SEPTEMBER

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PUBLISHED
TWICE A MONTH

Adventure

Leonard H. Nason
Robert Welles Ritchie
Hugh Pendexter
Harold Lamb
Thomson Burtis
Robert Carse
Ernest Haycox
Nevil Henshaw
Alan Williams
Helen von Kolnitz Hyer

3 Complete Novelettes

SEPTEMBER 23rd ISSUE, 1925
VOL. LIX No. 6

ADVENTURE

25 Cents

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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Three Complete Novelettes

HIS father's business seemed frightfully tame to "*Shorty*," so he went off into the black heart of Africa, seeking life with a tang to it. And the bronze-thewed giants who labored inhumanly to fulfill an impossible contract for metal had their doubts about the boy. "STEEL'S SON," a complete novelette by Edmund M. Littell, will appear in the next issue.

THE police of several continents would have been pleased to come upon the persons of the hotel-keeper and his wife at isolated Kroon's Island. Then one day a longboat from a wrecked ship, bearing two people who carried a fortune in money and jewels—and an ex-convict sailorman—beached on the island. "THE BOSUN OF THE *SAMARKAND*," a novelette by Frederick Moore, will appear complete in the next issue.

SAHARA—and the sun. They do strange things to men, and *Captain Lartol* was prepared to find mystery, as well as battle, at Bir Ella-Ma. "A QUESTION OF FAITH," by Georges Surdez, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

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

***Adventure* is out on the 8th and 23d of each month**

Author of "A Pack of Cards," "Cockney," etc.

SUNLIGHT scrawled an arabesque on the broad mahogany of the table in the directors' room of the Blue Star Navigation Company. Eight pairs of eyes stared in cowed defiance at that bright pattern, unwilling to lock with those of the man at the end of the table. Square in the beam of sunlight from the window at his back sat Captain David Bone, chairman of the board of directors, president of the company. "Hard-Case" David Bone these eight men called him, when out of his presence, among other things. Hard-case he was, and proud of it. Gained the name when he ruled the bridges of his clippers in the old, wide-open days, and the name had stuck. Hard-Case Bone, proud of it.

There had been acrimonious words used here this morning at this hurriedly called meeting of the board. Hard words, sharp innuendos passed up and down the long table. Passed and repassed, until Bone had silenced them like an irate schoolmaster, and they had lowered their eyes, preferring to study the sun pattern and not his face. Bone's fingers played with the only thing on the table, a small brass ash-tray, empty and shiny. The directors never smoked in that room, but the ash-tray was placed there before Bone invariably. He liked it so. Liked to play with it. Long, strong fingers those. Strong like the high-boned face with its deep-set, cruel eyes. Eyes that would stare a man down, make him feel his inferiority to that old buzzard sitting there at the head of the table, cold and unshakeable. Each one of the eight felt it, rebelled against it, but was silent.

The meeting had been called by Bone himself. The row had followed in due course. All over a question of business

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ethics, essentially. And as Bone had said at the beginning of the meeting, "ethics and cold, hard business very seldom sail together." They didn't like that, those eight prosperous business men, although deep down they agreed with the old codger's commercial principles. Had agreed ever since the war when he had bought into the stock, and took over the chairmanship and presidency. Agreed and made money, and after all, that's what steamship companies were for.

But the question put to them had galled a little, gone down the wrong way, so to speak, and they had bucked him—openly and determinedly for the first time. And the last. The argument was over the company's freighter, the *David Bone*, named after old Hard-Case himself; built during the war-time rush, out of Washington lumber, at one of the Seattle yards. Never been away from her slip in more that eight years until last week. No one had wanted to take her away. She'd turned keel-side up coming off the ways, trapped and drowned eight of the shipyard crew on her decks. They'd put it down as a bad break; righted her; pumped the water out of the long, low hull, and warped her alongside to rot.

She did, for eight years. Last week, Bone, acting on his own initiative, as always, had taken her out under tugs; towed her down to Tacoma and loaded her with copper. Big market for copper in England now, prices higher than they would be again for years. Bone knew that and acted. The directors knew it too, but didn't like the way he had acted. She was down in the bay now with steam up, all hands aboard, fully provided, conditioned and cleared from the port.

Bone had explained the situation to them in his short-clipped way as soon as they had settled down in those uncomfortable chairs. Top price in the English copper market. Agent had snapped up a corking good order, cabled on for verification. All of the company's seven ships were on the other ends of their runs, wouldn't be in port for weeks. Not a decent bottom to be contracted for up and down the Sound; all out for codfish on the Alaskan banks or on the other side of the world. True, the waterfront was lined with two dozen or so war-time hookers, but they were as bad, or worse, than the *Bone*. And, after all, the *Bone* never had been given an even break. Turned keel coming off the ways, yes, but more than one good ship had done that in years gone by and brought home many a cool thousand for her owners afterward. So Bone had wired the London agent in the affirmative and sent the *Bone* down to the Reggenheim plant in Tacoma to load her five thousand of ingots. Back alongside now, down at Rutter and Kenny's, seams as tight as a fiddle string. One —— of a time getting a crew, but he'd scraped them up, here and there, from Everett, Port Townsend and Bellingham. His friend, the commissioner, and a sharp lull in shipping had helped there. Called a meeting of the board, then, and these liver-hearted vermin who called themselves men had lain down cold on him.

Talked of insurance, after making sure they'd each made a nice slice out of the profits if the tub did make the 7,000 and some to Liverpool. Then little Morabacher there, had piped up in his obnoxious, girl-like quaver.

"Well—uh, Mister—"

"Captain," corrected Bone curtly.

Morabacher smiled weak apology.

"Well—uh, Captain Bone, it seems to me, I mean, will—is there any, say, slight possibility, that the *Bone* might not reach Liverpool?"

Bone said nothing. Just fastened those falcon's eyes on him and let him blunder ahead, the poor wishy-washy idiot. Clothing merchants had no bleeding right on the board of a steamship company anyhow. Morabacher's face flushed ruddily under that stare, but he quavered on.

"I mean, uh, Captain," he colored more deeply and looked around at his seven silent, grim-faced brother directors, "that there was so much talk about the—uh, vessel during the war and all—when she was, uh, launched, that I wondered a little."

He stopped, panting and red-faced as a high school boy making his first public speech oration. Phewee! he'd never go under the ordeal of those eyes again. Well, he'd eased his conscience, made his objection. Let the others carry it on. He'd made the start. Bone was still silent, sitting there with that foolish ash-tray between his big fingers. They said he could still break a man's arm with a wrench of those. My, what a sphinx the man was, anyhow.

CORRIGAN, a real estate developer with a new project out by the University on Lake Washington, took it up where Morabacher left off. Corrigan was one of the youngest men on the board—got his place through inheritance from his father. A cocky young parakeet. He cleared his throat firmly.

"Yes, Captain, how about that? Course we all understand, I guess—"

He too swung a glance of appeal at the others, sitting uncomfortably in their chairs around the big table.

"—that there's not another bottom in the Bay, or the Sound, for that matter, or she'd carry our copper for us. But to me—a—er—landsman, it seems sort o' risky sending out a ship which tipped over when she was launched, and hasn't been out of her pier since under her own power. Sort o' bad business. Give the company a bad name if she—er—you know, sank, and all that sort of thing."

That man's eyes were uncanny, the way they fixed on you. Corrigan gulped, pulling at his jacket cuff.

"Of course—".

His voice trailed off and he yanked out his handkerchief, blowing his nose with vehemence. Whew, he'd just remembered! The old sea-lion was a Pharaoh on the board of directors over at the West Coast National too. Could have those notes of his called just like that, if you crossed him. Said he did that sort of thing, too. Wouldn't put it past him. Bet there wasn't a man in this room on whom he didn't have something. Except, of course, poor Dutchy Morabacher there. And that was only because Dutchy had been in town a short while from Portland. He talked from the bottom of his heart, the poor *Deutscher.* They said he was a big bird over in the Dutch Reform Church. Looked it—the sort that asked the minister to sing the hymn, "Oh, Save the Sailors on the Stormy Sea," or something like that, when the *Post-Intelligencer* reported it was blowing up a bit outside.

Corrigan looked about him furtively at the other five. From the appearance of things they'd taken their medicine vicariously and were satisfied with what he and Morabacher had said. A spineless gang. But, profit was profit—Bone was a tough old rooster to buck, and he'd always brought home the bacon before. Knew his business, the old gentleman! And other people's too. That was the rub. Looked like the figurehead off some old sailing ship, posed there at the head of the table. Always sat with his back to the sun, with them in the broad light, so he could watch their faces. Wise, that last—

Bone tapped the ash receiver with a yellow fingernail, eliciting a faint tinkling sound, like a ship's bells far away. Going to speak now. That was the tacit signal. Like "Assembly" call in the Army.

"Gentlemen," said David Bone precisely, "you have heard what I have had to say. You have discussed the question among you. You have also listened to what Messrs. Morabacher and Corrigan have offered to the board. I again repeat: The *David Bone* is loaded, conditioned, manned and cleared from the port of Seattle, for the port of Liverpool, with 5,400 tons of copper ingots for the Great Northern Metals Co., Limited, of Birmingham. Copper, now at the top of a strong market, is in great demand. The profits of this voyage I have outlined in full, also the dubious dangers. I, therefore, as chairman of this board, suggest that the motion I made at the beginning of this meeting be acted upon. Second the motion?"

Corrigan, thoughts upon his notes at the West Coast National, murmured a low—

"Seconded."

"All those objecting to the motion?"

Silence, strained and painful.

"Motion passed," announced Bone gravely.

Before they fully realized it he had adjourned the meeting, and they found themselves on their feet. Bone pulled a heavy, old-fashioned gold watch from his waistcoat.

"It's now ten-forty, gentlemen. Cap'n Jamieson of the *Bone* has orders to sail at noon if the board approved. Would any of you like to go down and see her off? My car is downstairs now."

Corrigan nodded brightly. Morabacher pleaded another engagement and fled almost precipitately. Three of the others laughed a little nervously and said they'd be very glad to see one of the company's biggest money-makers make her getaway.

Going down in the elevator they all accepted cigars from Bone's case. Long, noxious cheroots which he had first taken a fancy to one night when ashore in Surabaya. They lighted up simultaneously and were

smoking with apparent delight as he ushered them into his sedan. The Chinaboy chauffeur got the car under way immediately, without any orders from Bone. Sure of his cards all along, thought Corrigan as they swooped down the descents from the Smith Building toward Coleman Dock. Worth your while to be around a man like Bone. Might not like him much personally, but you sure learned things. They undulated over the cobbles of First Avenue, the long shadow of the street-car structure overhead, swung through a gate opened by an agile watchman, and came to a halt beside a faded, red tin building on a long wooden pier. Warped to her bollards on the port side of the dock lay the *David Bone*, a thin thread of vapor fretting from her squat stack.

Bone was the first one out of the car and he waited impassively until they all stood about him. Then like a tourists' guide conducting a party through a strange, alien place, he led the way up a dingy gray gangway ladder amidships. A long queue of men stood along the 'midships deck on the starboard side, hands plunged deep in their pockets to protect them from the nip of the early spring breeze. They looked up curiously as the little party ducked under cargo boom falls and slack stays, to march down the after alleyway.

"Is this—the crew, Captain Bone?" whispered one of the party.

"Yes, the crew," answered Bone curtly. "They're signing on now. And —— well late about it, too!"

Behind them, a voice from the line said clearly:

"Yeah, buddy, that's him—the tall bloke in the black coat. That's Hard-Case hisself, the —— slave-driver!"

Corrigan checked a cough in the folds of his overcoat collar. At the door of a little cubby, almost at the after end of the house, Bone stopped, the directors halting close at his heels. There was something disconcerting in the way this group of unshaven nondescripts glowered at them, commenting to one another in growling undertones. A shabby, ill-looking lot. And that one man had applied a frightful epithet to Captain Bone—the man who was hiring him. And these were the sort of men who manned the American merchant marine. No doubt it was because of their surly, ungrateful attitude that shipping conditions were bad and the foreign ships were stealing rightful American trade.

Young Corrigan alone of the group grinned at the slowly moving file, trying to find the man who had greeted Bone. Seemed to be all races, types and ages here. Wedged between a knot of four or five moody, yellow-skinned chaps who were either Chinese or Japanese, and a swarthy man with the aquiline features of the meridional, was an old, white-haired fellow who looked as if he were a broken-down school teacher. A queer medley. But Bone was shouldering a way through the line and entering the little cubby. Corrigan followed at his heels. No sense in missing any of this. Have a better idea of what to say and not to say at the next board meeting.

BONE stooped his tall frame to get through the door over which a little disc sign read "Petty Officers' Mess." Two men were seated on the wall settees inside, ink bottles and wide sheets of ruled paper on the mess table in front of them. One of them Corrigan recognized as an assistant shipping commissioner. This gentleman had his hat jammed far back on his low forehead and rotated the stub of a wet cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other. His co-worker wore a blue officer's watch cap, a partly unbuttoned flannel shirt and a dirty gray woolen sweater. Between them stood a massive Scandinavian of some sort who reeked abominably of cheap liquor and sour, unwashed clothing.

Both seated men glanced up when Bone and Corrigan entered. The fellow from the commissioner's office expertly dropped his cigar butt, rose and held out a flaccid hand. The man in the officer's cap seemed to busy himself blotting an ink spot on the page before him after a quick look at them.

"Hullo, Cap'n. Down to see her off? Held up quite a while getting these cattle signed on. Some of 'em drunk—showed up late, even on sailing day. Couple of 'em who've been standing by the last few days ducked for good an' all. But we'll have 'em on the books in half an hour now. Yes, sir, Cap'n, half an hour."

Bone nodded jerkily.

"Where's Cap'n Jamieson?"

The assistant commissioner tilted his hat far forward over his sloping forehead and obviously sparred for time.

"Cap'n Jamieson? Why, he was here a minute ago, Cap'n Bone."

He swung around on the other man, who was glumly examining a pen point with a dirty fingernail.

"You know?"

The man in the officer's cap coughed into his hand.

"Why, yes. Think he went aft with 'Chips' to look over the hatch battens and tarps. Prob'ly find him for'ard in his cabin, now, sir."

He dropped his eyes hurriedly to his pen point again.

"You the first mate?"

"Yes, sir. Came on yesterday."

"Huh!" said Bone, breathing through his nose, and pushed out of the cubby.

Corrigan hesitated between a desire to follow and stay where he was. During the brief conversation the partially drunken Scandinavian had stood sullenly on one foot and then on the other, big, bloodshot, blue eyes fixed on a Steamboat Inspection Service chart explaining the manipulation of the Lyle gun which was pasted on the other bulkhead. Here was one of the men who followed the sea for a livelihood. One of the fellows for whom he and little Morabacher had battled that morning, trying to assure their lives for them. He'd stay and watch.

The assistant shipping commissioner had been fishing for his discarded cigar butt, which he found in a corner of the settee. He jabbed this now in a corner of his mouth and belligerently surveyed the Scandinavian.

"What's yer job aboard this hulk?"

"A. B., sar."

"Got yer ticket an' discharges?"

"Naw, sar."

"Why not?"

"Lost dem, py San Francisco."

"That's what they all say! What happened?"

"Crooked fellar, in Institoot, he steal dem from my dungarees when I'm sleepin'."

"Yeah? That's too bad. This all O.K., Mate?"

The man in the watch cap, who had been writing busily with his scratchy pen, peered up at the big seaman.

"Yeah, I guess so—in this scow. You can see he's an old sailor."

"All right, what's yer name?"

"Hodel Grennigsfors, sar."

"What?"

The sailor repeated it.

"Spell it!"

He uttered a jumble of totally incomprehensible gutturals.

The assistant commissioner sat back against the bulkhead and cursed with outraged fluency. Suddenly the big sailor poked a paw inside his torn jacket and produced a scrap of crumpled paper. He held it out wordlessly. The commissioner grasped it hopefully; read in silence.

"Who wrote this for yuh?"

"Fellar 'longside me in 'Frisco Institoot."

"You tell him all this? Is it all right?"

"Yas, sar."

"Good. You know what you're signing to now, don't you?"

The big Scandinavian laughed.

"Yas, sar. Forty dollar' a mont'——two watches—no overtime."

"Right."

He held over a pen.

"Sign here."

The sailor shook his head. The commissioner profaned his gods again, looking over at Corrigan, as if asking sympathy. He swung the page around and wrote the name himself in broad characters, then handed up the pen to the sailor.

"All right, make your cross there. Now, beat it! Wait a minute. Where is this Helsingfors—Sweden?"

The sailor, half out of the door, swung around, his conical skull wrinkled in weighty thought.

"Yas, sar."

"Right!" grunted the Commissioner. "Next man. Make it snappy, now!"

Corrigan followed the sailor outside. So that was how they did it, hey? He was sure that Helsingfors was the capital of Finland, but what difference did it make, after all? Poor swine! Probably never see the place again anyhow. He wandered aft across a litter of twisted wire topping lifts and wooden blocks on the main deck, and down a ladder to a lower deck, back toward the stern of the ship. A heavy steel door stood open and he stepped over a high sill into a passageway. Shouts and drunken cries issued in broken waves from the shadowy depths of the place. This must be what they called the forecastle, the place where the poor devils lived.

He poked his head into another doorway. A group of men were squatting around an

oil-clothed table where a couple of half-empty bottles stood. One man, who wore a disreputable derby hat and a pair of high rubber boots, was singing. He waved his tin cup at the others and they joined raggedly in the chorus.

"We're just a couple o' flyin'-fish sailors in fr'm
Hongkong,
S' give 's s'me time t' blow th' man down!"

One of the men at the end of the table heaved to his feet, slamming his cup across the room.

"A long trip 'n a big pay-off. Liverpool er swim! 'N t' fiery —— wi' Hard-Case Bone!"

A half-naked man bearing a leaky bucket of water pushed by Corrigan, glaring at him with bellicose curiosity. The real estate man suddenly decided he had better get along up forward and find the rest of his party. He'd like to get a squint at this Captain Jamieson, the man that commanded this rabble and the hulk they sailed in. He made his way up the alleyway past the cubby where the commissioner sat swearing at the last men to sign on. As he reached a door over which was painted "Engine Room," it swung outward and Bone, trailed by the other sightseers, came into the alleyway. Corrigan silently fell in behind, grasping one of his brother directors by the arm.

"Where we going now?" he whispered.

"We're looking for the captain. The chief engineer is a wild Irishman, swears the skipper is drunk and unfit to take the ship out. Chief seems like a pretty competent fellow. His engine room is as—well, as efficiently kept—as one might expect. You know. They're supposed to sail in twenty minutes, and they can't find Jamieson — he's the captain — anywhere. Pilot's here and so are the men from the compass company. First assistant engineer—just a boy, too—got me aside and told me that the compasses haven't been tested since the ship was built. And here they are, going out to sea! Hsssh—Bone's looking around at us!"

BONE had obliqued across the 'midships deck again and was going up a short ladder which lead to an upper deck. Before a door stencilled "Captain's Quarters," he stopped, the four directors stepping discreetly backward a few paces. Bone lifted a great fist and hammered on the door.

"Cap'n Jamieson!"

Through the thin panels came a vitriolic string of curses in broad Scots. Then, more distinctly and coherently:

"Gin ye noo gang awa' fra that dure I'll bash ye in! Get ye gaen, noo, or I'll oot on ye! We dinna sail fair twenty minoots yet. Gang, awa', —— ye!"

There was a lifeboat wedged on its wooden gallows on the outer side of the deck. Against this the four directors leaned limply, wide eyes on Captain David Bone. The president of the Blue Star Navigation Company and chairman of its board of directors, stood perfectly still for a moment. Then with a vicious slam of his giant fist, he rended the upper panel of the door into two splintered halves. He grasped one of these, and with a straining jerk, ripped it bodily out of the door frame. His voice quivered with surcharged venom when he finally spoke.

"Come out of there at once, Jamieson! This is Bone. I'll—"

He jumped precipitately backward, ducking his head. The black nose of a large revolver had just been shoved through the smashed panel, followed by a reddish face, crowned with a scant thicket of sandy hair.

"Must I gie ye lead fra ma weepon t' make ye leave a mon in peace? Who—who is 't? Ah, 'tis Bone. Mastair-r-r Cap'n Davvid Bone!"

The menacing muzzle disappeared, as did the reddish face. A latch clicked and the door opened. A short, frail man stepped forth and stood blinking at them out of pale brown eyes. Captain Jamieson was dressed in a rumpled dress shirt, collarless and tieless, a pair of blue serge uniform trousers, and ragged brown bedroom slippers. As he lifted the revolver to place it in his rear pocket, his slim, long-fingered hand shook as if with the palsy. Captain Jamieson was indubitably and manifestly quite drunk. Corrigan watched with fascination as Jamieson swung about on the company president with a bewitching smile, asking cheerily—

"Wha' wud ye ha', Davvid, me lad?"

Corrigan clapped a gloved hand to his mouth, and almost bit through the leather as he fought down the peal of laughter which rilled upward. The other three stockholders were gasping like dying brook trout.

Bone had drawn himself up to his full height, towering far above the little Scotsman.

"Come over here," he whipped. "I want to talk with you, you—"

He choked the last. Jamieson bobbed his head, then faced the four directors.

"If we ha' the consent o' yeer friends, Davvid. Cap'n James Jamieson, o' the S. S. *Davvid Bone*, gentlemen. I ha' not the plaiseer o' yeer names maself."

He bowed with grave alcoholic grace, and the four found themselves bowing back. Bone had stalked to the far side of the deck, and Jamieson followed, his worn-out slippers scuffling a tipsy little tune.

"Wha' wud ye ha', Davvid?" asked Jamieson, feeling the throbbing burn of the whisky die out within him as he faced this man.

Bone did not speak for a moment, fastening his gaze on the smaller man, as he had on Morabacher and Corrigan earlier in the day. Jamieson's eyelids stopped their fluttering and his soft, brown eyes locked uncompromisingly with Bone's. He was cold sober now, and Bone knew it, staring down at him.

"Wha' wud ye ha', Davvid?" he asked again with slow insolence.

The knots of muscles at the top of Bone's jaw-bones became hard, prominent bunches.

"Davvid, Davvid," breathed the other softly, as if expostulating with a child, "I am na snake an' ye canna char-r-rm me wi' yeer eyes."

Bone restrained himself with a violent grip of his will.

"You fool! What did I tell you—two weeks ago—when I gave you this billet? Are you going to leave the rum alone—or must I have your license revoked? Or have the other taken away?"

Jamieson's hand, where it rested on the mottled ironwork of the bulwark, fluttered, grew taut with anger. From the funnel whistle came an impatient howl of unleashed steam. In answer a soft bell stroke sounded from the bridge chronometer above. A quarter of twelve. One bell before the watch. Jamieson's slight frame relaxed, and he smiled a little as he pushed a fold of his stiff shirt into the waistband of his trousers.

"Ye need na talk like tha', Davvid. There was na ither mon t' take yeer ship oot ta sea. Aboot t'other—ye'd— Oh, I wud na, Davvid, tha's a'. There's MacCar-rty a-blowin' tha' he wants t' be gaen back t' Liverpool. 'Tis one bell, Davvid, an' we sail at eight bells, noon. Gin ye leave me noo, I'll be gettin' her oot ta sea."

Bone glanced forward, well aware as a seaman that what Jamieson said was so. The pimply faced weakling he had seen in the petty officers' mess was herding his gang of misfits forward to the forecastle head, and already a bow-legged fellow in a ragged canvas cap and new dungarees, whom Bone recognized as the boatswain, was overhauling the gangway ladder gear, preparatory to getting the heavy contrivance aboard. Bone inclined his head half an inch to evidence that he submitted to the demands of the situation, but the Scotsman was already gone.

Jamieson stopped in front of his cabin door to shake hands with the four visitors. Corrigan, the youngest of the lot, gripped the long hand extended to him with fervor, whispering:

"By ——, you're a man, sir!"

His only reply was a twinkle from the soft brown eyes and Jamieson was gone through the wrecked door. As Bone led them wordlessly down the ladder to the gangway Jamieson reappeared, garbed now in a wrinkled watch jacket and cap, carrying a small megaphone under his arm. One of the Blue Star's powerful tugs had slid into the slip and was nuzzling against the bow of the ungainly freighter while the chief mate prepared a line for her. Another lay under the port counter, her towing hawser already belayed around the bitts.

Jamieson stepped on to his bridge, nodding curtly to the pilot, who stood carrying on an undertone chat with the two representatives of the compass company. The pilot disengaged himself and hastened to Jamieson's side.

"'Fraid your quartermaster is drunk, there, Cap'n. Stumbled an' almost fell, coming up the ladder."

"Aye? Ha' the seecond mate stand by the wheel, then, Mistair!"

He raised the megaphone to his lips.

"Single doon—fore an' aft!"

Below, on the dockside, Bone and the four directors stood in a watchful group. Corrigan's eyes were on the figure of the little captain, who stood directly overhead in the extreme end of the bridge wing. There was a man for you. Drunk as a fiddler when

Bone first routed him out. Sober as a surrogate now. Didn't let this slave-driver Bone crack the whip over his back, either.

Then David Bone, sea captain, marine financier and master of men, did a strange thing. He threw away a cheroot which was only half smoked, lighted a fresh one and leaned back on his heels contentedly. His eyes ran proudly over the dingy shape of the big freighter, vibrating now to the pulse of her turbines. A hard job, this last, getting this old hulk off his hands with a good cargo, which would bring a sky-high price in her port of call. A hard job and a good one, raking up a crew, brow-beating this gang of ninnies who called themselves directors, and last of all, scaring the whisky out of that sot, Jamieson, there. The trick was turned now, she was bound out, and it meant just so much more on that ever-climbing account over at the West Coast National.

Captain David Bone exulted inwardly, he dilated, and grew incautious. He placed one of his huge hands on the shoulder of Corrigan, the man standing next to him.

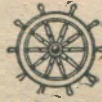
"There you are, gentlemen," he waved the cheroot tip. "You were arguing this morning about the fairness of sending out a craft like this—endangering the lives of a group of brave men and all that kind of twaddle. Twaddle, that's what it was, gentlemen. For she's a good ship, too good to be entrusted to a bunch of drunken, useless dock lice such as those in her now. A crew of —— no-goods, —— yellow-bellied no-goods, gentlemen. If she makes the Mersey it'll be no fault of theirs."

He clamped the cheroot back between his teeth again and permitted himself the rare pleasure of a satisfied smile. The smile fled as he stared upward. Captain Jamieson was leaning far out from the bridge wing, brown eyes flashing fire.

"A crew o' na-gudes, aye, ye sheep-stealin' renegade? Yalla-bellies, aye? Cap'n Davvid Bone, may the Horned-One ha' mercy on ye an' on'y let yeer rotten bones fry on the saxty-sax fires o' eternal——!"

"Come, gentlemen," managed David Bone aloud, "the man is drunk!"

The Chinese chauffeur slipped in his gears and the big sedan jounced softly over the dock as the *David Bone* nudged out of her slip, her propeller lashing up oily water, then wheeled about and started slowly out to sea.



CAPTAIN JAMIESON dropped his megaphone in the angle gear box and crossed the deck to the wheel. Outside on the bridge the officious pilot pushed his rounded stomach against the bridge work and shouted orders at the tug captains between swoops at the handles of the engine-room telegraph. Jamieson looked at the pallid face of the lad standing at the wheel. The second mate, a heavily set Norwegian, was standing at the open door, waiting to transmit the pilot's orders to the wheelsman. Jamieson leaned close.

"Ha' ye been suppin' fra' the cup tha' cheers, laddie?"

The lad looked up with startled eyes.

"Me? Nossir. Not me! Mebbe some o' them others."

Jamieson frowned a little perplexedly.

"But ye dinna luke sa gude. Are ye sick, mon?"

"Nossir. On'y—"

"On'y wha', laddie?"

"I ain't ett fer two days, tha's all."

"Och, ye can soon, then. Can ye take 'er weel?"

"Yessir, Cap'n."

The pilot had successfully cursed the tug captains into flight and turned now to the navigation of the ship.

"Hard-a-port, there!"

"Hard-a-port, sir!" repeated the hungry one, swinging the spokes down.

"Steady!"

"Steady she goes, sir!"

This boy wasn't drunk, mused Jamieson, crossing to the port door and so out on to the bridge. Seattle lay due astern now, the tall office buildings spired in serried ranks from the slopes, their roofs merging with the wind-whipped gray of the March sky. Jamieson pulled his watch cap visor over his right eye. Curse Bone and his knock-kneed gang of nickel-nursers! He'd bring this tub up the Mersey-side if it was the last thing he did before signing on in Fiddlers' Green. The two compass company men approached him now, grinning sheepishly. No doubt they'd overheard that last parting volley between himself and Bone. Well, he hoped they'd spread it all over the Rainier Club and so throughout Seattle.

"Better check up on them cards o' yours now, hadn't we Cap'n? Can't allow fer too much variation and deviation on a seven thousand mile v'yage like yours. Never see

one o' th' Blue Star boats yet whose binnacles wasn't way off true. Rotten ships, anyways, hey, Cap'n?"

Jamieson surveyed the speaker, a tall man bundled in a fuzzy greatcoat and a rumpled cap. This glomeril was trying to draw him out, making him talk against Bone, so that he could recount the conversation with much gusto and verbal embroidery when he got back to Seattle.

Jamieson's voice was a cold, lashing menace.

"Gang ye aloft an' true them or 'tis overside wi' ye! Quick t' it noo, ye gabbers!"

They hastened gaspingly up the wheelhouse topside ladder to the true compass and were soon busily shouting questions and answers down the speaking tube to the wheelsman. Jamieson settled down beside the pilot, who had done his day's share of blaspheming and was content now to get this barge down Elliot Bay to Port Townsend and hurry home to a hot dinner and his newspaper. He placed a caressing hand over the convex folds of his overcoat and grunted acknowledgment of the captain's presence. From time to time he peered over his shoulder at the wavering wake and barked a croaking command at the second mate in the wheelhouse doorway.

"Steady, there! You're off half a point. Starb'rd a little!"

"Starb'rd a leetle, sar!" answered the Norwegian, repeating the order to the helmsman.

The rounded bow bungled around a bit and steadied on the course once more.

"Look, Cap'n," sputtered the pilot plaintively. "Told you that sailor was drunk. Th' wake looks as if he's tryin' to spell his name in th' bay!"

"The laddie isna drunk," answered Jamieson.

The compass adjusters had finished their task and stood hesitating a moment at the head of the bridge ladder. The man in the plaid greatcoat shook his head at his companion fiercely.

"Nossir! Him—sober fer th' first time since Jonah wore pants—an' me—I gotta go an' try t' wise-crack with 'im. We don't waste no spare words on that crazy Scotchman. You heard what he tole Bone? Bone, mind ya, not you, er me, even!"

"Awri'," said the other, and started down the ladder.

The big man scowled at Jamieson's back. "Compasses are all trued now, Cap'n. Good v'yage t' ya."

He clunked after his mate.

"Aye!" called Jamieson, eyes busy ahead. A big, lean-flanked passenger packet of the Brown-Smith Line was streaking up the channel toward them, a ribbon of black smoke flinging astern from her canted stacks.

"Port a little!" commanded the pilot nervously.

The *David Bone's* bow wavered, floundered over a bit in the ordered direction, and slewed back again.

"I said 'port'!" screeched the pilot.

"Aye, sar!" barked the Norwegian mate, jumping into the wheelhouse.

The mail packet had already eaten up all but a scant hundred fathoms between them. On her bridge Jamieson could see the pilot move to the whistle valve, to warn the sluggishly veering freighter to give leeway. The face of the *Bone's* pilot had turned the hue of a dirty linen collar.

"Port—port—hard down, you idiot!"

"Yas, sar!" roared the Norwegian anxiously, losing his native calm and making wild motions at the wheelsman.

Again the maneuver was repeated. The freighter's bow rolled off in the commanded direction, and then swung back again, only this time it crossed the previous course and swung far to starboard.

"Oh, my mercy! I told you the man was drunk!" whimpered the pilot, gaze fixed on the onrushing liner whose whistle brayed repeated warnings. Jamieson swung around, to look through the wheelhouse windows. The lad at the wheel was spinning over the spokes rapidly, his mouth a white line of hidden fear.

"Git away from dere, farmer poy!" yelled the Norwegian, elbowing at the lad.

Jamieson gauged the space between the two vessels, and laughed aloud even as he moved swiftly to the bridge telegraph. A flash of white jackets came from the decks of the passenger packet, where a group of deck stewards dashed madly from the threatened side to comparative safety. He pulled the brass telegraph arm to "Stop." Almost immediately he felt the quiver of the ship cease as the turbines were stopped. The *David Bone* still clumsily sheered inward toward the bigger vessel, which heeled far over on her course, listing greatly to starboard. Jamieson jabbed at

the liner's commander, like air being released from a bagpipe. He staggered backward from the rail and was lost to sight in his wheelroom. Bells rang, water frothed from the razor stern of the liner, and she continued on her course.

"That'll hold 'im, th' unregenerate swine!" muttered the pilot while he and Jamieson went aft to the poop.

The chief engineer, a Liverpool man named MacCarty, was waiting for them when they came down the alleyway by the engine room fiddley. MacCarty was a morose, homesick Irishman. Jamieson was a Glasgow Scot and was known from Valparaiso to Vancouver for his alcoholic propensities and recklessness in handling a ship. Many harsh things leapt to the chief's lips while he waited for the pair to reach him, but something in the slim little Scot's demeanor checked the words.

"An' where is yeer donkey-mon, Chief? I'm thinkin' yeer steerin' engine is brekit. She will na answer the hellum fra' the bridge. Ye did weel in stoppin' her there, else we wud ha' smashed her unco sorely."

MacCarty swung his big square head in anger.

"Donkey-mon! Badd cess, an' he's sleepin' off a jag in his focsle, th' son av a sow."

He turned to a lanky Filipino oiler in singlet and dungarees, who slouched by the galley door while he arranged his sweat cloth about his neck before going below on watch.

"Hop it down below, you, an' get aholt av thot wine keg thot calls h'self an engine-room storekeeper. Tell 'm t'lay aft wi' a Stillson, some six fathom o' inch cable an' a marlin spike. We'll be in th' steerin' engine-room."

The oiler clanked down the steel ladders and the trio continued aft. From the line of men who leaned against the rail watching the disappearing mail packet, Jamieson salvaged a couple of A. B.'s and his Cockney boatswain. Jamieson pulled the boatswain aside.

"May ye nip it fair the bridge, Bosun. Ye'll aye find the seecond mate, a wee bit knockit oot, layin' there. Tell 'im ta break oot the black ball, t' show we canna navigate. Snappy, noo, mon!"

The boatswain ogled a moment at his superior before he loped forward. Lud lummee, they said this man was a drinkin' cove! Right now he was as sober as the Archbishop of Canterbury during Lent. A beastly strange ship this.

MacCarty yanked open the steel door of the steering engine-room on the poop. Inside, across the grease-slimed deck, a writhing mess of frayed, rusty steel cable confirmed Jamieson's conjecture.

"Aye!" said MacCarty, clambering over the steel rail which guarded the engine. " 'Tis th' cable on th' relievin' tayckle which has broke—as ye said, Cap'n. She would not come back when she was jammed hard over—d' ye see, there, where th' jaw is on th' traveler? Aye, an' may th' Saints—No one has been near th' blahsted thing since th' scow was rigged over ot Dugreave's in '18! Lookit—th' blasted wire is frayed like me last year's dungarees. May th' Saints bring eternal fire on thot mon's head an' may th' Brown-Smith sue 'm good an' proper. I was come aboard last night fer th' first time, tole that all things was in fine shape below an' on deck. May th' Saints—"

He glanced around at Jamieson and the pilot a little apprehensively, afraid that he had said too much in the heat of his wrath. But they smiled in approval and the pair of A. B.'s standing in the doorway supplied the exact details and qualifying adjectives left out by the chief.

"May ye gang for'ard to th' dining saloon, Cap'n," said Jamieson to the pilot. " 'Tis on'y a wee sma' job o' ten minoots fair the chief and me. May ye eat an' think o'er yeer repor-rt- t' yeer Association. I ha' na tried th' scoff yet. May it be better than' the mon's steerin' engines!"

The pilot grunted, and disappeared forward in quest of his doubtful repast. Jamieson and the chief unreeved the rotten wire, and when the Portuguese engine-room storekeeper staggered in under his load of wire and tools, they set expertly to work rigging the new tackle. The job done, they went forward together, the chief swabbing the grease from his hands with a piece of waste fished from a hip pocket. Suddenly he grinned over at Jamieson and offered him a handful of the waste.

"Pardon me, sir. It's me who's forgetful when anything happens like this. I—well, she's all the like o' that steerin' engine below—an' on deck, I guess, too. 'Twill be a crusty seven weeks until we raise P'int Tynas—"

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"Aye, Mac. Yeer unco richt. She's 'a the same, fra' fan-tail t' the eyes o' her. Ye can see it, well as I. Gude luck t' ye alow decks."

"Th' same, topside, sir," said MacCarty, stepping over the wave-guard on to the engine-room ladder.

At five bells on the afternoon watch the pilot pulled the telegraph indicator to "Stop," then to "Stand By."

"There comes my relief, Cap'n. You'll not make me feel bad if you sign this here paper. I'll catch yer chief's monicker going overside. Just a little statement to prove my words, if that swab Brindley does as he said. Kinda think he will. Just the sort. Thank you, Cap'n. May you bring her in O.K."

"Thankee kindly, Cap'n. May ye make the louse swallow his ain words. The same, sir!"

JAMIESON watched him, a haggard smile playing about his eyes and mouth, as he caromed down the ladders. A good man, that, with a few grains of real courage tucked away somewhere in that mound of fat. He'd saved him from a lot when they collided with the mail packet. A bit of luck, that—getting out of it so easily. He needed a wee snatch himself, flung in with the wheen of bad luck he'd sailed in for the last twenty-some years. His craft was uninjured, the mail packet had suffered, if anything. And because of it, he and the Liverpool man MacCarty had patched things up between bridge and engine-room—Had effaced that almost inevitable gulf which existed between Calvinist Protestant Scotsmen and Papist Catholic Irishmen ever since the wearers of the kilts had migrated to Ireland. An unco guid thing to have that out of the way in a floating coffin like this, with Bone's waterfront scrapings as hands.

The new pilot, an officious, jerky man, with a heavy mustache, and a red tin box holding his papers, had taken the bridge now, and was crackling orders at the helmsman. The third mate, a Newfoundland Frenchman, was bustling to and fro in the tiny chart-room abaft the wheel-room and Jamieson decided to leave the bridge in charge of him and the pilot while he went below for a snack to eat.

He stepped into the wheel-house to warn the mate that he was going below to the dining-saloon. The sailor at the wheel, a short man wearing a badly smashed derby hat and paint-spattered sea-boots, jerked his head nervously at him. Jamieson stopped. The sailor lifted a dirty hand, motioning him to come closer. A little mystified, Jamieson stepped close to him.

"Better watch that there third in there, skipper. I dunno, ain't rightly none o' my business, but he's had th' covers off all three clocks an' has been jammin' aroun' at 'em t' beat ——. One o' th' guys back aft says he was shipmates with him in a tanker an' that he's plumb off his tram—*loco*—crazier 'n a Austryliun jackass. Lissen to 'im now—he's a-tearin' aroun' in th' chart rack like a hound bitch with th' rabies. He been out here six times within th' strikin' o' th' bells an' ast me was I on my course. He don't even know which side o' th' ship he's on, th' crazy ——! Better take a look-see, Skipper."

He gave the wheel a poke, blinked ominously at the slowly tilting binnacle card, and tipped the battered headpiece at an impossible angle over one eye. Jamieson, himself no mere passing acquaintance of John Barleycorn's, caught the man's reeking, whiskied breath. But a glance at the card showed that he was within half a degree of the course chalked on the blackboard by the pilot. And there was an infernal racket coming from the chart-room in confirmation of the man's words. Jamieson crossed noiselessly to the chart-room door and looked in.

From behind a rumpled mass of charts which filled and overflowed the small chart table a shock of gray-black hair appeared, followed by the head and shoulders of his third mate. Jamieson had just barely made himself known to his watch officers in the two unreal days between his appointment and the sailing of the ship. Of his third mate he knew very little. He had seen him just once on deck, and learned from Mr. Brown, his first officer, that "the third was a sort of strange feller, one of those Newf'nland Frenchies."

Without a doubt, thought Jamieson, peering over the barrier raised by the heaped charts, his third was a "strange feller." After a quick look at him he had burrowed down under the charts again, and Jamieson heard a low, choked weeping. He picked his way across the deck, littered with

pencils, erasers, quadrants and chart cases.

"Wha' are ye doin' in there?" he asked mildly.

The face emerged. From the small, close-set eyes great tears were streaking downward, to be lost in a ragged black mustache which showed unmistakable signs of being dyed at some time far gone. With a visible effort the man behind the charts stopped his sobbing and wiped his sleeve across his ash-gray face.

"An' noo, laddie?" queried Jamieson gently.

"Captain, sir, look!" He indicated the charts with a shaking forefinger.

"Wha', laddie?"

There was a mad, hunted look in this man's eyes that made you a little crocky on the crumpet yourself.

"An' why na, lad?"

"Charts—charts—charts! Old, all old. 1910-'12, and back. Not one since the war. How can a man expect his—"

Jamieson's teeth clicked. Enough of this.

"Hoosh, ye! I hae mair made lang syne in ma' ain cabin. I'll aye break them out when we're oot ta sea. Noo, sir, may ye gang below an' send Mistair-r Braun, the fairst mate, ta me."

The blank, almost colorless eyes wavered to Jamieson's face, out the port, where the shoreline moved slowly astern, and back to his superior's face. Again the tears.

"But, Captain—"

"Get ye gaen, sir-r!"

As if slapped across the face, the other straightened up, tugging at a ragged end of the dyed mustache. The drooping shoulders squared; the abstruse look of neo-madness disappeared.

"Aye, aye, sir!"

He marched stiffly out of the chart-room, past the man at the wheel and down the ladder.

Bone had handed him another dud there, mused Jamieson, rolling up the mauled charts and replacing them in their respective notches on the rack. He was slipping the covers on the big chronometers when Brown, the first mate, looked in the door.

"You wanted me, sir? I was stowing the stern lines in the lazarette. I didn't think—"

"Aye, Mistair. Oor friend, the thaird, is a wee bit fey—crackit—aloft, I'm thinking. Do ye take his watch an' I'll hae ye dogged by th' seecond at eight bells. I wi' be back shortly ma' sel'."

"Very good, sir."

This man Brown seemed a spineless sort, but with a small wheen of brains and knowledge of ships. Jamieson nodded to the pilot, busy with taking a four-point bearing, and went below. Going down the passageway to the saloon he could see the limp form of the third mate through the partly open door of his cabin, slumped across his bunk, head couched on his arms. Looked as if the man suffered from fits of aberration, regained mental control of himself, and then popped off again for a spell, only to be brought back by the influence of some stronger will. Jamieson had seen the type before. Not a few of them in the ships, poor swabs. Probably grown on him in frequency in late years, you could see the pitiful attempts to dye the mustache, the prematurely gray hair. Black-balled in almost every line on both coasts, to fall at last into Davey Bone's net and end up here. Well, he couldn't have picked a better jumping-off place for the "Green" than this.

JAMIESON dropped into his leather-backed chair in the deserted dining-saloon and rang the hand-bell for the mess-man. A Chinaboy, with a round, shiny face like a new penny, stuck his head through the swinging doors leading to the pantry.

" 'Allo, Capden, sair. You likem somedeeng hot, yes, sair?"

"Aye."

The boy padded busily about, spreading a napkin before him on the table, placing another deftly across his knee, keeping up a running chatter of pidgin-English the while.

"We come bang-up-slam 'longside Blown-Smith, yes, sair, Capden? No-good sheep. Me—four year Number Two boy in her. Thisa sheep—bletta much. Bletta chief engineh—bletta Capden, yes, sair. —— fool, no-good — oveh Blown-Smith. Me *sabe* him, yes, sair, Capden, sair."

Jamieson ate the uninviting food quickly, thoughts far distant, lighted his pipe and sat back, listening to his match hiss out in his coffee cup. The Chinaboy stood indecisively when he was through serving, half way between his pantry and the table. Then he rubbed his hands on the back of his white jacket, pulled a cloth and can of polishing fluid from a bulging pocket and

began industriously shining the big nickel coffee percolator standing on the buffet. Jamieson watched him absently for a while; knocked out his pipe and went back to the bridge.

Mr. Brown had disappeared, and Breniger, the Norwegian second mate, was in his place. Evidently the pilot didn't like company, for the two men stood as far from each other as possible in the two wings of the bridge. Breniger was broodingly examining the fir-spiked shore and did not recognize Jamieson's presence until he spoke to him.

Jamieson looked keenly at his second. Here was a man after his own heart. Thick-headed and unruly in a pinch, sometimes, but with all the marks of a sailor of the windjammer school. Too bad he'd had to crack him on the button when he'd lost his head just before the collision. The blow had left a liver-colored bruise on the fellow's jaw. Well, he was either going to forgive and realize that he had been in the wrong to pull the kid from the wheel, or harbor the blow as an insult to his pride and position and wait to catch his vengeance. A bad ship in which to play that sort of game. He swung around when Jamieson called his name.

"An' yeer head is clear noo, Mistair? 'Twill be a tough watch ye'll be haen until we drap Flattery astern."

Breniger showed blunt yellow teeth in a smile.

"Yas, sar, yas! Dis here wagon—yust de same as Limey tramp I vas shipmates in, t'ree year 'go. Runnin' Yangs-tze, outa Shanghai. We pile up, two days below Hangkow. Ole, patched-up hulk, machinery below decks. Rudder chain broke dat time. Skipper—he's a stiff-collar book sailor, runnin' aroun' like cheecken with his hett off. Almos' swallow his monocle. Some queer man, that feller!"

Jamieson stood and talked with him for a while. He'd been in the China Sea trade for nine years. Went on the beach in Shanghai from a Rotterdam barkentine. Met a Russian girl on the Nanking Road one night. Working in a dive there. Died of the fever just after his money gave out. He'd gone native for a while. Then the billet in the Limey tramp; a good pay-off in Frisco; a crap game in a Steuart Street hole-in-the-wall; and here he was.

Jamieson left him to his brooding over the Russian girl after a while and entered the wheel-house. The same sailor in the paint-speckled sea-boots and derby was at the wheel.

"Where's yeer relief, mon? Ha' ye not been there fair a'most a fu' watch?"

"Sure, but them clam-diggers is all drunk back aft. One guy come for'ard while th' crazy guy was in th' chart-room, but th' pilot chased him t' —— an' gone down ag'in. He ast th' pilot if it was a nice afternoon, did he think? Me, I don't mind it. I ain't no corn-fed farmer boy, no-how. Young 'Slivers'—him who took her away from th' dock, he'll be up on th' next bells. Soon 's he gets a little shut-eye. Kid ain't ett fer almos' a week. Betcha his stummick got wrinkles in it like 'n ole tops'l."

Jamieson nodded and turned away. David Bone had somehow handed him one or two good men in his crew. But he'd make men out of the rest of 'em between Flattery and the Saint Georges. He wondered idly what sort of scum MacCarty had been loaded with below decks. He stepped to the speaking-tube and breathed down it, causing a weird moan to flutter forth below in the engine room.

"An' what de yez want now, by th' big toes o' ——?" boomed a voice through the tube. "If utts more steam ye can fly yerself a tin kite!"

Evidently the fey third mate had tried out the qualities of the speaking-tube too.

"Hoosh, ye! 'Tis Jamieson who's talkin' wi' ye, Chief. How wud ye be making o' it below? I'll be gi'en ye 'All clear' by four bells."

"Oh, utts you, Cap'n? 'Tis a great time I been havin' wi' this gang o' dock-rats who calls thimselves firemen. 'Tis my way av thinkin' thot th' Port Cap'n cleaned out one av thim Grick restaurants an' I'm stuck wi' a bunch av thim jibberin' garlic-eaters who knows more about soogyin' mess-gear than th' burning av oil. But ye'll not be findin' fault with us yet, sir, if I have t' bate thim all stiff, th' grasey thumbs o' Satan. I'll be glad when it's 'All clear,' sir."

Black sky met black sea at the blurred white haze of the fog. The pilot flicked on the range and sidelights and returned to his still, omniscient pose, a bulky shape in his heavy watch coat and scarf in the angle of the bridge. Jamieson stood beside him, welcoming the cool caress of the rain

flustering over the dodger. At seven bells on the after dog watch the pilot ordered the engines brought to "Slow"; to "Stop". He pulled down the bridge whistle handle, and sent long quavers of sound through the murk. Off to starboard Jamieson made out a faint, lemon-colored string of lights, the shore station for the Straits pilots. The pilot had picked up his red tin box and stood at the head of the ladder.

"Leave you here. Other man should be right out. Late now. I'll wait for him on deck. Bad night. Good trip."

"Thankee, Cap'n."

He went down the ladder. A cold cod, thought Jamieson. Something like his old Latin professor in public school at home. Same bleak type. The ruby and emerald sidelights of a motor launch could be distinguished through the haze and the *phut-ah-phutt-phuttt* of her motor coughed up at them. Mr. Brown and a couple of sailors had the boat rope and Jacob's-ladder ready and the two pilots passed each other going over the bulwark bar without a word. Some sort of bad blood there. These pilots were a hardy, competent lot, but they usually had a good word for one another at least.

THE new man was coming up the ladder at a nimble trot, his pipe, glowing redly, cast a faint light on the lower part of his features. A different sort, this chappie.

"That you, Cap'n Jamieson?"

Jamieson cursed under his breath. Was he as famous—or infamous—as all that?

"Aye, an' who wud this herrin'-sailor be?"

"Don't know if you remember me. Gargie's the name. Used to be in the old 'Diamond W' boats out of Falmouth. 'Shore with you one night in Rangoon. 'Bout tore up the town before we were through. Ended up b' singin' a terrible version of 'La Madelon' under the Froggie consul's window. 'Member?"

"Gang here sa I may see ye, mon."

He led the newcomer to the door of the wheel-house and pulled an electric hand-torch out of a small-gear box. The other blinked cheerily under the flash of the torch. Jamieson recognized him dimly. A small, energetic, beefy-faced man, one time second mate in one of the "Diamond W" barks. The fellow was right—Rangoon—eighteen or so years ago. Four or five of them—drunk on tepid, carbonated champagne—sickly stuff. Before the time when he had taken up the consumption of whisky as a steady, serious pastime. This beggar, Gargie, he said his name was, had shown them all a pearl he had pledged half his pay-off for in Singapore. Said he was taking it home to his "new l'il wifey in Newcastle." They'd laughed at that "new l'il Newcastle wife" business. He'd ended up by giving the blasted thing to some native girl when he was scuppers-under with that rotten champagne—a horrid drink at best. Yes, he remembered him.

"Aye," said Jamieson aloud, "ah reecolleck the night weel. Young uns ull be young uns out East. 'Tis the sun, I've thought unco times."

"Good, good! Glad your memory's so excellent. As for me—I don't forget old drinkin' mates. You—you're quite a—one might say—famous feller, now, Jamieson. While I'm a tide-bound Straits *pilote*, takin' 'em in an' out like a —— porter at Charing Station. How'd you like that swine that just left you? Briggs, his name is. A rum sort, if there ever was. Bad blood between us— Yes, thought you'd see it. Question of vacations, that's all. Haven't spoken to each other for months. Yes, yes. How'd I know you were bringing this wagon out? Radio, m' son, radio. Heard how you clipped Brindley and his blessed egg crate going in. Well, well—ship's like a woman sometimes. Yes—just like a woman. So you're workin' for Hard-Case Bone? One of the old-timers, too, he is, and rich man in the bargain, they say. Lots of pull around Seattle and the Sound, I've heard tell. Well, a man must eat and have a few bob for 'baccy and his beer. Not married, are you, Jamieson? Thought not. Lucky hound—Bone's naturalized American now, you know. Oh, you're too, are you? A good thing, full an' by, when you figure it out. As for me, of course—"

While he talked he started the ship ahead once more; cleared the moisture film from the forward windows and ordered the man on lookout to bring him a chair. Jamieson lounged beside him, thoroughly eager to get away and below, but held back by the man's insistent running fire of comment and one-handed conversation. He seemed to be getting into a highly reminiscent vein, talking of old ships, now scrapped, sunk,

almost forgotten. His knowledge of the shipping conditions of the 1900's was extraordinarily complete and he rambled on, eliciting only an occasional "Aye?" or "'Twas so" from Jamieson.

He waited dully until Gargie hit upon it. The pilot had talked successively of the last of the Donald McKay ships; the growth of the Hamburg-American and the U. S. Mail and the other big Western Ocean lines; finally switching back to his favorite topic, the British ships of twenty years before, when he, in his own words, "had been a gay young stick and a bucko mate with the best o' 'em!" Now he had it, thought Jamieson grimly, and would worry it like a puppy would a mutton bone.

"Steady on that, m' son," said Gargie over his shoulder to the man at the wheel. Then, regaining the thread of his historical résumé to Jamieson:

"Let's see, Cap'n, you were master of the *Clyde Prince*, weren't you? Back around '01 or '02, it was. A sweet ship. Saw her m'self, when she was launched at Harlan and Wolf's in Belfast. A sweet craft—'round nine thousand ton, wasn't she?"

Jamieson peered straight ahead through the misty window, listening to the grating sob of the whistle.

"Aye, yeer richt, Gargie."

"Thought so— Hey, what d' you think you're steerin', there—a blinkin' wheelbarrow? Now hold it there, m' buck. Yes, let's see, Cap'n. The *Clyde Prince*, out o' Harlan and Wolf's, around nine thousand ton. Seems to me as she was registered out of the Clydeside—'Far Eastern Transportation Company,' or somethin' like that, owners."

He filled his blackened briar pipe out of a beaded bag, lighted it with deep, sucking intakes of breath, placed the match on the neat little pile he had established on the workboard sill. Behind them the whistle whinnied and coughed and a gust of wind and rain slashed through the partly open door. Jamieson yanked it shut, thankful that there was something to do which would release his shaking, cramped muscles. Gargie picked up his thread of thought again, like a terrier returning to a rathole.

"Yes, the *Clyde Prince*, that was her, sure as shootin'. Strange how a feller'll hang on to a name, isn't it? Owned by those 'Far Eastern' people—and wait, seemed to me that you were quarter owner and master in her, somehow, Jamieson?"

"Aye," whispered the man beside him.

"Ah, thought so. Thought so! But, blast me if she wasn't lost off Sumatra or Formosa six months or so later."

"Balintang Straits, bound in fair Manila," offered Jamieson.

"Ah, right-ho! That was it. All hands reported lost. No wireless in those days. Valuable cargo, insurance, and all that. Then six months later you pop up in Taku, or some such place."

"Kwangchow, if I reecolleck richt."

"So it was, so it was! I never heard that story, Jamieson. I—"

"Nair will ye this trip, mate. 'Tis time we got ye overside an' bound back ta wife an' childer, I'm aye thinking."

He pointed off the bow, where the great golden hub of the lighthouse slashed through the sea fog and a bull-throated siren howled defiance at the Pacific. Gargie rose reluctantly.

"So it is, sir! Been good to talk old days and old ways with one of the real old-timers like yourself, Cap'n. Lucky, you are—and me, tide-bound here to this stinkin' run. Well, best of luck to you, Jamieson, an' may you bring her in *trés bon*."

Jamieson clenched the proffered hand and the man was gone, humming under his breath. He clambered into his sawing motor launch, waved a farewell salute, and disappeared in a stench of gasoline through the fog. Jamieson dragged over to the engine-room speaking tube. MacCarty's shout had a reassuring timbre.

"We're by way av standin' out now, sir? God knows an' I'm sick av this thumb-nail navigatin'. Ye're right, sir. Och, some av thim have been in th' way av actin' like Fayal monkeys, but a stout boot-toe is often a good prayer book. Good night t' ye, sir!"

Breniger, sea-boots and oilskins shining, was standing by the wheel when he turned around. This man would stream the patent log, take point of departure and make the initial entry in the log, he didn't have to put him through all that. In fact, he had already done so.

"Guid, lad," said Jamieson wearily. "I'm gaen below noo. The pilot has pootit the course for ye there on the board. Bide well, Mistair-r!"

Breniger hadn't realized before how old and worn the skipper was. He had seemed

almost like a young man that morning in Seattle. Of course he had just finished a tough session with the pilots, but even then, a square-rig man like Jamieson was used to double watch. Some said he was a hard drinker—that might be it, although he'd been stony sober all day. He knew that—jolly well! When he turned to the door to go topside to the true compass Jamieson had disappeared.

JAMIESON entered his cabin and sat down. With a slow smile he surveyed the smashed door panel. David Bone's work, that. David Bone's—and very like the man, too. Lummee, but he was tired! Fair gone from the strain of the last fourteen hours and more. He fumbled open the buttons of his mist-soggy watch coat and wriggled out of it; kicked off his wet boots and stuck his toes into his bedroom slippers. A tray of food covered with a napkin rested on the wall settee, left there by the mess-man. He eyed it dully.

He didn't want that. He wanted something else. Something that was at once meat, drink, rest and relief from all this horde of unwelcome thoughts that wavered through his brain, roused into being by the clabber and reminiscing of that glomeril, Gargie. He unlocked his desk with a key from his pocket-ring and shoved the roll-top back.

Standing on a tousled sheaf of papers and old note-books was a long-necked bottle of whisky, a tumbler upturned over the neck in lieu of a cork. In the light from the bulkhead bulb in back of him the bottle glass had the greenish-brown hue of partially dried seaweed. Through it the liquor itself sheened like furbished bronze. Carefully, without haste, as he always did with his first drink, he placed the tumbler upright on the desk and filled it to the brim with a steady hand. Then he sat back, stuffed and lighted his pipe.

For almost an hour he sat there, pipe cooling in his palm, staring at the tot of liquor. Three fingers of whisky. Just a wee drap, and still it would drive this ache from his bones and brain; build up a wall around him over which these unwelcome, shadowy visitors of his could not climb in, to rip his peace to shreds.

Twice he reached out for the glass; placed eager, accustomed fingers about its fragile sides. Once he lifted it to his nostrils, smelling deeply of it. Of the pungent, pervading stuff which he loved to hold on his tongue, as another man might a drop of honey—or even nectar. That's what it was, nectar to him. Or, as she had said one night, "brown poison, Jimmy." Poison, lud no! All depended on how a lad used it, he had told her then. Later on, his mates didn't accuse him of "using it." In serio-comical manner they charged him with "inhalin' it like a fin-back does air." Truth in that, all right—then. But, by that time there was a reason for it—several. Without it, without the golden, hazy walls it reared between himself and the outside world, he would have gone off the deep end, blown out his brains, chucked the game for keepers. It had saved him from that. Brought him to this—

A swirl of rain flurried through the broken door panel, spattering at him where he sat. David Bone had done that, smashed that door. David Bone— Ah, that was it—A short while gone he had been wondering why he didn't down the tot right off, why he had hesitated, not once but twice. Even smelled of it, and then sat there staring at it like a highland gillie before a Princes Street shop window.

David Bone. Hard-Case Bone, they called him here in Seattle too. The name had followed him ashore. Bone was responsible for his abstinence tonight. He wondered why. Not that scene out here on the lower bridge when Bone had smashed the door. No, for he had kept his head and made a glomeril of Bone. Always had, on the very rare occasions when Bone did lose control of himself. No, it wasn't that. What, then? Aye, that was it!

It had started when Bone and his gang of shore-weak ninnies had stood gaping up at him from the dockside as he backed her out into the stream. Began, in reality, when Bone had made his remark about the poor old tub and her crew. That was it. Funny, for a man like Bone to let himself go. You'd think he was too much of a sailor himself to talk like that. Seemed he wasn't, though. Shore life had stolen away what small wheen of decent attributes Davey Bone had left when he got through with the sea. Shore life—as he chose to live it.

But even then it made you think twice to figure out why Bone would let slack go like

that. Thought he had turned the trick, probably, and won out. Well, he had and he hadn't. Poor jackanapes with him —he had them cowed like so many trade niggers. Funny, too, that Bone should have let that taunt fly where he could overhear it. He knew —— well that Jamey Jamieson wouldn't let a thing like that pass uncalled. But he hadn't meant it for his ears—that was sure, for he'd jumped like a scared dolphin when he'd answered him from the bridge. Curse his pig eyes! A cruel, lean hound of a man, David Bone. Took all he could get and then sent you to sea with a cursing taunt for good voyage. Made fun of the poor waterfront combers he'd jammed into his crazy hulk as crew. Not a man's trick, that, but a low swine's. Curse him again!

Jamieson stood up, his small, square jaw outthrust. Hands behind his back, he strode to and fro across the cheap print carpet, legs spread to the pitch of her as she slumped down into the trough between two seas.

David Bone—the man's name had been a scourge to him for a long time now. Known each other for twenty-four years. Twenty-four years too long, when you looked back and the whisky wasn't in your blood. They'd met in the old four-stick, skys'l-yarder, *Queen Anne*, out of the Thames. He remembered the night well. Would never forget it.

They were bound out—last night in port. All hands aboard. Watches set and hooks catted. Tug alongside and port watch on deck. It was his third trip out. He'd had a year more to go before his 'prentice time was up. Been sitting there with his mates of the starboard watch, homesick and a little bit tired of it all already. One of his mates had come aboard with two bottles of Irish whisky, from Shaker Dan's, in Cheapside. Raw, flaming rum; stuff that made a youngster's hair curl.

Bone, he was second mate in her, a tall, black-haired bucko, with an arrogant swagger to him already, had come into the forecastle, stooping down to get in the door. Said the Old Man had sent him forward to see that all hands were on board and more than half sober. Stopped to take a drink with the mob at the table. They'd called him "sir" at that, those case-hardened shellbacks. Bone had seen him then, sitting forlornly on the edge of his bunk, socked toes nestling around the brass corners of his ditty box. Come over to him, grinned down at him in his superior, black-browed way.

"Homesick for Glasgow already, Scottie?" Bone was a Cornwall man.

"Ah wud na quite say tha'," he had ventured in reply, wishing heartily that he would leave him alone.

"Wait 'till we're in irons off the Plate, m' son! Now's no time to have the megrims."

THEN he had leaned forward, staring into the shadows of Jamieson's bunk. Boy-like, he had just tacked up the picture of his sister there. All his mates had the bulkheads on the inner sides of their bunks plastered with the pictures of the girls they knew in various ports. Seemed to be the thing to do, so he had followed style with the picture of the only girl he knew. Bone had reached in, pulled the thing away from its fastenings, held it up to the wavering blink of the slush lamp.

"My, a real clipper, this 'un! Yer only own, Scottie?"

"Sister," he'd replied shamefacedly.

Bone had clucked his tongue appreciatively, toyed with the bit of linen.

"She—she is a real clipper, lad! M-m-m-m! What say we swop?"

He pulled a wallet from inside his turtleneck sweater, and stuck a small, round photograph into the other's hand. He had winked curiously at the picture in his hand. The face of a wistful, brown-haired girl with deep, dark eyes looked up at him.

"She is a bonnie lassie," he had agreed.

"Swop an' swop about? Changee-for-changee?"

He'd nodded. Bone had placed the photograph in his wallet, secured it in some unseen pocket, and slapped him on the back.

"Who is she? Your new clipper? My only-own first cousin, Scottie!"

"Now hold yer bow up in the wind, m' son!" he had called as he hastened after the sailor who had put his head in the door, calling his name.

In the months while the *Queen Anne* made her westing and finally swooped into the muddy waters of the Rio de la Plata he had become very well acquainted with his newly acquired lassie. She was there, smiling softly at him when he came reeling in, dog-weary and lame, hands cracked and

bleeding from back-breaking hours at sheets and braces. She was there on the dreamy, slow stretch of the Sunday afternoon watches in the tropics when his mates sought coolness on the forecastle head in the shadow of the headsails. Then he preferred to sit there on his ditty box, dressed in a clean white shirt and freshly washed dungarees, hair religiously plastered down, to gaze at her for hours. Often times he cursed himself for a romantic Scotsman, reminding himself that if she were anything like her cousin, she would not even bow to a poor Glasgow 'prentice who had almost a year to go before he got his ticket.

But Bone had reassured him the last night in Santos, just before they pulled out for home, and Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro were already fading, exotic memories. Bone had come forward into the forecastle again, where he had been scrambling into guernsey and dungarees to go on the wheel.

"Still got yer clipper's picture, son? Lose my ticket and my pay-off first before I'll part from mine. Like that cousin o' mine, do you? Aye, I see, Scottie! Listen, the mate tells me we're putting up in dry-dock when we roll 'er home. Two months of white water, that means. 'Prentices and officers stand by in dock, hands pay off. Nice, eh? Chance for all four o' us to kind of get acquainted, what, m' son?"

They got leave from the first mate when she went in dry-dock in East London. He had hurried home on the Flying Scotsman, startled his sister by his suddenly acquired firmness, and wheedled his family in letting her accompany him to Cornwall.

Bone's family lived in a sturdy, wind-beaten old house on the Cornwall downs, not ten miles from the Lizard. His cousin was of Irish extraction, and possessed all the charms suggested in the photograph and the name of Moira. He had flushed to the roots of his hair at her laughter when he first tried to pronounce it in his slow, burry Scotch. The week fled all too quickly, and they had parted, he and Bone going back to the ship, feeling resentment for their lives for the first time.

On the next trip he had left the London ship, going in one of Scottish registry. In the spring when he got in, lean and wind-tanned from a trip around the Horn to Frisco, Moira came north to meet his family. The dour, short-spoken old folks had taken a quick liking to this slim, silent girl from the North of Ireland, and that afternoon he had asked her to marry him. They had taken the family dog-cart and little yellow pony his father used on week days to go to market, and driven far out across the downs. The sky had been a pale, lustrous blue, accentuating the purple of the heather, which stretched on all sides like the waves of an inland sea. About dusk they had returned, voiceless and ecstatic, the yellow pony trotting home unguided. That summer, when he had received his second mate's papers and a berth in a Glasgow ship, they were married.

Five years, then, until an aunt died in England leaving him a legacy of three thousand pounds. He was young, but capable and well recommended by his superiors. A family friend was starting a new steamship company. He had just secured his master's papers and he bought a quarter interest in their first ship, the *Clyde Prince.* Two days before he left on his first trip in her Bone married his sister, Glenna.

He had been very happy that day, standing on his new, freshly painted bridge as they went at half speed down the Firth of Clyde. Twenty-seven years old; married five years; captain and quarter owner in one of the finest coal-burners out of a North of England port. Bone, himself, had done no better, and was just assuming the command of a London-built cattle-ship, designed for the Argentine run.

He'd lost the *Clyde Prince* that trip, on the way out. Green third mate had piled her up, ripped the bottom out of her on a submerged reef in the Balintang one night. He would never forget the lad's white face when he piled into his cabin and yanked back the bunk cloth to tell him she was going down astern. No chance of getting log books or charts. Two boats were all they were able to get clear from the falls before she broke her keel and dived for the coral bottom.

Twenty-four men in one boat when they pulled away from her, with him at the tiller in his singlet and drawers. A coastwise Malay junk had picked them up the twelfth dawn. The second night aboard the junk the third mate stole past the helmsman and threw himself overboard from the stern. It had been impossible to find him in the darkness before the sharks surged in. Kwangchow, after two terrible

months in the evil-smelling junk. Finally a work-away job in a ship home to England.

His wife had died two weeks before the *Clyde Prince* piled up. He was left with a four-months-old daughter and his practically useless captain's papers, for his former friends and partners in the company kicked up a beautiful row over the loss of the ship. His father and mother had gone, years before. Bone was in the Argentine with his cattle hooker, wouldn't be in for months.

He had taken the baby and deserted Glasgow for all time. His sister was living in lodgings in Bloomsbury, where she and Bone had set up housekeeping. He made arrangements with her for the care of the child, and by paying over his last fifty pounds as bribe money to a Jew shipping agent, caught a berth out as third mate in a combination freight and passenger ship, destined for a local run in the Indian Ocean, out of Bombay.

Three-quarters of his pay he sent home to Glenna for his daughter Moira. The other quarter he kept for himself and his whisky. The second mate died of the fever in his bunk one stinking hot day in the Gulf of Osman. The owners moved him up a notch, and he took over the dead man's duties and his pay. He sent more money to Bloomsbury and allowed himself ten bob a week more for whisky. Seven years of it and the owners in Bombay made him skipper of her, greatly against their will and the advice of local wiseacres. But there was nothing else to do about it. The man drank phenomenal quantities of bad whisky steadily, but he was never incapacitated, seemed utterly impervious to the sun and fevers, and did know his job.

HE MET Bone one afternoon in Calcutta. He had just come alongside himself and had not bothered to change into clean whites before going uptown. At first he did not recognize the tall, haughty man in the wide cork helmet and perfectly tailored drill uniform as his brother-in-law. Bone had stopped him, then glanced around the bazaar to see if there were any white men he knew in sight.

"Come over here," he ordered shortly.

He had obeyed, he didn't know why.

"You're making a stinkin' swine out of yourself here, you know."

"Thankee, Davvid. An' how is Glenna an' the lass?"

"Glenna's dead. Died last week. Bad heart—touch of grippe—pneumonia. All over."

He had moved away a little and turned his back on Bone for a moment. The Cornwall man's voice had caused him to spin round.

"Look here, Jamey. I'm not fancyin' to be seen here with you. Your name's rotten eggs here and at home. Now let's have this over with. I just got the news in Said and I'm not used to it myself. But it's no time for the sort of thing you're putting on now. Stow that. What's to be done with your kid? She hasn't seen you since she was weaned. From what I made out, she's been left with friends of—Glenna's. Out with it, now, man! It's your child and not mine. Though —— knows I wish it were!"

He had stood there, staring dumbly up at Bone, idly noticing the graying hair around his ears. Moira dead—now Glenna—the pure, wee bairn all alone, and him, here, in this stinkin' bazaar with Bone. Why was the man so hasty and cruel about it? Glenna had been Bone's wife, yes, but his sister, too, and the one great tie which held him to England. Except, of course, the bairn Moira. And what was he—Jamey Jamieson, whisky-pickled skipper of a lubberly Indian Oceanman, to do with a wee baby girl?

"I—I dinna ken, Davvid? Wha' ha' ye to say?"

"Come," said Bone, pulling him by the arm.

They had entered into the jalousied shade of the most famous solicitor's office in Calcutta. Bone whipped an engraved card at the fawning half-caste secretary and a few minutes later they were ushered into the presence of the barrister himself.

Bone, for the captain of an Imperial Mail packet, seemed to have an amazing knowledge of the law; even the steely-eyed barrister was slightly surprized. After five minutes of rapidly lucid explanation from Bone and a half-understanding, puzzled nod from himself, the barrister tugged a cord and the secretary came to the curtain.

The half-caste, too, seemed possessed of Occidental swiftness, for he returned almost immediately with a long, legal-looking blank. This the barrister glanced at, then

read aloud a jargon of legal phrases interlarded with long passages of Latin which none of them understood. Bone had pulled the paper almost rudely from the barrister's hand as soon as he was done intoning.

"Y' understand, now, Jamey? Moira's to be legally adopted by me. Myself to pay all bills. Gives you all the more money for rum, and no responsibilities. Quick to it, now—yea or nay. I'm due aboard at three bells."

He had sat there gaping at the ornate fittings of the barrister's desk. Moira—legally adopted by Bone. Stay in England. Good schooling, good chances for a man when her time came. Never see her wreck of a father. Why not? He was going down, Bone was going up. The bairn probably called Bone father now.

The pen had shaken in his hand when he splotched his name across the line where Bone had showed him. A quick hand-grip with the cold-faced barrister, a rustle of crisp currency as Bone transferred a large Bank of England note from his bill-fold to the barrister's desk, and they were gone, Bone pocketing the paper.

That was the last he had heard or seen of Bone for almost twelve years. For him it had been all down grade. The line had sold out to bidders in London. The new group had given him the sack almost rudely and hurriedly, considering his long span of unfailing service. Something was implied in the Bombay office about "steady drunkards" and "bad hearts," and he had taken what little pay was coming to him and pulled out for Hongkong. Then the war. He got to England and tried to enlist, but Kitchener's men turned him down—hardening of the arteries.

Bone, he found after long investigation in the shipping offices, had married again—an extremely wealthy Canadian widow this time, and left with his new wife over a year before for Victoria. He himself found a job on a big North Sea mine-layer, and stuck to her until she was sunk by one of her own mines in a head gale off Jutland. Decided then that he'd take a burst at new fields once more after the signing of the Armistice, and for the first time in his life he sailed as a passenger out of Southampton Water, bound for Montreal.

In Victoria he learned that Bone and "his wife and daughter" were living across the Line in the States. Seattle, to be exact. Bone was not a hard man to trace. Quite a noteworthy figure now. Getting to be a windjammer in local shipping circles. They spoke very highly of his business acumen and foresight in Victoria and Vancouver. Given up the sea for good as an active life, they said, chuckling with a slight note of rancor hidden somewhere. Bone was still "active" all right. More so than ever, now that he had money at his command. He knew that—knowing the man.

Seattle and the offices of the Blue Star Navigation Company had brought them together again. And for the first time he had fully realized how down at the heel he was, and how unshakably well-turned and prosperous Captain David Bone had become. Bone had blustered and sworn a bit when he had asked to see his daughter. Told him that he was a drunken incompetent with a bad name in four seas. That his daughter had even taken the name of Bone for herself, and didn't even know what her father looked like. To tell the bald truth, didn't care. But he had been firm in this one thing, and Bone had arranged a meeting between them in a little tea shop on a side street.

Moira, his daughter, slimly tall, dark-haired, flashes of gold in her wide, brown eyes. Her mother, all over again. She had greeted him with a cool, assured courtesy, this stranger father of hers. But underneath he detected a vibrant yearning, a reaching out for something that wasn't there. Something, no doubt, that David Bone and this new, rich wife of his did not have. Nor would give, were it theirs.

They had talked jerkily for a few minutes over a pot of tea, ordered by Bone. Then he had been left alone with a half-eaten chicken sandwich and a cold cup of tea. The warm little hand had left a glow behind which he could feel even after they had gone and he fumbled for his pipe.

"No smokin' in here, please, sir," said the girl who served as waitress behind his shoulder.

He had nodded mutely and paid the bill. When he rose to rescue his hat from the pronged effect over the table he got a good look at himself in the mirror. Black circles under his pouched eyes. Deep lines from nostrils to chin, from eye corners to brows. Sickly yellow skin. That was from his service in the tropics. He couldn't help that much, anyhow. Needed a new outfit, too. This one was as shiny on the cuffs and

knees as a cadet's sextant. No wonder she hadn't looked straight at him more than once or twice. He was a rum-looking bloke to meet any daughter who had never seen her father since she was a bairn.

He had wandered out into the mellow afternoon sunlight, chinking what little change he had in his trouser pocket. But he'd telephoned Bone's home the next day. Butler had answered it. Real brass-hat style, that. She had come to the instrument. Yes, she'd meet him. That afternoon? Surely. She told him where. He had wondered whether Bone's wife was anywhere in the offing at the time.

They had taken a tram ride out by the lake and the university that afternoon. She had broken the silence by telling him that she was enrolled there for the coming Fall term. He had stuttered out some foolishness about his own school days, and before he knew it he was telling her about her mother, his other Moira, and the great boulders and white cliffs of Cornwall.

Her voice had held a low throb as she asked him of that other black-haired girl with the gold-brown eyes and he didn't have the courage to ask whether she was happy or not in the house of David Bone. She had told him, though, the next time they met, of her lonely, solitary life in that great, silent, over-furnished house, and after that meeting he had gone to see Bone.

BONE had laughed at him. Called him a —— drunkard. A mental and physical wreck, using the same brutally impersonal tone he would employ to his houseboy about the arrangement of a rug. Told him that the paper proving his right to the guardianship of the girl was right in his safe. Dared him to take the case to court. Boasted of his ever-growing power in civic affairs, and his influence with the local courts. And ended up by asking him what he expected to use for money when it came to supporting a girl who had an allowance of fifty dollars a week, and regularly spent far more than that.

He'd mulled over it for weeks, almost decided to shove off for the East again, when Moira had written him to meet her. He'd told her then, and she'd cried a little at first, then laughed. Of course. She'd be more than glad to go with him, her father. Gladly live where he lived; keep house for him, mother him as his other Moira had. But he had counted mentally the few quid he had left, and talked against it. Told her to wait until he made good in this new country where he was just getting his citizenship. Had an offer of a chief mate's billet in a coastwise steam lumber schooner. Would take that for a couple of trips, and then they'd see. They'd left it there.

And then this berth—in Bone's death-trap had come along. Bone had come down to the cheap little seafaring hotel where he was putting up and broached it to him. Ship—copper—top price in Liverpool, man! Not another ship to be found. Not a skipper, even. Having a deuced hard time to find a crew. Bone had talked in that vein for half an hour, seated on the thin blankets which covered the gaunt iron frame of the bed.

Bone had seemed as if he were drunk; eyes afire, hands trembling and sweaty, perspiration trickling down his forehead. The thought in Bone's mind had been evident to him, even as he leaned against the door, smoking and watching the man's flushed face. He had never seen Bone like that before. The thought of money seemed to go to his head like triple-distilled alcohol. Finally Bone had come forth with it:

"Ship there, Jamey. You're out of a berth, living in a rat-hole here. What do you say? One hundred and seventy-five dollars a month, a good bonus—five hundred dollars—and an A-1 recommendation if you bring her in. Aye, and who can tell?—maybe an opening in one of our other ships when you're finished with the *Bone*. She's a good, stout ship, and good money I'm offering you—you know that, Jamey. Now, don't be pig-headed, James, m' son."

Something reminiscent in that "James, m' son" of the old skys'l-yard days in the *Queen Anne*. But, something more, too. Some new, strange note of greed and carefully concealed hate for him. No wonder, he knew how he, Jamey Jamieson, hated him—loathed his very name. And still he sat there and tried to cajole him into taking a lousy, leaking bilge-pot laden with a valuable cargo out to sea, so that he, David Bone, could mount up the thousands on his bank account, and just heighten the wall a little between Moira and him. ——! how his fingers had itched for Bone's throat that night!

Even the old, rheum-eyed clerk down the hall knew what a hulk Bone was trying to recruit for. Had talked to him just before Bone came in. But he had battened down on that wave of mad, sweeping anger and smiled at Bone.

"No, Davvid. Thankee unco much, but I canna."

He'd had no definite plan, but one crystallized in his brain even as he spoke.

"Moira an' I air gaen to take a wee cottage t'gere, next week come Tuesday."

Bone had jumped to his feet, long gaunt face aflame with anger.

"—— you, Jamieson! Ah, but you can't. She isn't of age until August—over four months from now. I'm her legal guardian—I'll stop you—and her—if she is such a little fool. Have you locked up, you whisky-soaked swine!"

" 'Vast, Davvid. Yeer fergettit what ye are. An' wi' ye talk like tha', ye'll na get muckle mon t' take yeer scow oot. Pairhaps—"

"What? Be fast, man! What?"

"Pairhaps I'll take yeer ship oot fair ye. Aye, an' I will. We'll fixit the papers t'morrow, Davvid. An' be ye gaen noo, I'm fair tired o' gawpin' at ye."

Bone had winced like a whipped horse at the last sentence, but gone out, his hand hiding the beginning of a grim smile. And the next day he had signed on as captain of the S. S. *David Bone*, "Liverpool and return." But even the commissioner's man had smiled at the "and return" phrase.

Moira and he had settled things that afternoon, and he had told her his hopes, fears and dreams. Bone had obviously told her about his drinking, for she asked him to promise her not to touch even "a wee drap" until they were fast alongside in Liverpool. Yes, she would be all right. If it became too unbearable in Bone's house she would go to stay in a girl friend's home, across the Line, in Vancouver. But he wasn't to worry, not one bit. Just hurry home to her. Then she had kissed him, bright-eyed with hidden tears, and gone.

He had broken the promise, of course, when he once saw the *Bone* and went down into her after-hatches, sounding sides and compartment bulkheads. The chances of making Liverpool in her with a cargo of copper ingots were about as large as his chances of beating David Bone in a United States court of law and regaining his daughter. This trip was his last forlorn gesture. His despairing blow at an all but invincible enemy which was about to trample him down for the last time. That was the way it had seemed to him this morning, here in this frowsy cabin with its unfinished woodwork and leaky portholes.

The encounter with David Bone had finished his alcoholic lapse in more ways than one. His jeering words to his circle of admiring weaklings on the dockside had put a stopper to it forever. David Bone thought him a weakling, a coward, an addle-headed tippler. He thought too, this swine Bone, that he was going to keep his daughter after she became twenty-one years of age. Wrong guess number two, Mr. Captain David Bone.

Bone loved his dollars with an immense, enveloping passion, but he loved Moira as much, if not more. She, to him, was the only elegant product of his penurious, slave-driving life. If he, Jamey Jamieson, got her away and back to himself, Bone would crumple and break, just as he, Jamieson, would do, if he failed in August.

But there was more than that. Much more. There were thirty-two men besides himself in this wooden tub, who had ventured their lives for a few of Bone's dollars. Scum, "no-goods," yes, but men. And he, Jamey Jamieson, known from Singapore to Said and from Valparaiso to Vancouver for his love for the brown bottle, was responsible for them all. The other? Moira would be twenty-one in August and a free agent. He did not know much about the laws of the land he had just adopted, but there seemed to him a great deal of doubt that Bone could do what he said—keep a man from his daughter when both were willing for reunion, despite all orders and admissions of legal guardianship.

It was all pretty simple in the main. He needed money—to fight Bone and to make a home for Moira, and lastly—to redeem himself. He wanted to whip proud Hard-Case Bone to his knees, to crush him as you would a *tsetse* fly on your sleeping net. There was just one way of doing both those things. To bring this round-bowed, rotting mass of jetsam up the Mersey keelside down under her own power. And the stuff in the brown-green bottle wouldn't help.

Jamieson reached over, picked up the filled tumbler, and sat twirling it between

his fingers, watching the play of light on the dark liquid. He laughed grimly as he lifted the tumbler, downed the contents. He placed the empty glass on the desk and reached for the bottle. At his sink in the angle of the room he poured out the remaining whiskey in the bottle, wide eyes watching it slowly chuckle down the drain. He flung the bottle and tumbler out the port and turned to his small, battered trunk. He lifted out a bundle of clothing, an old sun helmet, a couple of logarithm books and his sextant in its worn leather case. Below, placed end to end, three deep across the entire length and width of the trunk bottom, were bottles. He stared thoughtfully; picked up one as if to throw it out the port. He replaced it carefully. Between here and the Mersey some of those thirty-two men might have need for that brown, sirupy liquor. He closed and locked the trunk.

He weaved wearily to the door of his sleeping cabin, looked back once more at the locked trunk, switched off the light and shut the door behind him.

THEY had three weeks of fair weather from San Juan de Fuca to the Gulf of Panama. Off Capo Blanco in southern Oregon they dropped the chill drizzle of the northerly spring rains astern and entered sunshiny seas. Life aboard settled into a more or less regular routine after the forecastle gang finished what little liquor they had smuggled aboard. All hands accepted Jamieson's explanation that Lubois, the Newfoundland third mate, was a little fey, or off his blinkin' trolley. He stood his bridge watch with alacritous regularity, to pest the wheelsmen with his nervous reiterations that they were far from the right course.

Hodel, the big Finn, cured him of this the night they ran the passage between Capo Corrientes and the Revillo Gegidos Islands, off the mouth of the Gulf of California. Lubois had been more erratic than ever during his watch, dashing furiously from the bridge wing and the dummy compass to the topside binnacle, wrought up over taking some useless four- and eight-point bearings. He finally wound up the proceedings by clambering back to the wheelhouse topside for a latitude sight with the azimuth compass on Polaris.

Hodel stood behind the wheel and seethed and cursed, trying vainly to quiet himself by remembering the skipper's words about the man being fey. Overhead he could hear the scuffle and pound of the fellow's feet as he hopped back and forth excitedly. Low, guttural Finnish curses broke from between Hodel's closed lips. He had been on the alert for the last three-quarters of an hour to see that he didn't fall off his course so this crazy fellar could take his bearings. But there was no need for bearings. Or star sights, either. Mebbe the fellar was *loco*, but them sort o' fellars belonged 'longside the crazy house. He was yapping at him now like a scared seagull.

"Hallo, there at the wheel! Are you on that course? Hold it, now. You've been steerin' like a drunk fish-wife!"

"Yah!" roared Hodel in reply. To himself, "Feesh-vife, vas it? Crazy son-of-a-gonn! He'd 'feesh-vife' him for goot an' all!

More scuffling, scraping and hallooing topside, then Hodel heard him bumping and slipping down the ladder. Deliberately he let the wheel down until she listed to starboard, several points off her course. The crazy fellar was sure to stop on the bridge and peek at the wake to see how he was steering. He did! On the moon-whitened bridge Lubois jumped and screeched in rage, waving a hand incoherently toward the phosphorescent zigzag of the wake.

Hodel stood motionless at his post. The mate glared at him and leaned over the binnacle, to read the card and then report the man for his inefficiency. As he leaned Hodel grabbed. A great, hairy hand clutched the third mate by the neck, compressed his wind-pipe, forced his nose against the cool brass-work of the binnacle.

"Dar Mistur!" announced Hodel. "You can see course now? You can see goot—if I'm off—on—whar I steer. Son-of-a-gonn! You stay dere one long while! You peek like dat onntil vatch iss ober. You one funny fellar, Mistur!"

Lubois' hands flailed upward impotently, trying to loose the crushing grip from the back of his neck. Hodel took a quick look out the forward windows. His course was clear of other vessels, the Revillo Gegidos were now far astern. He took his other hand from the wheel and used it to grip the mate by the hair of the head. With his

right hand he whaled his victim unmercifully across the seat of the trousers.

"Badt poy!" he remonstrated. "Badt poy! Dun't do it no more."

Lubois didn't. He bowed to his fate without further struggle. Hodel chuckled with great relish at his joke and regained the wheel, bringing the ship back on her course with his disengaged hand. When the bells rang from the chronometer he lifted his left hand and yanked the bell cord overhead, which stroked the bell on the forward bulkhead of the wheel-house. From the forecastle-head his mate answered with the big bell and his cry of—

"Th' lights 're burnin' br-r-right, sir!"

Hodel drew a great gust of air into his lungs and hurled a mighty "Aye, aye" back, in place of the watch officer's customary hail of reply. Lubois squirmed and whimpered once or twice, but a shake from the paw vising his neck silenced him. The last hour of the watch dragged to a close. Hodel glanced over his shoulder at the chronometer. A quarter of four. Time for one bell, to warn the lookout that he must break out the first mate and the sailors coming on watch. He surged the cord again and the bell chinked. A second stroke came from forward, to show that the lookout had heard and was on his way aft. Hodel looked down at his captive. In the dim suffusion of light from the frosted bulb below the compass card he could see the third mate's face, red and mottled with the surcharged blood which had flowed to his head.

Hodel yanked him upright and started him for the bridge with a well-directed kick.

"Git out dar, you son-of-a-gonn! Go see I'm on—off—my course!"

Lubois staggered on a fantastic tangent for the door, clunked against the bulkhead with his still bowed head, and revived himself somewhat. He turned himself around by pushing at the bulwark with his hands.

"You—you—" he gasped weakly.

"Me—me, nodding," responded Hodel. "Less you *vamose* quick I t'row you overside like old paint bockit. Hurry oop!"

Lubois hurried up, choking and sputtering profanely. Hodel listened carefully when Mr. Brown, the first mate, came on the bridge. Lubois had evidently learned his lesson, for he did no more than give his superior a brief good morning and the routine data of his watch, then rushed down below.

Hodel told his watch-mate about it in the mess-room as they settled down for some night lunch, a cup of Java and a smoke before turning in. The story spread throughout the ship until Jamieson got wind of it. At first it worried him a little, for the moody, extremely nervous mate was a problem. Later, from observation and hearsay, he learned that Hodel's rude lesson had earned a corrected attitude and had seemed to dispel the fey spells for all time.

They warped her alongside the oil docks in Colon to have her tanks replenished before the long hop ahead. Jamieson and MacCarty stood broodingly by the end of the pliant steel hose, both thinking of the test on men and ship to come. Jamieson had seen very little of the chief in the trip down the coast and got a good look at him now for almost the first time.

MACCARTY was a sturdy, broad-backed man, with bowed, trunk-like legs. He had started his "time" as a coal passer in one of the big British transatlantic liners, working doggedly up to his present rating as chief. He had been for ten years in the American service and was an American citizen, although his wife and children still preferred to live in Liverpool, where the cost of existence was not so high and they benefited by the exchange. He was a good engineer, far too good a man to be wasted on the *David Bone*, thought Jamieson, looking at the deep lines of exhaustion and worry limned about the chief's eyes and mouth. He had been for the last year and a half on the Treaty Ports run, in one of the crack American packets, and was wild to get home and see his wife and children. There was only one ship out of the Sound for the Mersey—the *David Bone*. MacCarty had looked her over with sea-wise eyes and decided to turn the billet down. Bone, reader of men, had offered to let him pay off in Liverpool—sort of illegal, he knew, but he could fix it up so it wouldn't be. How would one hundred and fifty dollars a month and a three-hundred-dollar bonus payable at dockside, Liverpool, suit him? MacCarty had wavered, hesitated; signed on.

Jamieson had heard some of this from Brown, his first mate, and surmised the rest. And from the look of weary doubt in the chief's face they were in for a bad month in

the Carib' and the Western, if not longer. All right for an old shell-back widower like himself to ship in such a bilge-pot, but MacCarty had cummer and childer at home. Some more of Bone's work. A heartless, steel machine of a man, David Bone. Yes, heartless—in all but one thing—his love for his adopted daughter, Moira. Through that chink in his armor — Jamieson took himself up with a short turn and came back to the present.

His quiet brown eyes leveled on the chief in question. MacCarty, divining what the other asked without putting it in audible expression, shrugged his shoulders under the thin denim shirt.

"I dunno, sir. By th' back tathe o' Saint Dennis, it's been one —— av a three weeks. Turbines, they call thim things. They was—nine years gone. Craker, th' first, an' me, has been standin' watch an' watch about, gettin' 'em in somethin' like dacent workin' shape. She's as leaky as an ole pair av boots, aft—sucks water through her seams like a baby does pap. I dunno, sir, I dunno. 'Tis good that you an' me understand one anither, for it ull be a bad thirty-wan or -two days t' Cape Clear. Thot's all I can tell ye."

He looked over the side, where a line of men wavered across the concrete dock toward the ship, heads down, feet dragging. He indicated them with a nod of his head. Jamieson glanced at them. They were part of the crew, firemen, oilers and sailors, coming back aboard. It was Sunday. They had made fast the night before just at sundown after coming through Lake Gatun and the last locks, and he had broken all sea watches, to give the mob a night ashore before they began the final grueling leg of the voyage. They were straggling back now, singly and in groups of twos and threes, white-faced and weak from their drunks of the preceding night, glad to get aboard ship again, even such a ship as the *David Bone*.

But something was wrong here with this band of repentant roisterers. There was some hidden note of tragedy about this silent file of nine men who came wobbling up the gangway ladder, heads sunken low between their shoulder blades. They stumped down the alleyway, one of the A. B.'s, Brent, the wearer of the battered derby, at the head. He raised blood-shot eyes to Jamieson and MacCarty, pushed a torn finger in a pocket to hide the knife slash across it, and halted. His mates backed up behind him, waiting for something. Jamieson cursed good-naturedly at them.

"An' wha's the matter, lads. Ye'er sick o' the *señoritas* sa soon?"

"Naw," murmured Brent in vague general reply, twitching at the brim of the derby with his exposed hand. He took it off, gazed at it proudly, replaced it.

"They bumped off th' Limey bosun last night, Skipper. Run a knife t'roo his guts. Over in a dump called *La Lugar de los Toreros*. Him—he was full o' Bac'di rum 'n wild fer action. Dancin' wit' some *negrilla* slut in a green shimmie an' a red shawl. She ast him sumpin an' he tole her t' climb ashore—er words like that. He was drunk bad. She tole 'im what he was an' he slapped her one in th' kisser. Them Limeys don't know no better in these hot places. We was all o' us there, drinkin' 'n dancin', 'n we tried t' get 'im t' shove off wit' us. '*No possible*,' he says, th' crazy farmer. So us, not wantin' no knife-fightin' ourselves, pulled th' hook out o' there. I come back an hour later. Th' joint's battened down, all lights out. 'Holy ——!' I says. Yea, I found 'im. In th' alley, four inches o' cold cutlery in 'is blinkin' back, th' dumb-head. I flagged one o' them Zone Police jaspers, but he wanted t' take me t' th' brig, too—so I says, '*hasta luego, amigo*'; pulled me freight, collects th' gang an' comes back aboard. Them Limeys is awful thick sometimes. It ain't healthy."

Jamieson cursed softly under his breath. Bone had only given him eight hands on deck and he would have a big need for all of them in the next few weeks. Well, it was a thing to be expected in any man's ship, especially in a port like Colon.

" 'Tis too bad, mon. An' noo may ye take his bairth t' Liverpool. Lay aft smart'—we're shovin' off at eight bells, four o'clock."

Silently they rolled aft. MacCarty, who had been standing wordlessly beside him, broke into sudden laughter. Jamieson looked aft along the main deck. At the head of the well-deck ladder Brent was stamping savagely with both feet upon the sorely tried derby, manifestly outraged that he, a shell-back with fourteen years in the forecastle, should be picked out to be elevated to the lousy, ungrateful, gutless job of boatswain.

They ran the Mona Passage between

Santa Domingo and Porto Rico, leaving the last bit of land astern until they should pick up L'Isla de Flores in the Azores group. Jamieson laid off his course with Breniger, turned over the bridge to him and went below.

At the door of his cabin he halted to look out over the syenite-black of the sea, where swift tropic rain thundered and boomed and the moon was as a gray skull behind dark clouds. Drawn by the rumbling surge and resurge of sound, he walked to the bridge wing and leaned out over the bulwark, so that the hard-pelting drops soaked his clothing, rivuleted down his hot face and hands. He somehow wanted that rain to-night; felt a need for it; was soothed by its cool susurrus.

Here in the murmurous basso of the rain, close to the sea with its soft-sobbing plaint, he was safe, sure of himself, calmed and soothed by those things which were a part of him. An integral part of the world which had been his for the last twenty-four years—since he had first swung over the 'midships rail of the *Queen Anne* at Tilbury Docks. While he was here, with the sea, in the rain and the whispered sob of the wind he was safe. In there, in his cabin, he wasn't—not right now. Not while this thing had him by the throat—ripped him open as a Cape Stiff snorter would an old top hamper.

Stay here in the rain—stay here and fight it out—it was the only thing he could do. Weak? Yes— But in there, alone, with only that little snap-shot of Moira to back him up, it was too much. Too much, with that trunk over against the bulkhead, the keys for it hanging on that nail in his desk. That trunk—filled from corner to corner with seaweed-green bottles. Bottles—he only wanted one—just one—one to relieve that ever-tightening band about his brain, to relieve this mad, white thirst which made his eyes hot and blinking; his fingers itch and jump; his whole body hot and aching for it. The stuff in that green bottle—just one bottle—just one drink out of that bottle—just one. He started for the door.

Foot on the wave-guard at the sill he stopped. One bottle—one drink! Why lie to himself—Jamey Jamieson, the toper, with a reputation as a rummy from Said to Singapore? One bottle, ——! He knew what he'd do with it—what would happen when he yanked back that trunk lid, flung his gear across the cabin as he tore after it—smash the neck across the edge of his desk; throw back his head, drain the beastly thing dry. Scupper it complete—like a swine—like a weak swine—

HE RELEASED the latch-ring, swung cross-deck again. Better—better out here. Where he could hear and see the sea; feel it; smell it; wrap himself in its dun-filming rain mists. Balance one against the other. Rum against the sea—sea against the rum. Both habits — both habits — after all. Strange, that thought. But they were, when you figured it out coldly, soberly. That was what that poor devil of a remittance-man, Brown, had said that night in Karachi.

"Th' blinkin' stuff plagued a chap, yes. But, Cap'n—jus' a habit—a habit! Some that fancy ridin' t' hounds—some th' gals—and they're all right, too—an' some their tot o' rum—"

Habit—yes—but Brown had blown his brains out the following night. They had told him about it when he docked on the next trip in—Brown's check had failed to come from England. A little drunk, a lot in debt. Found an old service pistol somewhere in his boxes—he had been a Woolwich man. Blown out his brains while lying in his hammock—a common thing, out East here—not one to become excited over at all—not at all, Captain—not at all. Just another weak swine.

He'd forgotten the phrase for fifteen years—to have it pop up now. Now, when he was on the verge of it himself—on the verge himself—parched by the white fire of longing for the whisky, for the gold-sheening stuff in those seaweed-green bottles—and the words of that red-faced trader in Karachi came back to him—"Just another weak swine—"

Habit—a poor name for a disease. For the thing that tentacled him with almost irresistible arms; made the cold sweat drool from his lips and face; made him a shaking, stuttering wreck; made him another "weak swine." A poor name for the thing that made him forget David Bone; made him forget Moira—Moira, dark-eyed, wistful—The Frenchmen had a word for it—*triste*.

Moira, waiting through the long days for him to come back. Waiting for him, her father, Scots Jamey Jamieson, the toper. Jamey Jamieson, whose "name was rotten

eggs at home and out here, too." Moira, who had met him for the first time since she was a baby, and come to love him, her father. To love him—so that she stood up for him in the home of that other man, David Bone. Stood up for him, whom she hardly knew, while Bone and his hard-faced wife told her of her father's sins—drunkenness—laxity in command—loss of his first ship.

Oh, there were many things to tell her—many—and still she had stood up for him. Bravely, alone, against those two people who had taken her in, adopted her, made her their daughter, given her of their wealth and their name. And still she had disbelieved them, stubbornly, wilfully, knowing the while that what they said must be true. But loyal to him, drunken Jamey Jamieson, her father, while she slowly watched the rift between herself and her foster-parents widen—knowing that it would end in only one thing.

End in her leaving their home, tossing up their wealth and position to go to that stranger-father of hers—drunken, broken Jamey Jamieson. Until that time she was waiting for him, living grimly through the days that must pass before she could come to him. Until he came back to take her away from Bone's home, Bone's wealth, the power of Bone's name, to share poverty, weakness and doubts with him, her father. Wee Moira, whom he had dreamt about during the night watches out East as they lumbered through moon-mottled seas, and the shadow of the bridge awning was a great black bar across the deck. Moira, to whom he had promised he would not drink, that day he had said good-by to her in Seattle. The day before he took this tub of Bone's out to sea on this *loco* voyage.

He had lacked the courage to keep that promise to Moira; had broken it the next day when his sudden burst of hope died after examining the rottenness of her bulkheads, beams and gear. And still he had stayed in the hulk—blindly fulfilling the hunch he had formed the night Bone had come to him in that scrimey water-front lodging in Seattle and asked him to take the hulk out to sea. The hunch that he would bring her in, keelside down, to dockside, Liverpool. That with Bone's own dollars he would regain his daughter, Moira; take her away from Bone forever. Away from "Hard-Case" David Bone—who had sneered at him and his crew that day from the dockside in Seattle. —— David Bone to eternal ——!

Bone, who had made his wild Scots anger seethe and riot so that he had put away the rum—cursed it for what it was! What it was the way he used it—as a steady diet, as a part of himself, of his life. Like the sea, here. And he had stayed away from it—that stuff that sheened in the seaweed-green bottles. Stayed away for almost a month; nearly forgotten it in his desire to thwart Bone—Bone, who thought he was going to sink this scow as he had sunk the proud *Clyde Prince*—but had been forced to come to him, the man he hated and despised—because he could not get another skipper. Because no other reputable captain would take her out, the lubberly, worm-rotten hulk.

Because of that he had done without the rum; forgotten about it in the absorption of his work, in his daily struggle to make sailors out of these dock-rats of Bone's. Sailormen who would be needed when they shoved bow-on into those Spring gales and fogs ahead out there in the Western Ocean. When this scow might spring her seams wide open; might snap her sticks short out of her; might founder with all hands. And those docklice of Bone's were men. Better men than he, Jamey Jamieson, the toper, who cursed and wheedled them; stiffened them for the trick to come. He—who was himself a weakling, a "weak swine," shaking and quivering now with the ague of longing. Longing for that sirupy brown stuff that would give new back-bone, new courage—and new weakness.

He was back at the cabin door again; had it half open; stood with one foot over the wave-guard, peering into the gloom of the place. Not now—not now. He was winning; whipping it; driving it down. A little longer—a little longer—and then—then—

He closed the door slowly; went back to the angle of the bridge wing and the slurring lisp of the rain.

Part of his hunch, this fight. Part of his hunch the night Bone had sat on the edge of his bed and asked him to take this hooker out. His hunch that it was now or never. Make or break. Beat Bone, the sea, the rum and the world all in one battle. Foolish, of course, for the rum had him in a death-strangle right now. But the thing had looked easier then. Things always

did, when you thought about 'em. But no—if he whipped the rum—right here—now—tonight—the rest seemed easy—all stern-wind sailing in comparison. It was just up to him—up to him, drunken Scots Jamey Jamieson—"Weak swine"—habit—"Just a habit." But that was a lot of bilge—a man was either strong or he was weak. One or the other—he knew that. Look at Bone, look at himself—strong and weak. Bone, who had always won, always would. He, who had always lost—always. No, by the beard of ——! No—

He stooped in the lee of the bridge bulkhead to light his pipe; turned for the cabin door; entered and passed through into his sleeping cabin, a tired touch of a smile at the corners of his mouth.

Fifteen slow, sun-parched days of their northeasting astern. Over two weeks more of it ahead before they would pick up land again and run the Irish Sea for the Mersey. For the Mersey and Liverpool. "Liverpool and return."

The words of his ship's articles returned to Jamieson as he paced his lower bridge in the shadowed moonlight of the first two weeks out of the Zone. "Liverpool—and return." Even the man from the commissioner's office had smiled as he read aloud that phrase in Bone's office. There had been something of a grim, tacit joke in it, seeing that the commissioner's man, Bone and himself knew the *David Bone*—feared her. And he had not shaken that fear since. Not in the month since they had shoved off from Seattle. But why?

A MONTH out of port and they were logging their knots right to schedule; running through blandly calm seas, making their steady 11.50 an hour. MacCarty had grumbled in Colon; talked of the labor he and Craker, the first, were putting in below to keep her running right. But chiefs always groused some—it was their way—and since then he had not had more than a cursory "hello" out of the Liverpool man.

True, the scow was like a sieve below decks—worm-rotten and weak from the years of non-attention while she had lain warped alongside in Seattle and better ships went out low with cargo and she was remembered only as "a lousey Jonah-ship—one o' them wooden war-tubs that had gone keelside-up, comin' off th' ways." But so far it had been all mill-pond sailing; calm sea following calm sea in almost monotonous procession. A month without even a squall, with only a couple of flurries of subtropical rain. And Liverpool was only little over two weeks off the bow. Luck, that. But would it last—? Would it last—? What would the hooker do in a rumbling beam sea—when those long rollers of the Western Ocean lashed at the worm-rotten sides; smashed them with blow after blow, each carrying more venomous force than the one that had lipped thunderously before it?

What then? That was it—that was what got a man—kept him awake through the night watches, while he should be getting his shut-eye in his bunk. While he should be figuring out what he was going to do with his daughter when he got her—after he had taken her away from Hard-Case Bone. Instead he paced the deck here like an old woman whose man was down at the pub making eyes at the bar-girl on pay night. Standing here, catching at vague, shadowy fears and making concrete possibilities out of them—like an old woman. Worrying about the leaky hulk—whether she would get into a snorter—if they got caught in a tough stern sea that might poop her. When chances were they might not even see white water between the Azores and the Mersey.

Standing here, worrying like an old woman—just as he had worried throughout the trip. Worrying about bringing through a hooker like this—he, Jamey Jamieson, with twenty-four years of the sea astern of him. Losing his sleep over calm water—afraid, almost, to turn in, lest the lookout come running to tell him that the mate wanted him on the bridge; that she was drawing water through those bad seams aft.

Foolishness—of course it was. Just like his fear that he could not beat the rum; could not whip it; rid himself of a habit that had been a part of him for almost fifteen years. And he had whipped the rum—two weeks gone, right here where he was standing now. Whipped it to a standstill for the second and last time. Not as he had that first night out of San Juan de Fuca when the thought of David Bone and old days had angered him, but calmly—looking forward to the future and what it would mean to Moira and himself if he beat the rum—or stayed a weak swine.

He'd whipped it—and now he stood here in fear of this vague, shadowy thing that hung over the ship, over this wooden hulk that bore the name of David Bone. In fear that she wouldn't make port—that a real sea would open her seams—waterlog her—sink her like a cracked soogey bucket. He, Jamey Jamieson, was afraid of that. He, who had licked the rum; had stood up to David Bone; had made his daughter love him, a sea-worn, rum-haggard failure. Love him so much that she had fought for him in the house of David Bone; fought for him in vain, then decided to live her life with him—share his poverty and his weakness.

Six soft bells from the bridge. Six deep strokes back from the lookout on the forecastle-head. Eleven o'clock. 'Sparks' would be topside now in the wireless shack, getting the time-calls from the Naval Station at Arlington, the news of the world from the big passenger packets to the north'ard. Getting up into the main travel lanes themselves, now. Tonight he was going to shake this thing for good—get rid of it. If there was any white weather on the slate for the next two weeks he would learn of it tonight. Sparks would be below with the news, if there were, knowing that he was not turned in, but pacing this deck of his like an old woman with a sore tooth. Wait and see—wait and see. A man couldn't be absolutely certain, but it seemed as if tonight Sparks would know for sure whether they were bound into dirty weather during the next two weeks. Those two weeks left of this nightmare—the weeks he hated; feared to think about. He was getting to be like an old woman. Like an old woman with a sore tooth.

He shambled slowly across the foredeck of his bridge; stopped to finger the brine-dewed brass of the ship's plate in the fore bulkhead of his cabin; ran his thumbnail over the invisible engraving. Ducking under the steps of the flying bridge-ladder he stopped indecisively by the door of his sleeping cabin. For a short while he stood there, playing with the brass latch-ring, so that if Breniger, on watch above, should cross the ladder-head and look down, it would seem as if he were about to enter his cabin and turn in.

Topside, on the bridge, he could just make out the dim shape of a life preserver belayed to the stanchion opposite the door of the wireless shack. The white-painted canvas of the preserver was yellowed by a faint bar of light. That was light escaping from under the corners of the blanket Sparks had nailed across his door to keep the bridge in darkness. He must be in the wireless shack then. Yes, there was the hiss and crackle of electricity. But why was he sending a message now? His time-calls were in—he had no need of sending out a call. It might be a query. Yes, that was it—a query. Perhaps there was a static and he had been unable to get the Naval Station flash clearly. Perhaps there was interference from some big passenger packet to the northward. But he was a —— of a washerwoman skipper, standing here like a fool, puzzling vaguely. Stop it, man, stop it!

He walked to the forward rail; hunched his elbows on the teak and leaned out into the softly whispering wind. On the forecastlehead he could make out the black blur of the lookout walking to and fro by the forepeak scuttle. Topside, a door clicked open and shut. That was Sparks coming out of the radio shack. There was a murmur of indistinct voices overhead. Probably Sparks talking with Breniger—asking him if the Old Man was still up. Yes, that was it, right enough, for there was Sparks clumping down the bridge-ladder now; you could hear the funny dry whine of his wooden leg where it was jointed at the knee. Poor beggar had lost his real spar somewhere up near Soissons two weeks before the Armistice.

Sparks was lowering himself down the last step of the ladder now, starting toward his cabin door to roust him out. He had been right—there was bad weather ahead, else the man wouldn't come looking for him during a late night-watch like this.

"That you, Sparks?"

"Aye, Cap'n. Just was goin' looking for you."

"Wha's on yeer chest, laddie?"

He was calm and cool as could be now. And here he had been worrying and fretting like an old woman for the last two hours. But there was something definite to deal with now, something real. Not that beastly, vague sensation of something wrong which he had felt time and again since he had taken this billet in Bone's hulk. Sparks was standing near in the darkness, peering at him.

"Was listening in after I got my time-calls, seeing what the boys to the north'ard had to say. Picked up the *Americ*, talkin' with one o' her own flag just comin' out of New York. Seems there's a bad buster due around these lines tomorrow morning, 'bout seven bells. Started yesterday morning off Cape Race and the Banks and is headin' sou'east-b'h-alf-east. I flashed back and picked up the *Americ's* chief operator—she's 'bout two hundred miles to the nor'west of us. He give me what I just told you. That's 'bout all, Cap'n. I'll sit in with the phones and see what the big stations say if you want—"

"Na, laddie. There isna use in 't. Lay aft an' do yeer bunk-duty noo. Fra wha' ye say, we'll aye be needin' ye t'morrow. Guid night, lad."

"Sparks" bobbed his head and labored down the lower ladder to the 'midships deck. For a moment Jamieson stood staring after him as he dragged around Number Three hatch and turned down the alley to the Petty Officers' Mess to get his coffee and night lunch. There was a bad gale sweeping down off the Banks and still this gimpy-legged operator told him of it with curt calmness, bade him good-night and went aft to eat a placid night lunch before turning in. While he, Scots Jamey Jamieson, who had cleared Cape Stiff eighteen times, stood here worrying like an old woman, fearful of a gale which was still far to the north'ard and might blow out like a punctured bagpipe skin before it reached them.

Nerves—nerves. Lor' lummee, he was a mess of 'em from head to foot. Unable to sleep, eat, work right because of them. Because they still craved the rum—were used to it—rebelled and jerked when they weren't soothed and quieted by it. And he thought he had beaten it! Just one drink out of— No! by the beard of ——!

HE WENT wearily up the ladder to the bridge. Breniger had heard about the gale from Sparks, laughed about it, welcomed it as a test for the ship; was a little bit amused and puzzled by his solemn air and half expressed forebodings. They walked back and forth together silently until one bell went, and the lookout came aft to call the watch. Jamieson left Breniger on the bridge and settled himself on the meager leather cushions of the chart-room settee to wait. By the time Lubois came on the bridge to relieve Breniger the little Scotsman was asleep.

The tail-end of the gale hit them at one bell after dawn; tornadoed down while they cursed futilely and waited for it to blow out. For five minutes they crouched under the upflinging sprays and watched the wooden topmasts buckle and snap short out of their steel sockets above the cross-trees, carrying away stays, halyards, wireless antenna and range-lights.

Sam Brent and Hodel, the Finn, floundered through the wave-wash around the mast-butts and chopped loose the shattered gear with long-handled fire axes. As the last mess of stays and halyards whipped over the side and bobbed off to leeward the wind muttered out and Jamieson brought her back on her previous course. Brent chased his men aloft to rig new halyards and oil range-lights, while he and the Finn tightened up on the remaining stay turnbuckles.

One of the able seamen, a Portuguese called Fernando, slipped while trying to stand erect in the mainmast cross-trees; fell and broke his neck. He was dead by the time they reached him where he lay, hunched over a winch barrel by Number Four hatch. Brent and "Slivers" carried the body forward to the 'peak; sewed it up in new Number Three canvas, a twenty-five pound bar of iron at the feet.

Four bells on the afternoon watch, Jamieson ordered her hove to and all hands assembled aft at the break of the main deck. In a solemn, low voice he read the burial service. To the nervously shuffling men above on the main deck the words came in broken spurts of sound.

> "We therefore commit his body to the deep,
> To be turned into corruption—"

Into corruption. . . . A strange phrase, that—but the whole service was full of things just like it. Big, long-sounding words that a sailorman never heard unless one of his mates went out like this. Of course a skipper had to read it off as if he meant it and understood every word, but all hands knew that he didn't any more than they did—a skipper's billet wasn't as cushy as it looked sometimes. There, and now be done.

Brent and Slivers lifted together. The hatch-board tilted upward. New canvas

rasped on wood; spray showered whitely outward from blackish-green seas. Brent and Slivers pulled in the hatch-board without looking. Jamieson came up the ladder, face a drawn blob of white in the rain, fingers clenching at his shabby Bible.

Breniger stopped him by Number Four hatch and pointed off the starboard quarter.

"Ship off dere, sir. Hear her vistle, now? Been usin' th' blinker on us. Dere goes a rocket."

A faint stream of fire sputtered across the sky; arced downward into the sea.

"What she say, sir-r?"

"Vants we should stand by. Out o' commission, she is. I think he say rudder-post gone."

Jamieson nodded; pocketed the Bible; went aloft to the bridge. Using his electric blinker flash, he answered the unseen ship.

"Unable to get boat to you or stand by now. Will heave to here until morning. Can you last the night?"

Through the shadowy bluster of the rain came the just visible reply.

"Yes."

Jamieson started the whistle; gave over the bridge to Brown and went below to sound the after-bilges with the carpenter. There was four inches of water in Number Four, about two and a half in Number Five. According to Chips' daily chart that was only two inches more than they had been carrying since leaving Seattle. Not anything to worry about—yet. It depended on the sort of weather they hit between here and Cape Clear. Most of the gale's damage had taken effect on deck. And that was luck. More luck than he had hoped for in these sleepless nights of the last two weeks. Nothing much to worry about—yet.

He left Chips replacing hatch tarpaulins and batten rods and returned to the bridge. Brown, at his suggestion, went below to supper and he settled down on the chart-room settee. Through the wheel-room door he could see the helmsman kicking one foot against the other, trying to keep awake, humming to himself while the whistle muttered at the rain. From the starboard quarter came the flustering bellow of the other's whistle, answering theirs with unflagging cacophony.

Jamieson rose, paced the length of the little room, wheeled and came back. Another ship, off there in the rain, waiting for dawn and them to stand alongside. To bring them aid, perhaps a tow into La Horta in the Azores. Salvage there, perhaps. That meant more money for him and the crew. For David Bone's yellow-bellies. More money for them to spend on the girls in Liverpool and Birkenhead. More money to buy new go-ashore clothes and sea-outfits. More money for him, too. Money he could use on Moira—Moira, who was waiting for him now in Seattle. Moira, who had placed her all with him, her drunken, weakling father, knowing all his love for the rum, his inability to keep a decent billet. Moira, his daughter—with the same dark hair and eyes of that other Moira, who had walked with him, a stumbling, stuttering Scots sea 'prentice, among the boulders of the Cornwall downs, her hair tousled by the whip of the sea wind from off the Lizard.

He settled down in a corner of the settee again, head on the stiff leather. That was Brown out there, talking with the man at the wheel. Brown wasn't much of a man, but a first mate of sorts—good enough to take care of her through the night. So was Breniger, and this other fey fellow, Lubois. If they wanted him for anything the man at the wheel knew where he was—right here on the settee—they could see him through the door. He was jolly well tired—hadn't slept in the last fifteen or so nights for more than a couple of hours at a spell. And a man couldn't keep on doing that—not with the topmasts yanked out of her—no wireless—no range-lights worth a bent ha'penny. There was two inches more in those after bilges, too. Two inches more. But a man had to expect that in a wooden war-tub like this. A wooden war-tub bearing the name of Hard-Case David Bone. —— and rot David Bone! He, himself, was going to steal a little shut-eye. A man needed it in this wagon. Needed it—an awful—lot.

The fingers clenching his shoulder relaxed as he sat up. Must be dawn, for the man who had called him was turning to the bell-rope; stroking the bells in time to the chink of the chronometer. Dawn, all right—it was five bells, half-past six. The fellow at the wheel was grinning at him, crunching out a smoldering cigaret butt under his heel. It was that broken-nosed Tacoma lad on Breniger's watch.

"Mr. Brown's on th' boat deck, sir. Gettin' a boat cleared to go overside. Tole

me t' turn you out, sir. Thought it was about time you'd like to break out."

The lad had an ingratiating grin. And knew —— well that he saw the cigaret the beggar was trying to grind out of sight under his heel. He was giving him all this clabber so he wouldn't notice it. Well, let be. More things to do than call down a sleepy lad for stealing a smoke at the wheel. He turned toward the door to the bridge.

"Aye, lad."

THE sun was a muddy orange plaque through the smoky white of the mist banks which lay low over the sea, torn now and then by a fitfully twisting breeze. A bad day to come alongside another ship—but perhaps that breeze would pick up and clean off this blinking mist; give them a chance to see one another.

He climbed hand over hand up the short ladder on the main-house side to the boat deck. Brown had a gang of men working at one of the forward starboard boats. She was already davited outboard and had her falls cleared. Brown seemed as if he wanted to take her over himself. Not this morning. That was Jamey Jamieson's job in this mist.

"Mornin', sir."

"The same, sir-r. Ha' yeer lads get her in the water, Brown, an' I'll be takin' her o'er ma'sel'. Aye. An' wi' ye gie us a rocket every five minoots sa we can find airselves in the mists? Thankee, sir-r. Lower away, there!"

Fall blocks squeaked and manila whined around steel cleats as the big boat swayed downward, Brent and Slivers fending her off from the side. The two other men in the boat crew clawed at the fall ropes and slid below to the boat. He waved his hand to Brown, poised by the white overhang of a davit and jumped for the fall ropes, the boat a dim gray shape below him.

They cast off the after and forward falls; shoved away and locked oars on the tumbling crest of a roller. Jamieson pulled the rudder out of the rings; placed an oar in the stern rowlock in its stead, then looked appraisingly over the boat crew Brown had chosen. Hodel, the big Finn, was at the bow oar, Chips at Number Two, a long-legged Oregon lad at Number Three and Sam Brent at stroke. A good boat crew—the best combination in the ship. Brent had regained his old, cocky smile and grunted a low, "huh-h—huh-h!" to every stroke as they heaved at the long oars when she humped along a crest, then staggered downward into the trough.

Mist lay in stubborn streamers close above the slate-brown seas that tumbled about them in serrated confusion like miniature mountain ranges. Jamieson changed his course as the sound of the *Bone's* whistle droned away and the other ship's siren moaned a choky, metallic gabble. Off to port two dun shadows lurched on the wave crests. Those were the other fellow's sea-anchors, streamed from the taffrail to keep her bow up in the wind. She ought to be within five fathoms of those. Right enough, there she was now—that long black shape standing out of the mist. He took his right hand from the haft of the steering oar and throated a sharp hail.

A lantern blinked like a Cyclopean eye above the black of her side and an answering hail floated dimly back. He changed course carefully, running almost broadside to the seas, seeking to come up under her lee. The lantern limned a yellow globe in the mists and he made out faint figures in the penumbra of light. He shouted again. The light moved, showing him the course. The plaint of her siren was a vast, hollow bellow now and below it he could hear the hissing slap of the seas against her side. He shouted once more and a husky English voice came back.

"Stand by for a line!"

"Aye, let 'er come!"

A heaving line coiled overhead droningly. Brent grabbed; passed it forward to the Finn, who made it fast through the bow ring.

"All fast. Heave 'way daint'y!"

"Heave 'way daint'y!" rasped the husky voice.

The slack in the line was taken up and they half-stroked their oars, following the black thread of the line toward the ship's side. The lantern was close above them when the Finn rose to his knees on the thwart, oar out to fend off and pick up the boat-rope bighted overside. His oar rapped against steel plates and Jamieson ordered, "Ship oars, port—backwater starb'rd!" The boat nudged in against wet steel and the bottom rung of a Jacob's ladder clacked downward right above them.

Brent bellowed "Fast alongside" as

Jamieson swarmed aloft to the deck. Hands helped him over the bulwark bar and he steadied on the gently swaying deck, facing a cluster of men in shiny weather-clothing who stood about a tall fellow holding a lantern.

"Chief mate?" asked the lantern-holder.

"Cap'n o' her," replied Jamieson, stretching his legs.

"Come for'ard with me, please, sir."

"Aye, Cap'n."

He followed the amber shimmer of the lantern across rain-puddled decks, up a short ladder and in a dark doorway. The lantern fluttered out with a stench of hot kerosene as an electric bulb brightened the place. This big Englishman had also done his share of worrying and waiting, mused Jamieson, looking at the other across the small cabin. The big man held out a hairy, wet hand.

"Gerhard's the name. She's the *Monmouth Towers*, out o' Falmouth, underwriter's charter. Glad to make the acquaintance, Cap'n Jamieson. Cargo? Aye, that's it. Some o' this Yankee copper they've all been talkin' about so much at home of late. Yes—yes. Loaded at Port Newark—loaded too —— deep, too. Told the agent so at the time, but—shore men, shore ways. A sailor earns his quid by takin' orders. Yes—yes, Cap'n, her Plimsolls are well-awash right now. With copper yourself, eh? Liverpool—that's for the Birmingham people. A mean, sour Staten Land day, this—make a man's blood run cold. A drink, Cap'n?"

Jamieson inclined his head in negation, a curbed gleam of humor in his eyes. Here, at least, was one man who hadn't heard of Scots Jamey Jamieson, the toper. Gerhard uncorked a bottle of Martelle Frères; filled a small glass.

"You'll pardon me, Cap'n? Thank you."

He drank; smacked his lips; filled a browned meerschaum pipe and sat back after offering Jamieson a cigar.

"Sorry to yank you off your course, Cap'n Jamieson, but we're in a pretty rum fix back aft there. Ran into some loose gear about five days back. Yes—yes. Probably some of the standing gear from that Dutchey fore-an'-after that foundered around here about a week or so back. Yes—yes, you're right Cap'n. She was reported in these lines, but my ——, a man can't see his own watch officer in weather like this!"

Gerhard stared morosely at his cracked sea-boot toe; tamped down the tobacco in his pipe bowl with a thumb-nail.

"Yes—yes, you're right, Cap'n Jamieson—just that. Stuff caught in the fan blades. Then the blasted screw ripped loose—cracked the rudder post to flinders. Yes, sir, flinders. Merry —— to pay. Sure as you live, Cap'n—tried to fish two jury rudders and straighten out the fan. Cracked in a couple of boats and near' lost a man overside. Gave it up as a rum job. Then this gale yesterday. Yes—yes—just about finished things as far as the fan blades went. Rigged a jury rudder of sorts and that's all. No—no wireless aboard. No, sir, they didn't put 'em in these *Monmouth* ships yet. Lyin' hove-to with a brace of sea-anchors out when we raised you to port. Jolly well lucky we did, too."

From his position on the lumpy cushions of the wall settee Jamieson studied the picture of a girl on a calendar over Gerhard's desk. A brown-haired, slim lass. With the dark eyes and wistful mouth of Moira. Moira—whom he was going to take away from Bone's house in August. In August—not far away, that— He looked over at Gerhard.

"An' wha' wud ye be wantin' wi' the *David Bone*, Cap'n?"

Gerhard laughed mirthlessly.

"No wireless aboard—and my orders are to proceed direct to London. You're Mersey-bound. You might put us into the Azores. But a man waits months there for repairs. In the meanwhile the top and bottom of the copper market at home might change places. On the other hand—there's handsome salvage money for you, your crew and owners if you bring us into Liverpool with our copper still below-hatches. What d'you say, Cap'n Jamieson—can you make Liverpool with us astern?"

Gerhard poured out another drink for himself; tossed it off with a wry face. Jamieson sat reflectively tapping a front tooth with a finger-nail. Gerhard was right—a salvage pay-off was a big pay-off. That was one of the old sayings of the sea. It meant many things if he decided to bring the Falmouthman in. It meant a whiteman's pay-off for all hands—and it meant double watches from here to the Mersey. To the Mersey—if they could make it. That was the joker in the pack. After all, it was up to his lads—up to Bone's gang of

—— yellow-bellied no-goods. For him, alone, it meant just so many more dollars to fight Bone. But it was the lads who would pay the price and they who would decide.

He glanced up at the haggard-eyed Englishman.

"I must talk it o'er wi' ma chief an' ma lads, Cap'n. We're na sa bonnie in the *Bone* airselves. Ma chief engineer an' ma laddies ha' the say, too, in such a ship as mine. Gin he an' the lads say 'aye,' I'll gie ye a flash wi' the blinker an' put lines aboard ye wi' the Lyle gun. An' may ye make oot a document noo, sa I may ha' one copy an' ye one, gin we agr-ree."

GERHARD clenched a pen in his warped fist and finally scratched forth a sorry-looking statement, attesting that he had entered into agreement with Cap't'n Jamieson, of the S.S. *David Bone* (Seattle, Am.), to tow into the port of Liverpool his craft, the S. S. *Monmouth Towers* (Falmouth, Eng.), at regular salvage rates; all details of settlement and payment to be decided by the respective owners, agents or underwriters of the two vessels after they had successfully reached port.

Bone made money even here, reflected Jamieson, conning his copy before he put it in his pocket. Gerhard pushed away the pen and they stood and shook hands.

"I'll let ye know wi'in the hour, Cap'n. Gude luck t' ye, either way."

"Thank you, sir—thank you. This —— lantern needs cleanin'. Make that all right. Good—good. Spare you a couple of hands later on if you need 'em. Right, sir—right!"

Jamieson waved his hand and dropped limberly down the ladder toward the dipping life-boat. Hodel and Brent cast off as he settled in the stern sheets and they shoved off. They tangented off to port when they cleared the bow of the Englishman and made way for the *Bone*, truing course by the rocket flares that burned wobbly white paths above her decks. Again the Frankensteinian howl of a siren, the shouts and replies, the slurring thrum of a well-tossed heaving line. They came alongside under the counter sheer and Jamieson ran quickly up the streamed ladder. Brown and MacCarty were waiting for him nervously on deck.

"They're looking for a tow, sir?"

Jamieson turned a quick, preoccupied glance at Brown.

"No, it isna a case o' tow, here, Mistair—'tis salvage. An' noo break oot a' hands, Mistair, I wud talk wi' 'em shortly on the 'midships deck."

He grasped MacCarty's jumper sleeve impatiently.

"Lay for'ard wi' me, Mac, I wud talk wi' ye."

They sat looking at each other over the green shadow of Jamieson's desk lamp. The Liverpool man industriously cleaned the film of fuel oil from his bare forearms with a piece of waste as he waited for the other to speak. Jamieson packed his pipe with shag, lighted a match, and watched it burn to a black cinder. Then he turned to the chief.

"She's one o' the *Monmouth* ships, Mac. Out o' Falmouth—bound-in noo fra' Port Newark wi' copper. Fan blade an' rudder post gone. They ha' fished a jury rudder but she canna navigate under her ain power. 'Tis salvage money fair a' hands—we make Liverpool wi' her astern. I told him o'er there I wud talk wi' ye an' ma ain laddies afore I wud tell him aye. Can ye stand it below?"

MacCarty surveyed the soiled bit of waste judiciously; jammed it in a hip pocket of his dungarees.

"We can—now, Jamey. One av thim *Monmouth* ships, aye? Be aroun' four thousand ton, then, I'm thinkin'. Bring us down t' about six knots—providin' it's not white water t' Cape Clear—"

He stopped abruptly, stared down at his stub fingers, then up at the Glasgow man.

"She's drawin' six inches in Number Four, James. Brown an' me was below whilst you was aboard the other fellow. 'Tis that we must be thinkin' av when we say aye t' th' Falmouthman."

Jamieson dropped his pipe on his worn leather pouch on the desk.

"Gin she keeps makin' water aft we must cast off fra' the Falmouthman—an' gie her the pumps below. She wi' na hold her headway wi' the Falmouthman astern an' the pumps workin' in Number-r Four?"

MacCarty was silent for a long moment, apparently concentrating his attention on a blackened hang-nail on his right thumb. He, too, was thinking of what that extra salvage money would mean, mused Jamieson. What those extra quid would do

toward paying for his childer's education; toward buying a new Bank Holiday rig for his cummer. Thinking, too, of what it meant to the men in his gang below, to the forecastle hands on deck, who would probably labor incessantly until they raised Point Tynas and the pilot's craft in the Mersey.

At last:

"Ye're right, James. She'll not keep headway on us an' the Falmouthman an' keep her dry below—too. An' we run into good weather from here to Clear, she'll take her. An' we hit dirty weather an' she draws more aft—'tis cast clear from the *Monmouth* ship an' get us in alone. As for me—alone, mind ye, James—I say aye, t' ye—now. 'Tis only sailorman decent t' take her as much as thim junks below is good for—"

He made a grimace with his mouth, as if he had tasted something very sour.

"But do ye put it to th' lads—an' they say aye—all right. Thinkin' on 't, if th' lads are wantin' av it, James, I've found me an auld hand-rig pump below in Stores' cuddy. That 'ud keep 'er clear by hand—but, man, 'tis a fearsome thing t' ask yeer lads. Do they get it down, an' keep it down, wi' th' hand-rig—we can bring th' Falmouthman in. If ye ask it o' thim junks below t' keep headway on us an' t'other, too—an' get th' water out below—yeer askin' too much, James. It's th' Falmouthman who'll be payin' little enough for th' job—an' yeer boys keep us clean below by hand."

He was silent, scowling down at his hangnail again. Three matches flickered out over the bowl of Jamieson's pipe as he tried to light it. MacCarty had put it clearly and honestly. The shaky turbines below could stand taking the Falmouthman—could stand taking the Falmouthman astern—and could still navigate above five knots an hour and make the Mersey with her tow within three weeks, at the most, dependent on the weather. She was drawing aft—needed the pumps now. To turn the power of her turbines on the pumps in Number Four—and perhaps, Five—would cut her knottage down to less than four knots an hour. And four knots an hour would not keep headway on two fairish-sized cargo ships, both well-laden. Not in a flock of crimps' holidays.

There was this hand-rig that MacCarty spoke about. The hand-rig his lads on deck would have to use if they decided to bring the Falmouthman in. With that they could keep the water out of her aft—either keep it out of her, or down below the danger mark, anyhow. With that extra power—saved for the tow by his lads—they could bring her in. And if the pace proved too brutal, too man-killing, they could recruit a couple of hands from the *Monmouth* ship and use the promise Gerhard had made him as he said good-by to him at the ladder head. And they could always cast off from the Falmouthman, let her seek elsewhere for her tow. But, as Mac had said, it was up to his lads, up to David Bone's —— yellow-bellied no-goods. They were the ones who would pay the biggest whack of the price, however you figured it.

Jamieson got nervously to his feet, dropped the smoldering pipe in a side jacket pocket.

"We must needs ask the lads, Mac. 'Tis on'y fair ta them, too."

MacCarty nodded wordlessly as they turned toward the door, the ladder and the 'midships deck.

THE men stood in silent rows along the leeward bulwarks, waiting for them. In the door of the pantry the Chinaboy mess-men hunched in patient bewilderment, aprons shrouding their hands. His three mates and the wireless operator were gathered in a small group by themselves, the engine-room officers near-by. MacCarty muttered something unintelligible in his throat and crossed over to his officers, leaving him alone at the ladder foot.

They swung about to face him slowly as the whispering ceased. He leaned back against the ladder rail, palms pressed to the cold steel. David Bone's no-goods, the scum of Puget Sound and the Northwest Coast. So Bone thought them, but not he, Scots Jamey Jamieson, their skipper—who had a name as a rummy from the Straits Settlements to Seattle. A hard thing, this. Harder, almost, than beating the rum. Hard, perhaps, because he had never done it before—wished to —— he never had to again.

He straightened up, brushed a hand across the sweat beads on his forehead, and talked to them. Talked to them in swift, choppy sentences—as he had talked to

Moira, that day out by the university in Seattle. Repeated word for word just what he and MacCarty had figured out, up there in his cabin, while they waited for him.

He finished and stood still, thumbs hooked in the corners of his jacket pockets. MacCarty was growling in low brogue at his firemen and oilers; his watch-officers craning over his shoulders to hear. A mutter of voices when he was done. One, clear above the rest:

"*Sangre del Greco!* Sure. Deck gang—they get all de dirty work. Sure—sure."

Then Sam Brent's voice:

"Whatcha say—we goin' t' roll an' go? Salvage jack is big jack—we bring in th' Limey an' it's real Guiness stout we swill, 'stead o' that lousy 'arf-n'-arf. Pipe up—yuh hay-shakers!"

Hodel, the big Finn, loomed behind Brent, waved a massive hand at Jamieson.

"Sure, Cap'n—sure. Ve tie chief's tin pump in sqvare knot—make dem bilges look like bottom o' ole vine bottle."

Jamieson smiled slowly back at him, turned and went wearily up the ladder to the bridge. His quivering fingers relaxed and grew steady as he snapped the electric blinker switch back and forth. Gerhard answered with a watery stutter of light, and he told him to look alive to take his towing hawsers aboard.

At half-speed ahead he maneuvered the *Bone* down-wind until she stood broadside-on to the Falmouthman, seventy-five fathoms of gray water between. On the boat-deck Brown answered his whistle blast with a flicker of his pocket-torch to show that he was ready. A flat report spat from the up-tilted red snout of the little Lyle gun as Brown pulled the lanyard and a heaving line twisted upward, to fall across the Falmouthman's bridge work. A bright spatter of blinker signals told them that it was secured and the heavy, four-inch hawser was bent on to the heaving line and sent over. A second hawser and a wire cable followed. Jamieson pulled the telegraph handle to "Slow Ahead," while the big lines were carried aft to be belayed to the stern bitts on the poop.

Again the yellow waver of the blinkers as he told the Falmouthman that they were getting under way and Gerhard answered that he was ready. Jamieson raked over the telegraph handle to "Slow Ahead" and the engines began to throb and tremble below. Aft, the great hawsers tautened and whimpered as the two vessels surged slowly forward, a lacework of spume from the laboring propeller frothing under the *Bone's* counter. Brown came topside to relieve him and he went aft to Number Four.

The Portugese engine-room storekeeper and two firemen were already assembling the long arms and cast-iron jacket of the pump by the forward coaming. Brent and his gang had ripped off the tarpaulins and were piling the hatch-boards on the lee deck when Jamieson reached them. Brent swung a heavy board to the top of the pile and squinted over at him.

"This here pump connection's in th' lower hold, ain't she, Skipper?"

"Aye, lad. But ye must work the copper out o' her fairst. Else, ye canna reach yeer connection. 'Tis o'er t' port, aboot four feet 'baft the bulkhead, I'm thinkin'. I'll tell MacCarty t' gie ye steam on deck fair the winches ontil ye get the ore out o' her."

Throughout the cold, gray afternoon they worked with silent swiftness to rig cargo booms and two winches and get the copper out of the shelter and two 'tween decks. Sling-load by sling-load they heaved the copper topside; piled it in the scuppers, then flung it into the sea through a cargo port. Jamieson stood nervously by the coaming, watching the men below as they slinged the two-hundred-pound ingots and sent them aloft in quick succession.

There was imminent, ever-present danger down there in that dark 'tween deck. Danger to those dock-rats of David Bone's who chanteyed and cursed as they nudged at the triangular-shaped bars that heaved and chafed against each other as the ship rolled in the quarterly sea. But these men were sailors—better sailors than he had thought—better men than he had realized that first week or so aboard, even though he had stood up for them that day in Seattle when Bone had cursed and jeered at them from the dockside.

Bone had been wrong—to curse him, Jamey Jamieson, toper and weakling that he was. Wrong again to gibe at these men who were shambling, improvident no-goods when ashore, but sailors—two-handed men once aboard and away from the cheap dives and grog-shops on the beach. They were men—men such as he needed now—to whom he had appealed as he never had before to

any gang. Men from whom he had gained an answer which even now made his throat pulse and warm as he watched them tumbling Bone's precious copper into the sea. A grim joke, that—grim in more ways than one.

By three bells, half-past five, they had jettisoned enough ore to reach the jury pump valve connection. Raker, the first assistant engineer, and the Portugese storekeeper rigged the pump while Sam Brent lowered a circular, three-bulb cargo lamp down a ventilator shaft, securing it above the long pump handles.

Brent squinted at the slump-shouldered figure of Jamieson going forward to the bridge, then spat down at the pump.

"MacCarty's iron man-killer, b' ——! 'Dead Man's Angle,' kid. You'll break your —— heart over them playthings afore you see th' Mersey."

Slivers looked up from caulking a crack in the rubber pump-hose.

"Yeah? You ole-timers done a —— of a sight more, an' worse, fer thirty a month an' a slap in th' chops t'rowed in. We're gettin' real jack fer this."

He looked aloft, to be sure that Jamieson had gone forward.

"Anyways, th' ole man's aces-high wit' me an' I'd do it fer th' askin'. You woodenship guys is always tough guys—t' listen t' yuh."

At the end of the after dog watch Jamieson set his new watches. Breniger argued with him for half an hour on the bridge, finally convincing him that he should be allowed to join one of the pump watches. There were six men now for the pump watches, protested Breniger. Only six of them—and at that he was including Sam Brent. The carpenter would be seven. If the skipper would let him join there would be eight—and that was men enough for the two watches.

The other officers? They could stand wheel watch with Sparks, who was useless with his gimpy peg and was without his wireless rig, anyhow. The Chinaboys could easily be broken in to the routine duties of night lookout. You needed a couple of good hands, too, to stand towing-hawser watch—renew the canvas seizings where they chafed at the bitts, sluice them with Albany grease, keep an eye on the Limey. The donkey-man had seen some time on deck—he was one man for that watch. The Portugese storekeeper in the black-gang was an old-timer, too. He was your other man. Those two could hold down the hawser trick, watch-and-watch-about.

As for the pump gang—they couldn't stand any more than two hours straight at the handles. He, Breniger, knew that—had been at the job himself in an Australian grain bark. The pump gang were the lads who must have the sleep—however broken—in the next three weeks. It would have to be a two-hour spell at the pumps; a pannikin of chow; two hours of shut-eye; a chance to sluice the sweat off your back and face; then back again.

A heart-breaking schedule if she drew more water aft. Right now it would be easy going. All depended on the sort of weather they nosed into. And if the going got rough the skipper of the Limey would lend a couple of hands, wouldn't he, sir?

Jamieson pushed his second mate gently toward the ladder.

"Aye—aye, lad! I willna deny ye. It isna muckle men like ye I ha' fair tha' blessed watch. 'Twould think ye were a bairn, beggin' his cummer fair tuppence o' a half-holiday!"

BROWN turned out to take the bridge and Jamieson followed the Norwegian mate aft to Number Four. Astern, the bulky Falmouthman's side-lights glinted red and green where she surged sluggishly at the hawsers. On her bridge he could make out the reddish ember of a pipe and envisaged Gerhard nervously leaning over his dodger, watching the black loom of the straining American ahead.

Steel bunk frames had been wrenched intact from their stanchions in the forecastle and lowered into Number Four hold, to be placed in a dark corner of the empty upper 'tween deck. Here the four men off watch were already asleep, oblivious to the clanking murmur of the pump. The men at the handles looked up at him as he came down the ladders; grinned and told him that she was "as dry as th' Flyin' Dutchy's scuttlebutts."

They were working easily at the long handles, singing a South Street chantey as they drove the whining arms up and down. He sat and watched them for a while, back against a bulkhead beam, half listening to

the droning, unmusical strains of the chantey. A chantey he had sung when a 'prentice, twenty-two years ago. The sea didn't change much. Turbines took the place of square riggers; fuel oil succeeded coal; ashore they invented radio compasses and Diesel-sailers. But the men working in the ships remained the same. These four men were such as he had seen in a dozen ships—slow-witted, sure-handed—the eternal problem and tool of men like David Bone. He, drunken Jamey Jamieson, with his unlimited master's ticket, was the same as they. He, too, starved when shipping was bad; fretted through long, hungry days to see some self-important port captain, then finally, rather than slowly starve on the beach, picked up a billet in a hooker like this. A hooker of David Bone's—curse his name!

He dozed, to wake at the clatter of mess-gear. Wong Lo, the chief cook, tall, white cap drooping over one eye as official badge of his position, was feeding the watch below out of a steaming mess-kid. The other watch had rolled out; were spitting on their hands; examining their palm blisters before beginning another trick with the "man-killer." They, too, seemed fresh and eager; seemed to take it all as a great joke on Bone—Hard-Case Bone—the nickel-nurser. No need to worry about these lads, they knew their jobs. He rose, brushed off his clothing and shouldered upward through a man-hole to the ladder and the deck.

For seventeen days they did not see the sun; sailed through sullen folds of fog. For a week the sea had been a black, snarling menace, pounding at the long, creaking hull unremittingly, slashing wave-crests across the water-heavy tarpaulins stretched over Number Four hold.

In the hold of Number Four the men no longer chaffed one another; no longer chanteyed as they worked. They had given that up seven nights before. The night the fog set in—bleak, smoke-blue fog. Fog that wrapped around you like a wet oilskin coat; that filled your lungs with clammy vapor; muffled the clanking chutter of the pump; turned the yellow light of the cargo lamp into ocherous shadow.

Fog, then dirty weather. They went together. As it settled down on them they suddenly stopped singing, looked at one another, peered aloft to see if Jamieson were coming below. Fog—and an exultant whine in the wind. The wind that brought dirty weather with it. That would roil the long, lazy rollers into smashing black battalions which would hammer the leaky seams—spread them open inexorably—

The air was foully thick now; reeked of men's bodies; of their sweat and unwashed clothing; of the oiled canvas of the tarpaulins above them. Air, which eddied sluggishly upward through the ventilator shafts—to be checked and be sent down again by the tight canvas ventilator hood. Curse that blasted hood! Had to keep it lashed there, though—kept the sprays out of the hold here, where they worked to drive down that stinking, greasy bilge water.

Guy didn't mind the work so much, but ——! a man needed air—air for his lungs on a trick like this when your heart thrummed and clamored in your chest and your mouth tasted like a paint-rotten sea-boot. But they'd bargained for it—bargained fair 'n square. Given their word to bring this —— Limey and her load of copper up the Mersey—The Mersey—Liverpool, lifting black buildings against a smoke-smirched sky—The Mersey and Liverpool. Seemed like the sort of thing you dreamed of in a drunk—a thing which would be never realized, never seen. But it was only a week more—just a week. Jamieson had told them that—Jimmy Jamieson—

Jamieson lifted up a corner of the tarpaulins, lowered himself down on to the first rungs of the ladder, climbed below. At the ladder foot, hidden in the shadows, hands twisting at the worn brass of his jacket buttons, he stood watching them. Hodel, Sam Brent, Slivers and the carpenter were at the handles. The chrome blot of the cargo lantern played dimly on their naked, straining backs, on their blue-veined forearms and taut faces, where their eyes stared with the fixed vacuity of dead men's. For seven days and nights they had been like this. Seven more like them—at least—before they lifted Point Tynas. Seven days and nights—

But it would be dawn soon. The eighth dawn since they had been in this greenish, stifling murk. The wind was smarting off to port—let it. White water was better than this choky stuff—at least it would clear this fog off the sea; let them breathe; sight the sun; talk with the Falmouthman astern. Then he'd signal Gerhard that he was going to heave to—that he could not go on unless he had a half-dozen new hands for

a relief watch—that his lads were breaking their hearts and backs—

At last he turned away, went up the ladder. Hand around a wet life-line strung between the main-house and the poop, he staggered forward across the main deck, wet to the knees by the seas. Through the bars of the fiddle grating at the head of the main-house passageway he could look down into the engine-room below. There was MacCarty, stripped to singlet and dungarees, walking back and forth from gauge to gauge, from fire to fire, getting every last pound out of her he could—thrusting her on to Liverpool—Liverpool—

MacCarty, too, had not slept for the last eight nights; had been on watch from dusk to dawn and dawn to dog-watch—cleaning burners, blowing tubes himself, unwilling to trust the job to any other man. He, too, had stood at the ladder foot, watching those four men at the handles. He, too, had listened to the rasping torture of their lungs, seen their eyes, flickering and guttering like old candle ends.

Jamieson went on forward to the forecastlehead, down the dark leeward alleyway and across the wave-waste of the fore deck. The Chinaboy mess-man on lookout duty was sleeping calmly by the forepeak scuttle, cap pulled low over the upper part of his face. He stepped softly past him to the eyes. Ahead, the fog had changed from purple-black to a softly faded gray. Now it was a soiled white, and there, just at the lower rim, was an indescribably delicate tracery of warm gold. The sun, by ——! The sun— This half gale out of the northwest was clearing off the sea, giving them blue-sky weather again. Time enough. For seventeen days he had been sailing a course laid off by dead reckoning and trued by the log record and MacCarty's r.p.m. report alone.

ON THE bridge he made up his flag-hoists and waited impatiently for the full sweep of the sun. To the eastward a vast, dun cloud rolled across the horizon under the impetus of the wind, its lower edges a crimsoned gleam. It swerved to the southward at last and the sun shafted golden columns across the whipping sea, flecking the wave-tops with manes of yellow lace. Flag-hoists under his arm, he hastened to the wheel-house topside and the halyards. He was bending on the first hoist when a burst of bright color caught his glance astern. He swung about, hands gripping the slatting halyards, and gazed aft. A flash of color broke above the Falmouthman's bridge where a series of flag-hoists snapped stiffly outward from her stay-halyards. The officer on the Falmouthman's bridge evidently could discern his figure on the wheel-house topside, for the long message followed quickly.

Will rectify position immediately. Check with you. Found broken ammonia pipe galley locker. Spoiled food. Dysentery. Twenty-one men down. Short-handed but all right.

Slowly Jamieson unbent his hitches, crumpled the soft cloth into a bundle and dragged down the ladder. Brown stood at the wheel-house door, sextant in hand. He nodded to him speechlessly, stuffed the flags in their letter boxes and fumbled down the ladder to his cabin.

Brown called him apologetically at three bells past noon to show him the position calculations he and Lubois had worked out. Jamieson took the smudged sheet of paper, pulled a pencil from his desk and checked over the figures. She had done better than he had figured from his dead reckoning, log readings and r.p.m. reports. Thank —— for that! Cape Clear was now only two hundred and fifty miles to the northeast-by-east. At their speed of five knots an hour, average, they would raise the Irish Cape in two and a half days. Then the Saint Georges, the Irish Sea and Liverpool. Three—perhaps four—more days, at worst.

Brown left him and he dressed slowly, to go aft through the sunlight of the spray-swept main deck. Off to port a lanky white French passenger liner was slashing through the beam seas, bright brass work sheening and winking in the sunlight, the faint blare of her orchestra audible above the combers. On her hurricane decks he could see moving black smudges against the white of her superstructure—passengers moving back and forth. Playing shuffle board and deck quoits, laughing at one another's errors, dozing in their long deck chairs when they were a little tired, yawning an order for a drink at a deck steward. And here, a half mile to leeward of them, four men worked in a dim, stinking hatch over a pair of clanking iron arms—for a few extra dollars. Dollars which for a brief moment would give them all the power and elation of those gay

ones over there— And one had no knowledge of the other's presence.

By Number Four hatch coaming he stopped again to look off to port, where a black-hulled Norwegian tramp plowed stubbornly on her easting, sprays whickering in sheets over her blunt bow, smothering her gray-hued bridge with spurts of spume. There was a stout, well-engined ship—one of those new Diesel-sailers, with twin screws that shoved her on her way at fifteen knots an hour in weather like this. A stout, powerful ship—the sort that would jump at a chance to tow in the low-rolling Falmouthman with her valuable copper cargo. The sort of ship which should have undertaken the towing of Gerhard's hooker in the first place. And not a rotten, leaking bilge pot like the *David Bone*.

All he had to do was break out a flaghoist and she would be ramming alongside here, her skipper all curiosity and eagerness—glad to talk salvage terms with him and Gerhard—split the prize. Perhaps it was better that way—much better. His lads were yanking their hearts out below, there; slowly killing themselves over those —— iron handles. But—'vast a minute, perhaps they had something to say about it. A whole lot. After all, as the Liverpool man had said that day he had come back from the Falmouthman, it was the lads who manned the pump who had the say—it was up to them. Not to him and Mac, with their sextants and levers and gauges.

From the foot of the ladder he stared broodingly over at them. They did not see him, their heads bowed low between their shoulder blades. They were working bared to the waists, feet spread, slow sweat streaming through the blackish soot on knotted muscles and stomach tendons. Sam Brent was the first one to look up and see him, a savage, almost mad look in his eyes. His words were a rasp of defiant triumph.

"Gained six inches—eight days, th' lousy ——!"

He inclined his head silently in reply and turned for the ladder. These men wanted to hear nothing about giving up what loomed so close now—what lay just over the blue smile of the horizon, there. No, there had been too much given up to those wailing iron arms—too much bloody sweat, too much grim courage and heart-break, too much—to ask them to split their prize with other, saner men. No, it was Liverpool or Fiddler's Green for these dock-rats of Bone's. No, they had known the price that day in the mist when he had asked it of them—known and been willing to pay it—to pay for it at the price that sailormen had always given for their bob. No, there were those eight days and nights in which they had toiled like this which stood between them and any other men. Eight days in which they had earned their right to the job—to finish it—as they could. It was not for him, Jamey Jamieson, to ask them.

He was almost at the top of the ladder when he stopped and went down into the hold again. Somehow he couldn't leave them just now. Leave these four with their haggard, glazed eyes, sweat-flecked beards and bodies. There was something that held him close to them; gripped him; made him unwilling to leave them alone here with their sleeping mates and the grinding echo and re-echo of the pump.

Four of them. Four men, with hearts and backs and lungs they had matched against that cast-iron pump and the sea. Four more like them, asprawl in their bunks over there in the shadows, sleeping out their brief two hours below before they, too, staggered up and took their places.

Men from all the ports of the West Coast and the Sound, there; brought in by David Bone's dragnet to man this floating coffin. Old-timers, greenhorns—wooden-ship men who knew the Shanghai *bund* better than their own home ports—farmer lads from the Oregon apple country who didn't know a reef point from a down-haul. Sam Brent, there, was an old-timer, a wooden-ship sailor—a crojick-yard man; trained in the school when tough men were the rule and not the exception. When a man had to be rough-an'-tough to live—to survive in the ships where mates got their berths not because they were good navigators but because they were hard customers, handy men with their fists, a belaying pin, a scrap of *ju-jutsu.*

Hodel, the Finn, with muscles on him like an Argyll stag, he too belonged to that time. So did the gray-head' donkey-man, who had turned-to here and done his trick, although the forecastle gang had bargained for the job and not the black-gang. But young Slivers, there, lacked the mature stamina, the seasoned strength of his mates. He was riding to a hard anchorage now, poor laddie. His head was wobbling as he watched him—his face was whiter than a new-sprung

flying jib. But the lad was game—stuck it along with his mates—would try to see it into Liverpool dockside with the rest.

No, these weren't the men to ask to split their prize with another crew. They'd probably crock in the man that asked them. So would he—Jamey Jamieson—come to think of it. But the lad, Slivers, needed some one to dog him for a while, needed a real sleep and a chance to get his strength back. Maybe the lad would let some one dog for him—if you told him that he'd get his place back at the end of the watch when the other gang turned to.

Jamieson pulled off his watch cap; shed his jacket and shirt. Slivers cursed and mumbled weakly when he took him by the arms, pulled him from the swaying handle, and laid him in his bunk. The lad's hands were as raw as fresh mutton from finger-tips to palms—stayed half-clenched and claw-like even after he had fallen asleep—Bone's no-good—yellow-bellied—

The donkey-man grunted non-committally as Jamieson grasped on alongside and picked up the stroke of the thing. At first the clamor of the pump was a song, answering the sway and swing of his arms, in tune with the beating of his heart and the intake of his breath. Then it was a steady clangor, sharp, gratingly insistent. An hour and it had a leering whimper; mocking; derisive of these four men and their labor; unconscious of their suffering; eager for their defeat. Then the thumping in his brain blurred away all other sounds and his head lowered until his chin brushed the sweaty neckband of his singlet.

Some one was chanteying. Some one far-off. No—it was near by—it was Sam Brent. Jamieson shook his head clear of the buzzing; joined in the chorus:

"A Yankee clipper with a Yankee skipper—
Blow—boys, b-l-low —— boys!
B-b-b-l-lo-ow th' man down!"

JAMIESON lifted his head as they swung into the first chorus of "Rollin' Down t' Rio." Brown was staring wide-mouthed from the hatch rim at him. They stopped unwillingly when Jamieson shook his head at them. Brown leaned low over the hatch-coaming, hand at his mouth.

"Cunarder close off the bow, sir. Think it'd be good to break out a hoist for 'em—so's they'll know at home we're still on deck?"

Brown had it, by ——. Something there he himself had been too rattle-brained to think about since dawn. Showed what mental shape he was in. Brown was a deep-water mate of sorts, after all.

"Aye, Brown. An' gie them air type o' tow, too. The last fair Davvid Bone t' mull o'er."

The mate had just disappeared when MacCarty swung down the ladder; pulling off his jumper and shirt as he came. Jamieson stopped chanteying to argue with him, but the Liverpool man was adamant. Raker and the rest could take her in. She was running all right below now—the junk! Chips, there, was on the point of going out. He, Mac MacCarty, had been down here last night around seven bells and the old fellow had been bleeding at the mouth and nose. The old blighter'd said it was from eating too much red meat and that he'd knock the first —— that touched him for a row of ——. But the stubborn audmadhaun would die on his feet unless some lad took his trick right away. And what was he, Jamieson, doing here, anyhow?

Still half asleep and comatose, Slivers and the carpenter were bundled into the deserted forecastle by two of the Chinaboy mess-men and the chief tamped on beside Jamieson.

Three days of semi-insane labor which formed a numb, gray void. While the choke and mutter of the pump reeled through their brains like eerie music they imagined they were standing waist-deep in water—that she was sinking slowly—slipping down by the stern; although they knew they were beating the cast-iron pump, beating the sea. When the other watch rolled out, reeled erect, they stared blankly at them as they muttered vaguely in their throats and veered unsteadily cross-deck for the pannikins of food and the steaming coffee-kid.

Somehow they ate without sleeping where they sat. Rose again and plunged for their bunks, still warm from their mates' bodies. Sleep was a fevered coma. A thing of mad imaginings through which the strident throating of the pump reverberated thunderously—like the stroking of a great, cracked bell within their brains.

It was Brown who awoke Jamieson from one of these comas—compressed his fingers against the sleeper's bare shoulder until there were blue marks on the flesh before he

would sit up. Jamieson fumbled his feet over the bunk bar and was half-way to the pump before Brown grasped his arm and pulled him back. He reeled around and blinked at the mate in the darkness. No heave and surge to the deck. No tremor of turbine, no slap of seas along the side. No gurgle of leaking water in the cracked hose. He twitched erect and stared at Brown out of yellow-crusted eyes.

The mate talked with an effort.

"We're fast alongside, sir. Docked two hours ago. Had to send Mr. Breniger, Brent and two of the others to the sick-bay. Ambulance called right after we warped in. Ambulance surgeon wanted to have me arrested. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. The Falmouthman picked up her tugs off Tynas. Letter for you here, sir. Hadn't you better—"

"Light a match, mon!"

Brown cracked one into flame against a rivet head on a beam. Jamieson controlled his twitching eyelids, stared at the envelope. It was from Moira. From Moira—in Canada. He wrenched an end from the envelope and yanked out the heavy sheets. The first two lines told him all he wanted to know.

"I am with Frances in Vancouver until you come back. We have heard that you are still alive and I know that you will be here soon—"

He stood for a moment, hands over his hot eyes, the letter in his fist. She'd left Bone—forever. Was waiting for him, her father—waiting for him. Not long now—not long—till he'd be there, pockets heavy with Bone's dollars, to handle him if he did try to fight. He had the money now—the power—the power he'd lacked before. The power to crack Hard-Case Bone. Smash him wide open—once and for all, forever. And now he was going ashore—to Liverpool—Liverpool. How was it those —— articles read? "Liverpool and return." He was all right—as soon as he got Bone's dollars in his pockets. But unless they warped this hulk fore-aft-an'-'midships to her shore bollards she'd sink right here in her slip before they got the copper out of her.

He was fumbling for his cap and jacket, Brown gaping at him from behind.

"Where you going, sir?"

" 'Shore, lad! Cable office—cable Bone."

He swerved up the ladders to his cabin, wrenched open a drawer in his desk and jammed a handful of pound notes in his pocket. He wobbled down the gangway ladder to the dock; Brown, wordless and frightened, dancing behind. At the ladder head Brown stopped and shook his head. This man, this ship, were too much for him.

JAMIESON staggered across the cobbles outside the dock gate and raised a taloned hand at a passing taxi. The light car screeched and skidded to a stop; backed rapidly toward him. The squint-eyed driver leaned out of his seat to examine his prospective fare.

Jamieson's growl was an impatient command of haste.

"Cable office—Chapel Street, laddie!"

The squint-eyed one shook his head apologetically.

"Bli' me, but h'I'll be t'rowed in clink for ridin' th' likes o' you!"

He looked up and down the drab, raingray street, took the pound note pushed in his hand and hurriedly opened the door of the cab.

Chapel Street was almost deserted by its work-day crowd when they slithered to a halt in front of the cable office. The big clock on the wall of the office read five minutes of closing time as Jamieson pushed open the door. The one clerk in the place stared curiously at him as he leaned over the grimed counter and clutched for the chained pencil and pad of cable forms.

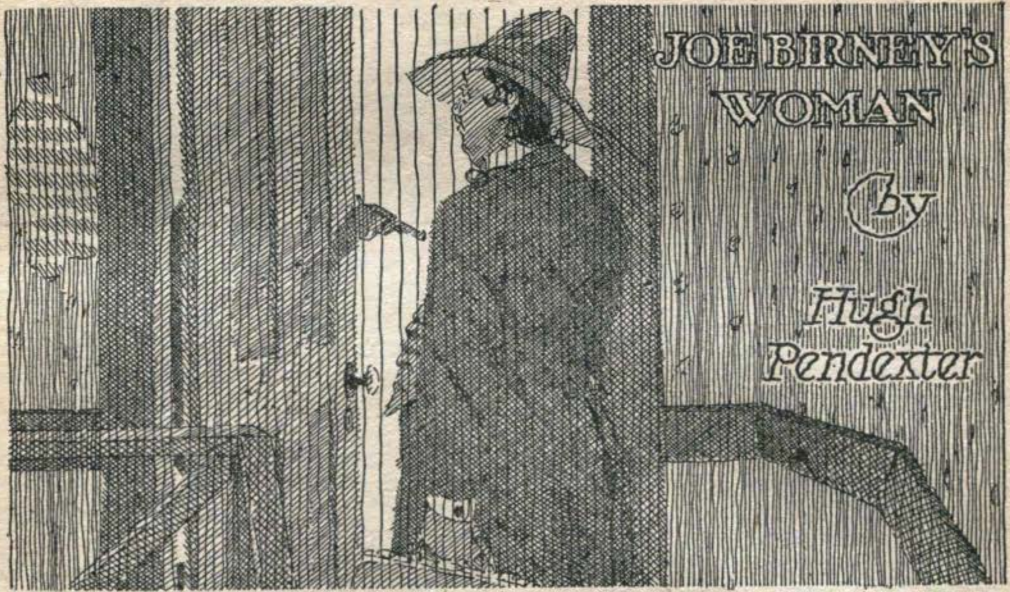
DAVID BONE,
PRESIDENT, BLUE STAR NAVIGATION CO.,
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON, U. S. A.
SHIP, SALVAGE AND CREW OF —— YELLOW-BELLIED NO-GOODS ARRIVED SAFE LIVERPOOL. REGARDS.
JAMIESON, MASTER.

The young clerk counted the words, named the tariff, and had turned from the cash drawer with the change for the bank notes handed him when he read the context. A worried furrow appeared between his weak eyes. He shambled back to the counter, his pencil point held against a word in the message.

"Sorry, sir, but its against the rules to take swear words in messages."

The unshaven, wild-looking man across the counter pointed to his change to show that the message had been accepted and paid for, then patted him reassuringly on the shoulder.

"Dinna ye worry, laddie. 'Tis not a swear wurrud. Ah, na! 'Tis a code signal!"



Author of "Log Cabin Men," "Old Misery," etc.

THE lawless element of Abilene was too busy with its whimsies to notice the arrival of any stranger of less importance than the successor of Town Marshal "Green River" Smith, deceased by murder. Honest folks were too much occupied avoiding the attention of rascals to check up on newcomers. It followed that the presence of the slight, dark-complexioned young woman would not have registered on the public ken, had she refrained from announcing she was Mrs. Joe Birney.

The first person she told this to was the wife of Keeny, the butcher, from whom she rented a room. The name meant nothing to Mrs. Keeny, who pronounced her a "wholesome body," but among the Borderwise it created a sensation. When she entered the small office of Big Bolio, cattle buyer and proprietor of the Little Gem gambling-room, and gave her name to George Stevers, the new clerk, that young man was visibly impressed.

"Joe Birney's wife!" he repeated, his pale eyes widening with a quickened interest.

"You know my husband?"

He shook his head; then explained:

"Only by talk. Heard about him quite a bit."

She showed her white teeth in a smile and surveyed the young man with approval. He was slim of figure, and clean-shaven in a town of bristling beards and ferocious mustaches, and he wore his sand-colored hair shorter than that of the prevailing mode. He was almost bashful and did not squarely meet her gaze. His furtive glances, his obvious diffidence and the respect in his bearing amused her.

Becoming grave, she further enlightened him.

"I wrote Mr. Bolio about some money—five thousand dollars he owes my father."

He was frankly amazed.

"If such a letter came since I've been here I never saw it. And I open, or am supposed to, all the mail," he told her.

"The letter was signed Annie Apple! I wrote for my father, William Apple."

His eyes lighted, now that she refreshed his recollection.

"Oh, that! The man in Texas," he murmured. "Five thousand you claimed to be due him for cattle bought here by my boss."

"Now you understand. But my father doesn't understand why he doesn't get his money. My husband says it's an outrage."

"Please sit down, Mrs. Birney. I'm new here. But I'm gettting the hang of your drift. You've married since writing the letter. But the last I've heard about your husband he was being held for running of cattle."

"Joe Birney's Woman." Copyright, 1926, by Hugh Pendexter.

She perched herself on a high stool and spread out her skirts and corrected, "Robbing a stage. Was held. He left the jail. I came on ahead to get the money so he wouldn't have to bother. Father's impatient, and he needs the money something cruel. Joe's getting peeved, too. He'll act up if he gits the notion I've been kept waiting."

Stevers smiled bashfully. She was so sure of herself. She was so frank in commenting on her husband's terrible fondness for six-shooters.

"Of course, Miss, I'm not the boss here— Don't feel nervous. Just cowboys letting off some uneasy guns."

A fusillade of shots completed the timbre of the dusty street's high confusion.

"Oh, I don't mind guns. I love the sound," she murmured. Then hurriedly, "But not the barking of Joe's guns. He shoots too straight. I've told him time and time again that I don't believe he ever fired a gun in fun the way most of the boys do."

He winced.

"Of course, Miss—Mrs., you would be used to 'em, being Joe Birney's woman."

"He always said he never drew a gun in his life when he didn't oughter," she proudly amended.

"I can easily believe that from what I've heard tell," he warmly replied. "Perhaps he's been misunderstood at times, but a gentleman at heart if ever there was one. And once he decided he oughter draw he must have been a humdinger."

"Is. He's loose again," she corrected rather sharply. "S'pose you scratch around and tell your boss I'm waiting."

"What I was gettin at, Mrs. Birney. Make yourself at home. I'll look him up. If any of them Texas fellers bust in here you'll find a gun in the holster tied to the leg of the table."

"I've had my eye on it. Bolio never said nothing to you about why he didn't send the money he owes?"

"Nary a word. I'm surprized he never sent it, although I reckon he's been badly pinched for ready cash for several weeks. That may be some excuse, but he oughter written you. He may find it mortal hard to raise anywhere near the amount you claim, but you being Joe Birney's woman—"

He did not bother to finish what was perfectly obvious.

"That's why I came here," she said eagerly. "I reckoned if he knew the daughter of the man he owes is Joe's wife, and Joe being loose again— Well, you git the idea."

"A blind man could follow the trail, walking backwards," he warmly agreed. "If the matter ever comes up in talk atween you'n Joe, I hope you'll let on I done my best. Even if it don't amount to a lot."

"Joe sure will appreciate it if you'll do something besides standing there and growing," she wearily assured.

As he slowly backed to the door he earnestly assured her:

"Lots of cattle deals put through in this little room. Just started eight hundred young stock cattle for Montana. They'll winter on the Arkansas. And the cattle we send East! They're almost beyond counting. But I mustn't keep you waiting."

He ducked into the street and hurried down to Ed Norton's saloon. Bolio's gambling-room would not claim his personal attention until evening, and it would be a waste of time to look for him there. Although but a short time in Bolio's employ he had learned his habits quite thoroughly. He would drink his way through the town quite impartially. After reaching a certain stage liquor did not seem to register.

Norton's bartender estimated—

"About two drinks ahead of you as he went out 'bout twenty minutes ago."

Stevers energetically prosecuted his search, his head filled with the picture of a pretty dark face and long lashes that almost hid the brown eyes. He came to a rude halt when his day-dreaming caused him to collide with a buffalo-hide hunter. As this individual was half-way through three thousand dollars, via the bar, he lacked patience. He seized Stevers by the shoulder and shook him vigorously and cursed him for a clumsy young lout. Then discovering the young man had short, light hair and wore no guns, and appeared to be frightened, he released him, invited him to drink, cursed him fo refusing, and staggered on.

Stevers hurried on and turned into the Bullshead, and almost collided with Bolio. "Big Bill" was rightly named. He stood over six feet and was mighty of girth and shoulders. His hair was black and hung over the dusty collar of his long, dusty black coat. Much drinking had puffed his broad face and left the pupils of his half closed eyes floating in a sea of blood.

"Where'n —— you think you're going?"

he harshly demanded. "You know I don't stand for no help drinking in work hours. I'll do the drinking for both."

"It's a bit of business, Boss. Can't we step aside. Just a bit of news," hastily explained Stevers.

Shifting from his heavy, lounging tread to quick, nervous steps the big man pushed Stevers ahead of him between the curtains of a small apartment at the street end of the bar. Seating himself at the small table and thrusting a big, hairy hand inside his coat he harshly demanded—

"What is it this time?"

"A woman at your office. The one from Texas who wrote you her father wants his five thousand dollars cattle money."

"Don't owe any Texas man five cents," he vehemently exploded. "Of all the nerve! Thinking she can cold-deck me out of even five dollars, let alone that many thousand! And you didn't have brains enough to show her the door? You trot back and tell her to go to ——"

"I couldn't talk like that to any woman, Boss," earnestly answered Stevers. "Besides, she's young and pretty; very pretty in a soft, brown sort of a way."

"Uh, huh? Well, mebbe I'd better talk to her. If she's young and a good-looker she may decide not to try that game any more. Daughter of William Apple, who's a very sick man— Never heard of him in my life. Nerve. Nerve. Signed her name Annie Apple. As if there was ever such a name! I'll go back and see her. You can take the morning off.

"Her name isn't Apple now. She's married Joe Birney."

Bolio slumped back and stared at his clerk stupidly for half a minute.

"Joe Birney," he repeated, as if testing his memory. "Good ——!"

STEVERS stood up but did not go. Bolio's big face was undergoing a great change. His thick lips writhed in a wolfish smile. He actually chuckled. "—— me! I was forgitting Joe's hard'n fast in jail for a stage hold-up. And his little wife comes here. Well! well! Abilene's a poor place for a likely young woman to come prancing into less she's got some male relations, or wants to join the dance-hall crowd."

"She struck me as being the sort of a young female that can take care of herself. Then there's her husband's reputation with two guns."

"Gun reputation and him in jail!" scoffed Bolio. "They've prob'ly stretched him by this time. Run away and play. You're a child."

"But they've got to catch him before they can stretch him, Boss. Joe's busted loose, she says. And she let on he's heading for Abilene."

Bolio came to his feet as lively as a cat, and as quickly lost his resilience and seemed to be caving in. His big shoulders heaved forward and the heavy face puckered with concern.

"Why didn't you tell me this when you first come in?" he said gratingly.

"I was trying to break it by degrees," defended Stevers. "She's here, and her husband's coming. She insists on five thousand dollars."

Bolio clamped his hands to his head and by muscular pressure endeavored to quicken his wits. Joe Birney was a by-word for recklessness and daring. One need not live in Texas to know his record. On Montana ranches, and along the the U.P. through Cheyenne and Laramie and Benton, or wherever venturesome men wandered, there was ever some one who would talk intimately of Joe Birney's gun cunning when the conversation touched on the lives and habits of bad-men

While Bolio owed no Texas man a dollar, he realized that what was a perfect legal defense was no argument to make to Birney if the latter was in the mood to collect easy money.

Bolio released his head and summed up:

"It's a new kind of a hold-up for Joe Birney to pull. Maybe his visit to jail taught him he can't keep holding up stages. From what I've heard he's a mighty bright feller. Prob'ly he's putting some business sense into his work. Robbing stages is a mighty big business risk. It's worse'n buying something you never saw. In his case the price he pays is always fixed: danger of being killed, or shut up in a jail. Yes, sir! He's a bright young feller. He's been mooning over things in general. He's decided he'll know the stake he's playing for before he takes any cards. No more going it blind. Jail's broadened him. Done him good, I'd say. He decides he'll play for five thousand. He cooks up this mighty smart scheme. —— him! but he *is* clever."

"His woman's clever, too," supplemented Stevers.

"All women are. Natural as for a cat to claw. But they need directing. Have to have a man to steer their play. Joe hides low and snug and sends the woman to git the money. She runs no risk. There's her letter from Texas. Time we could git word from Texas that there wa'n't no William Apple— What a name! Genius in it— Before we could git word back from Texas, I say, the railroad will sweep all of us farther west. Sort of a nip and tuck affair."

"She's waiting," nervously reminded Stevers.

"Good for a woman to wait. Now, George, we're bucking a crooked game but we've got to play. You trot back and say you couldn't find me, but that I'm sure to be in the office at one o'clock. Let on how hard rid-up I be for money. Tell her you know I can't git hold of any money for two weeks."

"Shall I tell her you'll pay in two weeks?"

"——, no! Honestly, George, when you come tearing out the wilderness with that hunk of language in your mouth I git plumb discouraged. How can you promise anything, or talk for me anywhere, when you haven't seen me? You have worked on my books. You know lots of money is owed me. But you know there ain't none coming in and that I'm caught in a jam. You'll simply open the way for my talk when I'm surprized to find her in the office at one o'clock. Birney's bound to be caught. Our game is to bluff and put her off till we git that glad word."

"You'll have to say either yes or no when you meet her," insisted Stevers.

Bolio surveyed him in sad resignation. He told the gay calico curtain:

"He actually has the notion I'll be short and sharp with Joe Birney's woman while Joe's at large— George, you'll be wiser when you're older. If you ain't, you'll never grow up. Go back and report one man missing."

Stevers nodded briskly and hurried to the little office. Mrs. Birney was still seated on the high stool, her slim ankles crossed, her slim brown hands folded. Apparently she had not moved during the clerk's absence. But the corner of a sheet of paper protruding half an inch from the table drawer had not shown, Stevers would swear, when she entered the office. However, the drawer held nothing but ordinary data connected with the cattle business.

The young woman's brows gathered in a little frown as she beheld the inconspicuous young man entering alone. He was quite breathless, as if from running a long distance.

"Combed the town till I learned the boss had rid out three miles to look at some cattle. But he's to meet Bill Mullen in the Bullshead shortly after one o'clock, and I know he's got to come here first to git some papers. If you'll be here at one you'll surely catch him. He's been awfully busy, trying to collect some of the money that's owed him."

She smiled ironically and questioned—

"Pay slow back here in the States?"

"Slower'n cold molasses, Miss—Mrs. His books will show thousands owed to him."

She deliberated a moment, then slid off the stool and shook out her skirts, and announced.

"I'll call once more. At one. After that he talks with my husband."

"You're banking on Joe's coming?"

"Coppered on the jack." Then her eyes, fixed on his frankly admiring eyes, all but closed and she smiled sleepily and remarked, "He knows I'm here, and why I'm here. Me being here, what do you think?"

The young man shivered slightly and fiercely exclaimed:

"He'll come. Ain't enough prarie and mountains in the world to keep Joe Birney from his wife."

She pondered over this critically; then bowed her head in approval, and patiently decided:

"No. I won't repeat that to Joe. He's finicky at times. Gits impatient. Sorry when it's too late, sometimes. But that don't help, does it? And you're young. You don't mean any harm."

"Good land! Harm? Me? Mean harm to you, or any other young lady? Well, I should say not!" he anxiously babbled. "I certainly don't want Joe to git impatient with me. And I do hope you git that money from the boss."

"If I don't, Joe will."

"But he'll be hard up for ready cash for the next two weeks," he remembered to stress. "Cattle men are often kept waiting overtime."

"My father's waited overtime. Folks are asking him to pay."

"That's it! Runs in a circle. If one man in the circle would square up all the rest could," he sagely insisted.

"Bolio runs a gambling-room, doesn't he?" The last was shot at him sharply.

"He runs a bank-game evenings. Opens daytimes only when a new crowd blows in. But the darn fool has been bucking t'other feller's game daytimes. So far as his room counts, he's lucky to break even along with his fool notions of bucking a game as well as running one. His dealer tries to git him to stay at home and lose to himself, but he won't— There's a nice variety-show this evening."

She had turned to the door. Now she faced about and coldly stared him out of countenance.

"Are you asking Joe Birney's woman to go to a show?" she demanded.

"Good ——! I certainly didn't mean any harm. I reckoned your husband would want you to enjoy yourself. All work and no play, you know. What I had in mind was Mrs. Stimmes, where I board. Comes from New Jersey, and she's as hard as her native mountains. Give her ten seconds and she can talk any he-man in Abilene into a wild gallop. I didn't know but you'd like to go with her. She's pure as the first snow, sixty years old, and uglier'n ——. I had two tickets—"

She laughed silently, and there was nothing but good-nature in her dark eyes. He was so apologetic, almost sheepish. His close-cropped light hair and washed-out eyes were so inoffensive. She kindly told him:

"I'm an old married woman. You're a very polite boy. I'm quite sure my husband wouldn't object. You may take me to this variety-show, if it's all right."

"Oh, the show's all right. Or it will be when the ticket-taker sees Mrs. Stimmes come in. But I mustn't make any mistake about this. If there's any question about how your man would think about it I believe it would be better for Mrs. Stimmes to go with you."

"No. I'm staying with the Keenys. You may call for me."

STEVERS sat down at the table, smoothed out the package of papers in the drawer and made a pretense of being absorbed in cattle transactions. A pretty brown face, sometimes frowning, sometimes alive with amusement, was between him and the columns of figures. He locked the office door and went to the Bullshead for dinner. Bolio was in the little room, drinking with Billy Mullen. Stevers would have avoided him but Bolio saw him passing the alcove, stopped him and asked for news, explaining—

"Bill knows all about it."

"She'll be at the office at one. I'm to take her to the variety-show tonight."

Mullen whistled softly and stared in pity at the young man. Bolio curtly remarked:

"Seems like you was crowding the mourners by taking Birney's woman to a show. Way things are heading I can't afford to buy anything but a plain box."

Mullen also disapproved, and advised.

"I wouldn't, if I was either of you, or any other man, take her to any show. That's the devil with Joe Birney. No one knows, according to all tell, how he'll act up. I was told he shot a man once for speaking slightingly of his hoss. Personally me, Bill Mullen, would just as quick take a panther's mate to a show as that Birney woman."

"You've learned public sentiment on the matter, George. I shall hate to lose you from the office," remarked Bolio.

"You two fellers don't understand," earnestly replied Stevers. "Didn't I try to git her to go with Mrs. Stimmes, where I board? Didn't she insist I go with her?"

"Bad, bad," sighed Mullen. "Worse'n worse. If we don't understand, how do you expect her husband to? We'll hope he don't blow in before the show's over."

"Well, its nearly one o'clock and I haven't any more time to waste on George's funeral," broke in Bolio. "If it was any other feller but that cuss I'd laff—I never owed any Texas girl's father any money!"

"Course you don't. Every one knows that," soothed Mullen. "Your conscience is as clean as a new blanket."

"But who wants to pay five thousand for a clean conscience? If I was sure that feller never would drift into Abilene my language would be mighty plain to that hussy."

"This is off his range," remarked Mullen. He'd never come except for two things—to nick your stack, to keep clear of Texas sheriffs and posses. Once he did wander up into the Cherokee Strip, but he stayed only long enough to run off eight hundred head, with Injuns driving the herd under his guns.

I wonder how they ever catched him. I double wonder why they didn't send him up a tree once they had him. If you decide to make it a fight your friends will stand back of you."

"Back of me! Yah-h!" snarled Bolio. "And also out of gunshot! Prob'ly they'd read about it in the Kansas City papers. It's the brassiest kind of a hold-up, but I prize my life more'n I do five thousand dollars. Still, if it comes to a showdown and I pay it's going to hit me a —— of tunk just now."

"Your play is to stand her off, just like you said," comforted Mullen. "The chances are that Joe'll be looking down from a tree inside of a week or ten days. I really don't think they'll take him alive again."

"They ought to snag him with that three thousand reward," muttered Bolio more hopefully. For Stevers' benefit he explained. "Been gitting a line on him, George. Texas sheriff is plastering the whole West with reward notices. Three thousand, dead or alive. No bodies to be shipped south if there's any doubt."

"Of course they offer a reward. We might have known that," said Stevers. "Reckon every one west the Mississippi has heard all about Joe Birney. I wish— It might be more perlite-like if *you* took her to the variety-show."

"Not on your life! Why should I deliberately stop doing a good cattle business? First question is what to do if Birney should blow in? Git some of the boys to settle his hash?"

"That would be the thoughtful thing to do," slowly agreed Mullen. "But you'd need lots of boys. They'd want a hundred apiece, and a Christian burying for them what fell. Then again the Texas fellers will back his game here even if they're keen to hang him in the Panhandle. Yes, it would take lots of boys."

"At a hundred apiece it would cost more to kill him than it would to pay him, the way you figger it, Bill. And they might not git him even then. If they didn't, and once he found out I hired the boys—whew!"

"Wish I knew how strong she stands with her husband," muttered Stevers. "Some women yoked up to bad men can make 'em eat out of their hand. But you can't always tell if a man gits jealous. Wonder how she'd take it if I let on I don't want her husband mad at me."

"She'd never forgive you, George," earnestly warned Mullen. "Not if I know anything about women. She'd tell Joe you refused to take her to a variety-show, after asking her. She'd make it out that you didn't think she was good enough—"

"Don't! Please, don't," groaned Stevers.

"George, it seems to be your duty to take her. Duty to me and to her finer feelings," spoke up Bolio. "If you can git two weeks' time, I'll have a chance to fool Birney, should he pop in."

Mullen sipped his liquor, just as he sipped his beer, and now advised,

"Bolio, we've overlooked the best card in the deck. Birney's heading for this town this minute. May pull in any time. You take a train back East and stay under cover till George telegraphs you Birney's dead, or in jail. I think George will be safe."

"Safe!" contributed Stevers under his breath.

Bolio was tempted. The scheme was so simple that they hadn't thought of it until the last. He played with his whisky glass and brooded over the problem for a bit, then decided:

"It's a good plan but I can't pull out till the last minute. I've got deals on that runs up high. If it comes to a show-down, Billy, before I'm ready to scoot it'll be cheaper to pay the five thousand than to let the business stampede."

Mullen was discouraged in trying to shoulder other folks' troubles. He succinctly replied:

"It's your money; not mine. Cheapest way out is always the best."

At one o'clock Bolio walked with heavy step into his office and sat down at the table to wait. A few minutes later Mrs. Birney swept into the room and stood opposite him, her small brown hands resting on the edge of the table. He stared up into her pretty face and instinctively approved of Birney's choice. She returned his gaze steadily and coolly questioned—

"Well?"

He lumbered to his feet and waved a big, hairy hand in an invitation for her to be seated. She perched herself on a stool and her half-closed eyes suggested amusement. Bolio pursed his thick lips and frowned in perplexity. He was wondering how best to open the talk. Resuming his seat, he fished a letter from the drawer and examined it as

if to refresh his recollection. Then staring squarely into the slightly smiling face, he began:

"From what my clerk tells me you are the person who wrote this letter—"

"Your young man said he couldn't find you," she broke in.

"He did look for me quite a bit, he told me a few minutes ago, when I found him eating his dinner. This letter is signed by the name of Annie Apple. Represents the writer as the daughter of a William Apple. Letter says I owe her father five thousand dollars for a herd of cattle."

"I know all that, as I wrote the letter."

"Then of course you must know I never bought a single cow of your father, or any man named Apple."

"I know nothing of the sort," she crisply replied. "Of course you'll deny it, as you never answered my letter."

"I can show in any court that there ain't an inch of proof that I ever owed any William Apple, any sweet or sour apple, a cent," he angrily exclaimed.

HER eyes flew open and no longer contained any suggestion of pleasantry.

"The claim won't be taken into any court," she coolly warned. "Joe Birney's the only court to look into this matter. After he's made a decision you won't take any interest in courts, cattle or anything else."

His spasm of rage vanished. He regretted his outburst. It would interfere with his play for time. Billy Mullen would strongly criticize his first play. He should have met her cordially, and good-naturedly affected to be submitting to the inevitable. His visitor continued—

"Joe's on his way here to join me."

"I see they have a reward out for him, dead or alive," he murmured.

She laughed shortly and snapped her fingers.

"And there isn't even a marshal in Abilene. Roughs are running this town," she sneered. "Joe never expected me to come in here and beg for the money. My errand is to find out just what you intend to do. That's my part of the work. What happens after that doesn't concern me."

He slowly thrust the letter back into the drawer and quietly told her:

"In this country of many hellions I reckon, ma'am, your husband is the rarest of the bunch. I drop. You can rake in the pot. I'll fork over and shut the door. Only, you must give me two weeks' time to get the money together."

The expression of quiet satisfaction shifted to cold hostility before he ceased speaking. She swung off the stool and laughed sneeringly.

"Two weeks?" she queried ironically. "Sure you don't want six months?"

"You're overplaying your hand," he gently warned. "Few men here can hand out five thousand dollars in cold cash on short notice."

"You had your notice in that letter. This is the last word. For two days I'll be ready to accept the money and give you a writing, showing you've paid up clean and square. But if Joe happens to come in before the two days is up, he may demand cash on the nail; and he's master hand at having his own way."

"You seem very sure of his coming," he murmured.

She tossed up her head and gave the same reply she had made to young Stevers:

"I'm here. He knows I'm here."

"He'll come as fast as hoss-flesh can fetch him," he promptly surrendered. "Two days. I'll try to arrange it. "And he was planning to accept Billy Mullen's advice and take a railroad trip East.

"Money or no money," she warned, "Joe'll be powerful peevish if he learns you've made any talk about our claim being a hold-up. Personally I don't care what you say, once I git the money; but Joe's sensitive."

"I certainly never want to hurt Joe's feelings," stoutly assured Bolio. "I'm hard-pressed, but I'll fix it."

She nodded pertly and turned to go. At the door she halted and demurely requested—

"If Joe should pull in during the evening, and look you up, as he'd be quite likely to do, would you mind telling him I took your young man to a show?"

"And be the death of that poor boy? No, ma'am!"

"Oh, nothing like that. I can handle Joe." And with a smile and bob of her small head she departed.

Bolio leaned his elbows on the table and marveled at the simplicity of it all. The whole game was based on nerve. The

letter; the follow-up in person; the climax in presenting Joe Birney, famous gunman, as the husband of the claimant. And Bolio was shamed that he had not foreseen there must be something behind the letter. He could appreciate it the more as his rise to comparative wealth had been marked by several deals he now preferred to forget. Like a desperate man crossing a northern river, by leaping from ice-cake to ice-cake, he had advanced by stepping on whatever support that would permit the next flying leap. Only, unlike the floating ice, some of these supports had failed to bob to the surface of the current once they had felt his foot.

ON THE afternoon of the last day of grace more cattle, more cowboys came to Abilene. All resorts were doing a capacity business and the town was crowded with milling humanity. The need of a marshal was never more acute. The reckless and the lawless knew Wild Bill Hickok had been invited to come and police the town, and were making the most of their holiday.

Bolio saw many strangers passing his small office. Mostly they were tall, lean men, their thin face bitten by sun and wind. All were armed. Some kept to the saddle and quested recklessly. One attempted to ride his pony into the Finch saloon, and was knocked senseless from the saddle by a bottle flung by a bartender recently imported from Pennsylvania. Twenty minutes later the place was thoroughly wrecked and two men were dead from bullets.

A tall man wearing two guns stumbled into the small office and banged his fist on the table and shouted for a drink. Bolio had gun-nerve and his hand itched to draw the Colt's .38 from the holster hitched to a leg of the table. But ever since the influx of strangers every swaggering roisterer had been Joe Birney. With a ghastly attempt at a humorous smile Bolio picked a bottle from the floor and placed it and a glass on the table. The tall man drank heartily, threw down some money, and departed, thinking he had patronized a saloon.

Stevers hurried in and anxiously reported:

"Town's crazy wild, Carpetsack's at the station. Be digging out. Telegraph me as soon as you're settled in new quarters."

Bolio counted out a month's wages and transferred the table-gun to his belt and reached for his hat. Stevers, facing him, saw his hand jerked back as if from a serpent, and his eyes fix in a stare at something by the door. The clerk turned and beheld a thickset man with long black hair, black mustache and swarthy skin, just inside the threshold. His thumbs were hooked in his belt, close to two big .44's. He was smiling curiously, but with no touch of good-fellowship. His soft hat was pushed back, and it was obvious he had been drinking. From behind him Mrs. Birney slipped to the front and harshly commanded:

"Joe, you mind your manners. Mr. Bolio, this is Joe, my husband. Got in a short time ago with a lot of wild Texas friends. Joe, this young man's George Stevers. The one who took me to the show last night. He's a nice boy."

"A —— nervy pup," harshly corrected Joe, his dark eyes glittering wickedly as he stared at the clerk.

"Joe, I said for you to mind your manners," the young woman sharply reminded.

"I ain't minding to kick over the traces along of the kid. This big feller's our meat. Say, neighbor, what you mean by trying to cold-deck my woman's old man? Huh?"

With hands hooked in his belt, he teetered back and forward and glared vindictively at Bolio.

"Mrs. Birney will tell you it's simply a matter of me finding the money," Bolio replied, his gaze fixed on the dark hands all but closing over the ivory handles of his two guns.

"I told you, Joe, I gave him two days after he asked for two weeks," reminded the woman.

"That was the agreement, Mr. Birney," Bolio politely added. "I have several hours yet to rustle 'round for the cash."

"You don't have another —— second," grated the gunman.

"I wish you wouldn't drink when you have work to do, Joe. It makes you too ugly," shrilly complained the woman.

"I've took a long, dangerous trip to settle up your old man's claim. I don't go to linger here. Now I see um, now I take um." And the thumb of his right hand wriggled longingly.

"But my dear man!" desperately cried Bolio. "I don't keep any five thousand dollars in this shack, even when I have ready cash. I don't—"

"I ain't interested in 'don'ts.' What I

want from you is 'does.' You've got a heap of money in your gambling-room. Some of my friends left almost enough there to pay this shot. Here's the last word, mister. You fetch five thousand to our room over Norton's inside of two hours, or I'll take your pelt and let the cash slide. It's five o'clock now. First right-hand room at the head of the stairs." "And he won't be silly enough to try to bolt," supplemented Mrs. Birney.

"Not 'less he wants to dec'rate' a new grave," was the grim rejoinder. "This place is watched, Bolio. You'll be trailed every step you take. You'll be plugged for sartain if any one takes a shot at me. Come along, Annie."

The amazing couple stepped into the crowded street. Employer and clerk stood gaping at each other. When Bolio could speak it was to exclaim huskily:

"There, son—there's system for you. There's pure nerve for you. You won't prob'ly never see it beat. With three thousand on his head, he comes here in broad daylight and holds me up for five thousand! —— of it is, I've got to pay."

Stevers sagely advised—

"When you pay, make them give you a receipt in full."

"Yah-h!" snarled Bolio. "And make him promise to be a good man! I'll give twenty-five hundred to the man who sends the snake over the range. George, with the three thousand reward, a man would be doing nicely."

"I'm never lucky," answered Stevers. "Mebbe I can spy on 'em after you've paid over."

"After I've paid over! What good will that do? If before I pay over you could sneak up behind him and bust him mortally with a club—"

"And have the young lady shooting the top of my head off. I pass."

"No spirit," grumbled Bolio. "When I was your age I'd jumped at the chance."

"But see what it's brought you to, sir! Paying over a small fortune just because a shooting-man says you must."

"I'm paying because the shootingest-man in Texas asks me to. There's a difference between a gun-fighter and *the* gun-fighter."

Stevers smiled good-naturedly and offered—

"I'll sneak along behind you after you've paid up and try to learn what they're going to do."

"To make sure they're going to use the money wisely," sneered Bolio. Then he had a new idea. "You do this and I won't forget it. Ed Norton will give you a room next to Birney's. Partition's thin as pasteboard. Hide in there and listen to their talk and mebbe I can have that feller by the heels."

Stevers hesitated for a moment, then agreed: "If I can git into that room without being suspected. But if they found me hiding there—"

"You'll be in the room before they come. Once they git the money they'll think of nothing else. Norton'll be up at the Bullshead. Catch him there and arrange about the room. Be sure the coast is clear before you go up-stairs."

"I'll be darn well satisfied it's clear," assured Stevers. "And you be there sharp seven. I might want to cough, or sneeze."

BOLIO left the office and drank his way to his gaming-room, and found the daylight session in honor of the newcomers had been most prosperous. His faro-dealer looked with disfavor on the hairy hands stuffing money into a stout bag.

"Why don't you stick along and buck your own bank, Boss?" he suggested.

"This is for a perm'nent investment, Ben. I'm insuring my prosperity," Bolio explained.

"You're leaving me mighty short if there's a run of hard luck for the house."

"It's your job, Ben, to see there ain't any real run of hard luck. Those Texas cusses will be too drunk to notice things."

"One of 'em bent a gun barrel over Willie Dean's head in the Eagle an hour ago. Poor Willie's one of the squarest dealers as ever slipped a card. Hope that feller don't come in here. If we had a marshal and he had fighting guts, he could clean up a little three thousand." Glancing about and stepping close, he whispered, "I mean Joe Birney. Busted from some Texas jail. Ba-a-a-d!"

"Heard he was in town," murmured Bolio.

"Husband of a small, dark-eyed woman rooming at Keeny's. Your young man took her to a show t'other night. Wouldn't be in his boots for eighteen million head of long-horns. Some of the boys is betting two to one we'll have to put him to bed with a shovel inside forty-eight hours."

"Reckon Birney's tough, all right. But, Ben, this fighting game never got any one anything except a lead-mine. It's the quiet, peaceful cuss, like young Stevers, who lives long enough to be surrounded by white whiskers."

Norton's place was three leisurely drinks away, and at two minutes of seven Bolio entered the long barroom and passed down the bar. Ed Norton caught his eye and, almost imperceptibly, bowed his head. Bolio lumbered up the narrow stairs and rapped bruskly on the first right-hand door. A woman's musical voice at once told him to enter.

Taking the bag from under his coat he opened the door, but halted on the threshold as he beheld the muzzle of a .44 peering around the edge of the door. The brown hand and wrist were visible. Mrs. Birney, seated by the window, with a newspaper in her lap, announced:

"It's all right, Joe. It's the man with papa's money."

Bolio advanced and the door slammed behind him. The man was leaning against the wall, his gun held at his side. Mrs. Birney discarded the newspaper and rested her slim hands idly on the .36 gun in her lap.

"I've brought the money," Bolio told the woman. "But you'll have to murder me to git it if you refuse to sign a receipt in full." He started to thrust a hand in his inside pocket. A gun clicked and the man was warning:

"Hands always in sight. You mustn't tire yourself. Annie will git the paper. We'll sign anything for five thousand. Ride in, Annie, and cut out the money."

The girl glided forward and relieved the visitor of the heavy bag, which she tossed on the bed. Then she extracted the formal receipt, plucked a pencil from Bolio's waistcoat pocket and signed it, "Annie Apple Birney." Then she proceeded to empty the bag on the bed. The man kept his position by the wall, his eyes growing wolfish as he beheld the fat rolls of hard money and the packages of greenbacks. He commenced to laugh, a mechanical, tuneless laugh.

"Joe, you stop that!" sharply commanded the girl.

"I ain't gitting ugly, Annie. Tickled. It's so —— simple."

"It sounds ugly," complained Bolio. "Business finished and I'm leaving."

"Just a minute, neighbor," and the man was between him and the door. "I don't know just what game you're planning behind that fat face, but if you try anything uppity you'll find yourself being measured for a harp."

"Think I'd come here and leave good money if I was trying anything," snarled Bolio.

"Joe's work makes him suspicious," explained the young woman. "He's gitting so he can't trust any one but me. You can go. Our friends will pick you up downstairs and watch every move you make. Unless you talk in the sign language you'll die on your feet before you can give us away."

The back of Bolio's thick neck was prickling as he passed into the narrow hall. His descent of the stairs was almost a tumble. The gunman put up his weapon and advanced to the bed to help count the money. In a husky voice he told her:

"We've done it, Annie. Now for a quick vamoose."

"I did it," she coldly corrected. "Your idea of making a raise is to hold up a stage, or run off a herd. You laughed at my letter-writing. Don't never laugh at education again. It has its good points."

"I'll never leave little Annie again," he declared as he finished counting a pile of twenty-five hundred dollars and began storing it in his clothes.

"We ride away together. Two miles out of town we follow different trails. When I've thought up something else I'll get word to you. Take my advice and don't touch whisky or cards till several hundred miles away."

"That's plumb foolishness. I'm traveling with you."

She eyed him more closely. There was a new expression in his dark, reckless face.

"You don't ride with me," she quietly told him. "Our business is finished. The game's closed. You agreed to my terms at the start."

His hot gaze took in the pocket revolver, where she had left it in the chair by the window. Avoiding her searching eyes, he reminded her:

"It was a good plan, but it was me that counted. If Joe Birney hadn't blown in to put on the screws that fat fool would have laughed at you. As Joe Birney's woman you was four aces."

"I know all that. It was part of my plan.

You came at the time I picked out. You've been just so much scenery; nothing else. The letter, my coming, claiming to be Joe Birney's wife, everything, was my planning."

"Annie, you've got me into a game I can't quit," he mumbled. "You've passed off as my wife. It's a game you can't quit."

"You're drunk or crazy!" she jeered.

Before she could move toward the gun in the chair he had caught her in his arms and was crying:

"You pretty little fool! To think you could put your dainty paws in this dish and not git 'em burned. Why, I come nigh shooting that young pup for taking you to the show. You never went to any show with me."

She did not struggle and her voice was calm as she replied:

"To git a gunman is easy. To find one who's got brains can't be done, I'm thinking. Let me go. You're spoiling everything."

"I'll kick the old world over before I'll let you go," he panted. "Take the money. All of it. But we travel back to the Indian Nation as man and wife."

She bit his wrist and began fighting with the fury of a wild-cat. But she did not cry out. He swung her off her feet, and the two glared at each other in silence for a few seconds. Then he was muttering:

"You little devil! Bite, will ye? I'm just scenery, huh? I'm going to surprize ye."

She renewed her struggling, and for the first time doubt weakened her gaze. The fool was quite mad. He was gabbling incoherently. She had held him in contempt, almost. Just so much scenery. She had refrained from crying out, thinking she could bring him to his senses. She suddenly discovered she was horribly afraid. At the risk of spoiling everything she opened her mouth to scream. He pressed her face against his breast to muffle the cry. Suddenly he opened his arms and let her fall in a sprawling heap on the floor. The door was slowly opening. He wheeled and beheld young Stevers on the threshold, the light eyes blinking owlishly.

"The cub!" grunted the gunman.

"Don't touch that gun, Mrs. Birney. We two fellers will settle this without you chipping in," warned Stevers.

Now sure of herself she thrust the weapon in her blouse and shortly advised:

"Just a bit of a row. He'll behave now. You can go, and thanks for opening the door."

Enraged to the exploding point her companion yelled—

"He'll not go out on his feet!"

Stevers kicked the door to behind him and advised:

"Better hush. You don't want the folks down-stairs piling up here— So the boss has paid. Money left on the bed."

Laughing softly the woman told him:

"We're about to pack up the money and take it back to my sick father. You'd better be trotting along. Joe 'n I have a falling-out now 'n then, but we never ask the neighbors to settle our fusses."

But her companion was now nursing a new suspicion. He demanded—

"How'd it happen you was outside that door?"

Stevers folded his arms and earnestly explained:

"Boss found he'd made a mistake. Sent me to ask you to return the money. Says he's found the 'riginal receipt, showing he's paid everything right after getting the cattle."

"Cold-decked!" shouted the infuriated gun-fighter, and his hands dropped to his guns. At the same moment Stevers' folded arms parted company, each hand holding a gun drawn from the shoulder-holsters under his coat. His opponent began firing the second his weapons were clear, the first bullet striking the floor at Stevers' feet. The latter fired rapidly, once with each gun, and the room shook as the tall figure crashed face down.

The dazed woman stared with dilated eyes at the sprawling figure. As if making a tremendous discovery she cried— "You killed him! You!"

He scooped the money into the bag and thrust it into her hands and sharply told her:

"I've killed Joe Birney. He must stay dead. The men will be coming. Go!"

He seized her arm and dragged her into the hall and toward the back stairs.

"Faster!" he urged. "Your husband's dead. Git back home and stay there. Don't try it again."

He turned and ran back to the room and emptied the dead man's pockets and stored the money in his own pockets. By the time he finished, Ed Norton, followed by a dozen

men, came to the open door. Stevers briefly explained:

"Joe Birney brought me a fight. There he is. Guns, cocked, in his hand. Some of his lead in the floor. I claim the reward."

"Where's that woman?" asked Norton, emerging from his amazement.

Stevers looked blank and shook his head and worked his way from the room. In the street he was buffeted and crowded aside by drunken cowboys, but he smiled meekly each time he was bumped and jostled. Arriving at the office he looked through the window and saw Bolio seated at his table, his broad face flabby with regret, or despair. He was staring at a paper on his table, and as he studied it his lips parted in low groans.

Softly opening the door, Stevers was at the table almost before Bolio discovered him. Shaking his big head, Bolio mournfully explained:

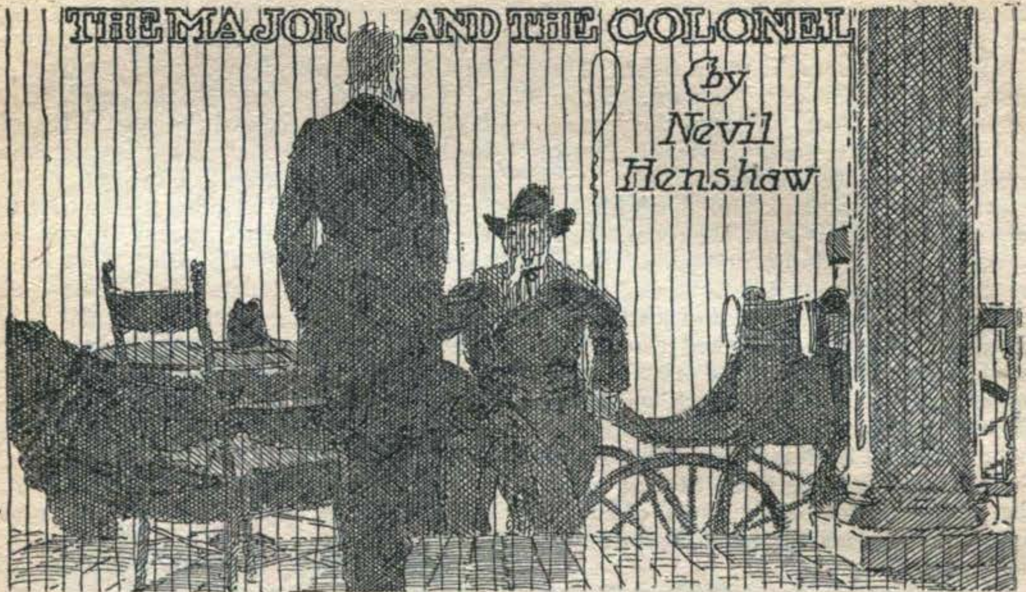
"They played me for a greenhorn, George. That woman ain't Birney's wife. Just got this notice, with her picter, from the express company. She's Kitty Star, from Injun Territory. Five thousand dollars!"

Stevers began producing bills and coins from his various pockets and, as Bolio stared wild of eye, he explained:

"Here's half of your five thousand. That feller's dead. I claimed the reward for killing him. I've kept half of the five thousand you said I could keep if I brought t'other half to you. Now I'm going to sign over the three thousand reward money to you and take a thousand of this cash. That leaves you five hundred dollars loser. Cheap price for knowing Joe Birney's dead." He counted out a thousand from the pile on the table, pocketed it and began writing his assignment of the reward to William Bolio. While he was signing his name Bolio querulously demanded:

"Just how'd you do it? What made you go fighting that devil? How could you best him?"

"You'll collect three thousand on the dead man over Norton's saloon. You won't blab a little secret and lose that three thousand. Joe Birney's dead over the saloon. The simon-pure Joe Birney is saying good-by to Big Bill Bolio. Good-by!"



Author of "They Always Forget Something," "Boule and the Major," etc.

THE major was old Major Stark of Auburn plantation. I was workin' for him as field overseer, and pretty well runnin' the place. That is with the major runnin' me. You could count on him for that. If he'd had his way he'd taken on the whole State of Louisiana.

As it was he looked after Auburn and as much of the rest of the parish as he thought was necessary. It wasn't politics with him, or anything of that sort. It was just that he had a kind of mania for seein' things done his way.

Don't think, though, that he was a busybody. That wasn't the major at all. In the first place, except when it come to plantin' and labor and such, he was perfectly willin' to leave folks alone. In the second, he always remembered that he was Stark of Auburn. He never fussed and he never argued. As a matter of fact, he didn't do much talkin' of any kind. But then he didn't have to. A word or so from him was generally enough.

All of which had got the major where he more or less run things in his own particular section. As the Cajuns put it, he was "Papa" of Fausse Point. Let somethin' go wrong as he saw it, and he'd ride right out and set it straight again.

Then Colonel John Alden Winthrop dropped down on us from up North.

THE first we heard of it was that a new owner was takin' charge at Sugarland. Sugarland was right across the bayou from us, and it was one of those places that change hands every three or four years. Why, it was hard to say. As a plantation it was about as nice a lookin' proposition as you'd want to see, with a fine big house, first-class quarters, and the best lyin' field in Fausse Point. But just the same no one had ever made a go of it. So when I heard it was startin' up again I figured it must be some one from outside.

Then word come in that it was a Yankee. The first chance I got I passed it on to the major.

"I see," says he. "Naturally. No one else would be fool enough to chance it. Did you get the name, Mr. Wilson?"

"No, sir," says I. "You know those Cajuns. But I did hear that he was a colonel."

The major looked like I'd passed him a bite of somethin' bitter. Of course the war had been over a long time. But not long enough for him, I reckon.

"Humh!" says he. "A colonel, eh? Things are looking up in Fausse Point. Any family, do you know?"

"No, sir," says I. "As I get it he's all alone."

"How long has he been in?"

"Just a day or so."

"All right," says the major. "I'll make it a point to see him first."

But the colonel beat him to it. He drove over the very next mornin' in a rig he'd brought down with him from the North. It was one of those high English dog-carts, with red wheels and a yellow body, and lamps like a locomotive. As it rolled down the plantation road it kind of stampeded the hands. Some was for part of a circus, and others for a medicine man, and I only got 'em quiet by promisin' to go over and find out what it was.

When the colonel saw me comin' he pulled in and waited. So I had a good chance to size him up as I rode across the field. He was short and fat and fussy lookin', but his shoulders was still squared from his soldier days. There was soldier too in his hard, round eyes, and his big hooked nose juttin' out of a red, puffy face.

Even before he spoke I knew he was all bottled up with talk. You could almost see it oozin' out of him.

"Well, well, well," he begins. "Am I addressing the owner of this place?"

"No, sir," says I. "I'm Nick Wilson, the overseer."

"Quite so," says he. "Then Major Stark—it is Major Stark, isn't it? He is about? I can see him? Or he is busy, perhaps? Then I might come again. Or now that I am here—"

For a second it kind of dizzied me.

"Yes, sir," I puts in. "The major is here. I'll go up to the big house with you and find him."

While I'd been speakin' the colonel had jabbered right on. All I had to do was to wait and catch up with him.

"Well, well, well," says he. "That is most kind of you, most thoughtful indeed. But before we start I must have a word with you. I am Colonel Winthrop, your new neighbor, and I have come here not only in greeting but in search of advice. I am not satisfied with conditions at Sugarland. I mean to improve them. Now you, as overseer, should be able to guide me. The quarters, for example. I find them deplorable. They are wholly without conveniences of any sort."

He stopped, and I jumped. It was like everything breakin' off short in the middle of a shower.

"I see," says I. "But what sort of conveniences?"

This seemed to slow him up a little.

"Well, well, well," says he. "It is curious —but, now that you ask me, I find that I can not explain myself exactly. I suppose that I mean conveniences in a broad, general sense. The cabins have nothing but their four bare walls. They appear absolutely desolate."

I looked over at the field. If I was ever goin' to get back to the hands it was time to start.

"Yes, sir," says I. "Those cabins must look mighty empty. It'll be different, though, after the hands move in. But I'm sure the major will advise you better than I can. If you'll just follow me—"

I started off with him drivin' beside me. And all the way in he talked. This time it was about why he'd settled in Louisiana, and it seemed to come in one solid chunk. I'd never heard anything to touch it. It was like he was dumpin' it out of a pail.

As I saw it, it was somethin' like this: Followin' the war the colonel had put in a lot of time talkin' about what ought to be done for the colored folks in the South. He figured that, now that the Yankees had freed the slaves, they ought to keep on and give 'em a boost in the right direction. After he'd preached this a while it got to be a habit. He just kept on with it year after year.

All of which wasn't easy on his friends. I reckon they got filled up with it right to their chins. Anyway, when the colonel had come into a pile of money the year before, they'd hopped right in with some advice of their own. They'd told him that, now he was rich, he could quit talkin' and act; and that, unless he was nothin' but bluff, he'd pull out and do all that he'd said.

This put it right up to the colonel. So he'd written South, and finally settled on Sugarland. Now he was out to boost his colored brother as he'd never been boosted before. And incidentally he meant to put in a crop and give the Louisiana planters a taste of what he called "Northern efficiency."

He was still at it as we went up the big house drive. But I only waited till I saw the major step out of his office. Just then *I had enough. I wanted to shake* my head and beat on it like you do when you have water in your ears.

So I said:

"There's the major now, Colonel Winthrop. If you'll excuse me, I'll get back to the field."

"Well, well, well," I heard him begin.

Then I put spurs to my horse.

I didn't see the major again till I went to report to him after knockin' off. Bein' one of these thin, wiry little men, he could go through the hardest day without turnin' a hair. But this evenin' he looked kind of limp.

"Never mind about the details, Mr. Wilson," he begins. "If it's all the same to you, we'll dispense with any unnecessary talk."

That was all till I was ready to leave. Then the major snapped out the rest of it.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "Colonel Winthrop uses a lot of wells."

"Yes, sir," says I. "I noticed it."

"And do you know what people do to get wells?" he goes on.

"You mean—?" I begins.

"Exactly," says he. "They bore, Mr. Wilson, they bore."

AFTER that first visit the colonel stuck to Sugarland for a while. Bein' all alone and with a good sized crop to get started, he had his hands full. In the first place, it was early September, with all the fall plowin' and plantin' to do. In the second, thanks to the comin' of grindin', it was hard to get labor at any price.

But this didn't seem to bother the colonel. From what we heard he was makin' things hum.

He begun by hirin' an overseer—a big two-handed Cajun named Gab Labau. Next, havin' loaded up said Cajun with his aims and ideas, he sent him out after hands. Of course the colonel didn't offer any advance in pay. That wasn't Northern efficiency. But he did promise a set of quarters with, as he put it, "refinements and conveniences such as have never been known on a Southern plantation before."

Just the same, Labau didn't have any luck. Bein' a Cajun he sort of cramped the colonel's style. When he talked about "those refinement" and "that convenience," it made you think of a parrot. The hands just listened and passed on.

Seein' which, the colonel had his rig hooked up and went out himself. And what's more, he got results. I don't know whether it was the dog-cart or whether his colored brothers just naturally give in for the sake of peace and quiet. Anyway, the hands begun to settle in at Sugarland.

And, once they were there, they found it wasn't all bluff. Those quarters were nice; with fresh whitewash, and whole windows, and spigots stuck about with a main tank to feed 'em, instead of an old fashioned well or the bayou. And there was the colonel fussin' round with flower seed, and vegetable seed, and colored pictures to stick on the walls. It was somethin' new to have a big boss do like that. And all of it free. Those hands hardly had time to go to the field they was so busy spreadin' the news.

Bein' just across the bayou, we got most of it first. And each fresh piece that come over seemed to hit me the harder. I'd never been up against anything like it before. It had me clean in the air.

As I saw it, if things kept on like they was goin', half the hands in Fausse Point would be movin' to Sugarland. And, what was worse, the other half, that couldn't get in, would be so dissatisfied that the planters would either have to fire 'em, or follow the colonel's lead. Of course it was all right to have decent quarters. It was like that at Auburn and most of the places. But those other frills and fixin's was a different matter. I could see the major messin' round with packages of flower seed, and clippin' pretty pictures out of the magazines. It was just plum ridiculous. And yet it was the chief thing that drew the hands.

All of which made me speculate considerable about the colonel. Was he as foolish as he talked and acted? Or was he just naturally the smartest labor-getter that had hit Fausse Point?

Naturally, I tried to get a line on him. Most of my spare time I was snoopin' round Sugarland, talkin' to the hands or Labau, the overseer. But where the hands didn't know anything, Labau was worse. He didn't even suspect anything. All he knew was to do what he was told—providin' he didn't forget it. Even then, with the pick of Fausse Point to handle, I could see he hadn't any real authority. He was just a big, ignorant Cajun, and for all his lookin' wise and ridin' a horse, he wasn't foolin' the colored brother a bit.

As for the colonel, I kept out of his way. I knew I wouldn't get anything out of him—

or rather that I'd get so much it would amount to the same thing.

Of course, there was the major. But in all this bothersome business he was the one who puzzled me most. At the very first he'd acted as I'd expected, growlin' about the colonel's dog-cart, and his gab, and his plans for the colored brother. But just as soon as these plans got started and was goin' good, he changed entirely. All at once he tightened up and went round as cool and quiet as if the colonel had pulled out for the North and things had gone back to normal.

For a while I thought I had it.

"He's layin' low and waitin' results," I thinks to myself. "So far this thing hasn't touched him. When it does we'll get action and get it right."

Then, one mornin', a couple of new families gave notice they was goin' to move out next pay day. I could hardly wait to report to the major. When I'd done I got the surprize of my life.

"To Sugarland?" he asks.

"Yes, sir," says I.

"All right," says he. "Move them out, and any others that want to go."

I couldn't say anything for a little. He'd spoken so quiet and easy it took me clean off my feet. At that it wasn't any of my business. But somehow I couldn't let it go by.

"Excuse me, Major," I begins, "but have you heard anything about these things that are goin' on?"

"What things?" he asks.

"Why the way Colonel Winthrop is pettin' his hands, and the way the labor is leavin' the other plantations," I answers.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "I am neither blind, nor deaf, nor a fool."

"Yes, sir," says I. "I know that."

"Well?" he asks. "What then?"

"That's what I'd like to know, sir," says I.

The major give me a look that was half pityin' and half amused.

"Mr. Wilson," he asks, "you're from the West, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you been in this part of the world?"

"About two years."

"Humh!" says the major. "Now I've been here all my life. And, if you'll take my advice, you'll stop worrying and let this affair run its natural course. It's unpleasant, I grant you. But so is a spell of bad weather. Have patience, Mr. Wilson. Just wait and you'll see."

When I left the office I felt like throwin' up my hands. It looked as if the old man was losin' his grip. Two of our families leavin' and he told me to be patient. I just couldn't get it no matter how hard I tried.

Then, a few days later, Big Alec, one of our oldest hands, joined the procession.

"Now for the fireworks," thinks I. "This will start him if anything can."

But when I told the major he only said:

"Very well. Move him out at once. The quicker he goes the sooner he'll be back."

This started me thinkin'. After all the old man ought to know what he was talkin' about. Hadn't he been on a plantation ever since he could remember? I called back that old sayin' about a "new broom sweepin' clean," and then I understood. Of course. That was it. Those hands was just like a lot of children goin' to a circus. They was crazy for somethin' new and different. But after a while they'd get enough of it a ndwant to come home.

And that was how it worked out. In less than a month the hands was beginnin' to drift away from Sugarland with Big Alec among the first of 'em.

"Sho, Cap," he says to me when I moved him in. "It's nice dar, but it's lackin'. I'se used to white folks what is."

It was all goin' right again, but somehow I couldn't keep from bein' a little sorry for the colonel. Of course he was a fool. Any man is who comes into a strange neighborhood and tries to beat the system. But at least he was a kind fool. He'd only tried to better conditions. And now he was due to be left high and dry by spring plantin'.

But I might just as well have saved my feelin's. For, havin' made his first mistake, the colonel went on to a second, worse one.

I got wind of it one day when I met Gab Labau on the big road.

"Well, Mr. Overseer?" I asks. "How's tricks across the bayou?"

He grinned like a mule eatin' briars.

"Fine," says he. "It is all right now. I have all the men that I need."

"That's good," says I. "But I'm just as glad you haven't taken any more of mine."

"Do not worry," says he. "Fausse Point is no use. They do not stay. I am no fool, me. This time I go to Freetown."

When I rode on again I was thinkin' hard. And the more I thought the worse it looked. Freetown was the toughest black settlement in the parish. The men from there was the kind that made gun-totin' advisable. I knew as I'd worked a few of 'em in a pinch at rush season. With a boss like mine it was all right. But with that Yankee colonel and his Cajun overseer—

This time when I spoke to the major I didn't have to wait for results. He got right out of his chair and begun to pace up and down as he always did when things was worryin' him.

"This is bad, Mr. Wilson—bad," says he. "You know that riff-raff—smooth and servile, and waiting their chance. If they should happen to break loose— Perhaps I ought to go over with a word of warning. But no. I've tried this before. He'd only look on it as interference. I'll just have to keep my eyes open."

So the major watched and waited while the weeks slipped into December. Then, with the comin' of Christmas, the colonel made a move that forced his hand.

CHRISTMAS at Auburn was always the same. The afternoon before the major knocked the hands off himself and told 'em that only such work as was necessary would be done next day. Then, the followin' mornin' some of the older men would go up to the big house. On the back gallery they'd find a demijohn or two that the major had had set out for 'em. Meanwhile a steer and some hogs would be slaughtered, and a wagon would drive over with groceries from the store. There'd be just enough drinkin', and perhaps a little too much eatin', and every one would have a good time.

That was the system at Auburn and at all the other places. There was seldom much carousin'. The planters wouldn't have it and, bein' treated right, the hands was anxious to meet 'em half-way.

But as usual half-way wasn't good enough for the colonel. He was out to go the whole distance with his colored brother by his side. So, somewheres around the middle of the month, he give it out that he was goin' to have a real, sure enough Christmas at Sugarland. There wasn't goin' to be any shuntin' of stuff to the quarters. On this day he'd mingle with his fellow workers man to man. They must all come up to the big house, and he'd have plenty to eat and drink, and a Christmas tree with some sort of gift on it for each and every one of 'em.

Once it was out, the news went round like wildfire. And maybe those Freetowners didn't rub it in.

"Huh!" says they. "We got a good time comin'. No salt horse and nigger whisky for us dis Chrismus."

When it got to the major he sent for me at once. This time he was already out of his chair.

"Mr. Wilson," he begins, "I suppose you've heard the talk about this business at Sugarland. Is there anything in it?"

"Yes, sir," says I. "I've seen Labau, and I'm afraid it's every bit true."

"Humh!" says he. "Then I've got to act, as much as I dislike it. This can't go on, Mr. Wilson. It's not only that it will upset everything. It isn't safe for Colonel Winthrop himself. It won't be easy to convince him. I understand that he is speaking of that scum from town as 'the ideal hand.' Of course he'll think that I'm prejudiced—that I merely represent the popular feeling—"

He broke off and stared out the window, strokin' his chin.

"If you don't mind, I think I'll take you over with me, Mr. Wilson," he goes on after a moment. "Coming from away, he may look on you as an outsider. At least you can give him a different point of view. We'll leave after dinner."

So that afternoon we rode to the bayou bank, and the little wooden drawbridge that crossed to Sugarland. On the other side was the parish road with the big gate facin' it. Beyond, set back in a pasture, was the stables, with the quarters trailin' off to the right in a line.

The big house was to the left, in a grove of oaks. It had two brick stories, and there wasn't a hall in it from foundation to roof. The rooms was just set in a couple of rows, with doors that give on to a brick pavement below, and a big wide gallery above. At one end of the pavement a staircase led up to the gallery. It was the only one in the house.

As we rode up the colonel was sittin' out

under the gallery wrappin' packages for his tree. He had a big basket of truck on one side of him, and a pile of papers on the other, and when he caught sight of us he dropped everything and come forward gabblin' his hardest.

"Well, well, well," says he. "Major Stark and Mr. Wilson. Come in, gentlemen. Or will you sit out here? It is really delightfully warm. Or perhaps, with my memory of Northern winters—"

We didn't try to say anything. We just shook hands and then took chairs. Seein' which, the colonel sat down himself without losin' a breath.

"Well, well, well," he flows on. "This is neighborly. It is more than that, as you have saved me a drive when I am busiest. Tomorrow or the day after I had meant to come over and invite you to a little Christmas celebration that I am planning. It will be most informal—"

Havin' his openin', the major tried to cut in.

"That's what I'm here about," he begins. "Has it occurred to you, Colonel, that this celebration of yours might be a little too informal?"

But the colonel rippled right ahead.

"No, no," says he. "It can't be. That is just the idea. It will be a get-together between master and man in the very best sense of the word. After all, your system here is quite feudal. I will merely make it more so—the wassail bowl, the castellan marking the feast by coming down from his place above the salt. You understand?"

He was so puffed up with his idea he looked about twice his size. But the major was all ready with his pin.

"Yes," says he, "I understand. But I can not approve. Our system here is the result of generations of thought and understanding. You will do well to leave it alone."

The colonel stared at him.

"Pardon me, Major," says he after a second. "But would you mind telling me exactly what you mean?"

"I will," says the major. "And I hope that you will understand that I speak only through friendship, and in the best interests of us all. Send your gifts to the quarters like the rest of us, I beg of you. This idea of a celebration in your home will not do. The darkies are not used to it. They will not understand. With the older, more settled hands such as you had at first it would be bad enough. With the ones you have now it is impossible. Trouble will follow—grave trouble for you perhaps, minor troubles for us all."

It was fair enough as the old man put it. There was almost a note of pleadin' in his voice. But that part about the new hands had hit the colonel. For the first time since I'd known him he quit talkin' and begun to speak.

"Major Stark," he asks, "do you mean to insinuate that I am not capable of looking after my own place and my own people?"

"That sir," says the major, "remains to be seen."

The colonel went purple, and then white, and then purple again.

"By gad, sir!" he snaps. "This is astounding. Do you realize, perhaps, that you are taking a good deal upon yourself?"

"Yes, sir," says the major, mighty mild and quiet. "Unfortunately I do."

"And that you are all but insulting?"

"If so," says the major, "I have not meant to be."

"Nevertheless," growls the colonel, "you are."

The major straightened up every inch there was of him. When he spoke his voice was honed to a razor edge.

"Then, sir," says he, "I am prepared to offer you every satisfaction."

The colonel didn't get it for a second. He looked puzzled before breakin' into a half-sneerin' smile.

"I see," says he. "Feudalism again. But I am afraid that it is a little late in the day for the lists and the field of honor. I am not altogether a fool."

The major got to his feet with a funny little bow that made me think of a piece of machinery.

"There are things in this world far worse than a fool, sir," says he. "Colonel Winthrop, I bid you good evening."

The colonel lunged out of his chair and stood with his fists balled up, and his big, hawk nose stuck forward. For just a breath he was all set for sure enough trouble. Then he dropped back and smiled again, this time like he really meant it.

"Come, come, Major," says he. "This is ridiculous. Are we schoolboys to quarrel so about my little party? Come in, man, and we'll see what we can find on the sideboard. Let's settle our differences with a nip of something."

But the major just bowed again. Once you wound him up he was powerful slow to run down.

"I bid you good evening," says he.

"What!" says the colonel. "Do you mean to say that you won't drink with me?"

The major spoke as prim as a schoolma'am.

"If ever I do, sir," says he, "I hope to be struck dead."

And with that he walked off to his horse.

There wasn't any talkin' as we rode home. I don't reckon there was really much to say. But before he turned off at the big house the major did pull up for a second.

"Mr. Wilson," says he, "I'm obliged to you. It was good of you to come."

He stopped, and when he went on again he kind of hesitated. It was the first time I'd ever seen him at a loss for a word.

"Er—Mr. Wilson," he begins. "This misunderstanding of mine with Colonel Winthrop—I hope that you—"

"Yes, sir," I puts in. "Of course I'll say nothing. It was between gentlemen."

The major yanked his bridle. As he done so he snapped back to normal like a rubber band. Some people might not have got him. But, knowin' him, I did.

"Humh!" says he. "You think so? Well, that's just what it wasn't, Mr. Wilson. And that's just what I can't understand."

AFTER this we treated Sugarland as if it had been hit by a plague. Whereas the major had only made a couple of calls, I'd been in the habit of droppin' over there every few days. Now I stuck close to our side of the bayou.

But of course the news come over just the same. I don't reckon there was a detail of that celebration that didn't make the rounds of Fausse Point. Now it was the colonel's hunt for a tree, now it was the nuts, and the candy, and all the other good things he was havin' sent from town. Now, at the last, it was his decoratin' the big house with casino branches and tellin' the hands that, although it wasn't holly, it was a pretty fair imitation for the South.

Then Christmas come in with the kind of weather that folks talk about afterward for years.

The day before it was gray and cold with the wind makin' up from the North. Next mornin' we had a full fledged norther blowin' with everything frozen tight. All the coulees and ditches was skimmed over, and the field was white with frost.

As I made the rounds, wrapped up in everything I had, I was glad it was a holiday. It would have been hard enough to put the men in the field, much less to get any work out of 'em.

"Well," thinks I, "the colonel will have considerably more of a Northern Christmas than he bargained for. Unless he's first cousin to a polar bear, he'll be mighty apt to look on this cold as another fair imitation."

Then I went on and wondered how things would turn out across the bayou. I knew that, if trouble broke out, we'd hear of it quick, and from our own quarters. Of course the colonel's party was supposed to be just for the hands at Sugarland, but that didn't mean that half of Fausse Point wouldn't be there besides. On the one hand this might make a little trouble. On the other it might save a big one. Anyway I figured that, with so many strangers around, those Freetowners would watch their step.

And I was right. That afternoon no bad news come over the bayou, and when our hands got back they told me that everything had gone off fine.

So I drew a good breath and went to report to the major. But somehow he didn't seem overly pleased.

"Humh!" says he. "So far so good."

"Then you don't think it's over yet?" I asks.

"I hope so," says he. "It all depends on how they handle things. For our part, I think we'll lay off again tomorrow, Mr. Wilson."

And he adds with one of his gritty smiles,

"After all this celebrating I reckon the hands will need some rest."

That the old man was a weather prophet was proved next mornin'. If anything it was colder still. So, havin' attended to all that had to be done, I built up a big fire in my room and started in on the hundred and one little things that pile up on a man when he's in the saddle from sunup to dark.

It was somewheres around ten o'clock, and I'd just got goin' good, when I heard a poundin' of hoofs. Then come a scream, and the next thing after that I was out in the

plantation road, and grabbin' the bridle of a half-harnessed mule. On its back was a Cajun boy named Leo who I'd seen round the stables at Sugarland. What with fright and cold he was mighty near crazy. I lost a good five minutes before I could get his story out of him.

It was murder, he said. The hands had killed Labau, and now they was on their way to get the colonel. And all because they didn't want to go to the field. Of course it was too cold. Labau had said so himself. But the colonel had told him that he was the best judge of the weather and, cold or no cold, he wasn't goin' to have any loafin' on his place.

Labau had done what he could. But for all his beggin' and bullyin' and cussin', he hadn't been able to call a single man out of the cabins. In the end he'd gone wild and swore he was goin' to throw 'em all out on their heads. Then he'd made a dash for the first of the cabins, and been shot as he broke in the door.

After that there'd been a lot of excitement with the men runnin' out and yellin' they was goin' to clean up the place. But Leo hadn't waited for any more. Havin' brought out some mules, he'd jumped on the nearest one and made record time to Auburn.

I made record time to the office myself. And you can bet the major didn't waste many seconds in what followed after. He had a stand of Winchesters set in the wall, and while I told him what I knew, he yanked 'em out and piled up some ammunition. Then he called in Durand, our Cajun stableman.

"Durand," says he, "the hands are shooting up Sugarland. Mr. Wilson and I are going right over. Get the white men together, arm them and follow us as quick as you can. Do you understand? All right. Now, Mr. Wilson!"

He didn't hold any post mortem goin' up the plantation road. It wasn't his way to say, "I told you so." But he did look forward, figurin' the chances as we raced along.

"No good for Labau, perhaps," he shouts across to me. "But we're due to save the colonel. You know that gallery, that one pair of stairs. If he has any sense or courage at all he ought to hold them off till we get there."

Then we struck the bridge and found that the draw was open, and the way blocked across.

"Humh!" says the major. "Wet legs for us, Mr. Wilson. Keep his head up and let him go."

If the bayou was cold, it was narrow and had mighty little current. As we pulled out on the opposite bank the major turned off to the bridge.

"We'll just fix this first for Durand and the rest," says he. "We may need them, and they'll never swim across."

There wasn't a soul on guard at the bridge. Those Freetowners had even failed to move the bar that worked the draw. But once we'd closed it and struck the parish road, we saw what we was lookin' for. All round the pasture the hands was millin' about, and up at the big house we could hear a lot of yellin' and a crashin' of glass. Then, just as we struck the big gate, some shots rattled out on the other side, and the crowd broke and scattered for the quarters. After the first sharp crack or so there wasn't a soul in sight.

The major pulled up his horse.

"Just a moment," says he. "There must be some white man down here. Anyway we'll see."

We rode in, and as we done so a couple of shots sounded from somewheres in the stables. Right off they was answered by a volley from the nearest cabins. Then come a yell and a fresh round, and little pieces of grass and dirt begun to kick up into the air in front of us.

JUST beyond the gate was a weighin' shed for the outgoin' teams. As it was open on three sides it didn't look very promisin', but it was the only shelter in sight. After we'd made it and fixed our horses as safe as we could, we got in behind the scales and opened up on the quarters.

"Not too fast, Mr. Wilson," warns the major. "We may need all our cartridges later on. As soon as we've done what we can here, we'll go on to the big house."

We already had things pretty well figured out. What was goin' on wasn't any race riot or general uprisin'. Most of the hands we'd seen in the pasture had been runnin' round and shoutin' simply because they was too worked up to do anything else. The real trouble was bein' caused by a bunch of half-drunk Freetowners who had their eye on what they'd been allowed to see at the big house. Part of 'em was holdin' the

quarters from the nearest cabins. The rest was attendin' to the colonel and helpin' themselves up above.

Just then some white man was makin' a stand in the stables. All he had to do now was to sit tight and let us look out for him. As there was a wide space between him and the cabins, we could stop any rush from front or rear.

After a little we let up with our Winchesters and waited. It was a funny sort of fight. No one was showin' and, except for a shot every now and then from the cabins, the pasture was still as death. Pretty soon it got on our nerves. I begun to shiver and fidget, and the major stepped clean out for a look round.

"No sight of Durand," he reports. "Of course that Cajun will take his time. In the meanwhile we'll be held here with nothing to do."

But he'd talked too quick. He was hardly settled back again when I noticed a movement at the stable door. The next second a man slipped through and flattened himself against it. He was a short, puffy man, with square shoulders and a big, hooked nose. In spite of the cold he was in his shirt-sleeves, and he had a gun in each hand.

"Look!" says I, and the major done so and begun to talk—half to me and half to himself.

"Why—why—it's the colonel," says he. "And he's going to rush them himself. Well now, that's better—lots better, I'd say. Get set, Mr. Wilson. We'll start the moment he moves. Now! Come on! Don't mind those bullets. Take time to aim!"

Followin' this, things went with a rush. I remember seein' the colonel start, and runnin' out myself. After that I was too busy pumpin' my Winchester to think of anything else.

It was pretty hot while it lasted. If those Freetowners had had decent guns and had known how to use 'em, we wouldn't have made ten yards. As it was I reckon they would have gotten us in the end. But before things had started real good there come a shout and a clatter behind us, and Durand rode in with his men.

That settled it and settled it quick. Cajun-like, Durand had waited to raise a crowd, and when those Freetowners caught sight of it they just naturally quit and ran. Bustin' out through the backs of the cabins, they made for the field, with our Cajuns hot behind 'em. It was all over by the time we reached the colonel.

"Well?" asks the major. "What now?"

"Over here," says the colonel, and he led the way to the first of the cabins.

Inside we found Labau laid out on the floor. He was all over blood, and at first I thought he was dead. But once he heard our voices he come right round and opened his eyes.

"It is too late," says he. "Me, I am *foutou*."

The colonel knelt down and begun to paw at him.

"Nonsense," says he after a little. "You're only hit in the side, and high up at that. You'll be out again in a week."

"You're all right, of course," says the major.

For once the colonel didn't waste any words.

"Of course," says he. "There was no particular danger—pistol fire and wild at that. It was the same at the house. I only had to shoot over their heads. At that I could have held the gallery all day."

"How did you get here?" asks the major.

"They wanted the money in my safe upstairs," explains the colonel. "When I refused them, they told me they had Labau wounded in this cabin. They promised to finish him if I didn't shell out. It was probably bluff, but I couldn't risk it. So I shed my coat, and managed to get down a rain pipe at the back. The stable looked like a good place to work from. The rest you saw."

"I did," says the major. "And it was mighty good seeing. I want to tell you—"

The colonel flushed a few shades redder.

"Don't," he breaks in. "I was only trying to make amends. I've learned something today, Major."

"So have I," says the major.

And he let it go at that.

LATER, when we'd looked after Labau, and called in our Cajuns, and settled things down, we had a chance to think of ourselves. Or rather the colonel noticed our legs and done the thinkin' for us.

"Why, gentlemen," says he, "you're drenched to the waist. And I'm none too warm myself. If those black scoundrels haven't taken all of my liquor—"

"Right," puts in the major. "If they've left a drop of anything, now's the time to use it."

So the colonel borrowed a horse, and we made for his private drive. As we went up it we was set and ready, but we might have saved ourselves the trouble. All we found was a cleaned out house, and that queer, tingly sort of quiet that settles down after any excitement.

The place was sure in a mess. All the doors was broken open, and the lawn was scattered with stuff that those Freetowners had carried out and left when they had to run for it.

But the colonel didn't say a word. He just took us inside, rustled round and found his liquor cupboard had been overlooked. After he'd unlocked it, he got out his fixin's and filled three glasses.

As we lined up beside him I felt somehow that we'd got clean past his fuss and gab, and had struck the real man behind 'em. It was like we was really knowin' him for the first time.

I reckon the colonel felt a good deal the same. But naturally he wanted to make sure. Anyway he picked up a glass, and offered it to the major, and then drew it back again.

"Pardon me, Major," says he, "but I feel it my duty to remind you that you asked for something very dire to happen to you if ever you took a drink with me."

The major looked at him just long enough to see he was smilin'.

"That's so," says he. "I'm afraid I did."

"Well?" asks the colonel. "Is there anything you can do about it?"

The major cocked an eye at the drink.

"Colonel," says he, "that looks like bourbon."

"Correct," says the colonel.

"And it smells like Old Crow."

"Right again. Old Crow it is."

"Real Old Crow, I mean."

"Still right—the realest and oldest made."

The major reached out for the glass.

"Humh!" says he. "That being the case, I think I'll take a chance."

VAGABONDS

by Bill Adams

I WAS thinking of the old days when I was a cop. I often think of them. I learned a good deal of the why and the wherefore of the trouble in the world at that time.

I was recalling a winter night when it was raining and when a wind blew by, when in company with my superior I searched about the dark corners of the small town of Lindsay. We came to a large hay barn, in which were tied thirty or forty mules.

The mules nosed contentedly in their mangers, and shook their ears. Neither wind nor rain could trouble them at all. They were safe for a good rest, and full bellies till morning came again.

My superior climbed up into the hay above the mules. Then I heard him give sharp orders to some one. I climbed up also, to see arms and legs and heads sticking out of the hay. There were some dozen young men therein. The town was so full of fruit workers that it was quite impossible to find a place to sleep under any roof. People slept in box-cars very often down there, for want of accommodations. Respectable girls, come to Lindsay to find work, have been found curled up on the hard floors of empty box-cars, asleep.

My superior ordered every one of the lads out of the hay, and bade them follow him. In a few moments they were, one and all, locked up in the Lindsay jail—a tiny building of two by fours spiked together, with a partition in the center, and a cot to each side.

There is just room for two people in that small and very infamous jail. That night there was already one man in one of the compartments. When the doors were locked, after my superior had opened them, and ordered the lads therein, there were thirteen people crammed into the jail.

Why? Because—because—well—I really do not know. They had done no harm insofar as I could see. The cop, the representative of the law, representing the people of Lindsay, was, I suppose, afraid of them.

KIERNAN THE KILLER

By Alan Williams

THE reputation of Owen Kiernan as a killer is rather undeserved, for he is really the mildest of men and without that tendency toward legalized bloodshed which is all too often a quality of peace officers. But a single incident, as so often happens, gave him a reputation, and the reputation has stuck, for the West is a country of traditions.

The incident which proved to be so sanguinary started mildly enough. There was a tip from San Francisco. A young drunken Mexican in a San Francisco joint had been heard boasting of a cache of opium hidden near a cathedral in the Catalina Mountains of southern Arizona. That was all the information which was transmitted to Special Agents Kiernan and Grant of the Treasury Department, stationed at Phoenix, Arizona. The Catalina Mountains being located near Tucson, the report was filed until such time as they would be in that city, since the tip was not definite enough to warrant a special trip.

A few weeks later they were in Tucson, however, and decided to run the tip down. There was very little to work upon. The Catalina Mountains are almost as nature left them. A few prospectors and trappers have cabins in those rugged, barren hills, and there is a summer camp for vacationists at the summit of Mount Lemon, the highest peak. The two investigators heard stories of valuable copper deposits in those mountains, but the difficulties and expense of transportation precluded mining operations. There were no settlements of any sort, and the tip seemed a very cold one indeed.

Then suddenly they hit upon one verifying item: At the lower end of the Catalinas there are some slim, towering, rocky peaks known as the Cathedral Rocks, and, if the boast of the man in the saloon had any foundation, it undoubtedly referred to those rocks, which certainly offered an excellent natural hiding place for a cache of opium or any other contraband.

Vague as the information was, the two officers, Kiernan and Grant, decided, since they were in the neighborhood, to run it down and investigate the vicinity of the Cathedral Rocks. Aside from their conscientious duty, a trip into the mountains was more than agreeable to both of the men, and for the purpose they assumed the characters of prospectors and equipped themselves with pack burros, provisions and large canteens.

They found the job a greater undertaking than they had supposed. The rocky peaks which appeared so close to town seemed to recede into the background as they trudged on. It was midsummer and the heat was terrific. Night brought relief and they camped in the foothills, and next morning they started up again. The foothills were covered with every kind of thorny vegetation

known to nature. It was impossible for man or beast to avoid the sharp needle of the Spanish bayonet, which seemed to penetrate the leather of the stoutest boot. Grant and Kiernan were accustomed to the California border and mountain ranges, but this arid mountainous land of thorns and rattlers was a new experience for them.

"Some country," Grant grumbled. "I wouldn't mind if we were really after something, but I'd hate to have my bleaching bones found around here, and on such a wild-goose chase."

"Charge it to experience," Kiernan encouraged. "We've got plenty of grub and water, and if we don't see anything by tomorrow we'll beat it back. After we climb a little higher, we'll be in timber, and out of these —— cactus bushes."

Early that morning they reached the shack of a health seeker, who had established himself in that lonely spot to fight the onrush of tuberculosis. His appearance quite blended with the starved country; his parchment-like skin seemed inadequate for the job of covering his bones. He wore a pair of faded flannel trousers, and an undershirt; nothing more. Grant wondered what the poor devil wanted to live for.

"You haven't many neighbors," Kiernan remarked after they had exchanged greetings, and he had presented the sick man with the few newspapers they had.

"No"—the sick man replied, and then after a paroxysm of coughing had passed—"not many. There are a couple more lungers down the gulch there—we have a sweepstake to see who dies first—and then there's an old trapper called Eric who has a cabin up in the rocks somewhere. I never tried to climb them."

Owen Kiernan squinted up at the barren, rocky peaks.

"Doesn't look as if there's much to trap up there," he observed.

"I don't think there is much," the sick man agreed, "but he's supposed to be a trapper. I've an idea he's an old hermit with a grouch against the world, and likes to live up there in the rocks. Not a bad idea, either. I've never seen him myself, but he has a couple of sons, half Mex, I think, who visit him occasionally."

The trail seemed to be warming up a bit.

"The sons come up from Tucson?" Kiernan asked, but his tone was entirely casual, and betrayed no special interest.

"I don't know," the sick man answered, "but I think they have a small ranch near Fort Lowell. They used to bring me papers when they went back and forth. But I seldom see them now. I think they probably have a shorter trail."

"Well we may drop in on the old boy," Kiernan said; "we're going to mosey around for a couple of days."

"Better watch your step," the health seeker cautioned them. "It's powerful dry around here now. If you don't know where to locate the springs in these mountains, you're plumb out of luck, and even the springs are drying up. If we don't get a rain pretty soon, I'm going down in the valley myself."

"The old man you mention must have a well," Kiernan observed.

"He probably has," the sick man agreed, "but I don't even know where his shack is, and the chances are ten to one you'd never find it unless you knew just which trail to strike."

AFTER a little more desultory conversation, Kiernan and Grant moved on. They felt considerably encouraged. There was something mysterious about the lonely trapper in the Cathedral Rocks and his half-breed sons; it dovetailed nicely with the tip they had. As Kiernan predicted, they were soon in the timber, where it was much cooler, and traveling considerably easier. But as they penetrated into the trees it was exceedingly difficult to follow any trail, and what appeared to be a path was only a little clearing where the vegetation had been beaten down by some wandering animal. Late in the afternoon they reached the end of the timber line, and were among the towering rocks.

"We'd better camp here," Kiernan suggested, "and tomorrow morning, if we can locate any springs or wells, we'll push on. We'll probably have to go on foot until we locate the trail. We'll never get the burros over these rocks unless we find the trail."

Grant was entirely agreeable.

"You need a mountain goat on this job," he complained; "not a man and a burro."

"Well take the load off your feet," Kiernan advised. "Open a can of beans, and I'll take the gun and see if I can't get a few birds or a cottontail."

"Cottontail!" Grant jeered. "A rabbit

wouldn't get up here without an aeroplane."

"Maybe," Kiernan agreed, "but there ought to be a few bob-whites, and I think we can take a chance of fracturing the game laws up here."

"Better not go far," Grant advised. "It looks as if a storm is coming up."

"Great!" Kiernan said. "I can't imagine anything I'd like better than a good wetting."

"It's easy to get lost in this country," his cautious companion observed.

"I won't go far," Kiernan promised, "and if I'm not back in an hour light a fire so I can locate you."

Ambling along slowly, Kiernan went back along their trail into the trees. He carried his rifle, and his automatic on his belt. After going a little distance he discovered some well-beaten tracks which they had not noticed. Kiernan decided to travel along with this trail for a way to see if it led up into the rocks. Absorbed in this undertaking, he paid no attention to time, until he suddenly realized that it was getting very black. In surprize, he looked at his watch, but it was not yet six o'clock. His partner had been right: a storm was certainly brewing.

The thunder and lightning started, and then Kiernan realized the closeness of the storm clouds. He was literally in the midst of them, and he hurried back along the trail, but it was rapidly becoming too black to see any tracks. He decided it would be foolish to wander aimlessly through the trees, and looked about for the means to improvise a temporary shelter. Before anything could be found, the storm broke with all its fury, and of all the storms in the world there is none more furious than that of the desert mountains after a drought.

The lightning began its dirty work with the trees. Kiernan threw himself prone upon the ground, vaguely remembering having heard of that method of safety But when a giant pine fell crashing within an inch of his head, he decided to meet his fate standing.

The roar of the loosened torrents of water was even more deafening than the thunder. As the lightning flashed, he could see the towering rocks, apparently just a little distance away. If he could reach them, he would certainly be safer than in the midst of these rapidly falling trees. It seemed impossible that the lightning could continue to miss him. Running toward the rocks, he suddenly reached the banks of what seemed to be a tearing river. He jumped back, not believing his eyes. There were no rivers in those mountains.

But the river, or torrent—for it was more than a river—was real enough. Fifteen minutes before it had been a dry gully on the mountain side, but now it was a raging, tearing wall of water rushing down to the cañon below. Another flash of lightning fairly sizzled the ground under his feet. Another tree fell and struck him a glancing blow. He dodged madly and grabbed at the branch of another tree. But the branch snapped, and he could not save himself from the raging torrent which was cutting a deeper channel every minute.

It was just as well, Kiernan decided philosophically. Drowning was preferable to electrocution. He regretfully threw away his gun, and finally managed to kick off his boots. He was a splendid swimmer, and if he could breast the torrent he would be in the rocks. But no man, not even an Indian, could fight such a whirlpool. Time and again Kiernan was sucked under, but somehow he managed to struggle back to the surface. He knew now that he was fighting for his life.

Then the roar of the water increased to a deafening, terrifying sound, like nothing he had ever heard before. The noise and the pressure of the water destroyed any intelligent thought or action; nothing remained but the primitive instinct of self-preservation, and he continued to fight. The rushing torrent was being pressed through a narrow defile of projecting rocks which at this point stretched down into the trees.

With outstretched arms he made a convulsive effort to grasp one of the smooth projecting rocks. He succeeded in getting a hold with his arms but the torrent battered from the rear, and he could not maintain his hold. He was swept away again, and now he felt utterly exhausted. The torrent was mounting higher and higher, choking the ravine, submerging the projecting rocks.

Again he managed to get a hold and this time to scramble on to one of the enormous boulders. But the water broke over him with a roar, and he leaped to avoid its whirlpools. He could not swim any longer in such a torrent. But in that terrible moment he felt he had escaped the lightning and the torrent only to be dashed to death

against these rocks, for he was falling down —down—down—

Of course it was not so far as it seemed, and he landed among the rocks and not back in the water. He lay inert; he had not lost consciousness, but his strength was completely gone, and he was not quite sure whether he was alive or dead. The worst of the storm was over. It was still pouring, but the electrical disturbances had subsided.

Then he became aware of terrible, excruciating pains. He tried to move and found he was helpless. Then he realized all the pain came from his legs. It seemed as if his right leg must be yards in length—his foot away off in the distance. Undoubtedly broken. The left one seemed all right except around the ankle. That was either broken or sprained.

He grimly reflected that electrocution or drowning would have been preferable to his present plight. There was not one chance in a hundred that he would be found alive. The thunder and lightning had stopped, but the rain continued to come down in thick black torrents. He had landed in a cup of the rocks. They towered to various heights all about him. These were undoubtedly part of the Cathedral Rocks. He could not imagine how he had reached them but there they were. The trail he had been following must have been steeper than he had realized, or else at this point the rocks came farther down the mountain than was apparent from the spot where he and Grant had made camp.

Grant! He wondered if Grant had survived the terrible storm, but Kiernan did not think about Grant or anything else for very long. His pain was excruciating, and he screamed aloud in a sudden, terrible delirium. The screams came back echoed by the rocks. And then other screams not his penetrated into his consciousness. Coyotes!

THE rain soaked him and lashed him, but it did not numb the pain. How long, he wondered in a rational second, could a man retain consciousness under such conditions? He hoped that he might die before the coyotes found him. His eyes became accustomed to the blackness of the ravine, and suddenly he realized that the pile of rocks just ahead of him had the appearance of a house. He stared through the falling sheets of rain, afraid to trust his eyes. This must be madness. A mad mirage of rain, rocks and fever.

For, of course, there could not be any house in such a place? Then he remembered his mission. Could it be—? ——, maybe it was! The raging torrent had tossed him into the hiding place of the smugglers—the opium cache.

He could detect a very faint light, and now he knew his eyes were not tricking him. He did not care whether the house sheltered smugglers, thieves or murderers. It was a refuge, and he called madly for help. Shrieked again and again, and it seemed as if his calls must penetrate the storm, but there was no response from the cabin. Only the answering cries of the coyotes mocked him.

He felt for his automatic, and then for the first time realized that the torrent had stripped him almost naked. His belt, revolver and shirt were gone. Nothing remained but the shreds of his trousers and underclothing.

He would not die so close to shelter! He turned over on his stomach, and found that he could drag himself along the ground, although every move was horrible torture. He lost consciousness, but probably for only a few minutes. Eventually he dragged himself close to the cabin. Now his cries must be heard, and he called again and again. There was no answer, and yet he was absolutely sure there was a faint light. He rested after every move. It was hours—or it seemed hours—before he reached the cabin.

Not until his hands felt the wet, rough logs was he sure that his fever was not tricking him. He found the door, but it was barred from the inside. He renewed his cries and beat with his fists upon the door, but all to no purpose. He found a rock and threw it against the door, but the logs were too stout. There must be other entrances. He crawled away and finally found a shutter which had been torn loose by the storm and swung upon a single hinge —a shutter without a window, and in its present condition offering no resistance to the rain which poured into the cabin. Obviously there was no one in the house, or the shutter would have been closed and fastened in some manner.

But the light—the light. He must get in,

for certainly it was better to die in there than to be eaten by coyotes in the darkness outside. Their screams were rapidly coming nearer. And after the storm some one would undoubtedly return to the house. Whoever had left could not have gone far, for there was the light.

Finally he managed to draw himself up by his hands and was able to look through the opening where the shutter had been torn away. The rain had not penetrated far into the room, and a little spirit-lamp on a stool burned away placidly in spite of thunder, lightning and wind. It threw its feeble light on an old man stretched out on a bunk against the wall.

Dead! Undoubtedly, but he could not have been dead long, Kiernan reflected. Struck by the lightning probably. But then the cabin surely would have burned. Only lightning does such freakish things. It had missed him, for instance.

Then out of the semi-darkness of the cabin something bounded toward him, and Kiernan fell back to the ground with a shriek of pain and fright. The coyotes! Then his shriek changed to an hysterical laugh. The leaping wolf was only a friendly dog, and Owen Kiernan patted it and thanked God for something alive.

At last, with a tremendous, desperate effort, he managed to pull himself through the shuttered opening into the cabin. He closed the shutter behind to keep out the rain. To keep the rain away from the dead man and the dying one. He lay there just inside the cabin, and gradually drifted off—

Before final unconsciousness his senses were aware of two things aside from his terrible pain: There was a sickening sweet, overpowering odor in the room; and some one, not the dog, was breathing heavily. Then the old man was not dead, and the odor—Kiernan recognized it—was opium! He forced himself back into reality. The opium nauseated him so that it almost relieved his pain. He crawled across the room. The perplexed dog, a mongrel collie not without a trace of the coyotes which had so terrified Kiernan, raced madly around, barking and wagging his tail.

The sleeper was an evil-appearing old man, yellow and wrinkled, with a stubby beard and wisps of long gray hair. The opium pipe had fallen from his claw-like fingers, and lay on the floor. A can with a small amount of the molasses-like drug was on the stool with the lamp. Kiernan shook the sleeper, but he was not to be aroused; he was in the full grip of the drug.

Kiernan fell back to the floor. He must find some way to bind up his tortured limbs; some way to make a splint. He crawled away from the bunk, but he only managed a few feet. His torture overpowered him, and he became delirious again. The walls of the cabin closed in on him. The friendly dog became a pack of coyotes. The old man was beckoning death. He raised himself on his hands, and then fell prone, mercifully enveloped in unconsciousness at last.

Some one was roughly shaking him—God! the pain—

He opened his eyes. It was the old man. Then it had not been a nightmare. It was only too real. His legs—God! his legs—he writhed in agony.

The old man, trembling violently, drew back in alarm.

"Who are you? What's the matter with you?"

"My legs," Kiernan moaned. "For God's sake do something for me, or—or shoot me!"

The old man looked more closely and began to realize Kiernan's condition. He immediately began making preparations for giving first aid, breaking up a wooden box for splints and finding cloths. For the time being he made no further effort to question Kiernan. He was an excellent amateur surgeon, as are most men who spend their lives in the wilderness, and in a very short time he had the leg rudely set and bound to the splint, and the left ankle tightly wrapped and saturated with liniment. Kiernan bore the pain without a murmur, and the final relief when the old man had finished compensated for everything.

Stretched on a cot, Kiernan speculated on his next move. It was daylight now, and the storm continued unabated, although without thunder and lightning. The old man had saved his life, and, though this was certainly the opium cache, Kiernan decided his benefactor must not suffer.

The old man waited expectantly, and Kiernan told his story:

"MY PARTNER and I are prospecting down below here, and just before the storm came up yesterday I started out to see if I could find some game for our dinner. Before I realized what was happening the

storm broke, and I had to fight for my life. I finally got here."

The old man did not look convinced.

"How did you come up the trail?" he demanded. "Where is your camp?"

"I didn't come up the trail," Kiernan replied truthfully enough. "I was thrown over the rocks by the torrent."

"Thrown over the rocks!" the old man cried incredulously. "Why it's a sheer fifty foot drop on both sides of those rocks."

"I can't help that," Kiernan insisted. "The water was up that high, and I rolled or fell all the way down."

"And are still alive!" the old man commented. "Where is your camp?"

"I haven't any idea," Kiernan admitted, "except that it's in the woods somewhere."

"On the south side?" the old man persisted.

"Sure," Kiernan replied. "We're just wandering around. Left Tucson a couple of days ago."

"That's why I didn't see you on the trail," the old man muttered almost in an undertone.

Kiernan disregarded the observation.

"Is there any way I can possibly get word to my partner when the storm is over?" he asked.

"We'll see; we'll see," the old man said impatiently. "You're lucky you're alive. What in the —— are you prospecting for in these hills? Don't you know every inch of them has been gone over time and time again?"

"That's what they said around Jerome before Clark developed the United Verde," Kiernan remarked. "We're just taking a chance."

The old man grunted.

"I'm—I'm a pretty sick man," he said. "Suffer with asthma a great deal. That's why I live up here, and—and I have some Mexican medicine I smoke to clear my head. It makes me sleep very sound. I guess you noticed the peculiar odor when you came in last night?"

He looked at his unwelcome visitor through half-closed bloodshot eyes. Kiernan had observed that all traces of the opium layout had been removed.

"To tell the truth," Kiernan said slowly; "I just barely remember falling in here. The storm had torn that shutter loose, and I remember climbing in, or rather falling in. Then everything went black, and I thought the coyotes had me. I don't remember anything else until you shook me this morning."

The old man waited a long time before he said anything; he was evidently weighing Kiernan's story.

"The dog was whining over you," he finally said, "when I woke up. It doesn't seem possible—over the rocks—"

"Well my legs show it, don't they?" Kiernan demanded ruefully.

Yes, the old man admitted that. He prepared some food and Kiernan was surprized to discover that he was hungry. He dozed fitfully through the day. He realized the gravity of his predicament, but in his helpless condition and with the storm raging outside it was impossible to do anything.

He was completely in the old man's power, and he sensed that the prospecting story was not believed. Should he tell the truth, and promise the old man immunity? But that was palpably ridiculous. He was *not in any condition* to make promises. The old man could take means far more certain to assure silence.

The day passed with very little conversation between the two men. The storm occasionally let up for an hour or two, only to begin again with increased fury. As night came Kiernan's pain increased until it was almost unbearable. The old man changed the bandages and applied more liniment, but this time he was very bungling. He was exceedingly nervous; the effect of the opium was evidently wearing off, and it was time for his daily smoke.

Kiernan felt that his fever was rising rapidly. He made a determined effort to keep awake and clear-headed, for he realized that if he became delirious he would probably make some disclosure quite sufficient to confirm the suspicions of the old man. He begged for quinine and whisky, but the old man querulously said that he was not running a hospital. Finally, he gave Kiernan a little whisky.

And it was apparent to Kiernan that the old man was also having a bad time of it. He dared not seek the oblivion of his opium pipe in the presence of this suspicious prospector. Kiernan had been given an old deck of cards, and although the designs and numbers swam before his eyes, he desperately played solitaire until way into the night. At last, the old man, tossing on his bunk, demanded that the lamp be extinguished. Kiernan was forced to comply.

Kiernan was burning with fever. He tossed aside the frayed quilt which the old man had given him. He could not stay in the dark, stuffy room. It would be much better outside on the cool, wet rocks.

His legs seemed all right. He could walk. The pain was horrible but he could walk. And yet though he walked, he could not leave the cot. His legs had quite left him, and were doing some independent walking. Then there came a moment of lucidness, and he found himself beating his paining, bandaged legs against the cot. Delirium was beginning. Had he said anything yet? The old man was feigning sleep, but Kiernan knew it was only a sham. Kiernan decided before real delirium came again he would do a little shamming on his own accord. Possibly he could throw the old man off the scent.

"I tell you," he screamed. "I believe him. He knows what he's talking about. Why shouldn't there be gold in these mountains. Gold! I say, gold!"

"Where are you going to find it?" some one asked him. Kiernan looked up in astonishment. It sounded as if it were the old man's voice, but it was Kiernan's fellow officer, Martin Grant, who seemed to stand over him. So the fever tricked him.

"Why, hello, Martin," Kiernan said joyfully. "How did you find this place?"

"How did *you* find it?" Grant asked with the old man's voice.

"Caught in the storm and fell over the rocks," Kiernan explained. "We were on the wrong side. There's a trail up the north side of the mountain. But this is the cache right enough."

"You are sure of that are you?"

"Certainly. The old man is over there in the bunk now. He was smoking hop when I came in. Opium, Martin, opium. That was a good tip all right. My legs—good ——, Martin!—cut them off—anything—we'll get the cache and the gang, Martin, but not the old man. He saved my life. We'll promise him immunity, if he'll tell the truth—

"What are you laughing at Martin? Can't you do something for my legs. That's right—tighten the bandages—but not too tight, Martin—not too tight— God!—you're choking me—choking me—what the —— are you doing?—"

That was all then, and toward morning the fever died down, and consciousness returned. He was bound, hand and foot, lashed securely to the cot; also gagged and blindfolded. He realized immediately that he had been talking in his delirium to the old man, thinking he was Martin Grant. He also realized that the room was filled with opium fumes again, and the old man was muttering aloud. As Kiernan's brain cleared he began to catch the muddled phrases coming from the bunk.

"—Thought you'd fool me—old Eric—prospector!—ought to kill him I guess, but I want to leave him for the boys—they'll be here all right—must have been them on the trail—"

Kiernan made a little movement, straining to hear.

"Are you awake, Mr. Prospector? I hope you are. You'll let me off will you—if I squeal on the others—wait until the boys hear that—are the bandages too tight?"

Kiernan could hear the old man sucking in the opium fumes.

"—Guess I'll have to anyway—can't wait for the boys—might fall asleep—you're a pretty slick one aren't you, Mr. Prospector—might get out of those bandages—so you're after opium? Well, under this cellar there's about a hundred thousand dollars' worth—does that information cheer you up before you die—you can take that information to —— with you—and that's where all Government officers go!"

HE LAUGHED with the gaiety of a fiend.

"But I want the boys to find out where you learned about this —they'll make you talk—they'll take the bandages off your legs and put new ones on—Joe will make you talk. If that Jim gave it away when he was drinking, I'll kill him—just like I'm going to kill you—squealers and revenue officers—one more little pill—opium, Mr. Prospector— I killed my brother and I can kill my son, too, if he's a squealer—me and Joe are enough—"

His sons! These were undoubtedly the two Mexicans the sick man in the foothills had mentioned. Their mother must have been Mexican, for the old man was certainly a Scandinavian.

"—I don't think you can get loose Mr. Prospector—you wouldn't go far with those legs— I wonder— I'd like to have the boys make you talk but I don't want to go to sleep with you here. I'll smoke just one

more then decide—make sure you're tight enough anyway—one more and then I'll see—"

There was another ghoulish laugh.

"—I don't want you to die so easy. I've always wanted to see Joe with a revenue officer. He'll pull your dirty tongue out after you've told him what he wants to know—and then he'll cut your ears off and send them to some of your buddies so they'll be warned and not listen to too much—one more and then I'll fix you up a little—not enough to go to sleep—just a couple of more and then I'll be steady enough to have a little sport with you—we'll see—the old knife can still find it's way through a skunk's hide—better not take any more chances—"

There was silence, and Kiernan waited breathlessly. But the old man started again.

"One more—but sticking is too good for you— Joe will skin you alive—and I'll stuff the skin for a souvenir—just one more—"

"—one more—one more—one last one—"

Then silence, a long silence, and regular breathing, and Owen Kiernan realized that he had been reprieved again. The opium smoker had passed into dreamland—a drugged, heavy sleep which would hold him in the trance-like condition in which he had been when Kiernan fell into the cabin.

It had stopped raining; streaks of dawn could be seen even through the rag which blindfolded him. Bound as he was, he was so exhausted that he again fell into a heavy sleep. This time without dreams or delirium; possibly the opium-laden atmosphere partially drugged him. It was the strangest sleep he ever had: bound hand and foot; hopelessly crippled, and with a murderous opium smoker for a sleeping companion. But nevertheless Kiernan slept soundly, and awakened quite refreshed.

He could tell that it was broad daylight, and a fine, clear day. He remained perfectly quiet, taking stock of the situation. The old man was breathing heavily, peacefully slumbering. Then Kiernan remembered that the old man had said his sons were on the trail. It was a clear day, and they might arrive at any minute. Obviously, the first thing was to release himself.

But it was easier planned than executed. The old man had been most efficient. The dog came over from his corner, and licked Kiernan's face, and in that there was consolation and friendliness at any rate. Kiernan managed to move his head sufficiently so that the handkerchief which gagged him worried the dog. The animal responded to the invitation to play, and caught the ends of the handkerchief in his teeth. Finally dog and man worked the gag loose, and Kiernan could breathe with freedom.

Then he pushed the dog with his head and invited the animal to jump, to "sic" him, and to do every playful stunt in which a dog might possibly be interested. The dog responded and began chewing at the ropes which bound the man.

There was no sound from the bunk except the monotonous, heavy breathing. Kiernan worked slowly and carefully. He realized that haste would not accomplish anything, and probably bring back the fever. He worked himself to one side and had considerable leverage for his hands and arms. Finally, after hours of working and resting and with the assistance of the teeth of the dog, he was free. Slowly he crawled about the cabin. He refreshed himself with whisky and a little bread. He could not find a revolver or any sort of gun. The old man, realizing that his long periods of unconsciousness made him practically dead, probably felt safer without firearms in the cabin. If there were any, they were well concealed.

However, Kiernan found several long, wicked-looking knives which might prove useful. He also discovered a pair of powerful field-glasses and focused them down the northern slope of the mountainside.

And there—

Sure enough! Two riders on burros were slowly ascending. The old man had undoubtedly seen them at the foot of the trail before the storm broke, and had realized they would camp until it was clear.

Some sort of immediate action was necessary, but his helplessness was appalling. Plan after plan was considered and rejected. He could only crawl, and was forced to rest every few feet. It was useless to think of escaping over the rocks and down the mountain. That meant a horrible death; he would rather remain and die fighting.

Since the old man would probably return to consciousness before the arrival of the sons, the logical thing to do was to kill the old man immediately and then attempt an ambush against the two armed men. But desperate as was his plight, Owen Kiernan

could not bring himself to the point of killing the old man in his sleep.

He tried to raise the door which opened into the opium cellar, but it was heavily padlocked and he could not find the keys. He did not have the strength to break the lock and if he succeeded it would only be an immediate sign to the sons that something was wrong.

His pain constantly increased, and the whisky was exhausted. He could fight no longer; a shot from a revolver would be a blessed relief. He knew from the mutterings of the old man before he had passed into his opium dreams that there would be no quarter. But everything became blurred again. Kiernan was again delirious, slept it off and the hours passed.

When he awakened the sun was again hidden behind clouds: another storm was coming up. Another reprieve if the men delayed. He could handle the old man, and he wondered if it would not be possible to use the old fellow as a sort of hostage: "Advance another step and I will kill your father!" Then he realized the absurdity of such plans against two able-bodied, heavily armed men.

He scanned the trail with the field-glasses. He was amazed to discover that the distance had evidently been deceptive, or else he had been unconscious for many hours. The two men were within a half-mile of the cabin. There was no time for further thought. He looked around desperately for a temporary hiding place. There was only one such spot in the room—a rather horrible spot.

TAKING the two long knives, Kiernan crawled into the bunk with the drugged old man. Carefully he climbed over the sleeper, and stretched out as best he could against the wall. The bunk was very dark, and Kiernan crouched low against the wall. The sleeper stirred a bit but showed no other signs of awakening. The sickening sweetness of the opium was almost nauseating. Kiernan's movements were necessarily very slow, and he had barely adjusted himself when he heard the men outside.

Then they entered the house. Kiernan dared not raise his head. He heard the door open, and since there was no immediate following sound, he judged that the men halted in the doorway, surveying the room. What had he left behind as evidence of his presence? He had righted the cot, and put away the ropes which had bound him. He did not believe there were any signs of his presence, but probably in his haste and nervousness he had forgotten something.

The dog greeted the men joyously, and Kiernan wondered if the animal would betray him. Fortunately, the dog did not seem particularly intelligent, and played with any one who happened to be around. The men tramped into the room, talking to each other. They were evidently of mixed blood, as Kiernan had conjectured, and their conversation was made up of words and sentences from both languages—English and Spanish. Kiernan understood enough Spanish to follow them.

"I told you everything would be all right," one of the men said. "You're too —— yellow; that's what's the matter with you."

"It ain't your fault if everything is all right," the other man retorted. "And I'm telling you, it's the last time you'll ever give me a scare like this."

One of the men advanced to the bunk and gave the sleeper a cursory glance.

"Dead to the world," the solicitous son announced. "Been hitting it pretty hard, I guess."

Kiernan could hear the opening of the cellar door. He had hoped they would wait until night to go into the cellar; then, possibly, with one man in the cellar and the other in the room he would make his fight. But they were evidently losing no time in assuring themselves that their precious contraband was safe.

He judged from the sounds that both descended into the cellar; he ventured a peep. The room was empty; the cellar door was open, and he could hear the men below. He had a forlorn hope that they might have left their guns in the room, but they had evidently gone below with some idea of trouble in spite of the padlocked door. If he could drop the door, and make them his prisoners! But they were climbing the stairs as the thought came to him, and he just had time to drop back into his retreat.

"Now are you satisfied," the apologetic brother demanded, "that everything is jake?"

"It looks all right," the other brother grudgingly admitted. "But from now on, you stay home with the old man. I'll 'tend

to the other things alone, or get Miguel."

Kiernan could hear preparations for eating—the rattle of cooking utensils and the lighting of the fire. He ventured another peep. The two men had now made themselves comfortable. Their belts, each with two revolvers in holsters, lay on the table, but the table was half-way across the room from the bunk.

The clouds were getting thick. The growl of thunder could be heard.

"Just got here in time," one of the men said. "I had enough rain night before last."

Kiernan agreed.

"The old man is surely having a sleep," one of the sons observed.

"Let him alone," the other cautioned. "You know what he is if he comes out too soon."

"I'm not going to bother him!"

It was getting quite dark and one of the men lighted the lamp. They drew up to the table for their meal.

"I'm sure I left some liquor here," one said; "but I can't find it. Do you suppose the old man has been hitting it?"

"Want to start with liquor again, do you, Jim?" the other commented.

"Well, a little drink up here ain't going to hurt, is it?" Jim retorted. "You had me so —— scared and shaky I need a drink. Look at that lightning. Worse than night before last."

"Well, close the shutter and stop looking at it."

The shutter was closed, and they continued their meal.

Suddenly Kiernan, absorbed in the conversation between the two men, felt two bony, horribly clawlike hands around his throat. The terrible fingers seemed superhuman; they dug into his flesh like the talons of a hawk or vulture, and breathing was impossible. The old man—either in an opium dream or in semi-consciousness—was choking him to death. Kiernan tried to squirm free, but it was useless, and quiet was imperative.

He still held firmly to one of the long knives he had brought into the bunk. Now as the breath left his body he mustered all his strength and plunged the sharp blade into the drugged monster. It was probably just as well; otherwise, he would not have had the heart to destroy the old beast. There was only a sort of gurgle, not loud enough to attract the attention of the two men, and then the fingers relaxed on his throat.

In mingled relief and horror, Kiernan felt the body. There was no life. The blood spurted over him and he pressed as close to the wall as he could. The room was black with darkness now except for the lamp on the table where the men were eating, and the feeble rays of the tiny spirit-lamp which continued to burn on the stool next to the bunk. He could watch the two diners without fear of detection.

The one called Joe, obviously the older of the two, walked over to the door and opened it slightly.

"Sure the burros are all right?" he asked. "It's going to storm worse than it did before."

If only one would leave to attend to the burros—but Jim assured his brother that the burros were quite secure in the corral. Joe remained standing by the door. And then Kiernan saw the man Jim staring intently at the bunk, and as he stared an expression of fear and horror came into his eyes.

Kiernan immediately sensed the reason. He could hear the *drip, drip, drip*— The blood of the dead man was slowly trickling to the floor, and the little spirit-lamp shed just enough light to increase the ghastliness of the sight. Hypnotized, Jim advanced slowly to the bunk, his eyes glazed with fright.

"What in the —— is the matter?" the man named Joe demanded.

HE WAS never answered, but as he asked the question he strode over to the table and picked up his six-shooter. He sensed danger.

Jim at the bunk let out a half-paralyzed moan of horror. He stooped over, and for Kiernan it was then or never. He reached out and grasped the terrified man by the throat, shutting off his breath and holding him as a shield in front of the bunk.

Both brothers were panic-stricken by this unseen terror coming from the blackness of the bunk where they thought only their father lay in peaceful opium dreams. Had they realized that the unseen terror was only a cripple, armed with a knife, it would have been different, but unseen danger is always the most fearful.

Joe lost his head and in complete panic fired point-blank at the bunk just as Kiernan grasped Jim and raised him from the

floor. There was a blood-curdling scream from the man he held, but Kiernan was not sure whether the man was really shot or just insane with fright, but he did not wait for assurance one way or the other. He relaxed his hold on the writhing, screaming man and threw the alcohol lamp and the stool, in rapid succession, at the other brother.

The stool hit the table, which swayed and then toppled over, extinguishing the lamp with a final gust of flame and the crash of glass. Kiernan heard the revolvers hit the floor.

Now the man Joe was afraid to shoot. He realized that he had killed or wounded his brother. The room was in complete darkness and there was a moment of awful silence. Kiernan rolled out of the bunk and crawled along the floor. The greatest moment of his life came when his hand closed over one of the revolvers on the floor. With it, he made one final effort—and now there was no consciousness of pain—and rolled under the bunk.

For the first time the advantage was his. The storm had commenced with great fury. The doors and shutters were closed, and while the lightning could be seen through cracks in the logs, it was not sufficient to relieve the blackness of the room.

Kiernan felt something crawling along the floor toward him. He fired, and the crawling figure stopped, but an answering bullet grazed his hand; Kiernan was sure that he had stopped Jim, and that Joe remained to be reckoned with.

Kiernan waited. Seconds in actuality; hours it seemed. Jim was certainly dead. There was only one other man breathing in that room—breathing heavily, breathing in terror. But there was no movement. He was still, and the man under the bunk was still, and the two dead men were very still.

There was a blinding flash, a deafening roar, and a corner of the cabin burst into flame. As the lightning illuminated the room, both men fired, but the advantage was all with Kiernan flat on the floor, shielded by the bunk. Joe's bullet buried itself in the floor. The rain immediately extinguished the fire. Kiernan listened for sounds of life, but now it was impossible to hear anything above the storm.

The next flash of lightning revealed the body of Joe prone upon the floor. But he might be shamming. And then another flash revealed a rapidly enlarging pool of blood. Kiernan could feel the body of Jim; that was absolutely without life.

Kiernan lay there inert, paralyzed, without thought or feeling. He did not see the lightning which continued to reveal the scene of carnage; he did not feel the warm drip of blood. Kiernan was unconscious again.

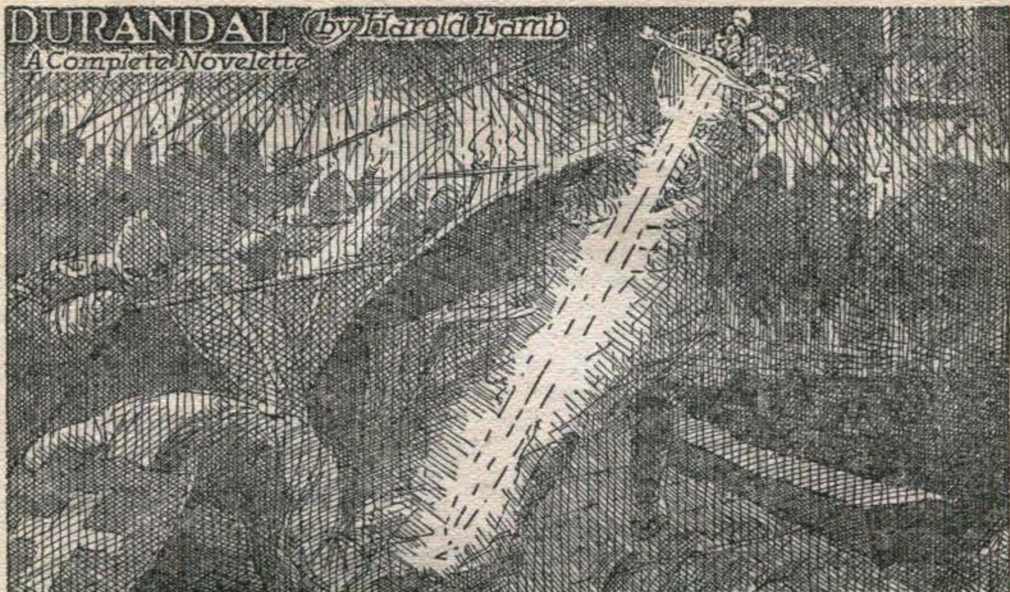
When he awakened some one was breathing heavily against him. Then for the first time he completely lost his head. He had lapsed into unconsciousness absolutely sure that the three men were dead. This breathing of one living snapped the final cord of his nerves. He shrieked in unearthly fear, and was about to empty his revolver into the breathing thing, when there was a little whine—the dog had reappeared from some corner, and was offering comfort. Kiernan buried his face in the shaggy coat of the beast and wept hot tears of relief and fever.

IT WAS almost two days later when they found him among the wreckage and blood. When morning came and the storm cleared away, he had lighted bonfires in the forlorn hope of signaling to his partner, Martin Grant. Grant had survived the storm, and had spread the alarm in the foothills, and dispatched a messenger to Tucson. The bonfires were seen, and several ranchers knew of the trail on the north side of the mountains.

The slow, painful trip down the mountain—the seizure of the opium—all of that is detail.

The recovery of Kiernan was slow, and weeks later when he read the newspaper accounts he was disgusted to find himself enrolled among the "killers" of the southwest.

He has never been able to shake off the appellation.



Author of "White Falcon," "The Shield," etc.

It hurts not the sword that its sheath be worn, nor the hawk that its nest be mean.—MAQAMAT OF HARIRI.

MAVROZOMES pushed back the flap of his tent and looked at the stars. Dawn was only three or four hours off, and he had a task to finish before the first light. Always, before a battle, Mavrozomes had this task.

He took up the insignia of his office, which was armorer to the Emperor Theodore. The silver hammer he thrust into his belt and the white leather glove likewise. Mavrozomes was a creature of habit, and though he did not like to think, it was now necessary for him to do so.

Through the mist of the ravine he watched the red eyes of light that were the fires of the men-at-arms, and he sighed. Ten thousand men lay or sat by their weapons in this ravine, and from the ten thousand he must select one. This was his task and it troubled him.

He had put off doing it until he heard the advance division getting their horses out of the lines, stumbling about in the mist and talking low-voiced. If the advance was mounting to move forward, there would surely be a battle, because Sultan Kai-Kosru lay yonder in the plain, beyond the ravine, with a good many more than ten thousand paynims.

In his own mind Mavrozomes was not quite clear as to whether the paynims were Turks or Arabs;* but he knew very well they were Muhammadans—bearded gentlemen who wielded curved swords that had keen edges.

Somewhere in the plain was a small river, called the Meander, and on the river a walled town. The town was Antioch and belonged to Sultan Kai-Kosru, and this town the crusaders meant to take for themselves before the sun had set again. Mavrozomes wished that the paynims were not so numerous—or that the Emperor Theodore had decided not to give them battle.

There was little chance of the helm or hauberk of the Emperor Theodore suffering harm on the morrow—so the armorer reflected. His work had been to polish, not to mend, his master's chain mail.

Theodore Lascaris, the gracious, the all-governing, the lord of Constantinople and Nicea, would not be within reach of sword edge or arrow tip on the morrow. But the paynims would seek him, and for this reason —and to hearten the emperor's men—someone else must wear the gold inlaid armor of Theodore, the surcoat with the royal purple border, and the shining helm surmounted by the griffon crest.

*Kai-Kosru was sultan of the powerful Seljuk Turks and Turkomans, in the early thirteenth century.

Behind the bars of the steel casque the face of this unknown would not be seen. The foeman would notice him, would seek him out and perhaps slay him. But the person of the real Emperor Theodore would be safeguarded.

It was not a simple matter to select this make-believe monarch. The man would need to be a weapon wielder of skill and daring, to keep safe the imperial standard that would follow him through the course of the battle. He must be a man of clear mind and tight lip, and one who could hold up hand and head in chaos. Certainly many of the crusaders would believe that he was actually the Emperor Theodore.

Since the odds were he would not live to see the sun set, he must needs be a man of courage.

So Mavrozomes reasoned, and made his way past the snoring and growling ribalds who tended fires and horses and stole what they might. He avoided the groups of sergeants-at-arms. The mock emperor should be of gentle blood.

He circled around the pavilions of the nobles, before which motionless banners drooped. Once a lantern was swung close to his face and he waited until the patrol had clanked and stumbled away from the mist. He waited because, in the gleam of light, he had seen a man sitting on a stone.

Mavrozomes had never before seen a man just like this one, who sat alone in the mist. A long staff, iron-bound, lay across his bare knees, and his long, loose-jointed arms rested upon the staff. He wore a short, sleeveless shirt of clumsy plate mail. Over this a cloak was thrown carelessly, and the cloak was white with a gold clasp at the throat and a hood upon the shoulders.

"What man are you?" asked the armorer.

It was clear to him that this stranger did not wear a knight's belt, and the only weapon hanging from his leather girdle was a short falchion with a horn handle, little larger than a knife.

The stranger did not look up.

"I am Donn Dera."

Soft as a woman's was his low voice. But his face was dark and bony, the hair shaggy over eyes and forehead—shaggy and fiery red.

"What lord do you follow?" demanded Mavrozomes, who was plagued by a demon of curiosity. "What do you here?"

By the voice of the stranger, he was neither Greek nor Italian, Fleming nor Frenchman. His hairy, withe-bound legs were like a ribald's or a thrall's, and he certainly had no helmet about him anywhere. Nor upon his cloak was there any sign of the cross worn by every follower of the Emperor Theodore.

"I wreak destruction. Yea, I look for rapine."

Mavrozomes stepped back a pace, but the man in the cloak appeared to take no heed of him. About the stranger was something sad and lonesome, and unyielding. Thralls did not speak to the armorer of the emperor like that.

"Are you noble-born, Donn Dera?" asked Mavrozomes. For a space the stranger made no reply.

Then he pointed toward the faint glow where the stars were failing.

"Yea," he said gruffly, as if giving tongue to the burden of his thoughts, "the day comes and there will be a rare feeding of ravens, and whetting of sword edges—there will be sorrow and blood that the wolves will drink. I have no more words for you, little man."

Reminded of his mission and the passing of time, Mavrozomes stifled curiosity and hurried on. Glancing over his shoulder he saw that Donn Dera was still sitting on his stone, alone in the chilling mist.

Mavrozomes picked his way through the tents and the sleeping groups to the fires of the Franks.

These Franks, following their custom, had settled themselves at a little distance from the warriors of the Emperor Theodore. Eight hundred of them, from France and Norman England and Flanders had joined the master of Constantinople in his march against the Saracens. They were the flower of his fighting men—long-limbed and high-tempered—utterly reckless of themselves or others.

HE ASKED his way, and so came to a fire where a dozen men roared over wine cup and dice board. They greeted him with an instant's silence, and then quick outcry.

"Ho, the pagan gods have sent a messenger! Here is Thor with his hammer."

"Nay—Saint Denis!—only mark the gauntlet. He has been flying pigeons!"

A dark-browed Provençal—a minstrel, by token of the gittern resting upon one knee—

smiled and swept skilled fingers across the strings.

"Messers," cried he, "attend ye!" And he pitched his fine voice to a ringing couplet:

> "His hair is oiled—painted his cheeks.
> A paladin he—of the Greeks!"

"Well and truly sung, Marcabrun!" declared a giant Frank solemnly, when the roar of mirth had subsided. "You have put heart into yon baron of Constantinople. I trow he'll make a brave stand in the camp when we fare forth to smite the Saracens."

In truth, blood had darkened the smooth cheeks of Mavrozomes. The Franks held the fighting qualities of the Greeks in as much contempt as the men of Constantinople held the savage manners of the crusaders from the west, whom they called barbarians.

"Enough!" cried a young knight suddenly. "See ye not, messers, this armorer bears the insignia of his office?"

The speaker was a youth who had grown to the full strength of manhood. He had put aside his mail and knelt by the fire in stained and creased chamois leather, scarred and rent in more than one place. Broad, black leather strengthened by silver plates belted him above slender hips. His long body upbore the chest and wide shoulders of a man accustomed to the weight of armor.

Wide and firm-set were his lips, and friendly his gray eyes. There was in him more than abundant physical vitality—the eagerness and wilfulness of a boy who has never known shame or suffering. This beauty of head and bearing—or the peculiarity of his long, red-gold hair—had bestowed upon him the nickname of Hugh the Fair.

Him Mavrozomes saluted profoundly, and his boisterous companions were silent.

"To Sir Hugh of Taranto, called the Fair peer of Christendom, most puissant of the knights of the Cross, descendant by direct line of Charlemagne the Great"—he began.

"Enough!" cried the youth again, ill-pleased. "What will ye, Messer Armorer!"

Mavrozomes drew the white gauntlet from his girdle, arousing the instant expectancy of the Franks. Although he knew well that these barbarians from over the sea were not at all patient, he did not know how to curtail his ceremonious message.

"*Equites illustrati*," he announced, "noble knights, Mavrozomes, *armiger imperatoris*, gives greeting and a summons to Sir Hugh from the most illustrious, most gracious emperor—" he lifted the light silvered basinet from his head, and the giant Frank sniffed loudly, aware of musk and oil—"Theodore Lascaris"—he bent his head, throwing up his left hand before his eyes as if dazzled by the very mention of the imperial name—"in this wise. To Sir Hugh hath fallen the honor above price and claim, the distinction of bearing upon his person the imperial and shining helm, the emblazoned shield of the Comneni, so that in the battle with the Saracens of Kai-Kosru, the great sultan, he shall worthily uphold the name and honor of the emperor, strike fear into his foes, and by so doing safeguard the person of Theodore. I await, Sir Hugh, your answer to the summons."

The eyes of the youth kindled and he struck palm to the massive pommel of the sword at his side.

"It likes me well, Messer Mavrozomes!"

The Greek bowed.

"Thus, the charge is accepted. The imperial standard will accompany you. And it would be advisable," he added thoughtfully, "to choose certain of your brother knights renowned by name and deeds, to act as body-guard. Of a truth, the Saracens will not deal lightly with you and your fellows, my Lord."

He could have said nothing better suited to the mood of the men. The minstrel cried that he would ride with Sir Hugh. Only the bearded stalwart, the knight who had baited Mavrozomes, frowned blackly, and stood up, folding his arms on his chest.

"It likes me ill, Greek. I have fought ere now with sword and lance and mace against the Saracens. And I wit well that they will make a set upon Sir Hugh. Hath not your emperor men of valor to his command that he summons a boy such as this to a passage perilous?"

To this Marcabrun took exception.

"Ill said, Rinaldo! Were the emperor to give this honor to a Greek, it would be an affront upon us."

"Now out upon thee, Marcabrun," retorted Rinaldo, "with thy qualms and punctilios! If affront it be, to choose a Greek for the mock-emperor, I say this—when the battle is at an end, we will go over to the Greeks and wipe out the affront with our swords."

"Hast forgotten, Rinaldo," quoth the minstrel, "that we have sworn fellowship with

the Greeks and service to the emperor?"

"Well, we did not swear we would not draw blade upon them." And the bearded Rinaldo glared at Mavrozomes. "I have said it likes me ill, and what I say I will maintain with hand and glove. Full well the cowardly Greeks know that this adventure will give Hugh's flesh to the wolves and ravens."

"Too much have you said, unwisely, Rinaldo," cried Hugh. "Theodore is our leader in this venture and his men are our brothers-in-arms. It is their thought to do honor to the Franks."

"If ever a Greek thought of aught but his own skin and wallet," quoth Rinaldo stubbornly, "then am I a cup-shot churl."

"Messers," spoke up a man who had been silent hitherto—a gray-chinned Norman, blind in one eye—"it is true that among the Crosses there is no baron the equal of Sir Hugh. His valor and prowess at arms is proven. Methinks the honor would be greater did this Theodore yield to him the baton and horn of leadership in this battle. Right willingly would all the Christian knights follow Hugh in that case."

"Aye," shouted Rinaldo, "let it be so! The Greeks shall give the command to Hugh."

Mavrozomes raised his hands in horror, as if he had witnessed sacrilege.

"O ye peers of Christendom!" laughed the minstrel. "Are ye querulous churls, or men of faith? Theodore is crafty and wise in leadership. Have ye followed him a hundred leagues into Asia, to bay at him now, like dogs?"

"Wherever your folly leads you, Marcabrun," declared the morose Norman, "my step shall go as far as yours. But Theodore is a fox with an eye to his burrow. If it suited him, he would betray us."

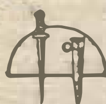
"To whom?" exclaimed the minstrel. "To the jackals and kites? To the Saracens, who hate him in greater measure than they fear us?"

Hereupon Hugh picked up his leather-bound sword, and lifted his hand.

"An end of words! We must bear ourselves so that no foeman comes anear the person of the true Emperor, and this we shall do right willingly."

"Aye so," muttered Rinaldo, "we shall so bear us, by God's grace. And before we mount into the saddle, Theodore shall have proof of our will."

And when Hugh had departed with Mavrozomes, Rinaldo summoned to him the men who had gathered around the fire, hearing rumor of the choice that had fallen upon the young knight. To them the big Frank spoke earnestly, low-voiced, and there was no more roaring of songs or clinking of cups.



IN THE tent of the armorer, Marcabrun, the Provençal, fingered his guitar in high good humor. Marcabrun was already armed, and he followed with experienced eye the fingers of Mavrozomes, who had slipped over the stalwart body of Hugh a double chain mail threaded with gold inlay. From foot to throat the young knight was clad in the glistening mesh. Mavrozomes buckled on him the wide sword belt of the knight, and laced to the steel collar of the hauberk the unmistakable helm of the Emperor Theodore.

It pleased the minstrel that this casque should be inlaid with gold, and surmounted by a cleverly fashioned griffon with flaming rubies for eyes. The two cheek plates and the long nasal piece hid Hugh's features except for eyes and chin. But Marcabrun did not think the shining helm would ward as stout a blow as his own plain conical steel cap.

When the long triangular shield, emblazoned with the Greek cross on a purple field, was slung about the youth's neck, the minstrel gave voice to his delight.

"Olá, messers!" he cried. "It were well that this hour should be rendered joyous with a fitting lay."

"What were better," ventured the armorer courteously, "than the illustrious song of the Franks, of the hero Roland and his sword?"

A shadow crossed the minstrel's brow.

"God forfend! Roland, the peer of Charlemagne, came to death by treachery in a day agone—aye, and the chivalrous Olivier, his brother-in-arms."

"There is no song like Roland's," said Hugh calmly. "I know it well. Sing, O Marcabrun, for this is a joyous hour."

For a moment the minstrel scanned his friend, thinking that the erect form of the youth made a finer figure in the imperial armor than the lean and stooped Theodore. Smiling, he struck the strings under his hand, and the Greeks fell silent to listen.

"It is the prelude of the great battle that

I say and relate," he chanted. "Give heed O noblemen and lieges, to the words of Roland, in the vale of Roncevalles, on the day that Charlemagne passed with his peers through the Pyrenees, and the two heroes held safe the rear of his host —

"Olivier climbed to a mountain height,
Glanced through the valley that lay to right;
He saw advancing the Saracen men,
And thus to Roland he spake again—
'I have seen the paynim,' said Olivier.
'Never on earth did such host appear;
A hundred thousand, with targets bright,
With helmets laced and hauberks white,
Erect and shining their lances tall;
Such battle as waits you did ne'er befall.
In mighty strength are the heathen crew,'
Olivier said, 'and our Franks be few;
My comrade, Roland, sound on your horn;
Charles will hear, and his host return.'

" 'I were mad,' said Roland, 'to do such deed;
Lost in France were my glory's meed.
My Durandal shall smite full hard,
And her hilt be red to the golden guard.
The heathen foemen shall find their fate,
Their death, I swear, in the pass they wait—' "

A swift roar of voices interrupted the measured tones of the minstrel, and a thudding of hoofs and grating of steel was heard without the tent. Rinaldo thrust in his head, coifed and helmeted.

"Well and truly sung, Marcabrun. The Crosses have sent hither a body guard, and await sight of Hugh. Come!"

Going from the tent with the young knight, Marcabrun saw that a gray light overhung the dark ravine, and in the mist he made out a forest of spears. A close array of mounted men surrounded them, and Hugh's battle horse was held in readiness before them. All the eight hundred crusaders had assembled to accompany Hugh, instead of the small band suggested by Mavrozomes.

The knight in the imperial armor halted as if struck when he beheld them, and Rinaldo laughed under his breath.

"Lo, sir brother, here is thy body guard, and if this day thou art slain, full eight hundred bold men will bear thee company."

Sir Hugh looked silently upon the restless war horses, the rows of grim-faced warriors. He went to his charger, picked up the curved horn that hung from its chain at the saddle peak and sounded a blast that echoed from rock to rock in the ravine—a rallying note that the archers who had gone forward in the first advance heard and understood.

But Mavrozomes slipped from his tent and ran, a shadow moving through the mist, to where a light Arab courser had been saddled and kept waiting in readiness. Mounting hastily, he trotted through the encampment of the Greeks, where nobles and servants were coming forth to learn the meaning of the Franks' trumpet call.

Where a wall of cloth had been stretched across the ravine he dismounted and approached two spearmen in silvered mail, who lifted their weapons as he gave the password. At the entrance of a silk pavilion he was scrutinized sharply by the guards and recognized. Taking on one arm his basinet, he raised high his right arm and empty hand, and, bending forward at the waist, crept as a jackal crawls into the presence of Theodore Lascaris, the emperor.

When he beheld under his feet a long, narrow carpet, he bent still lower and drew his right arm across his eyes. Sidewise, he peered at the gilded sandals, the long cloth hose of Greek attendants, until he judged it was time to speak. There had been a deep silence in the pavilion.

"Is it permitted, O greatest of the Comneni, to speak and live? The servant of thine Illustriousness hath gained the consent of the most renowned of the Franks, who now goes forth in thine armor—"

"What was the trumpet call?"

A quick, modulated voice asked the question.

"May it please your Grandeur, that was the rallying note, to announce the advance of the Crosses. From horse sergeant to baron, they ride forth, led by the champion who is garbed for the day in thy royal semblance — may thy years be increased, and never foe come anigh thee!

"To them likewise I gave thine order, that they should pass from the ravine and attack, and that thy host would follow—"

Mavrozomes paused, to discover if his master wished him to proceed, and again he took account of legs to make certain that no hostile ear should hear what next he said.

"It has happened in all things as thou hast desired it. Lo, the Franks go against the sultan and his array. The Saracens will be confounded by the onset of the barbarians. There will be a slaughter, and a ceaseless play of weapons. When the day is near its end, then may the invincible host of the emperor advance to victory.' '

"Aye," said the reflective voice, "it is well done. And yet—will not the Franks

turn back when they find they are not supported by my companies?"

"Turn back they will not. They are like unleashed hunting hounds at scent of a stag. Their champion may be smitten down, their standards reft from them, and still they that breathe will fight on. It is the nature of the barbarian."

Another voice was heard, modulated and unctuous as a flute attuned to the ear of a musician:

"May I, the Cæsar* of your grandeur, speak and live? When the imperial host asvances upon the broken Saracens, a remnant of the barbarians may yet stand in arms. *Imperator Maximus*, it were well that *none* should outlive this day."

"Aye, great Lord," put in Mavrozomes eagerly, "the barbarians have blunt tongues and scurrilous. Not an hour agone they did blaspheme thy Majesty—"

"Thy mission is accomplished, Mavrozomes," the cryptic voice of the emperor broke in. "Take care to guard thy tongue!"

Not once had the armorer looked up into the lean and pallid face of Theodore Lascaris. He did not see the tawny eyes pucker thoughtfully, or the down-curving lips tighten. Yet he heard the unmistakable clink of gold coins.

Theodore, weighing within his fingers a small purse that lay in an ivory casket at his side, was considering how greatly he need reward the armorer. And Mavrozomes, from the corners of his eyes, was watching the hand of the emperor.

CHAPTER II

THE FRANKS

WHEN the sun was high, the last files of the crusaders emerged from the ravine and formed on the sandy plain. Close at hand upon the left, the river Meander wound through dense rushes where waterfowl clamored and swooped. The ground in front sloped gently down to a dry bed of a stream, and ascended gradually to a line of hillocks a quarter mile away.

On this ridge the host of Kai-Kosru awaited them.

The Saracens seemed to be drawn up in no particular formation. Groups of horsemen were visible moving through the gullies between the hillocks, and the heights were held in strength. Far to the right, clusters of mounted archers trotted out and turned back again.

This continual motion of the Saracens and the heat haze that clung to the valley bed concealed the true numbers of the sultan, and the little group of leaders that surveyed the field from in advance of the crusaders' ranks watched it all in silence.

"I like it not," quoth the gray Norman, brushing the sweat from his eyes.

"What is their strength?" wondered Marcabrun, who had put aside his gittern, and was drawing taut the lacing of his coif.

"Three—five times our own," answered Rinaldo impatiently. "Come, messers, let us advance out of this hell-hole and try them with sword strokes."

"More lie hidden beyond the upland," insisted the Norman, "and it seems to me that here we have the full power of Seljuk and Turkoman under the banner of Kai-Kosru."

"Let it be so!" cried Rinaldo. "We may not now draw back. If, indeed, twenty thousand paynim lurk on yonder height, we should do ill to abide their charge. Forward, say I."

"Aye!" acclaimed the impetuous Provençal. "What says Sir Hugh?"

"The emperor tarries," mused the young knight, without turning his head. "When the Greeks come forth from the ravine there will be confusion in their array. At that moment well might the Saracens charge and do us harm."

The silence of the older nobles showed their assent and understanding.

"The emperor tarries," went on Sir Hugh quietly, "and so must we go forward to clear his path. Mark ye, messers, that the Saracens hold broken ground. They have left us the heavy sands to cross, the height to climb. Their real strength lies beyond our sight."

"And so," quoth the dour Norman, "it

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*Cæsar—The Greek Empire was the last fragment of Roman dominion, comprising, in the early thirteenth century, what is now the Balkans, Greece, the eastern islands of the Mediterranean, and Asia Minor, along the coast of the Black Sea, and as far to the south as Palestine. Constantinople was its imperial city.

It had been ruled for centuries by the family of the Comneni. Now the warlike Seljuk Turks had settled themselves in the heart of Asia Minor, and the crusaders—exasperated beyond endurance by the double-dealing of the Greeks—had driven the emperor out of Constantinople, into Asia. The policy of Theodore was to weaken the crusaders while pretending to be their friend, and to break up the Seljuk power.

The title of Cæsar was the second highest in the empire, and was given in theory to the commander of the imperial host—in reality it was sold to money lenders, even Tatars, and to several at the same time

were well to abide the coming of the Greeks."

"Not so!" Sir Hugh shook his helmeted head. "If the foe be in such strength, they can pass around us, and climb to the sides of the ravine, trapping the emperor and his followers."

And the youth in the imperial armor tightened his rein, trotting along the line of knights and men-at-arms, standing full armed by their chargers. Behind him three Normans bore the standard of Theodore, a purple banner surmounted by golden eagles.

Now when he wheeled at the end of the line, a low murmur grew to a joyful muttering. Not a man in the ranks but knew the bay horse he rode, and they who first perceived that this was not Theodore Lascaris but their comrade-in-arms passed the word back to others, until the groups of archers, leaning on their short halberds, were aware that Sir Hugh was in command.

Silence was broken by a roaring shout as men got them to saddle and took lances in hand. Sir Hugh wheeled his bay charger and paced slowly down the slope. No need to race the horses through the sands.

The short line of mailed riders extended no farther than the center of Kai-Kosru's forces. Sir Hugh knew well the danger of thinning his array to try to meet the wide-flung wings of the Moslems. His lances were in the first rank, the axes and swords in the second, and, walking beside the horses, the hooded archers, with strung bows, arrow in hand.

They descended to the rock-strewn bed of the stream, and picked their way across before the Moslem riders had perceived that this was an attack and no change of position.

At once a shrill clamor of kettle-drums and cymbals arose from musicians hidden in the gullies. A blare of the crusaders' trumpets answered the challenge, and clouds of light-armed bowmen galloped down, to wheel and dart around the Franks. Arrows whirred into the mailed ranks. But the archers of Sir Hugh made such response with their long shafts that the skirmishers kept their distance.

Then with a roaring ululation and a thunder of hoofs, a flood of Moslem swordsmen swept over the crest of the ridge, and made at the foremost knights.

"Forward—the lances!"

Sir Hugh turned in his saddle to shout, and, lowering his heavy spear, put spur to the bay charger. The horses of the crusaders broke into a trot, that quickened to a plunging gallop before the wave of Moslems struck them.

His feet thrust deep into the stirrups, his body rigid behind close gripped shield, Sir Hugh glimpsed faces that swooped down and passed him. His spear drove back against his shoulder, and he freed the point from the body of a man, swinging it fairly into the round shield of a bearded son of Islam, who was galloping down on him.

The long steel point picked the rider from the saddle, and the horse careened against the iron plated chest of the bay charger. Dropping his spear, Sir Hugh whipped his sword free, and glanced from side to side.

The wave of Moslems had broken upon the line of spears and—except where single riders wielded simitar against sword or mace—had scattered into fragments that drifted away under the sting of the long shafts that flew from the bows of the veteran archers.

"Ha—messers!" Sir Hugh laughed, rising in his stirrups. "Pass forward, and strike!"

He broke through a fringe of dry tamarisk, and galloped out upon the crest of the ridge, seeing in that instant the full power of Kai-Kosru.

Before him stretched a wide level where two battalions that had been reining in impatient steeds now launched against the Franks—two masses of horsemen, mailed from knee to throat, and splendidly mounted. He saw that one of these groups were Turkomans, lean men in white and black *khalats*—the other, the sultan's Seljuks, glittering in peaked helmets and inlaid mail, poising javelins as they advanced.

Swinging up his shield, he parried and cut with his sword, aware of men behind him

who thrust with spear and blade, and of the joyous shout of battle—

"For Christ and the Sepulchre!"

The mass of agile riders hemmed him in, and he was struck upon the helm and shoulder. Blood from his forehead dripped into his eyebrows and he shook his head to clear his sight. The Moslems were pressing against the standard and the man they had singled out as the emperor.

But Sir Hugh, putting forth the utmost of his strength, advanced through them, his long sword lashing aside up-flung shield and battle-ax. And the Normans, on rearing, screaming horses at his heels, kept pace with him. No rush of the lighter Moslem horse could stem that steady advance of the close-drawn ranks on level ground.

"Brave blows!" cried Marcabrun, at his side. "They stand not. Let us go on, to where the sultan abides."

"Stay!" ordered Sir Hugh. "Archers to the center. Rein back your men, Sir Clevis! Stand here!"

The masses of Moslems that had drawn off sullenly were joined by others that emerged from the gullies and advanced on the crusaders. On a distant knoll Sir Hugh beheld the green banner of the sultan, Kai-Kosru, surrounded by warriors who had not been in the fight as yet.

"The Greeks come to the valley!" Marcabrun pointed across the bed of gray sand, at the ravine behind them where some scores of the emperor's spearmen were visible. Sir Hugh watched them for a moment, searching in vain for the helmets of Theodore's nobles. If the emperor's host advanced promptly, it could join the Franks and occupy the ridge. The crossbowmen of the Greeks could clear the gullies and the sultan's center could be broken by a timely charge. The Moslems were wavering.

This was so clear to Sir Hugh that his heart burned with impatience, and he caught up the orifan, the long, curved horn that could send a blast across the tumult of battle. Once and again he sounded the rallying note that the Greeks *must* hear. The men about him, with souls intent on the work in hand, heard the horn and shouted gleefully:

"Strike, sir brothers! The field is ours."

But above the clashing of steel, the neighing of horses and the splintering of wood was heard the drone of the hidden drums, the clangor of the cymbals.

AT FIRST the crusaders had broken up the rushes of the Saracens by countercharges. For the most part, their spears had been broken and they fought with sword and mace. Most of them were bruised and bleeding, and all of them suffered from the burning heat that made the steel upon their limbs a torment, and sapped the might of their sinews.

Kai-Kosru's Turkomans had crept up the ridge on all sides, taking advantage of boulders and cross gullies that protected them from the onset of the dreaded horsemen. With their powerful bows they picked off the horses of the Franks, and the shafts of Sir Hugh's few archers did not avail to drive them back.

By mid-afternoon the crusaders ceased sallying forth and contented themselves with holding the high ground in the center of the ridge.

"Verily," quoth Rinaldo, pulling off his helmet to cool his forehead for an instant, "Satan spews forth these companies of paynim. The cursed fellows rise out of the earth. Hark to their music! Ho, they come again. Make way!"

He thrust forward, urging on his men, until his horse was killed under him by an arrow, and he fought on foot. Sir Hugh noticed him, and reined aside to get between him and the Moslems who were driving in his men. The reckless giant had let fall his helmet, and before Sir Hugh could reach him, a Turkoman had leaned down, an arrow quivering in his fingers.

The shaft struck Rinaldo between the eyes, and the bowman's horse knocked him to earth. One of the Franks slew the Moslem, and Sir Hugh took his stand by the fallen chieftain, bidding those who were nearest carry the body back to the standard.

He looked around, seeking the Norman baron in vain. Marcabrun was casting away the stem of a broken sword, and calling for a new one. Now that Rinaldo and the Norman were gone, no one remained to give wise counsel to the young chieftain.

The sun was sinking toward a line of purple hills, and the hot breath of the sandy gullies rose into the faces of the surviving Franks. More than half of them lay outstretched on the hard, shelterless earth, dead, or sorely wounded. The sun was in his eyes when he looked back at the ravine from which he had come that morning, and

he could not tell whether the Greeks were moving at last to his aid or not. But Sir Hugh no longer hoped for succor from the emperor.

A glance down the ridge showed him that the Saracens had lost three and four men to his one; but so great were their numbers that their force seemed unimpaired by four hours of battle.

And now the sultan Kai-Kosru took matters into his own hand. His green banner was seen advancing toward the remnant of the Franks, and in that clear, level light of late afternoon the sultan himself was visible, mounted on a white Arab courser, bearing a target ringed in black and gold—a slender, bearded man who looked ever steadfastly toward the height upon which stood the wearied bay charger of Sir Hugh.

Around Kai-Kosru trotted his bodyguard, two thousand Seljuks still unwearied, and more than eager to end by a single charge the long affray wherein such losses had been inflicted on their fellows.

Beholding this, Sir Hugh knew that two alternatives remained to him. He could close up ranks and try to cut his way through to the ravine where the Greeks stood, or he could risk everything in one advance upon the sultan.

Swiftly he took account of the numbers of the enemy, and decided that it was vain indeed to draw back now. His little company, harried and beset, would never survive the long march to their allies—and to turn about would discourage his men, and hearten the Saracens. Not a hundred horses remained fit to carry riders.

So thinking, he bade an archer cut the lashings of his helm, and sighed with relief when the hot steel had been cast aside. Shaking back the mail hood from his head, he held up his sword arm and called to his comrades in the brief moment of quiet when they became aware of the oncoming mass of riders and looked to him for an order.

"My brothers, well have you sped this day. You have struck good blows. If we turn back some few may win through; yet if we turn again upon the Saracen, we shall break the sultan's last array, or die with our faces toward the tomb of the Lord Christ."

"Yea, we will go with you, Sir Hugh!" cried the nearest, and even the wounded raised a faint shout of approval.

There was no flinching, no glancing back toward the valley. The men on foot closed in among the horses, and they that limped and panted caught at stirrups to steady them. Tortured by thirst, silent, and afire with grim determination, they moved down the eastern ridge.

So the watchers on knoll and cliff beheld a dark cluster of Franks move onward, into the rush of Kai-Kosru's guards. And, as the waters of a torrent sweep around immovable rocks, swirling and breaking into foam, the Saracen horsemen engulfed the remnant of the Franks.

THE bay charger flung up its head, stumbled and sank beneath Sir Hugh, who freed his feet from the stirrups and fell clear, staggering on aching legs. There was a haze of dust about him, and he felt men lurch against him, until a hand pressed his shoulder heavily and he looked up into the bloodless face of the Provençal minstrel.

Marcabrun swayed in the saddle, leaning upon his young comrade. His eyes were sunk in his head, and his cracked and bleeding lips mumbled words:

"A horse for thee, Sir Hugh—God shield thee! I go"—he coughed and gripped the charger's mane with blood-stained fingers. "*Mea culpa*—"

It was a groan rather than a prayer. The broken shaft of a javelin was embedded in one of the rents of his hauberk, beneath the straining chest.

Sir Hugh caught the body of his friend as it slid from the saddle. Marcabrun's songs were at an end and he had spoken his last brave word. But Sir Hugh never mounted to the minstrel's saddle. A group of foemen burst through the ring of men-at-arms around him, and as he let fall Marcabrun's body, he beheld the white courser of the sultan Kai-Kosru rearing, and black hoofs lashing out at his head.

Kai-Kosru was crouching in the saddle, a heavy simitar upflung in his right hand, which was toward Sir Hugh. There was not a moment between sight and the blow that flashed down at his bare head, but in that instant of time the young chieftain was aware of the gold chain that linked the sword to the sultan's wrist—of precious stones that flared and sparkled in the Moslem's turban knot—and of exulting brown eyes that were fixed avidly upon him.

Then he flung up his shield. Kai-Kosru's blow, descending with the full force of arm

and body, and the impetus of the dropping horse, struck fairly upon the shield, cracking it asunder, and knocking Sir Hugh to the earth. But as he fell the crusader cut upward with his long blade, slashing the sultan's knee and the tendon in the courser's off foreleg.

His left arm hampered by the fragments of the shield, and his bruised shoulder numb, Sir Hugh rolled over, and found himself prone beside Kai-Kosru. The Moslem chieftain had fallen from the saddle when his horse sank under him, and, maddened by pain, lay on the earth.

"Yield thee, paynim!" cried Sir Hugh, catching the sultan's sword arm in his left hand.

Kai-Kosru spat savagely into the youth's bleeding face, and let fall his simitar to pull a long-hilted dagger from his girdle. With this he stabbed several times at Sir Hugh's throat, only to have the slender blade thrust aside by the right hand of his foe, protected by its chain mitten.

Writhing back, and freeing himself from Sir Hugh's grasp, the agile Moslem gripped again his simitar hilt, bound to his wrist by its chain. Uprising on one knee, he whirled the curved blade about his head.

But in this second of respite Sir Hugh struck his adversary between the eyes with his mailed fist. Mighty sinews were behind the blow and the slender Moslem sank back with a groan.

Sir Hugh slipped the loops of his broken shield, and grasped his sword again, striking swiftly. The blade passed under the beard of Kai-Kosru, and bit through his neck, into the ground.

In another moment—before the Moslems, who had drawn back and reined in their horses for fear of harming their sultan, could do more than cry out in horror—Sir Hugh grasped the severed head by the beard and hurled it among his enemies, with a wrathful cry—

"Dead is Kai-Kosru!"

A horse, darting upon him from behind, struck him with its armored shoulder, driving the breath from his lungs and the sight from his eyes. He staggered and fell on one knee, powerless to rise or behold what passed above him.

Then, leaping through the rearing horses came a figure panting and yelling, and in semblance more demoniac than human. Its bristling head was red as the blood that ran from its fingers and loins, and in the deep glow of sunset its whole grotesque and powerful body was dyed crimson.

And with knotted, hairy arms this figure laid about it, dealing blows with a seven foot staff of iron bound upon wood, shattering the steel blades and the leather targets of the infuriated Moslems, until they drew back, crying—

"*Div—div!*"*

Then was heard the blast of a hundred trumpets of the Emperor Theodore, who was leading forward his companies of nobles and slaves of Tatar bowmen, and Bulgar axmen, and the cavalry of the Greeks.

Stunned by the death of their sultan, and wearied by the long combat with the Franks, the host of Kai-Kosru, scattered among the ravines by the river, made little resistance to the Greek attack. They separated into groups, each seeking its way from the field, some swimming the river, some galloping back to Antioch, leaderless.

Thereupon came Theodore, to ride over the field with his captains and councilors, and to look at the chivalry of the Franks, the dead men that lay from the bed of the valley to the ridge and from the ridge to the small ravine where Marcabrun's body was found, scarred by hoofs.

But the body of Kai-Kosru was not found, because the Turkomans had carried it off with them. And, though Theodore, the shrewd and far-seeing, promised rich reward to the man who should bring him the body of the mock emperor, no trace of Sir Hugh was discovered, other than his dead charger and the imperial helmet he had cast away in his last advance.

CHAPTER III

The man who stands beside a warrior in battle shall be in all things his friend, and no quarrel may arise between them; the man who carries a wounded warrior from the field shall be his brother and thereafter neither hatred nor evil word shall come between them.—THE YASSA OR CODE OF GENGHIS KHAN.

WHEN Sir Hugh's sight cleared, and the blood left his throbbing temples, he was aware of silence and of shadows. The sun had set, and though the sky overhead was a shimmering blue, the defile was in semi-darkness.

A score of bodies lay near him, and one

*A demon.

had been his comrade Marcabrun; but the headless corpse of Kai-Kosru was not to be seen. Only one living man was in the gully, an ungainly form seated on a boulder, a long staff across its bare knees.

Striding toward the stranger, the youth halted to stare at his clumsy armor of iron plates lashed together, the half of them sliced from his shoulders, and at his restless, gleaming eyes.

"What man are you?" he demanded.

"Donn Dera."

"Where are my followers?"

"Raven meat, and so they will lie. There is no help for that."

Leaning on his sword, Sir Hugh bent his head. It seemed impossible that all the Franks could have perished; in the desperation of the last struggle he had been able to see only what happened within arm's reach. Where were the Saracens? He asked Donn Dera this, and the strange warrior looked up craftily at the sky. His voice was husky and Sir Hugh thought he had heard it before.

"The war-bands have taken to fleeing," said Donn Dera. "They are fleeing before the incoming of the Greeks. There has been a destruction of many men."

"The Greeks! Has Theodore come upon the field?"

"Yea," responded the stranger, "he has taken up the standard that you let fall."

Again the youth's temples grew hot and he drew a long breath. Turning away, he strode unsteadily down the defile, until Donn Dera's heavy hand on his shoulder checked him.

"What now?"

The stranger shook his head.

"It is clear that you are going to confront the emperor himself, and there will be ill words and an end of the matter. You are a fool, though you do not lack courage. Being wise, the Greek will slay you with poison or in other fashion, that no ancient men or minstrels may say he did not keep faith this day."

"Eight hundred men died this day!" cried the youth, beside himself. "He—he is the one to answer for it."

"In his own fashion he fought," responded Donn Dera grimly. "And surely now, it was you who led your followers into their destruction."

The blood drained from Hugh's cheeks and his hands clenched the leather-bound hilt of his long sword. Donn Dera shook his shaggy head moodily.

"Yea, overyoung you are to be a chieftain. Another time it will fare worse with your foes, better with your followers. Come, we must hide."

Hugh could only look upon him silently. His wearied brain ached.

"Messer Donn Dera," he said thoughtfully, "it is in my mind that you shielded me when I was on my knee among the horses. So may you say to me what would bring harm upon another."

The stranger raised one shoulder.

"What is done is done, and the black shame upon Theodore. Now, a while agone I was spying and peering, and saw the Greek spearmen going about the field putting their weapons into the wounded Franks."

At this Hugh tried to shake himself free of the man and make his way toward the emperor's men, but the hand on his shoulder was not to be put aside.

"Come," whispered Donn Dera again.

"Whither?" Hugh laughed hoarsely. "To the Arabs?"

"Better than the Greeks," nodded the stranger. "The river is best. We must drink."

Hugh suffered the warrior to lead him back through the gully. Donn Dera seemed to have a dog's sense of direction, or a nose for water. Presently the young knight looked down at the ungainly figure, and at the iron-bound staff.

"What is your lineage, and whence are ye, Donn Dera?" he asked.

"I am a man of weapons, and I follow the war-bands and the hosts. Yea, I am quick at rapine and plunder."

"Whose son are ye?"

"The son of Etil, son of Tara."

Although Hugh had never heard these names before, and although he wondered from what land the stranger came, he put forth his hand and said frankly—

"I am beholden to you, Donn Dera, for my life, and while I live this shall not be forgotten."

The man of weapons merely grunted, yet he did not look displeased. The hand that closed around Sir Hugh's was like an iron claw. In silence they pushed through the dense willow growth until they descended a steep slope and dropped among the rushes of the Meander's bank. Then they drank

greedily from cupped hands, and plunged steaming heads into the muddied water.

Abruptly Donn Dera clucked and raised his hand. Above them horses were crashing through the underbrush at a mad pace. The man of weapons glanced around, and motioned his young companion to squat down where the tall rushes grew thickly.

Instead of turning aside along the upper bank, the horses came directly toward the river, and in a moment more a score of them slid down the declivity and plunged about in the slippery footing

Hugh saw that these were Moslems who wore pointed helmets from which hung linen hoods that hid everything except their eyes. They were armed with light spears, slung upon their backs, and simitars. Black cloaks enveloped their slender bodies, and he thought they were neither Turkomans nor Seljuks. Their steeds were nimble-footed and splendid, and these men he had not seen in the battle. They were trotting straight upon him.

Flight was useless, and concealment hopeless. The light along the river was stronger than in the defile above, and he stood up, grasping his sword with both hands.

"Back to back, Donn Dera!"

He moved to where the ground was a little higher and firmer, so that the water came no more than to his knees, and his companion followed him.

The leading Moslems reined aside in surprize. Then, seeing that only two Franks stood in the rushes, they drew forward their spears and rode in upon the twain.

Hugh felt the rugged shoulders of Donn Dera making play behind him, and heard the snapping of spear shafts. A man cried out and horses reared and plunged. For his part, he cut and parried with instinctive skill. He was over-weary, but so great was his strength and quickness of eye and hand that no spear touched a vital part in him. Glancing steel points slashed him across thighs and arms and his blood ran down into the muddied water.

"*Mash'allah!*" cried one of his assailants.

The riders drew their swords and exchanged swift words, preparing to rush upon him with their blades. At this moment three other horses crashed down the slope and trotted into the group about Hugh.

One of the newcomers took matters in hand at once. Flinging a question at his companions, he advanced close to Hugh and peered down at him. This was a man lean almost to emaciation. He bestrode a splendid gray Arab, sitting the high saddle with the thoughtless grace of one bred to horses. The trappings of the saddle were cloth-of-gold. Above the black veil that hung from his helm, deep-set, sparkling eyes surveyed the youth.

"Yield thee!" exclaimed the stranger in fair French. And to his companions he added as he noticed Hugh's armor, "*Padishah roumi*—the emperor of the Greeks!"

The Arabs exchanged glances and lowered their weapons.

"I yield me to no paynim!" cried the young knight defiantly.

Donn Dera edged closer to him. The man of weapons had been fighting warily, and without the sheer berserk rage that had gripped him during the battle. He, too, was tired. Frowning, he weighed chances, and before Hugh could move, he had lifted his heavy iron-bound staff, and whirled it down on the flat of the crusader's sword.

The blow, quick and savage, did not strike the weapon from Hugh's hand, but the steel blade snapped and the point shot from it into the water.

"Take him — thou," croaked Donn Dera to the chieftain of the Arabs. "There is no help for it."

And he cast away his staff, into the rushes. The rider of the gray horse scanned him curiously.

"What man art thou?"

Donn Dera folded bleeding arms across his heaving chest.

"I am a son of a king. Yea, of Etil, son of Tara, overlord of Erin and the grandest monarch of the earth."

The Arab signed to the men who waited behind Hugh, and when the crusader raised his broken stem of a sword, they leaned forward, gripping his wrist. Weakened by loss of blood, he tried to twist free, and then stood quiet, knowing that further effort was useless.

Thereupon the chieftain dismounted from his gray courser and led forward through the mud and broken rushes two riderless horses, ready saddled.

"*Khoudsama!*" He held out one rein to Hugh. "My Lord, I am Khalil, the Bedouin. Verily, we are here three princes, and—there has been enough of slaying this day. Come with me!"

Hugh looked into the dark eyes, and in

silence gave up the broken sword. The Arabs helped him into the saddle, while Donn Dera mounted. Surrounded by Khalil's men, they swam the mid-current of the Meander, and climbed the far bank, unseen by the sentries of the Emperor Theodore because the sudden darkness of the southern plains had covered the river.

THE droning of flies and the *swish-swash* of something moving over his head woke Hugh of Taranto from feverish sleep. He opened his eyes and saw that the moving thing was a fan of heron's feathers, held by a slim hand. The hand emerged from a loose black sleeve, and the sleeve was part of a fragile girl who knelt by his side.

A loose veil, running from her ears to the bridge of her nose, concealed all of her face except two very tranquil and dark eyes and a smooth white forehead.

Hugh stretched out his hand toward an earthen water jar that stood beside him, and the girl raised it to his lips, and held it until he was satisfied. Then, with a half-friendly, half-curious glance, she rose and left his sight. An Arab warrior came and squatted down in her place.

Hugh lay back and began to think. He was in a small tent, of loose, dark wool, supported by a single pole and by what seemed to be the shafts of spears. Under him was a mat of dried rushes, and the sand beneath had been hollowed out to fit his body. His mail and leather gambeson had been removed and a sleeveless tunic of fine white linen, beautifully embroidered, and a coarse brown cloak covered him.

He was alone in the tent with the squatting Arab, and the water jar, but he heard camels sighing and grunting and smelled horses. Through the open flap of the tent he saw high, tufted grass, and naked children playing with goats.

Suddenly he groaned aloud and the warrior looked at him in surprize. But the knight was not feeling the ache of his open wounds; he had remembered the battle of the Meander, and that his comrades Marcabrun, and Rinaldo and all the Norman chivalry were being eaten by crows and wolves. He did not think that the Greeks, who had slain the wounded, would give them fitting burial in consecrated ground. And this thought brought the blood to his forehead.

"Khalil!" he said to the warrior. "Take me to Khalil."

Although the Bedouin had not understood the words of the knight, he recognized the name of his chieftain. Nor did he try to restrain the wounded youth. If the Frank wished to go and speak to Khalil, that was his affair. He did bring Hugh the stained and wrinkled leather jacket, and the sword belt, adorned with silver plates, from which the empty leather scabbard still hung. This Hugh girded on and went forth, moving slowly because he was in pain and weak. It had been three days since they swam across the Meander, and all the first day they had kept the saddle.

Hugh thought they had come twenty leagues, south from the battle-field. He did not remember seeing this village, because they had come in at night and he had been asleep.

The village was really an encampment, where women and children tended the goats and camels, and the jars of milk. It was near the hour of sunset and Arabs were rising from the evening prayer, gathering their cloaks about them, and talking in groups. They were thin men, who moved with the grace of animals and looked at the knight with pride.

Hugh noticed that the camp itself was in a grassy hollow, where a rushing stream gave water, and only the wooded summits of distant mountains were visible against the sky. The air, too, was cool, and he thought that these Arabs had chosen a place of concealment far up a mountainside. In the horse herd were more than a hundred beasts, and the saddles standing between the tents were of Turkoman and Greek make as well as the narrow Bedouin saddle.

Khalil, the chieftain, separated from a throng of warriors and advanced toward him.

"Honor and greeting to the emperor of the Nazarenes!" he said courteously. "Has the fever left thee? Are thy wounds closed?"

Then Hugh remembered that Khalil had taken him for the Emperor Theodore, and that their swift flight from the river must have kept from the Bedouin the knowledge that the real Theodore was with his victorious host.

"No sultan am I," he made answer in the *lingua franca*. "I have no rank other than knighthood, and I am Hugh of Taranto."

Khalil's impassive face was touched by inward amusement.

"The lord emperor, who is my guest, sees fit to hide his name and high position. Wherefore?"

"It is the truth."

"In the battle of the Nazarenes and the Seljuks," smiled the Arab, "thou wert surely the emperor. Now it is not otherwise, though a sword is lacking and thou art the *rafik*, the guest of the black tents."

"My companion, the elder warrior, will tell thee the truth, even as I have said."

"Thy comrade hath said it—thou art indeed the emperor."

Hugh frowned angrily. It seemed as if Donn Dera always did what was least expected of him. He had not forgiven the wanderer for striking the sword from his hand.

"*V'allah!*" said Khalil seriously. "Mine eyes beheld thee among the Nazarene weapon men, aye, in the red heart of the slaying. Thy hand slew the sultan Kai-Kosru when a hundred Seljuks hemmed thee in. By the names of Oman and Ali, thou art worthy! I say it—I, Khalil, of al-Yaman, of the Ibna."

Hugh raised his hand impatiently.

"Nay, and again nay! Release me, O Khalil—give me a horse, and the man Donn Dera to attend me. I must hasten to the court of Theodore at Antioch and accuse him before all men. I shall cast my glove at his feet—let him pick it up who will!"

Although Khalil could speak the *lingua franca*, having wandered, like many of his race, from Fez to Saragossa, and even to Venice and Constantinople, he was none too sure what the young knight meant by his words. In all the swift forays of the Bedouins who came up from the desert lands to harry Turk and crusader and Bokharian merchant, he had never encountered a chieftain who allowed another to wear his garments and armor in battle.

So it seemed to Khalil—a master of deception himself—that the captive was trying to conceal his true rank, and making a clumsy job of it. Only one thing puzzled the Arab, who was a judge of character—this royal youth spoke wilfully, and with the appearance of truth.

"Nay, and again nay," the Bedouin made response. "In the battle thou didst bear thyself as a prince—as one, even, of the Three Hundred of Badr. That is truth. Yet, having taken captive the chieftain of the Nazarenes, I may not give him a horse and release him with only one follower, as if he were a common man."

"What then?" demanded Hugh.

Khalil considered. He had been weighing opportunity and guessing at profit for the last three days. Being a fatalist, he had wasted no thought on his extraordinary fortune in carrying off an emperor. God had given it, and moreover the chieftains of the Nazarenes were not like Moslems. They were accustomed to rush into peril unguarded, to fling off helmets when the sun boiled the blood in them, and to venture into all sorts of places.

"*V'allah!* I shall hold thee for ransom at four thousand *miskals* of gold. That is little enough, for the Greek lords are rich beyond belief. I have seen."

It was Hugh's turn to ponder. Theodore was indeed master of rich cities, and overlord of great nobles. True, the emperor's treasury lacked gold and Hugh had a suspicion that the expedition against Kai-Kosru had been planned to win the loot of Antioch which was the governing city of the slain Seljuk. There would be many *miskals* of precious stones, and rare silks, of elephants' teeth and red leather and chests of gold in the castle of Kai-Kosru.

And—if Theodore took Antioch and looted it—four thousand *miskals* might well be paid to Khalil for the persons of Sir Hugh and Donn Dera. They two alone had survived the slaughter on the Meander, and Theodore, having betrayed the Franks, would risk much to silence their tongues—if his men had put to death wounded crusaders on the battle-field.

Theodore, although emperor, did not hold Constantinople. The crusaders had possession of the imperial city, and there was a truce between them and the Greek emperor in Asia Minor.

If Sir Hugh should survive and reach Constantinople, and tell his tale to Henry of Flanders, commander of the crusaders, he would be believed, against the oaths of eight thousand Greeks. Theodore would find it no very easy matter, in any case, to explain to the Count of Flanders the loss of his eight hundred crusaders. And if the truth were known in Constantinople, the host of the Crosses would harry Theodore through all Asia.

"Send to the Greek camp," Hugh said

slowly, "trusted men, a few. Bid them look about and ask if the emperor be not in the camp. Aye, they will see him there. Thus it will be manifest that I am no more than a Frankish knight. *They* will not give so much as one gold piece for my life."

That, at least, was quite certain! But to Khalil, reared amid distrust, and experienced in wiles, this appeared no more than a simple trick to lessen the ransom that was his due, and he said so at once. He even laughed—a rare thing in an Arab—not to mock his captive but to show his understanding and appreciation of the trick.

"Shall I sell to the Greeks their emperor at their price and not at mine? May God forbid! If thou wert captive to the Seljuks who hold Antioch, they would ask three cities, and twenty camel-loads of silver, and a sworn truce, with other matters. Give praise to thy saints that I ask no more than two horse-loads of gold!"

A sudden thought struck the youth.

"Tell me, Khalil. Am I—a Frank surely—the man to be named emperor by the Greeks?"

For some time the Bedouin had mused upon this very question and had arrived at an answer that was quite satisfactory.

"By the beard and the breath of Ali, thou art stubborn as a she camel with unslit lip! Was I not at Constantinople, six years agone, when the Franks took it from the Greeks? Since then I have heard that a Frank rules Constantinople, and surely that is the city of the Greek emperor."

Hugh smote hand into fist angrily.

"Who art thou, Saracen? Whence art thou, not to know that the Nazarene army was led by Theodore Lascaris, an elder man, like a fox in wiles, and a treacherous dog-soul of a Greek!"

"Verily am I a Saracen—a robber," assented Khalil calmly. "With eighty of my tribe I came up from the sands to pillage whomever God sent into my hand."

He glanced around his little camp, and added good-naturedly:

"It was written that I should fall in with the Seljuk Turks as they were mounting for battle. I rode with them to the river and watched events. My men gained a few horses, good and bad, and some saddles and gear."

"Khalil!" cried the youth. "Give me no more than one horse, and a week of liberty. I pledge thee the word of a belted knight that I shall return to this place, alone, and become again thy captive."

Among the crusaders such a pledge, no matter under what conditions, would have been accepted. The given word of a banneret* was sacred, and Hugh of Taranto was a youth who had kept his word inviolate.

Khalil also was known by the tribes of al-Yaman to be a very mirror of honor, a lion in bravery, and reckless enough to have been beloved by the Companions of Muhammad. But it did not enter Khalil's mind to let four thousand *miskals* of gold out of his hand for a week. He had experienced the treachery of the Greeks.

Considering the anxious gray eyes and the flushed forehead of the youth, it seemed to him that his captive's fever must have gripped the brain.

"Nay," said a voice behind them, "not in a week, or in a week of ages would you return from the Greek camp."

Donn Dera was leaning on a knotted staff that he had cut with his knife, and his narrow, bony face was wistful as he looked at his youthful companion.

"That would not be good," said the wanderer again, and turned to Khalil. "Give us to eat, O chieftain!"

CHAPTER IV

THE CUNNING OF DONN DERA

THIS was a matter of pride with the Bedouin, that his captives should be entertained and made comfortable. He had the hind quarters of a sheep broiling, for them alone, and since his men could not be expected to serve meat to the Franks, he bade the young girl who had attended upon Hugh fetch them milk that might have been goats' or camels' and was probably a mixture of both—a potation that Hugh merely tasted for courtesy's sake, but which Donn Dera sucked down with appreciation.

"Eh, Lord," he grinned, "wash, wipe, sit, eat, wash, and then talk. But not before. A drawn belly breeds ill talk."

And he ate a whole quarter of the sheep, to Khalil's subdued amazement.

"*Yah Khawand*," the chieftain exclaimed, "what manner of man is this, that gorges as a tiger, and drinks as a horse, and sings

* A knight of distinction, entitled to a banner. Usually only a long triangular pennon was allowed, attached to the spear tip.

so that the children gather around him?"

"I know not," responded the crusader under his breath, "save that he comes from a land called Erin by some, Ireland by others and Thule by the astrologers—"

"Erin," put in Donn Dera, wiping his broad hands on a passing dog. He seemed to have the ears of a cat.

"He calls himself a king's son, and a man of weapons," added Hugh coldly in a tone Donn Dera could hear readily enough.

"Aye," nodded the wanderer, "in all the world there is no weapon that fits my hand. Sword handles I have broken—ax shafts I have split. From yew wood and iron I fashioned a club, and now that, too, is gone from my hand."

"I did not know you were so strong," said the youth, curiously.

Donn Dera glanced at him sidewise, but saw that the crusader had not meant to mock him. After a moment he stretched out his right hand in which the new cudgel was grasped.

The knotted muscles of shoulder and forearm swelled suddenly, and sinews cracked. Between his quivering fingers the wood of the cudgel creaked and then snapped.

Khalil watched with interest and picked up the short staff when the warrior dropped it. The bark had been squeezed away from the wood, and it was broken.

"*Ai*," he acknowledged, "no man of mine could do that, nor could I. But edged steel is another matter."

"True," put in Hugh at once, "yet in the fighting at the river Donn Dera stood over me when I fell, though mounted Seljuks hemmed him in. How he lives, I know not."

"There was a fury in me," explained the wanderer quietly. "At such moments my hand wreaks chaos and woe, for my father was a man of the elf-mounds, and in him a power of spells and magic."

They were sitting by then at the fire that had been made for the chieftains by the girl, who fetched woolen mantles against the chill of the night that Hugh and Donn Dera heeded not. After a silence, Khalil nodded understanding.

"Such a man we call *djinn*-possessed. Surely thy strength is uncommon."

Donn Dera, chin on hand, looked into the fire, and his lined, red face gave no indication of his thoughts. Hugh, leaning back against the tent, was moody in spirit.

It seemed to the young knight as if this craggy fellow was indeed a companion of evil beings. Donn Dera had broken the good sword in his hand—had lied to the Arab concerning his name—and now boasted openly and with a loud voice. Anger against Donn Dera was bitter in the youth.

"There is one weapon that will fit my hand," the soft voice of the wanderer went on. "It is a sword, and the sword of the great champion Roland, the knight of Charlemagne."

Idle, such words, Hugh mused. Durandal, the unbroken sword of the matchless Roland, was buried with the hero in some cathedral. Long since—four centuries ago—it had passed from the sight of Christian men.

"Of Roland I have heard," assented the Arab courteously. "My ancestors went against him in Frankistan."

"Men say," went on Donn Dera, "the shining glaive* of Roland is of such weight that no warrior of today may deal a cut with it or raise it from the ground, save with two hands."

"That also my ancestors said."

The voice of the wanderer took on a lilting note and his eyes half closed.

"It was in Nicea, in a hostel, that an ancient man of more fell than flesh sat with me the night. He announced to me that he had been to the Holy Land where the feet of the Lord Christ trod, and there was in his wallet a silver flask and in the flask a hair of Simon Peter, and he swears to me by the relic itself that he had word of Durandal, the shining brand, the sword of Roland."

Donn Dera sighed.

"And so this pilgrim tells of the sword, how it lies in the land of the Saracen folk, hanging in the hall of the sultan Kai-Kosru. And this hall is in the castle and the castle is in Antioch. Now in me there is a longing and a desire to have the grasp of Durandal, and that is why I joined the company of warriors that was making a raid upon Antioch."

"That can not be," said Hugh bluntly. "Durandal never left the hand of Roland. Often have I heard Marcabrun—may God grant him eternal rest—relate the song of it. Hark ye, Donn Dera."

He reflected a moment, and repeated the verses of Roland's death:

*Sword.

"Roland feeleth his eyesight reft,
Yet he stands erect with what strength is left.
That none reproach him, his horn he clasped,
His other hand Durandal grasped;
Before him a massive rock uprose—
He smote upon it ten grievous blows.
Grated the steel as it struck the flint,
Yet it break not, nor dulled its edge one dint.

'Mary, Mother, be thou mine aid!
Durandal, my masterless blade,
I may no longer thy guardian be,
Though battle-fields I won with thee!
Never shalt thou possessor know
Who would turn from face of mortal foe—' "

The resonant words of the song rang forth in the clear voice of the youth, and when he had ended, he turned to Donn Dera.

"So, it was. The hero could not break the blade against the stone, so he placed it beneath him, and lay down, that his soul could pass from his body."

Donn Dera wrinkled heavy brows.

"All that may be; but I also have heard Marcabrun, the minstrel. Surely this Roland was a champion and a good man with his weapon. Yet after he died he could not lift hand against a foe, and the Saracens may well have taken such a sword from under his body." After a moment he added, "Was there not a bit in the song about a Saracen who coveted the blade, and took it with him to Arabia?"

"He was slain!"

"Was it an elf or a ghost, then, that dealt with this Saracen? Surely the song relates that all the Franks lay dead about Roland."

At this Khalil, who had been listening attentively, lifted his head.

"Aye, Lord King, that is truth. I knew not the name of the sword, but among my people there is a legend that the blade of Roland, the Frank, was carried from the field under the Pyrenees, to Saragossa, and thence by sea to the land that was once under the yoke of my people and was just now the kingdom of Kai-Kosru."

Hugh flushed and said quietly:

"It is not good to mock captives, O Bedouin. If I wore a sword I should bid thee to combat, for such words are not to be endured by one who wears a belt."

"*V'allah!* If thou wert sound and hale, I should make proof of thee!"

Khalil's deep eyes gleamed.

"Harken, ye Franks—the matter may be adjudged in another way. Years ago I passed through Antioch, and at the palace of the sultan I was shown somewhat of his treasure—"

He paused a moment to reflect.

"Kai-Kosru was ever wary of his gold, but he showed me a strange sword. It was long, it was heavy, and it was not made in a Moslem land. The blade was broad as thy hand, of blue steel. The hand guard was a cross, inlaid with silver, the pommel a ball of gold, from which the precious stones had been taken. It hung upon the wall behind the carpet where the sultan sat. No single man could lift it down from its place. And the sultan said it was the blade of a Nazarene warrior long since dead. Is this thy Durandal?"

"So was the sword of Roland!" Hugh responded promptly. "O that we had known this thing!"

"It waits the man who will not turn his face from any foe," cried Donn Dera. "By the cunning in me I will possess the sword."

Now it seemed to Khalil that both his captives were out of their minds with fever. But when Donn Dera spoke again Khalil looked upon them with greater amazement.

"And thou, Moslem," observed Donn Dera, "thou art consumed by one thought —to take Antioch!"

VEILING surprize with pretended scorn, the Bedouin asked how, with eighty men, he was to think of mastering a mountain citadel, held by several hundred Seljuks and just now besieged by a host of Greeks.

Closing his eyes, Donn Dera rocked his ungainly body in the smoke above the fire, his lips moving.

"There is a way, unknown to the Greeks. A way through the stone of the mountain, into the palace."

This time the self-control of the Arab failed him.

"Art kin to the *djinn*-folk? That was a secret well guarded by Kai-Kosru. It was his way of escape, if an enemy pressed him too hard."

The wanderer wagged his shaggy head.

"It was in thy mind, Moslem, to lead thy men through the stone of the mountain into the stronghold, when Kai-Kosru had achieved victory over the Franks. It fell out otherwise, for the Seljuks fled like wolves while thy men were picking up horses. Now a scattering of them hold the wall of Antioch."

"Say on," demanded Khalil.

"Ochune! Easy to say! Now there is doubt in thee. Thy men are few, and, besides, here is the emperor, to be ransomed. Doubt is in thee."

"True—by the beard and the breath of Ali!"

Donn Dera opened his eyes, and Hugh cried out impatiently:

"Mad art thou! I am not the lord emperor!"

"Easy to say!" Donn Dera grinned. "What dost thou desire above all things? To ride in among the Greeks, aye, to the royal tent, and say thy say."

"That is true," acknowledged Hugh moodily.

"And what do I seek? Faith, naught but the sword, Durandal. Well, let us go and accomplish what we wish."

"How?" insisted Khalil.

His raid into the Taurus mountains had been inspired by sheer love of risk and spoil. As the man from Erin said, he had learned of the two armies that were bound to meet at the river, and he had left the women concealed in this spot, riding to the heights from which he watched the battle.

His plan had been to strike boldly at Antioch, which would be left almost unguarded if Kai-Kosru drove off the Franks. Stirred by the brave stand of Hugh's followers, he had drawn nearer the river, until his men had taken to driving off horses, and he had seen the Greeks overwhelm the shattered Seljuks. Then Hugh had fallen into his hands, and before doing anything else he meant to win a royal ransom.

It seemed to Khalil that the red-haired captive had indeed the gift of seeing hidden things. This being so, he might profit by the gift.

"How—O my guest?" he urged.

"Easy to say. Going alone with thy men against the city, even through the mountain, would bring no good to thee. Fighting within the city would bring the Greeks over the walls."

"Well, what?"

"Make a pact and truce with us. Give us good weapons, and we will make thee master of the castle."

"Ye are but two!"

"Two," admitted Donn Dera modestly, "yet such men as we are not found elsewhere in the lands of the earth. We shall wreak a destruction upon the Seljuks, even as at the river."

"Why should I trust thee with weapons?"

"Trust *him!*" The wanderer nodded at Hugh who listened in frank amazement. "As for me, how could I turn upon thee, Khalil? Would the Seljuks embrace me as a brother? They would not, and that is easily understood."

Khalil thought this over. It seemed to him now, beyond any doubt, that the strange captive had looked into his mind. He yearned to loot Antioch—he had glimpsed a little of the treasure Kai-Kosru had hoarded so jealously. To be master of that palace on the crest of the marble mountain, for a night! To root out its corners! To bear off weapons, ivory and shining jewels!

And, beyond all desire for this spoil, was Khalil's longing to snatch Antioch from the grasp of two armies. Both armies lacked a leader—

"It were folly," he mused aloud, with an eye on Donn Dera, "to risk lives on such a blind path, when I can have three horse-loads of gold as ransom for this lord of the Greeks."

"Oho!" Donn Dera hesitated an instant, without the Bedouin's perceiving it. "The Greeks have not so much gold or silver among them."

"That, at least, is true!" cried Hugh angrily. "Save for the trappings and gear of the nobles, there is little precious metal in their coffers."

"But if they take Antioch?" Khalil mused again.

"They will," quoth Donn Dera readily, "unless we do. The Seljuks are losing heart." He grinned at the fire. "Khalil, we will storm the city for thee. Let this royal youth go among thy men, and when we have finished with the Turks, do thou talk of ransom to the Greeks—from the towers."

Khalil was silent a long space, while the girl came and cast more wood on the embers and the flames crackled cheerily again. To loot Antioch—to compel a Greek army to send to Constantinople to ransom their emperor! The thought filled the desert chieftain with delight. He no longer doubted, because he saw how he could do this, in his own way.

"What sayest thou to this?" he asked Hugh suddenly.

The young knight lifted his head and smiled.

"To go against several hundred with eighty is no easy matter. Give me three days' rest and a fair weapon, and I will go with thee."

"Wilt thou swear, on the honor of a prince, not to try to escape from my men?"

"I give thee the word of a knight that I will not escape."

Looking at the youth, Khalil decided that he would keep his word, but still the Arab was a little puzzled that Hugh should speak of himself as a knight.

"Swear!" he cried, scenting evasion.

"Then fetch me something in the form of a cross—the hilt of my broken brand."

Khalil struck his hands together, spoke to the warrior who lounged out of the shadows into the firelight, and waited until the stem of Hugh's sword with its valuable hand-guard was brought. Holding this in his left hand, while the Arabs watched with curiosity, the crusader placed his right hand upon the hilt.

"I swear upon this cross that I will not lift weapon against thy men, or thyself during the truce between us, and that I will not forsake thee. Moreover, in God's sight, I swear that I will not go from this land until I have faced the lord Theodore Lascaris, the emperor, and cast his treachery in his teeth."

His eyes half closed and his wide lips drew down at the corners, and Khalil thought there was in this young warrior something of the falcon or wolf. Surely the lord Frank meant what he said, although it was nothing less than madness to swear an oath against himself.

"All things are possible in the sight of Allah," he meditated aloud. "Be thou at ease, my Lord. Another moon will not grow to the full before the Greeks ransom thee."

"Of all things," answered Hugh, "I desire that least."

Donn Dera chuckled under his breath, but the Arab flung up his hands.

"Thou art weary, and the fever—go to thy tent, and sleep."

Hugh wished to talk with Donn Dera apart, but his limbs ached and his veins were hot. He suffered himself to be led away by Khalil's attendant, and while he waited for Donn Dera to come to his tent sank into deep sleep. Khalil, too, left the fire, and the man from Erin remained alone with Youssouf, the warrior who had brought the broken sword.

Donn Dera, apparently, never slept. Looking through the smoke at the motionless Arab, he said softly, as if giving tongue to his thoughts—

"Yea, the day comes, and there will be a rare feeding of ravens and whetting of sword edges—there will be sorrow and blood that the wolves will drink."

This prospect was rather pleasing to the warrior of al Yaman, particularly as he firmly believed the speaker had the gift of sight into hidden things, and he asked Donn Dera to prophesy whether the issue would be favorable or not.

"God knows," responded the wanderer.

The Arab nodded, in complete agreement.

"With Him are the keys of the unseen."

CHAPTER V

If a chain is on the lion's neck, the jackal will range the ruins all night long.—Arabic Proverb.

THE third day dawned clear and cloudless in its heat, and Khalil waxed impatient. Hugh's fever had left him and his hurts had mended, and it was decided to move toward Antioch.

The horses were driven in from pasture by the boys of the tribe, and the men selected their mounts—Hugh picking out a bay charger that looked as if he were accustomed to a heavy rider in armor. Then Khalil led them to where plundered weapons were kept.

Swords—of the weight that would suit the crusader—were lacking, and the knight of Taranto selected an ax with a curved edge and a pick at the other end. The handle of the ax was three feet in length, of gray ash, smooth and oiled. Donn Dera raked over the pile, grumbling, until he grinned and held up an iron flail—two-foot lengths of wood and metal hinged together, the tip set with spikes.

"That will not cut a shield," Khalil remarked.

"It will break bones," responded the wanderer.

No shields had been taken by the Arabs, or helmets, and Hugh gave to Donn Dera the mail shirt, sleeveless, that he had worn under his hauberk. At first the man from Erin would not accept this but when Hugh reminded him that he was defenseless against arrows without it, he put it on.

Hugh had been watching the Arabs. They carried light leather targets, slung to slender spears at their shoulders. Each man had his simitar girdled high, and his hands rested among the hilts of numerous and varied daggers—some even wore two swords. Long kaftans and cloaks covered their mail and light steel helmets. They wore no spurs, and managed the horses by knee and voice.

"They move like foxes," said the youth, "swift and alert—but ready to flee as well as strike. How will we storm a gate with such as they?"

"That remains to be seen," admitted Donn Dera, "but if the gate be open, they will slip through like elves."

It was the first time that the crusader had been able to talk with Donn Dera. Hitherto, when he had sought the man of weapons in the camp, Donn Dera had been out with the watchers, or off somewhere with Khalil. The red warrior had the gift of tongues and could make himself understood more easily than Hugh.

"I know now," said Hugh frankly, "that you broke my sword to keep me from death—though at the time it angered me. But what reason is there for lies? You have made Khalil believe that I am the lord of the Greeks, and you have boasted overmuch."

"That is my nature," explained Donn Dera gravely. "As for the lie—if Khalil understood that you were no more than a young lord of the Franks, he would ransom you for fifty pieces of gold to Theodore Lascaris, who would pay readily enough. Would it please you to stand as a prisoner before the nobles of the emperor?"

"Aye, so that I could face him with his treachery!"

Donn Dera only puckered his lined face, and inspected the hinge of his flail.

"It may be," he said after a while, "that the Greeks can not or will not find a ransom of two men's weight in gold. That is your safety."

"You have the gift of foreknowing," assented Hugh calmly.

"Not so. I have cunning, and eyes and ears. Youssouf ben Moktar, who is lieutenant to Khalil, speaks the *lingua franca*. Yea, he is almost as great a boaster as I. From him I learned that Khalil covets the spoil of Antioch. And this is a strange city."

"How strange?" asked Hugh, not quite convinced that his companion could not look into the future.

Donn Dera twisted in the saddle. He rode not with the steady seat of the crusader or the pliant ease of the desert men, but with a jerking and shaking of his mighty limbs.

"Well, the Lord Joseph* and I fared forth together two days agone to a height whence we looked down upon the city. He did this because I dared him to go with me while I cast a spear over the wall of Antioch.

"Thus, from a shoulder of these mighty hills, we beheld the city, and it lies in a valley at the end of a lake, like Lough Neague. A small river runs down the valley into the lake, and on either hand of the river are two stone mountains, like giants. Now the town of Antioch runs down the slope of a hill—the one on this side of the river.

"The castle itself sits at the crown of the hill, and its walls are white stone. Now, look. Behind the castle, guarded by its walls and the steep of the hill, is the quarry from which this stone is taken. The quarry eats into the stone summit as a wolf gnaws into the flank of a dead cow. All this we saw, for we left the horses and climbed and peered. We climbed to the end of the castle wall, and cast two spears over it."

"And what of the path that is to lead us into the castle?"

"Joseph, the Arab, said there was a way through the stone of the quarry. The lord Khalil had heard tell of it. But what the way is and where it lies, I wit not."

He blinked reflectively, and added—

"Yet horses can pass through it. On the shoulder of the mountain behind the castle we saw their tracks, coming and going. Where the footing was all of loose stone, we saw no more tracks, because the Saracen beasts are not shod."

"They might have been Greeks."

"Not so. The Greek standards are planted in the town, where the emperor builds mangonel and ram to batter the gate and wall. Not even a dog or goat could climb from the town to this side of the summit."

"Why did you throw the spears?"

Donn Dera rubbed a gnarled hand through his boar-like bristle of hair.

"They were javelins of your Franks. When they fell among the Seljuks, the paynim must have feared they were cast down

* Youssouf.

from the heavens by warrior angels. It will be a miracle and an omen, and that will not be a bad thing for us."

Everything Donn Dera did was a matter of impulse, and yet he always had a plausible reason for it afterward. He had gone off on a mad venture, in which he might well have broken his neck or been taken by the Seljuks. And he came back with a clear description of the lay of the castle, and its strength.

Three days ago the two Franks had been captives, disarmed and kept only to be sold to the Greeks by the Arabs. Now they were mounted on good horses, and had weapons in hand. Hugh knew that Donn Dera had arranged this by his cunning. Yet as he thumped about on the hard wooden saddle, and fingered his clumsy flail and grimaced, he did not seem to have an idea in his head.

"You say, Donn Dera," he observed, "that you seek rapine and plunder. Why, then, have you joined the host of the Cross?"

"Easy to say, Hugh. There is more plunder to be had with your crusaders than elsewhere."

Hugh smiled.

"Nay, I am poorer than when I came out of Britain, an esquire-at-arms, and took the Cross."

"Then you are different from most of the lord Franks."

"It is not honorable to belittle such lords as Henry of Flanders, and the Count of Villeharduin."

"They are good men, with their weapons, but with their heads they are worse fools than these Arabs, who pray five times a day to their god for a battle."

Donn Dera slapped his horse impatiently.

"Now, look. Years ago your crusading barons started from France and Flanders and England to free the tomb of the Lord Christ from the infidel. They marched to Venice and demanded ships and sailors and stores from the Venetians, who are not of much avail as warriors, but no fools. The Venetians gave ships and stores, and the crusaders pledged payment, not in gold—for they had none—but in services.

"So, for a year and a half they fought the battles of the Venetians, and in the end they stormed Constantinople at the will of the Pope and the Venetians. Again they asked for ships to take them to Palestine. The Venetians said it was the season of tempests, and would not go.

"Instead they persuaded the barons to fight the paynim in Asia Minor, and the Franks—brave fools—did so. Then were they led, at the Pope's behest, to go against the paynim Tatars and Bulgars in the north. When a city was captured by them, they must supply a garrison, for others would not. So for four years they took spoil and fought the battles of the Venetian merchants and the Pope. They left their bones around Nicea and in the Dardanelles, but got no whit nearer the Holy Land."

"But now—"

"Now came the Greek emperor, who had been driven out of his city by your barons, and was a fugitive in Asia. He came humbly, with offers of a pact and truce, and a mutual venture against the paynim sultan, Kai-Kosru. Though the Greeks had betrayed the Franks not once but a score of times, the fools your barons acceded to Theodore's request, and granted him eight hundred Franks to serve him.

"What happened? Easy to tell! Instead of seeking the Holy Land by way of Antioch, Theodore sought only the gold of the Seljuks, and to make sure of winning a victory, he sacrificed all the Franks in his array. Eight hundred fools, and now the ravens are picking their bones by the river yonder!"

At this, moodiness came over the spirit of the youth, for he saw that Donn Dera's cunning had laid bare the truth. He had taken the Cross with high hopes, and when he set forth on this expedition to the heart of the Seljuk land he had thought that at last he would have sight of Palestine.

"Do you think, Donn Dera," he asked, "that Durandal lies of a truth in the hall of the Seljuk palace?"

"I think this. The paynim folk have a great fear and a dread of the Frankish champions, such as Richard of England and Roland, who was the peer of Charlemagne. Such swords they could not swing in their hands, but they would cherish them from father to son as an honor and a glory to their name. If they say that they have Roland's sword, it is the truth."

A mighty longing came upon Hugh to have Durandal for his own. He felt sure that he would have the strength to wield the sword.

Observing him shrewdly, Donn Dera spoke again:

"I shall find and take Durandal. To that have I set my mind."

"My life I owe to you," assented Hugh readily, "and though I desire the great sword above all things, I will yield it to you if I take it."

"Youngling—" the wanderer laughed harshly—"you have no hand for such a weapon. If you can grasp it first—keep it. But I will be the one. There is a feeling in me that this will happen."

His mood had changed in an instant from kindliness to brooding, and he sighed many times.

"Oh, it is said by the priests, 'They who take up the sword shall perish by the sword' I have a boding and a sensing of ill to come."

WHATEVER Donn Dera might feel within him, he gave no sign of it when they halted that night where a little brown grass grew among a labyrinth of loose rock. They had climbed steadily and a cold wind whipped and buffeted their lair, to the disgust of the Arabs. Khalil would permit no fire to be lighted, and they slept in their cloaks, rousing at times to listen to the horses cropping the tough grass, or the movements of warriors who were going forth to watch.

The Arabs were in no hurry to take to the saddle again, and when broad daylight came Hugh wondered where they were. All around him grew scattered firs, dwarfed and bent by the wind.

At places he could see down into distant valleys, where brown grain rippled and tossed, and through the mesh of the evergreens he glimpsed the reflection of the sun on a broad sheet of water—evidently the lake of which Donn Dera had spoken.

Near the horses he came upon the remnant of a village—huts built one above another into the mountainside, around a cave that had been walled across with stone and clay. The door gaped open and within was only cold and the rubbish of squirrels and dead leaves. But over the lintel of the entrance Hugh made out a cross hewn in a stone, and some strange lettering.

"Ermenie," quoth Khalil, coming up at that moment. "Armenian. Before the Seljuks conquered this land, it was full of such villages. Now the Armenians have been sold as slaves, or made to labor in the towns—Antioch, Tocat, Zeitun, or Mosul."

"They were Christians!" cried Hugh.

The Arab merely raised his hand and waved it aside as if to say that what had happened had been ordained and was not to be altered now.

"Come," said he, "it is time."

They mounted and wound upward, through the firs, and Khalil, who rode in advance, scrutinized closely the marks on the trail. There was only the one trail, because it clung to the shoulder of the mountain, and at times they were forced to edge their horses between the wall of brown stone and a cliff that fell away sheer.

Khalil's lips moved as if he were counting, and he and Youssouf exchanged a brief word.

"Many tens of Seljuks came along this trail two nights ago. There were some women, but no pack animals heavily laden. The Seljuks are dropping away from Antioch, but these are the first deserters, who had not much loot."

Hugh could see that the hoof marks went away from the mountain, but he wondered how the Arabs guessed at women, until Khalil showed him the faint outline of a slipper, where a woman had dismounted to lead her pony around one of the outcroppings of stone—and pointed to a fragment of coral anklet trampled into the ground. He showed the crusader, too, where the Seljuk horses had galloped across a wide slope, explaining that heavily laden animals would have kept to a foot pace.

"If these warriors have their families," he added shrewdly, "they will not wait to plunder those who come after. They will not wait at all."

When the sun was almost overhead, and its heat warmed the cavalcade in spite of the chilling wind, Khalil dismounted to search the ground. Here a narrow gorge ran back into the cliffs that now rose several hundred feet overhead. And here the chieftain left all his men but Youssouf and Hugh.

On foot, the three leaders followed the ledge around the shoulder of the mountain, and Hugh saw that here were no hoof marks. Soon they were ascending over masses of purple and whitish stone, and leaping fissures. Youssouf led the way around a turning, and climbed a pinnacle of rock with the agility of a goat.

"*Antharikyah, dar assiyadah!*" he called

back softly. "Antioch, the abode of power."

When the others joined him, all three lay down and drew themselves to the edge of the rock.

"*V'allah!*" muttered Khalil. "We have not come too soon."

In the brilliant sunlight the scene below them, to the left, was etched in minutest detail. Almost abreast them, a bare two arrow flights away, was the castle of Kai-Kosru—a castle built upon a ledge of solid marble, white, with reddish veins running through it. A wall of marble blocks, some twenty feet in height, had been built around it. Above the wall appeared the dome of a mosque, the terraced roofs of buildings and a single slender tower with a watch gallery at the summit.

This ledge was the shape of a half moon, curving out from the summit of the mountain, and so steep was the slope at either side that no men in armor could climb it without aid from above.

So there was no wall at the base of the half moon. Here the eyes of the watchers were dazzled by the glare of sunlight upon pure white marble, and here, Hugh thought, lay the quarry, built into the very crown of the hill. But between them and the quarry was the cliff, a hundred feet high.

He looked again at the castle. Groups of warriors were visible on the wall, plying their bows through the crenels of the battlement. Others stood in the watch tower, and Hugh could hear them shout, one to another.

"How many?" Khalil asked his lieutenant.

"More than two hundred, less than four. I watched, for the interval between two prayers. I saw no women."

"They have been sent away. A few Seljuks went to guard them, and these others remain to carry off the sultan's wealth, if the castle can not be held."

"Would even a few go hence without the wealth?"

"Aye, for they had the women of these as surety." He nudged Hugh and asked, low-voiced, "What think ye of the wall, my Lord—will it fall?"

Hugh could see the flank of the castle, and one end of the Greek lines. The ledge on which the castle stood was some hundred feet above the highest roofs of the town. And the town itself—brick dwellings with flat, clay roofs, set amid gardens and terraces where red grape-vines grew—descended from the base of the ledge to the river, far below. The streets were little more than stairs.

And these streets swarmed with Greek soldiery. Archers and crossbowmen occupied the nearest buildings and kept up a steady fire at the battlement above them. Other detachments escorted captive Turks who were hauling up massive timbers. The snapping of whips mingled with the whirring of crossbows.

"They have built a counter tower," explained Hugh. "See, they batter down the gate."

Within the vision of the watchers stood a strange edifice. It was wide at the base, narrowing to a summit, on which, reared back like the head of a striking snake, the long shaft of a mangonel was being bent. The wooden tower was fashioned of tree trunks, laid horizontal, and covered with raw hides as a protection against blazing arrows. Men could ascend within it to the platform, which was shielded by mantelets. And these men were levering back the seasoned beam that held a boulder in the pocket at its end. Great ropes creaked, and the beam was suddenly loosed, the stone shooting forward and up.

Khalil, watching with interest, could not see where it struck, but heard the thud of it, and the pounding of marble fragments sliding away. A white dust rose over the wall, and the Seljuks shouted in anger.

"They lack heart," muttered the Arab. "Once we faced such a wooden tower and cast upon it light clay jars that broke and loosed a liquid on the timbers and the men. They mocked us, for they took no hurt from *that*. Then, when all the tower was wet we cast over torches. *Bismillahi!* The liquid was naphtha."

"How is the entrance?" asked Hugh. "Do ladders or steps lead up, or is there a road?"

"A road," responded Khalil, "runs slantwise up the ledge to the gate, which is teak. By it, horses come to the castle. Half-way down the ramp small towers stand and a lower gate, but this the Greeks may have destroyed."

"Then, when the stone caster has battered in the gate, they will assault the ramp and enter through the breach. But they will not attack until a way has been opened."

Khalil nodded assent, thinking that Hugh's interest had been stirred by sight of his men at the siege work, and that the crusader was eager to join the Greeks once more. And when they had climbed down from the rock and rejoined the waiting warriors, Khalil spoke to Youssouf, ordering his lieutenant to follow at Hugh's back with two men, to shield the crusader.

It seemed to the Arab that his captive was eager to go against the Seljuks. And, having witnessed the crusader's recklessness in battle, Khalil proposed to take no chances of losing four thousand *miskals* of gold.

CHAPTER VI

THE WAY THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN

AT THE end of the first watch of the night, Arab sentries came back from the lookout rock and reported that all was quiet in Antioch. The Greeks had ceased their hammering at the wall.

Khalil glanced at his men, nodded to Hugh, and flung off his white *koufiyeh*. Tightening his girdle, he looked up at the stars and spoke three words—

"Come, my children."

Striding into the maw of the ravine, he was lost to sight instantly, and the three warriors who followed him. Youssouf nudged Hugh, and the two Franks stepped out of starlight into the utter blackness of trees between two cliffs. In their dark armor, with black hoods and skirted tunics, the Arabs were invisible. There was no talk, or blundering together.

At sunset the horses had been sent back along the trail, guarded by five warriors who made no secret of their disgust at this mission.

Hugh, ax on shoulder, his eyes on the vague shape of the man in front of him, advanced up the ravine, feeling his way around the twisted and thorny boles of trees, and sliding down clay banks. At times he walked over the round stones of a dry stream bed.

There was a halt and a muttered challenge when Khalil picked up the two sentries that had gone up the ravine.

Then Youssouf peered into his face and touched his shoulder. Following the lieutenant, Hugh climbed a bank, clinging to the roots that met his hand, and emerged from the brush into a narrow gorge. Through the cleft between rock walls far overhead, he could see the gleam of stars, and a cold wind brushed past him.

"Ah, what is this?" Donn Dera whispered in his ear. "I am thinking that this is neither quarry nor cairn, but a path into a pit, and no good a t the end of it all."

Hugh could hear his companion's teeth clicking together, andh is breath sighing and the ends of his flail striking against the cliff, and he wondered at the man's anxiety. Donn Dera did not lack courage, but the gusts of wind that whined in the gorge, the silence of the place, made him fearful.

Skilled marauders, the Arabs moved without a sound of footfall or metal striking against armor. Hugh could make out the faint gleam of their helmets. Then he could see nothing before him, and his ax struck stone overhead. He felt up with his hand and discovered that he was entering a tunnel, where he could touch the wall on either side. Bending his head, he strode on.

Presently the walls fell away, and the forms of men ahead of him became visible. He was standing in what seemed to be a narrow room, carpeted, without any ceiling. Reaching down, he picked up gritty dust in his fingers. Then he knew that he was in the quarry and that the white walls of the niche were marble.

The Arabs cast about a moment and entered a corridor that was so narrow only one man could go at a time. This passage turned many times, until the men in advance halted and Hugh was dazzled by the gleam of firelight on the streaked stone.

Pushing up to Khalil, he looked around the corner. There was barely room for one man to squeeze out of the corridor, and the Arabs had halted.

By looking over their heads Hugh could see the fire, in the heart of the quarry. It crackled and swirled under the wind gusts and sent shadows leaping over the gleaming wall of stone. Marble blocks, half chiseled into smoothness, stood at the sides, with piles of ropes and pulleys and hammers, and the short wooden ladders used to climb from ledge to ledge.

Clustered around the fire were some score of Seljuks. Several of them were talking at once, pointing and arguing, and—though they had spears ready to hand—they had eyes only for one another. A single sentry leaned on his spear and listened, almost within reach of Khalil.

This man was a bearded warrior who esteemed himself not a little, by token of the two swords and array of daggers girded under his ribs, and a Greek shield slung over his shoulders. From time to time he yawned and spat, his beard bristling in amusement at the oaths that flew about the fire. And without warning, aroused by a slight sound, he turned and looked squarely at the Arab who was moving toward him from the corridor.

"*Yah hai*—" he roared, and reeled back, falling with a clash of steel, Khalil's javelin fast in his throat.

The Seljuks sprang up, groping for weapons. Seeing the warriors running from the passage they closed in on them without waiting to dress shields or string bows.

Khalil, with a half dozen Arabs, met their rush with two-edged simitars, and before Hugh came up the chieftain had shifted his ground. The Arabs seemed to flow, rather than run, from the passage, bending low until they leaped at their foes.

Spreading out to the sides, they pulled down the Seljuks who tried to fly from the quarry. The remaining guards crowded together, then scattered and rushed desperately. But the swift-footed desert men sliced them with the curved simitars, and the cry of "*Aman*"* was raised in vain.

"*Yah Khawand—yah rafik!*" roared Khalil's men as the last Seljuk went down. Some picked up an extra sword, and they all swept after Khalil, across the floor of the quarry.

At the edge of the firelight they came full upon a chasm or a foss cut where the clay of the castle plateau met the stone of the mountain. It was too wide to leap, and there was no way of telling its depth.

As a precaution—though no attack had been expected from the quarry passages—no bridge had been built across this chasm. Instead, a light beam lay athwart it, and two sentries stood at the far end.

They had heard the fighting and seen the Arabs run from the fire, but, fearing to leave their comrades in a trap, had not pulled back the beam until the first assailants came up.

And these, without a second's hesitation, flung themselves bodily upon the beam, catching it in their arms and holding it in place with their weight. Some of the Arabs rushed across the shaking bridge, and the two sentries fled. The men who now hung to the beam were drawn up, and Khalil's band ran into the heart of Kai-Kosru's stronghold.

Hugh saw that the last man over halted long enough to push the beam loose, and it disappeared into the depths of the mountain.

Somewhere in the darkness kettle-drums sounded, and a man ran from the door of a palace building waving a smouldering torch over his head. He was cut down before he had a chance to cry out. Darkness favored the Arabs, and Khalil, who knew the plan of the castle, made the most of surprize.

Leaving the dome of the mosque on his left, he ran toward the sultan's dwelling on his right. At the portico a dozen of the garrison had mustered and were shouting at the sentries on the wall, believing that the attack had been from without.

These were surrounded by the Arabs, and their outcry ceased suddenly, in a clatter of steel. Guards were at the gate of the outer wall, and some hundred Seljuks were standing at the rampart, kindling cressets, stringing bows and shouting to know what the matter was.

Between the wall and the palace, Hugh made out the foliage of a garden, and the shimmer of water. Beyond the garden stood a low structure that looked like a barrack, and here also there was a bustle and clamor. Calling half of his men to him, Khalil plunged into the garden, and Youssouf cried out to the Franks—

"Come, Lords, we will take the sultan's *serai!*"

Paying no attention to the warriors on the outer wall, who fingered their weapons and peered into obscurity, unable to make out friend or foe, Youssouf sprang through the columns of the portico into the tiled entrance hall.

Hither the leaders of the Seljuks were hastening, down the stairway from a balcony, out of corridors. And here there was light, reflected on the gilded ceiling from hanging oil-lamps.

HUGH confronted the foemen who had vanquished his followers a week ago—stocky men, with broad, bony faces, clad in Damascus and Persian mail. By the plumes in their helmets, he recognized several chieftains and made toward them with Youssouf at his elbow.

* "Have mercy!"

One of the Seljuks stepped out to meet him, with shield advanced and simitar lifted. Hugh had learned that the light, curved blades of these fighters could strike inside the sweep of an ax. Lacking a shield, he gripped the shaft of his weapon in both hands, and sprang aside as the warrior cut at him.

The simitar glanced from the mail coif, laced about his head, but his ax, swung with all the strength of his shoulders, caught the man fairly between throat and arm. Tearing through steel links and shoulder bones, the ax grated against the Seljuk's spine, and he fell prone, bearing with him the embedded ax.

Others leaped at Hugh with a shout of anger, but Youssouf slipped in front of the crusader, and Donn Dera's whistling flail backed the Arab up. Putting his foot on the Seljuk's body, Hugh wrenched out his ax, and snatched up the round steel shield that the dying man had dropped.

Outnumbered, the leaders of the Seljuks fought desperately, crying to their followers to come to them. Several of them pressed together and cut their way out of the hall and ran from the palace. The others were pursued through corridors and balconies until they scattered in headlong flight.

"Ho!" cried Youssouf. "These are vultures, and we have stripped their feathers from them."

He kicked a plumed helmet and sent it spinning across the tiled floor.

"Come, Lord King, let us see where Kai-Kosru kept his wealth."

"What of Khalil?" demanded the knight.

"Khalil is a hawk, and these are vultures. Come!"

And, regardless of what was happening outside the palace, the Arabs snatched up lamps and torches and spread through the inner chambers. Here the floors were richly carpeted, and the marble walls bore paintings of Seljuk sultans and their battles. Youssouf halted in his stride, and threw back his head, baying like a hound at scent of quarry.

"By the Ninety and Nine holy names—by the beard and the breath of Ali, the Companion—lo, the vultures have trussed up their meat and left it for the hawks to find!"

It was, perhaps, well for the marauders that the garrison had been preparing to evacuate Antioch. Had the Arabs, scenting loot, scattered through the sleeping chambers and the deserted women's quarters, stripping and plundering, Youssouf could never have held them together.

As it was, in dozens of stout leather saddle-bags, and goatskin packs, the treasure of Kai-Kosru and his ancestors lay gathered before their exulting eyes, in the center of an anteroom. More, it was neatly sorted and packed, and the warriors who had been guarding it had fled.

With a slash of his simitar, Youssouf cut the thongs from the neck of one sack and thrust his hand within. Under the beards of his companions he held out gold bezants, and heavier coins stamped with Greek letters and the likeness of pagan gods—Persian *dinars*, bearing the figure of a horseman.

"*Ai-yah!*" cried Youssouf, delving deeper, "here is a *dirhem* of the caliph Aaron the Blessed* and another of Sal-edin, the foe of the Franks. Verily, Kai-Kosru had his finger in every purse of al-Islam. Well, he was a good provider!"

"The praise to the Giver!" echoed a warrior, who was prodding a goatskin.

Others unearthed jewels in the smaller saddle bags, and held them up to the torchlight gleefully, but Youssouf, well satisfied with the extent of the Seljuk treasure, remembered that the fighting was not over by any means. Hastily he told off ten men who were slightly wounded, to guard the sacks.

Then he looked around for the two Franks, at first casually and then more anxiously, until he struck clenched hands against his temples and stormed at his followers.

"Thieves—sons of misfortune—O ye spawn of the gullies! Was the door of plunder open, that ye should shut eyes and ears against the two Nazarenes, the captives entrusted to ye by Khalil! Out upon ye—search, seek—"

A shouting at the outer gate silenced him, and he clutched his beard when he heard the cry of the Seljuks.

"*Yah hai—Allah, il allaki.*"

Muttering, he gathered together the twenty remaining able-bodied men and sallied forth to learn what was taking place outside the palace.

*Haroun al-Raschid, of Bagdad.

WHILE the Arabs were crowding around the bags of gold, Hugh looked for Donn Dera. Not finding him in the anteroom, he went back to discover whether his companion had been struck down in the entrance hall. Here was no sign of the man from Erin, and Hugh continued his search, wandering through a corridor that led into the garden court in the center of the palace. This was in darkness, but at the far end a glimmer of light came from between slender pillars.

Ax in hand, the crusader crossed the garden, circled a marble pool, and advanced through the colonnade. He found himself in the throne-room of Kai-Kosru.

A single oil-lamp brought to life the blue of lapis lazuli set in the wall, the soft sheen of silk carpet underfoot, and the glint of shields and rare swords—simitars, yataghans and daggers hung behind the dais upon which stood the narrow silver chair of the dead sultan.

And beside the lamp on this dais sat Donn Dera with a six-foot sword across his knees.

Hugh came closer and looked at it, knowing that this was the sword Durandal. Its pommel was a gold ball from which the empty jewel facets stared like blind eyes. From pommel to crosspiece extended a bronze bar, long enough for two hands to grip, and the wide crosspiece curved toward the blade like a new moon.

"That is Roland's glaive," he said.

The blade was broad at the base, and the bright steel had the glow of silver. Down it ran an inscription that Hugh could not read. The point was blunter than in the swords Hugh had used.

All at once he felt that here was a sword of enduring strength. His hand longed to take it up. He thought that the bronze would fit his hand.

"Yea," quoth Donn Dera, "I found it hanging above the throne. I lifted it down."

The wanderer was gazing at the great blade as if puzzled or grieved.

"I can bend any bow, or cast any spear—I can lift this blade above my shoulders, but there is no strength in me to swing the sword Durandal."

"With both hands, then," suggested Hugh, who was afire with eagerness to do that very thing.

"Nay, I have the ache of long years in my joints. The sword is too heavy. Ah—"

Donn Dera stared at his companion in surprize. The young knight had dropped to one knee and clasped his hands upon it, and had shaken back the mail coif from his head, so that his mane of tawny hair fell around his shoulders.

After a moment Hugh spoke to Donn Dera.

"I thank the Lord Christ that we have found the sword of the hero, and will take it from paynim hands."

"Yea, we shall take it," muttered the wanderer. "My cunning found it, though I have not the strength to wield the great sword."

"Come and find Khalil."

Together, the elder walking with effort under the weight of the six-foot blade, they went from the throne-room and garden to the entrance of the palace. Hugh could not keep from looking again and again at Durandal. Donn Dera had found the sword and it was his. But the young knight was glad that it would not fall to the Greeks. The blade gleamed, in such a friendly manner, as if asking him to take it up.

Theodore had tricked him at the battle of the Meander, had broken the Seljuks, and would be master of Antioch. In all things he was victor, because he was shrewd and experienced and knew how to deceive others.

CHAPTER VII

THE GAUNTLET

UTTER confusion reigned outside the palace. Riderless horses plunged away from spluttering torches. Groups of Arabs flitted between lights, and beyond the outer wall of the castle there rose the steady, threatening roar of a multitude. On the wall, Seljuks were loosing arrows from their bows.

But they were sending their shafts into the outer darkness, and half-heartedly, because they were aware of the Arabs in the palace and the stables.

"By Michael," grinned Donn Dera, "the Greeks are attacking the gate."

They saw Khalil, then. The chieftain of Yaman was taking full advantage of confusion. Having cleared the barrack of Seljuks, he had scattered his few men so that the garrison on the wall could not judge his strength, and must have fancied, in their desperation, that all Arabia had descended from the mountain.

Carefully Khalil had counted the defenders of the wall—a hundred and fifty, warriors and officers. He had loosed the horses to add to their perplexity, having appropriated the best stallion for his own mount, and now, escorted by torches, with sheathed sword and hand on hip, he revealed himself to the harassed Seljuks.

"O ye men of Kai-Kosru!" he shouted in a voice that carried over the tumult. "Are there not souls enough in paradise that ye should stand against the Roumis and join the company of the slain?"

"What man art thou?" one of the Seljuk leaders demanded.

"I am Khalil el Kadhr, chief of the Ibna, lord of Yaman. My men hold the palace and what is in it. Lay down your weapons or we shall throw you to the Roumi dogs that bay without!"

Khalil looked both triumphant and satisfied. In reality he was on fire with anxiety. If he tried to withdraw, taking the sacks of gold—and Youssouf had told him their worth—the Seljuks would be aware of his scanty numbers, and would turn to fight for the treasure. So far he had not molested the garrison on the castle wall, and the last thing he wished to do was to attack them from below.

Meanwhile the Greeks, aroused by the tumult within, had ventured up the ramp and were beating at the outer gate with a ram. Their crossbow bolts whistled past the Seljuk helmets.

"Nay, withdraw, O ye Arabs!" cried one of the Turkish officers. "Leave the horses—the infidels will be in upon us before the first light."

Khalil laughed loudly.

"When did the men of Yaman leave horse to the sultan's dogs? We shall deal with the Greeks. Throw down the weapons—now—or we will come against thee with the sword."

Perhaps memory of the dreaded Arab simitar stirred the Seljuks, or sheer uncertainty made them desperate. They had seen their comrades slain or scattered—most of their leaders were lost, and they were quarreling among themselves.

"Then, Khalil," cried he who had bade the assailants withdraw, "let there be peace between us. We will help thee bear the gold to safety, away from the cursed Greeks. Then will we talk of horses and a division of the treasure—"

"Does the lion sit down with the jackal? I would have left ye, to live—"

"Nay, Arab!" The Seljuk cried out hastily when he saw Khalil turn as if to give an order. In imagination the men on the wall saw a thousand arrows loosed at them, and they all began to shout at once.

"*Aman!*"

"Forbear—we are believers. Have mercy, Khalil!"

"We hear and obey! Only stand back and let us pass into the quarry."

Khalil looked at them without apparent pleasure.

"Then cast down weapons—*all* weapons! The javelins likewise. What, have ye no knives?"

A few at first, scores of simitars, spears and bows clattered on the stones beneath the wall, and the Seljuks ran down the inclines, some prostrating themselves before Khalil's horse. But the Arab wished neither talk nor delay.

Youssouf and bands of the desert men hounded the prisoners off toward the stables, thrusting at them with their own javelins, and mocking them. The Seljuks were thoroughly disheartened, and—though many of them had long knives hidden under cloak and girdle—more than willing to flee.

A few of them picked up a stout plank bridge set on rollers that must have been used by the sultan to pass horses across the chasm. Pushing this into place, they fought to be first to cross to the sanctuary of the mountain. When the last had disappeared, Youssouf stationed a guard at the movable bridge and hastened back to where his chieftain was loading horses with the sacks of gold and precious stones that were being carried from the palace.

And then a warrior shouted and they stopped their work, rigid with astonishment.

Hugh had walked past them to the gate that was already splintered and shaken. One of the iron bars had been knocked down. Setting his shoulder under the remaining bar, the tall crusader lifted it, cast it aside and wrenched open one of the teak doors.

Reaching out his hand, he gripped the sword on Donn Dera's shoulder, and with this he stepped through the opening, and confronted the mass of the besiegers.

No Arabs were near enough to prevent

him, and they who snatched up bows and javelins to slay him remembered that he was Khalil's captive, the emperor.

BELOW Hugh of Taranto a hundred torches smoked and crackled. Under his feet was the débris knocked from the wall by the stones, and the length of the inclined ramp was littered with fragments of marble and the ruins of the lower towers.

Upon the ramp several hundred Greeks had ventured, and now stood poised, with shields raised over their heads, sword in hand. The nearest, who had been driving a tree trunk against the gate, had let fall their ram, and snatched up spears, fully expecting a sally from the opened gate.

On the hillside below were ranks of crossbowmen, covered by mantlets, and on the *bellfroi*, the gigantic tower, were other detachments, mustered under the white and gold standard of the Cæsar.

Beyond arrow-flight of the wall, Theodore Lascaris, the emperor, sat a white horse with crimson caparisoning, attended by his Sebastocratos, his chief officer, his councilors and Mavrozomes, the armorer. He had heard that the Seljuks were forsaking the wall and fighting among themselves, and, no sluggard, where an advantage was to be gained, he had commanded an instant assault, lending his presence to encourage the men of his host.

Conspicuous, in his gilded armor and griffon-crested helmet, illuminated by a ring of torches and outlined against the great banner with the purple cross, Theodore was perceived at once by the knight of Taranto.

For their part, sight of the tall Frank in the aperture from which they had expected a sally of Turks, filled the Greek soldiers with astonishment. When they noticed the gold wrought mail, and the purple cross upon Hugh's ragged surcoat, their bewilderment waxed greater.

They had been told that all the Franks were slain at the Meander, and here was one of the crusaders in the emperor's mail, leaning upon a sword of unearthly size—and Hugh himself, standing upon the pile of débris, his long hair shining in the flickering torchlight, seemed to them of gigantic stature.

So, within and without the castle wall, there fell a quiet in which the crackling of cressets and the stamping of horses could be heard. And in this moment of near silence Hugh raised his hand.

"Lord King—" he cried.

A bolt from a crossbow whirred past his ear and crashed into the stone lintel of the gate.

Hugh's voice now reached to the imperial cavalcade, and even the horse sergeants beyond.

"Down weapons! Sir Hugh of Taranto speaks, who defended the banner and person of the emperor at the Meander—"

He said no more. In Mavrozomes, peering up from the press below, there was a nimble wit. The armorer understood instantly that Hugh had escaped the slaughter at the river, probably as a Seljuk prisoner—Mavrozomes imagined that Hugh had been thrust out by the Seljuks to parley for terms of surrender, and the last thing the Greek nobles wished was that the knight of Taranto should have opportunity to speak before the whole army.

So Mavrozomes reasoned, and acted upon the thought. Gliding to the rank of crossbowmen, he clutched the shoulder of a sturdy Genoese, whispering—

"A purse of bezants—a captain's belt to thee, if thou canst bring down that tall foeman."

Thus the first bolt was sped, and the armorer, cursing its failure, passed to a second man, offering a dozen slaves and two heavy purses.

"Aim lower, at the cross!"

The light was illusive, Hugh's appearance bewildering, and the whisper of Mavrozomes imperative. The other man settled his shoulder against the iron stock and pulled the trigger. The bolt whirled upward, crashed against the knight's light shield and tore through it, but glanced aside. The crusader shook the shattered shield from his arm.

The parley ended as swiftly as it had begun. For the captain in command of the men highest on the ramp had taken account of the two missiles, and, feeling himself in jeopardy, shaded his eyes and looked down at his leaders.

One word passed Theodore's lips, and the Sebastocrator heard and lifted his ivory baton, pointing it toward the gate, twice—that there should be no mistaking his meaning. The captain understood, and cried to his men—

"At him—through the gate."

Spears lowered, the Greeks advanced. And at this sight fierce anger mastered Sir Hugh. His eyes glowed and he raised the sword overhead.

"St. George!" he cried, and again, "St. George!"

His sword flashed down in a horizontal sweep that snapped off the nearest spear-heads, and swept back, as he stepped forward, into the boldest of the Greeks. Three men were cast down, and lay without moving.

"A traitor!" shouted the captain. "Oho—he is leagued with the Saracen and the devils of the pit!"

What followed was witnessed by three thousand souls on the hillside below and by as many Arabs as could crowd into the half-opened gate—the sight of whom had inspired the Greek officer's shout.

The ramp was no more than eight feet wide, and covered with broken stone, so that only three men could stand upon it abreast. Bending low, and shortening their sword arms, the Greeks rushed, and were swept from their feet with broken bones and bodies gaping. Some slid off the ramp but they were dead before they touched the ground, a hundred feet below.

"Over the bodies," ordered the captain angrily. "Shield to shield. Thrust with spears from behind."

Three warriors linked shields together and went up, while others who had the long light spears of the foot soldiers, pushed their weapons in advance of the three.

"Well done!" laughed Sir Hugh.

He stepped forward, and a spear tore through his cheek, grinding into the bone. His sword smote down the middle man of the three, and he leaped back. An ax clanged against his straining chest as he heaved up Durandal, breaking the links of his mail.

"Well struck!" he roared, and cut inward, toward the rock. The two leaders were knocked against the cliff, their limbs numbed by the impact. Spears snapped.

Hugh fought with the cold rage and the swiftness of the man who knows his weapon. There was in him, at such a moment, the instinct of the falcon that strikes only to slay and is not to be turned from its quarry. Aroused in every nerve, his long body and iron muscles wielded Durandal as an ordinary man might swing a staff.

No man, struck by that sword, rose again. A tangle of bodies lay on the ramp at his feet, and he saw the Greek captain climb in desperation upon the huddle of his men. The Greek, who gripped a shield close to him, and a short sword upraised, leaped forward, to strike at the crusader's unprotected head.

And as he leaped Sir Hugh took two steps back, swinging Durandal far behind his right shoulder. The five-foot blade whined through the air, and checked as it struck the Greek above the hips—then swept out and up to the left, gleaming and hissing.

Smitten in mid-leap, the body of the Greek flew out from the ramp, and a shout burst from three thousand throats. The form of the captain divided into two parts, the legs and hips whirling away from the trunk, falling into the line of crossbowmen.

Beholding this, the Greeks on the ramp drew back, and the mutter of voices from the ranks below was like the murmur of innumerable bees—

"May the saints aid us—such a stroke!"

"Take up bows—make an end—"

"Nay, what say the nobles? I marked how the first bolts did him no harm—"

"By Sergius and Bacchus, the warrior is more than human. Whence came he? See, there is fire playing around his brow."

This muttering dwindled when Hugh, resting his sword tip on the roadway, drew from his right hand the gauntlet of steel links.

"Theodore Lascaris," he cried, "Lord King, forsworn and traitor. By thy treachery died eight hundred, my companions, who served thee faithfully. Worthier knights than I lie now unburied at yonder river, but I alone am left to proclaim thy guilt, and this I do, challenging thee in thy person or by champions, to do battle with swords that God may judge between us."

And he cast the gauntlet after the body of the Greek captain, so that it circled in the air and fell among the knights sitting their horses below the ramp.

This sudden cessation of the struggle at the gate produced a silence among the Greeks, and they who understood Sir Hugh's words glanced curiously at the emperor. But Theodore Lascaris, his lean face white under the silver helmet, fingered the tasseled rein of his charger, giving no response or any indication that he had heard. Seeing him thus hesitant, the nobles debated whether or no to pick up the gage

cast down by the Frank, and while they hesitated, Sir Hugh spoke again.

"I am the banneret of Taranto, my lineage the equal of any prince of the Comneni. If thou wilt not accept my pledge, name thy champions and I will meet them in this hour upon level ground until one or the other perish."

A strong hand grasped Hugh's belt at the back, others caught his arms and he was drawn suddenly into the darkness of the castle court. The gate was shut before his eyes and the iron bar dropped into place. He heard Khalil's deep voice at his ear.

"In the name of Allah the Compassionate, let there be an end of madness!"

IT WAS an hour before the Greeks broke down the gate, and the mountain peaks were outlined against the first yellow light when they entered the courtyard, weapons in hand.

An hour later the Sebastocrator and the Cæsar rode their horses up the ramp that had been cleared of bodies and, surrounded by a strong party of spearmen, searched the palace, the garden and the outbuildings. They were thoroughly mystified by what they found.

A hundred or more Seljuks lay scattered about, dead of sword wounds, and not a horse was in the stables. The palace had been cleared of its treasure, with the exception of the throne of Kai-Kosru, and heavy fretwork and plates of gold. Even the rare silks of Cathay and the ivories of Ethiopia were gone, although the first-comers had rooted out chests of linen and red leather and some weapons—that they hid away immediately.

So Theodore Lascaris, entering the stronghold of Kai-Kosru that noon, found nothing of value awaiting him, and no tidings at all of Sir Hugh. His men reported that they had discovered a light wooden bridge lying at the bottom of the foss that separated the castle from the quarry and, upon further search of the quarry, certain pathways that led into the ravines of the mountain itself.

The only material evidence of Sir Hugh's presence was the steel gauntlet that still lay untouched, by order of the emperor, under the ramp.

Although Theodore had defeated the Turks, had captured Antioch and its castle, his mood was dark that noon, because he had failed to seize the store of the sultan's gold and jewels that was the main object of his crusade. Moreover the Frank was still living, and this did not please the emperor.

True, his men were already creating fables out of the deeds of Sir Hugh, and beginning to believe that the knight of the long sword was a spirit incarnate that roamed the mountains around the Meander during the hours of darkness and disappeared into the bowels of the earth at daybreak.

But to Mavrozomes, who was his confidant, Theodore offered a hundred pounds of pure gold and a fief in Nicea for the head of Sir Hugh, and after consultation with his Cæsar, he composed a letter to be carried swiftly to Constantinople, before Sir Hugh could journey thither and tell his tale to the main body of crusaders. The letter was addressed to the Count of Flanders.

> To the worthy and pious princes of Christendom, greeting: Know that God hath so loved Us, that we met the Saracens upon the river Meander, and, though the battle was cruel and hazardous beyond belief, victory was given to Us.
>
> Know also that We have great grief in relating that the Franks under Our command advanced too rashly into the ranks of the Saracens, and were sorely beset. Thereupon We gave command to advance Our banner, and did encounter in person the sultan Kai-Kosru, and slay him with Our hand upon the ground after both were unhorsed. Thus did God grant victory to Us, but of the English, the Flemings and French, not a man but was slain.
>
> Know that We intend to set aside a rich portion of the treasure of Antioch, to be paid to the comrades of the slain Franks upon Our return, and this portion will equal the pay of your host for a year.

After a priest had written out this letter, and the emperor had signed and sealed it and sent it off by a rider, an order was given to the priest to sprinkle the castle with holy water, and to incense the gauntlet of the Frank that lay before it.

"What say the warriors of my host," he then asked, "concerning this Frank?"

"May it please your Illustriousness," the priest made response earnestly, "they say he is a warlock or werewolf, animate with unholy power, and taking human form in the hours of darkness. Surely he is an agent of Satan."

"Surely," agreed Theodore Lascaris, "though, to my belief, he was slain at the Meander and Satan drew down his body into hell and sent forth a demon in his semblance. Remember that his body was not found at the river."

The priest, breathing deeply, and making the sign of the cross in the air,

withdrew. Theodore Lascaris turned to the Cæsar who sat at his elbow.

"And now, my Lord Baron, I appoint thee to deal with this fugitive knight. Take a thousand horse, with foot attendants—hie ye straightway to Constantinople, and if this scion of Taranto shows himself in the city, demand audience instantly of his liege lord, the Count of Flanders. Make complaint that Sir Hugh deserted our ranks, allied himself with Saracen Arabs and drew his sword against our men, slaying divers of them, and making off with a great store of gold. But it is also your duty to see that Sir Hugh doth *not* appear at the city."

The Cæsar, who was an Italian and could appreciate intrigue, nodded expectantly.

"Send chosen officers," went on the emperor, "to the seaports, Smyrna, Tenedos and Gallipoli. Have them describe this Frank—his size should be notable, and his hair."

"And the fresh scar on his cheek, sire. I heard it said a spear slashed his face in twain."

"Have him taken and bound and brought secretly to me. Do likewise in the towns of our empire, leaving a band of men to watch in each. Put guards on all the northern caravan routes, and—" he thought for a moment—"fail not to drive off the cattle of the Armenians in these Taurus mountains. Sell the cattle to the Genoese at Smyrna, and from these moneys make a gift to the Count of Flanders, promising him still more."

Having made certain that the roads to the north would be so many traps to catch the knight of Taranto, Theodore Lascaris now awaited the arrival of Mavrozomes, for whom he had sent. Meanwhile he summoned to him two deaf Bulgars, clad in black leather, bearing wolfskins on their shoulders.

When the armorer entered the throne-room of Kai-Kosru and found Theodore seated in the silver chair attended by these twain, Mavrozomes' knees began to quiver and the hair rose on his head.

"Speak," murmured the emperor, eying him.

"May it please your unutterable Grandeur, I found a path through the mountain, cleverly hidden, and at the end—"

"What?"

"Horse tracks."

The emperor smiled.

"So you found horse tracks, but not Sir Hugh?"

Mavrozomes tried to speak, and only succeeded in shaking his head, while his eyes rolled. Whereupon the emperor made a sign to the two Bulgars, holding out a slender hand and going through the motions of breaking off each finger in turn.

Casting himself on the carpet before the dais, the armorer tried to crawl toward his lord, but the two barbarians caught him up in stout arms and haled him toward the door. To him, thus leaving, Theodore Lascaris addressed a reproof.

"Mavrozomes, I send thee to the rack, so thou wilt taste the pangs shortly to be experienced by Sir Hugh—until he discloses the hiding place of the sultan's gold. If Satan bids thee, Mavrozomes, select for him a mock-emperor of the nether world, bethink thee and do not pick out such a one as thou didst for me."

AT DAWN of the day after, Khalil called in his sentries and watched the lading of twenty horses with the bags and goatskins that he had taken from Antioch; he counted anew the drove of horses brought up by his boys, and found the count a full four hundred—a matter of pleasure to an Arab, especially as he noticed many blooded *kohlanis* and Turkoman racers in the stock of Kai-Kosru.

While the women bundled up the woolen tents, and his warriors saddled the steeds they had selected for the day's journey from the camp on the mountain, Khalil strode off, in an amiable mood, to talk to his two captive Franks.

He was still mystified, and he proposed to be enlightened. At the time they rode from the castle of Antioch Khalil had been certain that Sir Hugh was *ahmak*, mad. Now that the crusader had quieted down, and his wounds had been dressed, Khalil was not so sure he was mad.

Entering the tent where the captives sat, he squatted down on the rug by Sir Hugh and looked at him reflectively. Being a chieftain, he greeted the knight courteously, and being a Moslem spoke of something that had no bearing on his visit.

"Eh, Donn Dera, I see that thy companion has the long sword that wrought such woe among the Roumis."

The man from Erin nodded moodily.

"Yea, Khalil, my joints are stiff. Since I can not deal a blow with the great sword Durandal I have given it to Sir Hugh. Faith, I am thinking that no other man could handle it."

"All things are possible with Allah," murmured the Arab, glancing at the sword that the young knight was wiping down with a soft cloth until the steel shone as with an inward fire. So, too, the dark eyes of Khalil glowed. Every detail of the fight at the ramp was fixed in his memory.

Sir Hugh kept silence, fearing that the Arabs would try to take the sword from him, now that their truce was at an end.

"Eh," said Khalil again, "from the gate I beheld the emperor of the Greeks, with his standard. Now it is clear to me that this lord is not the emperor."

And he glanced sharply at Donn Dera.

"True," assented that warrior promptly. "It befell in this wise, O Khalil. The Greeks selected a false emperor at the Meander, to draw the attack of their foes. They appareled him in all things like the real Comnenus, and this man was Sir Hugh."

"*Mash'allah!*" Khalil thought this over for a while. "Who may escape his fate?"

"I have told thee truth," Sir Hugh spoke for the first time, bluntly. "I am the knight of Taranto, the vassal of a Frankish count, who will ransom us twain from Constantinople if thou wilt send thither."

"Will the antelope go into the tiger's lair?" Khalil shook his head, good-naturedly. "Thyself lacks wisdom, Lord, to offer thus."

"Yea," quoth Donn Dera grimly, "he will never be a king. He lacks wisdom, and there is no help for it. Throughout his life he will be set upon, and tricked, and will suffer for others' wrongs. When that is said, the worst is said.

"Reckless he is, and stubborn, and death lies in wait for those who follow him. Yet in the courts of the kings of all the world there is no champion the like of him—who held the gate of Antioch against eight thousand men and drove them back. Yea, he threw down his glove, and bade the men of weapons come against it, and it is an honor to me that I shall have the telling of this thing to the end of my life. For ye can not say better of any man than *that*."

The faded eyes of the wanderer gleamed reminiscently.

"And so I have given him the great sword that was found by my cunning, to keep."

When Khalil had considered this, two things were clear to him. He would have chosen to keep Sir Hugh with him as companion in his wars—and in honor, according to the code of a chieftain of the elder Ibna, he could not ransom or sell as a slave a man who had fought at his side.

"May Allah grant ye an open road!"

He rose, gathering his cloak about him.

"The agreement is at an end. Thou art free to choose thine own path. Two good horses, with saddle bags are my gifts."

"The gift of a prince," cried the man from Erin. "We will e'en fare to Smyrna and go by the coast to Constantinople to complain of this dog-emperor."

"Not so!" said the knight.

"Where else?"

Sir Hugh stood up, supporting himself on the cross piece of Durandal.

"Long years ago, I made a pledge to God, and this I must redeem. When I took the Cross I made a vow to seek the sepulcher of Christ, and not to turn back from this venture. I have thrown down the gage to Theodore Lascaris and with him will I deal in another day. Now, Khalil fares to the south, through Palestine. Surely he will grant us his escort to Jerusalem!"

Khalil uttered an exclamation of pleasure, for Sir Hugh had invoked a thing cherished by him, his hospitality.

"Come then, as my guest, and surely my honor is increased thereby."

He glanced inquiringly at Donn Dera.

"Hard to say," quoth the wanderer. "Yea, I will come, to shield this youth with my cunning, for I love him."

Picking up his bundle and his flail, Donn Dera went from the tent and peered around for his horse, while Khalil swaggered off calling to his men.

"O ye sons of Yaman, Allah hath caused great profit to us this day, for the wonder-working sword goes with us to Jerusalem, and the Frank who is undoubtedly mad, but only in certain things, after the manner of his kind. Bring the horses!"

And so swiftly did the tribe melt from the passes of the Taurus that the outriders of the Cæsar who were looking for cattle saw only their dust drifting into the desert plain, and the gleam of the sword that was as long as a spear, and that was thereafter the cause of sorrow to Theodore Lascaris.

But, being wiser than Mavrozomes, the Cæsar said naught of this to the emperor.

Author of "With Grape and Bayonet," "A Cup of Sugar," etc.

IT WAS late on the night of August 26, 1776. The sun had set blood red beyond the Jersey palisades, touching, as it dipped, the British ships in New York harbor. The nine thousand Continentals, camped on Brooklyn Heights, with their backs to the East River and their gun muzzles pointed toward the rugged hills which masked Flatbush, wondered where Howe kept himself and wished for the actual presence of Washington.

"Old Uncle Putnam!" grumbled the spruce Marylanders. "Galloping around here in his shirt sleeves and a dirty leather jacket. A —— New England farmer. A very fine appearing gentleman, indeed. Why doesn't Washington put a military man in command of the Long Island troops?"

In this impatient mood they scanned the line of hill and timber before them. Through that dark mass were scattered their outposts and beyond it somewhere Howe moved his twenty thousand troops—of which number a great many were veterans of the continent—and waited for a chance to fling them against the rebellious Americans in the first open and pitched battle of the revolution.

"Why won't he come and fight it now? fretted the Marylanders. "Why won't Washington force him? Why don't we fight?"

High-strung men, these sons of planters and Baltimore shopkeepers; proud but green troops who did not yet know what iron discipline or patient waiting meant.

"Howe's afraid," said the New Englanders posted in the distant timbered defiles. "He's remembering Bunker Hill and he wants to take his time. But why don't they bring up reinforcements? We can't hold these passes against the whole British army. Where is Washington?"

If they thought the commander-in-chief slept and forgot them they were mistaken. Washington stood in New York town and stared across the black tide of the East River; watching anxiously, knowing that the odds were heavy against the untenable position over there; knowing, too, that his general had not fully comprehended the spirit of his orders.

His last injunction to Putnam had been, "Keep an eye on the Jamaica road. I fear your main trouble will be from that quarter." He had personally supervised the placing of the troops on Long Island. He himself had seen to the disposition of trenches on the Heights and had even gone so far as to pace off a distance of ten yards in front of these trenches. "Do not waste powder. If attacked, wait until the enemy is within this space before firing." He, too, had placed the outposts in the two defiles of

the broken hills; one on the southwestern end and one in the center. By these two passes only could Howe penetrate the jungle of brush, marsh and sharp inclines. But there was another road to the northeast which skirted the range entirely—the Jamaica highway. And Washington had repeated again, "Keep a sharp lookout along that road."

Old Israel Putnam, a doughty, courageous veteran of the French and Indian campaigns, gaily agreed and rode away as if he were on a holiday. To fight was his business and if he found the enemy he would engage. Meanwhile, like a jolly old uncle he circulated among his soldiers quite as if he were at a town meeting.

SERGEANT ABNER COTTON led his detail back through the dark, answered the challenge of the sentry and trudged toward the general's tent. There was no formality about speaking with Putnam. One private supposedly stood guard at the door but Putnam, hearing the sergeant's voice, boomed out—

"Ne'mind that horseplay! Come in, sonny, come in!" Sergeant Cotton entered, saluted and stood straight.

"What's story, sonny?"

"I went as far as ordered, sir, and saw nothing. Another patrol passed me on the Jamaica road but the sergeant in charge said he'd found nothing suspicious either."

"All right, sonny. Guess you've done your night's work. Meanwhile your company's moved out to the hills, so you just fall in with the nearest outfit—that will prob'ly be the Maryland boys."

Cotton saluted and started to leave; Putnam held him with a gesture and looked at the young man's face as if he were reading a book. There could be no mistaking the nativity of Abner Cotton. Yankee awkwardness and Yankee conscience were stamped plainly on his features. His nut-brown cheeks were almost cadaverous and a kind of parsimony of flesh was evident from head to foot; he was, in fact, bony and march-worn. When he moved, it needed no second glance to place him as one who had worked hard all his life and in consequence had learned to husband his efforts. The illusion was further sustained by a thin-lipped mouth that appeared to be keeping in attempted speech. All in all, it made the man seem a little grim, a trifle dour, a shade hard-bitten; as if living had been none too easy and as if there were nothing much to laugh about in a toilsome world. But the eyes told another story. They were veritable mirrors of the man's conscience.

"Sonny," said Putnam, worrying a quill pen in his chubby fist, "your face does look f'miliar. What's name?"

"Cotton, sir."

The general's face lighted with a rare, beaming smile.

"Thought so. Know your Paw. Carried a fowling piece with him in Canada years ago. Good heart, good mind—Cotton's I mean."

He nodded.

Sergeant Cotton retreated to his detail, dismissed them and made his way slowly to the foremost fires which danced fitfully and brilliantly behind the rough earthworks. One particular blaze seemed less crowded than the others and he advanced to it. Within ten yards a remark floated out to him:

"There's a —— Yankee now, in a regular Yankee suit of clothes. Good ——, don't they know how to dress?"

His head was bent a little in reflection and so none could see the slight change of features. He passed the remark by as if he had been oblivious to it and advanced to the heat. The Marylanders regarded him in a speculative, disapproving silence. One gave way a little to admit him; he sat down and looked into the flames, offering nothing by way of greeting. He was more or less familiar with these proud, high-spirited Southerners, their fine manners and their well-kept buff-and-blue uniforms; he knew them to be prejudiced against anything savoring of New England. He knew they looked upon him as almost an alien. Perhaps if he could speak well he might mingle with these men, make them see that although he came from another province he was as they were. Clothes made no difference. They had ruffles on their shirts and their buttons were bright and their gaiters clean. He had no ruffles at all and no gaiters covered his homespun socks and cowhide shoes.

But they were all fighting for the same end. Moreover that fight had begun—and he felt a mild touch of pride in the fact—on Yankee soil. It was New England who first had shown her stiff backbone and given the

other colonies the tempo of American humor. But, though he thought it, he could not say it. The words were landlocked; he had spent too many years at sober communion to change style now. So he kept his eyes lowered, listening to the idle talk around him.

"SURE'S my name is Alex Carroll, if we don't fight soon I'll walk home. I came to tote a gun, not a shovel. Let the —— Yankees dig ditches. They do it so well."

A silence pervaded the circle. Sergeant Cotton would not take notice of them and presently the talk flowed again. Then he spent a brief glance around him. Handsome, flushed faces. All full of plain courage, all sighing for glory. But of other and more sober virtues, he told himself, perhaps he knew more. The same drawling voice broke in:

"Putnam! A fine general to command a Southern brigade. Man likes to feel at home under his commanding officer. For me, I need a Southern gentleman to give me orders. Sure's my name's Alex Carroll, I'll not abide the word of a New Englander."

Sergeant Cotton's fine eyes were lighted with trouble. He seemed struggling with his conscience, as perhaps he had been doing all his life. At last his mild voice, waiting for a lull in the talk, broke in, hesitant but free from embarrassment.

"Guess you'll find some New Englanders that know about war."

The circle turned upon him, voicing their hereditary antagonism. Carroll swooped down with a single, malicious—

"Who?"

Sergeant Cotton ventured to put up his own general's name.

"Putnam knows enough to win battles."

A howl of scorn overwhelmed him. The Marylanders rent "Uncle Putnam" in a dozen shreds.

"He looks like a village blacksmith, not a soldier," added Carroll.

"Clothes, now," ventured the sergeant, "do they make a fighting man?"

"There are certain elements of military discipline and appearance that go with general officers," stiffly admonished Carroll. "If they have not dignity and command, how can they inspire their subordinates?"

Cotton was imperturbable. He seemed to be searching himself to find the proper words, to gain these men over by the use of a mild reasonableness.

"He was good enough at Bunker Hill," he reminded them. "Right smart amount of New Englanders there. Guess they did a little fighting. Seemed so to me."

That silenced most, but not Alex Carroll the impatient, the scornful.

"Good ——! Must we be forever hearing about Bunker Hill? They talk as if it was the only battle under heaven. Why did you break and run when you had the British twice beaten and disorganized?"

Sergeant Cotton's eyes were half closed; he seemed to be reviewing the memorable struggle in which he had played a part at the immortal redoubt.

"Powder and shot. Can't fight without ammunition or parry a bayonet with a gun butt."

"So? Maryland men, had they been there, would have died to the last private before quitting that hill!"

The resounding sentence met with the circle's manifest approval. Alex Carroll raised his head, flushed by the sounding oratorical blast.

Sergeant Cotton's ancestry permitted him a dry, wintry smile. It skittered over his face and vanished.

"Guess you'll most all have a chance to do that before this war's over," said he and drew within his shell.

He had done an undue amount of talking and he had not succeeded. He could not find the words that would touch them; he could not penetrate that fraternity of spirits and he felt a little lonely, a little disappointed. Brotherhood was a very real thing to Cotton; he believed in it with a stronger faith than he believed in anything else, saving only everlasting salvation. He would have made a great many sacrifices to show these Southerners that he, as a New Englander, was a man of their own stamp and standing, possessing their own optimisms and follies. He wanted to vindicate his people; he wanted sorely to do his mite to ease a little of that antagonism and prejudice which existed so heartily in America. And he wanted, in his wistful way, to join that cheerful camaraderie. But he was a mute instrument; regretfully he thought of precious pen and ink. He wanted to inscribe in his neglected diary—he had not written in it for five days—that which he could not put in speech.

Alex was again speaking.

"As for me, I will never believe New Englanders make good fighters. They lack spirit. ——, they've no dash! They go at a battle as if it were a job in ditch digging. It stands to reason that a people so accustomed to spade and ax lack the flame that goes with good soldiers. My name's not Alex Carroll if I ever let one give me orders."

The fire veered and spent a momentary gleam upon Sergeant Cotton and upon the

narrow red flannel tabard pinned to his shoulder which indicated his rank. Once more had Carroll arrived at a challenge and once more did the circle wait. Sergeant Cotton's sturdy democracy, of the same part and parcel as old General Putnam's, spoke forth.

"Guess I'll never ask a man to do anything I'd be afraid or unwilling to do," said he with just a shade more than the usual vigor. "But if he doesn't do it then I shall name him a coward."

The camp fires along the Heights flickered and died. Most of the men were rolled in their blankets and sleeping under the open sky. A few of the more suspicious or forehanded kept the blanket rolled and ready, themselves stretched by the flames, dozing lightly. Sergeant Cotton sat cross-legged and communed with himself, now staring at the orange point of the seeking blaze, now watching the star-scattered heavens. His eyes, so perfectly mirroring the inner man, were a little sad. He had tried very hard to join this circle of men. In his own quiet fashion he admired their dash and their gallantry. His own manner was so different.

HOWE, the ever-cautious, at last satisfied himself of the enemy's position and under cover of the night set in motion the ranks and columns of the twenty thousand. There were only three routes of advance upon the American position; he dispatched Grant and a brigade of Highlanders to push through the southwestern gap; De Heister and the Hessians moved directly onward to the central pass; while he, himself, with the main body, pressed onward over the Jamaica road. Thus did the British army advance upon the dark woods in three separate columns. It was half a night's journey and the trampling feet sent clouds of summer's dust rolling over farmer's hedges and rosebushes while accouterments clinked and bayonets gleamed. But Long Island was Tory and no word or suspicion of their progress was heralded until, in the early morning, Grant's Highlanders met the American pickets at the southwestern pass and set up a skirmishing, tentative fire.

It was three o'clock when a messenger from the outpost made the three miles back to Putnam's tent on Brooklyn Heights. He dropped off his horse with a weary gesture that was meant to be, but was not, a salute.

"Captain Ord begs to report, sir, that the enemy has advanced and opened fire. Very heavy force, and it sounds like it might be a general attack. Our line has retreated to heavier timber."

Sergeant Abner Cotton, still sitting cross-legged by the fire, saw them waiting for further sounds. He heard snatches of talk among the staff officers—

"Howe may be over there—sounds like attack in force, all right—but the left flank?"

Putnam was impatient; he made a pretense of listening for warning in another quarter. Washington had warned him of the exposed Jamaica road. But there was action ensuing in the southwest, and where powder burned the stanch old warrior was reluctant not to join the issue. Nothing indicated that the enemy was anywhere save in the southwest. On that basis he made his decision.

"General Stirling, take the Delaware and Maryland battalions and support the pass to the southwest."

Abner Cotton rose and inspected his gun. Presently the drums rolled and the cry went down the line.

"Marylanders, roll out, roll out! We're going to march! Roll out, roll out!"

The sergeant leaned on his weapon and waited for formation. Uncle Putnam was pacing back and forth like an impatient mastiff. He saw his scout and came up.

"Now take care of yourself, sonny."

The sergeant saluted gravely, fell in, and marched through the darkness.

The firing that came out of the southwest seemed to advance on successive waves, rising and falling, running in ragged volleys and in sharp, explosive de onations. The column fell over the hill and groped along an uncertain road. Up at the head of he line a cry was picked up and carried on.

"Watch out for horsemen! Make way to the right!"

They grudgingly relinquished the road for the uncertainties of marsh land. Three riders came by at a gallop. Questions were flung after them and a shouted, unintelligible answer was returned.

Sergeant Abner Cotton stumbled in the file-closers as they descended the hill and crossed the lone bridge over Gowanus creek. The column swung sharply to the southwest with the Delawares under Colonel Haslet in the lead and the Marylanders following. To a man they were jubilant. They sang, they swore, they laughed hilariously. After all the weary weeks of waiting they were going into battle. Moreover, they were going into battle under a Southern general and a man who boasted being a Scottish lord. Fit commander for proud troops. If they did not distinguish themselves this coming day, then let Maryland never again claim them as sons. Somebody crooned a melody and in a moment the line broke into song.

"Stop that singing, men. Want to draw the whole British army down on us? Close up—close up! We've got a long ways to go."

The singing subsided amid muttered rebellion.

"Sure's my name's Alex Carroll, I'll not vote for Ben Marshall as captain next company election. He's too strict to suit me."

"Well, old horse, we're going to fight for a change. How's that suit your liver? Bet you wish Polly Mellis could see you now."

"That's what we came for, wasn't it? Let the New Englanders dig ditches."

"Hurrah for Baltimore, boys! Guess the old town'll hear something soon enough."

"Well, anyway, the general had sense enough to pick out fighting troops to take care of the heavy work. Wonder if we're goin' to have the honor of whipping the whole British army on Long Island?"

SERGEANT COTTON was silent. In all the extravagant, boisterous speech he caught the twang of nervousness, the note of anxiety. They spoke a little too loud and their laughter was pitched in an abnormally treble key. He contrasted these fellows with his comrades who had stood behind the redoubt at Bunker Hill and watched the flashing, close-ordered line of British bayonets advance up the incline. They had not jested to hide their nervousness. They had not been ashamed of hat nervousness, even though they were s arting a great war and knowing that if they failed they were all doomed to hang, as traitors to the English king. They had been deadly sober when face to face with death. And they had fought as well as men can fight.

The column passed into the woods. The gravel crunched under their feet. Accouterments clacked and swished. They had worn off a little of their vigor and for a half hour and then ano her half hour slogged along, nearly silent.

"Close up, men! Close up!"

"You'd think, by ——, we were on the drill ground," muttered Alex Carroll. Ain't that fool got anything better to think of than 'close up?'"

The sound of firing grew stronger in the cool air. A rooster crowed for the morning and a light flared in a farmhouse window, winking through the trees. A draught of wind struck Sergeant Cotton. The night shadows were dissolving into the first false dawn. He saw the tree-tops against the sky and found them parting to admit the road as it slashed through the hills. Suddenly the firing bore down on them from ahead. The column came to a halt while one of he lonely pickets who had borne the brunt of the first attack filtered through the brush.

The Marylanders were uneasy.

"What're we stopping for? This ain't no place to leave a column. Might be ambushed."

The picket laughed.

"Glad to see you boys come. They ain't in the woods. They're out on the far side

of a meadow, poppin' away like it was target practise. Ain't moved ten feet forward all night. Noise and bluster, but no real attack. Wait 'till morning comes and then you'll see fighting."

"That isn't far off," said a Marylander. "I'm right curious to see how this gun shoots."

"Guess you'll find that out, too," prophesied the picket. "You Southern boys been wantin' to fight. "Sure get a belly full of it before sundown. Mark my word."

A Maryland corporal was thinking of grand tactics.

"This may be a feint to draw us away from the main point of attack. Sounds queer to me they don't push forward."

"Why, you don't figure we're bein' led away from the hot work?"

"Either that," replied the corporal darkly, "or else they mean to crush us from the side."

"Shut up, Cæsar, and keep your commentaries for the barracks room."

The column dissolved and fell wearily against the banks of the defile. Horsemen galloped to and fro and at each such excursion Alex Carroll and his compatriots grew more and more fretful. They didn't mind hot work, they opined, but it was —— uncomfortable, this feeling around in the dark like a troop of gray ghosts playing tag.

"Where's the general? Hope he didn't go back to the Heights and leave us."

"Say! He wouldn't do that! He's taking a little reconnaissance of the ground."

"Boys, it's going to be a dreadful hot day. I can smell it in the air."

It promised as much. Sergeant Cotton, serenely watching the light arrive, felt the breeze turn warmer on his cheeks. The stars grew dimmer. It left him with a small regret until he saw newer beauties in the August woods.

The column cocked its ear. There was a roar and a plunk, followed by a spray of earth and leaves near by. Within the minute a second and closer geyser baptized the foremost Marylanders. Grant had opened his cannons as a prelude to the dawn.

"Fall in! fall in! Hurry up, men, we've got to get out of here!"

"I should think so," muttered Alex Carroll. "If I'm going to get shot I'd at least want to see the enemy."

"Close up!"

Sergeant Cotton felt like a veteran. He echoed the command down the column.

"Close up!"

The reaction from Carroll was immediate.

"You —— New Englander, keep your orders for your own kind. Don't ever attempt to shout me around."

"Tain't no time to be quarreling. Do as you're told and keep your eyes to the front."

They debouched swiftly from the defile and found themselves deploying on a sloping meadow. The Delaware men were already stretched in close lines on the ground and Maryland followed suit. Stirling and his men marched up and down the front, encouraging them by example. A compact, ruddy fellow was Stirling, fond of pleasure; a stubborn, capable fighter who had yet not quite emancipated himself from the drill book. Grant's Highlanders, across the meadow, were under the cover of trees. Stirling counseled his soldiers and kept them in formation on the open ground.

"Don't break, boys. Keep elbow to elbow, fire slow and look for your man. Never mind shelter. Let the other fellow do that. We're fighting continental style now and not Indian bushwhacking."

The cannonading continued in full force, a full-throated monotony of booming that battered away at the ear drums for an hour and more as the sun rose behind a bank of heat clouds. The musket balls came through the air with a peculiar sighing sound—*wheeee—wheeee.* Marylanders cursed the noise and inevitably ducked their heads.

"Sounds like a cussed bee bothering around," explained Alex Carroll. "You ain't exactly afraid of a bee, but nevertheless you're careful."

"Ah," murmured the man to his right. Carroll turned curiously and found a blank, dead face staring at him.

Sergeant Cotton, kneeling in the grass, saw a line of skirmishers pop out of the woods, zigzag a hundred feet and drop. The Marylanders opened a more vigorous fire. The powder stung Sergeant Cotton's nostrils.

"Aim low," he counseled. "You're shooting too high. Make the bullets plough the ground. That's the thing to get the nerves."

Alex Carroll turned stubbornly.

"Guess I can fight without help."

"Looks like we'll need all the help we can get," replied the sergeant. "Especially the Lord's."

THE advanced line of Highlanders were finding better marks. The puffs of powder ballooned up from their line. Another wave of skirmishers moved out stolidly, reached the hundred-yard mark and faded in the grass, whereupon the first set rose and trudged to the protection of a rail fence. Stirling brandished his sword.

"See, they don't dodge and scurry. Show 'em we're of the same metal. Don't waste the powder. Wait until they come in full force."

Into the mêlée, which was as yet only a minor engagement, arrived the witness of another struggle in progress northward. The rolling report of musketry reverberated over the meadows and the oak copses punctuated by the steady assault and reply of cannons. A murmur of wonder ran along the line of Marylanders, marked by uneasiness.

"Who's that? Somebody trying to flank us? Good ——, let's get up and have this over with."

"Cæsar, your prognostication seems dead right."

"But what is it?" muttered another, screwing his flint tighter in the socket. "Are we to be clamped between a vise, or is the real battle to be up there?"

Wheeeeee!—Wheeeee!—

"—— that bee!" broke out Alex Carroll. "Does a man never get over the eternal habit of ducking."

"It doesn't take long," advised Sergeant Cotton comfortingly. "Comes a time when you can hear a tune in that noise."

"A devilish tune."

The echoing reports northward burst into unprecedented fury. The sky seemed rent by the belching of the heavy guns. The sun broke through the heat clouds in a blood-red aura. It seemed to be a signal; or more likely the noise of the not far distant engagement was the signal. At any rate, a fresh line of skirmishers broke out of the woods and found their position. Then, behind them, advancing in splendid order, bayonets flashing, drums rolling, bagpipes skirling, came the main body of Grant's Highlanders with their kilts riffling against their knees. Stirling's men dug in their heels and prepared for heavy work. A continuous rattle of musketry ran down the line.

Sergeant Cotton felt the heat of the oppressive day. The sweat rolled over his nut-brown face and the chaff of the meadow grass crept down his neck. It was desperate work in the meadow and he wondered that men could keep their heads amid such a clamor. He wistfully thought of the bracing air and serenity of his own native State and lined up his sights on an advancing kilt. There were gaps in the Maryland ranks. Alex Carroll fought, a dead man on either side. Sergeant Cotton edged up to his erstwhile antagonist and the two blazed away alternately, each announcing the man he meant to take.

"——, I'm thirsty!" croaked Carroll. "Did you ever see such heat?"

"The work has only started."

Carroll swore.

"You're a cool one. —— if I don't think maybe I like you."

"The fight northward has died down," said Sergeant Cotton meditatively. "That's the British trying to get through the Port Road, I guess. One side or the other's winded."

Stirling stood as plain as any target and shouted encouragement. Not a hundred yards away the Highlanders wavered and took refuge behind another rail fence while reorganizing their ranks. The American fire was effective and continuous. Their own marksmanship was only indifferent. But they knew no backward road and in a short space were again crawling over the fence and forming in solid line. Sergeant Cotton marveled at their ability to face fire without flinching.

A courier galloped out of the woods and dismounted by the general.

"You are being surrounded, sir! There's a force cutting your communication with the Heights. The bridge across Gowanus creek has been burned.

Stirling's ruddy cheeks went crimson and he dipped the point of his sword to the ground, watching the Highlanders press onward.

"The hounds are upon the fox, eh? Evidently we are being hunted by more than one pack."

He clapped his hand to his chest.

"I conceive it my duty to give the enemy as much trouble as I can. We will drop back down the road. Colonel Haslet, bring your battalion off first."

The Delaware battalion gave ground slowly, keeping up a vigorous fire as they

climbed the meadow to the defile. The Marylanders were still more reluctant to go and covered the Highlanders until Haslet had his men through the pass. Then they backed away. Sergeant Cotton and Alex Carroll were side by side as the broken companies poured through the gap and down the wooded coast road. It was for a short while something worse than confusion, with captains crying and raising their swords and young lieutenants rallying the ranks until the original outfits were assembled.

"Now where?"

"General's taking us back to the Heights. What's the hurry? I believe we could whip those Highlanders."

"Powerful lot of soldiers there, my boy. ——, but I'm dry!"

"Where's he taking us, anyway? —— if I care about running from those Scotch skirts."

"Better to run and fight another day. Anything but digging ditches. There's my mind on that subject."

"Boys, the general's stopping. Maybe we're going back."

"Oh ——!"

The column halted. Stirling rode by the Marylanders and looked them over with the eye of a man bent on particular knowledge.

"Not much worse for the wear," said he. "Just a little winded and the blood up. Colonel Haslet, I think we'll cheat Mister Howe of part of his bag. Take your men and retreat across the marshes, southward of this road. The bridge is burned and I understand a force is coming up to engage with me. You will avoid them and swim your battalion over Gowanus creek. I shall stay here and cover you."

Haslet saluted and went off at the head of his battalion, dodging rapidly through the timber, along a mere cowpath. The news flew down the Maryland ranks.

"We're elected, huh?"

"Rear guard action," quoted the corporal dubbed Cæsar. "Boys, old Baltimore will do some weeping tonight."

"To make a Roman holiday. No, not that. But, Lord, I love you, it does look mighty slick pickin's."

The five Maryland companies were stinging with the forced retreat and somberly contemplating the future. The Highlanders were coming up from the meadow. They could hear the rumble of the advance just over the brow of the hill. Somewhere below, toward the Heights, a new foe lay athwart their path. The last of the Delaware column disappeared through the maples, going at the double. Stirling raised his sword, his ruddy face lighted with excitement. Maryland retreated along their route of a previous night. They had not gone a quarter mile before they flushed the advance guard of this new British column.

THE woods rang with fresh volleys. Sergeant Cotton came up alongside of Alex Carroll and took his station by a maple. A storm of lead was pouring into their position as the fresh regiment closed up, anxious to decide the issue. Over the hill swarmed the Highlanders, eager to resume the combat. Front and rear Maryland was taken.

The deployed line had become circular and the proud continental style of fighting was lost in the urgent necessity of protecting two sides. Americans fought best as individuals, obeying their own wisdom as to tactics and taking their protection wherever they could find it. Stirling stood in the center of the narrowing circle.

"Take your time, boys. Shoot straight and don't be afraid of cold steel."

Sergeant Cotton thought of the peaceful Connecticut home. Alex Carroll loaded and fired with a kind of religious intensity.

"—— the bees!" he shouted. "I'll duck my head no more."

Sergeant Cotton nodded.

"Now you're baptized."

Some one next to him, reeling like a drunk and streaming in blood, waved his weapon and cried—

"Oh, Cæsar, what a prophet you are!"

His falling body knocked Sergeant Cotton aside.

Stirling had seen one lone avenue of retreat and was waving his sword again.

"Come, boys! Up the hill for better cover."

Maryland turned to follow him, took a few grudging steps and then halted. From one despairing throat came a cry—

"Good ——, look there, will you!"

Sergeant Cotton had no need to look. He was already turned toward the little vista of oak trees to which Stirling had pointed as being better cover. But there was a sudden threshing of underbrush and the filling of open spaces with men's bodies. A higher, harsher shout rang out in the glade

and a third British column, flung in irregular lines, joined the first two to form a triangle of steel and lead.

Alex Carroll was sobbing in anger.

"Oh, why can't we have more powder?"

Sergeant Cotton had long ago made his peace; he had nothing now to say. As long as the ammunition lasted he continued to load, aim and fire with the same sober precision. The ring closed in; the firing spat in men's faces and trembled on the tortured ear drums. Ricocheting bullets whined and the little glade spilled over with struggling and desperate men; interlocked combatants swayed back and forth, bumped over other combatants and drew off to thrust with bayonet or club with gun butt. A haze of burnt powder sifted like twilight through the tree trunks and voices, once normal and human, screeched like mad.

There were five companies of Marylanders in buff-and-blue. Those five companies were wiped out, man by man. Stirling still kept his place in the center, his sword always raised and his voice shouting the final encouragement.

It was a maelstrom of combat. Sergeant Cotton loaded for the last time, shot a Highlander and instantly was engaged with a bayonet. The calm deserted him and some ancient fire utterly betrayed his lifetime training. He raised his voice to a cry of defiance.

"Come on, you beef-eaters!"

He knocked the bayonet aside and struck his opponent down. Behind him was a war-whoop. Alex Carroll cried encouragement.

"Good boy! You can fight! Go to 'er, New England, I'm right beside you!"

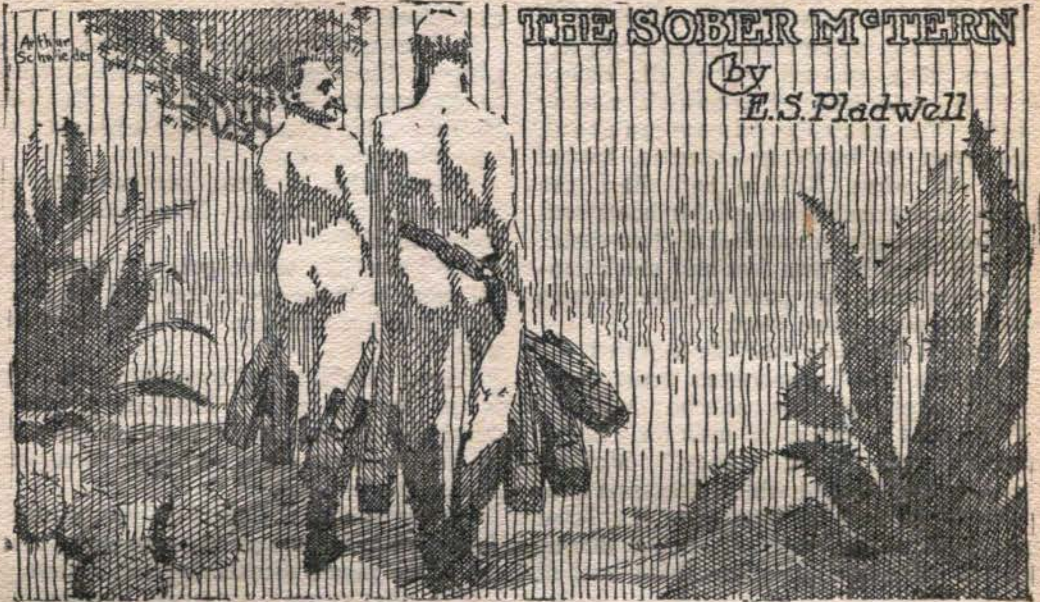
The glade roared like a heavy surf. Sergeant Cotton's nostrils were stinging and his feet stumbled over bodies and slipped in fresh blood. He had no more powder and his arms ached from the toil of struggle. He knew nothing of the rest of his company. It appeared they were swallowed up in the inextricable mass of dead and living British. He did not care; a wine-like glow pervaded his body and he fought on with one fact singing in his head. The Marylander had admitted him to friendship. It was an accolade. They saw that New Englanders could fight. He was vindicating his nativity.

He slashed and struck and jabbed and parried until his eyes distinguished only a blur. Something struck him sharply in the chest and it felt as if a great wall were falling atop him. Successively he was hit in the head and in the ribs. From a great distance he heard Alex Carroll giving one tremendous heart-breaking shout. After that all the bullets in creation did not matter. He could no longer be hurt by them.

THE roar of battle ebbed and the hot day drew to a close. The Delaware men looked down from a safe position on the Heights. Howe collected his columns and, like a wary fighter, recoiled from too close proximity with Putnam's intrenchments. Washington came across the East River and began a series of moves that led to his masterly retreat. The great captain, never emotional, uttered one phrase that rang like a trumpet throughout the land:

"Great God, what fine men I have lost this day!"

That was the epitaph of the Marylanders, whose buff-and-blue checkered the little glade. At one particular angle of this forest theater two men lay across each other. One of them, Sergeant Abner Cotton, was smiling a dry, wintry smile. The other, Alexis Carroll, rested face downward with a broken musket in his hand. They were now fellow members of a great company.



Author of "A Friend from Tophet" "The Gila Kid," etc.

TWO men in their birthday suits walked upon hummocks of coarse grass toward a small pool whose yellow-green waters reflected the upside-down images of a few trees, some thorny bushes, several steep hills, and a golden-blue morning sky which was starting to warm up for a sizzling hot day. Beyond the pool lay the great yellow desert.

Both men carried canteens by their straps, for replenishment before the bath. Both wore cowhide boots for protection against stones and ticklish grass. The man in the lead was young, white-skinned, graceful as a fawn and quite beautiful except for a grinning round blond face and a cigaret. The other man was larger, darker and older. His knees were knobby, his thighs narrow, his ribs gaunt, his arms scrawny and his face gnarled and rugged, with an expression of gravity engraved on his visage so deeply that it seemed anchored to the very bones of his long head. A heavy reddish beard concealed some of it, but the rest was starkly apparent in his tight mouth, big nose, high cheek bones, direct, blue eyes, bushy black brows and massive forehead. A six-shooter bumped at his right hip from a cartridge-belt which circled his middle. Its presence annoyed the younger man.

"Are you going to bring the gun in swimming, too?" he taunted.

"I'll hold it," promised the older man. "I'll remember you're a prisoner."

Irritation clouded the other's jocular face as he swung around.

"Aw, listen, McTern; be reasonable. I'm not trying to escape. Some fool swore out a warrant charging me with robbery. You've got to take me to town. That's fair enough. I'm innocent; everybody knows I'm innocent. I'll get clear as soon as I bring my witnesses into court; so why should I try to get away?"

The big man studied this for a moment and then his oracular bass voice gave judgment:

"Innocent you may be; I think you are. But that's a matter for the judge. I'll take no chances. I dare not. I'm trying for a fine job in a bank when I get home. Short hours and big pay. I'll resign as a deputy sheriff if I win that. Aye. There's money in it. Could I afford to risk that? No. Go ahead, Johnson! My mind's set!"

It was a long speech from the taciturn McTern. The victim grinned, resuming his walk.

"Well then, if you're so darned official, why don't you keep your star on your chest?"

McTern's boots thumped along for ten steps before his thoughtful reply arrived:

"I'm naked. There's no place to pin it."

Four birds whirred out of the damp-smelling water-hole at Johnson's ringing laugh. The chuckling prisoner ran ahead, submerged his bubbling canteens, hauled them out when McTern had filled the others, and then kicked off his boots and splashed joyously in four feet of clear water. McTern freed his own feet and stuck cautious toes into the pool as the blond's glistening torso came erect.

"What's this bank job?" he inquired.

"It's the new Consolidated Trust Company," explained the solemn McTern. "They need a guard in uniform. Seven hours a day. Good money." McTern frowned at a thought which disturbed him. "There'll be another man after it. Jawn Lucas. A college man. A police officer. Some of the bank directors think well of him."

"He'll get it," teased Johnson.

"Aye," admitted McTern glumly to his toes. "I think so."

The bather scooped a gleaming round pebble out of the pool and poised his right arm to throw at a rock; and then his body became rigid as his eyes widened and stared past McTern, who heard a queer murmuring, crawling, tearing sound some distance behind him. McTern jumped to his feet and whirled around.

"Our camp!" he gasped.

His bulging eyes looked past bushes and trees to where two horses and a pack-mule were hobbled near a stack of blankets under a shale-rock precipice which was starting to tremble with violent motion. The bathers were around the shoulder of the hill and several hundred feet from their camp, having no time to rescue anything.

Some stray creature had started a rock rolling at the top of the hill. The rock took a dozen with it, then hundreds, then the whole section of mountainside. Apparently the hill had been balanced like a trigger. There was a thundering roar, a demoniac screech, an avalanche of tumbling, leaping boulders, a barrage of bouncing shale-rock, and then a large and ghastly silence while a heavy cloud of dust arose over what had once been a camp.

Johnson still stood petrified with the pebble in his hand.

"My gosh!" he gibbered. "And we slept over there last night to keep away from mosquitoes!"

McTern's stricken blue eyes blinked stupidly at the fine brown dust which began to sift over the bushes and upon the pool. He cleared his throat and at last his quavering voice groaned:

"Forty miles to town, one prisoner, no horses and no clothes. What now? Can we make it?"

"It looks like we've got to," mumbled Johnson, lurching up to the bank as if his nerve had been shaken. "There's no other way."

"Aye. We'll travel by night. The sun is too hot by day." McTern pondered deeply for a moment. "But look—how do we go into town when we reach there, eh? That's the problem."

Slowly the grin began to return upon Johnson's pale face as his eyes questioned the other man's astonishing seriousness.

"Oh, that's easy," ventured Johnson, for a feeler. "We'll march right up Main Street; me in the lead and you holding a gun."

"That way? No!"

"Well then, buy a blanket."

McTern frowned and shook his head. A sober man was McTern.

"No," he demurred, at last. "We have no money."

Johnson gave a wild little laugh as he slumped down upon a carpet of fine yellow sand. He was a man of quick perceptions. He understood the full terror of the landslide which they had just escaped. The thing pulled at his nerves and he had to take it out on the stolid McTern.

"Pure bone, pure ivory, pure concrete, all in one wooden dome! And he wants to be an officer in a bank, where they have to jolly the customers! Wow! Well, then, figure it out for yourself. How *do* we get into town?"

McTern's affronted eyes stared austerely and somewhat suspiciously at the younger man.

"That will be the question," said the deputy sheriff. "Have you any ideas?"

"Me? Oh, no. I'm only a prisoner. You're an officer. It's up to you."

McTern considered the problem with extreme gravity for some time.

"You'll stay with me in yonder shade for the day," he ruled. "And tonight I'll think about it!"

APPARENTLY there was much thinking done that night, for McTern was extremely taciturn. The two luckless travelers pounded southward for hours along a dim moonlit trail which led uphill and downhill, over rocks and dry-washes, across alkali flats and through patches of sage or thornier brush which kept them eternally vigilant against punctures. Even then there were mishaps.

Strange howling dances were performed at sudden intervals in the moonlight, but the hikers kept on despite the thorns, despite the cold, despite the canteens which slatted against bruised flanks, despite the revolver which blistered wherever it thumped, until at last their haggard faces turned toward the red dawn of a new day, and in time they found themselves on the long upward slope of the last mountain range, where they threw themselves wearily upon yellow sand in the lee of a gray granite cliff where even the shadows were warm.

At dusk the two white wraiths emerged from a cleft in the mountains and flitted from sage-clump to sage-clump like furtive elves until they cringed behind a large and thorny super-clump, staring with hungry eyes upon a far-away fair land of fields and trees and ditches, and, farther yet, the tiny clustered buildings of a city which melted into the evening haze even as they watched. In its place came clusters of lights like little jewels.

"Well, there's the town," remarked the younger man, wearily. "What now? When do we eat?"

There was no immediate reply from McTern but at last his dubious voice rumbled forth—

"We'll have to find a way."

Johnson's shrill laugh jangled across the sloping lands and scared a jackrabbit into bouncing fits, three clumps distant. Bunny popped up suddenly and disappeared like a dim brown streak. Johnson laughed again but his eyes kept appraising the scene below as he tried to estimate distances and chances.

"Where is the nearest clothes-line?" he wondered.

McTern forbore to answer. The question implied stealing and he did not approve of stealing, though now the idea intrigued him with a strange new force. Here in the actual presence of civilization he began to admit a growing unrest, a feeling of starkness, of shocking self-consciousness, like that of a person who in dreams finds himself walking unclad before a crowd. He had had that sort of morbid dream several times. Many persons have. It is one of the bugbears of our common humanity and only our most advanced chorus girls are rising superior to it. McTern began to feel bewildered, balked, baffled and beaten. He groaned aloud.

"What's the matter?" inquired Johnson.

"Think: Suppose some one met us?"

"They'd be out of luck," retorted Johnson in a grim voice; and then he jumped to his feet. "Look! There's a light yonder! To the right, McTern; over in that cañon. See it?"

The older man arose deliberately from the brush and stared along the line of hills whose dark slopes were streaked by darker cañons or dry-washes. A constant ray of yellow illumination shone from a vast black area somewhat behind and above the other blacknesses, a mile away from the onlookers.

"That'll be an old mine cabin," surmised McTern. "It stands in a cañon, I remember. The main road is below it, at the foot of the hill."

"Somebody's there," urged Johnson. "I'm hungry. Can we make it?"

"Ye-es," admitted McTern, but there was no great enthusiasm in his voice and shortly the impetuous Johnson learned why.

They struggled through clumps of barbed brush; they stumbled upon unsuspected holes; they slid into treacherous little gullies and climbed demoniac slopes where loose rocks and bushes insisted on sliding them back into the gullies again. The journey changed into a nightmare. Each step became an adventure; each yard was fraught with unknown dangers which too often became known; but through it all the calm yellow illumination shone up ahead of them like the proverbial good deed in a naughty world, and the world grew naughtier as the hillside grew steeper.

There were groans, yelps, grunts and sudden eloquent outbursts of high-tension profanity; but at last the battered, bleeding, war-scarred travelers scaled the last heights and threw themselves, panting, upon the top of a rocky hill which curved down toward a deep cañon where standing cattle lowed plaintively, or stamped occasional feet whose impact hinted at the weight of their bodies. Beyond the vague dark forms

of the cattle, thin trees raised their tangled arms toward the jewels in the sky. Each inky-black bough and leaf was distinct as an etching, for the moon had not yet arrived to blur their outlines by its light. Beyond these trees stood the cabin. The chinks between its boards were long streaks of yellow. Its window still sent out a square of hospitable light.

Johnson raised himself on one arm. His breath had become regular but the perspiration on his body was cooling. There was a faint chilly breeze on the hill-top.

"The next time you come to arrest me, I'll be somewhere else!" he declared, with passionate finality.

"You mean you'd run away?" wondered McTern.

"Run? I'd fly! One trip with you lasts a lifetime!"

McTern considered this with careful deliberation.

"Some trips are lucky, some are not," he decided.

"Well, if this is your usual luck, no wonder you're solemn! If I were you, I'd get another job."

"Aye. I'm trying to, you'll remember."

It brought back Johnson's sense of humor and he chuckled as he rose stiffly to his feet. McTern also unfolded his bony form and came erect, easing the painful six-shooter from his blistered flank to the middle of his back. With one accord they struggled down through the last of the brush, crossed the cañon just behind the dark herd of cattle, and flittered like ghosts toward the cabin. Nobody saw them and they saw nobody. Plainly the cattle needed little watching, for the cañon was fairly deep and the herd could be guarded easily from the far front and rear.

McTern laid a hand on Johnson's shoulder as they drew nearer to the lighted window.

"Stand by me now. I may need you."

Johnson astonished him by drawing back.

"Oh, no," chuckled Johnson. "I'm a prisoner. You've got to watch me. I may escape."

"What?"

The outraged McTern sucked in a sharp breath and then his manner changed. He clamped down his powerful hand on the bare neck.

"You'd escape now, eh? Well, then; I'll take measures! I'll have no trouble now, me man; I've had enough!"

McTern shoved the surprized blond head downward and tucked it under his left armpit, hauling the victim forward. There was strength in that scrawny arm.

"Quit it!" appealed the squirming Johnson. "I was only kidding!"

But McTern's stern ire was aroused. He had suffered intensely; his body was torn by scars and his temper was strained almost beyond human endurance, so this new embarrassment came at exactly the right time to make him savage.

"Kidding ye may be," he raged, "but I'll take no chances. Enough from you!"

He whirled Johnson forward. He yanked him up to the window edge. He shoved his own face through the aperture, which was entirely devoid of glass. He gave no attention to the butting of Johnson's head upon the boards, for his haggard eyes were making an instant survey of the interior.

He saw a heavy man, in an old brown suit, reading a book at a candle-lit table. He saw a ruined old chair, an empty box, a saddle, a bridle, a rickety floor full of long gaps; and a little pile of crackers and canned beans in a corner alongside a six-shooter, in a holster with a leather strap wrapped around it. All these things were apparent in a flash.

The food and clothes caused an avid gleam in McTern's eyes. They added a desperate tempo to a voice already exasperated to the point of ferocity. His hoarse roar came like a fog-horn—

"Give me some grub and some clothes!"

THE man at the table jumped up, whirled around, glared in pop-eyed horror, and hurled his book.

McTern was outraged to fury, being totally unaware how he looked. The man inside had been reading placidly. Then came a shattering crash. Then the reader looked up. Framed in the window was a maniac, a were-wolf whose gaunt, famished, dog-like visage was criss-crossed with the marks of infernal pitchforks and smeared with the blood of countless human victims. The fiend's ferocious eyes gleamed with lust and ghoulish triumph. His voice was the voice of the devil.

The reader threw the book instinctively. He threw it with all the force of his vehement arm. He tried to follow up with his chair but the awful presence vanished. The window became blank. The startled

host held his chair in ready but trembling hands.

The door burst open. The naked, yelling, raging demon rushed in, pulling a human victim under his left arm.

"What do you mean—" he howled.

Wildly the rattled host brought down the chair in a great circle. McTern saw it coming. He checked his rush just in time to feel the wind of a chair-leg passing his nose. The leg whizzed down and landed with a dull crack upon the blond head of Johnson.

Johnson's body became inert. He sagged low in McTern's arm. McTern let him drop to the floor, for McTern was busy.

The host made a frantic leap around the table toward the six-shooter in the corner. McTern divined his intentions, jumped over the chair, and crashed into him like a locomotive hitting a cow at a grade-crossing.

The host's alarmed fist slammed into McTern's nose. With a yell of mad exasperation McTern swung his two powerful fists upward under the other's guard. They knocked the stunned victim three steps backward. The wild-eyed McTern followed, sobbing, breathing in deep gulps while his mighty fists worked like flails.

Bang! The victim's left eye closed. *Bang!* His mouth in its stubbly fringe of black beard became wide and flat. *Bang!* His prominent nose broadened. *Bang!* He bounced against the wall-boards while his twitching arms tried to cover his head from the awful impacts. He was a middle-aged man, dark of countenance, larger and stouter than McTern, but he hadn't time to get started. The battle was over before his wits were mobilized.

"So this is your hospitality!" sobbed McTern, getting between him and the pistol on the floor.

"Stop!" gasped the dizzy victim, recognizing the human words. "Stop! What do you want?"

"Grub and some clothes!" panted McTern.

"Here's grub. I've got no clothes."

"I must have them! It's urgent business!"

The victim swayed drunkenly along the wall, striving to get his balance. His wandering brown eyes tried to concentrate.

"I tell you I have no clothes," he mumbled.

McTern, still breathing hard, glared around like a caged tiger trying to find a way out of its dilemma. His roving glance spied a flesh-colored object which arose from the floor, groaned, swayed around behind the open door, and laid hands upon a blond head as if trying to hold it together. It was Johnson. His eyes blinked at McTern.

"What happened?" stuttered Johnson. "What was I doing?"

"You were kidding," explained McTern.

He said it absent-mindedly, remembering the other's last words before the chair hit him; but Johnson's eyes widened and he gave a wild little laugh.

"Score one for you! I didn't think it was possible!"

"Eh?"

"Oh, never mind. How about eats? Hurrah! I see 'em! The country's saved!"

He came across the room like a flash, scooping up a package of crackers and two cans of beans which he rushed to the table. McTern did likewise but first he collected the six-shooter on the floor, strapping its belt around his middle. The shattered owner of the gun leaned against the corner of the wall and watched proceedings drearily. He saw three cans of beans crushed open by his gun-butt.

"Do you want my watch too?" he inquired at last.

"Wait!" commanded McTern, wolfing down four crackers at once; and then there was only the sound of tearing packages and crunching teeth.

But McTern's vigilant eyes observed the host's frequent glances beyond the open doorway where the shanty's light shone on hard-packed dirt and a few loose leaves. The ground looked cold out there. McTern shivered. He laid his third packet of crackers upon a pile of spilled beans on the table.

"How many men have you?" he demanded.

The host hesitated and then his one good eye glared at McTern with a frank-and-honest malevolence which scorned evasions. The other eye was a slit in a purple socket.

"I have one man," snarled the host. "Do you think I need a regiment for a few cattle?"

"Where are you taking the cattle?"

"To the stock-yards. We hit the trail in the morning. We came from the back country. I'm a Republican. My father was English and my mother Irish. I'm the youngest of four boys. We were born in Kansas. Anything else?"

"Aye," said McTern, nodding his head in acknowledgment of all this information. "How is it you've made no move to leave the cabin now?"

"You'd have stopped me," retorted the bitter cattleman. "Besides, I want to know about you birds. You've done a lot of damage!"

McTern might have announced himself as a deputy sheriff with extra-legal rights in a dire emergency such as this, but his cautious brain shrank from inviting a damage suit against the county. Citizens are not supposed to be beaten up by deputy sheriffs, no matter how dire the emergency, so McTern decided to remain anonymous, if possible, until he could make full amends. The decision heartened him to take his next step.

"I've got to do more," he confessed aloud. "I have to have clothes! I'm shiverin'!"

"But I haven't any clothes!" roared the cattleman. "Do you think we pack wardrobes around with a herd?"

The acerbity of his voice awakened McTern's combativeness again. He slammed a heavy fist on the table. It made the candle splutter.

"My business will not wait! I must reach town tonight! I must have clothes!"

A chilly little wind which swept through the doorway lent power to the argument. The frightened cattleman saw an arbitrary gleam in McTern's eyes which made him cower toward the boards. The cattleman was no poltroon but he suspected he was dealing with a maniac with two pistols.

"Wait a minute!" he yelped. "How about a blanket. It's all I've got!"

McTern considered it but shook his head.

"No. I'll not be ridin' to town in a blanket. I must borrow your clothes!"

"No!" yelled the cattleman.

The desperate McTern stalked around the table, tugging the nearest six-shooter out of its holster.

"Enough! There's no other way. I'll make amends later—"

"You mean to say you'd take the clothes off a man's back?" demanded the outraged cattleman.

"I must! You have a blanket; you can build a fire; I can't. Take off that coat!"

"No! I'll fight! You lunatic—"

"But McTern's left hand had him by the throat and the cattleman covered up. He had been beaten badly. There was little resistance left in him, especially in view of McTern's loaded pistol.

"Help!" yelled the cattleman, suddenly. "Help! Help! Help!"

The alarm echoed through the drum-like cabin and floated out to the hillside. McTern shook him fiercely and then darted to the doorway and glanced up the dark cañon. The cattle were somewhat noisy but he feared that the frantic voice had carried beyond them.

"Take this man's clothes off!" he ordered Johnson, through the doorway.

To his dismay, the impish Johnson demurred.

"Oh, no. That's a felony. I'm an honest man. I can't do anything like that!"

"Felony!" sobbed McTern.

THE thing smote his Presbyterian conscience amidships. It appalled him, horrified him, staggered him; but the sheer frantic urgency of his plight overruled his objections, while the cold wind clinched the argument by causing goose-flesh to crawl up and down his harrowed body.

"You take his clothes off!" he chattered, waving the pistol at Johnson.

"Are you forcing me?" questioned Johnson.

McTern's pistol became steadier.

"Aye, I'm forcing you!"

"All right, then," surrendered Johnson. "But remember, I'm being driven into this robbery against my will. If this thing ever comes up in court I'll give some juicy testimony for the plaintiff— Hold still, old man; I can't help this; don't fight me; it would only make him worse!"

There was a subdued scuffle in the cabin but the stricken McTern gave it only passing attention for he had slipped out of the direct light from the doorway and was peering into the dark shadows up the cañon, where a moving form materialized over the black horns and backs of the cattle, pushing through the mass while edging toward the cabin. The sounds of its heavy-shod hoofs corroborated the suspicion that this was a rider coming to the rescue.

The new complication made the baffled McTern groan with heartfelt anguish, for crime was piling on crime—all of them making the county liable for stately damages because of the acts of its deputy sheriff—

and he wasn't used to this sort of enterprise. His ways had been simple and straight. His whole life had been lived in decency, honor, virtue and respect for the laws. The blood of his rock-ribbed forefathers seemed to freeze at this present infamy; the spotless escutcheon of Clan McTern was getting into a veritable sewer; but dire necessity was upon him and the night was getting colder, so with a heavy heart he prepared for his outrage.

From the shanty came the cattleman's despairing voice:

"Everything? No!"

"Everything!" demanded Johnson. "We ride far!"

McTern closed his ears to the consequent scuffle while his shivering form slipped away from the cabin and into the darkness alongside a small overhanging bank. He heard a horse munching loudly below the cabin, but his attention was directed to the animal and rider advancing from up above. The rider passed the cattle. His figure grew large as it loomed up in the reflected light from the cabin's door, where he leaned forward in the saddle as if wondering what lay ahead.

McTern appeared alongside him like a banshee, pointing a pistol.

"Hands up!" he yelled.

The trapped rider lifted his arms as he saw the dim flash of the gun.

"Come down!" roared McTern. "Into the house!"

The horseman had to obey, so his clanking spurs soon dragged upon the floorboards of the cabin, where Johnson had helped himself profusely to the other man's raiment. The latter victim was breathing hard and glaring deathless hatred. The newcomer's jaw sagged at the sight.

"What's the idea?" he bleated.

"We need clothes!" rasped McTern, hardened to crime by now. "I'll take your gun. There. Now, off with 'em!"

"Gosh, no!"

"Yes!"

The rider began to argue, plead, struggle and writhe; but the suffering McTern had reached a point of exasperation where his manner was curt and his methods summary. Within five minutes he stood arrayed in overalls which were too short, a gray coat which was too tight, and a yellow hat which was entirely too big. His shivering victim danced and howled.

"I've heard of mean crooks," he gibbered through chattering teeth, "but a fella who'll take the clothes off a man's back—"

"Enough!" roared McTern; but his face was beet-red.

"They're right," agreed the grinning Johnson. "This is a crime. It's highway robbery!"

McTern's glare focused upon the blond prisoner.

"This may be so," ruled the inexorable McTern, "but you'll go to town with me tonight, robbery or no robbery. There's two horses outside. Come! I've had enough of this!"

"He's had enough!" bawled the younger victim. "Ya-a-a! How about us? You thief! You crook, you low-down robber, you cutthroat, you wild-eyed lunatic—"

"Shut up!" howled McTern. "I tell you, I'll make amends! I promise it! Let be. I'll be back as soon as I can!"

"Yes," sobbed the older victim, whose one good eye was savage with helpless rage. "Come back real soon! I'd like to see you!"

The frowning McTern forbore to reply. He motioned the light-hearted Johnson out of the doorway and collected theh orses and made the prisoner mount alongside him. Shortly they rode to the mouth of the dark cañon, oblivious to the howling opinions hurled after them, and in time they wound down a wide loose-rock trail through sage and chapparal, with the cabin far above them and the lights of the distant city twinkling ahead on the great plain. The moon was just rising on the curved mountain-tops. The main highway lay like a silvery ribbon just below the base of the brushy hills.

"If I were you I'd lay low," suggested Johnson, as his mount slid down over the treacherous rocks. "You handled those fellows too rough."

McTern's silence rebuked him. Johnson persisted:

"You've committed assault, battery, horse-stealing, highway robbery and about everything else. Wait till those fellows learn who you are! Oh boy!"

McTern squirmed in the saddle.

"I'm doing my duty!" he exploded. "I'm bringing a prisoner to town!"

"You're bringing a good story for the newspapers," teased Johnson, meanly. "I can almost see the headlines!"

With a little sob of dismay, McTern

shoved cold hands into his pockets; and then he withdrew them. His right hand held some bills which flashed in the moonlight. Dejectedly he counted thirty dollars while Johnson chuckled.

"Burglary!" added Johnson. "Wow!"

McTern rammed the bills into his pocket.

"I'll return them," he growled. "Tomorrow!"

"You mean to say you'll risk a fight, publicity, investigations, maybe disgrace, to return this stuff? No! Leave 'em in a barn somewhere and send those fellows a message. Keep out of it!"

If McTern was desperate in his recent crimes, he was relentless now in his uprightness.

"I have done these men a wrong. I'll make amends."

"But suppose they kick up a big row?"

"I hope to keep it quiet. If not, so be it. It's my duty. I stand behind my acts."

"Suppose you knock yourself out of this bank job?"

"It's my duty. I hope to make those men satisfied. If they will not be, then the blame is mine."

THE man's pathetic directness touched a queer sympathetic chord in Johnson's whimsical heart. He leaned toward McTern, ignoring the latter's palpable suspicion at this move on the part of a prisoner.

"Listen, Mac. Don't crucify yourself on this thing. Let me deal with those fellows. I can jolly 'em along and you can't. Let me bring 'em the stuff."

"You'll be in jail," reminded McTern.

"Rats! I'll be out on bail as soon as I reach the court-house tonight!"

"Aye," conceded the rigid McTern, "but I wronged these men up yonder, not you. I am an officer of the law, not you. I bear the blame, not you. I forced you into a crime. Mine is the fault, not yours. Let be!"

There was a long, long silence while the horses emerged from the hillside trail and swung upon a hard dirt road on the lonesome flat plain. Johnson wailed at last:

"He pulls a trigger and hopes the gun will go off without any noise! Of all the honest dumb-bells on earth, this here suicide wins the special diamond-studded casket!"

"Eh?"

McTern stiffened at "dumb-bell" and he considered the rest of it at length; but finally he eased back in the saddle with his decisions made:

"I'll do my duty. I stand by my own acts."

But he didn't consider it his duty to make a wild hullabaloo about it, so after delivering his prisoner at the court-house, he voted himself a quiet leave of absence and at dawn he started out in proper raiment, on a fresh horse, towing the two borrowed animals and carrying the borrowed clothes and pistols in his saddle-bags. To his surprize, Johnson galloped up on a blooded sorrel before the city limits were passed.

"I knew you'd commit suicide," chirped the grinning Johnson, "so I came to act as cheer-leader. I'm out on bail."

McTern's haggard eyes regarded him somberly from under the bushy brows.

"I need no cheer-leader," rebuked McTern.

"You need a lot of 'em," corrected Johnson. "But I won't cheer unless you ask me to. Honest. That's a promise. I'll be good, Mac. I may come in handy. I can help carry the wounded, or notify the widow, or do all sorts of little chores. You'd better take me along."

McTern digested this.

"But there may be no wounded," he demurred.

"Then I'll help bury the dead," promised the cheerful Johnson. "Come on Mac; lead on; don't delay; I'm getting anxious."

Perforce the dubious McTern started his horse and allowed the blond to trot alongside him. though the deputy sheriff was taciturn and Johnson thought he had troubles enough. They traversed the great plain where the sunlight soon heated the glaring land to the temperature of an open-air furnace, and in time they ascended the long and winding trail into the brushy mountains. Johnson's startled eyes surveyed the frightful cross-country route which they had negotiated without clothes on the night before, but he said nothing. McTern's face was set in rigid lines, though somewhat white about the gills. The higher he climbed, the whiter was his visage and the stiffer his jaw. Johnson didn't chuckle now. The situation was too loaded with gunpowder.

The laboring horses struggled up the last steep shale-rock incline. The cabin appeared in the brown-yellow cañon with its

few dispirited trees. Beyond them, three-score dirty cattle stood behind a temporary barrier made of boughs and old boards stretched across the cañon. Apparently the stripped riders feared their own power to move around freely.

The cautious McTern reined in.

"HALLOO!" he yelled, opening diplomatic negotiations.

There was no reply. McTern rode up to the cabin, whose door was open. Johnson saw him lean over and poked his head into the doorway.

"There's no one here," he announced.

A bullet whined over his head. A sharp crack came from up the cañon.

Johnson's horse edged toward the shelter of the bank. McTern wheeled his mount and looked up-country, through the dust of the suddenly nervous cattle. Beyond the snorting heads and tossing horns was a queer object like a small gray tent moving on horseback. Bare arms stuck out at the right and left of the tent. The right hand waved a gleaming weapon while from under the blanket came wild, incoherent language.

"They had another pistol somewhere!" discovered Johnson.

For answer McTern reached into his saddle-bags and waved forth two pairs of trousers and a shirt, like flags of truce. Johnson began to grin again. The blanket-man up the cañon hesitated and decided to to move nearer.

"Drop 'em and get out of here!" he howled.

With a satisfied nod, McTern hauled all his booty into sight, waved them in friendly reassurance, and tossed them to the ground.

"Good!" he nodded. "That ends it, now. We're well out of it. There's no dead, no wounded. Come! Let be!"

"Fortune favors the brave," surrendered Johnson, disgustedly, "and the dumb!"

He swung his horse around, just as a bawling steer lumbered up to the rickety barrier, shoved a tree-bough aside accidentally with its horn, ambled through the aperture, and regarded the riders in the fool way which only bovines can achieve.

"Look!" yelled McTern. "So that's it, eh? That's different!"

Johnson looked. The hide of the steer was like no respectable steer's on earth. Its original brand was hacked, curried and criss-crossed; its ear-marks, if any, were hacked by numerous notches; and McTern's gestures about it were so vehement and positive that the far-away rider under the blanket took alarm, wheeled his horse, fired a passionate burst of shots, raced through a knot of scattering cattle, and bounded up the distant cañon-slope while his gray blanket waved like a flag behind him.

"Guilty!" ruled Johnson.

Many things happened at once. There was a loud yell from McTern. His pistol leaped from its holster. Its explosion echoed in the cañon as his horse jumped forward over the barrier. Johnson's followed. Bawling cattle with thundering feet started away in every direction as the riders shouldered through them. Thick red dust arose.

McTern fired again. The frightened cattle struggled up the side-hills, kicking down rocks and pebbles while the riders crouched low in their saddles. Their horses bounded beyond the chaos of red animals, leaped up a hill of shale rock and dry grass, and tore after a galloping figure retreating along a plateau toward steep and brushy blue-green mountains where the fierce sunlight's brassy glare radiated a heat so intense that the very atmosphere seemed charged with it.

"And where did he get the horse?" wondered McTern.

"He must have had an extra one," decided Johnson. "A skate! Look at it!"

The skate with its blanketed passenger stumbled, lagged and stopped despite frantic boots which almost kicked its sides in. The howling rider rolled off and waved his pistol. but he had no cartridges and no time to reload, so McTern thundered down upon him without fear.

The man on the ground, who had landed in a small slump of prickly brush, gave a yell of mad exasperation and threw his empty pistol straight at McTern's bearded visage. McTern saw it coming, yanked his reins, and dodged just in time to catch only a tiny part of the pistol's butt on his sensitive nose. Then the bawling, raging McTern leaped from his horse, jumped upon the screeching victim, hit him, kicked him, whacked at him with the McTern pistol, knocked him down, rolled him and mauled him. Johnson tried to wedge into it.

"Lay off!" interposed Johnson. "You've done enough!"

The panting McTern arose slowly and gazed down upon the ruins of what was once a man.

"Aye," agreed McTern. "Let the law punish him." He ignored Johnson's sudden coughing-fit and glared at the weak victim on the ground. "Where's your other man, eh?"

"He went to steal some clothes," mumbled the rustler, at last. "We thought you wouldn't come back."

"Stealing clothes!" yelped Johnson, in mock horror. "My gosh, that's a felony!"

McTern's embarrassed glance reproached him.

"Let be!" growled McTern. "There are some things we may overlook."

It was late afternoon before the prisoner was landed in town, and then the evening newspapers came forth with loud acclamations for the hero deputy sheriff. Shortly after this, the portly president of the new Consolidated Trust Company arrived with congratulations.

"Our directors," he said, in the orotund voice of a leader of finance, "believe you are the sort of person to help guard our institution. We have agreed to tender you the office."

The portly man turned to the grinning Johnson, and smiled urbanely.

"Here is a man without a flaw, is he not?"

Johnson nodded politely, then qualified his nod by—

"He has everything but a sense of humor."

The president seemed to stiffen. His reply was slow and austere.

"We do not need humor in a Trust Company."

"Then he's perfect!" chuckled Johnson.

"Exactly," said the president, turning away.

Johnson swung toward McTern to see how he had taken it all. McTern's gaunt face was as stolid, doleful and flintlike as before, but his lips formed words:

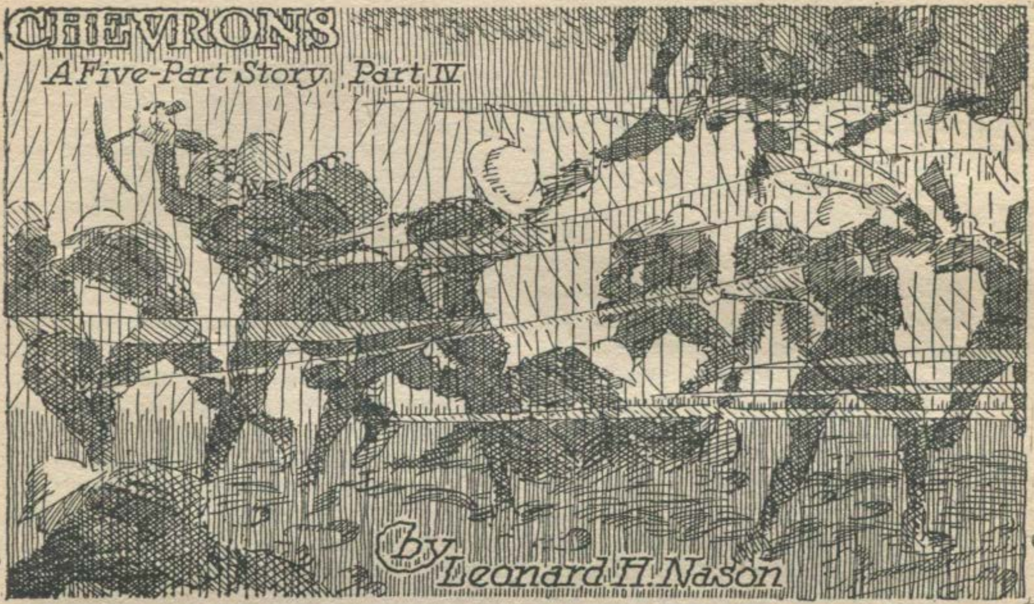
"I did my duty. Am I a bonehead?"

Johnson chuckled again. He teased:

"It was all an accident, Mac. You didn't know those cattle were stolen. Pure luck!"

"I did my duty," insisted the rigid McTern. "Them that does their duty sometimes meets lucky accidents. It comes that way. You said you would cheer when I asked you, eh? Cheer, then!"

But he said it gravely. He was a very sober man.



Author of "Burial," "Souvenirs," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

SERGEANT ROBERT EADIE, U. S. Artillery was at the base hospital at Vittel. He had been shell-shocked and gassed. Disgusted with the frightful food, the heat and the overcrowding at the replacement camp, he and a Private Darcy had deserted and set out to rejoin their company at Vaucouleurs. But at Vaucouleurs they discovered that the company had moved on to Toul.

In a clearing in the woods they discovered a cook who was putting steaks in the box.

"Steak!" said Darcy.

"Give us some grub," said Eadie.

"All right," the cook answered. "Only cut me some wood first."

When they had cut the wood the cook gave them each a can of salmon. They beat him up thoroughly and ran. Later, on the road, an M. P. in a truck passed him.

"You the guys that beat up the cook?" he asked.

"What cook?" asked Eadie.

"Say," said the M. P., "I ain't askin' official. I wanna know for myself."

"Well, we had a few words with a guy back there," Eadie told him.

"Jump in," said the M. P. "That was the C. O.'s pet private cook, an' I'd better lift ya to Toul before they start scoutin' for ya."

They arrived at Toul and found their battalion. The captain told Eadie that they were preparing a drive, and Eadie had an hour to prepare for it. Eadie discovered that there had been rumors about the post that he had deserted; and he was bantered a great deal about his wound stripe—which he was wearing without authority to do so.

Eadie was detailed as liaison sergeant with an infantry battalion and followed their captain into a trench.

Berrup-Blam!

"There go my guns," cried Eadie excitedly.

"It's time we were going," said the captain.

The engagement, however, proved to be child's play, and was over with little noise and practically no casualties. Eadie returned to his battery which was preparing a march nearer the front.

On the march Eadie ran into a man named Jake whom he had known on the transport. Jake was a big red-headed fellow and attached himself to the sergeant.

When the captain summoned Eadie to tell him of another engagement in which the sergeant would accompany the infantry, he asked whom the sergeant wanted to accompany him.

"Red Jake," said Eadie.

"Why," said the captain, "he hasn't the brains or the education to make a liaison man."

"I know," said Eadie, "but he'll do what I tell him."

Eadie refused to believe that this fight would be any worse than the last; but Jake was frankly scared. They went into a trench to sleep.

Then they were awakened by a great firing of guns. The Boche. The Boche had opened fire.

Eadie and Jake advanced, the former now convinced that this would be a real fight. They became lost, tied up with a detachment of infantry, discovered that they were advancing in the wrong direction, and finally discovered a young captain with whom they proceeded toward the front.

They passed through a town and beyond, when the captain received a note from headquarters telling him to advance farther immediately. This move brought death to the captain and dispersed most of the company. Jake and the sergeant were once again in the middle of No Man's Land, with no work to do. Finally they found a shell-hole full of infantry officers. The major in command detailed

them to go back to the artillery to request a barrage.

On the way back they ran into a road full of trucks. Suddenly they saw an officious shavetail lieutenant named Connor from their own battery.

"What are you men doing?" he asked.

"Carrying a message to the artillery, sir," said Eadie.

"You're lying," said Connor. "I order you to come with me, to lay telephone wire."

There was nothing for Eadie and Jake to do but comply. Connor marched them to a different sector. They passed through a post behind some woods.

"If you want to commit suicide," said the men, "go an' lay wire in them woods." But Connor, without answering, pushed forward, the two men following him.

Slowly they weeded their way through this wood. not knowing where the Boche were. Suddenly out of the black came a curt, harsh voice:

"Halt!"

"WE'RE Americans!" called Eadie finally, when the unseen man had made no further remarks.

"Come in," called a new voice. "Keep your hands where we can see them. Swing to your right a little way and you'll find a ditch."

Eadie rolled over, scrambled a little way, and sure enough found a deep ditch into which he could roll and stand upright. Jake joined him and then the lieutenant piled in. They moved cautiously along the ditch and found themselves confronted by half a dozen unshaven doughboys with fixed bayonets.

"Where the —— do you guys think you're goin?" asked one of the unshaven.

"Enough of that!" snapped Lieutenant Connor, "I'm an officer."

"Oh, he's an officer," said another unshaven. "Well, take 'em all up to the lootenant. Just leave that wire here, buddie."

Eadie dropped his wire and, escorted by four of the six unshaven, he and Jake and the lieutenant followed the ditch until they came to a road, into which they turned.

This road went over a hill as a circingle goes over a saddle, and two banks, one like the pommel and the other the cantle, stuck up on either side. The field that the men had crossed was a plateau, for the road plunged away on one side to the valley of the Meuse, and took an abrupt drop to a dry water course on the other side. The saddle itself was a hundred yards or so long, and this hundred yards was filled with men, all busy digging themselves holes in the side hill. There was a dressing station, a row of clay-faced wounded, and another row of men covered with blankets. Eadie, unable to restrain the temptation to look, glanced at the shoes that stuck out from under the blankets. There were a dozen pairs of shoes and only two were hobnailed.

Suddenly the guards halted and Eadie found himself confronting a soldier, who sat against the bank, his feet braced on the edge of the ditch. This man was shaved, but his once expensive uniform was ragged and stained with yellow mud. He wore boots, one of which was garnished with a lump of mud on the heel that a second look showed was a spur. There were little straggling threads of silk on collar and shoulder strap where the ornaments and rank insignia had been cut away. There was a huge tear in one breeches leg, through which a naked thigh and a nasty bleeding wire-cut could be seen.

"What's this?" asked the man, looking up at the newcomers.

"They was sneakin' across the field an' we brung 'em in," explained the guard.

"Well?"

"We're a wire-laying detail from the artillery," explained Lieutenant Connor. "I have been directed to find the foremost infantry unit of the Fourth Division. I assume this is it. If it isn't, I must go on."

"The Fourth Division?" cried Eadie. "We don't belong to the Fourth, we belong to the Third. Why the Fourth have got artillery of their own! The 77th is with the Fourth, our old brother outfit from Ethan Allen!"

The sergeant paused, for the eyes of all were on him, especially those of the man on the bank.

"Would you like to see a doctor?" asked the latter. "If you're feeling jumpy of seeing double or anything—"

Eadie shook his head. Even as he spoke several things had become clear to him. The infantry that he and Jake had been with the day before had not made a tremendous advance, but he and Jake had again wandered across the line into the right division's sector, and were now with infantry of that division. Still, the wire-stringers had belonged to Eadie's brigade, which would mean that the brigade was now backing up the Fourth instead of their own division. That would also explain why no relief had been sent to Eadie. There had

been a switch during the night, and probably Baldy and Short Mack had been rushed out to the new division. Well, they were here now, and must make the best of it.

"So you came in across the field," muttered the ragged officer. "We've tried to get runners through there, but they haven't seemed able to make it. Well, what's the answer? You men want to commit suicide or did you come up here for some definite purpose?"

"We've brought up a wire from the information center," replied Lieutenant Connor coldly. He had been thinking more and more that this ragged officer was probably a temporary second lieutenant. No one bought expensive uniforms like that except newly commissioned officers of the general staff. Hence he, Connor, was preparing to do some heavy ranking.

"You've brought up a wire?" cried the ragged man. "Well, I call that fine work. If I'd known you men were bringing me a wire I'd have let go a few slugs at you myself. This is the first time in twenty-nine years of service that I've been able to draw a free breath and do as I pleased. And you have to bring me up a wire so that the corps can make life miserable for me! What the —— do I want with a wire? I've got a blinker running and that's enough. It only runs one way, that's why I like it. Who knows how to hold this road, me or old Foot in the Grave, ten miles back and ninety feet down?"

"Before we discuss the question any further," remarked Connor haughtily, "let's settle the question of rank. I'm a first lieutenant ranking from July 10, 1918. What are you?"

The ragged man's jaw dropped with almost a distinct click. He seemed at a loss for words. He gasped.

"Rank?" finally breathed the ragged man in a husky voice. "——, are they all crazy? Don't worry about rank, lieutenant. When I was a first lieutenant, you weren't born. Go bring me that wire."

One of the men that had come up with Eadie detached himself from the group and in a few minutes appeared with several more, tugging the end of the wire after them. Lieutenant Connor, who had an instrument, attached the end of the wire and after some minutes of cranking and calling "hello," he got a response.

"There you are," said he to the ragged man, "you can talk to them."

"Hello," began the ragged man, "who's this? Ah, well put me through to Sheridan. Hello, Sheridan? General MacLeod speaking. I'm up here in the woods with a composite battalion. They belong to every unit in the A. E. F. The rectification of the line was very poorly done and so we were pinched out. I can hold out until night. We've got to have some air by then though. Darkness and all that. I haven't got any machine guns to speak of. Can you hear me?"

The ragged man, who said he was a general, wound the crank of the telephone. He listened, he called into the mouthpiece, and wound the crank again. "I guess it's gone," he remarked. "Well, they know we're alive. The thing that frightens me is that our artillery might take a desire to steam roll this road and with us on it it wouldn't be pleasant. Artillerymen do that some—what the —— is eating you?"

A doughboy, holding a portable pick in his hand, had joined the group. His face was quite white and concerned, and he rendered alternately the hand salute and the rifle salute with his pick. His mouth opened and shut but no words came.

"Speak up!" said the general.

The man gave a dry croak.

"Boche!" he said, and pointed with his free hand.

The group all looked in the direction of the place where the road went down-hill toward the west. That place had a few seconds before been full of doughboys digging holes, arranging shelter halves over holes already dug, or chopping down bushes for camouflage. These had suddenly disappeared and now one could see nothing but a helmet or two, a few rifle barrels and some men prone in the road who were looking at something down-hill below them.

"Lieutenant!" said the general quickly and sharply, "you and I are the only officers here. Go down to the other end of the road and take charge. Have every one stop what's he doing and find cover. Under no consideration let any shooting start. Jump! The rest of you follow me."

Eadie, Jake, the men who had guarded them, and two others that he had not noticed before, went hurriedly to the edge of the hill. Here they cautiously looked down. It was as the doughboy with the pick had said.

THERE was a deep gulch there that ran diagonally across the road, winding away to the southwest. Through this gulch marched a great many German soldiers, rifles slung, full packs, all helmeted with that dark steel hood that looks so much like a coal scuttle. They flowed along the gulch like a stream running uphill, not in any kind of formation but just as any crowd of men would scramble along over rough ground. Eadie tried to remember something he had learned a long time ago about the number of men in column of fours that would pass a point in a given time. He couldn't remember. Figures were not necessary, anyway. There were a whole lot of Germans there, and that was enough.

"You," said the general in an undertone to the two infantrymen, "jump out and tell those men in the ditch not to start any shooting. Those Germans are going up that gulch to pull off a flank attack on our lines farther back. We mustn't let them know we're here. They outnumber us about five to one or more, anyway. Sergeant Fletcher, run back to the blinker and send, 'Enemy in large numbers moving southwest. Watch left.' Go on, you others, get all those riflemen back here. You there, you man with the mustache, do you know where the machine-gun is up there? Jump up and tell 'em not to fire on their lives!"

The men turned to go, but there was a sudden crackle of rifle fire and a straggling burst of yelling from down the road. The Germans below halted instantly and stood listening. Two patrols detached themselves from the mob and began to climb the hill toward the Americans.

The machine-gun that was on the upper edge of the road went into action with a sound like ripping cloth, the two patrols melted into lumps of motionless gray, and men went down in the tightly pressed troops below, beaten down by the machine-gun fire as grass is by water from a hose. The sight was too much or the concealed American infantry. The place began to sizzle with rifle fire.

"Ah, —— the luck!" muttered the general, "now they're off." He bit his lip a moment, then turned to Eadie and Jake. "Is either of you a non-com?" he asked.

"I'm a sergeant, sir," replied Eadie.

"Good. We're in for a red-hot fight. I'm going back to get the wounded out of the road and to see how things are there. Stay here and when my messengers come back don't let them go away again. I'm leaving you in charge now. Don't let any-one start a panic."

The Germans, recovering from the shock of their surprize, unable to retreat, because of the number behind, and unable to go forward because of lack of cover, began to ascend the hill in the face of the American fire. They came on, slowly, creeping up the ditch on both sides of the road, firing their rifles and hurling grenades. Eadie had heard somewhere that the Germans did not know how to shoot, but these he now faced were an exception to the rule. Their rifle fire was hot and accurate, and the explosions of the grenades were unpleasantly close. Mud flew, spattering in the men's faces, bullets clicked on stones, bits of turf leaped and spun in air. The Germans came nearer, almost without casualties, crawling, creeping, showing themselves only to fire. The Americans firing down-hill and wildly excited, were firing too high, but as the range became more and more pointblank their bullets began to find marks and the advance slowed. It slowed, but it continued, nevertheless.

Eadie, on his stomach in the middle of the road, watched the enemy come nearer and nearer. A hot time, this, and like all hot times, it had come suddenly and unexpectedly. An explosion at his ear nearly split the drum.

"Who the —— was that?" cried the sergeant, looking around with his hand at his ear.

"Me," said Jake, "I didn't mean to hold the old gat so near you. Lookit the squareheads fixin' their bayonets. They're gonna rush us! Git out your gun, Eadie, unless you want 'em to come up here an' shake hands with us!"

It was true, the Germans were dangerously near. They clustered on the hillside like bees, the ditch crawled with them, they had already taken some prisoners and were herding them out of sight. Eadie drew his pistol and, pointing it in the general direction of the Germans, fired away a clip.

It took him a long time to reload, for his hands shook, he dropped the fresh clip in the mud, and then tried to insert it wrong side to. His breath came in gasps as though he had been running a long time,

and his heart beat with such speed that he seemed to be suffocating. The enemy were closer than ever, he could even see their faces now. There was one in particular, a man with a blond mustache. This one was in the right-hand ditch and showed himself from time to time to throw a grenade. Eadie aimed at him and fired. A few seconds later the blond man leaped up and a grenade sailed in the sergeant's direction. He did not hear it burst, for he had fired again at the German. He missed by a mile.

"Steady now," muttered Eadie, "steady."

He rested both elbows on the road and steadied his right wrist with his left hand. Then he drew a careful bead on where he thought the German would appear the next time. A pause. The German with the blond mustache obligingly put his head and shoulder out of the ditch.

Bang!

"I hit him!" shrieked Eadie, "by —— I hit him!"

There was no doubt of that. The German was slammed back against the bank as by a powerful unseen hammer and he remained there, arms outstretched as though he had been nailed to the ground. One or two men took the time to look curiously at Eadie over their rifle butts, but the greater part paid no attention. The air was full of unintelligible cries and shouts, both in German and English, and the men had other things on their minds than to heed them.

The messengers that the general had sent out did not come back. Eadie thought of them now and then, but all the men he could see were intent on killing as many Germans as possible. Probably the messengers, having delivered their messages, had stayed to help wherever they found themselves. Eadie, his pistol ammunition all gone, looked about him for a rifle. There was none near and though he saw several down the road a way, the chances were too good on getting killed if he went down after them. The enemy, he noticed suddenly, was not pushing the advance. It was apparent, as it is to a watcher on the seashore, that the high water mark had been reached. The gray chips from each wave were left a little farther back each time and finally there were no further attempts to climb the hill, but the ditch on each side was still full of Germans and there was no cessation in the rattle of machine-gun fire.

"Have any of those birds come back?" cried a voice in Eadie's ear.

At the same time a freckled hand splashed into the mud and a man lay down by Eadie. The sergeant, looking at him, recognized him as one of those who had been with the general.

"Haven't seen any," said Eadie. "We're holdin' 'em!"

"Have they begun to fall back?"

"No, not yet. They aren't doing any more rushing, though."

"——!" The other man spat in the road. "Ain't this a picnic for a man above grade seventeen to get into! I was detailed to go with that high-flyin' staff bird an' carry his camp chairs an' stuff. I'm a sergeant major with Brigade H. Q. Figure me doin' it! Boy, there's a jinx on this outfit! Where the —— did that shell-shocked lieutenant come from?"

"The one with me?" asked Eadie. "What's he done now, bawled you out for not saluting?"

"Him? —— no. But the general told him to go back and not let any shooting take place. They cut loose before he got there, but he soon stopped it. Yessir, he was the man that wasn't going to let it happen again, either. When the general got back there, and the scrap was goin' on like a house afire, this looey has the men all lined up emptyin' their ammunition belts into the road so's they couldn't do any more unauthorized firin'. An' all —— loose at this end o' the road!" The sergeant major paused and chewed upon a twig. "Boy, we'll get the Medal of Honor out of this fight!" he yelled, "us or our folks."

"There they go!" cried Eadie excitedly, "they're pulling out! We've licked 'em. —— their lousy souls! Look at 'em run!"

"Outta here!" howled the sergeant major, springing to his feet, "outta here! You men down there, fall back!" He took a whistle from his pocket and blew upon it with lung-bursting force. "Blow your whistle!" he cried to Eadie, "get these guys outta here! The general said the minute they started to go to run like —— ourselves. They're gonna shower down with G. I. cans!"

Eadie's whistle added its shrieking to the others and at last some of the men in the ditch and in holes at the side of the road began to pay attention. The two noncoms waved their arms frantically and the

men began to come in, standing up and climbing hastily out of the ditch or running down the side hill to the road.

"Go back there!" directed the sergeant major, shoving them along the road.

They obeyed, bending almost double to shelter themselves from any stray bullets. This was hardly necessary, for the road was higher than the hill across the gulch, and so was free from any aimed fire, although bullets were continually raking the sides of the banks and sending stones rattling down into the road.

Eadie looked around for Jake as the last of the riflemen skipped down the road. The red-headed man had taken up a sitting position on the bank and was firing a rifle that he had picked up. His bolt worked fast, and his jaws kept time. The light of battle was in his eye. Up would go the rifle to the shoulder, bang! Down it would come, he would masticate furiously, spit, and up would go the rifle again for another shot.

"Jake!" yelled Eadie. It was necessary to climb the slippery bank a way and shake the red-headed man's arm. Jake turned with unseeing eyes.

"Jake! Come on! Get the —— out of here before the barrage!"

"Huh?"

"Come on, Jake! Lay off shooting, the war is over. Come on, we got orders to fade to —— away out of here!"

Jake's jaw stopped its rapid motions and the gleam in his eye died.

"Man," he muttered, "this ain't no way to do. I was just goin' good!"

He arose stiffly, however, slung his rifle, and then the three men, bending low, scuttled down the road after the others. The general was there, ushering the men off the road to the right, that is, northward. There seemed to be a trench or another road there, which it was Eadie could not quite make out.

Some men were hurriedly hauling in Eadie's wire that had been laid up the road, others were arranging a sort of embrasure in the ditch, so that a machine-gun could be set up and have a clear field of fire down the road, yet be protected from shells striking near at hand.

The wounded had all disappeared, but the line of dead with their boots sticking out from under the blankets, still remained. Eadie looked again at those boots. The hobnailed ones were not remarkable, but there were some that had bare soles with a chain around the arch, but the most had those ridges of rubber that the British invented and call military soles.

"Lesson in duties of the liaison detail," remarked Jake, sensing Eadie's thought. "What's them with no hobnails? Officers. How come they got killed? They got between some dough-boy an' the skyline. How come they got all carried in here 'stead o' bein' left in the fields like the bucks? So's the fightin' democrats wouldn't steal the gold outta their teeth. Man, there's —— few officers fills an unknown grave. They carry too many francs in their jeans."

"How come all these officers with their toes in the air?" asked Eadie, turning to the sergeant major.

"Battalion staff and company commanders," said the sergeant major. "The order come up to retire to rectify the lines, the division on the left havin' left our flank flyin' in the breeze for about five miles. The battalion commander has in his captains to explain the retirement to 'em. Down comes a shell, a mean Austrian 88, one of them that comes zipp and you're dead. Well, it slammed right into 'em and when the smoke cleared their folks was all ten thousand bucks to the good. Me an' the general an' Adolph was out in the field, or we'd have got ours, too."

"And this bunch is what is left of the battalion?" asked Eadie, indicating the hurrying men, most of whom had now disappeared in the ditch to the northward.

"I guess so," answered the other. "They been stragglin' in all night. There's squads left of platoons and platoons of companies, commanded by anything from sergeants to privates first-class. The general's been runnin' around all night straightenin' 'em out. He ain't a fightin' general. He come up from G. H. Q. to make an inspection and see how many officers he could bust and now he's got the bull by the tail. Serves him right for makin' inspections at the front."

"Whaddyuh mean bull by the tail?" asked Jake.

"Why, he's took command o' this madhouse an' he's got to see it through 'til some one comes up here and pulls us out. We can't get out across the field, because the boche got it under observation. An' both flanks is in air for miles. Well, I'll give you

my guess. We'll last 'til night and then we'll get a summons to surrender, which we won't do, and then the boche will come in here in the dark and drive the livin' tar out of us. Wait an' see."

"These are the two men," said an unpleasant voice, "these two. I just wanted to point them out to you since they won't be under my eye any more."

Eadie and Jake turned. Lieutenant Connor stood there, pointing them out to the general.

"I found them skulking," went on the lieutenant, "and they've several times tried to get away from me. I'm told they made threats about killing me when they got me alone."

"They're a tough looking pair," remarked the general, a slight twinkle in his eye, "but then we all look a little the worse for wear. Civilization's no deeper than a shave and a little touch of the pressing iron, anyway. I'll keep my eye on 'em."

The lieutenant favored the two with one last cold look and then going over to the machine-gun embrasure, got into it. There were several helmets visible there, and it was plain that the machine gunners had their weapons in readiness.

"I'm leaving it to you, lieutenant," said the general, shaking the other's hand from the edge of the hole. "Keep 'em off my back. We'll keep 'em off yours and our own gang in the woods will keep 'em from crossing to the south."

CHAPTER VII

THE SUNKEN ROAD

THE moaning cry of soaring shells seeking their prey heralded the arrival of the barrage. The general, Eadie, Jake, the sergeant major and the few stragglers did not await its arrival, but tore down the road and plunged into the trench or ditch or whatever it was that ran northward. A rolling of kettle drums behind them told them they had not gone too soon.

The ditch, Eadie discovered, was a farm road, probably used by some farmer to go from the main road down to a sheep pasturage. It had been cut or worn by generations of usage to a depth of a yard or so and its protective features were added to by the earth banks that lined its sides and served as fences to keep stock from wandering into it. Underfoot it was very muddy and there were ruts there that showed the enemy had appreciated the advantages of the road and had used it recently. In this sunken road, hidden among the bushes that lined it, and the thorny hedge that crowned the top, were the remnants of the battalion. They were packed in there like sheep, and having no officers, nor any one who knew what to do, or where to go, the confusion was terrible. Moreover, they had just come from a hot fight and the growling of the barrage on the road they had just left was not reassuring.

A man wearing a khaki uniform, but not of American pattern, came running up to the general. It needed a second look to tell that this man was French. In the first place he wore no slicker, in the second, the buttons on his uniform were gold, and in the third place he wore a red cord around his left shoulder. He had a number of little loops of thread over his left breast pocket to suspend medals from.

"General," said the French soldier, "we ain't got no bullets for de odder gun. Anyway, she's broke its piston in t'ree ekal half an' lost one."

"And that leaves how many?"

"One now an' de rudder one what's got de lootenant."

"Sergeant major, go round up all the non-commissioned officers and bring them here. Wait here a minute, Adolph, we'll want your advice on this thing."

Adolph lighted a cigaret with a briquet and looked calmly around. Eadie regarded him. He noted the row of *brisques* or service chevrons that the French soldier wore, he noted that he was small, had intensely black eyes and coarse black hair. The collar of his blouse bore no device, but from the khaki uniform and the red cord, the fourrager of the Legion of Honor, this French soldier belonged to the Foreign Legion. Eadie looked at the other's cuff. There was a diagonal stripe of gold braid there.

"Where did you learn to speak English, sergeant?" he asked.

"I never learn," answered Adolph seriously. "I was born wit' it. I come from top Canadaw."

"What are you doing in this crowd?"

"I dunno maself. De boys show me how to lose all ma money shottin' crap an' de officers ask me what kind wine it can get

drunk on de soonest. An' when I go to a French P.C., it wants to know why de —— I ain't brung some boxes of cigaret back wit' me."

"You must lead a tough life," remarked Jake. "Ain't it better than bein' up in the lines an' gettin' killed?"

Adolph looked at Jake unblinkingly.

"You t'ink dis picnic to brung its lunch basket and sit onder tree?" he asked, nodding toward the road where shells growled, ten growls to the minute. "You wait till night an' see."

The sergeant major came splashing back along the road leading seven men. The general whistled softly when he saw them, but made no remark.

"All right, men," he said, "and Adolph, pay attention and if you have any suggestions, be sure to interrupt me. To begin with, I'm going to explain the situation so that you'll know what's going on and what we want to do. This place that we're in is a triangle, two sides of which are formed by gulches, and the base by our lines on the woods. We're up in the nose of it. The enemy have appeared on our left and that's the place that we must watch the closest. The right is under fire from the division on that side, although it's a little way back. Our rear is protected, because the enemy can't cross the plateau in the face of our troops in the woods, who are only waiting for night to advance and get us out of here. Meanwhile I want each of you men to take charge of thirty men. Take the first thirty you come to, let them know who you are, talk to them, explain what's going on, tell them that there's nothing to be afraid of as long as they obey orders. Then inspect your thirty men. See how much water they have, if they have any food or not, how much ammunition they have. Keep 'em under cover. I'll be walking up and down and keeping my eye on you all the time."

"Could I ask a question, general?" asked one of the men in a pause.

"Certainly, what is it?"

"Well, sir, what's to prevent them Boche from sneakin' up that road where we were and takin' us in the rear?"

"Their own barrage fire."

"But when that stops, sir?"

"I left the other machine-gun there in the ditch with an officer and ten men. They can keep the road clear. The second gun I'm going to use as a reserve to run to any threatened point. We won't have any attack, anyway, because the enemy have no intention of holding this sector, and they know very well if they took this hill they only lose it tonight when the army advances again. Any more questions? If not, posts. I'll be around in ten minutes to see what dispositions you have made."

There was a droning hum like a huge fly buzzing against a window pane. Every one flattened himself against the bank, for there was not a man there but knew that that sound heralded the approach of a German plane. It swept over them suddenly. flying low, and it seemed to cast a black shadow that remained even after it had passed. It swooped, circled, went westward, banked around, returned, and then making a circle over the sunken road, flew back the way it had come.

"Never saw us!" muttered some one.

The general looked questioningly at Adolph.

"The Boche send him for to see what gum her attack up," said Adolph.

"Did he see us, you think?"

"Oh, yes. In two minutes dat barrage she stop on de road an' we hear de mosheen-gun. If de Boche come t'rough, good. If she don't, dey go back an' she starts its artillery."

"Well, jump out, men," said the general. "Work fast. Shell fire makes a lot of noise, but we've got good cover here. Posts!"

The men went away at a trot, leaving Jake, Eadie, the sergeant major and Adolph with the general.

"Do you think it's likely we'll be rushed?" asked the general.

Adolph shrugged his shoulders.

"Dat depen'," said he. "Bimeby when it gets darker, we go out an' try to catch one, two prisoners. If she's a bunch old fellars, dey shell us all night. If she's young ones, just back from Roosha, mebbe she comes in to see us."

"By ——!" cried the general. "Adolph, you were right, they've stopped shelling that road!" He looked quickly around. "You telephone men, jump down to the end of the road and get that wire working. Sergeant major, find out where the blinker is, and see if we can get a place to use it without exposing ourselves."

Eadie, to lighten himself, tore off his slicker and overcoat. His pistol and belt

he rolled in his overcoat and then tucked the bundle under a bush. His slicker he put on again.

"Where were you wounded, sergeant?" asked the general, noting Eadie's stripe.

"I was shot in the leg, sir," replied Eadie.

"Fully recovered?"

"Yes, sir. Come on, Jake, let's go."

The two trotted down the path toward the place where they had last seen the wire and the telephone.

"I was wonderin' how long it would take you to snap out of it an' say you was hit," grinned Jake. "It's just as easy to say you was knocked over by a bullet as to say you got a month or so in hospital by mistake. They ain't goin' to make you peel down an' show your scar."

"That's just what I decided," replied Eadie.

"You're learnin'," said Jake, nodding his head sagely. "You got education but sometimes I think you ain't got a —— of a lot of savvy. Most book learned guys are that way."

The telephone they found hung to a tree by its carrying strap and guarded by a sad-eyed infantryman. Eadie ground the crank.

"Hello!" replied a voice at the other end of the wire with a suddenness that was surprizing.

"Hello," replied Eadie, "is this wire working?"

"Sure, why the —— not? Who do you want to talk with?"

"Wait a minute."

Eadie sent Jake running for the general, while the infantryman who had guarded the telephone and the sergeant had a cigaret to cheer them. The general was back in a minute and picking up the receiver, asked for a connection.

"That's all, men," he said over his shoulder. The men retired, but they had only taken a few steps when Eadie, whose cigaret had developed a break in the side, paused to lick it down and then light it again. The other two stopped to wait for him and thus they heard the general begin his conversation.

"Yes, I know," said the general into the telephone, "but I'd like to know what you're going to do about it. Water is the main question, water and food. Can you hear me? No, no, no! Water! Water! Get it? We haven't got any water. I've got twenty-two wounded here. Twenty-two. Yes. How about artillery fire? Can you help me any? Now, that's a feeble excuse!"

The three men looked at each other and continued their way. The general had dismissed them so that they would not hear and if he suddenly cut short his conversation and found them listening he might be vexed.

"Whadda we do now?" asked Jake.

"We'll dig ourselves a hole," said the infantryman. "When in doubt, dig in. If the holes I've dug was to be put end to end they'd make a trench from here to Weehawken." He took off his pack and unslung the spade carried there. "Now I'll find me a *hombre* that's got a pick an' we'll make out to git underground."

He went down the ditch.

"It's handy to know a feller that's got a spade," observed Jake.

"Want to dig yourself in?" grinned Eadie.

"No," said Jake, "but some of us are liable to need buryin'."

"You want to keep away from shovels," remarked Eadie. "The next worst thing to being buried yourself is a burying detail. We'd better find ourselves a rifle."

For a while great activity reigned in the sunken road. The men were digging themselves fox holes in the side of the bank, the sergeants were inspecting their new platoons and checking up on the amount of water, food and ammunition available. The reports from all were the same. The men had been fighting since early morning of the day before and their water was all gone. What little there was had been commandeered for the wounded.

There was no food beyond one or two boxes of hardtack, and this among two hundred men was mockery. There was a fair amount of rifle ammunition, but very little for the machine-guns. The division was equipped with the Hotchkiss and this gun had to have special ammunition. The machine-gunners had done more firing than the riflemen during the previous day's fighting and had not more than two boxes apiece left.

The wounded had been laid aside where the overhang of the bank gave them a little shelter and some medical corps men took charge. Only about six of the twenty-two had stretchers.

The general returned from the telephone and, commanding Jake and Eadie to follow

him, went up and down, exhorting. The men were cold, hungry, and frightfully tired. Thirty-three hours of fighting is a frightful strain on the system, mental and physical, and it is doubtful if a man that has undergone it is ever the same afterward.

"Keep your rifles out of the mud," ordered the general, "and be sure to make yourselves good shelters. The Boche won't attack us, but we're liable to get some shelling during the night. Relief is coming at dark, but they may be some time getting across the field. Every one get his hole dug and try to get some rest. Keep your heads down. Remember we're under observation from the west. Don't let the noise bother you, they aren't shooting at us."

THERE was a sudden sound, clear cut and distinct. The sound of pick and shovel, and the panting of laboring men stopped. The continuous roll of machine-gun fire from the westward and the American reply to it had become so much a matter of course that the men did not even hear it any more, but this new sound was different. It was close at hand, excited, frantic. It took the listeners but a few seconds to decide what it was. It was the gun on the main road in action and it meant that the enemy was trying to come up that way. Then the hush was broken by a single wild yell, high-pitched, a cry of alarm and terror that made the spine tingle and the scalp creep. From the upper end of the cart path came a hurly-burly of cries, then from the field to the west a hoarse shout.

"Hoch!" And again, "Hoch! Hoch!"

Eadie seized a bush and swung himself up the bank, to where he could see through the hedge. An army in gray overcoats and coal scuttle helmets was coming across the field and coming fast. They were not ten yards away and their first grenades barked as Eadie leaped into the ditch again. Things then became confused.

A man's mind is, after all, a simple thing. A rush of differing sensations numbs it and it can hold but one or two impressions. From the time that Eadie leaped from the top of the bank to the ground he had remembered he had no pistol ammunition, that though he had several times talked vaguely of finding a rifle, he had not yet found one.

Then his feet landed on the cart path and in recovering his balance his hand lighted on something hard. The Germans came through the hedge, then, bayonets foremost. Eadie dazedly endeavored to parry a vicious thrust with whatever he had picked up. It was a pick and the end of it clawed a German's rifle out of his grasp. Then he and the sergeant clinched.

Eadie had been at grips with many men on different occasions. But this was no wrestling match, nor was it a task like that of putting a violent soldier under restraint, nor yet the rollicking fierceness of café clean-outs. This man wanted to kill him. In just the second before their bodies met, Eadie had seen the other's eyes. They were hard and blue, and hate and bloodlust blazed from them.

All the nakedness of a man's soul gone back to primeval savagery looked out. The German's teeth were white and firm, bare to the gums, in a snarl of rage. Then their bodies had met. The sergeant kept his head down on the other's shoulder, some vague idea in his mind of protecting his eyes from the other's thumbs, and they made one spin thus engaged. The German was the stronger, that was plain at the first grip, yet Eadie managed to catch his heel behind the other's and bring him to one knee. The German was up instantly, however, but both reeled in the slippery footing. Eadie got one arm free and jabbed for the other's jaw, but the blow lacked force, for the men were too close. At the same moment the German, his arm likewise free, shot up his hand like a striking snake and seized Eadie's throat in a grip of steel.

"Gah!" Thus the sergeant.

There was the thud of a blow and Eadie found himself on his back in the mud, on his back but free. He scrambled to his knees, but the German was rolling about on the ground in the strangest kind of contortions, jerking backward all the time, as though he were a crab. Now, why—Eadie raised his eyes and saw a doughboy tugging and hauling to free the bayonet that he had plunged into the German's back.

Elsewhere the fight raged as before. The Americans and the enemy were too closely mingled to allow the use of even pistols. It was bayonet, pick, shovel, trench-knife, fists and teeth. No menagerie at feeding time gave vent to any such chorus of snarls and howls as that sunken road. The Germans still poured over the hedge, but their

own numbers hampered them. The Americans, their backs against the bank, had only to hew at the gray mass with whatever weapon came to hand. Eadie recovered his pick and swung with it. He chopped at rifles, at bayonets, at heads, feet, hands, arms, backs, shoulders, anything in gray. He swung until his head swam. His breath came in gasps, there was a taste of blood in his throat, his mouth was dry as desert sand. His arms ached and there came a time when it was impossible for him to raise the pick from the ground. It fell finally from his hands and he sank down against the bank, exhausted. He had done what he could and now there was nothing to do but wait for death.

Feet tramped up and down, mud splashed, men rolled on the ground, twisted from one bank to the other, fell down, got up and fell again. Eadie's breath finally returned, his arms grew stronger, the dryness in his mouth disappeared.

The fight still boiled and it behooved him to take part in it again. Then it was that his eye discovered a dead doughboy beside him and this man held a rifle loosely in his hands.

Eadie took it, threw off the safe, saw that the magazine had cartridges in it and then looked about for a target. Things were much clearer, the fighters were not so thickly clustered now, and the Germans had ceased to come in over the hedge. At the lower end of the cart track stood two Americans with their hands in the air, but at the upper end stood four Germans in the same attitude.

A German was walking calmly up the path from the lower end, a man whose bearing, well-fitted uniform, and thin gold shoulder-straps proclaimed him an officer. He had a pistol in his hand and motioned with it to Eadie to lay down the rifle. Him Eadie shot at point-blank range. Another German turned at the slam of the rifle and fumbled at his belt for a grenade. Eadie shot him, too. Then a rushing, trampling mob poured down the path, and bounding against the high walls and falling into the ditch, destroyed all opportunity for rifle shooting.

It was over. The trampling mob had been a number of Yanks from the upper end of the road who had cleared their sector and come to the aid of their comrades in the lower end. There was still some fighting going on, still a few cries of:

"Leggo now, Fritz, or I'll push your face in!" and "Get that big kraut! Get him!"

But it was over nevertheless and the Americans were still in possession of the sunken cart path. The general, pistol in hand, strode down the road counting the bodies of the slain. There were two and three Germans to every American, but what of that? The Americans had lost two-thirds of their effective strength in killed and disabled.

Not a man of the Yanks but what bore the mark of the enemy. The general himself had all the skin removed from the knuckles of both hands and bled from a stab in the forearm. Adolph, trotting in the general's steps, had the side of his face burned black from the discharge of a rifle, the bullet of which had cut the strap of his helmet. Jake appeared, walking side by side with the gloomy doughboy who had guarded the telephone. The doughboy had a bloody nose, which he wiped from time to time with the back of his hand, snuffling the while. Jake was a wreck. His gas mask was gone entirely, the strap of his helmet dangled in two halves, and his blouse, ripped from collar to waist, gaped wide, showing his barrel of a chest thick with matted red hair.

"There's the sergeant," cried the gloomy doughboy, "there he is. Are yuh hurted?"

"No," said Eadie dully.

"It was me that socked that hun," said the gloomy man. "I woulda spiked him sooner, only you two done the highland fling so lively I couldn't see no chance. Then, all of a sudden, sock! I thought my sticker was in him for the rest o' the war."

"Boy," cried Jake, settling his helmet, and trying half-heartedly to tie the ends of the chin strap together, "I ain't had so lively a time since the night I sung the Battle o' the Boyne in a caffy full o' the Twenty-Sixth division. Sergint, if you'd been born south o' the Line, I'd say you was gettin' rid of your dark blood."

Eadie looked down in astonishment. A long stream of black stained the front of his blouse clear down below the waist. What the ——, there was a long wound in his gas mask and this wound wept black soot. With a quick and apprehensive gesture Eadie seized the major's field glasses that he carried in back of his mask. The leather from the right-hand side had been

shorn away as by a knife. His gas mask rattled and a tiny flow of charcoal sifted out.

"Soldier," said Eadie, "you rammed that bayonet clear through that jerry and into me. If it hadn't been for that pair of field glasses you'd have spiked me, too. Look at my gas mask. What the —— good will it be now?"

"Yeh, I rammed that sticker into him, that's the truth," agreed the gloomy man. "I was near an hour gettin' it out again."

"Yuh wanta be kinda careful with that —— thing," said Jake hotly, "this ain't no second lootenant, he's a sargint. You don't wanta go killin' no sargints!"

"Uhhuh!" agreed the gloomy man. "Well, that was a nice little fight."

Eadie noticed that the doughboy had a brace of German helmets in his right hand and that Jake had about his waist a leather belt with a brass buckle that bore a crown and the device, "Gott Mit Uns." Into this belt was thrust a Mauser pistol and a saw-toothed bayonet with a red and white tassel attached.

"I'll say," muttered Eadie. "There was a time when I thought the party was over and we were licked and all of a sudden it was the boche were licked."

"Yep," said Jake, "we seen that, too. I ain't above explainin' that when I seen them jerries jumpin' over the hedge, I took my foot in my hand. Enough is enough, an' like I explained, I don't want to get killed before I fix up that little insurance matter. But I run the wrong way. I run up to the end of the road where the machine gun was. Well, you'd never believe it, but the jughead gunners had it off the tripod and were tappin' heads with it. Well, I ain't kiddin', we done a Virginia reel there for a while. Then the general comes wadin' up through the crowd to know where the —— the machine gun is. He sets it up himself. Sargint, I wish you could have seen the loop the loop that gunner turned and it wasn't no kraut that hit him neither. Well, the gun gets goin' an' that stops 'em from jumpin' over the hedge, an' we got to workin' on those that was already over."

"An' it wasn't long before their name was mud, neither," added the gloomy man.

"Yeh, but the —— of it is," said Jake, "that they shot off all their machine-gun ammunition. They ain't got one cartridge left."

THE Americans had beaten off the attack. Score one for the ragged doughboys, hungry and cold. They had beaten off a savage attack of three times their number. Yet another one like it would finish them. Their rifle ammunition had not been depleted, but their machine-gun ammunition was gone, they had sixty wounded in place of twenty-two, and thirty dead, among whom was the sergeant major.

There were also eight men missing, men who had been sent out into the field as scouts. Why had they not given warning of the attack? Who could say? They were all dead now, all eight of them, and if one looked cautiously through the hedge he could count their bodies among the gray ones that dotted the field.

In the sunken cart path there was great activity. Men bound up each other's wounds, there was a continuous rasp of first aid packets being ripped open, others searched the belts of the fallen for ammunition, still others dragged their own dead to a place apart and threw the German bodies into the ditch. The more practical lined the hedge with their dead enemies, to keep out stray bullets. Out of this welter of activity appeared the general again.

"Come on, you," he said to Eadie and the other two, "I'm going to telephone some more. If the wire is cut you'll have to go repair it."

He expressed no surprize that they were still alive, but stalked down the muddy road, past the four German prisoners, muttering something about "broad daylight," and "who the —— would have expected it?"

"Who was fool enough to take them four boche?" asked Jake.

"Some simple-minded guy," replied Eadie. "It's lucky they weren't near me. I had a pick and their heads look a —— of a like rocks."

These four prisoners were guarded by a haggard bearded man who looked as if he were trying to make up his mind to shoot them, but hadn't quite the courage.

The telephone worked. Five minutes for the connection and the general began to speak.

"Hello, I asked for Sheridan. Who's this? Oh. Good afternoon. Yes, sir."

There was a long pause while the general listened and Eadie could see his jaw muscles tightening.

The general suddenly hooked the receiving apparatus on the side of the instrument and taking the box by the strap he swung it once or twice and then by a mighty heave hurled it out of sight over the hedge, the wire looping after it like the string of a falling kite. The general's face had become very old, the lines from nose to mouth looked as if they had been cut there with an ax. His cheeks had fallen in like the skin of a squeezed orange.

"There's an old army joke," said he to no one in particular, "about the first message that comes in after communication has been broken off for a long time. They always ask you, the men at the safe end of the wire, why you haven't rendered your ration return for the month of August ten years ago, or something similar. It's the ghastly truth. In the Boer war, where I was an observer, the first message by heliograph sent into Kimberly by the relieving troops was an idiotic complaint about a mistake in a horse's number. The return was four months old when the war broke out. And this ass has just told me that if I have no better sense than to give away my position to the enemy by a lot of indiscriminate firing, he washes his hands of me. Well, now, when I get out he goes to Blois. I'm here from G. H. Q. and I can have any man's head in the A. E. F. That isn't a threat, that's a promise. I was a plebe at West Point when he graduated, but he never did have any sense. He couldn't pour water out of a boot with directions printed on the heel."

The general reeled a little bit and wiped the blood that trickled down from the stab wound in his arm. He looked at the three silent soldiers with a glassy eye.

"I wonder how my machine gun in the road is," he muttered. Then summoning his breath he put his hands to his mouth and shouted—

"Connor!"

In the pause that followed Eadie could hear men up the road talking and the click of shovel and pick where the men had gone back to digging the hole they had started before the attack.

"CONNOR!" Silence.

Adolph came slipping along through the mud and the general turned at the sound of his footsteps.

"What parade are you going to?" demanded the general after all had exclaimed, for Adolph's breast was now half covered with medals.

"Ma kitchenware," explained Adolph. "This gonna be a real Sattady night row. If I get killed, mebbe, the boche know it's killed a brave fellar what she don't see every day."

"Good idea," remarked the general. "Look out you don't get killed while there are any Yanks alive. If you do, your medals will never last for the boche. Now then, how can I see how things are with my gun out there without getting killed?"

"First," said Adolph, "we go down to dat road an' holler like ——. If she's no answer—"

"No," interrupted the general, "she or he or they didn't answer. What then?"

"Give me your helmet',' said Adolph, when they had come to the place where the cart path went into the main road.

Before the other could protest he had snatched the gloomy man's helmet from his head, an easy thing to do, since the gloomy man wore the chin strap around the back of his skull.

"Hey!" cried the gloomy man, but Adolph had already crouched and spun the helmet out upon the main road.

"What's that for?" asked the general.

"We watch her two, ten, fifteen minutes, mebbe," said Adolph, "mebbe some more. If it don't move, it ain't shottin' no bullets, an' we can go out to see what dat mosheen gun do."

"But we can't sit here on the flat of our backs for fifteen minutes. The trouble with you French is that you don't understand a need for haste. Suppose another attack is pulled off while we're waiting? No, no. Let's do something quick."

"If you go out on de road," said Adolph, "somet'ing is liable to happen quick an' you'll stay right dere till Gabriel blow it's ole horn."

"I've got a pair of field glasses, sir," offered Eadie, "and maybe if I can crawl just the littlest bit around the corner I might be able to see the gun and tell if there was any one behind the breastwork."

"Good idea," agreed the general, "only go ahead and do it quickly."

Eadie at once crept on hands and knees to the edge of the bank and then lay down and wriggled around, oblivious of the mud, until he could see along the road westward. The helmet lay a little way to his

left, motionless, in the center of the road.

Lifting his head slightly he could see the gunpit some twenty yards away. The gun itself stuck out, evidently on the alert for airplanes, since the muzzle pointed skyward. Eadie brought his glasses to bear and was distinctly shocked by the effect. The powerful lenses shot the gunpit right under Eadie's eyes; he could see the crumbling sod, the mud with which the breastwork had been put together, and the packs that were its foundation. The gun indeed pointed skyward, but Eadie could see the front sight was on the side instead of the top of the barrel. A few inches of clip stuck out perpendicularly from the breach. Eadie wriggled a little further. Ah! There were five dead Germans in the mud of the road, lying curled up as though they slept, but the flat, punctured appearance of those men showed that they were dead. The sight of them was cheering. It showed that the gunpit had been rushed and that the rushers had been repulsed.

If so the gunners must be all right, but lying low, awaiting another attack. Maybe they could see something that Eadie couldn't. Again he looked at the gunpit. There was the mud, the hastily cut sod, a corner of a blanket, an empty clip. Eadie suddenly rose to his knees, regardless of consequences, but he could see hardly any better. Just a corner of the gunpit was in view and in this corner some soldier had cast his slicker. Eadie brought the glass to bear on the breastwork at that point, for the sleeve of the slicker was draped over it. From this sleeve drooped a wrist and hand, a purplish clay-colored hand, with blue nails. Eadie thereupon crawled back to the men in the cart path.

"Sir," reported Eadie, "the gun crew are all dead. I couldn't see into the pit, but I saw the gun off the tripod and a dead man's hand, and if there were any men in there alive they wouldn't leave a guy lying like that, however careless they might be of a gun barrel."

"I thought as much. What killed them, could you tell?"

"No, sir. The boche had rushed them and there were some stiffs in front of the gun. Grenades did it, probably."

"What will we do, Adolph?" asked the general.

"You want to do it quick or you want to do it slow?"

The general gritted his teeth once or twice, but did not say what was in his mind. Finally he spoke.

"You've been at this longer than I have, Adolph," said he. "Every war has its peculiar phases and I'm never the man to claim that I know everything. I'll ask for your advice and if I like it I'll follow it. Now, then, what do you advise me to do?"

"Mebbe we wait for de arrerplane," suggested Adolph. "If dat not take too long time. De boche she'll send us one for to see what we do next. If she don' send, look out for anudder attack. If she send, look out for shells. We got two roads to cover, dis one an' de rudder one. How many men we got to cover dem two roads?"

There was a pattering sound on the main road, a clicking and rattling as though ghostly horses trotted there.

"No," said Adolph, after all had listened a few seconds, "we only got one road for a while. She firin' mosheen gun on de road. Like I tole you, watch out for arrerplanes."

"Come back," ordered the general, "I'll fix that."

Back in the center of his men, the general borrowed Eadie's whistle and blew it shrilly for attention.

"Keep up your courage, men," said he, "you've done well. They won't bother us any more after that repulse. In case an airplane appears I want every one to take his rifle and get ready to fire it. But don't fire until I give the signal. When I blow the whistle, fire a volley. If I think we can get in a second one, I'll blow again. We may not bring him down, but we'll drive him away. That's all. Remember, don't fire until I give the signal."

The general turned to Eadie and remarked in a low voice—

"We're putting on a fight here that backs some of the old Indian skirmishes off the map, and the —— of it is that we won't even get mentioned in the *communiques* for it."

"Come, Adolph, let's go up and arrange some kind of service of security for the upper end of this place. You men stay here."

"He don't know the half of it," remarked Jake when the general had gone. "I know what we're gonna get out of this fight. Six feet o' French real estate and a pat with a shovel. An' I give up a good job curryin' mules to be a liaison man."

"A guy never knows what a —— ijut he is till he goes to war," remarked the gloomy man. "I used to drive a milk route an' I was always crabbin' because I had to get up at three in the mornin'. But I got home at ten-thirty an' could sleep all the rest of the day if I wanted to. An' now I ain't shut my eyes for a week. May be more. It was such a long time ago I lost track."

"Now," said Eadie, fishing in the pockets of his muddy blouse, "we'll have a tailor made cigaret. Gloomy Gus, you better hunt yourself another helmet. We aren't dead yet and we may live to see another pay day. I crave to. The eagle hasn't done his old bit for me for a long time and I'd like to spend a little money before I do my part to make Flanders fields fertile."

"There," remarked Jake, interrupting his task of pinning his tattered blouse together with safety pins from bandoliers, "that's just in line with my thought. This here army promised us food, lodging, an' medical attendance free. We ain't had neither for a week. I've a mind to write to the papers about it. The worst thing I've found about war is that there ain't no noon hour. They works double shift all night, too."

"I wonder if those jerry stiffs out in the field have got any chow on them," said Eadie. "They're in full pack. I think we could get out to them if we went at it carefully."

"We can look, anyway," agreed Jake.

He and Eadie reached up and took hold of some of the hedge roots and hoisted themselves up the bank, very, very carefully. The thought had just come to Eadie that it might be a foolhardy thing to leave the cover of the bank, when the hedge was suddenly beaten as by a gust of wind.

Swish! Twigs and dead leaves flew. The two men at once let go their holds and fell to the bottom of the ditch, where Eadie scrambled hastily to his feet. He had heard beside him that sinister heavy thud that means a bullet has found a resting place, and he knew that Jake was hit.

Jake still lay in the mud and in that second all the color had left his face, leaving it a dead white behind his red beard.

"Where'd it get yuh?" cried Eadie, lifting Jake's shoulders and sliding his own knee under them for support. The gloomy man looked on in open-mouthed horror. Jake grinned, a feeble grin that died away almost as soon as it began.

"They got me," said he, "can yuh tie that?"

Then, even while Eadie laid him down again and reached for his first aid packet, he was dead. The life had run out of him in those few seconds and Eadie had felt it going, had felt the shoulders against his knee turning from living flesh to lifeless clay.

"Where'd it get him?" husked the gloomy man.

"I don't know," said Eadie dully. "What difference does it make?"

He got to his feet and looked to see who had noticed the affair. No one. Stray bullets had been finding their way into that place for some time. A man would drop suddenly, shot through the head, or one would cry out, or yet another would hurl himself into the mud and lie kicking like a horse.

The garrison had watched these casualties with horror and like passengers on a ship's deck, who watch the waves, the longer they looked, the sicker it made them. Some of the non-commissioned officers, urged by Adolph, had then taken charge and after that, those men not on duty as watchers or engaged in digging shelters for the wounded, kept their eyes resolutely on the ground when a crash of equipment or a hoarse cry told them of another casualty.

Eadie went to the bush under which he had tucked his overcoat, and bringing it back, he spread it over Jake. His pistol, empty though it was, he belted on. Every one, he noticed, was doing something. The man who sits and waits for death to come and take him is the one who gets the horrors and runs shrieking from a shadow, so these men kept their minds from their situation by work.

Some dug fox holes to lay the wounded in, but there were not enough picks and shovels to go around, so the others had to use their powers of invention.

A few cleaned their rifles, inserting the ramrod from the muzzle so that they would not have to remove the bolt and so would always have the rifle ready in case of need. Others counted ammunition and wiped the moisture from cartridges in their belts. Some cleaned and inspected their gas masks. There were men there plastered from head to foot with that thick glue-like mud of the

region, and sitting in more of it, who cleaned their shoes and puttees with their mess-kit knife for lack of another task. From time to time a man would be hit, or a lucky burst from a hostile machine gun would send the mud flying from the eastern wall. The general, a blanket about his shoulders, sat in the shelter of the opposite wall, where the bullets could not reach, and consulted with Adolph. Darkness was coming on and another attack was imminent. The lack of shell fire and of gas showed that the Germans had forces in the immediate neighborhood, who would likewise suffer from the gas and among whom the shells might fall.

"They've got a machine gun going on us," said Eadie to the gloomy man, "and it's close at hand."

The other made no reply, but drew his gas mask stupidly from the carrier and turning it in his hands, replaced it again.

"Do you know anything about machine guns?" demanded Eadie again.

"No," said the gloomy man, "I ain't much of a soldier. If you want to know anything about the milk business I could tell you. I used to be the smartest driver they had. It's funny the people that would put out their bottles dirty, though. Old man Thomas that owned the pulp mill, and Doc Jupson, an—"

"Steady!" said Eadie. "Sit down now and don't think about anything. Here, come down the road a ways. There now, sit down and clean your rifle. Suppose the general came along and wanted to inspect it?"

Eadie left the gloomy man fumbling at the breach cover of his rifle and walked farther along the road.

"Poor lad," he muttered, "he'll begin deliverin' milk to these doughboys in a few more minutes. Hey, there, Red Cross, you see that bareheaded bird down there taking off his breach cover? Keep your eye on him; I think he's started off his conk."

"That so?" said the medical corps man. "I'll just amble down there. What we need now to make this picnic a success is a couple of shell shockers runnin' hermantile up and down this ditch."

"Have you seen any grenades around here by any chance?" asked Eadie.

"Sure," said the other, "that bird with the shirt full of bullets on has got some."

THERE was a man sitting under the bank who had on a species of jerkin, the front covered with pockets for holding ammunition and the bottom divided into pockets for holding grenades. Eadie requested and received two grenades from this man. These he put into the pockets of his slicker and turning, walked down the path to the extreme southern end, past the prisoners there, and so to the main road. He listened here a few minutes, then as a loud clattering began, stopped, began again, and then was finally hushed, he nodded his head in satisfaction.

"I knew the —— thing was there," he muttered. He lay down and wriggled around the corner, as he had the other time, but the view had changed.

There were no German dead now and the gun was gone from the pit. But what interested Eadie, sweeping the road and the high banks on both sides with his glasses, was that from the south ditch arose a little cloud of steam, and looking for the course of this steam, he could see a long black tube that ascended the bank and disappeared over the top.

If the enemy was prowling about on the main road the general ought to be informed of it. Perhaps he had some way of watching the place where the road descended to the gulch where the enemy had first appeared. Well, that was none of Eadie's business, he had other things in mind. It was still too light for him to cross the road where he was, but if he got into the north ditch and went downhill on the east side, he could cross there and come up in the other ditch. It was worth a try.

"I'll probably get full of lead," he muttered, wriggling into the muddy ditch and crawling carefully downhill to the left, that is, toward the Meuse, "but it's better than staying in that hole waiting to be killed."

Halfway down the hill he paused and inch by inch raised his head for a look around. Nothing but the wild rolling country along the Meuse, distant woods, and the smoke of far-off shells. He rolled his helmet out into the road. No action. He listened for the thudding of bullets. No sound. So, then, gathering his legs under him, he leaped across the road, grabbing up his helmet in one sweep. Still silence. He began to worm his way up the hill again, but before he reached the top

a shell hooted down and tore itself apart very close to the place where he had crossed the road. The place was under observation then. Eadie cursed. If they started chasing him with shells, probably from a battery on the east bank of the Meuse, they might very well spoil his plans.

The second shell, however, burst in the field toward the American lines, and after it came quite a lively bombardment. Whoever had seen Eadie had thought it was the Americans trying to escape to their own lines, and so the German artillery began to pound the field south of the road. Eadie continued his progress, but slower and slower, more and more carefully. He breathed only at long intervals. There were things in that ditch that he had to crawl over, shutting his eyes when he did so. There were pools through which he went, wetting himself to the bone in their icy waters.

He paused at last for a long time, listening, but could tell nothing. The intermittent pounding was too loud and the sound rebounding from the slopes on both sides of the road made the location of its origin impossible. However, he took one of the grenades from his pocket and continued the journey. He made about the same speed as would a snail, even less. He had his life in his two hands and if he made a noise he would lose it swiftly and unpleasantly.

A faint hissing tightened Eadie's muscles and brought him to a breathless halt. The hissing gradually died, but not before Eadie had discovered where it came from. It was the steam coming from the tube that he had seen with his field glasses. The tube lay in the ditch, its open end still breathing faint vapors, and the other end going out of sight over the high bank. Under cover of his slicker and blouse Eadie cautiously pulled the ring from the grenade. Then, oh so carefully, he seemed to flow along the bottom of the ditch 'til he came to the tube. It went up like a black vine and at the top of it was what Eadie sought. He stood up.

"Jake," he breathed, "if you can see me now, watch this." Then he threw the grenade.

Up into the air it went, over the bank, and disappeared. Immediately that hellish pounding began again, a buzzing as though the grenade had been a stone that disturbed a thousand rattlesnakes. Eadie shivered. He did not know much about grenades—he should have counted before he threw it—suppose it was defective—suppose they found it and dropped it back—*CRACK!* An explosion audible even above the pounding. The pounding stopped, whimpering cries, a rumor of running feet, silence.

"Now then," thought Eadie, "I guess that pays for Jake."

He turned around very, very carefully to go back, but instead he paused and his heart began to beat rapidly. Why go back? Why not go up and see what was at the other end of the beanstalk? He had another grenade and might as well use it here as anywhere else. There are times, after all, in battle, when a man's heart begins to sing, for he knows that the thing he is about to do is likely to cost him his life, but he is going to do it just the same and he feels justly proud of himself that he has the courage.

Eadie turned, then, once more toward the bank. He tugged out the ring of the second grenade and looked up. The bank was too steep to climb there, but a few yards down the road the rain had washed out a gully. To this place Eadie crawled. Then, standing up, he took a short start and ran up the gully at full speed, came out in the field and flung himself down. He stayed there five minutes before he dared raise his head. No one had fired at him, there was no shout, no grenade banging, so he judged it safe to look around. The first look satisfied him.

Not far down the field was a dead German and near him the torso of another. There was a hole there, evidently, and the legs of the second German were in this hole. Eadie went there. The hole was occupied by two more Germans, one still alive, and by a thing that looked like a stove pipe on a sled. This was a heavy type machine gun, its support in the prone position. The tube from its cooler went over the edge of the bank into the road and it was the steam from this tube that Eadie had seen. The German machine gun, the Maxim model 1907, has its barrel water-cooled, and the water boiling after about five hundred shots, steam is ejected, so that the location of the gun would be readily detected, were it not for the tube that is attached to the cooling reservoir, and which

conducts the steam to a distance or to some place where it cannot be visible to the enemy.

"Now how the —— am I going to get this thing back?" muttered Eadie.

He had expected to find a gun there and its crew would be doubtless dispersed by the grenade, but the danger lay in the fact that there might be a supporting gun. He saw no signs of one. The hole in which the gun lay was protected from fire from the American lines in rear by curves in the ground between, and this same background prevented the men in the cart path from seeing it. The gunners had undoubtedly come up and established their gun while their friends made a diversion in front of the American gun on the road. The gun once in position, the American gun had been destroyed and sniping and harassing had been started on the Americans in the sunken cart path. Eadie had a fine view of the American position, a long curving line of hedge, but in the gathering dusk there was no sign of life behind it. If he could only signal now for a little help—the thing was too heavy to take back alone.

"By ——!" cried Eadie, "why take it back?"

If the Germans rushed the hedge again he could take them in flank. If they came along the road, they were his meat. The grenade that he still held in his hand he hurled in the general direction of the German lines in case any one there was coming to see what had happened to the gun, and then he proceeded to clean out the hole.

The two Germans he shoved over the bank. One of them was alive, but Eadie had other things to do than to take care of wounded Germans. It was getting dark rapidly and the main thing was to inspect the gun while he still had light. A hasty glance showed him eight or ten boxes of ammunition, a half dozen stick grenades, and an overcoat in the hole. Then he turned to the gun.

Eadie had fired one of these one day with Ham and the machine gunners. All he had to do was to take hold of the handles, push off the safety catch, and push on the corrugated thumb piece. A glance showed him that there was half a belt of ammunition still left. When that was gone, he would see about reloading.

Suddenly, with a long hiss, a flare went up from the gulch and burst almost over Eadie's head, burning with a ghastly green light.

He was still wondering what it meant, when with the roar and crash of a heavy surf on rocks, a box barrage was laid down just behind Eadie, on the eastern side of the hill, and on the line of hedge that marked the cart path. The bursts were not near Eadie, but hunks of steel began to buzz and sing, and so he kept low in the hole. Lying full length behind the gun, he could just see over the rear sight into the field across the road where his comrades were.

That barrage meant an attack and Eadie meant to be ready for it. He put his elbows on the pads of the support as Ham had showed him, gripped the handles and waited.

The enemy came suddenly out of the gulch, in two columns, tearing across the field. The hedge crackled with rifle fire, even as the barrage swung out into the eastern side of the hill. The gun leaped under Eadie's hands as he pressed the thumb piece. Ah, what a glorious sound it made! What was that? Some one had cried out. Again that cry, audible even above the clacking of the gun and the rumble of the barrage.

"By God, the wounded jerry! They're comin' up the road!"

He leaped to his feet and looked over the bank. A dark river of men was rustling along there and the wounded German that Eadie had rolled out of the hole was calling to his comrades for help. From the far end of the cut, where the cart path turned off the main road, four or five rifles flashed bravely. There was a guard there after all. They must have come down right after Eadie had gone out. Well, no time for that.

The German machine gun could not be trained into the road, Eadie's first frantic effort showed him that. What then? Prop up the rear end? No. Get it out of the hole and onto the slope? Good. Eadie seized the front end of the support, swung it out of the hole, grabbed the back end and swung that, then cleared the ammunition belt. He worked fast, for seconds counted. A quick glance showed him that he could not fire into the far end of the road, but that if the Germans fell back and attacked him from directly below he was lost. He flung himself down, placed his elbows, seized the handle and opened fire.

It was hard work, for the gun leaped and

wriggled, and being poorly placed, it was doubly hard to control. He kept shoving up on the breech to keep his fire low, and had the satisfaction of seeing the dark mass below him buckle, bend, thin out, and finally disappear, leaving only the scattered wreckage of its dead behind. There was a thin cheer from the far end of the road.

"Ah boy," remarked Eadie to himself, "what it takes to be a machine gunner I got in clusters!"

He decided that just to the left of the old position of the machine gun there was a place where he could not only cover the field across the road, but also the slope where the road dropped into the gulch.

Any more attacks that came up the road from the gulch could then be broken up before the enemy got up the hill. In the remaining light he could see men crawling in the opposite field, the steady flash of rifle fire from behind the hedge, and the great black shape of an airplane that ducked and swooped and circled over the line of the hedge.

The barrage had stopped, except the shells that were bursting between the road and the American lines to the south.

Again Eadie seized the handles of the support and dragging the gun behind him—the sled-like support was probably fashioned with just that end in view—he got it to the new position and swung it again toward the enemy. A new attack had just swept out of the gulch and the airplane, to aid it, was flying low and raining down bullets upon the Americans, the tracers glinting like sparks from a Roman candle.

Eadie could hear voices calling, the American fire seemed to lessen, there was a thin piping, and the ragged crash of a volley. The airplane jumped as does a wild fowl that receives a charge of shot, then climbing, turned suddenly sideways and fell swiftly to earth. Crash! The gulp and roar of an explosion, and the wreckage was in flames.

"Let's go!" cried Eadie. Beyond the flames of the burning plane he could see a wave of men coming up the east face of the hill and on that wave he swung his gun. It rattled for several seconds. Silence. Eadie pounded the breech to free the jam, and pressed harder upon the thumb piece. Then he looked closely at the breech. The ammunition belt had run through. "That's simple," he muttered. He crawled over to the hole, gathered up three boxes of ammunition, and then returned.

The plane blazed now, a pillar of fire from wings to up-ended tail and by its light Eadie could see that there was still another belt in the box by the gun. He seized the end of this and inserted it in the breech. The tongue went through easily and the first bullet clicked into the chamber. Eadie then trained the gun on the enemy and pushed the thumb piece. The gun remained quiet.

"Ah, there's a —— lever you have to pull!" he cried.

The light from the plane had rapidly died out and it seemed to Eadie that it was much darker than before. He felt both sides of the breech, he got up from the ground and inspected carefully with his eyes, but no lever could he see. There were chains and little buttons and a handle that he discovered locked the traversing gear. Across the road the fight raged and men shouted in English to "Hold 'em!" or "Look out for your end!"

There was also considerable yelling in German, probably the officers urging on their men. Eadie in the darkness fumbled with the gun, cursed, raved, pulled out the belt and inserted it again, pressed the thumb piece until his arms ached and was about to abandon the gun when he discovered a knob on the right side that moved. He shoved it down all the way and allowed it to come back. The machinery clicked.

"That's it!" cried Eadie, but the gun remained silent. Eadie rested his head on his hands and tried to think calmly. He was like a man who struggles with the silent motor of an automobile at night and far from home or aid. What else could he do? The thing would not work. He was tempted to hurl it all over the bank and into the road. Yet his comrades in that ditch had need of him, the gun must be loaded some way, and if he tried again, slowly, he *must* discover the method.

"Now suppose I pull the belt and shove that lever at the same time?" He tried to do this, but the knob of the lever slipped from his hand and snapped violently back as he pulled on the belt. The mechanism chuckled sarcastically, *but the belt jumped forward.*

"By ——!" cried the sergeant.

This time when he pulled the belt he deliberately let go the lever. Again the gun

clicked and the belt jumped. Without daring to hope, Eadie tried pressing the thumb piece. The gun barked joyously.

"Let 'er go!" shrieked Eadie.

He settled his elbows and swung the gun into a dark mass in the opposite field, that melted away before the blast. He threw a half dozen bursts into the eastern field by the wreckage of the plane and then, pulling down on the handles, tried a little indirect fire on the gulch. He began to have trouble with his eyes, specks danced before them, and at one second he thought he saw counter attacks emerging from the gulch; at the next he could see nothing but the empty field, dotted with dead. He kept the gun going, pausing now and then to rest his thumbs. He understood loading now and the second belt he inserted with ease. The enemy he expected every minute would pay him a call, but he was unmolested. Perhaps the men he had heard running off after he had fired the grenade had not reported the loss of the gun, or there might have only been four men with the gun after all, and the two bodies in the field were those who had run. If that was the case the Germans would think it was their own gun, firing on the Americans, and if they felt the effects of it in their ranks, they would attribute it to the rifle fire from the hedge.

The Germans changed their tactics. They retired to the gulch and shelled both hedge and main road for an hour or two. They drenched the place with gas, they watered it with machine gun fire.

They wanted badly to drive a living wedge down the gulch and separate the two divisions whose flanks touched there, but this force of Americans prevented it. The enemy did not know that there were only about a hundred starving men holding them up.

And then, the Germans at that time did not have the determination and eagerness in attack that they displayed earlier in the war. Nevertheless, after the bombardment they launched three simultaneous attacks. Eadie broke up the one that came up the main road from the gulch almost before it started. Then he turned the gun across the road.

It seemed the enemy would never stop pouring out of the gulch. His head reeled, he shouted and howled. The gun grew hot and a frightful smell of burning oil and red hot metal arose. Eadie shoved in a new belt and turned loose on some men trying to bring a gun up the opposite bank. Their gun went clattering down into the ditch, but the men stayed where they were. Eadie's gun suddenly clucked like a hen and lapsed into silence.

"—— it!" yelled Eadie and added his opinion of the gun and the man that invented it. There was still half a belt, it must be a jam.

Eadie pounded the breech, pulled the belt, snapped the lever, did everything he could think of. Then he noticed that the bottom of the cylinder glowed a dull red. Ah! The water in the German gun is only sufficient to keep it cool for four belts. After that time the cylinder must be refilled. Eadie had never thought of that, but then, machine gunners are not made in a day. The barrel had become hot, had buckled, and now the gun had fired its last shot.

Once more Eadie rested his head on his arms. Jake came and sat down beside him. Jake? Why Jake was lying dead over there behind the hedge under Eadie's overcoat. Jake grinned, nevertheless, and extended his huge hand. Was it really Jake? Why, no. There was a girl there, dressed in black, with a white cap and apron. She held out a platter on which was a huge steak, garnished with butter.

"Oh ——!" shrieked Eadie, jumping to his feet, "don't start that again!"

He staggered and fell across the breech of the gun. Three nights and two days without sleep, or rest, or food, and all the time under the strain of battle. Sergeant Eadie had collapsed.

CHAPTER VIII

BEHIND THE GUNS

EADIE opened his eyes with a start and was about to struggle, but the men that held him wore khaki uniforms, and their faces were sympathetic and kindly.

"Where yuh hit, buddy?" asked one.

It was day and rain fell heavily. The field that had been so lonely the night before was covered with Americans, walking steadily, their rifles over their shoulders, and their bayonets dripping rain. As far as the eye could see they marched along. Somewhere a barrage growled.

"Where yuh hit?" asked the man again. Eadie tried to speak, but no words came.

Practised hands turned him over and explored under his blouse.

"He's all right," said some one, "there's no blood an' I don't feel a thing."

"Yes," said a third voice, "shock and gas, write it down. What's the name on that dog tag?"

"Here!" cried Eadie, "I'm all right, I just fell asleep a minute or two."

His mind began to clear a little and he could see that there was an unfolded stretcher on the ground, that one of the men who had supported him was evidently a bearer, and that the other man was a doctor, for his collar bore the insignia of an officer of the medical corps.

"Sure," said the doctor, "we know. We're just going to fix it so you can have a little more sleep. You've got a little whiff of gas, I know the signs."

"No, no!" shouted Eadie, so that even the marching men turned to look at him. "I tell you I'm all right. Let me alone! I was evacuated for gas once before and I've had enough razzberries handed me ever since to keep the A.E.F. in jam a hundred years. Nix on that stuff. I'd spit my lungs right out on the ground and kick 'em over the bank before I'd go out for gas. No, sir! No more jawbone wound stripe for mine. One is enough."

While Eadie was speaking the doctor had turned his back and seemed to be looking at the scenery. He now turned with a bland smile and began edging toward Eadie. The stretcher-bearer began to close in on the other side. The doctor kept one hand behind him.

"Yes, yes," he said soothingly, "that's right. It's a dirty trick, that. Sure. Don't you mind 'em, though!"

"Oh, man!" moaned Eadie helplessly, "now they're going to give me a shot that would put a jack-mule away." He took a step backward instinctively, then his hand flew to his holster and the gun seemed to leap out to meet it. Eadie swung the muzzle at the doctor and the stretcher-bearers. It was lucky that it was empty, for his hand gripped trigger and butt-safe in a drowning man's clutch.

"Get the —— away from me!" growled the sergeant. The doctor and his assistants complied immediately, with more haste than dignity. A crazy man and a .45 are as dangerous a combination as gasoline and a match. Eadie watched them go grimly, then holstered his pistol and walked aimlessly up the hill a little way.

"That's the way to handle the medical corps!" he muttered.

On the hilltop he paused. There was a wall of smoke far to the north that marked a barrage and tall black plumes in the distant fields showed where enemy shells were falling among the advancing troops. An ambulance rumbled up the hill from the gulch whence the German attacks had come the night before. Along the hedge that marked the sunken cart path was a long line of recumbent figures, to which additions were constantly being made.

These must be the dead. Of the bitter conflict of the night before there was no sign except the German dead lying thickly and the blackened pile of junk that had been an enemy airplane. Jake was over there, and Lieutenant Connor, who, if he did not know much about being an officer, at least knew how to die like one. Perhaps the gloomy milkman was there, too, and Adolph. But the rest of them? Eadie guessed that the Americans had made a general advance at daybreak. His watch now told him it was eight o'clock. The survivors of the garrison of the sunken road had probably gone on with the advance, or else had been relieved and sent to the rear.

"I'm going to be relieved, too," decided Eadie. "This isn't my division, anyway."

If the ambulances could come up that road from the gulch then he could get out that way, decided the sergeant. He went down into the gulch, not looking at the dead Germans there, and so up the opposite slope. It was clear, now, why the Germans had not made a more determined attack by way of the main road. It was because they had been under observation from the southern end of the gulch and the attacks that did come through that way must have suffered heavily from American fire from the south.

The road itself was deserted. There were a few bodies, American and German, a great many German signs, a long line of empty dugouts, a dead horse or two, and the usual flotsam of overcoats, blankets, gray and brown, packs, rifles, and empty machine-gun clips. There were no men. Eadie got a glimpse of a long wriggling black line crossing a distant field and going south.

These were prisoners, but they were the

only living things he saw for more than a mile. Here the road joined another and Eadie took the south fork. Immediately he met infantry marching in column, a whole brigade, he thought, until he noticed the fresh uniforms, the shaven faces, and the brand new equipment. Replacements, these men were, going up to fill up the depleted ranks of some division. No, that wasn't it, because replacements wouldn't be marching in column so near the front. This must be a fresh, untried division, going in to see what it could do.

"Where yuh goin'?" called Eadie.

"To Berlin!" the men answered him with a cheer.

Eadie was moved to laugh hoarsely.

"There's bad boys up there in the wood that'll splash your new clothes all over with mud," he called. "That Berlin road is kinda rocky."

A column of artillery, some Three Hundred and Something regiment that Eadie had never heard of, followed the infantry, and after that, suddenly, he found himself in crowded country.

The first sign was a rolling kitchen in the ditch. This was some kind of a new-fangled apparatus that burned kerosene instead of wood, judging from the stop-cocks along the bottom.

The reason for its being in the ditch was not hard to find. The cook had run out of kerosene and there being no more to be had, the kitchen had been abandoned. Behind the kitchen was a mule and behind the mule a limousine, its radiator shattered. A shell had done that, or a collsion in the dark.

More dead animals, a stalled tank, a German limber, an ambulance with the roof gone, rifles, cans of hash or bully beef, crescent shaped sacks in which sho-sho ammunition is carried, more mules, an overturned truck. All, all spattered with mud from the traffic that passed and repassed on the road.

From time to time the road went over a low rise, and from here, if there were no woods, Eadie would have a view of the fields where thin lines of men flowed steadily toward the front, or batteries of artillery, in the open and with no attempt at camouflage, spat flame and shells at the enemy. From time to time tanks waddled across, looking like a flock of ducks in search of a pond.

Again he came to a break in the road where engineers labored, some to fill in the great ruts with stones, others to pry out a battery of howitzers that was mired to the hubs. Always the same panorama, distant woods, rolling fields, rain, engineers, infantry, and everywhere mud and waste and wreckage.

At a crossroads Eadie sat down upon a block of stone and considered. He had not the slightest idea of where he was, there was no M.P. there, nor any signboard that would indicate where the roads went. He not only had no idea of his own location but he had no idea of the battery's either.

The relief was going to tell him where the battery was, but he had seen no relief. At that moment a two-wheeled cart appeared around a turn and came bobbing toward Eadie. This cart had a tank on it and was used for carrying drinking water. It was drawn by a horse in the shafts and another, hitched alongside, was supposed to lend his assistance.

The cart bore a pump and a suction hose and bobbed up and down with the action of its sloshing contents. The interesting thing about this particular cart was that it had upon its side the words, "Battery A," and the man that drove it was one Cracker Coombs, a man well known to Eadie.

"Hey!" called the sergeant, standing up.

"Hiyuh, Sahgunt," replied Cracker, reining up his steeds. "Wanta ride? Climb on."

Eadie complied gladly enough.

"Where's the battery?" he asked, as Cracker clubbed his horses forward once more.

"Down the road a piece," replied the driver. "It's a —— of a long ways to come fo' wattuh three and fo' times a day. Git on thar, you no account ——!" Thus he addressed the off horse, who had been walking with loose traces, while the one between the shafts tugged and grunted.

"What good's that horse hitched on like that?" asked Eadie. "I never saw one of 'em doing any pulling."

"Oh, he's kinda company fo' the othuh one," replied the driver. "Where yuh been at, Sahgunt, fightin'?"

"I'll say," agreed Eadie. "I've had enough of it for a while. The battery been doing anything?"

"Ain't fired nary a shot yet. We had two show-down inspections and a evenin' parade. It was a good one, too, only two o' them Boche planes flew ovuh an' broke it up."

"That's a —— of a way to fight a war,"

remarked Eadie. "How come? Haven't they got any ammunition or what?"

"I ain't studyin' about that atall," said the driver, clubbing the off horse again. "I got to tote wattuh whether they fights or not. I heard we was to back up some regimunt but they took foot in hand an' done gone an' no one knew whe'at to shoot. That's what the fust sahgunt was tellin'."

"Umm!" said Eadie, "well maybe that's right. I was with an outfit and didn't hear an American shell for two or three days. How's the outfit feeding now?"

"Right slim!" said the driver.

IN A few minutes the cart turned off the road and Eadie was home. From the seat of the cart he could see the battalion strung out along a field, the guns of the three batteries in position, behind them piles of shells, and the gunners sitting idly around in shell cases, smoking.

A long line of harnessed limbers hid themselves in the shadow of a row of trees. Men wandered aimlessly about, some shaved or cleaned the mud from their clothing, others dug themselves dugouts, some slept. Behind a clump of bushes was a pile of helmets, rifles, and miscellaneous equipment, with here and there a patch of white cloth. Signs such as these pointed to the presence of a dressing station in those bushes, and that pile of arms contained the equipments and weapons taken from the wounded.

"Here we are," cried Eadie, leaping down. The water cart always stops near the kitchen, thus bringing Eadie immediately to the place he sought.

"How's chances on chow?" cried the sergeant. The cook, who smoked with his back against the wheel, and the K.P. who scraped at the bottom of a pan with a stick of wood, regarded the sergeant with surprize.

"Ain't got much chow," said the cook dubiously. "Spud and the mess sergeant are off to see can they find a ration dump to steal a little for supper. We just got through with breakfast an' I put on everything I had."

"—— and ——," cried Eadie, "I haven't set my teeth into food for three days!"

The men were all looking sadly at each other when the first sergeant suddenly appeared.

"Ha! Sergeant Eadie!" he cried. "They had the rumor around the latrine this morning that you were dead. I knew it was a lie. I bet you found a steam-heated dugout; I hear the Boche have 'em. The major wants to see you the minute you get back."

"What for?" demanded Eadie.

"I bet he wants to know where the steam-heated dugout is," said the K.P.

"I think he's got a new job for you," said the first sergeant, glaring at the K.P. "Maybe he's going to send you to officers' training camp. There's a detail goin'. Go see him. You better shave first, though, and clean yourself up a little."

"That's right," said the cook, "you go shave an' see the major an' when you come back I'll have somethin' for you to scoff. I got a little karo an' some hardtack an' a bit o' flour an' bacon grease, an' maybe I can bum some coffee off B battery. Maybe Spud an' the mess sergeant'll be back by then, too."

"Where's the liaison detail hang out?" asked Eadie.

"Soft," replied the first sergeant, "they got an old jerry dugout up on the hill there."

Eadie went in the indicated direction, after filling his canteen at the water cart. The dugout he found easily, for Baldy was in the doorway.

"Well, I'm ——!" exclaimed Baldy. "Yuh look like yuh been to war."

"Well, I haven't," said Eadie. "I've been snipe hunting. How's everything?"

"Ah, I knew it was you!" cried a voice, and Short Mack poked his child's face from the door. "I dreamed about money last night. Me and Baldy hollered 'Hey, goldbrick!' down every dugout between here and Sivry-la-Perche and when you didn't answer, we thought you were gone for good. What's the matter, did the M.P.s chase you back?"

"I'm going to shave," said Eadie, hitching forward his musette, "that's something Short Mack can't do."

The sergeant removed slicker, belt and blouse. His gas mask he laid handily by and the major's field-glasses beside it.

"Where'd you get *them?*" cried Short.

"A little bird flew down with 'em in his beak," answered Eadie, laying out his shaving tools.

"You're the cheapest —— I know!" foamed Short. "If you had brains enough to be simple, I'd knock your nose off its

trunnions! Gimme a look through 'em."

Short took the glasses and began to sweep the horizon with them, while Eadie lathered his face.

"Where's the red-headed guy?" asked Baldy.

"He's dead." Eadie lathered in silence and then laid the brush gingerly on his gas mask. "Hold the mirror, will you?" he asked.

"What did it, shell or grenade?" asked Baldy, holding the steel mirror before Eadie's face.

Scrape, scrape, went the razor. Eadie pulled his nose out of the way, removed a budding mustache and shook the soap onto the ground.

"Bullet," said he. "They had a machine gun up and he stopped one. He died in a minute."

"Uh," grunted Baldy. He changed hands on the mirror and watched Short sweeping the horizon with the major's glasses. Eadie continued to shave. Jake's death had a slight effect on these two, he thought, but then they had not known him very well. He, the sergeant, was not as affected as he might have been. He was surprized at this himself. But then how many men had he met, good lads all, in hospital in the States, in the casual company, on the transport, in rest and replacement camp, on trains, all up and down France, infantrymen, artillerymen, engineers, police, men of every branch of the service.

"That's a sorry shave you're givin' yourself," remarked Baldy.

"I know it," said Eadie, "but I'm in kind of a hurry. The major wants to see me."

"Uh," sneered Short, "we heard about that, too. There's rumor round you're off to officers' trainin' camp. Well, either they're —— hard up for officers or else it's the easiest way to get rid of you."

"You'll get all the more work to do when I'm gone," grinned Eadie, wiping his face and carefully putting away his tools in the musette again. "Now, then, Short, give us those glasses. You know I'm a bird that keeps everything valuable right on me. Also, when I'm gone, I want you to buscar around and get me a couple of blankets to sleep under."

"Who was your dog-robber last year?" inquired Short.

"Go on, now, find me those blankets," said Eadie coaxingly, "and when I get my commission you can be a real dog-robber."

"If they make you second lieutenant, I'm going to put in for Jack Pershing's job," called Short, as Eadie went down the hill.

The battalion P.C. he found easily enough. It was in another German dugout, evidently a large one. At the door he paused and made some attempt to brush off his clothes, but the task was hopeless. Anyway, it would be better to go in a battle-stained warrior. The effect would be more dramatic. Eadie knocked.

"Come in!"

The sergeant lifted aside the blanket that served as a door and stepped in. A number of lanterns lighted the place, and Eadie could see a table, a telephone, maps, fungus-whitened beams, and the dim outlines of three officers. With difficulty Eadie discovered the major sitting at the table.

"Sir," said Eadie, saluting, "I was directed to report to the major. I'm Sergeant Eadie of 'A' battery."

He squared his shoulders as he spoke, and felt a little sorry that the light was so poor and hence the officers could not see his wound stripe.

The major swung around in his chair and looked Eadie from top to toe.

"Sergeant Eadie, oh, yes," he said quietly. "You were detailed to go forward with the infantry September 26th, weren't you? Where have you been ever since?"

"Sir," began Eadie, "the division went to bits. The officer we were with was killed and the battalion commander after him. We stayed until night, all the officers we knew were killed, the men were retiring, and so we retired, too."

"Did you ask for any fire during the day?"

"Yes, sir," said Eadie, "we fired a rocket in the afternoon, but the barrage only lasted a few minutes."

"That's right," spoke up an officer from the shadows, "you remember, major, that the brigade called up and made us cease firing because the shells were bursting about two miles in rear of the line reported by the airplane?"

"Keep quiet," said the major, "I'm doing this. Now, then, sergeant, where did you go the next day? Why didn't you come back?"

"Well, sir, we were on the way back when we met Lieutenant Connor and he made us go along to help lay wire."

"Lieutenant Connor? He isn't with this regiment any more!"

"He had a Signal Corps detail from the Third Brigade, sir."

"Well, he might have that. He was transferred to another regiment of the brigade. The brigade was split up at the opening of the attack and he might have had a detail from the Third Brigade, but that doesn't allow you to go with him."

"He ordered me to go with him, sir, and I thought he was still with the regiment. I hadn't seen him around the battery since Saint Mihiel, but he had good reasons for staying out of sight."

Snickering from the shadows showed that the other officers agreed with Eadie.

"Well, we aren't getting anywhere," said the major coldly. "Any one can think up excuses, but facts are different things. Where's Lieutenant Connor now?"

"He's dead, sir."

"Well, where's the man that went with you?"

"He's dead, too."

"Oh, he is? Hmmm. Now, listen. We had a little affair with you on the Marne. You were sent out to find a bridge and if we'd waited for your report, we'd still be at Château-Thierry. There was some kind of a rumor around that you were gassed. I think if a certain general order were extended to include gas cases there'd be a ——ed sight fewer evacuations for gas. Well, this time you do the same stunt. There's been too much of this going out on detail and turning up a week later, with some feeble alibi. I think I've got you. Anyway, you're under arrest while I investigate. Tell your B.C. and your first sergeant. You're not to leave your battery position under any circumstances. I hold them responsible. Call up 'A' battery on the phone, Meadows, and confirm that. That's all."

The sergeant saluted and went out. He was tired, his legs ached, and his mind craved sleep. Between the Germans and his own officers, a man had a tough time in this war. On to the kitchen then. Eadie stopped on the way and asked the gas non-com for a new mask, pointing out that his, the can punctured as it was, was obviously useless.

"Yuh better go down an' see the doc," said the gas non-com, "if you been runnin' around with that mask long. There's been a lot of gas loose."

"Not on your life," answered the sergeant. At the kitchen he filled his cup with coffee and the cook, wiping his hands on his apron, took off the stove a mess-kit full of some kind of gray matter.

"What's this?" demanded Eadie.

"It's good for yuh," replied the cook, "eat it. It's bacon grease an' flour, with them pavin' stone biscuits stirred up in it."

"We got somethin' else for yuh," grinned the K.P., "fer sergeants only. Hardtack an' karo baked."

Eadie proceeded to eat. The stuff tasted good, especially since it was his first real meal in several days. His head reeled a little bit from fatigue and his legs kept going to sleep. He sat on a ration box, his back to the warmth of the rolling kitchen, and ate. The K.P. chopped wood and the cook searched his teeth with a splinter.

Eadie drank coffee and thought upon his lot. Jake had the luck after all. What was there in this war for a man? Work and fight and sleep in the mud and go without food, and be bedevilled by officers all the time. Three days of fighting and killing. Perhaps tonight he would have to go on the lines again. Winter was coming on and it was going to get colder every day. All honor to the French and British who had stood this misery for four years. As for his own particular troubles, they were annoying, but not serious. He could find some member of the wire-stringing detail, or even Lieutenant Harvey to testify for him. The general would say whether he had been a goldbrick or not. He had captured a machine-gun single handed, which was not a task performed by goldbricks. And that dumb doctor had wanted to send him out again for gas! He had fixed *him*. By the way, the echelon must be found and Coke Mullins approached on the subject of pistol ammunition.

"How's it go?" asked the cook, taking out a knife and putting a fresh point on his splinter.

"Good," said Eadie. "I've eaten lots worse. I wish I had some soft bread to wipe out my mess-kit with." He got up and walked toward the water cart, intending to rinse out his cup.

WHoooOOOO! A sudden swelling roar, a roar like that of a lion a thousand times magnified. A shell! A near one! Eadie went for the ground but he felt iron going into him ere he started. The explosion he did

not hear, but he saw a great sheet of flame open fan-like and shut out all the land-cape.

When things cleared a little bit, Eadie found himself on the ground, lying on his side. He opened his eyes and then raising his head looked about him. The place was deserted. Far away some one called wildly, but there was no one in sight. Eadie looked the other way. A column of steam hid the place where the rolling kitchen had been, but Eadie could hear hissing and see a shattered blackened wheel, and the wreck of a marmite can lying on the ground. Beyond the marmite was the cook, one leg gone, and dead. The K.P. lay a little farther away, also dead, horribly so. Other than the hissing where coffee or grease dripped on the scattered coals of the rolling kitchen there was silence, save for the distant man that called despairingly.

Eadie lay down again quietly. He was hit and hit bad, he could tell by the way he felt. And he had been hit right beside the guns, in front of the entire battalion. A real hit. No more sound-off about jawbone wound stripes! No more wise cracks about going over the hill! The ground felt soft and comfortable. Right in back of the guns! That shell had been a fast traveler. How many years ago had it been when he had told Ham that a shell could be heard five seconds before it burst? This latest arrival had but roared once and Eadie had felt its claw almost as soon as he heard the roar. There were feet pounding now, muttered comments, excited cries.

" 'A' battery's kitchen!"

"They're all dead! ——! Lookit the cook!"

"Get back, men, don't gang up around here! Get back! Another shell may land any minute! Where's the doctor?"

A dozen hands turned Eadie over and he could see a circle of white faces looking at him.

"Where'd it get yuh?" they cried.

"In the side," answered the sergeant. He was surprized to hear how natural his voice sounded. There were men there he knew, looking at him as though he were some strange and fearful object. There was Ham, open mouthed, and some of Ham's gunners, a section chief, that Eadie knew, and several more.

Off came his belt, his blouse was torn open, up with the shirt, and Eadie, raising on one elbow, saw it. A great bunch like an inverted cup and in the center of this bunch a round jagged hole, with a tiny splash of blood on one side. He lay down again and gritted his teeth at the sting of the iodine.

"Got any more?" asked the first-aid man who was putting on the bandage. He was an old timer, a man who had handed out pills to Eadie, and treated boils for him since the days of the recruit barracks at Ethan Allen. And now he was binding up his wounds!

"Yuh sure you ain't got no more nowheres?" insisted the first-aid man. "Didn't feel but the one? Sure now?"

"No, that's the only one," said Eadie. "Did it go in?"

"Yup, it went in."

"I don't feel weak or anything—I don't want to get shoved out with a flesh wound."

"You earned your ticket to hospital all right," said the first-aid man grimly. "Take him out to the road," he directed the stretcher bearers.

There was a row of men on stretchers beside the road, waiting for an ambulance. Eadie was laid down here, and a doctor appeared.

"Write out a tag now," said the doctor. "Wire it on him so it won't come off. That's a good dressing, we won't need to touch it. Gun-shot wound abdomen, put down. A.T.S. I think I'll give him a little morphine, too. Give him the injection, Clark."

Eadie turned his head at that and discovered a man holding a huge syringe of nickel. The man made the needle squirt tentatively. It was a huge syringe, so huge that the man held it in two hands.

"It's good for yuh," said the man, approaching Eadie. "It's so yuh won't get lockjaw."

"I think I prefer lockjaw," said Eadie, reaching back of him and taking a firm grip of the stretcher handles. Zip! It was done.

"That wasn't so bad," remarked the sergeant. "You've got a nice light touch. The looks of that thing are what give a guy the horrors."

"I get lots o' practise," said the man with the syringe. "I do this about two hundred times a day. Give us your arm an' I'll give you somethin' will make you feel better."

Eadie closed his eyes after that and lost direct connection with events. Dimly he heard an argument between two of the attendants as to whose turn it was to go to

dinner first, he remembered that the doctor asked him if he could drink a little hot chocolate, and he had a faint recollection of hearing familiar voices, Baldy's was one of them, saying in hushed whispers—

"That's him there, the bareheaded one."

"By ——," said some one, "I wouldn't have known him. He's about done for, my guess."

Eadie grinned without opening his eyes. He wanted to call to them, but somehow could not make the effort. A long time later he looked up suddenly. The place seemed changed, there were not so many stretchers there, and he had the sensation of having been asleep. Over him leaned a man. It was Short Mack, his child's blue eyes full of tears.

"You big bum!" said Short, "I thought you'd croaked."

"Fat chance," answered Eadie. "I'm going to spend the winter in bed. Think of me when you're sleeping in the mud with your feet in water up to the knees."

"Lookit now," said Short, "you'll be back to us by the time we go out to rest camp. You ain't got much of a wound after all. You're looking better already. The first time I came down here with Baldy and Ham we thought you were dead."

"What's on your mind?" demanded Eadie, for the other seemed to be at a loss for further words. Short blew his nose and blinked his blue eyes.

"Them glasses," he said. "Don't you think you better leave 'em with me?"

Eadie laughed and made his wound hurt.

"I meant to give 'em to you anyway," he said, "but I forgot."

He lifted the strap from his neck and handed the glasses to Short. "You see where that leather is torn?" he asked. "When you get home you can tell your mother a bayonet did it. It was an American bayonet, but you needn't say that."

"I'll look after 'em," said Short. "I'll keep 'em in the fourgon an' you'll have 'em when we see you again."

"Bring out your wounded!" An ambulance rumbled in the road and the orderly thus announced its presence.

"So long, Short," said Eadie.

"S'long, see you in rest billets."

They took up the sergeant's stretcher then and, carrying him down the slope, shoved him into the ambulance. Three more were loaded in, the back curtain was fastened down, and the ambulance took up its journey. The ambulance was cold. There was a blanket over Eadie, but none under him, and in the dressing of his wound his clothing had been considerably disarranged, so that the biting wind that came in through the burlap of the stretcher found his skin immediately.

The blanket, posssessed of that deviltry that inanimate objects often have, began to slide off. In trying to replace it the sergeant discovered that his feet and legs were like those of another man. He could see them, but he could not move them. They had plenty of sensation, however, which was that of intense, even Arctic cold.

There was never a sound from the other men in the ambulance, never a word, nor a groan. Eadie could hear the muffled voices of the orderly and driver on the front seat, and the blast of a whistle from time to time, but that was all. He must have slept or fainted, for of a sudden the back curtain was raised, and the stretcher jerked out.

The gray sky that Eadie remembered was replaced by one of blue, with airplanes humming in it. He had a brief vision of a tent that seemed to be white, and then he was laid on the ground. Feet splashed by, and legs, but the bodies Eadie could not see without raising his head, an effort that had already become burdensome. Some one arranged his blanket, some one read his tag, and then a man appeared in a sheepskin coat.

"Want a little shot of dope?" asked the man.

"I'd prefer a little cognac," answered the sergeant. "I'm a bit chilled."

"Can't give it to you," said Sheepskin Coat. "Belly wounds can't drink."

"Ow!" cried Eadie, "you needn't pinch my leg! That leg's got plenty of feeling in it, don't worry."

"Good," said the other. "Here, now, jump with this sergeant. In with him! Put him in that ambulance right there!"

Eadie wanted to get away from it all, to get somewhere where he could go to sleep and be sure to wake up alive, a place where he could close his eyes and sleep around the clock without having some one tugging at his heels with a curt request to snap out of it and go along with Lieutenant Whosis to find the infantry. He wanted distance between him and the German army. He wanted no more people coming for him with

a bayonet, nor did he ever want to hear a machine-gun again.

The sound of that last shell he could still hear. *Whoooooo!* Then the flame! The thought of it was like a blow. That sheet of fire! When he closed his eyes it was there as clearly as he had seen it on the field. The other men in the ambulance made no sound.

It was dark. There was no rattling of hooks, no rumbling of wheels, no creaking of the ambulance body. Eadie, instantly awake, realized that the ambulance had stopped, but where? Had it been abandoned?

The passengers were silent. Eadie pounded on the little door beside his head. No action. Again he pounded. There was muttering outside and the door was jerked open. Darkness of late twilight, streaming rain, and the dim figure of a man.

"Lookout!" choked Eadie. The other man leaped aside.

"Is that blood?" gasped the other man after a while. "——!"

"It tastes like it," said Eadie, wiping his mouth on his sleeve. "Why the delay?"

"They're shellin' the road up ahead," said the other man. "If they keep it up very long we'll turn an' go 'round by the other road." He shut the door.

Shelling the road. Nightfall and still in range! Where had he been at dawn? On the lines by his machine-gun? They had wanted to send him out then for gas. Wasn't it lucky he had waited! Now he was going out with a real wound. Somewhere near by a man was getting in his winter's coal. *Blong!* A shovelful would land in the chute and go rattling down. *Blong!* Another one. It wasn't coal, it was shells landing. Eadie was glad the curtain was down in back so that he could not see the flash of them. If he ever saw a shell explode again the shock would kill him.

There was a light in the ambulance now, a lone bulb that hung from the ceiling. A second look around showed the sergeant that his journey was over. He was not in the ambulance, but in a room, or a barrack, or a shed. Anyway, something with a roof on it. The electric light swam in a kind of haze, and showed how dark the place was.

On his right hand was a silent, blanket-clad form, and on his left another. Raising his head, he could see a row of stretchers disappearing in the darkness. There was a ringing in his ears now and he could not hear very well, but he was certain that the men on the stretchers made no movement, nor uttered any word. They might be dead. Probably many of them were.

"Yuh want these?"

A man stood by Eadie, holding in his hand a little white bag and in the other Eadie's whistle and collar ornaments.

"Sure," said Eadie, "save 'em. I'll need 'em some day."

"What else yuh got?"

"Razor and stuff in that musette. Dump 'em all in; musette and all."

"Right. Can yuh raise up a little bit? I'll button that shirt in back for yuh if yuh do."

The sergeant raised himself on his elbows. He was astounded to see that he was undressed and that a pajama shirt had been put on him, backside front for ease in donning and removing. The man, an orderly, deftly buttoned it in back and Eadie lay down again. Two blankets they put over him and left him. The blankets scratched, but they were warm and Eadie felt more comfortable than he had for a long time. He slept and only awakened once, when the nurse in blue, evidently a fresh young thing, pinched his leg and awakened him. He requested her profanely to leave his leg alone.

DAYLIGHT. An orderly, smoking a cigaret, was sweeping the floor and picking up blankets and folding them. Another nurse appeared, an elderly one, rubbing her hands with the cold.

"Good morning," she said to the orderly. "My, it's cold. How's business? My, my, I'll bet it's going to be a hard winter." She took a thermometer from her pocket and shook down the mercury. "Well, here's the first one," she remarked, sitting down beside Eadie's stretcher.

She gave him the thermometer and began to take his pulse. He noticed, turning his head, that all his neighbors of the night before were gone. There were not more than three or four stretchers in the entire room.

"How do you feel, son?" asked the nurse.

She was kindly-faced and gray-haired and her hand, for all it was cold as ice, felt very nice on the sergeant's wrist. She removed the thermometer and glanced at it.

"I feel fine," said Eadie. "When do they whittle on me?"

"Pretty quick," smiled the nurse.

"I wouldn't like to be forgotten," said Eadie, grinning. "I've been here since yesterday."

"I know it's hard to wait," said the nurse, "but we're doing the best we can. The doctors work two and three days without sleep and I know a lot of nurses that haven't had their clothes off since the drive tarted. You can't imagine the way the wounded pour in here. And it's getting worse every day."

She got stiffly to her feet and went to the next man.

It was not very long after that before the stretcher was lifted again and they bore the sergeant into a black room. This he knew was the X-ray. He smelled ozone and he could hear the machine humming softly. Hands felt his dressings, scissors snipped, more cold hands.

"Foreign body," said a mysterious voice and something about centimeters.

"Ow!" cried Eadie. "Let me know the next time you want to ram anything into me!"

"Steady, now," said the voice, "it won't hurt you if you don't tense your muscles that way."

"What's in there?" a ked the sergeant.

"A little bit of shrapnel. You can hardly see it."

"I saw the hole it went in," remarked Eadie, "that's enough for me."

Once more Eadie felt the stretcher seized, a door banged, and he was in a sudden glare of light. White walls, a host of people in white clothing, and a cold table on which he was laid. The sergeant's heart beat very fast for a little while, for this was the cutting room. A man with spectacles looked at Eadie with great interest.

"I think you're a goldbrick," said the man with spectacles suddenly, "you don't look as if you were wounded the slightest bit."

"I am, though," grinned Eadie.

"So it appears," muttered the doctor, reading Eadie's card. "Jump over to Major Bevan and ask him if he won't come here a minute."

An orderly left the table side while the doctor put his cold rubber-gloved hands on Eadie's stomach.

"How long since you were wounded?"

"Yesterday, some time. In the morning. It's on the card," replied Eadie.

"That's the time you were treated that's marked on the card. You might have been wounded last week. Well, it's long enough, anyway."

The doctor wrinkled his brows and whistled softly. Another man, white aproned and rubber-gloved, appeared.

"You want me?" he asked the other doctor.

"Yes, major. Here's a belly wound and from the X-ray I'd say he's got multiple perforations unless he's got a gut full of sawdust. It's twenty-four hours since he was wounded."

"Well, I've already made up my mind, but I thought I'd like to hear your thought on it, too. What would you do?"

"Send him to the morgue and then start on the next one."

"What are you going to do?" asked the other.

"Go ahead with that ether," said the first doctor gruffly. "Stick around, major, and learn a little something about surgery."

"Slow at first on that ether stuff," said Eadie. "I won't fight it if you go a little easy on it."

"Trust me," said the man at the head of the table. "Now. Take a whiff of it. How's that?"

"By —— it smells good!" replied Eadie.

It did, too. The first breath of it brought him a pleasant sensation of sleepiness and the second he drew in deeply as a man might a breeze from the ocean.

"Getting sleepy, Eadie?" asked the man at the ether, having read the patient's name on the card.

"Yup. Don't start to whittle before I get t'sleep, though!"

"No, we won't. You're going fine, Eadie. Let's hear you count."

There was a roaring in Eadie's ears now, a rushing of many waters. Count? Let them count themselves. A hand seized his arm. Eadie struggled up out of the waves of sleep as a man returns to the surface after a dive.

"Don't cut yet!" he cried, "I'm not asleep!"

The roaring in his ears swelled louder.

TO BE CONTINUED

THE WATCH-PATH SNAKE

by *Helen von Kolnitz Hyer*

MOKEY lamps of a roadside
store;
Noisy darkies welcoming
Adam, freed and home once more,
Stamping his joy in a "Pidgun Wing"—

Giant Adam, feather-brained;
Bane of the local "judge" whose hate,
Framed in judicial terms, had chained
To mend the roads of his native State—

"De Lawd, 'ee t'ought 'ee'd make a man.
(Dese bones gwine rise again.)
Make um out ob dirt an' a little bit ob san'.
(Dese bones gwine rise again.)
I know it, know it,
Yaas, Lawd, I know it, know it,
But as I know it, know it,
Dese bones gwine rise again."

Discord stabs like a dagger prick:
"Adam, folks am a-watchin' you,
Judge Ben Tyson's scairt half-sick
Wonderin' what yuh're goin' to do."

Booming tones make the four walls shake:
"Adam, listen, yuh no 'count buck,
Maus' Ben am jus' like a watch-path snake—
Cross 'ee path an' yuh'll lose yo' luck.

"'Ee stung yuh once an' yuh're feelin' sore—
Breaking rocks on de gang's no jokes—
But look fur trouble an' yuh'll fin' it shore,
Maus' Ben don' act like mos' white folks.

"Enty-yuh free? Den leab um 'lone.
'Ee stan' so mean ef 'ee shirt fly loose
Yuh'd see de yallow een 'ee marrow bone,
An' 'ee skin squinch up like a naked goose."

Adam paused in his boisterous play.
"Ah hears yuh, Preacher, yuh talks fust rate,
Ah shore got to walk on de big highway
While Maus' Ben Tyson's majustrate.

"Dat court time Ah bin full ob gin
Or I nebber wudduh swore Ah'd knife de
sneak
Fur jailin' me"—with a sudden grin—
"Kin yuh marry me tuh Eva come Sunday
week?"

Troubles tossed to the wind like smoke,
Adam spun joyous, care-free, strong;
Nimble feet beat a rhythmic stroke;
Rumbling chorus swelled his song.

" 'Ee t'ought 'ee'd make uh woman, too.
(Dese bones gwine rise again.)
(Didn't know ezactly what to do.
Dese bones gwine rise again—)"

Adam's baritone, honey clear,
Newly freed of the chain-gang moan,
Rang down the silent road to where
The craven Tyson drove alone.

"De Lawd took a rib f'um Adam's side.
(Dese bones gwine rise again.)
An' made Mis' Eve to be his bride.
(Dese bones gwine rise again—)"

* * * * * * *

Furtive fear draws eyes to slits;
Lashed horse jerks in startled flight—
Dusky shape from the store side flits:
"Boss, kin yuh gib me a lift tonight?"

* * * * * * *

"Jus' to Maus' Ben Tyson's place—"
(Eva lived on the Tyson row.)
Moonlit gleams on Adam's face
Blur swift red from a snake-whip blow.

Adam, seared with blinding pain,
Shook clenched fists and wildly cursed—
Tyson struck and struck again—
"Lay for me but I'll get you first!"

"Enty Ah say 'ee watch-path snake?"
Bent old preacher knelt beside
Groaning Adam— Past daybreak
Tyson shivered, evil-eyed.

* * * * * * *

Adam, doctored, grinned once more,
Held his peace, and soon his song
Nightly floated from the door
Of Eva's cabin, sweet and strong.

"Put 'em een uh gyarden fresh an' fair.
(Dese bones gwine rise again.)
Tol' 'em dey could eat ebery t'ing been dere.
(Dese bones gwine rise again—)"

Night by night the darky's song
Gripped the white man—bitter sweet
Words to one who plotted wrong:
"*But ob dis fruit yuh mus' not eat*—"

* * * * * * *

Moonlight arrows, piercing leaves,
Reap night's harvest eerily,
Pile the path with shadow sheaves.
Adam's song rolls cheerily:

"*Serpent sneak f'um behin' de stump.*
(*Dese bones gwine rise again*—)"
A tremor ran through a scrub oak clump—
Adam swung to a new refrain:

"Adam, Adam, where art thou?
(Dese bones gwine rise again.)
Yaas, Maus' Lawd, I'se comin' now.
Dese bones gwine rise again—)"

* * * * * * *

Woods so still that the acorns fall
Crisp on the ground like frozen flakes—
"*Ping!*"—And a stiffening form a-sprawl.
Such is the way of watch-path snakes.

* * * * * * *

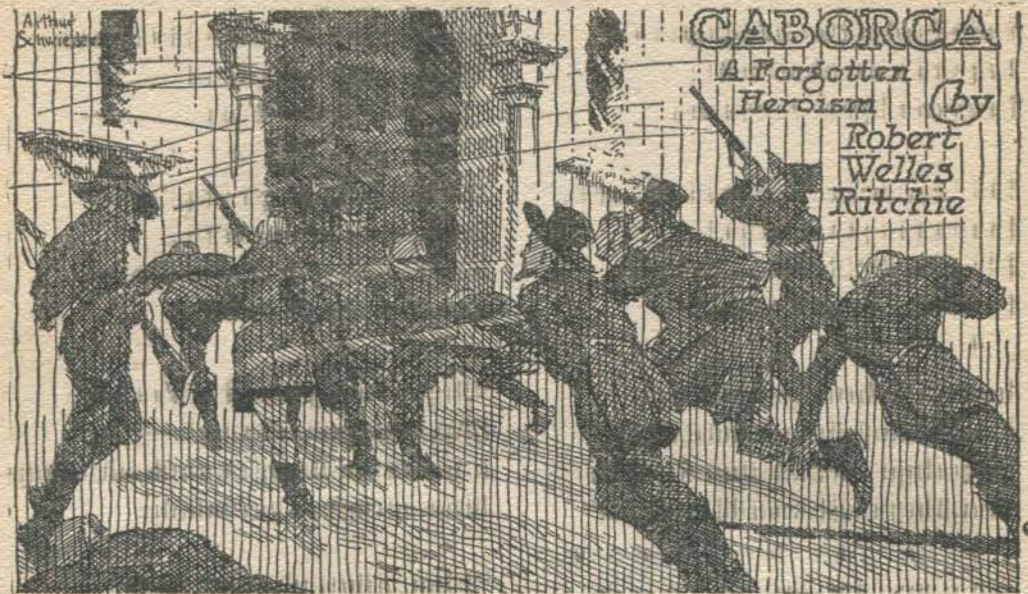
But the voice so stilled will not be still.
Tyson, crouched by the wood-path's rim,
Feels its words with a rising chill—
Knows that his God is calling him.

* * * * * * *

"*Adam, Adam, where art thou?*"
(The searching cry sounds sharp and thin.)
"*Yaas, Maus' Lawd, I'se comin' now.*"
(How can he hide his red-stained sin?)

* * * * * * *

"*God sent his angel Gabriel*—"
The watch-path snake in shuddering pain
Plumbed the depths of his lonely hell—
"*Dese bones gwine rise again!*"



Author of "Snapshotting War," "That Little Guy of Peter-Paul," etc.

NOT many years ago the writer, piloted by a desert-wise old-timer of Yuma County, Arizona, made an excursion south and east of Yuma across the Line into the Desert of Altar, in Sonora. Our motive power was what my friend and guide called a "desert duck"—all machinery and no meat. A stripped "Lizzie," in other words, which skimmed over the sand on partially deflated tires like a water spider on a trout pool. And with water-holes a matter of ninety miles apart, it was essential that that desert duck should not develop charley-horse.

We came, finally, to a mangy little town, Caborca, standing in an oasis of the desert a hundred miles from nowhere—as bleak and sun-scorched a community as could be found from Barrow to Panama. There in a dusty plaza reared the façade and bulbous belfry of a cathedral quite out of proportion to the town's slipshod appearance of life in death. The plaster covering the 'dobe bricks of the cathedral's front was all bullet-chipped and scarred, especially about the two narrow slits of windows on either side of a central door and the vents in the belfry.

Not an unusual circumstance in Mexico, where every two-by-four revolution centers about a fight in a citadel-church. But when I was told American bullets made those scars—!

Just that and no more! It was a legend of Caborca that gringoes had shot up the cathedral; but when or why—*quien sabe?* Not even the priest in charge could say more than that many years ago some wild Americans had attacked the town and there had been a big fight. Not another clue to some high adventure of the dead past whose lasting souvenir was this freckled façade of a cathedral in the heart of the Desert of Altar.

Once back across the Line, I set to burrowing back, like any historically minded Monsieur Lecoq, on the blind trail of those "wild Americans" who had left their mark on Caborca's cathedral. First the University library at Tucson, later the California State Library at Sacramento, the private collection of early Californiana belonging to a gentleman in San Francisco and—crowning achievement—an interview with a very aged lady whose memory ran back to the riotous days of the golden 'Fifties.

So from this scrap and that; from this reference to State papers in Buchanan's administration and that appendix to forgotten memoirs, I have pieced together a mosaic of romance. With a little retouching of the high lights dimmed by the years which have obscured it, I give you the story of Crabb, last of the California filibusters; how with less than a hundred men he tried to conquer the Mexican State of Sonora.

THE Californian city of Stockton, feeder for the Southern Mines in the 'Fifties, was in the heyday of a great boom when Henry A. Crabb came to nail his sign, "Attorney at Law"; over his tent there in the sprawling camp by the San Joaquin sloughs. This Crabb was a Tennesseean, typical of his clan. Very tall and gaunt, raw-boned as to features, with lank black hair which came down over the rolled collar of his bell-bottomed coat and black eyes given to flame with every passing mood. He was an orator after the real Southern school, a politician born to the craft. His was a fiery temper, a touchy sensitiveness in the fine points of honor and a mental tone wholly impractical. California of the 'Fifties was crowded with Southerners of exactly like mold.

Henry Crabb threw himself into politics immediately after settling in Stockton and was elected to the State Assembly on a pro-slavery Whig ticket in 1851. Thence he stepped into the Senate for the term '53-'54. A natural propensity for political intrigue advanced him in the councils of the powerful group of pro-slavery Southerners who were then fighting for domination of the State both at Sacramento and at Washington. But when he stood as a candidate for the United States Senate on the Know-Nothing platform in 1855 he was defeated; largely because he was charged with being the author of a plan for cutting off Southern California into a separate slave State.

The embittered Stockton politician, believing his public career ended, then turned to another dream of empire—one which was to lead him against the 'dobe wall of a dingy little cathedral, nearly a thousand miles away, in the heart of a desert.

When his feet were on the first rungs of the political ladder Crabb had met a ravishingly beautiful girl of one of the old Spanish-Californian families in San Francisco, Señorita Filomena Anza, herself a descendant of that valiant Juan Bautista de Anza who cut out the first overland trail from Mexico to California. He married Señorita Anza.

The main branch of the Anza family—uncles and cousins of the new Mrs. Crabb—were folk of great wealth and power down in the State of Sonora; one of the two or three leading clans of that State, indeed, who had disputed ascendency in government by a series of intrigues and petty revolutions since first Mexico threw off the yoke of Spain. The whole State was in a phase of boiling anarchy, with the peons paying the price for aristocrats' ambitions.

A French filibuster, Gaston de Raousset Bourbon, had been the first adventurer to attempt to turn this condition of affairs to his advantage. Sailing from San Francisco in 1851 with two hundred and fifty men, he'd come within an ace of winning the whole state before he was killed. Again in 1854 the redoubtable William Walker had his chance at Sonora and lost by a small margin.

Who shall say that when Henry Crabb sailed from San Francisco to Guaymas, Sonora, ostensibly bound on a complimentary visit to his wife's relatives there, he did not feel the mantle of his fellow Tennesseean, Walker, hover tantalizingly about his shoulders?

Now, nobody knows just what interviews over the wine, Henry Crabb had with the grandees of Sonora, friends of the great Anzas; how by his suave Southern manner he made himself *muy simpatico* with the plotters and the palace seneschals. On the surface of affairs this delightful *Americano* appeared to be interested only in a colonizing plan, whereby fellow Americans from California were to be moved down to mineral and agricultural lands of northern Sonora—the Sonoranians were mighty eager to lay a defense of real fighters across the trail of the dreaded Apache down from Tucson.

But for once Henry Crabb's native talent for intrigue played him false. He failed to take the measure of one General Pesquiera.

This soldier-politician, a friend of the Anza family, represented at the time of Henry Crabb's visit the most dangerous rival of Governor Gandara. He was, temporarily, the "out" in Sonora politics and was willing to wade through —— and high water to become the "in."

I show you these twain sitting in some secluded orangery of an Hermosillo garden, a flagon of rare Canary between them to oil their conspiracies: the Tennesseean Crabb, hawk-faced over his stiff white stock, imposing beaver tilted back from his forehead, delicate fingers playing with a twisted *cigarillo;* Pesquiera the swarthy, ferret-eyed grandee of old Sonora in his epaulets and pot-hat, eloquent hands moving persuasively.

Both dreaming of empire; but—alas for Henry Crabb!—hardly the same dreams.

Crabb went back to San Francisco believing that General Pesquiera was his ally in a bold stroke which should bring about the independence of Sonora—and the Tennessee politician had his own ideas as to just what that independence would lead to. Let Crabb but return to Sonora at the head of a small army of "colonists" and the minute he was across the Border, Pesquiera would head a rising which would secure the triumph of American arms. After that—well, a new, and slave, State would be added to the Union.

ON JANUARY 21, 1857, the sidewheeler *Sea Bird* waddled through the Golden Gate, Los Angeles bound, with Crabb and eighty-eight expeditionaries aboard—not as large a number as the leader had expected to recruit—but he was confident his ranks would be swelled along the Border. Arriving at San Pedro three days later, the enthusiasts moved upon El Ciudad de Neustra Sonora de los Angeles (today it is "Los" in Americanese), then a sleepy pueblo of some three thousand.

There Don Abel Stearns, the shrewd Yankee, outfitted the expedition. John Goller, famous over all the Southwest for his wagons, provided the great freighters—sixteen mules to a wagon—which were to carry ammunition and supplies over five hundred miles of desert sand. Flea-bitten mounts were purchased from the Mexican horse wranglers on the plains of Los Cerritos. At the end of a week Crabb gave the word for the start inland to where the parched terrors of the Colorado Desert lay waiting.

And he had no more recruits. Just eighty-eight men advancing over a single track through the wilderness to conquer a territory greater than the area of New England!

Look for a minute at these fellows in their new suits of buckskin and with the conchas of vanity jingling from their bridles. Men from the Southern Mines of California for the most part; the adventurous, the busted, the rake-hells from fandago and gambling palaces of Sonora and Jimtown. Then there were former associates of Crabb in the Legislature, Southerners all: Long Bill McCoun from Contra Costa, Major Charley Tozer of Yreka, Cosby from Siskiyou, young Captain Grant Orrey.

These fellows went singing over the Pass of San Gorgonio and down into the bleached white wastes of the Coachella Valley and the Sink beyond, where the old trail the Spaniard Anza cut through at pain of torture and death still stretched a single filament through a land of silence.

Third night in the desert when the expedition made camp at Seven Palms they found this notice nailed to a board on the trunk of one of the sentinel trees:

> Runaway: Oldish squaw about 30; blind in one eye—left one—slight halt in one leg but a thoroughbred, has quit my bed and board. Any one returning same will get reward—two bags of mesquite beans. FIG-TREE JOHN HAZLIT.

Tender tribute to the domestic instincts of pioneer Californians!

The wearying journey through the Colorado Desert was made without incident, and finally the expedition came to the red waters of the Colorado, where Fort Yuma, on the California side, housed two lonely companies of dragoons. Wagons, animals and men made the crossing on the private ferry, and a week was taken on the mesa beyond the river for resting the mules and horses.

Here Crabb made another blunder. Realizing his lack of strength for the undertaking which lay beyond the tawny southern horizon, he detached Captain Grant Orrey and twenty men with pack mules to follow the old Cook's Wagon Road on east through the Pima villages and the Apache country to Tucson in the hope that he could recruit some of the American mining contingent centering about the old walled pueblo. Orrey was to rejoin his commander at Caborca, in Sonora.

That done, Crabb and his diminished cavalcade set out on the old Sonora-California trail running south and east between ranges of sheet-iron mountains across the Line. El Camino del Diablo is the name the Mexicans gave this perilous way through the desert lands; and a veritable devil's highway it was, what with tricky water-holes and, in nine months out of twelve, incredible heat. But the expedition made it without mishap, arriving March 25 at the oasis hamlet of Sonoita just across the Line. There a shock was in store for Henry Crabb.

Nailed on the front of the single Mexican store under a giant mesquite tree was this proclamation, in Spanish:

FREE SONORANIANS—TO ARMS, ALL OF YOU!

A Yankee invader comes into our free state with an army at his back! What treatment does he merit?

That we march to meet him!

Let us fly, then, to chastise with all the fury that can scarcely be restrained in hearts full of hatred for oppression, the savage filibuster who has dared in an evil hour to tread on the national territory, and to provoke—madman!—our anger.

IGNACIO PESQUIERA,
Substitute Governor and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces on the Frontier.

There you have it—what in this present day we term the "double-cross." A perfect example.

Note, if you will, the title, "Substitute Governor." That could mean but one thing: that between the time Crabb and Pesquiera came to their tidy agreement in a garden of Hermosillo, and this fatal day when the meager expedition came to Sonoita, the worthy Pesquiera had succeeded in turning out Governor Gandara unaided. That done, he wished to clear his skirts of any implication of complicity with the gringoes, and so this righteous call to arms to resist an invader.

You may count Henry Crabb nothing less than mad for pushing on into Pesquiera's territory; his men all lunatics. But push on they did. I can hear them saying:

"What th' ——'s the difference! Sixty-eight white men kin lick a whole State full of Greasers."

ON AND on across the bleak Desert of Altar with no hint of opposition. Then on the morning of April first the town of Caborca lay in a green oasis before them.

The expeditionaries rode carelessly toward the town, with no scouts in advance, no guards about the wagons. Suddenly a cornfield by the side of the road jetted flame. Ambush!

After the first shock of surprize the Americanos spurred their mounts into the cornfield where one hundred and fifty rag-tag Mexican soldiers were hidden. It was a pretty fight: The mounted Californians shooting down with derringers and carbines at every fleeing figure; knife work on the hocks of the horses; hand-to-hand grips amid the green-dyed blades of corn.

Crabb, rallying the wagons, led them on into town while his men covered with a running fight behind. Coming to the deserted plaza—mere citizens had all scurried to their barricaded homes—the Tennesseean added one more to his incredible list of blunders. Instead of seizing the cathedral, which with its thick walls and tiled roof offered a perfect fortress, he chose to make his stand in a row of 'dobe stores and warehouses across the plaza from the church front. The wagons were parked in a corral behind, and plates of sheet-iron from one of the warehouses were ranged between the wheels to make a continuous breastwork.

Here came the fighting rear-guard, and here on this fatal April Fool's Day commenced one of the most spectacular passages at arms in forgotten footnotes of the West's annals.

Already five of Crabb's men were killed and three more mortally wounded by the fight in the cornfield.

Crabb's first care after perfecting the wagon defense was to have his men cut through from wall to wall of the four buildings seized so that a continuous passage offered. Then along the whole plaza frontage loopholes were cut for rifle fire. Powder kegs from the wagons were made secure against fire under salt bags in a store-room.

A secure enough defense except against cannon fire; and Colonel Hilario Gabilondo in command of the two hundred Mexicans had no cannon. But what chance of relief? Two hundred desert miles between Caborca and the nearest post of soldiery in the United States, and with no excuse for their moving even if their commander did hear of Crabb's plight. To cut a way back to the Border—impossible! Captain Orrey, then. Just a chance that Orrey would come down from Tucson, a hundred and fifty miles away, with a reinforced column.

A scant sixty men besieged by two hundred.

Now the Sonoranian colonel was quick to seize the advantage Crabb had missed. He put his sharpshooters in the belfry and behind the windows of the cathedral across the plaza, while others he sent to both ends of the street whose central stores Crabb had seized, to begin the business of digging through 'dobe walls toward the gringoes, as a hunter might dig out a badger. With all his superior force, Colonel Gabilondo did not risk a mass attack.

The fire from the cathedral was galling enough to prompt Crabb to attempt a foolish piece of grand stand play. (Truly the

man was crazy, you'll say.) At two o'clock on the afternoon of April first, with fifteen volunteers to go with him, Crabb made a run across the open plaza, carrying a barrel of powder with which to blow up the cathedral door and so get at the riflemen within. Covered though they were by a heavy fire from their own companions back in the stores, bullets rained down on the sixteen valiants.

They placed the powder keg and lighted the fuse, then retreated, carrying some of their dead and wounded. The fuse failed to set off the powder, and a mocking laugh from the Mexicans was the only explosion.

The bitter defense of the Alamo has all the advertisement, but I submit that no more shining heroism was shown in the San Antonio church in 1836 than could be matched by these Americans in their row of 'dobe stores twenty-one years later.

THE burrowing Mexicans working in on the Crabb men were met with dirk and clubbed muskets at the mouths of their warrens and beaten back. Sallies in the dark on the wagon line were driven off. Picked marksmen at the loopholes looked for the white of an eye, the vizor of a soldier's cap, in the embrasures of the cathedral, and drew unerring beads on such tiny marks.

Six days of it—six grueling eons of sunshine and dark. Then a Papago Indian in the belfry shot a flaming arrow which found lodgment in the thatch of one of the stores housing the Americans. An attempt was made to blow out the fire by exploding a barrel of gunpowder under it. The attempt failed. The fire spread.

Finally Crabb sent Hines and Cortelyou, trusted lieutenants, to wave a white tablecloth from one of the doors. Firing ceased. In the following parley Colonel Gabilondo promised a fair trial by civil court for all who surrendered. After talking it over with his men, Crabb agreed to the terms of surrender.

That was at 11 P.M. The surviving Americans were marched to the town's *cuartel* under guard. At 1 o'clock of the morning an officer came in and read the sentence of death before them all. Death for all but Charles Edward Evans, a sixteen-year-old boy whose life was spared by the merciful Gabilondo and whose deposition, incidentally, afterward filed in the documents of the Department of State in Washington, gives all the details we have of the siege in Caborca's plaza.

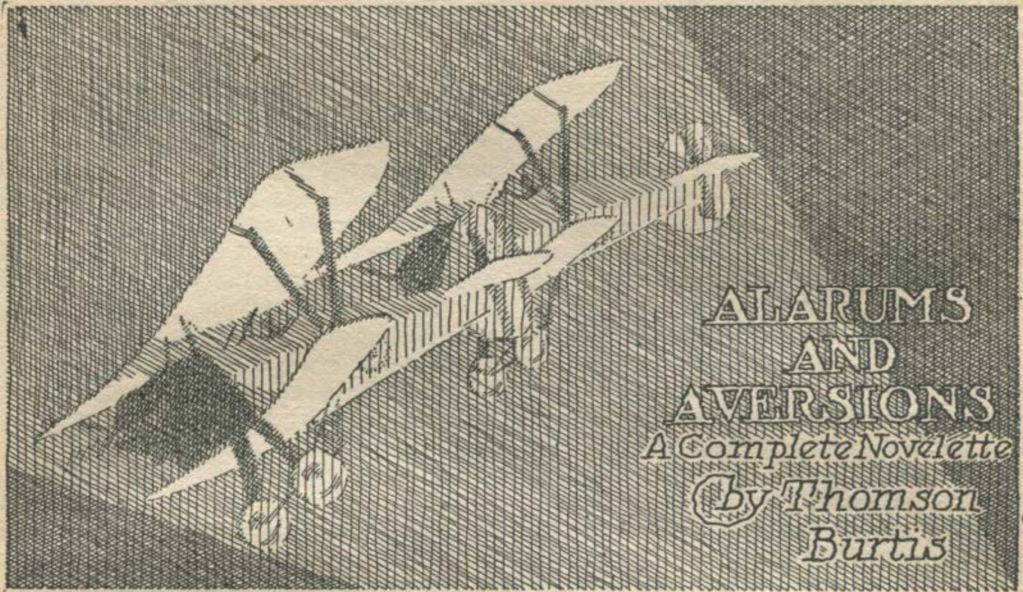
At dawn they began to shoot the Americans, including the wounded who had to be tied to posts because they could not stand. They were shot in batches of ten. From Mexican sources we learn that the first two batches, facing the firing squad, so disconcerted their executioners "by their jokes and terrible blasphemies" that the remainder were shot with their backs to the guns.

Henry Crabb, dreamer of empires, was reserved to the last. His hands were tied to a post over his head and his body was riddled with bullets. The humane Colonel Gabilondo, perhaps believing he would please his superior, "Substitute Governor" Pesquiera, had Crabb's head cut off and sent to Mexico City in a barrel of mescal.

And what of Captain Orrey and the Tucson relief column?

Theirs was an agony only a little less poignant than the portion of the Crabb expeditionaries. Hearing rumors of his superior's plight, Orrey and his original twenty men had set off from Tucson for Caborca. They were attacked by overwhelming numbers fifteen miles from the town just the day Crabb surrendered.

Their retreat through the desert and back to Tucson was a nightmare of poisoned water-holes and constant harassment. Four of them never arrived.



Author of "A Bit of 'Chuting," "The Oily Bird," etc.

HOW the —— he ever happened to be ordered to the Border I don't know. The Border patrol which the Air Service runs from the Gulf of Mexico to the Gulf of California was supposed to be the last stop of the hardest-boiled veterans still on earth. But he was; this particular day was the date upon which he was scheduled to arrive, and so I figured the De Haviland coming in from the northwest must carry none other than "Froggy" Pond. Naturally he wouldn't be coming in on the course from Donovan Field to McMullen. He always got lost on cross-country.

I was flying in myself, and it was just about dark. Likewise, I was less than one jump ahead of a fit, and my esteemed associate, Signor "Sleepy" Spears, was gulping convulsively in the back seat. It was the second day after St. Patrick's Day, and we'd been helping George Groody celebrate the holiday in his annual manner in Nueva Laredo. His method of starting the day is to depart with his friends for Mexico before breakfast, order three gin fizzes apiece and all at one fell swoop. Each man having consumed his three, the day starts. We awakened in an alley the morning after, didn't get started back for McMullen until late, and then ran into some clumsy alien smuggling around Carana. By the time we'd held the fort with our machine-guns until help arrived, the Liberty was on the fritz; we'd come down fifteen miles from nowhere on the trip back, spent the night in the woods and the next day fixing the ship—and were all in.

I mention these items in an endeavor to excuse myself for what happened five minutes after I spotted Froggy tin-canning in from the north. I lay no more claims to being a hero than I do to being a romantic type of beauty, and my manners, in general, are those generated by being a cowhand in Utah and Wyoming and a by-private in the Mexican trouble during my sappy and formative years. Nevertheless, I would not, ordinarily, have made such a complete ass of myself as I did.

I circled around north of the tiny sandy airdrome, flanked by its big black hangars and frame administration buildings, and started the ship on its dive down over the fence on the northern edge. The other D. H. was a few hundred yards back of me, about a thousand feet high. The McMullen airdrome is about as big, in relation to ordinary fields, as a pocket handkerchief is compared to a sheet, and it takes tight flying to get into it.

Being experienced, I dropped the ship to the ground within twenty-five feet of the fence, stopped rolling at a safe distance from

the headquarters building, and promptly taxied to the line to get out of the way of Lieutenant Froggy Pond. He'd have a tough job making the field at all, if he was the kind of flyer I'd known three years before.

I hadn't put the bunch wise to him at all, because I liked the little cuss and didn't want him to start his tour under a cloud. But he was, without exaggeration, the most butter-fingered, inefficient, unlucky and awkward flyer who ever thanked God when he made a safe landing. He was always trying, never licked, unconquerable—but he flew like I dance. He'd got to be a flyer by a series of the luckiest breaks I'd ever seen, mostly because everybody liked him and was sorry for him, and now the poor infant was injected into the Border patrol, where fifty yards is a long stretch to land in and the chapparal reaches hungrily for each D. H. that passes.

He was circling the field as I drew up to the line, and I sat in my ship and watched him. Perhaps, I figured, his three years in the Philippines had made him able to get his ship on the ground once in a while without a riot taking place.

He went way north, and nosed down in a gradual dive, jazzing his motor constantly. A hundred yards back I knew he was going too fast. He skimmed the fence at about ninety instead of practically stalling in at seventy-five, hit the ground and bounced —and then didn't give her the gun and go round again, but brought her down the second time.

It was Froggy all right, his head barely sticking up above the cockpit. He looked like a flea on a Ferris wheel.

He was more than half way across the airdrome, and the boys on the porch were on their feet. He was going like a scared bullet. He saw that he was bound to overrun, and threw his ship around in a ground loop. The inside wing was dragging the ground, but for some unknown reason—Pond luck—the D. H. didn't turn turtle.

He was around, practically, the ship facing back toward my grand-stand seat on the line and about twenty yards from me. He was safe—

Suddenly a roar split the quiet ozone, and the D. H. sort of leaped ahead—and that flailing prop was pointed right for me.

I hauled wildly at my belt clasp, and the —— thing stuck. My dazed and disorganized mind took in the fact that the other motor had been cut now, but the D. H. was rolling swiftly across the hard-packed sand. Sleepy was already out, but by the time I was scrambling over the side that prop, which can cut a man in two like a knife does a piece of cheese, was so close I could feel its breath. In one wild dive from the cowling I cleared the cockpit and landed on the other side—landed running. I was just able to get out of the way as Froggy's ship crashed into my boat, the propeller chewing it to pieces with apparent enjoyment.

Why had Froggy turned on the motor? Why had he made straight for me instead of turning? Why ask questions of any sort about that bird in the first place?

But in my hysterical, overwrought and frazzled condition of nervous debility I was the sorest flyer who ever got his whiskers shaved by a propeller. Seriously speaking, if that belt buckle had stuck another split-second, or my oversized feet tripped me, I'd have been repulsed from the Pearly Gates in two seconds less than nothing.

The dozen flyers and observers of the flight, who'd been idling around waiting for darkness to fall and the card games to start, reached the scene just as I circled back to the locked planes. I'd been running so fast I couldn't have stopped within a hundred feet if I'd had four-wheel brakes.

Froggy was alighting from his bashed-in cockpit, a twisted smile on his freckled face, and his blue eyes as bright as ever. Froggy was a good name for him. His legs, in army breeches, were thin and slightly bowed below a squat, powerful torso.

"Hello, 'Slim,' " he greeted me. "That was a —— of a landing, wasn't it?"

"I'll say it was!" I rasped. "What did you turn on your motor for, you butter-fingered little—"

"My elbow knocked it on, some way," he told me, his bright little eyes cocked up at me with determined cheerfulness. "I cut it—"

"Knocked it on, eh?" I raved sarcastically. "I see you haven't changed a —— bit! Then why did you make straight for me? Didn't your ship have a rudder, you——?"

"I never noticed there was anything in my way," he admitted, his eyes keeping on mine with an effort. That smile was determined, as though he was playing a part.

"Great God, are you blind as well as so

clumsy you can't walk without tripping over yourself? Do you know that you came close to adding me to the list of two men I know you've killed? You've got about as much business in the Air Service as a deaf mute has in a telegraph office! You couldn't land on the Sahara Desert without running into an oasis!"

I was arising to announce myself, without question. He pulled off his helmet, ran his fingers through his red hair, and that pug-nosed Irish face of his was pale, but still smiling. The others were clustered around now, but he never looked at them. I was too mad to notice the change in his eyes, at the moment.

"You can't fly, you never could fly, and you never will be able to!" I told him nastily, still shaky and as evil-tempered as a wasp whose sleep has been disturbed.

I turned to the others.

"You've just seen an exhibition by the world's greatest misfit!" I told them. "I thought I wouldn't say anything about it before, but you know it now anyway. He got to be a flyer because everybody was sorry for him; he's killed one observer and an innocent bystander already; he can crack up a ship easier than any man alive; and not only is flying with him as safe as shooting at yourself for fun because you're a poor shot, but while he's in the air there isn't a bird that flies or a beast that walks that's safe, and if he's near the ocean the fishing is poor for fifteen miles around! He—"

"Dry up, you big stiff, and give the kid a chance!" were the quiet words that broke into my monologue, and I turned to confront a total stranger in a spotless uniform.

"WHO the —— are you, and who cares what you think or want around here?" I asked him courteously.

"Doesn't make a —— bit of difference," he snapped back at me and his pallid, clean-cut face was the setting for a pair of black eyes that were snapping angrily. Nevertheless, his speech was as quiet and composed as mine was wild and woolly.

"Furthermore, whether it interests you or not," he went on equably, amid total silence, "I think you're about the biggest, crudest, loudest-mouthed bully I ever had the misfortune to—"

My far from lily-like fist caught him directly on the point of the jaw. For some reason Froggy Pond's pale, strained face, with a tragic look in the eyes, sort of leaped out at me from the gang as the stranger hit the ground and "Tex" MacDowell grabbed my arms.

I figured he'd stay down—he wasn't a big man—but he was up like a rubber ball. His thin, well-cut mouth wore a contemptuous sneer, and there was cold murder in his black eyes.

"Let him loose!" he snapped, and then he laughed in my face.

"You're six feet and a half tall, outweigh me forty pounds, and you're —— free with your fists, aren't you?" he spat at me. "Go ahead, sock me again. I can't keep you from it. But if you do, —— you, I'll find a wrench or a baseball bat and I'll beat you into a pulp! And my opinion of you hasn't changed a bit. I think you're a—"

In the deathlike silence he told me what he thought, and it was plenty. And I didn't care. I'd come to myself, somehow —that laugh had been like a stream of cold water flushing out my cotton mouth and my fevered head and the more ornary grottos in my two-for-a-cent brain. Little Pond was standing quietly, his head down and his homely face strained and bitter. The flyers stood back quietly, and never moved. Tex had released me, and I stood there and took the nastiest, most sarcastic, contemptuous flaying I ever stood for.

"Now what the —— do you want to do about it?" inquired the stranger, his eyes boring into mine.

I took a second to collect my thoughts. His face was a handsome mask below hair so black and sleek it looked like an actor's after said ham's daily bath in perfume and pomade. From highly polished boots to serge shirt and gold ornaments he was a picture-book aviator, contrasting greatly with my lanky, greasy, overalled self.

I glanced at Froggy, back to the stranger, and said my piece.

"What I want to do is apologize," I told him. "Everything you said, except certain reflections on my forefathers, goes double. My only excuse is that I'm a rambling wreck who flew off the handle. I'm sorry I hit you, and, by the way, I can't understand why you didn't stay down after a smite like that one, at that. Froggy, forget it. Accidents will happen, and I just lost my head. You're alive, so you're

good, as far as I'm concerned. I had no business jumping on you.

"I shall now bend over, and I will be very thankful if you, Froggy, will take the first kick at me, followed in file by whoever this chap is."

When I'd started the above elegant effort to set things right, this stranger hadn't unbent for a second, and he had a mean eye. Plainly, he was no *hombre* to fool with. Like a lot of those restrained babies, he had so much temper and dynamite stored up under the surface that you could fairly feel it.

By the time I'd finished, though, his body seemed to relax, like a snake uncoiling. Suddenly the ghost of a smile flitted over his face, and his narrow eyes crinkled a bit and seemed brighter. He held out his hand.

"Glad to know you, Evans," he said quietly. "I've heard a lot about you—the whole bunch, in fact. That's the reason I'm here. And I had no business horning in myself, being just a guest."

I shook with him, and he had a grip in his slim fingers that made my finger-nails crack.

"By the way, who in —— are you?" I asked him, and Captain Kennard, our C. O., gave me the information.

"Lieutenant Redding—Reserve Corps," Kennard told me, a grin on his scarred, square face as he looked at me. "Down here for a month's active duty at his own request."

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming here?" demanded Froggy. "I met Redding in San Antonio a few days ago," he explained to the rest of us.

"Wasn't sure it would go through," Redding told him. "You're late in yourself, aren't you?"

Froggy's mouth opened, and he seemed about to speak and then thought better of it. Finally his bright little eyes flitted from face to face with determination, and his mouth quirked in that crooked, indomitable smile.

"I got lost!" he admitted, and seemed to be mentally quailing from a conversational blow.

Nobody said anything, so I put in a soothing:

"It's hard to keep your course over the mesquite. You should have taken the long way, around by the railroad. Meet the bunch. This is Cap Kennard—"

And I introduced him around before I set off hot-foot for my tent to attempt getting into the likeness of a human being again. Sleepy went with me.

"You were sure in a —— of a state," grinned that tranquil gentleman who couldn't be jarred out of his customary peaceful condition by an announcement from headquarters that the end of the world was nigh.

"I'm going to try to get better pronto," I informed him, and did.

I took a drink, shaved, took a drink, bathed, took a drink, dressed, took a drink, horsed our chink into giving us a late dinner, and after absorbing same, was close to normal again. In fact, when Sleepy and I hit the recreation room I felt as though I might live.

"We've been waiting," Tex MacDowell drawled. "We're shy for the poker game, due to social engagements in town. How about it?"

That was a foolish question. I don't get bored with the game, and Sleepy, like Tex himself, would pile all he owned in the middle of the floor any time and high-card you for it. Two bridge games were going, but the poker, due to Jack Beaman being in the hospital and Jimmy Jennings being in town, was short.

"Redding and Pond are going to play," Tex explained. "They know the layout."

The session set forth with six hands, little Pete Miller being the other player. Draw poker, one hand of stud on threes or better, twenty dollar take-out and table stakes, as per usual.

"I didn't know you were a poker player," I remarked to Froggy as Pete Miller shuffled the cards. "Indulge much?"

"Oh, yes, I play a lot," he told me. "Learned it in the Army, though."

I wasn't so keen on having him in that hard-boiled game. If he was even a fair poker player, it was the first activity in the world I'd found he was any good at. Flying wasn't the only thing he couldn't do. He was always steaming in a fog. I'd never been able to discover anything he couldn't mess up. He couldn't fit into any job any more than he did into his clothes. He was willing to take a crack at anything, but always missed. He was a peg for which no hole had ever been found that came anywhere near fitting him. Just a natural born dub, who'd pulled more bones, had more wrecks, and been on the receiving end

of more laughs and bawlings-out than any living human.

But he came up smiling, always—battered physically or spiritually or both, but his face twisted into a determined grin, his red hair in wild disarray and the indomitable light still in his eyes as he tightened his belt and tried harder.

"BY THE way," Redding said quietly as the first hand was dealt, "I only have seventy dollars in cash. If I lose that, shall I drop or will you gentlemen accept a check on a New York bank?"

"O. K. as far as I'm concerned," Tex told him, and we all agreed.

Then Froggy stepped to bat.

"Until my check at the end of the month, I'm worth forty—"

"It's a custom around here to pay up at the end of the month anyway," I informed him.

All flyers are broke three days after payday.

The game went along quietly for an hour, few ripples disturbing its calm surface. Only two players changed their positions to speak of, and they were Redding and Froggy. Redding won steadily, in small amounts, and Froggy lost just as steadily. It was obvious that Redding was an excellent player. He didn't throw his winnings away making fool calls, and he varied his game like a master. I watched him like a hawk, and the more I watched the less I could figure his hand. I saw him open on a pair of jacks, and then draw only one card to them; saw him raise the pot before the draw, draw two cards, and win. That isn't so much, but I saw his hand by accident and he didn't have even a pair. One time I raised before the draw on three aces; he raised again, drew one card—and filled his flush. Ten minutes later, with what later proved to be a queen full pat in his hand on his own deal, he didn't raise when he stayed. Tex MacDowell did, giving him a chance for a re-raise that knocked everybody off because they thought he was bluffing.

I mention these things to show you that at no time whatever, no matter what he'd drawn or how he played, did anybody in the whole soirée have any idea whatever what he had. Add to that plenty of nerve on raising and practically no foolish calls, and you've got a poker player, gentlemen.

He was calm, cold, passionless—and Froggy was just the reverse. He was playing excitedly, an unhealthy glitter in his eyes. It was plain that he wanted desperately to win, and was forcing his cards. He was nervous, overstimulated. And, as usual, he was doing everything wrong. Not only did he show his feelings too plainly, but, as usual, he always did the wrong thing. If he called, his opponent had 'em; if he didn't, said opponent was bluffing. He'd get scared out with threes on one hand, and call desperately on aces the next. And toward the end, when he was two hundred in the box, he was staying on anything.

As for Redding, he was so uncanny in his playing that I started to get a bit suspicious. The best card crooks are the ones who enter a game under conditions and auspices where suspicion seems unthinkable. He was like lightning with the cards, and Froggy, behind him, was passing up cuts frequently. He did it—almost any player would in a game of friends—for two obvious reasons. One was that Redding always did a fast double cut himself after shuffling. Bottom half of the deck to the top, and then cards out of the middle to the top. And, gents and fellow poker friends, if a fast man sets the cards, he's cut off the bottom a bit forward on the remainder of the deck, the ones he cuts out of the middle can easily be the original top cards, ending up right where they started.

The other reason was that when Redding put the cards on the table for a cut he always placed them in front of himself, where Froggy had to reach to get his hands on 'em. And there's a deep psychological convolution there. A man who'll cut if he doesn't have to lean forward will pass it if it's an effort.

Shortly thereafter there came a hand which strengthened my suspicions—of which, I may state, I was ashamed.

It was Redding's deal. I got an open and straight flush. Pete Miller, next to me, opened; everybody stayed; and Redding, last man, raised the opening fifteen by twenty-five. I re-raised fifty, and everybody dropped—except the cool dealer. He re-raised me seventy-five, and I just stayed. I drew one card, and Redding two. I filled my straight, and he checked the bet. I only had thirty dollars left in front of me, which I bet—*and he didn't call!*

When he tossed his cards into the deck for thirty dollars, after all that money, his

opaque eyes met mine and held for a moment. Perhaps he could see in my popping optics the conviction I had that he'd played threes for all they were worth to start, knowing that I had nothing.

And if you don't think there are men around that good, you don't know many gamblers. He'd played his cards too strong, to start, I figured, not to have known pretty nearly what I had. At the end, of course, he might have merely figured my last thirty was too small for a bluff. But as good a player as he, in my opinion, wouldn't have played a small hand that hard in ignorance.

SEVERAL times after that, as I watched him, he sort of smiled at me, and I couldn't catch him. All I had were suspicions, but he was too fast—and not winning so consistently, either.

The game grew fast and furious from then on, and the bridge players gathered to watch as constant chip-buying made the stakes bigger. Froggy was like a trembling ghost at the feast, and turned it into a tense tragedy—a battle, not a game. It was close to midnight, the understood quitting hour, and there was close to fifteen hundred dollars on the table.

At ten minutes before twelve Froggy lost all but a few dollars of what he had in front of him. His homely, freckled face was white and his eyes wild below his faded eyebrows as he leaned forward.

"That's this month's pay," he said, his voice breaking. "All right for me to buy some more chips to get even on, and pay a month later? That's forty days from now."

Dead silence. No one knew what to do. We didn't want him to lose any more—

"I'm not going to beg you," he flared suddenly, and the break in his voice was half a sob.

He slumped back in his chair, for a second, as though utterly beaten. Froggy Pond wasn't a poor loser, or yellow, and that made his utter misery seem worse. I knew that the little fellow just *had* to win. There was more in it than the amount of money itself. A ten spot when you've got to have it means more than a hundred when you don't need it.

For just a second he sat there, and then sort of straightened and threw back his head and squared his small, bulldog jaw.

"Well," he started, when I cut in.

"It's all right with me. Count him out the chips, eh Tex?"

He got three hundred and fifty—his second month's salary, and there started the tensest hand I've ever seen.

We started roodling there—everybody anteing five dollars. It was my deal. Sleepy Spears, on Froggy's right, opened for thirty dollars.

"I'll raise—no, just stay," yelped Froggy, and fumbled thirty dollars' worth of chips out. That was typical of his poker playing.

Redding glanced at him, and then at Tex, second on my left. He just stayed, and so did I on two small pairs. Tex raised forty.

You know how these roodle pots at the shag end of the game are—everybody stays on everything, and shoots high, wide and handsome. Everybody stayed around to Froggy, who was now beside himself. He might just as well have announced that he had a good hand. He re-raised sixty; Redding stayed; and I dropped. Tex stayed, and the others dropped.

Tex took two cards, Froggy stood pat, and so did Redding. Not a word was spoken as Froggy bet a hundred and twenty dollars.

Redding, cool as a cucumber, glanced at him, and somehow that scar seemed to leap into prominence as the corners of his mouth turned down sardonically. He estimated Froggy's heap of chips, which totaled a little over a hundred, and then raised him eighty dollars.

Tex leaned back easily, surveyed his cards with care—and called. I saw his hand—three nines and a pair of threes.

Froggy's red hair, always untidy and sticking up in every direction, got an awful pulling as his nervous fingers tugged at it.

"There's your eighty, and twenty-five more," he said, his voice trembling.

It was all he had.

For a solid minute, to every one's growing amazement, Redding hesitated. It was unbelievable, for twenty-five dollars. Not a single word was spoken, and it seemed that the bridge players who were looking on were holding their breaths.

I was next to Redding, and for just a second his cards, in a close fan, were visible to me as he collapsed them and started tapping the table with them.

"You win," he said easily, and tossed them into the deck.

He'd laid down four aces!

I scarcely realized that in the next second Froggy had showed a queen full, and scooped in the pot. He was laughing, chattering, his face flushed—in as mentally disconnected a condition as any man in the grip of a tremendous reaction is bound to be. He was not only even, he was a couple of hundred dollars ahead. And if Froggy was half cuckoo, I couldn't have told you my right name on a bet. Mixed in with the amazement was several disgusted laughs at myself for what I'd thought of Redding. My mental batting average for that day was less than the size of my waistline, which is next to nothing.

On our way to the tents I decided to take the bull by the horns to keep myself from going crazy. This bird Redding and his relations with Froggy were beyond me, and for some funny reason he'd just intrigued me enough to cause me to desire a fuller knowledge of what made the wheels go around inside of him.

I hailed him, got him to one side in the velvet darkness, and before I could say a word he remarked evenly:

"You saw my hand, didn't you? Your face looked as though you'd seen something."

"I did," I told him. "I don't know why you did it, but I merely wanted to tell you that I feel more like a crumb than ever. It was —— nice of you, even if my limited intellect can't quite figure—"

"Right up to the last I didn't have an idea of doing it," he acknowledged coolly. "Then I decided winning would leave a bad taste in my mouth. I've got plenty of money, so there's no credit due me. Likewise, I know that Pond's folks are in a bad way, and he has to send them money all the time, and seems to be worried stiff about 'em. They're farmers somewhere in Idaho."

"How did you get so thick with him up in San Antone, if I'm not too curious?" I inquired. "Knowing Froggy myself and feeling as proud over what I did to him as I would if I'd killed my grandmother, I—"

"Saw him first in a hotel dining-room when he tipped over a pot of tea," he said, and grinned for the first time since I'd known him. Made him look more human, too, and less like an iceberg. "Ran into him in the lobby, and because he was in uniform I talked to him. I liked the little sucker, and he seemed to take to me, so we went around quite a lot, and I got to know him well."

He hesitated a minute, puffing on his cigaret. Then he said evenly:

"Listen, Evans, I don't want to butt in, but I know Pond pretty well. I don't care to break his confidence—but the little cuss is up against a combination of two things, both tough, which are just about driving him wild. He's worried sick. I thought maybe you could prime the other fellows to treat him gently. None of my business, of course. See you later."

He turned to go, and then faced me again.

"By the way, Evans, you were watching me awfully closely, with a peculiar glint in your eye, when I was dealing. Figure I was stacking 'em?"

"It's a tribute to your poker playing that I did," I told him.

There was the ghost of a grin on his face as he looked at me.

"That's good," he said without resentment. "Funny part of it is I could, if I wanted to. Knocked around with a gambler a while and learned a lot of tricks which I've never used. Probably because I've never needed the money. I knew what you thought, and I'll swear, Evans, I don't know of any good reason why I shouldn't hate your guts. So long."

Ordinarily that would have caused a slight ripple in my mentality, but right then my single-track brain was busy with Froggy. I started my march for his tent immediately. All of a sudden the lonely little runt had become the most pitiful object lying around loose, to me, and I was so ashamed of myself at the moment that I'd have said "sir" to Judas Iscariot.

HIS light was on, and I found him in a voluminous nightshirt and disreputable bathrobe, writing a letter.

"Well, Froggy," I opened up, "it's been quite a day, eh?"

He grinned his wide Irish grin.

"Sure has," he admitted.

Now I'm about as subtle as a charging rhinoceros, and the only way I can accomplish a diplomatic mission is to start blurting out what I've got to say. Consequently I went on:

"Listen, Froggy, I'm sorry as —— I said what I did today, but I don't want you to

take it to heart. I'm glad to see you again, and the bunch is glad you're here. You'll have a lot of fun, they're a great crowd, and every one of 'em'll go to —— and back to make it pleasant for any new man. They'll take what I said for the hangover raving it was, and it wouldn't make any difference to 'em if they did believe it.

"I don't want you to think I'm not glad to have you around, and if there's anything in the world I can do to make it more pleasant for you I will."

"Thanks, Slim," he said quietly, and suddenly there was an old look on his face. "It—did sort of knock me dead, I'll admit. I sort of figured this a new start, and that maybe I could make good for the first —— time in my life."

"You will," I lied to him, or thought I was. "This is a tough field to get into, and maybe tomorrow I can give you a few tips on it, eh? How've things been going lately?"

"Same as ever," he shot back, and bit off the words viciously. "Everything you said was true, as far's that goes."

"Forget it," I advised. "This is a new deal. And by the way, Froggy, I've been talking to Redding just now. Nice fellow, eh? What does he do and where does he come from?"

To my intense surprize, Froggy sort of hesitated and flashed a funny look at me. He gulped like a fish, but no words came forth. Finally they did—but they didn't answer my question.

He went off into a rave about the man. According to Froggy, Redding sat on the right hand of God, and was the finest fellow at present treading the earth.

Several things were obvious to me. Either Froggy didn't know much about Redding; or there was something he didn't want to tell; and that Froggy himself was puzzled about the man despite a bad attack of hero worship. I remembered, too, how surprized he'd been to find the mysterious stranger in McMullen at all, to say nothing of his rôle as a reserve officer with orders.

"Now list to me carefully, Froggy," I told him. "I don't want to butt in, but Redding was telling me you're folks are in some sort of a jam and that you're sending them money and worried about 'em. Do you want a loan or anything? I'd be glad—"

"No thanks," he interrupted quickly. "I don't need it now."

He got up and paced up and down the tiny floor for a minute, and then whirled to face me.

"I am worried, but not so much about money now that I won tonight. They're old, and dad's working himself to the grave and my mother worrying herself into it because I'm flying. I ought to be back there, taking some of the burden off dad's shoulders, I know it—know it —— well. But Slim, I'll be —— if I want to quit this game until—until I make good at it some way. I've been a failure all my life. There's never been anything invented I couldn't mess up, nor any job I couldn't flop at! I'd rather be a flyer than the Pope—but I'd shake it in a minute if I'd been a success at it!"

He was rushing along, now, as though letting some flood loose that had been strangling him.

"Oh, I'm not cuckoo enough to want to be a hero, or have my name in the paper, or do something great! But, by ——, I want to do one thing right, hold down some job efficiently, do something so I can get out of the service and hold my head up and remember for the rest of my life that there's one thing in the world I did and did right! I can't get out now, Slim—I just can't! What have I been? A failure at everything, from mess officer to pilot, shifted from field to field as fast as each C. O. could get rid of me, a joke as long as I stayed and good riddance when I left! My efficiency reports have been so rotten I've escaped Class B twice—and why? Because some C. O. was sorry for me! And, by ——, I'll stick until I'm deader'n —— or put something over. I don't give a —— if it's only that I knew I was a —— good mess officer in McMullen, or an adjutant! I know I'll never be a good flyer!"

There was more of the same, and it knocked me right off my base. I had no idea that he felt that way about it, or had realized his position in the service. I thought he was just a dumb, butter-fingered egg with a skin so thick that he didn't have any idea what a total misfit he was. And that night he was revealing himself as a sensitive youngster who was going through —— between his own gnawing realization of futility and the persistent

knowledge that his duty, so to speak, lay with his folks.

I'll be —— if I didn't feel bad. Sometimes I'm tender-hearted as——.

I tried to cheer him up, and as I was leaving I remarked:

"Glad to get better acquainted, Froggy. And you'll get a chance here."

BECAUSE of what I'd done to him, I felt it incumbent upon my bony self to make amends. So, after telling the bunch what Redding had done and said, I primed them to restrain any laughter at his mistakes, act particularly cordial, and in general comport themselves as though Froggy was a fragile and easily bruised plant fresh from the hothouse. Which same they did, after watching him practise landings practically the whole of next day. That bird had flown more hours than an aged eagle, because he never quit practising everything in the world in an attempt to make himself better. On some of his landings he bounced so high and so long I thought we'd have to shoot him to keep him from starving to death, and on others he overran or came short. So far as I know, he never got in the field once without using his motor to help him out. Somehow or other, his brain and his muscles couldn't coordinate.

I took Redding up for his check ride, and found him as I had expected—a smooth, finished flyer who did everything precisely right. Took a careful squint of all his instruments before he went up, ran the motor up and tested it on each switch, kept the ship low off the ground until he'd picked up plenty of speed, and always tried to be in a position to land if the motor went bad. He handled his throttle easily and smoothly, neither slipped nor skidded in his banks, and when he made his first shot at that small airdrome, he slipped the ship in to kill speed and didn't use more than three-quarters of the field.

Late in the afternoon, as the mechanics were trundling the ships into their hangars, Redding spoke up in meeting for the first time since we'd all gathered on the porch.

"Mind if I go up a while, Captain?" he inquired as he squinted at the sky. "I'd sure love to lay around in those clouds."

Kennard assented, and soon Redding was up where he wanted to be. The sky was filled, from horizon to horizon, with cumulous clouds. The stately piles of white mist were so thick that they practically provided a blanket between the sun and the earth.

Soon he disappeared in them. It's a lot of fun to bank and dive around mountain peaks of mist. Sometimes a good cloud formation will look like a vast stretch of snow-covered earth, with valleys and cañons and mighty ranges of snow.

Two hours later, at dinner time, he wasn't back. We all got a bit uneasy, particularly Froggy. We finished the meal, and still no sign of him. Two hours more, during which Froggy became more and more excited and nervous, and enough time had elapsed to make it certain that Redding must have run out of gas, unless he'd landed.

A radio to Laredo brought forth no news, and suddenly a shadow seemed to engulf the flight. Froggy was beside himself, and the rest were silent and abstracted. It might be the grimmest tragedy of the Border—a flyer down in the trackless mesquite, alone, hurt and miles from civilization.

At eight o'clock Kennard ordered out the ships. The last hour of daylight we used to cover every inch of territory east, west and north of McMullen for fifty miles. The Laredo ships were out, too. And after the ships had come in, most of them after dark, there was no news whatever.

It was a heavy-hearted flight that night. Froggy paced the floor incessantly, begged wildly for an opportunity to fly in the moonlight and try to find Redding—and then stayed up all night without a wink of sleep.

It was very evident that Redding meant a great deal to the little Irishman. And it occurred to me that Pond's life must have been a lonely one, at that. He wasn't taken seriously by any one, and I suppose the poor little dub hadn't had an honest-to-God friend since he'd been in the Army.

We turned in early, to start searching again at dawn. Froggy's face was pale and strained, his eyes glittering feverishly and every movement so jumpy and nervous that looking at him gave me the willies. He gulped his coffee, and jumped up from the table as though he couldn't stand still.

He went to the door, and the next second a wild cry rang out.

"Here he is!"

That broke up breakfast, and we went out on the porch to greet Redding. He came limping along on foot, his clothes torn, his forehead bloody, but his calm poise unaffected.

Froggy wrung his hand and babbled like a kid, his face one wide grin and his eyes so bright I'll be —— if I didn't think there were tears in 'em.

Redding grinned a tired grin as he dropped to the steps.

"Got lost in the clouds, and cracked up in Mexico," he said simply. "Utter washout—"

"In Mexico!" rasped Kennard, his bushy pompadour bristling. "Don't you know you can't fly over Mexico? They kick like ——. This'll create a —— of a rumpus!"

"I was lost, sir, and didn't know where I was," Redding said quietly. "I'm sorry. Rode forty miles with a spig last night and gave him fifty dollars to guide me and let me use his horse."

"Write out your report immediately!" barked Kennard. "We'll radio Laredo and headquarters—"

"I'll send the radios," offered Redding, and forthwith set out to the radio shack, accompanied by Froggy.

Soon he reappeared, at headquarters, washed, fed, clothed, and with a brief report in his hands. Likewise, accompanied by the ever-present Froggy. The little fellow seemed to think something might happen to his friend if he didn't have a bodyguard. Pond was as chipper as a sparrow, temporarily, and he seemed to have forgotten all his troubles in his joy at Redding's safety.

Which made what I saw just before dinner the more remarkable.

I was on my way to the bath-house, at the rear of the row of tents, and I happened to glance into Froggy's domicile. He was sitting on his cot, his chin in his hands, gazing into space. And if ever I saw stark tragedy in a man's eyes it was then. He looked as though he'd seen a horrible ghost, and was shaken to the heels. His mouth was just a thin line across his face, and his freckles stood out against the paleness of his skin. His eyes were narrowed and sunken and glaring.

I was utterly amazed. Looking at him was a physical shock. So I stopped and leaned against the ropes.

"WHY the down-in-the-mouth look, Froggy?" I inquired as casually as I could. "Anything more wrong at home?"

He shook his head, and wet his lips with his tongue.

"It's—nothing," he said more or less absently.

Which, of course, was a lie. He leaped to his feet in uncontrollable agitation, and, as usual, started walking around in a hit-or-miss manner. He never could hide his feelings, anyway, and it was so utterly apparent that he'd been rocked to the heels by bad news of some sort that I felt safe in going into the tent and grabbing him by the arm.

"You look like a bad dream, and something's wrong, Froggy," I told him. "I don't want to butt in, but if there's anything I can do—"

I stopped there, and three times he started to speak. Finally his body sort of slumped down on the cot and he said dully:

"Maybe I will, Slim. Tell you, I mean. It's nothing—personal, though. Give me a chance to get my bearings, will you?"

I did, and waited around all the rest of the day for him to come through. Somehow or other I'd got to feeling as if I was his guardian or something, and for some funny —— reason his condition got on my nerves. All the rest of the day he dogged Redding around like a shadow. Silent, possessed by a demon of nervousness that wouldn't let him rest; looking as though he'd been drawn through a knothole —the question of the day among the rest of us was what was biting Froggy. He didn't even fly.

I wondered whether it concerned Redding. I caught, once or twice, what I fondly thought was a funny look in his eye as he looked at the little pilot who was always with him—a look of understanding, sort of, and maybe the hint of sardonic mirth behind it. I speculated, at intervals, on just what effect Froggy's more or less adolescent admiration for the competent older man had on Redding, whether it was a joke or a nuisance or a pleasure to him.

In fact, I wondered about several things, which were all to be made clear to me before many hours.

Dinner was late that night, and as dessert came on Redding, who'd been fanning away with Cap Kennard about the beauties of

South America—which continent he knew like a book, as well as Mexico and Europe—said suddenly:

"By the way, Captain, if it stays clear, how about giving me permission to make a short night-flight? I'll promise not to get out of gliding distance of the field. I fly so little I don't want to miss anything, and I sure like a good clear night."

Kennard nodded.

"Sure, if the landing light's working all right," he returned.

A big searchlight had recently been added to our equipment, due to these —— alien smugglers causing us to get hurry calls for help from the ground patrols every hour of the twenty-four.

Froggy's been as silent as the grave all through the meal. Usually he was game enough to hide whatever worries he had beneath a certain chipperness, and he talked, if anything, more than the average.

Redding's request caused him to glance up quickly, and no sooner had the captain finished his reply than Froggy spoke up.

"I'd like to take a flight, too," he said hesitantly.

There was an interval of silence, and Redding's eyes held a queer light in them as they rested on Pond. Froggy was sort of glaring around with a challenge in his gaze, as though he knew that the C. O. wasn't so keen on having him try a night landing.

But what could Kennard do? Froggy couldn't be treated as a child, so the C. O. nodded assent.

Neither Redding nor Froggy played cards that night, but along about nine o'clock, when the moon was turning the darkness into silver, Redding got a crew, and he and Froggy went out to the line. If anything, Froggy'd seemed more nervous than ever, if that's possible. He was acting like a man whose execution was just around the corner. It was noticeable to every soul in the recreation room, and so much so to me that for no particular reason I got to feeling itchy myself, and dropped my hand for a while to stroll out on the porch.

One Liberty was shooting long flames from its exhaust pipes on the warm-up, and in the flooding illumination of the searchlight I could see Redding in the front seat. The other D. H. was coming out from the hangar.

I saw Froggy, waiting for it, walk over to Redding's ship, and at that moment Redding started taxiing up the field. I saw Froggy turn like a shot, and leap into the cockpit of his ship as though possessed. Redding was taxiing toward the fence on the northern edge.

One of the mechanics leaped around toward the prop, and swung it like mad. Another one was running toward me.

Something was up, and in an instant I connected Froggy's condition with it. Something that had been on his mind had suddenly come to a head—and it concerned Redding. Scarcely knowing what I was doing, I loped along to meet the mechanic.

The Liberty burst into a roar, and without an instant's delay Froggy gave it the gun. He was streaking directly across the airdrome toward the hangars on the other side. I stopped, my heart doing assorted acrobatics, as I watched that absolutely cold motor carry him toward the perilously close hangars. It was a mad chance to take with a cold motor, but he made it, and was bellowing over the huge sheds as Redding was turning for his take-off.

Sergeant Cary was gasping his story in my ear.

"The lieutenant says to get ships in the air, sir—he thinks Lieutenant Redding's stealing a ship—"

"Why?" I barked.

"Don't know sir, except that instead of a sandbag in the rear Redding's got a big bag of something—we just happened to notice there wasn't sand in it when Pond touched it—"

"Tell Captain Kennard!" I yelled. "And get ships out!"

I was on the dead run for the line, now, as the mechanics hustled out another ship. Froggy was three hundred feet higher than Redding, both circling the field for altitude. I could see Froggy, who was flying in the opposite direction from Redding, lean out and motion downward and then pat his machine-guns.

My whirling mind seemed automatically to set everything in place. Froggy'd seen something or other to make him suspicious of the man he worshiped, hadn't said anything because he was so loyal and wasn't sure—and now something had happened to make him sure. If Redding was stealing a ship, it might be for a variety of purposes: to sell to some bunch of revolutionists or something in Mexico, to be used for smuggling—almost anything. And if Froggy

was right, probably that supposed wreck of Redding's in Mexico had been a stall to cover the delivery of the ship to his partners or employers.

BY THE time my ship was started and I was strapped in, they were a thousand feet high. Redding had seen all the action below, of course—the others were streaming out of the recreation building now—and knew what was up. He couldn't streak the six miles to the Rio Grande right then—even Froggy could pick him off if he flew a straight course. He must get altitude enough to fight it out with Froggy, who held the advantage of altitude, and then go before we were high enough to hurt him. He knew we couldn't follow him over the Border.

As I shot the throttle forward the battle started. I cursed wildly as I thought of the poor little dub up there trying to hold the fort. If I could only get there in time to save him and take over the fight.

They were a half mile south of the field now, about fifteen hundred feet high. The exhausts were shooting flame and likewise the guns as the two big ships flung themselves around in the air. Froggy was still three hundred feet higher, and held every advantage. Any other man would have got Redding.

Flying my ship wide open, straining forward as though I could help it get altitude, I flew by instinct as I watched the shadowy bulks of the bombers. There was something awe-inspiring and terrible in that fight in the darkness, with the shadowed earth far below. Southward the Rio Grande was a twisted streak of burnished silver; eastward the lights of McMullen made it look like a fairy town; and west and north the never-ending mass of mesquite. Above it and me those two huge ships were like monsters of the air locked in mortal combat.

They weren't on an even keel for a second. Froggy, up above, seemed to be shooting almost continuously. Below him, Redding was combating like a master against terrific odds. His ship twisted and banked and zoomed—and he held his fire until he had a shot. But Froggy, by accident or design, was flinging his ship around so fast that a good shot rarely presented tself. Redding, forced to zoom to shoot, couldn't hold his ship up more than a few seconds to get a bead on his antagonist—and so the struggle went on without either one, apparently, getting any pronounced advantage.

My head was over the side of my ship as I climbed toward the river, to cut Redding off after he disposed of F oggy. The terrific airstream just about tore my head off. The roar of my wide-open motor drowned the sound of the other ships, and to me they were like silent bats high in the sky, whirling and turning around each other.

I was in a position now three hundred feet below them. And suddenly I saw Redding, in the lower ship, start for the Border. Straight as a string he flew, diving slightly for extra speed. Now was Froggy's chance.

Froggy dived on him from behind, but no fire came from the guns on the front cowling. I banked slightly, coming toward Redding diagonally from below. I'd intersect his course about at the river. A glance below told me that two more ships were in the air, and just then the searchlight was turned to the sky and picked the two antagonists out clearly.

Not the sign of a shot from Froggy. He was within fifty yards of Redding now, catching him because his greater altitude made a steeper dive possible.

Then I realized what had happened, and yelled out a few Biblical words which I couldn't even hear myself. Froggy had been shooting so wildly that he had no more ammunition left. The river was less than a mile away, and I was three hundred feet lower than Redding. He could dive faster, and right now was turning his ship away from me, at an angle. There was no chance in the world for anybody but Froggy to catch him—and Froggy's guns were useless. His drum was empty, or he'd be shooting.

Then, as I sent my D. H. hurtling toward them, I had a wild hope that he still had a shot or two left and was holding it to make it a certainty that he hit Redding in person, and not just perforate the wings. For Froggy was coming closer and closer to the fleeing man, right on his tail and about ten feet higher. The searchlight was of no service now—we were too far away, but the moon was so bright I could follow every move. Froggy's head was craned over the side of his cockpit, while Redding, in front, was like a statue, face straight ahead. Evidently he was positive Froggy didn't

have a shot left. At times he banked slightly, but a few seconds later Froggy would be on his tail again.

The two ships weren't five feet apart now, and the river was almost underneath them. Why didn't Froggy shoot, I wondered wildly. He couldn't get any closer.

I was wrong. Turned into stone in my seat, my optics popping with a loud report, I saw Froggy run into the tail of Redding's ship, and the next second tear his ship away. His flailing propeller had simply eaten the entire empenage of the leading D. H.—elevators, stabilizer, rudder—before it splintered itself into a thousand pieces.

REDDING'S ship went into a nose dive immediately. One glance at the other ship showed that it was spiraling down, in control. Froggy was comparatively all right—there were cleared spaces below.

But Redding was on his last ride. Without the sign of a spin, but in an absolutely vertical dive, his D. H. was streaking toward the ground. Motionless in my ship I watched it, and somehow, in those few seconds, my mind seemed to travel back over the past two days, and it was as though I was within a foot of the doomed pilot, and could see his pallid, mask-like face and those opaque black eyes as he rode to his death.

The crash was audible above the roar of my motor, and instantly a solid mass of fire leaped from the ground like a great ball. For a second it seemed that the whole world was illumined by the funeral pyre of the man who'd died within a hundred feet of the barrier which meant life and liberty to him.

I saw Froggy, with his propellerless ship, come down in the field next to the fire, overrun, and crash slowly into the trees at the far end. As I circled down Pond, unhurt, was walking toward the burning ship.

I knew the field, and landed to pick Froggy up and take him back. The moon was bright enough to make landing not too hard. As I walked toward him, my eyes on the ludicrous little figure outlined darkly against the flickering flames, I was putting everything together as well as I could. But I couldn't quite decide why Redding had bothered so much with Froggy, whether he had an idea he could use his friendship in some way, or whether some quirk in his nature caused him to really like the little fellow. This much I did decide, though—that he'd deliberately shown those four aces which he'd laid down, in order to get credit for what he'd done. The lost money he figured an investment against any suspicion. From first to last he'd grandstanded.

And somehow the audacity of the man appealed to me. He'd died with his boots on, crooked adventurer as he was, and he'd lost in a game worthy of any man's steel.

Froggy turned to greet me—pale-faced, somber-eyed, but somehow more self-possessed, and mature, as though he'd aged a good deal in those few minutes.

"Great stuff," I told him. "Now tell me how you got wise, and what Redding was up to."

"I caught him, this morning, or at least I was almost certain I had, taking a couple of official letters out of the mail, just before the orderly took it to town," Froggy told me, and there was a lingering sadness in his face. "That got me to thinking. Up in San Antone I'd seen him having talks with a couple of peculiar men and acting, when I found it out, as though he didn't want it known. The only reason he'd want to swipe letters would be to prevent headquarters from knowing he was here, and what had happened. All that, plus his not telling me anything about coming down here, made me think he might be up to some crooked game. I thought maybe he'd stolen that ship he was supposed to have cracked up, for smuggling, maybe. Or to sell it to somebody in Mexico. I didn't say anything—although I should have—because I wasn't sure, and I thought the world of him, Slim. It just about drove me crazy, wondering what to do.

"So I sort of followed him, and tonight I figured he might be stealing another ship and beating it. I think he knew I'd seen him around the mail pile, and was sort of suspicious of me following him so close. Anyway, I thought if he went over the Border after Kennard's orders not to, it would be a dead giveaway. I was going to shoot him down in Mexico or anywhere. Then I thought I'd talk to him on the line and give him a kind of warning—a hint not to pull anything.

"When I went to his ship I was pretty near sure—he was warming up so fast and didn't want me to fly. I happened to put my hand on the sandbag in the rear seat,

and I was sure it was full of drums of ammunition. He beat it right off before I could say a word or do anything.

"When he stole the reports which would show he was here I don't think he planned to get away with the second ship so quickly, or he'd have had no object in stealing the mail. I just made him suspicious and uneasy."

It was all as easy to see through as a ladder, except for two things: who he was, and exactly what he was stealing the ships for. The first thing we never found out, except that he was not Reserve Officer Redding at all. That gentleman was at his home in Dallas. The mysterious stranger had appropriated the name and come to McMullen with forged orders. As for the reason for his stealing the ships—it was smuggling. A month later, with the whole Border watching for the ship, a ranger heard it one night traveling north, and a radio tip to Donovan Field resulted in our ship being picked up at an isolated field with enough dope in it to hop up the entire city of New York.

For a minute or two we stood there, looking into the flames wherein lay the shriveled body of the man we'd never know any more about. He was unusual, anyway, and it had been a pleasure to know him.

"I've made up my mind to another thing, Slim," Froggy said finally. He seemed to have finally reached he point where he was sure of himself, feeling the relief which comes after important decisions, for better or worse, are made. "I'm resigning tomorrow, and beating it back where I belong. And I feel a —— of a sight better than I have in years, some way. About everything."

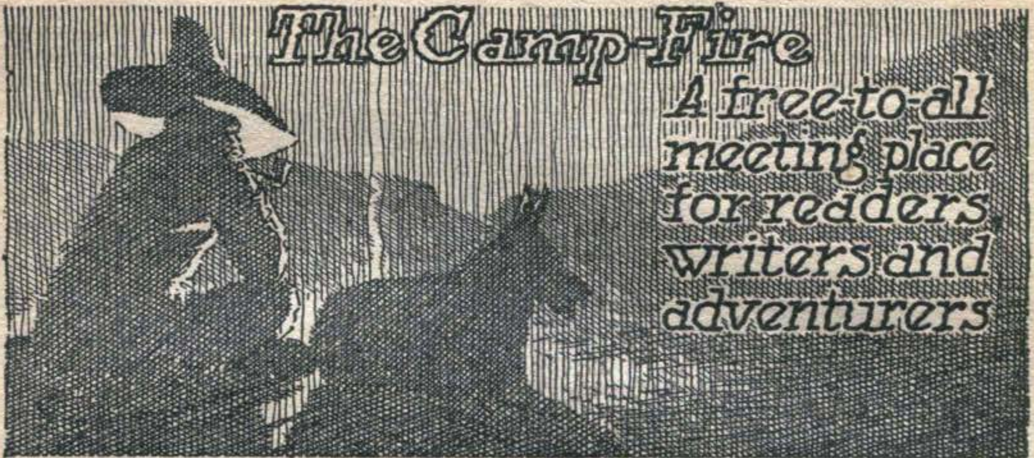
I nodded. I was glad to see him making an effort to save his own life.

"I did things wrong, as usual," he told me, and suddenly the old grin flashed into being for a minute, "but, by ——, I did go up and get him, and for once I did something to excuse myself for being a flyer. I might as well get out now while I can remember it."

"Absolutely, old-timer," I told him. "He was a —— good flyer and he didn't knock *you* down. Besides that, when you cut his elevators off with your prop you did as pretty a piece of flying as any pilot in the world ever did!"

Froggy grinned.

"Don't tell anybody," he chuckled. "But I was trying to get real close for my last shot, and I ran into him by accident!"



Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

THERE is good news. So good that I'm just going to blurt out the main facts and then we'll all sit back together and speculate pleasantly over all it is going to mean.

The ownership of the entire Butterick Company including the Ridgway Company, and the magazines published by both of them, has changed hands. It is going to give our magazine what it never had before—a real chance.

We have seen other magazines pushed and promoted, while ours was left to lift itself by its boot-straps. We have helped it bring new ideas into the magazine world, seen those ideas copied by other magazines and seen some of those other magazines pushed to a larger circulation than our own. Only one thing kept it going—since early in the game its readers, its writers and its editors have been working together in a friendly, informal alliance that is unique in magazine history. That may sound like "hot air" to some of you. The older members of Camp-Fire know better; the ideas and suggestions of too many of you have been builded into our magazine and become a permanent part of it.

But we had to work alone. Now we are going to be backed.

We all know how hard it has been to make people even examine a magazine printed on cheap wood-pulp paper. I mean the people who would be the natural readers of our magazine if they could overcome their prejudice against its paper and general

appearance. The other kind won't read it because its contents are not sexy enough or sensational enough to suit them. We've all had to buck the prejudice created by the magazine's appearance, its physical form. And there's been nothing but ourselves to buck it—no promotion, nothing to put it into the hands of people and make them taste it and realize it is their kind of meat despite appearances.

Now all that is to be changed. We're going to have white paper, good paper, real paper. Not the glazed kind that many do not like, but unglazed like that of the *Atlantic Monthly*. And a new dress and better make-up. To put it briefly, we're going to have the kind of magazine I've dreamed of having it, keeping all its good points, getting rid of all its handicaps. To us old-timers it will be the same old magazine in better clothes. To other people it will be a new magazine.

The same old magazine to us except that it's going to have more pages and improve in quality, with no increase in price.

When I look back over our sixteen years, over the loyalty, good-fellowship and co-operation that have made *Adventure* and kept it going, I detect a tendency to get a bit mellow. I'm not ashamed of that, but let's look forward instead. And we might as well get a little fun out of it as well as solid satisfaction. We've had to take our medicine for years when people turned up their noses at our magazine because of its appearance. Now it's our turn. Let's try a little experiment in human nature. After it comes out in its new clothes—which will be the second issue after this one—when we try to get new people to read it, let's watch their reactions carefully and see what difference is made by a mere change in its general appearance. Will they find worth while exactly the same magazine they wouldn't look at in other clothes? And if they do I suppose it would be rude of us to point out that it's been right within their reach for sixteen years, that they were misled by appearances and we weren't. But it will be quite some temptation to resist.

Of course the plan is to make it better and better as we go along, in contents as well as appearance, but that isn't a matter of sudden transformation. And don't worry—our favorite writers are not going to be replaced by new ones we might not like so well. *Adventure* will still be *Adventure*.

The only difference is that pretty soon the old guard are going to be able to say "We read it back in the days when its looks kept most people from even considering it. Now it stands in the front rank with no apologies to make." And if they're generous they can add "Yes, it's better now than it was then, but in essence it's exactly what it always was."

The change to good paper will be the biggest step up, for the other changes need good paper to make them fully effective, but there are to be other steps up and forward.

In the past some of you have complained that our advertising pages and our text pages seemed to belong in two different magazines. That is to be changed. More than that, our "ad" pages are gradually to be built into a feature that will add decidedly to the interest and information of the magazine as a whole. *Adventure* is essentially a trade journal for all equipment, outfitting, tackle, supplies and commodities in general necessary to outdoor life and activities—sports, games, camping, motoring, biking, touring, expeditions, traveling by steamer, boat, airship or any other way. Our service departments give practical information and advice on all outdoor commodities; our fiction, dealing mostly with the out-of-doors, has become known for its honesty and reliability in the fact material it carries; our readers are those whose interests turn toward outdoor activities of all kinds. *Adventure* is a trade journal, a magazine specializing on the outdoors, and therefore an ideal advertising medium, potentially, for every raw and manufactured product used outdoors. But it has never been given a chance to develop as such. Now it is going to have that chance—and to make the most of it. The change can not be made in a minute, but watch *Adventure* during the next year.

That development will do two things for *Adventure's* readers and editors. First, bring in an income that will make possible improvements in which we are more directly interested. Second, those specialized ad. pages will themselves become of direct value to us. We'll not have to look outside our own "book" when we want to know all about the latest and best outdoor commodities on the market, where and how to equip and outfit for our own adventures with gun, rod, automobile, baseball, train

or boat. Hitherto our ad. pages have barely started on the possibilities of that big practical field. Pretty soon we're going to be doing it *right.*

And right here *Adventure* wants opinions and advice from all of you. You've helped shape our fiction and departments; help us now shape our ad. pages and our ad. policy. The usual methods in the advertising field are usual because they've been proved sound and practical by experience, but there's always room for improvement and we of Camp-Fire are accustomed to blazing our own trails. Our ad. pages can be made an outstanding feature in the magazine world. If we all put our heads together we'll find the best way of doing it.

I suggest we go back to the beginnings of things. The success of advertising is measured by its effects on possible buyers. These effects are much more complex than appears at first glance. Let's find out what they are. No theories. Facts only. We readers and editors are possible buyers, hundreds of thousands of them. Let's see just what effects advertising has on us—our simple, elementary, direct reactions *of any kind* to various kinds of magazine advertising. Then we'll have definite, practical laboratory facts to guide us. Come ahead with your testimony. But facts, remember, not theories.

Now as to our departments, particularly "Ask Adventure." It's already the best information machinery of its kind in the field, the biggest and most comprehensive, though it occupies only a few pages per issue. That's fine, but let's consider it only a start. Keep it as it is in all essentials but develop it to cover the whole outdoor field in broadest sense, make it still more efficient, and add any improvements we can think of among us. Mr. Cox and I have already called a convention, by letter, of its seventy or eighty experts. To their findings from the expert point of view should be added the findings and suggestions of readers from the point of view of those using this service. Will you give us your suggestions on any phase of "A. A."? General system and organization, new sections to be added, presentation on the printed page?

Next, our Camp-Fire Stations. We in the office have some large ideas along this line, but we don't want to move very far until we get from keepers and readers any and all suggestions as to the possibilities. It is to me an amazing thing that our Stations have grown so in number and have assumed such a permanent character in face of obvious obstacles and in spite of our having been able to do so little for them from headquarters. If they've had the virility even to exist under such conditions, what can they not do and become if given a real chance? Among us, let's figure out how to give them that real chance. With this start, how far can we go?

"Camp-Fire" stays as is, except that, as I know from your letters, you won't mind if less space is given to kickers. For contrary opinions there will be room as always, for our Camp-Fire is an open forum. But many of you have complained about certain kinds of kickers as taking space needed for other things and I think you are right. Also when I hold forth at length on citizenship or some such topic it might be well to do so in a new department separate and distinct from "Camp-Fire," a department which might take over such discussions and arguments as that over Julius Cæsar. You won't, so help me, be able to keep me from talking some at Camp-Fire too, but a separate editorial department would let us hear more of the interesting letters now in our Camp-Fire cache.

"Old Songs." Personally I can't think of any way to better what "Bob" Gordon is doing with it except to give it more space when we can, so I'm all the more open to suggestions. My only objection to Mr. Gordon is that since he started on his year-long expedition for collecting and recording American and Canadian folk-songs he has been so enthusiastically absorbed in the work that it's like pulling teeth to get from him anything about himself. In comes copy for his department, along with a cheerful but hurried hello and straightway he dives off after more folk-songs. I'm going to have to go after him with a friendly ax so that new readers—and we ourselves!—can get some idea of what a big thing he is really doing.

There's going to be a new department. So far as I can find out nothing just like it has ever been done before. It's not the ordinary book-review idea. For one thing, it will not cover fiction, but will pass judgment on books of information on any phase of our outdoor world, including not only

sports and games but foreign lands, exploring, travel. The judgments will be very brief but authoritative. They will be passed chiefly byour experts of "A. A.," each holding to his field of special knowledge. The object, of course, is to tell you just which of the new books you can or can not depend upon for reliable information.

There are so many new things in prospect or under consideration that I'll have to postpone telling you about them until our next Camp-Fire, but I can at least outline some of them now. Most of all, I can again assure you that all the improvements are not going to take away from us our old magazine. Unless, of course, you count such things as printing it on good paper instead of—this! We're merely going to make our old magazine better and more of the same.

Which reminds me to mention that the enlarged size is going to let us have two serials instead of one.

As to our new dress. That, too, will leave us still the same old magazine in all essentials. We'll still have our drawn headings and still keep free from illustrations. As to the little "dingbat" ornaments scattered through the text, we don't know yet. There are two sides to that question, but a decision either way will hardly wreck us.

No change of policy as to our present writers. Cleanness and reliability as before.

When will the change take place? Well, it will at least begin to take place with the second issue after this. The better paper and new dress begin then. Most of the changes can not be made all at once and anyhow we want your suggestions and advice before going too far with any of them. But it is with the second issue after this that we're going to begin making *Adventure* a 200% *Adventure*.

And it is with that issue that we'll get our first chance to observe what effect the change in appearance is going to have on those who, because of its looks, have refused even to pick up *Adventure* to see what is in it. The experiment fascinates me. Appearances, of course, will make a big difference—they always do and it is only natural in this case that they should. But that doesn't spoil the game of waiting eagerly to see just what will happen. And I know one or two special people I want to try it out on.

WHAT are your own habits as to bathing in desert water-holes? Something from E. S. Pladwell in connection with his story in this issue:

Oakland, California.

I would like to clear up one point before the Eagle-Eye Boys pounce on my story and start to tear it to pieces. The point is this:

"Do men in the desert take baths in water-holes, supposed to be kept sacred to those who are thirsty?"

Yep. They do.

It's all wrong. It's unsanitary, unethical, thoughtless, impolite, selfish and everything else; yet the fact remains that they do. A little matter like water-pollution is secondary when the day is hot and a nice shady pool heaves in sight; so off with the clothes and jump in!

Of course there are many rigid and just souls who would recoil from such unsportsmanlike conduct, and consequently never take a bath. All honor to these martyrs. But as for the rest of them—well, just give 'em a nice deep water-hole on a hot day, and listen to the splash. I know. I've been in a water-hole with six desert rats, and nary one thought of anything but a good bath. Sanitation be hanged. What's sanitation to those boys?—E. S. PLADWELL.

HAROLD LAMB gives us some interesting pictures concerning the times in which is laid his complete novelette in this issue:

"Durandal" takes up again the Arab, *Khalil*, chief character in "The Shield." It deals with the legend that the Arabs carried Durandal, the sword of Roland, to Asia, and it introduces *Sir Hugh of Taranto* and *Donn Dera*.

I want to say this about *Sir Hugh*. I've named him myself, and drawn him from imagination, but also from life, because I followed the adventures of dozens like him. And the Sir Hughs of history were not confined to the crusades. They crop up all over Asia and were used to the personal and political advantage of shrewder brains. But after all the dust settled, and the annals and chronicles were written, the leaders who profited by his type we find usually as bare dates, and names and tombs. On the other hand the life stories of the Sir Hughs we've kept as part of our personal heritage—something that endures and belongs to us. Such men were Roland, the peer of Charlemagne, Tancred of the first crusade, Robert Longsword, and Count Robert of Paris (this last chronicled by Scott).

THE legend that the Arabs took the sword of Roland back with them to Africa and hence to Asia Minor, I have seen and read, but can not recall where or when. I've tried to find it again, and know it is to be found, probably in one of the Arabic chronicles, or Armenian histories.

The verses from "The Song of Roland" are quoted from the translation by John O'Hagan, given in the Harvard Classics series. The lines have been rearranged and very slightly altered, as in writing Charles for Karl.

A reading of "The Song of Roland" does not yield any mention of the sword Durandal after the death

of the hero. It is just as reasonable to assume that the sword was taken by the Arabs (Moors) as that it remained lying under Roland's body until the Franks arrived on the battlefield, a good many hours after.

AS TO the Franks. They were originally the people of Charlemagne, who became known later as the French. Since the first crusade consisted mostly of French (Normans, etc.), the Muhammadans christened all western Europeans Franks, and this name sticks today. Go to the Levant today, or Mosul, and you will be a Frank.

Now the Roumis. In the first place the Arabs called Rome Roumiah. The Greek empire, being the nearer half of the former Roman dominion, was called by the Arabs the Roum empire, and the Greeks became Roumis. At that time they occupied most of Asia Minor, and when the Seljuk Turks conquered Anatolia, they fell heir to the name Roumis. But this was later than the time of the story.

THE Antioch of the story was a city on the river Meander—not the Antioch of Palestine. This river, by the way, being very winding and casual in its course, gave rise to the word "meander."

Other words of the crusade era have come to have curious meanings today. When the old chronicler speaks of the *chivalry* of an army, he refers to the *chevaliers* or horsemen, who were usually nobles in the earliest days.

Accompanying and fighting besides the *chivalry* were the *sergens d'armes*, and *sergens a pied*. A story is told that Philip Augustus, a cautious monarch, formed the first body of the *sergens* to guard his person against the wiles of the Old Man of the Mountain. (The master of the Assassins, a rather deadly sect of Muhammadans.) Although the *sergens* continued to be bodyguards for generations, they gradually became the mounted men-at-arms, carrying mace, bow and sword. Still later they could use lances. Anyway, that's where our word "sergeant" comes from.

At the heels of the "sergeants" in the medieval army we find the miscellaneous attendants and followers, called variously Brigands, Ribalds, etc. The varlets (valerets) or pages were the personal attendants of the nobles.

The custom of arming and equipping one or more men exactly like the real leader or king was common in medieval warfare. Often as many as half a dozen knights were made up like the king, in order, as it were, to draw the fire of the enemy and safeguard the royal person. Usually they were badly mauled.

NOW, as to the eight hundred, and the battle of the Meander. This all took place as related in the story. Eight hundred crusaders, who had joined the Greek emperor in the expedition against Kai-Kosru and his Seljuks, were killed to the last man.

There is, apparently, no trace of a survivor, because the Greeks themselves reported the fate of the eight hundred, and the chronicle adds that the Count of Flanders was more wroth at the loss of eight hundred good men than pleased at the success of the Greeks.

The real happenings of the battle are vaguely related. It seems clear that the eight hundred Franks charged the Saracens before the Greeks came up; that they were surrounded and cut down to the last man, and that the Greeks themselves were then hemmed in by the Saracens.

The emperor was in command of the Franks as well as his own men. That these crusaders—the best unit in his army—should have been annihilated before his own forces were fully engaged, leaves the emperor open to more than a suspicion of cowardice or treachery.

Theodore Lascaris was subtle, persistent, daring and extremely clever. But he was not a coward.

Both Greek and Muhammadan chroniclers relate how Theodore Lascaris cut down the sultan Kai-Kosru with his own hand. Here is the Turkish account, as given by Petis de la Croix more than two hundred years ago: "Himself (Kai-Kosru) seeking the emperor in the mêlée, cries to his men to leave him this duel. He meets the emperor soon, attacks him and casts him from his horse; Lascaris, half rising, pierces with his sword the horse of the sultan, and brings him down in his turn. He does not give the sultan time to recover, leaps upon him swiftly and cuts off his head. The Turks, hitherto victorious, take to flight"—

Although the Greek panegyrists and the Muhammadan annalist thus make Lascaris the victor over Kai-Kosru, another chronicler—Acropolita—says the sultan was overthrown and beheaded by an unknown hand.—HAROLD LAMB.

IN CONNECTION with his article in this issue giving a bit of the forgotten history of the Southwest, Robert Welles Ritchie characterizes Caborca as "a little Alamo whose record exists only in scanty footnotes and State Department papers."

A FRIENDLY little argument as to hemp, Manila, manila and manila hemp. All sea-faring comrades will now prick up their ears.

Fabrica Occidental Negros, Philippine Islands.

Most all of the writers for *Adventure* seem to know their subjects thoroughly. John Webb in some of his "One-Two Mac" stories is another favorite of mine, but he made a bad break some time ago in one of his stories, which has no doubt been brought to his attention by some of the sea-going readers long before this. If not, you might mention to him that manila hemp rope is rightfully named, and as such is bought, sold and billed. Furthermore, Manila (meaning of course the Philippine Islands) IS THE ONLY PLACE IN THE WORLD WHERE HEMP IS GROWN COMMERCIALLY. His climax in the story in question hinged on the fact that one of the principals had spoken of manila hemp rope, which instantly spotted him as not really belonging to the sea-going fraternity. Please do not think this is a knock, for it isn't, and I am looking forward to reading many more of his stories and enjoying them. Being a sort of retired chief engineer, and having spent many years at sea, I can say that his portrayal of many of the little daily incidents and routine trifles are very true to life.

I HAVE been in communication with Captain —— and have given him some information about Siberia that may prove of great value to him. Would like to run up there myself, but would have difficulty in getting together the right crowd who would be able to hold up their end at the various jobs that would fall to their lot in that country.

G. W. CRUICKSHANK.

MY DEAR MR. CRUICKSHANK:—Mr. Clarke, of *Adventure*, has passed on to me your friendly criticism of "manila hemp" in one of my "One-Two Mac" stories. Mr. Clarke suggests that I follow *Adventure* custom in such cases and answer, giving my reason for saying that there is actually no such rope as "manila hemp"; and furthermore, that no real seaman would ever use the term. Just as you say, it is upon those two points, particularly the latter one, that the story hinges.

PLEASE note that I use a small *m* in the word "manila"; this has considerable bearing on the point in question, since "manila" is the name of a certain kind of rope, not the place from which the rope comes. All dictionaries and nautical text-books that I know of bear me out in the use of the small *m*.

First, let us see what the dictionary has to say on the subject. Funk and Wagnalls Standard says as follows:

> . . . *manila.* The fiber of a tall perennial herb related to the banana, of which the fine grades are made into rope. . . .
> *hemp.* a tall annual herb of the nettle family.

You see, hemp and manila are not even distantly related. The word "manila" is undoubtedly derived from Manila, P. I., and has become the technical name of rope made, not from hemp, but from the fiber of a plant related to the banana. So much for the dictionary.

ON PAGE 22 of "Modern Seamanship" (Rear-Admiral Austin M. Knight), which is used as a text-book by officers and men of the U. S. Navy, I find the following:

> Manila rope is made from the stalk of the wild banana and comes principally from the Philippine Archipelago.

And in answer to your statement that Manila (meaning the Philippines) "is the only place in the world where hemp is grown commercially," I find this:

> Hemp is made from the fiber of the hemp plant, which is cultivated extensively in many parts of the world, but principally in Italy, Russia and the United States.—"Modern Seamanship, page 22.

No mention is made of hemp being grown in the Philippines, so it is plain that the rope which is grown there is manila, not hemp; though you are absolutely right when you say the rope is called "manila hemp"—by landsmen; that is the very point I made in the story. You say that "manila hemp" as such is bought, sold and billed; that is because manila is not bought, sold and billed by seamen, who know the difference between it and hemp.

I THINK the foregoing proves conclusively that there is no such rope as "manila hemp." Now as to my assertion in the story that the term would never be used by a real seaman. "Modern Seamanship" has this to say on the subject:

> Much confusion results from the common practise of designating all ropes made of vegetable fiber as "hemp." This mistake is almost universally made by other than seafaring people in referring to manila. . . .

The author also says that aboard ship three kinds of rope are commonly used—*hemp, manila* and wire.

I could quote pages on the subject from many different authorities, but it isn't necessary; what I have given is uncontrovertible, and it agrees in every way with the point I made in the story. From my own personal experience as a licensed navigator I know that when a seaman uses the term "manila hemp" he is instantly put down as a green hand by his shipmates and the ship's officers. "Manila hemp," "knots per hour" and "cabin"—when referring to a room aboard ship—are all lay terms and betray lack of knowledge of ships and the sea.

I do not consider your letter as a knock, and hope you will write again the next time you disagree with me on a point. I'm always willing to discuss the accuracy of my facts. Perhaps some time you will catch me with my guard down—though I'm pretty careful, for I know sea stuff can not be successfully faked. Of one thing I am certain. It can not be successfully faked in *Adventure.*—JOHN WEBB.

HOW about these Norse-American stamps? Here's a letter to me from H. Bedford-Jones of our writers' brigade to the effect that the artist who designed said stamps would have a terrible time of it if he put similar ships on a cover of our magazine:

> When some of the boys start to lambaste us for the sins of our commission, turn their activities to the U. S. Government series of Norse-American stamps. A viking ship is pictured with the Norse and American flags at bow and stern. But the 2-cent stamp is worse. It shows two sailing craft, one-stickers. On this one mast one of them apparently has a wing-and-wing outfit, besides one or two topsails. The more prominent craft has a wonderful rig. Her one mast supports: jib, two courses, two topsails, royal, spanker, with two lower yards, two topsail yards; and the braces are most interesting in their arrangement. Have never seen these items in print, so you might be interested.—H. BEDFORD-JONES.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: Full list in second issue of every other month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card; Forwarding Service; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc.

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES TO ANY READER

These services of *Adventure*, mostly free, are open to any one. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we ask in return only that you **read and observe the simple rules,** thus saving needless delay and trouble for us. The whole spirit of the magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we can help we're ready and willing to try. **Remember: Magazines are made up ahead of time. Allow for two or three months between sending and publication.**

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application.* We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

Metal Cards—For twenty-five cents we will send you *post-paid,* the same card in aluminum composition, perforated at each end. Enclose a self-addressed return envelope, but no postage. Twenty-five cents covers everything. Give same data as for pasteboard cards. Holders of pasteboard cards can be registered under both pasteboard and metal cards if desired, but old numbers can not be duplicated on metal cards. If you no longer wish your old card, destroy it carefully and notify us, to avoid confusion and possible false alarms to your friends registered under that card.

A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in next issue.*)

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL SELL: *Adventure* from 1919 to 1925, incomplete, totalling 112 issues, also November 1918. What am I offered for the lot?—Address, B. DORAN, 3377 So. 17th Street, Omaha, Nebraska.

WILL SELL or EXCHANGE: Issues from 1920 to 1926, at 7c. each, plus postage. File incomplet , so will exchange.—Address, GEORGE J. CHAMPION, 1761 E. 39th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

WILL SELL: *Adventure* complete for 1922. Thirty-six copies, 10c each plus postage.—Address, J. PECARO, 505 W. 6th Street, St. Charles, Illinois.

WILL SELL: *Adventure* from 1910 to date, fine condition.—Address, WALTER E. GRODWIN, 595 Central Avenue, Dover, New Hampshire.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscripts. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and addres on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitt d, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3,000 welcomed.

Camp-Fire Stations

Our Camp-Fire is extending its Stations all over the world. Any one belongs who wishes to. Any member desiring to meet those who are still hitting the trails may maintain a Station in his home or shop where wanderers may call and receive such hospitality as the Keeper wishes to offer. The only requirements are that the Station display the regular sign, provide a box for mail to be called for and keep the regular register book and maintain his Station in good repute. Otherwise Keepers run their Stations to suit themselves and are not responsible to this magazine or representative of it. List of Stations and further details are published in the Camp-Fire in the second issue of each month. Address letters regarding Stations to KENNARD McCLEES.

Camp-Fire Buttons

To be worn on lapel of coat by members of Camp-Fire—any one belongs who wishes to. Enameled in dark colors representing earth, sea and sky, and bears the numeral 71—the sum of the letters of the word Camp-Fire valued according to position in the alphabet. Very small and inconspicuous. Designed to indicate the common interest which is the only requisite for membership in Camp-Fire and to enable members to recognize each other when they meet in far places or at home. Twenty-five cents, post-paid, anywhere.

When sending for the button enclose a strong, self-addressed, *unstamped* envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Addresses

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

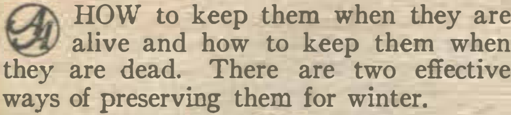
Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.
2. Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.
3. No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.
4. Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.
5. Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.

Please Note: To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4—6. Islands and Coasts. In Three Parts
7, 8. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
9. Australia and Tasmania
10. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
11. New Guinea
12, 13. Philippine and Hawaiian Islands
14—18. Asia. In Five Parts
19—26. Africa. In Eight Parts
27, 28. Turkey and Asia Minor
29—35. Europe. In Seven Parts
36—38. South America. In Three Parts
39. Central America
40—42. Mexico. In Three Parts
43—51. Canada. In Nine Parts
52. Alaska
53. Baffinland and Greenland
54—59. Western U. S. In Six Parts
60—64. Middle Western U. S. In Five Parts
65—74. Eastern U. S. In Ten Parts.
A. Radio
B. Mining and Prospecting
C. Old Songs That Men Have Sung
D1—3. Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
E. Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
F, G. Forestry in the U. S. and Tropical Forestry
H—J. Aviation, Army and Navy Matters
K. American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
L. First Aid on the Trail
M. Health-Building Outdoors
N. Railroading in the U. S., Mexico and Canada
O, P. Herpetology and Entomology
Standing Information

Fish



HOW to keep them when they are alive and how to keep them when they are dead. There are two effective ways of preserving them for winter.

Request:—"I would like some information regarding fresh-water fish.

How should a live box be made, and at what depth should it be kept for the best results? I have had very little luck with the one I have. I do *not* use a stringer.

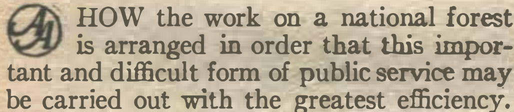
Can you give me a receipt for salting fish down for winter use?—RAY E. HAAS, Indianapolis, Ind.

Reply, by Mr. Thompson:—For a small live box for fishes, make it eight inches deep, twelve inches wide and twenty-four inches long, with a thin board top. A board top of this kind keeps the interior well shaded and that is what helps preserve the fish. Use common screen wire all around the sides and bottom. In the top bore holes here and there. You can float this box all day and fish will keep well in it.

If you want to salt down fish to keep for winter, soak them a few days in a brine of salt water, then pour out the brine and cover them well over with rock salt, broken up to the size of a B.B. shot. If you want to smoke them, smoke them immediately after taking them out of the brine over a slow fire of dry hard wood or corn cob. You can arrange them in layers on stakes so that each fish will get the benefit of the smoke. It is best to smoke them for about three days, doing the job as slowly as possible.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do NOT write to the magazine itself.

Forest Rangers



HOW the work on a national forest is arranged in order that this important and difficult form of public service may be carried out with the greatest efficiency.

Request:—"I should like to have some information concerning the work and duties of a forest ranger. If you can give me any information I should appreciate it very much."—L. W. SHINGLETON, Enterprise, W. Va.

Reply, by Mr. Barbour:—The work on a national forest is arranged as follows:

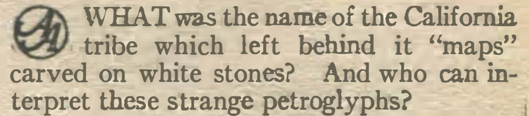
There is a forest supervisor in charge of the whole forest. Usually he has a deputy supervisor under him. If the forest is large and important he may have one or more forest examiners or forest assistants to help with the technical work.

The forest is divided, usually by natural watersheds, into a number of districts, and in charge of each is a district ranger. Each of these may have under him one or more rangers. There are also usually a number of patrolmen, lookout tower men, etc., employed only during the fire season, and a varying number of workmen engaged in building trails, telephone lines, buildings, etc.

A district ranger has entire charge of, and is responsible for, his district. Usually he lives in a headquarters building centrally located in the district. He organizes and supervises all the work in his district, has charge of fire prevention, control of trespass, has charge of sales of timber (unless the sale is a big one and a special man is assigned), issues camping, grazing, and special permits, and keeps in close touch with every form of activity in his district.

The job is a hard one and entails lots of work. It is pleasant work, though, mostly out of doors, and often leads to better positions later. Of recent years the amount of education, technical and otherwise, necessary to pass the Civil Service examinations for Ranger, has become greater, and a man should have some technical forestry training as well as practical experience.

Indians



WHAT was the name of the California tribe which left behind it "maps" carved on white stones? And who can interpret these strange petroglyphs?

Request:—"I am given to understand a large tribe of Indians (some 200-300) lived at one time in and around Soda, Calif., Crucero, Cave Cañon (now known as Afton Cañon), Calif., and were driven out of this part of the country by Government troops stationed at Soda and Camp Cady. Just *what* tribe lived here?

What tribe uses large white stones to draw their maps of the surrounding country, etc., on? In other words, a full-blooded Comanche Indian, acting as my guide, has shown me the location of three huge white rocks with maps thereon, but seemingly he can not read them, for he says they belong to another tribe. I have taken impressions of these maps (some are dug or chipped out of the rock) and I am wondering if it were possible to get one of this same tribe to interpret these maps for me? That is why I have asked my first question.

This guide of mine gave me to believe there *should be* six main caves belonging to this tribe—starting from Caliente, Nevada, and extending south along the old Mormon trail into California.

I have found some graves at Soda but remains so badly burned (even the beads were just one solid mass, with the exception of a peculiar blue or violet bead that the heat seemingly could not fuse) as to be of no particular value. I am going out in this country again before warm weather starts in.

I will appreciate learning the name of the tribe living at Soda, etc., in the early 40's. Also please inform me where I can get in touch with one of this same tribe."—MRS. G. M. BRIDGHAM, Victorville, Calif.

Reply, by Mr. Woodward:—Just at the present time I can not lay my hands on any references to movements of California Indians in the regions you mention during the '40's. Personally I am inclined to believe that if those Indians were moved by U. S. troops it was at a later date.

As nearly as I can make out from your locations, the Indians inhabiting that section of country in California were the members of the Vanyume group of the Serrano division who lived along the Mohave River. With the exception of a few (unknown)

individuals merged among other groups, the Vanyumes are extinct and I doubt whether you could locate one and if you did that he could give you the information you desire.

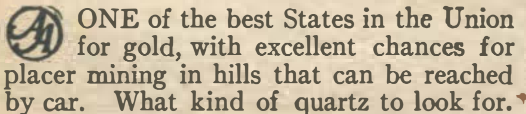
I do not wish to discourage you in your attempt to read the so-called "Indian map," but I am afraid there is no one—either Indian or white—who could "read" the "map" which may or may not be a map. I know of the carved rocks that you speak of but have never seen them. There are some fifty or sixty places in various parts of California from the northern boundary of the State to San Diego County where pictographs and petroglyphs are found. They are interesting, but we have no indication as to what their purpose was and aside from the person or persons who made them, no one knows what the figures are supposed to be. We do know that in San Diego County in former times the girls painted symbolic figures on granite boulders at the completion of their adolescence ceremonies. Some anthropologists have suggested that these carvings and paintings are the work of shamans. Perhaps they were. Your guess is as good as any one, as was that made by your Comanche guide. How the Sam Heck did a full blood Comanche happen to be wandering about as a guide in your section of the desert?

As to the caverns, *quien sabe.* Perhaps the guide may have heard some vague local tradition from the Paiutes of Nevada or from some of the desert Indians farther south and has passed it on to you. Cave shelters have been found all over the country and I myself believe there are some yet to be discovered on the edges of the California desert both in your neighborhood and farther south.

The finding of the burned bones and fused glass beads in the grave near Soda is a natural outcome of the cremation burial practised by the Indians who formerly lived there. Cremation was fairly common in some portions of southern California. The glass beads naturally mean that the burials were historic.

If you discover anything else in that locality, I wish you would let me know. Mr. Harrington at St. Thomas could also give you accurate information on your discoveries. He is rated as one of the best archeologists in the country today.

Mining



A ONE of the best States in the Union for gold, with excellent chances for placer mining in hills that can be reached by car. What kind of quartz to look for.

Request:—"For years I have been thinking about a prospecting trip out West, but I don't know exactly where to go. How would western Montana be? I have been reading in the papers about gold being found there years ago, but please tell me about any other place that you think is all right. I would like to go by auto if possible or as far as possible, and then get a horse and pack the outfit on if needed.

I have never been out prospecting before and don't know anything about mining, how to locate, or what to look for; what quartz looks like, mining laws, how to outfit, tools I'll need, etc."—P. G. N., Minneapolis, Minn.

Reply, by Mr. Victor Shaw:—You are quite right regarding gold having been found in Montana. It is one of the best mining States in the Union, since its mines produce around forty-five million dollars a year.

It has both placer and deep mines (quartz or lode mines) as well as those productive of other minerals. The most placer gold comes from Madison County; then come Powell, Granite, Mineral, Lewis & Clark, and Silver Bow counties. Other counties also produce some gold, but the above are the largest. But, a large part of the placer was hydraulicked.

If you want to try for placer gold, you can go *via* auto into say the Cedar Creek district—at Iron Mountain, or Quartz, Mineral Co. Take either of the towns mentioned and stake yourself to an outfit and hike out into the hills. Get acquainted with some old prospector who can be made to talk—flatter him and perhaps he'll tell you where you may be likely to find color. Or go to Gold Creek, Powell Co., into the Pioneer District, where there is quite a bit of sluicing operation. Or go to Virginia City, Alder Gulch District, in Madison Co. Or, some very rich placer gold has come from Ruby Creek, near Wisdom in the Beaverhead District, Beaverhead Co.

Could tell you many more, but when you get into that section you'll be in good mineral country and can strike out for yourself. Remember that all placer came from some vein. If you find any creek having colors, the gold came from a vein somewhere above it, up the creek, or up hill somewhere from it. You'd need to pan up the creek till you find the place above which there is no more gold; then you know your vein is near, up-hill on either side, or right down in the creek bottom at that point. Get the idea? It's all common sense, really.

Quartz is the glassy, dead white, sharp-edged rock you find almost anywhere. It comes in veins. The best quartz for mineral is not the clear sort, but the milky kind. Especially if it looks rotten, or streaked with red, or yellow. That is generally made by weathered iron and quite often it contains gold, or other mineral, lead for one.

If you find fragments of quartz in some creek, or anywhere else, look for mineral in it. Then follow up-hill and try to find more of the same kind, color, and having same mineral. If you look carefully and far enough, you'll hit the vein it came from. That's prospecting.

Montana is as good a State as any. Arizona is excellent, especially Yavapai Co.; New Mexico, down in southwestern part; Nevada, in western parts; California, in northern section close to Oregon line, and across into Josephine Co., Oregon. Also, up here along the coast of southeastern Alaska, where I now am. But you'd have to leave your auto in Seattle, and come here by boat, fare $34.00; and travel about up here by small boat.

Send for postpaid copy of The Miner's Guide, by H. J. West, to 340 Wilcox Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Also, to same place for copy of Wilson's Mining law of the States. These two books will give you what you need to know about locating a claim; outfitting for hill or desert; how to tell minerals, to test for them, and how to sell a mineral claim, or mine.

Just for prospecting, you need only these tools: a gold pan, of 16-inch diameter, a good magnifying glass, an iron mortar and pestle for pulverizing rock to pan, a prospector's pick, and a 4-pound miner's hammer and a D-handled round-point shovel. If you locate and want to work a claim, you need other tools, but that can come later. Another good book to have is Dana's Manual of Mineralogy, by Wm. E. Ford.

Old Songs That Men Have Sung

Devoted to outdoor songs, preferably hitherto unprinted—songs of the sea, the lumber-camps, Great Lakes, the West, old canal days, the negro, mountains, the pioneers, etc. Send in what you have or find, so that all may share in them.

Although this department is conducted primarily for the collection and preservation of old songs, the editor will give information about modern ones when he can do so and *IF* all requests are accompanied with self-addressed envelope and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*, Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York City.

I AM still much interested in early "blues" and "rags" and in those curious combinations made up partly of genuine folk material and partly of vaudeville or stage songs. This latter group is far more extensive than most collectors seem to realize. True the songs which are to be found there seldom have any great literary merit, but they throw much light upon that perplexing question—What is folk-song, and how does it originate?

A pure author song has but one single text; it is sung always the same way no matter who sings it. Folk-songs have no correct text; they are sung differently by different singers and in different sections. Sometimes, even, as in the case of most chanteys and many of the negro spirituals, there is so little unity in them that the same singer will never sing them twice quite the same. For that reason I want as many texts as possible for each song I collect.

Here are several that interest me. "The Train I Ride"—two versions—belongs to the older and more genuine "blues." "Mah Baby" is part stage and part folk. I print them without any apology, and in the form in which I found them.

The Train I Ride

(Version from Herbert Wilson, St. Louis)

When a man takes the blues
He catches a freight train and rides,
When a woman takes the blues
She hangs her head and cries.

Oh, the train I am riding
Is called the Cannon Ball,
Is eighteen coaches,
Don't carry no mail at all.

I got two good-looking sweethearts,
One who lives upon a hill.
If one of 'em don't love me
God knows the othern will.

Well, the train I ride
Is eighteen coaches long,
If you don't believe I am goin'
Count the days I'm gone!

I am goin' to the river,
Sit right down on the ground,
And if that woman overtakes me
Jump overboard an' drown.

The train I am riding
Is called the Cannon Ball,
Is eighteen coaches,
Don't carry no mail at all.

Well, my home ain't here,
It's in a rattlesnake den;
My daily occupation
Is taking women from the men.

I am goin' up on the mountain,
Sit down on a log—
Too good lookin' of a man
To make a woman a dog!

Them black-headed women—
It's chocolate to the bone—
Them black-headed women
Won't let my good-lookin' man come home.

The train I ride, baby,
Is called the Cannon Ball,
Is eighteen coaches,
Don't carry no mail at all.

The Train I Ride

(Version from C. W. Dorris, Providence, Kentucky)

O de train I ride, babe,
It's called the Cannon Ball.
O de train I ride, babe,
It's called the Cannon Ball,
Carries fourteen coaches,
Got no blinds at all.

O I never cried, babe,
Till de po' gal caught de train.
O I never cried
Till de po' gal caught de train,
Den de tears rolled down
Like great big drops of rain.

Sixteen years, babe,
It ain't no great long time!
O it's sixteen years, babe,
It ain't no great long time!
I got a buddy in Fort Leavenworth
Doin' ninety-nine!

Mah Baby

(Text from A. F. Barnett, Australia)

Some o' dese days, 'bout one o'clock
Mah baby,
Some o' dese days, 'bout one o'clock,
Mah baby,
Some o' dese days, 'bout one o'clock
Dis ole worl' am gwine to reel an' rock,
Mah baby.

I went home 'bout nine o'clock,
Mah baby,
I went home 'bout nine o'clock,
Mah baby,
I went home 'bout nine o'clock,
Went to de door, an' de door was lock,
Mah baby.

I went to de window an' took a peep,
Mah baby,
I went to de window an' took a peep,
Mah baby,
I went to de window an' took a peep,
Dey was lyin' like angels fast asleep,
Mah baby.

So I went in an' raised a row,
Mah baby,
So I went in an' raised a row,
Mah baby,
So I went in an' raised a row,
Swore to have vengeance then an' now,
Mah baby.

You may take this for a joke,
Mah baby,
You make take this for a joke,
Mah baby,
You may take this for a joke,
But I'll fill dis house full o' pistol smoke,
Mah baby.

Shoot yo' dice an' have yo fun,
Mah baby,
Shoot yo' dice an' have yo' fun,
Mah baby,
Shoot yo' dice an' have yo' fun,
Run like de devil when de police come,
Mah baby.

There are many other verses, for the song is endless in its variations. Send me in all you know. Here are two others I ran across years ago:

What you gwine do when de rabbits away,
Baby?
What you gwine do when de rabbits away,
Baby?
What you gwine do when de rabbits away?
Go down to de stream an' fish all day,
Baby!

What you gwine do when de stream run dry,
Baby?
What you gwine do when de stream run dry,
Baby?
What you gwine do when de stream run dry?
Sit on de bank an' watch de crawfish die,
Baby!

SEND all contributions of old songs, and all questions concerning them, to R. W. GORDON, care of *Adventure*, , Spring and MacDougal Streets, New York City.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

OCTOBER 8TH ISSUE

Besides the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

ELOQUENCE — *Fiswoode Tarleton*
The hill-billies have their own ideas about honor.

ALAMOGORDO THE GREAT — *Thomas Topham*
The Mexican won a goat.

THE LAST EVADER — *H. Bedford-Jones*
"Takes a man to work things out with Providence."

CYCLOPS — *Captain Dingle*
The ex-preacher followed *Harrison* to the ends of the earth.

ESTEVAN, THE BIG SMOKE An Article — *Robert Welles Ritchie*
The Moroccan slave who died an emperor.

KOKOMO BIRDS — *Andrew A. Caffrey*
A doughboy who dreamt about Napoleon.

SHINGLES OUT OF BANDON — *Albert Richard Wetjen*
It looked like a trick to hold the steam-schooner *Marquan* up.

AN ARIZONA ARISTOCRAT — *Alan Williams*
Once he had a noose about his neck.

THE DECEIVED GUNMAN — *Barry Scobee*
How "*Float*" failed to get his man.

WAIT !

—*before you eat another mouthful!*

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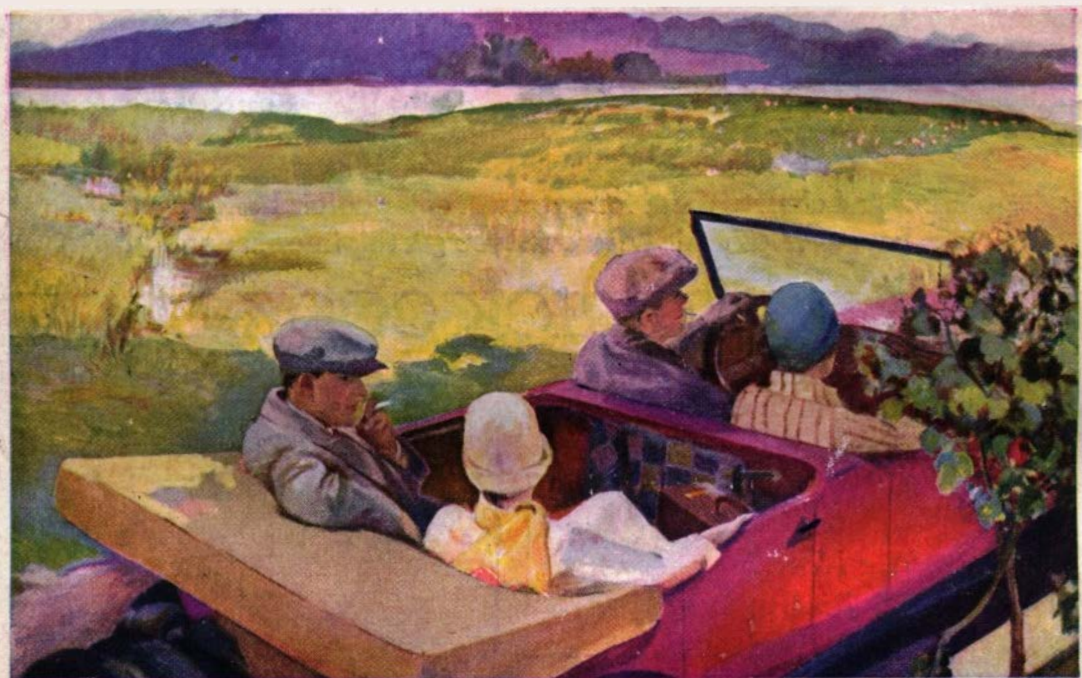

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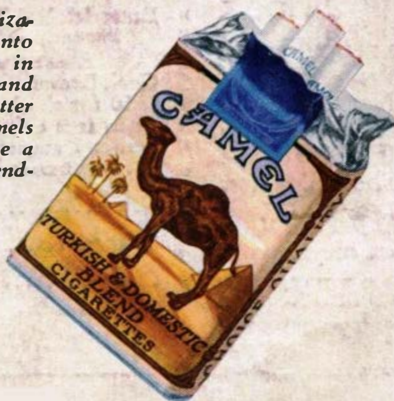

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