.

"Want us to ride up there with you?" Thad asked.

"—— no, I can handle a couple of Basques all right," Dal declined.

He strode on toward the corral. Thad watched him a moment, then he and Brick rode on. Thad had been foreman of the 7 H L outfit when Dal was its star twister, and he had a fatherly interest in the homesteader.

Old Spot, the sage pinto cow-pony, came to the corral gate and took the bit in his mouth without being urged. Dal swiftly saddled, and with the rifle on his arm rode roward the sheep. He soon saw the camp on a small knoll a quarter of a mile outside his fence. Leaving the sheep unmolested he rode around to a gate and on to the camp. Before he got to it he could hear an animated conversation being carried on inside in Spanish. A moment later a pair of sheep dogs detected him, and noisily disputed his arrival.

Three men, all armed, filed out of the camp and awaited the rancher. Two of the Basques were the ones who had herded in his field before; the other was a visiting camp-mover from some other herd.

"I thought I told you fellows to stay back two miles from my fence," Dal began impatiently.

"Me no savvy," the camp-mover shrugged.

"You're a —— liar," Dal remarked candidly.

The Basque glared, and his hand moved furtively toward the six-shooter that hung at his hip, but as the end of the Winchester was pointed negligently, but accurately at his waist-line he brought the hand back where it belonged.

"You understood that all right, didn't you," Dal commented. "Now look here. I was in Topaz the other day an' heard you use good English, so that "no savvy" stuff don't work no more. You know well enough you ain't got any business in here so if your herd ain't out of my field in fifteen minutes, an' your camp off of this bench in two hours you're goin' to stop some lead."

The visiting camp-mover muttered a few words in Spanish to his friends, and hurriedly took his departure.

"Well, what do you say?" Dal demanded impatiently.

"My boss he say you no right to closa the Dish-a-pan Basin. He tell us go through you fiel'," the camp-mover muttered.

"Who the —— is your boss?" Dal demanded.

The men glanced at each other questioningly, then the camp-mover shrugged. "Beel Hasbrouck."

"The —— you say!" Dal exclaimed in real surprize.

Hasbrouck had fought him by every foul means since he had filed on the homestead, but he had not anticipated that Hasbrouck would risk his standing as a cattleman by owning sheep.

The Basque, evidently believing he had Dal scared, remarked:

"Beel, one ver' bada man. You monk wit' heem he keel you."

Dal had no personal animus toward the herders. He was of big enough caliber, mentally, to realize that the herders were mere puppets carrying out the orders of the big men behind. The trouble was that it was generally next to impossible to find out just who was the man who pulled the strings. He counted himself lucky that he knew who owned these sheep. Nevertheless, he had no intention of letting Hasbrouck's sheep graze in his ripened wheat.

"I will monkey with Bill Hasbrouck in a way he won't like, but first you git them sheep out of my field, an' —— quick."

He raised the rifle in one hand and pointed.

"*Pronto*," he ordered.

The Basques cast one glance at the tall, wiry figure of the young rancher, and shuffled after the sheep. When Showalter's good-natured face became grim, men usually took notice. The Basques soon had the sheep outside the fence, though the bottom wire was jerked loose for a distance of a quarter of a mile—another item for which Dal meant to make Hasbrouck pay.

Once the sheep were outside the fence there was nothing further Dal could do without actual violence, and he disliked dealing with hired men when their employer was available. But it was getting too late to hunt Hasbrouck up that day; besides he was getting hungry. It had been four o'clock when he got back from Topaz, and the trespassing sheep had stopped him from getting his dinner. He decided to call on Hasbrouck the next morning.

As he was opening the gate again he chanced to look back in time to see two men riding up to the camp. He grunted with satisfaction, wheeled his pony and started back.

The men were Bill Hasbrouck and his foreman, "Slim" Gurley. Common prudence should have warned him that it was unwise to face four armed men, but though Dal tried to avoid trouble when he could, when he knew that it was unavoidable he preferred to meet it head-on. In reality he had little fear of them starting anything in the open. Hasbrouck was quite capable of shooting a man from behind, and he was a giant in a personal encounter, but he had little stomach for a face-to-face conflict with hot lead.

Dal was sure Hasbrouck had seen him, but the cattleman rode straight to the sheep-camp door and bellowed for the Basques to come out. The men came out, smiling ingratiatingly; but the smiles became frozen as Hasbrouck and Gurley each pulled down on them with their rifles. Without a word of warning each man sent a bullet into a Basque. To make sure of the job two more bullets each thudded into the fallen sheep-herders.

For an instant Dal was paralyzed with horror at the cold-blooded murder. Before he could jerk up his own rifle Hasbrouck and Gurley had disappeared over the crest of the knoll with a taunting laugh. Dal

dashed up to the camp, but the murderers had disappeared in the timber on another slope before he arrived.

"Poor devils," he murmurd pityingly, standing over the murdered men. "You sure got a rotten deal, an' you were only tryin' to git ahead like the rest of us."

The real significance of the murders was not lost upon Dal. He was never a slow thinker, and his reasoning processes were usually accurate. Hasbrouck's only object in killing the herders was to lay the crime upon Dal, and the very boldness of it would make Dal's defense look ridiculous. Dal could not doubt that the murderers had been keeping close watch on him and the herders all afternoon. He picked up the cartridges the men had ejected from their rifles, and every one was a .30-30—the same caliber as his own rifle. By one simple ruthless act Bill Hasbrouck had accomplished what five years of scheming had failed to do.

There was no doubt that Hasbrouck would soon contrive to have the herders found, so Dal returned to his cabin. The fire was not yet out, and the coffee in the pot seemed to sing a welcome. The *Avalanche* lay on the table, with the heading that had meant so much an hour before in plain sight. "Notice of Intention to Make Final Proof." Now it all seemed a grotesque mockery.

Mechanically Dal wrapped several days' supply of grub in his slicker and tied it behind his saddle. Then he pulled off his dusty overalls and donned a pair of new corduroys he had bought that day in Topaz. In his nervousness he neglected to go through the pockets of his old overalls which contained his purse, and all the cash he possessed.

He went out, gathered up the reins and swung on to the old cow-horse.

"Spot, old timer," he said with a mirthless laugh, "it looks like we was right in the same shape we was when the 7 H L busted up six years ago—only a —— sight worse."

CHAPTER II

HASBROUCK

DAL stopped on a hill and made a final sad survey of his ranch. Then he brushed his hand across his face with a curse. He had not realized before just how affection for the place had grown upon him. It sickened him to think that Bill Hasbrouck had practically swept it from under his feet in five minutes without the least bit of opposition. Dal was a fighter—but he was not a fool, and he saw clearly enough that Hasbrouck held all the cards. Yet instead of taking to the hills as he had first intended he rode toward Thad Thompson's ranch.

It was after dark when he reached Thad's, so he tied Spot to the fence, well out of sight and knocked boldly on the door.

"Come in," Thompson shouted.

Dal opened the door and walked into the rancher's kitchen. Thompson, a grizzled range veteran of fifty, sat smoking a pipe in one corner of the room. His wife, still a young woman, was cooking supper. Thad had married rather late in life, and the three children squatting on the floor like Hindoo idols were all small.

"Hello, Dal, have a chair," Thad welcomed.

Dal dropped into a chair, and let his hat and gloves fall to the floor.

"You look like somethin' had gone wrong, boy—have any serious trouble with them sheepherders?" Thad asked.

Dal nodded, and explained briefly what had occurred that afternoon.

Thad sat drumming on the arm of his chair for several minutes after Dal had finished, without making any comment. In the old days down on the Promontory, near Salt Lake, Dal had been his pet puncher, and the fact that the two of them were the only ones of the old bunch that happened to drift into the Topaz country had brought them very close together.

"You've known me for years, Dal," Thad said slowly, "an' you know that ten years ago I'd 'a' hooked on my gun, an' went with you after Hasbrouck an' Gurley. But don't you see, boy, that I can't do it now? I can't take any chances on account of the woman an' the kids."

"I wouldn't ask you to," Dal smiled.

"But I don't want you goin' out after 'em alone."

"I've put aside childish things, Thad," Dal smiled. "I know that Bill an' his outfit would git me before I could git any of them. One man don't lick ten outside of books."

"I'm sure glad you look at it that way," Thad said with visible relief. "I sure hate

to have you run, but it's the only sensible thing to do. You'll lose the ranch an' your cattle, but if you stay you'll lose your neck. That Sheepgrower's Association will swing you. Even if you tell what happened nobody will believe that Bill would kill his own herders, an' there'll be two against one; besides, you had a motive for killin' 'em."

"You don't think I killed 'em, do you Thad?"

"—— no. But I'm statin' the evidence. You started out after them Basques with a gun—me an' Brick would have to testify to that. Even Brick wouldn't believe but what you killed 'em, though he'd think you done just right. Then there's that other Basque who heard you threaten to fill 'em full of lead. Finally they was shot with the size bullets that your gun shoots, an' everybody knows that Bill Hasbrouck's rifle is a .32 High Power Special, an' Slim Gurley always packs a .44. They can convict you without Bill or Slim sayin' a word, though they'd swear they saw the shootin' if it was necessary."

Thompson spoke slowly, deliberately weighing each word.

"I realize all that," Dal admitted, "but I don't like the idea of walkin' out an' lettin' Hasbrouck calmly appropriate all my stuff."

"There ain't a thing you can do," Thad insisted.

"I can't see a thing right now, but if I had a little time I might think of something. If I could keep Hasbrouck from gittin' his hands on that place legally for about six months something might turn up to spike him."

"I'm willin' to do anything I can to help you—short of fightin'," Thad said, vaguely puzzled.

"Here's my scheme. Neither you or Brick have used your desert claim rights. You ride into Topaz with me tonight, an' when the Land Office opens at nine o'clock in the mornin' I'll relinquish back to the government, an' you fellows can plaster a desert claim of a hundred an' sixty acres apiece on it. Hasbrouck won't do anything until my time to prove up has passed, then when I default he'll have one of his men file a contest. But if you an' Brick have a claim ahead of the contest he can't do a thing till the six months the law allows you to git busy in is up."

"The minute you poke your face into Topaz you'll be arrested," Thad demurred.

"I don't think so. Hasbrouck would like to have me hung all right, but he'd rather I'd disappear. My story would raise doubts that wouldn't add to his popularity even though I wasn't believed. I figure he'll wait long enough to give me a start out of the country, an' then, about tomorrow afternoon, he'll howl loud enough to wake the dead. I'm willin' to take the chance if you are."

"Of course Hasbrouck can keep his mouth shut when he wants to—he's an expert at it. But if we did miscalculate——"

"There ain't a horse in the country that can overtake old Spot," Dal interrupted.

"—— me if I don't think you've got it figured out right. I'll go to Topaz with you, an' take a chance."

Mrs. Thompson spoke for the first time.

"Thad Thompson," she said firmly, "you'll do nothing of the kind. Everybody knows how bad Bill Hasbrouck wants that ranch, and the Dishpan Basin. We know he's tried to kill Dal more than once, and killing those sheepherders shows that he's going to get what he wants in the end. He'd kill you as quick as he would the rest of them. For the sake of the children you've got to keep out of it."

"You're right, Mrs. Thompson," Dal said. "I had no right to ask Thad to mix up in the fracas. In a case of this kind a fellow has to play a lone hand. Since it would only play into Hasbrouck's hand to relinquish without somebody takin' it over I reckon I'd just as well hit the grit."

He picked up his hat and gloves and started for the door.

"If I was only single—" Thad began.

"I know you would, Thad," Dal interrupted. "So don't think that I doubt your friendship."

Thad followed Dal out to his horse, still afraid that his reluctance would be misconstrued. Mrs. Thompson's voice followed them.

"Now don't you mix up in that business, Thad Thompson."

"If there's anything I can do—" Thad began again.

"If there is I'll write to you, an' sign my name Walter Dallas," Dal said. Then as another idea struck him: "I wish you an' Brick would be hangin' around Topaz—without your guns—on the day that I'm to prove up. There ain't one chance in a

thousand that I'll be there, but something might possibly happen that we could prove up after all."

"We'll be there. My word was give to be a witness, an' I'll keep it, family or no family," Thad promised.

"But don't forgit to leave your gun at home."

Thad tried to study the younger man's face, but in the darkness it was impossible to do so. He could make nothing of the voice, for Dal's tones were exceedingly casual—too much so.

"I ain't in the habit of packin' a six-gun any more anyway," Thad said. "But I'm thinkin' awful strong of takin' out a big insurance policy."

Dal laughed, and the two men shook hands with a hard grip. Then Dal mounted his horse and rode slowly away.

"Good luck, Dal," Thad called after the retreating figure.

"So-long, neighbor—till I return," Dal answered back over his shoulder.

DAYLIGHT found Dal well into the mountains south of Topaz. He was hitting for the nearest state line, which happened to be Nevada. The mountains he was in were not unusually high, but they all seemed to be standing edgewise, so rough and chopped up they were. He knew there were a few reasonably well-defined sheep-trails through them over which the sheep were driven to the desert in the Winter-time, and back to the Summer ranges in the Spring; but he felt that it would be a waste of time to try to find one of them. He was confident that he could force a way through to the desert on the other side without a great deal of trouble.

His plans for the future were still nebulous. In fact he was still too sore at being robbed of the fruits of five years of toil to think of much else. He supposed, however, that he would be able to find work as a rider with some cattle outfit in Nevada or Arizona. That there would be danger of being arrested for the murders back at Topaz did not enter his head.

He knew that the county officials back there were cattlemen or sympathizers with them, and that they were prone to wink at the killing of mere sheepherders unless there was some one to stir them up. That Bill Hasbrouck had sufficient influence to do this was certain, but as Hasbrouck's main object was achieved Dal did not anticipate he would want him brought back for trial. He had forgotten the newly organized and powerful Sheepgrowers' Association.

For four days he pushed on southward. Making allowance for twists and turns around mountains, and digressions to find water, he reckoned that each day found him at least forty miles farther south on an air-line—and he had not crowded old Spot to make it.

Then they came out on the high backbone of a ridge that ran out into the white and yellow desert, and Dal knew he was in Nevada. The desert seemed to stretch away endlessly, broken here and there by a high, cedar-clad hog-back. These hog-backs were the oases in the desert which made it possible to winter sheep there. High flying clouds were snagged on their summits, so that most of the Winter they were covered with a light blanket of snow to which the sheep were driven every three or four days from the flats below.

The sun was now only two hours high, and there had been no water since morning. Old Spot was showing the effects of it. Casting his eyes toward the floor of the desert Dal saw something that glinted in the sunlight like waves of silver.

"By gosh, old hoss, that's a lake down there, or a spring, unless it's one of them there mirages—which it ain't," he told Spot confidently.

Old Spot seemed to sense that it meant a drink for he began climbing down the ridge at a rapid shambling walk. Just beyond the lake, or spring, were two strips of something each several miles wide, and stretching away for miles to the east and west. At first they puzzled Dal. One looked like a field of ripened wheat, the other like barley. Then he realized how impossible it would be, for there to be such fields in this remote region. When he got closer he saw that what he had mistaken for wheat was sweet sage, and the barley was white sage.

Dal had seen these kinds of sage before, and he knew that they were as palatable and nourishing for sheep and cattle as alfalfa. His cattleman's instinct was aroused, and he realized what a paradise it would be in the Winter-time for several

thousand head of cattle, provided there was water enough in the spring or lake for them.

They dropped off of the high ridge into a coulée that ran in the direction of the water. The coulée ran along the top of a bench which was covered with cedars, and broken by other coulées and gulches. Suddenly the mid-afternoon stillness was broken by a high, shrill cry for help.

Dal urged old Spot to the top of the coulee in the direction from which the cry had come and stopped to listen. He heard nothing and started on, but within twenty feet he suddenly jerked old Spot back on his haunches as a man broke from the cover of another coulée and walked swiftly toward a dense clump of cedars. The man kept his face carefully averted, so that he entirely failed to see Dal. He was about two hundred pounds in weight, but not more than five feet six inches in height. His legs were short and his arms long, and the shoulders powerful and sloping. As he walked he moved with an incredibly swift, rolling movement, neither swagger of the sea, nor roll of the range; but a method of locomotion peculiar to his own build.

Dal knew one man who answered that description in every detail—Bill Hasbrouck!

CHAPTER III

THE FOLKS AT SILVER ZONE

HOW Hasbrouck could have beaten him to that place, and what possible reason the man could have for being there were mysteries to Dal. But while he was speculating on the matter his fingers were busy unbuckling his rifle. For once he regretted that his aversion to posing as a "bad-man" had caused him to give up carrying a six-shooter. To let Hasbrouck know of his presence before he had his rifle ready to use would be to commit suicide. As the gun came loose he yelled—

"Hasbrouck!"

The man jumped like a startled mustang, and was out of sight in the cedars before Dal could snap his rifle to shoulder. He had not turned even when Dal yelled, but there was no doubt of his identity. A moment later came the sound of his horse plunging into the coulée, and Dal knew that it would be futile to follow him. He wondered, but could not know, whether Hasbrouck had in turn identified him.

Finally he pushed on toward the coulée which Hasbrouck had rushed out of. There were abrupt rock walls on either side of it which explained why the man had gone into it on foot. Dal heard a faint moaning, and slipping from his horse he climbed into the coulée. A man in the usual coarse garb of a prospector was crumpled up against a boulder. At first Dal thought he was unconscious, but as he stood over him the fellow opened his eyes and groaned.

He was perhaps sixty years of age, and although he was dressed like a miner, and a pick and shovel lay close by, there was an incongruous note somewhere. His hands were long and delicate, and there were signs of refinement and care instead of rugged strength in his face.

"What's the matter, friend?" Dal asked gently.

"My back," the man groaned. "Hasbrouck broke my back."

Dal stepped back in horror. He knew that Hasbrouck with his terrific strength could easily do such a terrible thing to this frail old man.

"Listen," he said. "Is there any house close around here?"

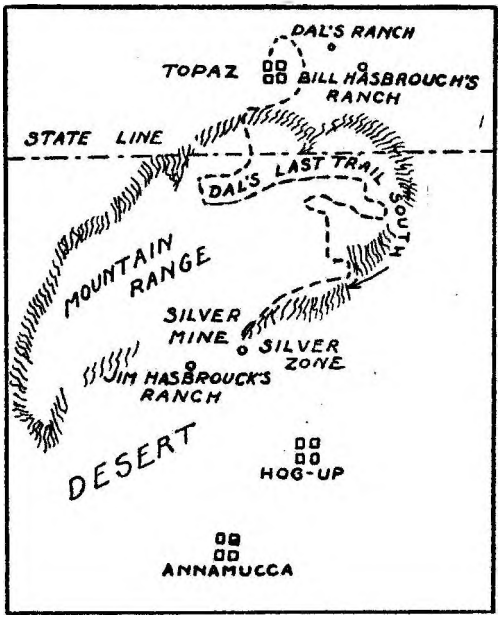
"Yes—at Silver Zone Spring. I—My——"

The pain seemed to become unbearable, and the old man slipped into unconsciousness.

"There's nothin' we can do, old boy," Dal said to Spot, "except hunt up that house, an' see if we can find help. I'm afraid I'd kill him if I tried to carry him, an' I know darn well you would you rough-gaited old pelican."

The spring was nearly a mile from where the old man had been hurt. As he rode up to it Dal saw it was really an underground stream gushing out of the side of a hill, spreading out in a sort of lake for perhaps a quarter of a mile, then sinking into the earth again. On the east end of the lake were a dozen or so tumbled-down cabins. One of them seemed to have withstood the ravages of time, and apparently was inhabited. Dal slipped the bridle from old Spot, and the thirsty horse trotted eagerly to the water while Dal walked toward the cabin.

Ten feet from the door he stopped in amazement, as he came face to face with



a slim, olive-skinned girl. The toe-caps of her shoes were worn off, and her dress had been washed and patched until its original color was only a memory, but her eyes were calm and unafraid. Dal removed his hat, and stood awkwardly while he fumbled for words which would not come.

"You wish to buy some water?" the girl asked clearly.

Dal turned toward old Spot who was drinking with joyful gurgles. It had not occurred to him that he was trespassing.

"Yes, please, I want to water my horse."

"That will be twenty-five cents," she announced quietly.

Dal dug down into the pockets of the new corduroys where his purse was supposed to be, but his hand came back empty. For the first time he remembered that he had neglected to take his money from the cast-off overalls back on the ranch. He became crimson in embarrassment.

"I—I—guess I'll have to work it out. Mebbe you can let me chop some wood or something. You see I'm—I'm broke," he faltered.

"That will be all right," the girl said hurriedly. "I hate to charge any one for water but—but that is all we have to live on."

She blushed as furiously as Dal had done.

"But what I come for mostly, was to git help for an old man up in the cedars who is pretty badly hurt," Dal hastened to say.

"My father?" the girl gasped.

Dal swiftly scrutinized the girl's features. The soft, luminous eyes, rather highly arched nose, generous mouth, and delicate but firm chin were the same as those of the old man.

"I'm afraid so," he answered.

The girl's face went white under the tan, but she preserved her balance admirably.

"How badly is he hurt?" she asked.

"I don't think he's in any danger, but his back seems to be hurt so that he can't move—much," Dal informed her.

"I've been afraid some of those prospecting holes he has been digging would cave in on him," she said nervously.

Again Dal sized the girl up with a keen, covert glance. Undoubtedly she was of firm fiber. It was better, he felt, for her to know the truth at once.

"Your father was hurt in a fight with a man named Hasbrouck," he said. "I got there just after it was over, so I don't know——"

"Hasbrouck assaulted my father! Oh, the brute! The beast!" she whispered.

The soft lines of her mouth became straight and hard.

"Have you got a team an' buck-board?" Dal asked.

The girl's face flamed at again being forced to acknowledge her poverty.

"We have the front wheels of an old wagon with shafts in that we used for a cart until our old horse died."

"That'll be fine," Dal said. "Old Spot is just as amiable in harness as he is under the saddle."

He recaptured old Spot and led the horse to the cart.

Every object he came in contact with seemed to be tainted with bitter, abject poverty. The frame on the cart had to be rebuilt with cedar poles, and the ax he was compelled to use was nicked and blunted almost past redemption; but finally, with the aid of his lasso rope he had the frame large and strong enough so that a man could lie on it full length. It required considerable more ingenuity to hook reluctant old Spot to the cart with the rotten remnants of what had once been a harness.

But in less than half an hour he was able to pilot the cart around in front of the cabin. The girl was waiting anxiously

with a pile of worn quilts and blankets, a water bag full of water, and a very meager supply of first aid remedies. Without a word Dal assisted her to a somewhat precarious position on the cart, climbed up himself, and invited indignant old Spot to proceed.

There were many questions Dal wanted to ask, but he had the good taste to hold his curiosity in check. Besides, old Spot required his constant attention, for the cow-horse possessed no such kindly attitude toward becoming a degraded work-horse as Dal had pretended. It was, in fact, the first time he had ever been hitched in single harness in his life, but he was gentleman enough not to create a scene and openly discredit his master.

By entering the mouth of the coulée they were able to drive to the old man's side. He was lying with his eyes closed, and for a moment Dal thought he was dead. But as the girl leaped from the cart and bent over him with a low cry he opened his eyes.

"Daddy," the girl cried in an agonized voice, "where are you hurt?"

Dal bent over him, and gave him a drink from the water bag.

"I seem to be paralyzed, Vincie—I can't move my lower limbs at all. I fear that brute dislocated my spine. I had no idea a man could be so strong. I shouldn't have struck him."

"Daddy! Did you strike him first?"

"I was the aggressor," the old man acknowledged.

Had the old man been of even average strength Dal could have at least admired his courage, but he was so puny in comparison to Hasbrouck that it was simply ridiculous. Dal could only pity him with the detached pity of the capable for the obviously unfit. With the girl it was different. In spite of her handicaps every act and movement spelled efficiency.

"We must get you to the house, daddy," she said gently. "We may have to hurt you terribly, but it has to be done."

"I can bear it," the old man said.

They spread a quilt beside him, and gently lifted him on to it, then Dal brought the edges of the quilt together, and with Vincie supporting her father's head, loaded him on the cart. The old man now seemed to have himself well in hand and bore the return trip with fortitude. He was carried into the cabin in the same way that he was loaded in the cart. They made him as comfortable as they could, and Dal looked at the girl questioningly.

"I know what you are thinking—that we must have a doctor," she said.

She led the way out of the bedroom where her father was, through the kitchen and outside to where the yellow rays of the setting sun were mingling with the white and gold of the sweet and yellow sage.

"We've got to have one," Dal stated positively.

Vincie eyed him curiously at his inclusion of himself in the matter.

"The nearest doctor is in Hog-up, fifty miles away—and we have just one dollar and seventy-five cents," she said hopelessly.

"If you had the quarter I owe you you'd have two dollars," Dal stated gloomily.

"I couldn't take money from you now if you had it," she said.

"Look here, Miss. In the shape you folks are in you shouldn't stay out here. What are you doin' here anyway?" Dal blurted.

"You have been very kind to us," Vincie declared, "and I think you have a right to have your curiosity satisfied. I——"

"Never mind. I spoke before I thought. I don't want to pry into your affairs," Dal disclaimed.

"My father's name is Samuel Bently," Vincie went on, not heeding his interruption. "He was an assayer by profession, but he had bad luck and lost his position. He was too old to begin again at the bottom, so he felt that his best chance was out here."

"Out here! In God's name what did a man like him want in a desert like this?" Dal expostulated.

"He had a very tangible reason—what it was I can't tell you without his permission."

"That's all right. I beg your pardon for askin'."

"We have been here two years, and it has been at times a terrible struggle for existence. Many sheep trail back and forth past here from range to range, and as father has filed a homestead covering all of this water we charge a small fee for the use of it—when we can collect. That is all we have to live on."

It was a plain statement of facts with no suggestion of an appeal for sympathy.

Knowing sheep outfits as he did, Dal decided that collections were bound to be very few.

"We got along very well, however," Vincie went on, "until recently we began having trouble with a big cattle outfit twenty-five miles west of here. The trouble today is an outgrowth of it."

"You mean to say that this man Hasbrouck owns a cattle outfit in this country?" Dal demanded incredulously.

"Yes," Vincie replied quietly, not noticing his surprize. "He intends to winter his cattle on the strips of sweet and white sage, and he refuses to pay us for watering his stock, though of course they must water here. Furthermore, he declares that he will not allow any sheepmen to come near Silver Zone Spring. It will mean starvation for us unless we leave, and we have no place to go—even if father was not hurt."

Dal tried to detect the bid for sympathy that seemed natural, but there was none.

"Isn't there anything you can do legally to protect yourself from Hasbrouck?" Dal asked, though, knowing the man as he did, he knew the question to be foolish.

"This is a long way from civilization," the girl said wearily. "It is fifty miles to the nearest town, and another fifty to the county-seat. Besides, Hasbrouck has a great deal of influence with the officials, and we have none."

"Then there's no possible way to stand him off?"

"He has offered to respect our rights on one condition."

"And that is?"

"That I marry him," the girl said simply.

A wave of anger surged over Dal, and he saw red. He knew that Hasbrouck had a wife and children in Idaho. He picked up his gun and started toward his horse.

"Where is Hasbrouck's ranch?" he demanded huskily.

"Please Mr. ——" Vincie's voice recalled him.

The flaming desire to kill subsided as quickly as it had come, and he returned to the girl. He saw that what she needed was not vengeance but help.

"I was just goin' to git my horse an' go for that doctor in—Hog-up is it?" he said.

"Yes. But how? You have no money, and neither have we. They say he is cold-blooded, cynical—won't touch any case unless he has his fee in advance."

"Don't you worry none—I'll send him out here tomorrow," Dal asserted.

He mounted old Spot and loped away. He looked back once, and seeing the girl watching him, waved an encouraging hand.

"She thinks she's seen us for the last time," he told old Spot, "but believe me, old hoss, we're comin' back. We don't run from no man but once."

CHAPTER IV

THE SUPREME SACRIFICE

THERE is no toughness like that of a range horse, and old Spot was equal to the toughest of the breed. Once finding out there was to be no night rest for him he loped along through the moon-lit mysteries of the desert on tireless legs. Dal was so innured to the saddle that except for the inability to sleep he was as comfortable as he would have been in his blankets.

Lack of sleep did not bother him this night in the least—his mind was too busy trying to see a way through the queer complications that had thrown him so suddenly into indirect contact with his worst enemy. The one positive, unalterable fact in the situation was that no man, who was a man, could abandon Vincie Bently to the tender mercies of Bill Hasbrouck out there in the desolation around Silver Zone Spring. And Dal was a man. Whatever complications might arise when his identity was disclosed to Hasbrouck would have to be faced when the time came.

Before he reached Hog-up Dal had solved, to his own satisfaction at least, the reason for Hasbrouck's double life. In five years acquaintance with the man the times he had actually seen him had been comparatively few. Hasbrouck and his crew of hard-bitten punchers kept very much to themselves. Hasbrouck was known to be a cattle buyer rather than a breeder, and it seemed so obvious now that many of the supposedly purchased cattle had been rustled in Nevada and trailed to the Topaz ranch that Dal wondered why he had not thought of it before. There was rustling known to have been done around Topaz, and though suspicion had never rested upon Hasbrouck Dal was now sure that he was guilty, and that the cattle stolen there were driven to this ranch in Nevada. No wonder Hasbrouck kept his movements covered, and his ownership of two ranches in different states secret.

The development of this theory raised

Dal's depressed spirits immensely. He now had something definite to work on. If he could get the goods on Hasbrouck for rustling, and utterly discredit the man, it would go a long, long way toward his own vindication on the murder charge. He felt now that instead of being handicapped by the necessity of helping Vincie and her father, their hour of trouble was the luckiest thing that had happened to him for many moons.

It was after midnight when he reached Hog-up, a small trading town built around one of those mysterious springs that occasionally bubble up out of the desert. He routed out a sleepy livery stable keeper, and had him feed and water old Spot. From this man he learned that the doctor was out on a case at a ranch ten miles away, and would not be back until morning. He obtained the liveryman's permission to bunk in the hay loft, and in ten minutes was sleeping like a log.

He was as hungry as the proverbial wolf when he awakened in the morning, but having no money he tightened his belt, and began looking for the doctor. He found the man of medicine just turning in to his home to get some sleep. He was not altogether gracious about the matter when Dal explained that he was wanted on a case fifty miles out in the desert.

"It's a broken back, an' the man can't wait," Dal argued against the doctor's objections.

"Well, I'll go," the doctor reluctantly conceded, "but the fee will be one hundred and fifty dollars in advance."

Dal was staggered at the sum. Evidently the doctor knew perfectly well how to take advantage of the absence of any other medical man on the desert.

"You'll go without a cent in advance," Dal said grimly. "I'll give you my note."

"And who are you?" the doctor sneered.

"I'm a man who always make it a practise to git what I go after," Dal shot out.

The doctor looked half-startled, half-amused.

"I can easily hand you over to the authorities if you start any rough stuff," he said, trying to feel out his man.

"If I have to start anything rough—there won't be any time for you to call for help. I'm going to stick to you like a cockle-burr to a sheep till we git to Silver Zone," Dal remarked pointedly.

The doctor was a fairly good judge of human nature. He inspected the cowboy critically. He felt he had taken the wrong stand, and that there was an easier way out than by making threats.

"Of course you're joking about using violence or that sort of thing now, but I believe you are just bull-headed enough to shoot a man if he didn't give in to you."

"I wouldn't shoot you—a dead doctor wouldn't be any good to me, but anybody that tried to interfere with me takin' you wouldn't have any particular value to me," Dal announced.

"Now look here, cowboy," the doctor argued, "a doctor has to have his pay just like anybody else if he is to give satisfactory service. Don't you see that if I go out there against my will I won't do the patient any—the amount of good I should."

Dal contemplated the doctor with unfriendly eyes. It was in his mind to suggest that there were ways by which even doctors could be persuaded without money, but reflection told him that it could not be done. For Vincie's peace of mind, if nothing else, the doctor should give his services cheerfully.

Then Dal made the supreme sacrifice.

"I've got a horse and saddle down in the livery stable that's worth more than a hundred and fifty dollars. I'll leave 'em there for security if you'll give me time to redeem 'em," he said with a reluctance that the shrewd doctor did not overlook.

"All right, I'll give you ten days if the security is worth it."

"I want three months."

"Say, what do you think I am—a pawnbroker?" the doctor demanded indignantly.

"No—worse than that," Dal said grimly. "Make it thirty days, or —— me if I don't march you out there at the point of a gun."

They made a trip to the livery stable, and Dal was forced to stand helplessly by with clinched fists while the stableman, at the request of the doctor, ran impious hands over old Spot's glossy coat and limbs, and took liberties with his mouth.

"This old pelter ain't worth much," the stableman declared in the belittling tone of the professional horse trader. "He ain't knocked out much, but he's older than the hills."

Dal knew that old Spot was sound as a dollar, but his age was against him. He was a three-year-old when Dal bought him, and he had owned him for ten years.

"You don't need to be tryin' to run him down—you ain't goin' to git a hold of him you know," Dal flared.

"He ain't worth much except fer coyote bait," the stableman went on unperturbed, "but the saddle is a right good rig, an' with that Navajo blanket, an' the bridle, chaps, rope, an' them silver mounted spurs the whole outfit ought to bring somethin' near a hundred an' fifty."

"We'll let it go," the doctor said curtly.

The question of the stableman's lien was arranged, and Dal was compelled to sign a bill of sale, to be void if he should pay the doctor the hundred and fifty within thirty days. He could not look old Spot in the eye. Although he felt the justification was ample he could not help feeling like a traitor to the old horse who was more a pal than an animal. For years old Spot had been his best and most confidential friend.

While the doctor was getting ready Dal borrowed a sheet of dirty writing paper, a dirtier envelope, and a stamp from the stableman and wrote a letter to Thad Thompson.

Dear Thad:—Go to my cabin and look in my pants pockets for my purse. There's fifty dollars in it if somebody ain't beat us to it. Then sell as many of my cattle as you can round up and send the money to me, or rather to Walter Dallas, at Hog-up. And for God's sake be sure that you get at least a hundred and fifty dollars, for I need that much —— bad. Harvest my wheat and keep the money to pay for your trouble. Dal.

He mailed the letter and climbed in beside the doctor in his little one-seated buggy. Once having embarked on the expedition the doctor seemed to be cheerful enough, laid the whip on the team of little sorrel mustangs, and they whirled into the desert under a cloud of scorching alkali. The sun was not far past the zenith when they reached Silver Zone.

The doctor shed his coat, washed up, and became busy with Bently. Vincie's eyes showed her surprize at Dal's return, but she followed the doctor into the room where her father was, without a word of comment. Dal washed up, and calmly boiled some coffee and cooked some hot-cakes. He could see no logic in starving himself unnecessarily, but in foraging through the Bently's cupboard he found that their grub supply was pitifully small. He had just finished washing his dirty dishes when Vincie and the doctor came out, the doctor giving her instructions what to do when the sleeping potion he had administered to the patient should wear off.

"Well, what's the verdict?" Dal asked.

"Back not broken, but several vertebrae badly dislocated, causing paralysis of the lower limbs," the doctor explained crisply. "I've put him in a plaster cast which he'll have to wear for six months at least. I'd like to speak to you personally," he added.

Dal followed him out to his buggy.

"That man should be in a hospital where he can have better care, but in the fix he's in it would kill him to move him," the doctor said bluntly. "He seems to be hurt internally some way also, and I'll tell you frankly that at his age he hasn't got one chance in a thousand of getting well, though he may live for six months."

"It's tough," Dal said simply. "When you comin' back?"

"I've done all I could," the doctor said earnestly.

"All right then," Dal assented. "You'll have your money in thirty days."

"Look here," the doctor hazarded nervously, "I don't want to be hard on you. If you're around Hog-up and want to use that horse, and will promise not to take him——"

"Go to ——," Dal interrupted pointedly.

The doctor grinned and began to hitch up his team. Dal found the dull ax, and the remnant of a grindstone, and seating himself upon the wood-pile began the laborious process of whetting the tool. Vincie found him still at it an hour later.

"Why didn't—didn't you go back with the doctor?" she queried in surprize. "I looked for you to thank——"

"I was huntin' through these old cabins for somethin' to work with," he evaded.

"You mean—you are going to stay here?"

"Sure. I'm the hired man—at least until I pay you for the water my old horse drank."

The mention of old Spot brought a gulp to his throat which the girl naturally misconstrued.

"We are not so niggardly that we would take pay from you after what you've done."

"I know it. I was only jokin', but I'm goin' to stay here an' help until your father gits on his feet again," Dal said firmly.

Suddenly the girl's hands went to her face, and she ran toward the cabin.

Dal was not much surprized at her breakdown—in fact he had expected it. He went

on methodically with his whetting but his mind was active. To abandon the girl with her crippled father was unthinkable, even if there was not the shadow of Bill Hasbrouck hovering over them. But if he stayed there were several serious problems to be faced. He must keep his identity a secret unless Hasbrouck had already recognized him—which he was sure the man had not. That meant he must work against Hasbrouck to gather evidence, and at the same time dodge him.

But the most pressing need was to provide for immediate exigencies. Vincie's dollar and seventy-five cents would not go far, and there was very little likelihood of any one visiting the spring to buy water, except possibly, some dreary desert rat who nine chances in ten would be as flat broke as Dal himself. In spite of his career as a rancher Dal was primarily a cowboy. None of his problems would have loomed half as large if he could have forked a horse; but now, when he needed a horse the worst, he was stranded upon a pair of legs which had never taken walking seriously.

Presently Vincie came out again. Her face, in spite of its natural sweetness, was a fighting one. Dal knew she would not lose her composure again.

"Forgive me for breaking down," she said straight-forwardly.

Instinctively he paid her the tribute which the uneducated who are not proud of their ignorance sometimes pay to the educated who can wear their culture without offensive conceit. Even her poise and composure told him well enough at the beginning that there were several intermediate layers between her social stratum and his own.

"We have become so used to having people fight us that it seems strange to find a friend."

"You've got one now—but just forgit it," Dal said.

"The doctor told me you gave him your horse and saddle to pay for his visit. Do you think I can ever forget that?"

"Look here, Vincie," Dal began fiercely, her name falling from his lips unconsciously, "I hate gratitude, even if I was entitled to it. Mebbe I need a place to stay as bad as you need somebody to chop wood, an' fix up the fence around the spring. How d'ye reckon you can make them sheepmen pay for water unless you fence 'em out so they can't git it for nothin'?"

"All right; I'll say no more—but don't think that I don't understand," she answered softly.

Dal felt better than he had since leaving his homestead. His status at Silver Zone was now established, and though he was flat on his back, figuratively speaking, he was ready to begin fighting back, and up. He chopped wood until dark, then, after seeing Vincie and her father needed nothing, rolled out his blankets in one of the abandoned shacks. His blankets, and his rifle were the only things he had managed to get back from Hog-up.

The next morning he sat opposite Vincie at breakfast. There was a rough pine table between them, but Dal noted with concern that there was very little else. The food problem already bulked large, but both were too tactful to comment upon it.

"My father wishes to speak to you," Vincie said when they had finished.

Dal followed the girl into the other room. He was painfully conscious of the bleakness of the furnishings, so entirely unfit for the sort of people the Bentleys were, but he tried desperately not to appear aware of it.

"Vincie tells me that you are going to stay by us in our trouble—that you have already given your most valuable possession to get the doctor for me," Samuel Bently began.

The old man looked very white and weak, but Dal decided he had misjudged him—there were signs of strong character in his face.

"No more gratitude please." Dal put up a restraining hand. "Vincie has me plumb fed up on it. Besides, I didn't give Spot to that doctor. I just put him up as security for payment of the note."

"I'm glad of that," Bently said. "I'll pay the note and retrieve your property for you. I dislike to accept charity, especially from a stranger."

Dal saw that Vincie's eyes were filled with tears. She understood perfectly that the old man would never be able to pay the note. He registered a silent vow to inflict a certain amount of corporal punishment upon the doctor the first time he met him for giving him away.

"I have talked to Vincie about the matter," Bently continued, "and we think you are entitled to our confidence. I am going to tell you why we are here."

"You don't need to," Dal asserted hurriedly. "Confidence calls for confidence—

an' there's some spots in my checkered career I'd as lief not discuss."

"We have accepted you on your appearance, and what you have done for us. We ask nothing more. Our case is different—we need a friend who understands," Bently said with simple dignity.

"Then I'm listening," Dal said.

"My daughter told you I was an assayer. Through my carelessness my house lost a large sum of money. I worked for a large concern, and there was a large amount of very valuable ore samples in the laboratory. One night I absently forgot to put those samples in the safe, and the next morning they were gone. Besides the intrinsic value of the ore the firm had to pay damages you understand. I lost my position, and I had no savings. Some day I intend to pay the firm all it lost on account of me. Things looked very black at that time, but fortunately I had something promising here at this old, deserted mining-camp of Silver Zone."

"I'd call this a darn poor straw for a drownin' man to grab at," Dal commented to himself.

"Forty years ago," the old man continued, "signs of silver were found close around here and these old cabins were built, and the place named Silver Zone. But the ore was not found in paying quantities so the camp was abandoned. However, about three years ago, a prospector who signed his name "Lonesome Jim" sent me a sample of ore to be assayed, stating that it came from a new ledge or lode near the old Silver Zone camp. It proved to be a rich argentiferous galena, containing thirteen per cent. silver. It showed that somewhere near here is one of the richest silver-mines in the West."

"And this Lonesome Jim?" Dal inquired.

"In a letter he sent with the samples he stated he had some dangerous, powerful enemies who were watching him. He said that if I did not hear from him in six months I would know that he was dead—and that I would be welcome to the silver-mine as he had no folks of any kind. That was three years ago, and Lonesome Jim has never been heard of."

"Then you've spent two years huntin' for this lost mine an' ain't found it yet," Dal commented.

He had the true cattleman's disdain for prospecting and prospectors.

"But it's here—it only takes patience to find it. I have found traces, traces everywhere. But the real lode has eluded me so far just as it did those prospectors of forty years ago—though I know it is here. More than that, Hasbrouck knows it is here. More than once I have seen him in the hills with a pick and shovel. I believe he is that powerful enemy of Lonesome Jim, and that he is the man who killed the prospector."

Dal was anxious to change the subject. Even if Lonesome Jim had found a wonderful mine the chances of finding it now were too remote to be attractive to him. That sort of work, he felt, properly devolved upon some white-haired desert rat, and he had no desire to join the breed. The mention of Hasbrouck gave him an opportunity to turn the conversation.

"About Hasbrouck—are you going to have him prosecuted?" he asked.

"It would be useless—besides, the only thing I want in this country is that silver-mine," Bently declared.

"Well, buck up. I'll find that silver-mine, an' bring it in for you to look over," Dal said lightly.

"Don't treat it flippantly," the old man implored. "The mine is an actual fact, and remember that it means an old man's honor. If it isn't found I can never repay my employers. Furthermore, if you find it half of it will belong to you."

Dal saw Vincie watching him closely, and he was glad that his skepticism made him regard the matter so easily. But even if he had been convinced that the mine could be located, he was not at all covetous. As if to test him the girl said—

"Of course you can claim it all if you find it."

"I'm only the hired man—an' wages will do me fine," Dal said cheerfully.

CHAPTER V

A PERIOD OF ACHIEVEMENT

THAT day Dal busied himself fixing up the flimsy pole fence with which Bently had tried to protect his spring from the sheepmen. It was completely torn down in many places, mute evidence of the contempt in which the sheepherder bandits had held it. In one of these open places Dal made a discovery that sent him down on his hands and knees in a hurry. When he arose his face wore a look of satisfaction. Many

horses' tracks showed that a band of mustangs were in the habit of watering there.

There was a pool of stagnant water detached from the main lake which aroused his curiosity, especially when he saw that it was full of sluggish, torpid fish. Investigation showed that a short canal connected the two bodies of water, or would do so if the lake were higher. Now the canal was dry, and Dal judged that the water in the lake got higher in the Spring of the year and overflowed into the other depression through the canal. Presumably Bently had dug the canal under the impression that the overflow would make more room to water a herd of sheep, and had not figured on the water in the lake decreasing in volume. It was a blunder, Dal figured, that was on a par with most of Bently's actions. But beside this dead pool, with the sickly, green scum over it, Dal found other tracks and signs that aroused his interest keenly.

"See here," he said to Vincie, when they were eating dinner together, "how much longer will the grub hold out?"

"Two weeks," the girl replied quickly, proof that she had already given the matter much thought.

"Then we ought to fill the grub box easy by that time," Dal said cheerfully.

"I don't see how; with no money, nor any way to make any," she retorted.

"See here now, Vincie, if I didn't know I was man enough to rustle a food supply from somewhere I'd never touch a morsel of yours. I'll git some grub somewhere by the time this is gone if I have to rob Hasbrouck's cook."

"But you're welcome to anything we have. What would we have done without you, Dal?" she cried earnestly.

It was the first time she had used his first name, and he was glad. Formality, like gratitude, he despised because it always made him ill at ease. Now for the first time he felt thoroughly at home.

"Just the same," he argued, "it's not the way of a real man to eat the bread of an invalid and a girl without repayin' it in kind. An', by the way, have you ever noticed a bunch of wild horses comin' here to drink?"

"Many times," she answered, surprized at the question. "Sometimes they will come every night for a month, and then they may not appear at all for another month. I miss them terribly when they don't come, especially one handsome, grey fellow. I love to watch them playing in the moonlight. I can never get close, but I like to think of them as mine, particularly that grey leader. I have named him Sport."

"Have you any rope about the place?" Dal asked thoughtfully.

"Yes, coils of it. Father brought in a lot for he thought he might need it to operate a windlass when he found the silver-mine. Surely you don't think you can catch any of those wild horses, and if you did how could you conquer them?"

"I think I can do both," Dal replied quietly. "You see I used to be a cowboy, an' I got to know quite a lot about horses. I know I could git at least one out of that bunch by creasin' it with a bullet, but I don't want to do that. I might kill ten before I knocked one over without killin' him, an' even when you do git one that way it seems to knock the sense out of 'em. I'd rather ketch my horse on even terms, then I can make a friend out of him as well as a good horse."

He inspected the rope which Vincie produced and was satisfied. He cut off a forty-foot lariat, and a shorter rope. It was five-eighth inch rope, a quarter of an inch larger than he would have preferred for a lasso, but the additional strength he felt was a commendable feature.

"If I can git a horse between my knees again I'll feel like a man, an' equal to anything," he said half-apologetically.

Vincie watched curiously while he tied a hondo in the end of the longer rope, utterly unconscious of the fact that she was trying to analyze him. He was a source of constant wonder to the girl. Until she had come to Silver Zone she had associated only with men of culture and refinement; but since then she had met only mean, grasping sheepherders, and cattlemen like Hasbrouck, whose very appearance filled her with repugnance. Dal was like them in the language he spoke, and the clothes he wore, but there the resemblance ceased. He was just as much of a gentleman as any man she had ever known as far as innate courtesy was concerned, though it was apt to assume weird, and to her, fantastic forms in its outward manifestations. Each was puzzled at the other's mannerisms. She said to herself that she did not "understand him." He told himself that he "didn't know

how to take her." Both meant exactly the same thing.

"I am wondering how you expect to make money out here, even if you get a horse?" she asked expectantly.

"I don't figger on the horse helpin' much that way, only for moral support. But I'm goin' to start makin' money tonight—if there's any moonlight," he smiled tantalizingly.

"I am intrigued," she confessed.

"You are—what?" he puzzled. "Oh, I see. You're interested. Did you ever see coyotes ketch fish out of that stagnant pond?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, no. But I've often seen coyotes, and sometimes a wolf standing on the bank watching the fish. We used to think we could kill them and get the bounty. It is fifty dollars each for wolves, and five for coyotes. Part of it is paid by the state, and part by the Sheepgrowers' Association," she explained.

"That's a plumb lib'ral bounty. Didn't you have any luck?"

"I guess I might as well make a full confession, though I know you'll laugh at the foolish things we did," she laughed, reddening slightly.

"I reckon whatever you done couldn't be as foolish as the things I'd be guilty of if I went into your country," he assured her soberly.

"Well, when father cut that canal through to fill the pond we never thought that the spring would decrease, so he made a trip to Annamucca to buy trout minnows to stock the pond with fish. Blunder number one, the minnows turned out to be not trout but chub—utterly unfit for food."

"I'll see that fish agent some time," Dal promised.

"When the water went down below the canal the fish in the fresh water disappeared, but there remained some in the pond, though they are terribly sluggish. They die, and sometimes the water goes down leaving them on dry land. We noticed the coyotes hanging around to get these, and father bought some traps from a sheepman, but I suppose we didn't know how to set them properly, for we never caught anything."

"It takes years of experience to ketch coyotes," Dal said.

"We found that out," the girl said dryly. "We gave away the traps, and Mr. Hasbrouck gave father a rifle to kill the coyotes with. We both tried to shoot them, and wasted several dollars' worth of cartridges but we only succeeded in making the animals so wild that they never come around in the daytime any more. Why don't you laugh?"

"Have you still got that gun?" Dal asked unsmilingly.

Vincie brought out the gun, and Dal examined it closely.

"I reckon you would waste a lot of shells," he commented ironically. "The sights have been filed until you couldn't come in a mile of anything you aimed at."

It was obvious to Dal that Hasbrouck had given them the gun as a measure of safety for himself should either of them ever take a notion to shoot at him.

"We seem to have been duped all around," Vincie said drearily. "It looks like we are simply a pair of the world's incompetents—my father and I."

"You're not," Dal defended her warmly. "Show me another girl that could stick it out in this God-forsaken country. There ain't any."

"Somehow," she said dreamily, "I have a sort of liking for this country after all. There is something about it that grips you. I'm afraid that I'll never be satisfied in the East again."

"Girl, you ought to see a place I know about," Dal declared.

Thereupon he launched into a description of his own deserted homestead, carefully refraining from any suggestion that he was personally interested in it. But because his heart was in his subject he became really eloquent.

"I'm sure I'd love that place," Vincie said when he finished.

Suddenly he colored and walked away without another word. It had just occurred to him that in the telling about his homestead he had visioned Vincie as a part of the landscape—more than that, a part of his very life there. Almost viciously he thrust the idea out of his mind. Although for the moment they were associated on terms of equality, he recognized readily enough the yawning gap between their social accomplishments. And at that moment he resolved not to tolerate any thought with respect to the girl which shaded ever so slightly into the sentimental.

At midnight Dal rolled out of his blankets, picked up his rifle, and walked to the

north end of the pond. Then he crawled on hands and knees until he was concealed in the dry canal. After a wait of an hour he saw a dim, moving object that blended into the moonlight and the background of sagebrush so nicely that it was almost imperceptible.

Dal wondered what the animal would do. In all his experience with the grim marauders of the desert he had never known them to catch fish, though he had often seen them take to the water, and had seen them picking up dead fish along the shore.

From time to time he could hear the plop of some sluggish fish leaping to the surface for a night insect. The coyote came straight to the edge of the pond, and walked slowly back and forth with his sharp ears pricked eagerly forward and his long, bushy tail gently undulating.

Finally there was a plop close to the coyote, and the marauder rose into the air as gracefully as a kitten. He came down into the shallow water with his back arched high, and the long jaws snapped into the water like the recoil of a steel spring. There was a quick thrashing of the water, then the coyote waded gingerly ashore with the fish in its mouth.

Convinced at last that the coyote was no nature-faker, Dal drew a bead on him, no easy feat in the moonlight, and fired. The coyote went down, up, and down again—this time permanently. It was too early in the season for the pelt to be of value, so all Dal had to do was to remove the scalp.

Two animals escaped him during the night, but he shot one more coyote, and just before dawn he got a wolf. That meant sixty dollars for one's night's work. He knew that it was beginner's luck, but it was a long, strong step in the beginning of his fight. The next problem was to capture one of the wild horses. It was possible to build a corral close to the water, but it was highly improbable that he could ever get any of the wary mustangs into it. He decided that the only practicable way was to get them on their range.

Each afternoon thereafter for three or four days—he slept during the forenoon after hunting predatory animals by night—he walked over the rough, coulée-cut foothills. He let Bently think he was searching for the silver mine, but in reality he was looking for the bunch of mustangs and a place to trap them.

Twice he caught a glimpse of the band, about twenty in number, and he quickly picked out the one Vincie had named Sport, a beautifully dappled gray stallion. Dal fell in love with him at once. The horse had the sturdy, supple build of the mustang, but his size and color betrayed the fact that there was a strain of superior blood in him.

"You're my huckleberry, Sport, old-timer, just as sure as shootin'," Dal called gleefully the first time he saw the horse.

Finally he discovered a small box cañon with a bottle-neck at the outlet. The other end was a sheer wall of rock, and the sides were too steep for a horse to climb without difficulty. On one side of the bottle-neck Dal set a strong cedar post four feet into the ground. Then he borrowed a quart of salt from their meager table supply and put it just inside the entrance. Further preparations or precautions were very likely to defeat their own object, so day after day he waited close by in the brush with his rifle and the two ropes. Some day, he knew, the salt would attract the horses and they would enter the box cañon. He could only hope that they would do so during the hours he was on watch.

The days flew rapidly by, but still the horses refused the bait. From three o'clock in the afternoon until midnight Dal watched by the mouth of the box cañon. Then he went back to the pond and waited for coyotes and wolves until daylight. Sometimes he got one coyote in a night, sometimes more—but no wolves. As it took ten coyotes to equal one wolf Dal began to despair of reaching the two-hundred-dollar mark he had set for himself by the time their grub supply was exhausted. He was sure he would get money enough from Thad Thompson to redeem old Spot, but it might be several weeks before Thad could collect it, so he wanted to make sure by getting sufficient bounties.

Almost equally badly he wanted to capture the gray wild horse to save himself the fifty-mile walk into Hog-up when the food was gone.

Finally Vincie hinted that they were out of coffee and sugar, and that the flour, bacon and beans would not last more than three or four days. Dal decided to spend the entire night at the box cañon, and if nothing happened to strike out on foot for Hog-up with his burden of scalps. He now had one wolf, and twenty-one coyotes, which

meant one hundred and fifty-five dollars in bounty.

Shortly after midnight he saw something moving furtively through the cedars several hundred yards from him. In an instant he was keenly alert, his fingers gripping the rifle longingly. And then suddenly he heard another sound from a different direction which gave him a different kind of a thrill. This was unmistakably the tramping of horses' feet.

The animal he had been watching also heard the sound, and it slipped behind a bush out of sight of the approaching horses and waited. In doing so it came broadside to Dal, and he saw that it was a monstrous timber wolf.

His fingers itched for the trigger. At that distance he knew that he could not miss. Another fifty dollars would be enough to retrieve old Spot, and buy supplies. But if he shot the wolf he knew he would send the wild horses into a panic, and they would not return to that locality for months. He weighed the possibilities swiftly. There was still two weeks to rescue old Spot, and he stood a good chance of killing more coyotes even if Thad failed him, but he knew that it might be the last chance he would get to capture the Sport horse, and it surely meant that he would have to walk to Hog-up. The gambling instinct, never far submerged in him, rose, and he dropped the rifle. A moment later the wolf slunk away.

Slowly the wild horses filed into view. They were grazing, and it seemed to Dal that they would never arrive. At last they fed opposite to the bottle-neck of the cañon, and the gray stallion threw up his head and sniffed in the fearless, yet prudent manner of the untamed. Dal saw that it was the salt he had sniffed for he turned inquiringly in that direction. The salt-hungry animal boldly advanced through the bottle-neck, and the rest of the band trooped in after him.

Dal loped through the brush like a coyote, scarcely daring to breathe until he reached the mouth of the cañon. The horses were fighting and squealing around the salt, and failed to see the man until he was within a hundred feet of them. When they did see him they scattered in a panic; some rushing blindly against the wall at the farther end; some endeavored to climb the sides of the canyon, most of them losing their footing and tumbling back.

The gray alone stood perfectly still while his companions bolted in aimless confusion. He was whistling shrilly as he watched the man, his intelligent eyes shining with suspicion. Suddenly he broke for the entrance to the cañon with the speed of a rocket. Dal had no time to swing his rope as he wanted. He made one desperate swing, and heaved the entire length of the lariat, except one coil, almost parallel to the course the horse was taking.

For a moment it seemed that the gray had evaded the rope, but in the long leap he had made to clear it he miscalculated and both front feet came down squarely in the noose. In the second before he could withdraw them Dal jerked up the slack, and with a lightning movement "took his dallies" around the top of the cedar post with the last remaining coil. Rope, post, and Dal held, and the gray came down with a terrific thump upon the hard ground, for the moment knocking the wind out of him.

Dal had just rope enough to tie a knot at the post. Then picking up the other rope he dashed to the prostrate horse and sat upon his head. He threw a pair of half hitches around the horse's forefeet, then slipped his improvised hackamore over its head. The horse was helpless, but he was far from being subdued.

As it struggled Dal talked soothingly, sincerity in his pleading voice. When the horse ceased to fight Dal got up and made the end of the rope, which was tied to the hackamore and the horse's ankles, fast around the snubbing post. This done he returned to the horse.

"Take it easy, Sport, old-timer," he admonished gently.

He was supremely happy for the moment, for he was a horse-breaker as well as a horse-lover; but unlike most cowboys he was not a broncho-fighter. There is a great distinction between the two methods of dealing with wild horses.

After the next violent efforts of the horse to escape had subsided, Dal took off the half-hitches and allowed the gray to get to his feet—but only to begin his first lesson in being led.

With his hand on the McCarty rope he began pulling the horse first to one side, then the other; all the time clucking and talking to him encouragingly. Soon the horse began to respond, reluctantly at first; but as he found that each step slackened

the pressure on his sore neck he came more willingly.

In a couple of hours Dal had him responding to the slightest pressure of the rope. In another hour he was able to touch the horse on his face and neck, and by daylight he figured that it was tractable enough to ride. He would have preferred to delay this operation for several days, but he knew if he did not begin at once the alternative meant a fifty-mile walk. The unusual intelligence displayed by the horse encouraged him to take more chances than he would have taken with a jar-head.

Dal was a good rider in the saddle. In fact he had won a number of prizes at various bucking contests, and he had not given up the game entirely after becoming a rancher; but those prizes had been won in a saddle, and now he was bareback. He had no wish to test his ability against Sport, for the horse showed plainly that he could, if he wanted to, buck hard enough to throw a wood-tick—the best rider in the world.

Now he remembered an old trick that he had seen Indians use in breaking colts to ride bareback, which was to tie up one front foot of the horse by a rope across the withers to the opposite shoulder. This he proceeded to do, and then, leaving the McCarty still tied to the snubbing post, gradually wormed himself on to the quivering horse's back.

At first Sport stood trembling with fear, then launched himself into the air in the beginning of a terrific leap. But the hobbled foot interfered grievously with the effort, and the taut McCarty rope jerked him back on the ground. Again and again he tried it, but quickly grew discouraged over his failure to dislodge his rider. Dal grew correspondingly more confident. Soon he had the horse responding to the neck-rein of the hackamore, and circling whichever way he wished him to around the snubbing post.

At length Dal let down the captive foot, and untied the McCarty rope from the snubbing post. Then he again climbed on the horse's back with all the caution he could command. He had placed the rifle on the top of the snubbing post, so he gently reined the horse so close that he could reach out and pick up the gun. This accomplished he rode out of the cañon.

The one thing he now had to fear was that Sport would bolt as soon as he found himself away from the scene of his great humiliation. He did increase his speed considerably, but by much petting, pulling at the hackamore, and coaxing, Dal was at last able to guide his conquest to Silver Zone.

He saw Vincie watching him, but he pretended not to see her until he had watered Sport, and staked him by the foot on a bit of wild grass beside the spring. Then he strolled casually toward the cabin.

Vincie plainly showed her astonishment.

"Why Dal—that—that is the leader of the band of wild horses! It is Sport! Surely you haven't been able to catch and conquer him since you left here yesterday?" she gasped.

"I've done just that," Dal said proudly.

For the first time he saw in her eyes something beside friendliness or curiosity. There was positive admiration.

CHAPTER VI

DAL ENLARGES HIS ACQUAINTANCE

THE remainder of that day Sport was allowed to rest, but all the next day Dal labored with him, kindly, carefully, yet firmly. He soon saw in the gray a horse the equal of old Spot in his prime for intelligence, strength, and speed. The phenomenal luck he had thus far almost caused him to forget he was wanted for murder, and his mind was at rest on the matter when, on the third day of Sport's captivity, he rode the gray into the livery stable at Hog-up, and tied him in a stall beside old Spot.

The old horse greeted his master with an eager whinny in which there was expressed such infinite relief and pleasure that tears rushed to Dal's eyes and he threw his arms around Spot's neck. He seemed to be well enough cared for, though Dal, with that intense fellow feeling of his, realized how galling it was for the horse to have to stand wearily, hour after hour in a stall surrounded by strangers. Yet there was nothing he could do.

The stableman scrutinized Sport carefully, nor did he overlook the fact that the horse had just been broken, nor the significant fact that he had no brand.

"That's some horse yu got, mister," he opined. "Yu don't mean to say he's just a desert mustang?"

"Not now he ain't, Dal said shortly. "He belongs to me—an' don't let anybody forgit it."

"Awright," the man agreed, somewhat taken back.

Dal's first step was to go to the post-office and inquire for a letter for Walter Dallas. The postmaster, a long, raillike specimen with a long, thin brown beard, handed out a small envelope, and Dal tore it open eagerly. Automatically he looked for a draft, or a money order before noting the contents of the letter. A premonition of evil gripped him as he saw that there was nothing in the envelope but a single sheet of paper.

"Dear Dal,"

he read,

"Wuz glad to know you'd got away. Awfully sorry can't send you no money. Somebody done beet me to yore pants and tuk yore pocket-book. Bill Hasbrouck has done rounded up yore cattle and branded them. He claims you owed him money and Nobody can't say you didn't cause you ain't Here to say so yoreself. Hasbrouck Also knocked yore fence down and Pastured off yore wheat. He has His cattle in dish Pan basin now. If I had any money id send you some, but I ain't sold a thing off my Ranch. Me and brick will be in topaz on the 15 of Octe but for God's sake don't you be there. The Sheep growers have raised a —— of a commotion about that killin', and Hasbrouck and slim are tellin' how they saw you Kill 'em cold, so if i was you I'd put a —— of a lot more distance between me and topaz. The missus sends her regards. As ever, Thad Thompson, p. s. Nobody knows about yore letter or this one."

Dal's head whirled dizzily for an instant after he had deciphered his friend's somewhat cramped handwriting. This meant another hope gone, and signified that Bill Hasbrouck's victory on the other side of the mountain was now complete. It meant too, that old Spot must suffer a longer term of imprisonment.

The post-office occupied only a small space in a large building devoted to general merchandise, and the postmaster was evidently the proprietor.

"Who around here pays the bounty on coyotes an' wolves?" Dal asked the postmaster.

The postmaster smiled with the hatefulness of superior wisdom.

"Why; you can't collect the bounty till the papers are sent in to the State capital, and a duplicate set to the Secretary of the Sheepgrowers Association."

"That so?" Dal asked, crestfallen. "Ain't there anybody here then that'll buy 'em at a discount?"

"Well, I might," Cutler, the postmaster said foxily, "providin' the discount is big enough."

Later Dal learned that Tom Cutler practically owned the town of Hog-up, and his interests were far-reaching in other parts of the county.

"I've got a hundred and fifty-five dollars worth of scalps, an' I'll take a hundred dollars in cash, an' fifty in trade for 'em," Dal offered.

"Do you think I can afford to wait six months for my money for a measly five dollars?" Cutler asked contemptuously.

Dal cast his eye speculatively over the various goods in the store. Everything was plainly marked to conform to the caption above the door: "The One Price Store." The sign was appropriate all right for there seemed to be in fact but one price —and that utterly, unreasonably high.

"Judgin' by the tags on your stuff I reckon at that you'd be makin' about twenty per cent. profit for the six months," Dal said.

"I'll give you twenty-five dollars cash, an' fifty in store trade—take it or leave it," the old profiteer said firmly.

"There's other stores in this country," Dal ventured.

"Yes; at Annamucca, fifty miles away—and they ain't bargain stores either. Go there if you want to," Cutler grinned.

Dal was beaten. He knew that the old robber was in a position to dictate terms, and had no scruples about doing it. As cheerfully as he could he accepted the offer and traded out the fifty dollars for food, and medicine for Bently.

"Give me an envelope to pack this stuff in," Dal requested in a spirit of sarcasm caused by the small bulk of his purchases.

One thing he had fully intended to buy he had to forego for lack of funds—a six-shooter. A rifle was well enough for some purposes, but for the kind of clashes that seemed to be impending a six-shooter was almost a necessity. But now since he knew he could not get old Spot out of the barn he realized that it would take nearly all of his remaining cash to hire a pack horse to get the supplies to Silver Zone.

Sport was too unused to carrying a man's weight to be able to return to Silver Zone that day, so Dal wandered into a saloon

to pass away the time. He was not without qualms that he might possibly run across somebody who knew him, but he felt that was entirely unlikely. Still, he did not venture far into the saloon until he satisfied himself there was no one there who knew him. Then he went in and looked around for something of interest. He dared not waste any of his precious dollars, so he stayed away from the bar.

Most of the patrons were dull, commonplace fellows whom he felt it was not worth his while to cultivate. They, in their turn, sized him up with mild interest, then returned to their usual amusements. There was a set, determined look on his face which declared plainly that he was neither "a live wire" in the saloon sense, or an "easy mark."

There were, however, three men playing poker at a table who were too deeply immersed in the game to pay any attention to new arrivals. They were obviously of a decidedly different cast to the rest of the men in the crowd. Dal catalogued two of them at once as cowboys of a capable, but rather unprepossessing type. The third man was dressed much the same, with the same kind of chaps and spurs, but there was a vague, almost intangible difference somewhere which marked him as a sheepman—probably a well-paid foreman.

The interest the bystanders manifested in the game told Dal that it must be rather wild. He moved close to the table and stood just behind one of the cowboys. The sheepman, he saw, was carrying a heavy cargo of red whisky; but he was still in possession of all his faculties. In fact he appeared to be at the moment unusually alert.

Suddenly a quarrel developed, and the sheepman called one of the cowboys a liar over a disputed play. The cowboy's hand sank toward his holster in a flash, but it came up empty as the sheepman's gun leaped on to the table in line with the top button on his vest.

"Don't think that because you're cowpunchers you've got the monopoly on all the gun throwin' in the country," the sheepman remarked coolly.

The other cowboy dropped his hand stealthily, drew his gun beneath the level of the table, reached around the end of the table and pointed it at the sheepman from an angle. With a little less whisky the sheepman would have observed the act, but as it was he was too intent upon his little lecture to the other cowboy to watch both of them. Dal's hand shot out and seized the cowboy's hand, bending it slightly downward just as he pulled the trigger. The bullet tore a hole in the floor and instantly all was confusion.

Dal wrested the gun out of the man's hand, and held him firmly to his chair while the fellow cursed. He was small, but in his rat-like face were all the signs of a cold-blooded killer.

The sheepman stood up, and though he weaved about unsteadily on his feet, the hand that held the gun did not falter. With the other hand he motioned to the crowd to stay back.

"Who the —— are you to come buttin' into this business?" the small cowboy demanded of Dal.

"He's the fellow that brought in them coyote ears from Silver Zone," some one volunteered.

Dal saw that it was the clerk who had waited upon him in Tom Cutler's store, and who had watched him signing the necessary affidavit swearing where he had killed the animals. Dal noted that both cowboys greeted this announcement with a strange interest. The larger cowboy arose and hunched forward on the balls of his feet.

"You're that Silver Zone skunk, are ye?" he demanded. "Then listen to me—if you ever go back there you're goin' to collect more lead than you can pack away."

"Shut up," the smaller man hissed. "Let him come back there. I want the pleasure of killin' him. No —— sheepherder like him can put anything over on Nevada Brown the second time."

"Bein' as you hold them sentiments, pardner, I reckon I'll just confiscate that gun of yourn—an' the belt," Dal drawled.

Before the vituperative little cowboy sensed what he was going to do Dal had dextrously unbuckled the belt and flipped it around his own body.

"Here; you can't do that! I ain't goin' to stand here an' see any gran' larceny pulled off that way," a voice boomed, and Dal saw a huge, sallow faced man elbowing his way through the crowd.

The star on his breast revealed that he was the town marshal.

"He made threats. I claim the right to protect myself," Dal argued.

"I'll protect you," the marshal snorted.

"Like ——," some one in the crowd snickered.

"You all seem to hang together pretty well," Dal opined.

"Give that gun back to Nevada, or to me, or I'll put you under arrest," the marshal thundered.

"Give it to him," the sheepman interjected. "I've got two guns, an' I guess there's no law against me loanin' you one of 'em."

He passed a forty-four to Dal, who in turn handed Nevada's gun and belt over to Wendall, the marshal.

"I ought to arrest you both in the name of law an' order," Wendall growled.

"Yet I reckon Tom Cutler thinks too much of the trade of the Burnt Creek Sheep Company for him to let you do it," the sheepman said impudently.

The marshal beckoned to the two cowboys to follow him outside, and they did not reappear that evening. Dal and the sheepman retired to one corner of the saloon where they could keep a watchful eye on the crowd, which was rather studiously intent upon leaving them alone.

"I reckon I'm obliged to you for the preservation of my carcass," the sheepman began. "My name's Vic Sawyer. What's yours?"

"Walt Dallas—but my friends call me Dal," Dal replied promptly, half-ashamed already of his assumed name.

"I just can't keep from taking a fall out of a cowpuncher every time I see one," the talkative Sawyer went on. "They have the same effect on me as a red rag to a bull They all think they're some pun'kins—an' they are—the punk-uns. That's how I got mixed up in that poker game in the first place—I saw a chance to take it out of a couple of cowboys. I would have done it, too, if I hadn't absorbed just one too many drinks. You're a sheepherder, ain't you?"

"No—cowpuncher," Dal said dryly.

Sawyer laughed.

"That's one on me—but you're sure one —— of a specimen."

"Thanks," Dal grinned. "Now how much do you know about this country?"

"Not much, except that this desert country is pretty much run by old Tom Cutler and a cattleman named Hasbrouck. They ain't overly popular down at Annamucca, the county seat, but they seem to have their own way on the desert. I've managed to stay on the good side of old Cutler so far, but I may be in for trouble now. Them cowpunchers we had the run-in with work for Hasbrouck."

"I thought so," Dal said.

The remark the larger cowboy had dropped let him know that he had been spied upon at Silver Zone, but the fact that the cowboys thought him a sheepherder led him to believe that Hasbrouck had never seen him, and that no one as yet suspected his identity.

"How many sheep do you run?" he asked Sawyer.

"Six herds. I'm down here now tryin' to spot a Winter range."

"Then listen. Would a place like this interest you? A strip of white sage, and a strip of sweet sage each a couple of miles wide, and ten or twelve miles long. Foothills an' mountains on one side, shadscale desert on the other, an' a twenty acre lake fed by a big spring in the middle of it."

"Would it? Boy, you're describin' sheep heaven! If I could find a place like that—an' could hold other outfits off of it—I could bring my outfit here as fast as they could travel. That would hold six herds till the snow come on the high buttes, an' I could go where I pleased," Sawyer said enthusiastically.

"That spring is privately owned, an' if you leased it you could hold everybody else off," Dal informed.

"If that's the only water around, and I can get a legal right to it I'll pay a good price," Sawyer said.

"It would be up to you to see that other outfits didn't chase you off the range," Dal warned.

"I'll take chances on that—but you'd have to see that nobody else watered at the spring. In other words you'd have to make the title good."

Dal deliberated a moment.

"I'll do that," he said positively.

Straight-forwardly he told Sawyer of Hasbrouck's intentions to use the spring. He had no wish to deceive the sheepman in any respect.

"If you'll do your part to fight 'em off the proposition is worth lookin' into," Sawyer said. "Besides, it ain't like it used to be in these range wars when the cattlemen with their professional killers always got the best of it. Now there are a lot of sheepherders

who don't ask no odds from any man in a gun fight. I've got a bunch of tough *hombres* workin' for me, and back of us is this powerful Sheepgrowers' Association. The cattlemen ain't learned to organize yet."

"My sympathies are all with the cattlemen," Dal confessed. "But in this instance it's different."

"Then I'll ride out with you tomorrow and look the situation over if you don't mind," Sawyer suggested.

"That suits me exactly," Dal said promptly. "I reckon now, though, that I'll mosey down to the livery stable an' see how my bronc is gittin' along."

"I'll walk along," Sawyer said, heaving himself to his feet.

Though neither mentioned the matter each knew that the other was on the alert for a possible ambush. They knew that all unmeaningly they had brushed the wrong way of the hair of the most powerful interests in the country, and something might be expected to happen any minute. It was now dark, and the streets of the town were totally unlighted, but they were permitted to walk to the livery stable unmolested.

As soon as Dal set foot inside the stable door he was greeted by an eager whinny from old Spot, but for once he paid no attention to his pet. The stall where he had left Sport was empty.

"Where's my horse?" Dal demanded furiously of the cringing stableman.

The man wet his lips several times with his tongue before he could speak. There was a look in the face of the man who confronted him that chilled him to the bone.

"Nevada an' Kutch tuk him," the man whined at last. There wasn't no brand on him to show that he was yours, an' they claimed him. Wendall was with 'em, an' he said I'd better let 'em have him if I wanted to keep out of trouble, an' that's all I want."

"You'll git into a —— sight more trouble right now," Dal choked.

He rushed for the fleeing stableman with the idea in view of breaking the man in two with his bare hands, but Vic Sawyer made a flying leap and caught him by the coat-tail.

"Whoa, cowboy," Vic cried. "You're startin' to clean house at the wrong end."

Dal was himself in a moment. His anger had not lessened, but it had changed direction.

"Thanks, old man," he said gratefully. "I'll start at the other end—an' it reaches a lot farther back than Wendall or those two punchers."

CHAPTER VII

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND

THE loss of Sport, coming so quickly after all his trouble to get the horse was a crushing blow to Dal. To be on foot again, a fugitive from justice, and in a land that seemed full of enemies was terribly disheartening to a man whose natural home was the back of a horse. And he had fallen in love with Sport.

He accepted Vic Sawyer's invitation to share his room at the Hog-up House, and while Sawyer slept he thought things over. The prudent thing to do was to send the grub supply out to Silver Zone by Sawyer the next day, and grab a freight train for parts unknown. Granting that Hasbrouck did not yet know he was in the country there was little doubt but that Nevada and Kutch would now give him a description of his personal appearance exact enough for Hasbrouck to guess who he was.

Even if this should not happen a personal conflict with Hasbrouck could scarcely be avoided when he opposed his unlawful use of Silver Zone Spring. Hasbrouck, of course, would notify the Topaz authorities unless he choose the shorter, more direct method of assassination to eliminate him. Undoubtedly the only safe thing to do was to run, and each time his mind came back to that possibility Dal repudiated it more vehemently.

He was heartily disgusted with his status as an outlaw. Even in his wildest days he had been peaceable, and his five years on the homestead had almost trained the wanderlust out of him, and made him home-loving. Though he dared not frame it in words he knew that Vincie Bently had greatly increased his longing for a hearthstone of his own. To turn and run away meant to give up every cherished hope. To stay and fight against long odds meant almost sure defeat in the end, but he could do nothing else. The only question was how to fight.

Dal was not a gunman. He had never yet shot at a man, but in his cowboy days he had practised drawing and shooting just as

he had practised roping and riding. It was part of the business. Now he was supremely glad that he had at least some skill, for the only logical thing to do, it seemed, was to carry the fight to Hasbrouck in person. He would get the goods on Hasbrouck if he could by visiting his ranch, but if that failed he would seek Hasbrouck face to face and settle the issue man style.

Yet he did not underestimate the danger. Hasbrouck had always been as stealthy as a coyote—his secret ownership of two ranches was proof of that. Moreover, he usually had some gun-fighter with him. Slim Gurley in Idaho, and presumably Nevada Brown or Kutch here.

In the morning Dal and Sawyer had breakfast together, and later Dal hired a saddle horse and a pack horse from the livery stableman for ten dollars each, on condition that Sawyer would agree to bring them back the next day. Then they went around by Cutler's store to load up the supplies Dal had bought.

Cutler was on hand, and greeted Dal with a surly nod. Evidently he had heard of the row of the night before and had taken sides. Yet he seemed to be friendly enough with Sawyer—a friendship, however, perhaps based on the expectations of further profit. Six herds of sheep meant an expense account of four or five hundred dollars a month, a sum which was not to be scoffed at.

"You going out to Silver Zone?" he asked Sawyer.

"Yes; I'm goin' out to look over the range," Sawyer replied.

Now that he was entirely sober his utterances were crisp and to the point.

"You'd best not monkey with that range out there," Cutler advised in a soft, confidential tone.

"Why not?" Sawyer asked bluntly.

"It's a long way to haul your supplies, the range ain't very good, and you're liable to have trouble with cattlemen. I'm a county commissioner, you know, and I like to avoid these range wars. They're bad for the country. That is why I always try to smooth things over when I see trouble coming. If you take your sheep out there you'll not be allowed to water them."

"That so? Why I figured on leasing that Silver Zone Spring!"

"Hasbrouck will control that," Cutler said flatly.

Sawyer looked inquiringly at Dal.

"That spring belongs to Samuel Bently, an' Hasbrouck won't be allowed to water a critter there," Dal answered.

"I suppose you think you can hold Hasbrouck off at the point of a gun," Cutler sneered. "Let me tell you, Sawyer, that old man Bently has been there two years and he ain't plowed a furrow. To hold that alleged homestead he should have forty acres plowed. Hasbrouck has been trying to buy him out for charity's sake, but now he's decided to contest him."

"Looks like you might be tryin' to sell me a lemon," Sawyer remarked to Dal, though without rancour.

Dal's homesteading experience had taught him a little about the Homestead law.

"Even if Hasbrouck contests, Bently has possession an' he can't be put off until the contest is decided in Hasbrouck's favor. If Bently wants to appeal it to the General Land Office he can hold it for a year if he loses in the end," Dal reminded them serenely.

Cutler lost his temper.

"See here, you," he snarled. "You keep out of affairs in this country. We don't need your kind of people—nor that girl out there either. What's she doing out there at that water-hole except to catch men that come around? It's all a bluff about——"

Dal's fist crashed into the tobacco-stained mouth, and Cutler went down like a beef, his head striking against his own door-step. It was not a clean knock-out, but the man was too stunned to get up at once. Dal let him lie there, and snapped an order for the dish-faced clerk to bring his stuff to the door. He was just putting the last articles in the pack-bags when Cutler staggered to his feet.

"Don't you ever show your face in Hog-up again," he quavered through his bloody lips. "And if you know what's good for you you'll leave Silver Zone. You ain't fooling anybody about what you're after out there."

"Well, if I ever do come back to Hog-up you're mighty likely to go out," Dal shot back.

He mounted his hired saddle horse, and giving the leading rope on the pack horse a pull, rode out of town. Sawyer rode by his side.

"Looks like you've made an enemy out of every man in this country. For a cowboy you are sure one —— of a mixer. What have

they got it in for you about?" Sawyer wondered.

"Search me," Dal said truthfully. "All I done in here was to take up your little quarrel, an' they fall on me for it; but love you like a brother."

"What's queer out at Silver Zone?" Sawyer quizzed.

Suddenly Dal saw it. Bently had said Hasbrouck also was hunting for Lonesome Jim's lost silver-mine. Now it appeared that Cutler was in cahoots with Hasbrouck. The poor fools doubtless believed he was at Silver Zone hunting for the mine, and naturally they felt their own chances would be enhanced if he could be got rid of. It was laughable.

"The people are queer," Dal smilingly replied to Sawyer's question.

Vincie's first question when the two men rode up to the cabin at Silver Zone was, "Why, where is Sport?"

"I lost him—let him get away from me," Dal confessed.

"Oh, what terribly hard luck," she condoled.

"Oh I'll get him back all right," Dal said with feigned confidence.

SAWYER was delighted with the range, and with the location of the spring. Dal had rightly sized the sheepman up as a born gambler, and after having been beguiled by the range he was ready to take long chances on holding it. He assured Dal he would give five hundred dollars for the use of the spring if the papers showing Bently's right to hold it were clear, saying he would recommend a payment of that amount to his company, with reasonable certainty that it would be approved. But some time must elapse before he could pay the money. It must first be shown that Bently could fulfill his end of the agreement.

After supper that evening, which Vincie made something of a banquet compared to the slim rations they had been living on, she and Sawyer went into the room where her father was, to discuss the papers allowing Bently's homestead application.

Dal told Sawyer where his blankets were and invited him to use them that night. He excused himself, over Vincie's protest that he was working too hard, on the plea that he must hunt coyotes all night. But once out of sight of the cabin he cached his rifle, and struck out on a trail along the edge of the desert. He was starting out to carry the war to Hasbrouck.

He would have taken the hired horse, but he had promised to send the animal back the next day by Sawyer, and he hated to break a promise. Nor did he care to make explanations to Sawyer. He was dog tired to start with, for the hired horse had been a rough gaited one, and Dal had had no real rest the night before. But having definitely decided to take the aggressive he was willing to stand any amount of physical hardships for the advantage of taking the enemy by surprize.

It was past eight o'clock when he started, and though he walked until his legs felt like stilts and he was compelled to shove them along like so much lumber, he kept doggedly to a pace that he was sure averaged three miles an hour. When finally he came to a fence which marked the boundary of Hasbrouck's ranch there were dim, red streaks in the eastern sky which heralded the swift approach of dawn.

He plodded on grimly until he stood on the rim of a plateau overlooking a flat, wild-grass meadow. Nearly a quarter of a mile from him, near the north end of the meadow, was a cluster of low buildings, and a conglomeration of hit-and-miss corrals. This was Hasbrouck's headquarters.

As he looked there was a flicker of light in the largest building, a sign that somebody was getting up to build a fire. A moment later a curl of smoke came out of the stove pipe. Dal shivered. In spite of his long walk he was cold. Even on the desert the hours just before daylight are bitterly cold in the Fall. He hurriedly began walking down the slope toward the buildings.

When he was close enough to see clearly he saw that only two of the buildings were used to live in, the rest being stables and outbuildings. One of these two was a long, rambling structure that resembled a bunkhouse. It was the one where the light was burning. The other habitable building was a neat log cabin about twelve by sixteen feet. Considering the fact that the logs for the buildings had to be hauled from the mountains twenty or more miles away it was not strange that the buildings were not more commodious.

There was no sign of life in the smaller building and Dal shrewdly suspected that it was Hasbrouck's private domicile. It occurred to him that if he could get in there

with Hasbrouck he might force the man to fight, but after all he felt it would be too much like murder, even if Hasbrouck did deserve killing. Besides, there was small chance of getting anything valuable in the way of information.

His best chance, he decided, was to do a little eaves-dropping; but before doing so he took note of a small shanty, not more than six by six, that stood about sixty feet from each of the buildings, forming the apex of a sort of triangle. He judged it to be a smoke-house, and admirably located as a hiding-place should the necessity arise. Then he moved swiftly over the remaining open space until he stood close beside a window of the bunk-house.

Dal took it as a good sign that his efforts to drive himself onward had been rewarded by getting him to the place just in the nick of time. Already he could hear the usual grumblings of sleepy men pulling on their clothes inside the bunk-house. From the other end came the rattling and banging of pots and pans which told that the building was cook-shack as well.

"What's on the program today, Kutch?" Dal heard a man ask.

"There won't be much of anything to do except fix up around the corrals, an' mebbe do a little brandin' with a fryin' pan till the boss gits back. A couple of you, though, can come with me an' try to git Nevada's saddle back."

"Want me to go back to Silver Zone—as usual?" the man who had spoken first, asked.

"No; I'm on that assignment from here in, Bonanzer," came Nevada Brown's querulous voice. "All you ever done was to go to sleep under a cedar."

"Like ——!" Bonanzer snorted.

"You've been stickin' around there off an' on ever since the old man done up old Bently, an' you never once got a look at that sheepherder he brought in there to help him prospect," Kutch cut him off.

"When's the boss comin' back?" Bonanzer grunted.

"None of your —— business," Kutch replied shortly.

Then Hasbrouck was not at home, which meant probably, Dal reflected, that the cattleman had gone back to Idaho. Dal was now warned who to look out for around Silver Zone, but he felt there was little more to be gained for the present in the way of information; and if the majority of the cowboys were going to stick around the ranch that day it was going to be dangerous for him to linger in the vicinity.

But just then a brilliant idea occurred to him. Breakfast could not yet be ready in the bunk-house, so the cowboys were undoubtedly going to do their chores before they ate. Some of them would surely drive in the cavy. Dal figured he could hide in the shanty behind the buildings until the men came in to breakfast, and then he could slip out to the corrals and replevy Sport if the horse was there, or borrow another horse if he was not.

Boots were stamping across the floor toward the door, and Dal ran to the shanty, Instantly he realized his mistake. The shanty was not a smoke-house, but a spring-house. In one corner of it a clear pool of water bubbled up, and hanging above it by ropes were jugs and buckets containing milk, eggs, and butter. He started to withdraw, but already the yard was full of cowboys; he knew that he could not get twenty feet before he would be seen.

It was now broad day, and the spring-house was in full view of the corrals. And it was almost a certainty that the cook would visit the place before he called the men in to eat. Even if he could surprize and overpower the cook the cowboys would miss the fellow before he could take any steps to escape.

All speculation was cut short as a bow-legged Chinaman came trotting hurriedly toward the spring-house. Dal looked around helplessly, but suddenly he happened to look up and saw that the rafters were held together by four wide collar beams. Instantly he leaped up and caught one of them with his hands, drew his feet up between two others, and wriggled on top of them, where he lay breathlessly.

The cook entered and hauled up his milk and butter. After untying the ropes he started back for the house with a jug in one hand, a bucket in the other, without once glancing toward the roof. But as he started through the door Dal dropped softly to the ground floor behind him.

"Hop Sing," he called softly.

Jug and bucket clattered to the ground and the Chinese gave a startled squawk. His eyes bulged in terror until he saw Dal, then a slow grin wreathed his face, and he extended a yellow paw.

"Mist' Showaltah," he exclaimed. "Allee time you flighten me—just likee on the seben Hell. What the ——!"

"Careful, Hop Sing," Dal cautioned. "I ain't pinin' to be made no guest of honor here."

The Chinaman glanced at him shrewdly, and the corner of one slant eye lowered just perceptibly.

"Mebbe you fella what stay along Slilvah Zone spling?"

"I'm the hick," Dal confessed. "Now what are you going to do, Hop Sing, raise the outfit?"

"You my flind—Hasblook my boss," the Chinaman distinguished with a shrug which made his meaning clear; though Dal was perfectly sure of the Chinaman's attitude, or he would not have dropped. Hop Sing had been the cook of the old 7 H. L. in the days when Dal was serving his cowboy apprenticeship, and Thad Thompson was acting as foreman. The Chinaman had been treated as one of the outfit—a kind of treatment he was not likely to get from the average cow outfit.

"Where is Hasbrouck?" Dal asked.

"He no tell. Mebbe Kutch know—mebbe Nevada—nobody else. Mebbe hunt slilvah-mine."

"All right, Hop Sing. Now listen: this outfit stole a horse from me down in Hog-up night before last, an' I've come after him. They're runnin' the cavy in now, so when you call 'em in to breakfast I'm goin' to sneak out to the corral an' git my horse. If I have time I'm goin' to stampede the rest. So if you're a friend of mine don't give me away, but ring that breakfast gong good an' loud."

The Chinaman grinned understandingly.

"You sma't boy, Dal," he approved kindly.

There was a roar from the house from some cowboy who had finished his chores and wanted breakfast. How many others were already in Dal could not tell. This left him to guess when they were all in, though cowboys were not likely to linger long at the corrals when the breakfast gong was sounded.

A few minutes after Hop Sing had returned to his kitchen he appeared in the door and beat loudly upon a tin pan. Instantly the cowboys came running from the corral. As soon as the cook-shack door closed behind them, Dal started for the corrals on a run.

A little more than half way there he wished he had not been so precipitate, for Hop Sing again came to the door and beat upon his tin pan.

Dal knew that it was not the way of cooks to give a second warning to come to a meal. If a cowboy failed to come it was his own fault. So it was a certainty that the old Chinaman was only giving him a warning that the men were not all in yet. But it was too late to go back. If there were other men in the corrals they would surely see him before he could get back to the spring-house. He must go on and take his chances.

He jumped the first fence he came to and dodged behind a stable on his way to the horse corral. For a moment he was out of sight of the house, but too late to turn back he saw a man not twenty feet in front of him.

The man was rubbing down a handsome black horse which he had evidently just caught out of the cavy. At the sound of Dal's approach he looked up swiftly. It was Nevada Brown. Amazed recognition showed in the man's eyes a moment, then his hand shot toward his belt. He was taking no more chances on the man who had once humiliated him.

Dal had the advantage of the second he had seen Nevada first. A short period of time for most purposes, but a long time when a life hangs on the slight pressure of a trigger. The instant he had seen Nevada he had anticipated what the man would do, and his right hand had clutched his own gun—not in the least to force an issue but to be ready for action if Nevada was in a killing mood. He read Nevada's intentions at the first glance of the man's opaque eyes, and he began to draw his gun while Nevada's hand was ten inches from his.

The guns roared almost at the same time, but that second which had given Dal ten inches the start had counted heavily. He had beaten Nevada by a split second, and his shot had gone home while his opponent missed by a hair's breadth. Dal heard the bullet whistle uncomfortably close to his ear as Nevada pitched forward on his face.

He knew the shots would bring the cowboys on the run. There was now no time to look for Sport, or to let down the cumbersome bars and stampede the cavy. He leaped to the back of Nevada's black and urged the horse at the nearest outside gate.

Instantly he knew he had a real horse between his knees. The animal swerved sidewise to the hook that held the gate, Dal unfastened it and shoved the gate back with one sweep of his arm, and they were bounding away toward the trail that led to Silver Zone.

Six-shooters were popping before they were through the gate, but Dal had little fear of them at that range, for he knew such guns are never accurate at a fast moving target. But as he glanced back over his shoulder once he saw Kutch kneel and take a deliberate aim with a rifle. There was not one chance in ten that the man would miss. If he failed to get his man, it was certain that he could at least drop the horse, and the rider could quickly be overtaken.

Dal flinched involuntarily, but he forced himself to look toward the door of the cook-shack where Kutch was kneeling. It was better to receive a bullet with his face toward it than to get it in the back. He looked just in time to see Hop Sing come to the door with a dish-pan of greasy water. The presumably excited Chinaman stubbed his toe and fell full length, the contents of the dish-pan deluging Kutch from head to foot.

Dal gave an exultant whoop. Good old Hop Sing had risen to the occasion. Before Kutch could wipe the dirty water out of his eyes Dal had gained the top of the plateau. Hasbrouck's men hurriedly caught horses and gave him a short chase, but it was half-hearted. It was obvious that Nevada's black horse was the pick of the cavy, and the men knew it would be useless to try to overtake him. In a half-hour they had all turned back.

Dal loped along easily for another five miles when off to one side he perceived a cloud of dust kicked up by a band of wild horses swinging in ahead of him. More through curiosity than anything else he urged the black to a keen run until they were in sight of the wild horses. He was not greatly surprized to see that it was the same bunch he had taken Sport from. But he was surprized to see Sport himself behind them.

The horses were running wearily—that was apparent, though nothing was chasing them. Stranger still, Sport, the erstwhile leader, was behind instead of pridefully leading his band. Another burst of speed from the black brought Dal close enough to explain the riddle. Sport was saddled, and the creaking leather and flopping stirrups were scaring the other horses. The more Sport tried to overtake them, the harder they ran to avoid him. The reason the gray could not overtake the band was because he had thrown the bridle reins over his head, and his feet were thrust through them so that his mouth was jerked every step he made. Also he was dragging a lasso rope around his neck, and this was continually tangling in his legs.

Dal could easily vision what had happened. Out in the desert Nevada had undertaken to ride the wild horse, and because he lacked Dal's finesse in handling him had been thrown. Kutch had then roped him but had been too slow taking his dallies and Sport had escaped. Naturally he had gone back to his band with that peculiar instinct which always takes the wild horse straight to his kind.

The black was covering the ground in a long, easy run that ate up the miles, and gained steadily on the tired range horses. Dal kept well above them so they were gradually forced to bend toward Silver Zone. Finally they seemed to sense that they were being out-maneuvered, and they turned at a sharp right angle to make a wild dash for the hills. Dal could have headed them easily but he pulled the black down to a lope and let the band get by. But when Sport came along every nerve in the man's body was tense.

Sport cut across the trail to follow his band not twenty feet ahead of the black horse. With a rope and saddle Dal could easily have tossed the string on him, but he had nothing but his bare hands. He reined the black gently to the left until he was running parallel with the gray, and then he held the horse down to a slow run to allow Sport to get a slight lead.

Finally, with a skilful exhibition of good riding, Dal locked one hand in the black's mane, and leaned over until he could touch the ground with the other hand without slackening the speed of the black. At the second trial he picked the end of the rope from the ground and regained his seat on the black.

Gradually the black forged ahead, and Dal coiled the rope, all the time exerting a steady pressure on the gray's neck. It hurt Dal to see Sport trying to win the race handicapped as he was by the bridle reins

and the rope, but his soul responded to the splendid courage the horse showed.

At last the horses were breast to breast, and then the black inched ahead. That instant Sport stopped dead still in his tracks, and faced Dal with a look of mild inquiry in his intelligent eyes.

CHAPTER VIII

LONESOME JIM'S LETTER

WHEN he found that Sport was willing to be ridden, Dal turned the black horse loose to find his way back to Hasbrouck's ranch, though he retained the saddle and bridle that were on Sport. Even under extenuating circumstances he was loath to ride another man's horse any longer than was absolutely necessary, but he had ridden bareback too long already, and now wanted the saddle. As for the legal consequences he only smiled. What was the use of worrying about a simple thing like borrowing a saddle when he had just killed a man?

Though he had killed Nevada in self-defense he knew it would be impossible to establish that fact to the satisfaction of any jury, against the perjured testimony of all the cowboys on Hasbrouck's ranch.

That day, or the next, the officers would come to Silver Zone to arrest him for killing Nevada. Or Hasbrouck's outfit would come to get vengeance in their own simple way. Dal had no illusions about being able to fight off a bunch of men of any size. It seemed that fate had conspired to make him abandon the Bentlys. He had even secured his own horse in the nick of time. But he felt just as strongly as ever that he must stick with the people of Silver Zone.

But obviously he could not go on as he had done. He must now look out for the Bentlys secretly. Vincie was capable of taking care of her father, and Dal felt there was little danger of even Hasbrouck using violence against her. Money was the thing she needed most. Dal glanced toward the rough, timber-clad slopes of the mountains. Somewhere up there he felt that he would be safe until he was driven out by the snow, and he could shoot coyotes and wolves while keeping an eye on Silver Zone. Also he could keep watch on all of Hasbrouck's operations.

There was, however, no immediate necessity for going into exile, so he rode slowly toward Silver Zone, all the time keeping a watchful eye on the trail behind him.

"Oh, you've got Sport again," Vincie cried delightedly as he rode up to the spring. "How did you manage it?"

"Well, somebody else got him first," Dal admitted, as though striving manfully to do full justice. "But Sport throwed him away, an' the thoughtful little cuss brought me the other guy's saddle an' bridle. Reckon he didn't like bareback ridin' any better than I did."

"Dal, I don't know what we would have done without you," Vincie broke out suddenly. "Mr. Sawyer is going to give us six hundred dollars for the use of the spring—a hundred dollars for each herd that waters here. That is more money than we could have collected in ten years. Think what it will mean to us!"

"I'm sure glad," Dal said heartily. "I wisht it was so you folks could move out of here though."

"Are you tired of us, or do you want our silver-mine?" the girl laughed.

"Neither one—an' as far as the mine is concerned, candidly, I'd take two-bits for my chances of ever findin' it."

"But it's here—somewhere," the girl insisted. "Father will never give it up. I couldn't persuade him to leave here until that mine is found even if the doctor hadn't said it would be too dangerous to move him."

Apparently she would stay just as long as her father wanted to, regardless of consequences. Dal looked her over admiringly, and suddenly he reddened with shame for himself. Vincie had failed to put on the bill of supplies he had bought in Hog-up one single article for herself, and he, manlike, had overlooked it.

Her clothes were little else than a mass of patches. They were neat and clean, and the quality had once been good, but they seemed to have almost lost the power of cohesion. True, she wore them as regally as a queen, but Dal was gifted with a fine understanding, and he knew what secret humiliation it was for a girl of her type to have to wear rags. More and more he thrilled at the fine spirit of her which disdained to make complaint or apology. He cursed himself for having placed himself in a position where he had to kill a man, thus making it necessary for the girl to be

her own protector; but for her sake there was no other way.

"I had a little hard luck today, Vincie," he began tentatively. "The result is that I've got to go into the hills for a few days. D'ye reckon you can git along without me?"

"Certainly—we never did have any claim on your time at all, of course—but what was the hard luck?"

Should he tell her? No doubt it would be only a matter of hours until she knew from others, so why postpone the inevitable.

"I shot a man."

The girl turned pale.

"Dal! You killed a man?"

"I didn't stop to look, but I think so—practically know it."

"Were there—any extenuating circumstances?"

"It was me or him."

"But still—yet I suppose——"

"There were reasons," Dal said wearily. "But I'm afraid you couldn't understand. You ain't been used to this sort of thing."

"I'm afraid I can't understand. I can't understand Westerners at all. Perhaps I should try to conform to the standards of the country, but I——"

"I'm not askin' you to approve of killin' a man," Dal broke in. "You'll notice that I ain't makin' any defense, or excuses rather, because I will make a defense when they come after me. I'm only explainin' to you why it's necessary for me to go into the hills for a few days."

He waited expectantly for her to say something. He rather expected her to express her disapproval—perhaps to tell him never to come around again. But she only turned toward the cabin.

"You must come in and get part of the supplies if you are going into the mountains," she said quietly.

Dal looked in on Bently for a moment, and it was evident to him, though the girl perhaps did not notice it, that the old assayer was failing fast. Vincie explained briefly to him that Dal was going into the mountains for a few days.

"Keep your eye out for Lonesome Jim's mine," the old man urged. "I have been thinking lately that it may be farther back than I have looked."

"I'll keep watchin' for it," Dal promised absently.

With a scant grub supply tied on behind his saddle Dal struck into the mountains. He kept more to the northwest than he had ever been before because it placed him closer to Hasbrouck's ranch. But as the mountains grew higher and rougher he seldom caught sight of even the desert itself. He was moody and depressed. Everything seemed determined to go wrong. He had always destested "killers" and now he had slid into the class himself as naturally as though he had always trained for it.

His previous state of mind upon the subject made him appreciate Vincie's attitude, for her views would naturally be more uncompromising than his had ever been. She had not even rebuked him, but he knew that was through no toleration of his act. It was only her sense of gratitude which kept her from showing how much she abhorred him.

However, Dal was too much of an optimist to be long depressed. Things were as they were, and he must make the best of them, offering Vincie all the help and protection he could, and doing his best to get the goods on Hasbrouck. His immediate concern was to find an out-of-the-way place where he could camp in safety, and find feed for his horse. Fortunately the grass was yet good, and his Sport could get all the feed he needed within the radius of a picket-rope.

Riding up the bottom of a cañon he happened to look up, and saw, half-way up the almost vertical side of the cañon, a coyote looking down on him curiously. Leaping to the ground Dal took a careful aim at the animal, but with the opportune shiftiness of the breed the coyote sprang just as he pulled the trigger. Dal gaped in amazement. There was not even a bush to give the coyote shelter—but it had disappeared.

The cañon wall was too steep for a horse to climb so Dal clambered up on foot, determined to see what had become of the coyote. When he reached the spot where the animal had stood its disappearance was easily explained. There was a deep pot-hole, or depression, in the side of the hill, perhaps three hundred yards in diameter and a hundred feet deep. The coyote had been standing just on the rim of it, and had jumped down as Dal had fired. The peculiar thing was that the hole was not visible from either the top or bottom of the cañon on account of the peculiar slope of the sides.

Dal debated a moment whether or not

to investigate the place more thoroughly, and the possibility that the coyote might still be in there decided him. He found a place where he could scramble down. A glance around showed that the joke was on him. There was a small, barely perceptible opening at one end of the pot-hole where brother coyote had assuredly gone out.

Dal walked slowly toward the place when suddenly something rolled under his foot. Looking hastily down he was horrified to see a man's thigh bone. Lying around promiscuously where they had been dragged by coyotes were the rest of the bones composing a man's skeleton. Dal swiftly located the skull, and it required but a cursory inspection to show that it had been punctured by a rifle bullet.

Now thoroughly interested Dal began an inch by inch search of the surrounding ground. Bits of rotten clothing were scattered here and there, but none of them yielded anything that might identify the dead man. He began to search the entire pot-hole, and close to the narrow entrance used by the coyotes, he was rewarded. There he picked up a buckskin sack, or poke, six inches in length, rotten and moldy but the strong buckskin still holding together. It was badly chewed, mute evidence that some coyote had been worrying it, but the draw-string at the top was still tightly drawn.

Dal broke the string and peered inside. There were a few coins, but these he gave scant notice. The thing that interested him was a moldy, crumpled sheet of paper in the bottom of the poke. Dal drew it out carefully to avoid tearing it, and gently wiped away the mold. After it had dried in the sun a few minutes it was easily read in spite of its age. The date and part of the heading of the letter was gone but the body of it was still intact.

Lonesome Jim, Hog-up, Nevada. Dear Sir:—I regret to have to inform you that the samples of galena ore you sent me to be assayed are practically worthless. Not enough silver to bother with. A full report will follow, but you are wasting your time trying to exploit ore of this character. Respectfully yours, Samuel Bently.

If Lonesome Jim's ore was worthless, why was Bently so confident that there was a rich silver-mine in the vicinity? Then the truth dawned upon Dal. Bently had deliberately lied to the old prospector to get him to abandon his mine; then he had come out to find it, hoping that Lonesome Jim had left the country in disgust. Bently, then, was the most contemptible kind of crook. Dal's eyes wandered to the bleached bones of the old prospector. Could Samuel Bently be worse than a crook—a killer?

The indications were that the prospector had been shot down by some one above the pot-hole. Second thought convinced Dal that it could not have been Bently. The only gun the assayer owned was the one with the filed sights given him by Hasbrouck, and Bently surely was not a marksman even if he were a murderer which was a thing Dal found it impossible to believe.

There was not a doubt, however, that circumstantial evidence pointed at Bently. Dal himself had too recently been a victim of that kind of evidence to attach much importance to it, but he was glad that the letter had fallen into his possession instead of anybody else—Hasbrouck, for instance. Had the date of the letter not been obliterated it might have established Bently's alibi. Whatever Bently had done he was past injuring any one again, and Dal determined that the old man should never be called on to explain his relations to Lonesome Jim.

Yet something held him from destroying the letter. Having cleared Bently of the charge of murder to his own satisfaction, he went on trying to acquit the old man of fraud. The evidence seemed indisputable, but it was not in keeping with Bently's character. Still, men did queer things where money was concerned. Finally he folded the letter tightly, rolled a cigaret with the last of his tobacco, put the letter in the sack and returned them both to his pocket. If anything should happen to him no one would think to look through a half-empty tobacco sack.

Later in the evening he found a small spring in the head of a box cañon that suited him for camping purposes. The place was heavily wooded, and there was a bit of a meadow with grass enough to last a horse for a month. Altogether it was ideal. There was small chance that he would ever be located there, and three hours hard riding would take him either to Silver Zone or to Hasbrouck's ranch.

The next day was a lonesome one. He tried hunting coyotes for a while only to

give it up in disgust, for he knew the only reasonably sure way to get those gaunt, desert ghosts was to let them come to him. Then he went back to where he had found Lonesome Jim's skeleton, gathered up the bones, and covered them the best he could with rocks. When this distasteful job was completed he again made a minute search of the place for further evidence. All he found was the old prospector's pick, which further bore out his surmise that Lonesome Jim had simply been dabbling at the rocks in usual prospecting style. There was not the slightest sign, however, that the prospector had found any color there.

By sunset Dal had stood it as long as he could. He threw the saddle on Sport and started for Silver Zone. On the way to camp he had shot a brace of pheasants. He cleaned them carefully, and denying his own stomach, took them with him as a peace offering.

He tied Sport in the closest clump of cedars to the Bently cabin and went on afoot. It was a light night, and he knew there might be men at Silver Zone waiting for him, so his approach was cautious. The last hundred yards he crept in stealthily as an Indian, but there was not a sound to indicate danger of any kind. There was no light in the cabin, but when he pressed his ear to the cracks in the wall he could hear deep breathing inside. An occasional moan from Bently told him that nothing critical had happened in his absence.

Dal gently opened the kitchen door and without entering the room left the pheasants just inside. Then he started back to Sport, before he had gone far he stopped in amazement as he heard the shrill whinny of a horse. It was old Spot. He would have recognized the peculiar intonations under any circumstances.

He sank to the ground and waited, his hand on his revolver. Old Spot should still have been in a livery stable in Hog-up, and his presence here augured a trap of some kind. He could think of no other explanation than that the horse had been planted there for a bait.

As he waited he could hear the horse coming slowly toward him, the lack of speed not being entirely due to the hobbles. Old Spot had evidently scented the presence of his master and was trying to find him, for he was zig-zagging back and forth. Motionless as a cat Dal waited. He was sure that somebody expected him to come to the horse, but he was equally positive that they would never expect the horse to go to him.

Finally old Spot caught his scent again, or some other tangible evidence of his best friend, and came on. Dal half-expected him to whinny again, but there was no sound save the clanking of the hobbles. At last the old horse stood directly in front of him, quietly nuzzling the top of his hat with a soft nose. Without arising Dal took off the hobbles, then leaped from the ground to the horse's back. With a pressure of the knee he headed Spot for the place he had left his other horse, and they disappeared silently as ghosts.

In the morning Dal came back, leaving his two horses in the cedars. Thin, blue cedar smoke was ascending from the cabin but there was no sign of lurking spies. Nevertheless Dal's advance was cautious. On three sides of the cabin the country was flat, so he was certain there was no one very close to the place. He went up to the door and knocked boldly.

"Come in," Vincie called.

He entered diffidently, but the girl's manner was unchanged from the last time he had seen her.

"Thanks for the birds," she smiled.

"Hope you'll like 'em," he said.

The pheasants were already in the frying-pan, and the savory odor made his mouth water.

"You haven't had breakfast?" she asked.

Dal gave one look at the girl's white, pinched face and replied:

"Sure. I'm an early riser in the hills. Had a chicken myself. Has anybody been here inquiring for me?" He hastily changed the subject before his hunger betrayed itself.

"Only Mr. Cutler from Hog-up," she answered.

"Cutler? Now what the —— could he want?" Dal wondered.

"He wanted to stay here until you came back, but I told him you might not come for weeks. Really, I never expected to see you again," she confessed. "Anyway, he left your horse and saddle here, and said to tell you to be sure to come to see him immediately—that he would do better by you on a certain proposition than anybody else could do."

"Well, I'll be danged," Dal said softly. "Last time I seen that old pelican he ordered me never to come to his bloomin' town

again, an' here he brings me my own horse to ride in."

"He said that he felt it was his duty to pay for the doctor for father because he was our friend; so he brought back your horse and the bill of sale you gave the doctor," Vincie explained, as she handed over the paper.

Dal slowly tore it into bits. Then he laughed softly.

"What are you laughing about?" the girl asked wonderingly.

"I knew when I saw old Spot last night that he was the bait for some sort of trap, but I never thought old Cutler was the trapper. I reckon I know now how a coyote feels when he sneaks the meat off a trap an' never loses a hair."

"Mr. Cutler was terribly worked up about something," the girl insisted. "He said he knew you were a detective, and so you needn't be afraid of any trap."

Dal clamped his jaws on the natural comment that arose. He did not believe for a minute that Cutler thought him a detective, but if he failed to deny the charge there was a chance somebody else might believe it and it behooved him to seize every helping straw that might be blown across his trail by the winds of chance.

"Mr. Cutler was not acting. He was almost hysterical with alarm," Vincie insisted.

"I may call on him," Dal said. "But," he added under his breath, "it'll be when he ain't lookin' for me."

Then, because he had lied about having had breakfast, and because the pheasants were so tantalizing, he went outside and chopped wood until breakfast was over in the cabin.

CHAPTER IX

A DATE IS KEPT

SEVERAL days passed slowly with Dal shifting back and forth from his mountain retreat to Silver Zone—and nothing happened. Once in a while he caught sight of some shadowy rider but that was all, so naturally he began to abate some of his caution. Not that he believed Hasbrouck had given up getting him for the killing of Nevada, but because he could not forever keep tensed up to expect an immediate battle. Yet he was not running blindly into any traps.

Bently was growing weaker, so rapidly now that even his daughter noticed it, and in her deep trouble she was coming more and more to rely upon Dal—no matter what she might think of him as a man. One morning when he arrived, her face clearly showed greater anxiety.

"Your father worse?" Dal asked.

"I don't know. He has had something to worry him more, and he shows the effects of it."

"What's happened?"

"Hasbrouck's foreman, Kutch, was here yesterday with a notice of contest against this place. The hearing is to be in Annamucca next month. Kutch says we haven't lived up to the law, and that we must vacate in ten days or he'll put us off."

"He was bluffin'," Dal said confidently. "He wouldn't have bothered to file a contest if he meant to try to throw you out."

"But we haven't lived up to the homestead law, and we can't tell what to expect. Western men are so violent. Even you——"

"The government is more liberal in these homestead contests than a readin' of the law would lead you to believe," Dal cut in to cover her rapidly mounting confusion. "If a man is livin' on his place, an' usin' it for what it's best adapted for he's not likely to lose it because he don't meet some fool requirement like plowin' up this desert to raise a better crop of sage-brush."

"But that only shows that they are more likely to try to eject us by force, if there is a possibility of our winning the law-suit," Vincie said quickly.

Dal saw the logic of her contention, and he knew that Hasbrouck would never wait to settle the issue by law.

"Just remember that you've leased this place to Sawyer, an' he'll have something to say about Hasbrouck throwin' you out. He has the whole Sheepgrowers' Association back of him," he encouraged.

"It will mean more violence," Vincie said wearily. "I almost wish you had never brought Mr. Sawyer here."

"It may have been a mistake," Dal flushed.

"I don't blame you in the least," she said quickly. "I know you did it for us."

"Well, all there is to it we can't let Hasbrouck have his own way. Your father can't be moved, and I'll say frankly that I'll be tickled to death to have Sawyer's

help if Hasbrouck does start any rough stuff."

The girl's eyes wandered off across the desert and came back to the humble cabin in its squalid setting of a by-gone mining town.

"It seems a pitiful thing to fight over," she said at last, "but we didn't start it. I begin to see that half-way measures won't do. When you live in Rome, do as the Romans do. That means that we'll have to fight for our rights."

"Now you're talkin'," Dal said enthusiastically. "We'll fight 'em in the courts, an' we'll fight 'em on the range."

"And I believe you'll like it," she said shrewdly.

That remark caused Dal some deep thought when he was alone. He had always hated trouble, but now he had to admit that he looked forward to the inevitable clash with Hasbrouck with interest, if not positive zest. Whether or not he was beginning to like trouble for its own sake, being an outlaw was at least making him more daring—more keen to take desperate chances.

As a result of this changed state an idea had been lurking in his mind for several days, which two weeks before would have seemed to him rank folly. But now, the more he thought about it, the more possible his belief that it could be pulled off. The plan was to go quietly back to Topaz and prove up on his homestead under the very jaws of the law that was anxious to hang him.

Going back to his camp in the mountains Dal saw a man digging at an old prospect hole. The fellow was too far away for his features to be discernible, but Dal supposed him to be some casual prospector until the man, suddenly becoming alarmed, started for his horse. Then the peculiar rolling glide showed it was Hasbrouck.

Dal pulled his hat well down over his eyes and started in pursuit. He was impelled more by curiousity than any wish to overtake his arch enemy, but Hasbrouck showed no intention of being caught. He was riding the same black horse on which Dal had escaped after shooting Nevada, and he was urging the animal to do its level best.

Dal quickly turned back; he had no desire to be ambushed, or lured into the Hasbrouck domicile. For the first time he took Lonesome Jim's lost silver-mine seriously. Hasbrouck undoubtedly believed in it or he would not waste his time pecking away at solid masses of rock. Bently had stated that Hasbrouck was hunting for the mine, and had voiced his suspicion that Hasbrouck had done away with Lonesome Jim; but Dal had discounted the old assayer's statement. He had figured that Bently seeing the man riding for cattle in the hills a few times, had been so obsessed by his own interest in finding the mine that he jumped to the conclusion that Hasbrouck was actuated by the same motives.

Now he knew Hasbrouck really was hunting for the mine, so Bently might be right about Hasbrouck having killed Lonesome Jim. Somebody had murdered him, and it was much more likely to have been Hasbrouck than Bently. The poor old prospector had hit hard sledding all around. After having found a silver lode his assayer had lied to him, and then, perhaps while he was hunting another lode, he had been murdered.

Dal stopped his horse and rolled a cigaret. While he smoked he made up his mind as to his next course of action. He decided that the silver mine could wait. Kutch had given the Bentlys ten days to move off, and at least there was little danger of actual war at Silver Zone until Sawyer's sheep arrived. But the thing he had been contemplating could not wait.

This was the eleventh day of October, and in four more days he was supposed to prove up on his own homestead at Topaz. If he should fail to appear he knew that one of Hasbrouck's men would promptly take possession and file a claim that would win on his default. To go back into the town where he was wanted for murder, and where he would assuredly be hanged if he was caught seemed little short of madness, but that was the very thing he contemplated.

The thing he pinned his faith to was the element of surprize. No one would dream of his coming back to Topaz, especially at ten o'clock in the morning. And he was not going blindly; he had turned his plans over and over in his mind and found them reasonably sound. Of course there was always the chance of the unexpected happening, and it was dangerous at best; but if he could pull it off it would be a body blow to Hasbrouck.

The thing he had feared most about the project was that Hasbrouck would be there in person with some of his men to file the contest immediately after the default, and before any one else could take advantage of it. But now that Hasbrouck was flying in the opposite direction this danger was removed. The more he thought about it the more the venture appealed to him for the very excitement. It would be more fun than shooting up a town.

"This outlaw business has got to pay some dividends on the investment," he told old Spot confidentially, slapping the horse on the neck with the palm of his hand.

He rode on up to his improvised camp, and threw Nevada's saddle on Sport. Then he rolled up the meager grub supply, the largest share of which was a front quarter of one of Hasbrouck's "slow elk"—the other three quarters he had taken to the cabin and Silver Zone as real elk. This, in the middle of his bed-roll, he tied behind the saddle on the extra horse.

Daylight, on the morning of the fifteenth of October, found Dal in the foothills a few miles south of Topaz. Mounting Sport, and leading Spot, he cautiously crossed the hills until he was due east of the town. From here he rode on without old Spot, continuing until he had ridden a semi-circle around the town and stopped about four miles north of it. By coming in from the north and going out the same way he hoped to make people think he was from the Snake River country.

The entire country surrounding Topaz was as rough as a washboard, so he was sure that he could lose any pursuers in three or four miles. Old Spot had been unbeaten as a runner around Topaz, and the gray, desert mustang was faster yet. Dal had little doubt, therefore, that Sport could show a clean pair of heels to any hastily gathered posse until they got back to old Spot. Then, by changing horses after a ten or twelve mile heat, he could literally run away from his pursuers.

By cutting a wire fence or two he was able to get into the very edge of town under cover of the willows that lined Topaz Creek. He dismounted and tied Sport to a willow bush with a single bow knot which could be jerked loose with one pull. He looked at his watch and saw that it was just nine-thirty. Thirty minutes more and his case would be called by the Land Commissioner.

Dal crawled to the edge of the willows and took note of his surroundings. Like most Western towns Topaz had never been laid out—it had simply grown up, with houses built wherever the whim of the builder dictated. A hundred yards away was the closest building, a livery stable. Then there were two three old shacks and the jail. Another hundred yards was Main Street. In one of the buildings that abutted thereon, above the White Owl saloon, was the room in which the Land Commissioner conducted his hearings on his monthly visits to Topaz. This was the room into which Dal had to get by means of an outside stairway, open to the vision of all who cared to look.

He stood an even chance at least of slipping from building to building, and finally getting up the stairway without being recognized, for there were not many people on the streets at that hour. There was an equally good chance that the Land Commissioner, who only spent one day each month in the town, would not connect him with the Dal Showalter wanted for murder. But it was not so simple as that, for he must first locate Thad and Brick and let them know his intentions.

He knew they would be in town, for Thad was a stickler on keeping his word, however foolish it might appear to be. But they might be in any of the dozen stores and saloons. Neither of them would dream of Dal really coming back. He decided that he must get in the shelter of either the livery stable or the jail and take chances on seeing one of his friends walking along Main Street; then try to attract his attention. If any of his enemies were in town he knew they would be more likely to be at the livery stable than the jail, so he strolled out boldly, crossed a vacant lot, passed between two shacks, and reached the side of the jail without any one taking any notice of him.

He dropped flat of his face with arms and legs sprawled out in a credible imitation of a drunk man. Again he was banking on the unexpected. Any place except by the side of the jail a drunk would quickly be picked up. His hat was pulled well down over his face, but between the rim of the hat and the ground was three inches of daylight through which Dal peered, getting a

good view of every person who walked down Main Street.

Suddenly he saw a familiar, bow-legged figure cross a ten-foot alley between the New York store and the Palace Saloon. There was not time to make any kind of a signal, and Dal crouched, waiting to see whether Thad stopped in the Palace or went on by. Whichever it was, Dal was now determined to walk boldly out and make his presence known to Thad. At the worst he could make a brush run to his horse and get out of town.

To the great surprize of the imitation drunkard Thad swung by the Palace Saloon and turning sharply to his left headed straight for the jail. This was better luck than he had expected, but his satisfaction swiftly changed to alarm just as he was on the point of trying to attract Thad's attention. The door of the jail opened and heavy steps strode into the front yard. A moment later Dal heard the heavy voice of Matt Wells, the sheriff, booming an inquiry.

"Anything I can do for you this morning, Thompson?"

"Nothin' per'ticklar—I just wanted to know if you'd ever heard anything about that neighbor of mine that's wanted for murder?"

"Showalter?" the sheriff demanded.

"Shore," Thad replied.

"Yeah. We got him located all right. Have him right here in the coop 'fore many more days," the sheriff said confidently.

"That so?" Thad inquired with interest. "Whereabouts is he, sheriff?"

Dal chuckled to himself. Thad's question would surely show whether the sheriff was bluffing or not.

"Look here, Thompson; ain't you pretty thick with Showalter? I ain't giving information out promiscus till I've got my claws on him," the sheriff said irritably.

"Bluffin'," Dal commented to himself.

"I thought you said you had him where you could git him?" Thad asked innocently.

"I have—but I ain't givin' his friends no chance to tip him off," the sheriff laughed. "If that's all you wanted to see me about," he continued, "let's go to a saloon an' have a drink."

"Might as well," Thad agreed.

Dal was in a dilemma. If he let Thad go away with the sheriff there would almost certainly be no chance to speak to him, and it was now a quarter to ten. Neither could he lay around pretending drunkenness for very many minutes. Some one would surely call an officer's attention to him. On the other hand how could he make himself known to Thad in the presence of the sheriff? There was only one alternative to immediate abandonment of the whole project, and that called for instant, dangerous action. Dal had come too far, and counted on the result too much to give up at that stage.

He arose and stepped swiftly around the corner of the jail.

"Stick 'em up, sheriff," he said low voiced, but in tones charged with menace. "You, too, Thompson," he added.

The sheriff's heavy jaw dropped. His hand began groping absently toward his belt.

"Don't do that, sheriff—you wouldn't want to git all mussed up right in your own jail-yard," Dal warned softly.

At last comprehension dawned upon the sheriff of the indignity he was being subjected to and his face flamed angrily, but he realized his impotence. He started to raise his hands.

"Never mind gittin' 'em up now," Dal amended. "Just keep 'em well away from your sides an' walk into the jail, an' walk straight."

Matt Wells walked into his own office in a way he had never contemplated. He whirled around with an icy glare.

"What the——" he began fiercely.

"Set down," Dal snapped.

The sheriff slumped into a chair.

"Take his gun an' keys, then gag him with your handkerchief, an' then we'll rope him to his chair, Thompson," Dal directed, his gun swinging ominously toward Thad. "An' don't try to bungle the job or I'll ventilate you."

Thad suddenly came out of the state of coma the shock had thrown him into. He permitted himself one long grin behind the sheriff's back, then he fell to his job with a great show of fear. But the job he did trussing up the sheriff left nothing to be desired.

"I ain't takin' chances on leavin' you two together," Dal said, jangling the jail keys. "I'll let you think it over in a cell for a while, Thompson."

He prodded Thad roughly in the ribs with the end of his six-shooter as they

filed out into the corridor. Dal locked the sheriff's door, motioning Thad towards an empty cell. A moment later they were both inside.

"You —— fool," Thad grated.

"Don't waste time," Dal cut in. "We're due at the land office right now. I'm goin' over an' give my testimony now. You hunt Brick up an' git up there as quick as God'll let you. I ain't got no time to fool around in this man's town."

"Got your gitaway fixed?" Thad asked.

"Absolutely—an' don't you go tryin' to help me out no matter what happens. They can't touch you for bein' held up by me, or for appearin' to give your testimony like you was ordered to, but the minute you try to help me out if I git cornered they'll grab you for assistin' a criminal to escape. Remember the wife an' kids."

"You're right; you'll have to play your game alone. I got to think of my family. But —— me if I don't take out some insurance before I leave town," Thad muttered.

Dal stepped into the corridor with a keen glance in each direction. Apparently the sheriff had been on duty alone at that hour. His deputies, Dal shrewdly suspected, were already where Wells had been headed for—the Palace Saloon. In one of the back cells a poker game was in progress among the inmates, but the prisoners had not suspected anything amiss in the office.

Commanding Thad to wait a few minutes before coming out Dal pulled his hat far down over his face and stepped into the street.

Now was the critical time. If he could walk the fifty yards to the White Owl building, and up the stairs without being recognized he figured the victory would be half-won. At least he would not be working in the dark. All he would have to do would be to look out for squalls, and make his getaway if things began breaking too fast.

Several men half-hesitated, favoring Dal with curious glances as he shuffled along with head down and face averted, but each man thought he must be mistaken—it was simply impossible that Dal Showalter would be openly walking the streets of Topaz. With a sigh of relief Dal opened the door of the land office and stepped inside. With a sickly grin he noticed for the first time that his face was covered with perspiration. After all it was something of an ordeal.

"Good morning," hailed a voice from behind a roll-top desk.

"Good mornin'. You the Land Commissioner?" Dal asked.

"Yes. Are you the Mr. Showalter that was to prove up here this morning?" the commissioner asked.

"That's me," Dal responded warily.

"There's a fellow by that name charged with killing some sheepherders around here —I thought you might be the man."

"I wouldn't be apt to be here if I was, would I?" Dal grinned.

"You wouldn't be apt; that's a fact," the commissioner agreed with a slightly different interpretation of one word.

"I'd like to git this over with," Dal urged.

"Your witnesses?"

"Will be right on deck by the time you need 'em."

"All right then; we'll start."

Testimony taking in homestead cases where there is no contest is usually an informal affair. The commissioner rapidly read off a number of sterotyped questions regarding length of habitation, amount of improvements, extent of cultivation, and jotted down Dal's replies.

"You'll do," he said at the end. "Swear." Before this ceremony was completed Thad and Brick arrived.

"I reckon I might as well be goin' now," Dal said lightly.

"Who pays the fees?" The Commissioner demanded sharply. "There's thirty-five dollars to be paid on this case."

Dal was non-plussed. This was a point he had overlooked. He turned hopefully to his witnesses.

"I'm busted," Thad confessed.

"I just sold an old cow to the butcher, an' I can let you have the money," Brick Hardy announced laconically.

"Brick—you're a brick," Dal said earnestly.

The commissioner was beginning to be suspcious that something was wrong. Dal quickly grasped the fact that he was trying to slow up the proceedings. The phenomenal run of good luck could not possibly continue to last. Thad and Brick could attend to the rest of the details so that no matter what happened the proof was sure to go up to Washington. He pulled the sheriff's keys from his pocket and handed them to Thad.

"You deliver these where they belong, Thad, I'm on my way," he said.

He started toward the one door in the room but stopped dead still as the door was thrown open from the outside.

Bill Hasbrouck, Slim Gurley, and another cowboy filed in.

CHAPTER X

A RUNNING FIGHT

FOR one dramatic moment the faces of six of the men were blank. Then full realization of the significance of the situation swept over them and they tensed for action while the bewildered commissioner in his turn looked blank. Dal's hand dropped to his gun with a cunning evolved by many hours of practise as a youth, but before the gun had left the holster Hasbrouck had leaped backwards through the door with an agility almost unbelievable for one of his bulk.

Slim Gurley, however, could think of nothing but trying to use his gun. Dal's momentary hesitation after Hasbrouck's jump backward gave him a chance to use it—or so he thought until Dal crooked his wrist in his direction for a chance shot. The bullet struck Slim in the arm, and his gun clattered to the floor. The third member of the Hasbrouck trio prudently decided to follow his employer outside.

Brick Hardy, in the meantime, had not been idle. At the first sign of trouble he had seized a chair and smashed a window.

"Outa that winder," he yelped. "You gotta run for it."

But now the land commissioner was galvanized into action. His suspicion that Dal was the man wanted for murder had naturally crystallized, and being an excitable man he lunged wildly for Dal the instant he shot Gurley. Quite unexpectedly he found himself thumped back into his seat with Thad Thompson sitting on his lap and holding him firmly to the chair with a pair of slim but muscular arms.

"This here hearin' ain't over yet—you got to take my testimony before you rush off," Thad announced matter-of-factly.

Dal ran to the window and leaped out. It was not high enough to be really dangerous, but he went down on his hands and knees and his feet stung as though they had alighted upon a thousand tiny needles. For a moment it interfered with his running.

He had jumped on the side opposite the door so Hasbrouck was not in sight. But the shot he had fired, together with Hasbrouck's yells had brought a crowd. Under these circumstances he was quickly recognized. The preying instinct of the mob was at once aroused. Guns sprang into the hands of men who had neighbored with Dal for years, and to whom he had never done an injury. They yelled hoarsely for his life while bullets spattered around him and into the walls of the White Owl Saloon.

Dal ducked behind the saloon and gained a moment's respite. From there he ran like a wolf in a straight line until he was opposite the jail. He turned sharply to the left and dashed for the shelter of the jail. For several rods he was directly in the line of fire from the mob, but the real man-hunters among them had already ran back to the tie-posts for their horses. A few desultory bullets sang around him, but none hit the mark.

Again he turned and ran straight, keeping the jail between himself and the men who followed. This was only a temporary safeguard for he was still fifty yards to the right of his horse, and his course was taking him almost straight for the livery stable. His friends could aid him no longer. His one chance was to reach his horse before somebody's bullet located him. Once in the saddle he had little fear of any horse in Topaz that day being able to overtake him.

Three men rushed out of the livery stable, their eyes popping at the unusual excitement. They fumbled at their guns, not knowing yet quite what to make of it.

"Head him off—he's in the corral," Dal yelled, wasting a bullet on the vacant air in front of him as the inspiration struck him to be the leader of the mob.

The ruse worked for an instant. The stupefied men rushed around the corner of the barn to get a look at the corral, and Dal promptly altered his course, heading straight for his horse. Hasbrouck and several others had already mounted their horses and were in pursuit, but out of the corner of his eye Dal saw a more immediate danger. Between himself and the jail knelt Matt Wells, elbow propped upon knee to steady his six-shooter, a look of murderous fury upon his face. Evidently a deputy had returned and liberated the sheriff.

Dal sprinted as he had never sprinted before. Matt Wells was an old time cattleman with a reputation for marksmanship and ruthlessness. Just as he reached the edge of the brush Wells fired. The bullet grazed the side of his head, just above the eye, and he went down on all fours under the impact.

There was a triumphant, gloating yell from the mob like a wolf pack at the kill. Curiously enough Dal's sole thought at the instant was how murderous angry that inhuman yell would make Thad Thompson. He was not badly hurt but he was a little dazed. It did not occur to him to stop; neither did he think of getting up. Instead, he crossed the twenty feet between himself and his horse on all fours.

Possibly because of this unusual manner of arrival, or perhaps on account of the blood streaming down the man's face, the ex-wildhorse surged madly back on the rope. Had Sport been tied to anything solid the rope would surely have snapped; but as it was the willow bush gave to his pull, and the instant he slackened up it straightened back and led him forward. Three times this was repeated while Dal tugged at the bow knot he had so carefully tied.

The horse was already nearly frightened out of his wits by the shooting and yelling, and now this bloody apparition in front of him added the last measure to his terror. Only the whites of his eyes was visible, and his shrill whistling sounded above the clamor of the mob. In desperation Dal drew his knife, but he was cautious enough to fling himself on to the horse's back before he cut the rope.

As the severed strands of the rope popped back Sport whirled and fairly flew back along the trail he had come on. Dal yelled and waved his hat derisively in the faces of the pursuing horsemen, who, now that they were mounted, were miraculously transformed from a mob into a posse.

So confident was he of the gray's ability that he made no effort to short cut to the place he had left old Spot. He wanted to make the posse think he was escaping to the north and all he had to do was gain such a lead that he could double back up some of the numerous ravines without being detected. Sport was running like a scared wolf and in three miles had gained a lead of a half-mile on the posse.

Dal was now looking for a place to turn. Ahead of him was one of the highest ridges of the washboard, sloping on the closest side but abrupt on the other. This, he decided, was the place to alter his course. He let Sport sweep up the slope without slackening speed. Any horse but a cayuse or mustang would have been badly winded by the effort, but Sport's breathing was deep and regular. Dal figured that by the time the posse reached the top of the ridge he would be lost in the intricacies of the washboard and it would go on by, naturally thinking he had disappeared over the next ridge to the north.

On top of the ridge, however, he pulled his horse to a stop. He was in full view of the posse, but in the gulch at the foot of the ridge, directly in his path, was a big band of cattle resting on trail in charge of four cowboys. To go down among them at the speed he must maintain, with his head and shoulders bloody from his wound was to announce himself as a fugitive. Any cowboy, whether friend or enemy, would demand an explanation. On the other hand, to turn in either direction in full sight of the posse would enable it to head him off.

He hesitated but an instant before urging his horse down the side of the ridge. It was not more than three hundred yards to the bottom and Sport fell off it in tremendous leaps. But before he was in the cattle the four cowboys had spread out in a semicircle to receive him. He leaned low over Sport's neck, his six-shooter clutched firmly, his eye watching every move of the cowboys.

He recognized the men quickly as Hasbrouck's riders. He flashed one swift glance at the cattle and among them he saw many of his own. The cattle he had owned he had acquired slowly and by dint of much sacrifice. Naturally he knew every dot and spot on every one of them. Comprehension dawned upon him instantly. This was a bunch Hasbrouck was driving to the railroad to ship, which accounted for their presence there.

For an instant escape and pursuit were forgotten in a just rage at seeing his own cattle being stolen before his very eyes. He spurred his horse further among the cattle and began to reply to the bullets that were already beginning to hum. He dropped along Sport's neck facing two of the cowboys just as their guns spoke. A curse from the other side told that one

of the men had stopped a friend's bullet. Dal fired at the closest man and had the satisfaction of seeing him drop his gun and howl with pain.

As long as he was among the cattle he had a great advantage in that his horse could not be shot unless a lucky shot got him in the head. But he was also losing ground. He knew that six-shooters are mighty unreliable weapons when fired from the undulating back of a moving horse except at extremely close range. The only thing to do, he felt, was to get clear of the cattle and risk a running fight with the two remaining punchers.

The men made the mistake of going into the bunch after him so that when he got clear of the cattle they were still impeded. This gave Dal the advantage of a short lead. Sport was still at his best, fully able to maintain his speed until they reached old Spot. Of course he could not hope to side-track the posse now, but there was a good chance that it could be done when he changed horses.

Sport promptly picked up speed and Dal laughed softly as the two cowboys lost ground, and their shots became correspondingly wild. Then, suddenly, one of Sport's front legs buckled under him and the horse went down. Dal rolled clear as the horse fell and was on his feet in an instant. He had no other thought than that he must fight it out to a finish and die with his boots on, but Sport was far from finished. The bronco was on his feet almost as quickly as Dal. There was a deep chasm of clean, red flesh exposed across the muscles of one fore leg a moment, then a gush of blood that stained the grey hairs from shoulder to hoof. But the indomitable mustang was still traveling. Dal made a flying leap and landed in the saddle without touching a stirrup, and fired the last shell in his gun at the nearest cowboy. It missed and Dal groaned.

"Do your best, you wild mustang," he implored. "Your only chance to see Silver Zone again is to keep that leg a movin'."

The horse responded with a burst of speed that once more put them where there was little danger of being hit by a revolver shot, and there was little likelihood that either of their immediate pursuers would be lucky enough to make such another chance shot as the one that had brought Sport down. Dal reloaded his gun and shoved it into his belt. All his attention was devoted to riding with such skill as would give his horse every opportunity to husband his strength.

Then, inch by inch, Sport began to lose ground. Dal could see the blood that spattered off the horse's hoof and left a red trail behind. The horse was obviously growing weaker and he began to favor the wounded leg. Only the unconquerable spirit inherited from his mustang ancestors kept him in the race.

A bullet zipped into the dirt close beside them as the two cowboys again came within firing distance. Dal saw that even the original posse was gaining, and he could make out Bill Hasbrouck and Matt Wells among them. He leaned over Spot's neck and spoke to him in the low, encouraging voice he had taught the horse to have confidence in.

"Keep 'em out of range, horsey, for just another quarter mile an' we'll fool 'em, boy."

Sport seemed to sense the need of doing more than the possible. He had been favoring the wounded leg slightly, but now he ceased to limp. Each time the wounded leg pounded the ground blood flew in all directions, and Dal winced in vicarious suffering for the horse—but they held their own. In the distance Dal had named they swept around a bend, and were greeted with an eager whinny. Old Spot rushed to meet them as far as his stake rope would permit. On his back was Dal's own saddle; Nevada's saddle being on Sport.

In mere seconds Dal had jumped from one horse to the other, slashed the stake rope, and was away.

"We'll see you ketch us now," he gloated over the posse, though his victory was dampened by the fear that Sport would not be able to keep up, and might fall into the hands of Hasbrouck's outfit.

Weary, winded, and wounded though he was the mustang's spirit was far from being broken. Relieved of Dal's one hundred and eighty pounds he came along gamely, holding his own with the posse, and even old Spot's gain on him was not impressive.

As the two cowboys swept around the bend and saw Dal on a fresh horse their eyes popped out, and they brought their own horses to a standstill until the posse arrived. As he topped a rise Dal saw the

men clustered together at the spot where old Spot had been tied. He waited for a moment, partly to see what they were going to do, partly to give Sport a chance to catch up.

Part of the posse turned their horses and rode back, but two of them, Hasbrouck and Matt Wells, took up the trail. They did not ride fast, but they rode like men with a grim purpose. Dal needed no more to tell him that they proposed to track him. It would be easy to throw them off the track except for one thing—Sport. The bloody trail left by the grey could be read as easily as print. Dal drew his gun and drew a bead on the exact center of the grey's forehead. His finger pressed the trigger with a slight pressure, but not quite hard enough to fire.

"——, I can't do it," he muttered sheepishly. "We'll all take our chances together.

He was getting to a point where he could shoot at men with impunity, but he was not yet case-hardened enough to shoot a defenseless horse. Calling to Sport to come on he urged old Spot to a long, wolf-like lope which ate up the miles. The grey forged pluckily along behind.

Gradually Dal veered around to the south until he reached the trail he had come in on. He had seen nothing of Wells or Hasbrouck, but he knew they were still on his trail. There was a small creek at this place and he dismounted long enough to wash the blood from Sport's wound, and to fasten a tourniquet, made from a strip of blanket, around the leg to check the bleeding. This completed he hurriedly washed his own wound in hit or miss fashion, and mounting, rode on toward the west gradually working his way closer to the mountains.

This direction was taken in hopes that the two men behind might guess his strategy to consist in making a complete circle of the town. By night-fall he was well into the mountains, and he changed directions again; this time bearing straight to the south. Silver Zone was calling him. He believed it would be impossible for his enemies to overtake him now, even if they should track him for a few miles, but if they did, no matter. He had wasted all the time he could afford to lose.

CHAPTER XI

A FRIENDLY WARNING

ALONG about midnight Dal stopped for a few hours' rest. His head ached horribly, and sleep would not come. Now that his venturesome project had succeeded he failed to glean any satisfaction from it. True enough his proof would go to Washington and a patent would issue unless Hasbrouck or the Government initiated a contest against him on the ground that he was a criminal. This was indeed probable, but Dal knew there was a doubt that the place would be taken from him until he was actually convicted of a crime. At any rate it would take months of slow, legal procedure before his enemy could get the land away from him.

Still, Dal cursed himself for his folly. Much as he had thought of the homestead it loomed small in comparison to a slim, wistful girl at Silver Zone. He tortured his mind with conjectures as to what might happen there during his absence. At the best it would be three days before he could get back, and there was more than a remote chance that he might be followed by the sheriff of Topaz County.

In the morning he was burning up with fever. It required a long, painful effort to find his horses and saddle them without losing his grip on things. Mind and memory were behaving strangely; seemingly intent upon wandering away in pursuit of frivolous, almost forgotten subjects. But at last he climbed aboard old Spot and pressed on into the mountains.

There came times he could fight back the delirium no longer and he wandered aimlessly. At each creek or water-hole he would tumble off his horse and plunge his aching head into the water. Old Spot would stand patiently by until his master was ready to go on, and the grey horse was also always in sight; wondering what it was all about, perhaps, but lacking the subtle understanding of the old pinto.

When the fever abated somewhat Dal would get his bearings afresh and press on to the southward, but he had no idea how much time or distance he had lost during his mental aberrations. One thing his wanderings had accomplished, though he did not know it, was to throw Matt Wells off his trail.

Finally, as the bullet wound along his skull healed, the fever left him. He had been five days since leaving Topaz. His grub was exhausted, and he was weaker than a ten-year-old boy but he was in possession of all his faculties. From the best he could judge he had wandered far from his trail to the east. That day he found a sheep-camp, and the Portuguese herder cooked him a good dinner and gave him a small supply of beans, coffee, and canned goods. The herder had never been to Silver Zone but he knew the general direction to Hog-up, and with his help Dal was able to lay a reasonably straight course to where he wanted to go.

Twelve days after he had left Silver Zone he rode out on a ridge from where he could see the bluish water sparkling in the afternoon sun; but for all he knew of time it might have been longer. Anything might have happened in the time he had been gone. He had no time to think of possible ambushes as he rode straight in toward the spring. He was a weird figure, white as wax, and huddled low over the saddle-horn on a wise old cow-pony. Behind limped a gaunt-flanked, but indomitable gray mustang under a galling stock-saddle that had not been removed for days.

The cabin looked peaceful enough, there on the edge of the desert, and it looked inhabited—though there were no signs of life. It lacked that dreary look, however, which any log cabin seems to assume the hour it is vacated. Yet Dal had a vague, uneasy feeling that something was wrong. He was within a hundred yards of the spring before he saw tangible proof. Close in to the water lay a dead sheep. Looking closer he saw another and another; in fact a white stream of them running back into the brush.

Without dismounting he drew his gun and advanced toward the cabin. Suddenly the door was opened and Vincie stepped out. Dal heaved a sigh of relief and tried to slip the gun back in his belt without her seeing it. The girl was pale, and her eyes were rimmed by dark circles induced by sleeplessness, but her nerves were steady. As she caught sight of the white-faced man on the horse she uttered an exclamation of pity.

Dal mustered a smile.

"Gee, I'm sure glad to see you," he exclaimed.

"Dal! Are you hurt? Let me help you down," Vincie gasped.

"I'm all right," Dal waved her away and swung off the horse. "It looks like —— had sure been a poppin' here," he surmised. "What's happened?"

"You're starving. When I get you something to eat you can hear the story," the girl said firmly.

Dal followed her obediently, but in the doorway he paused in surprize.

"Welcome to our hospital," Vic Sawyer called from a pallet in one corner of the room.

Despite his insistence to know what had happened no one would talk until Vincie had a meal on the stove to cook, and had given his wounded head a proper dressing. Later, while he ate, she talked.

"The day after you left," she began, "Hasbrouck and Kutch called here and——"

"The day after I left?" Dal interrupted.

"Yes. Why?"

"Nothing," he denied, but his mind contained a large sized question mark.

He had made the trip from Silver Zone to Topaz in three days with two horses that he believed to be equal to the best, and he had hurried. Yet Hasbrouck had contrived to make it in a day less. It seemed uncanny.

"Go on," he urged.

"Hasbrouck said he had heard that we had leased the spring to a sheep outfit, and that as our claim was contestable we had no right to do it. Consequently, he warned us, he was going to consider it a public water-hole and the property of any one who could hold it."

"Did—did he make any other—proposition?" Dal asked

"He made the same one he has made several times before," Vincie replied, a rush of blood coloring her face.

"He's made it the last time," Dal asserted hotly.

"What you talkin' about? The conversation has got switched on to a side-track," Sawyer observed peevishly.

Nobody answered him.

"Yesterday," Vincie went on calmly, "Mr. Sawyer drove one of his herds here to water, and Hasbrouck and his men attacked them. Mr. Sawyer was wounded in the fight, and the herder and camp-mover were chased away."

"Is Vic hurt bad?" Dal asked.

"Yes," Vincie.

"No," Vic. Both in the same breath.

"He is shot right through the shoulder," Vincie declared.

"Merely winged," Sawyer insisted.

"Where's the sheep?" Dal queried.

"Scattered from —— to breakfast, I reckon," Vic gloomed. "One of the herders sneaked back here this morning an' said the rest of the herd was all over the desert. The other fellow had gone on to hold up the rest of the outfit."

"Then you're—quittin'?" Dal asked.

"Not yet, cowboy," Sawyer grinned. "But we ain't comin' in again with our eyes shut. Nex' time it won't be Vic Sawyer against a bunch of cowboy cutthroats—it'll be the Sheepgrowers' Association against one measly cow outfit."

"You got a heap of faith in that association," Dal ventured.

"It'll be justified," Vic declared.

"Where's that herder now?" Dal demanded.

"We sent him to Hog-up for a doctor. I was afraid Mr. Sawyer's wound was worse than he thought it was, and it might be days before anybody came here again," Vincie explained. "Mr. Cutler has been here twice since you left, but he might not come again."

"Grub is what that herder went after mostly," Vic cut in. "You're one —— of a provider," he told Dal bluntly.

Dal was not mindful what Sawyer thought about him, but he was interested in Cutler's visits. He had Vincie repeat all the postmaster had said.

"He insists that you know what he wants, and he says he must see you," Vincie summed up. "He says if you won't go to Hog-up that he'll meet you any time or place you name."

"I can't quite figure him out," Dal confessed.

"Do you know what they're sayin' about you down in Hog-up?" Sawyer asked.

"No I don't."

"Maybe it'll shed some light on what Cutler wants. They say that you're a detective sent out by the Government to round up the gang that's been robbin' mail trains, an' pryin' up —— in general if Miss Bently will excuse my language, an' the rumor is that you think it's Hasbrouck's gang. There's talk, too, that you killed a man out at Hasbrouck's ranch though nobody is sure. If you did they're keepin' it quiet."

"Then you are a detective—and you got that wound while doing your duty," Vincie said with a note of profound relief.

"There'll be a man here in a few days to work with you that no detective on earth can afford to scoff at. He's one boy that always gits what he goes after. He's the man that makes the Sheepgrowers' Association mean something. He's——"

"Wait!" Dal said steadily. "Folks, I'm no detective."

Vincie seemed stunned. She had been terribly shocked when Dal had told her he had killed a man, and it had been a great satisfaction when Cutler informed her that Dal was a detective. That fact took away much of the opprobrium connected in her mind with the shedding of blood, for with naive confidence she accepted the usual dictum that detectives, being arms of the law, could do no wrong. With three words Dal had shattered her faith.

Sawyer, however, was not in the least dumfounded.

"Then why did you accumulate that crease along your scalp?" he asked quickly.

Dal hesitated. He knew it would have been much better for him to pass as a detective as long as he had unexpectedly won the name, but he could not continue to deceive the girl. Sawyer, also, had been a good friend. He could not forget that it was Sawyer's six-shooter he carried, and it had proved more than useful. Still, it was a problem whether to thrust them with his story.

"Mr. Showalter—" Vincie began, only to be cut off by Vic.

"Showalter?" the sheepman cried. "I thought you said your name was Dallas!"

"I did—and it is—Dallas Showalter," Dal grinned sheepishly.

"Folks," he continued earnestly, "you've been mighty good to me, an' I'm goin' to give you my story straight. You can draw your own conclusions."

Briefly he recounted the events that had led up to his exile, and his actions since that time. When he finished he waited for their verdict. Sawyer lay on his pallet with eyes glued speculatively on the roof, making no comment.

"Dal, you have been very foolish,"

Vincie said softly and unexpectedly. "You should never have gone after those sheepherders with a gun. Neither should you have placed yourself in such a position by going to Hasbrouck's ranch that you were compelled to kill a man. But more foolish than all, except your staying here with us, was that trip back there, risking your life for a mere piece of land."

Dal was totally unprepared for that attitude. It was as if she thought her culture and education placed her on a plane above him, from whence she could unerringly pick out a suitable course of action without so vulgar a thing as a resort to violence. That was the way it appealed to him, as setting up a barrier between them under the guise of sympathy. He had never expected for a moment to get sentimental. No matter what he might think of her he accepted the social gulf between them as unbridgeable, but it nettled him to have that gulf emphasized. He floundered into a defense.

"That piece of land back there meant a lot to me, an' I mortally hate to be licked. I may be foolish and all that but I'm goin' to play the same game till I either git the goods on Hasbrouck that'll clear me up, or till they git me."

"Then you are going to stay around Silver Zone in spite of the danger?" Vincie asked.

"I sure am," he declared warmly.

"I—I like men who are courageous enough to do foolish things which they know to be foolish," the girl admitted while a wave of color swept over her face.

With a muttered excuse that her father needed her she passed into the other room.

"Showalter," Sawyer said slowly, "I hate to enter a game against a man when I've got all the advantage, but in this case I'm goin' to. You've got a case on the Bently girl but I'm goin' to beat your time."

"——, man, she's not in my class—yours either," Dal blurted.

"Naturally you figure that way," Vic went on unperturbed. "Just the same if you was goin' to stay here there'd be danger of them class lines dissolving, but you're not goin' to stay."

"No?" Dal queried curiously.

"Fact. The reason is because if you do you'll be decoratin' the inside of a jail for killin' them two sheepherders. You know what that means; whether you're guilty or not, you'll swing."

"You aimin' to let 'em know where I am?" Dal asked quietly.

"Not me," Vic denied swiftly. "You done me a good turn, an' I like you, notwithstandin' we both like the same girl. What I'm doin' is givin' you your only chance to save your neck."

Dal smiled incredulously.

"Listen; durin' the last two years there have been nineteen sheepherders murdered in the three states where the Sheepgrowers' Association is organized. The murderers of sixteen of 'em have been convicted, an' every one of 'em was hard to catch. Every man was nabbed, an' the evidence against him gathered by one man. The other three cases he didn't handle. That man was a crack Texas Ranger, but now he's hired by the association solely to defend it against lawless cattlemen an' ranchers. He's cold blooded as a coyote an' no more feelin' than one. Name's Pet Bradley. Ever hear of him?" Sawyer was watching Dal narrowly.

Dal had heard of Bradley, particularly in connection with his sensational arrest of Goldfield Jack, a hired gunman who had long terrorized sheepherders on a certain range.

"You mean, I suppose, that this here wonder man is sure to be on my trail," Dal said.

"Exactly. There's no doubt that he's lookin' for you. The only reason he ain't been on your trail before is because he's been on an emergency job out in Wyoming. Now he's called out on another emergency job, an' it'll bring him to Silver Zone inside a week," Vic stated.

Unconsciously Dal gave a jerk. It is no pleasant sensation to know that a human bloodhound is on your track. But when he spoke his voice was quiet enough.

"You mean that Bradley is the man that's comin' here to help you hold the spring."

"Yes; I specially requested the association to send him, an' they promised they would. Remember, I had no idea he was after you when I sent for him," Vic urged anxiously, lifting himself on his elbow to watch Dal more intently. "There's this much about it, though: as soon as he hits Hog-up he'll know that you have been at Silver Zone. I'm sorry, but it ain't my fault."

"No; it ain't your fault," Dal agreed readily.

He sat on a bench, drumming on his knees thoughtfully with the tips of his fingers.

"About this water-hole—if Bradley comes I reckon there'll be no reason why you can't pay Bently right away, will there?" he asked.

"Only one reason—in there," Vic indicated the other room with his thumb. "They won't take any pay until Hasbrouck is licked."

"Then they won't git any money for some time," Dal opined.

"Not long," Sawyer said easily. "You are too used to seein' only the cattlemen's side of these range wars. They used to win all right through intimidation, but those days are gone. The sheepmen have the legal right, an' they'll win through organization. Within a week after Bradley gits here this man Hasbrouck will run his legs off every time anybody mentions Silver Zone."

"Then you're sure you won't need my help to hold the spring?"

"Not a bit of it," Vic cried eagerly.

"Then I reckon that will give me a chance to move on. Do you need your six-gun?"

"—— no; keep it an' welcome. I'm tickled to death to have you go for more reasons than one. Depend on me to give Bradley a bum steer if I can. If you can trust me you might let me know where you intend to go to," Vic suggested.

"Sure I will," Dal said with a grin. "I may go as far as Hog-up occasionally, but generally you'll be able to find me within ten miles of Silver Zone."

"——," Vic Sawyer swore disgustedly.

CHAPTER XII

A NEW OCCUPATION

BY NIGHT Sawyer's wound was bothering him, and they had to give up hope of the doctor's arrival that day. Vincie begged to be allowed to nurse both her wounded guests that night, but they vehemently ordered her to bed. The fine olive complexion she had possessed when Dal first saw her was fast being replaced by the pallor of weariness. The strain of constantly waiting upon her father was enough to wear her down regardless of the other troubles. Both Dal and Vic would have died rather than interfere with her much needed rest.

Though still rather weak and sick Dal sat up and waited upon the sheepman. Between times he snatched a few hours of much needed sleep sitting upon a bench with his head propped against the wall. Though Sawyer occasionally revived enough to curse him for not appreciating his danger from Pet Bradley Dal refused to argue. Yet he was fully alive to his dangerous position. If he stayed around Silver Zone he knew that his chances for long evading Bradley were small, unless he could in the meantime contrive to get the goods on Hasbrouck in a way to discredit him utterly. He foresaw that for a time Hasbrouck and Bradley would have their hands full with each other, so right away, he decided, was the time for him to move lively. How and where to move, however, was a problem.

There were two things which he felt might have enough significance to be worth following up. One was that people believed him to be a detective; he had puzzled over and over for the reason, but had had to be content with the fact without the explanation. The other was the peculiar actions of Tom Cutler. Somehow his first idea that Cutler was only clumsily trying to lay a trap now seemed untenable in the face of the man's repeated efforts to get in touch with him. Cutler might possibly yield some information of value if he could get to him in the right way.

His experience as an outlaw had already taught Dal that the most unexpected, audacious thing to do was the safest thing in the end. If Cutler, or his friends, contemplated Dal's falling into a trap they would look for him to name some out of the way place for a conference; therefore, he determined to ride openly into Hog-up trusting to his reputation as a detective to get him out.

Shortly before daylight Sawyer dozed off, and Dal made himself a cup of strong coffee. Then he slipped out and gathered his horses. He was surprized to see that Sport's wound had healed so well that the horse walked with scarcely a perceptible limp, so he saddled both horses and led the gray, as he took the road to Hog-up. When the sun rose he left the road and struck into the desert. The doctor, and possibly others might be on the road at any hour, and Dal was not courting any undue publicity.

A mile from Hog-up he picketed his extra horse to a big greasewood, then rode boldly into town. A few herds of sheep were already drifting into the country, depending upon the few scattered springs and sinks for their water supply—a supply that would prove totally inadequate a few weeks later when the real influx of the woolly nomads began. Dal was relieved to see that the saddle-horses tied along the street mostly belonged to camp-movers. Apparently there were no cattlemen in town yet, as he failed to discover a single lariat on a stock saddle.

Dal tied old Spot across the street from Cutler's store, and giving his belt a hitch to loosen his six-shooter he strode straight across the street into the store. A sallow faced clerk started to meet him, but Cutler emerged from the cage-like post-office and forestalled him. Dal observed with satisfaction that the superior expression on Cutler's face was not in evidence. Every mark and line on the man's face spoke of worry. The long, thin crop of whiskers positively quivered. All in all it was a far different appearing man from the one who had ordered Dal to stay away from Hog-up.

"Come right in to the wareroom, Mr. Dallas, where we can talk undisturbed," he greeted, leading the way.

He made some sort of sign to the clerk which Dal intercepted, but which seemed to mean nothing of importance.

Dal followed the merchant into the wareroom without objection, nor did he make objection when Cutler locked the door behind him. There was no one else present and he had no doubt of his ability to get out if things went wrong.

"What's your price?" Cutler began without formality.

"For what?" Dal countered cautiously.

"Don't beat around the bush. We know each other," Cutler retorted. "You fooled me into thinking you were just a sheep-herder once, but I know you now. If I'd known what you was then I'd have talked turkey with you—or seen that you never got to Hasbrouck's ranch."

The sinister tone in the old man's voice was not to be mistaken. Dal half-sat, half-leaned nonchalently on a huge dry goods box and contemplated the stringy form of the merchant as he paced nervously back and forth. Cutler was a bad man, obviously. The merchant wore a gun, slung low on his hip, but Dal felt safe in disregarding it. Cutler was not the man to make any gun-play face to face. Behind the back might be different, but this could be avoided. Still, Showalter had a feeling that he was in just about the most dangerous place he had ever been in. Cutler believed that he had something on him, and was willing to pay for it; but if it was not forthcoming——

"Do you suppose I'd tie my own hands by sellin' my evidence?" Dal threw out tentatively.

"You didn't come here to get me. It's Hasbrouck you're after ain't it?" Cutler demanded.

"I'm after all of you."

"Then why ain't you used the—what you've got? I know you're holding for a price or you'd sprung something before this."

Dal cut figure eights on the dry goods box with his spur while he pondered the situation.

"See here," Cutler broke out irritably, "if you didn't come here to talk business you sure made a —— of a blunder by coming at all."

"I'm a hard man to trap, Cutler. I never felt safer in my life," Dal drawled.

"What you've got against me won't hold. I can prove they're forgeries," the merchant blustered.

Dal heaved a sigh of relief. At last he knew the nature of the evidence Cutler supposed him to have, though why Cutler, or any one else thought he had in his possession any written evidence of any kind was the profoundest mystery. The only thing he had that answered the description at all was the note Bently had written to Lonesome Jim, and no one on earth knew he had that. Yet he decided to risk a shot in regard to it in hopes that it might surprize something out of Cutler, though he could see no connection whatever.

"One thing leads to another lots of times, Cutler. You wondered why I hadn't done anything before this. Mebbe I would if I hadn't run on to the body of Lonesome Jim, an' some papers that he had in his poke."

To his surprize Cutler's face became positively ashen.

"I didn't have a hand in that," he denied frantically. "Sell me what I want and I'll help you land Hasbrouck."

"Turn state's evidence do you mean?"

"No, no. I don't know anything about it. But I can find clues——"

"Then I reckon I'll jog along," Dal said laconically. "When you feel like makin' a clean breast of it, mebbe we can talk business."

"All right," Cutler choked, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down frantically behind the thin whiskers.

Murder was written plainly on the man's face.

Dal stretched himself lazily but his eye never left the merchant for a moment.

"Ten thousand dollars," Cutler shot out abruptly.

"A straight story from beginnin' to end is my price. After that we'll talk business —mebbe. An' remember that I know a plenty to tell whether you're lyin'."

For a moment Dal hoped that the man's obvious fear would make him surrender, but Cutler was not a fool. Some very tangible incriminating evidence was held against him by somebody, for which he was willing to pay, but he still considered himself far from beaten.

Dal had noted that Cutler regularly stopped his pacing for an instant each time he got close to the door and appeared to listen. Now the man appeared to be better satisfied and ceased to listen. Suddenly Dal walked over to the door and listened. Just outside he could hear the shuffling of several pair of feet.

"Well, if you won't do business stand back while I unlock the door," Cutler said curtly. "But remember that any one man who thinks he can buck a whole country is a —— fool."

Suddenly Cutler felt the cold muzzle of a forty-four in the pit of his stomach.

"Back up an' keep quiet," Dal whispered tensely. "I'm goin' out the back door."

The foiled, baffled expression on the merchant's face told Dal that he had guessed correctly. He would never have got through that inside door alive.

"Git down on the floor, you —— old murderer," he hissed, "an' if you even whisper I'll brain you."

With his left hand Dal assisted the merchant to a position flat on his back on the floor. With a handful of waste and a handkerchief he gagged him very effectually, then anchored him to a studding on the wall with a piece of strong baling wire. The back door proved to be locked, necessitating taking Cutler's keys. Dal unlocked the door, slipped quietly outside, and seeing no one in sight relocked the door and threw the keys away.

It was now clearly unsafe to go straight across the street to his horse so Dal dodged rapidly through the cluster of buildings at the back of Cutler's store until he was under cover of the greasewoods. The desert was slightly rolling there so it was not hard to keep out of sight, until he was on the other side of town and coming toward his horse from the opposite direction to which the men in Cutler's would expect.

A hundred yards from old Spot Dal stopped and recoiled behind a bush like a startled coyote. Directly between him and his horse was a man hunkered down behind a pile of rubbish, gun in hand and his eyes upon old Spot. Dal craned his neck until he could get a good look at the man. He was fully six inches over six feet tall, rawboned, extremely narrow shouldered, and with a wrinkled, bronzed face.

From Vic Sawyer's description Dal knew that this was Pet Bradley, the famed man-hunter.

Dal emitted an almost soundless whistle while he began slowly backing away from there. Luck had certainly been with him. Had he been unmolested at Cutler's he would have crossed the street to his horse and undoubtedly fallen into the hands of Bradley. It was not hard to deduce how the detective came to be waiting there. He naturally would have a description of old Spot and the saddle from the people at Topaz; nor would they neglect to let him know that Dal and the horse were inseparable.

Finding the horse tied there the detective would, of course, consider it to be pure luck; but evidently it had not interfered with his taking full advantage of it. Dal could imagine the man chuckling inwardly as he waited.

"People are sure determined to make me lose old Spot," Dal thought resentfully as he backed out of sight of Bradley and fled hurriedly to where he had left his other horse. It was getting late and he needed some place to stay all night. Stopping longer in Hog-up was out of the question, and he didn't care to return at once to Silver Zone.

A few miles out in the desert he came

across a sheep camp. The two men who greeted him were Americans; both splendid specimens of the genus sheepherder.

"What's the chance to bum a couple of meals, a little water an' a few oats?" Dal asked.

"Couldn't be better, except maybe we'll have to go a little easy on the water—our kegs just about hold enough for our own horses," the camp-tender replied cordially.

Dal slid off his horse and chatted with the camp-mover while he fed and watered Sport. The herder meanwhile prepared a meal for him with the phenomenal skill of which some of those range veterans are capable. When Sport finished his oats Dal staked him out on the best feed he could find. He was not quite ready to trust the gray alone on the desert without the guardianship of old Spot.

During the talk it developed that the camp-mover was also the owner of the outfit, and that he wanted a man to move camp for a couple of weeks while he went home.

"We'll have to travel fast for a couple of days till we git to the mountains above Silver Zone Spring, but after we git there we won't have nothin' to do till snow flies," Sorensen, the owner, hinted.

Dal thought deeply. Heretofore he had held himself far above sheepherding if not above sheepherders, but this proffered job seemed fairly made to his order. It would give him a place to eat and sleep without interfering with his watch over Silver Zone and likewise provide a few badly needed dollars.

"I never worked with a sheep outfit—mebbe I couldn't fill the bill," he suggested.

"You can harness and drive a team can't you? And cook? But if you can't cook Bill can. Move the camp when Bill tells you to, and rustle wood and water is about the size of it. You can handle that can't you?" Sorensen asked anxiously.

"I reckon I can," Dal agreed. "I'll be ready for action in the mornin'."

Since sheep invariably leave the bedground at the first crack of day sheepherders are of necessity early risers. Thirty minutes after daylight the next morning found breakfast over, Sorensen departed for Hog-up, and Dal on his horse with his instructions from Bill the herder for the day's work. The first movement was to look for the camp horses which had wandered away despite their hobbles.

Dal set out on the horses' tracks and located them about two miles from camp. But he did not at once return with them. Instead, he rode on until he reached a huge lava rock, large as an average sized house, known as Monument Rock. It was five miles from Hog-up on the road to Silver Zone.

Sorensen had left Showalter a pair of field glasses, and now Dal climbed to the top of the rock and with them inspected the road toward Hog-up. Half an hour passed before any one came in view, then a man appeared riding at a jog trot and leading a pinto pony behind.

Dal slid to the ground, carefully extinguished his cigaret before remounting his horse, and waited.

Presently the unsuspecting stranger rode past the rock and found himself gazing into the wicked end of a six-shooter, behind which sat a steady eyed man on a gray pony.

"Just keep your hands right on the fork of your saddle, Mr. Bradley," Dal ordered coolly.

Bradley's gaunt face cracked into a grin.

"Reckon I will, Showalter," he said, "seein' as this ain't just the scenery I figured on for our first meetin'."

"It's much more to my likin' than the one you had fixed up down in Hog-up," Dal drawled. "How long was you hunkered down out there in that rubbish pile before you decided I wasn't goin' to keep the appointment?" he grinned.

"'Bout a hour I reckon—anyway it was until they got nervous across the street an' found old Cutler where you'd done fastened him up like a bale of hay," Bradley informed good naturedly.

Except for the gun between them they might have been chance acquaintances having a casual conversation, yet behind their smiling exterior each was measuring the other's strength. And each saw in the other a personality of tremendous force.

"Is this a case of highway robbery, or are you just after your horse?" Bradley inquired.

"Just the horse—but if you had anything else I needed I wouldn't hesitate to take it," Dal said.

"Feel yourself purty well fixed, eh?" Bradley asked, grinning. "I figured you'd sure make an effort to git your horse back which was why I done brought him along,

but you come after him a heap more previous than I expected," he went on. "I'll just say, though, that I don't make a practice of lettin' a man out-guess me more than twice in succession."

"I don't doubt your word in the least—but there won't be no more guesses between us mebbe," Dal countered.

"Goin' away from here?" Bradley quizzed.

"—— no! Things is altogether too interestin' around here for me to pull out," Dal said with a touch of irony which he hoped would make the detective disbelieve him.

Bradley searched his face with a pair of eyes as coldly probing as a surgical instrument, but said nothing.

"I'll just relieve you of that horse now an' let you go," Dal said, reaching out and appropriating the leading rope.

"All right. If you're done with me I'll travel along," Bradley shrugged. "I got business out at Silver Zone."

"Vamoose then," Dal consented, "but don't git absent-minded an' look back too quick. In fact I'd advise you to face the front for at least a mile. You see this Winchester of mine carries that far right good."

"My eyes are done riveted to the trail," Bradley announced.

Dal watched the detective ride out of sight, then he crossed the road and headed straight on into the desert, away from the sheep camp, until he was well out of sight from Monument Rock.

SOON after, a third horseman fanned the breeze back into Hog-up and presently stood in the presence of Tom Cutler.

"The tall guy that pretended he wanted to arrest the feller that rough-housed you yesterday," he reported, "met that same feller behind Monument Rock this mornin'. They had a chinnin' match, an' the pinto cayuse changed hands. Afterward the tall guy rode on along the road, an' the Dallas feller rode into the brush—but they're in cahoots, an' both of 'em is bound for Silver Zone."

As for Dal, he rode in a circle, recrossed the road, gathered up Sorensen's camp horses, took them to camp and began to earn his pay.

CHAPTER XIII

A RAID IN THE NIGHT

FOR three days the sheep camp Dal Showalter was supposed to be moving had sat in a small cañon in the mountains eight or ten miles east of Silver Zone. There was little to do except drag in wood to the camp and feed the horses twice a day, so most of Dal's time was spent on the top of a pinnacle from where, with the aid of Sorensen's glasses, he could see what was going on around Silver Zone.

Winter was approaching, and already the ground had been covered by a light skit of snow which melted slowly. Out on the strips of white and sweet sage were Vic Sawyer's six herds grazing tranquilly, all unmindful of the grim fate that hovered over them. As long as the snow lasted there was no need of the herds being driven to the spring, but another day or so at most meant that they must be watered at Silver Zone or else taken from the sage to the mountains.

Hourly Dal expected to see Hasbrouck's cattle being brought on the scene; though he realized that their failure to appear did not mean in the least that Hasbrouck had given up. In fact Hasbrouck might be deliberately keeping them out of the danger zone until the trouble was over. Yet it was not like Hasbrouck to wait until a herd was driven to the spring again before starting his warfare. Hasbrouck wanted every advantage he could get; nor was he scrupulous how he secured it. And beyond a doubt when Sawyer and Bradley brought another herd to water that herd would be heavily guarded. It would not be a propitious time for Hasbrouck to strike.

Occasionally men rode up to the cabin, or away; and once Dal caught sight of two women outside the house. One of them he knew was Vincie, but the other one puzzled him until he decided that she must be some relation of Vic's who had come out to help nurse him. This conclusion made him feel better for, God knew, Vincie needed, and was entitled to a little feminine companionship.

Had Vincie not been there, where the coming conflict was almost sure to take place, Dal could have laughed at the idea of Hasbrouck and Bradley locking horns. But her presence there added more than

complexity to the situation. If there was actual fighting, and he could see no prospect of its being avoided, there was no telling what men might do while under the influence of the blood lust.

And if Hasbrouck should happen to be the victor—had Dal been betting on the issue his money would have been on the cattleman—Vincie's position would surely be perilous. Already Hasbrouck, a married man, had made the infamous proposal that the girl live with him—Dal discredited utterly Hasbrouck's plan to commit bigamy which had been implied in his offer of marriage. This was only an index to what might be expected from the man should the sheepmen be defeated.

Dal cursed Bradley fervently. He had no personal animus toward the detective, but events had made Bradley practically the sole protector of the girl, and he was keeping away the one man who would be willing to go to any lengths in her defense.

Another thing which failed to make Dal any more cheerful was the memory of Vic Sawyer's attitude toward the girl. Dal had tried not to admit even to himself that he was really in love with her, or if the admission was unconsciously made he promptly repressed it as the supreme height of folly. Her training, her education, her whole outlook upon life placed her definitely in a social stratum far above his attainments.

Sawyer, however, had certain social graces in spite of his lowly occupation. His education, though not erudite, was sufficient for him to pass as a gentleman when he wished to make the effort. He had a good position—two hundred dollars per month and an interest in the business. Stranger things had happened than that Vincie, being thrown in his society continuously by the necessity of taking care of him, might tumble into love with him. For some peculiar psychological reason Dal could face Vincie's passing entirely out of his own life with much greater equanimity than he could if he knew her future was to be merged with Sawyer's.

Being stopped from going to Silver Zone Dal determined at least to take a little ride along the edge of the mountains in the direction of Hasbrouck's ranch. In dealing with the rancher there was always the possibility of stumbling onto some incriminating circumstance, Dal reasoned, because Hasbrouck simply had to be doing something crooked.

The skit of snow had disappeared on the tops of the hills and ridges where the wind could strike, but in the hollows it was still deep enough to leave a clearly defined hoof print. Dal, however, was paying little attention to this feature until suddenly he came upon the clean tracks of three horses, one of them shod. A careful scrutiny developed that one horse carried a rider, but the other two were probably being led. Had they carried riders they would have traveled abreast. The tracks had been made the day before, and they had gone up into the mountains and returned over the same trail. This indicated, of course, that there had been some definite terminal of the unknown horseman. Dal decided that it might be worth his while to investigate the trail to where it ended.

He was now well to the west of Silver Zone, not far from the place he had camped after the shooting of Nevada. The trail wound around to the northward for a mile, then veered sharply to the right straight over the face of a high-backboned, slate-covered ridge from which the snow had long since gone. The sharp, jutting rocks were hard on a horse's feet and old Spot, being unshod, protested energetically against being compelled to take them.

Dal dismounted and looked around. The tracks he had been following could no longer be seen, for no tracks were left on the rocks. Abutting, flint-covered ridges, wind-swept and lonely ran in every direction. A man might travel for hours without finding a horse track even though he was an experienced tracker, which Dal assuredly was not.

One fact, however, seemed fairly certain. The man, whoever he was, would not have punished his horses so by dragging them over the sharp stones without some well thought-out reason. And the most obvious reason was that he wished his trail to be lost.

"I know it's ——, old man, but you got to take it until we git to the top of this ridge an' see if we can find where this hombre went," Dal told old Spot, leading him reluctantly along behind.

The keen, cold wind on top of the ridge made the man shiver and the horse hump his back against it when they stopped. Dal knelt in front of the horse and applied the field glasses in a careful scrutiny of his surroundings. For a long time he saw nothing that promised anything of value, and was about to put up the glasses when his eyes

rested upon something down in a cañon far below him and back to his left toward the place he had started from that interested him. He had looked at the same place before without seeing anything out of the ordinary, but as he kept the glasses focussed there he was quite sure he had found something important.

The entire slope of the cañon was thickly covered with chaparral so dense that at first glance it seemed impossible to get a horse through. Being protected from the wind the snow still stuck to the tops of the bushes, and the thing that had arrested Dal's attention was a long, thread-like strip through it which showed faintly green as though the snow had been brushed off the bushes by some passing object.

Arising, Dal led his horse carefully along the backbone of the ridge, all the time keeping a careful look-out for horse tracks entering the chaparral. Finally, following a rocky spur ridge, he found what he was looking for—an old sheep trail through the chaparral. Brush roots covered the ground like a net so that the tracks made by the horses were never plain, but the strip of green where the rider's stirrups had brushed away the snow on the brush wrote a plain message, one that he would never have read, however, in the first place, without the aid of the field glasses.

At the bottom of the cañon the brush ended, but Dal picked up the trail easily in the snow. It wound crookedly back and forth up the slope of the next mountain, but there was a dim trail that had evidently been used for a number of years. The unknown had evidently trusted entirely to his tracks being lost upon the slate-covered ridge. At last the trail went over the top of the mountain and began to wriggle down the slope on the other side. Vertical rows of cliffs ran clear across the break of this mountain making it impossible to bring horses up that way. Dal began to wonder if he was not wasting his time, and that the fellow had taken the roundabout way he had simply because there was no other way to go.

This seemed more than ever probable when he reached the bottom of the cañon and found himself just above an abrupt break-off of at least a hundred feet, running clear across the cañon and joining one of the vertical cliffs on either side. The trail he had been following veered suddenly away to the right and entered a small grove of Jack-pines in a pocket in the cañon. Entering the grove Dal was astonished to see a small, half cabin, half dugout built into the steep face of the mountain.

He stopped his horse and contemplated the cabin calculatingly. It was built in a triangular pocket with the only mode of ingress through the grove of Jack-pines. It looked almost as if it had been built there for defensive purposes. More careful scrutiny disclosed the fact, however, that if such had been the idea of the builder his judgment was poor. True enough it would be hard for others to get in, but much harder for the besieged to get out. Dal scaled the cañon walls above the cabin with his eye and decided that a man, by being very careful, might descend on foot to the roof of the cabin; but that it would be well nigh impossible to climb up from the bottom.

Though reasonably certain that whoever had been there before him had gone back Dal approached the door cautiously. The door was latched, and there was also a heavy wooden bar placed across the outside. He removed the bar, raised the latch and entered.

A damp smell greeted him as he stepped on the dirt floor. There was no window whatever and it was a moment before he could accustom his eyes to the poor light. When his vision cleared he saw a typical prospector's cabin. There was a small sheet-iron stove in one corner, a bunk in another, a rude table in the center, and a rough cupboard against one side. Piles of débris and bits of old, rusty prospecting paraphernalia were scattered around the room. It was evident that this stuff had not been touched for months.

Not everything, however, was mildewed with age. The bunk was covered with fresh bedding; new cooking utensils hung behind the stove, and several cases of groceries were stacked under and upon the table. But search as he would Dal could find no clue to the identity of the man who had put them there.

There was a hole, or door, in the back of the cabin that led into a sort of cellar. Dal discovered here some mouldy, whitish sprouts growing from a pile of débris which he quickly decided had once been a sack of potatoes. There was nothing else of interest here so he returned to the main

room and began an investigation of the various piles of debris. There was no one thing in particular which disclosed anything of value in the way of information, but everything lay in the disordered confusion of use.

Everything went to show that the prospector who had lived there first had gone out with the full expectation of returning. There could be but one conclusion—this had been the home of Lonesome Jim.

It was a discovery, but it was nothing more. The lost mine might be close and it might not—probably not. The cabin was farther up in the mountains than old man Bently had figured, but it was quite possible that Hasbrouck had found it and thoroughly prospected the immediate vicinity.

After all his trouble it seemed that Dal had discovered nothing of any value. Lonesome Jim was dead and gone, and the cabin disclosed no new facts concerning him. The identity of the man who now expected to use the cabin was a mystery, but in all probability he would turn out to be some other lonesome prospector who had decided to use the cabin for a while.

It might, indeed, be Hasbrouck himself who was to be the new occupant, because it would give him more time to hunt the mine. If so it was detrimental to Showalter, for while the man was treasure hunting he was keeping out of the cussedness in which Dal hoped to catch him.

Dal wasted some time trying to find a shorter way out, but there was none. In the end he decided that the man he had followed had not been trying to cover his tracks, but had simply taken the only route to the cabin.

It was dark when Dal finally got off to the slate-covered ridge. It was now too late to do anything at the sheep camp so he turned old Spot in the direction of Silver Zone. He tied the horse at a considerable distance from the cabin and crept in cautiously afoot until he was within twenty feet of the window in the kitchen.

He raised himself until he could get a good view of part of the interior. A woman stood at the table talking to some invisible person in one corner of the room. She was in the uniform of a trained nurse, so her presence, which had somewhat mystified Dal, was explained. She was there to look after Sawyer.

Then Vincie stepped in front of the window and stood in a position where Dal had a perfect view of her profile. There was a look on her face which struck Dal to the heart—a look of grief which comes only for one reason. It was easy to read from her face that Samuel Bently was at last dead.

A wave of sympathy for the lonely girl rushed over Dal and he started impetuously for the door to offer his services, but at that moment he became aware that he was not alone watching the cabin. In the greasewoods and among the other tumbled down shacks were furtive moving figures.

Before Dal could make a decision someone snapped out an order, and a volley of bullets crashed into the cabin walls. Immediately there was a wild yell from a dozen throats, and the mob surged toward the cabin.

Dal caught a brief glimpse of a man inside the cabin who showed himself just long enough to send a bullet out of the window. It was Pet Bradley. Dal quickly determind upon his own course of action. The mob had gone by without seeing him, so he could reach the shelter of one of the deserted shacks and start a bombardment of the mob from the rear that was pretty likely to demoralize it for a time at least, and he knew that there was a man inside who could be depended upon to give an account of himself.

Without bothering to look behind him Dal arose, and as he did so collided with a man. Instinctively he clinched, and immediately recognized his mistake. Athlete that he was he found himself in the grip of a more powerful man.

Hasbrouck had been playing safe by staying behind his gang until he saw how things were going. But it did not interfere with his using his tremendous physical strength when the necessity unexpectedly arose.

Dal felt himself in an unbreakable hold. He was lifted clear of the ground for a moment, then crashed heavily to the earth. An instant later the butt of Hasbrouck's revolver descended upon the unhealed wound on his head, and for Showalter everything ceased to be.

CHAPTER XIV

A LAND OF DESOLATION

DAL opened his eyes and blinked into the leering face of the sun just emerging from the rim of the desert. His first realization was that he was terribly numb

and cold. He wondered vaguely why he had been so foolish as to fall asleep in the desert without his blankets. His head hurt, and he felt of the sorest place with gentle, exploring fingers. He felt something sticky and dug it off. It was a flake of dried blood. Instantly the events of the night before rushed back in his memory.

He got to his feet with difficulty and stared around. Something seemed to be missing from the landscape. At first his brain was not clear enough to grasp it directly, then his eyes rested upon a smouldering heap of ashes from which occasional spurts of flame shot up. The cabin had been burned.

Silver Zone was now indeed a place of ruin. Dal staggered over to what had once been the home of the Bentlys and contemplated it grimly. Where was Vincie? The question beat upon his mind incessantly. All his self-deceiving sophistries about his interest in the girl being only an impersonal one dropped from him. Another woman had disappeared with her, but the fate of that other woman was secondary for the time.

Where the pole bed had stood in one corner of the bedroom was the burned skeleton of a man. Unquestionably it was the body of Samuel Bently. The old assayer had died in the nick of time. Dal found a pole and poked gruesomely through the hot ashes until he convinced himself that there were no other bodies.

His mind did not dwell long upon unpleasant contingencies. Any number of disagreeable things might have happened to the girl, but she had not perished in the cabin so there was still some need for action. And then, too, where were Vic and Bradley? It seemed impossible that Vic, wounded as he was, could have escaped, and as they were not around, it was likely that they had been taken away—perhaps to decorate some tree.

Dal walked down to the spring, plunged his bloody head into the cold water and felt greatly relieved, and found his thinking apparatus more pliable. It occurred to him as being strange that Hasbrouck had not made sure of killing him. But Hasbrouck had undoubtedly been after the girl and he may have been in a hurry. And having once got her he was possibly too busy to go back and finish the job. Besides, Hasbrouck had probably figured that the one blow was enough; and had it landed squarely it no doubt would have been.

Being essentially a cowboy with all of the breed's habits and prejudices, Dal had to look for his horse as a preliminary measure, as even his thoughts came more freely on a horse than on the ground. He went to the place where he had left old Spot but the old pinto was gone. Dal knew that not even an earthquake could scare the old horse into breaking loose. Some one had untied him so it was obviously a waste of time to look farther.

Feeling more than ever helpless Dal returned to the spring. To walk back to Sorensen's sheep camp to get his other horse would be to waste many hours of valuable time, and besides the hours it would take him to walk there, it would probably take other hours to find the horses. He dismissed the plan as impracticable.

The best bet seemed to be one of Sawyer's camps. The nearest one was only a mile and a half away and Dal struck out for it. Before he reached the camp he began to find dead sheep. He had a presentiment of what he would find before he reached the place where the camp should have been, so he was not surprized to find only warm ashes and the twisted irons of the camp which fire could not destroy.

In the ashes lay the charred body of a man where he had evidently been shot while his figure was outlined through the thin, canvas wall of the camp. Out in the brush a hundred feet Dal found another body. Little bunches of frightened, herderless sheep huddled here and there. The cattlemen had made a clean sweep. Quite obviously the Sheepgrowers' Association was not nearly so powerful as Vic Sawyer had fondly believed. Dal knew it would be a waste of time to look for help here. All the sheepherders for miles around Silver Zone would be in a state of panic, and they would be hiding out in the brush with their dogs muzzled to keep them from barking. Range war history proved that the victorious side was always as relentless as wolves in running down and murdering the defeated.

Returning to the spring Dal was astonished to see a human being coming in from the desert, weaving on its feet like a drunken man. Some wounded sheepherder, perhaps, he thought; but as the man came closer

he recognized Vic Sawyer. Dal rushed to meet him.

"My God, Vic," he cried, "where are the rest?"

The sheepman grinned at him foolishly, but offered no reply.

"Plumb loco," Dal cursed softly.

He led the sheepman to the water, helped him to get a drink, and then washed and bandaged the wounded shoulder. Gradually Sawyer's senses came back to him. Under Dal's prodding questions he began to remember something of the horror of the previous night.

"I don't know what become of the rest," he said. "When we heard 'em startin' to rush the house Pet said for me an' the girls to run, but we hadn't no more than got out of the door until we met 'em. Some fellow bumped into me, and bein' so weak from my wound I went down. It was lucky for me it happened, I guess, for they didn't pay any attention to me.

"The girls was fightin' like wild cats, but of course there was too many men. I saw that I couldn't do any good so I crawled into the brush figuring that I might be able to get help, but I suppose I went daffy."

"What became of Bradley?"

"He stayed inside to stand 'em a siege. God!" Sawyer's eyes roved wildly toward the smouldering heap of ruins. "I saw 'em fire the cabin, and I knew Pet was inside. That's the last I can remember. He is—he must be——"

"No he ain't," Dal cut in. "There ain't nobody there but Bently, an' he was dead, wasn't he?"

"Yes; he died yesterday. But if Pet wasn't killed in there where is he?"

"Probably runnin' his legs off for Texas, or wherever it was he come from if he got away from them," Dal said curtly.

Somehow he held Bradley responsible for the thing that had happened. If the man was an ex-Ranger, an ex-cowboy, and the wonder he advertised himself to be, why had he attempted to hold Silver Zone Spring single handed. Furthermore, it appeared a cowardly trick to send two women and a wounded man out to face a mob while he stayed indoors.

"What are we goin' to do?" Vic asked disconsolately.

It seemed that there was little they could do.

Dal deliberated the problem with all the concentration of which he was capable. The first, and paramount fact was that Vincie and the nurse had been carried off by Hasbrouck. No time could be wasted in rescuing them, for there were no limits to Hasbrouck's capacity for evil.

Sawyer was all in. Everything depended upon Dal. He might go to Sorensen's camp, but he had already decided against that as being too indirect. By the time he found his horse he, too, would be all in—and there was a chance that he might not find the horses at all. Sheep-camp horses were given to playing hookey, and Sport would be with them.

There was no place to go for help. Hog-up, the closest place was fifty miles away. The very idea of going there, even if he was able to walk it, made Dal laugh ironically. It all simmered down to the fact that the only way to get help was to wait for it—for somebody to come along.

But one man could wait as well as two. Sawyer could not move anyway, and with plenty of water he was not likely again to get delirious. Curiosity would surely impel some sheepherder to slip in during the day to see what had happened.

"You stay here in plain sight until somebody comes," Dal told Sawyer. "Then send to Annamucca for help—ain't no use sendin' to Hog-up. Tell 'em to send a posse at once to Hasbrouck's ranch. That's probably where Hasbrouck has taken Vin—the girls."

"What are you goin' to do?" Vic demanded.

"I'm goin' on to Hasbrouck's ranch. I hate like —— to leave you, Vic, but——"

"Don't mind me if you can do any good there," Sawyer broke in. "But I don't see," he continued, "how you can git there, nor what good you expect to do single handed after you do git there. Likely git yourself killed."

But Showalter had other ideas. In the Chinese cook at Hasbrouck's he had a powerful ally whom no one suspected. If he could once get in touch with Hop Sing he might find out where the girls were kept, and by the exercise of proper strategy might possibly contrive to outwit Hasbrouck altogether.

On the other hand he had little faith in any outside help. By the time some one should chance to come to Silver Zone, then ride a hundred miles to Annamucca, gather

a posse, and ride back another hundred miles to Hasbrouck's ranch on Goose Creek, Hasbrouck would surely have his plans arranged. Help being out of the question time was the very essence of the situation.

Dal set out over the road he had traversed once before on foot. Hard as it had been to make that first walk it was harder now; yet he plodded on grimly, step after step, keeping his teeth gritted to fight down the pain in his head.

It was just past dusk when he finally reached the top of the plateau which overlooked Hasbrouck's headquarters. Tough as the going had been he was unconscious of any weariness. He was just as eager for combat as he had been when Hasbrouck's revolver butt had taken it all out of him.

There were lights gleaming in both the bunkhouse and the smaller house occupied by Hasbrouck personally. It was this smaller building which riveted Dal's attention; but he wanted to see Hop Sing first. He made his approach cautiously, going directly to the springhouse where he had taken refuge on his previous visit.

He sank to his knees almost the instant he entered the place. Several crocks of milk were setting about and he wasted no time getting his lips to the edge of one. The contents disappeared steadily until he finally lifted his head with a sigh of pure content.

There was a chuckle behind him, and he whirled on his heel while his right hand shot toward his gun. The next second he grinned sheepishly as he gazed into the bland face of Hop Sing. The Chinaman had evened the score for the shock Dal had given him when he dropped from the rafters in that same place.

"You much likee milick," Hop Sing grinned.

"If you hadn't had anything on your stomach but your shirt for as long as I have you wouldn't have stopped with the milk—you'd have eat the crock," Dal retorted.

The Chinaman struck a match and held it uncomfortably close to Dal's nose while he peered into his face.

"Me fixee you," he said bluntly, and before Dal could move he was out of the door and padding up the path toward the house.

Dal sat down and waited. He had absolutely no fear of treachery on the part of the Chinaman. Despite his yellow hide Hop Sing was clean strain from top to bottom, but when he got his neck bowed to do a thing there was no changing him.

In twenty minutes the cook was back with a huge sirloin steak, bread, butter, and coffee. Dal knew it had required art to smuggle those things out of a room filled with watchful men, but he wasted no time in purposeless inquiries. In his present condition he was ready to accept any help the Fates might bring—especially in the shape of eatables—without asking vain questions. But as soon as his mouth was crammed full he was ready to begin asking questions of importance.

"Wok c'here, Sop Hing," he started.

"You eatee—then talkee," Hop Sing cut him off with a grin.

Knowing that the Chinaman would refuse to answer anyway Dal finished his meal and found himself feeling decidedly better, and with renewed confidence in the ultimate outcome.

"I believe that feed saved my life," he acknowledged gratefully. "Now I want some information. Where has Hasbrouck got those two girls hid?"

The cook's almond eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Me no see no gels," he stated positively.

"Is Hasbrouck here?" Dal asked quickly.

"Yes."

"Been here all day?"

"Yes."

"Ain't you heard the men talkin' about any girls?" Dal persisted.

The Chinaman's eyes closed suggestively.

"Hasblook's men much cuss—much swear—but no talkee no time."

"Was Hasbrouck here last night?"

Hop Sing's eyes widened innocently.

"Me tellee all I know me ketchee touble—plenty ——," he rebuked.

"Look here, Hop Sing," Dal said firmly, "I know that Hasbrouck an' his gang raided Silver Zone las' night—'cause I was there. They killed at least two men, an' carried off two girls. They might git away with the killin's, but even Hasbrouck can't git away with that kidnappin' stuff—not in this day an' age. If the law don't git him I will. If the law comes everybody that's here will have a hard time makin' explanations. But if you help me what you can there'll be no danger of you bein' implicated with this rotten outfit."

He watched the Chinaman's expressionless

face sharply, hoping to catch some clue to his mental processes.

"You p'lice officer?" Hop Sing inquired blandly.

"Absolutely not."

"Too bad—you makee me out awful liar," was the cook's astounding comment.

"I—what?" Dal gasped.

"You killee Nevadla. Me know what happen you glit allested."

With three expressive gestures the Chinaman went through a suggestive pantomime of a man being hanged.

"You my flind, Dal. Me lie like ——, steal like ——, so you no glit allested. Hasblook find out you ketchee plenty ——. Me too."

"What's that?" Dal cried eagerly. "You mean it was you, you danged old pelican, who kept 'em from arrestin' me?"

Hop Sing fairly beamed as he nodded assent.

"But how?"

"That day you killee Nevada, Hasblook gone. Cowboy no ketchee you, Kutch say send to Annamuc'—have you 'lested. Then me tellee Kutch you a de-teck-e-tiff. Me tellee Kutch me flind out you stealee much paper flom Hasblook's cabin beflo' you shootee Nevadla, an' pape' laise plenty ——. Hasblook come home—miss pape'. He flaid have you 'lested," Hop Sing explained comprehensively.

"Let me git all this straight. You told 'em that I had gone through Hasbrouck's cabin that mornin' an' took some of his papers. Then Hasbrouck come back an' found the papers missin', an' because you told him I was a detective he didn't dare have me arrested. Then you must have swiped those papers to keep me out of trouble," Dal ruminated slowly as he organized the facts in his mind.

"Yes. Many time me clean up Hasblook's cabin. Know where is papers—know where is key. Cowboy all chasee you me stealee pape'—then make evelybody think you take," Hop Sing explained.

Dal's eyes gleamed. "Have you still got those papers, Hop Sing?" he queried breathlessly.

For answer the Chinaman knelt down and ran a long, yellow hand far under the floor above the spring. Withdrawing it he produced a small packet of letters.

CHAPTER XV

DAL LOSES AN ARGUMENT

BY THE light of Hop Sing's lantern Dal ran through the letters eagerly. Some of them appeared to refer guardedly to certain shady transactions and might mean much or little according to what was otherwise known of the business referred to.

But there was a packet within the packet which Dal could understand, and which brought a gleam of satisfaction to his eye. The name of the person to whom each note or letter had been addressed had been carefully torn off, but the initials of the writer at the end of each one had been left on. They were, "T. C."

As if to prove that the initials stood for Thomas Cutler, at the bottom of the pile was a simple business letter underneath Cutler's letterhead, and signed with his name. The similarity of the handwriting showed conclusively that the initials had all been written by Tom Cutler. The letters cried aloud that they had been kept by Hasbrouck for no other purpose than to have them to hold over Cutler. Hasbrouck's error had consisted in keeping them with other papers that could be used to incriminate himself, though naturally he had not intended to lose possession of any of them.

Very easily understood now was Cutler's anxiety to get possession of the letters he believed Dal held. In them was sufficient evidence to send Cutler to the penitentiary for the remainder of his life.

As long as Hasbrouck had those papers he was in a position to grind the Hog-up postmaster into the dust, but once out of his possession they became fully as dangerous to himself, especially if Cutler should decide to talk. This explained why Cutler had been promptly notified of the loss of the papers, and explained, too, why the attack upon Silver Zone had been delayed as long as it had.

The fact that Cutler's man had seen Dal and Bradley meet and part at Monument Rock, without seeing what transpired there between them, had convinced the outlaws that the two men were working together, and they had waited for both of them to appear at Silver Zone. When it appeared that Dal was not coming back they had attacked anyway.

Two letters in particular Dal found which

related definitely to the problem of which Silver Zone was the storm center. Those two, with another one Dal already had in his possession were ample to send the postmaster over the road.

The first one read:

"Letter to-day for Lonesome Jim from an assayer named Bently saying that some samples he had submitted had assayed thirteen per cent. silver and a lot of other valuable mineral. The old cuss has found the silver lode that everybody was crazy about around Silver Zone forty years ago. It must be worth millions.

"I removed that letter and forged one that I put in its place saying that the samples he submitted were worthless. That will cure Lonesome Jim I guess. I'm sending this to you so you can start hunting for it immediately. I don't dare to hold this more than a week before giving it to him, but it don't matter much. If you can't follow him to it you ought to be able to locate it anyway for it can't be far from his cabin. This will be the biggest thing we ever tackled.—T. C."

Here was proof to convict the postmaster on three separate counts, tampering with the mails, forgery, and conspiracy; but the point that Dal grasped first was that the letter he had found in Lonesome Jim's poke, purporting to come from Bently was now explained. Samuel Bently's honor was forever cleared, and none but Dal had ever known that it could be questioned. It was no wonder that Cutler had flinched at the mention of a letter found among the prospector's effects.

Dal hastened to read the second letter.

"The Assayer who reported on Lonesome Jim's mine arrived to-day. Because Jim never sent him any more samples he believes him dead and has come out here to try to find his silver mine. If they get together imagine what will happen to me when they find out how I've monkeyed with their letters. And don't forget that Jim will go back to his mine, and that will end our chances of ever getting it. For God's sake do something with Jim—and do it quick. The Assayer has a girl with him.—T. C."

That letter had sealed the doom of Lonesome Jim. Hasbrouck must have murdered him just before Bently arrived at Silver Zone. Every fact dove-tailed together nicely to build a wall of evidence around Hasbrouck and Cutler.

Had Hasbrouck for any reason ever chosen to use those letters against Cutler, and mailed them to the district attorney there would have been nothing in them to prove that Hasbrouck was the recipient of those letters; but losing them the way he did, and with other incriminating memoranda, the coils were fastened around him as firmly as they were around the postmaster. And the skeleton of Lonesome Jim, which Dal could produce, would be a powerful exhibit.

The events of the sordid drama were easy to trace. Following the receipt of the forged letter Lonesome Jim had abandoned his claim, but had gone on hunting for another one in the same country with that blind, unbeatable optimism which only the real desert rat possesses. Hasbrouck and Cutler had failed to find the real mine. Then had come the arrival of Bently on the scene. Cutler had sent word to Hasbrouck, and the cattleman had taken the simple, direct way of preventing a meeting between the cheated prospector and his assayer. He had followed him on one of his prospecting tours and shot him like a dog.

Still, they had failed to find the mine—any of them. Lonesome Jim had lived true to his name and kept his secret. Dal did not doubt that that secret had been hard to keep. Certainly Hasbrouck must have exhausted every possible means to make him tell before murdering him—and those means must have included torture.

Dal refolded the papers into a packet and gave them back to Hop Sing.

"Hide 'em here for me," he requested. "But if I git killed and a feller name of Pet Bradley should come around give 'em to him. But if he don't come the first chance you git you take 'em to Annamucca an' hand 'em to the banker there—we don't know what the sheriff might do. You won't git into any trouble by doin' it.

"Mebbeso something velly bad in them pape's?" Hop Sing suggested.

"Bad enough to hang Hasbrouck," Dal said grimly.

A smile overspread the face of the Chinaman.

"Me no velly sorry," he said cheerfully. "Me keep papes."

"Now; how many men are here?" Dal asked.

"Flifteen."

"Where are they?"

"All in blunk-house 'cept Hasblook an' Kutch—they stop along little house," Hop Sing informed.

"All right. You go back into the bunkhouse an' entertain the lucky thirteen. I'm goin' to call on the other two," Dal said

with a smile that signified not amusement, but cold resolution.

The Chinaman threw a detaining hand swiftly upon Dal's shoulder.

"You my flind, Dal," he stated, "but you muchee clazy. Kutch shoot allee same like —— muchee fast. He no hit, Hasblook velly stlong man."

Dal threw off the detaining hand calmly, and pulled his gun from the holster. He examined it critically and seemed satisfied.

"Run along, Hop Sing," he said evenly. "The odds are not likely to get any less."

Without another word the Chinaman sped up the path toward the bunk-house, his slippered feet making no noise, and his white uniform but a faint blur against the darkness.

Dal moved slowly toward the small cabin, with an iron determination to come out with a knowledge of the whereabouts of Vincie Bently, or not at all. Even then he was conscious of a fierce resentment against the circumstances which compelled him to act the part of bad-man, even in a just cause.

But his plans were not destined to work out. Halfway between the cabin and the spring-house he became conscious of the presence of other men outside. He could not see them, nor hear them; yet he knew they were there. Friend or enemy he could not tell. He dropped flat on the ground to await developments.

He had not long to wait. Almost the instant he dropped he heard a voice, crisp and firm; but coldly impersonal, shout—

"Hello inside."

It was Pet Bradley's voice. The detective had come back.

At the sound of his voice the light in the smaller cabin disappeared, and the door of the bunk-house was flung open from the inside and a cowboy rushed out.

There was a flash, the roar of a rifle and the cowboy fell headlong.

"Nobody was invited outside," came Bradley's cold voice. "The rest of you stay in there until you're invited to leave. Your whole diggin's is surrounded."

"Who are you?" some one inside the cabin demanded shrilly.

"U. S. Deputy Marshal with a posse," Bradley responded.

"It's a bluff, fellers," another man inside shouted. "That's the feller got away from us las' night. He ain't had no time to raise a posse. Rush him."

Instantly men came tumbling out through the doors and windows. Too late they realized that it had not been a bluff. They were met by a fusillade of rifle bullets that rattled against the logs like hail. More than one cowboy stopped a bullet while getting out.

But once outside the cabin the besieged stood a better chance. In the darkness firearms were practically useless. If the cowboys were to be taken it must be by hand-to-hand methods. Bradley seemed to realize the fact at once.

"Come in close, boys, an' mix it with 'em. Here's the place to see whether a sheepherder's any good or not."

The excitement around the bunk-house had distracted Dal's attention from the smaller cabin for a moment, and also, presumably, that of the other members of the posse; for as he glanced there he saw a man leap swiftly from a window. Dal fired from the hip, but he was just too slow—the man vanished in the darkness. Immediately another man leaped from the window, and again Dal was just a fraction of a second too late. He rushed toward the window, but the darkness had swallowed the men up.

For one man to try to follow two who had already escaped under cover of darkness would be folly. All that was left for Dal to do was to mix in where he could hope for the help of the posse later on.

Sounds of hand to hand fighting arose from all over the yard, but none from the direction in which the two men from the small cabin had gone. With a curse Dal turned to some of the struggles going on around him.

Just then a powerful pocket flashlight flared out, and from directly behind it sounded the voice of Pet Bradley calling encouragement to his men. It flashed only for an instant, then disappeared only to reappear in another place.

While still wondering which fight to mix into Dal almost stumbled against a man who was crouched motionless with a gun in his hand. So intent was the man on what he was watching for that he failed to see Dal. Dal recoiled a step, wondering if the man was friend or foe.

Just then the flashlight reappeared and both Dal and the man were directly in its rays. Instantly Dal divined what the man had been waiting for. He was one of the cowboys who had avoided any of the scrimmages, and was waiting for the reappearance

of the light to get a shot at its owner. At the distance he could not miss.

Dal went into action with a single flip of the wrist, and fired from the hip. The cowboy's finger quivered nervously on the trigger for a moment, while his face grew blank; but he seemed to lack the muscular reaction necessary to plunge the hammer down. Then his legs buckled and he collapsed.

The light disappeared, but Bradley's voice sounded calm and unruffled:

"Purty work, Showalter. I owe you my bacon."

There was no more shooting, and each fight seemed to be developing a crisis as one or the other side got the better of the argument. Bradley passed from group to group with his flashlight, playing it upon the strugglers on the ground until the cowboy, or cowboys were disarmed and helpless. Members of the posse outnumbered the cowboys two to one, and their victory was complete.

When the round-up of the cowboys was finished, and a count made of them in the bunkhouse it was found that of the thirteen, two had been killed—the fellow who had first opened a door, and "Bonanzer," the cowboy whom Dal had cut short in his attempt to assassinate Bradley—three more were wounded, and eight were more or less bruised prisoners. But Hasbrouck and Kutch had escaped.

Dal had been hustled into the bunk-house with the rest of the men. Now he saw that the posse was composed of sheepherders and camp-movers, grim, bearded men actuated by a stern ferocity. For once they had been victorious over their hereditary enemies and they wanted to take full advantage of it. Dal found himself treated as a cowboy by these fierce, implacable men.

"Go out to the corral and find these fellows ropes. Right here is where Sawyer's two murdered sheps' get even," ordered a big, black bearded sheepherder.

Dal glanced anxiously at Bradley but the detective only smiled, coldly dispassionate.

"See here, Bradley," Dal remonstrated. "I object to bein' held in the society of Hasbrouck's gang."

"All right. Come away from 'em. But you're under arrest for murderin' two Basque sheepherders up in Idaho—don't forget that," Bradley said coldly.

Dal smiled.

"Hop Sing," he called.

Presently out from under a bunk crawled an impassive, stoical Chinaman, looking as unperturbed as if he had merely crawled under there to mop the floor.

"Bring those papers, will you, Hop Sing?" Dal asked.

"How did you manage to raise that posse so quick?" Dal asked the detective curiously, while they waited for Hop Sing's return.

"I replevined that old pinto horse of yours," Bradley grinned. "I rode him far and fast to collect these sheps'. He's a reg'lar hoss all right."

There were other things Dal wanted to ask but Hop Sing had returned, and also the sheepherder with the ropes. Until he knew how the detective would react to the evidence against Hasbrouck he could do nothing. First to be settled, however, was Bradley's ability to control his posse. This point the detective settled with a word.

"Wait," he ordered without the slightest raise of voice.

Aready the herders were getting busy with the ropes. They were men of the solitudes, unused to being commanded. Also they were strangers to any sort of organized effort. At that word of command they hesitated. Had they been used to acting together a word from any one of them might have overridden Bradley—but they remained silent. After several minutes of hesitation each man seemed to understand that the delay was a tacit acceptance of Bradley's leadership, and henceforth his orders would be obeyed.

Bradley ran swiftly through Hasbrouck's papers with no word of comment until he had finished.

"There's a lot of evidence here, all right; but it ain't necessary against any of 'em but this man Cutler. That raid on Silver Zone last night was enough to hang the rest of 'em, an' there ain't no use doin' more than that to a man—we got to be reasonable," Bradley said dryly.

"But look here," Dal argued. "These letters show that Hasbrouck was in the business of killin' people in cold blood here. He has a ranch up in Topaz which nobody knew about here. He has a ranch here which nobody knows about there. Ain't it reasonable that if he was crooked an' a killer here he'd be the same thing there?

"I can show that he had more motive for

killin' those Basques than I did. I stood to gain nothin', an' lose everything. If he could fasten it on to me, like he did, he stood to win my ranch an' cattle, an' the Dishpan Basin. Nobody seen me kill those fellows, but I did see Hasbrouck an' Gurley. Now——"

"Whoa," Bradley cut in. "Sounds like you hadn't heard all the evidence. Hasbrouck and Gurley claim they saw you do it."

"Well, don't that make my case all the stronger? He had the motive to kill 'em an' frame me up, an' this evidence here shows that he had the character to do it," Dal insisted.

"It shows nothing of the kind," Bradley said coldly. "Where you've slipped up is in supposin' that this Hasbrouck here, an' the one in Topaz is the same man. But this man's crimes don't make that man a criminal."

"What's that?" Dal demanded dazedly. "You mean to say there's two Hasbroucks? Why, man, it's impossible! The same look, the same walk—everything!"

"Not so strange, considerin' that they're twin brothers," Bradley explained with cool aloofness. That's Bill Hasbrouck up there and Jim here.

"No, my man," he continued firmly, "don't fool yourself. I've got you cinched for murder."

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIGHT AT LONESOME JIM'S

FOR a moment Dal seemed to loose cntrol of his faculties. His head whirled, and he seemed unable to make his thoughts coordinate. For weeks he had worked and planned on the theory that if he could get something on Hasbrouck it could be used to pry apart the evidence which fastened the Basque murder in Idaho to himself. Then what he had been working for had dropped into his hands almost miraculously—but the whole fabric of his hopes had been based upon a false assumption.

With a supreme effort of will he regained his self-control, and regarded the situation calmly. He saw clearly now the depths of folly to which his specious reasoning had brought him; and yet he had been justified. True enough he had never met Jim Hasbrouck face to face except in that brief instant when he had collided with him in the raid on Silver Zone, but he had seen him at a distance, and in motion, and every look and movement were the same as those of the man he had known.

Nor could he be blamed for thinking one man owned both ranches and traveled back and forth between them in spite of difficulties. Had there really been only one Hasbrouck, and he the owner of both ranches, such an arrangement would have been exceedingly useful in carrying on his rustling operations.

However, he had been fooled and regrets were vain. He set aside his own predicament and returned to the one theme which had predominated in his mind since he had come to himself that morning.

"Do you happen to have any information about what happened to Miss Bently and the nurse?" he asked Bradley, making a titanic effort to overcome his growing repugnance for the man.

"Don't know a thing," Bradley replied. "Last time I seen 'em was when they rushed out of the door of Bently's cabin. When we come by Silver Zone Sawyer told us you had left word that they would be here. Didn't you know what you was talkin' about?"

"I only made a guess, but that was better than sendin' 'em out to face a mob while you skulked behind like a scared coyote," Dal retorted hotly.

"You can't insult me—as long as you're my prisoner," Bradley said laconically. "But I'll just explain that I use common sense in dealin' with the ladies, an' not sentiment. If I'd have rushed out —— bent like you would have done I'd 'a' got killed, an' nobody any better off. As it was I sent 'em out to create a diversion so I could git out through a back window. This here posse is the result. Any remarks?"

Dal had none to make at the moment. The detective was cold-blooded as a fish, and that was all there was to it. Anyway, Bradley's morals was not the issue before the house. Dal began to realize that he had been keyed up too tight; that he had been thinking too frantically.

What the problem needed was clear, analytical thought. Vincie could not be around the ranch or Hop Sing would at least have heard something about it. Hasbrouck's presence there all that day argued that he had either never taken her prisoner—this surmise was untenable—or he had placed

her and the nurse in some place where he was sure they would be all right until he was satisfied that there was to be no come-back from the Silver Zone raid. Wherever that was there was little doubt that Hasbrouck and Kutch were on their way there at that moment.

Suddenly Dal had an inspiration. What place could suit their purpose better than Lonesome Jim's cabin? In a flash it dawned upon him who had provisioned the cabin two days before, and why. He was about to state his facts to Bradley when the detective turned his attention to the prisoners.

"I want to know where the two girls are that Hasbrouck done took from Silver Zone last night," he said dryly. "The first man to speak up can save his neck by doin' it."

There was no response.

"Where are they?" Bradley snapped, every tone charged with menace.

"We don't know," a cowboy answered tremblingly. "Right after we left Silver Zone Hasbrouck an' Kutch took the two wimmin an' disappeared. Hasbrouck never took nobody into his plans 'cept Kutch, an' Nevada when he was alive."

"Looks like they was tellin' the truth," Bradley commented.

"I think I know where they are," Dal said quietly.

"You do?" Bradley asked curiously.

Quickly Dal related how he had come to discover Lonesome Jim's cabin, and why he believed Hasbrouck had taken the girls there.

"Then that's where the two *hombres* who got away have gone," Bradley exclaimed with a peculiar gleam in his eye. "We've got a chance to git 'em before morning."

Dal saw that the glint in the detective's eye was that of the man-hunter, and that he was not concerned about the girls.

"I want three of you to guard the prisoners," Bradley told his men. "Then who will volunteer to help me nab the two that got away tonight?"

"See here," said a bearded shepherd, "we've helped you raid this ranch to pay up for the raid on Sawyer's outfit. That lets us out. We ain't no more than got time to git back to our herds before they start to movin' in the mornin', an' we've left 'em too long already. If we ain't with 'em by morning they'll be mixed up, the coyotes'll be into 'em, an —— will be to pay all around. None of us has got the time to go on any wild goose chase into the hills."

"Then I reckon I'll have to git 'em myself," Bradley said. "But two of you will have to stay and watch these prisoners."

"Let us have our way an' they won't need watchin'," the herder retorted.

In the end two young camp-movers who cared more for excitement than they did for their jobs were detailed to watch the prisoners.

For the first time Dal knew the bitter taste of being a prisoner as he found himself being herded with Hasbrouck's men. It would have been bad enough at any time, but it was a thousand times worse at this precise moment to have his hands tied when Vincie Bently was in deadly peril.

"Look here, Bradley," he protested vehemently, "you can't leave me here—you need me. You won't be able to find the place."

"I'm purty good at findin' trails, especially when I've got the directions. I reckon I can make out," Bradley replied.

"But there'll be two to one, and a fight at the end of the trail," Dal warned desperately.

"I reckon I can take care of the business at the end," Bradley returned evenly.

"You're well heeled for conceit," Dal exclaimed bitterly. "But recollect, mister, that if it hadn't been for me tonight you'd have been a dead one. More than that I could have got away if I'd wanted to, and when we met before you come off second best."

The cold eyes of the detective played over Dal questioningly.

"Give your word that you won't try to escape an' I'll take you along," he said without a trace of feeling.

"You've got it," Dal cried joyously.

To Bradley's credit he did not try to hedge. Thereafter he treated Dal as a partner in the enterprise, with no suggestion of his status as a prisoner. Fresh horses were quickly obtained from Hasbrouck's pasture and soon the two of them were on their way to the place where Dal had first picked up the trail which led to Lonesome Jim's cabin.

Dal rode in advance with the ex-Ranger following in silence. To Dal it all seemed weird and uncanny, that midnight pilgrimage among the familiar ridges and cañons which now seemed vaguely unfamiliar as

vast shadow peaks crawled and undulated while a new moon played hide and seek among floating clouds of silver; the almost ghostly silence broken only at intervals by the even more ghostly yell of some morbid coyote, or the deeper, more resonant howl of a timber wolf, or the startled, jeering hoot of an owl. And at the end of the trail —what?

On top of the ridge overlooking Lonesome Jim's cabin Dal halted and with a few terse words explained the topography of the cañon to Bradley.

"We had better slip down afoot if we figure on takin' 'em by surprize," he advised in conclusion.

"Ain't there a way to get down there outside the trail?" the detective inquired.

"A man might possibly slide down the mountain above the cabin, but there wouldn't apt to be any surprize—except for the fellow that tried it. He'd probably loosen a ton or two of gravel to take along with him."

"But see here, Showalter; if those women are in the cabin the men will be outside. Anyway, they'll be watchin' the trail. The only way to surprize 'em is to drop down from above."

"You'll wake 'em up if you try it," Dal maintained obstinately.

"No mountain goat has anything on me. I'm going to try it," Bradley insisted. "You wait within yellin' distance of the cabin till you hear from me."

Without more ado he swung off the trail.

After all Bradley was the commander, and Dal but a prisoner. Reluctantly Dal strode down the trail alone. He had no way to estimate how long it would take the detective to get down. He might come down with the speed of an avalanche, or he might work his way down inch by inch.

The more Dal thought about it the more resentful he became. He felt that there was small chance of the men looking for two surprizes in one night. They had felt perfectly safe or they would not have brought the girls there in the first place—if they had brought them. The reasonable thing to do, then, was to advance straight up the trail, surprize them if possible, fight it out with them if it was not.

Once before that night Bradley had spoiled Dal's game by horning in, and Dal was not disposed to let it happen again. He waited impatiently for fifteen minutes in a thicket opposite the grove where the cabin stood. He could hear the restless stamping of horses and knew the quarry was trapped; but no sign of Bradley.

The fact that the horses had not been concealed indicated that the men felt themselves perfectly safe. Between where Dal lay and the edge of the grove in front of the cabin was a smooth, open space a hundred feet wide. Dal began to advance across it boldly, but cautiously.

Straining his eyes through the moonlight he caught sight of some object in the trail, in the jack-pines, and not twenty feet from the cabin. Gradually it took form before his eyes, and he could make out the distinct outline of a bed and two parallel humps which marked the bodies of sleeping men. Within the cabin all was dark and quiet.

His heart missed a beat. Whether willingly or unwillingly, as the case might prove to be, the outlaws were sleeping outside, and if Vincie and the nurse were inside all was well with them. He again cursed the detective for a conceited, double-barreled idiot. Had he come on down the trail like a sensible man it would have been dead easy for the two of them to sneak up and get the drop on the outlaws while they slept.

As it was Dal felt that the best thing to do was to crawl in alone and get the drop on them before Bradley came plunging down the cañon wall waking them up.

Inch by inch he crept warily closer. From time to time he stopped to listen, but all seemed serene and quiet. Suddenly he stopped and dropped to the earth. Between the cabin and the bed appeared the tall form of a man. Even in the moonlight Dal knew it was Bradley. The man had succeeded in getting down from above without making a sound, and was certainly stalking the bed the same as Dal was doing.

Dal dared not create a diversion, or risk being shot by Bradley. All he could do was lie still and wait for Bradley to wake the men up.

Suddenly the flashlight flared on the bed accompanied by Bradley's terse command—

"Hands up."

Almost the same instant the light was extinguished, nearly simultaneously with the report of a revolver from somewhere within the grove.

"Grab him, Jim—I missed the ——" snarled Kutch.

A moment later came explosive grunts and sounds of furious combat which told Dal plainly that Hasbrouck had grappled with the detective.

Dal leaped to his feet and ran toward the trees, zig-zagging as he ran. Spurts of flame came from the trees and stabbed into the darkness all around him as he ran; proof that Kutch was well aware of his presence. In daylight Kutch would not have missed, and Dal realized as he ran that every step lessened Kutch's chances of missing.

Then he stumbled over something in the trail and fell headlong, causing Kutch's last bullet to whiz over his head. Almost automatically Dal realized that his enemy's gun must now be empty, and he sprang fiercely for the spot from whence the bullets had come.

Still, his brain had registered the fact that the thing he had fallen over was the decoy bed, for the two humps which resembled men had collapsed under the impact of his body. He was painfully aware that instead of trapping the outlaws he and the detective had been neatly trapped.

His grasping arms collided with nothing but the slim trunk of a small jack-pine, while a taunting laugh came from the bushes a few feet away. There was a choking sound from where Hasbrouck and the detective struggled that told well enough how that battle was going. Bradley would have had as good a chance with a grizzly bear in a personal encounter as he had with the gorilla-like rancher. Yet the tall Texan was forcing Hasbrouck to extend himself. Sometimes they were on their feet, sometimes rolling on the ground; but each movement brought them closer to the abrupt break-off in the cañon.

Dal realized that he must deal with Kutch quickly if he was to be of any assistance to Bradley. With a gunman of Kutch's ability reloading would be merely a matter of seconds. In the grim game of hide and seek which they were playing Kutch had the advantage in that he knew approximately where his antagonist was, while Dal had nothing but a guess that his opponent had retreated toward the cabin.

Showalter dropped flat on his face and rolled to one side—not a second too soon. He heard the angry impact of a bullet into a tree behind him. He fired instantly toward where he judged Kutch to be, but was rewarded only by a mocking laugh from another place. Dal shifted positions and began crawling slowly through the trees, every nerve alert and tingling.

For some time Dal had been aware that a light had been struck in the cabin. He was positive now that the girls were inside and it filled him with satisfaction. The knowledge that Vincie was in there made him ready to take any desperate chance, yet he was coldly determined that he would not be guilty of a single misstep.

Kutch fired once more, and Dal chuckled silently as the bullet went ten feet wide of the mark—proof that Kutch had lost track of him. Then Dal's knee came down upon some round object which seemed to roll too smoothly for a stick. He stopped and felt around slowly until his hand came in contact with it. Immediately he discovered that it was Bradley's flashlight, which the detective must have dropped when he had been unexpectedly assaulted by Hasbrouck.

With the flashlight in one hand and his gun in the other he crawled ahead again slowly. Once he seemed to make a slight noise for a bullet went over his head like the hum of an angry hornet. Instantly Dal flashed the light on the spot from where the bullet had come. Just within the radius of the light, crouched behind a deer bush, Kutch was plainly visible, a look of ghastly surprize upon his face.

Before the man could recover from the shock of having the light flashed in his face Dal fired. The look of astonishment never left the man's face.

Dal knew that he had not missed. Without waiting to make any examination of his victim to see whether he was dead or alive he bounded toward the other two combatants. They were fighting now on the very verge of the precipice. As Dal ran he saw Hasbrouck lift the lank form of the ex-Ranger high in the air, holding him helpless as a baby.

Never before had Dal had an opportunity to really fathom the amazing rapidity of thought. Hasbrouck had but to make a half-turn and a toss—a matter of ten seconds at the most—and Bradley's career would be terminated upon the rocks below. In that brief period of time all the possibilities

of the situation flashed through his mind.

He could withhold his fire, and the man who was so implacably bent upon taking him back to Topaz to hang for a murder he had never committed, would be forever past doing any harm. As soon as Bradley was over the break-off he could easily deal with Hasbrouck and would then be alone in control of the situation.

On the other hand, should he shoot quickly enough to save Bradley's life he could expect no benefit from the act. He had saved Bradley from a bullet once that night, and his sole reward was to be promptly arrested for murder. He was strangely cool. He disliked Bradley only a degree less than he hated Hasbrouck, and he could contemplate the death of either of them without the slightest compunction.

Yet another chain of thought was running through his mind. In spite of his innate loathing of "bad-men" circumstances had compelled him to become a killer. He could not feel any sense of guilt for the death of Nevada, Bonanzer, or Kutch; nor would he for Hasbrouck. And they had been, or would be, killed by positive, direct action. It would require only non-interference to account for Bradley. With his own life at stake it would be easy to slip over the line. But his sense of justice told him firmly that crossing that line meant his transition from justifiable killer to cold-blooded murder.

Before Hasbrouck had scarcely started to turn, Dal fired. Slowly the rancher's arms relaxed, and Bradley wriggled free, falling weakly on the very edge of the cliff. A moment Hasbrouck staggered back and forth as if indulging in some grotesque dance there in the moonlight, then pitched headlong over the precipice.

CHAPTER XVII

"THE PAROLE IS OFF"

DAL waited just long enough to make sure that the detective was out of danger before he started for the cabin. The door was barred from the outside, but the streaks of light that shone through the cracks in the walls apprized Dal that someone was inside.

With fingers that trembled with excitement he lifted the heavy bar and attempted to push the door open. It resisted his efforts, and then he realized that the girls had barred the door on the inside as well.

"Vincie, are you in there?" he called eagerly.

"Yes; who is it? Is it you, Dal?" she called back in a voice that quivered with excitement.

"Yes, it's me—everything's all right," he replied.

"I'll unfasten the door in a minute," she promised.

He heard her moving or dragging heavy objects inside for a moment, then the door was thrown open.

He stepped in and took the hand which she impulsively offered. The first thing he noticed was that everything in the room seemed wrecked. The bunk was torn from the wall, and practically every piece of the crude furniture was piled in the middle of the room.

"Did—did Hasbrouck—" he stammered.

Vincie caught his meaning and smiled.

"We've had no visitors since we came here. We piled all the furniture against the door to make sure we wouldn't."

Now he had time to regard her personal appearance. Her patched gingham dress was torn and soiled, and there were smudges of dirt over her hands and face. The nurse was better off in appearance only because her uniform was of newer, more substantial material. Mentally she seemed less calm than Vincie.

At Dal's lugubrious expression Vincie began to laugh—a laugh that came perilously near being hysterical. The nurse's professional instinct was aroused.

"Stop it," she commanded.

Vincie quieted at once.

"Tell me," she implored, "what has happened? We heard shooting outside."

"Hasbrouck's gang has been wiped out, so you have nothing to worry about."

Dal wasted no time in a long recital of all that had happened. He found boxes for the two girls to sit upon, then perched himself upon the edge of the table.

"Now what has happened to you?" he asked.

"When we ran out of the cabin at Silver Zone—you have heard about the raid there, of course?" Vincie began.

Dal nodded.

"We ran into those men and were overpowered. They tied our hands behind us

and put us on ponies. The men soon separated and Hasbrouck and his man Kutch brought us here. They didn't come inside—merely pushed us through the door and fastened it behind us. But on the way up here Hasbrouck threatened that we would be kept here indefinitely unless we agreed to marry them. The nurse told Kutch that she was already married, and that took some of the wind out of his sails, but of course they couldn't let her go under the circumstances."

Dal contemplated the nurse speculatively.

"Were you married?" he asked.

"I should say not," she answered indignantly, "but I wasn't going to advertise the fact."

"I couldn't run a bluff like that," Vincie said ruefully.

Again Dal saw where his mistake in thinking there was only one Hasbrouck had put him at fault. He had ridiculed the idea of Hasbrouck wanting to marry Vincie because he thought him a married man; but Jim Hasbrouck was single and so sincere in his desire to marry the girl that he was ready to commit murder, and kidnap in his effort to get her.

"Hasbrouck and his man came back here last night and tried to get in, but we had the door barred," Vincie said.

"It must have been a terrible strain on you," Dal began tritely, completely at a loss how to express the sympathy that seemed to be in order, and which he surely felt.

"It was not so bad as far as we were concerned, only on account of our anxiety as to what had happened to the others. Poor father was already dead and they couldn't hurt him," she went on bravely, "but Mr. Sawyer was wounded, and Mr. Bradley stayed inside to fight them off and we saw the cabin burning."

"Sawyer and Bradley both escaped," Dal explained hurriedly. "Bradley raised a posse and wiped out Hasbrouck's gang. He sent men back to look after Sawyer and bury your father, so everything is all right."

At the mention of her father Vincie's face went white, but she quickly recovered her self-possession.

"It's a sad finish for so good a man," she said slowly, "but perhaps it's just as well. Anyway, his honor was never questioned out here."

It had been—just once—when Dal found the letter Bently was supposed to have written to Lonesome Jim, but he made no comment.

"It was too bad he never found the silver-mine," Dal offered.

"Yes; and the irony of it is that he died the day before it was found," the girl said with a touch of bitterness.

Dal slipped from the table and stared at her with vast incredulity.

"Who claims to have found that mine?" he asked. "Hasbrouck?"

"I do," was Vincie's surprizing answer. She walked into the cellar in the back and returned with her hands full of ore.

"This is exactly the same sort of rock that Lonesome Jim sent to my father."

"But how——"

"We found an old rusty pick and shovel here, so we attempted to dig our way out through the walls of the cellar, or what we supposed to be the cellar. The rock was so hard that we had to give it up, but it felt so heavy that I brought some of it out here to look at and made that discovery."

"It's simple," Dal broke out. "So darn simple that it's no wonder your father nor Hasbrouck ever stumbled on to it. When Lonesome Jim believed he had something the secretive old cuss built his cabin over the tunnel an' let 'em rave. You two girls are sure lucky."

"Excuse me," the nurse broke in emphatically. "I'm off this country for life. There may be a silver-mine here and all that, but I'm not bein' tied up with it. Besides, I didn't have anything to do with discoverin' it. If it'ud been left to me the only use I'd of had for it would have been to maybe chuck a hunk of it at that Kutch guy's head.

"However," she finished demurely, "if anything should come of it and you could slip me a few thousands I wouldn't kick."

"We're no luckier than you are," Vincie said evenly addressing Dal. "Any interest in this mine that you will take won't begin to compensate you for what you have done for us. You will accept an interest in it won't you?"

"I certainly won't," Dal refused bluntly. "After Lonesome Jim, you and your father had the best right to it without your discovery."

There was a finality in his tone against which the girl saw it would be useless to

argue. She recognized a stubborn pride in him that could never be conquered with bribes. There were tears in her eyes as she faced him.

"Dal," she faltered, "you're the finest, realest man I ever met."

For an instant he faced her, a rush of indiscreet words on his lips. Then, from the doorway, came the unemotional voice of Bradley.

"We'd better be rustlin' some breakfast, folks; it's a right smart ride back to Hasbrouck's ranch," he said.

The tension that had been gathering inside the cabin subsided at once—much to the relief of the nurse. Every one promptly became busy. Vincie and Bradley cooked breakfast, while the nurse dressed Dal's wounded head with swift, expert fingers.

Hasbrouck had the place well-stocked with grub, and there was a ten gallon keg of water so the breakfast was good and all four of them ate as if they expected it to be their last meal on earth.

Bradley asked the girls a few questions but gave no indication of his plans. He had quietly assumed command, and if the girls wondered why Dal was content to assume second rank they made no comment.

After breakfast the two girls were mounted on the dead men's horses. Dal looked for the body of Kutch but it was missing. In reply to his look of inquiry Bradley motioned toward the break-off of the cañon, and Dal knew the detective had thrown it over to join Hasbrouck's.

Before noon they reached Hasbrouck's ranch and found Hop Sing in solitary possession. The two camp-movers, he said, had started for Annamucca at daylight with their prisoners.

By some miraculous means Hop Sing was able to produce a few articles with which the girls were able to do wonders to their personal appearance. While they were so engaged Pet Bradley and Dal gathered together a really comfortable camping-outfit from Hasbrouck's supplies, and loaded it all in the back of a large mountain hack. Food and water for a day and a half were added. When the job was finished the Texan regarded Dal with coldly speculative eyes.

"About that promise of yours not to give me the slip—does it still hold good?" he inquired.

"What's the idea?" Dal asked non-committally.

"That girl thinks well of you, an' I'm willin' for her to get out of the country without knowin' about you bein' arrested for murder. Reckon I owe you that much for savin' my carcass a couple of times."

It was the first sign of gratitude the detective had shown, but even this he proceeded to discount.

"Besides," he went on, "I've got other things to do than ridin' herd on a couple of women."

"What do you want me to do?" Dal asked.

"I want you to take those girls into Annamucca in that hack. I'll borrow that spotted horse of yours an' ride around by Hog-up an' pick up that man Cutler. I'll be back to Annamucca before the girl gits out of town, an' as soon as she leaves the parole ends. From then on you'll be welcome to try to git away if you think you're lucky."

His tone was grimly confident.

"All right; I'll give my word," Dal agreed. "I'd like to ask a favor, though. Go around by Sorensen's sheep camp the other side of Silver Zone an' git my other horse. I want to send both of them to a man by the name of Thad Thompson up around Topaz."

"I'll shorely 'tend to it," Bradley promised readily.

IT WAS almost dark that night before Dal stopped to make camp. He set up the teepee tent for the girls, then hobbled out his team after giving them a drink and a big feed of grain. Then he gathered a plentiful supply of greasewood and started to cook supper. The girls came out and offered to help, but he waved them away.

Still they hovered about the fire. There were things which Vincie wanted to say but the presence of the nurse acted as a damper upon confidential words, and Dal was not responsive. They talked of inconsequential things until bed time.

After the girls had retired Dal sat beside the fast dying embers of greasewood until the deep, gentle breathing inside told him that the fatigued girls were sound asleep. Then he arose and began pacing back and forth across the flat floor of the desert,

fighting the greatest battle with himself he had ever been called upon to make.

In spite of his terrible physical weakness sleep was an impossibility. Among the articles in the pack was just one of which Pet Bradley had been ignorant—a burlap-covered gallon canteen. Dal had smuggled it into the pack with considerable difficulty, but with it filled with water the road to freedom lay open before him across the pathless floor of the desert.

He knew the girls would have no difficulty hitching the team up in the morning and driving on to Annamucca. It would prove to be a long, wearisome road but they would be scarcely more weary than if he were along to drive. As the country was flat as a floor there was no twisting of the road; it ran straight as a chalk-line and there was no chance for them to get lost.

But there, so close at hand, was the girl he loved. Infinitely removed from him it was true by barriers of education, culture, refinement, and, since the discovery of the lost mine, wealth. Under certain conditions all these might have been bridged, but the fact that he was under arrest for murder—with certain conviction awaiting him—could not.

Why, he asked himself, should he be troubled about what she would think when she awoke and found him missing. She would not require him to lose his life to keep from breaking his word; he knew that. If she knew all the circumstances he was positive that she would even help him to escape, would even go as far as old Thad Thompson himself. There seemed no reason why he should go on and put himself in Bradley's clutches again.

Yet he knew there was a reason, so intangible that he could scarcely grasp it in words, though he felt it keenly. He did not believe for a minute that Vincie loved him; vanity was never his curse. Still, he knew that in a way she idealized him. He stood for something finer in her mind than did other men of her acquaintance despite his lack of social polish. In a word, "bigness"—a complete, utter thoughtlessness of self.

And he knew that that feeling of hers would be forever destroyed if she awoke and found that he had sneaked away in the night. Her feelings must inevitably triumph over her reason, which would insist that he had done perfectly right.

A coyote howled in the desert, a mournful, cynical wail—a perfect echo of Dal's dreary thoughts—a grim commentary upon the futility of life. He laughed once, harshly. Abruptly he returned to his blankets and counted stars until morning.

IT WAS a long hard drive to Annamucca and the days were short. The electric lights of the little railroad town in the midst of the desert were beckoning and twinkling a friendly welcome before Dal piloted the hack in front of the largest hotel. They had been three miles out in the desert when they first caught sight of the lights and Dal at once sensed the heart hunger with which Vincie welcomed them after two years of soul-trying exile on the desert.

After he had put his team in a livery stable and eaten supper Dal wandered around the town apathetically. In the saloons he found the talk still buzzing about the arrival of Hasbrouck's men under guard. Wild stories were being told of the sanguinary battle that was supposed to have taken place out on Goose Creek, and at Silver Zone. In the excitement Dal found his own presence went unnoted, though ordinarily strangers were objects of some curiosity.

In one saloon he found the two camp-movers who had brought in the outlaws. They looked at him strangely but otherwise made no sign of recognition. Quite obviously they had received instructions from Bradley to let him alone and say nothing.

In the morning Dal was on the streets early. Vincie would be leaving that day, and he was hungry for a final sight of her. But it was not until eleven o'clock that he saw her, and then he would have evaded her had she not caught sight of him and called.

He stood before her awkward and bashful as a schoolboy. She was not the girl he had known, this lovely creature in black silk taffeta, black silk stockings, soft black shoes, and a trim, dark little hat. He had known at Silver Zone that she was good looking, but he had never dreamed that she could become as radiant as he saw her now.

"Am I not extravagant?" she greeted with a blush that was half-apologetic, and half-anxious for his approval.

"You are wonderful," he breathed.

"Do you think so?" she asked with level-eyed honesty that fairly took his breath away.

Before he could formulate an answer she went on:

"Mr. Bradley paid me the money Mr. Sawyer owed us for the spring. He said there would be no more difficulty, and that it would be foolish for me not to take the money. I should have been more economical but I simply had to have some good clothes. Honestly, Dal, I'd have died if I'd had to wear those rags another day."

"You made the rags appear glorious," Dal surprized himself by saying.

The girl did not try to conceal her pleasure.

"Why, Dal," she smiled, "I never expected to hear anything like that from you."

"You are goin' home?" he asked

"I'm leaving on the two o'clock train."

Dal could find nothing to say.

"I—I wonder if you are going back to that lovely ranch you told me about once?" she asked diffidently. "Or will that trouble you told me about prevent it?"

"No; I'm goin' back to—to Topaz," he replied slowly.

"Dal, won't you please take a half-interest in that mine? It belongs to you," she pleaded.

"No," he smiled, and the corners of his mouth were white, "I ain't got the least bit o' use for money."

At noon Annamucca was given another surprize when Pet Bradley rode into town with Tom Cutler under arrest. The detective lodged his prisoner in the jail and shortly before train time joined Dal and Vincie at the depot. The eyes of both men were hard and expressionless as they clashed. Vincie caught the hostility between them and puzzled vainly over what it was about.

The train thundered up and Vincie faced the two men for a final instant.

"Good-by, Dal," she said, her eyes luminous, "you must come and see me some time."

There was much less cordiality in her tone as she added—"And you, too, Mr. Bradley."

"All aboard," sang out the conductor.

The girls scrambled up the steps, and as Vincie turned for a final good-by Dal saw that her eyes were full of tears.

The train rolled away and Dal stood looking after it until it was only a blur against the smoky haze of the desert. Suddenly Bradley touched him roughly on the arm.

"The parole is off," he said curtly. "Let's go."

CHAPTER XVIII

A GRIM CHOICE

UNOSTENTATIOUSLY the detective removed Dal's gun and slipped it into an extra holster on his own belt.

"I've a notion to go through the hills to Topaz on them horses of yours. If I knew you'd be good I would. What d'ye say?"

"The first chance I git I'm gone," Dal said promptly.

"Chances to git away is the one thing you shore ain't a goin' to git," Bradley retorted with a suggestion of a smile on his straight gash of a mouth.

"I don't know—you ain't showed any great amount of ability yet," Dal jeered, determined to goad the man into going through the mountains if it were possible.

There were no restrictions now on his trying to escape, and a great deal might happen in the three or four days they would be on trail.

Bradley refused the bait.

"I've sure enough had a winnin' streak of luck which is a heap better than ability," he replied without rancor.

"There has been other folks mixed up in it all the time before," Dal reminded. "Now the issue lays between us two alone."

"You know," Bradley said easily, "I could easy git somebody to help me take you through the mountains, an' you wouldn't stand a ghost of a chance gittin' away."

Dal's disappointment showed keenly in his face. Bradley noted it at once, and its corollary that Dal was confident of his ability to escape if they were alone. It touched his pride—his one susceptible feeling.

"We'll go through the hills—alone," he stated.

Bradley was in no hurry to start. They loafed around the town the rest of the day, seemingly two very good friends killing time together, but the detective's eye was never entirely away from his prisoner, nor his hand far from his gun.

They spend the night in a hotel, in the same room, hand-cuffed together. Before they left the room in the morning Bradley took off the hand-cuffs. Bradley informed Dal that his horses had been left in Hog-up, so they rode on the stage to that place.

The next night they spent in Tom Cutler's hotel in Hog-up. The town was seething with excitement over the arrest of Cutler, and the death of Jim Hasbrouck. Undoubtedly the men still had many friends out of jail, but they were too stunned by the disaster that had overtaken their leaders to start anything.

All of them believed Dal and Bradley were both detectives, and Bradley was shrewd enough to take full advantage of the fact by treating Dal with marked respect and friendliness in public. In the morning they were allowed to depart in peace.

Spot and Sport were in the livery stable where they had been left by Bradley. Old Spot greeted Dal with an eager, welcoming whinny, and a moment later Sport joined in like a bashful boy.

"I see you're a regular horse lover," Bradley remarked. "It's darn few men can make a horse think enough of 'em to say hello."

"I sure think a lot of this pair," Dal admitted.

Bradley dropped the subject, but he stored it away methodically in the well organized store-house of his memory. Without making any request or acknowledgment he threw Nevada's saddle on Sport and calmly appropriated him. He had a pack outfit on another horse and this was their only equipment.

"You take lead—an' don't make nary a false step whatever or I'll drill you," Bradley warned as they swung onto their horses.

In the afternoon they stopped at Silver Zone long enough to water their horses and eat their dinner. All that remained of the cabin was a heap of ashes. Close beside it were three small mounds which testified that some one had done all that was possible for Samuel Bently and the two murdered sheepherders.

Not a word had passed between the two men all day except such as related strictly to business. But now Dal could restrain himself no longer. Silver Zone had meant too much to him for him to ride away from it forever without some speculation as to its future.

"What do you suppose will become of this place now?" he asked.

"I judge that Kutch's contest will go by default now, so Sawyer will have no trouble holdin' the place till Spring. If the girl is wise she'll sell her rights to the Sheepgrowers' Association. They can have some old, broken-down shep' prove up on it for a song, then it can always be used as a water-hole for sheep. I offered the girl a thousand dollars for her rights, which was plumb liberal considerin' that it can be contested an' taken away from her," Bradley said somewhat argumentatively.

"Wouldn't she take your offer," Dal queried.

"Turned it down cold," Bradley said resentfully. "It'ud look like she would have had enough of it by this time."

Dal was delighted at the detective's disgust. It meant that in one respect at least Bradley was not going to have his way. The man had no idea whatever that a silver mine had been discovered in the vicinity, and Vincie had wisely said nothing to him about it. Whoever the girl got to promote the mine would promptly see that the Sheepgrowers did not get a title to it, for the place was the one natural base from which to work the mine.

They rode on, and were well into the mountains when they stopped to make camp for the night. Dal was now constantly on the alert. He knew that it was in the hills, if ever, that he must make his escape.

Bradley sensed his prisoner's feelings and reacted accordingly. He kept Dal covered with his gun until they were off their horses, and then at once linked himself to his prisoner with the hand-cuffs. It was awkward, tedious work for the detective to attend to the camp duties with one hand, and at the same time keep an eye upon Dal; but he went about it uncomplainingly. Bradley was on his mettle.

Dal watched his enemy's efforts for a time, making no attempt to either help or hinder, but after a few minutes he good naturedly cooperated and they got along with the camp work very well. It was part of Dal's nature to be agreeable if he possibly could, and he felt that there was nothing to be gained by being stubborn or sulky. If he was to get the best of Bradley he knew he must take the man by surprize, and the more dangerous the situation the more watchful his man would be.

Bradley slept so lightly that the slightest move on Dal's part brought him instantly erect. He kept one gun in his hand while he slept, and the other one well beyond his prisoner's reach. Morning dawned at last, and Dal was convinced that he would never be able to take Bradley by surprize in the night.

The next day they rode with scarcely a word, Dal ahead, and Bradley crowding close behind. That morning Dal noticed very carefully the shape of the key that unlocked the manacles, and all the next night he lay awake furtively trying to make some contrivance that would unlock the one on his hand while Bradley slept. His knife blade failed to do the work, nor could he find anything else that offered more promise. Another hope went glimmering.

"Hope you didn't ruin your knife las' night tryin' to unlock the bracelets," Bradley grinned as they were eating breakfast; proof that he had been aware of what was going on. Dal flushed and said nothing. He was slowly beginning to realize that the Sheepgrowers' Association's picked man was not so highly overrated as he had thought.

As they neared the summit of the timber-covered mountains the trail gradually became rougher until it degenerated into a mere pack-trail that wound around, through, and over almost inaccessible places. Now or never Dal knew that he must make his escape. As they were riding along the narrow rim of a ridge above almost perpendicular sides he began to gradually urge old Spot to a faster walk.

"Hold on there—not so fast," Bradley ordered promptly.

"——; we want to git off of this ridge before night," Dal threw back carelessly.

"I'll do the crowdin' if any needs to be done," Bradley stated curtly.

But Dal got off the ridge quicker than the detective expected. Just below him was a perpendicular drop of about ten feet, and below that a slightly less steep incline covered by a tangled growth of underbrush. Without in the least checking speed he furtively slipped his toes out of the stirrups, and with a tremendous effort vaulted clear of the saddle and disappeared over the drop below.

When he struck the ground he was below the detective's range of vision, and Bradley had not had time to fire a shot. But Dal failed to keep his balance on the steep ground, and tumbled head over heels into the underbrush.

At the first break in his fall he scrambled to his hands and knees and dived into thicker brush like a rabbit. He smiled joyously at the way he had fooled Bradley. The one thing Bradley had not expected was for him to abandon his beloved horses and try to get away on foot. Dal was aware that it would mean a lot of hardships to get out of the mountains without a horse, but he was used to hardships.

He lay still, awaiting developments, wondering why Bradley did not at least try a few chance shots.

"Oh, Showalter," Bradley called suddenly, without a trace of disappointment or alarm.

Dal hugged the ground closer and waited.

"Showalter; you'd better listen," Bradley called loudly. "If you think much of that old pinto horse of yours you'll stop an' pay attention."

The unemotional, inflexible tones of the Texan caused a chill feeling to creep over Dal.

"If you're not in sight with your hands up by the time I count ten I'm shore goin' to shoot your old pet hoss," Bradley said evenly. He began to count slowly: "One—two——"

Dal's thoughts had never been more bitter. He knew that he could escape, but that cold, implacable counting told him that it would be at the price of old Spot's life. "It's a horse's life against my life, an' in a case of that kind who would hesitate," the thought ran through his mind.

But, old Spot was more than a horse. He was friend, pal. For ten years he had been the sole confidant of all his troubles. To deliberately sentence him to death without fault on his part was nothing less than cold-blooded murder.

"I'm comin' back," Dal suddenly yelled.

A few minutes later he scrambled back to the trail and silently mounted old Spot.

"You've got too —— much fool sentiment to ever be a successful outlaw," Bradley commented dryly.

TWO days later Dal found himself lodged in the jail at Topaz.

"Thought you'd be driftin' in here purty soon," Matt Wells greeted him sourly.

Dal mustered a grin.

"Don't forgit that it wasn't you that herded me in here, Matt," he cautioned.

"I'm the lad that'll keep you here, though," Wells retorted.

The next day Pet Bradley visited Dal in his cell.

"I like you, Showalter," he began bluntly, in his cold, impersonal voice. "I'm goin' out to collect the rest of the evidence against you, though I've got enough now to hang you. But I don't want to do a thing by halves. I want all the facts in the case. All I want is to find out who killed those Basques. I'm dead sure it was you, though the fact is I'd like to clear you if I could. So if you know of any evidence against anybody else, or can give me any tip at all on the case I'll run it down with just as much zeal as I would if it was against you."

"I could tell you the straight of this killin', but what would be the use—you wouldn't believe me. Go on an' git your evidence an' let's git it over with," Dal said firmly.

He was not anxious to talk with the detective.

"You don't quite seem to savvy me," Bradley said a little hesitantly. "You said I didn't have any special ability, an' I reckon I ain't—only to hang on to a case like grim death to a dead nigger, an' not to be influenced by sentiment in any way, shape, or form. You seem to think I've got a personal grudge against you, but I ain't. You're just an incident in my business, that's all. Now if you want to tell me anything——"

"Not a thing," Dal waved him away.

It was two weeks before Dal saw the detective again. In the meantime he had waived a preliminary hearing, and his trial had been set for the January term of court. He was not expecting to see the detective again before that time. The sheriff was with Bradley, and Dal felt no call to pretend much pleasure at seeing either of them.

The sheriff unlocked the cell door and beckoned for Dal to come out.

"What's up?" Dal demanded.

"We're raisin' a sort of a posse, an' Bradley wants you to go along," Matt Wells explained.

Dal glanced inquiringly at the ex-Ranger.

"In spite of your bein' so —— stubborn I found out that you didn't kill those Basques," was Bradley's unexpected reply. "But I'm a long way from bein' able to prove it to the satisfaction of a jury. However, I'm takin' a chance on arrestin' Bill Hasbrouck an' his foreman, Gurley. It's liable to be a man's job, an' I want you along."

"Just let me mix with those two, an' if they don't own up to that killin' I'll come back an' hang," Dal said grimly.

He was anxious to be off, so he wasted no time asking questions until the proper time came. Outside the jail he was pleased to find his Sport horse awaiting him, saddled and bridled. There were four other horses, and Bradley and the sheriff mounted two of them. But Dal was surprized when Thad Thompson and Brick Hardy walked up and took possession of the other two.

Dal shook hands heartily with his two friends, then they all rode out of town as unobtrusively as possible.

"D'ye know what's up?" Dal inquired of his friends.

"Only that we're goin' after Hasbrouck an' Slim Gurley," Thad replied with satisfaction.

"Look here, Thad," Dal began, "remember the wife an' kids."

"I did—just got insured, so I'm worth more dead than alive," Thad responded laconically.

CHAPTER XIX

TREASON

MATT WELLS, the sheriff, was an old time cattleman, and a man of no inconsiderable courage; yet there was a marked nervousness about him as the little posse neared the stronghold of Bill Hasbrouck's ranch.

"Look here, Bradley," he said resentfully, "it 'pears to me you're actin' a bit high-handed, comin' in here an' runnin' a posse in my own county. Just because you can flash a paper from the governor of the State orderin' all sheriffs to take your orders don't license you to plumb ignore a man."

"Got any suggestions?" Bradley asked.

"Yes; I got a lot of 'em, but you don't seem to pay no 'tention to 'em. I told you it was rank foolishness for us to start out after Hasbrouck with only five men, but you wouldn't hear to it. Rushed me right off my feet without givin' me time to do any figurin'. If you'd let me deputized

about a dozen fellers back in town we'd have stood some chance."

"I don't want to argue with you, sheriff, but the reason I rushed things was because I've got an idea that Hasbrouck pulls a lot of strings in this county, an' if we went around gatherin' up a posse promiscus the chances are we'd find Hasbrouck missin' when we got there, or else settin' up waitin' for us. Besides, I learned from the last Hasbrouck I went after that numbers are apt to be confusin'. If anybody's got cold feet now's the proper time to hunt a stove."

No one spoke and the posse moved on. Once they were within sight of Dal's ranch. A few weeks earlier Dal would have viewed the wreckage of his years of hard labor with seething indignation. Now he looked at it with an odd sense of detachment. Somehow, he felt that it could never become soul-satisfying again. Something else was needed.

At last they reached a place from where they could see Hasbrouck's ranch. A powerful kodak could have taken a picture of the whole place. It was a flat, unpicturesque place, spread out over a wide creek bottom, with a huddle of squat buildings in the center.

Bradley reined up and the others followed suit.

"Any more suggestions, sheriff?" the detective asked.

Wells took a squint at the setting sun.

"Seein' as we won't have long to wait I'd advise that we wait till after dark before takin' any action. If we ride in now one or the other of the men we want may not be in yet, or they may git scared an' run; or worse yet they might decide to fight, an' the five of us wouldn't last as long as a speck of grease in a hot skillet."

"There's wisdom in that," Bradley admitted. "They don't dream of anybody comin' after them, but they might think we was too numerous if we rode in on 'em in force. Fellows in their business are apt to be plumb gun-shy anyway."

They waited quietly, only the sheriff breaking in to speech.

"I'm plumb tickled to think you wasn't the man that done the killin'," he told Dal. "A man with the nerve to come back an' prove up on a homestead in the town where he's wanted for murder is too good a man to hang."

As no one made any reply he went on:

"It's no great surprize to me to learn that it was Bill Hasbrouck. There's been cattle rustled, an' other —— pried up around here for years. I've often suspicioned that Bill Hasbrouck an' that —— sneak of a foreman of his was at the bottom of it, but I never could git the proof."

"I reckon bein' a sheriff in a big range country is a right smart job," the Texan commented.

"It shore' is," Matt Wells admitted gloomily.

The moment the lamps were lighted in Hasbrouck's house and bunk-house the posse made for the ranch. At the sheriff's suggestion they tied their horses a short distance below the corrals and went the rest of the way on foot. At the corrals they stopped for a final consultation.

"There won't be anybody in the house except Bill, an' his wife an' kids," the sheriff stated. "Better let me go up an' knock on the door like nothin' was the matter, an' when I git inside I'll flash a gun on Hasbrouck an' slap the bracelets on him. Then we'll go to the bunk-house an' call Gurley outside. He'll never s'picion anything wrong, an' we'll nab him before he wakes up. How does that plan sound to you?" he asked.

"Sounds all right. Has anybody got a better plan?" Bradley questioned.

The plan was agreed upon and they skirted around the bunk-house, coming up to Hasbrouck's residence from the other side. They all stayed in the shadow of the building while the sheriff knocked boldly on the door.

Dal fingered the gun which Bradley had given him with nervous fingers. He had a presentiment that things were not going to work out as nicely as the sheriff calculated. He knew that the other fellow seldom acted according to schedule.

"COME IN," Hasbrouck roared, in answer to the sheriff's knock.

Wells entered boldly and closed the door behind him.

"Hello, Matt, what are you doin' here?" the eager listeners on the outside heard Hasbrouck inquire.

"Oh, just passin' by, an' thought I'd stop an' have supper with you," the sheriff drawled.

Suddenly his tone altered, and he snapped:

"You're under arrest, Hasbrouck—toss that gun on the table."

The men outside waited breathlessly, wondering of what sort of stuff the rancher was made. But a moment later they heard a rattle as if a gun were being thrown on the table.

"You don't need to hand-cuff me," Hasbrouck whined.

"Got to do it, Bill," the sheriff replied. "There's four boys with me outside, an' we'll have to fix you so you can't make trouble while we git Gurley. You're wanted for killin' them sheepherders up at Showalter's ranch last Fall."

"Well, let me git some clothes on then before you hand-cuff me," Hasbrouck pleaded.

Dal smiled contemptuously. This was the man who had run him out of the country! There was a wait of several minutes in which they could hear Hasbrouck shuffling about, apparently getting ready for the night ride. Then the door opened and Hasbrouck stepped outside, followed closely by the sheriff.

The squat, heavy figure of the ranchman was bowed in humiliation. His big felt hat was pulled down over his face, and his hands were thrust under his coat to conceal the hand-cuffs.

"Stay here with Hasbrouck, Showalter, an' we'll have the other one rounded up in a jiffy. This is sure workin' smooth," Wells chuckled.

"I'll stay with Hasbrouck, all right," Dal said grimly.

"He's hand-cuffed, an' I got his gun, so you don't need to worry about him," the sheriff said.

"He'll take care of him—let's be goin'," Bradley said impatiently.

Without wasting more words they advanced toward the bunk-house. Dal, watching them as well as Hasbrouck, saw Thad walk around to the rear of the bunk-house, and Brick go on around so that he could watch the window on the opposite side. Bradley took up a position where he could watch the closest side and the front, and the sheriff strode boldly toward the front door.

Just then Dal heard a soft, swishing noise toward the rear of Hasbrouck's dwelling. Glancing quickly around he was just in time to see a woman slip from the shadow of a fence that ran from the house to the bunk-house, and make a break for the kitchen door. It occurred to him that they had all bunched up around Hasbrouck when the sheriff had brought him out of the house, and Mrs. Hasbrouck had taken advantage of it to make a break for the bunk-house.

"Watch out, boys, they're warned," he yelled loudly.

The next instant Hasbrouck leaped upon him like a wild cat. Dal was hurled to the ground, and powerful, muscular fingers tore at his throat. At once Dal discovered that Hasbrouck was not hand-cuffed—had never been. His voice was throttled so that he could not warn his friends that the sheriff had betrayed them. But he was deadly cool. He was not so strong, and considerably lighter than his opponent, but his one hundred and eighty pounds of bone and sinew were never to be trifled with.

As he fell both his arms shot up inside Hasbrouck's and his fingers fastened into the huge throat like leeches. They began desperately choking the life out of each other. Hasbrouck had the greater strength but to offset this Dal had the advantage of position. His knees were drawn up under him so that Hasbrouck had difficulty getting his short legs planted firmly on the ground, and his arms were inside so that he could relieve the pressure on his own throat slightly by prying outward against Hasbrouck's arms without lessening his own grip. It became at once a question of sheer grit and endurance.

Dal sensed, somehow, that there was a lot of shooting going on, but who was doing it, and who was getting the best of it he could form no idea. Things began to grow black, and the choking feeling became almost unbearable. His arms and hands grew numb under the terrific strain until it seemed that he must loosen his grip on the hairy throat above him. Only the realization that Hasbrouck must be suffering fully as much, and undergoing the same feelings made him hold on until consciousness had all but departed.

Then, suddenly, the fearful pressure was released, and the pure, night air rushed into his lungs bringing infinite relief. With it came a sense of keen satisfaction. He had out-gamed Hasbrouck.

Immediately Hasbrouck clutched his wrists in a frantic attempt to tear Dal's hands from his throat. For sheer strength Hasbrouck easily had the edge and Dal

felt his hands wrested from their hold and forced far apart. But he was using his speed and his head for all they were worth. While Hasbrouck gasped hungrily for breath Dal jerked his hands free, and with a sudden, titanic effort bucked Hasbrouck to one side and rolled clear.

With a hoarse cry of rage Hasbrouck was after him. Dal's gun had been knocked from his hand by Hasbrouck's first assault, and now as he again found himself in Hasbrouck's embrace he fought with a grim sort of despair. He was thrown heavily to the ground, and this time his opponent had made sure that his arms were effectually pinioned to his side. Once more Dal found himself being slowly choked to death as Hasbrouck rammed one powerful hand to his throat.

Dal could feel something hard grinding on his hip bone which he realized at once was Hasbrouck's revolver. With a quick, vicious jerk he wrenched his left arm free although the entire sleeve of his coat was torn off in the effort. His fingers closed over his enemy's gun, and as Hasbrouck reached for his arm again he poked the muzzle of the gun against the man's side and fired.

Hasbrouck's fingers dug into Dal's throat with a convulsive movement then relaxed suddenly as a quiver ran through his entire body, and he rolled off of Dal.

It was a full minute before Dal's mind cleared enough for him to realize that he was vitally interested in the outcome of the battle that was being fought around the bunk-house.

He groped around until he found his own gun, then staggered to his feet and ran forward. His mind was not entirely clear, due to the terrible choking he had endured from Hasbrouck. The firing had ceased, but there was no one visible except the huddled form of a man lying just in front of the bunk-house door. Dal could think of nothing except to see what was the matter with that man.

Suddenly some one gripped his ankles and he fell headlong.

"Stay down you chump! D'ye want some of 'em to pot you?" Pet Bradley demanded irritably.

"Where is everybody?" Dal panted.

"We've got 'em all rounded up in the bunk-house," Bradley chuckled exultantly. "Boy, it was plumb lucky you yelped when you did or we'd all shore enough be decoratin' the dirt by this time like Matt Wells there."

"Who shot him?" Dal asked curiously.

"I did," Bradley said calmly. "He tried to bore me as soon as you hollered but I beat him to it, an' ducked down here to play a tattoo on the front door. Thad went to pourin' red —— into the back door, while Brick amused hisself by smashin' winder panes on the side that me an' Thad couldn't cover. None of 'em had the nerve to take it. How'd you come to find out somethin' was wrong?" he asked abruptly.

"I saw Mrs. Hasbrouck comin' back from the bunk-house so I yelled. But I never suspected Matt Wells of bein' crooked till Hasbrouck nailed me. Lord, we was the fools! Let him go in there alone, an' stood an' listened while he told 'em how many of us there was, where we was, what we wanted, an' how we was goin' about it!"

"Yea, verily," Bradley agreed.

"Hello, outside," some one called from inside the bunk-house.

"Well, say it," Bradley replied.

"What do you want?"

"If we was out for the good of the community we'd want all of you, but we're on personal business so we'll be satisfied with Slim Gurley. Chase him out here, unarmed, an' the rest of you can go plumb to ——," the detective answered.

For several minutes a hot argument raged inside the bunk-house. Above the rest could be heard a high-pitched voice cursing, arguing, entreating. Then the man who had called out before, shouted—

"Stan' by to grab him—he's comin' out."

There was the sound of a sharp struggle for a moment, then the door opened and a man was thrown out, landing on hands and knees. The door was promptly slammed shut.

"Don't move," Bradley warned ominously.

He advanced cautiously to the prostrate man, ran his hands over him expertly for concealed weapons, and jerked him to his feet. Prodding him in the ribs with his gun he drove the man ahead to the corrals. A moment later they were joined by Dal, Thad, and Brick.

"What d'ye want with me?" Gurley whined dismally.

"We want you for murderin' one of them Basque herders," Pet Bradley said coldly.

"You can't prove nothin' on me. I never——"

"Shut up. We've already proved it," Bradley snorted.

The man's fear-strained eyes darted questioningly from face to face, resting hopelessly at last upon the cold, mask-like face of the detective.

"Hasbrouck killed 'em both—I saw him," he lied desperately.

"Hasbrouck don't say that," Bradley said significantly.

"He planned it an' carried it out. I didn't know he intended to kill 'em until he started to shoot, an' then I had to git my man before he got me," Gurley pleaded.

"An' then you had to say Showalter done it to save your bacon," Bradley commented. "Always doin' just what you have to to save your worthless skin! Well, let me tell you, son, you've sure got to ride that line hard this time if you save your neck. An' the thing you've got to do is to come clean about everything you an' Hasbrouck have been mixed up in."

"I'll do it," Gurley cried, clutching eagerly at the thread of hope Bradley extended.

"What of Hasbrouck and Wells?" Dal asked soberly.

"Hasbrouck's men can 'tend to them," Bradley said unfeelingly.

"I'm glad we don't have to monkey with them," Dal said earnestly.

He was glad that he would not be compelled to look upon Hasbrouck again. A complete revulsion against killing had seized him. Now that the man who had caused him to kill four other men was dead he felt a sense of compunction. He doubted he would ever again he able to kill a man even in self-defense.

Thad and Brick rode away to their homes and Dal and the detective rode in silence toward Topaz with the prisoner.

"Just how," Dal asked at length, "did you come to wise up?"

"By findin' out from an interested party that there was another witness to that murder."

"Who?" Dal asked quickly.

"The Basque camp-mover who heard you threaten the two who were killed. Instead of goin' to his camp he laid in the brush to see what happened, an' so he seen Hasbrouck an' Gurley do the shootin'. He wanted to keep out of trouble so he didn't say a word to anybody. I'd never have found it out if you hadn't got confidential and told a certain party all about it. When I heard the story I went after the Basque to make him testify against you, an' he told me the truth. He was workin' for Sawyer so I had no trouble findin' him. But I had to git a confession from Gurley to clear you, for the Basque would have been dumb as a post on the witness stand," Bradley explained at length.

That was a possibility Dal had never thought of.

"I reckon it's lucky for me that you heard about that Basque," he said.

"You'd have swung if I hadn't, an' it would have served you right for not tellin' me the truth about it," Bradley said curtly.

Dal knew that if the Basque had kept silent only three people beside himself knew of his connection with the case: Thad, Vic Sawyer, and Vincie. One of them must have told Bradley.

"Who told you—was it Sawyer?" he asked.

Bradley grinned, but made no reply.

CHAPTER XX

AT HOME

DAL SHOWALTER slept late the next morning for the simple reason that he had stayed awake most of the night considering the changed condition of his life, and had fallen asleep at daybreak from sheer weariness. It was almost noon when he awakened, but he awoke with a clear head and a cold resolution.

The homestead which had meant so much to him only a few weeks before now gave him a feeling of intense antipathy. All of its former attractiveness was gone. He wondered dully how he had ever stood it alone for five long years. It gave him a grim satisfaction, however, to know that he had proved up on it despite difficulties. He could soon sell it for enough to take him to —he was rather nebulous in his ideas of where he wanted to go to—but it was away.

Pet Bradley had requested that he come to the courthouse as soon as he got up so that his formal discharge could be arranged for, and to make his deposition regarding the killing of the Basques. So he went straight from the hotel to the courthouse. The cold, crisp air invigorated him and he

was calm and steady as he ascended the steps of the courthouse.

He started at once for the county clerk's office, but stopped, dumfounded, as he saw the slim figure of a girl emerge from the office and close the door gently behind her.

"Vincie!" he gasped.

She came toward him smilingly with outstretched hand.

"What are you doin' here?" he asked ungallantly.

"I came to help you fight that murder charge," she said candidly.

"But how did you know I was arrested? We tried to keep it from you."

"I knew you were wanted, and I knew Mr. Bradley was some kind of an officer, so I suspected it when I saw the queer way you both acted. But of course it was in the Salt Lake papers, and I saw it there when I stopped to interest some capitalist in my—our silver mine," she explained.

"Haven't you been home yet?" he demanded.

"I haven't any home," she said simply, "and I'm afraid my two years at Silver Zone have spoiled me for the things I used to like."

"Was it you that told Bradley my side of the story?" he asked.

"Yes. Thad Thompson objected, but I was sure Mr. Bradley would be fair, an it looked like our only chance. I was sure I could make him believe you were telling the truth."

Dal saw that there were things she as yet did not understand, but he did not enlighten her that the only effect of her story on Bradley was to send that relentless bloodhound on the trail of a bit of evidence against him. But the big, all-important thing was that she had come to fight shoulder to shoulder with him in his battle for life.

"Vincie," he said unsteadily, "you know—you must know what I think of you. If I wasn't so far below you—your——"

"There's some one listening," she broke in laughingly. "And I thinks it's the clerk who sells marriage licenses."

THERE was a hint of frost in the air, and it grew steadily colder as the sun dropped slowly behind the Western mountains. But there was warmth in the hearts of the two persons on horseback who rode away from Topaz.

Dal had learned that Vincie had been staying with Thad Thompson since she had come to Topaz, and it was through her that Bradley had picked upon Thad and Brick to help arrest Hasbrouck and Gurley.

"So you've been stayin' with Thad, an' learning to ride old Spot," Dal said.

"Yes. I'm afraid you've lost him—old Spot I mean. I don't intend to give him up," Vincie said, leaning ahead to pat the old pinto's proudly arched neck.

Dal slapped the neck of Sport, the little desert mustang, with a gesture that denoted he did not care; but he made no reply. His mind was roving backward to the time when he had had to choose between old Spot's life and his own. After all the gods had been more than kind. Had he not been true to the faithful old horse he would have condemned himself to be a fugitive for life. Vincie would have come to Topaz, found him gone, and passed out of his life forever.

They rode on in happy silence until they came to a fork of the road.

"I reckon we'd better spend the night at Thad's hadn't we?" Dal asked.

"Really, Dal," Vincie answered, softly, "I'd rather go to our own place. It isn't as bad inside the cabin as it looks from the outside. You see, Thad and I came over here several days ago and fixed it up—for us."

They turned their horses blissfully toward their ranch. Hasbrouck had almost ruined it, but even the trampled fields and torn-down fences were not unsightly in their eyes. It could all be repaired by hard labor.

True enough they owned a silver-mine and would not need to labor—but they had forgotten it.

IT'S ONLY A QUESTION OF TIME

by Negley Farson

HE CAME out from England with the whale of a reputation. A ripper. Even the Egyptian messes of the air force—that Sphinx of advertisers—had heard of him. Gosport, the premier school of aerobatics, had known him as its star. And when Gosport admits to having a star it is safe to concede that he is one. He was; Tunnard was an aerial marvel.

And he knew it.

That would have been all right; but he insisted that every one else know it. To that end he talked of himself, and of his wonderful exploits, in season and out of season. It became very tiresome after a time.

Therefore, he was sent out to Egypt. But even there too much of a marvel can be rather oppressive.

The Gosport C. O. remembered his War days, and the pale, shining sands of Lybia—where, as he vehemently asserted, it was just two degrees hotter than Hades—and as that was the hottest place he could think of he had Tunnard sent there.

"The trouble with Tunnard," he complained to his adjutant, "is that he's all right in the air—an' all wrong on the ground. Needs some education in life and good manners. I'm sendin' him where he'll get it."

Tunnard had taken it as a compliment, a logical reward for meritorious service. He looked upon this trip to the East as an aerial joy-ride, a circus, with himself as the brilliant performer. He was a captain, and he had visions of soon putting up the crown of a major. Also, he cherished the "hunch" that he was being sent out to take over No. X squadron, anyway.

With this idea well fixed in his head he landed in Egypt determined to demonstrate the manner of pilot he was on every possible occasion.

At Abou Kir, on the Mediterranean, he used his reputation to bludgeon the commander into letting him fly direct from there to the spot on the desert then covered by No. X squadron.

Flying by compass alone—and guessing at drift—he did two hundred and fifty miles into the heart of the Lybian Desert, and dropped his little S.E.5. gently down on the sands of No. X drome. An almost incredible feat. It was a perfect example of aerial navigation—and marvelous luck.

The dun-colored canvas of No. X squadron formed but a speck, and an almost invisible one, in the limitless sweep of the brass-colored wastes. Few pilots—and not one who knew aught of the East—would have essayed the attempt. But Tunnard was an aerial marvel; and he knew it.

On climbing out of his bus the first thing he noticed was that the glare of the sun on the sands was so strong that it was hard for him to keep open his eyes; next, that it seemed as if in some mysterious way he had suddenly entered a furnace; and then that his arrival had made no sensation.

Tunnard was surprized—more, he was piqued. People were slouching about in what looked like trousers cut off above the knees, glistening, oil-stained shirts and enormous sun topees. Every one looked weary—and glum.

A group of three squatted beside an old petrol tin, absorbed in the death struggles

of a scorpion which lay at its bottom. He was not sure whether the smudge-faced one he addressed was an officer or simply an air mechanic.

"Where's the C. O.?" he inquired.

"I haven't the foggiest idea," answered the greasy-faced individual. "Are you Singleton?"

"No. I'm Tunnard."

The other looked disappointed.

"Perhaps you brought the mail?"

He got up, expectantly.

"What mail? I didn't bring any mail. Just flew over from Abou Kir."

"Yes, you did!" A faint grin altered the smudged-one's face. "Did you see Singleton over in Hilmi? He's the new ferry pilot, y'know."

"—— it all!" Tunnard was very much annoyed. "I tell you I've just come over from Abou Kir. I——"

"Oh!" The other sat down to his scorpion, no longer interested in Tunnard. "You'll probably find the major in his marquee," he said over his shoulders. "I'd let him sleep though, if he is."

His companions laughed and looked Tunnard over appraisingly.

Tunnard, after questioning various half-alive individuals, located the tent of the commanding officer and coughed to make known his presence.

"Oh, yes?" A red and much-mottled face rose from the green canvas pillow. "Oh, yes?"

"I've come to report, sir. My name's Tunnard."

"Oh, yes?"

Tunnard did not know what next to say; the major appeared to be asking a question.

"Oh, yes?"

"My name's Tunnard."

"Well, what about it?"

"I've come to report, sir."

"Is that all?"

"Yes, sir."

"Great Joseph!" The red face turned purple. "What the blistering— Oh, my lord!" It fell back upon the green pillow and laughed. Tunnard had never before heard such derision. There was something fiendish in it, he thought. "Brought any papers?" he heard the major asking.

Tunnard fumbled with his breast-pocket to produce his movement orders, and then the face laughed again.

"Not those—not those. Newspapers. N-e-w-s!"

"Why, no; I never thought of it." Tunnard cleared his throat. "I've just flown over from Abou Kir."

"Oh!" The major rolled over and, like the person on the *tarmac*, appeared to have lost all interest. "Report to the adjutant after tea-time," he ordered. "What d'you think we keep an adjutant for?"

It was a very indignant, bewildered and anxious-to-be-recognized Tunnard who reported to the orderly room—a low, sand-sagged marquee—at 5:30.

"My name's Tunnard," he informed the man with the bloodshot eyes who reached for his papers.

"I see. How'd you get here?"

"Flew—" Tunnard paused to get the proper effect—"from Abou Kir."

"Where's your kit?"

"Oh, that's all right; it's being sent up to Hilmi. They told me at Abou Kir some one would fly it over from rail-head for me."

"They did, did they! Told you that at Abou Kir, did they? Well, —— my eyes! ——!" The adjutant appeared at a loss. "Didn't bring a cot, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"Um! This is a nice mess o' fish. Where do you intend to sleep?"

"I don't know; I just flew over from——"

"Well, I'm —— if I do either."

THAT night Tunnard struggled to sleep on three palm-fiber crates. He was dismayed to discover that as soon as the sun had left the face of the desert the night became bitterly cold. The scanty donation of blankets was rearranged several times in an attempt to keep warm the base of his spine, and he found the melancholic chanting of the Arab batmen, from the sand-waddies behind the camp, frightfully depressing.

His mind was a tumult of outraged pride and offended dignity. No one had taken any notice of him. His flip from Abou Kir—which he had expected would make quite a stir—had not even been mentioned; his intruding upon the major's *siesta*, however, had been the cause of some mild merriment at dinner.

But even that had made but a ripple in the monotonous drone of the talk. Every one seemed wrapped up in himself, gloomy, tired and bored to death with every one

else. Even the bridge fours yawned as though they had been playing the same hands for centuries.

There were not enough chairs in the mess-tent to lounge in; the major and the doctor sat off and drank by themselves; over half the talk was in a *patois* of mixed Arabic-English, of which he could make no sense at all; and Tunnard, ignoring completely the fact that as the newcomer it was *he* that should fit into the picture, voted No. X the dullest, most ignorant and uninteresting crowd he had ever bumped into and fell to sleep cursing his luck that he should have been sent to it.

Along in the night he was awakened to find that some one was tugging at his foot, some one with something white tied round his head and apparently dressed in a voluminous white night gown.

"Four 'clock, Meester Captain, four 'clock!" croaked a voice from the darkness. "Me tellum you fly."

Something moved that was blacker than the night, something which glistened faintly, and Tunnard got his first glimpse of Ahmed, his Nubian batman.

"Get the —— out o' here!" Tunnard kicked furiously at the elusive white shape.

"Nono, Meester Captain, nonono, *mush-quiece* you fly, *sabe?* Four 'clock! Fly!"

A familiar roar from the hangars broke in upon the blackamoor's exhortations. Tunnard gasped. What the devil did people want to go up for at this ungodly hour, anyhow? He crawled out from his blankets and into cold, oily flying togs. Ugh! They were distasteful. He stumbled over guy-ropes and tent-pegs to where the candles guttered on the mess tables. Here, over luke-warm tea and unripe bananas, he was told that he need not have got up at all; he was not yet assigned to a flight.

"You fellows are pretty slack down here," he told the astonished pilots. "Why the deuce don't you post a flying-list?"

"Keep your shirt on, old boy," came a voice form the end of the table. "This isn't England."

"England!" a hook-nosed Australian lurched across the table in quest of the tea-pot. "Who said it was England? None of your —— London fogs out here. This place is jakeroo; nice warm weather—190 in the shade—an' lizards—and you, Smith. Nice animal, you are! Why, back in West Aus we——"

A well-flung banana brought on a barrage of edibles, and Tunnard and his complaint were forgotten.

In a surly mood he stood on the *tarmac*, watched the dull red haze of dawn incarmine the sky and criticized the conduct of the early patrol. By his flying-school standards its performance was rotten. The machines took off the ground singly. Nobody stunted. The Australian jerked his Bristol Fighter off the ground, climbed at an alarmingly steep angle and, flying one-wing-low, ambled off in the distance like a broken-down bird.

The single-seaters—S. E. 5's—got off nicely, however, although Tunnard noticed that the services of a little red-headed corporal seemed very much in demand, he, apparently, being the only one present who knew anything about the scout pilot's machines.

Through it all there was—so Tunnard decided—an unnecessary amount of tuning up and minor repairs. And the mechanics did not stand at the wing tips and salute the take-off! Perfectly beastly squadron, this! It was time some one showed how things *ought* to be done.

He demanded his machine be brought out. Warmed her. Halted his take-off to bawl out the little red-headed corporal for not saluting him and then cork-screwed the S. E. 5 into the air in a beautiful climbing spiral. At two hundred he roared round and round in a vertical turn, out of which he shot, only to fall back on himself with an Immelmann. In a lightning-quick series of these he gained another two hundred feet, whereupon he rolled most perfectly—and then threw her about for the space of ten minutes. Coming down, he held his side-slip to within ten feet of the ground: straightened out; and with dextrous kicks at the rudder-bar shook her into a swish-tail landing.

As pretty an exhibition of flying as one could see in a long day; and, when he got out of his machine, the drome was deserted. No one had been there to watch it.

At precisely one hundred minutes after sunrise the heat took up its game with the desert, and it was impressed upon Tunnard that if the night had been wretched the day was going to be about a thousand times worse. The air over the sands simmered alarmingly. Outlines softened, blurred and then waved about aimlessly. In the distance

thin shreds of the landscape arose and floated off in the sky. The hangars seemed to have sunk in blue water. The horizon rolled like a sea, and only the planes overhead were immune from distortion. Officers, passing but from one tent to another, put on their sun-topees.

"Here, you!"

Tunnard turned to meet the enraged face of the adjutant.

"Where's your sun-helmet?" bellowed that sweating official.

Tunnard was not accustomed to being yelled at.

"Abou Kir," he answered laconically.

The adjutant cursed.

"— an' stay in your tent till you get one," he concluded.

Tunnard suddenly realized that he was a captain—equal in rank to the adjutant—and he opened his mouth to say something of the sort. But here a kind Providence intervened and closed it for him. Otherwise—Well, Tunnard had yet to learn what the East can do to one's temper.

Ahmed expeditiously solved the dilemma by stealing for him the helmet of somebody else.

At the hangars, after a "perfectly putrid breakfast," Tunnard was pained to see the mechanics washing down the machines with Shell's finest No. 1 petrol.

"No water," explained Jacobs, the South African pilot.

Tunnard was told that the half of a small canvas bucket was all he would get per day for himself.

"But a chap can't even keep decent on that!" he protested.

"Who ever said we were decent," Jacobs wanted to know. "Do I look decent?"

Jacobs, who flew rotaries, was fairly well shut off from the world by a viscous coating of castor-oil and burnt carbon.

"Some of this," he said, pointing to a face like a piebald negro's, "will come off."

TUNNARD looked and then turned to hurt his eyes trying to stare over the sands to where he knew Abou Kir basked by its turquoise sea. The cool seat! He thought of his imaginings of life in the East: Mysterious bazaars—minarets reaching wistfully into a flawless sky—officers, himself in particular, striding about masterfully among the natives—luxurious, soft-scented nights— In fact, San Stefano, the fashionable watering-place near Abou Kir, had been something like that. Everybody happy. Cool. Fine food—fine women—palm fronds whispering in the night.

He glared disgustedly at the shabby Bessonau hangars; at Jacobs; and then, after a hopeless survey of the silent sweep of the desert, he remarked that this was no place for a white man.

Jacobs laughed.

"Oh, you'll get used to it. Have a fag?"

He held out his case of cigarets.

Tunnard shook his head peevishly.

"No, I don't want a smoke. I'm going back to the mess to get a cold drink."

Again Jacobs laughed—louder this time—as if Tunnard's remark had seemed funny to him.

"Which mess?" he inquired.

"Why, ours, of course."

"Well, you won't get it."

"No," Jacobs continued, "the only people about here who have anything cool are the sergeants; try their mess."

"Sergeants!" Tunnard sniffed disgustedly. "I see myself going there for a drink."

"Suit yourself." Jacobs turned to his duties. "Hanratty," he called to the little red-headed corporal, "Mr. Davidson had a loose quadrant this morning on 1649. Better see to it. What you trying to do—kill him?"

"Oh, no, sir." The red-headed man grinned respectfully. "I'll tape off the 'rigger,' sir."

"Right."

Jacobs passed on.

Pilots, in from patrol, reported, shuffled over to their tents and flopped down on their cots to lie there until luncheon, which Tunnard found to be even more "putrid" than breakfast. Every one was flushed and ill-tempered, as if the heat had killed the light spirits of the morning. Meat, which the Australian insisted was camel, and tea—had Tunnard known that the two Greeks in the cook-tent had spit in it for amusement, there is no telling what he would have said about that. The mess-tent was stifling; he tried to put down a bottle of warm, sticky pop, failed and cleared out of it all to the comparative cool of his own marquee.

Between the hours of luncheon and tea the entire camp seemed dead. The camp was dead, Tunnard complained to himself.

Dull as dishwater. Well, it was time they woke up; they needed some one to joggle some life into 'em. By —— he'd wake 'em up. He smiled at the thought. Bunch of second-rate pilots, that pie-jaw of an adjutant—and the major, laughing; he'd soon give them something to laugh at.

No. X was unresponsive to joggling, however. The pilots were not interested in stunting. Leave, enough to drink and news from the outside was about all that concerned them. They became openly bored when he informed them that the stunts they were doing as Immelmans were not Immelmans at all, but only half-rolls.

They said they were good enough; they answered the purpose, a quick reverse turn. Besides, just straight flying was difficult under such weather conditions. Sometimes the air was so thin that the planes couldn't get off the ground; other days the air was as full of holes as a Swiss cheese. No, just plain flying would do. Also, the buses weren't in very good shape, he must understand; too many hours without overhaul— Was it true, what people wrote out from Alex., that Digby, the sultan's jockey, was crooked?

For the first time in his flying career Tunnard found himself without an appreciative audience. He felt as would an actor under the same conditions, half-crazy. And, like his co-sufferer of the vacant stalls, he set about seeking it. He thrust himself upon and into conversations and diverted them into flying. He talked shop on the slightest provocation or upon no provocation at all. And after a short trial of this his brother officers began to grow tired. He took up the habit of bullying them in the air; sitting on their tails, looping around them, or seeing how close he could barge into—without actually hitting—them.

Then they began to dislike him. One or two, infuriated, fought back at him; but he completely outclassed, outmaneuvered and smothered them until they came down to the ground. After that they gave up and let him do what he liked.

Through it all he had frequently uttered this boast—

"Two thousand hours—and never broken a wire."

"Two thousand hours—and never broken a wire," became almost another name for him. Pilots said, as he walked past them talking, "There goes Two Thousand Hours," or "Never-broken-a-wire said to me to-day——"

The Australian, whether to annoy the English pilots or because he really believed in the theory, asserted that it was all right for Tunnard to go on as he did.

"As long as a man can back up what he says, he has a right to say anything. Anything, so long as he can make good. And doesn't he do that. Let me tell you that that wallaby certainly can fly. You're jealous; that's what the matter with you Johnnies. Isn't that so, Jacobs?"

He turned to the South African for support. Jacobs, puffing the inevitable cigaret, gave counsel sagely.

"That depends. He says he's had two thousand hours and never even broken a wire. Now, suppose he does break a wire; suppose he has a real *pukka* crash? What then? As it is now he's just like the rocking-chair sailor who insists in jibing your boat in a gale; he's brave as all —— because he has no idea of the chances he's taking. That's the way I've got Tunnard sized up. Now, suppose——"

"Suppose you shut up." The huge Anzac hauled Jacobs from off his chair on to the sand. "You're too —— physicological for a hot country like this."

TUNNARD was too much engrossed with himself to notice how the others felt about him. He had expected his position in No. X squadron to be a fairly prominent one; he was unhappy to be out of the limelight. Here, to put it expressively, he found no opportunities to show off. He wanted things to be as they had been in the old Gosport days, when the pupils—and even instructors—had been admiring of all that he did. He felt that if he could once get the chance to show off his whole bag of tricks to No. X squadron that even that listless crowd of pilots would rise up and acclaim him.

It was the little red-headed corporal who gave him the opening.

In his own small way Hanratty was also a marvel; his ability to doctor the finely balanced Hispano-Suizza engines of the S. E. 5 planes verged on the borders of genius. No matter how hectic the beer-swilling bout of the previous evening, morning found him on the job, his stubby fingers fondling the hearts of the scouts as if they were things that lived and understood him.

He kept the S. E.'s in the air; that was his virtue. And, aside from that, there was nothing too bad to be laid at his door. His head and his morals were crimson.

Up until the morning that Tunnard steamed open his letter* to Lizzie he had been but faintly aware that there was such a person; he had always summoned him, when in need of him on the *tarmac*, by simply shouting—

"Here, *you!*"

When Tunnard came to the part where Hanratty, casting loose the restricting bounds of truth, described himself as being a pilot, he cursed. A corporal writing home that he was a pilot! Sacrilege! He took the letter over to the major's tent.

"This man needs a —— good lesson," he said, throwing the offending document down on the table.

Now, the major had often read the letters of Tavish Hanratty; he had read flights, fights and sights that never existed except in the head of the corporal, and he had enjoyed them. Hanratty, so the major averred, made Munchausen look like a piker. He liked reading them, said they were better than O. Henry. But something in Tunnard's scowl, something in the bull-dozing attitude of the pilot, prompted him to say—

"Yes, I suppose he does."

He then waited for Tunnard's reaction.

"Fine!" Tunnard had a swift picture of himself administering the dose—in the air, of course. "Fine!" He smiled almost jovially. "I'll give it to him. When I'm through with him he'll keep quiet about being a pilot."

For an instant the C. O. was prompted to relent, to tell Tunnard that it was a matter of small importance what Hanratty said as long as it didn't concern No. X's movements and also to point out how dishonorable it was to act upon information so meanly acquired.

But again he was constrained to be silent. Perhaps it was that he sensed some excitement in this situation he was permitting to be made, some drama which would enliven the monotony of life in the desert. Also, it showed an extreme confidence in Hanratty's ability to take punishment; because when the major told the adjutant about his conversation with Tunnard he bet him a pound that Tunnard would fail to make good.

At tea the mess was quite "het up" with the prospect. Tunnard already felt the pleasure of again being the center of attraction. Some pilots were frankly skeptical over it being at all possible to frighten an Ak Emma—air mechanic—in this fashion. Jacobs said to Tunnard:

"You know that little red-headed beast doesn't scare worth a ——. Gave him the razzle-dazzle one or two times myself."

Tunnard smiled from his eminence in a particularly irritating way—as if to say, "*You*, you tried it—but then, you see, you're not me!"—and made an instant enemy of Jacobs by saying—

"Ah, yes—but wait!"

Jacobs went over to the Hanratty backers, vowing, "I haven't the slightest doubt but that Tunnard has some trick up his sleeve that will half-kill Hanratty with fright, but I'd a —— sight rather lose money on a game little runt like Hanratty than win it backing a puffed-up swine like that. I've got a couple of quid that Tunnard doesn't put it across."

"Gotcha!" The Australian dug up two hundred piastres. "I'm backing a hard guy like Tunnard. You watch 'im; I tell you that boy's a dingo!"

An old dual-control Avro was the plane selected for the performance. Tunnard swung into the front cock-pit, wiped the oil from his goggles and bellowed, "Here, you!" to corporal Tavish Hanratty.

"Yes, sir!"

The N. C. O. came over and stood by the fuselage.

"Get in."

"Engine-trouble, sir?"

"How the —— do I know? Get in!"

"But, sir——"

The perplexed Hanratty searched the crowd on the *tarmac* for the rotary mechanic.

"Get in! —— it all, man, I don't want to sit here all day."

The confused corporal stuffed the socket-wrench he had in his hand into the pocket of his monkey-suit and gingerly climbed into the rear cock-pit.

"Switch off, sir?"

* It was 1920 and therefore it may seem peculiar that censoring should still be enacted. No. X, however, was on a secret show, running down Hussein Ali. For this reason—and others best known to the Colonial Office—the movements of No. X were not allowed to get beyond Lybia. The mail of the enlisted men was inspected *without their knowing it!* The Dear Public must not be excited. Officers, of course, were supposed to know enough not to talk—witness the case of Col. Kelley, V. C., on the Archangel show and see what happened to one officer who did.

"Switch off," Tunnard repeated the starting dialog.

"Shall you take off—or shall I?" Tunnard called over his shoulder to Hanratty.

"Beg pardon, sir?" The corporal thought he must have misunderstood what his pilot was saying.

"I say"—Tunnard howled it above the intermittent roars of the Le Rhone—"will you take off or do you want me to?"

Hanratty let go the control-stick as if it were red-hot. "You, sir," he protested, "you."

Now, putting the breeze up an Ak Emma was an old game for the pilots, so old that most of them had left it behind them in their training-school days. Also, most of the Ak Emmas had been subjected to it so often that they knew what to expect, and were as cool in the air as the pilots; but Hanratty was in no way prepared for Tunnard's offering.

This was something new, this ground-scraping. The Avro, dragging a wing close to the sands, zithered in and out among the officers' marquees like a windward-bound duck trailing the wave troughs. Marquees, mess-tent, bell-tents, hangars, they seemed about to hit everything and then to miss it—by inches. It was like whirling about on a fast-spinning top. An agonized glance showed him one wing-tip sucking the sands in its wake, the other directly above it. At the same instant their wheels seemed to be running into a wall of brown canvas. This pilot was crazy!

Hanratty opened his mouth. A blast of air hit it and seemed to blow through his entire system. He swallowed a great blob of castor-oil, gripped the sides of the cockpit, closed his eyes and became violently ill. From then on he prayed that they would hit something that would put him out of his misery.

They would have, had Tunnard not possessed the luck of the devil. And he was pressing it, riding it hard. Flying like some insane bat in the twilight. He had his spectators, and he was going to give them the show of their lives. He knew that it was useless to stunt before scout pilots; there was not one among them but who could do the whole gamut of tricks himself. Any bone-head can do anything at five hundred, one thousand or two thousand; but to treat the ground as if it just wasn't there, that was flying. This shaving the margin of safety, this brushing his wings against the face of calamity, it was this would make them sit up.

It did; even Jacobs admitted that Tunnard was either drunk, or a genius.

"He's a ——'fool," came Major Moore's answer. "I'll take care of him for this, the——"

The roar of the Le Rhone drowned his curses.

"Aye," the Scotch doctor put in, "but no doot I'll ha to take care o' him furst. I'll just be startin' my car." So he always called his little Ford ambulance.

After several reckless zooms at the group on the *tarmac* Tunnard climbed the Avro up to five thousand feet, where he executed a breath-catching series of tail-slides. This was not so much for the benefit of those on the ground as it was for the complete humbling of Hanratty. There is something appalling about a tail-slide, something which shatters the nerves. The machine plunges earthward, tail first, and then, as if some giant were using it for a hammer, its nose whips violently earthward. Everything strains. The occupants lurch against their life-belts; wood, wire and fabric screech their protest. Machines aren't built to stand much of it. It is probably the most dangerous of flying maneuvers.

Whu-s-s-s-s-s-s-sh! Whu-u-u-u-u-umph! Hanratty was jerked out of his misery and into a world full of horror.

Again, and again, the sickening wrench! Tunnard grinned back at the putty-colored face. This was the stuff to take the guts out of him. He spiraled up for another go. This one would be a humdinger.

He glanced at the altimeter—5,000. A look below showed the tawney floor of the desert, stretched to the mists which lie on the rim of the world. A mile underneath lay the hangars.

He pulled back on the stick and then turned to watch his nose come over the sky-line.

TO THE watchers beneath it seemed as if some misfortune had reached out and gripped the machine. Something in the indecision, the apparent lack of purpose of its movements, whispered to the heart of each pilot that he was looking on at disaster. Its engine had stopped, and the black nose lobbed ahead aimlessly. Then, slowly, one wing dropped

earthward, and 7844 began to fall. No tail-slide, side-slip or any known feature distinguished its descent. It just fell and fell until it was a screaming mass of tortured material. Fell until pilots shouted out, in spite of themselves:

"She'll fold up! She'll fold up!"

"Hi," growled a sergeant. "Wot the —— is all this? Hi!" he bellowed aloud. "She's *on fire!*"

He pointed to a thin ribbon of black smoke.

The elevators of 7844 were seen to cock suddenly back at a sharp angle; the blunt nose whipped earthward; a loud *bang* told the tale of a broken control. 7844 raised her head—ever so little—and floated down to crash into the roof of No. 3 hangar, where its tail came to rest like the spire of an old Baptist church.

"Holy sufferin' cats!"

It was Jacobs, trying to light a cigaret with hands that shook like a semaphore.

A bevy of pilots and mechanics attempted to scale the girder supports of the hangar; the doctor's car arrived with a rush and a cloud of brown dust; the major swore and shouted useless orders; and the solemn white face of Tunnard appeared over the roof. He seized a girder support, slid to the ground and stood there for a moment—apparently collecting himself. Then he shakily made off toward his tent.

"Oh, Tunnard!" called out several voices.

Tunnard quickened his pace and continued in silence.

Hanratty also was silent; but that was because he had fainted. The limp little body was lowered on to the sands as if it were so much dead meat. That he had been frightfully sick was a fact made objectionably plain by the state of his clothes.

"Beastly mess," shuddered the major, but it was noticed that his was the tunic which was shoved under the little red head.

"Ha!" chirped Ashboldt, the adjutant. "Lookin' after your entrant, I see."

The C. O. glared up at him—

"You'll get your pound—so shut up!"

That night in the mess, after dinner, the C. O. called Tunnard aside.

"No more of this, y' understand, Tunnard? We know you can fly, an' all that. But—after this performance today, you'll stick to straight business. Get me?"

Tunnard nodded.

"As a matter of fact," the major laughed, and spoke in a more friendly manner, "I lost a quid on you to-day. Bet old Ashboldt a pound you never could do it. But then, of course, I never expected anything like you gave us. Play bridge?"

Tunnard said that he did, and he, the major, Ashboldt and an obese equipment officer sat down at the baize-covered table under the big swinging lamp. "But that what-you-may-call-it you did when you were ablaze was a new one to me. Whatever the deuce do you call it?"

"Oh—nothing." Tunnard began to shuffle the cards.

"Well, anyway," continued the major, "it's a —— good thing that you did it. If you'd ever let her nose get down—flames come back into the fuselage—ugh! By jove, you were lucky!"

"Might have had you for dinner," commented the cold-blooded Ashboldt. "Roast bird, so to speak."

The equipment officer frowned and pursed his fat lips.

"I should say you were lucky. You not only put out that fire, but—do you know that you got down with a broken aileron king-post?"

Tunnard said that he knew that something had smashed; that was why he flew straight ahead without trying to turn out of the way from the hangar.

"It's the only thing to do, when something busts, you know—fly straight ahead."

"—— fine head work, old bean," said the major admiringly; "only hope mine's as good when it's needed."

The mess echoed this sentiment; and Tunnard smiled. The glumness which had pervaded him since the afternoon slowly evaporated in this pleasant atmosphere of good fellowship. His face lost its look of tense puzzlement, and he became quite congenial.

"*Suffragie!* . . . More whisky!" came frequently from his end of the table.

Somewhat humble—a natural result of a crash—he kept off the subject of flying, his exploits in particular, and actually encouraged the others to talk. It was not until long after midnight that this reticence left him; and then, abetted by the best part of a quart of Scotch whisky, he was telling his befuddled audience how they did the real, *pukka*, Immelmann—back at Gosport.

"Not this half-roll stuff," he was explaining, when the tent flaps flew open, and

Bellhouse, the lanky O. D., bounced in like Doug. Fairbanks entering a drawing-room. "Extra! Extra! All about the great flight!" He war-danced about the four bridge-players. "Hanratty confesses." He whirled aloft a scrawled pink sheet of stationery. "The true story of who killed Cock-Robin!"

He was captured, and Hanratty's letter was removed from his grasp; the major handed it across to Ashboldt:

"You read it. You read, don't you?"

Ashboldt grinned and commenced reading the letter aloud. It was an astonishing document. Finally, after a lurid description of the stunts, Hanratty pictured the catastrophe:

". . . FIRE! and then this washout of a captin goes right off his nut. Hollers FIRE! FIRE! and tries to push her into a dive. (Laughter from the mess, and shrieks of "Good old Hanratty, the little red-headed liar," and "That's a hot one for you, Tunnard!") I sees myself being fried like one of J. Vasey's eels. S'help me! I could feel the —— *heat!* NOSE UP! I hollers, but he hollers FIRE! FIRE! an keeps on shoving the stick. I knows if I'm goin to pull back and he front, one of our sticks is going to bust. So I takes out that socket-wrench and cuts him a slap on the bean. I hated to do it but I sees that this bone-head is scared so he has no idea what he's doing. Then I takes over control and tail-slides and side-slips to the ground—— (The members of the mess are now holding their sides, and some protest hotly that "Hanratty ought to be —— well killed for such lying.")

"Dirty little liar!" Tunnard cursed vindictively, and tremblingly took a cigaret out of his case. "I've a good mind to break his neck."

In fumbling for a match Tunnard knocked the case on to the sands and reached below the table to get it.

As he did so the rays of the lamp fell full on the back of his head; and there, now visible through the light, short-cut hair, was something which the major, with wide-open mouth, reached unbelievingly to touch—

A bump; and on it the hexagonal bruise of the socket-wrench. . . .

SHANGHAI FRIED CHICKEN

by William H. Wells

THE dining-saloon of the Oriental Steamship Company freighter, *Faralon*, was empty except for two men at the petty officers' table. It was midday, and from every side poured an intense heat mingled with the smell of ancient Shanghai docks rotting in the sun.

Outside the rattle of winches and the banging of boxes was suspended. The coolie stevedores had ceased their work and were chattering over their rice and dried fish. In the saloon, however, the sound of their voices was barely audible above the hum of the flies which besieged every porthole screen.

Seated at the table, awaiting the appearance of the steward with their dinner, the deck engineer and the bosun were talking together seriously. They were men whom

the sea had moulded. Neither God, man nor the devil drew from them any respect; only the sea that claimed them held their hearts, with reverence, with hate and fascination.

Strangers when they had come aboard the *Faralon* in San Francisco, they had tried to outswear, outyarn, finally, to knock down each other, and achieving no success they had become firm friends.

"Deck an' the Bos'," the other seamen said as one might say "Damon and Pythias." Both were Irishmen; the Bos', a strapping, blue-eyed six footer who came from the West Coast; Deck, somewhat younger, was raised in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn. He was not so tall as the bosun but stockily built with powerful shoulders, and his brown eyes blazed up at the slightest provocation.

"Oi think, Deck, it was a good idea to wait till the old man was finished and out of the way, the little squarehead. He has no great, burnin' love fur you inyway, since you told him that if he'ld watch the ship's course, you'ld watch her winches."

"Yeah, we'll be able to talk to that Chinee steward more heart to heart with nobody aroun' to butt in. The stingy son-of-a-gun, givin' us steak, steak, steak every —— day, that you could sole yer shoes with, an' blue grass growin' on it. An' out there in the galley them yellow hash-slingers eatin' fried chicken! Yes sir, fried chicken; I seen 'em with me own eyes in the galley last night packin' their glands an' we gettin' cast-iron horse meat."

" 'Tis a —— outrage the stuff we get," burst out the Bos'. "Oi notice though that the old man's table don't seem to be sufferin' from any famine."

"Yeah!" cried Deck. "An' where's our fried chicken, Bos'; where's all the rest of the decent grub we ought to be gettin' aboard this wagon? I'll tell you where it is—it's goin' ashore every night in galley-coal sacks, while the ugly-mugged Chink an' the skipper are rakin' in the boppoes, an' feedin' us swill. I been on ships before this where the steward tried that stunt, but he didn't have the old man with 'im."

"What! Ye think the squarehead is playin' in with him?"

"You've noticed yourself, Bos', the way the skipper keeps callin' the Chink up to his cabin. An' he keeps the ports —— well shut when he's got him in there."

"But are ye sure, Deck?"

The bosun brought his fist down fiercely on the mess table.

"—— it, I know! I seen it meself last night. I was up the mainmast about eight bells to fix the connection on the cargo light, when I happens to look down on the boat-deck. I notices there was somebody movin' around there. It was foggy as all ——, but I see two men open the galley skylight—I'll swear they was Chinks—then somethin' was handed up from the galley. They took it to the side of the deck away from the dock an' lowered it down. There must have been a sampan alongside to catch the bundle, because in a couple o' minutes they come back for another load. An' I says to meself, 'Now I know why we're existin' on wormy beans an' shoeleather.' "

"Sellin' our grub on us," the bosun said, leering, "we moight 'ave suspected it. Oi wouldn't trust a Chink and a Swede togither, even under me very eyes, unless they was both laid out in the same coffin. Do ye suppose, Deck, if we was to let the company know——"

"A —— of a lot they'd do!" interrupted Deck contemptuously. "What does the company care whether a few seamen get bum food. Seamen are cheap; too —— cheap, Bos', that's what's the trouble. Didn't the company ship us out with rotten, crawlin' mattresses an' no blankets? Ain't the company tryin' right now to cut down what pay we got and make us work more hours? Ain't they too stingy to put aboard enough wire fer falls an' tackle? They didn't even give me tools to fix their —— winches. Do you think they don't know what sort of a skipper they got? You bet they know. They ain't losin' any money if he sells our grub, are they? A fine lot o' sympathy we'd get from the company."

The screen door of the saloon opened and a Chinaman slipped in carrying a large bowl of soup and a platter of meat which he set on the table. Turning to the steward, the Bos' pointed a finger at the contents of the platter.

"What do you call that stuff, huh?" he demanded.

"Teck," replied the Chinaman briefly.

"Steak?" roared the bosun. "Steak—again?"

Deck grabbed the steward roughly by the seat of his loose, white pants as he attempted to escape.

"Come 'ere! Where do you think yer goin'? Now looka here; you see that steak? Well, we've had all that —— stuff we're gonna stand. We ain't gonna eat steak any more. Take it away. We want some fried chicken, an' we want it bad; an' you're gonna bring us some, *pronto*. Fried chicken —sabee?"

"No sabee—le' go—no sabee!"

The steward was furious at the undignified manner in which he was detained.

The Bos' spoke up:

"Yes, you sabee, you yellow crook, come on, are you goin' to bring us some fried chicken, or are we goin' to take you down to get it?"

"No got," protested the steward trembling.

"O yes, you got it."

Deck shook him.

"I saw you last night; you an' yer whole dirty bunch eatin' it in the galley. We want some, an' we're gonna get it."

The Chinaman regained his self-possession and smiled blandly.

"No mo'—a' gone, no mo'."

Deck and the Bos' looked at each other.

"Come on," said Deck, "we'll find out whether they got any more or not, hey Bos'?"

As the Bosun nodded, they rose, and taking the steward tightly by either arm they propelled him to the galley remonstrating volubly. At the galley door they stopped.

"There!" burst out Deck, pointing. "What do you call that?"

On a box near the stove sat one of the cooks startled in the act of chewing a meaty drumstick.

With a sudden jerk the steward broke from his captors, jumped into the galley, and snatching up an iron poker shook it violently at them, shrieking every filthy English name he could remember. Deck's temper flared up.

"Put down that poker, you low-life Chinee bastard an' shut yer ugly face before I shut it for you!"

As the Chinaman raised the poker above his head Deck shot out all the force of his right fist and caught him on the nose. He dropped with a howl, blood streaming down his face. Then, in a flash, he fled out the door on the other side of the galley.

"He's gone to get the old man," Deck remarked calmly as the two men stepped into the galley.

Since there was no chicken in sight and the cook had disappeared, they opened the oven doors one after another. At last the Bos' triumphantly drew forth from one of the ovens a large, dripping pan half-full of warm, brown fried chicken.

The bosun placed the pan conveniently on the baking table.

"Have a hoind leg, Deck," he invited with the gesture of a king bestowing his daughter on a worthy prince. "If the old man gets here before we've done away with it all Oi suppose we'll have to offer him some; um-m-m-m!"

By industrious chewing the two had almost finished a second leg apiece when the little, blue-coated, Swedish skipper was pushed in through the door by the gabbling Chinaman. The steward howled wildly—

"Der, der—wan' cheek, no let have he."

Cowering behind the captain he beat his breast and waved his arms in a frenzy at the deck engineer and the bosun.

The little Swede's mustache bristled, and he frowned sternly at the pair who, unperturbed, continued eating.

"Fell!" he exploded. "Fot duss diss mean?"

Throwing the bare drumstick on the floor, Deck answered matter-of-factly:

"It's all right, cap'n. We wanted some chicken for a change an' the Chink didn't want to give us any. He said there wasn't none, an' when we shows him there was; he picks up that poker an' starts callin' us a lot o' dirty names. So I hit 'im, an' the goes runnin' up to bother you. That's all."

"Oh—dot's all iss it?" returned the captain with sarcasm. "Vee shall see feder dot iss all. Who do you tink you are to order diss man about and hit him? Fot right haf you to get fried chicken? Huh?"

"We got as much right as those dirty Chinks, an' a —— of a lot more!" Deck blazed forth before the bosun could restrain him.

The Bos' knew that the old man had a temper shorter even than Deck's, and he nudged Deck.

"Lay off," he warned in a low voice; "ye'll git 'im sore."

"You haf no rights except fot I vant you shall haf, so long as I am captain uff diss ship. Ondershtand dot?"

Deck's lips curled back pugnaciously and his jaw set.

"We want good grub when there's good grub to be got, an' if you don't see that we get it, we will. Don't try to pull any of that stuff on us; do you think we don't know what happens to the grub we ought to get, you square-headed thief?"

"You shpeak to me like dot?" raged the Swede. "Get out uff here—qvick, before I tr-r-ow you out!"

Taking a step toward Deck he drew back his fist.

The bosun laid firm hold on Deck's arms, but the engineer shook himself loose, and stepping up to the skipper, grasped him by the shoulder.

"You ——, lousy, little Squarehead, you throw me out? Say! Of all the skippers I ever shipped under you're the rottenest, lowest, stingiest, God-forsakenest, that ever missed sinkin' 'is ship. We'll get out o' here when we —— please, an' you kin go now."

He gave the captain a shove toward the galley door. For a moment the little Swede stood clenching his fists, white and trembling with fury.

"Vee shall see, vee shall see. I vill haf you arrest'! Shust vait—vait!" he choked, then rushed from the galley.

Silently Deck and the Bos' gazed after him. Two inquisitive Chinese cooks peered in through the other door, spellbound by what they had just witnessed. Deck, spying them, raised his arm threateningly and they vanished. After several seconds a grin slowly dawned over his face.

"Nice, ain't it?" he remarked.

'O, foine, foine," replied the bosun. "The —— little Squarehead, I wonder will he really try to arrest ye now. If he does I'll wish ye'd hit 'im when ye had the chanst; but we might as well finish up the chicken, eh? Thot's the stuff!"

They were not kept wondering long, for the captain went ashore and returned at five o'clock with the American consul and three Chinese policemen. When the two culprits saw them coming up the ship's ladder the bosun shook Deck's hand tenderly, bidding him farewell and good-luck, for they had planned in this case that it would be better if the Bos' withdrew. In his excitement the captain might forget that there had been any one mixed up in the affair besides Deck.

The engineer met the delegation stoically. He made no protest and was duly arrested on the charge of disobeying and threatening with violence his superior officer. With a solemn Chinaman on each side and one bringing up the rear Deck was moving toward the rail when the captain stopped him.

"Fere iss de bosun?" he demanded. "He too iss to be arrest'."

As the bosun had retreated to a bunk in the foc's'le it was some time before he appeared. When he arrived he was a perfect picture of injured innocence. What had he done?

It turned out that he had aided and abetted the deck engineer and refused to come to the assistance of his captain when his captain was very much in need of him. Both his own arguments and those of Deck were in vain; finally he turned to the consul:

"Oi'll go with ye if Oi must, thin, but first let me tell ye one thing; if thot little Squarehead wur as big a man as he is a money-grabbin' coward he'd stand twinty-foive feet tall. Moreover, he's made inimies of two men with longer memories and less scruples than ever sailed the sea."

Then, turning his back on the skipper, he and the deck engineer went over the side and down the ladder closely escorted by the three Chinese policemen and the consul.

"WELL, I've been in better jails," remarked Deck bitterly as he peered about at the narrow, dirty, stone and mud walls that enclosed the two mutineers.

"And Oi've been in worse, a —— of a lot worse," replied the Bos', stretching his long body on the heap of straw and dirt in one corner of the dim cell.

Then he continued: "But ye know, Deck, what railly makes me sore is havin' to walk all the way here. It's no wonder these Chinks are so bad off whin they ain't got enough civilization to have a hurry-up wagon."

"If they don't use no hurry-up wagon they don't lose no time, —— 'em." Deck was decidedly irritated. "A fine mess we're in now. You heard what he said? Ten days. Ten —— days in this dirty, dark, stinking, lousy hole; an' all on account of that Squarehead. I hope every —— winch on his rusty tub goes on the blink, an' he can't get no one to fix 'em. Ten days! If we don't make that skipper pray to God

he'd never sicked them Chinee cops on us, I'll leave off goin' to sea. Bos'! Are you with me—do we git 'im?"

The Bos' sat up in his corner.

"We'll get 'im," he answered, and they shook hands heartily.

Deck drew back suddenly with an expression of blank foolishness on his face.

"Holy smoke, Bos'!" he ejaculated. "Ho-ly smoke! Suppose she sails before we get out of this glory-hole. She can't be gonna stay much over a week longer now an' we're in fer ten days. We gotta get outa this place before she sails!"

" 'Vast heavin', Deck, 'vast heavin'," cut in the bosun. "Oi think maybe we moight get one of these here ugly lookin' Chinymen I see litterin' the decks as we was escorted into our stateroom, and maybe if we asked him right he'd go and foind out for us jest whin she is leavin'."

He fetched a deep yawn and hauled himself to his feet.

"Fat chance!" came Deck's scornful retort. "These Chinks ain't doin' nothin' fer love, an' I don't know what in —— else we got after the cleanin' out they gave our pockets before they shoved us in here. Just how was you figgerin' to persuade any of 'em?"

The Bos' replied slowly in a tone of mock resignation.

"I wish you wasn't so hasty, Deck. If it wasn't thot Oi know ye didn't mean the tone of voice ye was speakin' in, Oi'd never show ye what ye're now about to see."

With that the Bos' sat down on the floor and under the silent and scornful stare of Deck, began removing his shoes. From inside each shoe he drew a thin pack of something very much resembling American dollar bills but smaller.

Deck whistled.

"Say, that ain't money, is it?" he asked wonderingly.

"Yer right," said the Bos', "it ain't; that is, not in the United States. But this here is Chiny, an' in Chiny if it looks like money, then money it is."

"Cigar coupons?" queried Deck.

The Bos' nodded.

"Oh, you foxy son of a gun," the engineer clapped him on the shoulder. "Oh you ——" he broke off and rushed to the heavy wooden door.

Placing his face close to the small, barred opening he let out a shrill whistle between his teeth that rose to an almost siren shriek.

In the darkness of the narrow corridor he caught sight of a startled Chinese jailer looking wildly about him to discover the source of the sound. When Deck called to him he approached with timid steps and refused to come within three feet of the door of the cell.

Turning quickly Deck whispered to the bosun, "Gimme some o' them coupons, pronto, I got a Chink out here."

He snatched a pack from the Bos's outstretched hand and waved it through the opening.

"Look, Charlie—plenty money—money, you sabee money?"

The Chinaman moved slowly toward the door as if drawn by a lodestone. Deck's wheedling voice continued:

"See money? When ship sail? We don't know! You find out when ship sail, we give you plenty money. Sabee?"

The Chinaman opened and shut his immense wide mouth and stared at the coupons with uncomprehending eyes.

As Deck got a nearer view of the Chinaman's face he chuckled and whispered to the bosun who was standing close beside him.

"What do you know! It's one o' them Chink cops that brought us here. He's makin' out he don't sabee, but I'll bet we can get him."

Pressing his face to the barred opening Deck began again to speak to the Chinaman. His voice fairly dripped sweetness—

"Charlie, you sabee 'ship'?"

The flat, yellow head nodded vigorously.

"You sabee 'sail'?"

This time there was a slow shaking of the head.

"Sail —— it! Look here."

Deck placed his flat palm, thumb up, in the window, then uttering a low "toot toot!" he moved it slowly across the space. At that, the Chinaman's face split into a broad grin. With sparkling eyes and quick little nods he imitated the engineer's motion several times, repeating under his breath, "Toot-toot, toot-toot."

Anxiously, Deck now put the crucial word—

"When?"

For a moment the slant Oriental brows met in a puzzled frown.

"Does he undershtand?" queried the Bos' in Deck's ear, but Deck was too intent to reply.

All at once the Chinaman became radiant, crying, "Aee, aee! Me sabee, me sabee. When sip sail?—aee!"

"Whew!" whistled Deck. "He gets it at last."

The Chinaman in the corridor was all excitement.

"How muts?" he demanded with gestures toward himself and toward the wad of coupons in Deck's hand.

"Me—you; when sip sail; how muts?"

"That," said the Deck engineer removing five coupons from the pack.

Returning the rest to the bosun, who stood peering over his shoulder, he waved the five pieces of green paper to and fro in front of a pair of greedy Chinese eyes. As a dirty hand stretched forth to grasp them Deck drew them back out of reach.

"Hold on, don't lose yer shirt there, young feller. You see these here bills? When you git back with the news they're yours, an' not before. Sabee?"

The Chinaman dropped his hands disconsolately. Even if he could not understand all the words, he "sabeed" the Irishman's meaning. He stepped back from the door, bowed three times very meekly, and pattered out of sight down the corridor.

Deck heaved a sigh.

"Got the makin's, Bos'?" he asked.

Silently he and the bosun rolled and lighted their cigarets. This done they seated themselves side by side on the straw in the corner to smoke and plan their campaign of retaliation.

"Oi don't think we want to beat the little Squarehead up," said the Bos' seriously in reply to some wild propositions by the deck engineer.

"No, I ain't afraid of 'em, nor any man livin', but there ain't enough in it. We'd only be gettin' ourselves arrested agin, for which Oi am not over-anxious; an' he'd probably recover with nothin' more than a broken nose or the like. No, Deck, we got to think of a better way than thot. Let's see now; what would get the skipper in worse trouble than inything else, an' keep us out of it, hey?"

"—— if I know." Deck wrinkled his forehead. "What would?"

For some minutes both men wrestled with the problem without speaking a word. Their cigarets glowed like two red eyes in the corner of the dark cell. Suddenly, one of the eyes disappeared as the bosun removed his cigaret from his mouth and spoke.

"Say, Deck, suppose we was to hold up the boat jest whin she was all ready to sail."

Deck's tone of voice became listless.

"All right, but how are you figgerin' on doin' it? That's what I want to know."

"Hark now to me, Oi've an oidea, Deck."

And Deck "harked" and argued and discussed until the bosun yawned.

"Now we got tin days in here, an' Oi can't see no use in losin' sleep the first noight. Oi'm goin' to hit the deck; an' Oi'd say it was a good oidea fur you to do the same."

The Bos' rolled over, face to the wall, and wriggled his long body down into the straw.

"Come on, Deck, they ain't goin' to bring no sheets and pillowcases—not tonight."

With a disgusted snort the deck engineer stretched himself out beside the bosun and soon both men were snoring rhythmically.

"SAY, Bos', you don't suppose these —— Chinks has got their dates mixed, do you? A fine hole we'd be in if they forgot to let us out now. It's been the longest ten days I ever want to spend, an' I ain't spent it fer nothin'."

Deck was striding nervously back and forth in front of the cell door talking to the bosun who sat on the straw in the corner rolling a cigaret.

"—— it, Bos'! they was wallopin' four o'clock on the Chinee dishpan in the yard half an hour ago. If the ship sails tonight, an' that greasy Chink swore it did, we got to get out o' here an' down there pretty *pronto*. We can't let the little Squarehead get away, now we got it all cooked up fer him, just because them Chinks is too careless to let us out. We got to get out somehow; —— quick too."

All at once he stopped short before the door and pressing his face close to the grating gave a low "*Psssssss*—." He had spied a lone Chinaman coming down the corridor with a large ring of keys in his hand.

As the jailer halted, Deck reached into his pocket and fluttered all the remaining coupons before the Chinaman's eyes, repeating softly, "Here—open, open."

The Chinese face remained expressionless, but there was a jangle of keys, a grating, and the heavy wooden door swung inward. At the sound the bosun had dropped his cigaret and risen quickly to his feet.

Deck grabbed him by the arm, then, thrusting the pack of green coupons into the Chinaman's outstretched hand, he pulled the Bos' cautiously into the corridor after him. The jailer followed them and closed the cell door with a slam that caused the deck engineer to turn on him with an angry, "Can that racket!"

Then he added in a softer tone, "Where—where go?"

A motion of his head toward the closed end of the long passage was the Chinaman's only answer as he shuffled on with the two seamen creeping along the dark wall in his wake.

Once the bosun, pursuing too closely, stepped on Deck's heel and fell sprawling spiderlike on the stone floor. He choked down a curse, and got up hastily, shamefaced under a furious backward glance from the engineer. Finally, when the Chinaman stopped they waited expectantly, holding their breath, while he fumbled at the latch of the door that sealed the passage. Then, like Saint Peter admitting righteous souls to Heaven, he swung the door open, uttering a brief, "He', in he'."

"You son of a ——," Deck made a vicious clutch at the Chinaman, who jumped through the doorway just in time to evade him.

Before the two men was an office of the jail with several Chinese policemen startled into rigidity standing about. With a roar the deck engineer dashed at the nearest, yelling, "Knock —— out of 'em, Bos'l We'll get out o' this hole. Get out o' the way you ——!"

But two short policemen had laid hold of the bosun, and four more of the Chinamen succeeded in downing the deck engineer after his first ferocious rush. At this moment of defeat one of the higher officials of the jail, an educated man who understood English, hurried into the room. His sharp question in Chinese brought forth a volley of jabbered explanation from the proud captors of the Irishmen.

Frowning severely at the deck engineer and the bosun he demanded,

"Can you not wait that much to walk out, without you must try to keel all dees men? Firs' you mus' write de name, den you may go, an' no use to fight. Come!"

Deck's face wore a look of foolish bewilderment. He turned toward the Bos' who was grinning like a full moon and shaking his head.

"Deck, me bye," he began with attempted solemnity as he caught the other's eye, "Oi told ye ye wur too hasty a man fur comfort. Will ye never learn? Look it yurself—payin' a dirty heathen to open the cell whin that's what he come fur; an' thin tryin' to fight yur way out through a crowd that was all anxious to have us go. O-o-o-o!"

Deck made no reply, and after their money had been scrupulously returned to them, and they had left the jail in a decorous manner, he remained unusually silent while they hastened along through the twilight over the rough cobbles of the narrow, jumbled streets on their way to the ship.

IT WAS six o'clock and quite dark when they tramped down the wharf where the *Faralon* lay. Evidently she was about ready to cast off. The forra'd booms had been lowered and on the after deck they could hear the first mate shouting, "Lower away there, easy; all together now, easy!"

On the corner of the bridge above the dock was tied a large cargo light throwing a brilliant glare over the ladder which stood against the *Faralon's* side. As the two seamen reached the foot of the ladder Deck opened his mouth for the first time since they had left the jail.

"Bos', looka that!" he said in a subdued voice, pointing to where on the side of the ship, picked out by the cargo light, a notice was chalked in wobbly, ten inch letters. "Ship sales at 7 O'clock tonite."

After reading it carefully the bosun remarked between his teeth:

"She does, hey? Not if we've figgered right, and Oi think we have."

"But,—— it!" ejaculated Deck. "Suppose he has got some money. What——"

The Bos' interrupted him.

"Thur ain't a skipper yet thot ever had any money whin he was just goin' to sail, I should think ye'd been to sea long enough to foind that out. But now, Deck, listen to me—" his voice grew serious—"will ye please lash yur shirt on tight and kape it lashed on while we're talkin' to the old man."

"I will," replied the deck engineer with firmness. "Now, let's go."

As nobody was 'midships when they

climbed on deck they went up the ladder to the bridge at once and knocked at the screen door of the captain's cabin. There was a light within, and they could see the little skipper with his coat off going over a pile of papers on his desk, his jaws working away on his cud of Copenhagen snuff.

Absorbed, he called out, "Coom in," then, after they had stepped inside he faced about and looked at them. A triumphant smile twirked up the corners of his mustache.

"Fell! I fuss expecting you two. Now you haf been plenty punished, I tink. I haf no grudge. You can haf your chobs back again, now dot you haf learned dot I don't shtand for any moonkey-business on my ship."

Returning to his papers, he said over his shoulder: "Dot's all. You may go."

Neither of the men budged.

"Excuse me, cap'n," began the Bos' in his most apologetic tone, "we'd just like to ask ye one thing."

"Fell—fot iss it?" snapped the Swede and spun around in his chair to face them.

"We'd loike to be paid off, if ye don't moind. We want to settle here in Chiny fur a whoile; we loike it."

The skipper's mustache rose to a height indicating angry astonishment. He controlled himself, however, and said in the persuasive manner one uses with children:

"Fy—fy no, you don't font to leave de ship now; you vould get only half-pay. You font to go back fid her again, not to shtay here. You don't font I should pay you off now; uff course not. No, no."

"And whoy not?" The bosun's voice was hard.

"Fell—fell, I haf not now enough money to pay you off."

Deck, unable to remain any longer silent, cut in accommodatingly: "That's all right, cap'n, you can get the money tomorra an' pay us off then. We don't mind waitin'."

"But the ship sails before an hour now," the skipper answered, both angry and uncomfortable.

"Not if we don't get our money. I tell you now, cap'n, that we don't give a good —— when this ship sails, but if you want to keep out of trouble with the law you'll pay us off, an' you'll do it as soon as you can, the sooner the better—for you."

The little Swede rose from his chair gasping with rage. The knowledge that they were right and he would be forced to hold the ship over, almost paralyzed his tongue.

But he managed to snort: "Get out—get out. Tomorrow morning at half past eight, you shall haf your pay. Now go to —— out uff here!"

The two men remained sternly silent until they were out of sight and hearing of the skipper; then the Bos' answered Deck's widening grin with a hearty dig in the ribs.

"Pretty good fur a starter, hey? They'll have to hand it to us, Deck, we done thot roight. If he only knew what was comin'. The little Squarehead was sore tonoight; what wull he be whin mornin' comes? A ragin' lunatic, Oi'm tellin' ye."

Deck cut sharply into the bosun's exultant monologue:

"Come on forred, Bos', we gotta tell the gang they ain't gonna sail tonight. An' remember, we don't go tearin' off ashore before we got that four to eight engine room watch to go with us. ——with 'e oilers, but we gotta have them two Spic firemen an' that Finn water-tender. Once we get them guys drunk we can pull some show, an' I'm not kiddin' you. Come on, Bos'," called back Deck exuberantly, stumbling over the littered deck toward the fo'c's'le scuttle.

The unexpected news of another night in port created an invitation not to be disregarded by a crew that had parted lugubriously the night before from what they had supposed their last bottle.

It was after half-past three the next morning when the cargo light on the bridge, shining down thickly through the Yangtze River mist, picked out the forms of two men herding five other very unsteady men about the foot of the ladder. One by one Bos' and Deck assisted their charges safely to the deck where they placed them in a row on the edge of the small midships hatch.

Seating himself beside the inseparable Spanish firemen, Joe and Pedro, the deck engineer began to discuss with them their respective merits as firemen of an oil-burner like the *Faralon*. According to him, it was said among the other firemen that if it came to a showdown, Pedro could always run his fires better and get up pressure in his starboard boiler more quickly, than Joe was ever able to do with the port.

When Deck assured them that it was impossible to believe such a thing, Pedro's drunken pride overshadowed his brotherly love.

'Datsa right—datsa righ'," he boasted,

"Joe, he ees no gooda fire man lika me, Pedro."

'Lika ——, you lie!" blazed out Joe. "I showa you."

By the time eight bells sounded the fight had been quelled, and they had decided with Deck's help, the only sure way to prove which of them was the better fireman was to see which one could get up the higher pressure in his boiler. The boozy Finn water-tender was appointed to watch the two gages and be the judge. Moreover, Deck promised to be there when they came off watch in the morning.

Wrangling fiercely, Joe and Pedro descended to the fire-room, followed by the Finn who, out of respect for his new judicial capacity, acted ridiculously sedate.

At the foot of the ladder, after they had left the ship, Deck and the Bos' whispered together.

"It's all been too —— easy," said Deck uncomfortably. "I don't like that. Say, suppose, after all the trouble we gone to, them Spics come to their senses before the boilers burn out, or the second ketches 'em; or that fool Finn turns on more water. We can't go down there an' watch 'em though."

"Come, come, Deck, ye're actin' like a superstitious kid. There ain't nothin' to worry about, Deck me bye, we ain't ate thot fried chicken fur no reason, Oi'm tellin' ye thot. Come along now, maybe we kin get a flop at Chinee Tom's, this here fog's gettin' too wet fur me."

THE sun had burned away the enshrouding mist, and when shortly after eight o'clock, the deck engineer and the bosun trudged down the dock, they were sighted and hailed by the seamen of the watch-below gathered for a smoke on the *Faralon's* fo'c's'le-head.

"How soon yu gonna cast off," called Deck.

The reply came instantly in a vociferous medley of dialects that were utterly meaningless. Without waiting to hear more, the two Irishmen rushed for the ladder, and scrambling up, hustled forward to learn the details.

"Them two drunk Spics sure fixed us pretty."

"Der boilers dey iss bote gone."

"Dem —— Shpaniards——"

"—blowed hoff an' burned hout, at's wot."

" 'E old man's sore as a pup."

"Un dee secon' inyineer vuss yoost coomin' rroun' fen dee bote saftey walves goes——"

"Steam hall hover the plice, an' the chief shootin' hoff his fice somethin' awful."

"—gonna kill 'em —— drunk Spics an' 'at lousy Finn, he says."

"—getta it feex? I noa tink not for a longa time."

"Vee got to lay up here now; vell, fot de ——? More dayss more dollarss."

From this babel, Deck and the Bos' gathered the heart-warming knowledge that their prison-pondered plan had succeeded. Suppressing their triumph behind the most serious faces they marched up the bridg ladder to the captain's cabin and knocked softly. At a snapped, "Coom in," the two entered.

The little skipper sat in his chair facing them, red in the face, his mustache working furiously up and down as he chewed his Copenhagen snuff, the open can of which lay on the desk. Beside it were two piles of United States bills each weighted with a small heap of change.

Disdaining to speak, the captain picked them up and thrust one at the Bos' and one at the deck engineer. Not until they had counted their pay, deliberately and with care, under his irritated scrutiny was a word spoken. It came, in tones of too-perfect politeness, from Deck who could restrain his tongue no longer.

"Thank you, captain, we appreciate wot you done fer us. Now if you were only stayin' in Shanghai a little longer me an' the Bos' here would like you to come ashore an' have a real fried-chicken dinner on us. But I suppose you'll soon be goin'."

THE SPIRIT OF THE C Z

By Edgar Young

Author of "A Few Will Remember," "William Walker, Filibuster," etc.

COLONEL GOETHALS—gray, tall, gaunt, khaki-clad—left his yellow railroad motorcar standing on a spur track at "Pete M'Gill" and picked his way on foot down through Culebra Cut. In his mouth was a King Bee cigaret he had "grubbed" from the telegraph operator at Paraiso Cabin.

He dodged along between loading dirt trains, Star drills, pumps, hoists, cranes, and the conglomeration of other machinery that was being used by Man in his fight against nature in that yawning chasm, until at last he stood behind the fleet of steam-shovels that were rooting into the toe of Cucarach slide, an earth glacier of some millions of extra yards of clay.

What was ailing that Bucyrus No. 213? Last month she had dug 70,290 yards of soft rock at Gamboa in twenty-six days. That was a record. On one day, the twenty-second of March, 1910, she had loaded 4,823 yards of clay upon Lidgerwoods in five hours and twenty minutes. Something was wrong. She wasn't performing smoothly at all, at all. He walked to the side of the steam navvy and climbed to her deck.

Jim Hall was running the shovel, and a new man was craning her. Jim shut off and dropped his dipper easily to rest and stepped over to confront the colonel.

"Where's Dave?"

"Quit this morning, colonel."

He hitched a thumb up toward the new crane-man and spoke confidentially.

"That feller don't seem to get any speed into himself. He's been craning in the ore beds of Minnesota. He's done killed this week's record. I've sweated blood all day."

A passing supervisor saw the colonel on the shovel deck and clambered aboard.

"What's the idea of putting a green man on this record shovel?"

"Had to, colonel. Roach didn't show up this morning. It was that or else——"

"Has he been complaining of anything? Nobody been riding him among you fellows has there?"

"Nope. Guess he got his stake made and is putting back home."

The colonel swung down. The shovel began to roar. The colonel looked back for a moment at the jerky manner in which the 213 was working, smiled, swore and went on down through the cut.

At Empire he swung on to a train of loaded Lidgerwoods that rolled by and at Pedro Miguel he dropped off where his car stood. Soon the "Yellow Peril," as newspaper writers dubbed it, was scurrying along the main line of the P. R. R. to Culebra Village.

It was eleven o'clock that night when the light in his office went out. And it was five minutes to nine the next morning, Sunday, when he again entered his office by a side door. A long line of men and women led away from the front door all the way down the hill to the railroad station.

At exactly nine the door swung open and a Bajan boy stepped out to allow them to

enter one by one. The colonel began to hold Kangaroo Court. He was smoking cigarets and as fast as one burned down he lighted another on the stump of the old one.

Men came to report injustices, ask advice, all manner of things; some were sent for to tell the why, how, and where of something. Also women came for many reasons and some of them, also, were sent for. The colonel heard each and every one fully. On and on the line filed by gradually growing shorter. Finally a lanky blond man stood before the large mahogany desk twirling a new hat rather sheepishly in his hands.

"A gum-shoe man came down to Colon and told me you wanted to see me."

"What's the matter you're quitting?"

"Just because, I reckon. Been down here five hitches with no vacation. Thought I'd like to work in the States for a while."

"I asked you why you were quitting? Don't you like the job you have, the pay, quarters, your engineer? Men in good health don't quit down here, and you don't look as if you have missed too many boats. They don't even quit in bad health. We watch for the ones that are breaking down and ship them out. When we don't notice they stay on and on and they go crazy from the sun or they go to pieces and we ship them back as wrecks. Men in Panama feel the parts they are playing. They are symbolizing a race, an ideal, a spirit of their forefathers, a grim-jawed race of fighting pioneers. There are no flags flying over this work, but these men are fighters for their country. Has it ever occurred to you, Dave?"

"It has colonel, many times."

The colonel's lean finger pointed straight in front of Dave Roach's shifting eyes.

"Then why in —— are you quitting? Are you a deserter, a traitor? Haven't you got the guts to stand the gaff?"

Roach's face flamed red with anger. He half-rose from his chair and started to blurt out a denial. Colonel Goethals lighted a new cigaret. Roach's heavy face set, and his shifting eyes grew steady and they burned squarely into those of the colonel's.

"I don't like to tell it, colonel, but you've dared me. They say your 'gum-shoes' know everything. They do know many things, but they don't know it all. Now about me. What would you think if I told you my name wasn't David Roach? It ain't. It's Charles Redford. I've worked here five years and never got called on it. I was third officer on a Pacific Mail Steamer and I came over here and looked at the work. I wanted a job from the first time I watched the work. I never went back to my ship. I deserted her. I got a job of craning a shovel. Never had craned one. I 'put the sticks' out of the first shovel I craned. Tied up the shovel for an hour and a half getting them back in. I learned, though. And nobody has ever said a word about my assumed name. I never done any crime except desert my ship and change my name."

He paused and turned his hat around and around.

"Well, if you were innocent of crime and merely changed your name to desert your ship and it has gone along all right for five years why quit now?"

"I have got to get married. My girl has been waiting all this time and I have been stalling. Down here I'm Dave Roach, champion craneman. Up there in Oregon I'm Charlie Redford. I'm getting old. Last month I was twenty-eight. Louise is twenty-one. There's another feller who would marry her in a minute. He's got her on the fence right now. She has hinted that she would like to live in the tropics. That wouldn't do. She wouldn't understand why I changed my name. Further, I couldn't marry her down here as Charles Redford. Awful mixup. I've worried over it for months. The only thing I could see was to quit and go back up there and be who I am."

When he stopped the colonel reached into a drawer and brought out a personal record file, a bulky package of papers culled from many sources. He handed this over to the craneman and asked him to look it over. He noted his original application and the references which had denied knowledge of him. Reports of his clumsiness at work were followed by papers from the Pacific Mail Steamship Company claiming he was working in Culebra Cut. Gum-shoe reports placed him exactly. Other reports followed about his improvement in work. A copy of a letter from the colonel to the steamship company telling them to let the man alone for the present. Full, complete, almost day by day a record had been kept of him. Other men had gaped with surprize as this craneman now gaped. Other

men had been shown photographs of themselves in compromising places or drinking at bars. The gum-shoe system of the Zone was complete. It's good feature was that the gum-shoe men had orders to report the good with the bad and no one knew who they were.

The crane-man handed back the personal record and stood up. The colonel spoke half-wearily.

"You go back on your shovel tomorrow morning. Cable that girl to come down here. If she likes you she will come. Meet her at the boat and bring her straight over to see me. I'll do the explaining. I'll see that you get a nice cottage. Better hurry around and tell Jim Hall you will be back with him tomorrow. He's all cut up about your leaving."

The colonel's voice was sharp as he shouted for the next in line to enter.

THE SEA-HAWK

A FIVE-PART STORY

Part IV.

by Rafael Sabatini

Author of "Rebels Convict," "Captain Blood's Dilemma."

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

IT SEEMED that all things came to Sir Oliver Tressilian. He had achieved honor on the Spanish Main; had been knighted by England's Virgin Queen, and his wooing of Mistress Rosamund ran a true course save that it was opposed by her brother, Peter, and by Sir John Killigrew, her guardian. The latter, Sir Oliver "pinked" in a duel and Sir John in some part withdrew his objections.

Rosamund, fearing that the impetuous Peter would provoke Sir Oliver to a duel, asked Sir Oliver to avoid him. This he did until one day, by chance, he met Peter at the village smithy.

"You dog!" Peter cried and struck Sir Oliver with his whip.

Then, with a drunken laugh, Peter rode off and Sir Oliver followed in furious pursuit. But shortly, remembering his promise to Rosamund, he checked his course and rode home.

That night Lionel, Sir Oliver's half-brother, confessed that he had killed Peter in a duel, and that he himself had been wounded. They had fought in the dark, without witnesses. It would be called murder. No one must know.

And so Sir Oliver, because of his great love for his half-brother, helped to cover up Lionel's crime; confident that the woman who had caused the quarrel, would remain silent for her own sake.

Next morning rumor had it that Sir Oliver had killed Peter.

"There are those who heard you vow his death," cried Rosamund when he protested his innocence. "From where he lay they found a trail of blood to your door. Will you still lie?"

"God forgive you," said Sir Oliver.

Taking with him certain men Sir Oliver went before a justice and exhibited his body. It bore no mark of recent wounds, was a mute witness to his innocence, and the justice indited a document so testifying.

Lionel, small of soul, fearing that the death of Peter would yet be charged to him, hired Jasper Leigh to trepan Sir Oliver away from England on his ship the *Swallow*.

His plan was successful and Sir Oliver's apparent flight confirmed the belief that he had murdered Master Peter.

Master Leigh later told Sir Oliver of Lionel's treachery and offered to take him home on payment of a certain sum. Sir Oliver agreed and the order was given to "put about."

But the *Swallow*, having sailed too close to the coast, was attacked and sunk by a Spanish ship.

Sir Oliver and Jasper Leigh were rescued by the Spanish and sentenced to labor at the oars as galley slaves, Sir Oliver being sent to a ship of fifty oars.

For six months he experienced the tortures of hell and, in his bitterness, cursed all Christians.

"I renounce them all from this hour," he said with an obscene oath.

"Verily we are God's," said Yusuf, a Moslem slave.

And so commenced a friendship between the two men.

When the Spanish ship was attacked by four Moslem galleys, Sir Oliver and Yusuf escaped from their chains and joined the fight.

"By Allah!" said the Moslem leader to Sir Oliver when all was over, "was there ever such a fighter?"

Urged thereto by Yusuf, Sir Oliver embraced the Moslem faith and, because of his valor, became commander in chief of Asad, the Basha. Men now called him Sakr-el-Bahr, the Hawk of the Sea.

Having sent an English captive home with a letter to Rosamund—telling her of Lionel's treachery and of the document which would prove his innocence—he was disheartened later to hear that Rosamund had thrown his letter, and the document, into the fire—unread.

Five years passed and he again received word from England. He had been presumed dead; Lionel had succeeded him; Lionel was betrothed to Rosamund.

Capturing a Spanish ship on which Jasper Leigh was a slave, Sir Oliver persuaded that man to turn Moslem and to sail the ship to England.

Lionel he found feasting with Rosamund and carrying them both aboard his vessel he set sail for Algiers.

There he found that Fenzileh, the Basha's Italian wife, had poisoned Asad's ear against him.

Sir Oliver asked that the two English slaves be given him.

"Nay," replied the Basha. "Deliver them to the bagnio. They will be sold on the morrow."

"It shall be done," said Sir Oliver. But he gave orders that Rosamund and Lionel should be kept apart from the other slaves until the hour of sale.

Early the next morning the Basha visited the market place. His eyes at once alighted on Rosamund and he ordered his *wazeer* to bid a thousand philips for her.

News of this was brought to Fenzileh and she, fearing that the Basha meant to put Rosamund in her place, bade her *wazeer* to offer fifteen hundred philips for the girl.

Lionel was one of the first to be offered for sale. He was sold to Othmani, Sir Oliver's henchman, for five philips.

A beautiful Spanish girl was sold, after much bargaining, to a Jew. When he sought to carry her off, she killed herself with a dagger.

"She has shown me the way," muttered Rosamund. "Surely God will give me the means."

So comforted she offered no resistance when her time came.

Bidding was now fast and furious, rising quickly to the limit set by the Basha.

"One thousand and one hundred philips!" Fenzileh's wazeer cried triumphantly.

"One thousand six hundred philips!" shouted a newcomer.

It was Sakr-el-Bahr, and there were no other bidders.

"Come!" he said to Rosamund.

She cowered against the wall.

"Cover her face," he bade his Nubian attendants, "and bear her to my house."

That night Sir Oliver, by clever questioning, trapped Lionel into confessing his guilt.

"It was for love of you, Rosamund," Lionel cried.

But she turned on him contemptuously.

"Take him away," growled Sir Oliver. "Chain him to one of the oars of my galley."

But Rosamund's attitude toward Sir Oliver did not soften.

"Are you not," she said, "become a heathen and a robber, a renegade and a pirate? Have you not sacrificed your God to your vengeful lust?"

Came now Fenzileh.

"None saw me enter,' she said and stilled his alarm. "I come about the slave you purchased. Wilt sell her for three thousand philips?"

"Not for thirty thousand. She is not for sale. She shall never usurp thy place beside Asad."

"Fool!" she answered. "Asad will take her whether she is for sale or no."

The stillness of the night was broken by the tramp of marching men

"Asad comes now," she cried. "He must not find me here. He would kill me."

"Take cover in the courtyard until he shall have passed," said Sakr-el-Bahr.

"Thou'lt not relinquish the girl?"

"Be at ease," he answered, and she departed satisfied.

CHAPTER XX

IN THE SIGHT OF ALLAH

SAKR-EL-BAHR stood lost in thought after she had gone. Again he weighed her every word and considered precisely how he should meet Asad, and how refuse him, if the Basha's were indeed such an errand as Fenzileh had heralded.

Thus in silence he remained waiting for Ali or another to summon him to the presence of the Basha. Instead, however, when Ali entered it was actually to announce Asad-ed-Din, who followed immediately upon his heels, having insisted in his impatience upon being conducted straight to the presence of Sakr-el-Bahr.

"The peace of the Prophet upon thee, my son," was the Basha's greeting.

"And upon thee, my lord." Sakr-el-Bahr salaamed. "My house is honored."

With a gesture he dismissed Ali.

"I come to thee a suppliant," said Asad, advancing.

"A suppliant, thou? No need, my lord. I have no will that is not the echo of thine own."

The Basha's questing eyes went beyond him and glowed as they rested upon Rosamund.

"I come in haste," he said, "like any callow lover, guided by my every instinct to the presence of her I seek—this Frankish pearl, this peri-faced captive of thy latest raid. I was away from the Kasbah when that pig Tsamanni returned thither from the

sôk; but when at last I learned that he had failed to purchase her as I commanded I could have wept for very grief. I feared at first that some merchant from the Sus might have bought her and departed; but when I heard—blessed be Allah—that thou wert the buyer I was comforted again. For thou'lt yield her up to me, my son."

He spoke with such confidence that Oliver had a difficulty in choosing the words that were to disillusion him. Therefore he stood in hesitancy a moment.

"I will make good thy loss," Asad ran on. "Thou shalt have the sixteen hundred philips paid and another five hundred to console thee. Say that will content thee; for I boil with impatience."

Sakr-el-Bahr smiled grimly.

"It is an impatience well known to me, my lord, where she is concerned," he answered slowly. "I boiled with it myself for five interminable years. To make an end of it I went a distant perilous voyage to England in a captured Frankish vessel. Thou didst not know, O Asad, else thou wouldst——"

"Bah!" broke in the Basha. "Thou'rt a huckster born. There is none like thee, Sakr-el-Bahr, in any game of wits. Well, well, name thine own price, strike thine own profit out of my impatience and let us have done."

"My lord," he said quietly, "it is not the profit that is in question. She is not for sale."

Asad blinked at him, speechless, and slowly a faint color crept into his sallow cheeks.

"Not—not for sale?" he echoed, faltering in his amazement.

"Not if thou offered me thy Bashalik as the price of her," was the solemn answer.

"Ask anything else that is mine," he continued, "and gladly will I lay it at thy feet in earnest of my loyalty and love for thee."

"But I want nothing else." Asad's tone was impatient, petulant almost. "I want this slave."

"Then," replied Oliver, "I cast myself upon thy mercy and beseech thee to turn thine eyes elsewhere."

Asad scowled upon him.

"Dost thou deny me?" he demanded, throwing back his head.

"Alas!" said Sakr-el-Bahr.

There fell a pause. Darker and darker grew the countenance of Asad, fiercer glowed the eyes he bent upon his lieutenant.

"I see," he said at last, with a calm so oddly at variance with his looks as to be sinister. "I see. It seems that there is more truth in Fenzileh than I suspected. So!"

He considered the corsair a moment with his sunken smoldering eyes.

Then he addressed him in a tone that vibrated with his suppressed anger:

"Bethink thee, Sakr-el-Bahr, of what thou art, of what I have made thee. Bethink thee of all the bounty these hands have lavished on thee. Thou art my own lieutenant, and mayest one day be more. In Algiers there is none above thee save myself. Art, then, so thankless as to deny me the first thing I ask of thee? Truly is it written 'Ungrateful is Man.' "

"Didst thou know," began Sakr-el-Bahr, "all that is involved for me in this——"

"I neither know nor care," Asad cut in. "Whatever it may be it should be as naught when set against my will."

Then he discarded anger for cajolery. He set a hand upon Sakr-el-Bahr's stalwart shoulder.

"Come, my son. I will deal generously with thee out of my love, and I will put thy refusal from my mind."

"Be generous, my lord, to the point of forgetting that ever thou didst ask me for her."

"Dost still refuse?" The voice, honeyed an instant ago, rang harsh again. "Take care how far thou strain my patience. Even as I have raised thee from the dirt, so at a word can I cast thee down again. Even as I broke the shackles that chained thee to the rower's bench, so can I rivet them on thee anew."

"All this canst thou do," Sakr-el-Bahr agreed. "And since, knowing it, I still hold to what is doubly mine—by right of capture and of purchase—thou mayest conceive how mighty are my reasons. Be merciful then, Asad——"

"Must I take her by force in spite of thee?" roared the Basha.

Sakr-el-Bahr stiffened. He threw back his head and looked the Basha squarely in the eyes.

"Whilst I live not even that mayest thou do," he answered.

"Disloyal, mutinous dog! Wilt thou resist me—*me?*"

"It is my prayer that thou'lt not be so

ungenerous and unjust as to compel thy servant to a course so hateful."

Asad sneered.

"Is that thy last word?" he demanded.

"Save only that in all things else I am thy slave, O Asad."

A moment the Basha stood regarding him, his glance baleful. Then deliberately, as one who has taken his resolve, he strode to the door. On the threshold he paused and turned again.

"Wait!" he said, and on that threatening word departed.

Sakr-el-Bahr remained a moment where he had stood during the interview, then with a shrug he turned. He met Rosamund's eyes fixed intently upon him, and invested with a look he could not read. He found himself unable to meet it, and he turned away. It was inevitable that in such a moment the earlier stab of remorse should be repeated. He had overreached himself indeed. Despair settled down upon him, a full consciousness of the horrible thing he had done, which seemed now so irrevocable. In his silent anguish he almost conceived that he had mistaken his feelings for Rosamund; that far from hating her as he had supposed, his love for her had not yet been slain, else surely he should not be tortured now by the thought of her becoming Asad's prey. If he hated her, indeed, as he had supposed, he would have surrendered her and gloated.

And then her voice, crisp and steady, cut into his torture of consideration.

"Why did you deny him?"

He swung round again to face her, amazed, horror-stricken.

"You understood?" he gasped.

"I understood enough," said she. "This *lingua franca* is none so different from French." And again she asked—

"Why did you deny him?"

He paced across to her side and stood looking down at her.

"Do you ask why?"

"Indeed," she said bitterly, "there is scarce the need perhaps. And yet can it be that your lust of vengeance is so insatiable that sooner than willingly forego an ounce of it you will lose your head?"

His face became grim again.

"Of course," he sneered, "it would be so that you'ld interpret me."

"Nay. If I have asked it is because I doubt."

"Do you realize what it can mean to become the prey of Asad-ed-Din?"

She shuddered, and her glance fell from his, yet her voice was composed when she answered him—

"Is it so very much worse than becoming the prey of Oliver-Reis or Sakr-el-Bahr, or whatever they may call you?"

"If you say that it is all one to you there's an end to my opposing him," he answered coldly. "You may go to him. If I resisted him—like a fool, perhaps—it was for no sake of vengeance upon you. It was because the thought of it fills me with horror."

"Then it should fill you with horror of yourself no less," said she.

His answer startled her.

"Perhaps it does," he said scarcely above a murmur. "Perhaps it does."

She flashed him an upward glance and looked as if she would have spoken. But he went on, suddenly passionate, without giving her time to interrupt him.

"O God! It needed this to show me the vileness of the thing I have done. Asad has no such motives as had I. I wanted you that I might punish you. But he—O God!" he groaned, and for a moment put his face to his hands.

She rose slowly, a strange agitation stirring in her, her bosom galloping. But in his overwrought condition he failed to observe it. And then like a ray of hope to illumine his despair came the counsel that Fenzileh had given him, the barrier which she had said that Asad, being a devout Moslem, would never dare to violate.

"There is a way," he cried. "There is the way suggested by Fenzileh at the promptings of her malice."

An instant he hesitated, his eyes averted. Then he made his plunge.

"You must marry me."

It was almost as if he had struck her. She recoiled. Instantly suspicion awoke in her; swiftly it grew to a conviction that he had but sought to trick her by a pretended penitence.

"Marry you!" she echoed.

"Aye," he insisted.

And he set himself to explain to her how if she were his wife she must be sacred and inviolable to all good Moslems, that none could set a finger upon her without doing outrage to the Prophet's holy law, and that whoever might be so disposed Asad was not

of those, since Asad was perfervidly devout.

"Thus only," he ended, "can I place you beyond his reach."

But she was still scornfully reluctant.

"It is too desperate a remedy even for so desperate an ill," said she, and thus drove him into a frenzy of impatience with her.

"You must, I say," he insisted almost angrily. "You must—or else consent to be borne this very night to Asad's harem—and not even as his wife, but as his slave. Oh, you must trust me for your own sake! You must!"

"Trust you?" she cried, and almost laughed in the intensity of her scorn. "Trust you! How can I trust one who is a renegade and worse?"

He controlled himself that he might reason with her, that by cold logic he might conquer her consent.

"You are very unmerciful," he said. "In judging me you leave out of all account the suffering through which I have gone and what yourself contributed to it. Knowing now how falsely I was accused and what other bitter wrongs I suffered, consider that I was one to whom the man and the woman I most loved in all this world had proven false. I had lost faith in man and in God, and if I became a Moslem, a renegade, and a corsair, it was because there was no other gate by which I could escape the unutterable toil of the oar to which I had been chained." He looked at her sadly. "Can you find no excuse for me in all that?"

It moved her a little, for if she maintained a hostile attitude, at least she put aside her scorn.

"No wrongs," she told him, almost with sorrow in her voice, "could justify you in outraging chivalry, in dishonoring your manhood, in abusing your strength to persecute a woman. Whatever the causes that may have led to it, you have fallen too low, sir, to make it possible that I should trust you."

He bowed his head under the rebuke which already he had uttered in his own heart. It was just and most deserved, and since he recognized its justice he found it impossible to resent it.

"I know," he said. "But I am not asking you to trust me to my profit, but to your own. It is for your sake alone that I implore you to do this."

Upon a sudden inspiration he drew the heavy dagger from his girdle and proffered it, hilt foremost.

"If you need an earnest of my good faith," he said, "take this knife with which tonight you attempted to stab yourself. At the first sign that I am false to my trust use it as you will—upon me or upon yourself."

She pondered him in some surprize. Then slowly she put out her hand to take the weapon, as he bade her.

"Are you not afraid," she asked him, "that I shall use it now, and so make an end?"

"I am trusting you," he said, "that in return you may trust me. Further, I am arming you against the worst. For if it comes to choice between death and Asad, I shall approve your choice of death. But let me add that it were foolish to choose death whilst yet there is a chance of life."

"What chance?" she asked, with a faint return of her old scorn. "The chance of life with you?"

"No," he answered firmly. "If you will trust me I swear that I will seek to undo the evil I have done. Listen. At dawn my galeasse sets out upon a raid. I will convey you secretly aboard and find a way to land you in some Christian country—Italy or France—whence you may make your way home again."

"But meanwhile," she reminded him, "I shall have become your wife."

He smiled wistfully.

"Do you still fear a trap? Can naught convince you of my sincerity? A Moslem marriage is not binding upon a Christian, and I shall account it no marriage. It will be no more than a pretense to shelter you until we are away."

"How can I trust your word in that?"

"How?" He paused, baffled; but only for a moment.

"You have the dagger," he answered pregnantly.

She stood considering, her eyes upon the weapon's lividly gleaming blade.

"And this marriage?" she asked. "How is it to take place?"

He explained to her then that by the Moslem law all that was required was a declaration made before a *kadi* or his superior and in the presence of witnesses. He was still at his explanation when from below there came a sound of voices, the tramp of feet, and the flash of torches.

"Here is Asad returning in force," he cried, and his voice trembled. "Do you consent?"

"But the *kadi?*" she inquired, and by the question he knew that she was won to his way of saving her.

"I said the *kadi* or his superior. Asad himself shall be our priest, his followers our witnesses."

"And if he refuses? He will refuse!" she cried, clasping her hands before her in her excitement.

"I shall not ask him. I shall take him by surprize."

"It—it must anger him. He may avenge himself for what he must deem a trick."

"Aye," he answered, wild-eyed. "I have thought of that, too. But it is a risk we must run. If we do not prevail, then——"

"I have the dagger," she cried fearlessly.

"And for me there will be the rope or the sword," he answered. "Be calm! They come!"

But the steps that pattered up the stairs were Ali's. He flung upon the terrace in alarm.

"My lord, my lord! Asad-ed-Din is here in force. He has an armed following with him!"

"There is naught to fear," said Sakr-el-Bahr, with every show of calm. "All will be well."

Asad swept up the stairs and out upon that terrace to confront his rebellious lieutenant. After him came a dozen black-robed janissaries with simitars along which the light of the torches rippled in little runnels as of blood.

The Basha came to a halt before Sakr-el-Bahr, his arms majestically folded, his head thrown back, so that his long white beard jutted forward.

"I am returned," he said, "to employ force where gentleness will not avail. Yet I pray that Allah may have lighted thee to a wise frame of mind."

"He has, indeed, my lord," replied Sakr-el-Bahr.

"The praise to Him!" exclaimed Asad in a voice that rang with joy. "The girl then!" And he held out a hand.

Sakr-el-Bahr stepped back to her and took her hand in his as if to lead her forward. Then he spoke the fateful words.

"In Allah's Holy Name and in His All-seeing eyes, before thee, Asad-ed-Din, and in the presence of these witnesses I take this woman to be my wife by the merciful law of the Prophet of Allah the All-wise, the All-pitying."

The words were out and the thing was done before Asad had realized the corsair's intent. A gasp of dismay escaped him; then his visage grew inflamed, his eyes blazed.

But Sakr-el-Bahr, cool and undaunted before that royal anger, took the scarf that lay about Rosamund's shoulders and raising it flung it over her head, so that her face was covered by it.

"May Allah rot off the hand of him who in contempt of our Lord Mahomet's holy law may dare to unveil that face, and may Allah bless this union and cast into the pit of Gehenna any who shall attempt to dissolve a bond that is tied in His All-seeing eyes."

It was formidable. Too formidable for Asad-ed-Din. Behind him his janissaries like hounds in leash stood eagerly awaiting his command. But none came. He stood there breathing heavily, swaying a little, and turning from red to pale in the battle that was being fought within him between rage and vexation on the one hand and his profound piety on the other. And as he yet hesitated perhaps Sakr-el-Bahr assisted his piety to gain the day.

"Now you will understand why I would not yield her, O mighty Asad," he said. "Thyself hast thou oft and rightly reproached me with my celibacy, reminding me that it is not pleasing in the sight of Allah, that it is unworthy a good Moslem. At last it hath pleased the Prophet to send me such a maid as I could take to wife."

Asad bowed his head.

"What is written is written," he said in the voice of one who admonishes himself. Then he raised his arms aloft.

"Allah is All-knowing," he declared. "His will be done!"

"Amen," said Sakr-el-Bahr very solemnly and with a great surge of thankful prayer to his own long-forgotten God.

The Basha stayed yet a moment, as if he would have spoken. Then abruptly he turned and waved a hand to his janissaries.

"Away!" was all he said to them, and stalked out in their wake.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SIGN

FROM behind her lattice, still breathless from the haste she had made, and with her whelp Marzak at her side, Fenzileh had witnessed that first angry return of the Basha from the house of Sakr-el-Bahr.

She had heard him bawling for Abdul Mohktar, the leader of his janissaries, and she had seen the hasty mustering of a score of these soldiers in the courtyard, where the ruddy light of torches mingled with the white light of the full moon. She had seen them go hurrying away with Asad himself at their head, and she had not known whether to weep or to laugh, whether to fear or to rejoice.

"It is done," Marzak had cried exultantly. "The dog hath withstood him and so destroyed himself. There will be an end to Sakr-el-Bahr this night." And he had added—

"The praise to Allah!"

But from Fenzileh came no response to his prayer of thanksgiving. True, Sakr-el-Bahr must be destroyed, and by a sword that she herself had forged. Yet was it not inevitable that the stroke which laid him low must wound her on its repercussion? That was the question to which now she sought an answer. For all her eagerness to speed the corsair to his doom, she had paused sufficiently to weigh the consequences to herself; she had not overlooked the circumstance that an inevitable result of this must be Asad's appropriation of that Frankish slave-girl. But at the time it had seemed to her that even this price was worth paying to remove Sakr-el-Bahr definitely and finally from her son's path—which shows that, after all, Fenzileh the mother was capable of some self-sacrifice.

She comforted herself now with the reflection that the influence, whose waning she feared might be occasioned by the introduction of a rival into Asad's harem, would no longer be so vitally necessary to herself and Marzak once Sakr-el-Bahr were removed. The rest mattered none so much to her. Yet it mattered something, and the present state of things left her uneasy, her mind a cockpit of emotions. Her grasp could not encompass all her desires at once, it seemed; and whilst she could gloat over the gratification of one, she must bewail the frustration of another. Yet in the main she felt that she should account herself the gainer.

In this state of mind she had waited, scarce heeding the savagely joyous and entirely selfish babblings of her cub, who cared little what might betide his mother as the price of the removal of that hated rival from his path. For him at least there was nothing but profit in the business, no cause for anything but satisfaction; and that satisfaction he voiced with a fine contempt for his mother's feelings.

Anon they witnessed Asad's return. They saw the janissaries come swinging into the courtyard and range themselves there whilst the Basha made his appearance, walking slowly, with steps that dragged a little, his head sunk upon his breast, his hands behind him. They waited to see slaves following him, leading or carrying the girl he had gone to fetch. But they waited in vain, intrigued and uneasy.

They heard the harsh voice in which Asad dismissed his followers, and the clang of the closing gate; and they saw him pacing there alone in the moonlight, ever in that attitude of dejection.

What had happened? Had he killed them both? Had the girl resisted him to such an extent that he had lost all patience and in one of those rages begotten of such resistance made an end of her?

Thus did Fenzileh question herself, and since she could not doubt but that Sakr-el-Bahr was slain, she concluded that the rest must be as she conjectured. Yet the suspense torturing her, she summoned Ayoub and sent him to glean from Abdul Mohktar the tale of what had passed. In his own hatred of Sakr-el-Bahr Ayoub went willingly enough and hoping for the worst. He returned disappointed, with a tale that sowed dismay in Fenzileh and Marzak.

Fenzileh, however, made a swift recovery. After all, it was the best that could have happened. It should not be difficult to transmute that obvious dejection of Asad's into resentment, and to fan this into a rage that must end by consuming Sakr-el-Bahr. And so the thing could be accomplished without jeopardy to her own place at Asad's side. For it was inconceivable that he should now take Rosamund to his harem. Already the fact that she had been paraded with naked face among the Faithful must in itself have been a difficult obstacle to his pride. But it was utterly impossible that he could so subject his self-respect to his desire as to take to himself a woman who had been the wife of his servant.

Fenzileh saw her way very clearly. It was through Asad's devoutness—as she herself had advised, though scarcely expecting such rich results as these—that he had been thwarted by Sakr-el-Bahr. That same

devoutness must further be played upon now to do the rest.

Taking up a flimsy silken veil, she went out to him where he now sat on the divan under the awning, along there in the tepid-scented Summer night. She crept to his side with the soft, graceful, questing movements of a cat, and sat there a moment unheeded almost—such was his abstraction—her head resting lightly against his shoulder.

"Lord of my soul," she murmured presently, "thou art sorrowing."

Her voice was in itself a soft and soothing caress.

He started, and she caught the gleam of his eyes turned suddenly upon her.

"Who told thee so?" he asked suspiciously.

"My heart," she answered, her voice melodious as a viol.

"Can sorrow burden thine and mine go light?" she wooed him. "Is happiness possible to me when thou art downcast? In there I felt thy melancholy, and thy need of me, and I am come to share thy burden, or to bear it all for thee." Her arms were raised, and her fingers interlocked themselves upon his shoulder.

He looked down at her, and his expression softened. He needed comfort, and never was she more welcome to him.

Gradually and with infinite skill she drew from him the story of what had happened. When she had gathered it she loosed her indignation.

"The dog!" she cried. "The faithless, ungrateful hound! Yet have I warned thee against him, O light of my poor eyes, and thou hast scorned me for the warnings uttered by my love. Now at last thou knowest him, and he shall trouble thee no longer. Thou'lt cast him off, reduce him again to the dust from which thy bounty raised him."

But Asad did not respond. He sat there in a gloomy abstraction, staring straight before him. At last he sighed wearily. He was just, and he had a conscience, as odd a thing as it was awkward in a corsair Basha.

"In what hath befallen," he answered moodily, "there is naught to justify me in casting aside the stoutest soldier of Islam. My duty to Allah will not suffer it."

"Yet his duty to thee suffered him to thwart thee, O my lord," she reminded him very softly.

"In my desires—aye!" he answered, and for a moment his voice quivered with passion. Then he repressed it, and continued more calmly:

"Shall my self-seeking overwhelm my duty to the Faith? Shall the matter of a slave-girl urge me to sacrifice the bravest soldier of Islam, the stoutest champion of the Prophet's law? Shall I bring down upon my head the vengeance of the One by destroying a man who is a scourge of scorpions unto the infidel—and all this that I may gratify my personal anger against him, that I may avenge the thwarting of a petty desire?"

"Dost thou still say, O my life, that Sakr-el-Bahr is the stoutest champion of the Prophet's law?" she asked him softly, yet on a note of amazement.

"It is not I that say it, but his deeds," he answered sullenly.

"I know of one deed no True-Believer could have wrought. If proof were needed of his infidelity he hath now afforded it in taking to himself a Nasrani wife. Is it not written in the Book to be Read, 'Marry not idolatresses?' Is not that the Prophet's law, and hath he not broken it, offending at once against Allah and against thee, O fountain of my soul?"

Asad frowned. Here was truth indeed, something that he had entirely overlooked. Yet justice compelled him still to defend Sakr-el-Bahr, or else perhaps he but reasoned to prove to himself that the case against the corsair was indeed complete.

"He may have sinned in thoughtlessness," he suggested.

At that she cried out in admiration of him.

"What a fount of mercy and forbearance art thou, O father of Marzak! Thou'rt right as in all things. It was no doubt in thoughtlessness that he offended, but would such thoughtlessness be possible in a True-Believer—in one worthy to be dubbed by thee the champion of the Prophet's Holy Law?"

It was a shrewd thrust, that pierced the armor of conscience in which he sought to empanoply himself. He sat very thoughtful, scowling darkly at the inky shadow of the wall which the moon was casting. Suddenly he rose.

"By Allah, thou art right!" he cried. "So that he thwarted me and kept that Frankish woman for himself he cared not how he sinned against the law."

She glided to her knees and coiled her arms about his waist, looking up at him.

"Still art thou ever merciful, ever sparing in adverse judgment. Is that all his fault, O Asad?"

"All?" he questioned, looking down at her. "What more is there?"

"I would there were no more. Yet more there is, to which thy angelic mercy blinds thee. He did worse. Not merely was he reckless of how he sinned against the law, he turned the law to his own base uses and so defiled it."

"How?" he asked quickly, eagerly almost.

"He employed it as a bulwark behind which to shelter himself and her. Knowing that thou, who art the Lion and Defender of the Faith, wouldst bend obediently to what is written in the Book, he married her to place her beyond thy reach."

"The praise to Him who is All-wise and lent me strength to do naught unworthy!" he cried in a great voice, glorifying himself. "I might have slain him to dissolve the impious bond, yet I obeyed what is written."

"Thy forbearance hath given joy to the angels," she answered him, "and yet a man was found so base as to trade upon it and upon thy piety, O Asad!"

He shook off her clasp, and strode away from her a prey to agitation.

She saw him halt, and fling up his arms, as if apostrophizing Heaven, as if asking a question of the stars that twinkled in the wide-flung nimbus of the moon.

Then at last he paced slowly back to her. He was still undecided. There was truth in what she had said; yet he knew and weighed her hatred of Sakr-el-Bahr, knew how it must urge her to put the worst construction upon any act of his, knew her jealousy for Marzak, and so he mistrusted her arguments and mistrusted himself. Also there was his own love of Sakr-el-Bahr that would insist upon a place in the balance of his judgment. His mind was in turmoil.

"Enough," he said almost roughly. "I pray that Allah may send me counsel in the night."

And upon that he stalked past her, up the steps, and so into the house.

She followed him. All night she lay at his feet to be ready at the first peep of dawn to buttress a purpose that she feared was still weak, and whilst he slept fitfully, she slept not at all, but lay wide-eyed and watchful.

AT THE first note of the Mueddin's voice, he leapt from his couch obedient to its summons, and scarce had the last note of it died upon the winds of dawn than he was afoot, beating his hands together to summon slaves and issuing his orders, from which she gathered that he was for the harbor there and then.

"May Allah have inspired thee, O my lord!" she cried. "What is thy resolve?"

"I go to seek a sign," he answered her, and upon that departed, leaving her in a frame of mind that was far from easy.

She summoned Marzak, and bade him accompany his father, breathed swift instructions of what he should do and how do it.

"Thy fate has been placed in thine own hands," she admonished him. "See that thou grip it firmly now."

In the courtyard Marzak found his father in the act of mounting a white mule that had been brought him. He was attended by his wazeer Tsamanni, Biskaine, and some other of his captains. Marzak begged leave to go with him. It was carelessly granted, and they set out, Marzak walking by his father's stirrup, a little in advance of the others. For a while there was silence between father and son, then the latter spoke.

"It is my prayer, O my father, that thou art resolved to depose the faithless Sakr-el-Bahr from the command of this expedition."

Asad considered his son with a somber eye.

"Even now the galeasse should be setting out if the argosy is to be intercepted," he said. "If Sakr-el-Bahr does not command, who shall, in Heaven's name?"

"Try me, O my father," cried Marzak.

Asad smiled with grim wistfulness.

"Art weary of life, O my son, that thou wouldst go to thy death and take the galeasse to destruction?"

"Thou art less than just, O my father," Marzak protested.

"Yet more than kind, O my son," replied Asad, and they went on in silence thereafter, until they came to the mole.

The splendid galeasse was moored alongside, and all about her there was great bustle of preparation for departure. Porters moved up and down the gangway that connected her with the shore, carrying bales of provisions, barrels of water, kegs of gunpowder, and other necessaries for the voyage, and even as Asad and his followers

reached the head of that gangway four negroes were staggering down it under the load of a huge palmetto bale that was slung from staves yoked to their shoulders.

On the poop stood Sakr-el-Bahr with Othmani, Ali, Jasper-Reis, and some other officers. Up and down the gangway paced Larocque and Vigitello, two renegade boatswains, one French and the other Italian, who had sailed with him on every voyage for the past two years. Larocque was superintending the loading of the vessel, bawling his orders for the bestowal of provisions here, of water yonder, and of powder about the mainmast. Vigitello was making a final inspection of the slaves at the oars.

As the palmetto pannier was brought aboard, Larocque shouted to the negroes to set it down by the mainmast. But here Sakr-el-Bahr interfered, bidding them, instead, to bring it up to the stern and place it in the poop-house.

Asad had dismounted, and stood with Marzak at his side at the head of the gangway when the youth finally begged his father himself to take command of this expedition, allowing him to come as his lieutenant and so learn the ways of the sea.

Asad looked at him curiously, but answered nothing. He went aboard, Marzak and the others following him. It was at this moment that Sakr-el-Bahr first became aware of the Basha's presence, and he came instantly forward to do the honors of his galley. If there was a sudden uneasiness in his heart his face was calm and his glance as arrogant and steady as ever.

"May the peace of Allah overshadow thee and thy house, O mighty Asad," was his greeting. "We are on the point of casting off, and I shall sail the more securely for thy blessing."

Asad considered him with eyes of wonder. So much effrontery, so much ease after their last scene together seemed to the Basha a thing incredible, unless, indeed, it were accompanied by a conscience entirely at peace.

"It has been proposed to me that I shall do more than bless this expedition—that I shall command it," he answered, watching Sakr-el-Bahr closely.

He observed the sudden flicker of the corsair's eyes, the only outward sign of his inward dismay.

"Command it?" echoed Sakr-el-Bahr. "'Twas proposed to thee?"

And he laughed lightly as if to dismiss that suggestion.

That laugh was a tactical error. It spurred Asad. He advanced slowly along the vessel's waist-deck to the mainmast—for she was rigged with main and foremasts. There he halted again to look into the face of Sakr-el-Bahr who stepped along beside him.

"Why didst thou laugh?" he questioned shortly.

"Why? At the folly of such a proposal," said Sakr-el-Bahr in haste, too much in haste to seek a diplomatic answer.

Darker grew the Basha's frown.

"Folly?" quoth he. "Wherein lies the folly?"

Sakr-el-Bahr made haste to cover his mistake.

"In the suggestion that such poor quarry as waits us should be worthy thine endeavor, should warrant the Lion of the Faith to unsheathe his mighty claws. Thou," he continued with ringing scorn, "thou, the inspirer of a hundred glorious fights in which whole fleets have been engaged, to take the seas upon so trivial an errand—one galeasse to swoop upon a single galley of Spain! It were unworthy thy great name, beneath the dignity of thy valor!" and by a gesture he contemptuously dismissed the subject.

But Asad continued to ponder him with cold eyes, his face inscrutable.

"Why, here's a change since yesterday!" he said.

"A change, my lord?"

"But yesterday in the market-place thyself didst urge me to join this expedition and to command it," Asad reminded him, speaking with deliberate emphasis. "Thyself invoked the memory of the days that are gone, when simitar in hand we charged side by side aboard the infidel, and thou didst beseech me to engage again beside thee. And now——"

He spread his hands, anger gathered in his eyes.

"Whence this change?" he demanded sternly.

Sakr-el-Bahr hesitated, caught in his own toils. He looked away from Asad a moment; he had a glimpse of the handsome flushed face of Marzak at his father's elbow, of Biskaine, Tsamanni, and the others all staring at him in amazement, and even of some grimy sunburned faces from the rowers' bench on his left that were looking on with dull curiosity.

He smiled, seeming outwardly to remain entirely unruffled.

"Why—it is that I have come to perceive thy reasons for refusing. For the rest, it is as I say—the quarry is not worthy of the hunter."

Marzak uttered a soft, sneering laugh, as if the true reason of the corsair's attitude were quite clear to him. He fancied too, and he was right in this, that Sakr-el-Bahr's odd attitude had accomplished what persuasions addressed to Asad-ed-Din might to the end have failed to accomplish—had afforded him the sign he was come to seek. For it was in that moment that Asad determined to take command himself.

"It almost seems," he said slowly, smiling, "as if thou didst not want me. If so, it is unfortunate; for I have long neglected my duty to my son, and I am resolved at last to repair that error. We accompany thee upon this expedition, Sakr-el-Bahr. Myself I will command it, and Marzak shall be my apprentice in the ways of the sea."

Sakr-el-Bahr said not another word in protest against that proclaimed resolve. He salaamed, and when he spoke there was almost a note of gladness in his voice.

"The praise to Allah, then, since thou'rt determined. It is not for me to urge further the unworthiness of the quarry since I am the gainer by thy resolve."

CHAPTER XXII

THE VOYAGE

HIS resolve being taken, Asad drew Tsamanni aside and spent some moments in talk with him giving him certain instructions for the conduct of affairs ashore during his absence. That done, and the wazeer dismissed, the Basha himself gave the order to cast off, an order which there was no reason to delay, since all was now in readiness.

The gangway was drawn ashore, the boatswain's whistle sounded, and the steersmen leaped to their niches in the stern, grasping the shafts of the great steering oars. A second blast rang out, and down the gangway-deck came Vigitello and two of his mates, all three armed with long whips of bullock-hide, shouting to the slaves to make ready. And then on the note of a third blast of Larocque's whistle the fifty-four poised oars dipped to the water, two hundred and fifty bodies bent as one, and when they heaved themselves upright again the great galeasse shot forward and so set out upon her adventurous voyage. From her mainmast the red flag with its green crescent was unfurled to the breeze, and from the crowded mole, and the beach where a long line of spectators had gathered, there burst a great cry of valediction.

That breeze blowing stiffly from the desert was Lionel's friend that day. Without it his career at the oar might have been short indeed. He was chained, like the rest, stark naked save for a loincloth, in the place nearest the gangway on the first starboard bench abaft the narrow waist-deck, and ere the galeasse had made the short distance between the mole and the island at the end of it, the boatswain's whip had coiled itself about his white shoulders to urge him to better exertion than he was putting forth. He had screamed under the cruel cut, but none had heeded him.

Lest the punishment should be repeated, he had thrown all his weight into the next strokes of the oar, until by the time the Peñon was reached the sweat was running down his body and his heart was thudding against his ribs. It was not possible that it could have lasted, and his main agony lay in that he realized it, and saw himself face to face with horrors inconceivable that must await the exhaustion of his strength. He was not naturally robust, and he had led a soft and pampered life that was very far from equipping him for such a test as this.

But as they reached the Peñon and felt the full vigor of that warm breeze, Sakr-el-Bahr, who by Asad's command remained in charge of the navigation, ordered the unfurling of the enormous lateen sails on main and foremasts. They ballooned out, swelling to the wind, and the galeasse surged forward at a speed that was more than doubled. The order to cease rowing followed, and the slaves were left to return thanks to Heaven for their respite, and to rest in their chains until such time as their sinews should be required again.

The vessel's vast prow, which ended in a steel ram and was armed with a culverin on either quarter, was crowded with lounging corsairs, who took their ease there until the time to engage should be upon them. They leaned on the high bulwarks or squatted in groups, talking, laughing, some

of them tailoring and repairing garments, others burnishing their weapons or their armor, and one swarthy youth there was who thrummed a *gimri* and sang a melancholy Shilha love-song to the delight of a score or so of bloodthirsty ruffians squatting about him in a ring of variegated color.

The gorgeous poop was fitted with a spacious cabin, to which admission was gained by two archways curtained with stout silken tapestries upon whose deep red ground the crescent was wrought in brilliant green. Above the cabin stood the three crescents or stern-lamps, great structures of gilded iron surmounted each by the orb and crescent. As if to continue the cabin forward and increase its size, a green awning was erected from it to shade almost half the poop-deck. Here cushions were thrown, and upon these squatted now Asad-ed-Din with Marzak, whilst Biskaine and some three or four other officers who had escorted him aboard and whom he had retained beside him for that voyage, were lounging upon the gilded balustrade at the poop's forward end, immediately above the rower's benches.

Sakr-el-Bahr alone, a solitary figure, resplendent in caftan and turban that were of cloth of silver, leaned upon the bulwarks of the larboard quarter of the poop-deck, and looked moodily back upon the receding city of Algiers which by now was no more than an agglomeration of white cubes piled up the hillside in the morning sunshine.

Asad watched him silently a while from under his beetling brows, then summoned him. He came at once, and stood respectfully before his prince.

Asad considered him a moment solemnly, whilst a furtive, malicious smile played over the beautiful countenance of his son.

"Think not, Sakr-el-Bahr," he said at length, "that I bear thee resentment for what befell last night or that that happening is the sole cause of my present determination. I had a duty—a long-neglected duty—to Marzak, which at last I have undertaken to perform."

He seemed to excuse himself almost, and Marzak misliked both words and tone. Why, he wondered, must this fierce old man who had made his name a terror throughout Christendom be ever so soft and yielding where that stalwart and arrogant infidel was concerned?

Sakr-el-Bahr bowed solemnly.

"My lord," he said, "it is not for me to question thy resolves or the thoughts that may have led to them. If suffices me to know thy wishes; they are my law."

"Are they so?" said Asad tartly. "Thy deeds will scarce bear out thy protestations."

He sighed.

"Sorely was I wounded yesternight when thy marriage thwarted me and placed that Frankish maid beyond my reach. Yet I respect this marriage of thine, as all Moslems must—for all that in itself it was unlawful. "But there!" He ended with a shrug. "We sail together once again to crush the Spaniard. Let no ill-will on either side o'ercloud the splendor of our task."

"Amen to that, my lord," said Sakr-el-Bahr devoutly. "I almost feared——"

"No more!" the Basha interrupted him. "Thou wert never a man to fear anything, which is why I have loved thee as a son."

But it suited Marzak not at all that the matter should be thus dismissed, that it should conclude upon a note of weakening from his father, upon what indeed amounted to a speech of reconciliation. Before Sakr-el-Bahr could make answer he had cut in to set him a question laden with wicked intent.

"How will thy bride beguile the season of thine absence, O Sakr-el-Bahr?"

"I have lived too little with women to be able to give thee an answer," said the corsair.

Marzak winced before a reply that seemed to reflect upon himself. But he returned to the attack.

"I compassionate thee that art the slave of duty, driven so soon to abandon the delight of her soft arms. Where hast thou bestowed her, O captain?"

"Where should a Moslem bestow his wife but according to the biddings of the Prophet—in the house?"

Marzak sneered.

"Verily, I marvel at thy fortitude in quitting her so soon!"

But Asad caught the sneer, and stared at his son.

"What cause is there to marvel in that a true Moslem should sacrifice his inclinations to the service of the Faith?"

His tone was a rebuke; but it left Marzak undismayed. The youth sprawled gracefully upon his cushions, one leg tucked under him.

"Place no excess of faith in appearances, O my father!" he said.

"No more!" growled the Basha. "Peace to thy tongue, Marzak, and may Allah the All-knowing smile upon our expedition, lending strength to our arms to smite the infidel to whom the fragrance of the garden is forbidden."

To this again Sakr-el-Bahr replied "Amen," but an uneasiness abode in his heart summoned thither by the questions Marzak had set him. Were they idle words calculated to do no more than plague him, and to keep fresh in Asad's mind the memory of Rosamund, or were they based upon some actual knowledge?

HIS fears were to be quickened soon on that same score. He was leaning that afternoon upon the rail idly observing the doling out of the rations to the slaves, when Marzak came to join him.

For some moments he stood silently beside Sakr-el-Bahr watching Vigitello and his men as they passed from bench to bench serving out biscuits and dried dates to the rowers—but sparingly, for oars move sluggishly when stomachs are too well nourished—and giving each to drink a cup of vinegar and water in which floated a few drops of added oil.

Then he pointed to a large palmetto bale that stood on the waist-deck near the mainmast about which the powder barrels were stacked.

"That pannier," he said, "seems to me oddly in the way yonder. Were it not better to bestow it in the hold, where it will cease to be an encumbrance in case of action?"

Sakr-el-Bahr experienced a slight tightening at the heart. He knew that Marzak had heard him command that bale to be borne into the poop-cabin, and that anon he had ordered it to be fetched thence when Asad had announced his intention of sailing with him. He realized that this in itself might be a suspicious circumstance; or, rather, knowing what the bale contained he was too ready to fear suspicion. Nevertheless he turned to Marzak with a smile of some disdain.

"I understood, Marzak, that thou art sailing with us as an apprentice."

"What then?" quoth Marzak.

"Why merely that it might become thee better to be content to observe and learn. Thou'lt soon be telling me how grapnels should be slung, and how an action should be fought."

Then he pointed ahead to what seemed to be no more than a low cloud-bank toward which they were rapidly skimming before that friendly wind.

"Yonder," he said, "are the Balearics. We are making good speed."

Although he said it without any object other than that of turning the conversation, yet the fact itself was sufficiently remarkable to be worth a comment. Whether rowed by her two hundred and fifty slaves or sailed under her enormous spread of canvas there was no swifter vessel upon the Mediterranean than the galeasse of Sakr-el-Bahr. Onward she leaped now with bellying lateens, her well-greased keel slipping through the wind-whipped water at a rate which perhaps could not have been bettered by any ship that sailed.

"If this wind holds we shall be under the Point of Aguila before sunset, which will be something to boast of hereafter," he promised.

Marzak, however, seemed but indifferently interested; his eyes continued awhile to stray toward the palmetto bale by the mainmast. At length, without another word to

Sakr-el-Bahr, he made his way abaft, and flung himself down under the awning, beside his father. Asad sat there in a moody abstraction, already regretting that he should have lent an ear to Fenzileh to the extent of coming upon this voyage, and assured by now that at least there was no cause to mistrust Sakr-el-Bahr. Marzak came to revive that drooping mistrust. But the moment was ill-chosen, and at the first words he uttered on the subject he was growled into silence by his sire.

"Thou dost but voice thine own malice," Asad rebuked him. "And I am proven a fool in that I have permitted the malice of others to urge me in this matter. No more, I say."

Thereupon Marzak fell silent and sulking, his eyes ever following Sakr-el-Bahr, who had descended the three steps from the poop to the gangway and was pacing slowly down between the rowers' benches.

The corsair was supremely ill at ease, as a man must be who has something to conceal, and who begins to fear that he may have been betrayed. Yet who was there could have betrayed him? But three men aboard that vessel knew his secret—Ali, his lieutenant, Jasper, and the Italian Vigitello. And Sakr-el-Bahr would have staked all his possessions that neither Ali nor Vigitello would have betrayed him, whilst he was fairly confident that in his own interests Jasper also must have kept faith. Yet Marzak's allusion to that palmetto bale had filled him with an uneasiness that sent him now in quest of his Italian boatswain whom he trusted above all others.

"Vigitello," said he, "is it possible that I have been betrayed to the Basha?"

Vigitello looked up sharply at the question, then smiled with confidence. They were standing alone by the bulwarks on the waist-deck.

"Touching what we carry yonder?" quoth he, his glance shifting to the bale. "Impossible. If Asad had knowledge he would have betrayed it before we left Algiers, or else he would never have sailed without a stouter bodyguard of his own."

"What need of bodyguard for him?" returned Sakr-el-Bahr. "If it should come to grips between us—as well it may if what I suspect be true—there is no doubt as to the side upon which the corsairs would range themselves."

"Is there not?" quoth Vigitello, a smile upon his swarthy face. "Be not so sure. These men have most of them followed thee into a score of fights. To them thou art the Basha, their natural leader."

"Maybe. But their allegiance belongs to Asad-ed-Din, the exalted of Allah. Did it come to a choice between us their faith would urge them to stand beside him in spite of any past bonds that may have existed between them and me."

"Yet there were some who murmured when thou wert superseded in the command of this expedition," Vigitello informed him. "I doubt not that many would be influenced by their faith, but many would stand by thee against the Grand Sultan himself. "And do not forget," he added, instinctively lowering his voice, "that many of us are renegadoes like myself and thee, who would never know a moment's doubt if it came to a choice of sides. But I hope," he ended in another tone, "there is no such danger here."

"And so do I, in all faith," replied Sakr-el-Bahr with fervor. "Yet I am uneasy, and I must know where I stand if the worst takes place. Go thou amongst the men, Vigitello, and probe their real feelings, gage their humor and endeavor to ascertain upon what numbers I may count if I have to declare war upon Asad or if he declares it upon me. Be cautious."

Vigitello closed one of his black eyes portentously.

"Depend upon it," he said, "I'll bring you word anon."

On that they parted, Vigitello to make his way to the prow and there engage in his investigations, Sakr-el-Bahr slowly to retrace his steps to the poop. But at the first bench abaft the gangway he paused, and looked down at the dejected, white-fleshed slave who sat shackled there. He smiled cruelly, his own anxieties forgotten in the savor of vengeance.

"So you have tasted the whip already," he said in English. "But that is nothing to what is yet to come. You are in luck that there is a wind today. It will not always be so. Soon shall you learn what it was that I endured by your contriving."

Lionel looked up at him with haggard, blood-injected eyes. He wanted to curse his brother, yet was he too overwhelmed by the sense of the fitness of this punishment.

"For myself I care nothing," he replied.

"But you will, sweet brother," was the answer. "You will care for yourself most damnably and pity yourself most poignantly. I speak from experience. 'Tis odds you will not live, and that is my chief regret. I would you had my thews to keep you alive in this floating hell."

"I tell you I care nothing for myself," Lionel insisted. "What have you done with Rosamund?"

"Will it surprize you to learn that I have played the gentleman and married her?" Oliver mocked him.

"Married her?" his brother gasped, blanching at the very thought. "You hound!"

"Why abuse me? Could I have done more?" And with a laugh he sauntered on, leaving Lionel to writhe there with the torment of his half-knowledge.

An hour later, when the cloudy outline of the Balearic Isles had acquired density and color, Sakr-el-Bahr and Vigitello met again on the waist-deck, and they exchanged some few words in passing.

"It is difficult to say exactly," the boatswain murmured, "but from what I gather I think the odds would be very evenly balanced, and it were rash in thee to precipitate a quarrel."

"I am not like to do so," replied Sakr-el-Bahr. "I should not be like to do so in any case. I but desired to know how I stand in case a quarrel should be forced upon me." And he passed on.

Yet his uneasiness was no whit allayed; his difficulties were very far from solved. He had undertaken to carry Rosamund to France or Italy; he had pledged her his word to land her upon one or the other shore, and should he fail, she might even come to conclude that such had never been his real intention. Yet how was he to succeed now, since Asad was aboard the galeasse? Must he be constrained to carry her back to Algiers as secretly as he had brought her thence, and to keep her there until another opportunity of setting her ashore upon a Christian country should present itself? That was clearly impracticable and fraught with too much risk of detection. Indeed, the risk of detection was very imminent now. At any moment her presence in that pannier might be betrayed. He could think of no way in which to redeem his pledged word. He could but wait and hope, trusting to his luck and to some opportunity which it was impossible to foresee.

And so he paced on alone and very lonely, waiting and praying for a miracle.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PANNIER

HE WAS still pacing there when an hour or so before sunset some fifteen hours after setting out—they stood before the entrance of a long bottle-necked cove under the shadow of the cliffs of Aguila Point on the southern coast of the Island of Formentera. He was rendered aware of this and roused from his abstraction by the voice of Asad calling to him from the poop and commanding him to make the cove.

Already the wind was failing them, and it became necessary to take to the oars, as must in any case have happened once they were through the cove's narrow neck in the becalmed lagoon beyond. So Sakr-el-Bahr, in his turn, lifted up his voice, and in answer to his shout came Vigitello and Larocque.

A blast of Vigitello's whistle brought his own men to heel, and they passed rapidly along the benches ordering the rowers to make ready, whilst Jasper and a half-dozen Moslem sailors set about furling the sails that already were beginning to flap in the shifting and intermittent gusts of the expiring wind. Sakr-el-Bahr gave the word to row, and Vigitello blew a second and longer blast. The oars dipped, the slaves strained and the galeasse plowed forward, time being kept by a boatswain's mate who squatted on the waist-deck and beat a tom-tom rhythmically.

Sakr-el-Bahr, standing on the poop-deck, shouted his orders to the steersmen in their niches on either side of the stern, and skilfully the vessel was steered through that narrow passage into the calm lagoon whose depths were crystal clear. Here before coming to rest, Sakr-el-Bahr followed the invariable corsair practise of going about, so as to be ready to leave his moorings and make for the open again at a moment's notice.

She came at last alongside the rocky buttresses of a gentle slope that was utterly deserted by all save a few wild goats browsing near the summit. There were clumps of broom thick with golden flower about the base of the hill. Higher, a few gnarled and

aged olive trees reared their gray heads, from which the rays of the westering sun struck a glint as of silver.

Larocque and a couple of sailors went over the bulwarks on the larboard quarter, dropped lightly to the horizontal shafts of the oars, which were rigidly poised, and walking out upon them gained the rocks and proceeded to make fast the vessel by ropes fore and aft.

Sakr-el-Bahr's next task was to set a watch, and he appointed Larocque, sending him to take his station on the summit of the head whence a wide range of view was to be commanded.

Pacing the poop with Marzak the Basha grew reminiscent of former days when roving the seas as a simple corsair he had used this cove both for purposes of ambush and concealment. There were, he said, few harbors in all the Mediterranean so admirably suited to the corsairs' purpose as this; it was a haven of refuge in case of peril, and an unrivaled lurking-place in which to lie in wait for the prey. He remembered once having lain there with the formidable Dragut-Reis, a fleet of six galleys, their presence entirely unsuspected by the Genoese admiral, Doria, who had passed majestically along with three caravels and seven galleys.

Marzak, pacing beside his father, listened but half-heartedly to these reminiscences. His mind was all upon Sakr-el-Bahr, and his suspicions of that palmetto bale were quickened by the manner in which for the last two hours he had seen the corsair hovering thoughtfully in its neighborhood.

He broke in suddenly upon his father's memories with an expression of what was in his mind.

"The thanks to Allah," he said, "that it is thou who command this expedition, else might this cove's advantages have been neglected."

"Not so," said Asad. "Sakr-el-Bahr knows them as well as I do. He has used this vantage-point aforetime. It was himself who suggested that this would be the very place in which to await this Spanish craft."

"Yet had he sailed alone I doubt if the Spanish argosy had concerned him greatly. There are other matters on his mind, O my father. Observe him yonder, all lost in thought. How many hours of this voyage has he spent thus. He is as a man trapped and desperate. There is some fear rankling in him. Observe him, I say."

"Allah pardon thee," said his father, shaking his old head and sighing over so much impetuosity of judgment. "Must thy imagination be for ever feeding on thy malice? Yet I blame not thee, but thy Sicilian mother, who has fostered this hostility in thee. Did she not hoodwink me into making this unnecessary voyage?"

"I see thou hast forgot last night and the Frankish slave-girl," said his son.

"Nay, then thou seest wrong. I have not forgot it. But neither have I forgot that since Allah hath exalted me to be Basha of Algiers, He looks to me to deal in justice. Come, Marzak, set an end to all this. Perhaps tomorrow thou shalt see him in battle, and after such a sight as that never again wilt thou dare say evil of him. Come, make thy peace with him, and let me see better relations betwixt you hereafter."

And raising his voice he called Sakr-el-Bahr, who immediately turned and came up the gangway. Marzak stood by in a sulky mood, with no notion of doing his father's will by holding out an olive branch to the man who was like to cheat him of his birthright ere all was done. Yet it was he who greeted Sakr-el-Bahr when the corsair set foot upon the poop.

"Does the thought of the coming fight perturb thee, dog of war?" he asked.

"Am I perturbed, pup of peace?" was the crisp answer.

"It seems so. Thine aloofness, thine abstractions——"

"Are signs of perturbation, dost suppose?"

"Of what else?"

Sakr-el-Bahr laughed.

"Thou'lt tell me next that I am afraid. Yet I should counsel thee to wait until thou hast smelt blood and powder, and learned precisely what fear is."

The slight altercation drew the attention of Asad's officers who were idling there. Biskaine and some three others lounged forward to stand behind the Basha, looking on in some amusement, which was shared by him.

"Indeed, indeed," said Asad, laying a hand upon Marzak's shoulder, "his counsel is sound enough. Wait, boy, until thou hast gone beside him aboard the infidel, ere thou judge him easily perturbed."

Petulantly Marzak shook off that gnarled old hand.

"Dost thou, O my father, join with him in taunting me upon my lack of knowledge. My youth is a sufficient answer. But at least," he added prompted by a wicked notion suddenly conceived, "at least you can not taunt me with lack of address with weapons."

"Give him room," said Sakr-el-Bahr, with ironical good-humor, "and he will show us prodigies."

Marzak looked at him with narrowing, gleaming eyes.

"Give me a cross-bow," he retorted, "and I'll show thee how to shoot," was his amazing boast.

"Thou'lt show him?" roared Asad. "Thou'lt show him!" And his laugh rang loud and hearty.

"Go smear the sun's face with clay, boy."

"Reserve thy judgment, O my father," begged Marzak, with frosty dignity.

"Boy, thou'rt mad! Why, Sakr-el-Bahr's quarrel will check a swallow in its flight."

"That is his boast, belike," replied Marzak.

"And what may thine be?" quoth Sakr-el-Bahr. "To hit the Island of Formentera at this distance?"

"Dost dare to sneer at me?" cried Marzak, ruffling.

"What daring would that ask?" wondered Sakr-el-Bahr.

"By Allah, thou shalt learn."

"In all humility I await the lesson."

"And thou shalt have it," was the answer viciously delivered.

Marzak strode to the rail.

"Ho there! Vigitello! A cross-bow for me, and another for Sakr-el-Bahr."

Vigitello sprang to obey him, whilst Asad shook his head and laughed again.

"An it were not against the Prophet's law to make a wager—" he was beginning when Marzak interrupted him.

"Already should I have proposed one."

"So that," said Sakr-el-Bahr, "thy purse would come to match thine head for emptiness."

Marzak looked at him and sneered. Then he snatched from Vigitello's hands one of the cross-bows that he bore and set a shaft to it. And then at last Sakr-el-Bahr was to learn the malice that was at the root of all this odd pretense.

"Look now," said the youth, "there is on that palmetto bale a speck of pitch scarce larger than the pupil of my eye. Thou'lt need to strain thy sight to see it. Observe how my shaft will find it. Canst thou better such a shot?"

HIS eyes, upon Sakr-el-Bahr's face, watching it closely, observed the pallor by which it was suddenly overspread. But the corsair's recovery was almost as swift. He laughed, seeming so entirely careless that Marzak began to doubt whether he had paled indeed or whether his own imagination had led him to suppose it.

"Aye, thou'lt choose invisible marks, and wherever the arrow enters thou'lt say 'twas there! An old trick, O Marzak. Go cozen women with it."

"Then," said Marzak, "we will take instead the slender cord that binds the bale." And he levelled his bow.

But Sakr-el-Bahr's hand closed upon his arm in an easy yet paralyzing grip.

"Wait," he said. "Thou'lt choose another mark for several reasons. For one I'll not have thy shaft blundering through my oarsmen and haply killing one of them. Most of them are slaves specially chosen for their brawn, and I cannot spare any. Another reason is that the mark is a foolish one. The distance is not more than ten paces. A childish test, which, maybe, is the reason why thou hast chosen it."

Marzak lowered his bow, and Sakr-el-Bahr released his arm. They looked at each other, the corsair supremely master of himself and smiling easily, no faintest trace of the terror that was in his soul showing upon his swarthy, bearded countenace or in his hard pale eyes.

He pointed up the hillside to the nearest olive tree, a hundred paces distant.

"Yonder," he said, "is a man's mark. Put me a shaft through the long branch of that first olive."

Asad and his officers voiced approval.

"A man's mark, indeed," said the Basha, "so that he be a marksman."

But Marzak shrugged his shoulders with make-believe contempt.

"I knew he would refuse the mark I set," said he. "As for the olive-branch, it is so large a butt that a child could not miss it at this distance."

"If a child could not, then thou shouldst not," said Sakr-el-Bahr, who had so placed

himself that his body was now between Marzak and the palmetto bale.

"Let us see thee hit it, O Marzak."

And as he spoke he raised his cross-bow and scarcely seeming to take aim he loosed his shaft. It flashed away to be checked, quivering, in the branch he had indicated.

A chorus of applause and admiration greeted the shot, and drew the attention of all the crew to what was toward.

Marzak tightened his lips, realizing how completely he had been outwitted. Willy-nilly he must now shoot at that mark. The choice had been taken out of his hands by Sakr-el-Bahr. He never doubted that he must cover himself with ridicule in the performance, and that there he would be constrained to abandon this pretended match.

"By the Koran," said Biskaine, "thou'lt need all thy skill to equal such a shot, Marzak."

"'Twas not the mark I chose," replied Marzak sullenly.

"Thou wert the challenger, O Marzak," his father reminded him. "Therefore the choice of mark was his. He chose a man's mark and by the beard of Mohammed he showed us a man's shot."

Marzak would have flung the bow from him in that moment, abandoning the method he had chosen to investigate the contents of that suspicious palmetto bale; but he realized that such a course must now cover him with scorn. Slowly he leveled his bow at that distant mark.

"Have a care of the sentinel on the hill-top," Sakr-el-Bahr admonished him, provoking a titter.

Angrily the youth drew the bow. The cord hummed, and the shaft sped to bury itself in the hill's flank a dozen yards from the mark.

Since he was the son of the Basha none dared to laugh outright save his father and Sakr-el-Bahr. But there was no suppressing a titter to express the mockery to which the proven braggart must ever be exposed.

Asad looked at him, smiling almost sadly.

"See now," he said, "what comes of boasting thyself against Sakr-el-Bahr."

"My will was crossed in the matter of a mark," was the bitter answer. "You angered me and made my aim untrue."

Sakr-el-Bahr strode away to the starboard bulwarks, deeming the matter at an end. Marzak observed him.

"Yet at that small mark," he said, "I challenge him again." As he spoke he fitted a second shaft to his bow.

"Behold!" he cried, and took aim.

But swift as thought, Sakr-el-Bahr—heedless now of all consequences—leveled at Marzak the bow which he still held.

"Hold!" he roared. "Loose thy shaft at that bale, and I loose this at thy throat. I never miss!" he added grimly.

There was a startled movement in the ranks of those who stood behind Marzak. In speechless amazement they stared at Sakr-el-Bahr, as he stood there, white-faced, his eyes aflash, his bow drawn taut and ready to launch that death-laden quarrel as he threatened.

Slowly then, smiling with unutterable malice, Marzak lowered his bow. He was satisfied. His true aim was reached. He had drawn his enemy into self-betrayal.

Asad's was the voice that shattered that hush of consternation.

"*Kellamullah!*" he bellowed. "What is this? Art thou mad, too, O Sakr-el-Bahr?"

"Aye, mad indeed," said Marzak; "mad with fear."

And he stepped quickly aside so that the body of Biskaine should shield him from any sudden consequences of his next words.

"Ask him what he keeps in that pannier, O my father."

"Aye, what, in Allah's name?" demanded the Basha, advancing toward his captain.

Sakr-el-Bahr lowered his bow, master of himself again. His composure was beyond all belief.

"I carry in it goods of price, which I'll not see riddled to please a pert boy," he said.

"Goods of price?" echoed Asad, with a snort. "They'll need to be of price indeed that are valued above the life of my son. Let us see these goods of price." And to the men upon the waist-deck he shouted—

"Open me that pannier."

Sakr-el-Bahr sprang forward, and laid a hand upon the Basha's arm.

"Stay, my lord!" he entreated almost fiercely. "Consider that this pannier is my own. That its contents are my property; that none has a right to——"

"Wouldst babble of rights to me, who am thy lord?" blazed the Basha, now in a towering passion. "Open me that pannier I say."

They were quick to his bidding. The ropes were slashed away, and the front of

the pannier fell open on its palmetto hinges. There was a half-repressed chorus of amazement from the men. Sakr-el-Bahr stood frozen in horror of what must follow.

"What is it? What have you found?" demanded Asad.

"In silence the men swung the bale about, and disclosed to the eyes of those upon the poop-deck the face and form of Rosamund Godolphin. Then Sakr-el-Bahr, rousing himself from his trance of horror, reckless of all but her, flung down the gangway to assist her from the pannier, and thrusting aside those who stood about her, took his stand at her side.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DUPE

FOR a little while Asad stood at gaze, speechless in his incredulity. Then to revive the anger that for a moment had been whelmed in astonishment came the reflection that he had been duped by Sakr-el-Bahr, duped by the man he trusted most. He had snarled at Fenzileh and scorned Marzak when they had jointly warned him against his lieutenant; if at times he had been in danger of heeding them, yet sooner or later he had concluded that they but spoke to vent their malice. And yet it was proven now that they had been right in their estimate of this traitor, whilst he himself had been a poor, blind dupe, needing Marzak's wit to tear the bandage from his eyes.

Slowly he went down the gangway, followed by Marzak, Biskaine and the others. At the point where it joined the waist-deck he paused, and his dark old eyes smoldered under his beetling brows.

"So," he snarled. "These are thy goods of price. Thou lying dog, what was thine aim in this?"

Defiantly Sakr-el-Bahr answered him:

"She is my wife. It is my right to take her with me where I go."

He turned to her, and bade her veil her face, and she immediately obeyed him with fingers that shook a little in her agitation.

"None questions thy right to that," said Asad. "But being resolved to take her with thee why not take her openly? Why was she not housed in the poop-house, as becomes the wife of Sakr-el-Bahr? Why smuggle her aboard in a pannier, and keep her there in secret?"

"And why," added Marzak, "didst thou lie to me when I questioned thee upon her whereabouts?—telling me she was left behind in thy house in Algiers?"

"All this I did," replied Sakr-el-Bahr, with a lofty, almost a disdainful, dignity, "because I feared lest I should be prevented from bearing her away with me," and his bold glance beating full upon Asad drew a wave of color into the gaunt old cheeks.

"What could have caused that fear?" he asked. "Shall I tell thee? Because no man sailing upon such a voyage as this would have desired the company of his new-wedded wife. Because no man would take a wife with him upon a raid in which there is peril of life and peril of capture."

"Allah has watched over me his servant in the past," said Sakr-el-Bahr, "and I put my trust in Him."

It was a specious answer. Such words—laying stress upon the victories Allah sent him—had aforetime served to disarm his enemies. But they served not now. Instead, they did but fan the flames of Asad's wrath.

"Blaspheme not," he croaked, and his tall form quivered with rage, his sallow old face grew vulturine. "She was brought thus aboard in secret out of fear that were her presence known thy true purpose too must stand revealed."

"And whatever that true purpose may have been," put in Marzak, "it was not the task entrusted thee of raiding the Spanish treasure-galley."

"'Tis what I mean, my son," Asad agreed. Then with a commanding gesture—"Wilt thou tell me without further lies what thy purpose was?" he asked.

"How?" said Sakr-el-Bahr, and he smiled never so faintly. "Hast thou not said that this purpose was revealed by what I did? Rather, then, I think is it for me to ask thee for some such information. I do assure thee, my lord, that it was no part of my intention to neglect the task entrusted me. But just because I feared lest knowledge of her presence might lead my enemies to suppose what thou art now supposing, and perhaps persuade thee to forget all that I have done for the glory of Islam, I determined to bring her secretly aboard.

"My real aim, since you must know it, was to land her somewhere on the coast of

France whence she might return to her own land, and her own people. That done, I should have set about intercepting the Spanish galley, and never fear but that by Allah's favor I should have succeeded."

"By the horns of *Shaitan*," swore Marzak, thrusting himself forward, "he is the very father and mother of lies. Wilt thou explain this desire to be rid of a wife thou hadst but wed?" he demanded.

"Aye," growled Asad. "Canst answer that?"

"Thou shalt hear the truth," said Sakr-el-Bahr.

"The praise to Allah!" mocked Marzak.

"But I warn you," the corsair continued, "that to you it will seem less easy to believe by much than any falsehood I could invent. Years ago in England where I was born I loved this woman and should have taken her to wife. But there were men and circumstances that defamed me to her so that she would not wed me, and I went forth with hatred of her in my heart. Last night the love of her which I believed to be dead and turned to loathing, proved to be still a living force. Loving her, I came to see that I had used her unworthily, and I urged by a desire above all others to undo the evil I had done."

On that he paused, and after an instant's silence Asad laughed angrily and contemptuously.

"Since when has man expressed his love for a woman by putting her from him?" he asked in a voice of scorn that showed the precise value he set upon such a statement.

"I warned thee it would seem incredible," said Sakr-el-Bahr.

"Is it not plain, O my father, that this marriage of his was no more than a pretense?" cried Marzak.

"As plain as the light of day," replied Asad. "Thy marriage with that woman made an impious mock of the True Faith. It was no marriage. It was a blasphemous pretense, thine only aim to thwart me, abusing my regard for the Prophet's Holy Law, and to set her beyond my reach."

He turned to Vigitello, who stood a little behind Sakr-el-Bahr.

"Bid thy men put me this traitor into irons," he said.

"Heaven hath guided thee to a wise decision, O my father!" cried Marzak, his voice jubilant.

But his was the only jubilant note that was sounded, his the only voice that was raised.

"The decision is more like to guide you both to Heaven," replied Sakr-el-Bahr, undaunted. On the instant he had resolved upon his course.

"Stay!" he said, raising his hand to Vigitello, who indeed, had shown no sign of stirring. He stepped close up to Asad, and what he said did not go beyond those who stood immediately about the Basha and Rosamund, who strained her ears that she might lose no word of it.

"Do not think, Asad," he said, "that I will submit me like a camel to its burden. Consider thy position well. If I but raise my voice to call my sea-hawks to me, only Allah can tell how many will be left to obey thee. Darest thou put this matter to the test?" he asked, his countenance grave and solemn, but entirely fearless, as of a man in whom there is no doubt of the issue as it concerns himself.

Asad's eyes glittered dully, his color faded to a deathly ashen hue.

"Thou infamous traitor—" he began in a thick voice, his body quivering with anger.

"Ah no," Sakr-el-Bahr interrupted him. "Were I a traitor it is what I should have done already, knowing as I do that in any division of our forces, numbers will be heavily on my side. Let then my silence prove my unswerving loyalty, Asad. Let it weigh with thee in considering my conduct, not permit thyself to be swayed by Marzak there who recks nothing so that he vents his petty hatred of me."

"Do not heed him, O my father!" cried Marzak. "It can not be that——"

"Peace!" growled Asad somewhat stricken on a sudden.

And there was peace whilst the Basha stood moodily combing his white beard, his glittering eyes sweeping from Oliver to Rosamund and back again. He was weighing what Sakr-el-Bahr had said. He more than feared that it might be no more than true, and he realized that if he were to provoke a mutiny here he would be putting all to the test, setting all upon a throw in which the dice might well be cogged against him.

If Sakr-el-Bahr prevailed, he would prevail not merely aboard this galley, but throughout Algiers, and Asad would be cast down never to rise again. On the other hand, if he bared his simitar and called upon the faithful to support him, it might

chance that recognizing in him the exalted of Allah to whom their loyalty was due, they would rally to him. He even thought it might be probable. Yet the stake he put upon the board was too vast. The game appalled him, whom nothing yet had appalled, and it scarce needed a muttered caution from Biskaine to determine him to hold his hand.

He looked at Sakr-el-Bahr again, his glance now sullen.

"I will consider thy words," he announced in a voice that was unsteady. "I would not be unjust not steer my course by appearances alone. Allah forbid!"

CHAPTER XXV

SHEIK MAT

UNDER the inquisitive gaping stare of all about them stood Rosamund and Sakr-el-Bahr regarding each other in silence for a little spell after the Basha's departure. The very galley-slaves, stirred from their habitual lethargy by happenings so curious and unusual, craned their sinewy necks to peer at them with a flicker of interest in their dull, weary eyes.

Sakr-el-Bahr's feelings as he considered Rosamund's white face in the fading light were most oddly conflicting. Dismay at what had befallen and some anxious dread of what must follow were leavened by a certain measure of relief.

He realized that in no case could her concealment have continued long. Eleven mortal hours had she spent in the cramped and almost suffocating space of that pannier, in which he had intended to do no more than carry her aboard. The uneasiness which had been occasioned him by the impossibility to deliver her from that close confinement when Asad had announced his resolve to accompany them upon that voyage, had steadily been increasing as hour succeeded hour, and still he found no way to release her from a situation in which sooner or later, when the limits of her endurance were reached, her presence must be betrayed.

This release which he could not have contrived had been contrived for him by the suspicions and malice of Marzak. That was the one grain of consolation in the present peril—to himself, who mattered nothing and to her who mattered all. Adversity had taught him to prize benefits however slight and to confront perils however overwhelming. So he hugged the present slender benefit, and resolutely braced himself to deal with the situation as he found it, taking the fullest advantage of the hesitancy which his words had sown in the heart of the Basha.

He hugged, too, the thought that as things had fallen out, from being oppressor and oppressed, Rosamund and he were become fellows in misfortune, sharing now a common peril. He found it a sweet thought to dwell on. Therefore was it that he faintly smiled as he looked into Rosamund's white, strained face.

That smile evoked from her the question that had been burdening her mind.

"What now? What now?" she asked huskily, and held out appealing hands to him.

"Now," said he coolly, "let us be thankful that you are delivered from quarters destructive both to comfort and to dignity. Let me lead you to those I had prepared for you, which you would have occupied long since but for the ill-timed coming of Asad. Come."

And he waved an inviting hand toward the gangway leading to the poop.

She shrank back at that, for there on the poop sat Asad under his awning with Marzak, Biskaine, and his other officers in attendance.

"Come," he repeated, "there is naught to fear so that you keep a bold countenance. For the moment it is *Sheik Mat*—check to the king."

"Naught to fear?" she echoed staring.

"For the moment, naught," he answered firmly. "Against what the future may hold, we must determine. Be sure that fear will not assist our judgment."

She stiffened as if he had charged her unjustly.

"I do not fear," she assured him, and if her face continued white, her eyes grew steady, her voice was resolute.

"Then come," he repeated, and she obeyed him instantly now as if to prove the absence of all fear.

Side by side they passed up the gangway and mounted the steps of the companion to the poop, their approach watched by the group that was in possession of it with glances at once of astonishment and resentment.

Asad's dark, smoldering eyes were all for the girl. They followed her every movement as she approached, and never for a moment left her to turn upon her companion.

Outwardly she bore herself with a proud dignity and an unfaltering composure under that greedy scrutiny; but inwardly she shrank and writhed in a shame and humiliation that she could hardly define. In some measure Oliver shared her feelings, but blent with anger; and urged by them he so placed himself at last that he stood between her and the Basha's regard to screen her from it as he would have screened her from a lethal weapon. Upon the poop he paused, and salaamed to Asad.

"Permit, exalted lord," said he, "that my wife may occupy the quarters I had prepared for her before I knew that thou wouldst honor this enterprise with thy presence."

Curtly, contemptuously Asad waved a consenting hand without vouchsafing to reply in words. Sakr-el-Bahr bowed again, stepped forward, and put aside the heavy red curtain upon which the crescent was wrought in green. From within the cabin the golden light of a lamp came out to merge into the blue-gray twilight, and to set a shimmering radiance about the white-robed figure of Rosamund.

Thus for a moment Asad's fierce, devouring eyes observed her, then she passed within. Sakr-el-Bahr followed and the screening curtain swung back into its place.

The small interior was furnished by a divan spread with silken carpets, a low Moorish table in colored wood mosaics bearing the newly lighted lamp, and a tiny brazier in which aromatic gums that were burning and spreading a sweetly pungent perfume for the fumigation of all True-Believers.

Out of the shadows in the farther corners rose silently Sakr-el-Bahr's two Nubian slaves, Abiad and Zal-Zer, to salaam low before him. But for their turbans and loincloths in spotless white their dusky bodies must have remained invisible, shadowy among the shadows.

The captain issued an order briefly, and from a hanging cupboard the slaves took meat and drink and set it upon the low table—a bowl of chicken cooked in rice and olives and prunes, a dish of bread, a melon, and a clay *amphora* of water. Then at another word from him, each took a naked simitar, and they passed out to place themselves on guard beyond the curtain.

This was not an act in which there was menace or defiance, nor could Asad so interpret it. The acknowledged presence of Sakr-el-Bahr's wife in that poop-house rendered the place the equivalent of his harem, and a man defends his harem as he defends his honor; it is a spot sacred to himself which none may violate, and it is fitting that he take proper precautions against any impious attempt to do so.

Rosamund sank down upon the divan, and sat there with bowed head, her hands folded in her lap. Sakr-el-Bahr stood by in silence for a long moment contemplating her.

"Eat," he bade her at last. "You will need strength and courage, and neither is possible to a fasting body."

She shook her head. Despite her long fast, food was repellent. Anxiety was thrusting her heart up into her throat to choke her.

"I can not eat," she answered him. "To what end? Strength and courage can not avail me now."

"Never believe that," he said. "I have undertaken to deliver you alive from the perils into which I have brought you, and I shall keep my word."

So resolute was his tone that she looked up at him, and found his bearing equally resolute and confident.

"Surely," she cried, "all chance of escape is lost to me."

"Never count it lost whilst I am living," he replied.

She considered him a moment, and there was the faintest smile on her lips.

"Do you think that you will live long now?" she asked him.

"Just as long as God pleases," he replied quite coolly. "What is written is written. So that I live long enough to deliver you, then—why, then, faith I shall have lived long enough."

Her head sank. She clasped and unclasped the hands in her lap. She shivered slightly.

"I think we are both doomed," she said in a dull voice. "For if you die, I have your dagger still, remember. I shall not survive you."

He took a sudden step forward, his eyes gleaming, a faint flush glowing through the tan of his cheeks. Then he checked. Fool!

How could he so have misread her meaning even for a moment? Were not its exact limits abundantly plain, even without the words which she added a moment later.

"God will forgive me if I am driven to it—if I choose the easier way of honor; for honor, sir," she added clearly for his benefit, "is ever the easier way, believe me."

"I know," he replied contritely. "I would to God I had followed it."

He paused there, as if hoping that his expression of penitence might evoke some answer from her, might spur her to vouchsafe him some word of forgiveness. Seeing that she continued, mute and absorbed, he sighed heavily, and turned to other matters.

"Here you will find all that you can require," he said. "Should you lack aught you have but to beat your hands together, one or the other of my slaves will come to you. If you address them in French they will understand you. I would I could have brought a woman to minister to you, but that was impossible, as you'll perceive."

He stepped to the entrance.

"You are leaving me?" she questioned him in sudden alarm.

"Naturally. But be sure that I shall be very near at hand. And meanwhile be no less sure that you have no cause for immediate fear. At least, matters are no worse than when you were in the pannier. Indeed, much better, for some measure of ease and comfort is now possible to you. So be of good heart; eat and rest. God guard you! I shall return soon after sunrise."

Outside on the poop-deck he found Asad alone now with Marzak under the awning. Night had fallen, the great crescent lanterns on the stern rail were alight and cast a lurid glow along the vessel's length, picking out the shadowy forms and gleaming faintly on the naked backs of the slaves in their serried ranks along the benches, many of them bowed already in attitudes of uneasy slumber. Another lantern swung from the mainmast, and yet another from the poop-rail for the Basha's convenience. Overhead the clustering stars glittered in a cloudless sky of deepest purple. The wind had fallen entirely, and the world was wrapped in stillness broken only by the faint rustling break of waves upon the beach at the cove's end.

Sakr-el-Bahr crossed to Asad's side, and begged for a word alone with him.

"I am alone," said the Basha curtly.

"Marzak is nothing, then," said Sakr-el-Bahr. "I have long suspected it."

Marzak showed his teeth and growled inarticulately, whilst the Basha, taken aback by the ease reflected in the captain's careless, mocking words, could but quote a line of the Koran with which Fenzileh of late had often nauseated him.

"A man's son is the partner of his soul. I have no secrets from Marzak. Speak, then, before him, or else be silent and depart."

"He may be the partner of thy soul, Asad," replied the corsair with his bold mockery, "but I give thanks to Allah he is not the partner of mine. And what I have to say in some sense concerns my soul."

"I thank thee," cut in Marzak, "for the justice of thy words. To be the partner of thy soul were to be an infidel unbelieving dog."

"Thy tongue, O Marzak, is like thine archery," said Sakr-el-Bahr.

"Aye—in that it pierces treachery," was the swift retort.

"Nay—in that it aims at what it can not hit. Now, Allah, pardon me! Shall I grow angry at such words as thine? Hath not the One proven full oft that he who calls me infidel dog is a liar predestined to the Pit? Are such victories as mine over the fleets of the unbelievers vouchsafed by Allah to an infidel? Foolish blasphemer, teach thy tongue better ways lest the All-wise strike thee dumb."

"Peace!" growled Asad. "Thine arrogance is out of season."

"Happy so," said Sakr-el-Bahr, with a laugh. "And my good sense, too, it seems. Since thou wilt retain beside thee this partner of thy soul, I must speak before him. Have I thy leave to sit?"

Lest such leave should be denied him he dropped forthwith to the vacant place beside Asad and tucked his legs under him.

"Lord," he said, "there is a rift dividing us who should be united for the glory of Islam."

"It is of thy making, Sakr-el-Bahr," was the sullen answer, "and it is for thee to mend it."

"To that end do I desire thine ear. The cause of this rift is yonder."

And he jerked his thumb backward over his shoulder toward the poop-house.

"If we remove that cause, of a surety the rift itself will vanish, and all will be well again between us."

He knew that never could all be well again between him and Asad. He knew that by virtue of his act of defiance he was irrevocably doomed, that Asad having feared him once, having dreaded his power to stand successfully against his face and overbear his will, would see to it that he never dreaded it again. He knew that if he returned to Algiers there would be a speedy end to him. His only chance of safety lay, indeed, in stirring up mutiny upon the spot and striking swiftly, venturing all upon that desperate throw. And he knew that this was precisely what Asad had cause to fear. Out of this assurance had he conceived his present plan, deeming that if he offered to heal the breach, Asad might pretend to consent so as to weather his present danger, making doubly sure of his vengeance by waiting until they should be home again.

Asad's gleaming eyes considered him in silence for a moment.

"How remove that cause?" he asked. "Wilt thou atone for the mockery of thy marriage, pronounce her divorced and relinquish her?"

"That were not to remove her," replied Sakr-el-Bahr. "Consider well, Asad, what is thy duty to the Faith. Consider that upon our unity depends the glory of Islam. Were it not sinful, then, to suffer the intrusion of aught that may mar such unity? Nay, nay, what I propose is that I should be permitted—assisted even—to bear out the project I had formed, as already I have frankly made confession. Let us put to sea again at dawn—or this very night if thou wilt—make for the coast of France, and there set her ashore that she may go back to her own people and we be rid of her disturbing presence. Then we will return—there is time and to spare—and here or elsewhere lurk in wait for this Spanish argosy, seize the booty and sail home in amity to Algiers, this incident, this little cloud in the splendor of our comradeship, behind us and forgotten as if it had never been. Wilt thou, Asad—for the glory of the Prophet's Law?"

THE bait was cunningly presented, so cunningly that not for a moment did Asad or even the malicious Marzak suspect it to be just a bait and no more. It was his own life, become a menace to Asad, that Sakr-el-Bahr was offering him in exchange for the life and liberty of that Frankish slave-girl, but offering it as if unconscious that he did so.

Asad considered, temptation gripping him. Prudence urged him to accept, so that affecting to heal the dangerous breach that now existed he might carry Sakr-el-Bahr back to Algiers, there, beyond the aid of any friendly mutineers, to have him strangled. It was the course to adopt in such a situation, the wise and sober course by which to ensure the overthrow of one who from an obedient and submissive lieutenant had suddenly shown that it was possible for him to become a serious and dangerous rival.

Sakr-el-Bahr watched the Basha's averted gleaming eyes under their furrowed, thoughtful brows, he saw Marzak's face white, tense and eager in his anxiety that his father should consent. And since his father continued silent, Marzak, unable longer to contain himself, broke into speech.

"He is wise, O my father!" was his crafty appeal. "The glory of Islam above all else! Let him have his way in this, and let the infidel woman go. Thus shall all be well between us and Sakr-el-Bahr!"

He laid such a stress upon these words that it was obvious he desired them to convey a second meaning.

Asad heard and understood that Marzak, too, perceived what was here to do; tighter upon him became temptation's grip; but tighter, too, became the grip of a temptation of another sort. Before his fierce eyes there arose a vision of a tall, stately maiden with softly rounded bosom, a vision so white and lovely that it enslaved him. And so he found himself torn two ways at once. On the one hand, if he relinquished the woman, he could make sure of his vengeance upon Sakr-el-Bahr, could make sure of removing that rebel from his path. On the other hand, if he determined to hold fast to his desires and to be ruled by them, he must be prepared to risk a mutiny aboard the galeasse, prepared for battle and perhaps for defeat. It was a stake such as no sane Basha would have consented to set upon the board. But since his eyes had again rested upon Rosamund, Asad was no longer sane. His thwarted desires of yesterday were the despots of his wits.

He leaned forward now, looking deep into the eyes of Sakr-el-Bahr.

"Since for thyself thou dost not want her, why dost thou thwart me?" he asked, and his voice trembled with suppressed passion.

"So long as I deemed thee honest in taking her to wife I respected that bond as became a good Moslem; but since 'tis manifest that it was no more than a pretense, a mockery to serve some purpose hostile to myself, a desecration of the Prophet's Holy Law, I, before whom this blasphemous marriage was performed, do pronounce it to be no marriage. There is no need for thee to divorce her. She is no longer thine. She is for any Moslem who can take her."

Sakr-el-Bahr laughed unpleasantly.

"Such a Moslem," he announced, "will be nearer my sword than the Paradise of Mahomet."

And on the words he stood up, as if in token of his readiness.

Asad rose with him in a bound of a vigor such as might scarce have been looked for in a man of his years.

"Dost threaten?" he cried, his eyes aflash.

"Threaten?" sneered Sakr-el-Bahr. "I prophesy."

And on that he turned, and stalked away down the gangway to the vessel's waist. There was no purpose in his going other than his perceiving that here argument were worse than useless, and that the wiser course were to withdraw at once, avoiding it and allowing his veiled threat to work upon the Basha's mind.

Quivering with rage Asad watched his departure. On the point of commanding him to return, he checked, fearing lest in his present mood Sakr-el-Bahr should flout his authority and under the eyes of all refuse him the obedience due. He knew that it is not good to command where we are not sure of being obeyed or of being able to enforce obedience, that an authority once successfully flouted is in itself half-shattered.

Whilst still he hesitated, Marzak, who had also risen, caught him by the arm and poured into his ear hot, urgent arguments enjoining him to yield to Sakr-el-Bahr's demand.

"It is the sure way," he cried insistently. "Shall all be jeopardized for the sake of that whey-faced daughter of perdition? In the name of *Shaitan*, let us be rid of her; set her ashore as he demands, as the price of peace between us and him, and in the security of that peace let him be strangled when we come again to our moorings in Algiers. It is the sure way—the sure way!"

Asad turned at last to look into that handsome eager face. For a moment he was at a loss; then he had recourse to sophistry.

"Am I a coward that I should refuse all ways but sure ones?" he demanded in a withering tone. "Or art thou a coward who can counsel none other?"

"My anxiety is all for thee, O my father," Marzak defended himself indignantly. "I doubt if it be safe to sleep, lest he should stir up mutiny in the night."

"Have no fear," replied Asad. "Myself I have set the watch, and the officers are all trustworthy. Biskaine is even now in the forecastle taking the feeling of the men. Soon we shall know precisely where we stand."

"In thy place I would make sure. I would set a term to this danger of mutiny. I would accede to his demands concerning the woman, and settle afterward with himself."

"Abandon that Frankish pearl?" quoth Asad. Slowly he shook his head.

"Nay, nay! She is a garden that shall yield me roses. Together we shall yet taste the sweet sherbet of Kansar, and she shall thank me for having led her into Paradise. Abandon that rosy-limbed loveliness!"

He laughed softly on a note of exaltation, whilst in the gloom Marzak frowned, thinking of Fenzileh.

"She is an infidel," his son sternly reminded him, "so forbidden thee by the Prophet. Wilt thou be as blind to that as to thine own peril?"

Then his voice gathering vehemence and scorn as he proceeded:

"She has gone naked of face through the streets of Algiers; she has been gaped at by the rabble in the *sôk;* this loveliness of hers has been deflowered by the greedy gaze of Jew and Moor and Turk; galley-slaves and negroes have feasted their eyes upon her unveiled beauty; one of thy captains hath owned her his wife." He laughed.

"By Allah, I do not know thee, O my father! Is this the woman thou wouldst take for thine own? This the woman for whose possession thou wouldst jeopardize thy life and perhaps the very Bashalik itself!"

Asad clenched his hands until the nails bit into his flesh. Every word his son had uttered had been as a lash to his soul. The truth of it was not to be contested. He was humiliated and shamed. Yet neither was he conquered of his madness, nor diverted from his course. Before he could make

answer, the tall martial figure of Biskaine came up the companion.

"Well?" the Basha greeted him eagerly, thankful for this chance to turn the subject.

Biskaine was downcast. His news was to be read in his countenance.

"The task appointed me was difficult," said he. "I have done my best. Yet I could scarce go about it in such a fashion as to draw definite conclusions. But this I know, my lord, that he will be reckless indeed if he dares to take up arms against thee and challenge thine authority. So much at least I am permitted to conclude."

"No more than that?" asked Asad. "And if I were to take up arms against him, and to seek to settle this matter out of hand?"

Biskaine paused a moment ere replying.

"I can not think but that Allah would vouchsafe thee victory," he said.

But his words did not delude the Basha. He recognized them to be no more than those which respect for him dictated to his officer.

"Yet," continued Biskaine, "I should judge thee reckless too, my lord, as reckless as I should judge him in the like circumstances."

"I see," said Asad. "The matter stands so balanced that neither of us dare put it to the test."

"Thou hast said it."

"Then is thy course plain to thee!" cried Marzak, eager to renew his arguments. "Accept his terms, and——"

But Asad broke in impatiently.

"Everything in its own hour and each hour is written. I will consider what to do."

Below on the waist-deck Sakr-el-Bahr was pacing with Vigitello, and Vigitello's words to him were of a tenor identical almost with those of Biskaine to the Basha.

"I scarce can judge," said the Italian renegade. "But I do think that it were not wise for either thou or Asad to take the first step against the other."

"Are matters, then, so equal between us?"

"Numbers, I fear," replied Vigitello, "would be in favor of Asad. No truly devout Moslem will stand against the Basha, the representative of the Sublime Portal, to whom loyalty is a question of religion. Yet they are accustomed to obey thee, to leap at thy command, and so Asad himself were rash to put it to the test."

"Aye—a sound argument," said Sakr-el-Bahr. "It is as I had thought."

Upon that he quitted Vigitello, and slowly, thoughtfully, returned to the poop-deck. It was his hope—his only hope now—that Asad might accept the proposal he had made him. As the price of it he was fully prepared for the sacrifice of his own life, which it must entail. But it was not for him to approach Asad again; to do so would be to argue doubt and anxiety and so to court refusal. He must possess his soul in what patience he could. If Asad persisted in his refusal undeterred by any fear of mutiny, then Sakr-el-Bahr knew not what course remained to him to accomplish Rosamund's deliverance.

Proceed to stir up mutiny he dared not. It was too desperate a throw. In his own view it offered him no slightest chance of success, and did it fail then indeed all would be lost, himself destroyed, and Rosamund at the mercy of Asad. He nourished the faint hope that in that coming fight—if indeed the Spaniards did show fight—some chance might perhaps present itself, some unexpected way out of the present situation.

He spent the night under the stars, stretched across the threshold of the curtained entrance to the poop-house, making thus a barrier of his body whilst he slept, and himself watched over in his turn by his faithful Nubians, who remained on guard. He awakened when the first violet tints of dawn were in the east, and quietly dismissing the weary slaves to their rest, he kept watch alone thereafter. Under the awning on the starboard quarter slept the Basha and his son, and near them Biskaine was snoring.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE MUTINEERS

LATER that morning some time after the galeasse had awakened to life and such languid movement as might be looked for in a waiting crew, Sakr-el-Bahr went to visit Rosamund.

He found her brightened and refreshed by sleep, and he brought her reassuring messages that all was well, encouraging her with hopes which he himself was very far from entertaining. If her reception of him was not expressedly friendly, neither was it unfriendly. She listened to the hopes he expressed of yet effecting her safe deliverance, and whilst she had no thanks to offer him

for the efforts he was to exert on her behalf—accepting them as her absolute due, as the inadequate liquidation of the debt that lay between them—yet there was now none of that aloofness amounting almost to scorn which hitherto had marked her bearing toward him.

He came again some hours later in the afternoon, when his Nubians were once more at their post. He had no news to bring her beyond the fact that their sentinel on the heights reported a sail to westward, beating up toward the island before the very gentle breeze that was blowing. But the argosy they awaited was not yet in sight, and he confessed that certain proposals which he had made to Asad for landing her in France had been rejected. Still she need have no fear, he added promptly, seeing the sudden alarm that quickened in her eyes. A way would present itself. He was watching, and would miss no chance.

"And if no chance should offer?" she asked him.

"Why then I will make one," he answered, lightly almost. "I have been making them all my life, and it would be odd if I should have lost the trick of it on my life's most important occasion."

This mention of his life led to a question from her.

"How did you contrive the chance that has made you what you are? I mean," she added quickly, as if fearing that the purport of that question might be misunderstood, "that has enabled you to become a corsair captain."

"'Tis a long story, that," he said. "I should weary you in the telling of it."

"No," she replied, and shook her head, her clear eyes solemnly meeting his clouded glance. "You would not weary me. Chances may be few in which to learn it."

"And you would learn it?" quoth he, and added, "That you may judge me?"

"Perhaps," she said, and her eyes fell.

With bowed head he paced the length of the small chamber, and back again. His desire was to do her will in this, which is natural enough—for if it is true that who knows all must perforce forgive all, never could it have been truer than in the case of Sir Oliver Tressilian.

So he told his tale. Pacing there he related it at length, from the days when he had toiled at an oar on one of the galleys of Spain down to that hour in which aboard the Spanish vessel taken under Cape Spartel he had determined upon that voyage to England to present his reckoning to his brother. He told his story simply and without too great a wealth of detail, yet he omitted nothing of all that had gone to place him where he stood. And she listening was so profoundly moved that at one moment her eyes glistened with tears which she sought vainly to repress. Yet he, pacing there, absorbed, with head bowed and eyes that never once strayed in her direction, saw none of this.

"And so," he said, when at last that odd narrative had reached its end, "you know what the forces were that drove me. Another stronger than myself might have resisted and preferred to suffer death. But I was not strong enough. Or perhaps it is that stronger than myself was my desire to punish, to vent the bitter hatred into which my erstwhile love for Lionel was turned."

"And for me, too—as you have told me," she added.

"Not so," he corrected her. "I hated you for your unfaith, and most of all for your having burned unread the letters that I sent you by the hand of Pitt. In doing that you contributed to the wrongs I was enduring, you destroyed my one chance of establishing my innocence and seeking rehabilitation, you doomed me for life to the ways which I was treading. But I did not then know what ample cause you had to believe me what I seemed. I did not know that it was believed I had fled. Therefore I forgive you freely a deed for which at one time I confess that I hated you, and which spurred me to bear you off when I found you under my hand that night at Arwenack when I went for Lionel."

"You mean that it was no part of your intent to have done so?" she asked him.

"To carry you off together with him?" he asked. "I swear to God I had not premeditated that. Indeed, it was done because not premeditated, for had I considered it, I do think I should have been proof against any such temptation. It assailed me suddenly when I beheld you there with Lionel, and I succumbed to it. Knowing what I now know I am punished enough, I think."

"I think I can understand," she murmured gently, as if to comfort him, for quick pain had trembled in his voice.

He tossed back his turbaned head.

"To understand is something," said he. "It is half-way at least to forgiveness. But ere forgiveness can be accepted the evil done must be atoned for to the full."

"If possible," said she.

"It must be made possible," he answered her with heat, and on that he checked abruptly, arrested by a sound of shouting from without.

He recognized the voice of Larocque, who at dawn had returned to his sentinel's post on the summit of the headland, relieving the man who had replaced him there during the night.

"My lord! My lord!" was the cry in a voice shaken by excitement, and succeeded by a shouting chorus from the crew.

Sakr-el-Bahr turned swiftly to the entrance, whisked aside the curtain, and stepped out upon the poop. Larocque was in the very act of clambering over the bulwarks amidships, toward the waist-deck where Asad awaited him in company with Marzak and the trusty Biskaine. The prow, on which the corsairs had lounged at ease since yesterday, was now a seething mob of inquisitive babbling men, crowding to the rail and even down the gangway in their eagerness to learn what news it was that brought the sentinel aboard in such excited haste.

From where he stood Sakr-el-Bahr heard Larocque's loud announcement.

"The ship I sighted at dawn, my lord!"

"Well?" barked Asad.

"She is here—in the bay beneath that headland. She has just dropped anchor."

"No need for alarm in that," replied the Basha at once. "Since she has anchored there it is plain that she has no suspicion of our presence. What manner of ship is she?"

"A tall galleon of twenty guns, flying the flag of England."

"Of England!" cried Asad in surprize. "She'll need be a stout vessel to hazard herself in Spanish waters."

Sakr-el-Bahr advanced to the rail.

"Does she display no further device?" he asked.

Larocque turned at the question.

"Aye," he answered, "a narrow blue pennant on her mizzen is charged with a white bird—a stork, I think."

"A stork?" echoed Sakr-el-Bahr thoughtfully.

He could call to mind no such English blazon, nor did it seem to him that it could possibly be English. He caught the sound of a quickly indrawn breath behind him. He turned to find Rosamund standing in the entrance, not more than half concealed by the curtain. Her face showed white and eager, her eyes were wide.

"What is't?" he asked her shortly.

"A stork, he thinks," she said as if that were answer enough.

"I'faith an unlikely bird," he commented. "The fellow is mistook."

"Yet not by much, Sir Oliver."

"How? Not by much?"

Intrigued by something in her tone and glance, he stepped quickly up to her, whilst below the chatter of voices increased.

"That which he takes to be a stork is a heron—a white heron, and white is argent in heraldry, is't not?"

"It is. What then?"

"D'ye not see? That ship will be the *Silver Heron*."

He looked at her.

"'Slife!" said he, "I reck little whether it be the silver heron or the golden grasshopper. What odds?"

"It is Sir John's ship—Sir John Killigrew's," she explained. "She was all but ready to sail when—when you came to Arwenack. He was for the Indies. Instead—don't you see?—out of love for me he will have come after me upon a forlorn hope of overtaking you ere you could make Barbary."

"God's light!" said Sakr-el-Bahr, and fell to musing.

Then he raised his head and laughed.

"Faith, he's some days late for that!"

But the jest evoked no response from her. She continued to stare at him with those eager yet timid eyes.

"And yet," he continued, "he comes opportunely enough. If the breeze that has fetched him is faint, yet surely it blows from Heaven."

"Were it—" she paused, faltering a moment. Then—

"Were it possible to communicate with him?"

"Possible—aye," he answered. "Though we must needs devise the means, and that will prove none so easy."

"And you would do it?" she inquired, an undercurrent of wonder in her question, some reflection of it in her face.

"Why readily," he answered, "since no other way presents itself. No doubt 'twill cost some lives," he added, "but then——"

And he shrugged to complete the sentence.

"Ah, no, no! Not at that price!" she protested.

And how was he to know that all the price she was thinking of was his own life, which she conceived would be forfeited if the assistance of the *Silver Heron* were invoked?

Before he could return her any answer his attention was diverted. A sullen threatening note had crept into the babble of the crew, and suddenly one or two voices were raised to demand insistently that Asad should put to sea at once and remove his vessel from a neighborhood become so dangerous. Now, the fault of this was Marzak's. His was the voice that first had uttered that timid suggestion, and the infection of his panic had spread instantly through the corsair ranks.

Asad, drawn to the full of his gaunt height, turned upon them the eyes that had quelled greater clamors, and raised the voice which in its day had hurled a hundred men straight into the jaws of death without a protest.

"Silence!" he commanded. "I am your lord and need no counselors save Allah. When I consider the time come, I will give the word to row, but not before. Back to your quarters, then, and peace!"

He disdained to argue with them, to show them what sound reasons there were for remaining in this secret cove and against putting forth into the open. Enough for them that such should be his will. Not for them to question his wisdom and his decisions.

But Asad-ed-Din had lain overlong in Algiers whilst his fleets under Sakr-el-Bahr and Biskaine had scoured the inland sea. The men were no longer accustomed to the goad of his voice, their confidence in his judgment was not built upon the sound basis of past experience. Never yet had he led into battle the men of this crew and brought them forth again in triumph and enriched by spoil.

So now they set their own judgment against his. To them it seemed a recklessness—as, indeed, Marzak had suggested—to linger here, and his mere announcement of his purpose was far from sufficient to dispel their doubts.

The murmurs swelled, not to be overborne by his fierce presence and scowling brow, and suddenly one of the renegades—secretly prompted by the wily Vigitello—raised a shout for the captain whom they knew and trusted:

"Sakr-el-Bahr! Sakr-el-Bahr! Thou'lt not leave us penned in this cove to perish like rats!"

IT WAS as a spark to a train of powder. A score of voices instantly took up the cry; hands were flung out toward Sakr-el-Bahr, where he stood above them and in full view of all leaning impassive and stern upon the poop-rail, whilst his agile mind weighed the opportunity thus thrust upon him, and considered what profit was to be extracted from it.

Asad fell back a pace in his profound mortification. His face was livid, his eyes glared furiously, his hand flew to the jeweled hilt of his simitar, yet forbore from drawing the blade. Instead, he let loose upon Marzak the venom kindled in his soul by this evidence of how shrunken was his authority.

"Thou fool!" he snarled. "Look on thy craven's work. See what a devil thou hast raised with thy woman's counsels. Thou to command a galley! Thou to become a fighter upon the seas! I would that Allah had stricken me dead ere I begat me such a son as thou!"

Marzak recoiled before the fury of words that he feared might be followed by yet worse. He dared make no answer, offer no excuse; in that moment he scarcely dared breathe.

Meanwhile Rosamund in her eagerness had advanced until she stood at Sakr-el-Bahr's elbow.

"God is helping us!" she said in a voice of fervent gratitude. "This is your opportunity. The men will obey you."

He looked at her, and smiled faintly upon her eagerness.

"Aye, mistress, they will obey me," he said.

But in the few moments that were sped he had taken his resolve. Whilst undoubtedly Asad was right, and the wise course was to lie close in this sheltering cove where the odds of their going unperceived were very heavily in their favor, yet the men's judgment was not altogether at fault. If they were to put to sea, they might by steering an easterly course pass similarly

unperceived, and even should the splash of their oars reach the galleon beyond the headland, yet by the time she had weighed anchor and started in pursuit they would be well away straining every ounce of muscle at the oars, whilst the breeze—a heavy factor in his considerations—was become so feeble that they could laugh at pursuit by a vessel that depended upon wind alone. The only danger, then, was the danger of the galleon's cannon, and that danger was none so great as from experience Sakr-el-Bahr well knew.

Thus was he reluctantly forced to the conclusion that in the main the wiser policy was to support Asad, and since he was full confident of the obedience of the men he consoled himself with the reflection that a moral victory might be in store for him out of which some surer profit might presently be made.

In answer, then, to those who still called upon him, he leaped down the companion and strode along the gangway to the waist-deck to take his stand at the Basha's side. Asad watched his approach with angry misgivings; it was with him a foregone conclusion that, things being as they were, Sakr-el-Bahr would be ranged against him to obtain complete control of these mutineers and to cull the fullest advantage from the situation. Softly and slowly he unsheathed his simitar, and Sakr-el-Bahr seeing this out of the corner of his eye, yet affected not to see, but stood forward to address the men.

"How now?" he thundered wrathfully. "What shall this mean? Are ye all deaf that ye have not heard the commands of your Basha, the exalted of Allah, that ye dare raise your mutinous voices and say what is your will?"

Sudden and utter silence followed that exhortation. Asad listened in relieved amazement; Rosamund caught her breath in sheer dismay.

What could he mean, then? Had he but fooled and duped her? Were his intentions toward her the very opposite to his protestations? She leaned upon the poop-rail straining to catch every syllable of that speech of his in the *lingua franca*, hoping almost that her indifferent knowledge of it had led her into error on the score of what he had said.

She saw him turn with a gesture of angry command upon Larocque, who stood there by the bulwarks, waiting.

"Back to thy post up yonder, and keep watch upon that vessel's movements, reporting them to us. We stir not hence until such be our lord Asad's good pleasure. Away with thee!"

Larocque without a murmur threw a leg over the bulwarks and dropped to the oars, whence he clambered ashore as he had been bidden. And not a single voice was raised in protest.

Sakr-el-Bahr's dark glance swept the ranks of the corsairs crowding the forecastle.

"Because this pet of the harem," he said, immensely daring, indicating Marzak by a contemptuous gesture, "bleats of danger into the ears of men, are ye all to grow timid and foolish as a herd of sheep? By Allah! What are ye? Are ye the fearless sea-hawks that have flown with me, and struck where the talons of my grappling-hooks were flung, or are ye but scavenging crows?"

He was answered by an old rover whom fear had rendered greatly daring.

"We are trapped here as Dragut was trapped at Jerba."

"Thou liest," he answered. "Dragut was not trapped, for Dragut found a way out. And against Dragut there was the whole navy of Genoa, whilst against us there is but one single galleon. By the Koran if she shows fight, have we no teeth? Will it be the first galleon whose decks we have overrun? But if ye prefer a coward's counsel, ye sons of shame, consider that once we take the open sea our discovery will be assured, and Larocque hath told you that she carries twenty guns. I tell you that if we are to be attacked by her, best be attacked at close quarters, and I tell you that if we lie close and snug in here it is long odds that we shall never be attacked at all. That she has no inkling of our presence is proven since she has cast anchor round the headland. And consider that if we fly from a danger that doth not exist, and in our flight are so fortunate as not to render real that danger and to court it, we abandon a rich argosy that shall bring profit to us all.

"But I waste my breath in argument," he ended abruptly. "You have heard the commands of your lord, Asad-ed-Din, and that should be argument enough. No more of this, then."

Without so much as waiting to see them disperse from the rail and return to their lounging attitudes about the forecastle, he turned to Asad.

"It might have been well to hang the dog who spoke of Dragut and Jerba," he said. "But it was never in my nature to be harsh with those who follow me."

Asad from amazement had passed quickly to admiration and a sort of contrition, into which presently there crept a poisonous tinge of jealousy to see Sakr-el-Bahr prevail where he himself alone must utterly have failed. This jealousy spread all-pervadingly, like an oil stain. If he had come to bear ill-will to Sakr-el-Bahr before, that was turned of a sudden into hatred for one in whom he now beheld a usurper of the power and control that should reside in the Basha alone.

Therefore the words of commendation which had been rising to his lips froze there now that Sakr-el-Bahr and he stood face to face. In silence he considered his lieutenant through narrowing evil eyes, whose message none but a fool could have misunderstood.

Sakr-el-Bahr was not a fool, and he did not misunderstand it for a moment. He felt a tightening at the heart, and ill-will sprang to life within him responding to the call of that ill-will.

The conciliatory words he had in mind to speak he now suppressed. To that venomous glance he opposed his ever ready mockery. He turned to Biskaine.

"Withdraw," he curtly bade him, "and take that stout sea-warrior with thee." And he indicated Marzak.

Biskaine turned to the Basha.

"It it thy wish, my lord?" he asked.

Asad nodded in silence, and motioned him away together with the cowed Marzak.

"My lord," said Sakr-el-Bahr, when they were alone, "yesterday I made thee a proposal for the healing of this breach between us, and it was refused. But now had I been the traitor and mutineer thou hast dubbed me I could have taken full advantage of the humor of my corsairs. Had I done that it need no longer have been mine to propose or to sue. Instead it would have been mine to dictate. Since I have given thee such crowning proof of my loyalty, it is my hope and trust that I may be restored to the place I had lost in thy confidence, and that this being so thou wilt accede now to that proposal of mine concerning the Frankish woman yonder."

It was unfortunate perhaps that she should have been standing there unveiled upon the poop within the range of Asad's glance; for the sight of her it may have been that overcame his momentary hesitation and stifled the caution which prompted him to accede.

"It is not for thee, Sakr-el-Bahr," he answered at length, "to make me proposals. To dare it, proves thee far removed indeed from the loyalty thy lips profess. Thou knowest my will concerning her. Continue a barrier in my path at thy peril."

His voice shook with anger.

"Not so loud," said Sakr-el-Bahr, his eyes gleaming with a response of anger. "For should my men overhear these threats of thine I will not answer for what may follow. I oppose thee at my peril, sayest thou? Be it so, then. It is war between us, Asad, since thou hast chosen it. Remember hereafter when the consequences come to overwhelm thee that the choice was thine."

"Thou mutinous dog!" blazed Asad.

Sakr-el-Bahr turned on his heel.

"Pursue the path of an old man's folly," he said over his shoulder, "and see whither it will lead thee."

Upon that he strode away up the gangway to the poop leaving the Basha alone with his anger and some slight fear evoked by that last bold menace. But notwithstanding that he menaced boldly the heart of Sakr-el-Bahr was surcharged with anxiety. He had conceived a plan; but between the conception and its execution he realized that much ill might lie.

"Mistress," he addressed Rosamund, "you are not wise to show yourself so openly."

To his amazement she met him with a hostile glance.

"Not wise?" said she, her countenance scornful. "You mean that I may see more than was intended for me. What game do you play here, sir, that you tell me one thing and show me by your actions that you desire another?"

At once he perceived how she had misread the scene she had witnessed.

"I'll but remind you," he said very gravely, "that once before you did me a wrong by over hasty judgment."

"But then—" she began.

"I do but ask you to save your judgment for the end. If I live I shall deliver you. Meanwhile I beg you keep your cabin."

She looked at him, a prayer for explanation trembling on her lips. But before the calm command of his tone and glance she withdrew beyond the curtain.

TO BE CONCLUDED

FOR WOUNDING RETALIATION

By Nicholas Dyalhis

Author of "Who Keep the Desert Law."

OLD Inez Chachalaka threw a pad made from gunny-sacking across the back of the long-legged, one-eyed, lop-eared burro, swung a cluster of the beautiful grass baskets—in the weaving of which she excelled all other members of her tribe, the Pimas—into place, and with much spryness, considering that she was well past eighty-six, mounting first on a convenient boulder, hopped astride the gray burro and kicked him in the ribs with her bare, bony heels.

She was on her way to the trading-store kept by one Brunson. She was out of coffee and sugar, and since she was now wealthy, thanks to the grateful if lawless Ben Mallock, she saw no reason for stinting herself.

Coming back after her "shopping trip," she suddenly stopped her mount and stared at something lying fairly in the middle of the trail.

For a moment she could scarcely credit the evidence of those two faithful servitors, her eyes.

Inez had a lucky streak that way—she was forever finding something or some one—but a baby—a tired, disconsolate, dirty little Pima child of the same sex as herself, sound asleep, with its absurd thumb stuck in its ridiculous slit of a mouth—at least three miles from anywhere—it was too much for Inez!

Hurriedly dismounting, she approached the sleeping infant. No sooner had she touched it than the coal-black eyes flew open, the mouth followed suit, and from the mite's lungs issued a roar fit to wake the dead.

Inez was appalled! Then with the swift instinct of woman the world over, without stopping to placate the wrathful small one, she picked it up, chuckling delightedly at the soft, yielding feel of the little figure.

Something in the wizened old face evidently reassured the imp, for it ceased its howls as suddenly as it had commenced. In another instant it was chuckling back to the old woman. The *entente cordiale* had been established.

How did she work it? That's a mystery deep and unfathomable.

But if Inez ever undertakes to make love to a full-grown mountain lion, it's a safe bet that inside seven minutes, she'll have him sitting up, rolling over, and playing dead! Some fascinating—Inez!

She tried to pry some information from the little tad. And met with mighty poor luck. Either it didn't know where it came from, or how it got there in the trail, or else with innate cussedness, it didn't propose to tell. And it didn't!

Really, Inez was just as well-satisfied. If she didn't know where it belonged, she couldn't very well take it back.

On the other hand, it wasn't hers. Findings isn't always keepings.

All right then; she would advertise in the *Pima Daily News* Lost and Found column—something like this:

Tearing a small wisp of cloth from the toddler's dress, she tied it to a bush in plain

sight. This read—

"Baby found at this spot."

A stick, one end pointed, the other notched and laid in the trail clearly stated:

"Finder gone this direction. Follow the arrow!"

A shred torn from her own dress and tied about the impromptu arrow would inform any distracted searchers that the "Finder is a woman," thereby relieving any mother with two grains of common sense of needless worry, and giving assurance that the little midget was safe and in good hands, in A-1 condition.

Her advertisement written, Inez started homeward, serenely content with herself and the day's events.

Reaching the *jacal* she opened a can of milk and set about the first duty of the desert-dweller to a guest—that of filling said guest's aching void, *pronto!*

GEORGE TWO-DEERS, with his wife, his wife's sister, Chaska, and his tiny daughter, little Star-gleam, were on an auto tour in that part of the desert country.

George was twenty-two years of age, his wife nineteen, and Chaska was fifteen. The Star-gleam was going on three.

George and his wife were both products of the Indian school in California. Now he was "land-looking," actuated by that universal craving for a home of his own, which is a fixed obsession with all married folks, regardless of race, age or color.

They were camped at a water-hole over a mile from the trail where Inez found the baby.

Something had gone "funny-ways" with the flivver, and Mr. and Mrs. Two-Deers were remarkably busy.

Chaska took the little imp and went for a stroll.

When she was within a couple of hundred yards of the private trail old Inez had worn in her pilgrimages to and from the trading-store the young Star-gleam had snatched at her string of beads.

Naturally, the string broke.

Chaska hurriedly set the baby down and crawled about salvaging the wreckage.

Having recovered the most of them, she commenced re-stringing her precious necklace.

That done—she fell asleep!

Star-gleam became afflicted with "explorer's itch" and started.

After a bit, she got sleepy, and selected the middle of a trail as her temporary boudoir.

And old Inez annexed a baby!

Later, when "dad," "maw," and "auntie" bulged in on the scene, Inez realized that she had four fast friends. Star-gleam was the fastest!

She swore by old Inez and promptly swore in her baby-prattle—at least, the sounds she emitted couldn't be interpreted as anything else—at any one attempting to pry her loose!

The upshot was that the Two-Deers outfit moved camp and took up temporary residence about a hundred yards from the *jacal* of Inez.

Within a week, George had found just what he was looking for.

Any white man would have passed the place up in disgust.

Not so Mr. Two-Deers. To his englamored sight the arid, barren stretch of earth which had taken his eye represented an embryonic paradise.

Wherefore, he stepped on the gas and blew in to interview Kyle, the agent.

Stopping in front of Brunson's trading-store, he left his car and hurried across the street to the agency.

Kyle, after the manner of Indian agents, was anything but cordial. Men of his stamp all too frequently transpose the word "authority" into "Autocracy."

And then people wonder why the agent and the reservation Indians are in a state of perpetual, if thinly-veiled hostility toward each other!

But if Kyle was brusk and overbearing, George was patient and persistent.

Inwardly, Kyle cursed all education—when applied to "The Wards of the Nation." It gave them too clear an insight into their rights and—wrongs.

The interview terminated in Kyle giving his promise to run out in his car to the *jacal* of Inez, meet George there, and look over the desired location.

And, for a wonder, he did, in less than a week after George made application for an allotment.

Kyle had his short-comings as well as his long-goings. A pretty face—of the other sex—and he immediately qualified for the office of target for the "fool-killer."

His first sight of Chaska took his breath. She *was* a howling little beauty for a fact.

Still, Kyle was old enough to have been her Daddy, and he should have been old enough to be sensible, but he wasn't.

He chucked her under the chin, making some idiotic remark, and staggered back with two long, bleeding scratches from eye to jawbone on the left side his erstwhile grinning face.

The impulsive little wild-cat had clawed him!

Enraged, his open hand landed with vigor on her delicate, flower-like cheek, and Chaska was knocked sprawling. Her slender brown fingers curled about a conveniently handy dornick, and she scrambled hastily to her feet.

Right then George took a hand in the merry little war!

He was a pretty hefty guy—more than one white on opposing foot-ball teams could give testimony thereto, after playing against the "braves" of the Indian School—and he was no slouch with the gloves. Also, he held himself the equal of any man, be he white, red, green, blue, or—yellow!

His fist started somewhere about the center of the earth and gave a perfect imitation of a pile-driver working upward, with Brother Kyle's jaw as the pile-cap.

Kyle was mad all the way through, and his dignity had been jarred, but so was his head when that unholy wallop connected. And his head got jarred again—sudden—when his feet flew up and he landed on the region of his cow-lick.

It was no good time to go to sleep, but that's what he did, nevertheless!

One little mistake was made by Mr. Two-Deers. Instead of frisking Kyle while he had him quiescent, he soused him with a canteen of water, and Kyle gasped, grunted and sat up.

If he had been mad before, he was now in a murderous frenzy. He, Kyle! Struck and knocked out by an Indian—an Indian! It was—or would have been—unbelievable save and except for a sorely aching jaw and a most remarkable pain in his neck, a ringing and sizzing in both ears, and a queer, numb feeling at the back of his head.

"——'s angels!" he snarled. "You—mud-colored ——! Hit me, will you?"

In his hand appeared a full sized Government model Colt's .45 automatic. A slug from that was guaranteed to stop an elephant in full charge.

Kyle was quick—considering the shape he was in—but pretty little Chaska was "jest a leetle shade faster on the shoot!"

Her graceful, shapely arm flew back and forward again.

The dornick she had been cherishing took the infuriated agent where it would do the greatest good—squarely over the ear—adding another bump to those already collected—and Kyle, realizing that it had been his busy day and that he felt tired, sighed gently and took another nap!

He awoke to find old Inez bending over him, trying first aid to the sleeping—*modus operandi* the same as used by George—nice, sloppy, wet water, liberally poured from a five-gallon coal-oil can fitted with a baling-wire handle.

With a groan, he sat up and glared about.

"Where's that ——?" he demanded.

"Gone went!" Inez explained succinctly, then added: "Him took you' gun, too! Him gone Mesico! Him bad Injun!"

"Why'n't somebody stop him?" Kyle howled furiously.

Inez shrugged.

"Only me here. Me ol' womans. Why me wan' stop him? Him got you' gun, me tell you one time a'ready! Gun go bang! No Inez! Goo'by me! Why you no stay 'wake an' stop him for you'self?"

Kyle groaned again. He felt like groaning.

"All right, Inez," he mumbled. "No use me chasing him while he's got my gat. Besides, I'm sick! I'll git him some day!" And he scowled malevolently.

Once in his car he felt a trifle better.

"Inez," he said, simulating a heavy joviality he was far from feeling, "you're a pretty good old gal. Here's a dollar for you. If that —— comes 'round here again, let me know, an' I'll give you fifty of 'em! Fifty dollars, *sabe?*"

"Sure me *sabe!*" nodded Inez, but as the car rolled off, she muttered something which, had he heard it, would have cost Kyle many an uneasy moment, for it was the Pima "Declaration of Unrelenting War." War, which could never end until the enemy was exterminated.

For Inez had been as deeply smitten by the charms of the little Star-gleam, as that imperious small one had been captivated by the old woman's infectious grin and heart-warming chuckle.

And now, unless Kyle was eliminated, she would never hold that soft, cunning little imp to her lonely, old heart again.

Decidedly, Inez had it in for Brother Kyle, and, like most kindly and tender-hearted people, once arouse her animosity, and she would prove implacable.

THE little shindy with the Two-Deers' outfit was but a prelude.

The desert is mighty dry territory, but when it does rain there, Old Man Noah's shower-bath was a drought by comparison.

Two days later Kyle was packing a grouch that caused all other troubles he owned to seem like unmitigated joys.

A huge touring-car stopped before his door barely two hours after sun-up.

A big, gray-haired, gray-eyed man alighted, and proved to be the new Government inspector, and with him traveled his daughter, a golden-haired, rose-and-lily featured, blue-eyed young lady whose gracious smile gave the susceptible agent "heart-trouble."

Kyle put in the entire A. M. showing them about.

Charmed by the flattering interest and attention evinced by the sunny-haired Radiance, he waxed vain-glorious—the *saga*, briefly, thus—

"Irrigation—Civilization—Me, Kyle!"

And just then Pete Horgan, Indian policeman, hove into view, hazing ahead of him three Pima bucks sociably hand-cuffed together, howling drunk on "boot-leg" of a peculiarly virulent sort smuggled into the reservation from south the border!

Pete was using language—also a club.

The inspector's daughter took one look—so did Kyle—so did the Inspector—then she, the adorable one, murmured softly but distinctly:

"Ah, yes! *All* the benefits of civilization!" And added insult to injury by an unmistakable, "Tee-hee!"

Kyle turned red clear to the back of his neck! Naturally, he felt still better when the inspector quietly remarked—

"This can be explained, Mr. Kyle?"

Mr. K. explained—too profusely—and when his stock of breath grew scant, the inspector looked bored—incidentally, unconvinced.

The next morning the inspector coolly announced that he would tour the reservation without a guide, he wished to inspect for the Government, not for Kyle. And he advised the deflated and crest-fallen agent to hump himself and dig a pit wherein the booze-runners might tumble.

The advice annoyed Kyle exceedingly.

He had reasons for not digging holes—the exercise sometimes raised blisters of a painful sort!

The inspector's car stopped before a tiny *jacal*.

The horn blared and a quaint, withered, and unbelievably wrinkled old woman bobbed out the door.

In flawless Pima the inspector asked her her name.

His daughter's eyes widened as her usually staid and dignified dad hurled his body out of the driver's seat with a profane shout of:

"——'s bells! Inez, d'you remember me?"

The old crone peered into the face of the big man for a moment, then with an ear-to-ear grin,

"Sure me know!" she cackled. "You L'ten't Shane! You one time chase Apache—him carry me off—you catch—turn me loose—me never forget——"

Then pointing one bony finger at his companion—

"You get young wife? Plenty sweet!"

"——, no!" he roared. "She's my daughter!"

"O-o-o-oh?" quavered old Inez, not a whit abashed. "Me only joke! Me know preety like her no marry weeth fat ol' mans like peeg!"

Inspector Shane—one-time a slender and dapper lieutenant in the —th Cavalry—gasped; then catching the gleam in the old torment's eye, he roared again—this time with laughter.

"Light down, Maisie," he guffawed. "Your old dad's met up with a friend! We're due for a long visit! I can learn more from Inez in one hour than the whole Indian Bureau could find out in six months any other way."

Inez could both speak and understand English far better than she ever let on, and she had ideas of her own as to how much he would learn, and about whom it would be!

Maisie tried to be agreeable—she wished to please her dad—and wound up by sitting with one of the old woman's withered brown paws held gently in one of her own perfectly manicured hands, while the old Pima lady, for Inez was just that, and her father talked and chuckled and grew grave again.

Finally she interrupted.

"Dad, you're mean as dirt! *I* can't talk Pima!"

"All right, kiddie," he smiled. "Suppose you ask Inez to tell it again."

Inez accommodated.

Amazed, disgusted, sometimes horror-stricken, the softly nurtured daughter of the dominant race listened to a tale told by a wise old woman of the dominated ones.

Words failed the girl, and openly and without shame, she wept. Inspector Shane did not weep, but his eyes held a hard look and his jaw had a grim set as the words came from the old woman's lips.

"Inez," he said finally, "you make this Kyle out to be a pretty poor stick."

"Him bad egg!" she asserted vigorously.

"I believe you," he replied, "but what proof can you give?"

"Proof?" she countered. "Jus' look at him face! Plenty proof! What more you wan'?"

"You are right, old friend from other days," he agreed gravely; "but I must have more than that before I can make trouble for him."

THAT night his daughter had a bright idea. At least, she thought it was, and after submitting same to her father she felt sure of it.

As a result, the next morning they headed the car west from the agency, and as soon as possible, described an arc which eventually brought them again to the *jacal*.

Shane wasted little breath this time in compliments.

"Inez," he demanded; "what do you know about this booze-running on the reservation?"

"Know too much—an' me know not'in'!" she returned cryptically.

"Well," he retorted, "tell me what you do know!"

"Me know white mans never catch 'em!"

"Huh!" he grunted. "Why not?"

"Does the coyote await the coming of the sheep-dogs?" she asked blandly.

"——!" he growled. "You're dead right!"

Then he added—

"Can Inez teach me how coyotes may be trapped?"

"Injun-man—him catch!" she asserted. "Get George Two-Deers back on reservation — him Injun — buy *mescal* — buy *aguardiente*—him fin' out heap—sometime —come sheriff-feller—goo'-by booze-mans! You *sabe?*"

Shane took off his hat in a gesture of admiration—twice.

Once in homage to her reasoning. The other time as tribute to her *finesse*. He had a shrewd idea she wanted the little Star-gleam to hob-nob with. He knew the Indian mind pretty well, for a white man.

"All right, old lady," he assured her; "if we can get word to young Two-Deers, I'll give him the job!"

Without further parley Inez coolly clambered into the front seat of the car and settled herself comfortably beside him.

"Were you planning on going any place especially?" he asked a trifle sarcastically.

"Go get George," she stated in a matter-of-fact tone. "You run you' tin bronco that way!" and she pointed straight south with her skinny arm.

"My Lord!" gasped Shane amazedly to his daughter, who was convulsed with merriment. "Tin bronco—my car! Any one'd think to listen to her, she owned a better one!"

And for thirty-seven miles as the giant mechanism hurled them onward, he repeated at intervals in an awed tone, " 'Tin Bronco!' Aw ——! What's the use!"

Five miles north of the boundary they halted, and from then on, Inez became boss with a large "B."

Inspector Shane was imperiously ordered to gather wood—"all same peon"—as he gravely informed his daughter who fairly reveled in the sight.

Inez herself had more important business. She needed a certain weed, and it took her an hour to find enough of it to suit her.

Then a fire was kindled and a column of greasy, blackish smoke rose straight toward the stainless blue.

"Wireless outfit," chuckled Shane to the deeply interested girl, who had heard and read of such things, but had never expected to see them carried out.

A small handful of the weed thrown on the fire by the old woman, and the smoke changed to a bright yellow.

And so, in some code known to Inez and known likewise by some Pima living in the Indian village beyond the border, with alternate puffs of black and yellow smoke, George Two-Deers was summoned to hold conference with Inspector Shane of the Indian Bureau.

ANDREW KYLE sighed with relief. Shane, the inspector, to use Inez's graphic expression, had "gone went."

Kyle was glad to see the last of him, even if it did entail losing sight of the beauteous, sunny-haired divinity known on earth as "Maisie."

Kyle had business interests which had suffered neglect by reason of Shane's presence. Hence the glow of satisfaction which pervaded the virtuous agent as he watched the monster car rapidly vanishing in a cloud of dust.

To all intents and purposes, life on the reservation resumed its wonted routine.

THE Federal prohibition officer Jed Crockett glanced up impatiently from his desk as the door opened, and a man walked in without stopping to knock.

It was nearly dusk, and the light was poor, and Crockett took a second look to make sure he saw straight.

Before him stood a dirty, frowsy, ragged, and altogether disreputable looking Pima buck—the worst specimen Crockett had ever beheld.

"Well, Injun!" he snapped. "What do you want in here?"

"Wan' 'reenk wheesky, please," wheedled the apparition.

"You want—" began Crockett, blankly; then as realization came, he blew up.

Striding hastily from behind his desk, he laid ungentle hands on the idiotically grinning aborigine.

"I'll give you 'reenk wheesky,' dang your heart!" he howled wrathfully. "Who the —— are you, buttin' in here lookin' for a 'reenk wheesky'? Answer me, you——"

And the literal reply nearly knocked him flat with astonishment, for the other said in faultless English—

"I am the Man-who-hunts-booze!"

"For the love o' ——!" whispered Crockett feebly. "The man whom Shane told me to be on the watch for! That's the password all right! Well, what have you to report?"

"We can get the men who are at the head of the booze-running into the reservation, tonight, if we are lucky!" the ugly one assured him tersely.

"Fine, if true!" drawled the official, pessimistically.

He had reason to be skeptical—not that he doubted the veracity of the informant—Shane had vouched thoroughly for him, but because he knew from past and bitter experience that the old proverb anent the "cup and the lip" usually reversed itself in his business.

The cup and the lip connected frequently and satisfactorily, and the slips were conspicuous by their rarity!

"H-m-m-m!" he mused. "How many of them, and how many of us? Also, where? And——"

"If you will take one other man, a fast car and myself, and start at once——"

"Fine again!" exclaimed Crockett. "You're talking business, feller! Keep it up!"

"One moment," the other interrupted blandly; "I have not finished! Please telephone Inspector Shane at the address he left with you, and ask him to come at once. He will understand where to meet us. Also, will you kindly provide me with a double-barreled shot-gun and a few buck-shot cartridges?"

"Buckshot?" repeated Crockett. "Good Lord, man! Do you want to blow somebody into hash? What's the matter with a rifle or a six-gun?"

"Not for the "runners," assured the Indian languidly. "Only for their tires."

Crockett grinned.

"I'm not used to taking orders from any one, let alone an Indian," he chuckled; "but I like your style! You win your shot-gun, *hombre!*"

Crockett himself was a Westerner, and once the Indian had stated that there would be only two men to cope with, he felt certain that himself, one deputy, and the Indian would be plenty. He would have thought shame to his manhood to take an "army."

An hour later they were within a mile of the line.

Then the Indian spoke for the first time since they set out.

"Straight to the foot of that butte," he ordered.

Arrived, he alighted with a brief—

"Come ahead!"

"And leave the car here?" demanded Crockett.

"Sure," was the reply. "The stuff was brought across the line and cached around the corner. They will come from the northwestern angle. From there the car will be

unseen. Don't worry," he added; "they'll never get away! You will understand in a moment."

Around on the north face the butte was split from top to bottom by a wide crack.

The guide piloted Crockett and his deputy, Matt Barker, into the *crevasse* for some seventy feet.

Just after turning an "elbow" he stopped and slapped the wall with his hand.

"Here's the cache!" he declared.

Crockett's powerful electric torch revealed nothing but great slabs of rock, standing on end against the main wall.

The Pima grunted—

"Behind the slab!"

And Crockett, after one look, grinned happily.

At least, that's how he felt, although his expression more nearly resembled that silent lift of the upper lip which the great lobo wolf gives when his quarry is sighted.

"Good boy!" he gloated, then added, "Now what?"

The Pima made an about-face.

"Back around the bend," he directed.

Here the light revealed a number of size-able boulders.

Crockett and Barker promptly took cover, and then the Indian, cuddling his shot-gun like a baby, slipped away into the darkness, to take up a position outside and some yards away from the entrance to the crack in the butte.

An hour and a half passed.

Two hours.

Then—

"Well, we're here!" in a harsh voice, and a car stopped fairly in front of the *crevasse*.

Two men alighted.

Evidently, they were familiar with every inch of their ground.

Leisurely and with certitude they passed into the rift and returned heavily laden.

Another trip—and as they came out and deposited their loads in their car—

"Put 'em up, high!"

Few words and short, but they mean a lot.

Neither of the runners was a quitter. That swiftly became manifest.

With surprizing unanimity they whirled—their hands came up—but, each held a blazing, spitting automatic!

The audacity of it was well-nigh unbelievable! It was a direct violation of the rules promulgated by "Mr. Hoyle," of revered memory.

Covered from behind—in the very teeth of "the drop"—only men too desperate to care to live if discovered would have taken the chance.

Chance? There wasn't any!

So, likewise, the gaunt, gray, giant lobo wolf, when the steel jaws of the trap close on the foreleg, takes a "chance."

And sometimes, but rarely, the miracle happens.

It looked that way this time.

Matt Barker gave a queer yelp, and his body crumpled up and slumped into a shapeless, dark heap. Crockett felt a terrific shock high on the left shoulder, and the gun in his left hand ceased spitting and thudded to the rocky ground.

One of the dark figures standing beside the car coughed and collapsed. No call to worry about him—when a man goes down that fashion he simply doesn't get up, unless some one picks him up.

For a moment, so badly jarred was Crockett, that he ceased shooting.

And the surviving booze-runner bounded into the car and pulled her wide open.

For ten yards she leaped ahead.

Came then the smashing blasts of the heavy nitro loads from a double-barreled ten-gage—two flashes of flame rent the star-lit dark like the winking blaze of sheet-lightning—a slithering smash as the powerful car, both front tires and most of the rims shattered, swerved and lunged into the face of the butte!

A dark figure hurled itself clear of the wreck and hit the ground, running.

Another dark figure appeared, yelled—a hideous, blood-curdling screech like that of a demon unleashed—and tore off into the velvety blackness in swift pursuit of the fleeing one.

Another yell, triumphant, exulting, came to Crockett's ears.

Hurrying, despite the agony of his left shoulder, in the direction whence came the shout, he saw a confused mass thrashing and rolling on the earth.

Crockett was a scrapper himself—he liked it—but this time he had no idea of mixing in.

Good reason, too, outside the fact of a crippled left wing. He couldn't tell which was boot-legger and which was Indian!

Little by little the fracas quieted down.

One figure lay still, and the other, kneeling astride, joyously and firmly continued choking his victim.

Crockett lighted a match—he had lost his electric torch long before.

"All right, Indian," he laughed shakily, "lay off that jasper or you'll croak him and I want him alive! Let's tot up the casualties."

Barker was not dead, but he was sitting within the shadows of the grim gate. Just how badly he was shot up remained for closer examination to reveal.

Crockett, aside from his shattered shoulder, was all right, and the Indian was unwounded—although Crockett fairly howled in hysteric mirth at the spectacle the Pima presented.

"My gosh!" he gasped. "You look like—no, you don't! Nothing like you was ever seen before!"

The Indian's face split with a painful grin, which added to his weird aspect, then sobered swiftly.

"We'd better get our car loaded with the relics of the battle and pull out!" he asserted. "Barker needs help bad! And he's got to have it sudden! I know an old squaw—she's good at Indian surgery—we better go to her place first, then to the agency. Inspector Shane will be waiting there for us."

Somehow they got things shipshape and started, with poor Barker, the dead bootlegger, and the living prisoner, the last-named shackled securely, wrists and ankles, loaded into the tonneau.

Inez emerged from her hut at their hail, her eyes as bright as though she had not been sleeping a minute before.

Very few words sufficed.

Crockett was amazed at the quiet, efficient manner with which she went over Barker and himself.

"By ——!" he told her, admiringly. "I believe poor old Matt'll make a live of it now! You'd better come with us to the agency."

When they reached their destination they found the house all lighted up. Shane hurried out.

"Who's that?" he challenged sharply.

"Crockett, Barker, a dead man and a prisoner—likewise, two Indians," replied the Pima, slipping from behind the wheel.

"——!" said Shane.

Out of chaos—order.

Shane was speaking in a voice low but furious.

"Kyle, you infernal scoundrel! I knew you were inefficient, I was sure you were crooked, and I knew you were a petty tyrant—but I did not dream that even you would so foully betray the trust reposed in you by a too confiding Government.

"Even Brunson, your dead partner, was not so utterly contemptible as you. He was a trader, but you—selling that filthy slop to the Indians whom you were placed here to protect——"

Shane choked, then resumed in that same deadly, menacing tone:

"Kyle, it isn't in you to comprehend just how low you are in the scale of evolution. Take him out of my sight!"

And as harsh hands were laid upon the man who had proven false to his trust, old Inez stepped in front of him, holding out her right hand, palm up.

"Hol' on!" she commanded. " 'Fore you go, you pay me feefty dolla'! Come 'cross!"

Kyle stared at her out of smoldering eyes.

"Whaddo I owe you fifty dollars for, you old she-wolf?" he mumbled sullenly.

"You say one time—" she jeered—"if George Two-Deers come back on reservation, you pay me feefty dolla' for tell you——"

Whirling about, she pointed to the Indian buck who stood half-naked, his face battered and bruised, one eye shut, his clothing nearly dropping off, and his upper lip so swollen that it made a flush surface with the tip of his nose.

"Me tell now!" she screeched. "Him's *him!* You pay me feefty dolla' 'fore you go jail!"

George tried to grin at Kyle, but the result was so hideous that even Inez shuddered.

TWO weeks later, Inspector Shane and the newly appointed agent drew up before the *jacal* of Inez. They had come to confirm George's allotment.

Shane nodded to himself as who should say—

"I knew it!"

Seated on the ground, face to face, were a very aged Pima lady, and a very young one, holding continuous session of "Mutual Admiration Society, Local No. One!"

There is an ancient Pima proverb which says—

"Provoke the rattlesnake, and escape unscathed, but incur not the wrath of the aged!"

BAD MEN OF THE OLD FRONTIER

by **E. A. Brininstool**

THE DALTON GANG

AMONG the many desperadoes who menaced the public in the then Territory of Oklahoma in the late '80s and early '90s was the notorious "Dalton Gang," consisting of Bob, Grat, Emmett and Bill Dalton, aided by various confederates, prominent among whom were Dick Broadwell and Bill Powers. Bill Dalton had no hand in the final raid of the outlaw band on the two banks at Coffeyville, Kan., Oct. 5, 1892.

In the "grand finale" of these bad-men, Bob and Grat Dalton, Powers and Broadwell were shot and killed by the citizens of Coffeyville, while Emmett Dalton was seriously wounded, but eventually recovered.

Frank Dalton, a brother, who was a deputy United States marshal, was killed in 1887 near Fort Smith, in the Indian Territory, while attempting to arrest some horse-thieves and whisky-peddlers.

Bob Dalton, the acknowledged leader of the outlaw band, with his brother Grat, were both deputy United States marshals in the middle '80s. Grat, it is said, acquitted himself with credit in the early part of his career as a peace officer, but, with Emmett Dalton, the two brothers were finally charged with some crooked deals, one of which consisted of stealing some horses and disposing of them in Kansas.

Things finally became too warm for Grat and Emmett, and they made their way to California, where their brother Bill owned a ranch in Tulare County. Here, on January 6, 1891, a Southern Pacific train was held up and the fireman killed in the gun-fight which followed.

Bill, Grat and Emmett Dalton were charged with murder and attempted train-robbery. Bill and Grat were arrested, but Emmett escaped arrest. Bill was eventually acquitted, but Grat received a twenty-year sentence. On the night of September twenty-sixth, he escaped from the county jail, finally turning up at his old haunts in the Territories.

Bob, Grat and Emmett Dalton now are alleged to have commenced a career of crime in earnest. On May 9, 1891, a Santa Fé train was held up at Wharton, Okla., by three men wearing masks. The express car was looted and the bandits escaped. It was generally understood that the robbers were the Daltons.

The band then appears to have gone into hiding for a year. The following June, Red Rock, in the Cherokee Strip, was the scene of a hold-up, also reported to have been pulled off by the Daltons.

A train was held up at Adair, in the Indian Territory, only a month later. Several thousand dollars in loot was secured. In that raid Grat and Bob Dalton were recognized. Detectives and deputy marshals were put on their trail, but they escaped.

Then came the Coffeyville raid. The gang was short of cash, and it is alleged by Emmett Dalton that the brothers intended this as a final robbery, after which they had decided to go to South America, change their names and start life anew.

The Dalton gang rode into Coffeyville on the morning of October 5, 1892, being reenforced in this raid by Powers and Broadwell. They trotted their horses boldly down the main street, the Dalton brothers wearing false beards, as they were well known in the town. They were recognized, however, by a merchant named McKenna, who quickly spread the alarm that "the Daltons were in town on mischief."

Meantime the bandits had entered an alley in the rear of one of the banks. Here they tied their horses and prepared for action. Grat Dalton, Powers and Broadwell entered the C. M. Condon Bank, while Bob and Emmett hastened into the First National Bank across the street. The officials of both banks, when intimidated with guns, blandly informed the robbers that the time-lock in the vaults would not be off for fifteen minutes. The bandits waited.

During this wait the town was arming itself, and bullets began to fly through the windows of the Condon Bank. In the First National about twenty thousand dollars in greenbacks was secured and stuffed into a grain-sack, and Bob and Emmett Dalton escaped to the alley by a rear door. Here they were joined by the other bandits, who had secured about three thousand dollars.

A terrific fight took place in and near this alley, three or four citizens being killed and

several wounded. John Kloehr, a liveryman, killed Bob and Grat Dalton, and Bill Powers was also shot dead. Broadwell was fatally wounded and was found dead just outside town. Emmett was seriously shot, but recovered and was sentenced to the penitentiary for life, but was pardoned in 1907 and is now living a respectable life. Bill Dalton was killed in the Indian Territory in 1894 while resisting arrest.

TIBURCIO VASQUEZ

OLD-TIMERS of southern California will recall with a thrill the name of Tiburcio Vasquez, the notorious Mexican bandit who was the terror of southern California in the early '70s, and who conducted a campaign of robbery, murder and outlawry which forms one of the thrilling chapters in the history of the section.

Vasquez first came into prominence through a triple murder committed at Tres Pinos, near Hollister, August 26, 1873, the details of which are briefly as follows:

Seven Mexican bandits, of which Vasquez was the leader, rode up to the store of a man named Snyder at Tres Pinos. Four of the men entered the store and compelled those inside to lie down on the floor, where they were all securely tied. They then helped themselves to whatever they wished.

Outside, Vasquez was busy with the balance of his gang. A sheep-herder named Martin and a teamster named Redford were shot down in cold blood. A blacksmith named Scherrer, hearing the shooting, ran into Davidson's hotel, and the inmates started to bar the door, when Vasquez rushed up and discharged his revolver through the paneling, killing Davidson. The bandits then looted the store, stole seven horses in the stable and left.

After the gang had departed, one of the clerks managed to untie his bonds. He liberated the others, and then rode to Hollister and told the sheriff. A posse was at once organized, and the bandits were trailed toward southern California in the Elizabeth Lake country, where Vasquez had relatives. Later the bandits made for Cahuenga Pass, near the present moving-picture city of Hollywood. From there the outlaws rode toward Tejunga Cañon, where the trail separated and was eventually lost.

The outlaws soon again started their depredations by robbing stage-coaches and holding up wealthy ranchers. One of the exploits of Vasquez and eight men was that of holding up and robbing thirty-five persons, leaving them all tied to trees.

Soon after a wealthy rancher at San Gabriel named Rapetto was visited by Vasquez and ordered to deliver eight hundred dollars or be killed. The man did not have the money at the ranch, and sent his son into Los Angeles on horseback for the money. The son informed the sheriff of his father's predicament and a posse followed the boy home, but Vasquez saw the dust arising from the moving horsemen and fled.

Such a scourge did Vasquez become that fifteen thousand dollars was appropriated by the Legislature to rid the country of the Vasquez Gang, and eight thousand dollars was offered for the chief, captured alive, or six thousand dollars if he was killed.

But his day of reckoning came at last. It was learned that he was living at the house of one "Greek George" in the Cahuenga Pass, and the sheriff of Los Angeles County formed a posse to capture Vasquez. The posse concealed themselves near the house, undecided whether the outlaw was there or not, until the morning fog arose and disclosed the famous white horse of the bandit picketed at the door.

How to approach the place undetected was a problem, until a passing wood-chopper driving a large wagon with a deep box was apprehended. The posse concealed themselves in the wagon-bed and the driver was ordered to approach the house slowly. Here a rush was made and the house surrounded.

Emil Harris, one of the posse, made for the kitchen door. As he entered, gun in hand, he saw Vasquez at the table eating his breakfast. Before the officer could fire, the bandit made a leap out of the window. But he had not reckoned on the others of the posse outside, and a fusillade of shots met his exit. He was shot several times, none of the bullets proving fatal, and at last threw up his hands in surrender.

Loaded with chains, the famous prisoner was brought to Los Angeles, where the whole city, wild with joy, turned out to get a glimpse of him. He was subsequently taken north to the county where the Tres Pinos murders occurred, tried, found guilty and finally hanged at San José.

THE BATTLE OF THE IMPIS

By Fantie Sabalala

Author of "In Kaffir Kraals," "Mamoti the Witch Woman," etc.

SOBOSABO'S kraal was a scene of great confusion. For the past three days there had arrived a constant procession of powerful *indunas*, stately councilors and bold-faced witch-doctors. These men had come in response to the call of the head chief. Talk of war was in the air.

The large council-hut was crowded. The air was blue with the smoke of many pipes. Girls trooped in and out, serving the men with beer.

A commanding voice suddenly rose above the merriment, and the clamor instantly ceased.

"Those dogs over the mountains," said the voice—and it was the voice of the head chief, "are getting overbearing. They pass through our borders whenever they will, and because we have made no attempt to stop them they say that we have lost our manhood. The dogs taunt us! They bark too loud!

"Sobosabo!"

"*Ewe, inkosi!* Yes, chief. What is your will?" asked Sobosabo.

He was a tall, powerfully built warrior.

"You shall be our messenger. You will take a basket of corn to the chief of the people beyond the mountains. So shall they know that we are not afraid."

The chief gave to Sobosabo a cone-shaped basket. Taking it, the messenger walked out of the hut and lost no time in setting out on his errand.

Many young warriors followed him to the gate of the kraal. They questioned him eagerly, seeking to know his mission. But he made no reply. It was not time for them to know.

TEN days later Sobosabo returned to the kraal and went immediately to the council-hut.

"What did that dog of a chief have to say when he saw the grain?" asked the king.

"He spoke no word," Sobosabo answered.

The councilors grunted in disappointment.

"We shall not have a chance to kill them after all," grumbled one.

"Be patient," advised another. "There is yet tomorrow."

AT HIGH noon of the next day a party of strange warriors marched through the gate of the kraal. They were led by one who was richly dressed. He was tall, large of frame. Around his shoulders he wore a *kaross*—a robe of tanned hide—and around his neck was a necklace of red beads.

"Where is the headman of the village?" he demanded.

"Follow me," said one of the boys of the village.

He led the strangers to the council-hut.

The members of the council looked up excitedly as the stranger warriors came to a halt several paces from them.

"Say it, you infants," said the leader of the strangers in an insulting voice.

"Who are you? Where have you escaped from, slave?"

The man with the *kaross* smiled contemptuously.

"I am the mouthpiece of the men beyond the mountains. We are men. All you who live in the plains are dogs. If you persist in barking at us and snapping at our heels, we will kick you hard. We are strong; we are mighty; we are as numerous as the hairs on that."

He threw down before him the *kaross*.

"Get out of here before I have you killed," the chief of the council roared in response to the counter-challenge.

"My!" the stranger remarked sarcastically. "How that dog can bark!"

"Son of an ape!" shouted the chief of the council. "This is my kraal."

As he spoke he struck savagely at the messenger with his knobkerrie. With comparative ease the man warded the blow and, wrenching the knobkerrie out of the chief's hand, grabbed him by the throat and shook him until his teeth rattled. Then, lifting him bodily, he flung him at the crowd of warriors who were rushing to their chief's rescue.

This checked the onrush of the rescuers for a moment, and the leader of the strangers, shouting the battle-cry, "*Mtenfene! Mtenfene!*" charged with his men toward the gate of the kraal. This they reached in safety and made good their escape. Their challenging cries grew fainter and fainter in the distance and finally died away.

Ten minutes later the war-drums of the kraal were booming a message over the plains.

"*Dali, saku mem za!*" (Dali, we are calling you) was the message the drums boomed over and over again.

After a little while the low throb of distant drums was heard replying in short, sharp beats:

"*Ndvu! U Yevwa!*" (Heard! You are heard!)

The distant drumming ceased and then the bearded chief of the council sent out the order to mobilize-and the declaration of war.

A nasal-voiced witch-doctor came forward.

"Shall we dig a trench?" he asked.

"Yes," the chief answered, and as the witch-doctor hastened away to see that this was done he continued, "I want two boys."

"I will get them," said Sobosabo, and he too hastened away.

"Where is the maker of spears? Bring him here."

Another warrior sped away in response to the chief's commands.

"Here are the boys, chief," said Sobosabo.

The chief looked at them gravely. They were very frightened.

"Can you fight?" he asked them.

In great relief they looked at each other and smiled.

"Yes, chief," they replied, and, puffing out their chests, they faced each other, forehead to forehead, and breathed terrible threats into each other's mouths.

"You are real men," said the chief with a laugh. "Now listen closely to my commands. You will go out toward the mountains and bring me word of the preparations those dogs are making. Should any ask what you are doing, you will say that you have come to look for some lost cattle. Do you unders and?"

The boys nodded and with an air of great importance departed on their errand.

The spear-maker came up to the chief.

"Those dogs of the mountains are hungry for iron," said the chief. "Forge many spears and battle-axes that they may eat."

"*Um!*" the blacksmith grunted in assent and hastened to his forge.

The wind sighed; the sun set; darkness came. Sparks flew heavenward as the spear-maker pounded the iron and steel. The night silence was broken by the *clash* and *clank* of his hammer; war-drums murmured their bloody messages to the kraals of the plain.

IN THE blue-dawn the kraal was awakened by the beat of the war-drums.

"Witch-doctor! You witch-doctor!" shouted the chief.

"I am here," a nasal-voice answered in the gray-dark. "The first regiment of the great army is here. There is much to do. It will be past mid-day before the ceremony of the sacred smoke is finished."

"Have the cattle been selected?" asked the chief.

"Yes. Five bulls and nine cows. Let the women be sent away."

"It shall be done," answered the chief, and walked toward the gate of the kraal. There he met Sobosabo.

"After sunrise bid all the women to come to the cattle-place. I have something to tell them," commanded the chief.

As the sun rose, it revealed line after line of warriors in full fighting regalia, squatting behind enormous battle-shields. They were all veterans. As their chief neared, they sprang to their feet and greeted him with a loud—

"*A—wu!*"

The chief waved his hand at the *impi*—regiment—bidding them go to the trench, turned on his heels and went to the cattle-corral, where the women and girls were awaiting him.

"A man is a man," he said, "a woman is a woman. When a man wants to gain strength he goes among other men. It is not good for women to see their men receive strength; therefore you will go to the forest for two nights and two days. On the third night at the time when sleep is heaviest we men shall be awaiting you. Go in peace!"

As the women and girls trooped out of the gate the chief strode away to supervise the work of the warriors. The clanging thud of a hammer on raw metal and the snort of several bellows filled the air.

Some boys, squatting around the pile of hides, were cutting them into shape for shields; others were bending and testing those already made. The chief walked about silently, never in a hurry, watching each operation. His long slim form seemed to be everywhere, spurring on the work.

The golden twilight turned to a blue-domed canopy studded with bright jewels. The clash of steel on stone rose above all other sounds and was the night's snore—there was to be no sleep for any of them.

MIDDAY—a scorching sun!

The kraal was surrounded by a force of four thousand warriors. Each carried long war-shields and spears.

The veterans proudly wore their head-dress of long blue feathers. Each man wore charms and silently awaited the ceremony of purification, administration of the sacred oath and retention.

Five bulls were led into the circle by one of the lean-faced witch-doctors. A stal-wart warrior came forward, a hammer in his hand. Swinging it in a mighty arc, he killed one of the beasts with a blow on its forehead. The witch-doctors dropped on the ox almost before it had ceased struggling and, cutting out its gall bag, carried it to a fire where a small pot rested and there mixed it with other ingredients. The small pot was taken off the fire after a little while and green shrubs piled on to the fire so that a dense cloudy smoke filled the air.

The warriors in the front line put down their shields, spears and knobkerries and took off their loin cloths. At a sign from one of the witch-doctors two of the men stepped forward and, walking into the sacred cloud of smoke, came out on the other side of the fire. Their eyes smarted, and tears ran down their cheeks. At the command from another witch-doctor the two men bent down and filled a calabash with medicine from the pot and drank it.

Then they hurried away to the trench, flung themselves down and vomited noisily. No sooner were these two cleansed out than two more warriors rushed out, and in a little while the trench swarmed with men, all vomiting noisily.

The day reached its close.

Midnight—the stars twinkled above. A dull-red light glowed through the curtain of gray smoke; men passed hither and thither! The thud of a hard substance against solid bone! The death moan of a dying ox! The clinking of knives!

The gray dawn stole on the scene. The warriors were sprawled about in confused heaps. The boy cattle-herders moved about restlessly, yet dared not leave. The stern eyes of the chief were watching them. All solid matter had been cleansed out of them, but the rule is that all liquid matter shall be retained until the word is given by the chief witch-doctor.

As the sun rose the air was shattered by the crashing sound of war-drums. They were throbbing out the command for all warriors to stay clear of the kraal until next morning.

"You have passed through the smoke that will protect from all harm," said the witch-doctor. "The bitter medicine you drank is the bitter sharpness of your enemies' spears. You have vomited all that is old, and now you can be new. Eat your fill, and drink what you will. I have spoken."

The young boys scampered away with shouts of joy. The warriors leaped to their feet and with a mighty yell carved off mighty hunks of meat from the dead oxen. Dozens of fires were blazing, and shortly the smell of roasting meat filled the air.

When they had eaten their fill the chief said:

"You are men. You have eaten raw meat, and your faces are smeared with blood. Soon you will meet the dogs of the mountain. You will kill them and wash your spears in their blood. Break their bones and rip their flesh. Every one that you see strike. Kill them! Kill them! Kill! Kill!"

"Aye! Yes, we will kill!" shouted the warriors.

"This is the night," the chief continued, "the women will return from the forest."

Then he uttered the age-old military command—

"Breed before you die!"

The sun set slowly in a blaze of ominous red. The hours passed quickly as the men stopped in their huts bragging, smoking, awaiting midnight.

The sweet-sounding chant of the women and girls, borne on the cool breeze of the night, came from the forest. The warriors echoed their song as they went out of the kraal to meet their womenfolk. As the two groups neared the tones blended musically and then died away. And there was no sound, save the leaves of the trees whispering in the night air and the crooning of owls.

SOUNDED a long blast on a horn. In response to its call the warriors and young boys raced from the huts and came to a knoll where the horn-blower stood. About the base of the hill were a number of the councilors. With them were the two boys who had been sent out as spies.

"These two have just returned and have told of certain things they have seen," said a warrior.

The chief turned to the crowd of boys and said:

"Some of you will carry mats; others are to go with the warriors; the rest will drive cattle. All of you will carry spears. When you meet an enemy, kill him! Take out his heart, cook it and then eat it. Thus you will gain his strength. Keep up with the warriors, you mat-boys.

"The pass-word and the grips will be given to all in the council-hut. Go!"

As the boys shuffled away toward the kraal a war-drum boomed and was quickly echoed by another and another.

At the council-hut the witch-doctor was awaiting them. The oath of a warrior was administered and then each was given the pass-word.

"And now," said the nasal voice of the head witch-doctor, "remember this: When in the fight and you get your enemy by the throat, if he should grip your arm thus, you will know that he is one of you. In the dark challenge every man and kill him if he can not give you the right pass-word. Watch for all signs along the path and beware of the broken spear. A coward never lives! You have permission to go."

As the witch-doctor finished speaking, the steady throb of marching feet came to the ears of the boys. Louder it came with thunder speed—the tramp of a mighty host. Suddenly it burst into view. Battle-axes brightly gleaming, spears shining in the sun, shields raised high, the warriors came on. The ground shook to the thud of their feet. War-drums throbbed unceasingly as regiment after regiment marched up to the councilors that their captains might get their orders.

"You are the advance guard," was the order given to the captain of the first *impi*. "You will attack the dogs of the mountains when the lions roar their loudest and the elephants go down to drink. Go!"

The captain bowed and led his regiment away.

The second regiment was ordered to attack at midnight, and the third was instructed to make a feint attack in the night but to defer their real attack until the breaking of dawn.

The other regiments were ordered to be ready to support the others. They were to hold themselves ready to act on any order that would be transmitted to them by word of mouth.

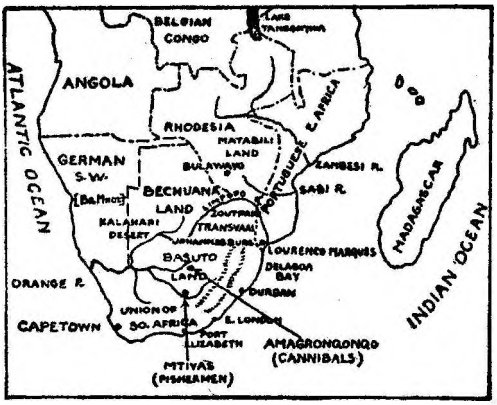
At last all the warriors were on their way; chanting the fierce battle-song of their race.

Before following the regiments the head chief addressed the women of the kraal.

"Be brave," he said. "Do not disgrace your men-folk who now go out to die that you may live. As you act here, so will we act in battle—your spirits will affect us. Therefore, be good vessels for your masters."

With that the chief mounted his riding-ox and hastened after the fast traveling *impis*.

Soon all the warriors disappeared from sight, yet for a long time the women watched listening tearfully to the song of



victory borne back to them on the morning breeze.

In a little while the mat-boys left the kraal and followed in the trail of the regiments. The boys strutted as they walked and, sticking out their stomachs, vainly attempted to imitate the swagger of the warriors. As they marched they too sang the song of victory in their childish, piping treble.

And the tears of the women gave way to laughter.

FIVE days later and half-way to the mountains.

A light mist hung about the camp of the regiment of the chief.

To the resting-place of the chief came several warriors. They half-dragged, half-carried, a young man. He was wounded and covered with dust. Sweat dripped from him like heavy rain.

"What is this?" asked the chief. "What is your news? Speak!"

"The dogs of the mountains fell upon us, and we were beaten back," gasped the wounded man.

"What is your regiment?"

"Sobosabo's, chief. He asks for more men."

As he spoke the man's head fell forward, and he began to snore.

The chief sprang to his feet and shook the tired man until his teeth rattled and he shook off the sleep.

"This is no time for sleep," said the chief.

"First tell me many things." And he showered the man with questions.

The warrior answered as best he could. From noon of the previous day and all through the night he had run in order to bring news of his regiment's defeat to the chief.

When the chief had learned all he could from the man he barked out a quick succession of orders. Scouts were sent out. A forced march was ordered, and in an incredibly short time the warriors were on the move. But the wounded man—he who had brought news of the defeat—was left to his fill of sleep.

MIDNIGHT. The moon, clear and bright in its last quarter, streaked the silent vastness with alternate patches of light and shadows. Dim figures moved swiftly forward as the regiments hastened to the attack. The sound of many blows thudded on the air. Taunting yells rose above the clashing of steel on steel; battle-cries were bandied back and forth.

Silently, grimly, the chief's regiment hastened to join the attack.

Then, from out of the dark shadows, and the darker mass of struggling men ahead, a band of warriors came fleeing toward the advancing regiment.

"Who are you?" the chief shouted.

A trembling voice gave the pass-word. They were men of Sobosabo's regiment.

"Forward and kill these things who call themselves men," the chief ordered sternly. And to the retreating warriors he said: "You jackals! Go back and fight. You have no friends here."

And the chief's regiment pressed forward.

Sobosabo, seeing that his men would be caught between the two opposing forces, quickly rallied them and, forming them into a wedge, turned and charged the enemy. So furious was their onslaught that the enemy gave way before them; retreating, stumbling, falling, down a steep incline. Sobosabo gave them no respite, but pressed home the attack, hacked through their ranks and, coming to the bottom of the hill, led his men to a flank attack.

And now the regiment of the chief joined the attack.

The seething tide of men was lost in the cloud of dust which rose and mingled with the fine mist of morning.

The gray-blue dawn stole through the darkness. The blood-red sun labored over the hills. A cool, soft breeze blew the mist and the dust away, revealing a large band of the enemy surrounded by the regiments of the chief and Sobosabo.

Battle-axes flashed upward, and with their downward swing heads flew from mighty shoulders; spears shot forward into bronzed stomachs, and with the releasing, twisting motion entrails, caught on the barb of the spear, were pulled out and men fell, clawing at their vitals.

Soon, despite their almost superhuman courage, the surrounded warriors were killed; not a man was left alive, and the chief sounded the order for his men to rest.

The cattle were driven up and slaughtered that the men might eat. The mat-boys calmly went about their alloted task—ripping open the stomachs of the dead warriors of their own people that their spirits might be released.

Jokes and quips were tossed back and forth by the victors.

HIGH noon. The regiments were once more on the march; their objective the mountain-stronghold of the enemy. The stalwart bronzed bodies of the warriors were covered with fine dust; their barrel-like chests rose and fell with a slow, measured breath-taking.

And so they came to the foot of the rocky hill crowned with the chief kraal of the enemy. Frowning crags and overhanging boulders met their eyes. The only trail up its sheer sides was a narrow, winding path.

As they massed at its base, awaiting orders from the head chief, a huge rock above them moved forward and dropped into space. It hit a projecting ledge of the hill, bounced off and fell into the center of the yelling men, crushing a score or more to death. Another and another rock followed in quick succession. The air was filled with flying stones. A cloud of dust, choking in its density, rose to the sky, blotting out the sun. The rumbling of flying rocks filled the air with booming noises like the firing of big guns; the smell of brimstone tickled the nostrils as stone crashed against stone.

Coughs and slashing sneezes mingled with the bedlam of sound. Horns blew—blast upon blast—the order to retire. Clashing battle-axes and the thudding blows of knobkerries told the story of men fighting men that they might escape from the terrible spirit which tore down mountains and buried men under them.

"Back to the veld!" shouted the head chief. "Back!"

At the sound of his voice order came out of confusion and his command was quickly obeyed.

"Men of my fathers," said the head chief as the warriors gathered about him well out of range of the falling stones, "for a little while those dogs have beaten us. But the rocks can not last forever. Remember! But two days ago you defeated their vile brothers, and their strength is in you. Before dawn the hill will be ours. The courage of those dogs is as jackals' dung before your bravery. Now let the regiment of the piebald shields go forward, making much noise. The enemy will watch them, but it is the regiment of red shields which will really go to the attack. They shall sneak up the pathway like a leopard on its prey."

As the head chief finished speaking the warriors burst into a thunderous cheer. The regiment of men carrying the parti-colored shields formed ranks and swung into step, swinging through the brown cloud of dust, singing their battle-song.

The captain of the red shield regiment called to his men to follow him, and silently they vanished into the gloom.

The sun set; the twilight hurried away; inky night curtained down.

A barrage of rocks crashed down the precipitous slopes of the hill; a hundred sparks stabbed the darkness. The challenging cries of the noise-making regiment sounded unceasingly.

Along the twisting pathway the captain of the red shields led his men. He stumbled suddenly against the body of a sentry. The man was dead. His skull had been crushed by one of the falling rocks.

On went the warriors, silently, swiftly.

A whispered challenge was hissed by an unseen foe—

"The mountain is high!"

The captain of the red shields made no reply but hurled himself at the voice. Small stones rattled as the two men struggled in the darkness. There was a gurgling, choking sound; the soft rip of a knife cutting into flesh; a hoarse bubbling as of a drowning man fighting the water and then—silence. One form rose from the ground and joined the waiting band of warriors.

It was the captain of the red shields.

A whispered council was held. It was agreed that one of the warriors should impersonate the dead sentry and see what was behind the rock gateway which blocked their path.

Word was sent down the line that they were at the gate of the mountain dogs. White-toothed smiles flashed in the darkness. Each warrior spat on his hands and took a firmer grip on his battle-ax.

One of the warriors left the whispering band and disappeared into the dark shadows. Time passed. The air was tense. A distant scuffling of feet sounded from the other side of the rock gateway. The noise of scuffling feet, of blows, of grunts.

A big boulder moved and fell with a crash. One of the warriors was unable to get out of its way, and his head was crushed; his feet danced frantically in his death-throes.

There was space now in the gateway for one man at a time to pass through. The captain held his men back for a moment—fearing a trap. But nothing happened, and he gave the order to advance, and on hands and knees they crawled through the narrow opening.

The first dozen who passed through the gateway fell easy victims to the defenders. But the end was sure. The invaders had the advantage of a surprize attack, they were in stronger numbers, and the stronghold was theirs. But not yet was the battle won.

The long blast of a horn, sounding the alarm, gave notice that a mighty force was hastening to relieve the garrison of the stronghold.

"You have won a great victory," said the head chief. "But other dogs are coming. Forward! Let us kill them."

With a mighty shout the warriors rushed down the pathway ready to give battle to this new foe.

The mists cleared.

A piercing yell shattered the moment's silence as a host of tall men bearing white shields burst into view over a rise of land.

"We slay! We slay!" they yelled.

"Bring all you have!" shouted the warriors as they charged.

Spears clouded the sky. A few men fell.

"That is your meat—kill it!" shouted a strong voice.

The two forces clashed, heaved and swayed, struggling for the mastery.

Two long, mournful blasts sounded on the horns, and in response to the signal the warriors of the plains gave way, retreating to the right and to the left. The drumming of a thousand hoofs on the hard ground sounded above the battle-cries of the warriors. Then came into view a cavalry of trained cattle. Young warriors were on their backs, carrying sharp-pointed spears. They urged the beasts on into the opening made for them by their comrades. On they went and charged into the heart of the foe.

The strategy was successful. The white shields of the mountains could not stand against this new and unexpected attack. Panic-stricken, confused, they turned and fled, followed by the maddened cattle and the warriors of the people of the plain.

HIGH noon.

The warriors of the plain were homeward bound. Before them they drove large herds of cattle and goats. The victory had been complete and the songs of the warriors were happy songs.

Night came swiftly; the sun was blotted out.

Mat-boys set up the lean-to's and spread the sleeping-mats for the weary warriors. Others built fires. Cattle were slaughtered, and the host feasted royally.

From afar other sounds of revelry were heard. Hyenas, jackals and vultures snarled and quarreled over the bodies of the warriors who would fight no more.

The new moon rose and cast strange shadows in the night.

The tired warriors slept beside their smoldering fires.

The moon waned; it was night.

Rushing feet, clashing spears, thudding blows and vigorous shouts broke the stillness. The snoring warriors of the plain woke up to find an enemy in their midst.

Grunts, yells of boys, the blaring of horns and the shouts of captains to their warriors were added to the din.

A bold voice roared an order. It was the voice of the head chief. His sentence finished with a gurgle as a spear whirled in the dark and pierced his throat.

The strong, nasal tones of the witch-doctor sounded above all other noises in an attempt to bring order to the bewildered warriors.

A triumphant laugh mocked the order.

The commander of the hill people shouted an order:

"This way. Follow me."

The fighting ceased. The foe melted into the night.

The mocking laugh floated back and then died away. The padding of feet was heard no more.

In the darkness of the night they had come; in the darkness of the night they went away.

Torches were lighted by the warriors of the plains and the sound of wailing rent the air when it was seen that the head chief was dead. A spear had transfixed his throat.

Squads of warriors were instructed to follow the night attackers and warned not to come back until all the enemy were killed.

Then the main body resumed its march to the kraal of the head chief, whose body was carried by two stalwart warriors.

Five days later they came to the kraal.

Women and children rushed out of the gate to meet them—greeting them with shouts of joy. But the laughter of some turned to sobs when they learned that the ones they had waited for would not return.

A burial trench was dug, and in it was placed the body of the dead chief—sitting upright, facing the east. The witch-doctor ordered one of the dead man's wives to come forward and, slitting her throat, threw her into the trench. This was done in order that the chief would not travel alone on his Great Journey. Then the hole was rapidly filled with stones and dirt.

The red sun set slowly. The drums beat an enticing dance measure as the warriors trooped back toward their temporary encampment.

Voices droned incessantly; loud laughter filled the air. Sparks from many fires ascended in the still night air.

A lean-faced witch-doctor, followed by a band of councilors and captains of regiments, walked in and out the groups of joyful warriors. He was the new head chief.

He came to a halt where Sobosabo and men of his regiment were feasting.

"Eat and fill your bellies," said the lean-faced man. "Tomorrow you will feed the jackals."

Sobosabo rose to his feet and, taking his spear, broke it in two. The broken spear he then gave to the chief.

The lean-faced man called for some thread and when that was given to him he said:

"The broken spear has been given to me. It is the sign that a regiment was defeated because no support was given. If this be true, then shall the warriors live and their captain be greatly honored. If it be false, then shall the captain be branded and he and all his men shall die. He who was chief has gone to another place and his 'snake' has not yet come out. But the power that was his is in my hands. You have all felt the bitter end of the flying spear and you have seen mountains fall. Had not a regiment forgot their manhood, had their captain been a brave warrior, all the evil that has befallen you would not have happened.

"But now see. As I twine this thread about the broken spear it is made whole again. The captain's appeal is not a true appeal. He knew that support was hastening to him. This then is my order.

"At high noon tomorrow this regiment of cowardly dogs shall march over the precipice and be dashed to pieces on the rocks below. To all other commanders I say this: You shall have your regiments ready tomorrow, for even a cowardly jackal will fight when he knows he must die.

"A flung spear knows no friends. A knobkerrie has no brother. You are warriors—you have no dealing with cowards and outcasts."

"Sobosabo! Son of a dog! Stand forward and I will give you the mark of shame."

Perspiration streaming down his face and body, Sobosabo obeyed.

Chest to chest the two men stood, and the captains of the regiments closed around them.

One of Sobosabo's arms was placed around the body of the lean-faced witch-doctor while his left was twisted behind him, his hand held against his back, the fingers spread open, his thumb pointing straight up his spine. In that position it was held by one of the captains.

The lean-faced man, a spear in his right hand, twined his arms about Sobosabo and guided by his forefinger, slashed Sobosabo's back, tracing the outline of his digits.

The luckless man did not move; not an eyelash quivered.

The lean-faced man flung the weapon to the ground. It made a loud clattering noise in the terrific silence.

Menacing looks were cast in the direction of the disgraced regiment, and as others drew away from them Sobosabo and his men grouped around their fire, gazing moodily into the red-hot embers. The soft sobbings of their wives came to them.

And so the night passed.

The chilling dawn awoke to the tramp of marching feet.

A warrior laughed loudly.

"Who dares to laugh when a witch-doctor sleeps?" asked the nasal-voiced one.

"A man who cares nothing for a thing that talks through his nose like a hyena," a bold voice replied.

"Bring that man here," shouted the witch-doctor—the lean-faced man.

A group of men advanced toward the fire where the witch-doctor and men of the council were resting.

"Ha!" said the witch-doctor, springing to his feet. "It is the messenger of the dogs of the mountain."

"Even so," said the man proudly. "Yet it took a regiment of you dogs to capture me."

"Who made the magic that caused a whole mountain to fall on our warriors?" the witch-doctor asked.

"There are greater witch-doctors than you," the man replied scornfully.

"Tell me, and I will make you a leader of one of my regiments," said the witch-doctor.

"Large stones were strewn around the mountain top. It is easy for strong men to roll them to the edges of the stronghold. And so well balanced are they that an infant could set them hurtling down. We of the mountains are above throwing spears. We kill by letting rocks fall on our enemies. Now I have told you all," concluded the messenger.

"You have told me nothing," shouted the witch-doctor. "You shall die with the other jackals. Away with him."

NOON.

The blare of horns bade all the warriors don their fighting regalia. Drums boomed out the summons for the regiments to form up in military array, and out of the welter of confusion order came as the warriors responded to the commands of horns and drums.

Regiment after regiment marched to the place where the men of Sobosabo were to pay for their cowardice during the battle.

The doomed regiment was lined up some twenty yards from the edge of the cliff. Behind them, and on either side, were the other regiments. Only one way was open to them—and that over the cliff to death.

War drums crashed and thundered for a full moment, then ceased.

Suddenly a voice shouted the command—"Forward, jackals!"

And the regiment marched forward in perfect step, shouting their battle-cry.

Leading them were Sobosabo and the messenger of the people of the mountains.

On they went; past the ranks of their comrades; singing bravely. And so on—like a mighty stream they spilled over the edge of the cliff on to the rocks below.

There were no screams; no pleas for mercy. Only the tribal battle-cry resounding over and over again.

THE FIRST BORN

by Lewis H. Kilpatrick

Author of "The Evidence of Dreams," "Troubled Waters," etc.

IN THE portico of a gray stone mansion, which overlooked the Kentucky River from one of Frankfort's terraced hills, Dr. Wayne paused to give a final word of assurance to the matronly, aristocratic woman who had accompanied him outside.

"Mrs. Prentice, she's coming along nicely, nicely," he said in a professional undertone. "General condition couldn't be better, considering that this is her first experience. You and your husband have no reason at all to be uneasy. Promise him for me, please, that Gladys shall have the very best care that modern obstetrical science can give her. And remember it yourself. Good-by, ma'am."

Stepping into his car, Dr. Wayne glanced casually down at the river. There, swinging into view around the bend, was a raft of logs, riding the last Spring tide to market. Four stalwart mountaineers were aboard the rude craft, bareheaded and clad in homespun, chanting in chorus an ancient Scotch love-ballad as they manned the sweeps.

Far behind them on a tributary of the Kentucky, where they came from, a wrinkled midwife watched beside the bed of a young mother and her baby. A handmade table near by held a large pair of scissors, a bundle of cotton rags, a turkey-wing fan and a gourd dipper of herb tea. The room was small and meagerly furnished; the floor was uncarpeted, the plank walls bare, and the sun beat scorchingly upon the tar-papered roof.

The girl-mother stirred restlessly.

"I wisht Arch was here," she murmured through bloodless lips. "If the jailer down thar at Frankfort knowed how bad we're a-needin' him, I'm shore he'd let him come home fer a leetle while, anyway. Aunt Sally, don't ye reckon he would?"

The old midwife reached for the turkey-wing.

"Now, Lou Ann, don't spend yerself a-frettin'," she soothed, fanning her. "When Arch gits that letter I writ, he'll do the best he kin. But don't ye hope fer too much, honey. That air State prison ain't a easy place to leave, and the jailer mightn't be friendly to Arch. Ye mustn't reelly look fer him ontil his time's up."

"But—but I want him now!" cried the girl. "I'm his woman and this here's his fust baby. I'm shore he'll come, Aunt Sally, even if the jailer is ag'in' hit." Her tone grew suddenly confident. "Arch he ain't the sort to stay away fer nobody when I'm a-needin' him at home. Aunt Sally, I'm sartain he'll come. Yas—somehow I jest feel hit. I won't fret no more."

And, drawing the baby to her breast, she smiled and closed her eyes.

TWO months later a young man, mending a post-and-rail fence at the outer edge of the few acres that surrounded the shack, looked up from his work at the sound of approaching hoof-beats. He had been whistling the moment before, light-hearted, rejoicing in his freedom

and his ability to labor for those he loved. But now an automatic fear clouded his tanned smooth face, his blue eyes narrowed, and his attitude was that of one abruptly put upon the defensive.

The horseman turned from the dirt road and stopped on the other side of the fence. He was big Clint Hawkins, sheriff of the county, and his own perturbation was obvious from the way he nervously pulled at his blond mustache.

"Arch Balinger," he began without so much as a preliminary "Howdy," "I ain't any gladder to see you than you are to see me."

He paused, scrutinizing the young mountaineer's expression; then continued:

"I've put off making this trip for 'most two months—but now I've got to find you. The warden down at Frankfort knows mighty well that a mountain feller strikes for home after he breaks prison, and he's purty near worried me crazy ever since you escaped. He says that if I don't fetch you back, he'll send men up here who will. What are we going to do about it, Arch?"

There was no unkindness in the sheriff's tone or manner, but sympathy and a frank reluctance to perform a painful duty. Arch knew him for the man he was—fearless and uncompromising when a situation demanded it, but always stanchly loyal to his people, willing to trust and shield them even beyond the legal limit.

Young Balinger rested his elbows on the top rail of the fence and moodily shook his head.

"I was afeerd ye'd be comin' over afore long," he said, staring at the ground. "I knowed I'd have to go back some time. That's plainer to me then hit is to yo', fer I've seen the ways they've got fer trackin' and ketchin' fellers who escape that prison.

"But, Clint—" he met the sheriff's eyes squarely—"I'm tellin' ye honest that I hadn't any notion o' stayin' away fer good. That wouldn't be doin' right. I jest 'lowed to hang 'round here a short spell, ontil I got ever'thing in shape, and then go on back and give myself up. I wasn't meanin' to put yo' er the warden neither to so much trouble."

"Don't let that worry you, Arch." The sheriff glanced beyond him to the weather-stripped shack. "Understand, I ain't blamin' you a bit for coming home. I'd 'a' done the same thing myself if I'd been in your place, and I hate like —— to arrest you. But I got to. There's nothing else for me to do now that I've found you."

He changed the subject.

"Your corn and 'taters certainly are looking prime," he declared. "There ain't a weed in sight. I reckon the old cow's fresh by now and the pigs are fattening. I tell you, things around here have perked up mightly since I come by last. You must 'a' put in a heap of work this Summer."

Arch turned and surveyed the little valley-farm with the satisfaction of a good husbandman. It was all he had, and none knew better than he the sweat that must water its sandy acres to make them produce a year's living. Even with the cow and pigs and a few chickens, the fight for existence was primitive and hard.

"Yas," he drawled, "I ain't leavin' nothin' undone that I kin do. Hit'll keep Lou Ann from havin' to work out in the sun afore she's strong ag'in. That's what I'm a-reckonin' on. Ever' single lick I hit now will save her jest that much atter I'm gone. She'll have more'n a plenty to do all by herself anyway, these next three year," he added with gloomy reflection.

"Why don't you send her and the baby to Harlan County," the sheriff suggested, "and let 'em stay with her folks until you've served your time? They'd be glad to have 'em—and such a plan would make things easier all 'round."

"Naw, hit wouldn't!" Inherent pride broke through Arch's melancholy, straightening his shoulders and stiffening his jaw. "Me 'n' Lou Ann ain't axin' help o' nobody," he affirmed. "When I'm home, I kin take keer o' her and the young'un; and whilst I'm gone, she kin make the livin' right here on my farm. Jest 'cause I played the fool and got into trouble, don't mean we can't still look atter ourselves."

Clint Hawkins smiled, not in ridicule but in admiration of the independent spirit that neither stone walls nor haunting poverty had crushed.

He leaned from his saddle toward Arch, the smile broadening into a grin.

"Look-a here," he said, "you ain't told me nothing yet about that boy. Are you ashamed of being a pappy?"

Arch grinned too, kicked the fence with a force that almost displaced a rail and clutched the sheriff's arm eagerly.

" 'Shamed o' bein' a pappy?" he ejaculated. "Good Lord, man, hit's worth all I got to be one jest fer a hour! I never 'lowed that a sober feller could feel like I do. Afore I seen leetle Tol, I didn't take much stock in young'uns; but now I can't study 'bout nothin' else. Why, I'm so plumb light-headed and stirred-up inside that half the time I don't know whether to roll on the ground and holler er take to the woods and cry!"

Chuckling boyishly, he tugged at the sheriff's arm.

"Come in and look him over yerself," he insisted. "Hit'll give ye somethin' to gas about the rest o' yer life. I swear, thar never was sech a young'un born on Red River. Git down, Clint, and lemme show him to yo'!"

Clint's expression changed and he shook his head.

"Wish I could, Arch, but I better not," he said. "If Lou Ann sees me, she'll know what I'm here for and it'll scare her. You tell her yourself, easy-like, that you've got to go back down there. That's the best idee. I'll drop by later and take a look at the baby."

Arch's shoulders drooped again and a spasm of anguish contorted his features.

"Gosh, I sartainly do hate to leave 'em!" he muttered. "Hit comes harder now then hit did the fust time!"

Then, after a moment, his voice controlled—

"Wal, Clint, when do ye want me to go?"

The sheriff rubbed his chin, squinting upward at the forest-swathed mountains.

"You've sort-a overstayed your time now," he drawled, "seeing as you weren't given none to start with. But how soon will it suit you to leave?"

Arch hesitated.

"Hit'll take me ontil the end o' this week to finish up my work here," he said. "Then Monday I'm bound to the mill with a turn o' corn, Tuesday's 'lection day, ye know, and I would like to spend Wednesday and Thursday jest messin' round the house with Lou Ann and the young'un. Do ye reckon yo' could give me till next Friday, Clint?"

Sheriff Hawkins nodded.

"All right," he agreed. "I'll send the warden a line tomorrow saying I've got you safe in jail, but can't leave the county to bring you down before Friday."

The young man looked at him appealingly.

"But, Clint, ye don't have to take me down," he protested. "I'm aimin' to go back anyway, and hit'ud 'pear like I ain't to be trusted if yo' er one o' yer deputies go 'long."

"That's something you or me can't help." The sheriff spoke crisply, scowling. "I've give you a heap of rope, but it's got a end. When the warden sees you, he'll see me too. That's the law."

He thoughtfully fingered his mustache for a full minute, while Arch waited, silent. The horse pawed the ground impatiently.

"But I'll tell you what we might do," Clint resumed, relenting. "Thursday night you can tramp over to Nada and catch that early morning L. & N., which'll land you in Frankfort about noon. I'll go through to the C. & O. and make it there the middle of Friday evening. There's a boarding-house just across the street from the Frankfort station, and you meet me in front of it at four o'clock sharp. Then we can go 'round to the prison together, and the warden or nobody else won't know the difference."

He eyed the young man searchingly. "Can I count on you to keep your part of that bargain?" he demanded. "You won't fail to be in front of that boarding-house at four o'clock next Friday?"

Arch grasped his hand. "I'll shore be right thar, Clint," he vowed gratefully, "on the minute. Ye needn't be oneasy a-tall. I know the place ye speak of and I won't fail ye."

"May be I can talk the warden into letting you off light," added the sheriff, and touched the horse with his spur. "I've had dealin's with him before. Good-by, Arch."

"Come back ag'in, Clint. Ye're al'ays welcome."

And, after a farewell salute, young Balinger resumed his interrupted labor of mending the fence.

THAT night a full moon gave him light to wield his ax at the woodpile; and when dawn fringed the eastern mountain-walls with silver, he was out in the garden-patch, breaking ground for a row of late beans. Even Sunday brought him no time for rest; Monday he went by the country store, at Bald Knob,

on his way back from the mill, and spent all the money he could spare on clothes for Lou Ann and the baby; Tuesday he walked five miles to his polling place, voting unchallenged; and the next two days passed swiftly, a living dream of primitive happiness, with the morrow yet to come.

Wearing a slouch hat, a cotton shirt without a tie and the only suit of clothes he possessed, Arch strode unnoticed down the Frankfort station platform to the street that Friday noon. But something of the stolid independence of the hillman was lost from his poise, left behind in the early morning darkness at Nada. He now was the legitimate captive of every free citizen he met, and he knew it. There was not a peace officer in Kentucky by this time who hadn't had notice of his escape, with a complete description of his face and person, even of his weight and measurements. The system was thorough, and few defied it successfully.

Yet Arch Balinger was not afraid. However strong the counter-urge, his purpose as expressed to Sheriff Hawkins was sincere; and that purpose was his bulwark against the fugitive's instinct to slink and hide.

He stepped into an alleyway for privacy, and ate the lunch of cornbread-and-bacon sandwiches that he had brought in his pocket. Then, slaking his thirst at a public fountain, he realized that he still had four hours of freedom, but no particular way to spend them.

"Reckon I could go to the graveyard and knock 'round a bit," he thought to himself. "I've heered some mighty great men air buried up thar. Naw," he decided, "I believe I won't. I weren't acquainted with none of 'em. But thar's the new State House—hit beats anything I've ever seen, lookin' at hit from the train in passin'. I'll jest ax my way thar and l'arn if hit's as fine as hit 'pears from a distance."

Knowing something of urban customs, and boldly daring fate, he asked a policeman to direct him to the capitol. It was a tiresome walk to one whose feet and leg muscles were unused to pavements; and, climbing to the upper terrace, Arch sat down at the top of the last flight of granite steps before the main entrance.

Behind him reared the imposing home of his commonwealth's government, with its Ionic colonnades, sculptured friezes and massive white dome lifted to the Summer sky. But, somehow, it had ceased to interest him. He was gazing out over the little city, flanked by wooded hills, whose name had become to him synonymous with captivity. Across the winding Kentucky River, far to his right, was the gray bulk of the State arsenal; and his memory saw in the valley beyond it the walled-in grounds and buildings of the penitentiary.

Icy sweat broke out on his tanned features, and he wiped it away with his sleeve. A dread that he could but dully analyze clutched him. It did not come from the thought of his tiny barred cell, or the monotonous prison fare, which was as good as he had ever been used to, or the daily association with criminals much worse than he. He had adjusted himself to these things and they had their compensations. But the discipline, the consciousness of always being watched, the restriction of freedom—that was what galled his mountain nature, insulting his pride and mocking his love of liberty. And that, after a few more hours, was what he was going back to.

With the dread came a pang of homesickness. He had suffered that before, when he was first brought to Frankfort; but now the painful longing was more acute, challenging the utmost powers of his simple philosophy. An invisible little hand reached up from nowhere and gripped his forefinger. Arch trembled. A girl's pale face moved toward him out of the heterogeneous vista, trusting, devoted, submissive to his will. He shut his eyes and bowed his head. After those iron gates below the arsenal clanked to behind him he would have greater need of such visions. They weakened him now. He tried to drive them away.

Suddenly, actuated by instinct rather than reason, he sprang to his feet. His defensive ear had heard some one start down the steps beside him. It was an official-looking man, but he paid no attention to Arch. Instead he touched his hat and smiled genially to a well-groomed, elderly gentleman who at that moment came around the lower parapet, walking briskly.

"Congratulations, sir!" he called. "Don't blame you for prancing like a two-year old! How's the young colonel? How's the mother?"

"Fine, fine," replied the elderly man,

beaming. "He's at home to visitors today. Go by and see him, judge. If you don't rule that he's the greatest boy ever born in Kentucky, I'll say you have no business on the appellate bench."

Laughing, they met half-way up the steps and briefly shook hands.

"Weighed him yet?" inquired the judge, passing on.

"Of course we have, you ignorant bachelor. That's about the first thing done. He tips the scales exactly eight pounds and three ounces——"

"Hump, that ain't so much. Mine weighed a even ten pound. Jonas Stiles made the guess, and he's the best jedge o' stock on foot in the county."

The old gentleman paused and turned toward the interrupting voice, startled. His heavy jaw protruded a trifle beneath his closely cropped gray mustache; stern lines hardened his cultured features, and his eyes, finely browed and keen, veiled their exuberance with chill dignity.

But, seeing Arch's grinning face, this assumed expression quickly relaxed.

"What!" he exclaimed, understanding. "You have one too?"

"Greatest boy ever born in Kaintucky," boasted Arch, thoroughly at ease. "Why, mister, hit was all his maw could do to hold him in the house over the fust day. He jest naturally wouldn't take to bein' milk-fed; 'lowed he wanted raw meat, and whistled up the dawgs to go ground-hawg huntin'. Afore he was a month ole, she kotched him out behind the barn a-suckin' a jug o' moonshine licker."

"Pshaw, that's nothing!" came the immediate retort. "Prentice was born just last night, and this morning he bit his nurse's finger off because she wouldn't let him go with me to the links. At noon I heard him trying to bribe the chauffeur to drive him over to Lexington for the university ball. He swore he was going to walk if he couldn't get there any other way."

Both men threw back their heads and chuckled. The judge had gone on, and they were alone in front of the white-domed capitol. Unlettered mountaineer and lowland aristocrat, that moment's banter had bridged the gulf between them with the common pride and joy of parenthood.

Arch sensed this bond, and his heart's tongue was loosened in confidence. It was a relief to confide in one he knew would understand.

"Don't hit beat —— to be a pappy?" His tone was awed, not profane. "Jest as often as I'd look at that young'un o' mine, knowin' he was part o' me, I'd wonder how God A'mighty could 'a' made hit happen. Not that I'm what ye'd call religious, mister, and I never felt that way afore; but if I was a prayin' man, I'd 'a' drapped on my knees and give thanks ever' time I took him in my arms."

The aristocrat regarded him wonderingly; then moved nearer and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"Does it effect you that way, too?" he marveled.

"Yas—" struggling for the right words—"hit makes me hanker to be the sort o' feller I ain't, the sort I've never reelly had the chancet to be, a pappy who could p'int to himself and tell his boy to grow up to what he is. But—"Arch avoided the kindly eyes—"I ain't able to do that, mister. Leetle Tol will have to look to his maw fer his virtues 'stead o' me. I done myself wrong by him afore he was even born."

A puzzled frown creased the cultured brow and the hand on Arch's shoulder tightened.

"Young man, who are you anyway? What's your name? Mine's Prentice. You can trust me," he assured him.

A cynical smile flickered across Arch's face.

"I ain't got much o' a name in these parts. I go by a number," he said, and jerked his thumb toward the city. "Hit's a-waitin' fer me down thar in the warden's office—been a-waitin' ever since I run away from the Estill County road-camp. But," he added, "we'll meet up ag'in afore sunset."

The hand slowly slipped from his shoulder.

"An escaped convict?"—bluntly

Arch nodded, flushing.

"What are you sent up for?"

"Cuttin' a man almost to death."

"Were you guilty?"

"Guilty as a sheep-killin' dawg with wool in his teeth."

The older man's expression again was stern, but the sternness was softened by a furtive sympathy.

"Tell me about it," he commanded.

Arch leaned against the stone balustrade, folding his arms across his chest.

"Wal, thar ain't much to tell," he said. "Lookin' back on hit now, hit 'pears foolish; but thar at the dance, I was of a different mind.

"Ye see, mister," he went on, "me 'n' Lou Ann had been wed jest a few week then and I was turrably in love with her. I wanted her plumb to myself and hit riled me to have another man so much as tech her. Tol Everett seen that, and Tol's chuck full o' mischief. So whilst we was dancin' that night, he never missed a chancet to run a set with her. He got Lou Ann that flustered, she didn't know rightly half the time who was her partner.

"I didn't blame her, o' course, but I kept gittin' madder and madder at him. And when he come atter her fer the sixth set, I busted loose and talked up to him purty sharp. Tol he laughed in my face, 'lowin' out loud afore the hull crowd that hit was ag'in' the law fer a man to have sech a good-lookin' gal all to himself. I clean lost my head then, mister, drawed my knife, and, afore anybody knowed quite what I was a-doin', fed hit to him 'round his heart, through his stomick and ever'whar else I could reach.

"Next day they took Tol's measure fer a coffin-box. And fer several week atter that hit 'peared like he'd be needin' hit any minute. His folks would 'a' got me, I reckon, if I hadn't gone to town right off and give myself up to the sheriff. Then, havin' plenty o' money, they lit in, hired a furrin lawyer and made him help prosecute me. Thar wasn't much I could say fer myself in court, and a prison sentence was jest what I expected. I got hit, too."

Prentice spoke impatiently.

"Well, go on!" he snapped. "What made you escape from the prison camp?"

"A letter that Aunt Sally Gabbard writ," Arch's answer was prompt. "Hit said the young'un was about to be borned, the weeds was takin' the craps, thar wasn't nothin' to eat in the house, and the neighbors was havin' to feed and look atter my wife."

His eyes kindled and he stood erect.

"Now when I heered that," he explained, "I knowed thar was only one thing fer me to do. Lou Ann and the young'un needed me a heap worse'n the State did fer a while. I was her man afore I was the warden's, and when I wed with her I swore I'd al'ays pertect and keer fer her. So, one night, I jest walked out o' the road-camp, struck acrosst the mountings, and kept a-footin' hit fer a couple o' days ontil I got home. Thar I turned to and worked, gittin' the farm so I could leave hit to come back to prison."

"You've come back voluntarily?" gasped Prentice, incredulous.

The mountaineer glanced toward a policeman who had taken post at the opposite balustrade and was watching them. The lunch-hour over, other people were ascending the steps, staring curiously in passing.

"Wal," drawled Arch, "I ain't sayin' that if I hadn't wanted to come Clint Hawkins wouldn't 'a' brung me. But ye see yerself, mister, he didn't have to. Jest as I tole him, I never meant to cheat the State out o' hits time. I ain't that low and sneakin'. The warden he confidenced me by makin' me a trusty, and I aim to show him he didn't jedge wrong."

He added simply:

"I'm meetin' Clint at fo' o'clock, in front o' that tavern acrosst from the railroad station, and we're goin' 'round togither. Clint he's high sheriff o' the county, yo' know. He seen hit' ud humble me to be fotched down like a common prisoner, and he's a-doin' hit this way to convenience me."

"Great Scott!"

The older man took off his hat, ran his fingers through his gray hair and muttered confusedly to himself.

"—— if this case hasn't gotten the best of me!" he swore aloud after a moment. "Stabbed a man almost into his coffin because he teased you for being in love with your wife. 'Guilty as a sheep-killing dog with wool in his teeth,' and you admit it. Escaped from a convict-camp to save your family from pauperism or starvation. And now you voluntarily return to finish paying what you believe is a debt of justice to your State, when you probably could be halfway around the world, safe. Young man, if you're telling the truth—and I'm sure you are—you needn't feel ashamed to be any baby's father!"

Arch, his thoughts running in other channels, pulled a cheap nickel-cased watch from his pocket.

"Jest a leetle over two hour more," he

muttered, looking up at the sun to verify the time.

"What about this Tol Everett?" came the sudden inquiry. "Has he entirely recovered from his wounds?"

"Law—yas!" Arch exclaimed. "He's stirrin' 'round sassy as ever. And he's still abusin' his folks fer gittin' me into this trouble. Tol 'lowed he was the most to blame thar at the dance, and he offered to pervide fer my family whilst I'm away. I ain't got a better friend nowhar' now than him. We named the young'un atter him, and I stayed home over Tuesday a-purpose to help 'lect him county clerk."

Prentice searched Arch's smooth face thoughtfully. His own still reflected something of wonderment, but his decisive jaw was set.

He took out a note book and pencil.

"Give me your full name," he said. "Now your home address. Mr. Balinger, somehow I'm beginning to realize that every father has a paternal responsibility toward every child. You won't mind, will you, if later I send a few toys to that boy of yours?"

A mist blinded the blue mountain eyes.

"I'll be mightily obleeged to ye, sir," Arch gulped. "And—and when yo' boy grows up, atter I've served my time and got back home, maybe I kin send him a 'possum-dawg pup."

The old gentleman extended his hand.

"Good-by, lad. Probably we'll never meet again, but I won't forget you. I must get back to my job now. Good-by."

Releasing the hand, after a prolonged grip, young Balinger with blurred vision followed the alert figure until it disappeared through one of the high-arched doorways. For some minutes he stood there dazed, engulfed by a sickening loneliness, feeling utterly cut off from all friendly human contact. Then, turning his back on the towering white dome, he went stumbling down the terraces to the street below.

FOR two hours he wandered aimlessly, taking avenues and alleyways as they came, seeing little that he passed, dimly realizing that he must keep moving else something within him would break. The suspense nauseated and stifled him. The minutes dragged. Thrice he resolved to go at once to the penitentiary and surrender—but he remembered his promise to Sheriff Hawkins. Hard labor, solitary, probably a humiliating striped suit; the leering pity of his fellow prisoners, the armed guards pacing the high walls, the oppressive discipline, official distrust of a returned fugitive—the sooner he faced them, the sooner would come paradoxical relief. These last hours of freedom had grown more unendurable than imprisonment itself.

At a quarter to four he was shambling back and forth in front of the boarding-house. His face was strained and haggard; his feet were blistered, and his legs and the small of his back ached. He had taken off his coat and torn open the neck of his cotton shirt.

There were no trains on the railroad tracks across the street. Perhaps Clint Hawkins had already come, or maybe his train was late. A few more minutes would tell. Arch again looked at his watch. Four, sharp. He groaned.

At that moment a young man, who had been loitering a short distance away on the same block, approached him.

"Pardon me, sir," he said. "Would you mind telling me your name?"

Arch, startled, blurted it out unthinkingly.

"And who are you waiting here for?"

"Sheriff Clint Hawkins. Do ye happen to know him, stranger?"

The young man smiled. "No," he said. "I haven't that pleasure. But you're the party I'm looking for. Here's something that ought to interest you."

He pressed a large envelope into Arch's hand and, still smiling, walked rapidly away.

The mountaineer looked suspiciously at the envelope, cautiously tore its flap and took out two folded papers. The one he opened was a typewritten letter, informally dictated.

"Mr. Balinger,"

he read,

"If you receive this, it will be final proof that you are a man who puts honor above liberty. However wrong you may have been seven months ago, when under the sway of a jealous passion, I maintain that you have now suffered enough, learned your lesson; that there are at least two people who still need you more than the State does; and that——"

Arch looked up at the sound of a familiar

voice. Clint Hawkins, puffing under his weight of flesh, was beside him.

"Three minutes late," he panted; "all because Tol Everett told me to be shore and buy you the fanciest necktie I could find before I took you back to prison. It's just a friendly little gift, he— Gosh a'mighty, Arch, where'd you get that?" Clint exploded, glancing over his shoulder at the embossed letterhead.

"Here's another," Arch said, handing Sheriff Hawkins the second folded paper. "Git the sense o' that whilst I finish this."

The next minute he grinned.

"Listen, Clint!" he ejaculated. "He goes on to 'low that I may think I'm happy enough to bust 'cause I'm a new pappy, but jest wait ontil I see my fust grandbabby. Then, says he, I won't have to die to be plumb both feet in heaven. Hitmore'n beats ——, he says—and he reckons thar ain't narry a grandsire in Kaintucky who'll blame him fer celebratin' a leetle by signin' that air paper ye've got!"

Clint Hawkins was staring, first at the document in his hand, then at Arch.

"You durn fool," he gasped, "do you know who that man is you're talkin' so intimate about?"

"O' course I do," Arch replied. "I met up and had speech with him jest this evenin', but I looks on him as a mighty good friend." And he briefly related the episode.

"This here pardon gets you out of a mean fix all right," the sheriff growled with pretended ill humor; "but now I've got to go around and lie to that warden like a mountain witness. I haven't any friend who happens to be governor of the State to stand atwixt me and the law!"

Pirate Tales from the Law:

KIDD

SALT WATER MONEY

by Arthur M. Harris

SOMETIME in the Autumn of the year 1695 Captain William Kidd, of New York, arrived in the city of London. He came as master of a trading-sloop; he left in the following Spring a commissioned officer of his most gracious Majesty, King William III, on the quarter-deck of what was really a man-of-war.

This was not the first time, however, that Captain Kidd had been in the public service. Said to be the son of a Scottish minister, he became first definitely noticeable in the province of New York, where, sometime before 1695, the grateful council of New York had voted him a gratuity of one hundred and fifty pounds for valuable efforts in suppressing local disturbances, ensuing the revolution of 1688. Not only that, but during England's interminable

IN TAKING these pirate tales from the law recourse has been had to the most authentic sources of the subject—the verbatim reports of the court proceedings in which the pirates here portrayed were prosecuted. So far as we are aware, this is the first popular presentation of the subject of piracy from this point of view. This derivation of these articles makes for the special informative value of the series. You have here the accounts of this picturesque class of sea-brigands as the activity of each has been determined by the examination of witnesses, the arguments of counsel, the instructions of judges and the verdicts of juries. In comparison with these records, the narratives of lay writers on the subject of piracy were frequently found to contain mistakes. Where collateral history has been consulted to necessarily supplement matters not concerned in the trials, the most authoritative has been sought. The technical trials themselves may be likened to maps.

argument with France, he had locked shrouds with the Frenchmen off the West Indies, thus acquiring the repute of a "mighty man" against them.

In fact, Captain Kidd when he thus stepped on to the docks of old London was a substantial colonial, a householder and taxpayer of the town of New York, where, we must suppose, his wife and daughter moved in those delectable geometrical figures, the best circles.

The royal commission of 1696, though, was a novel one in the captain's experience. Briefly, it directed and authorized "our trusty and well-beloved Captain Kidd" to proceed to the coast of India, and the islands of those distant seas, there to extirpate, exterminate, and generally obliterate the horde of disgraceful fellow-subjects of the benevolent William III, who were making those parts a very scandal for piracy.

English-speaking folk have been as much a part of the sea as the white crests of its waves. Like that element, too, they have made for both good and ill. The by-product of England's maritime effort was the sea-robber, a creature as skilled, unfearing and enterprising as his brother who went up and down the highways of the ocean upon his lawful occasions.

In the considerable East Indian commerce ships of many nations were chartered, but if you took a Moorish, an Arabian, an Armenian ship you would have heard the working of it directed by the bellowings of a Devonian, a Londoner, or a burring Yorkshire man. And if while you were aboard the cry of "Pirate" went up, you could be just as sure that that swiftly oncoming menace was driven by a man who called in English to a crew that needed no interpreter.

Two things begot the piracies of the early eighteenth century. One was that the constant international wars prevented any but the most feeble policing of the seas; the other was the condition of lawlessness falling upon the Indian coasts with the collapse of the one-time vigorous rule of the Moguls. Even though government caved in, commerce hardily struggled on, despite that its voyages began in fear and ended by good fortune, rather than by the smooth working of good law. Such ships were fat, unshepherded sheep and inevitably attracted unlawful shearers.

The lay of the land as well as of the water made against the merchant and for the brigand. A thieving craft could steal up a river and wait its opportunity, comfortably provided with wood and water. Particularly Madagascar attracted the plundering folk for there they could not only water and victual, as the saying was, but had a rather busy market for their stolen wares; Madagascar was a land without law, and where, conveniently, the title to personal property consisted generally only of the two hands which at a given moment should be holding it. It was there that the pirates swarmed, so much so that crews exchanged from one commander to another, and left or signed up quite after the manner of legitimate ports.

Madagascar was the despair of the English Admiralty and the bitter wail of merchants great and small. Somebody hit upon a scheme which on its face looked workable. That was the proposition to authorize private persons to proceed to that region to take pirates, their compensation to be the booty which they might salvage from the robbers. This idea did not crowd the cup of commerce with consolation—it was an enormous charge to pay for police work. But what would you? Staringly plain, too, was the chance for the citizen policeman and the outlaw to connive. The idea was tried, and markedly in the instance of Captain Kidd.

Now, Earl Bellamont, whoever he might have been, had at this time been appointed governor of the Province of New York. He was still in London when Captain Kidd arrived. Through a Colonel Livingston, prominent New Yorker, to whom Kidd must have been reputably known, the captain made contact with the earl. Just who proposed the plan does not appear from the record of Kidd's trial, but Kidd, Bellamont, Livingston and sundry English noblemen, who discreetly wore the cloaks of agents, agreed together, in serious contract, to procure, equip and man a ship which should be used for the suppression of East Indian piracy, on the gainful basis of keeping whatever their enterprise found.

To this end they acquired a galley named the *Adventure*, and often spoken of in those days as the *Adventure* Galley. As a trader, the *Adventure* would have been able to carry two hundred and seventy tons of merchandise. You can see from that what

an imposing ship she must have been, especially when, in imagination, placed alongside a modern trans-atlantic liner. She would almost be big enough for a lifeboat on the latter. In those times the last thought of a sailor seems to have been the size of his ship. Perhaps they were afraid a large ship would break in two. Anyhow, they threw themselves in the most matter-of-fact way at the highest waves in the world with what we would consider merely exaggerated rowboats.

Kidd, who represented Bellamont and Company, as master of the *Adventure* bristled her with thirty guns. They understood the economy of space in those days, you may well imagine. Kidd must have been a natural-born packer. Not only thirty guns did he get on board, not only provisions and water for months, with small arms and ammunition as well, but when he left New York on the first run of the cruise proper, he was bedding and boarding some one hundred and sixty men! Whatever else he may have been, the captain was a man who knew his business as a tailor knows his needle.

Bellamont probably only had to ask once for the royal commission to take pirates and their property. As has been intimated, it was made out to the trusty and well-beloved Captain Kidd, and made him a sort of sheriff of the orient seas. In order that he might be a stone for two birds, a commission was thrust upon him to take and condemn French ships as by the law, was made and provided. The thought was that any leisure hour that could be spared from taking pirates might be usefully employed in taking Frenchmen. The British Admiralty was always a great hand at putting people to work.

Of course, if he took a Frenchman he was not entitled to the captive's goods, wares and merchandise. Enemy ships were to be brought into the nearest British port and by the proper authorities condemned. He had a blank signed check only on the sea-robbers' banks.

These things done, Bellamont and Livingston left for New York fat with the expectancy of great garnerings from the pursuit of pirates, and the trusty and well-beloved Kidd, twice commissioned, recruited eighty good and faithful seamen from among the taverns of Wapping and the wet alleys of Blackwall.

II

SPRING'S early smile was broadening to a merry laugh amid the bushes and hedgerows of old England when the *Adventure* drew out of Plymouth for the East Indies, by way of New York. Past the fishing-boats, the west coasters and an anchored man-of-war she slipped on one of the most unusual errands that had ever engaged a ship clearing from that ancient port. It was probably a great morning on which to begin a voyage, with a sparkle on the waters and an edge to the sea air that must have sent the chanty rolling up from hardy throats and put a snappiness in strong muscles that labored zestfully at rope and windlass.

Putting out to sea on a fine morning is one of the peculiar delights of healthy folk. At such a time one does not reckon on never returning—that might be the fate of the other man not ours—yet of the eighty men obeying Kidd as captain that morning many had set their last foot on the soil of home.

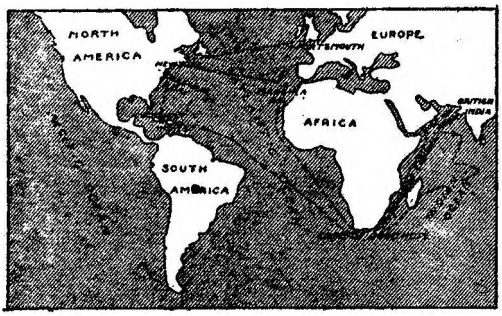
Like the new broom of adage, the *Adventure* bowled across the Atlantic to the western colony in seaman fashion in the quite creditable time of a month. She was not in fact a sound ship. Long before the Indian seas had been harvested her crew were calling her names, such as "Leaky and crazy" and what not. It turned out that she had the qualities of a good sponge, being absorbent at almost every seam and requiring constantly to be squeezed dry with the pumps.

So it was something to reach New York without misadventure. Off the Banks they took in a small French fisherman unlucky enough to get in their way. She was sent into New York for condemnation. This appears to have been the first and last time that Kidd lawfully employed himself under his two commissions. A trifling take it was, to be sure, but it gave Kidd's arrival in New York quite the air of officialism.

Kidd purposed to recruit eighty more men at New York—evidently he esteemed the colonial sailorman as much as him of the mother country. To do this he caused to be printed and set up in various gossip spots about town enticing handbills inviting adventurers. The meat of the call was that there was plunder a-plenty to be taken

from the East Indian pirates, and lots of fun for a stalwart man in the taking.

Men accepted would be placed upon a fair share basis, after deducting twenty-five per cent. of the profits for the ship. He had no trouble attracting a crew. In fact so hearty was the response that there were fears in the colony that its man power would be depleted. Strong arms were



needed against the Frenchman, Indians and whatever other perils might befall an isolated community in times such as those were.

Contemporaries do not speak squeamishly about an element of Kidd's crew. Well, the captain asked no disingenuous questions and for more than one fellow in a tight pinch it was a lucky way of escape. Many others were no doubt decent, respectable men intrigued by the prospect of vividly imagined gains. The less definite the harvest of a speculation the more it seems will men greedily pursue it. So Kidd finally herded some one hundred and sixty men all told on the deck for watch divisions when the *Adventure* was geared for sea.

This outfit was rather more than merely master and men; they were co-partners. Forty shares were to go to the ship and the remainder were to be parceled out in lumps of average weight according to a scale agreed upon by all. Bellamont and Company supplied arms and equipment at a charge.

The late Winter ice still cluttered the Hudson River when the *Adventure* at length turned its prow toward the Indies, Madagascar and Fortune. Kidd, according to the proprieties of the sea, kept himself a cabin, the rest of them shifted in forecastle and hold as well as a hundred and sixty men in a small ship might. With the best they could do conditions of life must have become very serious and in a way invited the heavy sickness that fell upon them when the hot regions of the East were reached.

At the Madeiras the voyage was broken briefly, then off again to India. Summer was torrid on land and sea when the company finally 'watered and victualled' at Madagascar. And now for some months Kidd cruised up and down the coast without any overt act under his commissions, cruised that is with a ghastly plague aboard which tumbled four or five men a day over the bulwarks and into the oily, turgid deep. When one conjectures the sanitation of the *Adventure* it is marvelous that any one escaped the calamity.

What could the captain have been thinking of as he loafed aimlessly up and down the Indian coast? He did business with neither pirate nor merchantman, just seems to have gone here and there as the wind blew him. He may have been acquainting himself with the nature of the commerce of those parts—it may have been a period of debate with him as to whether to persist as a law officer or strike out in the new line of law-breaker. It is hard to think that Kidd arrived at Madagascar with a formed pirate purpose; perhaps they may be right who say that after carefully appraising the situation as a whole he chose the plundering line. However that may have been, Kidd's first major operation in those parts was not against pirates, according to his commission, nor the French, but against merchantmen in their peaceful pursuits.

At this point let us get the lay of the land, or sea as it may happen. The captain, leaving New York shot across the Atlantic to Madeira Islands, from which he right-angled down to the Cape of Good Hope. Swinging around this broad pedestal of Table Mountain he ran up the coast of Africa, probably by way of the Mozambique Channel to Madagascar. He stopped here long enough to refresh his stores then beat up toward India.

Roughly, Madagascar, for Kidd's purposes, may be thought of as the apex of a sort of isosceles triangle, with the Red Sea for one angle and Bombay for the other. Within these boundaries the captain had the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean to navigate, with Madagascar to run back to from time to time.

Sea traffic, such as it was, around the cape was not attractive to the pirates, at least so much as that which passed more

quickly from India through the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea and gulf countries. Compared with Africa, India, of course, had an old and rich civilization and it was for the products of that country that the mouths of pirates watered; the costly silks, linens, spices and gold and silver treasures which had become the traditions of sailors' dockhead stories.

As it happened, however, it was not a cargo going from India which first enticed Captain Kidd, but cargoes going thence from the gulf region, more particularly the fat freight of what was known as the Mocca Fleet.

"Men," said Kidd as he swung the *Adventure's* nose suddenly about at the end of his dallying days in the Indian Ocean, "we are off to Bab's Key and the Mocca Fleet. We will ballast our good ship with gold and silver from this Mocca Fleet."

Thus did Kidd treat his commission as a scrap of paper, to be quite modern, and thus, with a roaring cheer, another terror was added to the troubles of honest commerce.

III

AT THIS port of Bab's Key, then, the Mocca Fleet was being stuffed as the fox stole smoothly upon it from the Indian Ocean. About fourteen ships made up the fleet, going in mass for safety, and chartered by the usual polyglot crowd of Dutchmen, Arabians, Moors, Armenians and so on.

While the coolies sweated and strained and hauled bundles and bales aboard certain odd-looking strangers sauntered about the docks, marking closely the lading of the vessels. These were Kidd's men, spies he had sent ashore to warn him of the sailing of the fleet. With desiring eyes these men watched the caravans pouring in from the interior and emptying their freights into the various holds. Rich merchandise lay spread all about—loot that their doughty commander was to appropriate without a thanky-you and distribute among their tarry palms.

Not only that, but had you gone into the low, round hills that basoned the town, you would have seen lurkers there, watching keenly the work on the fleet. More of the *Adventure's* men, sentineled all around by the captain as a kind of double watch. Kidd, you notice, was a man of method—it was not going to be any fault of his if Bellamont and Company did not pay dividends.

Whether the presence of the spies had disturbed the skippers of the Mocca Fleet is conjectural, but when it did put to sea at length it was under both Dutch and English convoy. And in spite of Kidd's keenness it got away without notice.

Only when morning came above the swelling deep, after two or three weeks of waiting, did the lookout cry the captain from his cabin that the fleet was passing. True enough—there over the horizon the high poops of the Mocca ships were awkwardly wagging away to safety.

Orders immediately showered the decks like the great drops of a thunderstorm. The anchor chain grated sharply against the bows while the shrouds were all at once black with racing men. A few minutes and the *Adventure* began to take the water slowly—sail after sail bellied out and quickly she leaped and ducked and flung herself upon the heels of her prey.

Fourteen ships convoyed by armed Dutch and English guards would seem a large bone for so small a terrier as the pirate boat to grasp. Something must take possession of the reason of English-speaking sailormen when combat promises, for long odds challenge rather than daunt them. Their maritime acts sparkle with just such feats as this—absurd but in a way heroic—and had Kidd had the color of law upon his work, the story of the Mocca Fleet would have echoed in generations of English schoolrooms.

Kidd certainly was grown on the tree that bore Grenville, Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins and the rest, even though it might have been advisable to prune him out. In quite the traditional spirit Kidd hurled his little ship at the great Mocca Fleet as casually as a boy would fling a stone into a flock of sparrows.

It might stimulate the imagination to tell how this extraordinary effort netted big gain, and how the *Adventure* knocked the merchantmen to left and right and plucked the fattest and richest of them from their midst, from which the captain redeemed his tropical promise to ballast his ship with gold and silver. But that would not be the fact. The difficulties were too great. After a brief peppering on both sides with round shot the pirates were forced

to drop back, and leave the fleet, frightened, fluttering but safe, tumbling on for India.

Well, it was a doughty but miscalculated start. The *Adventure* rode high upon the waves instead of bulwark-deep with goodly gain. The good cheer aboard must have flagged. What, they asked one another, what if the whole commerce of this country should be organized into fleets, what would become of poor pirates? Here they were embarked in a trade at great spending of money and effort, come all the way from New York, only to find a great concentration of merchants against them—surely a monopoly in restraint of trade. If this sort of thing kept up, there might be nothing for them left to do but to live up to the terms of the captain's commission and be content to sift the loot from gentlemen of free enterprise who had been on the ground in happier and more prosperous days.

Grumbling doubtless began now, if not before, and was kept up until it ended in a sad mischance to one Gunner Moore, which deplorable accident will shortly be narrated.

KIDD now began to net the gulf for anything he could catch. They hauled in a little Moorish ship, which was but a poor sardine for the whale that had escaped. She was too small to put up a fight and Kidd just bullied her down. From her they took a few bales of coffee, some opium and twenty pieces of Arabian gold.

They also caught a "linguister." It turns out that a "linguister" is not an article of commerce, but nothing more nor less than an interpreter, in this particular case a Portuguese person. Not a bad word that—linguister; language rather more expressive than the scholastic interpreter.

Now you cannot ballast even a two hundred-and-seventy-ton craft with twenty pieces of Arabian gold and, refusing to believe that so poverty-stricken a craft could be in these rich reputed waters, Kidd improvised an inquisition. Some of the unfortunate captives were hung up by the wrists and beaten with naked cutlasses by way of persuading them to reveal the real treasures of their ship. Nothing so far as the record shows came of this strenuous examination. So the pirates turned them loose minus their coffee and opium and the contemptible pieces of Arabian gold.

Rough usage this, but not the ultimate of ferocity with which Kidd has been charged. For all we know, this is as far as ever the captain went in the treatment of captive crews. It may be said as well here as anywhere that there is no walking the plank or other picturesque punishments of fiction. Ships were looted and turned loose, in most instances. Those of their crews who wished to might sign up with the pirates; their officers, if not sent back to their ships, were carried to the Indian coast and dumped there.

All hands were then in no very sociable mood when the incidents of this immediate time closed with the matter of the Portuguese man-of-war.

It was on an evening soon after the taking of the Moorish ship that the *Adventure* saw and was seen by a cruising Portuguese war-vessel. Now there was nothing in Kidd's contract with Bellamont, Livingston and the rest of them which even suggested that he should take any special risk, and of course not a line thereof which could warrant him in lying-to all night to risk the company's property in a perfectly gratuitous battle engagement with a ship of war.

This, however, is just what the *Adventure* did. Instead of taking the hours of darkness for a discreet and quite justified withdrawal from an embarrassing situation, Kidd and his merry men impatiently watched for the first break of light in the east for a go with an enemy. After all the *Adventure* was well and poetically named. Conduct of this kind makes us suppose that gain was less in the eye of these folk than rip-roaring adventuring in lawless waters.

Historically, the Portuguese opened fire first on Kidd. Evidently that swart son of Lisbon had not heard from the Mocca Fleet that a wild demon was loose on the sea. When you read that the Portuguese opened fire first on Captain Kidd, you think at once of a foolish tramp going out of his way, to kick a sleeping bulldog. Mr. Portuguese got a surprizing rattle of shot on his bulwarks and sails. He had opened fire on the one man in all the East Indies that with more exact information he would have avoided.

Kidd closed with him zestfully and for five hours they whanged away at each other, and at noon, all concerned having had

a brisk workout, as the athletes would say, the two ships drew apart and went their ways flinging shot at each other till Neptune shouldered them beyond range. Ten men of the *Adventure* lay about the ship with broken bodies, waiting the perhaps more dangerous ministry of ship's surgeon Bradinham.

Save for the fun of fighting here were three or four weeks wasted. A couple of these had been thrown away hanging around for the Mocca Fleet and a couple more had brought forth only the meager pilfering of a Moorish sloop. It is not unnatural then that when, after the *tête-à-tête* with the war-ship, the craft *Loyal Captain* sighted and seeming to promise worth while gleaning, was allowed by Kidd to go by scot-free without a hand being raised, discontent began to threaten discipline on board the *Adventure*.

IV

WHEN A gang of men with a grievance grumbling usually becomes vocal in a sort of natural spokesman. The kind of people who manned the *Adventure* were probably hard to manage, especially after all hands had committed themselves as lawbreakers. They were taking so many risks that unless profit came in to justify them their complaints would sharply flare up.

They were in front of danger from disease, a demoralising illustration of which they had but recently seen in their own ship; the robbery of ships was also dangerous, while most vivid of all though farthest removed geographically was the picture of outraged authority waiting them at home with the grim paraphernalia of Execution Dock.

Such things make men peevish and if all be endured or braved it must not be for a mere trifle. And, beyond the game with the Portuguese, which all would admit was the one bright spot of the month, nothing by way of a share had been passed around, for the quite apparent reason that nothing had been taken to share.

Why Kidd let the *Loyal Captain* get away is known only to himself. His men did not understand it. They knew he was not afraid; they never doubted in that sort of thing. But there she went—a good sized merchant ship, the very thing they were all out here risking their necks for

Gunner Moore gave tongue to their troubles; Gunner Moore was not afraid, not he, out with it and speak up like men. Why he himself could have shown Captain Kidd a way to take the *Loyal Captain* and that without any risk. There is always a Gunner Moore. Always in all undertakings, lawful as well as unlawful, there is an ever-ready subordinate with better plans and methods than his superior's. Such men always talk, and almost always fatally. Gunner Moore did.

You notice the sting in the gunner's phrase—"without risk." That was the heel by which to prick the demon up in the captain. The imputation of fear so plainly false—no wonder as Gunner Moore was grinding a chisel on the deck, the hoarse voice of his commander growled in his ear—

"Which way could you have put me in a way to take this ship (the *Loyal Captain*) and been clear?"

It was a hot minute for Gunner Moore. Now Mr. Moore, you who are so smart, how would you have taken the *Loyal Captain* without risk? One may feel sorry for the gunner; he has angered the hardest man, in some respects, on or off the coast of Malabar, in whose shelter the *Adventure* was then riding.

The gunner did what almost everybody would have done in the same stress—he tried to put out to sea in a lie.

"Sir," said he, "I never spoke such a word, nor ever thought such a thing."

Gunner Moore was not naturally adapted for the piratical life. With Kidd in that mood and menace before him there was no refuge for him in words. The captain must have surmised that the gunner had been audible to the crew as well as himself, and his particular game made an example imperative. It was really all up with the gunner before a word was said.

Everybody on board was looking on. The sail-maker sat cross-legged with his needle poised; men dozing on the blistering decks awoke to stare; over the yard-arms aloft the heads of the sailors working gazed fixedly below them—it was that intense moment before tragedy.

Captain Kidd pronounced sentence in a voice that everybody could hear—

"You lousy dog!"

Kidd was never short of picture words.

He used few abstractions, everything and everybody he painted in quick, certain colors.

Perhaps, after all, there was a chance for the gunner. If he had meekly bowed assent and driven along with his chisel-grinding it might have been well for him. But it is to be taken that Gunner Moore had passed himself for a man of some character among his fellows. He was a sort of gang leader, apparently; had he not spoken up, had not his attitude been, "Who's afraid of Kidd?" He was, really, but had not imagination enough to know it. And now he was tumbled low before all men with these rough words. To swallow them was to creep about the ship forever humble. He rallied, did the gunner, but instead of rallying with words he should have resorted to the chisel in his hand or a marlinspike. No, he did not understand the piratical trade. He mistook it as a calling in which one could still talk.

"If I am a lousy dog," he cried desperately, "you have made me so; you have brought me to ruin and many more."

"And many more." Notice that—it is an appeal to that gaping sail-maker, those wide-eyed sleepers, those staring men in the rigging. Here am I, it says, your spokesman, telling the captain now just what we have all been saying about him and the way we all feel—stick by me; somebody up there in the yards please drop a block on his head.

Gangs, being untrained and undirected are necessarily uncertain and do not engage their opportunity. A brisk demonstration of sympathy might have saved the gunner; the captain was only one man.

The ship rocked, the wind blew sluggish from Malabar, a cord smacked thinly against the spars and the moment passed.

"Have I ruined you, ye dog?" replied his formidable opponent. "Take that!"

Kidd grabbed a heavy wooden bucket, bound with iron hoops, probably the one holding the water with which the gunner wet his stone, and smote Moore upon the head.

Sails sank his needle back in the canvas, the sleepers turned over on their sides, the men aloft looked a moment solemnly at each other, and the wooden bucket, bound with iron hoops, rolled redly to the scuppers.

There was an opening for a gunner aboard the ship *Adventure*.

MALABAR, that beautiful and fertile strip of the Indian coast which fronts the Arabian Sea for some hundred and fifty miles, was a sort of way-station for Kidd as he worked the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. He ran in and out of this region according to his need for victualing or repairing the now unsatisfactory *Adventure*.

He was not what one would call exactly welcome there. His coming meant a disturbance in the local villages and the liberation upon them of an undisciplined and roguish company. His crew and the natives not occasionally fell out. Very likely the sailors were the beginners of the trouble—so their general make-up of character would suggest. Gunner Moore's death was not the only violence of the *Adventure's* hours at Malabar.

There was, for instance, the matter of the ship's cooper. That artisan got among the natives and never came back to the ship. It was on him the townsfolk avenged themselves in an undetermined quarrel with the pirates of which the cooper's death was an episode. Knowing Kidd as we do, it is not astonishing that he visited his wrath upon the natives in vindicating the life even of a ship's cooper. He swarmed his men ashore, burned down the dwellings of the people and, catching one of the inhabitants, ordered him, with crude formality, shot.

It is a wonder that he did not exterminate the town. Mere ruthlessness, however, would not seem a part of his disposition. In this matter of the cooper there cannot be much question that the final responsibility must fall upon the captain, whose failure to keep order among his men made their acts of provocation possible.

With these two incidents of the gunner and the cooper to lend action to his sojourn, Kidd lay about Malabar until November, 1697 was advanced. He then pulled up his anchor and breezed out to the Arabian Sea seeking what or whom he might devour. The lot fell on a Moorish ship, out from Surat, under the command of a Dutch skipper.

On sighting her, Kidd went to the flag locker where he had a bundle of symbolic aliases and picked out the flag of France, and flung it brightly from his top-mast. The Moor was wallowing along without any

insignia of nationality, but before very long, the *Adventure's* men saw her shake out the French flag. Whereupon everybody laughed in deep chests and kept smoothly to the pursuit.

After some hours of comfortable sailing the *Adventure* pulled alongside the Moor, and confronting her with a row of gleaming cannon bade her stop. No doubt the agitated Dutchman in command supposed that he had been intercepted by a French ship of war, and so, stowing certain ship's papers, doubtless prepared for just such earnest moments, in his pocket he obeyed Kidd's hoarse bellow to come aboard. While his boat was coming over to the *Adventure*, Kidd was arranging a reception for him of an artful kind.

He called one of the crew, a Frenchman, aft and bade him represent himself to be the captain of the *Adventure* in the pending interview with the Dutchman. Just why would soon be shown.

Over the side came the Dutch skipper with a puffed, perturbed face. The Frenchman met him and demanded his papers. With something of relief the skipper must have pulled out the French passes, or clearance papers, he had taken the precaution to bring on the voyage with him. He was relieved because he found himself on an undoubted French ship and happily with French shipping papers—he felt among friends.

No sooner was the French pass spread out than Kidd, standing close by, toying with the handle of his cutlass, roared out in frightening English:

"Ah ha, I have catched you, have I. You are a free prize to England."

Probably the Dutchman told to the end of his days how he was deceived by an English beast and lost his ship in the Arabian Sea. It is likely that he never surmised that his loss was at the hands of a pirate instead of a lawful enemy of France.

This action shows that Kidd was not ready to avow himself a pirate. As such, there would have been no need for the subterfuge of French colors and a French captain; he had force enough to accomplish his intent as it was. The truth of the thing most likely was that Kidd coolly calculated that he could take ships under color of being Frenchmen, or some other excuse, and that even the despoiled vessels would not necessarily know his real status. He seems always to have had an eye to an early return to his accustomed social position. This, if anything, distinguishes Kidd from the typical pirate and so far denies the traditional picture of fiction.

Out of this small Moorish ship the haul was meager. Two horses, some quilts and odds and ends of cargo. He kept the ship with him until his next trip to Madagascar; probably, according to his custom, putting the officers ashore at Malabar, and recruiting his forces with any of the captives who wished to go along with him.

December soon marked a change in the very ordinary luck which had so far attended the *Adventure's* enterprise. A Moorish ketch in this month fell to them, and, rather unusually, after a fight in which one of the pirates was wounded. An inconsequential affair it was at that, her capture being effected by a handful of men from the ship's boat. The captors ran her ashore and emptied out of her thirty tubs of butter as the principal gain. The ketch was then turned adrift.

All hands no doubt wished each other a happy and prosperous New Year as 1698 came over the horizon of time. But January was to step along quite a little before even a trifle was scavenged from the sea. This was a Portuguese, out from Bengal, and laden with butter, wax and East Indian goods. She was taken in without any trouble, and a prize crew put on her to keep her in company with the *Adventure*.

And now a disturbing matter arose for the captain. He was pursued by seven or eight Dutch ships, until he was obliged to call off his prize crew and abandon the Portuguese ship. It was disturbing, not because the captain was afraid of the seven or eight Dutch sail, but it must have indicated to him that his unlawful operations had not been disguised as well as he had wished. He saw then that word had got about the Indian ports that he was a pirate. His suspicions were correct; not only was the truth penetrating to India it was also on its way to England, where a great shock was to befall all those concerned with King William's trusty and well-beloved mariner, not the least so interested was to be that genteel nobleman, Earl Bellamont, Governor of the Province of

New York, whose political enemies, airing the arrangement with Kidd, began to openly accuse him of having a good big finger in the piratical pie.

Thus far off all sorts of trouble was brewing for Captain Kidd as he beat about the spicy coast of India.

V

BUT a most momentous turn of fortune was impending. And it was high time. The pirates were thoroughly fed with butter—out of almost every capture they had taken butter, until it was butter, butter and nothing but butter. The *Adventure* promised to become a sort of floating grocery store, specialising on butter, with coffee a strong second, while, for those with a fancy for dreams, liberal quantities of opium could be passed over the counter.

Bellamont and Company had not gone to considerable expense just to corner the butter market of the East Indies, nor to seriously interfere with the dairy and grocery businesses of those regions. Had they been in receipt of monthly reports from their peculiar partner away out there they would have been both surprized and disappointed and very properly grieved.

The butter era was about to end sharply. The *Quedagh Merchant* did that.

A comparatively large ship she must have been when Kidd first saw her lumbering along, loaded down to capacity. As soon as he spotted her out from the locker came the French flag again, and as a French ship he drew quickly alongside. Probably the usual round shot across the bows brought her up. If so that was the only demonstration of violence which marked the taking of one of the richest ships that ever a pirate gloated over.

As soon as the *Merchant* braced back Kidd sent a boat from his ship to her with orders to bring the captain to him. The boat came back with an old Frenchman grumbling and puzzled in the stern. The skipper of the *Merchant* naturally thought a Frenchman should represent them to a French ship of unknown but threatening attitude. This old man, however, had not been long in talk with the pirate chief before he confessed that he was not the master of the *Quedagh Merchant*, but her gunner. Whereupon Kidd sent the boat off again for the real commander.

One begins to see the value of the ruse of sailing under French colors. Many of the ships on that particular beat evidently had French clearance papers—British trade was probably almost entirely through traffic around the Cape to England—the coastwise business was Moorish, by which was generally meant Arabian, Dutch, French and Armenian. Hence to approach the ordinary coaster, the French colors at his mast, avoided the delay and difficulty of a protracted pursuit, as well as served to disarm them when overtaken.

Whenever they had French passes, instead of showing force to a seemingly French ship, the easiest and most natural thing for them to do was to expose their papers, and so proceed peacefully on their way. Such a ship as this which Kidd was now taking could no doubt have put up some measure of resistance had she been forewarned. Still again, Kidd artfully induced them to show a French pass and then revealed himself as an Englishman commissioned to take just that sort of craft, and thus despoil many victims without discovering his real traffic.

The French pass idea struck Kidd as so good that he worked it not only in the waters of the Indies but in the courts of his outraged Majesty, King William as he entered the valley of death's shadow.

This time the boat came back carrying a swearing Englishman, one Wright, indubitable skipper of the *Quedagh Merchant*. When he set foot on the pirate's deck Kidd brusquely informed him he was a prisoner, being off a French ship, as witness the embassage of the old French gunner. While Wright, who had formerly been a tavern keeper at Surat, bleated about the decks, Kidd sent a crew over to take possession of the *Quedagh Merchant*.

Here they found a couple of Dutchmen, probably the ship's mates, a Frenchman—the old gunner—and a crew of Moors. Another group of considerable importance to the story was that of the charterers of the ship—certain Armenians under the headship of one Cogi Baba. In a little while Kidd joined his merry men.

Here occurred a curious little comedy. So soon as Kidd came up the side, the Armenians rushed toward him and with loud cries and prayers besought him to return them their ship. They thrust at him the respectable ransom of twenty thousand

rupees. Kidd waved their offer away, remarking that it was a very small parcel of money. He then called his men and instructed them to go off on the forecastle and hold a mimic conference together, wherein they were to pretend to vote upon the fate of the captured craft. With solemn stupid faces they grouped off by themselves the while the plaints of the distracted Armenians assailed their hairy ears.

Then owlishly they returned to the quarter-deck where, with great seriousness, they informed their commander that they had voted to retain the *Quedagh Merchant*. Thereupon Kidd turned to the Armenians with a shrug of the shoulder as much as to say, what would you; what can you do with a crowd like that?

Kidd was still playing his strange double game. He was acting the part of an English officer taking in a suspect enemy ship. The farce of the crew's conference was a by-play to divert the Armenians' clamor from one to many heads, and perhaps to show the incorruptibility of these patriotic British seamen.

That done, they appraised their garnerings and shouted with joy when it was discovered that they had found nearly ten thousand pounds worth of valuables. In our money it is difficult to estimate just what the amount would be, but certainly an extraordinary fortune.

Not only that but here was a good seaworthy, commodious ship of very great value herself. All hands were called from the old *Adventure;* pitch barrels were staved in and kicked about her decks, and she went up to the coppery Indian sky in great festoons of smoke.

The *Quedagh Merchant* swung around, her decks now congested with the whole crew of the destroyed *Adventure* and into her compass box peering the firm hard face of William Kidd, mariner, of London, trusty and well-beloved.

VI

NOW, the big question before the house was to dispose of the cargo of the *Quedagh Merchant* to the best profit. To get the officers of the ship and the clamant Armenians out of the way Kidd put them ashore, supposing that that was the last he would see of them. In this he was mistaken.

He stood away in the general direction of Madagascar. But on the way there he touched at one port and another where he entered into vigorous bargaining. He had in view the turning of the *Quedagh Merchant's* cargo into coin, and seems to have managed this quite adroitly. There being no telegraphs or cables the outraged charterers could not, of course, catch up with him. Probably he was suspected but nobody cared very much—there the goods were and sellers who were sharp but not too close.

Their merchanting was interrupted long enough to pick up a Portuguese who got in their way, and once again there was a surplus of butter aboard. At that the pick-up brought them some five hundred pounds—not too miserable a sum in those days or, for that matter, in any day.

Thus keeping an eye to business in both directions, trade and theft, they beat down to Madagascar, probably their principal market.

In this place Kidd was to encounter a veritable pirate, the very chap for whom the Admiralty had commissioned him to look. The story of this contact is quaint.

When the *Quedagh Merchant* dropped anchor in the channel, a canoe was seen putting out from the shore, manned by white men. As Kidd, leaning over the side, watched this craft paddling swiftly over the blue, languid waters he thought some of the faces in it were not altogether unfamiliar. He became certain of this when a motley gang tumbled up the rope ladder and stood on the deck before him, awkwardly twisting their hats in their hands, and saluting by a drag at their long, unkempt forelocks. Why, to be sure, they were New Yorkers, old salts known to Kidd in prior and more repectable years. Well, what did they want?

"Cap'n," began the spokesman, reluctantly stepping a little forward from his fellows, "cap'n, how d'ye do, sir? You remember us, cap'n, don't ye; all good sailormen from New York? Some of us fought the French under ye, cap'n, sir, in the West Indies."

Kidd nodded.

"Well?"

There was a heavy silence. The newcomers looked around them, and somehow took a little heart from a something in the attitudes and manner of the men under their old acquaintance's command. Things just

didn't look like a reputable king's ship on the king's business.

"You be come to hang us all, cap'n" blurted the speaker. "We've heered you got the king's commission to take pirates. Maybe we've fell into a loose step or two, but we aren't regular robbers. Cap'n, give us a chance, and we'll uncover a nest of the kind you're alooking for."

He pointed a long finger toward the wooded shore.

"See that ship, cap'n? That's the *Resolution*, Culliford, skipper, and one o' the hardest ships in these parts."

Kidd turned and gave a long look at the rakish *Resolution*, from this distance even, a vessel evidently of speed and unlawful purpose.

"I'll go back with you," declared Kidd, briskly.

They all returned to the canoe and set off for the *Resolution*. The delegation must have been astonished at the audacity of Kidd's returning with them to a known pirate, with a commission in his pocket to hang the crew of the *Resolution* if necessary, and returning at that with absolutely no protection. They had always known this man for a queer one.

Just as coolly as if he were mounting his own proper ship, Kidd stepped on to the decks of the *Resolution*. The rowers joined their mates in the waist of the vessel and pointed with thick thumbs as Kidd ascended to the quarter-deck, where Captain Culliford, as much puzzled as any one, shuffled forward in his slippers to do the honors. All about went the whisper that the king's man, with power of death, had come amid them.

Kidd and Culliford shook hands and presently sat down together under a sail stretched as an awning against the beating sun. All hands breathed just a wee bit easier. Pretty soon they heard Culliford crying to his negro servant for the materials of "Bomboo." The strain slackened noticeably. Their captain was a match for the king's man. If they had got to "Bomboo" things might yet be well.

Taking the sugar and limes and dark thick bottle the servant had brought to him, Culliford himself, as a gracious host, prepared the drinks. The crew from the forecastle and waist watched until both the august noses were buried in the mugs and then knew that all would be well.

All was, indeed, very well. Up there on the quarter-deck the two skippers were laughing loudly. Said Kidd, as the Bomboo moved within him:

"Harm you, Culliford! Why man, I'd see my soul fry in —— before I'd harm you."

We have said the captain was a great hand at picture words—he could use them even in a sociable way. One thing led to another, the cordiality increased, and when at length Kidd walked a little jiggingly to the canoe he was laden with a very considerable gift of silks from the treasure chest of the *Resolution*. He sent back the canoe with an equal present of shirting stuff, and more, much more than that in view of his commission, the next day he supplied Culliford with two guns.

Now, that was the extreme of disloyalty. Not only not to apprehend the piratical Culliford—that was inexcusable—but actually to make him more efficient in his plundering work was simply intolerable. If by some clairvoyance, his Britannic Majesty's Admiralty could have seen this horrid transaction the very building itself must have tremored.

It may be that Kidd here was acting according to a policy to which the logic of circumstances had compelled him. As soon as the canoe from the *Resolution* came to him, he discovered that his arrival had been a considerable shock to the sailing community of Madagascar. Gossip flies about a port as quickly as about a street. Two things, therefore, presented themselves for his choice; he must either engage the pirates in action or reassure them by companioning with them. Madagascar was to be the last big chance to clean up the balance of the *Quedagh Merchant's* cargo, the final market. As a king's man he could not remain there indefinitely without expecting to be attacked by a combination of lawless men, who saw in him only the king's authority and punitive power. Whether this thought particularly directed him or not, his visit to Culliford, one of the leading pirate commanders there, was undoubtedly in the way of appeasement, and not the mere fraternizing of colleagues.

This situation being smoothed out, Kidd went seriously to work to sell his wares. According to the chronology of the record, this could not have taken a very great while.

And now the day for which they all had

longed came. Outside of the cabin which Kidd, commander-like, always reserved to himself, a long queue was formed that ended in a jostling knot beneath the poop. Pay day had come, and mirth bubbled without restraint.

On the cabin table were piled over one hundred heaps of coin. Stowed away in a locker were the forty shares for the ship. Kidd stood at the table, a great pistol lying suggestively at hand in case of too much excitement, and by the door his personal servant, Richard Barlicorn, kept a kind of order.

One by one the crew came in and each swept into his hat the share allotted him, and with a grin and a duck of the head hastened out to the sunshine, to watch with gleaming eyes the enchanting sparkle of the greatest fortune that had ever come to him in the hard, and sorrowful farming of the sea.

Everything was square and above board. Kidd had kept his florid promise to ballast the ship with gold and silver, and the workman had received his agreed hire.

It must have been a great day for Bomboo.

VII

WHILE Kidd was fraternizing with pirates and turning the *Quedagh Merchant's* cargo into gold at Madagascar, the solemn and serious gentlemen of the British Admiralty heard with pained disappointment how their trusty and well-beloved mariner was behaving himself in the distant seas. They saw gloomily that another experiment in the suppression of piracy had fizzled out, and that the private ship of war was not an approved instrument of police work. That method having been quite the opposite of successful they ponderously planned another which, in the event—though we will not be concerned to follow it—was to prove if anything still less effective.

Their plan might as well be set in their own peculiar language, and showing that oddity of punctutation which made a state paper of this sort three enormous, mountainous sentences:

"By the king, a proclamation.
William R.

Whereas we being informed, by the frequent complaints of our good subjects trading to the East Indies, of several wicked practises committed on those seas, as well upon our own subjects as those of our allies, have therefore thought fit (for the security of the trade of those countries, by an utter extirpation of the pirates in all parts eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, as well beyond Cape Comorin as on this side of it, unless they shall forthwith surrender themselves, as is hereinafter directed) to send out a squadron of men-of-war, under the command of Captain Thomas Warren.

Now we, to the intent that such who have been guilty of any acts of piracy in those seas, may have notice of our most gracious intention, of extending our royal mercy to such of them as shall surrender themselves, and to cause the severest punishment according to law to be inflicted upon those who shall continue obstinate, have thought fit, by the advice of our privy council, to issue this proclamation; hereby requiring and commanding all persons who have been guilty of any act of piracy, or any ways aiding or assisting therein, in any place eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, to surrender themselves within the several respective times hereinafter limited, unto the said Captain Thomas Warren, and the commander-in-chief of the squadron for the time being, and to Israel Hayes, Peter Dellanoye, and Christopher Pollard, esquires, commissioners appointed by us for the said expedition, or to any three of them, or, in case of death, to the major part of the survivors of them.

And we do hereby declare, that we have been graciously pleased to impower the said Captain Thomas Warren, and the commander-in-chief of the said squadron for the time being, Israel Hayes, Peter Dellanoye, and Christopher Pollard, esquires, commissioners aforesaid, or any three of them, or in case of death, to the major part of the survivors of them, to give assurance of our most gracious pardon unto all such pirates in the East Indies, viz., all eastward of the Cape of Good Hope, who shall surrender themselves for piracies or robberies committed by them upon sea or land; except, nevertheless, such as they shall commit in any place whatsoever after notice of our grace and favor hereby declared; and also excepting all such piracies and robberies as shall be committed from the Cape of Good Hope eastward, to the longitude or meridian of Socatora, after the last day of April, 1699, and in any place from the longitude or meridian of Socatora eastward, to the

longitude or meridian of Cape Comorin, after the last day of June, 1699, and in any place whatsoever eastward of Cape Comorin after the last day of July, 1699; and also excepting Henry Every, alias Bridgman, and William Kidd.

Given at our court at Kensington, the 8th day of December, 1698, in the 10th year of our reign. God save the King."

Such was the confession of the impotency of the British authority to clear the seas of the East Indies.

William Kidd, it is to be noticed, is no longer the trusty and well-beloved—he is quite in the outermost dark, coupled with Henry Avery, or Every, for whom no royal mercy was to exert its gentle and benign qualities. It would seem fair enough considering the well-beloved's flippant attitude toward the king's commission.

The proclamation is an exact document of specific effect. There is nothing ambiguous in its terms. This definiteness became extremely important to some of Kidd's crew when they stood in the somber shadow of the gallows.

The meat of the matter was that all East Indian pirates who after April, June and July, 1699, according to certain geographical boundaries, should give themselves up to four particular persons, Warren, Hayes Dellanoye and Pollard were to be admonished and forgiven—all, that is, except Avery and Kidd.

With a bale of printed proclamations Captain Warren and the three gentlemen commissioners departed for the Indies. It does look rather an absurd mission from our point of view. Authority thus said in effect to the outlaw folk, we can't catch you so we will forgive you. Laughter loud and long rose from piraty throats from Madagascar to the Gulf of Aden when Captain Warren passed hither and thither tacking up the pretty sheets of paper. It was the ultimate good joke on government.

Yet not all the lawless ones grinned and went on plundering. It would seem that the jolly Culliford, he of the *Resolution* and the artful mixer of Bomboo, saw his chance to mend his ways and put himself in the hands of the commissioners. By a sort of coincidence he who had lain at Madgascar with Kidd, with Kidd later groaned in the cells of Newgate, though he probably effected his discharge by virtue of the proclamation.

Just where and when the proclamation came to the notice of Kidd's company is uncertain, that it did, however, will shortly appear.

VIII

PARDON or no pardon, proclamation or no proclamation, Captain Kidd was bound to go home. He had finished with piracy, at least in the East Indies.

His active operations had barely filled out six months. His bold attack on the Mocca Fleet befell on the 14th of August, 1697; in January, 1698, he grabbed the *Quedagh Merchant*, loitered down the coast in her, trading here and there, and about the opening of May of the same year came to Madagascar, having picked up a wandering Portuguese on the way. August, then, to January, really saw Kidd's work, and it was in that comparatively short time that he acquired an extraordinary and permanent notoriety.

Yet with the exception of the slaying of Gunner Moore he had committed no act which today would be a capital offense—the matter of the ship's cooper and the native is all too modern in tone. Undoubtedly, the notice which Kidd attracted was because of the connection of Bellamont and certain other nobles with the inception of the enterprise, their political enemies now making gain of their predicament and flooding the town with pamphlets wherein, as part of the game, Kidd took on the lineaments of a sea-monster. Beyond an uncommon boldness, there was nothing in the crimes he committed to foundation such a popular clamor as rose about his name in England.

Those few months of effort, however, had been very profitable. Contemporaries put the extreme value on the *Quedagh Merchant's* cargo at twelve thousand pounds—an exaggeration, the probable figure being about nine thousand. Of this, on the forty share basis together with all he could deduct as charges for supplies and ammunition, Kidd must have obtained some thirty per cent. Not only that, but it appears from the remarks of one of his crew on the trial that the captain by some device or other took back this man's share, and if this man's probably others.

There was a fat three thousand pounds out of this venture; in addition there must

be remembered the value of the smaller pick-ups he had made, so that one way and other, with goods and money the captain must have concluded his enterprise with a good five thousand pounds—about twenty thousand dollars, and in the values of the present day a very considerable fortune indeed. On top of all that he had the ship herself, which was then valued at four hundred pounds, or two thousand dollars.

Today one could hardly get a good halibut boat for two thousand dollars, so you can get an inkling of what the sum of his gains would have meant in these times. On the other hand, some of the articles are cheaper now than they were then, as for instance calico of which he made a good haul. This money is what makes up the bulk of the so-called Captain Kidd's treasure, which fancy has so vividly exaggerated.

Robbing merchant ships as he was, all he obtained was mostly merchandise, largely perishable and hence to be disposed of quickly. To imagine these vessels as carrying unique articles of gold and silverware or pearls and jewels of great price is to be away off the road of historic fact.

For instance, here is a general list of the property that fell into his hands: Opium, sugar, raw silk, calico, muslin, rice, beeswax, butter, iron, horses, quilts, sugar-candy, tobacco, and similar sundries. Eatables such as butter and sugar and so on were shared among the ship's messes, the rest was sold wherever a buyer could be found.

Fighting and taking ships were really incidental labors for these pirates. There was a great amount of hard, plain stevedore work to be done shifting these cargoes from ship to ship and from ship to shore. From August onward there was little loafing indulged in. What with working the ship, sometimes two of them, sorting and arranging cargoes the sailors were at it constantly, while we must imagine the captain enmeshed in the ardor of close bookkeeping long after the lantern had been set up in the stern.

In all of the record of the proceedings in the Old Bailey there is nothing said of any one being killed in combat, either with the capture of ships or the engagement with the Portuguese man-of-war, on either side.

And now the captain was content. Save for the complaint of Darby Mullins that the captain took his share away from him, the crew also seem to have been satisfied. After the division Kidd let it become known that he was leaving the way of the law-breaker, and, according to his own account ninety-five men thereupon left him, almost in a body. Incidental attrition later on took more of them, and when at last he turned the nose of the *Quedagh Merchant* homeward barely enough men remained with him to work the ship.

IX

ALTHOUGH Kidd arrived at Madagascar in May of 1698 it was not until the turn of the next year, and probably well into that year before he set sail on his stolen ship for home. It must have taken him quite a time to be rid of his merchandise and to pay off his men. After that, short-handed as he was, he seems to have attempted no recorded piracy.

It is quite possible that while he still lay in the Mozambique Channel, Warren and the three benign peace-bearing commissioners came around the Cape and up the coast, and that before he left those waters he was acquainted with the character of the royal proclamation. Or it may have been that it was after his return to New York that Kidd first learned that he was a marked man.

In June of 1699, after an absence of a little more than two years, Captain Kidd arrived in Delaware Bay. But not in the *Adventure* and not in the *Quedagh Merchant*. He came in a little sloop, with a crew of about thirty-five men on her articles, named the *St. Antonio*. What had become of the *Quedagh Merchant*?

That ill-fortuned ship was snugly stowed and secreted away in a solitary creek of the West Indies. There he had hidden her until such time as he could return and bring her out—that means, until the storm of which he must have felt the first blowings at the West Indies, if not at Madagascar, had passed over. He brought back with him of the old *Adventure's* personnel barely one-fourth, probably not more than twenty-five or thirty men. One man, Hugh Parrot, who came in the *St. Antonio* we know from his own account was recruited in Madagascar and replaced an original adventurer. So it must have been with others.

Hugh Parrot's brief autobiography as he

gave it to the court may be glanced here as typical of the sea folk who homed in Madagascar. He said he "sailed out of Plymouth in the year 1695 in a merchantman, bound for Cork, in Ireland, there to take in provisions; thence to the Island of Barbados; and in sight of the island of Barbados I was taken by a French privateer, and carried to Martinico; and thence coming in a transport ship I was brought to Barbados; there I shipped myself in a vessel bound for Newfoundland, and thence to Madeiras; and then I went to Madagascar, and there I staid some short time after, and came in company with Captain Kidd; and then the commander and I had a falling out, and so I went ashore at that island. And understanding that Captain Kidd had a commission from the king, I came aboard Captain Kidd's ship."

Romantic words—"I came aboard Captain Kidd's ship." How they quicken the pulse of old, sober-sided fellows such as we are. Suppose we had sauntered about old New York and had read his appeal for men to go off to the Indies? Or been in Madagascar and had a "falling-out" with some blockhead of an old merchant skipper, and seen Kidd and his bully boys swagger by? Eh?

Delaware Bay did not detain Kidd long. He slipped the little *St. Antonio* out of there and put in at Oyster Bay, from which he now began the most difficult job of his life—to rehabilitate himself and yet come out of it all a rich man.

He and the remnant of his crew flocked openly about the old town. Governor Bellamont was off in Boston. And now Kidd began to get the full blast of his unsought notoriety. He was told that the mother country and the colonies, yea, even the seven seas were vibrant with the name of Kidd; that, in the language of that day, he was everywhere "published a pirate," for whom there was no day of grace or pardon.

Quite in the spirit of New York pirates, ancient and modern, he sought out an adroit lawyer, one Emmott, a man then at the head of his profession, as the saying is, though that did not mean, any more than it does now, that he shone by the purity of his principles; the breadth of his learning, or the transparent propriety of his manners. Pirates can't use that kind of lawyer. Seriously, we do not reflect on Mr. Emmott individually; we know nothing of his morals, and he was indisputably a leader of his bar, appearing in the most important litigation of his time. Whatever his character, he engaged himself to assist the projects of Captain Kidd.

X

BOSTON was having a hot Summer. The noble governor was taking the air, such as there was, with his wig laid off for coolness, and his decorated coat carelessly open. No doubt he gazed at the dusty road, the blistered frame buildings and longed for the temperate downs of Sussex and the fresh, green lawns of his ancestral mansion. How afflicting that a noble earl should be subjected to heat and cold just like a wretched porter!

The entrance of a negro servitor to announce a visitor did not refresh the excellency. Just then the last man he wanted to see was he whose name had been brought in. The governor and lawyer Emmott did not get along together very well. It is not hard to understand the tribulation of a ruler whose technical knowledge of the art of government was probably weak, at the hands of a turbulent, sharp and well-informed colonial attorney—the intelligent, persistent and irritating mouthpiece of the perpetual discontent of the colony.

Whether he would or no, it was Emmott who was without soliciting audience. He was ordered admitted. One simply can not turn the Emmotts away—especially when one is a governor, somehow such fellows seem to have an impish art of getting the gubernatorial attention whenever their cheekiness suggests it to them.

Imagination may perhaps reconstruct the interesting interview.

Enters Lawyer Emmott, his bright eye appraising at once the mood of the man in the seat of authority. But Emmott is not half-saucy now; in this matter he is not backed by the sturdy burghers and supported by a law whose exact application he thoroughly knows, while as thoroughly knowing the glazed ignorance of his opponent. He is now after a private fee in the service of a private client. His tune, therefore, is somewhat different.

With a bow and a most respectful attitude the lawyer carefully unwraps a package which he has brought with him. From this he seems to take a ball of snow, which,

with a most insinuating smile, he shakes with a twist of his hand and which before the astonished Bellamont, cascades over the back of a chair as a shawl of the rarest workmanship and material.

"A present for Lady Bellamont," says Emmott, with another obeisance.

What can be the fellow's game now? Bellamont rose and walking across the room allowed the shimmering texture to ripple through his fingers.

"A present for Lady Bellamont—" It was a wonderful thing; Bellamont can see that.

Emmott steps up as close as politeness permits and glancing about artfully whispers, "From Captain Kidd," and throws his head back with a wide smile like a doting parent playing the rôle of Santa Claus.

"Kidd!" cries the earl. "Kidd!"

Yes, the old partner of Bellamont, Livingston and Company had turned up. All sorts of notions chase themselves through the governor's brain like hare and hounds, and chiefly he is afraid; he fears this notorious colleague of his has shown up to be the ruin of them all. Why on earth didn't the fellow stay out in the East Indies. To Emmott this is as plain as the ripple on a smooth pool of water.

He rubs his hands one over the knuckles of the other and looks all sorts of meanings.

"An incredibly prosperous voyage," he murmurs, "incredibly. A mere trifle—the captain wishes to send Lady Bellamont something really worth while."

He almost sneers at the magnificent shawl.

The governor sits down and gazes out over the harbor. Now, it is probable that if the notorious partner had shown up with nothing but a story of hard luck the governor would not have sat down in just the way he does; but a partner coming back, even with a sooty reputation, but stuffed with treasure—well, one must think the matter out. There was one's original investment in the old *Adventure* to be protected, one must remember.

Emmott continues:

"The captain feels deeply chagrined to find this unjust hue and cry made about him. It is a great mistake. He can explain all; and he suggests that the governor see that this irritating matter of the piracy charge is disposed of so that they can proceed to an accounting as all good partners should. Really, he has been absurdly fortunate in his East Indian enterprise."

They talk the thing over indecisively and without committal on either side, and the outcome of it is that the governor decides that he will see his errant and erstwhile partner in person. With this decision Lawyer Emmott backs out of the room and hies back to New York. So far so good.

XI

BEFORE going to Boston to see Bellamont Kidd did that which has somehow so caught the imagination of artists and fictionists; he ran the sloop over to Gardiner's Island, at the east end of Long Island Sound and there buried a considerable portion of his money and finer articles of plunder. Hence arose the great yarn of the pirate's buried treasure. Like all the rest of Kidd's doings this is wildly exaggerated. What there was was all practically recovered by the colonial authorities. Yet the myth persisted for centuries.

A writer who considered himself conservative speaks of Kidd bringing home twelve thousand pounds. This is a modern computation, but it does not agree with our figures. With all his scheming the captain's subordinates got more than half of the takings, and if Kidd got twelve thousand pounds it would mean that in all thirty or forty thousand pounds were gained by those few months' work in the Indian seas.

It is all way beyond the facts. Admittedly, the *Quedagh Merchant* was the one considerable haul and according to the valuation of the government at the time, ship and cargo all told were not worth more than five thousand pounds. A recent writer even represents the *Quedagh Merchant* alone as being of the value of thirty thousand pounds! In the indictment upon which Kidd was tried that ship is said to be worth four hundred pounds, which is more like it. The captain did very well, as we have said, if he came home with a good five thousand pounds.

As well as communicating with Bellamont, Kidd put himself in touch with his other partner, Colonel Livingston, and the colonel became very much excited over the prospect of cutting a pretty fine little melon. If the *Quedagh Merchant*, a respectable and capacious cargo vessel, cost four

hundred pounds, the *Adventure*, a "crazy and leaky" craft, fit only for the patrol work intended for her, could not have run her owners more than three hundred pounds, ship and furnishings. That would leave some forty-seven hundred pounds to be divided. Four or five partners at that rate might expect nearly a thousand pounds apiece for chancing fifty or sixty pounds at the beginning.

And if instead of four or five men sitting in at the split, two or three, or better one or two shared the pot why so much the better for the lucky one or two. That notion occurred to Livingston, to Bellamont and to Kidd.

So the captain went on to Boston and some of his men with him.

Bellamont, in the mean time, had been obliged to call the council together to discuss the fact that a law-breaker was at large and unaccounted for. It was a formality the earl had to observe to preserve the pure bloom of his own official reputation. With the power that was then vested in governors, the council meeting need have been no great difficulty in the way of an arrangement between friends.

Just what happened in the interview between Kidd and Bellamont is not recorded, but they began to dicker. All the pirates were quite at liberty, making themselves thoroughly at home and with all the air of honest sailors returned to spend their money and take a respite from the arduous sea.

Suddenly the wind changed. Why it so did we can only conjecture. But a letter from Bellamont is preserved in which he remarks that at about this time Livingston and Kidd were acting very "impertinently" about the money and valuables that Kidd had brought home.

Does "impertinently" mean that Bellamont suspected that his two partners were conspiring to deprive him of his share? That might well be. However, it is not fair to insinuate the governor was remiss in discharging his duties as a magistrate on the skimpy chronicle which has come down to us. We can say, however, that, so far as we can make out, he did not act with that decision which the crimes charged against Kidd would seem to require. This dallying about and questioning, privately and before the council, permit implications that the governor may or may not be actually responsible for. The whole affair does not look regular.

Then, again, Bellamont, who was sharp enough for most general affairs, could plan something like this; throw Kidd into jail, thus clearing himself of the talk of complicity which had been gathering since his connection with the pirate had become known, send him home to England for trial, and with him out of the way, attend to the matter of the loot, against which he could make a claim by virtue of the original commission to Kidd, supported by the political strength which he and his noble friends at home could exert.

Whatever might be the fact, the governor's equivocal conduct stopped with the discovery of Livingston and Kidd's "impertinence" in the affair of the spoils, and Kidd, with all of his crew who could be grabbed, were stowed away in Boston jail. Before that happened a number of his men had slipped across to the Province of Jersey and surrendered to Colonel Bass, the governor, in the spirit of the king's proclamation, within the time therein provided, but to none of the persons therein particularly named as empowered to receive such surrenders.

In December, 1699, the pirates were sent to England in the frigate *Advice*, and on May 9, 1701, just about five years after leaving Plymouth, they went to trial for their lives in the historic Old Bailey.

XII

CAPTAIN KIDD and nine of his men arrived in Newgate gaol from the colony in February of 1700, and lay there for over a year until their trial. These nine men were those who surrendered to Colonel Bass, Governor of what is now New Jersey. What disposition was made of the rest of those who came in on the *St. Antonio* does not appear.

Kidd's arrival brought to a focus a sharp and unsparing struggle between the two great political factions of the day, and the Government was rocked in its seat by the exposures which were made of Bellamont and other friends of the administration's connection with the pirate who was talked of from Land's End to John O'Groat's. During 1700 Kidd appeared several times before the House of Commons, and a contest was waged in that forum over his

reputed treasure. A measure was introduced by the opposition providing that the commission to Kidd to take pirates and keep their effects and plunder should be illegal as void, and was only lost by a thin majority.

From this it may be supposed that Bellamont and the partners got hold of the swag. Not that it did the noble earl much good for he died at about this time. However, the commissioning of the *Adventure* did not prove such a gain to the opposition as it hoped, and the matter was allowed to slide when the House recommended Kidd for common criminal trial.

Under modern circumstances, this trial would have been a very close, keen struggle. The accused would have been able to engage the most expert counsel, who might be expected to make the prosecution exert itself in the matter of proving its charges, not an easy thing to do from some angles.

There were five trials upon six indictments, one for the murder of Gunner Moore and five for acts of piracy. Kidd was alone, of course, in the trial for murder; on the charges of piracy, he was in the dock with his nine seamen.

The murder trial should be carefully noticed, in view of the modern vogue for exonerating Kidd of all guilty acts in the Indies. Those who attempt to show that Kidd was "judicially murdered" as the result of a political plot carried on by factions opposed to the noble gentlemen who backed the Kidd enterprise, must prove this murder trial to have been unfair, for if it were not, then Kidd was liable to the death penalty regardless of the crimes of piracy.

To clear himself, Kidd called three of his own men in an effort to show that he slew Moore as Moore was in the act of leading a mutiny; in other words, what we would call justifiable homicide. But his own witnesses proved that the mutiny concerning the *Loyal Captain* occurred from two to four weeks before the death of the gunner—a fact which in modern law would have sufficed to convict Kidd—there being no "immediate" emergency, as our statutes would say. No modern court would upset the verdict of the jury who tried Kidd for murder, on the ground that it was not supported by the evidence.

With the bewhiskered seafarers in the dock before him, the clerk of arraignments of the Old Bailey arose and hurled eighty clauses at the accused—eighty or more clauses, with no longer pause between them than a semicolon. It may be submitted that this is no fair way to come at a man whose method of combat is entirely different; who thrusts, for instance, with a cutlass instead of a verb; hurls round-shot in place of mere nouns, with a wooden bucket, say, for purposes of punctuation. A fine fellow this clerk of arraignments with his wig and gown and fat, subservient bailiffs about him! But put him on the tipsy decks of the *Adventure*, and, mark'ee, that would be another story. So, perhaps, the captain thought, as he stood up before this broadside of words.

If English justice is swift in these days, it must have been greased lightning in the days of William III. Half an hour after the grand jury met and returned the indictments, Kidd went to trial before the petit jury, and three days sufficed for all five indictments.

A battery of prosecutors shelled the accused. The crown was represented by Mr. Knapp, Dr. Newton, Advocate of the Admiralty; Sir John Hawles, Sir Salathiel Lovell, Recorder; the Solicitor General and the Attorney General. On the bench, sometimes ably assisting the prosecution, Baron Gould, Baron Hatsell, Justice Turton, Justice Powel and Chief Baron Ward, who divided the job of presiding in groups of judges.

Now, in those days one accused of crime was not allowed the assistance of counsel on matters of fact. On a pure question of law he was permitted to consult an attorney. This was just the opposite of what, according to a more enlightened jurisprudence, it should have been. Perhaps the extraordinary importance of the real science of evidence had not occurred to our forefathers. Great injustice was the result of thus handicapping a defendant. Kidd and his nine colleagues had to carry the big job of defense unadvised.

The state used just two witnesses, Palmer and Bradinham, both old Kidd men who were turned king's evidence. Palmer had been a common seaman on the *Adventure* and was called by Kidd a "loggerhead;" Bradinham had been surgeon aboard, and was accused by Kidd of being a lazy, thieving, perjured rascal. Every man was running for his own neck then and no one could afford to be too particular as to how he saved it.

All of the piracies we have set down, as well as the murder of Moore, came from the evidence of Palmer and Bradinham, somewhat corroborated by the expressions of the nine sailors who were not delicate to save their commander in this pinch.

No time was lost in getting a jury. When Kidd objected to being tried by those who had convicted him of the murder of William Moore, on his other trials for piracy, they were cleared out of the box and another jury promptly put in. It all went at a gallop. The jury in the murder case brought in their verdict while the first trial for piracy was in process; it took half an hour each for the jury to render their verdict on the piracy indictments. The lengthy speeches of the learned gentlemen for the Crown took up as much time as anything, with the summing-up by the judges a good second.

It must have been a great day for Cogi Baba, the Armenian, and one of the owners of the *Quedagh Merchant*, who appeared in London at this time to push the punishment of his despoiler. Yet he was not used at the trials—a noteworthy omission.

Palmer and Bradinham were subjected to no cross-examination save that of Kidd. They were somewhat mixed up on their dates and the captain made the most of this, but on the whole his questioning must be regarded as quibbling.

Things looked dark for Kidd and his defense did not cast very much light upon the situation.

XIII

KIDD'S defense may be pieced together from his own words as it appeared, not as an orderly presentation of his position, but as comments upon the answers of the witnesses and interjected explanations during the proceedings. It was not without ingenuity.

"I had a commission," he said in effect, "to take the French and pirates; and in order to do that I came up with two ships that had French passes both of them. I called all the men a-deck to consult, and a great many went aboard the *Quedagh Merchant*. I would have given that ship to Cogi Baba again, but the men would not; they all voted against it. They said, we will make a prize of her; we will carry her to Madagascar. Palmer and Bradinham have heard me speak of the French passes taken from the ships. The *Quedagh Merchant* was under a French commission. Her master was a tavern-keeper at Surat. I was not at the sharing of the goods taken from her; I know nothing of it.

"I did not take Culliford because a great many of my men went ashore; the statement that I gave him guns and presents is only what these witnesses say. I was not aboard Culliford's ship. I have some papers, but my lord Bellamont keeps them from me; that I can not bring them before the court. I never designed to keep more company with Captain Culliford than with Captain Warren. I have many papers for my defense if I could have had them; my French passes which my lord Bellamont has. I could not condemn the ships according to law because of the mutiny in my ship. Bradinham is a rogue; he shared in the goods and robbed the surgeon's chest. He knows nothing of these things; he used to sleep five or six months together in the hold.

"The men took the goods of all the ships taken, and did what they pleased with them. I was never near them. They lay in wait for me to kill me. They took away what they pleased and went to the island; and I, with about forty men, was left in the ship and we might go whither we pleased. I will not ask the witness any more questions; so long as he swears it our words or oaths can not be taken. Palmer is a loggerhead. Ninety-five men deserted my ship, and went a-roguing afterwards.

"I was threatened to be shot in the cabin if I would not go along with the villains. This was the reason I could not come home. They tried to burn my ship. When they deserted I was forced to stay by myself and pick up here a man and there a man to carry her home. Mr. Bradinham is promised his life to take away mine. It is hard that a couple of rascals should take away the king's subjects' lives; they are a couple of rogues and rascals. It signifies nothing for me to ask them anything. They have perjured themselves in many things; about the guns given to Culliford, that is one thing; he swore I gave them four guns yesterday, now he says but two. Then he says the ship went from Plymouth the beginning of May and before he said it was in April. I have been sworn against by perjured and wicked people."

By way of defense to the murder charge, he alleged that there was a mutiny on

board, of which Moore was a leader, and the trouble ensued from that fact. He is borne out in this to some extent by Hugh Parrot, not a friendly witness, who averred that the seamen had taken up arms against their captain in the *Loyal Captain* crisis.

He called a couple of old salts as character witnesses who had fought by his side against the French and who testified that he had been a doughty man.

As for the nine common seamen their geese were more quickly cooked. They only defended by pleading that they had surrendered under the king's proclamation, to which the judges replied that inasmuch as they had not given themselves up to Captain Warren, or any of the three special commissioners, they were not within the terms of the instrument, and could only hope their surrender might at this time provoke the king's clemency. Which was but dubious cheer. Three of them showed they were on board as servants of particular persons and not as sailors working the ship, and these were cleared.

After very short absences the juries at each trial returned verdicts of guilty as charged against all except the three servants.

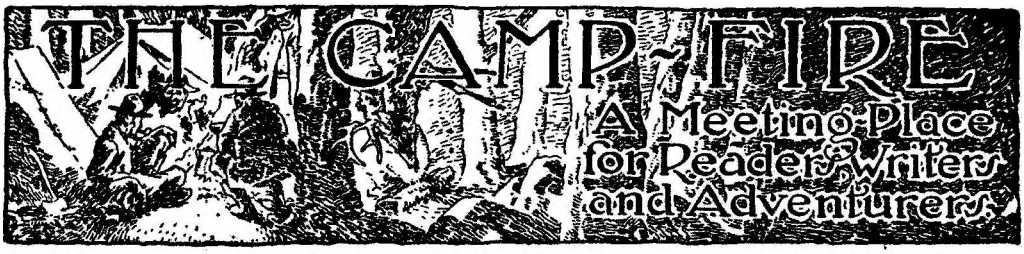
Thus the Captain Kidd of fiction disappears, but not so completely as those who would have us believe that he was not guilty of piracy at all. His defense suggests a state of things on board his ships which is probably true, but the advantage he might have gained from such a showing is weakened by several circumstances.

The state could have conceded his claim that the ships he took were under French commissions, and they had French passes which were then in the possession of Earl Bellamont in New York. It might even have granted that under the compulsion of his crew he was prevented from bringing them in for condemnation, as required by his commission. Still, the significant thing would remain that he made no attempt to account for his share of the cargoes, which he did not unequivocally deny receiving.

His commission to take pirates required a careful and exact account of every ship captured, her cargo, its value and all other details, to say nothing of French ships, whose condemnation was lifted entirely out of his hands. He did not attempt to explain all these irregularities. We are considering strictly the matter adduced on his trial. When we go beyond the record of that, and see, as we have, his conduct on his return home, it is clear as daylight that he was exercising over the property taken from the alleged French ships a private ownership entirely incompatible with this defense.

If the *Quedagh Merchant* was under a French pass, as he asserted; then that portion of her cargo which he brought to Oyster Bay in the *St. Antonio* was neither his nor Bellamont's, nor Livingston's, but the Government's. No, the thing doesn't seem to hold water—nobody concerned in the whole affair seems to have been straightforward.

And so within a week of his conviction, Captain William Kidd was hanged at Execution Dock, on the margin of the Thames, where sailors setting out for the far places of the earth thus received England's farewell admonition that honesty is the best policy.



A FEW words from Frank C. Robertson in connection with his story in this issue:

Hatch, Idaho.

I've stuck close to the three occupations which I am most familiar with for the setting—homesteading, cow-punching and sheep-herding.

"The Sheepgrower's Association," under another name, did make a very real fight against lawless cattlemen in the range wars of several years back. Many readers will perhaps identify the Goldfield Jack referred to in the story with the notorious Diamond Field Jack who was accused of killing a number of sheepherders. Diamond Field Jack, however, was finally turned loose after having been several times convicted. His was one of the most famous legal battles ever fought in the Inter-mountain country.—FRANK C. ROBERTSON.

THE letter from Wm. Madans at our August 20th Camp-Fire, protesting because some of our writers still use the terms "Boche" and "Hun" and breathing Hun hate and threats against America, brought forth a storm of red-hot replies. I'd say Mr. Madans is a very poor propagandist for his cause. He kindles a wrath that will make it sort of hard for all Germans who still cherish the Hun spirit.

Most of us needed his letter as a warning against the enduringness of the Hun spirit, though he himself is not important. There are many Germans, here and in Germany, who are not his kind. In this country many a German-born or German by descent proved himself as good an American as anybody when the crisis came. But there are also those other Germans who were and are and will continue to be Huns. They are a menace not only to this country but to the peace of the world.

THERE is quite a good deal to think about. The Germans on the whole are by nature a kindly folk. The Hun is a manufactured product, deliberately fashioned by a deliberate policy of "blood and iron" into a ruthless and inhuman beast. Years ago a minority in Germany—the junkers, the military caste—laid plans for world-conquest, "*Deutschland über Alles.*" They had to have the German people to do the conquering with. But the German people, as a whole, had no desire for world-conquest and were not by nature sufficiently hard and brutal to be the kind of machine needed for trampling all other people into the dust. It would not be enough to equip and train them for war—that would be enough for defensive warfare against invasion, but not enough for the far bigger job of conquering the world at large. The German people were not sufficiently "blood and iron" to serve the junkers' purpose.

"Very well," said the junkers, "we'll *make* them sufficiently blood and iron for our purpose. It will take a generation or so but we'll do it." They did. By education from the cradle up. By systematic, thorough, unrelenting education. They saw to it that the German people drank the doctrine of ruthlessness with their mothers' milk, breathed it from the air, absorbed it from every contact of life. Just as any of us could take one baby and in the course of years make a devil out of him, so did they take a whole people.

Therefore, now that the war is three years past we still have Wm. Madans and a host of other Huns. If it was not born in them, it was bred in them, and, being bred in them, it stays in them. If some Germans did not absorb the blood-and-iron doctrine or merely tolerated it, plenty of others had soaked it in for keeps. It had been educated into Germans from birth, molding all of them for a while and part of them until they die.

Huns had been made out of Germans. By *systematic education.*

Well, Americans, if a whole nation of people can be educated into a different kind of people, why can't we do it in our country? Can't we do as much as the Germans can—and go them one better? If they made themselves into worse citizens, why can't we make ourselves into better citizens? By

systematic education. Education in the real meaning, the real spirit and the real practise of real democracy. God knows we need that kind of education.

Think it over.

There is not space for all the splendid replies to Wm. Madans' letter, but here are pieces from two of them:

Phœnix, Arizona.

Some of the soldiers may have exaggerated a little about some of the things that happened while they were away in the Army, but if more of the people could have seen some of the children that the "so called Huns" had worked over, this country would never have any confidence in or anything to do with a German the rest of their lives. As you say, all Germans are not like that, but all of them that are of this fellow's type should be thrown out of the country or in jail.—C. K. McClure.

Kansas City, Mo.

America is the place for Americans and Americans nly. Germany is the best place for Germans; talians are probably more welcome in Italy than elsewhere and the same thing goes for Greece, Armenia, Russia, France, England and all the rest of them.

No man, be he prince or plebeian, plutocrat or pauper, priest, politician, clergyman, craftsman or anything else, can be both American and something else. He is either American or Anti-American. There is no such condition as "un-American Americanism."

ANTI-AMERICANISM increases in the direct ratio with decrease in strong, red-blooded, heartfelt Americanism. And, thank God, there are yet enough of this class of Americans to leaven the great conglomerate loaf of humanity in this country if we all keep everlastingly at it and shut off the inpouring horde of undesirable aliens of which this fellow Madans is one.

To some people the picture of America as a "Great Melting-Pot" may be romantically beautiful. It is a lovely dream for the idealists, but nothing more. It certainly is not practicable, because its very principle is opposed to all natural laws. Any thinking person knows that a very little excess of cold metal will congeal the whole mass in any melting-pot and that unless we put a stop to immigration we will find Americanism completely submerged and annihilated under the influx of countless aliens.

No, thank Heaven, all Germans are not like this one and many good Americans are of German stock. Some of the best boys in my outfit in the army were Americans of German descent. But we do not need any more Germans, or Greeks or Italians or others from the outside and the sooner we Americans realize this, the safer our country will be for ourselves.—Harold R. Laudermilk.

Is a man like Wm. Madans a benefit or a damage to this country? Then why keep our doors open to thousands of him?

And that is only a small part of it. Comrade Laudermilk gets to the heart of it. If you keep pouring dirty water into a barrel of clear water you sooner or later cease to have a barrel of clear water. Stop immigration.

THEY say we have benefitted by the infusion of foreign blood. We have. We were mostly English in the early days and by the infusion of foreign blood our national type has become something that we consider better adapted to our country than is the English type. We call this new type American and all our inspirations and institutions arise from it and are based upon it. That type is our clear water. But how much dilution and discoloration can it stand? And how much of the new blood poisons instead of improving us?

In the early days what we needed was people, people and still more people. We were a new world and that new world needed population. The conquest of that new world was an arduous and dangerous task; we could take almost any kind of material and trust to the survival of the fittest to weed out the rotten and leave us the strong—the strong made stronger and better by the struggle. But we no longer need people; pioneering days are done; the survival of the fittest is no longer a safeguard, an Americanizer. Foreigners swarm upon us, settle in communities of their own, keep their own customs and language, make within our cities inner cities of Italians, Germans, French, etc. They may be fully as good as we, but they do not Americanize as in the old days. They bring a hyphen with them now. Pink or blue or yellow water may be very good, but it is not our clear water.

THEY say we should be a "refuge for the oppressed of all nations." Very pretty and very commendable, but what becomes of the refuge if so many from other nations come to it that it becomes merely like the other nations?

And is it just the oppressed who come? And are all the oppressed oppressed by things that shouldn't oppress them or merely by such things as compulsory respect for the rights of other people? Incidentally, who's been oppressing Wm. Madans?

How many of our immigrants come merely to stay until they can earn—or get—enough money to take back to their own countries and live on comfortably? How many of

them become American citizens merely for the protection or immunity it will give them in their own country? How many of them don't even go through the formality of becoming citizens even technically? If war came, how many would—or did—turn back to their own country and against ours? In peace, how many of them fail to support the very government and institutions that give them "refuge" and a living? How many do all they can to overthrow that government and those institutions?

STOP immigration. The politicians are afraid to do so. Make them more afraid not to do so.

At every move to stop immigration there at once comes an outcry and opposition from those who do not want it stopped—from among the hyphenates, the revolutionaries, the criminals, the capitalists and corporations seeking cheap labor without regard to the interests of the American people as a whole, from among the Jews for the sake of their brethren on more meager diet in other lands, from all the foreign nations who, like the Jews, naturally want more of their own kind to join them here. There are plenty of good Jews and good foreigners, but it doesn't follow that we can afford to take all of them—along with the bad ones—into our country.

It happens that all the above classes are far better organized for their own interests than are the American Americans as a whole. When they raise an outcry and oppose something the politicians give ear because they are afraid of losing votes—or rake-off. We'll have to raise our voice enough to make them a whole lot more afraid of losing a whole lot more votes. We'll have to make it mighty plain to them that this country doesn't belong to them or to the hyphenates or to anybody else, but to us, the Americans, and that they themselves, the politicians, belong to us and will be crushed by us if we close our hand.

Stop immigration. If a politician stands in the way of the will of the majority crush him. If anybody else stands in the way of the majority, crush him. Stop immigration.

YOU can do the crushing. Real Americans are still in the majority in this country. The majority *does* control if it wakes up and exerts its power. If your Congressman is indifferent or opposed, make it clear that the majority is against him and then watch him get a change of heart. Most Congressmen wilt very easily. That's how quite a few of them got to be Congressmen—by knowing how to wilt at the right time. Of course it's his duty, too, to obey the will of the majority, but in most cases it will be just as well to make his duty look as attractive and profitable as possible. Luckily even among Congressmen—perhaps even in the Senate—are a few who are Americans first and Congressmen afterward, and more than a few who will forget party and self-interest when the issue seems vital enough to stir them out of their usual custom. In any case, straight or crooked, the majority can make Congress do the majority's will if the majority expresses itself. Do your part.

Stop immigration.

HERE'S another side of the butt-versus-barrel question and I've no doubt Mr. Wetjen is entirely right in the following letter to me:

Eureka, California.

I have noticed in several instances that you have queried my using the term "hitting with the butts." I believe I use the expression in the correct way. You are evidently drawing your information on this subject from your Western readers. It is perfectly true that on the Western plains, whenever it is necessary to hit a man with a gun, the barrel and trigger guard is used. I believe that is why the cowpunchers prefer and demand the long-barrelled .45 Colt.

NOW it is my experience that the long-barrelled .45 is used only in America and Western Canada. I do not recollect ever having seen it carried by any other nationality, except perhaps in the English army during the war.

In the Islands most men carry a .38 Smith-and-Wesson, or an automatic, usually the latter, with a short barrel that is hardly adapted for striking. Four times altogether, twice in the Islands, I have heard of men being "laid out" by gun-butts. The method is not to toss the gun and hold it by the barrel, but to strike with a hammer-like motion just above the eyes, using the butt just as it is held in the hand.

On making inquiries from the cowpunchers round this vicinity, I am informed by them that by hitting with the barrel they achieve a longer reach, which is easily understood. Nine out of ten of them seem to be of the opinion that that is why they prefer long-barreled guns; the tenth man buys his because it is the custom to use that weapon. But in the tropics it's different. It's too blamed hot to pack a heavy .45 about when traversing tough country. Guns are brought there for lightness and service, the automatic preferred. You can't very well hit a man with the barrel of an automatic, for in the

smaller calibres there is hardly any barrel. And though it may be usual to hit with the barrel of a short-Smith-and-Wesson, I have never heard of it or seen it done. I write, or try to write, only about what I know. In a rough and tumble, of course, one hits any way. I stunned a Swede once by hitting him with a .25 Colt automatic held flat in my hand.

The above are my reasons for writing about a man being hit with the butt. But if I am wrong I shall be only too pleased to be corrected.—ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN.

P. S.—In cases where I have mentioned the sort of gun used I should have remembered about the barrel, where a long Colt is in question. But I still say that a man unaccustomed to guns would strike with the butt. However, I must admit, I am wrong in bringing in .45 Colts when writing about the Islands, according to my own statements. I hope, though, you get my point.—A. R. W.

WORD from a comrade about Diamond Cave in Arkansas and rifled barrels:

Placerville, California.

In one of your August numbers, I noticed some one asking about a cave which compared with the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, wanting to know where it was. As nobody ever seemed to give the information, I shall do so.

This cave is the Diamond Cave located in Newton Co., Arkansas, about 3 miles from Jasper, the county seat, on the Little Buffalo River. The nearest Railroad is at Harrison, Ark. It is about 25 miles from the railroad. I have gone into this cave about 12 miles but others have been in 30 miles or more. Those who have been in the Mammoth and the Diamond claim the latter is the most wonderful. This would be better known if it were not so isolated.

Some time back I noticed a discussion about grooved and rifled barrels. I may not add much information to the discussion, but I have seen backwoodsmen groove their barrels, the groove being V-shaped while the rifling usually referred to as such is square cut. Take it for what it is worth.—E. W. N.

BACK again to snake-bite cures. Remember that this magazine, while not scoffing at any of the remedies suggested, vouches for none of them. It simply passes them on to the rest of you for your own judgment.

Newark, New Jersey.

Rattler bit me August 6, 1887, "somewhere in Panhandle," Texas, on the left leg. I shot him, took his rattles, put on a Spanish windlass, rode five miles to camp, found the reserve whisky which had mysteriously evaporated except about 3 oz. Cook gave me a washbasin of kerosene to drink—"Drink till you taste it, Boss," says he. I did, couldn't smell or taste it at first. Slept for about four hours with no after affects except diarrhoea and a lot of hazing from the crew. Now when I studied medicine I found that every derivative from coal tar (petroleum) was a *heart depressant*. So is a snake-bite. Why the cure? It's puzzling me yet.—LOUIS C. MULLIKIN.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Negley Farson rises and introduces himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. And I think all of us will join him in his salute to Jo-Jo, once our Camp-Fire comrade, now somewhere out on the Long Trail that, for him and so many other comrades, led out from France.

Lake Cowichan, Vancouver Island,
British Columbia.

I can't stand up at the Camp-Fire without bringing in Jo-Jo, for it was with him that I set out on the Trail. The wanderlust, restless foot, love o' life, whatever it was, he had it. No sea, no gale or black misery could dull his bright heart. Jo-Jo was game!

Down in the States, studying to be civil engineers, we were chaffed by our Dean of Mathematics: "Farson, vy iss it dot you und Joe Graham always look oud der vindow?"

It was Spring! How could we tell him we were smelling the river? that the *Anna* had just been put in the water, and 250 miles of the Bay were a-calling—?

Jo-Jo went to Peru; and came back and laughed at me—because he'd seen men shot down in a plaza. Five years later I had my hand on the back of a patriot when an assassin appeared and blew out his brains.

Joe went down to Costa Rica, to grow fruit; and I went to England, up through the Scandinavian countries and across the broad face of Holy Russia. Various things happened to me.

In the Big Show we did what every one else did; and, one day in the hot sands of Libya, I read of the passing of Jo-Jo. It was at the Château.

I know what he said on that morning—he had said the same thing on the yawl—"Let her blow: we can stand it!"

And I've saluted Jo-Jo at the Camp-Fire because we read *Adventure* together when it first came off the press; and got slated for it by the staid members of the community: "Such things don't happen," they said.

But they do! They all did, didn't they, Joe?

"Let her blow: we can stand it!"—NEGLEY FARSON.

A CONTEMPORANEOUS news item on the death of Wild Bill:

War Department. Washington.

I copied the following item from a New York *Herald* of August 13, 1876, thinking that it might be of some interest to your readers.

Murder in the Black Hills

Cheyenne, W. T. August 12, 1876.—James B. Hickok, alias Wild Bill, known in Kansas and the Territories as a scout of some prominence in former years, was killed in a saloon at Deadwood on the 2nd inst. by one, Bill Sutherland, who in justification of the act, alleges that Hickok killed Sutherland's brother at Fort Hayes, Kansas, some years ago.—W. A. GRAHAM, Lt. Colonel, J. A.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, Arthur M. Harris rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine. The story, however, is of fact, not fiction, and the first of a series of articles the second of which will not appear until one of our January issues. I think you'll find he makes you see the old pirates all over again—in a new light.

To begin conventionally, I was born in Chicago in 1883 and a simple trick of arithmetic discloses the tally of my years. I could scarcely walk on land before I was called upon to navigate the slanting decks of a ship, crossing the Atlantic to England, and thereafter going backward and forward enough times to embarrass the family treasury. Went to school in England, varied with a voyage as a cabin boy up the North Sea to the tip of Scotland. I have nothing kind to say for the North Sea; we parted with mutual ill feeling, particularly on my side—physically. Being nearly come of age, I returned to the best country in the world—you know it when you leave its mainland—and no emigrant felt more emotion than I did at seeing the gray lady with the lamp.

On this trip I met some adventurers—gentlemen who had taken mules to South Africa for the British Government in its trouble with the Boer. One of these had his head picturesquely bound up. I supposed he had managed to get wounded in the wars. He was a truthful person and explained that he had been kicked in the head, not by a mule nor a Boer dum-dum, but by a Tommy Atkins in the big military camp at Shorncliffe, England. Such is life—some of it.

I tarried a few years in Chicago, and then went West—just as far as one could go—to the tidewater of the Pacific. Here I got among surveying crews of a railroad that was then flinging its rails from Chicago to the Coast. It was a really new country where the rattlers had never seen a man before and one could pick up the arrow-heads dropped by the old-time Indian bands. But it was great—the smell of the sagebrush first thing in the morning before the sun knocked you over—Ah! And the bunch! They deserve commemoration by a worthy pen. But I left them somehow and went to law school and grew to be a lawyer—at least I hope so. Having become acquainted with lawyers I like them, and even wrote a book for them as well as a few stories which they were good enough fellows to say they liked. I am now a husband, a father, a vestryman and an employee of the supreme court of Washington State. Camp-Fire folks, I thank you very much for the hospitality of your inimitable circle.—ARTHUR M. HARRIS.

HERE is something more about elephant guns with a real kick in them:

Waban, Massachusetts.

In Baker's "The Albert Nyanza," published in 1868, page 175, he says: "I had a pair of No. 10 polygroove rifles made by Reilly of Oxford Street (London). They weighed 15 pounds and carried 7 drachms of powder without disagreeable recoil. The bullet was a blunt cone, 1½ diameter of bore, and I used a mixture of 9-10 lead and 1-10 quicksilver for the hardening of the projectile. This is superior to all mixtures for that purpose as it combines hardness with extra weight; the lead must be melted in a pot by itself to a red heat, and the proportion of quicksilver must be added to a ladlefull at a time, and stirred quickly with a piece of iron just in sufficient quantity to make 3 or 4 bullets. If the quicksilver is subjected to red heat in the large lead-pot, it will evaporate."

PAGE 176: "Among other weapons I had an extraordinary rifle that carried a half-pound percussion shell—this instrument of torture to the hunter was not sufficiently heavy for the weight of the projectile; it only weighed 20 pounds: thus, with a charge of 10 drachms of powder behind a half-pound shell the recoil was so terrific that I was spun round like a weathercock in a hurricane. I really dreaded my own rifle, although I had been accustomed to heavy charges of powder and severe recoil for many years." (To digress a moment, in his "Abyssinia" he mentions carrying a heavy roc for some camp-boundary purpose, which it took tv Arabs to raise from the ground. So Baker evidentl was some giant. To resume:) "None of my me could fire it, and it was looked upon with a specie of awe, and was named 'Jenna el Mottfah' (child of a cannon) by the Arabs, which being far too long a name for practise, I christened it 'The Baby,' and the scream of this 'Baby,' loaded with a half-pound shell, was always fatal. It was far too severe." (In "Abyssinia" he says, "This Baby not only screamed but kicked most viciously") "and I very seldom fired it, but it is a curious fact that I never fired a shot with that rifle without bagging; the entire practise, during several years, was confined to about 20 shots. I was afraid to use it; but now and then it was absolutely necessary that it should be cleaned, after lying for months loaded. On such occasions my men had the gratification of firing it, and the explosion was always accompanied by two men falling on their backs (one having propped up the shooter) and the 'Baby' flying some yards behind them. This rifle was made by Holland, of Bond Street, and I could highly recommend it for Goliath of Gath, but not for men of A.D. 1866."

Ultimately, having a "hunch," on a cleaning-day, he lashed that "Baby" to a tree and got behind another, and fired the rifle with a long string. It was well thought of for the rifle blew all to pieces.

Nevertheless, later, he had several more guns made of that pattern, for African use. I think he tells of them in his later volume "Ismaila," which book I do not happen to have. If need be, you might look it up.—JOHN PRESTON TRUE.

WHERE and what is adventure? It's easy to say it must savor of what is unusual to the individual in question, but surely there are other elements.

For example, my wife finds digging potatoes an adventure, and I can feel at least something of the same thing. Why not? Except that values are less, it is essentially the same as digging for diamonds or gold. Perhaps the element of chance is

the important one in these things, as in gambling or many games in which luck figures largely. Perhaps anything hidden in the earth has its lure.

I'm just perhapsing, of course. The original question, as propounded by Edgar Young, was "What is adventure, biologically speaking?" I don't know.

Berkeley, California.

Dear Camp-Fire: I'm wandering in from the far flickers of the fire. Not that I've been out of the U. S. A. but I've never felt my presence was needed in the active circle. Beg pardon, once I did write some hobo verses for *Adventure*, but the editor thought they were good and let them hobo back to me. But now Gordon MacCreagh has started an argument on a subject over which I've done some thinking myself. And I'm inclined to agree with Mac.

'E been able to *caminar* over considerable coun- y here in the Golden State, and I've lived out- rs considerable. But when I had a chance to ıb a ranger's job I thought adventure was sure cing my way. I'd read a lot, and heard a lot st and second hand about the life of the ranger, ıd I promptly grabbed the job. Result—I had a ood time, plenty of movement, but nary adventure. I shot a mountain lion, fell into an ice-cold creek, was accidentally shot at by a fool hunter—who by the way was wearing one of those red shirts they sell, so I couldn't get even with him—but nary adventure. When I returned to this city, the site of the University of California, and why I mentioned that I don't know—I was never in it, but once, everybody asked me to tell my experiences. I did. "My what a lot of adventures you had!" says a sweet young thing to my right. Nope, not any.

It just happened that the things which I ran across didn't thrill *me*. Yet I appointed myself to investigate "vice in the big city" of Frisco, and got a real thrill out of being pinched for a bootlegger. *That* was an adventure, and yet I'll wager there are hundreds of men in this country to whom it is a worn out experience, devoid of thrills and not even interesting from the standpoint of the fines.

YEP, old lady Adventure is simply a matter of the thrill, and different things thrill different people. Of course I'll admit that I get an awful cheer while reading the tales of Tuttle, the hazards of Everhard and all the rest of them, BUT, if all those things really did happen to the originals, they probably just wrinkled their noses and cussed at the luck of it, as Mac has said.

Finally, your adventures come when you get out of your own element and into the other fellow's. Can you image Mac getting all worked up over shooting a deer? But I bet he'd have a real adventure if some accurate parlor hunter were to bag him at a swell social hunt. Of course he may be experienced in that line too, but I don't think his vocabulard extends that far, judging from his six pages, single spaced.

EVERY Summer I cut loose from bread and butter, wife, pavement and colored shirts, and get out on the highways, byways and sidedoor conveyances. I meet all the brethren of the road, some expert financiers whose methods aren't as well protected as those of their city office brethren, and the whole outfit of regular fellows. In a word, I am seeking Adventure. So far, the only place I've found it is in the news-stands and in the abandoned camps of the followers of the Camp-Fire. It's always bound, and down in black and white.

And I'm not hard boiled either. My nerves aren't iron, or any of those things. I've never been outside the U. S. A., except to Canada for a drink and Mexico to watch a bull-fight. Usually I'm a newspaper reporter. No, sit down. There's no adventure in that either. But it's interesting to study people. I get all excited over tales of "somewhere else" and I'd like to cut loose and start on the "Road to Anywhere."

Well, I've written a lot and said little. Anyway I agree with Mac. Yours in search of Adventure.—RANNY VAN NOSTRAND.

AS IS to be inferred from his letter, it is only the past few years that comrade Strachan has been giving particular attention to the man-sized job of fulfilling the full duties of citizenship that most of us do not fulfill.

Atlanta, Georgia.

We stay-at-homes must stifle our desires to a great extent and keep a-plugging away. Fact is, I've sorter revised my ideas of what constituted bravery and, without a trace of ego, can say I believe the guy who tries to fulfill the duties of citizenship comes nearer the ideal than the swashbuckling hero. Quick action invigorates, while the dull and deadly grind wears away the nerves and after awhile uncovers the yellow streak. (I only learned the width of my own, and have been trying to hide it, for the past few years.)—P. A. STRACHAN.

HIS claim to being a real puncher looks perfectly good:

Klamath Falls, Oregon.

Never having dropped in on your little hang-out before I will be a little easy in addressing you, so will say Hello, Long Horns, and hope no feelings hurt.

Seems like introductions are a little in order, so will say as to me myself was something like two years old when I took my first horseback ride. It was in a pack-saddle bag (*alfarjas*) on an old gray pack horse, me on one side, grub on the other. Mother and father on horseback leading the pack horses. At all stops I mounted the top and went on a rampage for eats.

That being in '81 and having grown up on the range among the bunch grass and father's cattle and horses, feel that I can lay claim to being an old puncher.

Being as I thought I really had something to say when I started this scratching will say it.

In Jan. 30th issue of *Adventure*, Brother J. J. Colman inquires about Tracy the outlaw. Tracy was no myth by any means, as a list of his killings and tricks will show, which I will send to Camp-Fire in the near future.—OLD PUNCHER.

FROM one of the Oatman family something about the Oatman massacre—the Rev. Johnson Oatman, Jr., author of many well known hymns:

Lumberton, New Jersey.

The article in your magazine for Nov. 20, 1921, in reference to the Oatman Massacre was of very great interest to me. I belong to a branch of that family and the names of the girls are Oatman names. My father's youngest sister was named Mary Ann Oatman and she was a young woman at the time of the massacre. I also have a niece who is now Mrs. Olive Oatman Bishop, of Riverside, N. J. I remember when a small boy I once saw a book called "The Captivity of the Oatman Girls." Since than I have searched far and wide for a copy of that book. Can you or any of your readers obtain the book for me? I will gladly send check for the price. It may be of interest to your readers to know that the greatest boom town of the West is the town or city of Oatman, built at what has been called ever since the massacre, "Oatman Springs." No other town in the West has grown so rapidly during the past five years and because of this the Oatman Massacre will never be forgotten.—Rev. JOHNSON OATMAN, JR.

The Singers and Their Songs

SKETCHES OF LIVING GOSPEL HYMN WRITERS

by Charles H. Gabriel

THE REV. JOHNSON OATMAN, JR., was born in 1856, and is an ordained local preacher in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Although just reaching the zenith of his years, he is the author of nearly five thousand hymns. All who have ever sung or heard:

Jesus knows all about our struggles,
He will guide till the day is done;
There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus—
No, not one! No, not one!

will be interested in reading about the man who gave these splendid lines to the world.

He wrote his first song, "I Am Walking with My Saviour," in 1892; it was set to music by the late John R. Sweeney in 1893, since which time he has written an average of two hundred hymns per year. His first real success was, "When Our Ships Come Sailing Home," sung at Ocean Grove in 1894 with tremendous power. The late Bishop McCabe sang it all over the United States:

O, what singing, O, what shouting,
When our ships come sailing home;
They have stood the mighty tempest,
They have crossed the ocean's foam,
They have passed o'er stormy billows,
But they now have gained the shore;
The anchor's cast, they're home at last—
The voyage is safely o'er!

The next to become popular was "Deeper Yet," which made its way into the hearts of all true worshipers. There is a peculiar depth to it, found in very few gospel songs.

In 1895 appeared the song that has carried his name to many lands of the earth, "No, Not One!" Within one year it was reprinted in thirty-five different song books, and has been translated into many languages and dialects.

In 1898 came his "Higher Ground," which at once took high rank among holiness people. No song can bring forth more shouts at a camp meeting than—

Lord, lift me up and let me stand,
By faith, on heaven's table land;
A higher plane than I have found,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

"Count Your Blessings" was written in 1897, and, like a beam of sunlight, it has brightened up the dark places of earth. Many others might be mentioned, for it has been said that "he has more hymns in the various gospel song books than any song writer, living or dead." There is a newness of thought, a freshness of contemplation and an originality to his verses which is seldom found.

Mr. Oatman is a firm believer in the old doctr of the Wesleyan theology, conscientious and secrated to the Lord, whose work he is doing so w He believes that his best songs are yet to be writt and it is his daily prayer that he may be spared a f years in which to write the praises of his Mast after retiring from active service, and that whe his sun sets he may be swept home to glory on a flood tide of song.

SOMETHING from F. R. Bechdolt concerning a letter he sends to us that adds to the data on the Skeleton Cañon fight. Mr. Bechdolt states very mildly the approval of his articles from our readers:

Carmel, California.

I am positive Hicks is correct in his data as to the Skeleton Cañon fight. I had bad luck getting that data—could not find John Slaughter who had the facts, as he was sick. And other accounts did not sound just right to me. Mr. Hicks' account does. Furthermore, I am pretty sure from the tenor of his letter and from one or two allusions he makes, that he knows the Old West and is giving straight stuff. So I thought you might like to publish it—anyhow the facts in it—in "Camp-Fire."

One of the pleasures of this series is coming in contact with an occasional old-timer who likes the stuff.—BECHDOLT.

HERE is the letter:

Los Angeles, California.

I note your article "Boot Hill." Have read same with much interest, especially that part telling of fight at Double Dobe between Mexicans and Rustlers. Also the killing of old man Clanton and robbing of Mexican pack train. I suppose you gathered your information from non-combatants or talk with oldest inhabitants.

I WAS a resident of the Pinery Cañon, Chiricahua Mts., and also had a place in Galeyville before there was a Galeyville, as my father and brother and myself were in the mining game and owned some

promising ground on both slopes of the range, having landed there Thanksgiving Day, 1878.

The fight at the "Double Dobe" did not take place there, but on the East side of the San Louis, and Curly Bill was not in it at all. A man by the name of Jack MacKenzie and partner had stolen the cattle in Mexico and had crossed the pass and left the cattle to rest up, thinking he was safe. But the Mexicans followed and rounded up the cattle and started back for Mexico. MacKenzie and partner appealed to some of the vaqueros working for Billie Land and a few others that happened to be there, raising a crowd of eight men, good riders, fair shooters, took to the trail, caught up with the Mexicans and after a running fight lasting several hours recovered the cattle and drove them back, and there was not a man on MacKenzie party killed.

ALSO the robbery of the Mexican smugglers took place in Skeleton Cañon and was arranged executed by Ike Clanton and Flying Cloud as. Green). It was a train of 70 animals and 30 icans. The Mexicans cut off a lot of pack and e a run for it with their best treasure, but ten dozen mules were killed. Reported at the time eral Mexicans were killed, but we never found . There were eight men in the Clanton arty—I knew them all. All told they only got 2,000 "Dobes," one small bar of gold, sold in Tombstone for $800, and couple of kegs mescal.

THE killing of old man Clanton or, more properly speaking, the Billy Lang party, where five men out of party of seven were shot in their blankets. I know all about it as I was one of the party of twenty-two who went down and brought four bodies back to Gray's ranch, made the boxes and buried them on round knoll or hill between Clanton's and Gray's ranches. Their names were old man Clanton, Billie Lang, owner of Cloverdale Ranch, Dick Gray, Jim Crane. The fifth man could not be found at the time of our visit, so we went back the next day, found him by the vultures and threw a blanket over his face and piled a lot of rock on and I expect was never disturbed by man after. His name was Chas. Snow.

The killing took place in a little sparsely wooded flat near the head of Cañon Bonito, very close to the Mexican border, and was on the 13th day of August, 1881. Lang was taking 100 head of beef cattle to Tombstone. After the killing, all Lang's and Clanton's cattle (Gray had none) were rounded up and driven over to the San Pedro, and later, passed through the Tombstone market.

In my time all the longhorns stolen in Mexico were sold at San Carlos Indian Reservation for food for Indians. $5 a head was the ruling price.

MY BROTHER picked up Curly Bill (Wm. Borscius) in the street when he was shot by his chum "Black" Jim Wallace and carried him into our tent where we nursed him until he fully recovered, which was about one month. He then took trail to look for Wallace. Bill was not mean or bad, unless drinking whisky; when he got about so drunk, got mean and then some.

All these incidents came thick and in fact starting in April with the Skeleton Cañon hold-up, in July the MacKenzie fight, and Aug. 13, 1881, the Lang killing. There were 35 Mexicans in that. Billie Byers, one who was shot and left for dead, went back to Leavenworth, Kansas. I don't know when he went. It is many, many years since I met any of that part of 22. Billie Lang's brother, John Lang, lives in California, 50 miles from Banning, a hermit prospector.

I KNEW all the Earps and all about why they killed McLowery and Billie Clanton as I carried a verbal message from Virgil Earp to them. It would be called ultimatum now, and these were the words: "Tell the boys everything is off between us, and when you come to town you will have to fight."

They would not believe it and laughed at the idea. But next time they rode in, late in Fall of 1881, they were killed. The Earps played fair and square in that matter and I know. The boys were warned and should have been on their guard.

In your "Stories of the Old West" the data is pretty close to being correct (published in Dec., 1918, in *Saturday Evening Post*).

The killing of Bud Phillips was done by two outsiders, Billie Leonard and Jim Crane. Leonard was killed a few months after in little mining camp of Eureke, New Mexico, by the Hasslett brothers and they were killed after by Jim Crane and two or three friends, and Crane got his along with Billie Lang and Clanton.

Take it all in all, 1881 was certainly quite a lively and interesting time through S. E. Arizona and S. W. New Mexico.

I hope you will pardon me for butting in, but as I was sort of mixed up in a lot of that trouble or history making epoch, thought I would put you right about some of the data. I like your articles and stories and read them, every one I see.—W. B. HICKS.

SOME more information as to Nellie Cushman of Alaskan fame:

Oakland, California.

I have additional information concerning Nellie Cushman that may be of interest. A party of us went up as far as Dawson last Summer, leaving Vancouver June 23, 1921. Nellie Cushman was aboard (the *Princess Royal*). She had been "outside" for a year or so, and was going in, to remain at least a year. She left us at Dawson intending to go on up the Koyukok River, Alaska. I believe it was to Bettles. We all found her an original and capable woman.—H. H. CRANE.

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BERIAH BROWN, 1624 Bigelow Ave., Olympia, Wash. Ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting, small-boat sailing; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S.; fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks. (*See next section.*)

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CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care *Adventure*. Seamanship, navigation, old-time sailorizing, ocean-cruising, etc. Questions on the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire go to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brown.

3. ★ Islands and Coasts Part 1 Islands of Indian and Atlantic Oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits
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4. Islands Part 2 Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico and Virgin Group
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6. South Sea Islands Part 2
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FAY-COOPER COLE, Ph. D., Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Ill. Hunting and fishing, exploring, commerce, inhabitants, history, institutions.

9. New Guinea
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For information on trade in any part of the world, address I. L. BINDA, National Foreign Trade Council, 1 Hanover Sq., New York.

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Supt. of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines, Porto Rico, and customs receiverships in Santo Domingo and Haiti, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dept., Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, T. H. Also, Dept. of the Interior, Wash, D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dept. of Agri., Com. and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

The Pan-American Union may be called upon for general information relating to Latin-American matters or for specific data. Address L. S. ROWE, Dir. Gen., Wash., D. C.

For R. C. M. P., Commissioner Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can. Only unmarried British subjects, age 18 to 40, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Com., Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dept. of Com., Wash., D. C.

United States Revolver Ass'n. W. A. MORRALL, Sec'y-Treas., Hotel Virginia, Columbus, O.

All inquiries for information regarding the national parks, how to get there and what to do when you get there, should be addressed to the National Park Service, Washington, D. C.

How Broadcasting Started

IN CONNECTION with the establishment, beginning in this issue, of a radio "A. A." section the subjoined article is so interesting—not to say historically important—that we're printing it anyhow, despite the fact that it is not a formal answer to a specific question. It isn't every day that we have the chance to publish a first-hand account of the genesis of a transcendent idea; and when we do have such a chance, if the office rules try to get in the way they get run over.

The article is unsigned, but I can vouch for the writer. In the radio field he is a history-maker. In explanation of his anonymity he remarked: "I didn't give this story to any radio magazine because my name appears in the text. I allowed a manufacturer who gets out a little house organ to jobbers to print it in a little three or four hundred copies edition he sends out occasionally listing his hardware lines. You may use it, alter it or can it as you ding well please." And as I said before, we ding well please to use it:

Of course, the old-timers among the radio fans know that thousands of boys had been dabbling in radio telegraphy ever since 1903 or earlier, and that Fessenden succeeded in telephoning by radio a distance of eleven miles in 1906. Further, Dr. Alfred N. Goldsmith in November, 1909, read a paper on radio telephony before the Wireless Institute of New York.

Subsequently development was continued by

various scientists, but it was not until the demands of war came that material progress was made in perfecting radio telephony. During the war years American engineers were foremost in developing and applying the new art to the needs of communication.

But broadcasting—the present great popular movement—was in those years only a dream. A few of those who were engaged in radio research at that time were Lee De Forest, H. D. Arnold, R. A. Heising, C. V. Logwood and Robert F. Gowen, all of New York.

What was perhaps the first feast of radio music picked up by the New York radio bugs was that which followed experiments carried on by Logwood and Gowen in the Winter of 1919-1920. Logwood's "Hello, Bob; hello, Bob!" hurled through the ether became a familiar nightly sound to those who possessed radio-telegraph receiving-sets—these sets were capable of picking up radiophone as well as radio-telegraph signals.

In view of the magnitude of later developments, these experiments were of limited extent.

Undoubtedly the seed for broadcasting was sown when in 1920 the Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company acquired the business and radio interests of the International Radio-Telegraph Company, owners of Fessenden's patents. The Westinghouse Company found itself in the radio game, which already on a large commercial scale was the undertaking of the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America.

What should they do with their acquisition? Go into the commercial telegraph business as competitors of the Marconi Company, ably managed by Mr. E. J. Nally?

The answer to this question was worked out a year or so later when the company through partnership relations identified itself with the Radio Corporation of America—the latter the old Marconi Company now under General Electric Company control.

But in the interim! Here is where broadcasting as we know it today was born. The Westinghouse Company had on its engineering staff several clever, energetic young engineers who, while the executives of the company were planning a future for the International Radio Telegraph Company, busied themselves—as engineers will.

Their company owned radio facilities, and the engineers decided to use these—to sell apparatus.

The first inkling radio folks in New York had of what was coming broke through on the evening of October 6, 1920.

On that evening a dinner was given at the Café des Beaux Arts, New York, by M. C. Rypinski, of the Westinghouse engineering staff. Those present were L. W. Chubb, J. V. L. Hogan, Dr. A. N. Goldsmith, Donald McNicol, Lloyd Espenschied and Louis R. Krumm.

Mr. Chubb, a thoroughly trained research engineer in Westinghouse service, had been appointed manager of the Radio Department of the Westinghouse Company. Mainly the dinner was in his honor. Mr. Hogan was then president of the Institute of Radio Engineers; Dr. Goldsmith was head of the Research Department of the Marconi Company and director of the Radio Laboratory at City College, New York; Mr. McNicol was a member of the Board of Direction of the Institute of Radio Engineers, editor of *Telegraph and Telephone Age*, and a radio engineer since the days of the coherer; Mr. Espenschied was radio engineer with the American Telephone and Telegraph Company and the inventor of several radio systems; Mr. Krumm, a colonel and Legion of Honor participant in the Great War, formerly in charge of the Department of Commerce's radio bureau of the Port of New York, had just entered Westinghouse service.

From the vantage point of the present day those who attended this dinner recall the enthusiasm of Chubb and Rypinski relative to the possibilities of broadcasting music.

Compared to the others present Rypinski and Chubb were new in the radio game. The radio business—as new arts will—had kicked the others around a bit. They were skeptical about radio phones in a million homes, but, of course, only in degree.

Perhaps they regarded their two sanguine associates as somewhere pictured by the Bard of Avon:

> We see no scars charactered on your skin;
> Men's flesh preserved so well do seldom win.

However, Rypinski and Chubb were on solid ground. True, they had at that date but a vision—a vision which two and one-half months later, on December 23, 1920, became a reality when the famous KDKA station at Pittsburgh, Penn., was placed in broadcasting service.

The experience gained by operating this first station was capitalized when WJZ station at Newark, N. J., was opened for broadcasting on October 3, 1921. This started the ball which has since acquired girth and momentum equaling in destiny the tiny snow-pellet which starts from mountain-top valleyward and becomes the mighty river—a highway for commerce, for adventure and for things new.

The full statement of the sections, as given in this issue, is printed only in alternate issues.

Cowboys

IT'S hard to disbelieve the motion pics, isn't it?

Question:—"Will you kindly give me some information in regards to the life of a cowpuncher of today?

I have always longed to be a cowboy and a good one, and I would like to know what part of the country would be the best for a tenderfoot and what a cowboy's outfit consists of. I am used to much hardship and am not afraid of work.

I do not know how to ride or rope or anything in that line but I'm in a position where I could learn if I went at it right, which I mean to do.

I should prefer a dry climate, but still I shall act on your advice.

What kind of clothes does a cowpuncher wear? Do they still wear chaps? Do they have to furnish their own saddle?

If you have any other information that you think would be useful to me, I shall be very glad to consider it.

If this is published I would prefer that my name would not be mentioned."

Answer, by Mr. Whiteaker:—The life of a cowboy of today is not as wild and woolly as it was a few years ago. Prohibition is one cause; the growing-up of the country as agricultural lands, the laws governing the carrying of firearms, Henry Ford's gasoline buggies taking the place of so many riding ponies, and many other modern improvements are helping to do away with the old-time cowboys.

Most of the ranches of today are more on the style of stock-farms than of ranches only. Some of the ranches in southwest Texas are more on the old order of stock-raising. A majority of the ranchmen are going in more for the registered pure-blooded stock than they did formerly. The long-horned stock is becoming less each year and the short horns are becoming more numerous.

The southwestern part of Texas would be as good a place as any to make a start as it still is somewhat as it was years ago. The climate is dry and very healthful. The clothing worn by cowboys consists of a broad-brim Stetson hat, flannel shirts, corduroy or other tough, woven cloth; trousers, leather cuffs or gauntlet gloves, bandanna neckerchief, boots and spurs, chaps to protect their trousers from thorns and bushes; some wear leather jackets. When wild animals are numerous the cowboys often carry six-shooters on the range to protect the stock under their charge.

They usually carry a slicker tied on the back of their saddles. The cowboys furnish their own saddles if there are no extras on the ranch. There are often a few extras around; but a cowboy likes a saddle of his own, especially when he gets used to riding in a certain one.

You will have to learn to do your own riding, as it is not a subject that can be taught through correspondence. Get on the range and get a good rider to teach you. The same with roping. You will improve with practise; but it will take practise, and plenty of it, to become proficient in the art. Put yourself under one of the old-timers and he will be glad to assist you in all ways if you tell him that you want to learn and not pretend that you know more than he does.

Address your question direct to the expert in charge, NOT to the magazine.

Where the Circus Can Never Go

OR IF it does it must leave the snake exhibit at home; for this stretch of the world is bare of reptile life, and the inhabitants thereof intend to keep it so:

Question:—"I am very interested in the South Sea Islands. My ambition is to live there as a trader, so I will appreciate it very much if you will kindly answer a few questions.

Can one get an island in French Oceania?

What is the approximate cost?

Where can I get charts of the South Sea Islands? Cost?

Where can I get the "British Admiralty Reports?"

How much do they cost?

Is there anything poisonous (reptiles, insects)?

Are there any flies or mosquitoes?

Your answers will help me very much in getting 'the lay of the land.'

I have read many books on the South Seas; in fact all I could get.

Please do not put my name and address in *Adventure*."

Answer, by Mr. C. Brown, Jr.:—It is practically impossible for the man of small means to acquire an island in the South Seas. In French Oceania, as well as throughout Polynesia and Melanesia, rich trading-companies are buying and leasing all available outlying islands of value. Twenty or thirty years ago the average man could pick up a small island almost for his asking; but since then a trading boom has struck the islands and things are no longer as they were in the wild, carefree days. And the time is drawing on when the average man will not even find it possible to buy himself a decent strip of island land, so valuable will it become within the next few years.

For South Sea charts, write to McCarron, Stewart & Co., Ltd., 22-26 Goulburn Street, Sydney, N. S. W. (Aust.)

Captain A. E. Dingle, our expert on questions pertaining to "the sea, ships and men local to the British Empire," can direct you how to procure the British Admiralty Reports.

While mosquitoes and flies hold their own throughout French Oceania, one need not worry over poisonous reptiles and insects; for there are not any. Years ago one Frenchman tried to introduce reptiles into Tahiti. Islanders still tell of all the things that happened to the snake-charmer and his "bally" cargo.

Now before a ship is permitted to tie up in Papeete lagoon it is first given the utmost inspection to see that no pet serpents are shimmying between-decks. Once in a while a dyspeptic snake does wiggle out of some forecastle, when it is towed off to the reef and done away with. Which is one reason why a circus will never have the audacity to include Tahiti in its itinerary.

Still, in this little island paradise the natives affirm that there are things even more horrible than snakes. For instance, certain brands of bottled rum!

So much for islands that can not be leased or purchased and serpents that have no place in the scheme of Tahitian things.

Omaha to New Orleans by Water

BE SURE you have a sound craft and a *good* engine:

Question:—"A pal and myself are planning a trip down the Missouri from Omaha to New Orleans. We are 22 years of age and intend to build our own motor-boat. Can you tell us where we can obtain plans for the boat and maps of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers? Do you think a Ford engine will answer the purpose?

Most trips I have heard of have started from St. Louis. Do you think it advisable to start from Omaha? How much do you think such a venture would cost, and how long would it take?"—HARVEY KITTLEMAN, Council Bluffs, Ia.

Answer, by Mr. Zerr:—The trip you mention is rather risky—unless you are familiar with the rivers, especially the Mississippi—in a home-made craft.

Here are some objections to the Missouri River according to Government engineers. Hindrances to easy navigation are snags and shifting, shallow channels; caving banks in every bend are responsible. The maximum draft at the shoalest part is three feet at mean low water, which is good water for a boat drawing little more than eighteen inches. This depth is from August to November, from Kansas City to St. Louis. From March to the end of August the ruling depth fluctuates from nine to four and one-half feet at the lowest stages.

The mileage from Sioux City to the mouth of the Missouri River is 807 miles; thence to the mouth of the Red River, 860 miles; thence to New Orleans, 214 miles; a total of 1,881 miles. As you have practically an open river all the way, you will have gage your speed according to your engine and ie current. On still water in the Pittsburgh ict we have small motor-boats which make a better than ten miles an hour. At the rate of hundred miles daily, apart from engine trouble d snags, you ought to reach New Orleans in uteen days.

In regard to construction. Use a flat-bottomed iff with a good plank bottom, twenty-five feet ong, five feet wide at top and four and one-half feet wide at bottom and about eighteen inches deep. This all depends on the amount of personal freight you carry. I have seen Pittsburgh boys make their own boats out of old lumber picked up along the river-banks and scraps from houses under construction, and they were excellent.

Your Ford engine will fill the bill, providing it is in good condition. Some of the Pittsburgh boats are equipped with this kind of motive power, and they are doing well. However, it must be remembered that you are on an open river, not dead water, and your safety depends on a good engine. The Mississippi River has its hazards.

As to costs. Well, well, let's see. Figure it out. How much do you eat per day? Multiply this by two. Then count the costs of gasoline and oil per mile. Multiply this by 1,881 miles. Add. Thus you will have about the right idea of the costs from your home to New Orleans.

But let me mention this before you leave: Be sure to place a good windlass on your boat and about 200 feet of a good tow-line alongside, to pull you off possible snags. This should be heavier than the ordinary wash-line.

Unless full return postage is enclosed, no reply.

The Cassiar Country

SOME prospecting; good trapping—and more grizzlies than whites. What better country could a sourdough aspire to?

Question:—"I would like information on a prospecting trip around Great Slave Lake. What kind of minerals may be found there? We do not expect to get rich. Would like to know what is there.

We are a party of experienced men from 38 to 45 years old—in good health. We expect to go next Summer for two years.

What kind of an outfit would it be best to take? About what would it cost from Buffalo, N. Y.?

What kind of a Winter can we expect? What kind of people may we have to deal with? And how can you rough for supplies? Is the country rocky or smooth? Has it been prospected to any extent?"—GEO. SNYDER, Buffalo, N. Y.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—I hate to throw cold water on a man's plans, but I fear that you would be disappointed in a prospecting trip to the Great Slave country. It is not a mining proposition; that is, there is no placer there that I have ever heard of that was worth bothering with.

If you fellows are looking for a bunch of real life in the open why not tackle the Cassiar country? This section is reached by boat from Fort Wrangel up the Stikine River to Glenora, which would be your outfitting point. Your local ticket-agent can give you the cost of transportation from Buffalo to Vancouver, and from there it will cost you probably fifty dollars to get to Glenora. You are then right at the front door of the open country.

The principal "industries" of the Cassiar district are hydraulic mining and the fur trade. In the country lying between the Stikine and the Liard Rivers there are probably 150 whites with double that amount of natives (Tehltans).

I find I have overlooked another "industry," which is guiding the big-game hunters during the hunting season; for this is the big-game paradise of the north. About half the entire population of the district is centered around Glenora, or Telegraph Creek as it used to be called, and are engaged in the latter industry. The Hyland Estate and the Hudson's Bay Co. both have outfitting stores at the creek as well as on Dease Lake and the Liard River.

The climate in Summer is mild, 90 degrees being the extreme of heat, the average being about 70. The Winters have an average of about 15 below with an extreme of 40, and about three feet of snowfall. This is not too bad when one considers the latitude.

There is plenty of timber in the district for cabin-building and for fuel, so there is no reason why an experienced party should suffer from the weather.

Now as to prospecting. While no remarkable strikes have ever been made in this section I believe a man's chances are as good here as anywhere, since this entire country is well mineralized and there is always the chance of running on a rich pocket that will at least pay expenses. Trapping could be carried on in the Winter, which would give one an additional chance to break ahead of the game.

As to the hunting, I believe there are more grizzly bears to the square mile in the Cassiar than in any other place in North America. When common ordinary tourists can bring out twenty-eight of them in one season as was done one year it states plainly that this is some grizzly patch. Then there is the big-horn sheep, not so plentiful but still in evidence, as well as the moose and caribou. Goats are also plentiful, while the smaller game is practically everywhere.

A hunting license costs you $25, and can be procured from the Government agent at Glenora.

Owing to the scarcity of the human race this is a splendid trapping country, so that if your prospecting venture does not pan out all you have to do is to hit the first H. B. C. post and get a trapping outfit and get busy. Injun around a little with your ears

open and local gossip will tell you where to head for.

All you need to take in the line of outfit is the clothes you wear, since everything else necessary can be purchased reasonably when you get to your jumping-off place.

I believe you will be better satisfied with this district than the Great Slave; but if you still hanker for the latter write the Department of Interior, Ottawa, Canada, and get what dope they have to offer.

Life in North Africa

ALSO directions on how to get from Egypt to northern Nigeria:

Question:—"Are the people in Algeria, Egypt and the Sudan friendly? Which are the most educated? What is the chief language? Is there much English spoken there? Are there any American or English settlements? What are the chief occupations and industries?

How and which way would be the best way to travel from Egypt to northern Nigeria?

Is there much railway building in those countries?"—C. J. HIGGIN, St. Paul, Minn.

Answer, by Mr. Binda:—The people of Algeria, Egypt and Sudan are friendly, at least as friendly as a race can be which is under the domination of other races which it considers its inferiors. We must realize that the natives of Northern Africa are practically all Mohammedans and consider themselves superior to the Christians who rule them by force of arms. However, a great many of them think that conditions are not so bad under this domination as otherwise they would be fighting amongst themselves.

The upper classes are extremely well educated as a rule, but the lower classes are lacking entirely in any education. The French and English have tried to remedy this matter by establishing a great many schools throughout the territory. The chief languages—of Northern Africa, at least—are as follows: That of the native population is Arabic; next comes French, which is closely followed by Italian; then come English and Spanish.

In the towns along the Mediterranean there is a sort of *patois* spoken which is a mixture of Italian, Arabic and Spanish, which is understood by all the people on both sides of the Mediterranean. In the interior points practically nothing is spoken but Arabic.

There are few, what you may call English or American settlements, with the exception of Egypt. Of course, you will find a large resident English population in Cairo, Alexandria, Port Said and many other points of Egypt.

There is quite a settlement of Americans in Cairo, mostly employees of the Standard Oil Co., the American Tobacco Co., etc. In Algiers also you will find both American and English settlements.

Besides making fake antiques and cheating the tourists, the chief occupation and industries of the native population are usually restricted to the making of pottery, rugs, embroidery, copper utensils, ornaments, trading in fruits, nuts, dates and other tropical fruits. There are few real industries established in this part of the world.

It is very difficult to travel from Egypt to northern Nigeria. You might possibly go along the Egyptian State Railway to El Fasher *via* Khartum, which is the last station on the branch line to the west.

By caravan it might be possible to reach the French settlement at Abeche in the northern part of Kameruh, and from here you could go to Nigeria. This is the most difficult way and the one requiring a great deal of money to take.

Another way would be to go from Egypt along the Mediterranean coast to Bengasi in Italian Tripoli. You could join up with some caravan that goes across the desert. Some of these caravans strike northern Nigeria.

The only feasible way, however, would be to go from Egypt to Mombasa on the Egyptian State Railway by a river steamer *via* Lake Victoria Nyanza, and then take a steamer round the coast to Bonni in Nigeria. It is not far in miles from the frontier of Egypt to the frontier of Nigeria, but those few miles are practially impossible to negotiate, and the usual way is to travel practically half-wa around the continent to get to one or the othe these places.

There is very little railway-building in north Africa at the present time. The French, howe are extending a few of their lines into the Saha while the Italians are doing the same thing Tripoli. This work, however, does not amount t much.

If you don't want an answer enough to enclose full return postage to carry it, you don't want it.

A Cold-Climate Battery for Big Game

TOGETHER with a bit of advice from Admiral Peary on the treatment of gun-locks in the Arctic:

Question:—"Five friends and myself are going trapping in the Canadian Rockies and would like to have an expert's opinion on which are the best arms to take.

Which is the best—a Savage .250-3000 1899 model lever action, or a .250-3000 1920 model bolt action? Would the cold have any effect on the bolt action?

Is a Savage .32 automatic 1917 model heavy and powerful enough, or would a .380 automatic do better? Will the cold have any effect on these guns?"—LU MARSH, St. Louis, Mo.

Answer, by Mr. Wiggins:—I would prefer the bolt-action Savage to the lever-action model for service in the country where you say you expect to hunt. I admire the lever-action Savage and use one myself; but for a cold climate I will recommend the bolt action; the bolt can be dismounted and the oil and grease wiped from the moving parts more easily than can the lever style of bolt.

Admiral Peary told me never to leave oil or grease in the lock of a weapon used in the cold climate, as the oil or grease would harden and cause the gun to work hard or perhaps miss fire. Both types of rifle are accurate, hard-hitting guns, and I am sure you will be pleased with the gun you select.

I would select the .380 Savage pistol, in preference to the .32, as in a pistol for the woods a man should get one with all the "punch" that can be wrapped up in so small a compass. (I pack a .45, myself.)

World's Most Beautiful River

MR. THOMPSON puts it in Arkansas; and he's a far-traveler, too:

Question:—"I would like what information you have on the Ozarks in regard to the wildness and beauty of the mountains.

What I had in mind, being an artist, was to find a nice wild spot—the wilder the better—where I could go and paint and probably hunt and fish. If I liked the place I intended to spend about two years there.

Also give me an idea of housing conditions there, if I stood any show of picking up a shack reasonable, or whether I would have to build one myself. If so give me an idea of the price of land thereabouts.

I was thinking of heading a little west of Chadwick, Mo. It looks pretty wild on the map; but if you could suggest a better place you would oblige"—

ARTHUR R. WHITNEY, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Thompson:—Most of the Ozarks would suit you well. There is the White River country of the west part, where the scenery is beautiful. But my beloved spot which you would enjoy well is the Current River country of Carter and Ripley Counties, Missouri, and the counties well on the river farther north. In my mind it is the most beautiful river in the world; and I am considering what I have seen in Europe, Canada and the West. There is no sameness about it, though the hills are not quite so high as in the western part.

You could pick up a shanty in the good fishing and game country with land adjoining costing around fifteen dollars an acre. Write Will Reddin at Doniphan, Mo. He ought pick you a place. Tell him that I would like to see you located about Phillip's Bluff or close to the Carter County line, or anywhere eighteen miles above Doniphan.

Never will you regret going there. My mother was Celeste De Laureal, the landscape painter, so I am anxious to see you suitably located, as I believe I have a good idea of what you want. There you would be close to what is known as the Irish Wilderness, with few people ever about to bother you.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible*. All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

PHILPOTT, JACK. Your brother would like to hear from you at once.—Address E. N. P. 21st Co., Ft. Randolph, C. Z.

SHAKLEE, GEORGE H. Last heard from in Yonkers, N. Y., about fourteen years ago. Was the son of George W. Shaklee and lived at Olivett, Ohio. Had a sister Martha and a brother Warren. His niece would be very glad to hear from him or his wife or children.—Address EDITH, care of *Adventure*.

WILSON, SAMUEL WILLIAM. Left Clinton, Ontario, Canada, in 1898. Last heard from in 1899 in New Westminster, B. C., where he was employed by Burnette Saw Mills. Age forty-two years, height about six feet, dark complexion. Any information will be appreciated by his brother.—Address JAS. C. WILSON, Holmesville, Ontario, Canada.

WRAY, ALBERT L. (sometimes called Gray). Last heard of in Quincy, Mass., sixteen years ago. Born in Quincy, Ill. Age forty-seven years. Any information will be appreciated by his daughter.—Address ELIZABETH WRAY, care of *Adventure*.

LEE. Glad to hear from you any time. Enclose letter to Sweetie too. She and I are so worried. For my sake make good. Love same as ever.—MOM.

JONES, THOMAS F. C. Left Fall River, Mass., Friday, July 20, 1920, for short business trip to New York City. July 21 he telegraphed from New York to his father "Safe and sane, will write." But no letter has ever come. Parents extremely worried, ask for news and are always ready to help him toward anything which he wishes, or to come to him or to send financial aid. Any information will be appreciated.—Address L. M. R. W., care of *Adventure*.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

FORSS, ELLIS G. Is at present thought to be in Old Mexico. Please write to your old friend "Curley."—Address A. V. ANDERSON, P. O. Box 18, Hoboken, N. J.

HUFFMAN, CARL. Last heard of in Canadian Army under assumed name of West. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. EMMA HUFFMAN, 111 Bridge St., Piqua, Ohio.

MULLER, ROBERT F. Last heard from three years ago. Was then a shoe cutter in New York. He also was employed as an attendant in Insane Asylums in New York and Pennsylvania. Is probably now in California. Any information will be appreciated by his mother.—Address MRS. ALICE MULLER, 73 Chadwick St., Roxbury, Mass.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the February 10th issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

WILLET, JAS. S. Mother will die if you don't come to her. She has forgiven all and we need you. Please come.—Address JAS. E. WILLET, R. D. No. 1, Salisbury, Md.

THOMAS, LUTHER. Last seen about March 1st at Union Depot, Washington, D. C. A good buddy of R., at Sternenburg, Ft. Myer, Va., is desirous of getting in touch with him as he needs some very important advice from him. Any information will be appreciated.—Address PAUL R. GODDEN, P. G. H. Post No. 1, Fort Myer, Virginia.

KENNEDY, NORMAN. Formerly of Hecla Ave., Detroit, Mich. Please write.—Address G. IRWIN, care of *Adventure*.

HARTMAN, G. Write me at once. Will join you anywhere. Have you forgotten the S. A. at Norfolk and Headhunter?

CANNON, LEWIS MARION. Last known to be living in Michigan. Please write or come and see father and all.—Address CLEMENT C. CANNON, 1259 W. Harrison St., Freeport, Illinois.

WHO AM I? I am five feet, eleven inches, weigh 150 pounds, dark complexion, dark-brown hair, large brown eyes. I have a scar on my forehead, between my right eyebrow and hair; a scar running around index finger of right hand; a scar two inches long under right arm and one on left thigh. Small brown mole on right eyelid and back of neck. Not older than twenty-five or younger than nineteen. I came to myself in Fresno, California, some time in April, 1920. I call myself Frank Gregoire. Anyone recognizing above description please write.—Address FRANK GREGOIRE, 4623 Central Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

N. S. L. Please come back to your broken-hearted pal and all will be well.—N. S. L.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

MIDDAUGH, ROBERT LEE. Usually known as Lee Middaugh. Age about fifty years. Has been in several South American countries, also Honolulu and San Francisco. Has interest in an estate. Was to have been in San Francisco in April, 1921. Any information will be appreciated.—Address R. N. JOHNSON, Fort Madison, Iowa.

COOK, "MANO" or COOK, R. M. Mess cook and coal-passer on *Monadnock*. With him in the Philippines during Spanish-American War. Information wanted as to injury received during war. Please write.—Address CHAS. J. MCDONALD, Ex. Cox. *U. S. S. Boston*, 102 Kentucky St., Vallejo, Calif.

MALCOM, PETER. Formerly of London, England. Last heard of about 1900 at Malden, Mass. Any information will be appreciated.—Address PETER MALCOM, A. M. S. Washington Barracks, Washington, D. C.

GRIM, EDWARD C. Formerly of Philadelphia, Pa. Last heard of about eight years ago. Was then employed in the tool department of the Packard Automobile Co., at Detroit, Mich. Any information will be appreciated by his father.—Address S. A. GRIM, 409½ East 41st St., Los Angeles, Calif.

JENSEN, VICTOR. Last seen in Kansas City, Mo. Any information will be appreciated. —Address PVT. AUGUST A. JENSEN, Station Hospital, Schofield Bks., H. T.

SNYDER, "DUTCH." Formerly bugler on *U. S. S. Utah* and *U. S. S. Yankton*. Your old shipmate "Red" Le Blanc would like to get in touch with you. Please write. —address 3 St. Paul's Place, Jersey City, N. J.

STYLES, VIRGIL. Born in Salt Lake City, Utah. Last heard of was in Alexander, Texas. Father was a switchman for Cotton Belt R. R. Last heard of was in Tyler, Texas, think he is now in Salt Lake City. Any information will be appreciated.—Address ROGER EDWARDS, 408 N. 10th St., Fort Worth, Texas.

REED, MRS. M A. Last heard of was in Grant's Pass, Oregon. Please write to your old friend.—Address MRS. MARGARET GROW, Marshfield, Oregon.

BOSSMAN, ARTHUR. Please write to me, I have something I want to tell you.—Address CLARA, 1044 20 Ave., S. E., Minneapolis.

WOULD like to hear from the sergeant of Company K (Infantry) who was in France with me after the armistice was signed.—Address JAMES HOPLEY, Dorchester, Ill.

UNCLAIMED mail is held by Adventure for the following persons, who may obtain it sending us present address and proof of ident

GUNN, P. R.; Lekki, Michael; Martin, Hugh S.; [illegible] throp, John.

PLEASE send us your present address. Letters warded to you at address given do not reach you Address L. PATRICK GREENE, care of *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in either the Oct. 10th or Oct. 30th issues of Adventure They can get the name of the inquirer from the magazine:

BATEMAN, LEONARD: Buckley, Thomas; Burg, Louis A.; Burton, Bob; Bushard, Wilfred; Cook, Frank; Conrad, Ira L.; Coulten, Mrs.; Curran, Patrick; De Con, John H.; Hankins, Drew; Jorkinson, L.; Malone, Clifford; McGee, John: Noll, Adam Mrs. (Mollie Thompson); Peebles, Jack; Romans, Donald L.; Savage, Frederic; Seagraves, John; Smyth, Pete; Talbott, Lizzie; Wells, Fred S.; West, Max.

MISCELLANEOUS:—Bob and Ruby write to your friends; write to your old pal "Dutch."

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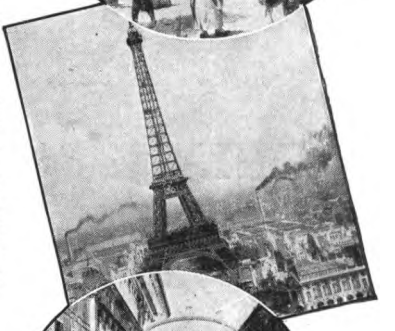

Learn At Home In Spare Time

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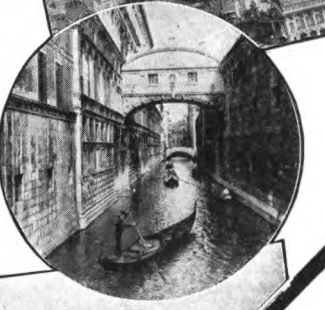

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