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ADVENTURE

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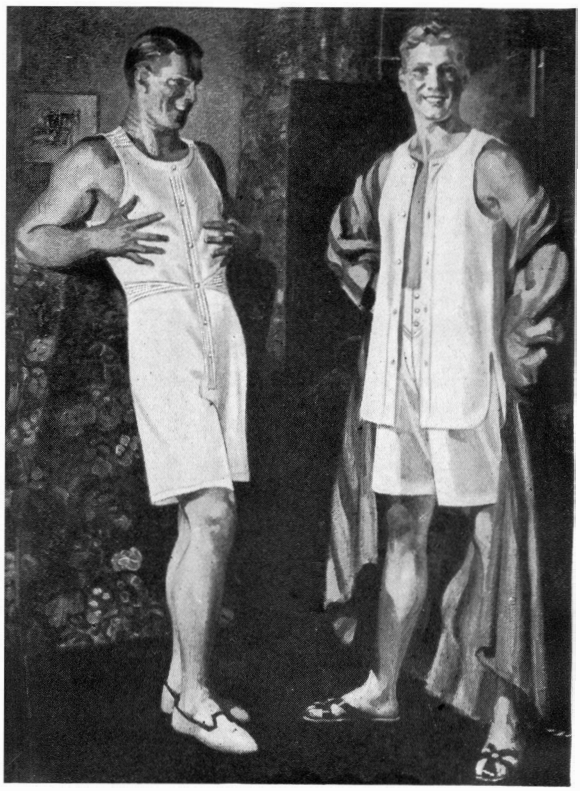

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ADVENTURE
July 30th, 1924

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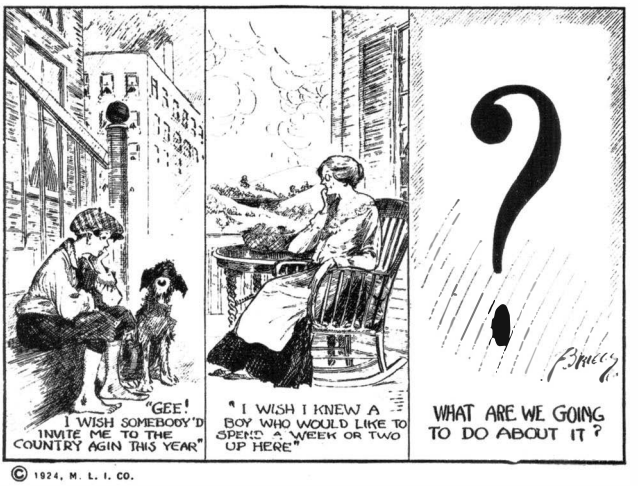
"... needs a friend"

THE famous cartoons "When a Feller Needs a Friend" are familiar to millions of newspaper readers. You will find *this* "feller" wherever there are children of the poor cooped up in squalid quarters.



The Fresh Air Funds organized by newspapers and other kindly folk are doing a splendid work in getting children out of the city and into the country. They need your help.

Find out what is being done in your community to give these poor, pinched, nature-starved children the happiest time of their lives. If a Fresh Air Fund has been started give it your heartiest support. But if nothing of the kind is under way won't you ask your favorite newspaper to help start a Fresh Air Campaign? They know all about the work that other big newspapers are doing. Don't wait. There is not a precious minute to lose—the Summer will slip away so fast.

If you live in the country will you share your home with some poor child this Summer—even for two weeks? Your own newspaper undoubtedly knows of boys and girls who need just the help that you can give. Poor youngsters—it will be the first time that many of them have seen a green field or brook or real woods. Fire escapes, burning hot side-walks, brick walls—these are the wretched substitutes for trees and flowers that they have known.

The gratitude of the boys and girls who are taken into private homes is pathetic. It is usually their first glimpse of a real home.

If you have children of your own think what it would mean to see them drooping and withering in the stifling heat of dark airless rooms all Summer, playing tag with death in truck-jammed streets.

In memory of your own happy childhood—or perhaps in regret for the fun that you've missed—will you help? If you are in the city, send some needy children to the country. If you are in the country, take them away from the city. It is a splendid thing to do.

One great metropolitan newspaper claims that it can send a child to the country for two weeks for only $7. The same newspaper figures that last year it gave the children of its city more than 500 years of happiness! 14,000 children were given fresh air vacations—two weeks each; 6,000 were placed in the camps maintained by this newspaper and 8,000 were sent to private homes. But there were 35,000 applications for these 14,000 places—less than half were taken care of.

The boys and girls were given a critical physical examination before they were sent off. Careful record was kept of a certain group of these children and it was found that the average gain in weight at the end of a two weeks' stay in the country was nearly five pounds for each child.

No social service is more important than this of building healthy boys and girls. A vacation in the right environment may mean a permanent change in the life of a child.

This is the time of the year when every boy and girl "needs a friend". How many youngsters will you make happy?

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK

Biggest in the World, More Assets, More Policyholders, More Insurance in force, More new Insurance each year

Published Three Times a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

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ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

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Contents for July 30th, 1924, Issue

**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.*

(Continued on next page)

(*Continued from preceding page*)

A New Serial and Three Complete Novelettes

THOSE were grim and glorious days when Indians allied themselves with British to wipe out the rebellious colonists, and the valley of the Mohawk was filled with cries of "IROQUOIS! IROQUOIS!" Hugh Pendexter's five-part serial begins in our next issue

IN SALUZZO *Silvain de St. Lo* saw only luxury—luxury paid for by a wretched prisoner at Pinerola. "THE MAN IN THE CAGE," a complete novelette, by H. C. Bailey, in the next issue.

BECAUSE he obeyed orders *Nielles* was called a coward by his men—then he came face to face with *Kouro Moussa*, the scourge of the Sudan. "WHERE NO MAN HEARS," a complete novelette by Georges Surdez, in the next issue.

"*CIGARET*" *JOHNNY* sets out to find what happened to the boss' horses and runs into some new tricks in cattle-rustling. "THE SHRIMP," a novelette of range life, by Frank C. Robertson, complete in the next issue.

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

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

I Will Give You a Chance To Earn $200 a Week

Right now, today, I offer you an opportunity to be your own boss—to work just as many hours a day as you please—to start when you want to and quit when you want to—and earn $200 a week.

These are Facts

Does that sound too good to be true? If it does, then let me tell you what J. R. Head did in a small town in Kansas. Head lives in a town of 631 people. He was sick, broke, out of a job. He accepted my offer. I gave him the same chance I am now offering you. At this new work he has made as high as $69.50 for one day's work. You can do every bit as well as he did. If that isn't enough, then let me tell you about E. A. Sweet, of Michigan. He was an electrical engineer and didn't know anything about selling. In his first month's spare time he earned $243. Inside of six months he was making between $600 and $1,200 a month.

W. J. McCrary is another man I want to tell you about. His regular job paid him $2 a day, but this wonderful new work has enabled him to make $16,800 in the last three years. Yes, and right this very minute you are being offered the same proposition that has made these men so successful. Do you want it? Do you want to earn $40 a day?

A Clean, High-grade Dignified Business

Have you ever heard of Comer Topcoats and Raincoats? They are advertised in all the leading magazines. A good-looking, stylish coat that's good for summer or winter—that keeps out wind, rain or snow, a coat that everybody should have, made of fine materials for men, women and children, and sells for less than the price of an ordinary coat.

Now, Comer Coats are not sold in stores. All our orders come

J. R. HEAD

through our own representatives. Within the next few months we will pay representatives more than three hundred thousand dollars for sending us orders.

And now I'm offering you the chance to become our representative in your territory and get **your** share of that three hundred thousand dollars. All you do is to take orders. We do the rest. We deliver. We collect and you get your money the same day you take the order.

You can see how simple it is. We furnish you with a complete outfit and tell you how to get the business in your territory. We help you to get started. If you send us only four average orders a day, which you can easily get, you will make $100 a week.

Maybe You are Worth $1,000 a Month

Well, here is your chance to find out, for this is the same proposition that enabled George Garon to make a clear profit of $40 in his first day's work—the same proposition that gave R. W. Krieger $20 net profit in a half hour. It is the same opportunity that gave A. B. Spencer $625 cash for one month's spare time.

If you will mail the coupon below, I will show you the easiest, quickest, most simple plan for making money that you ever heard of. I will send you a complete outfit—a beautiful style book and samples of cloth. I will tell you where to go, what to say, how to succeed. Inside of thirty days you can have hundreds of dollars in cash.

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Please send me, without expense or obligation, your special proposition, together with complete outfit and instructions, so I can begin at once to earn money.

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If your Health is threatened—

you should know the power of this natural fresh food

THESE remarkable reports are typical of thousands of similar tributes to the power of Fleischmann's Yeast.

There is nothing mysterious about its action. It is not a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense. But when the body is choked with the poisons of constipation—or when its vitality is low so that skin, stomach, and general health are affected—this simple, natural food achieves literally amazing results.

Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are millions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. *Health* is yours once more.

"Since childhood, I have had to resort to taking salts every two weeks to relieve constipation. It was very seldom that I had a natural, healthy appetite. A night never passed that I would sleep soundly. Then I started eating Fleischmann's Yeast. My appetite began to increase, and my constipation gave way gradually to a healthy, regular, daily discharge of waste. Now each morning finds me full of life and vitality."

(*Extract from letter of Mr. F. A. Christopherson of Fresno, Calif.*)

"All my life I have been constantly annoyed with indigestion and a cankered, sore mouth—caused by acidity of the stomach. Fleischmann's Yeast has effected a permanent cure of my stomach and mouth troubles, and I consider Yeast as much a necessity as a toothbrush or my bath."

(*Extract from a letter of Mrs. Hugo V. Bolin of Ponca City, Oklahoma*)

"Innumerable boils on each of the three children. All treatments seemed in vain. Three medicine spoons went down three tiny throats twenty times daily. Boils still came. The little sisters still cried.

"When at last the doctor suggested Fleischmann's Yeast, the household laughed. But soon the boils came less frequently. And when three little girls began to spread Fleischmann's Yeast instead of butter on their bread, the boils disappeared entirely."

(*Extract from letter of Mrs. Mary H. Lloyd of New Albany, Ind.*)

Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink)

— before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat 2 or 3 cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain.

Fleischmann's Yeast comes only in the tinfoil package—it cannot be purchased in tablet form. *All grocers have it.* Start eating it today! A few days' supply will keep fresh in *your* ice box as well as in the grocer's.

Write us for further information or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-6, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington St., New York.

Adventure
VOL·XLVII
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JULY 30 1924

The FRESH YANK

A Complete Novelette

By LEONARD H·NASON

Author of "A Morning Call," "A Tragedy of Errors," etc.

NOT very far north of Paris the Aisne River joins with the Oise. The Oise itself has several branches and between the two rivers is the forest of Compiègne. A force retreating on Paris begins to feel the wall at its back here, and the tired British, hunted and harried down from Mons, were beginning to turn at bay.

By brigade, division and corps, wherever the ground gave any indication of being favorable for defense, they halted and made preparations for meeting the gray inundation from the north. Montdidier must be delivered up to the invader, but that would be the last city, if there was a man left to defend the next.

At the entrance to the Forest of Compiègne, north of La Croix St. Ouen, a man was in a tree, looking for signs of the enemy. He looked all around the horizon, eastward across the forest, and south and west where the dust clouds rising in the Summer heat showed the location of the retreating British, north where the Oise glittered in the sun, and finally east again, but this time he looked anxiously at another man who occupied a similar tree at a little distance.

"I wish," said the first man to himself, "that I was out of this tree. If some impolite uhlan came along and fixed his lance just right, I'd be in an embarrassing situation. Oh my back! Look at that man!"

The other man was descending from his tree with all possible haste. The first man looked down at the road through the forest, and espied moving figures thereon, that approached at what appeared to be a gallop. He threw a despairing glance toward a clump of trees from which a horse's tail protruded now and then like a handkerchief waved from a window, then he began to go earthward himself.

When he reached the ground he grabbed up his spurs from the foot of the tree, put them on hastily and began to run toward the clump of trees where the horses were, going very gingerly, for his drop from the lowest limb had stung the soles of his feet.

"'Old 'ard, Yank," cried some one. "What's the 'eadlong speed for? What did you come down for?"

Before the Yank could reply, the other man arrived.

"There's men a-comin' down the road," he cried, "an' they're fair raisin' the gravel!"

"To 'orse!" said the third man, and to horse the three went.

The horses were in a clump of trees, four of them held by one man. At the approach of the three runners, the horses displayed nervousness and began to back away, to rear and roll the whites of their eyes.

"The Fresh Yank," copyright, 1924, by Leonard H. Nason.

The Yank went for his with a leap, one hand on the neck and one on the withers, and he was in the saddle, feeling for his stirrups. The other watchman clambered aboard his mount, who began to rear and crash about in the underbrush.

"Give the sargint a 'and, will you?" he cried to the Yank.

The Yank shoved his horse over to the sergeant and reaching over, seized the horse's halter. Then, holding his own horse close with the spur, he extended his hand to the other man, and swung him into the saddle.

"Quiet the 'orses," panted the sergeant. "I'm intendin' to see 'oo this is. Swords out, all. Be ready to charge when I give the word. Let up on the —— curb! 'E'll never quiet if you keep a-haulin' on 'im like that!"

A tall horse which had been turning end for end and rapping his rider's legs against every tree in the clump, feeling the pain of curb and chain relax, relaxed himself and looked about, snorting. There was a moment's silence. On the road could be heard a steady *clop, clop, clop* of trotting horses, a jingle of chain and scabbard, and as the riders drew nearer, the rattle of accouterments and the *slap-slapping* of saddle pockets.

The sergeant stretched his arm over his horse's head and waggled his sword to clear his sleeve. The Yank softly slipped his foot home in the stirrup and clenched his teeth. His heart hammered wildly and he looked straight ahead past his horse's ears, to a patch of sunlit road.

When that road blackened with an uhlan, the Yank would sink his spurs and go out there like a thunderbolt. He gripped his sword so tightly that his hand pained him. The tall horse neighed shrilly, the sounds of trotting stopped almost instantly. *Thwack* went the sergeant's legs on his saddle skirts, and the four men shot from the grove in a thunder of hoofs.

"Too soon," thought the Yank, "too soon. They'll have their lances down and —— help us!"

He was out of the trees and lying along his horse's neck, squinting down his sword-blade at six or seven men on the road clustered in a heap, their horses' heads every which way, some spurring madly, some tugging at their swords, some looking open-mouthed at the charging British. Sun and dust and the glitter from his sword obscured his sight, but the Yank headed for the black of the men in the road and spurred his horse again.

"Hold up!" roared a voice. "Hold up! Friends all!"

" 'Old up!" echoed the sergeant. " 'Old up! 'Ware swords! —— it, pull down them 'orses!"

THE Yank put his own point in air and tried to pull up. The horse dashed into the group on the road, collided heavily with a cursing trooper, crunched the Yank's knee against a saber scabbard, and came to a plunging halt. One of the other horses reached out a searching hoof and plastered the Yank's horse in the chest. More plunging and snorting and language.

"Look sharp wi' that —— pin o' yours," panted the man with whom the Yank was entangled.

The Yank held his sword high in the air, swung his horse's head and shoved out into the ditch. In the middle distance was the tall horse that had whinnied, head down and tail in the air, drumming straight for the woods, his rider futilely sawing at the reins. Midway between horse and road a sword still quivered, hilt upward, where it had fallen from the rider's hand and stuck into the ground.

"Ride him!" yelled the Yank. "Sit on him, trooper!"

"Shut up," cried the men. "Wot are you about?"

"Who's that giving a view halloo?" inquired a stern voice. "Come over here! What are you thinking of, man, to be giving tongue like that?"

The Yank approached the owner of the voice. An officer, he saw at once, and a subaltern, in all the glory of one pip. The officer produced his glass and inserted it in his eye. Then he proceeded to chill the Yank with a stare. The Yank got his tongue between his front teeth and chewed upon it until he could speak without laughter.

Then he said very respectfully—

"One of our men is being run away with."

He pointed, but the tall horse was gone.

"He'll come back, I fancy," said the officer. "You should have better control of your patrol, sergeant. Yelling and running away and charging about are not evidences of the best discipline. You're from

the Bays, what? Well, you had best be jogging back to them. We've come from Puits du Roi and haven't seen a sign of a German. You'd best be jogging, sergeant, or you'll be getting yourself cut off and what-not."

The officer raised his hand, sang a command and he and his patrol clopped away. The sergeant gazed calmly at the Yank.

"There's summat as you don't often see," said he. "A man as can place a glass without pullin' his face all to whichways. An' I would be no end obliged if you wouldn't howl so. You're not at 'ome on your prairies a-chasin' of the wild Indians now, you know. An' the next time you're a-doin' picket duty, don't come down till you see what army an advancin' patrol belongs to. Now let me speak to Neddy Clyne. 'E it was 'oo come down from his tree first."

It appeared that Neddy was the man who had glimmered away on the tall horse. The three men sheathed their swords and waited restlessly for the reappearance of Neddy, who seemed to have encountered trouble in getting his horse under control.

The sergeant inhaled his lip through a place in his jaw where there was no tooth, and having tugged at his mustaches a few times, squared his shoulders, gathered his reins and rode his horse in a small circle in the road. The three troopers strained their eyes toward the woods where Neddy had disappeared and the horses champed their bits and tossed their heads in the air.

"Yank," said the sergeant, " 'e give me the name of the town where the regiment's to billet tonight. 'E give it to me on this paper 'ere. Read it, will you, my eyes are full of dust.

The Yank took the paper and read:

Cross the Oise at Verberie, proceed through Fay Farm and Nery to Roquemont, and rejoin.

"Who is he to be telling us where to rejoin?"

" 'Is patrol is from the Cherubims," said the sergeant, "and 'e was just doin' us a friendly turn. 'E says as 'ow we'd better be joggin' and 'e means we are gettin' ready for another action. What in ——'s a-keepin' Neddy?"

"He's coming now," said the Yank. "Look at the horses' ears."

The horses' heads and ears were all turned toward the woods. The three men picked up their bridles and prepared to go, but though they waited some time and the horses began to crop the grass, Neddy did not appear.

The third trooper, a lean, pimply-faced man, with a sagging neck, in which his Adam's apple hung like a stone in a handkerchief, mopped his brow with the back of his hand and complained of the dust.

"I shouldn't wonder if 'e 'ad 'urt 'iself," remarked the sergeant.

He looked up the road, whence the other patrol had come and then down the highway to where they were passing from sight around a bend.

" 'E said as 'ow there's no one in those woods. Let's go see if we see any sign of the boy."

The sergeant's horse jumped across the ditch as the spurs touched him, and the other two men followed. The Yank loosened his sword and kept his hand on the pommel, ready to reach back and draw it.

The dust rose from the grass, the August sun beat down upon their backs, and the sweat poured from their brows, but the patrol kept on and reined up as they came into the shadows under the trees. The marks of hoofs, where Neddy's runaway had torn up the ground, could be plainly seen.

"Take interval of about ten yards," directed the sergeant, "an' then we won't miss 'im if 'e's been unhorsed."

They had not gone ten yards before there was the crash of the lean man's horse shying and bolting and his startled cry—

"There he is!"

THE sergeant and the Yank went to that spot immediately. Neddy lay on his face, a red wound in his back, and the broken half of a lance across him to show how it had been done. The sergeant dismounted and turned him over. Then he covered the body's face with his cap and mounted again.

The lean man came galloping back and looked down at his former comrade with tight lips. The sergeant looked about at the silent forest and his face darkened.

"I wisht I 'ad the —— 'ere as done that!" he muttered. "They must 'ave been lurkin' 'ere all the while, a-watchin' us on the road. An' so when Neddy comes in among 'em they does 'im in, and then runs!"

"They're gone now, for sure," said the Yank, "or the horses would show us."

The horses moved about restlessly, snorting at the smell of blood, but their ears kept

going and did not settle to any one direction.

"They've gone," agreed the sergeant. "We'd best go ourselves. The captain will want to know summat of this. Their patrols must be edgin' in on us."

The three went out into the hot sunlight again, crossed the dusty field and took the high road in the direction of Senlis.

The road in this section went through the forest, skirting the western edge, all the way from Compiègne. The main force, a brigade of cavalry, to which the regiment that had sent out this patrol belonged, had left their bivouacs in Compiègne and reconnoitered in the direction of Amiens.

The dim recesses of the great Forest of Compiègne had bothered the British command, but they had contented themselves with sending patrols along the roads that traversed the western section, none of which went father east than Carrefour du Moulin and Puits du Roi, where a number of intersecting roads made a kind of wheel.

The patrol marched at a walk with no interval between the troopers. This moved the Yank to speech.

"Sergeant," he began, "it's none of my business, but don't you think we'd better open up a bit, have a little more distance between troopers, in case we're fired on?"

The sergeant looked at the Yank soberly.

"By rights I ought to check you," said he, "but I won't as I know you means well. If there's henemy troops amongst these trees, they'll come at us at the charge, an' we'd best stick together an' not scatter about. In South Africa it was different."

The Yank held his peace after that. He felt humbled.

"This is real cavalry warfare," he told himself, "and I've been taught so long that the first thing cavalry must do in a fight is dismount that I don't recognize real cavalry tactics when I see them."

THEY came presently to the road that branches off to Saint Sauveur. They went past it and then halted and took the horses into the woods.

"Now," began the sergeant, "we'd best 'ave a look down this lane. There may be summat down there as we should know about. Larcom, 'old the 'orses. Yank, come with me."

The two went back to the road fork and sat down in the ditch, the sergeant facing so that the could see one road and the Yank the other.

"Yank," began the sergeant, "you're one of them as joined while I was recruitin'; I don't know you. Where did you learn to ride? You never got that seat in our riding-school. I don't wish for to pry into your affairs, an' no offense meant nor none taken I 'ope, so if you don't please to tell me, all well and good."

The Yank laughed.

"I never had any service, sergeant," said he, "but once upon a time I had hopes of a commission in the American cavalry. I lost them, together with my citizenship, and that's why I'm in the British army. I've never amounted to a —— all my life and I figured that this was as good a way to round out a useless career as taking carbolic acid or jumping off Waterloo Bridge."

The Yank saw the startled look in the sergeant's eyes at the mention of loss of citizenship.

"Don't be alarmed, sergeant," he said, laughing louder yet. "It wasn't for treason or anything like that. Let's see, yes, I can give you the exact language of the court:

" 'In that Cadet So and So did, on or about, direct Cadet Somebody Else, Fourth class, to sing the words of a song entitled "Mary Had a Little Lamb," thereby assuming unwarranted authority over the person of said Cadet Somebody Else, Fourth class. Findings, Guilty; Sentence, to be dismissed.'

"There you have it, all in a nutshell."

The sergeant said nothing after that, but produced a black and evil-smelling pipe from his tunic, which he sucked noisily, for want of tobacco to put therein.

"Yes," he observed finally, "this is a fine war to get killed in. There'll be a big action before the fortnight's up. Six days of retreatin'. It's time we was puttin' our backs to the wall an' not to the enemy. I think we'll be doin' it right soon now. That officer 'e was from the Cherubims. They sent 'im out to round up the patrols and bring 'em in. We was to rejoin at Verberie, but 'e gives me word to rejoin at that other place—Rocquemont, was it?—which means a change of plans an' a fight probably."

"What do they call that regiment the Cherubims for?" asked the Yank.

The sergeant grinned.

"In peace times they wears cherry

trousers. You needs to say it quick to get the joke."

The Yank meditatively stuck his spur into the bank of the ditch and pulled it out again.

"These tunics aren't much for hot weather wear, are they?" he said.

"That's something about the British service I like," he continued. "They have such fine traditions. I don't know a regiment in the American service that has a traditional nickname. I don't know one where even the officers know its battle record. They don't have crests or distinctive badges or anything to make a man proud of his regiment, beyond a few shooting and athletic trophies."

"Aye," agreed the sergeant, sucking his pipe. "The honor of a regiment is a fine thing. It stiffens the men's backs, it holds them to it when nothing else will. I've seen it time and again, when the Boojers 'ad us in a 'ot place that honly the thought that they'd be disgracin' the regiment kept 'em from doin' a cut and run. But this is a very hold regiment. We was formed in 1685, the Earl of Peterborough's horse, an' your bally country wasn't 'ardly discovered then."

"Why, you must be the oldest outfit in the British army!"

The sergeant laughed, looked at the sun, looked down the road again, and then got to his feet, brushing himself.

"I guess we'll trot along," said he. "There'll be a fair amount of men tryin' to get across the river below us, an' we've got quite a way to go before we gets billeted. I guess we're pretty close in, or else the henemy patrols 'aven't got down this far. If there was any kind of a force in these woods, we'd have seen sign of them by now.

"It was a patrol same as us what killed Neddy. It'll take six of them to pay for 'im. I'll settle that bill one of these days soon. Now as to bein' the holdest, not by a far ways. The two Life Guards an' the Blues is both older than us, an' there's a plenty more as hold. We was Hold England afore any one ever knew of America, an' we had a army since we started in trade."

"True enough," said the Yank. "I know of several times that fine old army got a good poke in the nose from a lot of farmers." This last, however, he said to himself.

They went back to the horses, the sergeant put away his pipe, and they moved out once more.

THE patrol kept at a walk. The roadway was paved and trotting would be hard on the horses. The road was deserted. The forest lined either side and arched above, but the heat penetrated just the same, for there was a goodly space in the center of the arch for the sun to shoot through his rays.

The patrol had come down from Compiègne that morning, halting for a little time at every cross-roads, then going on again. Until the affair in which Neddy had met his death, they had seen no sign of the enemy. The troopers did not converse.

The Yank mopped his brow and wondered at the loneliness of the road. It had not been that way yesterday on the road north of Compiègne. British infantry, British cavalry, transport wagons loaded with carcasses of beef and bales of hay. Refugees, some riding, some walking beside wagons loaded with their household goods and driving their cows ahead of them. The poorer sort pushed barrows or carried their few treasures in their arms.

There were no men of military age among them, very few men at all. The women wept bitterly, some hysterically, for the stories of German atrocities had been circulated freely, stories of burning alive, of children's hands being cut off, and others quite unthinkable. These things always grow in the telling.

The Yank's regiment had passed some French cuirassiers, huge men on huger horses, wearing helmets and breast-plates of the same pattern that they wore at Waterloo. He had noticed then, that though the French were halted, every man sat stiffly in his saddle.

In the British cavalry, the instant the column stopped, every man dismounted. Since the patrol had left the regiment, the Yank reflected sadly that he had been as much on his feet as he had on his horse.

"But I'll still be riding when all those red-legged Frenchmen have killed their last horse," he assured himself.

"Cheero, Yank!" said the lean man. "It cawn't last forever! We'll make another stand one of these days and them youlans will learn somethink."

"I'm not glooming," answered the Yank.

"I was just thinking that we must be pretty far on the flank not to see any troops at all. Remember how the road was jammed yesterday?"

"If we was near a lot of troops we wouldn't need no patrol," replied the lean man.

His tone implied that the Yank was a recruit and so devoid of understanding.

"Did you notice what that lance was made of that killed Neddy?" asked the sergeant suddenly. "Aluminum, it was. I wager they snap like so much glass."

After that he subsided again and said nothing until the patrol came out of the forest on the hill above Verberie. Below them clouds of dust arose in the red rays of the sun and to the left, across the railroad, a thick column of black smoke towered.

"'Old up," cried the sergeant. "Now what's this 'ere? That smoke's from summat burning."

This seemed very probable, but the men on the hill were unable to tell what it was that burned.

"There's no firing," suggested the Yank.

"True enough," agreed the sergeant. "Let's go down. We'll meet summun shortly."

Sure enough, on their way across the marsh the patrol encountered two cyclists, one assisting the other to make some repair to his machine.

"What lot are you from?" called the sergeant.

"Rile Fusileers," answered the cyclists.

"Is that a fire down there?"

"Aye," was the answer. "There's a proper fire down there, there is. They're a burnin' of officers' kits, they are."

"What for?"

"Why, to myke room in the wagins fer the hinfantry to ride."

The lean man sighed.

"I had a chanct to be a batman," he murmured, "but I put it by. It's a proper job, it is, a batman with no kit to take care huf. I never 'ad no luck. I was drawer in a pub onct, but the owner went bankrupt the first fortnight I was there."

He sighed again.

"Did you see any cavalry on this side of the river?" asked the sergeant.

"Aye."

"What lot were they?"

"They didn't sye," said the cyclist, and went back to fixing the broken cycle.

"You'd know they was City of Lunnun men the minute they opened their blooming traps, wouldn't you?" the lean man asked the Yank.

"Sure would!" agreed the Yank. "Look at that jam across the river!"

Verberie was a fairly good-sized town. There were two roads into it, the one through the forest that the patrol had followed, and the one that crossed to Port Salut and joined the high-road to Clermont.

The town itself was on top of a very steep hill, and weary men could be seen crawling up its side. At the foot of the hill, across the river, in the river, and among the houses of Verberie, was a swarming mass of men, horses, wagons and guns. The patrol crossed the marsh and climbed the hill.

"Nip under that shed," directed the sergeant, "while I take a look about and see if our lot 'as been this way."

The Yank and the lean man dismounted and led their horses under a shed in one of the yards. The lean man prowled about until he found a high-wheeled cart into which he climbed and composed himself to sleep. The Yank had no desire for sleep. He hunted through the pockets of his tunic until he found a cigaret end, hoarded since the night before, and this he lighted.

Then he began to watch the columns filing by the gate. They were a tired-looking lot. Scotch regiments, their kilts muddy and torn, infantry covered with white dust, and battery after battery of guns, all bearing the marks of hard service—a splintered wheel, a cracked spoke, harness mended with rope and scars of shell fragments on the gun-tubes.

The men themselves, though weary, did not appear discouraged. There was no sign of apprehension in their faces, only a quiet curiosity as to how much farther they would have to march, and when they would get their next meal. There had been no action for the last two or three days, and morale had had a chance to pick up.

"They were beginning to get their tails down in the middle of the week," thought the Yank. "After Audregnies and Landrecies any one's nerve would begin to go. I wonder how long this is going to last. It can't keep on forever because we'll be at the Spanish border very soon. I suppose Paris will have to be given up, but there'll be a fight first, I hope. I hope it won't be like the last two or three shows."

THE Yank thought rather bitterly of the fight at Audregnies, where a regiment of British lancers had charged unbroken infantry protected by wire fences. That sort of thing used cavalry up rather fast. At Le Cateau all branches of the service had received a hammering.

At this point, the cigaret end burned the Yank's lips and he turned from contemplation of the parade to go back to the shed where he had left his horse. The Yank loosened the girth and inspected the horse's back by lifting one end of the saddle. All well. He picked up the horse's feet and rapped the shoes, looked for stones, and prayed mentally that the blacksmith would be spared to the troop, for he was a good one.

The patrol had put their blanket rolls and spare kit on a wagon, so that they would have as little weight as possible on the horses, for patrolling is likely to be arduous work and is best done with stripped saddles Flies buzzed, the lean man snored in the cart, and the shadows lengthened. The sergeant still tarried. At last hoofs clattered on the stones of the yard.

"Mount!" called the sergeant. "No time for nappin' now. Mount an' let's move out of 'ere."

The lean man awoke and rubbed his eyes. Then he straightened his cap and climbed out of the cart. The Yank tightened his girth, gave a tug at his sword carrier to be sure it was secure and mounted. As they went out of the yard the sergeant began to curse.

" 'Ow long do you suppose it will take for them to learn," said he, "not to hencumber cavalry with guns? I've seen it afore, many's the time.

"In South Africa it was the same. Halways a waitin' for the precious guns, halways a 'altin' whilst a carriage was pulled out of a 'ole, or a broken wheel was repaired, or we couldn't 'alt at such a place because there wasn't cover for the limbers an' we couldn't 'alt summurs else because there was no place to park the guns, an' hevery road 'ad to be hexplored to be sure the guns could negotiate it.

"Now they're a-doin' of the very same thing, lettin' the cavalry sit about an' chew their stirrup leathers whilst the 'orse batteries makes up their minds whether it's too 'ot for to march or not."

The Yank said nothing, as befitted his rank and station. They went out the same road as they had come, but swung to the west toward a place that a road marker said was Saintines. The road followed the edge of the marsh on the other side of which was the railroad embankment.

Then Yank addressed the lean man.

"What's to prevent a hostile force from occupying that railroad line, and knocking us into a tin can? Do you see any of our patrols on that other road?"

The lean man was not alarmed.

"I don't see nothink to fear," said he. "We 'aven't seen 'air or 'ide of a youlan since Cambry. I 'ear they've begun to retire."

He took his feet out of the stirrups and let them hang to show his coolness of mind and also to rest his legs a bit, for they were still cramped from the position he had assumed when he slept in the cart.

The sergeant turned his eye upon the two troopers.

"Larcom," said he, "trot up ahead a bit and act as point. We're a-goin' away from the main body again and there's no use of takin' chances."

The lean man thumped his horse's ribs and trotted up the road for fifty yards or so, when he slowed to a walk again. When he was beyond earshot the sergeant turned to the Yank.

"What's your name?" he inquired.

"Collins," answered the Yank.

"Well, Collins," continued the sergeant, "we'll 'ave no discussing horders amongst ourselves. We hobeys them as we're told. It's not military for you to be sayin' to Larcom 'ere—

" 'What's to prevent the henemy doin' thus 'n so?'

"Like as not 'e'll repeat it to summun an' it's hard enough to keep the men's spirits up as it is, without 'avin' our own rank 'n file tryin' to shove 'em down. Don't do it no more. It may seem strange to you, but I've been through all this afore, you know.

" 'Ere we have an army, its flank in the air, an' because there hasn't been any sign of the henemy within the last few hours, not a patrol out nor any attempt to guard the flank. In South Africa we learned that when the henemy don't bother you for some time, double the outposts. I calls this whole thing a mad'ouse.

"We fights a fight, mows down the Germans, 'old our positions, and when we've got 'em on the run proper, comes the horder

to mount up an' retreat at the gallop. That's no way to fight with cavalry. An' when we're supposed to retreat summurs, when we get there we 'ave to go summurs else. When we left the regiment this morning, we was told to rejoin at Verberie.

"This 'ere officer from the Cherubims tells us to rejoin at Rocquemont. I meets up with the brigade major in Verberie an' reports to 'im.

" ' 'Oo's your orficer?' says he.

"I reminds 'im of the horder that due to a shortage of orficers steady N. C. O's of long service will command patrols. This is to let 'im know as 'e was talkin' to summun as knew 'is business.

" 'Rejoin at Nery,' says 'e. 'That's where we'll bivouac tonight. If you 'ave trouble findin' the road, follow the guns. They'll be delayed,' says 'e, 'for they won't be able to water farther on an' will 'ave to wait their turn 'ere.'

"Follow the guns! They'll be delayed! 'E's —— well right they'll be delayed!

"As I was a sayin', when we gets to Nery, wherever it is, after a perishin' 'ard time of it, probably we'll catch merry —— for showin' hup there instead of summurs else."

"But aren't horse batteries useful when it comes to an action?" asked the Yank, more to turn the sergeant's thoughts to a pleasanter channel than because he wanted to know.

"No," said the sergeant. "They are not. They're fine to get a squadron all tangled hup in, they're fine to 'ave to dismount an' take cover to protect the retirement of, an' like as not 'ave your 'orses stampeded whilst you're a doing it. They're fine to give you away by makin' a lot of smoke, but as for anything by way of doin' good, I never seen it."

They went by an orchard where horses were being picketed and at the next farm a line of infantrymen were waiting to be assigned billets in the stable. Farther on were more infantry and a regiment of howitzers. The artillerymen hailed the lean man and indulged in tremendous mirth, but he rode on in seeming contempt of them.

"Artillery is all right in their place," observed the sergeant, "but that place ain't with a regiment as wants to get summurs in a 'urry. This lot must be that division that got the 'ammerin' Wednesday. They looked knocked about a bit."

There was a group of men under a tree engaged in peeling potatoes and putting them into a pot suspended over a fire of twigs. These men called derisively to the lean man.

"Don't be down'earted, cavalry," they jeered, "death or glory!"

"Un's lost a ha'penny," suggested a huge man in shirt and suspenders. "Ho, cavalry, you won't find ut mounted. Loyt doon an' look for ut, an not be peerin' ovver horse's neck loike thot!"

This brought a roar of laughter from the men, at which the lean man's horse shied, not violently, for he was too tired, but still enough of a shy to take him half-way across the road. The lean man swayed sidewise and then slowly, gently, like a falling oak, tumbled to the ground. The horse trotted into the fields and began to eat grass. The soldiers about the fire strangled with laughter.

"What the —— —— does this mean!" cried the sergeant, spurring his horse to a trot.

He and the Yank came up as the lean man got to his feet in a dazed manner, feeling of his bruised leg and unwinding his pouches and bandoleer from about his neck.

"What's the matter, Larcom?" asked the sergeant sternly.

"I'm hit," said Larcom.

THE infantry within hearing lay down upon the ground in utter helplessness. A grinning private appeared drawing Larcom's horse after him by the bridle.

" 'Ere, noble six 'undred," said the private, "catch 'olt. Gentle 'im an' 'e won't be wicious."

The sergeant looked at this one sternly, and the private departed hastily, not quite so cheerfully as he had come.

"Mount!" barked the sergeant.

The lean man climbed into the saddle.

" 'It!" snorted the sergeant. "Wot was you 'it with? A bright idea? It's a wonder it wasn't the killin' of you! Move out!"

The lean man moved out sadly.

"I guess I must 'ave gone to sleep in the saddle," said he. "I was dreaming somethink, an' thought I was 'it."

"You're liable to find you're not dreamin' the next time you're 'it, and there won't be no doubts about wot it was that 'it you either. When we get to billets, my man, something will 'it you proper!"

The sergeant continued to speak even after Larcom had gone on.

"I thought 'e was bobbin' 'is 'ead too much to be awake, an' I was going to check 'im anyways for loungin' in the saddle. Loungin' in the saddle and layin' all about makes sore backs an' sore backs don't do any one no good, 'orse or man. I wonder why we can't turn off here. It's better goin' for the 'orses."

This was delivered partly to the Yank and partly as a soliloquy.

A narrow road branched off to the right across the fields and this the sergeant proposed to follow. He recalled the penitent Larcom and herded him up this new road. The patrol was still forced to walk, for the going was uphill, the ground rising to the hills that bordered the valley.

The ground was softer and as they climbed higher, more of the country and the troops that thronged it became visible. Half-way up the hill they passed another farm, sitting in the midst of a tangle of cart paths. There was a staff of some kind quartered there, for bicycles and horses stood at the gate, and a huge car, with bits of brasswork still glimmering under the dust that covered them, was parked under a tree.

A month ago that car had been used to take merry parties into the country for the week-end, or bring the master down to town for a visit to the bank. Now the car carried red hats about on their travels here and there, and the master himself, who had volunteered to drive his own car, was asleep in the tonneau, in such a state that the lowest groom in his stables would have disdained to recognize him.

The setting sun reddened the distant tree-tops and colored the many columns of smoke that rose from the cook fires.

"There's a division here," remarked the sergeant, "but they are not all in place yet. Mark where that column is bivouackin'."

He pointed to where a regiment of cavalry was crossing a field, moving in line of squadrons. As the Yank watched, the ranks halted and then with a confusion of movement, the troopers dismounted. A moment and all was still again, line after line of horses and empty saddles.

The Yank caught his breath. No true son of the sword can see a splendid cavalry command without a thrill, no matter if it be the hundredth one he has seen.

The Yank remembered an organization to which he had once belonged, and how much was made of unison of movement in dismounting, and how, when the guidon dipped ever so slightly, each gray-clad leg swung over the saddle and to the ground, and each trooper stood to horse with a click. But that was playing at being a soldier.

"I'm glad this is real," thought the Yank. "I'm glad that I'm not playing soldier any more."

He reached back and touched his sword hilt.

"I may flesh this thing within the next twenty-four hours. I hope so anyway. Every one else is having luck; this lot ought to strike some."

"Hi!" cried Larcom, waving his hand toward the cavalry in the distance.

"What's up?" cried the sergeant, wheeling his horse.

The Yank came from his trance with a shock. The cavalry had mounted up and were tearing for the shelter of some trees at a run. They looked like a herd of animals at the approach of danger.

"What's started them?" cried the sergeant.

The men of the patrol searched the countryside with their eyes, but could see nothing. There was no dust cloud to tell of approaching uhlans, no cotton tufts of shrapnel in the sky, no sign of any danger.

"What's that noise?" asked the sergeant.

There was a low humming that seemed to fill the air.

"Look! Look!" cried the sergeant, pointing upward.

OVER their heads was a monoplane, a German by the shape of it, that flew in a great circle over Verberie, followed along a road, and then turned in the direction of the field in which the patrol was. There was no need for the sergeant to give any orders. He, the Yank, and the lean man put spur to flank and departed.

"Pull up!" shouted the sergeant when they had reached the shelter of a grove. "Pull up! Let's see what the beggar's a doin' of."

When the Yank had succeeded in stopping his horse and had quieted the animal to the extent that he did nothing worse than rear once in a while, he squinted out through the trees to see what had become of the airplane. He could not see it. The patrol moved cautiously out to the edge of the

grove and there beheld the hostile ship, like some unclean bird of prey, slanting away across the fields.

As it soared over the farm they had passed a short time before, something gleamed beneath it like an incandescent bulb. Then the plane was gone out of sight, skimming low across the river and over the green billows of the Forest of Compiegne on the other side.

"What does that look like?" asked the Yank.

"I should say it looked like trouble for them as is in that farm," answered the sergeant. "It's time we was a gettin' back to our troop. Larcom, ride with us."

When they had gained the next rise the village of Nery lay below them, its houses gleaming in the dusk. The fields round about were filled with horses, and noisy with the shouts of men, the whinnying of their mounts, rattling of wheels, clanging of metal, and all the thousand noises of a brigade of cavalry making its bed for the night.

"This is us," cried the sergeant joyfully.

"The guns didn't delay us so long after all, did they?" said the Yank.

"They probably stayed behind," grunted the sergeant, "and we'll be turned out in the middle of the night to go an' get 'em. I've been through this before, you know.

"In South Africa when we 'ad guns with us, an' they was not in camp by nightfall, it meant a midnight parade to save them, or a day's chase for to get them back from the Boojers as took 'em. I 'ope they fell into the marsh. We'll be shut of them. Now let's go report. What did you say your name was now?"

The sergeant peered closely at the Yank.

"Collins," smiled the Yank.

"First name?"

"Tom."

"Huh," grunted the sergeant. "Whatever was it as made you take that name?"

"In my country," explained the Yank, "they have a long silver drink, cool and delicious, that is like a breath of violets over boundless fields of snow. It's called a Tom Collins, and so I took its name for the pleasant memories it brought."

The sergeant coughed dryly and then spat.

"——," said he disgustedly. "—— what a thirst you've give me. I'll never see you again without a dry throat. This comes o' gettin' chummy with a trooper."

He led the way into the town without further word, found the adjutant of the regiment and reported the result of the day's patrol to him. Then the three troopers went out through the backyards of the houses to the field where C squadron was bivouacking.

As they were unsaddling, a rattling of carriages and clank of trace-chains made them look to the south. They could dimly make out an artillery column wheeling in to park.

" 'Ow many is there?" asked the sergeant. "I can't see without me glasses."

The Yank counted.

"Six guns," said he. "They're all there. We'll get a night's sleep after all."

"Six guns," muttered the sergeant, "all cuddled together nice and cosy by that pump 'ouse or whatever it is, as is got a nice tall chimney for a haimin' point, an' right where anything that gets thrown at 'em is certain to land on us."

The sergeant picked up his sword and went off toward the houses while the Yank removed his tunic and prepared to feed and water. As he went toward a pile of hay he nearly fell over a silent form on the ground. He bent over it. It was Larcom, his cap still on his head and his spurs still on his heels, just as he had dismounted. He lay face down, arms at his sides, like a tailor's dummy blown over by the wind.

"Let the poor beggar sleep," said the Yank to himself. "It may be his last chance."

The squadron had finished feeding before the patrol had come in, so the Yank completed his task of giving supper to the three horses unaided. The picket guard lent a hand in shaking down the hay and requested a little information regarding the events of the patrol's journey.

"We didn't see a thing," said the Yank, "except one of our own patrols."

"Where's the other 'orse?" asked the picket guard.

"What horse?" asked the Yank.

"Why, there was four of you. I seen you go out myself."

"Oh, yes, I remember, we left one man on the road to guide the horse batteries in."

"Wa-a-lker!" sang the picket guard derisively, but the Yank made no reply.

He decided that if the news that one of the patrol had been killed was to get around, Larcom or the sergeant would have to start

it, and then any penalties for betrayal of secrets would fall upon them. If a rumor-monger was caught in that command, when morale was at such a low ebb, it was likely to go very hard with him. The Yank gathered his weapons and accouterments and went up to the town, his only thought now to find a place to cast himself down and sleep.

Of all the fatigues of war, that which follows a mounted march is the worst. An infantryman can hike twenty miles and be exhausted at the end. It takes two or three hundred miles to bring a lorry-driver to his last gasp. But neither foot-soldier nor lorry-driver goes to his bed with half the bone-racking agony that wrings a mounted man at the end of a forced march.

Every muscle cries out, every nerve twangs, it is exquisite torment to move a limb. The chafe of the saddle, the pounding of the carbine, the grinding of a misplaced buckle, the rasping of the stirrup leather on the shin bone, the dust of the column in nose, eye and throat, the spine-racking trot for a hundred yards, the pulling up, and then the shambling walk until a loss of distance compels another pounding trot; all these the cavalryman knows.

And when he comes at last to camp, he can not cast off his pack and sleep where he falls as can his brother of the infantry. He must water, feed and groom his mount, and not only his own, but several extra mounts including those of the officers. Then he must clean his accouterments and after that he may sleep, unless it is already daylight.

MOVING with the patrol away from the troop, the Yank had escaped much of the discomfort ofa march with the column, but patroling is a hard task in itself and they had done so much running down forest paths and halting at cross-roads and climbing trees, that the name-sake of the drink of violets and snow was weary enough.

"Now," thought he, "I've got to prowl around and find my blankets. First, though, I'd better eat. Then sleep."

He hunted up the cook fire and ate some bread and potatoes, washed down with tea. Then, bewailing the fact that he had no tobacco, he went in search of his blankets.

A weary hunt through the wagon park located these, and a few inquiries told him that his squadron was billeted in the field to the south of the village, where he had left his horse. On his way thither he met Larcom, stumbling along with a blanket over his arm.

"Where you going?" called the Yank.

"Ho, is that you?" asked the lean man. "I'm 'untin' a place to sleep. I'm fed up with sleepin' in the wet grass. I'm a goin' to bivouac in a waggin, I am."

"Where is there one?"

" 'Ard by 'ere. Come on, there's room for two hov us. I'm fair tired, I am, after trottin' around them roads all day."

The Yank followed him to a wagon parked just this side of the houses. Alas, when they raised the curtain they found that the driver had invited a friend, so that there remained but room for one more to creep in. Naturally, since it was his find, the lean man crawled in. For once he was thankful for his leanness, for there was not a great deal of room there. The Yank went sadly away.

"I'm not going to sleep in this wet grass," he grumbled after a while. "There surely must be some shed I can get under."

He went back toward the houses again. His regiment was quartered in the west side of the town and the houses were given over to the officers and sergeants. What few barns there were would be full of officers' mounts, with their attendant batmen. The cooks and scavengers of the brigade and regimental messes would occupy every place that was not filled by some N. C. O., but the Yank hoped he might get his head under cover just the same.

It was a fruitless task. Snores came from nearly every window and barn door, and those that did not elicit snores, showed officers bending over maps about a candle-lighted table. The Yank felt his weariness descend more heavily on him, dragging at his limbs like iron weights.

What a fool he had been to enlist! To risk his life in an alien army, fighting for a cause that did not concern him in the slightest. His head sagged on his chest.

As he turned down a path between the houses, a tiny gleam of white on the dusty ground caught his eye. He stopped and, in spite of the agony of stiff neck and lame back, bent down.

"My blinking eye!" cried he. "It's a cigaret!"

A real cigaret, dropped by some officer, perhaps. The Yank seized it and looked

hurriedly around to see if he were observed.

"Oh, my back!" he whispered gleefully.

And as if that were not enough, at the end of the lane he found a shed, a lean-to built against the wall of a stable, for the shelter of the inevitable high-wheeled cart. A hasty exploration showed that it was empty. The Yank dumped his blankets under the cart, spread them out, took out the seat cushion for a pillow and was about to remove his outer clothing, when a thought occurred to him.

"If I smoke this cigaret now," he thought, "some one will smell it and then I'll be a popular man. If I get two puffs out of it I'll be lucky. No, sir; I won't light up here. I'll go out in the fields where I can finish it all myself. Not so bad after all. A bed under cover and a whole fag. I haven't had one for some long time."

He went up the street to the north end of the village, where the other dragoon regiment of the brigade was quartered. The hussar regiment occupied the east side, all of the horses being picketed in the fields.

"Here," thought the Yank, "is a fine place."

He was beyond the farthest picket-line, on the edge of a little gully across which was black woods. He hunted a match for a moment, found one, lighted it and held it to the end of his cigaret.

"If there's a 'un out there, 'e'll be a-snipin' of you," said a voice.

The Yank groaned and looked around. He could make out a dim outline, a form that was unmistakable. It was the sergeant who had commanded the patrol.

"Whato," said the Yank. "You gave me a start! Have a drag?"

"Aye," said the sergeant. "I see as you 'ave the proper spirit for a recruit. You'd better let me smoke that fag. I'm an older man than you an' if I get ruined it won't be much of a loss."

He shifted a sword that he carried to the crook of his left elbow and reached out his hand. The Yank gave him the cigaret. The sergeant inhaled, while the Yank watched the spark travel rapidly up the cigaret. Oh, what a drag! The sergeant handed him back the remainder of the cigaret.

"Take it," said the sergeant. "I never smoke them, only I 'aven't 'ad a bit of 'backy fer me pipe for a long time. I never 'ad much use for fags. They're like takin' a mouthful of Lunnun fog, an' not 'alf so satisfyin'."

The Yank proceeded to smoke himself.

From the fields came the stamp of the horses, shrill squeals and the thud of hoofs on ribs as impatient chargers requested their fellows on the line to make room for them. There were voices down there in the darkness, clear yet indistinguishable. A wagon rattled on the road, there were faint snatches of song from the other side of the village, where the Yank's dragoons were quartered.

"It's a pleasant night," said the Yank at last.

"Aye," said the sergeant. "Do you notice a lack of anything?"

"Nothing but beds," said the Yank. "Beds and tobacco."

The sergeant snorted.

"I thought you said as you'd 'ad service. Do you see any outposts, any pickets, any security for this hencampment at all?"

"No," said the Yank shamefacedly. "I don't. But why are they necessary? We're in the middle of the British army, and we haven't seen any enemy for three days."

Again the sergeant snorted.

"'Oo killed Neddy?" he asked. "'Ow do you know as we're in the middle of the army? We 'ave arrayed ag'inst us a halert an' active henemy, as is got youlans by the thousand. Them youlans is the dandy lads for drivin' in on places like this. This morning we lost a man to them. Tonight we might lose some more. I was thinkin' I might get a chance to even up the score, as I was takin' me bit of a walk."

Here he rattled his sword ever so slightly.

"You never should be without it," he continued in response to the Yank's exclamation. "They're a fine dandy thing for killin' a man. In South Africa the henemy would creep in a'most to our blankets. I got the 'abit there of carryin' me pin about with me.

"It is not 'eavy an' gives a man a bit of swank, like a toff's walkin'-stick. Well, I'm fer bed. We 'ad a proper ride today an' we're like to 'ave another tomorrow."

THE Yank, taking a last drag that burned his lips, stamped out the butt, and he and the sergeant went back through the lines toward the town. The hussar regiment was asleep in the field,

snoring heavily. Horses whinnied, pounding their feet on the ground. There was the *chock! chock!* of hoofs on ribs, and the raucous cry, "Ah, —— —— yer, wot are you abaht there?" from the picket guard.

"They have the guns in a fine place," remarked the sergeant. "Fancy tryin' to charge through such a mess! Well, I'm off 'ere. Good night, Yank."

"Good night," answered the Yank.

He went on to his shed, thinking that the sergeant had left him purposely, so that no one would see them together. In the fields they would not attract notice, but in the town, where a candle might gleam on the sergeant's whistle cord, it was a different matter. Sergeants are supposed to have little to do with troopers in an informal way.

When he came to his shed, the Yank paused, resting his hand against one of the posts that supported the roof. He listened to the sounds of the bivouac, now a faint murmur, for the command was weary, and went early to bed. Two thousand horses in those fields and twelve hundred swords.

Swords, indeed! The Yank stepped into the shed where his kit was piled and picked up his own. Then he went out into the warm night again, under the stars.

All his life long he had wanted to go to war. His only ambition had been to be an officer of cavalry, his only ideal to serve his country. And this had been denied because of some wild impossible regulation, some infraction of a rule that was never kept, and that had been broken time and again by the very men who had sentenced him.

He was at war now, he had seen men die in battle, had heard shots fired in anger, had already been present on three stricken fields. A real war, such as he had never dreamed of, save as a romantic vision. Real war, with cuirassiers, hussars and dragoons, with lancers, with cavalry in bearskin shakos.

Men galloped about in breastplate and helmet, regiments attacked other regiments mounted, flags waved, bands played, here in this very town sergeants went walking with a sword under their arms.

The Yank drew a deep breath and struck the ground with the ferrule of his scabbard. He drew his sword with a whistling *swish.*

"Back home," said he, "in God's country, my class are second lieutenants. Tomorrow their troops commanders will say to them 'Mr. Spurchains, see what you can do to get up a football team in this troop,' or, 'Mr. Gunboot, I want you to look after the mess accounts more carefully. We're spending too much money.'

"And at that time I may be riding to the attack. I may be in a charge. This sword —this sword——"

He shook it, feeling the balance of the blade and heavy hilt.

"This very sword may be blooded. I wonder what it feels like to kill a man with a sword! It must be our turn soon. The other lots can't have all the luck!"

He returned his sword to its scabbard and went back to the shed, where he spread his blankets and then got down on hands and knees to clear away any stray stones.

Some one shook him by the shoulder.

"Leave me alone," said the Yank. "I'm just trying to clear away these stones."

Somehow he had difficulty in speaking. Then his legs seemed to undergo a sudden change. Instead of being bent under him they were straightened out, and instead of kneeling, he found himself on his back. Why, it was light! The hand on his shoulder shook him again.

"Gittup!" said a voice. "We're movin' out of 'ere shortly."

The Yank was fully awake by now and he got stiffly to his feet.

"Oh, my back!" he exclaimed. "What time is it? Gee, I don't remember lying down. Three-thirty, huh? And a foggy morning."

The man who had awakened him dragged the cart from under the shed and inspected it. It seemed that he was going to requisition it to carry forage in. The camp coming to life murmured in the mist.

The Yank prowled around until he discovered a pump and having filled the trough below it, he removed his tunic and shirt and proceeded to wash. Two other men appeared, clad only in their own virtue, and with towels about their middles. They likewise made for the trough and began to splash water on each other.

"Good morning!" they greeted the Yank. "Feeling fit?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," said the Yank.

His heart failed him after that. This pair of Adams was the brigadier and his staff major. Evidently they thought that the Yank was an officer. Enlisted men in their undershirts look much the same as

officers, but the Yank had a full set of teeth, a thing not common in the British rank and file. The three continued to wash.

"—— this mist," exclaimed the brigadier. "We can't march in this soup. We ought to be well away from here by four-thirty!"

"I sha'n't be surprized if it clears before then," said the major. "It's going to be another scorcher today. I shall be glad when this everlasting marching is done with."

"So shall I," said the brigadier.

He buried his face in the towel and at that moment the Yank gathered his own clothing in one sweep and departed. The fog closed behind him like a thick curtain. Back to his shed he hurried, seized his kit, and then to the picket-line, where for the next half-hour he busied himself in shaking down hay, feeding oats, watering, grooming and saddling up. He hurried as fast as he could, for there would be little time for breakfast.

The fog still held, although it was getting thinner as the daylight increased. A hurried breakfast, and back to the line again.

The town hummed like a top now. Men shouted, horses squealed, the guns to the south banged and clattered as they were drawn out of park and hitched in The Yank himself felt cheery and began to sing a song that he liked quite well:

"Oh, oh, that camp-meetin' band,
"Let me tell you, sister, it's the best in the land!"

He adjusted his girth, shoved two fingers under the curb-chain, tugged tentatively at his sword and gave his blanket roll a settling pound with his fist. All seemed secure. He swung himself into the saddle, rose once or twice in the stirrups, then drew his word and dismounted.

"This sword," he thought, "ought to have a little cleaning. I don't want to give any one lockjaw by sticking a rusty sword in them."

There were spots of rust on the blade and he began to rub at them with a handful of earth. A commotion in the fog made him pause in his labor.

"Hye says as 'ow that 'orse wasn't properly tied up!"

"Hye says as 'ow 'e never was on this picket-line!"

"Don't give me no imperence! 'Asn't 'e 'is troop number on 'is 'oof? Where would 'e be picketed?"

THE Yank tucked his sword under his arm and went toward the voices. There was a small group clustered about a tall bay, examining him with interest. In the center of the group a troop sergeant-major held the horse, while another N. C. O. expostulated.

" 'Is saddle is all knocked about," said one of the bystanders, removing his pipe and lifting one of the skirts. " 'E's been an' rolled in it proper."

All inspected the saddle. It was scarred and chipped, and the cantle, that rose from the saddle like the high stern of an ancient galley, had been badly broken.

"Summun will be payin' for that," spoke another soldier.

"Well, 'oos 'orse is it?" cried the sergeant major. "You knows that much, don't you?"

"I 'aven't my book about me," said the other sergeant. "Wot matter does it make anyways?"

The sergeant-major choked and was about to erupt like a volcano.

"I know whose horse that is," spoke up the Yank. "That's Neddy Clyne's horse."

" 'Im as the youlans scragged?" exclaimed the men.

"By —— the Yank's right, so it is! I'd know that step-ladder beast if I seen 'im in a thousand!" cried another.

At this moment the captain appeared.

"What's this about?" he demanded.

The sergeant-major explained.

"I finds this 'orse a-runnin' about loose, sir, and I was askin' the farrier sergeant wot 'e means by allowin' his 'orses to be let run loose an' not unsaddled all night."

"How about it?" asked the officer.

"Why, this 'orse wasn't tied up at all, sir, I knowed very well. It belonged to Trooper Clyne, sir, as was lost yesterday. 'E was on patrol with Collins 'ere," indicating the Yank.

The officer stepped nearer and examined the horse suspiciously. It was easily seen that the beast had not been unsaddled, nor had he had any care for some time. Dust lay thick on his flank and his hoofs were quite white with it. More men began to cluster around until there was quite a crowd there.

"How far away was it that you encountered the enemy?" asked the officer.

"About fourteen kilos, sir," answered the Yank.

"Most 'straw'nary!" muttered the officer.

"Fancy the beast finding his way here through all the British army! This is the most 'straw'nary thing I ever heard of! Well, take care of him. Have them stand to horse, sergeant, we must be ready to move!"

The crowd broke up at once. As the men scattered in all directions, the Yank saw his friend, the sergeant of the patrol, step up to the officer and salute. The sergeant began to talk earnestly and once the officer appeared about to call back the horse, who was being led away into the fog, but he reconsidered and suddenly laughed aloud. He went away slapping his leg.

The Yank made up his mind that the sergeant had been rebuffed and all the weary time the troopers stood waiting for the order to mount, he wondered what the check had been. Something about that horse.

"That was curious," said the Yank to himself, "that that horse should find his way back to the troop all that distance. I've heard of such things before. I wish I had some kind of instinct like that. It would be a tremendous help on patrols."

He inspected his sword which he had been working at all this time. He held the blade out at a level with his eye and squinted along it.

"Not bad," he decided, "but it will stand a little more scrubbing. Well, this is enough for today."

He tossed the sword up by the blade, about to place it in his scabbard. The sergeant who had been in his thoughts so much came by leading his horse and ostensibly inspecting his troopers.

"Morning," said he gruffly.

"Morning," said the Yank. "Did you know that Neddy's horse had come back?"

"Aye," said the sergeant. "'Ave you seen 'im?"

"Sure," said the Yank, hoping that he might draw the sergeant on to tell of his interview with the officer. "What about him?"

"Did you look at 'im closely?"

"Fairly closely."

"Did you notice as 'ow his curb reins was knotted on 'is neck and 'is stirrups was crossed over 'is withers?"

"No, I didn't. But what if they were?"

"You didn't notice as 'is snaffle reins was draggin'?"

"No."

"You believe as that 'orse found 'is way 'ere all by 'imself?"

"Well, he couldn't fly here and the only other way he could get here would be to have some one bring him."

"Hexactly. Well, 'oo would bring 'im?"

"I can't imagine," said the Yank, grinning, for he was beginning to find the sergeant's air of mystery highly amusing.

"Well, then, I'll tell you. The same people brought 'im as killed Neddy."

The Yank very nearly laughed as the officer had done, but he did not dare. An officer may laugh at a sergeant, but a trooper mustn't.

"Let the ranking man laugh first," is a good motto.

"How do you make that out?" asked the Yank when he could keep a straight face.

"Why, them youlans 'as been a doggin' us, an' 'avin' Neddy's 'orse, 'e breaks away from whoever was leadin' 'im and comes down 'ere."

The Yank rested the point of his sword on the ground and twisted it medizatively. Clattering of hoofs in the distance made him look up. Beyond the town, figures of horsemen moved faintly in the mist.

"There goes a patrol," said the sergeant, "within fifteen minutes of marchin'. That's the first one out, I knows very well, for I would 'ave 'eard any others."

"If there are any uhlans in those woods," said the Yank, "that patrol will root 'em out."

"They're more like to get rooted themselves," observed the sergeant.

The Yank laughed and started to replace his sword again.

"What are you doin' with that?" asked the sergeant.

"I was just shining it up a bit."

"Let's 'ave a look at it."

The Yank turned again, and for the next few minutes he listened to an exposition of the sword.

"Isn't it about time we were moving?" he inquired presently.

The sergeant consulted his watch.

"It's five o'clock. We must 'ave 'ad orders to 'old up 'til the mist clears a bit. What's that?"

The noises of the men whistling, horses neighing, kits being thrown into wagons, the *suck suck* of a distant pump, seemed suddenly hushed. The faint rush of galloping hoofs sounded.

"Look there!" cried the sergeant.

Far off, across the fields to the north,

mounted figures dashed, one, two together, another.

"Some one's being run away with," guessed the Yank.

The sergeant fumbled at his whistle-cord, then put his foot into the stirrup and gathered his reins. His face was very stern.

CRACK!

A yellow light gleamed in the fog above their heads. The sergeant's horse reared and plunged, the sergeant was hurled to the ground and his horse bounded away. The Yank grabbed for his own bridle, but missed, and his horse went plunging and kicking out of sight.

Crack-crack-BANG!

There was a rumble, low and thunderous, like the sound of a thousand kettledrums. Louder it swelled and louder. There were yells from the fog, shrieks, commands, cries for help. The thunder came nearer. It was the pounding of thousands of galloping hoofs.

"They're chargin' us!" cried the sergeant. "Run for the 'orses!"

The Yank ran as fast as he could, his heart pounding and his breath coming in gasps. Thank God he had his sword! A wave of horses surged at him from the mist, charging down directly upon him, necks outstretched and nostrils wide.

The Yank stood still, held out his sword directly in front of him and prepared to die. No lance lowered at his breast, no sword flickered at him. He saw flying stirrups, reins dragging on the ground, spare shoes flying on pommels, empty saddles.

"Our own horses!" he cried.

Their own horses, the mounts of the brigade, stampeded by the firing!

A terrific shriek—*BERRAM!*

A sheet of flame, a hot breath in the Yank's face, and he was hurled to the ground. He was up, though, in a second's time, running blindly through the cloud of dust. A shell had burst in the midst of the stampeding horses and he had no desire to see its wreckage. He collided with the sergeant, who had been trying to see what had become of him.

"Steady all!" cried the sergeant. "It's a dismounted attack! They're firin' at the guns! Ah, —— them, I knew they'd fetch us bad luck."

He pointed to where bursting shrapnel jeweled the fog above the southern field. Another shell struck in the village. Rifles cracked.

The Yank, still reeling from the shock of the shell's explosion, and trembling from the narrowness of his escape from being trampled to death, shook his head to try to clear his mind.

Beyond the town, above the fields, yellow flames stabbled the mist where the enemy guns thundered. Machine-guns chattered, men shouted and cried, the field by the factory where the British guns were was all alight with bursting shells. Tumult, horror, shrieks, confusion indescribable. The incessant bursting of the shells was unbearable.

The Yank and the sergeant huddled in the shelter of the house, unable to speak, unable to make themselves heard if they could have formed the words. Both had been in action before, the battles of the previous week, Mons, Landrecies, Auregnies, Cambrai, Le Cateau had been stern enough, but they had known beforehand of the approach of conflict, they had fought in the daylight, and could see the enemy.

This sudden violent attack, this savage firing from the fog, the terrific onslaught of a hidden foe, was a different matter. The two men felt themselves alone in all this sea of horror. Rifles barking, shells banging, horses galloping, whether their own stampeding or the enemy charging, they could not tell.

The Yank was possessed with that deep scarlet terror that seizes a man alone on a battlefield, under the stress of a sudden and vigorous attack. He was unable to tell if any of his comrades lived or not, he could not discover if the enemy had destroyed the brigade immediately, or if the British were making resistance, there was such a —— of sound.

Had the Germans smothered the town with gunfire, or was the brigade replying? Certainly the horse battery had not been put entirely out of action. Three of its six guns coughed bravely. Not rapidly though, not with the same quick flashing, like flame running along a streak of oil, that showed in the fog where the enemy held the heights, but slowly, painfully, like the snarling of a wounded animal, a slow heavy fire that spoke of wounded gunners, of short crews, and of lack of ammunition.

The Yank looked away, toward the east, where machine-guns rattled. There were

two guns in action there firing toward the heights.

"Those are my regiment's guns," thought the Yank, "for we are the only lot in this part of the town."

There was a terrific explosion in the horse-battery field, that made the two troopers cover their heads.

They looked to see what had happened. Apparently nothing; the gun still fired. The Yank watched. Were there still three guns there? It was some time before he could be certain, but there was no doubt at last. But two guns fired. A haystack in the battery field began to blaze. There was a sudden barking from the fog at a little distance.

"Machine-guns," shouted the sergeant in the Yank's ear, who immediately began to run in that direction, gripping his sword.

The sergeant was weaponless, but he hunted about the ground for a moment, and having found that for which he was searching, he followed the Yank. The two ran on, expecting at each step to be mowed down. They fell over bodies and abandoned kits, a pile of dead horses forced a detour, they collided with a collection of benches and tables, where an officers' mess had taken its supper out of doors. The sound increased, as if by an accession of strength.

"What folly," thought the Yank, "for two men to rush a group of machine-guns!"

Suicide! Still, as well die this way as cowering under a house-wall like a rat.

And then, he assured himself, why should he, a broken man, outcast, expatriate and disgraced, leave a stricken field where so many brave men had already died?

The sound of the guns was like rapid hammering now. They must be almost upon them. The sergeant panted at the Yank's shoulder, his eyes wide, and his lips drawn tightly together. The Yank stopped and pointed.

THERE were the guns; *there* was the source of the sound. The sergeant nodded and the two men, shouting hoarsely, charged through the fog. The barking of the guns abruptly receded, and the sound of their firing was lost in the wilderness of noise.

The Yank stopped short and looked about wildly. Was this some new device of the enemy to lure men to their death into the German lines? He heard other guns, similar to those that had disappeared firing, faintly, then the sound was smothered by the crash of a high explosive shell, or the bang of shrapnel.

"Did you ever hear anything like that?" yelled the sergeant. "Lad, this is the best —— fight as never was!"

They were between two houses now and they crouched in the shelter of the wall, while they got back their breath.

PUP-PUP-PUP-PUPUPUPUP!

In front of the house it was, almost within arm's reach. The Yank leaped to his feet, but the sergeant barred the way. The Yank turned his head to see what the sergeant was watching.

There was a window in front of them, in the wall of the house opposite. A line of holes appeared in the casement, like those stitched by a sewing-machine needle moving at high speed. Dust curled from the cracks. The glass disappeared like thin ice on a hot stove melting away before their eyes. Sash, panes and casing disintegrated, curtains fluttered as though in a breeze.

For the space of four or five seconds, no more, the gun fired deafeningly. Abruptly it ceased. The sergeant and the Yank exchanged glances, then they began to crawl along the house-wall. The Yank strained his ears for the sound of voices, the clink of metal, the rattling of a new belt being placed in the gun, but the exploding shells made too great a noise. The gun before the house was still silent.

"They haven't gone," thought the Yank, "or we would have heard them moving away."

Then the sergeant stood up, and the Yank, making his sword whistle, echoed his companion's yell and followed his dash into the street.

The sergeant went down, hands outstretched, and the Yank, following close behind, swerved, only to catch his foot in something and go headlong. He hurt himself cruelly in the fall, but his heart sang, for he felt the machine-gun under him, still hot from the firing.

He floundered in a tangle of arms and gun, then raised himself on one arm and stabbed blindly into the mist with his sword. His searching point felt no resistance.

"Keep down!" cried a voice, "keep down, we've blooming well acted the ruddy fool, we have!"

The Yank turned.

The sergeant was crawling toward him, wriggling along like a fat snake.

"Keep your 'ead down," yelled the sergeant. "We're in a line o' fire 'ere."

"I've got their gun here," cried the Yank.

"Look at it," cried the sergeant and began to swear terribly.

"Are you hit?" asked the Yank.

"No, —— it, no, look at that —— gun!"

The Yank looked. He felt of the metal with his hands.

"——!" he exclaimed.

That corrugated cylinder was not a gun barrel, but a motor. What he had thought was part of the tripod was a handle bar. His dumbfounded gaze discovered wheels and beyond the wheel, a foot clad in an ammunition boot and puttees. The foot was motionless and the leg to which it belonged ended in a heap of old clothes.

"It's a motor-cycle," cried the Yank.

"You're ruddy well right!" agreed the sergeant. "This 'ouse is brigade 'eadquarters. Keep your 'ead down! We 'eard the exhausts of the motor-cycles as went away for 'elp."

"But the gun we heard that wrecked the window!"

"It was this fellar we 'eard, and the gun that wrecked the window blooming well scragged 'im. Well, I 'aven't no use fer me weapons now."

The sergeant opened his hands in resignation and two large stones fell to the ground. The Yank stared at him.

"They mightn't 'ave been no good anyways," went on the sergeant. "I've 'eard as 'ow them Germans 'as uncommon 'ard 'eads. But they would 'ave been as much use as that wabster's needle you're a-huggin' to your bosom. Why don't you throw it away?"

"I want to keep it," said the Yank, swishing his sword back and forth. "I want to see how it feels to kill a man with it, for you said last night it was a dandy thing for that purpose."

There was a clatter of feet on the stones. The two shrank against the wall and the sergeant reached down for another rock. A voice spoke from the front of the dark figures that appeared out of the fog.

"This way, men," it called. "Keep behind the houses. Rally to me, Bays!"

"It's Major Derwent," cried the sergeant. "There's some of our lot left hanyways."

The Yank and the sergeant ran out to the road.

"Here we are!" they called.

An officer stared at them intently.

"Have you got a rifle?" he asked.

It was apparent they had not, for the sergeant was empty-handed and the Yank only flourished a sword.

"Can't take you," said the officer shortly. "We're going to make a demonstration on the flank here, and we only want riflemen."

"But we could get one from a casualty!" cried the Yank.

"I won't chance it," said the officer. "Too many men make a good target. I'll tell you how you can help better. Nip down among those houses and scare up as many of ours as you can find. Tell them to go to the sunken road at the south end of the town. We'll be there."

The officer ran after his men, still calling.

"Let's find a couple of rifles," suggested the Yank. "There ought to be plenty here."

"The sunken road at the south end," muttered the sergeant. "They better stay out o' there. It's too near them —— guns. Every time a shell bursts short, it'll get some of ours."

"Well, let's find a rifle, anyway," said the Yank.

THEY hunted about the fields and behind the houses. The place looked like a city park on a Monday morning in Summer, after the picnickers had spent the previous day there. Half-rolled kits lay scattered about, blankets, shirts, extra shoes, spurs, stirrup leathers, saddles, bridles, broken swords, tunics, single puttees, ammunition pouches, everything but rifles.

"Can you see if those guns are still going?" asked the sergeant, peering toward the battery field.

"I think I can see one going," answered the Yank. "Maybe there's more."

He watched a minute or two, but saw only one streak of flame spitting from the fog. There were a number of black masses there that might be guns, but they were all dark and silent.

"There's guns for you," said the sergeant. "As much —— use as a lance to a lorry driver."

"What are you so sore at the guns for?" asked the Yank. "They're doing their bit as well as they can."

"Ah," muttered the other, "true enough,

but if it wasn't for them an' their teams as couldn't be watered 'ere, we'd 'ave been at Rocquemont for the night and wouldn't have been jumped like this. They 'as no place with cavalry."

They came suddenly upon the wreckage of a wagon, a pile of splinters and twisted iron, destroyed by a direct hit. The Yank looked at it the second time and there was no doubt in his mind. It was the wagon into which the lean man had crept, and which, but for a happy accident, would have been the Yank's tomb as well. The Yank shuddered in spite of the warmth of the morning.

"It's lucky he was a heavy sleeper," he thought. "He never knew what hit him."

Still searching for rifles, they went back into the town. They crossed the street to the east side of the village and here found a goodly number of hussars, sheltering behind carts, in barns and outbuildings, and firing at the flashes of the German guns.

"Any extra rifles around?" the Yank asked a dirty man in shirt and breeches, who fired from behind the shelter of a mattress and two chairs.

"Look abaht!" said the grimy man, pointing with his rifle barrel.

The Yank looked. There were three dead men in a little heap by the corner of a shed and each had a rifle. The Yank stepped over and seized one. An inspection of the magazine showed that it was loaded and the Yank, kneeling beside the grimy man, looked for something to shoot at.

"Hey!" he said, "where's the sergeant?"

He looked around carefully, but the sergeant had disappeared. The Yank got up and walked out to the street, but no sign of the sergeant.

"He couldn't have been hit," thought the Yank. "He was with me until we came to the houses on this side. Well, I'm not going to look for him very far, he can take care of himself and I don't want to stop any of this shrapnel that's on its way somewhere."

He went back to the grimy man and the mattress and thrust his sword into the ground.

"Wot yer 'anging on to yer blinkin' pin for?" asked the grimy man, as the Yank settled himself to a good position.

"I want to see how it feels to kill a man with a sword, and also in case they should charge us," said the Yank. "Where is the enemy?"

"They won't charge us, they 'as guns. They don't charge wiv guns, yer —— ijut. The henemy is in front of us, where else? There's some of em in that bit of copse, and some more be'ind them woods."

"What's that over there?" asked the Yank, pointing to the south, where mounted men galloped about dimly.

"Don't fire at 'em," said the grimy man. "I've 'eard as the French was a comin' up. They may be Frenchies. Most of our lot is over by the church, but don't fire at naught but the gun-flashes."

He blazed away two or three rounds. The Yank waited until a German gun erupted, and then aimed low and to the left, hoping to get a bullet under the shield. Before he could pull the trigger, he heard the pounding of hoofs.

This was no stampede, but an orderly approach, the rattling shuffle of a column of cavalry moving at the trot. The Yank stood up immediately, seized his sword and turned about. The column passed the corner of the house. It was British cavalry and the Yank felt slightly reassured.

They trotted by, the men rising calmly to the trot as though they were going out to drill There was a kind of fringe of loose horses following along, running beside the ranks, their empty stirrups banging, reins flying. The Yank tried to see what regiment it was, but he could not see the badge.

It was probably the hussar regiment, for they were the only ones whose billets had any protection, and who would thus be able to muster a mounted force like this. There was an entire troop there, if not more.

"Hi, Yank!"

The Yank jumped.

"Hi there," cried the voice again. "Catch on to a loose 'orse!"

It was the sergeant, wildly waving his arm to the Yank, who at once ran out and tried to seize one of the loose horses.

It was not a simple thing to do, for those horses had been rushed up and down the fields for some time and were more than nervous. The first one that the Yank made for stood up straight in the air, and startled the nearest troopers into gushing blasphemy. The next stood on his nose and flung his heels at the sky. With the third the Yank had better luck.

He caught hold of the halter shank first, then the rein, and endeavored to vault into the saddle. To do this, when the horse is

moving, it is necessary to have a firm grip of the mane, and British cavalry mounts have roached manes, leaving little to grasp.

The Yank had seized his sword when he ran out to the street and this encumbered him considerably. A hasty glance at the saddle of his new mount showed him that the horse had been down, and having rolled on his side, had made the sword that was suspended from the saddle look like a fish-hook.

Hercules himself couldn't get that sword out of its scabbard. Well, he must mount the horse somehow. The horse meanwhile increased his pace, not relishing the Yank's dragging on the rein. The Yank, then, holding his sword in his right hand, and letting it hang down on the off side, grabbed for the crown-piece of the bridle, seized it, made a tentative hop, and then gave a tremendous bound.

He landed across the saddle on his stomach and very nearly went over the other side. The horse began to canter and the Yank clawed wildly for the stirrup. He could not drop his sword, for then he would be weaponless, and one-handed as he was, it was all he could do to keep from falling. The horse meanwhile tossed his head and the Yank was forced to shift his grip to the neck. He was encouraged from the ranks.

"Chew 'is ear!" "Push on the rein, trooper!" "Speak to 'im gentle an' 'e won't 'urt you!"

Some joker howled above the rest, "Stole away, stole away, tally-ho-o-o!" and then gave a huntsman's yodel.

The troopers laughed wildly.

THE Yank was well toward the head of the column now. In vain did certain sergeants tell him to "'old that 'orse." He went by an officer with the speed of light, whose cries were lost behind him. His horse was running away. Head down, tail up, he scurried along, and at that moment the Yank got astride the saddle and gathered the reins.

"Oh my back!" he exclaimed, "the stirrups are too long!"

Too long by half a foot. They flew about and hammered his shins and the horse's ribs alternately. The horse responded by another burst of speed. The Yank hid his best with the reins, but the horse had his head on his chest and paid no heed. Most of the Yank's strength was expended in holding on.

He reached out for the off rein and gathered it close, with the idea of circling his beast, that is, making the horse run round and round in circles and thus stopping him, but he only succeeded in turning the horse off the road and into a field.

Then the Yank began to haul on the rein in real earnest, for he had left the road to the right and was going toward the enemy at good speed.

"Whoa!" cried the Yank. "You —— hammer-head, whoa! Oh my back!"

Before him appeared a shape in the fog, and while his heart was still in his mouth, his horse careered into a group of wagons. Dark they were, green or gray, and the nearest one had the word *Futterwag* in white letters by the driver's seat. The horse swerved sharply to avoid colliding with the *Futterwag* and dashed around the back of it. The Yank lay down on the horse's neck and stretching an arm on either side, did nothing but hold on and stick his sword out straight in front of him.

"If I fall off now," he thought, "I'm as dead as Free Silver. I'll yell and maybe they'll think I'm a whole troop! *Yea-a-a-a-y!*"

A startled face in a round cap looked out of one of the wagons and seeing the British uniform, ducked in again rapidly. The Yank arrived in an open space, where several men in spiked helmets stood about. They fled in all directions at the sight of the charging Yank and the horses they had been holding snorted and tore away into the mist.

"Come around, you ——," panted the Yank, pulling on the other rein.

He got his horse's head turned around and they went off in a new direction, jumped a pile of boxes and collided with tremendous force against a knot of horsemen. These cursed horribly and shouted to each other. The Yank was away before they could get out their swords, but they came after him, spurring and lashing.

Trees flew by, gray men on foot took to their heels, one shot at the Yank with a pistol. The Yank turned loose the reins.

"Now, bolter," said he in the horse's ear, "let's see you run now and run back to your own gang. Don't take me into Germany again!"

The horse swerved at right angles to his former course and flung his hind quarters

to the sky, nearly unseating the Yank, but those iron-shod heels landed square on a horse that had crawled up to the British charger's haunch, and horse and helmeted rider went head over heels.

The fallen one's companions cut across the angle of the Yank's flight and one came near enough to slash at him with a sword. They pounded along; a wall rose.

"Here's the finish," thought the Yank.

The wall opened, and disclosed itself as a line of cavalry.

"Yeay!" howled the Yank. "Germans! Germans!"

His pursuers tried to pull up, but were unable to stop their headlong rush. A wave of khaki poured forward, two helmets went down, and the Yank's horse came to a bumping halt. When the Yank had recovered himself, he thrust his feet into the stirrup leathers over the stirrups, adjusted his reins, and then, feeling secure once more, he turned about to face his pursuers.

There was one gray-clad figure in front of him, his hands in the air, and a trooper snatching his sword out of his hand, and to the left a little, a kind of swirl of movement that broke, as the Yank watched it, into a group of British cavalry, whose swords no longer gleamed, and who were quieting their shying horses and looking at something on the ground that the Yank could not see.

" 'Ere, lad," called some one to the Yank. "The colonel wants to see you."

The Yank followed his guide. A white-mustached, red-faced man that looked as if he had stepped bodily from the pages of *Punch*, put his glass in his eye and addressed the Yank.

"Are you the man that went charging through here? Where did those Germans come from? Did you see their main body?" His eye noted the round brooch-like badge on the Yank's cap. "From the Bays, eh? Any of your lot left alive?"

"There are some, sir. They're fighting dismounted. I ran into a bunch of wagons out there."

"Wagons, eh? Let's to work!"

The cavalry began to move forward again. The Yank fell back into the ranks and seized the moment to adjust his stirrup leathers. The British were in line, moving at the walk, but they increased the gait to a trot before the Yank had finished his task, so that he had to fix the last buckle, bouncing about like a cork. Finally the job was done, and he thrust his feet home in the stirrups with considerable satisfaction.

"Now," he muttered, "let 'em come on!"

THE flank of the advance secured touch with the enemy first. There was shouting, some rifle fire, and considerable sound as of hammering on wood. Before the Yank had time to decide what this last noise was, he found his part of the line beginning to canter.

As he looked down the line, he could see men rising in their stirrups and slashing at some invisible objects. Then they arrived at the wagons again.

It had seemed, the first time that the Yank had struck those carts, that there were only a few of them, but this time, after he had gone down a lane between the wagons, he found that he was very nearly lost.

A terrific din arose. Horses plunged, axles squealed, men shouted, rifles and pistols cracked with machine-like rapidity. The British charged about, singly, in pairs, and in groups, for the units had been broken up by the wagons, and had lost all touch with each other.

"Now, let's wait a minute," said the Yank to himself. "I don't want to get captured. Let's gather a few friends."

He tried to pull up, but his horse would have none of it. There was a knot of British troopers in the next lane, yelling and stabbing, and the Yank's horse wanted to stay with his companions. The Yank looked behind him.

A trooper was engaged in a duel with the driver of one of the German lead teams. The German, who of course rode the nigh horse of the team, was handicapped because he could not reach the Britisher over the off horse, and when the Britisher worked his own mount around to the nigh side of the team, the German had to thrust and parry across his body, thus losing about a foot of thrusting length.

"That Hun is a goner," thought the Yank, but at that second a rifle barrel protruded from the back of a wagon in the opposite rank.

Bang!

The Yank jerked on one rein with all his strength, and literally hauled the charger's head around. The lane was narrow and by the time he had extricated himself and his mount from the horse of a lead team into which he swung them, he noticed two

of his own men coming down the upper end of the lane with their mounts at a dead run, their swords at the charge.

"Gangway!" cried the Yank, spurring his steed. "Those two fools will spike the both of us."

The rifle cracked again and the trooper who fought with the German toppled from his saddle to the ground. His horse reared, swerved, and came down the lane ahead of the two charging men.

The Yank crowded his horse as far off the lane as he could and the two horses, stretching over the fallen trooper's body, swept by so near as to rap his knee with the haunch of the nearest horse. Down the lane they went, and the Yank again swung his horse to watch them. He was surprised to see how far the lane extended.

Why the mist was lifting!

"Oh my back!" cried the Yank. —— Here's where I get action!"

A rifle cracked and his horse leaped. The man in the wagon was still practising marksmanship. The Yank clapped spur to rib again and tore down the lane. He rose in his stirrups for a look around.

The German wagon-train had been drawn up in three lines and the British attack had met it on the flank. There were only a few drivers with the train and many of these had fled at the sudden onset from the mist. The Yank could see men running between the wagons, swords waving in air, and troopers in khaki charging about.

The mist was going away like a rising curtain. With a rumbling thunderous crash, a wagon tore out of line and departed down the lane at a dead gallop.

"Now we're in for it," thought the Yank. "The teams are running away."

Another team left the line and crashed into the wagon in front of it, where the horses speedily melted into a kicking mass. When the Yank arrived opposite the place in the line where the two wagons had been, he swung his horse through the gap, and then discovered the cause of the teams running away. A squad of troopers attacked a wagon.

Rip! went their swords through the canvas top, a man was dragged from the wagon body and sabered, two troopers rode up to the horses and beat them heavily with their swords. The horses reared, bucked, and leaped out of line, where a trooper at their heads swung them in the right direction and away they went in full career. The wagon swung hard against one in the front rank and the rear wheel on that side melted away.

The horses continued on, the other wheel collapsed, the top fell off, kits and boxes fell out, the wagon body came clear of the running gear altogether, and the horses increased their pace, dragging only the front axle behind them.

"*OOroar!*" howled the troopers.

"That's a poor way to wreck the train," cried the Yank. "Why not set the thing alight? Those wagons all bunched up that way will burn to beat the band!"

"Righto," agreed the troopers. " 'Op down an' lend a 'and."

They all dismounted, the Yank still holding his sword, for he had nowhere else to put it, and into the next wagon they climbed. There was no one in it and it seemed to be filled with officers' bedding. This they rolled out on to the ground and one of the troopers began to break open some of the valises to see if there was anything of value therein.

The Yank paused to listen to the sounds of conflict. The racket in this particular part of the battlefield was so loud that he could not tell how the action was going elsewhere, although he could still hear the rolling of the German guns and the clatter of machine-gun fire in the intervals between the explosions of the larger guns.

"Give us a 'and 'ere, Bay!" cried a trooper. "Sprinkle a bit of this petrol about!"

He held out the bottom of a lamp and the Yank proceeded to cast it here and there on the pile of baggage. Then he bent over and applied a match to a place where a fold in a bundle had held a little pool of oil.

There was a rush of feet and a cry. The Yank looked up.

"Oh my back," said he, and ducked under a thrusting saber that came so near it knocked his cap off, chin strap and all.

A lot of action ensued. It seemed to the Yank that the whole German army had jumped them, all he could see were horses and gray pants with purple stripes, and big men with funny helmets.

"Those aren't helmets," he thought, as he scuttled under a wagon. "Those are busbies. These must be hussars."

THERE was a German crawling from under the wagon and he met the Yank. They stared at each other for the space of a heart-beat, then the German threw up his rifle and fired. Firing a rifle under a wagon is a difficult thing and the German can not be blamed for missing even at pointblank range, but the flash of the gun burned the Yank's cheek and filled it with bits of powder.

The Yank, while the German had been firing, had been advancing, so that he was inside the sweep of the muzzle and too close for the German to take a second shot. That is to say, he was within reaching distance with his sword. A sword works better than a rifle at close quarters. The Yank picked up the German's weapon and crawled to one of the wheels with it.

The pile of bedding was now blazing briskly and the German hussars had drawn away from the fire. From his place by the wheel the Yank could see alley after alley of wagon-wheels, with horses' feet and legs passing, he could see bundles of baggage and bundles that were not baggage, but dead and wounded. Khaki-clad legs pursued black boots and black boots pursued khaki-clad legs. The rattle of stampeding wagons was as regular as a clock's ticking. The rolling smoke began to take the place of the mist.

"There must be more fires started," thought the Yank. "I better get out of here, or I'll be cooked."

He looked cautiously about, but saw no one in the immediate vicinity, then, holding his rifle in one hand and carrying his sword in the other, he crawled out again. He was none too quick.

The canvas cover of the wagon that had sheltered him was already blazing. The breeze that had blown away the mist was helping the fire to spread among the wagons. A loose horse galloped by. The Yank stepped out and peered cautiously down the lane. There was a wagon overturned at the foot of it and at the upper end a pile of bodies, horse and man, where hussar and dragoon had slaughtered each other.

The Yank ran across the lane and through the wagons on the other side. He wondered why all the firing and smoke had not stampeded every wagon in the line.

Then he discovered. Some of the teams lay before their wagons still in the traces, but dead. Most of the wagons had no horses.

"The drivers probably cut their traces and ran for it," decided the Yank.

The line of wagons on the other side of the lane was a terrible mess, some drawn out of line, some overturned, half of them burning, and what few were gone were those whose teams had stampeded.

The Yank remembered that it was the left flank of the British that had secured contact first, and so this end of the wagon park had not suffered as much as the other, and the drivers had had more chance to get away.

"I wish I'd had presence of mind enough to grab that horse of mine before I crawled under that cart," said the Yank. "Here I am in this burning wagon-park and dismounted. Let's see if I can't grab a horse somewhere."

He ran back across the lane to see if there was any sign of a loose horse about. The smoke was beginning to thicken and nearly a dozen wagons were burning merrily. A horseman appeared in the smoke, coming from the direction of the overturned wagons. He paused as if undecided which way to go. The Yank turned at the sound of the horse's stamping.

"Oo, look at the duke!" he exclaimed silently.

The horseman was an officer. A fur busby as large as a butter tub surmounted a stern, smooth-shaven face. A monocle flashed in one eye. The officer's tunic was heavily frogged, his breeches very tight and well-fitting, and he wore black shiny boots, possibly patent leather.

The horse was a magnificent black, beautifully proportioned, standing close to sixteen hands high. His bridle—crown-piece, cheek straps, throat latch and reins—was all encrusted with some kind of ornamental work, and a jeweled doodad, suspended under the horse's throat by a strap from the crown-piece, twinkled and glittered.

The Yank was aghast at such magnificence, but his astonishment was not for long. He rested his sword against the wagon, slowly raised his rifle and sighted it at that gray figure, drawing the front sight down to the third or fourth frog from the top, where the braid made a kind of curlicue, like the bull's-eye of a target.

"Hey!" thought the Yank suddenly, "how do I know this thing is loaded?"

The thought was a sober one. If the rifle was unloaded, the click of the firing-pin

would draw the German's attention, he would come charging in among those wagons with that black horse and the Yank's name would be ordure.

"I'll take him prisoner," thought the Yank. "I can use that horse."

"Hey!" he cried aloud, "get off that horse!"

He stepped into view from behind the wagon. The German officer stopped looking about the landscape. His horse gave one bound and then came tearing down upon the Yank, while the officer reached for his sword.

"Here goes," thought the Yank. "If it isn't loaded, good-by!"

BANG!

It was loaded all right. The horse went to his knees, tried to get up again and fell back on his side, while the officer leaped clear. When he had shoved his busby from over his eyes, he discovered the cavernous muzzle of the Yank's rifle, and behind the muzzle the cool eyes and skinned teeth of the Yank himself.

"Put 'em up," said the Yank.

The officer complied.

"Do you understand English?" asked the Yank.

"Perfectly," replied the officer.

"Then you realize that you are my prisoner?"

"It would seem so."

"And you realize that if you let out one yelp, or so much as bat an eye with any kind of noise, that there'll be a big hunk of cupro-nickel go sailing into your skull?"

"I realize," smiled the officer, albeit his eyes held a look that went amiss with the smile.

"Then proceed," said the Yank, motioning with his rifle. "You can put down your hands."

WHEN the officer was in front of him, the Yank felt of the German's pockets, up his sleeve, and inspected the little box that he wore by a sort of bandoleer over one shoulder. No weapons. The officer's sword was still under his horse. As the Yank prodded the German ahead of him, the officer looked back to where his poor steed lay prostrate.

The horse was dead; his eye was glazing and fixed, and blood trickled from mouth and nostril. The German muttered something in his own language, in a tone of anguished sorrow, then he removed his monocle, and taking a handkerchief from the breast of his tunic, wiped his eyes with it. Then he looked at the Yank.

That young man felt his spine spring to life and began to crawl like a startled snake. He crouched and thrust forward his rifle.

"One move," he cried, "and you're on your way ——ward!"

"Why didn't you kill me anyway?" asked the officer. "Why for should you shoot an inoffensive beast?"

"I aimed at you," said the Yank, "but these rifles of yours aren't over accurate. I know I killed the better of the two as well as you do."

His own heart was torn with pity to see that magnificent animal laid low, and for a moment the hearts of captor and prisoner felt that thrill of kindred feeling that all horse-lovers know, no matter how far apart their race or creed may be. Only for a moment, though.

The German, seeing the Yank still gazing sorrowfully at the dead horse, and holding his rifle loosely in his hands, took one step forward. The spell was broken, the Yank snapped his rifle to his shoulder, and the German came to an abrupt stop.

"I can't miss at this distance," remarked the Yank. "Now turn around and proceed."

They went to where the Yank had left his sword and having recovered it, and tucked the hilt in the crook of his arm, he directed the German to turn around again and cross the lane. The ground seemed open there, beyond the next line of wagons, and in the opposite direction there was nothing but a cloud of smoke and the crackling of the flames from the burning train.

Across the lane they went, and through the line of wagons. There was an open space there, but it was not very wide. There was a hay pile on the far side of it and this pile was the base of a pyramid of smoke that went up into the air beyond reach of the eye. In reality it met the smoke canopy from the burning train. On the left hand a mass of wreckage burned, and on the right hand a heavy cloud of smoke hid what was beyond.

"Back we go," said the Yank, "and go down the lane. That's fairly clear."

The two turned about. A finger of flame was writing on the top of the unbroken row of wagons.

"Hurry," said the Yank. "Let's get back before those wagons get going good."

The officer halted and the Yank prodded him over the kidneys with the rifle.

"Wait!" cried the officer fiercely. "Stop, fool! Let me think! It is true, I know it. There is ammunition in those wagons! Ammunition and other things!"

He looked around at his captor and his lips were rather white.

"No," said he, "I'd rather go any way but toward those wagons."

The Yank looked around. They were in the center of an arena, an enclosure walled by smoke and flame. It seemed that they would be safe there, for there was no way for the fire to get at them, unless it burned the grass. As hard as he listened, the Yank could hear no distinct sounds of conflict. The noise of the battle was so terrific that his ear drums could not register their impulses.

Beyond the burning hay, in the direction that the Yank judged the enemy guns were, the noise and thunder of the explosions seemed to have increased. He could no longer distinguish the whining cough that the field gun gives as it spits forth its projectile.

He heard instead the sharp crack of shrapnel and the slam of high explosive shell. Perhaps the cavalry had gone that way and the Germans were shelling them. The lone gun of the British horse battery could not make all that racket. It was probably out of action now anyway.

He came out of his abstraction with a start.

"I better keep my eye on this Portrait of an Officer," the Yank told himself.

The officer, however, was watching the flames creep along the line of wagons. The Yank suddenly realized that the heat was terrible. His throat was dry and the smoke began to make him cough. The billows of thick choking vapor rolled closer, shutting out the line of wagons. The officer's figure became indistinct.

"Come here," cried the Yank. "Stick right around, keep right in sight, if you don't want me to put a hole in that handsome tunic that will take a lot of tailoring to mend."

The officer came closer to the Yank, but he was grinning happily.

"I've half a mind to kill you anyway," choked the Yank. "—— this smoke!"

The German began to cough and wipe his eyes himself.

"Listen, *Englisher*," said he when he could speak, "we had better go away from this place. We had better go now, immediately. Anywhere but here! I speak with knowledge."

"If you can think," replied his captor, "how to get through that burning hay, or across that wagon-line, then let's go. But you lead the way. And don't be in a hurry either."

The officer grinned again, though the water ran from his eyes, and the smoke strangled him. It occurred to the Yank that this man had discovered a way out of that fire-ringed enclosure, that this officer knew his way about that wagon-park very well, as of course he should. How about making him show the way out?

While the Yank still debated this matter with himself, a vagrant breeze wandered through the park, entered the enclosure, and turning about in the current of hot ascending air, swept up the smoke as a curtain is lifted on a stage. Up went the curtain, and as stage scenery becomes visible, the Yank glimpsed rolling fields, green woods and men galloping.

TA-TA-TA! Enter, right, a body of cavalry. The officer gave a tremendous shout, the troopers saw him, and the column, turning, came thundering down toward the entrance that the lifting smoke had revealed.

The Yank, with slack jaw, saw that at the upper end of the arena, was a space perhaps twenty feet wide, on one side of which the flames licked at the hay, and on the other side was a clump of wagons, just beginning to burn. The smoke had been thick enough to obscure the country beyond and make the entrance look impassable.

The advancing cavalry was in column of fours, magnificent horses, magnificent men, cantering across the field, the rolling thunder of four hundred hoofs like the growling of a mighty giant, the riders' lances dark above their heads. They were a troop of uhlans.

"Put down that rifle," sneered the officer, "unless you want a lance through you!"

"—— you!" cried the Yank. "I can take *you* to —— with me!"

He dropped his sword, threw his rifle to

his shoulder, and pulled the trigger. *Click!* He had fired his last shot.

The officer laughed, the leading four, not twenty yards away, swept down their lances, and spurred forward.

Berrrrram!

There was a slow lingering explosion like a blast in a mine, and before its echo had ceased there was a terrific crash, an eruption of sound so terrible that the eardrums could not register its full intensity. It was an explosion that seemed to split the universe.

The Yank pitched forward on his face, almost senseless, but still able to realize that he was better where he was than on his feet. The air was fresher on the ground.

Hoofs went by, he heard the thud and felt the rush as a horse leaped over him. There were cries, a rapid popping, the crackling of the flames swelled louder. Cries of men and screams of horses swelled louder yet.

"OW!" shrieked the Yank, and leaped to his feet in agony.

A red-hot coal had struck his back. Why, the air was full of them! Another scorched his hand. The Yank tore off his bandoleer, ripped his tunic open, and tearing his arms from the sleeves, wrapped it around his head and over his mouth.

He took one last look, located the entrance to the open space before the new, heavier billows of smoke hid it, saw that the enclosure was covered with what appeared to be red hot coals all blazing and smoking prodigiously, and then, muffling his face in his tunic, he began to run toward the entrance.

He collided with a running man, and in seeking to escape, fell over a horse's body. Up again, though he had a nasty burn on his leg, where he had struck against one of those flaming coals, and covering his nose and mouth, he started once more.

He wondered what had become of the uhlans. Only a few had entered the circle of smoke and the explosion had either stampeded or killed them all. The rest must have retreated. Where was the officer?

The Yank's smarting eyes discovered a man groping toward him, arms outstretched. He knew who it was by intuition, even before he could be sure. It was the gorgeous hussar. He was gasping and choking, and headed blindly back into the field where the blazing coals lay the thickest.

"Let him go," thought the Yank.

Then his better nature conquered. It was an evil thing to let a fellow being burn to death, when he had but to reach out his hand and save him.

"Here," he shouted through his tunic, at the same time seizing the officer's shoulder. "The other way. Put your arm over your mouth!"

The officer turned about without seeing who his rescuer was and followed.

The grass was blazing now, and the Yank's soles were more than hot when the smoke thinned and he found that he and the officer were well beyond the wagon-park. A little more, and they were in the open air.

The Yank threw off his tunic and straightened up. One gulp of fresh air and then he began to cough and strangle, while the water ran from his eyes.

The German wiped his own face. He had lost his busby and his close-cropped hair was singed in a sad manner. When he could see, he observed that the Yank was weaponless. He began to look about him as well as he could with his streaming eyes.

At some distance were a number of guns, the air above them hung with bursting shrapnel like the lights of a boulevard. Those long dark masses by the wagon-lines meant gun teams dead in their traces. The gunners seemed to be attempting to wheel the guns away by hand, but the fire of the enemy was too terrible.

The German swore. Those were *his* guns that were being destroyed. Help had arrived for the sorely tried British, and fresh artillery was playing upon the Germans. He that raideth the flanks of an army must do it swiftly and be gone. The Germans seemed to have remembered this.

On the far edge of the field, where the line of trees marked a road, cavalry could be seen trotting away. The German measured the Yank appraisingly.

The Yank saw the look, half-blinded as he was—he had had to keep his eyes open in the smoke, to be sure that he and the officer would not lose their way, and his eyes were now resenting such treatment—and clenched his fist. If this Hun got rough, his aristocratic nose was in for a doleful time.

The grass was burning freely now and a wall of fire a foot high was advancing on the two men. A puff of smoke swept forward, and the Yank's indignant eyes wept afresh,

while his tortured throat tightened like a closed purse.

He began to put on his tunic. The German turned his back to the smoke, and at that moment saw a boot, a uhlan's boot, with steel-shod heel, that had been cast aside. The officer bent swiftly and sweeping up the boot in his hand, smote the coughing Yank with it a mighty blow. A boot heel makes a good black-jack.

The Yank went down in a heap, and the German tossed the boot away and searching in the moon-shaped pockets of his uniform, brought out a cigaret. This he lighted, found his monocle still hanging by the cord, and inserted it in his eye. He looked once more at the Yank and saw that the flames were not five feet from his body and would burn him in another minute or two.

The officer exhaled cigaret smoke and walked toward the distant road where the German squadrons retreated. There were faint cries behind him, but he did not increase his speed.

FROM the opposite direction, coming over the brow of the hill, appeared a troop of cavalry in line. Heads tossing, feet twinkling, the horses moved across the field at a sharp trot. They changed direction slightly, so that they would pass closely by the remnant of the burning wagons.

"There's a poor lad's body by the fire," said one of the corporals on the end of the line. "See can you pull 'im out from the saddle."

A trooper obediently swung down, but his clutching hand missed the Yank's collar. At that minute, however, the line halted.

"See there!" cried one who rode before, and seemed to be the commander. "I said all halong as 'ow there was amminition in them wagons that made that explosion."

"What's all them smokin' coals?" asked the seeming adjutant.

"I wager them's a wagonload o' them flamin' larzenges they throws into the 'ouses for to set them afire. Ullo, there's their main force!"

The commander, who wore the chevrons of a sergeant, pointed to the distant road.

"Let's 'ave a go wi' them," suggested the adjutant.

"'Ave a go with them!" snorted the sergeant. "That's summat for a troop of cavalry to do, go proddin' a whole giddy brigade! No, we'll 'ave a look at these guns. Now what the ——'s the matter now?"

There was a knot of dismounted men by the wagon-park, who were very agitated about something.

"What's the matter over there?" called the sergeant.

The sergeant and the lance corporal, who acted as aid or second in command, rode over to where the dismounted troopers clustered about the Yank. He had regained his wits and, held on his feet by two sympathetic dragoons, was wildly declaring that he was all right, but possessed with an insatiable desire to drink about a gallon of Hunnish gore.

"'E's barmy," explained one of the sympathetic men to the sergeant, "an' 'e's burnt 'orrid."

"Cruel shyme, I calls it," remarked another.

"I'm not burned," cried the Yank, "just my clothes. I had the Kaiser himself prisoner and he got away on me. Give me a horse and a sword and I'll show you how well I am."

"I know that lad," said the sergeant. "'E looks like a blooming sweep, but I knows 'is voice. 'E's one of ours. Look after 'im, men, whilst we pays our *dewars* to these hartillerymen."

The two troopers who supported the Yank remained behind, and the troop, moving forward again, began to canter, and then to gallop, arriving at the German guns with a rush. Considerable sword-waving ensued.

"What happened?" asked the Yank, holding his head.

"You was lyin' there a warmin' yourself by the fire. We thought as you was dead, but most like some 'un rung noon on you with a lance butt."

"I know who did it," answered the Yank, "but I wonder how. He struck twelve on my head, all right. I can hear it ring yet. What lot are you from? Let go my arm, I'm all right, barring a head like a champagne hang-over. —— I never knew what a roast of beef feels like before. Where did you come from?"

"We're a —— lot of mongrels," said one of the men. "Dragoons, 'ussars, and signal troopers. I misjudge there's a few wagoners, too. We come out with a colonel as I never see before, but we run into some of them uhlans and kweerassers an' got cut

about a bit. The colonel and lots more was done in."

"Aye," agreed the other man. "We got cut up proper. That sergeant, 'e took command, 'e did."

"Are there any more of ours around?"

"Don't arsk me, I seen a lot scourin' off northwards, cuttin' an' stabbin', but I don't know 'oo they was. There's a squadron o' Cherubs prancin' round 'ereabouts, too."

As the Yank's vision cleared, the form of one of the men became familiar. That strawberry-shortcake face could belong to but one man. It was Larcom.

"I thought you were dead," exclaimed the Yank.

"Why, it's the Yank!" said the lean man. "I wouldn't 'ave known you. You're as black as any pitman in Cornwall!"

"Didn't you sleep in that cart?"

"No, not much. They kicked and squirmed somethink 'orrid. An' they says as I snored like a beagle, so they kicks me out most himpolitely. I was out an' about when the firin' begun hanyways."

"How did you hang on to your horse?"

"I nipped into a shed for a bit of a snooze and took 'im with me. The order was as we wouldn't march for the 'alf hour."

"I must have a horse," cried the Yank. "A horse and a sword. Where can I get one? I lugged my sword around with me all morning and then lost it in that wagon-park. I suppose I could go back and hunt for it, but it would be a little warm in there."

The three men eyed the smoking ruins. Bent and twisted pieces of iron-work, tires, bundles of baggage still blazing, the hay pile now black, now red-hot as the breeze fanned the embers.

"My —— hye," breathed the lean man.

The other two followed his gaze. A cloud of horsemen had detached themselves from the column under the distant trees and was moving rapidly across the plain with the very evident intention of attacking the broken and disorganized troop that still wheeled and circled by the German guns.

It looked like a brigade, but was probably a squadron at the most, detached to create a diversion and give the main body time to get away. Be that as it might, that onrushing horde would make red rice out of the troop of British in the space of a few minutes.

"GIVE me a horse!" cried the Yank. "Oh —— for a horse!"

He looked frantically around, but there was not a loose horse to be seen.

"Take mine," said one of the men, licking his lips. " 'E's a German's, but you can 'ave 'im if you wish. I never was no ruddy enthusiast about ridin' any gait."

The Yank had the bridle and was in the saddle before the other man was done talking. He looked toward the troop. They had seen their danger and were swiftly rallying. Some dismounted men were swinging one of the guns toward the oncoming Germans.

"A sword," cried the Yank. "A sword! I haven't any sword."

"Wot are you going to do?" asked the two men. "You can't 'elp them lads, they're as good as done in now."

"See those Germans?" cried the Yank. "I'm going to wreck a few!"

He wheeled his horse suddenly toward the lean man's, darted forth his hand and drew the sword from his scabbard before its owner had time to prevent.

Then, deaf to the lean man's curse, he slammed the spurs to his horse, and in one bound was on his way across the field. The troop by the guns were cantering out now, the attempt to use the gun had been abandoned, and the two bodies of horse drew rapidly nearer.

The Germans made a slight change of direction, intending to swing around and strike the British on the left flank, a vulnerable place for cavalry, for they can not use their swords so well on the left. The Germans, at the same time, would envelop the British rear and cut them off from their own lines.

This maneuver brought the Germans nearer the Yank, and for one freezing second, he saw that he would strike the oncoming men before the troop arrived.

"All right," he muttered through clenched teeth, "it's got to be some time and it might as well be now."

He lowered himself to his horse's neck, thrust his feet into the stirrups to the heel, and spurred his horse. The stirrups were a little short, and the saddle had knee-rolls, but all the better. He could feel the horse driving under him like a machine, and he marveled that the enemy could make such marches as they did, and still conserve the strength of their mounts so well.

The enemy were nearer. He could see their frogged tunics and the cold glimmer of their swords. Their horses cantered, rising and falling like the wooden steeds of a merry-go-round, the ranks rippling like the waves of the sea.

"A saber charge," said the Yank. "It's a good way to go."

On the right, where the British scampered to the attack at a dead run, the Yank could hear cheering. The fight would be short, but it certainly would be sweet. The heaving squadron was very near now; the Yank could see them settling in their saddles, and their swords turning at him like so many tongues of flame.

"What luck!" cried the Yank.

He laughed happily. "To —— with the Kaiser!" he cried.

He settled himself a little firmer. An officer had appeared in the range of the Yank's vision, bareheaded, erect, riding with a firm seat and a free hand. This officer, however, wore a tunic that was blackened and dirty, as if it had been through much smoke and fire.

He was near enough, also, for the Yank to see his features. It was the German of the magnificent horse, the prisoner of the wagon-park, and he who had smitten his rescuer with the boot heel.

The Yank laughed again, and at that moment the officer recognized him, for he also laughed. The Yank stretched out on the horse's neck, out so that his whole arm was beyond his steed, and aimed his sword for the middle of that gorgeous tunic.

The two horses rushed at each other, but each shied violently from the extended sword of the other's rider.

"—— your —— soul!" shrieked the Yank, trying to pull his horse around.

The German swept by, slashing ineffectually at the Yank, and cursing himself purple.

Then the Yank arrived in the German ranks, amidst shouting, stamping, clashing of swords and rearing horses. He had his sword into one man, out and into the rear rank man, and ducked a hungry blade that *zipped* across the back of his tunic.

Then he was clear, marveling that he lived, sawing at the reins to get his horse under control, and back into the fight. He heard the shock of the British meeting the German squadron.

A horse that has been spurred to a dead run is rather difficult to pull down. The Yank was very near the tree-lined road, where he could see the last of the German main body hurrying away, herded by shrapnel, before he got his horse turned.

A cloud of dust marked the position of the mêlée. The Yank went back, spurring and cursing alternately, and looking about for the officer. He could have wept with rage. To have his crazy horse act that way!

"My enemy!" cried the Yank. "My dearest enemy! I'll find him yet."

The sudden appearance of a German with an upraised sword, brought the Yank back to earth. He parried the blow, made a half-hearted thrust in return, and went on.

He pulled his horse to a walk. Clouds of dust swirled, black figures rushed about, loose horses tore by, frequently a rearing horse raised head and forefeet above the crowd. The Yank noticed that there were no prolonged duels.

Friend and foe were closely mingled; each took one thrust at the other and rode by, to thrust again at the next one. The Yank avoided all, for he was searching for one man alone.

There were innumerable Germans, seemingly four or five to every Britisher that the Yank saw. At one time three of the enemy set upon him and drove him ignominiously for quite a way, until they met some of the Yank's comrades.

The Yank was careful of his skin. He feared lest he be disabled before he could meet with his officer. He *must* cross swords with him. If only he killed that gorgeous hussar, he cared not the slightest what happened to himself.

THERE was a rumbling roar, like a cartload of bricks sliding out of a cart, then a tremendous shock. Swearing, stabbing combatants seemed to be moved bodily to one side.

A German went by the Yank, but even though he saw the Yank plainly, he made no effort to attack. It seemed that his mind was on other things. He spurred his horse and beat him on the haunches with his sword.

Another appeared suddenly and his sword licked at the Yank, who threw himself backward just in time to avoid it. The sword severed his curb rein, but the Yank had swung under that thrusting arm, and reaching so far that his right leg stood out

horizontally, had lunged in his turn, so well that his basket hilt struck on the other's elbow.

The Yank seized his hilt with both hands, and so retained his sword when the other's tumbling body had fallen to the ground.

"My back!" exclaimed the Yank. "I was afraid he'd break my sword!"

He looked about again. The place was brown with khaki. Horses were tearing by, all going in the same direction, and the Yank's horse followed.

There were a few Germans, one who rode with his face in his hands, swaying in the saddle, to finally go over altogether, down under the hammering hoofs. Others rode sullenly and darkly, slashing about them with their swords and darting hurried glances like a fox with the hound's breath on his flank. They went down, one after the other, under a hail of blades.

"Don't kill my officer!" cried the Yank. "Don't kill my officer. He's mine; I'll do his killing for him!"

He wondered if the troop had actually defeated the Germans, but that could not be. There were too many khaki riders in sight.

Ah! That crash, that rumble! Help must have arrived and hurtled to the rescue. That would explain the fleeing Germans. And the Germans, having small liking for the game of two to one, with the odds on the other side, were dusting away.

Like dust they fled and like the hurrying gale the British drove them. Like a gale indeed, a gale of rushing horses and sleeting swords. Across the fields. across the road, down the next road, where a troop came back from the main body and tried to make a stand, but was overwhelmed and swept aside, across yet another field and another road.

The major, in command of the British that had come to the aid of the embattled troop, kept advancing his left flank, with the idea of keeping the Germans from rejoining their main body, which had moved away to the northeast. He had no desire to assault the main body himself, for one squadron, all that he had with him, does not willingly attack a brigade of four regiments, however disheartened that brigade may be.

At last, on the summit of a slight hill, the major drew rein, and gave the signal for the halt. Hands were raised in air and the horses came to a plunging stop. Pickets galloped out to the flanks, and the squadron dismounted to look to girth and bridle, and give the horses a chance to blow.

On the left flank at the bottom of the slope a dozen or so troopers still harried a like number of Germans. They had had quite a run, over a ditch or two, and through two fields, and the horses of the pursuers had gained considerable interval between each other, so that they ran in little groups of two and three, with odd troopers stringing in between.

The hindermost, perceiving that the main British force had halted, began to pull up their horses and proceed to rejoin the squadron. Four, however, hot on the trail, spurring and shouting, still pursued.

There was a German officer with the pursued, who kept standing in his stirrups and looking back at those who thirsted for his blood. He noted the departure of the rearmost troopers, and that the Germans now outnumbered the British.

"Mount up a troop," cried the squadron commander on the hill. "Have a troop mount up. Those *krauts* down there are going to turn at bay. Run now, have a troop go down there and rescue those fellows. Now who's that silly ass?"

A man had darted from the ranks of the squadron and lying low on his horse, was tearing down hill at terrific speed.

"Hey! leave that officer alone," cried this one. "He's mine! I want that guy!"

Then he was beyond hearing of the watching men.

A messenger spurred along the ranks, tearing on his way to send a troop to the aid of the men below. But at that instant the German officer rose in his stirrups again. The watchers saw his sword twinkle and blaze as he waved a signal.

The Germans swung in a circle, and turning about in their tracks, were upon the four or five British that still pursued. Down the slope and across the field tore the black speck that was the Yank. He had recognized that officer the first time he had risen. The Yank had mounted at once, but an officious corporal had pulled him off his horse. To lean five knuckle-bones against the corporal's jaw and to mount again took some time.

It took more time to cover the ground between the two forces. The Yank called to his horse. He wanted to get to that fight before it was over, before some one had killed his enemy.

There was a snarling roar from the squadron, and many of the men mounted immediately, expecting the command to charge. The Yank, who had never once taken his eyes from that group of twisting horses, wondered what the snarling was about. Then he saw the group break up, two loose horses go galloping and kicking across the field, and the Germans turn and trot leisurely away, two of them leading extra horses.

The Yank's heart rose. He'd have that man, now.

HE BEGAN to call, yelling terrible obscenity at the officer, blackening his ancestry for four generations. The officer turned. The Yank was quite near now and could see the hussar's face, crimson with anger.

He had understood what had been said to him, and it irked him that he, an officer and nobleman, should be blackguarded by a common soldier and an Englishman. It helped but little that the German troopers could not understand what was being said.

The officer looked beyond the Yank to where the troop was pouring down the hill, riding —— for leather. There would be plenty of time for what he had to do. This insolent Britisher, that had escaped him twice, must be destroyed. The German swung his horse away from the others, now urging their tired beasts to their best speed to escape that avenging line, and awaited the arrival of the Yank.

"Whoa!" shouted the Yank, hauling on the reins, as he saw the officer swing around. "Whoa! No charging this time! I missed him that way before! A duel, by——!"

He had his horse on his haunches when he got within sword's reach of the German and his thrust was short. The German replied with a lunge that took the badge from the Yank's shoulder-strap. The Yank had thought that he was a swordsman; he had been on a championship fencing team in those days before his disgrace, but he had never faced an antagonist like this hussar.

The German's blade flashed in and out like a snake's tongue and the Yank could only parry about one thrust in four. It occurred to him that this man was playing with him, making sport of him before killing him. But the face that the Yank could see through his sweat-blinded eyes was not that of a cool antagonist, but that of a man consumed with hate, a man whose throat was parched for blood, and a man in the utmost extremity of haste.

The British were coming dangerously near. The German could see them, but the Yank could not, and the drumming of their hoofs was lost in the throbbing blood in his ears.

The German, for all his swordsman's skill, was unable to conquer. His training had likewise had faults, and he, as well as the Yank, had trouble in keeping his horse within thrusting distance. The officer had fought many a duel, but with the razor-edged dueling-saber whose lightest kiss means a deep gash, and he was not accustomed to putting his weight behind the blade.

So, then, he did great slaughter to the buttons and the cloth of the Yank's tunic, yet no real harm to the Yank. The Yank panted for breath and did the best that he was able. A voice whispered him that there was a trick worth two of this feinting and riposting.

The German, able now to see the tight lips of the charging British, made one last desperate thrust, the first one he had made with any meat behind it. The Yank parried clumsily, the point of the German's sword was deflected downward, and so through the Yank's saddle, where it pricked his horse sadly.

The horse bounded forward and before the German could jerk loose his blade, the Yank had leaped upon him and secured a hold he had often used in the days when mounted wrestling was one of his favorite sports. The German cursed and clawed at the Yank's throat, but the Yank broke that hold, and his horse, now driven frantic by the prodding of the officer's sword, reared and then bounded away.

The Yank was unseated, but his hold was not broken and as he crashed to earth he still cuddled within the angle of his right elbow the close-cropped head of the gorgeous hussar. The charging troop passed over them with a roar of hoofs, and wild cries of:

"Man down! Man down!"

"Lie still!" panted the Yank in the German's ear, "and you won't get stepped on."

The officer kicked and struggled wildly, so the Yank, tightening his hold, shut off the other's wind, nor did he relax until the German was quite still.

THE troop, returning from the pursuit, which they had carried to the very doors of Le Plessis Chatelaine, halted at their captain's signal The captain leaned upon his horse's neck and placed his monocle.

"My word," said he, "what have we heah?"

Before him stood two men, one wearing the badly scorched uniform of a British trooper, and the other that of a German hussar officer. The trooper had but one puttee, and the German had his hands bound tightly behind his back, probably with the missing puttee.

The trooper saluted.

"Sir, I have the honor to report that I have a prisoner."

"Fawncy that now," ejaculated the officer. "Really! I imagined you were discussing the action together. Two horses here!"

Two horses were brought up, for the troop had had rich picking at Le Plessis, a dressing station with its personnel, twenty-five led horses and a case of champagne.

The Yank and his prisoner were mounted.

"Are you the man that Sir Galahaded out ahead so boldly?" the captain asked the Yank.

"Yessir."

"Fawncy that. Marvel you weren't spitted, what? Fuzzy boy with a sword, wasn't he? How did you disarm him?"

"I rapped him on the beezer," said the Yank soberly.

"What? Eh? Rapped him on the beezer? Fawncy that!"

The captain dropped his glass, replaced it and gave the order to move out. The troop spurred forward, and followed the retiring squadron at a brisk trot.

The action had apparently ceased. There was no cotton-tufted shrapnel in the sky, the mist had gone, and the sun was mustering his strength to make another oven-like day. It seemed to the Yank that the fight had lasted for hours, but the position of the sun showed that the hour was not much after nine.

"Another day, another fight," thought the Yank. "Well, this can't last forever, we'll all kill each other off. I hope we have cooler weather. It won't be so bad this Fall, but the war won't last that long."

He looked happily at his prisoner, who sat his horse with a stony face, his hands still bound.

"I gathered him in, at least. And he was a hard nut, too. That ought to advance my prestige a little with these gallopers. I only wish there was some way I could let the old gang at home know about it."

When the squadron reached the field in which the wagon-park still smoldered, it halted and waited for the detached troop to come up. The major then made an address of which no one but the immediate hearers could catch a word, but which doubtless contained the words Glory, Honor, Glorious Tradition, etc.

Then he directed all those men who belonged to other units to rejoin them.

Thus, presently, the Yank saw a troop detach itself, and go trotting away across the plain. This was the troop that had rescued the Yank from the fire.

While the Yank marveled at this, and looked curiously at the wreck of the wagon-park, a rude sergeant appeared and told him to begone to his own lot.

"Run along now, 'omeless," said he. "We'll mind our little playfellow for you. The major says you should all go 'ome, for we'll be marchin' out of 'ere presently."

"Suits me," said the Yank.

Then he turned to his prisoner, riding sullenly between two troopers.

"Now, then, tailor's dummy," said the Yank, "you see what you got yourself into. If you hadn't left me to burn when you cracked me over the head, these men wouldn't have stopped to drag me out of the fire, and I wouldn't have got into that scrap at all. And you, fine prancing Prussian that you are, would have been safe away, instead of a candidate for a good job building roads. So that's what you get for doing a dirty stunt like that."

The German officer appeared utterly oblivious to what the Yank said.

"You needn't waste your breaf on 'im," said one of the guards. " 'E cawn't speak a word of Hinglish."

"Yes, he can," said the Yank. "I know this boy very well. He knows what I said. Well, so long, Fritz. If I ever see you working on the roads I'll give you a fag, and if you're cold on the moors this Winter, think of all the heat you let me in for; after I dragged you out of there, too."

The officer paid no heed, and the Yank moved away, trotting over toward the

abandoned German guns, for he wished to examine them.

"Hi, Yank," cried a voice.

Who but the sergeant of the patrol advanced at a trot, two ammunition pouches torn from his breast, and a weeping cut on his ear.

"Yank," he continued as the Yank drew rein, "I want to shake your 'and. Fer a man as was knocked out of time like you was, you done very well. This 'ere 'as been a —— good fight, and I'm glad we're both out of it with no holes in our shirts. An' —— well we paid 'em for what they done to Neddy Clyne."

"Where did you come from?" cried the Yank. "I thought they'd carved you long ago."

"Aha, not me," replied the sergeant. "My 'ide's too hold and tough for any of them bullet 'eads to poke a 'ole through it. I was commandin' that troop that pulled you out of the fire. We got all gormed up in that wagon train, and was in a fair way for a 'idin' by some youlans, but I takes command, the officers bein' killed, and so we gets out of it proper.

"We was quite a ways toward the town by then, but I got 'em turned and we comes ridin' back, sees you a toastin' of your 'eels, pulls you out, and so away to the wars again."

"What was this we ran into, or ran into us?" asked the Yank. "It wasn't the German main body, was it?"

"No, I misjudge it was just some of their screen cavalry. You mind that farm where we saw the cavalry and the airoplane fired the light? I think they was intendin' to raid it. Maybe, not 'avin' no hadvance guards out, nor no system of security, they runs blind into us in the fog.

"There was a —— big lot of them, I takes my oath. They 'ad us on the run for a while. I thought as I'd never get them thick-'eaded beer-swillin' recruits turned about, but I 'ollers their motto continuous, 'no hoof-marks backward,' an' calls 'em —— a few times, and so after a while we turns about."

"That's a great motto," said the Yank.

"Aye," agreed the sergeant, "they've 'ad it since the days of Cromwell, an' what a sweat old John 'Ampden, as was their colonel then, would be in if 'e could see 'em now. Now you can see 'ow we played with these bombardeers."

THE near view of the German guns indeed showed how they had been played with. The horses of the limber teams lay piled in heaps, some cut in two by high explosive shell. The guns were no longer in even alignment, but strewn about, where their crews had tried to roll them out of range, and had died doing so.

It was impossible to tell whether the dead had been killed by shrapnel or sword, save where a high explosive shell had found its prey. There was no doubt then. Twelve guns the Germans had had, and had left eight of them on the field.

"You certainly found use for your swords here," said the Yank.

"Aye," agreed the sergeant, "but we could 'ave used clubs just as well. What a target they had!"

The two men had come to the brow of the ridge, where they could see the town and the fields spread below them, the factory, the church, and the field where the horse battery had been destroyed.

There were a great many troops there now. A kilted regiment was massed on the road, and another infantry regiment, in their undershirts, was marching away toward St. Vaast. The heavy firing had drawn troops from all over the district, but they had not arrived in time to take any large part in the action. The Yank continued the conversation.

"No, but sergeant, there's another thing you were wrong about, and that's those guns. We licked 'em, didn't we, a force bigger than we were. Cuirassiers, hussars, uhlans, and dragoons. All those types I recognized and if that isn't a full brigade, I'll bite my initials in the first horse shoe we come to. And the guns had quite a bit to do with it."

The sergeant said nothing. He pulled at his long mustaches and meditated whether to check the Yank severely for talking in such a familiar tone with an N. C. O. or to forgive him because of his youth and the gallant way that he had borne himself that day. It would be too much, however, to leave the lad unsquelched.

"When I was in South Africa," began the sergeant, "I was just such another as you, all eyes and no brains, like a young calf. 'Ow do you think we defeated a overwhelming force such as them Germans was?

"Them guns of ours was fair to be the death of us. You mind we didn't begin to fight with no success till they was silenced. Well, the Germans was 'eld back the same way. They 'ad guns and waited for to fire them, instead of chargin' us mounted, an' wipin' us up proper. An' any gait, the guns as did the firin' at the last of it was 'owitzers an' not 'orse batteries. I seen 'em comin' up when we rode out."

"Yes," said the Yank, "but the fact remains that we licked them."

"The reason for which," said the sergeant, "was as we only 'ad six guns to 'amper us, and they 'ad twelve."

There seemed to be no answer to make to this and the Yank made none. They rode down the slope and when they were almost into the town the sergeant turned once more to the Yank.

"Well, I suppose you feels 'appy now as you've 'ad a chance to try out that sword as you was luggin' about like a woman 'er first born. How does it feel to kill a man with it?"

THE Yank looked at the sergeant with the expression of him who finds a letter five days unmailed in the pocket of his coat.

"Now doesn't that beat ——," said the Yank. "I never paid any attention."

THE VIKINGS

by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur

IT IS a matter of history that between 700 and 1100 A.D. the vikings conquered half of England, much of Ireland and Scotland, Normandy, Sicily, Russia and Finland, besides making periodic raids on the German coast, besieging Paris thrice, settling Iceland and discovering America. Only the military genius of the Normans—their own descendants—and the growth of the German Empire stopped them at last.

What were they like, these vikings, princes of high adventure? They were big men, blond, with ring-mail, round shields and helmets—*not* winged—for defense, and spear, broadsword, ax and bow for offense. Their gods were Odin, patron of the brave who die fighting; Frey and Freyja, who gave good harvests and wealth; Tyr, the one-armed war-god; Thor, slayer of giants and friend of the peasant; and a host of others. These were worshipped in groves, at streams, in temples of wood. The gods demanded only one virtue of men—courage.

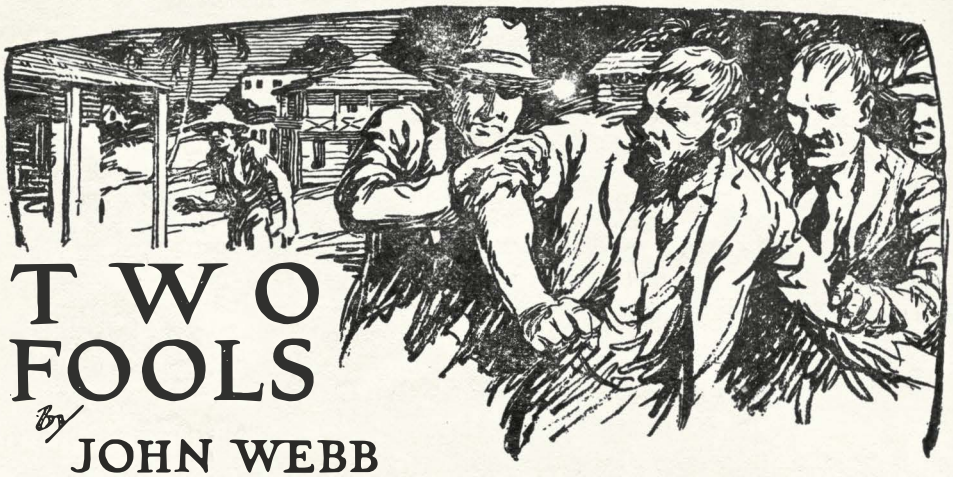
A man must boast to be respected—but he must make his words good, though he died for it; otherwise all men scorned him. The viking held friendship and good fame the best things in life. One of their poems says:

"I was young once, and went about alone; when I found a friend, I thought myself rich, for the delight of a man is a man."

"Wealth dies, kinsmen die, a man must die himself; but good fame never dies, if a man can get it."

Their kings maintained a strong force of professional champions, who must be faithful to death. To live after one's king was slain was eternal disgrace. The king must be generous to his men. Each king had one or more poets, or scalds, who not only ensured his glory by singing his deeds, but fought for him as well. Among these scalds were some of the fiercest warriors of Norse legend. One, Egill Skallagrimsson, was never outsung nor outfought; when ambushed and seized by a king whom he had mocked, Egill won his pardon by singing.

The berserk—a man subject to attacks of frenzy that made him indifferent to death—was a by-word for reckless ferocity; but it was expected that any man would fight to the death. The religion of the viking promised immortality only to the man who died fighting. For this reason they stubbornly resisted Christianity, with its emphasis on peace. But their courage was not mere fanatic fury; it sprang from their inherited love of adventure, ingrained by their "battle for existence with a stern climate, a barren soil, and stormy seas."



TWO FOOLS

By JOHN WEBB

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THE freighter *Hawk* lay hove to a half-mile off the southern coast of Haiti, with her bow headed toward the opening between Capes Jacmel and Marechaux. She rolled easily in the long swell made by the moderate breeze that tempered the heat of the noonday sun and sent streamers of smoke shoreward from the little vessel's stack.

On the ship's bridge, Captain McGuire, a trim little man with a hard mouth, black hair and deep-set black eyes, stood rolling a cigaret in the lee of the weather cloth. He finished his cigaret, lighted it, and gazed shoreward.

The mate, a lean, dried-up State-o'-Mainer, spat disgustedly to leeward. He replaced his pipe in his mouth, pulled the vizor of his cap over his eyes, and moved over beside the captain.

Ahead of the *Hawk*, between the capes, a three-masted schooner was working its way into Jacmel harbor.

The third mate, bracing himself beside the engine-room telegraph in the center of the bridge, waited patiently for the order to send the ship ahead. The helmsman, his weather eye on the captain, hung limply over his wheel.

"Black Michael and the *Gannet*, ain't it?" asked the mate, squinting at the schooner ahead.

The captain nodded.

"Takes 'is dang time," muttered the mate. "Shall I give 'im a couple o' toots o' the whistle, captain?"

Again the little captain nodded.

"Wake him up," he said shortly.

The mate went to the whistle lever and gave a series of short angry blasts.

The schooner, with no sign that she had heard, continued her slow passage into the harbor.

"Slow ahead, Captain Mac?" suggested the mate after a while.

"Make it half-ahead, mister," said the captain over his shoulder.

"Half-speed ahead, sir," answered the third mate, and he placed the pointer of the indicator on "Half-ahead."

A bell jangled in answer, the ship began to forge slowly ahead; the helmsman shifted his wheel to keep the ship headed toward the opening between the capes.

"Haiti" is an Indian word, and means "mountains." Jacmel harbor is merely a gorge, a passage in the mountains open to the sea. Although but two miles in length and something less in width, it has the distinction of being one of the deepest harbors in the world, perhaps the deepest of its size.

The *Hawk* steamed steadily in, changed to "Slow ahead" when abreast of Cape Jacmel, passed Marechaux, and dropped anchor on a twenty-fathom bank southwest of the town. The *Gannet*, farther inshore, was being moored bow and stern, to prevent her swinging in the limited anchorage space when the wind shifted or died.

The master of the schooner, a huge black-bearded man, dressed in khaki and with a faded blue cotton handkerchief knotted about his thick neck, came to the poop and scowled up at the bridge of the *Hawk*.

"In a —— of a hurry, ar'n't ye?" he bellowed across the fifty yards of water.

Captain Mac, now rolling another cigaret, drew up one corner of his mouth in a thin, one-side smile.

"Harbor's too small for ships, without cluttering it up with apple-wagons," he remarked in a clear, cool voice.

"Apple-wagon!" snorted the seemingly furious schooner captain.

For a moment he glowered at the somber little man on the steamer's bridge; then his scowl disappeared; he grinned; he slapped his knee. Then peals of laughter rolled from his lips and carried far over the calm water of the harbor.

Captain Mac's smile became more crooked; his somber eyes twinkled.

"Hello, Black Michael," he called.

"Hello, One-Two Mac," answered Black Michael, still laughing. "Going ashore?"

"Yes," Captain Mac nodded.

"I'll pick ye up, then, as soon as I can get a boat away." Black Michael waved his hand, turned and shouted for his boatswain.

TWENTY minutes later the *Gannet's* boat slid alongside the wharf at Jacmel, and little One-Two Mac and Black Michael clambered over the string-piece. They left the wharf and walked into the town.

The sea breeze had died and the land breeze did not descend into the valley. Perspiration dripped from Black Michael's face and wrists. A dark patch appeared on his khaki coat at each shoulder-blade. The heat was terrific, and Black Michael, being bulky, felt it more than did the little man at his side.

"Hot," remarked Captain Mac.

"'Tis," agreed Black Michael.

Black, naked babies played with filthy curs in the dust of the street. Black men dozed on the flagstones in the shade of the ramshackle houses. Bare-footed women, glistening with sweat, squatted on door-sills. A myriad of flies hummed and droned in the torrid air and worried the sleepers.

They came to a one-story building that had its entire front open wide to the street. Inside were a number of tables at which sat a half-score of white men, talking listlessly and wearied ly across their glasses of rum and *kola*.

Black Michael halted.

"This is the American Café," he said. "'Tis here that all the whites o' Jacmel spind their time durin' the hate o' the afternoon. Will ye go in for a bit?"

Captain Mac nodded.

A scrawny, hollow-cheeked black child sat in the center of the doorway. Black Michael bent down, picked up the child and made as if to throw it out into the street, then he set it down, patted it on the head and placed a coin in its skinny fist.

"Run along," he said, scowling ferociously at the dazed child. "Buy some *rapadou* to put in your little tummy."

He turned to Captain Mac and said, shaking his head—

"Poor little nippers, they eat once ev'ry other day, no oftener."

They passed into the café.

In one corner of the café sat a big, bearded man who bore some resemblance to Black Michael. The man's beard, however, although thick and curly like Black Michael's, was red. His wrists and hands were big and bony; his forehead was low; his shoulders were broad and slightly hunched. His gray eyes were humorous and his mouth was wide, straight-lipped and hard but the mouth of a man in whom there is no great amount of harm. The man was busy talking and had not noticed their entrance.

"I think I know that fellow," said Captain Mac to Black Michael, who was nodding to his acquaintances. "His name is—is——"

He studied a moment, and then:

"By George, his name is the same as yours—McClone! Know him? Come over and——"

Captain Mac sensed that something was wrong, that he had blundered. A sudden silence had come upon the occupants of the café. There was a feeling of expectancy in the air. He saw that men were moving silently from between Black Michael and the red-bearded one, that all eyes were on the two.

He heard Black Michael, at his side, growling deep in his throat, and glanced curiously at him.

The big man was half-crouching, cat-like, as if about to spring. His lips were drawn back from his teeth and his countenance was black with fury. He was trembling with passion. His hot gaze was fastened on the red-bearded man across the room.

The red-bearded McClone had risen from

his chair and was glaring with unconcealed hatred at Black Michael. He cleared a space for himself by shoving away the table and kicking back his chair, then he stood, his whole body tense, returning stare for stare.

The French proprietor broke the suspense. He shot in between the two men, swept the bottles and glasses from the nearby tables into his apron, and scuttled to the rear with them.

"Stop them!" cried some one; and in that moment the red-bearded one sprang.

He leaped clear over one table, spun another out of his path, and drove his fist with all his power to Black Michael's body.

Black Michael went to his knees, but was up again in a flash, and he sent the other man back on his heels with a smash to the jaw.

"Tit for tat, Jem McClone," growled Black Michael.

They grappled and, fighting furiously, rolled together under a table. The table was lifted and flung aside as they came up, and a chair was splintered as they went down again. For a moment Black Michael was on top, and he battered Jem McClone's face with both heavy fists; then Jem fought free and sent the other sprawling with a kick to the stomach. Together they rose from the floor and stood toe to toe, each striving to beat down the other with heavy, crashing blows.

"Stop it!" cried the same voice that had spoken before.

Captain Mac leaped forward. He kicked Jem McClone's feet from under him and dived football-fashion at Black Michael's legs, sending him to the floor. Before either of the two big men could gain their feet they were pinioned by the men who sprang upon them.

"Now, what the —— is it all about?" asked Captain Mac, rising and brushing his clothes.

Still holding their captives, they looked at him. One man snickered, then sobered as another cast him a warning glance. Some of them seemed to want to laugh, but didn't. They all seemed torn between pity and amusement.

No one answered.

"Black Michael is my friend," said the captain, half-angrily; "and I——"

"He is our friend too, captain," said one of them curtly; "and so is his brother Jem. We know what we're doing."

The captain shrugged, and stepped aside.

Black Michael, still struggling, bleeding from mouth and nose, was dragged out of the place and down the street by five men. Captain Mac could see that Black Michael had no animosity against any of the men who had hold of him, that the big man merely struggled to break away and get back at his brother, to renew the fight; moreover, that his captors were handling him as gently as possible; so he did not interfere. Besides, he was acquainted with several of the men and knew them to be respectable traders. But he was greatly puzzled.

Jem McClone, bleeding from a deep gash on his cheek, in one hand a tuft of hair which he had yanked from his brother's beard, still lay on the floor, a man upon each arm and each leg and one upon his chest.

"All right," said a man who had stationed himself at the entrance, "let 'im up. They've put Michael in the hoosegow for safe-keeping."

The five men rose from off Jem McClone.

The big red-bearded man rose slowly. He wiped blood from his lips and spat out a tooth. He dragged a chair to a table in a corner and sat down alone, with his back to the rest of the room.

"Rum and *kola*," he snarled to the frightened proprietor.

The men looked at one another, and shook their heads. Some of them returned to their seats; some of them went out.

"What do you say, captain?" invited a man whom the captain knew, turning a chair toward him.

"No, thanks," answered Captain Mac. "I have to enter my ship at the consular office."

He left the place and walked to the consular office, in the next block.

Breen, the consular agent, was a political derelict. He had been washed up on the beach at Jacmel, so to speak, and forgotten. He was a tall, slim, wiry man with slightly grayed hair and overhanging eyebrows.

"Greetings, One-Two Mac," he said, holding out his hand to the captain; and then, to some one in the rear: "Boy, another orange-blossom."

"I heard about it," said Breen as the captain sat down. "You were going to

introduce Michael McClone to his brother Jem. Ha!" He laughed shortly.

"The news traveled quickly," said the captain.

"Ha—it always does. That is one of the advantages of Haitian life: we know what the other fellow does before he does it. You pulled one for the book, One-Two Mac. How long has it been since you were last in Jacmel?"

"It's been over a year. I met Jem McClone only once, but I know Michael quite well. Somehow I never thought of them as brothers."

"I take it, then, that you don't know the story about them that all the south coast has been laughing at for nearly a year? No. Well, it was a good joke; but the laughter is dying out now, and we are all wondering where the thing will end. It's past the joke stage now. See here——"

Breen lowered his head and parted his hair with his fingers so that a jagged scar could be seen above his left ear.

"Big Jem did that, because I laughed out loud one night. I evened the score with a table leg, but it taught me a lesson: I laugh no more when either of those lunatics is about."

Here the boy entered with the "orange-blossom;" which proved to be a mixture of Barbancourt rum, orange-juice, water and sugar.

"Two more, boy, in ten minutes," said Breen. "Greatest invention of the age, captain. No doubt of it. Invented by a man whom I consider a public benefactor. Name is Healy, and he was chief steward of a Panama boat——"

"But about the McClone brothers," interrupted the captain.

"Oh, yes. Well, it started over a diamond. I never saw the thing, but rumors have it every size from a pea to a head of cabbage. Wonderful stone, they say—worth two pounds."

"Two pounds!"

"Yes; about nine dollars. Here's about it:

"The McClone brothers came to Haiti three years ago. They had a bit of money and went into the coffee game. Made good from the start. Soon they chartered a schooner—the *Gannet*—and began to carry their own cargoes, and whatever else they could pick up to fill out.

"They are fine men, the McClones. Biggest bodies and biggest hearts on the island. And square as a die, both of them. And not stupid, either, all in all. But they are slightly conceited, and proud—you'll see.

"About ten months ago a rich Englishman spent a fortnight or so in Barbados. Had his wife with him. Wife had a wonderful diamond of fabulous value. One morning the Port au Prince paper came out with the news that the wonderful diamond had been stolen, by an employee—secretary or something. Rich man was furious; wife was prostrated. Great detective agency was to be put on the case.

"A week later a fellow arrived here in a trading-schooner, from Barbados. An Englishmen named Hamilton. He spent a day and a half in the American Café and made a lot of acquaintances. He was a good mixer and knew how to make up to people. We know now that he was just sizing things up, picking his victim. Oh, he was a clever lad, this Hamilton! He met the McClones, and decided they were his meat. Here's what he told them—in confidence, of course:

"His name wasn't Hamilton. That was only an alias. He was really Simmons, the rich man's secretary. He had the diamond, but the authorities were on the watch for him and he didn't know what to do with it. Did the McClones want to buy it, for a small fraction of its real value?

"Now, the McClones were honest, as I said before. Ordinarily, they wouldn't want to buy a stolen diamond. But this diamond had been stolen from an Englishman. An *Englishman* — d'you see? That made a difference.

" '—— the English!' said the McClones —they come from County Mayo. 'How much?'

" 'Twenty-five hundred,' said Simmons alias Hamilton. Dirt cheap. Broke his heart to let it go at that. Oh, yes! He wanted the McClones to promise to sell it back to him for five thousand dollars, when he should come back to Jacmel, after the chase had died down; but they refused!

"Now, here is the funny part of it: You'll laugh. A few days later— Wait a minute."

Breen was gazing out the door, and Captain Mac turned in his seat to see what he was looking at.

In the middle of the street, Jem McClone, the red-bearded one, was helping an aged negro woman to get her donkey started. The donkey had its feet firmly planted at

four different angles and refused to move. Jem McClone picked up a handful of sand, put it in the donkey's ear, and gave the animal a ringing slap on the rump with his hand.

"Giddap, ye stubborn baste," said Jem; and the donkey started off, shaking its head to dislodge the sand.

"Do you get it?" asked Breen as Jem McClone passed out of sight. "The stupid creature can think of but one thing at a time. That's donkey psychology. Who would understand it better than an Irishman?

"But to get on—I don't like to even think of diamonds when either of the McClones happen to be near. The transaction between Hamilton, or Simmons, and the McClones, was supposed to be in secret, you understand; but Hamilton went to Port au Prince, to catch a New York steamer, and before he sailed he got drunk, and the secret was a secret no more. It was all over the south coast before sundown.

"The McClones said nothing, and no one broached it to them—at least, not openly—but we could see they knew the secret was out and were a bit chesty about it. They had put it over on an Englishman, and their manner as much as said— 'Let's see 'im get it back!'

"Now, here's the funny part of it—funny at the time: A few days later the paper comes out and says that the rich Englishman's wife's diamond had not been stolen at all! It had merely dropped out of its setting and rolled under the bed. A negro maid found it, and returned it, for a corking big reward. We found out later that Simmons, the secretary, had, by chance, picked that particular time to run off with a steamship captain's wife. Coincidence. Hamilton turned out to be 'Peg' Hamilton, an English gambler.

"We began to poke fun at the McClones.

" 'Liar,' they said. 'The Englishman is a liar. He doesn't want to admit his loss. The diamond was stolen, and we—know who has it.'

"A Panama boat made Port au Prince. There happened to be a diamond merchant aboard, bound from Australia to New York. The McClones went to the diamond merchant, 'secretly.'

" 'What's it worth?' they asked, showing him the stone.

"The man cocked one eye at the thing, laughed, and said:

" 'Two pounds. It's paste.'

"The McClones put their twenty-five hundred dollars' worth—or rather, nine dollars' worth—of paste back in its chamois bag and said nothing. They were hit hard; not so much the money, though that was bad enough, but the shame. The fools they had made of themselves! We all laughed. We in Jacmel began to greet one another with, 'Want to buy a diamond?' I, being more foolish than the rest, said it to Jem—and got this."

He touched the scar on his head.

"Yes; it was a great joke. We laughed and laughed. And the McClones got angrier and angrier. They began to boast openly that they had the diamond. They insisted that the Englishman was a liar, that the diamond really had been stolen, and that they had it. That was the conceit of them coming out, you see. They wouldn't admit that they had been cooked. Not they. One night they cleaned out the American Café when some one told of their visit to the diamond merchant—he had heard it from a stevedore foreman who had heard it from the ship's purser who had heard it from some one else. The story had drifted down from the ship's captain, to whom it had been told by the diamond merchant himself.

"They are big men, the McClones, and A1 scrappers, as you may have noticed, and it wasn't long before we began to think it better to laugh up our sleeves than openly. Besides, we all liked them, even after the fights. If they wanted to insist they had a stolen diamond, let them, we said. I don't doubt that they began to believe it themselves after a while. Well, and then came the serious part of it, the part that spoiled the joke.

"There were a number of us in the American one night. Jem and Michael were there, and they had been drinking more than was their custom. They weren't drunk, but they were not sober, either. About midnight they got up to leave. As they left their chairs, something dropped to the floor and landed in the center of the room. One of them had dropped the "diamond." It was in its chamois sack, but we all knew what it was. A general laugh started; not open, hearty laughter, but chuckles behind the hand, sniggers,

averted faces. You know the kind. Jem and Michael saw, and heard. They became red, then white. Pride, you see, and conceit. Laughter is a wicked weapon. In that moment their hearts were black; two good men were set for murder.

"Well, to go on, they both reached for the thing at the same time. They were both unsteady on their feet. Michael bumped Jem with his shoulder, and Jem sprawled on top of the diamond. Michael promptly kicked him off and reached for it himself. Jem smashed Michael on the nose with his fist, and Michael knocked Jem over a table. Then they flew at one another like madmen. Two good men, brothers, fighting with murder in their hearts for the possession of a nine-dollar fake diamond! Do you see where the humor of it ends, and where the tragedy begins? Well, we piled on and pulled them apart, and it took the lot of us! You have noticed how Jem's nose is slewed over to one side? Michael did that the first fight.

"I believe, now, that each of them, in his heart, had been blaming the other for falling for Peg Hamilton's game in the first place. Now it was out, they were sworn enemies; though they both still insisted that the diamond was genuine. They wouldn't admit even to one another that they had been cooked; so, you see, they had no foundation upon which to build peace, no starting point. Each claimed the other was trying to steal the stone for himself.

"The first night, in the confusion, Michael got away with the diamond. The next morning they met again—both sober this time. Michael had the diamond in the pocket of his coat.

" 'Ye dirrty thafe,' says Jem,

"They fought again, up and down the street, for fifteen minutes or so. All the niggers were out, watching, wondering what it was all about. At length, four *gendarmes*, and three civilians, one of whom was myself, got them apart. Michael had a broken arm, and had lost his coat, with the diamond, to Jem. The feud was now well under way. Ruskin said that pride is at the bottom of all great mistakes. You see what it was doing to the McClone brothers. They split partnership. Michael took the schooner—they had bought it by now—and Jem took the plantation. Michael has been using the schooner as a feeder for the steamers that make Port au Prince. He makes all the coast ports and discharges at the capital. But he carries not an ounce of Jem's coffee; Jem wouldn't give it to him and Michael wouldn't carry it if he would. They have fought a dozen times in the past eight months, and the diamond has passed back and forth so often that we're never quite sure who has it. They are one-idea-at-a-time men, you see, like that donkey, and all they can think of is, how much they hate one another. Their stubborn pride will not let them give in. I don't believe that a real diamond, of any size or quality, could ever have come between them; but you see what a bit of paste has done! Too bad."

"Yes, it is," said Captain Mac. "Why don't you fellows get together and take the thing away from them? Perhaps that would end the feud."

"Perhaps it would; but I wouldn't want to be in on that deal! You see what madmen they are. They would hunt us down and slaughter us. The only thing I can think of to do is—put sand in their ears. Ha! Funny thing, human nature. No accounting for it. Take me, for instance: There is nothing in the world I hate as much as I do Haiti; and there is no place I would rather be. Perhaps the McClones care nothing at all for the thing they persist in calling a diamond; but see how they are fighting for it! I'm wondering how long it will be before they take to using knives or guns. They are coming to that. Too bad!"

Captain Mac nodded, slowly and thoughtfully.

He took his ship's papers from his pocket and laid them on the desk before the agent.

"Now, Breen, if you'll fix up my entrance papers," he said. "I'm here for twelve hundred tons of cargo, and some of it is coffee—Jem McClone's, I see."

MR. DOWNS, the *Hawk's* third mate, was very tired. All afternoon he had been checking cargo as it was swung over the side from the lighters. He had been on his feet fifteen hours that day, and still had an hour to go: at midnight he would go off watch until seven in the morning, when the last of the cargo, three thousand bags of coffee, would begin to come aboard. He came up from below and decided to wait out the remainder of the watch in the wing of the bridge. He put his elbows

on the rail, his chin on his fists and gazed shoreward.

It was a drowsy night. The surface of the bay, riffled by the faint breeze that came off the land, was a stretch of dark blue corduroy; a crescent of pale yellow moon just topped the mountains in the east; the sky was a shimmering mass of stars. A great fish broke water and rolled under the ship's bow. Black Michael, whom the *gendarmerie* had released on his promise to return to his vessel, sat on the poop of the *Gannet*, and his cigar glowed in the night like a live thing.

There was a shadow moving about down in the *Hawk's* waist, and Mr. Downs smiled as he saw it.

"One-Two Mac prowling around like a lost soul," he said to himself. "Never saw such a man for prowling. Little fellow must be lonely."

Captain Mac, with his inevitable cigaret, left the waist and came up the ladder to the bridge deck. He said, "Good night" to the third mate as he passed him on the way to his room.

"There's a boat coming out from the town, cap'n," said the third mate, pointing. "It's headed for either us or the *Gannet*."

The captain halted.

Downs went into the chart-room and returned in a moment with a pair of large-diameter night glasses, which he put to his eyes and trained on the approaching boat.

"Headed for the *Gannet*, I think—yes, it is," he said. "One man in it."

He paused, and then—

"Big man, dressed in whites—there, he turned to look over his shoulder; he's got a beard——"

"Please," interrupted Captain Mac, holding out his hand for the glasses.

For a few seconds he gazed through the glasses at the boat; then, turning to Downs:

"You may turn in, mister. You've put in a good day. I'll see that the second mate is called."

"Sir?" Downs, astonished, stood agape.

"Turn in."

"Oh, I'm not so sleepy——"

"Turn in," said the little captain, and he gave the third mate a friendly push toward his room.

Downs went off, shaking his head.

Captain Mac returned the glasses to the chart-room, left the bridge, walked forward through the waist, and climbed to the forecastle-head, the point nearest the *Gannet*. The *Hawk's* quartermaster on watch lay in the waist, curled up beside a ventilator, asleep, as quartermasters on watch usually are. The captain cupped his cigaret in his hand and waited, silent and motionless.

Black Michael had seen the boat too, and he left his chair and came to the schooner's taffrail, where he stood with his wide-brimmed hat on the back of his head and the cigar screwed in the corner of his big mouth.

"I'm watchin' ye, Jem McClone," rumbled Black Michael as the boat approached.

Jem McClone did not turn, he continued to ply his oars, but his answer came to Black Michael—and to Captain Mac, too, watching from the bow of the *Hawk*—

"I'm comin', ne'er th' less, ye dirrty thafe!"

The boat slid alongside and Jem stood up, his hands clutching an open port, his face on a level with the schooner's deck. Above him, on deck, Black Michael bulked like a giant in the moonlight.

"I've come for the stone," said Jem, "and to settle things between you and me."

"I could kick your face in from where I stand," said Michael, looking down at him; but even as he spoke, he was moving away to allow the other to come aboard.

Jem made fast his boat and vaulted to the schooner's deck.

"And now, where is it?" he demanded fiercely.

"Ye'll not get it," answered Michael.

"I will unless ye've hid it away, ye skulkin' dog!"

Black Michael, his eyes blazing, strained forward, then he caught himself and stepped back. He took from his pocket a small chamois-wrapped object, stripped off the chamois and placed the object on the wheel-box. The imitation diamond glinted dully in the moonlight. He silently threw off his hat and coat, pulled his cotton shirt off over his head, slipped off his blue neckerchief, and the great muscles of his arms and shoulders bulged and rolled as he tightened his belt and bent to tie additional knots in the laces of his shoes. Prepared, he drew back his lips and grinned wolf-like at his brother.

"I'll beat ye with my hands this time, Jem M'Clone," snarled Black Michael, "but the next time I'll shoot ye dead. Get ready!"

Jem tossed aside his coat and hat. His fury made him clumsy, and he tore his shirt

from his body in ribbons. His deep chest rose and fell with passion, and he sucked in air through one corner of his mouth.

Captain Mac, who had been watching intently, suddenly made a decision. He stripped off his clothes until he was in nothing but his underwear and socks, then he took his handkerchief and tied it about his head so as to conceal the lower half of his face. He went to the break of the forecastle-head and dropped the end of a cargo fall overside, then went hand under hand down the fall and into the warm water of Jacmel Bay. With long, smooth, silent strokes he slipped through the water toward the *Gannet*, fifty yards away.

Jem and Black Michael wasted no time in coming to blows. They knew how to fight, Jem and Michael, and they wanted to fight—and they did! Jem got in the first punch, a smash to Michael's cheek. For a fraction of a second the black-bearded one was staggered; then he lunged forward and drove both fists, one after the other, to his brother's body. Jen grunted, then clinched and sent his right fist upward in a short uppercut to Michael's chin.

Jem was a few pounds lighter in weight than Michael, and probably not quite so strong, but he was younger and faster, and thus, by reason of his superior speed, a more damaging hitter. Michael had the advantage in knowing where to hit and in rough-and-tumble experience. In grit and bulldog tenacity they were equals.

Back and forth across the schooner's deck they fought, Jem concentrating most of his fire upon his brother's face and Michael hitting to the body. Time and again Michael went back on his heels; but fighting men know that when a man is really hurt he falls forward, not backward. Jem was bent over from body blows, and his breathing was labored; he fought from a semi-crouch, as if it pained him to stand erect. It seemed that if the fight went long enough Michael would surely win.

Jem, in a last desperate rally, sent his left to Michael's waist and followed it with a crashing right to the jaw that could be heard from end to end of the schooner. Michael stumbled forward, his knees buckled; but even as he toppled to the deck he struck again at his brother's tortured body. Jem coughed, blood flecked his lips; he went to his knees. They grappled and rolled together into the waterway, where each struggled to gain the upper position. They were both hurt now, but Jem's hurt was of the kind that has the longer effect. The fog was already passing from Michael's brain. Chest to chest, they writhed and struggled in the waterway.

"We'll rest," growled Michael in his brother's ear, "and then at it again."

Jem grunted assent, and they released their holds and rose to their feet.

"Mother o' me!" exclaimed Black Michael. "Look!"

He pointed to the wheel-box.

There stood a slender, clean-limbed little man, dressed only in underwear and with a handkerchief about the lower part of his face. In his hand the stranger held the fake diamond the two big men had been fighting for.

"You darn fools," said the little man.

He drew back his hand and sent the "diamond" flying far out into the bay.

"It went beyond the edge of the bank," he said calmly, "where you'll find no bottom at a hundred and thirty fathoms."

"You ——!" bellowed Black Michael, and he leaped forward with murder in his eyes.

Laughing softly, the little man eluded the lumbering giant with ease, dodged around the wheel-box, trotted to the poop ladder and went down.

Some of the *Gannet's* crew, at last awakened from their sleep, came from the forecastle, and they stared in surprize at the figure running toward them.

"Grab 'im," yelled Black Michael to his men. "Knock 'im down with somethin'."

A negro seaman clutched at the stranger, but an arm flicked out and an open palm smacked beneath the negro's chin, sent him off his balance and falling into the men behind him. The little man sprang to the rail, steadied himself, and dived cleanly into the water. When he came to the surface he had covered over half the distance between the *Gannet* and the *Hawk*.

"The boat," cried Jem, running toward it.

"Too slow," said Black Michael. "Wait."

He ran to the companionway and dived below. A moment later he reappeared, in one hand a long blue-steel U. S. Navy type revolver. Captain Mac, on the cargo fall, was by now half-way to the steamer's deck, and his white figure stood out plainly against the black of the ship's side.

Black Michael brought his revolver to

bear on the captain's back between his shoulder blades.

"I couldn't miss, at fifty yards," he said.

His finger tightened upon the trigger, then relaxed, and he dropped his hand at the same instant that Jem sprang to stop him.

"Now what would I be doin' that for?" asked Black Michael, puzzled to find a reason for his own actions. "What would be the use o' shootin'——"

"No use at all," said Jem quickly. "And what difference does it make that we lost the thing, anyhow?"

They stared at each other with puzzlement in their eyes.

Black Michael put down the revolver and snatched a pair of binoculars from the binnacle case.

"I'm wonderin'—" he murmured as he put them to his eyes.

He saw their mysterious visitor drop from the *Hawk's* rail to the deck, pick up a bundle of clothes and go aft with them under his arm. He climbed the bridge ladder and disappeared, but a voice, a clear, cool voice with a chuckle in it, seemingly coming from the wing of the bridge, called to them:

"You darn fools! Why didn't one of you think of doing that before?"

"I think—" muttered Black Michael, "I think—no, I dunno——"

Wondering, he stood staring across the moonlit waters.

JEM McCLONE came out to the *Gannet* early the next morning.

"You, Michael, come on deck," he shouted down the companionway.

"Look," said Jem, as Michael's head came above the hatch.

He pointed seaward.

The *Hawk* was gone; and far out to sea a streamer of black smoke lay on the horizon.

"Now who's goin' to take my coffee?" demanded Jem.

Black Michael scratched his head and tugged at his beard in perplexity.

"Well," he said at length, "the *Gannet's* near empty. Now——"

"To be sure," said Jem, nodding slowly. "If ye will. And maybe, now, we—we could kind o' fix things up between you and me——"

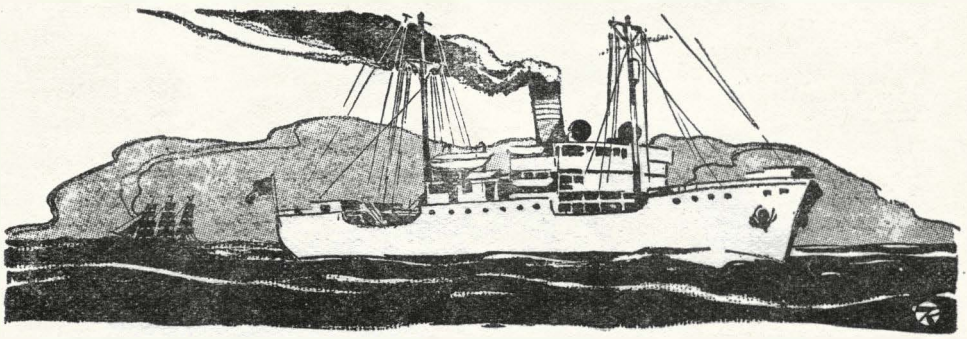
"And why not?" asked Michael.

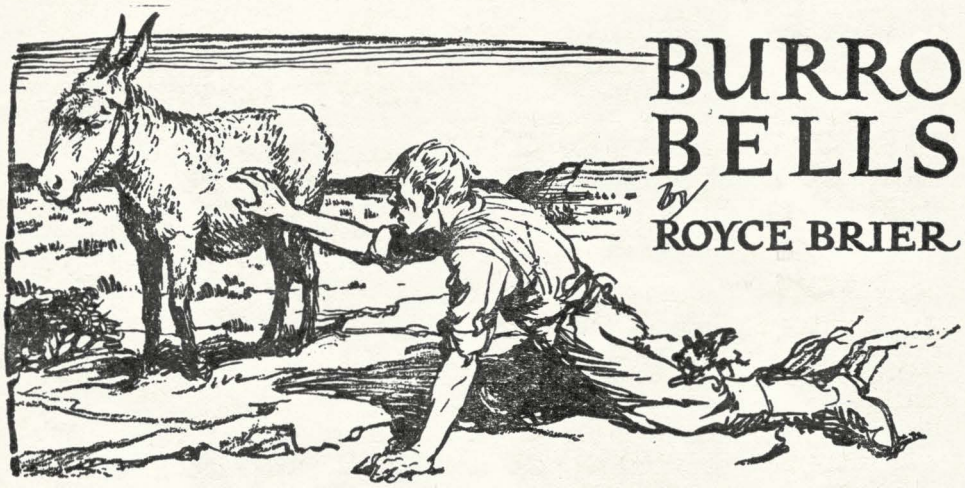
The wonderful diamond had been stolen, by a mysterious stranger who came aboard in the night and took it from where Black Michael had put it. So said Jem and Michael McClone to the men of Jacmel. And six of the *Gannet's* crew, eye-witnesses, backed them up.

The incident was closed. The men of Jacmel were satisfied that the joke had been played out. They wondered, to be sure, but they kept their wonderings to themselves, and no longer did they laugh out loud when diamonds were mentioned.

Breen, the consular agent, wondered greatly, and he said to himself, with a laugh—

"Some one must have put sand in their ears."





BURRO BELLS

by ROYCE BRIER

Author of "Foreign Parts," "Ordinary Men," etc.

IT MAY not be said that the day "Red" Carnahan was to hear the burro bells was woven into the fabric of his boyhood. He had not seemed of that stuff which the desert mercilessly sounds and finds to its liking. He had been a lean, smiling lad, somewhat gentle of manner, and given to books. Indeed, his older brother, "Butch" Carnahan, had not infrequently in their childhood thrust a shoulder bearing the proverbial chip under the nose of one molesting Red.

They had nothing in common, these boys, save that profound and reasonless love ofttimes prevailing between two men born of the same woman. While Red pored over "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" and the Homeric method of *Tom Sawyer* in getting whitewash on his *Aunt Polly's* fence, Butch pored over holding his forefinger and his middle finger crooked in a certain way.

Butch was pitching in a minor league, and on his way to the majors, when he was stricken with tuberculosis. Butch, the doer, could only lie and dream. Red, the dreamer, must do! That is how Red Carnahan, who was not conspicuously of the stuff which the desert finds to its liking, went to the desert. He acquired an antediluvian flivver, and he took Butch to Arizona.

Arriving at Kingman, he established Butch in a hospital, and in the months that followed he laughed at the heat and the dust and wrung from the desert a living and hospital fees. A stroke of modest good fortune in a mining claim aroused in him a certain pardonable contumely for desert traditions.

"Where do you get this 'Covered Wagon' patter?" he would ask over a bottle of denatured beer. "This is 1924. The old flats out there are a little drier than the prairie at Peoria, but about as many pink-toed tourists flow by, I observe. Why, your old desert is all gummed up with radios, four-wheel brakes and Mah Jong outfits. Show me a square mile between here and Custer's Last Stand, and I'll go out and pick up a 30x3½ casing on it."

Of course, Red's complacency had been jarred upon an occasion or two. Once he had wilted for twenty-four hours because he drank from Yellow Bird Lake, which is an excellent disinfectant but an indifferent beverage. Once, when a clapper dropped from a burro bell, Red dropped extraneous affairs and walked five miles hunting the burro, which proved eventually to have been standing fifty feet from Red's true point of beginning, as the surveyors put it.

But these were episodes and of little account in the vaster scheme—that of bringing health to Butch Carnahan. Nor did Red perceive that in these episodes the desert was gaging him, feeling with love-pats of its cushioned claws for his vulnerable spot, where it ultimately would strike to destroy him.

The loss of the burro bell clapper was precisely a love-pat from a cushioned claw. Red had heard of the burro bell tradition,

but he had laughed at it and talked of 30x3½ casings.

The burro bells are a strange and subtle thing. They are a myth twice removed, second-hand tales of a sound, itself without substance. The old-timers, the rats, the lost-mine visionaries wandering hither and yon over the desert's saffron face—these are the men presumed to hear the bells. In the evening there is a tinkling, as of a pack-train approaching, beyond the red rim of the mesa, up from the violet depths of the cañon, down the black defile of a lava flow.

But there is no pack-train approaching. Perhaps it is the seal of loneliness imprinted upon the souls of men whom the desert has mercilessly tried and found to its liking. At any rate it is tradition, profound and ineradicable—those who have heard them have been avowed by the desert and are its sons forever; those who have not heard them are its prey, as surely as is the fledgling motor tourist, astonished at the scarcity of sheiks and camels.

Red had never heard the bells. At mention of them his blue eyes danced like Michigan in a Spring gale, his hooked nose twitched, and his tongue puffed his lean brown cheek. He saw only what he had done to the desert. He had worked one of the few placer mines in Arizona, and he had worked it to a fine turn. Asked nothing, yielded nothing.

Red had a supply shack at Silver Basin, forty miles from Kingman, but his claim was on Lost Creek, two days of rough going from Silver Basin and up behind the Big Wash Cliffs. Here he had taken out some fair pay during the first trying year that Butch was in the hospital.

The second year Butch was able to assume a light time-keeping job over a railroad re-grade crew near Kingman. Once he had even ridden on a burro in to the Silver Basin supply shack, but Red had been adamant against his going in to the Lost Creek claim, though Red called him a half-owner in the claim. Butch called Red a kill joy, a doleful fathead and a violent beefer.

Red's violent beefing was divided between restraining the vaulting ambition that accompanied Butch's gradual recovery, and his own wretched luck in his choice of helpers on the claim.

Far distant the burro bells were tinkling, but Red Carnahan was deaf to them.

RED and Gar Nunn, at the heels of two burros which customarily ignored the names Cub and Whitesock, circled the Big Wash Cliffs and penetrated the barren hills toward Lost Creek. Red noted for the tenth time on that torrid day that Nunn was lagging. The man seemed possessed of an infinite capacity for sly shirking.

"If you were running bases," Red chaffed him, "you couldn't make a two-bagger out of a hit across Lake Michigan."

Red still pursued a mildly bantering tone after four days, though Nunn had no stomach for humor. Red felt that he had again erred as an employer—felt he should have read more importance into Nunn's slinking manner, the rodent look in his rather small eyes. Necessity had pressed, however, and this dour desert wanderer had been her sole offering at the moment.

They were leaving Silver Basin with its mesas and sandy washes, the desert with its olive-green haze, for each desert has its especial draperies; the Colorado, a curtain of lavender; the Mojave, a screen of copper. They were encountering an occasional scrub-oak, singed and sickly at first, but with altitude more rugged, for the travelers were penetrating the Great Colorado Plateau. Then there were evergreens, little Christmas trees, fit for mantels. As they proceeded laboriously, Cub and Whitesock nibbling daintily at welcome greenstuff, there was evidence of water.

This only made Red the more impatient, and at every step he was less pleased at his choice of Nunn. Nunn persisted in suggesting luncheon. Red paused finally at the foot of a rocky wash.

"Nunn," he said, "you're one of the far-famed fifty-seven varieties—the sourest one of the bunch."

Then he laughed.

"Don't get all peeved up," he said good-naturedly. "If you want to eat, we'll eat. I only want to get over the hump and into camp before sundown."

"Allus do what you want in this country," said Nunn. "That's the kind of a country this is. Don't never worry 'bout schedooles."

"The hospital superintendent wasn't so backward about pay schedules," smiled Red. "I used to swing a pretty mean shovel at the head of the sluice last Spring, so many shovels to the minute,

and when I fell one short I'd kick myself."

"You took it hard," observed Nunn. "You oughta play your luck more. A man don't get anything by workin'."

They ate, and quenched their thirst from a diminishing water supply, then pressed on over a rugged mountain range that taxed both men and animals. They came at length, late in the afternoon, to Lost Creek.

Save for the foraging of a mountain-cat, Red's shack had been undisturbed in the six weeks he had been absent. The shack was set well up on the side of a box cañon. The sluice, however, had been partly carried away by the July freshet, and several of the boxes had been scattered half a mile down-stream. It was several days before the men were in a position to start operations, and during this period of repair and preparation Red was brought to a close study of his companion.

Red had yet to learn that two men alone in a wilderness may weary one another to the quarreling point, unless they be fast comrades, or unless one recognizes the command of the other. Nunn, it developed, had an especial talent for carping suggestion. He did not like the sluice grade at this point, and he did not like the riffle spacing at that point. He was an inexhaustible compendium of annoying proposals, yet his experience had been wholly in quartz mining, and he was working for Red at a daily wage.

He did not slacken in his fault-finding when they commenced washing, but Red resorted to disregarding him as the simplest means of avoiding contention. He also ceased his banter as Nunn grew more and more morose, resenting the indifference of his employer. It was not many weeks before Red was sensible to a steadfast current of ill-feeling that took the edge from the exultation at washing out rich pay.

The sluice boxes were yielding thirty per cent over the previous Spring. The July freshet had uncovered a modestly rich bench a hundred feet up-stream from the old sluice-head, and Nunn, who shoveled gravel at the head, fed into the boxes a steady stream of tiny bright particles. Much of this was flour or medium dust, but frequently there appeared a smooth yellow pellet a little larger than the head of a pin.

The small hoard in the old cash bag, which bore the name of a Peoria bank, steadily grew, and at length this hoard overflowed and a salt sack was called into service. Each night Red would weigh the day's washings or arduously submit the metal to the retorting process which eliminated the mercury. Then he would glance across at Nunn sitting in the candlelight and would weigh out the other's daily wage of nine dollars.

It was about this time, when the salt sack was called into use, that Red noted that Nunn watched him narrowly, a strange gleam in his eyes. Red was aware how small that nine-dollar cone of shining metal must appear beside the larger cone that represented Red's daily income. He wondered if it were involuntary—the way in which Nunn's tongue furtively sought the corner of his mouth and was drawn slowly under the black mustache that adorned his upper lip.

They washed for another month and filled the salt sack. One evening Red decided to go up-stream half a mile to learn if the creek had washed out a good looking ledge it was undermining. His walking was somewhat slow, for he had taken lately, for no sharply defined reason, to carrying the gold sacks on his person. They were growing heavy and were an awkward impediment.

Red came unexpectedly upon Nunn working a small cradle. He had never before seen it, and he knew instantly that Nunn had constructed it during frequent unexplained absences during the twilight hours, and that he had a hiding-place for it.

Red stood for a moment at the verge of the rock face, watching the other, who was oblivious to all but his toil. Then Red retraced his steps down-stream. He waited at the shack for Nunn to appear with his tale of gold, but he knew the wait was futile. The man was dishonest. It was time they quitted the claim.

Perhaps Butch was in shape to come in. He could ride most of the way and could do light work at the sluice boxes while Red shoveled at the headworks.

Several immediate expedients came to Red as he sat with his pipe before the shack, destruction of the rocker, open accusation and banishment. But he rejected them. When Nunn appeared his employer gave no sign that he was acquainted with Nunn's thievery. It would be folly to antagonize Nunn when they were alone, days from civilization. A claim-robber might not be

averse to more violent and less furtive measures if his cupidity and hatred were coupled by an overt act.

What was to prevent Nunn acquiring the gold? There was close to five thousand dollars worth of the stuff, but little silver, twelve or fourteen per cent. possibly. Red had been carrying the twenty pounds without undue discomfort for a month.

THAT night at supper there was no banter in Red's tone—

"We're going out to Kingman in a few days."

Nunn betrayed his astonishment with an abrupt glance upward. He had that bland look many men are able to summon when they are trapped.

"I thought you was goin' to stay to Thanksgiving," he said deliberately.

"I get worried about my brother," returned Red. "He's headstrong, and he talks about coming in ere. I'm afraid he'll try it."

"He couldn't find us," observed Nunn.

Red eyed his companion, wondering if any significance lay behind the words.

"Yes, he's been in here," he lied.

"I thought you said——"

"I did," Red cut in curtly. "But I meant outsiders. Butch is half-owner in this claim."

"Oh."

"You get ready to leave day after tomorrow. I'll pay you for your full time to Thanksgiving when we get out."

Nunn ignored this liberality.

"I think yer crazy to go out when yer washin' fifty-sixty a day out here."

"My brother is worth more than fifty or sixty a day."

"Oh, yeah," said Nunn in a deprecatory tone.

He did not cease for several days to press Red to remain, and when he did it was in a manner further to arouse Red's suspicion. He wanted to purchase Whitesock, said he desired to turn off at the Silver Basin supply shack and prospect in the Great Bend. His plan was to weigh out the cost of the outfit at Silver Basin. Red flatly refused.

"Man alive," he declared, "it takes five years to teach a burro his name. I'm figuring on having a phonograph record made to call these babies."

Nunn was sullen at his inability to pierce the armor of Red's good nature. He moped about for two whole days with hardly a word.

They made good headway going out to the desert. They were descending from the great plateau and the pitch of the dry watercourses favored them. Nunn seemed to have lost his dilatory way and some of his surliness. He seemed charged with an unwonted nervous activity that was almost delirium as the late afternoon of the first day wore along.

They made a dry camp, and the next day descended into the desert. Though Silver Basin is off the trail to Kingman, the travelers were obliged to visit Red's supply shack in the Basin to replenish their waterbags, there being a fresh spring half a mile from the shack, and none other for many miles. The going was bad that afternoon. In the northern reaches of the desert are several mesas, scattered about like round tables on a cabaret dance-floor. The sun was sinking over the saw-toothed mountains when the two swung into view of Silver Basin.

Red's shack lay at the foot of a gentle slope leading into the Basin, diminutive down the olive-gray distance. In the twilight it appeared farther from the two men than it actually was; perhaps it was two hundred yards distant. Nunn suddenly sat down upon a rock.

"Guess I'll rest a minute," he announced.

Red noted that there was a singular tenseness about the other that denied his plea for relaxation. But any significance in this tenseness eluded Red for the moment, and he had taken several steps with Cub, the lead burro, when wonderment flashed in his thought that Nunn should rest in sight of the shack. He started to turn for a second glance at his companion, who was now a hundred feet behind, and as he started he heard the short, dry cough of a gun.

He felt a sting in his thigh, a little above the knee, and it wrung from him a gasping smile. For he knew in a twinkling what had occurred, and in the same twinkling there came to him the ludicrousness of the sting, which was little more than irritating. It might have been a sharp thrust from a stick.

He started to slip sidewise, and there was a *zzz-z-z—z—z——z——z———z*, quite like the dying tone of a violin. His hand went out to Cub, and he gripped a heavy thong on the pack saddle. Cub, like all Arizona burros, was a shy beast. He commenced to run. Red never knew why he hung on.

With his free hand he tried to extricate his revolver, but his body swayed in and Cub's hoof struck Red's leg, which further alarmed the animal. Other shots whined plaintively, but Cub and Whitesock darted away, their bells clanging down the silence in what seemed to Red to be a thunderous ringing.

It is a credo that a burro is inexpressibly lazy, but the tradition of obduracy is perhaps even more firmly intrenched, and when that obduracy is applied to a desire to put space between a burro and a given point, some remarkable agility is displayed, as the bleaching bones of a considerable number of desert rats can mutely testify. Cub and Whitesock were frightened. They made for the one point that called forth memories of safety and serenity—a shack.

Red would not release Cub; he saw, dimly, that here was some sort of salvation. He was battered and bruised with passing rocks, but somewhere, beneath the superficial whirpool of his thoughts, there lay a profound belief that he had something to see through.

In a brief time he was aware that the burros had stopped. Red fell on his side, almost under Cub's feet, but almost instantly he was aroused and looking dizzily about. He saw they were at the shack. The jacks had quite forgotten their fright, and Whitesock was braying loudly, doubtless recalling potato-peelings of a bygone day.

Seizing Cub's halter-line, he dragged himself to the far side of the shack. His brain seemed slowly to cease whirling. He felt his thigh wet and sticky, and he looked down to behold a viscous mass of sand and blood. Then he smiled.

The significance of it all came to him like a blow from a bludgeon. Well, Gar Nunn had a fight on his hands! Red knew the other would lay immediate plans to end the work he had started. Doubtless he was creeping now toward the shack, leaping from rock to rock, or circling through some sandy wash. Red was able to open the door of the shack, and he herded the jacks into the structure with him.

CERTAIN facts needed to be faced. He had water for a siege of two or three days, and he had all the food and the rifles. On the other hand, Nunn controlled the outside water supply. Furthermore, Red could not sleep, while Nunn might snatch some sleep out in the mesquite.

The wound would settle it, soon or late. If it developed seriously there was little chance, unless Nunn were entirely reckless. Granting Nunn moderate sagacity, Red was forced to concede that his opponent was the overwhelming favorite.

It was life, too, for Nunn as well as for Red. The former had no water-bottle to make a try for the outside, and no burro. He would have to improve his shooting, Red thought with a wry smile, even to get a prairie dog with his automatic. He had cast his lot irretrievably with that first shot. It was victory or death for one or the other in the next forty-eight hours, perhaps in twenty-four.

A violet evening had settled on filmy wings. Red could see no vestige of his enemy as he dragged the rounds of the shack. To be sure, a sortie could not be expected that night. The other had doubtless taken a point of vantage from which he could watch the shack without himself being detected. He might make a dash for the spring in the night, but other than that the shack would certainly be under close surveillance.

This sense of being under surveillance of death was a strange, a ghostly one, and these qualities were accentuated by the utter silence of the night. The white oval of a three-quarter moon sailed out from behind Dead Squaw Mountain, and as reluctantly as it sailed there formed in Red's thought a nebulous plan. This was supported by a growing certainty, which he was loath to concede, that his wound would prove fatal. While he had pondered his plight he had cleaned it as best he could in the gloom and had fashioned and applied a tourniquet. The femoral artery seemed involved in the wound; whether it was severed or not he did not know, but the blood did not appear to clot properly.

It was characteristic of Red, of what had lain dormant within him all of his life to be called forth now valiantly, that his consideration of victory or defeat was concerned not so largely with his personal life, or loss of it, as it was concerned with winning the game against his opponent, live or die. This is a rare attribute, for it rejects, or at least depreciates, primal law, the instinct to survive. It is born of a love which is more for living than for life.

The vast purple vault which is Arizona night had been fashioned from the more

delicate violet. Red could see through the cracks in the shack the dark rim of the limestone mountains, fading nearer at hand to the chiseled silver of the moon-bathed desert. From deep in the distance came the bark of a coyote. Red ate and drank, watered the burros and rifled his food stock for them, giving each a box of rolled oats.

It was as he did this that his nebulous plan was suddenly congealed to a semblance of cohesiveness. A hungry burro stops to nibble at the first salt bush or yucca. A well-fed burro wanders afar. Red sat thinking there in the velvet darkness, trying to forget the lethargy that was upon him, trying to forget the tiny needle-like thrusts of savage pain that seemed to stream down his leg like lightning flowing down a sky.

He arose at length to a sitting posture beside the provision cabinet and produced a small gasoline stove. Near by was a closely corked bottle of gasoline, and he filled the stove-tank and pumped air-pressure into it. With the oilcloth taken from a small table he formed a tent to shield the light of a match. Then he lighted the stove.

Next he extracted several tallow candles from a small box and tossed them into a frying-pan, which he set over the blue flame.

He yet was uncertain precisely what he would do. The torpor in his brain seemed a deadly thing, impeding his every thought and act.

GAR NUNN, from his perch in a small defile of rotten rock a few hundred feet from the shack, considered what he would do in the morning. Meanwhile, no effort at escape was possible in so radiant a night. Nunn could have seen a coyote scurrying from the shack.

He was quite certain he had dealt Carnahan a death blow. Certainly the chances were all against a serious fight. Perhaps, just before dawn, he would creep to a point near the shack to determine if his quarry were still alive. He could hold out for a day or so; he possessed a few cakes of chocolate.

He had to hold out—that was the way things stood—he had to. He should have got this dirty rat in his sleep, instead of blazing away at him like a crazy fool. And such shooting! He had had the jumps, no less. Why, a schoolboy with a pop-gun could have done better.

Now, he was up against a day of hunger, at least, before he could get the gold. Five thousand dollars! Nunn smiled there in the silver radiance.

What was that?

There was a creak that ripped through the desert silence like a band saw, followed by a thud of hoofs. Nunn leaped to his feet and started running, pell-mell. Then he slowed down. He could see, on the flat plateau upon which stood the shack, the dark forms of two trotting burros. He noted, with a sigh of relief, that Carnahan was not with them.

He stopped suddenly in his tracks, sharply suspicious of a ruse on the part of Carnahan. At first he could see no reason why Carnahan should turn loose the jacks. Nunn hesitated for some time. He could still see the burros, diminishing dark figures. It came to him suddenly that Carnahan must be sending for assistance. He had taken the bells from the animals, better to get them off without detection. Ah——

It snapped into a settled conviction—Carnahan was sending the jacks off in the hope they would attract attention, bring help. Perhaps each carried a note.

Nunn chuckled to himself. Carnahan now was without means of transportation. He couldn't get a hundred feet. He depended upon a thousand to one chance. Million to one, Nunn chuckled. And how simply he would intercept them! Carnahan had played right into his hands. But the next instant a devastating thought flashed like a beacon. Carnahan, dying, might be driving the burros off that Nunn too should die.

To capture the burros before they wandered too far, which a moment before had been an idle whim of Nunn, or at any rate a matter of common prudence, loomed suddenly as a fearful necessity.

He circled the shack, running down through a dry wash and up over the gentle slope of a lava flow which terminated abruptly at the verge of the plateau. At least he need not worry about Carnahan, cooped up and dying in the shack.

The jacks seemed to have been swallowed up, and Nunn stood for some time peering over the level sweep of the desert. He was about to turn back, believing the animals would return to the spring in the morning, when he heard them in a small box cañon on his right.

He descended the sides of the cañon cautiously, but when he reached the bottom he

could see them leaving the lower mouth, climbing a long incline which seemed interminable, and which, indeed, mounted out of Silver Basin. Nunn was angry with the beasts, and scrambled after them out on the floor of the desert, to behold their dark figures some distance away.

In the moonlight the mesas seemed infinitely distant; the floor of the desert seemed measureless. Nunn was unable to gain on the burros. They appeared always like a distant object which moves with one's own movement. He was enraged at them, and ready to shoot one from sheer ill-temper. He felt it was time to return to the shack, but he was not certain of his position, and he decided to follow the animals slowly until morning. They might then return to the shack. He stumbled along.

Furtive gray light threaded the east, then dull green dawn, then deep crimson on far mountains. The desert was a colossal bowl, cool and refreshing, but Nunn sweated and cursed. The mesas seemed to have withdrawn to the remote horizon. On every side the illimitable flat floor swept to the base of aloof mountains. He must have trudged miles during the night.

Far distant he saw two dim, gray moving figures. For a long time, as he approached, they seemed to stand stirless against an ashen-gray curtain. But when he looked up again they were gone. Nunn reached a point where he thought they had been grazing, and stared about him. He could see little hoof-prints in the sand, but when he followed them they led in nice little strides to a bronze-black lava flow.

The coolness left the world. From crimson it turned to pale gold. The sun lay hot against a yellow sky. Nunn was lost. Without water. He staggered. He thought he saw the burros—knew that was it; "thought" he saw them—and he laughed crazily. He forgot the gold, forgot Red Carnahan, knew only a raging, blind hatred for all burros.

The olive-green curtain of afternoon came. Night came, and day came.

The desert stretched dead white about the man, to dead-white mountains, under a dead-white sky. A dazzling, blinding white that whirled dizzily at ever-increasing speed as he crawled impotently on.

Bells—the clear tinkle of burro bells came to him. He whined hoarsely. His fumbling consciousness told him a shaggy ash-gray leg was but a foot away. Nunn reached spasmodically and fell forward upon his face.

The clear notes of the burro bells tinkled on for a time, ultimately to sink in a great pool of silence.

BUTCH CARNAHAN was riding a pony, and Fillion, the old prospector, trudged beside the pack train, when Butch came upon that which a few hours before had been Gar Nunn. Butch saw only the dead man, and was somewhat stunned by the sight, but Fillion was less arrested by the effect than by the cause. He stared beyond to a small dry-wash.

"Wa'll if that ain't ——!" he cried.

Two burros were watching them curiously. Butch could just see their heads beyond the brink of the wash. When Fillion clucked their ears dropped meekly and they came on with deliberation and dignity.

"This man died with them ten yards off," pronounced Fillion. "They's foxy. They hide——"

He broke off abruptly.

"Their bells ain't ringin'!" he exclaimed.

Bells hung at their necks, but they were silent bells. Fillion reached out and caught Cub by the ear. He upturned the bell in astonishment.

Held firmly by reason of being wedged into the narrowing bronze walls of the bell was a carefully whittled block of wood. Several drops of solder doubly secured the block against falling out. Fillion, muttering little exclamatory curses, scraped out the solder and cut the wood at one end. Then he pried the block out with the handle of a small frying-pan. Beneath was revealed a thick surface of tallow.

With one slash of his knife Fillion ruptured the tallow. There lay under the eyes of the two men, close-packed in mute splendor about the silenced clapper, a bellful of gold.

"That weight!" gasped Fillion. "I should 'a' knowed!"

But to Butch this was more than a gleam of gold; it was a blinding flash of light. He whirled and turned the dead man over.

"My brother's—pardner—I guess," he said hoarsely.

Without a word he mounted his pony, plying the beast without mercy. Fillion found himself obliged to care for the treasure, and was left far behind.

In an hour Butch arrived at the Silver Basin shack. He threw open the door. Red sat facing the opening, holding a rudely fashioned tourniquet high on his thigh. The blood had congealed, and he smiled feebly.

"I knew some 'ne was com'n'," he muttered thickly. "I heard Cub 'n' Whitesock —their bells—las' night—down by the spring. 'N' I heard your bell—alla way from the top the hill——"

But the bells of Cub and Whitesock had not been ringing last night, and Butch's mount, being a pony, wore no bell.

THE MEETING

by Harvey Sellers Dye

WELL met! is how I phrase it, friend.
In old Peru,
At journey's end,
You welcomed me as one who knew
White beaches where the tall palms bend,
Far headlands where the trade-winds sweep,
Blue reaches where wild horses leap.

You welcomed me
By Callao forts.
You spoke the lingo of the sea,
The language of forgotten ports,
The lingua Franca of the free.
When life unrolled that Lima page
I knew we'd met in other age.

Perhaps we fared,
In old lang syne,
With bold Pizarro when he dared
The Spanish wolves to cross the line
Drawn by his sword; mayhap we stared,
With Cortez, at the Aztec gold,
Or saw the western sea unfold.

New Time atones
For old Time's lust.
In Lima, where he dealt in thrones,
The conqueror's bones lie in the dust.
Perhaps, revived again, he owns
A master, in some narrow cage,
And pores above a ledger page.

The long sea lane
And then Peru—
The hawse-hole sped the anchor-chain
And made the rovers' rendezvous.
We yarned the old moon down the wane
With tales of ships, and journey's end.
Some friendships wax thro' wind and rain—
Well met! is how I phrase it, friend.

WHAT INDIANS FOUGHT WITH

by **Hugh Pendexter**

BEFORE the Plains Indian was introduced to breech-loading and repeating firearms the bow was his favorite offensive weapon. The war-club, conspicuous in Catlin's drawings and most common in his day, passed out years before the repeating rifle reached the Plains. And the tomahawk was carried for chopping wood. The Indian bow was a short-distance weapon according to the white idea. In a flight of nearly two hundred yards it lost considerable of its force in the first few yards.

Some tribes, such as the Comanche, had the blade of the hunting-arrow in the same plane as the notch to accommodate its passage between the ribs of an animal, which, of course, are up and down. From the same motive of efficiency the war-arrow blade was perpendicular to the notch, human ribs being horizontal.

The making of a good bow required great care and much time. A quiver of arrows required much more time and labor than one bow. In the earliest encounters between the Plains Indians and United States troops it was a common practise for Indians, retreating in haste, to cling to their bows and arrows even though they threw aside their guns. That was before the repeating rifles came in.

Contrary to belief, the Indian was not a good shot with a bow at a fixed target if it be somewhat removed.

Army officers have vouched for his ability to knock a coin from a split-stick at fifty yards by causing the arrow to fly sidewise at the end of its flight. The same officers have declared an Indian can shoot all day at a square inch of paper on a tree at fifty yards and barely hit it once.

The lance ranked next to the bow in offensive warfare. The shafts were light and rather pliable and measured from eight to twelve feet, headed by a sliver of stone, or a point of metal. The Apaches and Comanches often used the long stalks of the soap plant. These tribes and others trading with, or raiding into Mexico, secured straight sword blades, which was their favorite point.

The Plains Indians' one great weapon of defense was the shield. Combats with bows and arrows were at close range. With lances the mêlée became hand to hand. As his life often depended upon the shield it ranked first in all his war-gear. Not only did he spend much time and thought in fashioning it, but he lavished decorations upon it, and to make its "medicine" strong he often hung scalps to it and even his medicine bag. His tribe mark was painted on it. It held the place of honor in his teepee or in front of his teepee.

A volume can be written concerning the different makes of bows among the western tribes and the "releases" characteristic of various tribes. Also much can be written about the different planes of culture in making the shield. Briefly it may be said the hide from the neck of a buffalo or ox furnished the required thickness. The hair was removed and the hide put through a process of soaking and pounding. After being cut into the desired shape, it was dried and was almost impenetrable. Oftentimes a double thickness of hide was used, and such a shield could resist a rifle bullet unless the lead hit it squarely. As it was carried on the left side, and was continually moving back and forth, a bullet was quite sure to glance off. With the advent of firearms, especially the repeating and breech-loading models, the Plains Indian strained every energy in trade and cunning to secure rifle or revolver, or both. In the later campaigns the troops found the red men were as well armed as they, and in some instances better armed.

In the old days an Indian boy commenced his bow-and-arrow practise at the age of nine. Even after firearms were common on the Plains he could not expect to obtain one until able to buy, or take from some victim. As a rule a warrior did not come into possession of rifle or revolver until about twenty-five years of age. Long association with the bow made him fond of it even after he owned the white man's weapons.

PEARL-HUNGER

A Five-Part Story
Part IV

by

GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Everhard and the Russian Count," "Ointment Pots," etc.

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

CAPTAIN BENNINGS, owner of the pearling schooner the *Gloria* died as hard as he had lived. He had been cheated by Fate, bowled over by a poisoned arrow just as he was about to put the *Gloria* about and make for the harbor of a Christian port.

His wife had left him years before, her pretty empty head turned by the flatteries of a rich youngster. She had taken one of her children — the golden-haired Margaret—with her, leaving him to bring up the other girl. And for that daughter Bennings had lived and worked, making his name to be feared in the South Seas, reaping a rich harvest of pearls.

He kept good men about him—they were all intensely loyal; especially Heddon, a big powerful man who feared no one—not even "Black" McGree.

It was to Heddon that Bennings entrusted his girl—the schooner was named for her.

"Take her to Lianfo, Will," he said just before he died. "Let the consul take care of her. You'll promise, Will?"

And Heddon had promised.

So to Lianfo they sailed after giving Bennings a sailor's funeral. The *Gloria* carried a native crew of twelve. Heddon, now, was captain; Raeburn, nothing much and old Wateman, the other white man on the vessel. was an odd piece of flotsam who was always sober at sea and always drunk on shore.

Lianfo was a copra port, south of the Samoans. It was settled by rich planters who drank and gambled while their women gossiped and danced.

There was a seamy district to Lianfo; a collection of gin shanties where beachcombers, half-castes and Chinamen—broken down, vicious fellows—clustered like chilled flies.

Most notorious of the gin shanties was the *Gallows* —the rotted hulk of a wrecked bark—run by Duclos, a mean vindictive Frenchman.

After coming to anchor at Lianfo, Wateman and Heddon went ashore, although it was past midnight, Heddon wishing to be on hand to make a call on the consul first thing in the morning. He also planned to see Oxenham, a distant cousin of his. Heddon had always regarded Oxenham as "a fine fellow, but rather a bore; a man to be admired, but hardly liked."

Old Tom Wateman went ashore but for one thing—whisky!

And so, presently, the two found themselves in the *Gallows*.

They arrived just in time to hear the beachcombers plan to marry "Shanghai Ann"—a slovenly woman of the beach—to a young planter who was drunkenly announcing his intention to marry, "The wors' woman on Lianfo."

IT WAS their plan to take the man and the woman out to one of the ships and have them married by the ship's captain.

But Heddon interfered.

"You fellows can't take a drunken man and marry him to that," he said.

"Who in —— are you?" demanded one of the men, Buxton by name.

"You heard all I have to say," Heddon answered.

And then Duclos took a hand in the game. He pulled out a knife, double-edged, and held it ready to throw.

"You'll meddle now?" he asked Heddon with insolent softness.

A hurtling stool came through the air and knocked Duclos over. Right after the stool came Wateman; he pounced on Duclos and snatched away the knife.

Then the fight was on—Heddon and Wateman against the crowd.

"Come on!" old Tom bawled. Then somebody clouted him on the back of the head with a bottle and he went down and, for a time, was motionless.

Lights went out. When they were restored again the bartender yelled triumphantly:

"Duclos has carried them off to be married. He wants us to save this fellow until morning."

"That's a —— of a trick," grumbled Buxton. "Mate—" he turned to Heddon—"you was right anyhow. It was a blasted trick to do to any man."

"Who was that feller?" asked Wateman. "Him the row started over?"

"Him? He was going to marry Peg Cardan, but

she threw him over for ol' Jeffries. And so this chap Ox'ham took it hard and——"

Buxton went off, swaying.

"Ox'ham," muttered ol' Tom. "Ain't that him?"

"Yes," said Heddon broodingly. "Peg Cardan is old Benning's first-born. The last thing he said to me was, 'If daughter of mine ever plays with a man, I'll——'

"And if she brought Oxenham to this, by ——, I'll—I don't know what'll I do."

Heddon and Wateman then left the *Gallows* and went to the house of the consul, finding Mr. Sanborn dead and Roland, son of one of the wealthy planters, acting in his stead. To him Heddon reported the affair of Oxenham and Shanghai Ann. As nothing could be done until the return of the wedding party, Sanborn and Heddon went to the club where the news was broadcast. All seemed to think it a great joke and, later, went down to the beach with rice and pans that they might properly welcome the couple on their arrival.

Heddon and Wateman were on hand, too, and taking possession of a gig drove off with Oxenham and the woman to Oxenham's plantation.

There Heddon endeavored to send the woman away.

"I'll shoot myself if you make me leave him," she screamed, snatching a revolver from a near-by holster. "I'll make him a good wife! I won't go back to the beach!"

"Tell her to do it," Heddon said coolly. "I'm going out on the veranda until her little scene's over. Shoot yourself if you want, too."

He went out and again the woman threatened herself.

"Don't," Oxenham pleaded. "You'll be taken care of. Give me the gun—it has a hair-trigger—it——"

He took a step forward. She lurched backward to keep out of his reach and was half-falling when the gun went off.

Oxenham was held for trial, accused of the murder of the woman, but was released the next day on the evidence of Wateman.

"You'd better come with me," Heddon advised Oxenham.

"I wish I could, but——"

Heddon turned impatiently away and with Wateman left the plantation, taking the winding path which led to the beach.

On the way they met a woman on horseback. She tried to ride Heddon down but he pulled her off her horse.

"So, Peg Cardan," he cried, "you think you can trample any man underfoot! I'm going to take you with me—to the ship."

He lifted her up in his arms.

"Let me go," she pleaded. "What can I do?"

"Nothing," said Heddon, stepping off the trail and making a sliding drop down through a mass of ferns.

That same day Black McGree boarded the *Gloria*. He was accompanied by two of his men. After threatening to carry off the girl, he bound and gagged her and Raeburn then, taking with him a picture of Gloria's mother, set with pearls, he departed.

Gloria and Raeburn endeavored to free themselves but were unsuccessful. While they were still struggling Heddon and Wateman returned, bringing Peggy Cardan with them.

Gloria and Raeburn both pleaded with Heddon, begging him to let the girl go free, but he refused.

"I'm going to take her to Kulicos," he said. "They buy women at auction there."

He gave orders to slip the cable and amid the bustle of getting the crew over the side with a towing hawser there came a hail off the water astern the *Gloria*. It was Oxenham. He came aboard and demanded that Heddon put Peggy Cardan ashore.

Again Heddon refused—refused, too, to allow Oxenham to leave the ship.

Then the crew deserted, fearing that they would share the punishment which would surely come to Will Heddon for abducting a girl. Chang, the Chinese cook, later joined the deserters and the *Gloria* was left unmanned so that Heddon was obliged to call upon Oxenham and the two girls to assist him in sailing the ship.

The days passed quickly, and every day the others expostulated with Heddon, endeavoring to change his mind. Between the two girls there was a sort of armed truce; Oxenham transferred his affections from Peggy to Gloria; Wateman and Raeburn were both ensnared by Peggy's beauty. But Heddon seemed to be apart from them all, sneering at them—specially at Peggy.

And then a heavy sea came aboard and carried Peggy over the side.

Heddon let go the wheel, kicked off his shoes and leaped after her.

Hours passed. It was black on the water. Thin clouds lay before the stars. The sea tossed and smote the *Gloria* with reverberant thumps.

A voice came up from the water like a weary echo—

"Get a line over—quick!"

"He's got her! He's got her!" Raeburn yelled excitedly.

"Of course," said old Wateman. "He never let's go o' nothin'. Hold that lantern down."

They hauled Heddon and Peggy aboard.

"Raeburn—" there was a weary echo of mockery in Heddon's voice—"you said *man* overboard."

They put Peggy to bed and cared for her but an hour went by before she showed signs of life.

Presently she moved her head, coughed weakly, opened her eyes and stared.

"Cold—cold!" she said to Heddon, not knowing what she said.

XIII

A FEW days later the morning sun was coming red and clean and bright up out of the water while Heddon, with glass to eye, stared away toward the brigantine, some three miles off, which lay with idle sail and drifted without visible motion. The *Gloria* too lay becalmed.

"The ——, he's up an' answered somebody's prayer, he has!" old Wateman grumbled, blinking his red eyes at the glare of the rising sun on the still surface of the ocean.

"It's the *Loftus Mark* all right," Raeburn

affirmed, as if there was need of affirmation.

They had been in a calm most of the night, and dawn, drawing back the curtains between east and west, showed them "Black" McGree's brigantine.

"Why Black McGree! I know Black McGree," said Oxenham.

"An' what do ye know of him?" demanded Wateman, irritably.

"Why, twice I've turned over my copra to him."

"An' he didn't cheat ye?"

"Cheat me? No. He never carried it in his own ship, but he always got it shipped for me according to agreement."

"Then it were the other feller he cheated," said Wateman. "He don't do business 'les' he can cheat somebody. Ain't his idee of business!"

"I never believed the things that were said of him until after he came aboard this ship there in Lianfo," Oxenham explained.

"Well," said Heddon, "you'll have some other things to believe if he gets a suspicion that we are short-handed. Two to one, he'll try to lay aboard us anyhow. You'll make just about two good mouthfuls for him—if he isn't very hungry."

Heddon had spoken with only a glance toward Oxenham, and continued peering across the water.

"There's twenty if there's a ——'s son among 'em," Wateman said, handing the glass back to Heddon.

"He was very nearly on the point of carrying off Gloria!" Raeburn put in.

Oxenham remarked that he did not believe Black McGree would do a thing like that. No. It was unthinkable.

"I did it," said Heddon.

"But you—that was different. You—you brought her to her sister. And you—you wouldn't really hurt a woman!" Oxenham's faith in Heddon had been greatly restored by the way he had pulled her out of the water and worked to bring her to life.

"You'd better be quiet or I'll do something to show you you are wrong again," Heddon answered irritably.

Oxenham stood in misty puzzlement. He seemed to have a way of drawing ill-natured replies, however cautiously he spoke, from both Wateman and Heddon. For a time he looked across the water at the toy-like ship. Then, with sudden decision, he hurried off and disappeared down the companionway.

"What's the matter with that feller?" Wateman demanded with querulous exasperation, fumbling from one pocket to another for tobacco. Not finding it, he sucked noisily on his empty pipe. "What's the matter with him, Will? I want to cuss ever' time he opens his mouth!"

"He's all right," Heddon answered carelessly. "One of the best fellows in the world. But doesn't speak our language—that's all."

"I guess ye're right. He is like a —— furriner. He's all right, o' course—but he ought t' 'ave stayed at home."

Wateman absent-mindedly put a match to his empty pipe and puffed, then, muttering in disgust, threw the match away but did not fill his pipe.

"They say McGree has carried off native girls," Raeburn remarked for no apparent reason.

"I've got two women I'd like to give him," said Heddon indifferently, his eye to the glass.

"I'd like to have seen him when he found out about those pearls—that weren't pearls!"

"Well, Jack, he either laughed—or killed somebody!" said Heddon.

"Aye, that's right, Will." Wateman flourished an arm. "Ye can never tell how he'll take a thing. Them times he fought with ye, he'd laugh when ye hit him hardest."

"You can't hurt him—with a fist." Heddon passed the glass to Raeburn.

Wateman chuckled—

"We'll give him back his anchor if he wants it, eh?"

"We'll give him nothing!" Heddon answered.

"They're lowering, Will! Here—look!"

Raeburn thrust back the glass. Heddon took it, unhurriedly raised and glanced through it, then passed it over to Wateman, saying:

"Break out the rifles, Jack. Nobody is going to set foot on this deck without getting shot."

Raeburn hurried off at a trot.

"Aye," cried Wateman. "It's two boats they're gittin' away!"

"We can keep off a dozen," said Heddon, scowling.

"But they're pickin' up a hawser, Will! Great Judas, I b'lieve they're—Will, they're goin' to tow her 'longside o' us! We can't keep her off. Now what are we goin' to do?"

Heddon looked carefully at the empty

sky, bare of clouds, and searched the glassy surface of the water. There was not a ripple anywhere. The wind was dead, as if the maker of winds had died. The *Gloria* could outsail the *Loftus Mark* in heavy wind or light; but there was not a breath. The ocean moved with a sleeping pulse, heaving its breast faintly in vast, league-long breadths that did not stir the blue-greenish mirror into which the sun stared.

BY A little past noon the *Loftus Mark* was less than a half-mile off. McGree and other men were plainly seen on deck, standing about watchfully. His great body towered as if he had pigmies near him. Now and then he raised a telescope.

"You shoot 'im, Will! You shoot him when he gits clost enough," Wateman urged in a kind of crabbed nervousness. "We ain't a chanct. Twenty-two o' them I counted, an' four o' us—with them there two girls to make it worse. That Oxey feller ain't a whole man, an' Jack is half a kid, so we ain't even four agin 'em. That crew o' his is sweepin's from the beach. It's him that's dang'rous. They wouldn't do nothin'—be all scared with him down. You shoot him, Will!"

Heddon turned and with sullen directness eyed the two women who, with Oxenham by them, stood aft and watched the coming of the *Loftus Mark* and her boats.

Gloria thought that since the day her sister had fallen overboard Heddon had changed, incomprehensibly. He had become more sullenly aloof, hardly speaking, even when spoken to, and looking at her, and at Margaret, with a dark-eyed moodiness.

What Margaret thought, she did not say. Her effort to thank him had been rudely repulsed:

"Why thank me? You fell overboard. I fished you out. You ought to be sorry!"

She had heard from all of them what he had done, and she had come to him almost humbly; but on his saying that in the half-mocking way that he did say it, she replied with sudden flash of eyes and quick lift of head:

"I am not sorry. I look forward with great curiosity to the interesting experience that awaits me at Kulico!"

She turned with an air of proud unconcern, rather suggestive of triumph, and left him glaring after her. She had let him know that she was no longer intimidated by his manner, or uneasy over his threats.

After that Heddon grew darkly sullen, brooding in a kind of baffled, inert anger. She, with intuitive penetration, saw at least partly through his jeering and seeming dislike of her, and dared to taunt him. That was the woman of it, race-old, new-born in each girl babe.

"What ye goin' to do, Will?" Wateman nagged. "Twenty agin four. Shoot 'im, why don't ye—like he done Bennings!"

Wateman's red-rimmed eyes, in a face browned, burned, wrinkled like a withered potato, glared up at Heddon.

"Yes. If he tries to get aboard us, shoot."

"But that'll be too late. O' course he'll try it. What else is he comin' for? He's tried agin an' agin to catch the *Gloria* off her guard. Alus we've had a deck full o' men—so he's been hearty, as if it were a joke, him hangin' in our wake. But we've knowed he was waitin' for a chanct, jest to catch us off somewhere like now, with nobody lookin' on to tell what he's done or how he done it! Now he's got us!"

"You're right. This time, he's got us."

"But what are ye goin' to do?"

"I don't know. There are twenty-some men—" Heddon glanced down at the half-dozen rifles and bucket of shells on the deck near his feet—"twenty-some men there, and"—he half-turned and looked over his shoulder, aft—"and two women here. I've been a —— fool, Tom."

"Aye," said old Wateman quietly.

Heddon reflected on many things he might do, or try to do, but there was futility in all of them. He might open fire on the boats as soon as they came within range, and stop the towing; but those on the *Loftus Mark* would then also be in range of the *Gloria*—and ships in a calm, somehow, if anywhere near, nearly always drift together. Besides, to start shooting would be to make the meeting deadly, whereas Black McGree, who had queer ideas of what made fun, might not be angry enough to start blood flowing. Besides, to open fire on twenty men who would soon be rail to rail with the *Gloria* was folly. Heddon simply did not know what to do. It was not as if he could put up a losing fight and make the best of an inevitable defeat—there would remain the two women after the defeat.

THE boats dragged the *Loftus Mark* nearer and nearer.

Salvador McGree, broad, massive, tremendous, stood on his quarter-deck and the men near him appeared nothing more than children, so much did he stand above them; but children who, somehow, had got old ugly faces. He was grinning; the teeth flashed white under his black mustache. His head was bound with a brilliant scarf, its ends falling across his shoulders. At times there was the glint of the loop ear-rings. As his ship came nearer his eyes ran over the *Gloria*, along the rail, and his dark eyes rested repeatedly in long glances on Margaret.

Heddon sullenly watched. Close by, Raeburn had finished loading the rifles and had placed them in a row, muzzles up, against the rail.

"Hoy-ho, there, Will Heddon!" McGree roared, lifting a giant's fist. He was not unlike a merry pirate pleasantly hailing a helpless craft he was soon to scuttle.

"Still looking for trouble, I see," Heddon answered sullenly.

"Oh, ho, that is one good name for a woman!"

McGree turned his head and stared toward Gloria and Margaret, mostly at Margaret. Then, tauntingly—

"Where's all your crew, Will Heddon?"

"You must know—or you wouldn't be laying alongside!"

McGree laughed, deep-chested, amused:

"We're coming aboard, Will Heddon. Salvador McGree would have a friendly talk with you!"

"There'll be dead among you if you try it!"

"Oh, ho! So that's the welcome you give old friends, Will Heddon!" McGree roared, laughing.

"Whoever that sailed with you was friend of mine?" Heddon demanded.

"You are so good friend, Will Heddon, that for a long time now I have been trying to come up with you."

"Then why," said Heddon, "did you leave Lianfo in such a hurry?"

"Oh, ho, but next day I put back to find you, and you had gone. It was Will Heddon who had left in so great hurry! Ah, ha! So that is the woman. I didn't think you would be a woman thief, Will Heddon. Why, you are as bad nearly as that —— black scoundrel, Salvador McGree!"

He laughed and struck his huge breast.

"You know then that we have no crew, but remember that we still have arms, McGree!"

"Bah," said McGree, contemptuous. "Is that the way you pay lawful debts? Shoot somebody?"

"It's the way I'll pay you for how Bennings died if you don't shove off!"

"Ha! So?" McGree roared, excited. "You believe that —— lie too? If it was to kill Bennings I wanted, I would have—so!" He made a furious quick pantomime of tearing something to pieces. "Salvador McGree has a black name, but when did he hire men murdered? Who says that of him? You saw blacks from my crew among the natives that attack. They were runaways. I swear it. I do not hide behind blacks to kill people. No! I kill them myself, so?"

He drove his huge fist into a palm, and glared.

"But you keep a bunch of cutthroats at *your* back to help," said Heddon, who could not be humble, and would not let McGree think that he had fear of him.

"These pigs? Bah! They are nothing!"

With a contemptuous side sweep he struck the man nearest him, knocking him to the deck. The others jumped back quickly, and laughed. The man arose, grinning. They were used to his tyrannical humors, half-loved him for them as if they had pride in his hugeness and strength with which he over-rode everybody, themselves too.

"They are lazy pigs. I keep three to do the work of one man."

"Well, what is it you want now?" said Heddon.

"Much, it is much. To even old tricks on you. When I found I had —— French pearls, I put my ship about and went right back into Lianfo. But you—a-ha! So that is the beautiful woman. Here—" he flung something—"I give you back this!"

The small circular object cut through the air and skittered athwart the *Gloria's* deck. It was the frame from around the portrait. The picture, he had kept.

The ships lay not fifty yards apart. One boat's crew sat idly at their oars, looking up at the *Gloria*. The crew of the other boat were clambering back on the deck of the *Loftus Mark*.

Old Wateman had taken a rifle and, filling his pocket with shells, had gone up

into the bows to keep his eyes on the crew of the boat that was in the water. Raeburn was near the mainmast, rifle in hand, ready to flash behind the mast and begin shooting.

McGree, when ready to say what he wanted, did so bluntly:

"You have two women on board, Will Heddon. Give to me now the one I want, and I will go my way. Then that Yankee gunboat will be looking for Salvador McGree—not you!"

"I never yet saw women bad enough to be fit gift for you!"

"Not even that fair one who made such a fool of Will Heddon in Washington?" McGree answered jeeringly. He had learned the rampant gossip of Lianfo. Heddon scowled fiercely but did not reply. "And though they do make us such fools, we must have them, eh, Will Heddon?" Heddon glowered. McGree was enjoying himself. "The Yankee *Dolphin* and more than one ship is out looking for you. I come to help you. Give her to me. Let them hunt Salvador McGree!"

"Keep off this schooner!"

"As you got her, so I will take her, Will Heddon!" He was serious now; serious, not angry. "You know Salvador McGree as the man of his word! And we have old debts between us, Will Heddon!"

"I left an anchor in Lianfo Bay. If you want it—go fish it!"

McGree laughed. There was something like real humor in him, for often he laughed when the joke had been against him, if it was a clever joke, worthy of the laugh.

"It is not anchors I want, but pearls—aye, one that lives and breathes. I will be good to this one, Will Heddon," he said with a kind of hungry earnestness, looking toward Margaret. He was not begging with Heddon, not trying to persuade him. He was putting his best words out for Margaret to hear. "I have laid by a good fortune; I am leaving the sea. I go soon to some Spanish country in South America and live at my ease. She'll be a lady with fountains and birds——"

There was now an awkward earnestness about him. He was trying to speak persuasively. He, the thunderous roisterer, wanted to appear in as fair a manner as he could before a woman whom he meant to take forcibly. He did want that she should admire him; he felt that she should, and would. He was no mere brute, totally indifferent to how a frightened woman felt. When he wanted a woman he wanted her love, the soft sweetness of her admiration, her caresses; not that the lack of these things would make him chivalrous, but the blood of two romantic races mingled strangely in his great body, and he did not like to have women afraid of him, at least not until he was tired of them. For years, whenever he had seen a woman who was at all pleasing to his fancy he had at once begun to think of her as the one who would be his "noble lady" when he retired to the fanciful estates in Spanish America.

"—all men will bow low to wife of mine or have their necks broke, so! I have lived the hard life and I have been that —— scoundrel, Black McGree. But there I will be Don Salvador. I have looked a long time forward and watched many women for the one to whom should be that honor. There is more to me than this—" He struck his chest. His face was darkly earnest— "If maybe there is trouble in that country I'll be *presidente* myself and have an army——"

Heddon loweringly watched him, and would have laughed but laughter was not the thing, though Black McGree, whom most men feared, was making a fool of himself because of darkly-blue eyes and a white skin, delicate as a pearl's, and the soft shell-like ears that listened in benumbed amazement under the golden hair. He wanted to impress this woman, whose face was as the portrait that had maddened his sleep with dreams. He had seen her at Lianfo, too, but then she had seemed unattainably beyond his reach; but now she was at hand and he meant to have her; yet his romantic blood made him want to be admired, and with awkwardness he boasted.

The ships had come together, magnetically, as ships do if near in a calm; rail to rail they lay. Men on the *Loftus Mark* stepped outboard and made fast to the outboard rigging of the *Gloria:* but no one tried to come on deck.

"—I have money. I will make a great lady of her. I will give her things, more than she can ask for——"

"There she is, McGree. Ask her!" Heddon said bitterly, with a slow look toward Margaret. McGree had mentioned money, and the things that money would buy. "Ask her!" he repeated harshly.

McGree slowly closed and opened his

mouth, astonished. He had thought Heddon had taken her because he wanted her. He looked nearly blank for a moment, then faced toward Margaret and was suddenly self-conscious. In a lifetime of wild living he had never before been anything like embarrassed. Margaret was watching him with a frozen steadiness.

"*Señorita*—" he bowed with all the courtesy of one who was to be Don Salvador —"you will come with me. I have your picture. Before that I had seen you. I knew no other woman but such as you would be the one I loved. To honest man or woman I never broke my word, *señorita*——"

He had come to the rail of the *Loftus Mark*, near to where she stood. His great arm reached out.

She drew back quickly, looked anxiously toward Heddon, took another step back, staring, shaking her head as if unable to speak.

"Now see here, McGree—" Oxenham began.

"You, make your mouth shut!" McGree roared at him, swinging up a fist. He was furious. He had a vague sense of having had another joke played on him. He had spoken fair words, hopefully, and the realization that he had made a fool of himself stung hotly. "You," he shouted at her, "I'll come on board and take you—as other men have done!"

He made a start to climb to his rail and jump.

Heddon shouted, his voice hard with menace:

"Back, McGree! Stay back!"

Raeburn, his rifle resting against the mast, held a level aim.

McGree stopped, looked about, saw Raeburn, saw old Wateman, their guns at readiness.

"Ho," he shouted scornfully. There was hardly such thing as fear in him. "Ho, what chance have you if it comes to a fight, Will Heddon!"

"None, McGree. But that won't keep us from making it a fight!"

"Where would you be now, Will Heddon, if guns cracked from behind my bulwarks?"

"In ——, waiting for you to come."

"Why there when I am here now?"

He thumped on his chest, straightening his massive shoulders.

"And I am waiting for you to come—if you dare!"

"And now I will have what I want or——"

"Or what?"

With sudden thunder of voice McGree roared:

"I will fight you on your deck, Will Heddon, toe to toe, and if you win I'll shove off and let you go. And if I win, I'll take what I want—" he looked meaningly at Margaret—"what I want from pearls to anchor!"

Oxenham stammered a shocked protest. This was unreal and barbarous.

Old Wateman yelled—

"Ye'll take off naught but a sore head with ye!"

Heddon stared moodily, glancing from him to the women and back to McGree. It would be like him to take both girls. McGree was the better man; Heddon knew it; he knew too that if McGree got a beating he might still take both girls, and what else he wanted.

"I could lay aboard and clean your deck in two flops of a jib, Will Heddon, but I'll fight you, fist or knife, and toe to toe!"

He said it loudly. In a fight he would beat down this Will Heddon, crush him before the woman, show her how much the better man was Salvador McGree. That he had fought Heddon before without doing so meant nothing. This Will Heddon was a tricky fighter who had used the whole beach to dodge about on. A deck would be different.

Heddon understood. He could fight McGree all day, be safe or nearly safe, hit him almost at will, when he was tired clench with him, jeer him, even trip him—but he did not believe that with his fists he could beat the giant Spaniard into submission. The man was too big, too toughened by sea-life; it was like fighting a sand-bag. McGree loved a fight; he was built to give and take blows; something deep within his tremendous body was satisfied by the lusty joy of flesh to flesh struggling; and if McGree got him down, or got over one of his powerful blows delivered with a bull-like rush, Heddon knew it would be the end of him.

"If you win, you keep her. If I win, I take her. What is it you say, Will Heddon?"

Heddon eyed him in scowling thoughtfulness. McGree was proud and powerful; no man could whip him—he knew it; and Heddon himself more than half believed it.

"You'll swear to that?" Heddon asked.

"I swear!" said McGree, and flung a hand

up in the air. "The fight to last as long as one of us can stand!"

Heddon looked about, toward old Wateman, menacingly grim up in the bows; at young Raeburn, by the mast, with rifle half-raised; along the deck to where the women stood, silent and afraid, with Oxenham by them, staring wildly, incredulous, bewildered.

"What do you say, Will Heddon?"

"Don't be in a rush. We're all becalmed. There's lots of time. And the woman should have something to say."

He called to Margaret—

"Miss Bennings?"

She had been turned toward him, listening; and now came readily, but slowly and stood near, looking at him intently. Her face was pale, as if she stood in moonlight instead of the sun.

"You've heard." Heddon's voice dropped. He could not be overheard on the deck of the *Loftus Mark*.

"I have heard," she said quietly, but there was an anguished glimmer of distrust in her eyes.

She was afraid of Heddon, afraid of what he might now do. There were twenty-some evil looking men on the *Loftus Mark*, and the piratical Spaniard was much the larger man than Heddon. She had begun to think that she understood Heddon; but now she was not sure, and was afraid.

"He can take you anyhow," said Heddon, glaring at her but angered with himself. It was his folly that had brought this about. "He may keep his word, if he loses. There are times when he has kept it. But he knows pretty well no man can beat him off his feet without a club. I suppose I'll have to try it. You see, there's nothing else can be done. A word from him and his men would be all over this deck. If we had the luck to knock over half of them there'd still be twice as many left as we. I wish I'd never heard of you!"

"You want me to go to—to him, now?" she asked in a low voice, trembling as if with chills. There was a distrustful look in her eyes, a look in which fear and disappointment mingled. She had begun to think of him as a man who had no fear.

McGree, as he paused in drinking from the mouth of a bottle one of his men, the negro Dott, had brought to him, looked across and shouted—

"What about it, Will Heddon?"

"What about it?" Heddon repeated to her. "If I lose, will you go?"

She answered bitterly: "I will go now, if you say. But that beach woman of Lianfo found a way to—I can escape as she did. You wanted to see me what you called *punished*. You should be satisfied!"

"Well, I'm not," Heddon said surlily. "I was a blasted fool. I've had to pull you out of the water. Now I've got to fight a man that couldn't be killed with an ax. I wish I'd let you alone. You'd have married old Jeffries. That would have been punishment enough."

She flushed, her eyes grew bright, angrily:

"Why didn't you let me drown? Why don't you give me to him? Why didn't you kill me there on Lianfo? If I am such a terrible woman, why—why—you said you were going to give me to some brute at Kulico—I won't let you fight for me! I'll go now! I detest you! I hate you! I hate all men! I don't care what becomes of me! I'll go now!"

She turned quickly, angered, furious in her despair, filled with a kind of suicidal recklessness, and called—

"Salvador McGree, I will come to——"

Heddon swore, and with a swinging stride reached her side. He caught her shoulder, drew her slightly back and pushed her aside, nearly off her feet. He shouted:

"If you win, she'll come, McGree! But you don't put foot on this deck till you have the right! I'll meet you on your own deck—Stand from under, McGree!"

Heddon sprang to the rail of the *Gloria* and recklessly leaped across to the deck of the *Loftus Mark*.

THE crew of the *Loftus Mark* scattered itself in a wide circle, squatting and crouching. All the men were on deck. Pipes grew cold in half-raised hands that paused on the way to open mouths. It was a dark-faced crew, mostly natives, partly half-breed, three whites and a negro. Their eyes were gleamingly eager, and slow lingering glances were turned toward the *Gloria* where her few people stared.

Margaret, with a forearm to forehead, leaned weakly against the rail. She did not want to watch, yet could not keep from watching. If she tried to close her eyes to shut out what she saw, they would come open, wide open. Excitement and fright

trembled through her, making her face burn then pale from a chill that seemed almost to stop her heart. She had no thoughts, only a wretched confusion of terror and hope that was of itself almost despair.

"It is not so—it is not so!" hung on her lips like the words of another voice. Her senses were dizzied by the incredible reality of all that it meant.

Heddon stripped his shirt, pulling it off over his head, and without looking threw it aside. Standing on one foot, then the other, he took off his shoes and flung them toward the scupperway; then with a handkerchief from his pocket he bound his forehead to keep back the hair from his eyes. When he was ready he stood with arms folded, waiting.

Two men—the negro Dott, a favorite with McGree, and a slim-bodied Kanaka with a delicate face but badly set eyes—helped McGree strip, helped him take off his shirt of yellow silk, took off his boots, untied the sash about his waist and brought him a broad belt. McGree, sitting on a stool, watched them critically, but in good-nature. When "Tongo" Charley folded the broad handkerchief that was to replace the scarf on McGree's head, McGree grasped it, shook it open, refolded it, and placed it around his head, carefully feeling of the knot when Tongo Charley had finished.

Some one handed Dott a bottle of champagne. The negro pulled a corkscrew from his pocket, twisted out the cork, and offered the foaming bottle to McGree.

"Bring him one," said McGree and drank.

Heddon shook his head.

McGree drank what he wanted from the bottle, then threw it to the deck. With a scrambling lurch a man grabbed up the bottle and drank hurriedly, spilling the wine about his mouth, down his neck, as other hands grabbed and snatched for it.

"This thing, take it away," said McGree, overturning the stool with kick of a bare foot as he arose.

Tongo Charley took it up and tossed it over the heads of men, and the stool went clattering along the deck.

McGree stretched himself proudly, slapped his great shoulders, beat his chest. He was hairy of breast and arms, a head taller than almost any man, heavy, broad, powerfully muscular. He could strike a blow that would start a capstan, and no amount of pounding seemed to wear him down. He turned and looked across at the *Gloria*, straightening, showing himself; then he faced about, crouched, frowned ferociously and took a shuffling bear-like stride to meet Heddon.

The circle of watchers stiffened alertly—

"Kill 'im, cap'n!"

"Eat him up!"

"In one moufful, cap'n!"

"Tear into him!"

McGree stopped, glared about, roared:

"It will be no talk from you! Your mouths you keep shut!" His eyes swept them.

They were as suddenly quiet as mutes, as blankly silent as if they had been mutes all their lives. He liked praise and took it pretty raw. Those who knew him knew that he was easily flattered; but at times he would break out at them contemptuously. But he knew Heddon as a man of his own kind. They had to fight when they met—the mere presence of one was a challenge to the other; but though they were foredoomed to a half-hate, they were of the same caste, and the hot-hearted ruffian, with the blood of a Spanish lady and a roistering Irish sea captain in his veins, felt that jackals should be quiet when lions quarreled.

"Now, Will Heddon—I will kill you!"

He crouched again, again took up the shuffling bear-like stride, and drawing his big dark face into the scowl that made men shrink and beg, came at Heddon.

Heddon rushed, feinted at the face, drove a left into the bear-like stomach, and went into the clinch, rocking McGree's jaw with an elbow as they closed—then tripped him, breaking from McGree's pawing hands as he fell.

The only thing barred, and that only because neither ever thought to use it, that being a little too far back in the animal for either, was the teeth.

McGree was up quickly.

"More tricks—more tricks!" he growled.

Heddon had risked a clinch the first thing to make McGree wary of clinches, to keep McGree from being so eager to close in on him.

McGree came with a rush, grunting as he struck. Heddon jumped back and back again. One of those swings would have killed a man, have broken an arm lifted to guard against it. Heddon went back again, circling—then down, flat. A man behind him had thrust out a foot. The man was Tongo Charley.

McGree stopped, glaring blankly for an instant. Then he lunged, drove out a long hairy arm, seized the native, took him neck and thigh and heaved him overboard, roaring after him—

"It is for you to drown, —— you!"

He might as well have tried to drown a fish by throwing it into the water; but this had been McGree's first impulse, and he followed it. Then facing about he waved his arms in furious scattering gestures:

"Get up forward—forward! Every pig of you! Clear forward—into the forecastle!"

As if the furious waving of his arms had stirred the wind a rippling shadow, a mile wide, came on the water and, spreading, ruffled the glassy surface of the ocean on all sides. A breeze began playing lightly among the inert sails.

The crew went forward, moving with backward steps, lingering as they went, pausing after every step, stopping near the deck-house, then edging aft again when unwatched.

"Now, Will Heddon," he shouted, "we will fight! And the next man that meddles, I will kill him!"

And they fought, on and on, at times with caution. McGree was recklessly aggressive, but a little wary of Heddon's tricks. He was hardly afraid of Heddon's blows. Heddon, watchful, alert, struck over and over at just one spot on McGree's face.

The wind grew stronger. The calm was broken. The ships swayed a little, straining against the ropes, then bumped together, grinding bulwarks as if the struggle of their captains were entering them.

Heddon came in close, ducked under a swing, raised up and flexibly as a whip straightens its lash to a mark, again drove his right arm at McGree's left eye. The blow jarred Heddon's arm to its elbow. A side-swiping swing glancingly caught him alongside the head and knocked him over.

He hit the deck and was up with a movement like rebound.

McGree bared his teeth in a laugh and rushed again.

Heddon, fierce-eyed, both eyes focused on one spot, feinted, side-stepped, stepped in, and, teeth hard set, again smashed his knuckles against the swollen eye. McGree flung a hand to the eye, cursed, then rushed wildly. The rush was like the charge of a bull. No man could have stood against him in one of his flurries of rage.

Heddon went back, circling with rapid shifting of feet; then, glimpsing an opening, lunged, driving the heel of his palm against McGree's left eye. But McGree caught him, jerked him forward to get his arms crushingly around him; and Heddon, quick as a cat, lunged and setting his heel behind McGree's foot, shoved. The great body went over with a backward, full-length fall, and again Heddon broke free.

"Fight with your feet—and run!" McGree roared, instantly crouching, and came wildly.

Heddon was tired. So far he had luckily escaped from the clinches. Heddon was a powerful man, but McGree was stronger than he; and he could not merely fight easily, deftly, indefinitely—he had to punish himself hard, trying to win. His right fist ached as if it had been burned.

Now, retreating before McGree's rush, he ducked again, side stepped; then, seeing a chance, paused, swung with a left for McGree's eye, missed and was knocked cleanly off his feet.

He hit the deck with a groping sprawl. His head spun. The gently swaying deck seemed swirling on a tossing sea. Dimly he came to his knees, hands down, and the next instant McGree was at him. In the stillness, all that he heard was a woman's shrill, broken cry, seemingly far away.

Heddon, nearly blinded closed on McGree's legs, bucked against them, jerked, tugged. With the topping fall of dead weight, McGree fell upon him, but across Heddon's back. For a minute their two great bodies thrashed together, seeking strangling holds, striking blows that had no arm-swung impetus, squirming and writhing; then, in the flash of a chance, Heddon butted and struck McGree's left eye.

For a moment it seemed to Heddon that he had cracked his own skull.

McGree clapped a hand to the eye, and on the instant, Heddon broke free, rolled over and jumped to his feet; but McGree, too, was rising, and they faced each other in a minute's pause.

Heddon's mouth was cut, the flesh of a cheek was broken, his face bleeding, his knuckles were opened at old scars and ached. He was tired. Red spots that would be black bruises in another hour were on his body. But the brow of McGree's left eye was cut; the brow sagged; the eye was bruised, swollen, and closed. Heddon

had half-won his fight, but felt half-dead. He had known that he could not beat this man down; his body was too great. He took blows as a sand-bag takes them. All Heddon could hope for was to blind him, and to do that he had to punish himself as if he struck his bared knuckles on wood.

The fight went on. Both men breathed noisily. Both were tired. The wind was up. There was a splintering grind when the ships rocked together; and, though barefooted on the deck, the men swayed and at times reeled stumblingly.

Across the *Gloria's* rail Margaret stared at them. Her small white fist was between her teeth, and she had broken the skin with her teeth and did not know it. She, in her moment of worst doubt before the fight, had thought that Heddon would make merely a pretense of struggling with this giant; and then could say he had tried and lost, and that she would have to go to Salvador McGree.

McGREE, now with upraised fore-arm, tried to guard his good eye as best he could, turning around and around as Heddon circled him, striking as Heddon shifted in with rapid feints and body blows that made McGree lower the fore-arm guard. It was with his left almost altogether that Heddon struck, but he struck two, three, four times to McGree's once. McGree was baffled, confusedly angered. Again and again he made lunging jumps, springing, not to hit but to grab, wanting to clench, wanting anything that would end that tormenting fist-pelting that fell on him.

The opening came, and Heddon took it; he had saved himself for it, saved his right hand. Again he put his two hundred pounds behind an overhand right arm drive. It caught McGree's right eye—and buckled the knuckle bones in Heddon's fist.

McGree bellowed angrily, hastily touching the eye. Heddon jumped back, pulling at his knuckles. They were broken.

From then on a one-handed man fought with one half-blind, more than half-blind, for the eye began to swell so that McGree thrust forward his face to peer from it. And, though one-handed, Heddon could strike almost as he pleased. It was like butchery.

Heddon's lips were cut. He could not speak easily.

"You're blind, McGree!" he cried. "Let's stop this thing!"

"I'm on my feet!" he bellowed, wiping a wrist across his eyes.

"No man could keep you off your feet, McGree—without a club! I can't hit you now, man! You're blind!"

"Put me to the deck and keep me there," he roared, "and then I'll say you win!"

"No, McGree. It's no fight now to strike you!"

"*Por Dios!* You coward!"

He could see only as a half-blind man peers through a mist, but he thrashed out suddenly, whirling both arms, sweeping right and left for the chance blow.

"—— you, McGree," said Heddon, easily leaping out of his way. "You're a better man than I am—but I've won this fight. Give in!"

"No! No! No!"

He rushed again. He could hardly see at all. At times he struck the air not even near where Heddon stood.

"Why don't you fight me!" McGree bellowed, thrusting his face forward, peering purblindly. "You're hiding—tricky coward of a dog!"

"Why, man, you can't see!"

McGree rubbed a palm back and forth across his face. Then he twisted off the scarf that bound his head and rubbed with that. His eyes would not clear.

"Fight me! Fight me!" he begged, turning about and losing track of where Heddon stood.

"You're blind, McGree! You can't see! Stop this thing!"

"No!" McGree stopped flat-footedly and stood still. "Come here and fight me!"

"No!"

McGree faced toward the sound of his voice. Gigantic, hairy, crouching, he hung a moment, peering, then rushed furiously. Heddon circled on light toes out of his way. McGree rushed on along the deck. His foot struck the stool. He pitched headlong. His head crashed to the deck. He lay still.

Heddon went to him, pulled at a shoulder, turned him over. McGree did not move.

"Here, you men," Heddon called. "Get some water on him."

"Youah didn't win that fight faiah!" said the negro Dott, shifting his eyes up and down, sidelong and up.

"I didn't what!" Heddon snapped, lurching forward.

Dott shuffled back:

"Nuthin' suh. Nuthin'. Ah reckon it's nuthin'."

Heddon glared about at the men. They watched with indecisive, staring blankness, and were afraid of him, and also afraid of what McGree might do if they tried to jump Heddon. When McGree came to he might curse them if they let Heddon get away; he might do worse than curse them if they had not let him go.

Heddon contemptuously turned his back on them, and climbing one-handedly, jumped again to the deck of the *Gloria*.

"Cast off those lines!" he shouted. "Cut 'em adrift!"

Old Wateman, Raeburn, and Oxenham bent over the rail and sawed at ropes that had their ends made fast to bitts on the deck of the *Loftus Mark*. Some of her crew watched sullenly, and some, to save their ropes, cast the ends off.

For a time the ships still bumped together, as if reluctant to part; then the sterns drifted off, the bows touched—and parted.

McGree lay on his deck with men around him. It was two hours before he moved; and by that time the *Gloria* was out of sight.

XIV

THAT night Heddon sat on the edge of his bunk with a bucket of hot water on a stool between his legs and soaked his broken hand. He was in a black mood. Even old Wateman kept away from him. His face was bruised, blackened, raw, his mouth swollen. Though he had dodged the worst blows, McGree had given him a terrific beating. One hand, his right, was ruined for the —— knew how long; the other was stiff and puffed, nearly useless now. Heddon thought of what he had heard wiseacres say: that if knuckles bled they would not puff. He lifted his hands and looked at them. The skin was broken, and they were black and swollen. Salvador McGree was the better man. Heddon knew it, and the knowledge hurt. McGree was more than a fighter, too; there was a queer gallant manhood inside that brute body.

But the thing that hurt Heddon most was that what he had done had been done for that woman.

"—— her!" he muttered, glaring at the water in the bucket. Then: "Serves me right—meddling with her. I ought to have known better!"

After a time Raeburn came in with a teakettle of scalding water and poured enough into the bucket to bring up its temperature.

"Anything you want, Will?" Raeburn asked with the air of a man who was ready to dodge.

"Yes. Send Sir Galahad down here."

"Who?"

"That fool Oxenham. It runs in our family, being fools. Tell him to get down here."

"All right, Will. Want anything to eat?"

"*No!*"

"All right, Will," said Raeburn soothingly, and scuttled out.

Oxenham came, eager and nervous. He was proud of Heddon, almost worshipful. He had been pretty much that way in his boyhood. In games and sports there had been no one like his cousin, Will Heddon. When Heddon had come back from the deck of the *Loftus Mark*, Oxenham had tried eagerly to praise him, and had been told to shut up.

Now he asked:

"What do you want, Will? What can I do for you?"

Heddon looked up broodingly, and waited as if not to speak; then—

"Are you going to marry that girl?"

"Why—why, what girl, Will?"

"Stop that! You know whom I mean. Are you?"

"Of course not! How can you think of such a thing?"

Heddon glowered at him thoughtfully—

"Well, if you were, I'd turn back to Lianfo."

"What has that to do with it, Will?" Oxenham asked hopefully. "Go back to Lianfo, Will. You ought—you know you ought to go——"

But he stopped. There was a look in Heddon's deep dark eyes that meant he had better stop.

"Why do you suppose," Heddon demanded, "that I am going to the Kulicos? For my health?"

"Why, I thought you meant to—you know you said—Peggy, because of her. Sell her, you said."

Because his lips were thick with swelling Heddon's voice came from far down in his throat, growling:

"You knew —— well I wouldn't. I'd like to—wanted to. A woman can sell herself and be a lady, but a man can't sell

her without being a blasted dog. I wish McGree had knocked me overboard!"

"Don't say that! You were splendid. She—she said so!"

Heddon glared at him:

"Yes, I kept the man that ought have had her from getting her! He was a —— fool for not taking her—no man can whip him. He knows it. Black Spanish—— He's too good for her. He's a man."

Heddon raised his hand from the bucket and looked at it—puffed almost to his forearm, black and purplish, with red sore-like abrasions on the knuckles. He put his two hands together, measuring them, then soused both into the hot water.

"Ought to have my head in here, too," he said, disgusted.

"Why *are* you going to the Kulicos, Will?"

"To get rid of that girl you ought to marry. You'll never find another woman that knows so little."

"What on earth are you going to do with *her* on the Kulicos?" Oxenham cried anxiously.

"I'm going to give *her* away. You'd better take her. You can have her. Anybody can have her that wants her."

Oxenham tugged at his fingers, hesitating to ask questions for fear of shocking answers; but at last he did ask softly, anxiously:

"What do you mean, Will? Who is there you would trust *her* with?"

"Ben Stockton. Broken down old sailing captain. Runs general store on the reefs. Has gambling layout. Half-blind. Does business with scoundrels. Everybody thinks he is one. I'll give her to him."

"You don't mean it! I know you don't mean that! You're just trying to get me excited again." Oxenham smiled weakly, trying to show that he understood.

"What do I care whether you get excited! My mouth's sore—hurts me to talk. I'll give her to him, I tell you. That's why I headed for the Kulicos. You promise to marry her—I'll go back to Lianfo. Otherwise, Ben Stockton gets her!"

ALL THAT Heddon had said of Stockton was true; but the truth did not end there. Stockton, well over middle age, was a man in whom good-breeding had not been quite effaced, never would be effaced—not even on the Kulicos.

He was a tall man with a stoop; his eyes were perpetually bad, and he wore dark glasses. Once, after the glasses had been broken, the glare of sea and sand nearly blinded him so that he could not read, and he had a letter that had been handed from one deck to another two or three times until it reached him. That was how, a few times a year, such letters as this one came to him. He carried it about for days, unread, because among such men as were at hand there was no one whom he was willing should know what was in the letter.

But one afternoon he had taken Heddon into a corner of his corrugated iron storeroom. This was like an oven in which malodorous things were being cooked. There were barrels of rum that had seeped, molasses, the smell and stench of hemp, the stink of copra and coffee-bags. Heddon sat on a box of tinned meat and read the letter aloud.

It was from Stockton's wife in Sydney. The letter was filled with their three daughters, and a tiny grandson, named Benjamin Stockton Somebody-or-other. There was much about the Benjamin Stockton Somebody-or-other. He had some new teeth and had been colicky. Two daughters were still in school, private school; and the letter told of what they were now doing in music, how far they had gone in languages, of the books they were reading, their naive comments on what they read, of their dresses, friends, dances. The youngest, Charlotte, was keeping up her diary to send to her father when the year was out, and she would let no one have a peek at its pages, sacred to his eyes.

It was a long, affectionate, cultured letter, written by a gentlewoman. That was why Stockton had carried it for days, unread. He felt that he could not endure to have its contents babbled, and its phrases garbled and tossed back to him in rough jokes.

Stockton dictated an answer in Heddon's writing; he lied in saying he had sprained a wrist—couldn't hold a pen; but at that, his whole life and attitude was a lie. The family thought him wealthy, but tied from them by interests that in another year or two—for years it had been, "just another year or two"—he would sell out, then come to them. They did not know that desperately, by every turn and angle of trade, he was gleaning a fair profit, which to the last penny he poured into their comfort.

No one on the Kulicos had known that he had a family. Bennings had always been

distrustful of his ever-interested inquiry, each time they met, about Gloria. Bennings did not know that Stockton, too, had daughters, loved them, endured exile for them—more than exile, a sort of martyrdom.

Heddon, having got an insight into Mrs. Stockton, seeing that she was a kindly, motherly, gentlewoman, felt that she would be the best of any one whom he could now find for Gloria. And he had headed for the Kulicos to take the matter up with Stockton.

COXENHAM went out, having learned nothing to ease his mind. He sensed, without understanding, that Heddon had perversely tried to make him uneasy over what would happen to Gloria, who was a strange lonely girl and seemed very well to like him; and whom he liked, too. But the ghost of Shanghai Ann had a way of seeming to come to his elbow and call herself "wife." The thought made him shudder. The very word "marriage" seemed mockery in the shadow of such a memory as gathered about her.

Heddon, now alone, dipped his hands in and out of the hot water and shifted about in the irritation of a strong man made cripple. He swore with fury under his breath, stood up a time or two and peered into the little mirror that he used for shaving, looking with a sort of disgusted fascination at his unfamiliar features.

"I could have fought him for a week," he told himself, "and not been this badly jammed. But to finish him off! —— that woman!"

The door opened quietly, half-way.

"May I come in?" Margaret asked in a subdued tone that nevertheless meant that she intended to come anyhow.

Heddon looked toward her quickly and frowned steadily. She was changed, different. He was puzzled. Magic seemed indeed to have touched her—like Cinderella's godmother. She wore a dress, waist and skirt, of shimmering brocade, iridescent, with a peacock's richness of color. Vaguely he remembered when old Bennings had bought it from a wrecker. She had found it, and with clever draping and the mysterious instinct for effectiveness that women have, had made herself a costume in which to come to him.

As she moved through the door, closing it gently behind her, he growled—

"Now what do *you* want?"

She did not reply—ignored the words, the tone, the sullen glare. She came nearer, looking at him with an expression of pain and pity; and this expression made him angry.

"You poor man," she said softly.

"Poor fool, you mean!"

Her beauty irritated him. It *was* beauty, entrancingly soft—softened by the yellowish ray of the lantern that gently rocked from a beam. She knew she was beautiful. She had, somehow, twisted that precious cloth about her to show how beautiful she could be, as if she knew that in her beauty there was punishment for him and a woman's revenge for her. That exasperated him. He wanted to deny her beauty, even to himself.

He stared in critical antagonism, trying to sneer, but his swollen lips were stiff. He could do nothing but glower.

In these rough quarters where there were no furnishings but board bunks, age-darkened sea-chest, stanchions like denuded saplings rooted in a desert, on which were hung odds and ends of clothing, and a table of sawed planks, her presence had the sharply angled contrast of a bright silhouette.

"I want to talk with you about some things," she said and sat down carefully on the bench by the table.

He wondered irritably if she knew that where she sat brought the light aslant her face so that when she glanced down at pieces of old Wateman's shell-work on the table, her lighted profile was turned to him. He looked determinedly for flaws. He tried to make himself the more angry with the thought that such beauty was injustice, should be scorned, was nothing but the preposterous accident of skin stretched over a bony skull—that age would eat her up as acid does a pearl, and serve her right. The very absorption of criticism defeated its wilful intention; he knew it, and angrily—

"Well, talk then!"

"You won't let me thank you," she said in the same subdued tone in which the trace of a question lingered as she glanced toward him, mildly.

In half-confused obstinacy he reflected: Artful that tone; calculating that half-turned pose of the head, and the serious sympathetic look in her blue eyes. He knew her, knew her kind, knew their art, despised it—yet knew that he didn't, for

the glamour of it touched his senses with the warmth of sunlight on a chilled body.

"Why thank me?" he said thickly, for his lips were almost rigid. "I saved you for a worse fate than McGree. He's a gentleman!"

"For a worse fate—on the Kulicos, you mean?" The Kulicos now held no dread for her. She even smiled a little.

"No. Men there, bad as they are, are *men*. I'll take you back to Lianfo—give you to Jeffries!"

It was he who smiled a little now, or tried to, for she stiffened and her look was for an instant startled. But further than that she chose to ignore what he meant.

"Gloria's mother is living, Mr. Heddon. You should let her go to her mother."

"Unh—likely!"

"She has paid with long bitter years for that mistake, Mr. Heddon."

"And Bennings, unh? What of him and his years?"

"My mother is a good woman," she said firmly.

Heddon stared for a moment then looked away, unconvinced, unconvincible.

"I know what you think," she told him quietly. "In a way what you think isn't unjust. In another way, it is frightfully unjust! Her life was miserable there on the Caroline Islands with my father. She should have stayed. She knows now she should have stayed. Not because she would have been better off—where one is miserable one is miserable, and there isn't much that is better about one place than another. But she should have stayed because it was not right for her to go away, as she did. She knew she was doing wrong to go, and when you do something that you know is wrong, Mr. Heddon, you have to pay—pay bitterly!"

Heddon looked at her, but said nothing. These were queer words for her. He suspected artfulness behind her words—she was trying to get into his sympathy. She was talking like a woman who had never taken men up, bit into them, flung them away, carelessly. She now, in half-saddened mood, looked like a woman who would never do that sort of thing. Artful. He saw through her.

She seemed to sense his doubts, and asked quietly—

"Do you know why I broke the engagement to your cousin?"

"Yes. He wasn't rich—enough."

She ignored this, just as though it had been inaudible; and asked—

"Do you want to know why?"

He sullenly would not give her the satisfaction of seeming interested; but as if he had asked, she answered:

"Then I will tell you. I did not love him in the least, and I found that he was really a fine man, truly a gentleman. Another sort of man, I wouldn't have cared! But such as he, no! I couldn't go on with it. It made me ashamed. And since I was, as you have very truthfully put it, Mr. Heddon, *selling myself*, I made a choice that was more fitting for that sort of transaction."

"Yes. A better bargain," said Heddon.

"Don't you think that I, even I, could more easily face a man like Mr. Jeffries, who knew very well why I would marry him, than the adoration of an innocent boy like Fred Oxenham—when I did not in the least care for him. I would suffer then ten times as much. It would be unbearable. I knew it. Whatever else I am willing to be, I will not be that sort of hypocrite!"

"What of the ensign on the *Dolphin*? Was he an innocent too?"

"I was not engaged to him. He said so, but that was too much champagne, and gossip took up what he said. I was not. Fred, yes. And—" reluctantly—"Mr. Jeffries."

"Why tell all this to me?" Heddon demanded. "It is nothing to me. Why think I am interested in your—your financial affairs?"

Patiently she said:

"I wanted that you should know I expected to pay, and pay bitterly. My eyes were open. You did not need to threaten the Kulico Reefs. But that threat did—I can't just explain, but it did make me realize just what I was doing. I knew it, but—but somehow I had not thought of it as—as I should."

"Money meant so much as all that, did it?"

"Yes," she said simply, meeting his hard eyes. "It would get what I wanted—what I felt I had to have. For that I was willing to pay. Being sold on the Kulico Reefs would have been greatly worse!"

"No magistrate of the Reefs—no missionaries!"

She did not blush. Her face grew a shade whiter, and her mouth trembled into thinner lines:

"But I knew what my mother had gone

through after—after she left Mr. Cardan—and a better woman doesn't live! Let Gloria go to her, Mr. Heddon."

"No!" he said with somber finality.

For a time they sat in silence amid the gentle creaking of timbers, as if the ship gave off little, not unaffectionate sounds under the heaving, enfolding caress of the water, and the wash of the water along the sides was not unlike the soft nuzzling of an eager lover.

As he realized the sort of imagery along which his thoughts were creeping, Heddon shifted impatiently and scattered the thoughts from his mind.

He took his hands from the water and began trying to dry them on a piece of brown toweling.

"Let me," said Margaret, rising, reaching to the towel.

"No! Get away!"

He held his hands and the towel to one side, and she saw how bruised and shapelessly puffed his hands were, particularly the right hand, which had struck the rock-like head of McGree again and again to blind him.

"You are badly hurt!"

"No," he said irritably. "I wish you'd get out of here!"

"You won't let Gloria go to her mother, Mr. Heddon?"

"No." Then brutally: "You think her rich. You've seen the pearls—that's why you want her!"

"Mr. Heddon!"

"Don't try to be offended. Besides, Bennings' pearls were made in France. False—like some other things in the world. You heard what Black McGree said. Saw how he flung them back to the *Gloria*. French pearls! The whole lot of them are worth nothing much. Do you suppose old Tom and I, and that young thief Raeburn, wouldn't have whacked 'em among ourselves if they'd been worth stealing? You know men well enough for that!"

Margaret gazed at him with startled intensity. Her slender body bent forward, and the clear white brow, itself of pearly luster with a mist of golden hair above it, wrinkled in tense scrutiny.

"I *do* know men," she said slowly, spacing the words. "You would not touch them, or let others!"

Heddon laughed, forcing contemptuous sounds from deep in his throat, and glared. Irritably, he wanted her to hate him. He tried to hate her, to think ill of her, to believe it was Gloria's pearls she wanted. He resented the fascination that he pretended to despise; mere beauty—it was nothing! He called it mere beauty though had he closed his eyes he would vibrantly have felt her presence. He was like a man entangled in the soft tenacity of gossamer. Her extenuation of herself exasperated him. Behind the plausibility of what she had said was a simplicity of humiliation, like a confessional made less to be heard than for the relief of telling.

He was angered that little thoughts within his head tried furtively to shape themselve more favorably toward her. A nervous and wilful antagonism filled him, though every fiber, in unidentified pain, mutely craved that he believe, yield, give in to her charm. Hunger was in him, and he called it hate. In perversity of impulse he wanted to make himself out as infamous, rather than that she should think well of him. She didn't, of course, really think well of him; that was part of her art, the woman of it, the seductive, entwining, impalpable sinuous warmth of woman.

Somehow it seemed to give her a sort of indefinable advantage as long as she believed or pretended to believe that he was incapable of the evilness to which he pretended. And he wanted to hurt her. He could not strike her flesh. Nature had not given him sufficient laxity of manhood to ease his torture in that sort of violence; but he could strike her eager hopes, defeat this warm artfulness, this confessional duplicity, with which she tried to get his sympathy. She had planned to coax him into letting her, and her mother, have Gloria. He would show her!

"You know pearls, do you?"

"I have seen some," she said doubtfully, as if a little on watch against being trapped.

"*You* of course would know false from real ones. Most *men* don't! Bennings kept French pearls to get even with traders that sold him rotten supplies. That's his wealth—Gloria's inheritance. Gloria herself doesn't know one from another. You come with me. I'll show you!"

He got up impulsively. The bucket toppled from the stool and gushed water over the deck. She moved quickly aside.

"That's nothing. Come on."

He could not open the door. His fingers

were too rigidly swollen. She opened it.

No one was in the cabin. Gloria and Oxenham were on deck. He, having a lot of useless knowledge in his head, was telling her about the stars, naming the constellations. Raeburn had the wheel, and with envyless jealousy watched them. Old Wateman strolled about, empty pipe in his mouth, mumbling a sort of inarticulate staccato.

In the cabin Heddon went to the mirror let into the bulkhead behind which he knew that Bennings had craftily concealed his treasure. In the mirror he now again saw his own battered face. He looked frightful. He wondered that this woman had not turned in shudders from him. But she had been after something, and when after something she did not shudder easily. There was, for instance, Jeffries; and her willingness to pay—pay bitterly.

He examined the mirror closely, but now as a time or two before when he had curiously looked at it, he saw no hinges, no locks, nothing that suggested a way it might be opened; but it did open, for he had seen it open, the whole mirror off, with Bennings busy at what lay behind.

"Call Gloria," Heddon said.

Margaret went out, and returned with Gloria and Oxenham.

"How do you open this thing, Gloria?"

"Open it?" Gloria looked at him with a mystified steadiness. "Does it open? I don't know. Why does it open?"

"You don't know?" he said, not half believing her.

Pretended ignorance would be one good way to guard her wealth, and he was in a mood of suspicion at all women. Besides, her steady gray eyes had an impenetrability that may not have been merely the blankness of innocence.

"You don't know?" Heddon asked again.

She shook her head—

"No, I don't."

"Then it's time you found out." He peered closely about the wood. "Get an ax," he said to Oxenham.

Oxenham returned from the top deck, followed by old Wateman who carried the ax.

"What's in the wind, Will?" asked Wateman, looking suspiciously about.

"Smash open that mirror."

"Are ye gone crazy!"

"Break it open—open it up."

"Break a lookin' glass! I'll ne'er put on another divin' suit if I do!"

"See here, Tom. This woman thinks Bennings had a lot of real pearls. Bennings hid all he had behind this mirror. I want to show her that they are French pearls."

"Ye do?" asked old Wateman, mystified.

"Yes. And a quart of them is not worth a hundred dollars, though few people can tell the difference."

He looked hard at old Wateman, who caught the glint of a warning and reluctantly grumbled:

"Aye—right—aye. Two quarts ain't worth nothin'."

"Then break it open, Tom."

"I don't want too, Will. No—there's ill luck'll come." He shuffled nearer, raised the ax, lowered it. "If I do, I'll ne'er put on another helmet, I won't!"

Heddon reached out impatiently with his left hand, touched the handle, but his swollen fingers would not take hold. Then:

"There's no bad luck when you break a mirror on purpose. It's only when you do it by accident. Smash into it, Tom!"

"Are ye sure?"

"Of course I'm sure. Get busy, put the ax into it!"

Tom raised the ax and struck with the edge—not into the mirror, but into the wood, then pried a little. He chopped carefully, prying each time, and started the mirror-door of the secret cupboard.

Those in the cabin gathered behind him, breathless.

Chop—chop—chop. The ax took a deep hold. He pried, hard. A *cl-i-i-i-i-ck* ran across the mirror, and a crack appeared.

Old Wateman stepped back, staring nervously.

"That's all right," said Heddon. "Go on!"

"It ain't awright! I was bein' careful. I didn't mean to do it!"

"It's done. I'll take the curse. My fault anyhow, open it up!"

Tom, now with the air of a man foredoomed, so nothing mattered, defied his fate by a reckless crashing of glass. Pieces of it shivered and clattered. More blows, and the door came open, falling to the deck.

On the very narrow shelves of this now exposed secret cupboard were little boxes securely fastened between pegs, so that they would not slide about when the ship rolled.

"Take them out, Tom—any one."

He grasped a box, half as big as a matchbox. Oxenham and Margaret pressed close to him. The box was covered. He slid back the lid.

Within, each nestling apart on a film of cotton, were four or five *boutons* and large *baroques:* one *bouton* was large as a big man's thumb nail, circular as a coin; all were priceless in color, lacking spherical symmetry, but odd, beautiful, such things as the artistic workman loves to bring under his ingenuity, fashioning strangely figured ornaments.

"These," said Heddon, looking directly at Margaret, "are genuine, and of no great value. Try another box, Tom."

Old Tom stared at Heddon with quizzical frown. Pearls were a passion with him. His dry lips trembled with protest. He looked down with lingering adoration at the large odd pearls, motionless and alive, burning with subdued orient flame, like little creatures sleeping in the reposeful consciousness of their amazing worth.

Gloria brought a wooden bowl into which she had pressed a piece of black velvet. Pearls to her were little more than pretty pebbles, over which for some unimaginable reason, men were mad. Beautiful, but why valuable? She knew nothing of value; and as for beauty—the burning luster that gleamed within shells her father tumbled overboard by the thousand had as much beauty.

Carefully Tom replaced the cover and carefully he replaced the box among the pegs.

The very rarity of size, and their odd shape, made the pearls seem of indifferent value to Oxenham; as a diamond, oddly cut, big as a hen's egg, would surely be thought nothing but glass by persons familiar only with the fiery glitter of small gems.

"Try another one, Tom," said Heddon.

Tom's fingers trembled eagerly as he lifted his hand, hesitating which to touch, as a child's hand indecisively flutters over a selection of toys.

The next box contained a handful of pearls of the blister type; some fairly large, none small; half-formed beauties—through no fault of their own, misshapen; perfect if rightly set—that is, perfectly deceptive. Luck, mysteriously entering into the tiny shell cavern in which they were born on the ocean bed, touched them into what they were. Luck brought them out to men's hands. Luck could change their moon-glinting innocence to the evil impulse for tricky bartering and blood-letting.

"These," said Heddon, "are worth nothing. Like a woman with a twisted nose—nobody wants her, however genuine."

Tom swallowed hard a few times, but held his peace, though his small red eyes glanced hopefully toward Margaret. She was interested, nervous, but nearly expressionless.

"No," said Gloria quietly, indifferently. "Father never cared for this kind."

"I think them lovely!" Oxenham exclaimed.

"You would," Heddon told him. "All your life you've admired the wrong things."

Tom returned these to the shelf, took another small box, opened it, then with a quick gesture thrust it almost against Margaret's face.

"Some of the cheaper French pearls," said Heddon. "See how perfect they are—artificial! Prettier in a way than real ones. Always are, such things!"

"Why did Bennings take so much care of them?" asked Oxenham.

"When he brought a trader down here, Bennings would want him to think they were real treasures—wouldn't he?"

Gloria looked up at Heddon with mystified steadiness. Her father had never brought traders into the cabin. She said nothing.

"What are these—er—worth, Will? If they were real, I mean?" asked Oxenham.

"Real? Oh, a hundred dollars, up—each. But would Bennings have carried them about with him? He might have lost his ship—everything—been penniless."

"Beautiful," said Margaret, touching the box lightly with both hands as Tom held it out for her to see.

"You can get more perfect ones in Paris for a dollar than out of a thousand ton of shell," Heddon told her.

"Then why doesn't everybody wear—" Oxenham began.

"The false pearls have nothing but an outer skin coloring—like some other false things. It fades. Nothing remains. A real pearl is a pearl, from its heart out—layer on layer of inner beauty. That's why!"

Margaret with a tense air of preoccupation pretended not to have listened. Oxenham fidgetted with embarrassment. The cabin suddenly seemed very quiet.

Tom pulled back the wooden lid of another box and gazed, holding his breath, bending forward, lifting the box closer to his face.

"Now what have you, Tom?"

The old fellow had nothing to say. He hesitatingly took his eyes off the box and, with a sort of savage triumph, thrust it up that Heddon might see for himself and be struck dumb.

Pearls, large ones, lay in rows, in grooves. They were spaced from each other by bits of silk. Some were yellowish, and some were dark to the tint that, in a pearl, is called black; some were shadowed with the green of peacock's feathers, two or three were rosy as the first glimpse of dawn. The others, and more precious, varied in tone, but were of a sisterhood in their pale opalescence and symmetrical perfection. Many were pears, some oblong drops, a few *boutons* perfect of shape as art itself could have made them; and side by side lay others that seemed veritably to be Seed of the Moon. Their delicate luster burned with the subdued glow of an inner warmth. These were no cold bits of lime suffused with nacreous coloration; they were ***alive***, and in the faint shimmer of their opalescence seemed to breathe. They had been fished from many parts of the world; Bennings himself had found most of them; others he had traded for among the thieves that came to buy from him.

"That's what I was talking of," said Heddon, quickly. "French imitations. Dump 'em out, Tom. Let her handle them. There's all the fortune that Bennings left!"

Tom growled vaguely, blinking and peering at Heddon.

"Wonderful," Margaret murmured. "Wonderful!"

"These are lovelier than those you called genuine," said Oxenham, his eyes large with doubt.

"You know pearls, do you?" Heddon demanded.

"No, of course not. But I never saw anything as lovely as these!"

"Nor I," said Margaret quietly, lifting her eyes to Heddon.

"So? Well, pour 'em out, Tom. Here's Tom, been pearling for years. Knows pearls with his eyes shut. Can sense a pearl twenty fathoms down, when the shell's closed. Many a time he's come up with an oyster under his arm and said, 'This fellow's got one in him!' How about it, Tom—are these worth anything?"

Tom moistened his lips and became very intent at pouring the gems on the velvet cloth in the wooden bowl.

"I guess worser than these," he muttered, "would be as good as any to them as couldn't tell the diff'rence!"

"There!" said Heddon. "See? And Tom knows pearls."

Tom's hand shook. With twinkling shimmer the pearls dropped from the box onto the black velvet, rolling about a little as if looking for where to stop, then nestling together. The ship rolled. Tom's hand was unsteady. One big round pearl, reluctant to be shaken out, seemed suddenly to feel fright, and sprang from the box, leaped to the deck, bounded with faint click, rolled and lodged against the mat on which Heddon stood.

"But Mr. Heddon," said Margaret, "surely—*surely* these are real!"

She looked inquiringly toward Gloria—

"Aren't they?"

"Here," Heddon answered her. "Here's one of the largest."

He pointed to the deck. Tom was stooping with fingers bent guardedly for the runaway pearl, and muttering gentle reproof.

"And the prettiest!" Heddon added savagely, then moved his foot, put down his heel, and ground it into dust. "Now," said Heddon defiantly, "you see why they are not even worth stealing!"

Old Tom became rigid as if frozen. He gave Heddon a look that was murderous, then straightened, turned, and with bandy-legged clattering went from the cabin.

"Pretty, but worthless!" said Heddon, looking hard at her.

Then he strode out.

OLD TOM leaped out of the companion way and began jumping up and down on one spot, muttering wildly. He drew his pipe from his pocket and slammed it to the deck, swearing. Without warning he kicked Raeburn until the boy nearly brought the ship aback, trying dodge and begging to know what was wrong.

"Wrong!" old Tom screeched, throwing up his fists. "It were murder! Worse than murder! He done it jest to be mean! By the look o' him ye knowed he wished she was under his heel that way. He's lunaticked! He stays in the water half a night to save her, an' fights Black McGree, then——"

Tom, to illustrate, drove his heel on Raeburn's foot.

"Ow! Tom!"

"He done that—to a pearl! Jest to show her he hates 'er! An' he don't hate 'er, —— him! To a pearl, that big!" Tom excitedly measured off at the first joint of his thumb. "He's gone clear off his head, he has! I'll never speak to him again—strike me dead if I do! He tromped on a pearl. An' I busted a lookin' glass!

"Jack—" he shook a warning finger against the boy's face—"if this here ship goes down with all hands, don't ye be surprized. Afore mornin', maybe!"

XV

TEN days later Heddon hardly knew whether he felt relief or something that was not relief as he lowered the telescope, knowing that the dark low-lying blotch on the shining sea was the Kulico Reefs.

He turned with a seaward glance all about. Nothing was in sight.

Then he looked with perplexed watchfulness at Oxenham and Gloria, side by side on the seachest near the foot of the foremast. They were together for hours each day. They were as nearly made for each other as boy and girl were ever likely to be, each flushed with innocence—and yet this sea-born, sea-bred girl was incomprehensible.

The morning after he had crushed the pearl she had come up to where he was standing alone on the deck and quietly stood near, looking at him with gray-eyed mildness. He rather felt there was a little reproach in her eyes, knew that he deserved it. He had destroyed a pearl that would have made many a girl a handsome dowry.

"Well, Gloria?"

"Yes, Will."

"Something has to be done for you. With you. What would you like?"

"To stay on my ship," she said.

"You can't stay on the ship, on anybody's ship. You have to go somewhere—get under a roof. You'll be happy. People will like you. There's Oxenham. He thinks you're about the finest girl he ever met. He likes you."

"I like him," she said simply.

"See here. You two were born for each other. You marry him. Go with him."

"You want me to do that?"

"I think it's the best thing you can do. And you—he likes you. You like him."

"Not so much as I like old Tom, or Jack Raeburn, or you."

"What the —— do you like about us?"

She gave his question no answer, but asked one of her own—

"Why did you make that woman think my pearls were not real?"

"Does she?"

"When you were gone she asked me, 'Are these really not pearls?' I said: 'They are worthless. You may have them. I give them to you.' "

"You what!" Heddon exclaimed.

"I said: 'If you think they are pretty, you take them. I don't want them. I don't like them.' "

"You—you gave them— Say, look here, they are worth—well, you don't understand money. But they are worth a lot of money. I'll see that she doesn't take them. What on earth made you do that?"

"If I got rid of those I knew you couldn't send me away until you got others for me. I want to stay on my ship."

"But you wanted to get off it. That's why your father was leaving the sea."

"I—now I don't," she said quietly.

"What's come over you? I think you'd be confoundedly glad to get off."

"I don't want to leave you," she said it simply, not even coloring.

"Leave me? What have I to do with it?"

"I love you, Will Heddon. When I see you, I am happy. When I don't see you, I am not happy. When you look at that woman I want to hurt her. She loves you too."

"Thunders of nonsense!" said Heddon explosively.

"She does. I can tell by the way she sits and looks at nothing. When I sit that way, I am thinking of you. So is she. I know it."

"What's got into you, child?"

"I am a woman! I love you. I know I love you. I don't want you to send me away. I don't want to leave you. I want to go where you go, always."

Heddon stared at her, impatiently. He searched her features with a cruel scrutiny. In all self-honesty he could not imagine why she should care two straws about him. Except that she was the girl-child of Bennings, he did not care two straws about her. In his eyes she was immature, colorless—a lusterless woman, however [illegible] of a woman. Not badly featured [illegible]ty, dull, without the evanescent [illegible] save

pearls and women value. She had, as thoroughly as a woman could have it, the virtue of innocence—of such inestimable value, but in the next world, not this. He was, on the moment, a little sorry for her loneliness; but what she told him of love had no more effect than if she were a child of seven instead of seventeen.

"See here, Gloria. How would you like to go to your mother?"

"No. I thought that mother was dead. I loved her when I thought that she was dead. I do not love her now. She is not my mother now. She is that woman's mother. I would not go to her. She left my father when he needed her. I have heard him say to her picture, 'Oh, I need you, my God, how I need you!' She went with another man. I hate her. That woman you say is my sister has told me. I hate her too."

Color had now come with an angered flush into her browned cheeks. She did—he reflected—after all, have fire in her, and a woman's pitiless heart for other women who had slipped.

"Where the —— did *you* learn about love and hate?"

"What I feel I just feel," she answered positively, as if what she said meant something. "I felt that you loved her until you stepped on the pearl. Then I knew you did not love her. I am glad. You don't love her, do you?"

"No!" said Heddon angrily.

She regarded him soberly, as if watching to see if there was not something behind that ill-tempered denial that meant "Yes;" then, calmly—

"Are you going to send me away?"

"I am!"

"Where?"

"To Sydney. Family there I know about. You'll be well off."

A thoughtful pause; then, with a matter-of-fact firmness—

"I won't go!"

She gave him a parting glance, calm and defiant, and walked off, head up, stiffly.

During the days that followed she had been just the same as before, rather silent without shyness, searchingly steady in the way she looked at everything and everybody, as if a little doubtful, but prepared against su[illegible] Though she may have hated M[illegible]loria was not disagreeable [illegible]om mo[illegible]iendly. There was no knowing what went on behind the gray calmness of her wide eyes; and she was as much with Oxenham, and as attentive to his monologic discourse, as ever.

"Experimenting on him," said Heddon.

"Won't go, unh?" he had reflected. "Then she can go to the ——. I'll not be hauling women all over the map for the good of their souls! Silly little idiot, talking of love. She only about ten years old, really—or less."

Now as the blotch that was the Kulico Reefs began to grow and seem a cloud lying low on the water, a thought like the devil's voice whispered to Heddon, "Why not marry Gloria?" There would be in that money, ease from the sea, a return to the comforts of life; and as far as women went she was as nearly moist clay as a man's hand could ever have to work with.

Heddon had very little conscious self-respect. He did things by impulse, rejected them by impulse, and was exasperated by the tantalizing intricacies of what was right and what was wrong. Why not. The thought whispered to his passive brooding. Anyhow, she would be better off under his care than, possibly, elsewhere. A few more years on unsteady decks, a few more fights of one sort and another, and his joints would begin to stiffen; and in the end he would be at best only a knock-about skipper, some day drowned. He had no particular dread of the outlook. He was still too strong to feel what he foresaw. But he toyed indifferently with the thought of Gloria, and pictured what her money would buy.

Visualize her as he did, with idle speculation, in the dress and manners of society, he saw nothing appealing in the picture. But her trusting innocence was like a reproach. He foresaw that to look into her eyes day by day, after a marriage without love, would make him feel guilty. Something within him, he did not know what and did not try to think, made him throw the thought out of his head and send a curse after it. Better the heaving decks and stiffening joints, and in the end the unhallowed burial of a storm.

Then, unbidden, Margaret Cardan floated up into his mind. Margaret—a pearl. "*La gran Margherita.*" The significance of her name had not occurred to him before. Pearl! He wondered how it came he had not thought of that? Like other names, it had lost its meaning in common use. There

was his own, Will. He smiled a little mockingly as his thought crept along half-forgotten knowledge back to the school days' interest in its Latin origin. "*Guiliel-mus*—helmet of protection." In spite of his intentions, that was what he had turned into for these women; particularly for Margaret. Surely there was no escaping the webbed irony of the Fates. There did seem to be a thread to which each mortal dangled, helpless as a Jumping Jack. Perhaps the dead did live, and meddle. From where came impulses and accidents, the long toe-to-heel sequences that marched off with a man, willy-nilly?

Then, as if his thought of her had called her, Margaret came on deck and toward him.

In her loneliness she had taken old Tom into her servitude. What they talked of Heddon had no way of knowing, and did not care. But she was by him a great deal while he worked on his box—her box, now—which he had finished, but would not call completed as long as her interest in it seemed to be why she was with him so much.

"If you let her know those pearls are not pearls, I'll throw you overboard," Heddon had told him.

Tom blew his nose, shuffled about, then glared up defiantly:

"Ye an' me ain't frien's no more, Will Heddon. A man what kills something that prutty, like what you done, is got a bad heart in 'im! I'm disapp'inted in ye, Will Heddon!"

"You are right about the heart," Heddon jeered, "and I'm right about your going overboard—if you tell."

"I won't tell 'er. But she's got eyes, she has!"

"It isn't her eyes I care about. It's your tongue."

"I hate liars!" said old Tom, glaring.

Then he tramped off, full of bandy-legged hauteur.

Now Margaret came on deck and up to Heddon. She had the faculty of not being embarrassed. That was art, or perhaps an inheritance. Gloria was much the same.

"Tom has just said those are the Reefs. Are they?"

"He knows as well as I do."

"May I see?" She ignored his rudeness and glanced at the telescope. He gave it to her. "Your poor hand, isn't it going to be all right, at all?"

Heddon put his right hand behind him. It was still crippled and bandaged.

"It's all right now. Good enough."

She smiled a little with a sort of furtive kindness, then braced the glass against a stay, looking toward the low-lying, dimly seen splotch, like a flat cloud that had fallen out of the sky. She was not trying to see the Reefs. Though she looked for several moments, he could see that she did not in the least change the focal adjustment. She lowered the glass, and, looking out to sea, asked—

"Mr. Heddon, what *are* you going to do with Gloria?"

"Send her to Sydney."

"Friends of yours?" She looked at him.

"No."

"Then how do you know she will be all right?"

"I don't."

"But you *care?*" she asked guardedly.

"Not much. No."

"You still feel, Mr. Heddon, that you won't let her go with me?"

"And where do you think you are going?"

"You don't imagine," she asked, "that I want to remain here, on these Reefs, do you?"

"I see," said Heddon.

"You see what?"

"Old Jeffries!"

She colored, but quite coolly—

"In some ways he is at least a gentleman!"

"That," he asked bitterly, "is important, is it?"

"Sometimes I wonder how mean you would like to be, if you could! And why—why did you try to make me think that those were *not* pearls?"

"Tom Wateman goes overboard," Heddon said between his teeth.

"Old Tom had nothing to do with it. I've worn too many imitation pearls—I love pearls—I've looked at the best imitations I could find—not to know real pearls. And if I hadn't already hated you, I would have hated you for what you did!"

Heddon glared at her; but she was unafraid, not even angry. Her eyes seemed daring him to do whatever he wanted to do; and his impulse was to hurt her, to crush her brutally—but with an embrace. She knew; she seemed to watch, waiting, a little breathless, nearly defiant, yet submissive. The mysterious antagonism of attraction played between them, electrically. They

both were tangled in the darkly woven, impalpable thread of fascination, each for the other; and each was stubbornly resentful of the bondage.

"I could kill you!" said Heddon savagely.

She laughed, understanding; and turned from him lightly, going away as if satisfied, even happy.

XVI

THE *Gloria* slipped across the narrow entrance of the lagoon and with three tacks came to anchor at six fathoms, a hundred yards off the flat sand and within hailing distance of three or four small craft. Only small vessels, cutters, luggers, schooners, entered the lagoon. Others went a mile or two off, round the sandy island to an anchorage that was not land-locked; but the risk of storm was to be taken rather than the precariously shallow entrance to the safe harbor.

The Kulicos were a labyrinthine sprawl of sand, reefs, flat islands and lagoons; no fresh water was there excepting such as was caught from the roofs and put into casks. Tall palms, looking very scraggly, some half-rooted in the sea, slanted upward, bending to the prevailing winds. Outside, great combers foamed over the coral buttresses, breaking amid clouds of spray.

It was hot. The lagoon was smooth as glass except at the edge of the white sand where tiny ripples played. Below the *Gloria*, water lay clear as in a tumbler, and colored fish drifted about in lonely idleness.

The habitations of men look trivial and ant-like to those who come in off the sea, for there is an inestimable vastness in the ocean's horizon though its actual diameter may be but a few miles. It is only when land breaks in upon that magic circle that the perspective is narrowed.

Back from the flat white beach were numbers of low, sheet-iron buildings and, scattered wherever there seemed a bit of shade, were squat houses and shacks. These looked particularly insignificant.

Heddon stood apart from the others on deck and scowled at the houses on the shore; now and then, a little furtively and mystified, he looked toward Margaret and scowled at her. For the first time on the *Gloria* she was nearly merry. She seemed happy over something. This irritated him. She stood at the rail with Raeburn and old Tom beside her and made laughing comments on the fish. Heddon felt that she had no reason to be cheerful. He did not want her to be cheerful. It irritated him that Raeburn laughed and old Tom chuckled as if some of the things she said were witty. Even Oxenham stood near, listening with an expression of silly good nature on his thin face; and Gloria, though half-blankly, smiled.

Two natives were plodding along the sand under a load. Heddon gave them a far hail between his hands. They leisurely dropped the sacks they were carrying and at an idling gait came to the water's edge where they squatted on their haunches and stared for a time; then, with infinite leisure, ran a boat into the water and stood off for the *Gloria*. They knew the *Gloria*. She was well known, being about the largest vessel that risked the lagoon's entrance. When near, they let their oars dip idly and stared at the women.

"Lay longside here," Heddon told them.

With some hesitation they came alongside, their eyes on Margaret.

Heddon, with a word to Tom that nobody was to be allowed on the schooner, dropped into the boat and was rowed ashore.

As Heddon strode up the beach the two natives sat and watched him, then turned and stared again toward the *Gloria*.

"Him fella one plenty big fool," said a native; and the other grunted agreement.

Heddon, tramping heavily in the loose sand, made his way to Stockton's store.

This was a large, sheet-iron room, with a bar, benches and tables on one side, a counter and up-ended barrels on the other, behind which were piled an assortment of goods, and a warehouse was joined to this store in the rear.

The store was hot as an oven. The sky was hot. The sand was hot. The iron roof and walls caught and reflected the heat in shimmering waves. The store was filled with the sharp odors of stale beer, spilled gin and rum, of coffee, rope, paint and kerosene. After the glare of white sand and sea it seemed very dim within, and for a time Heddon stood with broad shouldered erectness at the doorway, blinking.

Five or six men were in the room. One lay at full length, face down, asleep on the counter. He was Jenkins, Stockton's clerk. Business was slack; more than slack—there wasn't any business excepting in the opening of a bottle now and then. Jenkins

felt that if any one wanted to buy it would be an easy matter to awaken him.

The rows of shelves did not have their usual orderliness; the entire store looked, somehow, littered, untidy, as if in careless hands. Stockton was pernickety about order, too. An open sack of sugar was by the counter; its burlap sides were crumpled in drunkenly. One almost knew that the sleeping clerk had stepped on it when getting to the counter to sleep.

Another man lay on a bench, flat on his back, hands across his stomach, hat over his face to keep off the flies, and snored. The flies lighted about his mouth.

At a table were the other men, all coatless, shirts open, sleeves rolled up over dark arms; all bearded men. Two or three smoked pipes. One was the bartender, a fellow Stockton had cured of dysentery after a pearler had kicked the sick man off his ship. They stared at Heddon in much the same sort of guilty silence as if they had been talking of him.

"Where's Stockton?" Heddon demanded, coming in.

"He ain't around," said the bartender.

"I asked *where* he was!"

Heddon was truculent; he was always truculent on the Kulicos. The law of the Reefs was bully or be bullied. They eyed him with reserve, noted his bandaged hand, looked into his face, still with the dark shadows of a fight on it.

"He ain't been around much lately. His eyes been botherin' him a heap," said one fellow, known as "Yankee" Saunders.

"Anything particular you wanted?" asked another.

"Off hand, I'd say somebody laid 'longside you—from the looks o' things," a fellow ventured.

Heddon took a step closer and glared at the man who had spoken last—

"Any further remarks you care to make—off hand?"

The man shook his head, but smiled knowingly.

For a moment there were no remarks of any kind. Heddon looked from one face to another, then repeated—

"Where is Stockton?"

"He's over to his house," said the bartender with sudden agreeableness—too agreeably.

Heddon looked about the store. It was evident that business was neglected, worse than neglected. Stockton was probably being robbed. Heddon knew most of the men, and liked none of them. Hard, tricky fellows, such as Yankee Saunders. He disliked them with a kind of instinctive antagonism, and he was of a size that could with a degree of insolence express what he felt. They were bold fellows in a way, who dared storms, and the law, and with hardships that more honest men have grown rich by took their livelihood from the sea. They were angered by his erectness, which was like pride, and his way of looking at them: his whole bearing and attitude, now as ever, was one of unfriendly superiority. They wished him ill, spitefully. He knew it, and was insolently indifferent. They knew that, too.

Heddon swung on his heel and left the store.

The men sat and looked from one to another as long as they could hear his feet scrunching in the sand. Then one of them quickly, with a little stealth, ran to the door, peered out, and facing about, said excitedly—

"He's goin' to Stockton's—doesn't suspect a thing!"

"You lose!" cried Saunders, slapping his hand on the table before the bartender. "I said he would come!"

"The blasted fool!" answered the bartender, shaking his head, wonderingly.

"Now what?" inquired some one.

"I'll tell you what," shouted Saunders. "I'm goin' right across this here island just as fast as I can get there an' tell on board the *Dolphin* that he's come. An' don't any o' you let on, or he'll slip his cable an' be off, like at Lianfo."

"Stockton'll tell him! He'll tell him she waitin' for him for come in, sure!"

"Stockton don't know," the bartender shouted. "Won't let anybody come near him. Hasn't for days."

"What's all the row? Waking a feller up with your bally racket—what's the row?" demanded Jenkins, sitting up on the counter, scrubbing his hair with his knuckles, resting his feet on the open sack of sugar.

"Heddon's come!"

The clerk nearly fell off the counter. But the man who lay on his back on the bench snored away and did not move.

Yankee Saunders took a parting drink of gin, lifting the bottle to his mouth, hitched up his trousers, lurched heavily through the doorway and started off across the sand

toward the anchorage used by ships that did not care to risk the lagoon's narrow entrance.

A HALF-MILE up the beach, well away from other houses, in a spot that had something like shade under two or three coconuts that had been planted there, Stockton had built himself a small two-roomed house. This was hardly two rooms, being a one-room shanty with a cooking-shed in back. He lived alone except for a Solomon Island boy who could burn bacon and boil tea, and who had all the tobacco and sugar that he wanted. His negroid lips usually had a white granulated stippling for he ate sugar out of a cup by sticking his lips into it.

As Heddon came up to the house he saw no one about, no signs of any one. Before the doorway was a small box of geraniums, the bed outlined with chunks of coral. Stockton had paid for sacks of soil brought to him, and he had planted red geraniums to have a bit of fragrant green by him. He caught rain-water to keep them alive. They were wilted now. Their leaves looked scorched.

Of a sudden the black boy appeared on the run from around the house. All in a breath he said:

"Who you? Go way—go clear —— way. Misi' Toktoni no want see you fella. Go way."

Heddon came on and the native drew back, wiping at his mouth with a forearm and licking at the sugar crusted on his lips.

"Who you? What you fella want? Unh?"

He walked backward as he spoke, keeping well away from Heddon who came on as if about to walk right over him, as one walks over a shadow.

Heddon knocked on the closed door and called. There was no answer.

"Is he there?"

The native nodded as he backed still farther off, afraid of Heddon's scowl and size.

Heddon tried the door. It was fastened. He knocked loudly. The sound was as if he pounded on an empty box. With a lunge of shoulder he easily forced the door. It swung back on an interior of solid blackness, cut only by the vivid light that now crossed the threshold.

He stooped through the doorway and stood uncertainly, half-blinded in darkness. Then the interior of the room took shape and exposed itself. It was more like an anchorite's shelter than the home of a wordly man. There was not even a mat on the floor. A ship's hammock was slung across a corner. Against one wall was a box with shelves. In this were old newspapers badly worn with much re-reading. In this box cupboard were a half-dozen books, their backs scarred with use: A Bible, "Religio Medici," Pascal's "Thoughts," Donne's "Poems," "The Anatomy of Melancholy." Strange books for the Kulicos.

The table in the center of the room was merely a large box on pine-board legs. On the table was a lantern with a roughly made blue shade, which he had fashioned to keep the light from hurting his eyes. Stockton sat at the table, elbow on the table, chin against the wrist of the hand that lay across his right shoulder. It was as if he had fallen asleep, but a revolver on the floor below the extended left hand disclosed into what sort of sleep he had thrown himself. Spread before him on the table were four photographs, all women. Unable longer to sacrifice himself for them, he had laid their pictures before his sightless eyes, and died. His eyes were still covered with the large dark glasses. His long gray hair was stroked back as if his fingers had just run through it. His mouth was only slightly a-droop. He had shot himself in the heart, and had been dead for hours. The property he left, the stock of goods, was worth a little something, but had he gone through the trouble to dispose of this he would have been cheated until nothing was left. He knew the ways of business on the Kulicos. It had been hard enough when he had his eyes. So he had given himself to death, hurrying out of the world.

The picture-faces of the women looked up with what now seemed inane pleasantness; but at that, their inanimate expression was as much touched by the tragedy before them as their lives had been by the greater tragedy of his long sacrifice that they might smile pleasantly above folds of lace and silk.

Heddon suddenly felt angered that they, though in all innocence and affection, had plucked this man of peace and life. His torture had not been less than if they had been wanton and faithless. He had given all he had and died when he could give no more. Heddon bent and scowled searchingly at the pictures. All of them were fair, touched

with beauty; one, the youngest—Charlotte: he remembered her name from the time he had written Stockton's letter for him—was blonde, with a laughing mouth, dainty of features, very young, but her face was shadowed with the look of the woman within her, age-old, instinctive, intuitive; out of the picture her eyes looked straight at him, and in her eyes was an expression, almost of recognition. Hers was to be the magic gift that would place some man, almost any man, in bondage. There was no escape from the glow of beauty, itself a mere nothing, a shimmer on the flesh, a luster, impermanent, impalpable, evanescent.

Heddon touched the body. It was cold and rigid.

He went outside and called, but the native did not answer. Heddon found him in the cooking-shed, squatting in the shade, a palmful of sugar in one hand, a pipe in the other. He seemed to understand nothing that Heddon said until Heddon took him by the neck and marched him into the room where Stockton was. The native eyed the body curiously, licked his palm, sucked at his pipe. He told Heddon that after breakfast Stockton had sent him to the store. That was the last time he had seen Toktoni.

The native stood by, noisily licking at his palm, keeping his eyes on the body. He was curious, not otherwise concerned.

"Stop that noise—get out!"

The native gave a start and turned to run, but Heddon caught him with outreached hand:

"Wait. You understand *tabu?* Well, I'll put a *tabu* on this room when I leave, and you keep out. If there's anything taken from this room, you'll have bumps all over you. Get out!"

The fellow bounded through the door.

"And they send white men and women down here to pray for things like that!" said Heddon bitterly, looking after the black. "If it's a soul that gets you to heaven, there'll be more dogs there than men!"

HEDDON returned directly to Stockton's store. The men there were on the look-out and saw him coming; also they had watched in the direction that Yankee Saunders had gone, but had as yet seen no one returning. As Heddon came near they withdrew from the doorway and settled themselves at the table; and when he entered they eyed him in awkward silence.

Heddon sensed something suspicious in their manner and regarded them carefully; then he stood with his back near a wall, jerked a chair around in case he needed to break it over somebody's head, put his foot on the seat of the chair, and leaning an elbow on his knee looked from face to face, then said:

"Stockton is dead. Shot himself."

Jenkins jumped up excitedly—

"What? Stockton—shot himself!"

Some swore in their surprize. Some sat in silence. The man who was sleeping on his back continued to snore. One man said heavily:

"Best thing. If my blinkers went out, it's what I'd do. He weren't a bad feller, Stockton weren't. But he were close. Blast 'im, how he did squeeze the dollar!"

"Too stand-offish for me," said one.

"What's to be done with his store now?" said Jenkins, with a critical look along the shelves. Then, off-handedly: "He was owin' me quite a bit for back pay an' money I lent him."

The men slyly looked from one to another and grinned guardedly—clever head Jenkins had on his neck.

"Is there any kind of a warship off the Reefs?" asked Heddon.

They eyed him a little strangely. One after another shook his head, looking at the ceiling or at the floor, or into pipe bowls, as they shook their heads.

"No," said Jenkins, emphatically. "We ain't seen none for months. Why was you askin'?"

"No," said another in reassuring tones. "No gunboat been near here. They quit comin', I think."

"Why was you askin'?" Jenkins inquired again, with an effort to appear unconcerned.

"Her captain," said Heddon, "could sell out Stockton's stuff at auction and send the money to his family. Stockton has a family down at Sydney."

"Fam'ly? He didn't have no fam'ly!" Jenkins shouted indignantly, as if repelling false claimants. "I know he ain't got no fam'ly. I asked him one day if he ain't married, an' he said, 'No.' You don't run in no fam'ly on us as he owes money to—does he fellers?"

Some growled vaguely and shook their heads. One muttered—

"He owed me a hundred pounds, he did."

Another nodded heavily with—

"Me too."

"We got our rights!" said Jenkins.

"You might as well stop your lying," said Heddon. "You are not going to be his heirs."

"Do you think you'll be!" Jenkins demanded hotly.

"I rather think so, yes. Who's going to stop me?"

The law of the Kulicos was pretty primitive. The strongest took what he could get away with; and Heddon meant that there was to be no picking of the dead man's man's bones by these jackals.

"Who's going to stop me?" he repeated, straightening, with challenge in the way he stood and looked.

"There'll be plenty to stop ye!" said some one.

"You'll see, short off!" Jenkins cried.

Heddon put his hand on the back of the chair:

"All right, out you go! All you. Clear out! I'm shutting up shop."

They had him outnumbered, more than outnumbered for one of his hands was nearly useless; and they might have put up a fight, but they remembered Yankee Saunders and what he had gone after. They could abide their time and win without having their heads broken. They stood up, one after another.

"Outside, get out!" said Heddon.

Glaring much like animals that were being whipped into a corner by a trainer they could have killed but were afraid to attack, the fellows shuffled awkwardly toward the door and, stepping outside, looked away across the sand.

Heddon, behind them, looked too.

People were coming. At a distance, he could make out the white uniform of sailors. There was a gunboat at the Reefs, in the bay, concealed behind a rise of sand topped with ragged scrub. These fellows had lied. Heddon felt relieved; then, at first doubtfully, his feeling of relief began to go; and he lost it entirely as with certainty he recognized old Jeffries hobbling along with a stoop-shouldered swing of arms. He recognized Yankee Saunders too.

Until he saw Jeffries, Heddon had practically forgotten how serious a thing he had done in carrying off Margaret Cardan; but now he knew, and knew too that he was caught. There was no way out. Nothing to be said. But he felt that it was worse luck than was needed that the gunboat *Dolphin* should have guessed so accurately that he was coming to the Kulicos.

Heddon nevertheless pulled shut the iron door of the store and snapped the heavy lock.

"Give me the key to this lock," he said to Jenkins.

"I ain't got it!" Jenkins answered defiantly, but stepped backward, thrusting a hand into his pocket.

Heddon made a jump at him. Jenkins threw the key. It fell on the sand, but Heddon stooped and found it.

From a distance of fifty yards or more, old Jeffries pointed and squeaked:

"That's him, Lieutenant Masters. That's him! He stole my bride!"

Everybody on the Kulicos usually dozed through the mid-afternoon, huddled in the hot shade, trying to forget the heat in restless sleep; but now people, catching a glimpse of the sailors or being called by those who had seen them, stirred from their shacks and shanty bars. Men and a few women came straggling into view, then hurried along.

"That's him! He stole my bride!"

Jeffries' mouth hung open, his chin whiskers dangled. "Bride," sounded absurd, coming from such a mouth. He liked his importance in the scene and made the most of it, gesturing and squeaking until people looked at him wonderingly.

With an encircling rush, just as if they expected him to try to run, though there was no place to run, the sailors formed a ring around Heddon and a short, chubby-faced young officer, with binoculars dangling around his neck, and now looking as martial as he could, faced Heddon and said fiercely—

"William Heddon, you are under arrest for the abduction of Miss Margaret Cardan."

TO BE CONCLUDED

CAVE MAN

by **Bill Adams**

I HUNGER for the taste of mastodon,
To smite a rival down, cold, dead, today.
I would that I were naked, free to run,
Untrammeled, down long valleys far away.

I'd like to feel the Springs I used to know,
To gnaw old bones beneath my cave's low arch.
Ah, but it makes me tremble everso
When winds whirl, crying o'er the fields of March.

I used to match my speed against the horse
Running, fear-crazed, from my thirst for blood;
Ofttimes I swam some swollen watercourse,
With leaves of April bursting into bud.

There was a woman, naked as the day,
Her hair was long, she moved with unlearned grace;
I crowned her once, with white flowers of the May,
Seeing a something flower-like in her face.

We were hard sinewed, hairy on the breast,
Our nostrils quivered, and our eyes were keen;
Knowing which of the wild brutes tasted best,
Killing our choice, we licked their sweet bones clean.

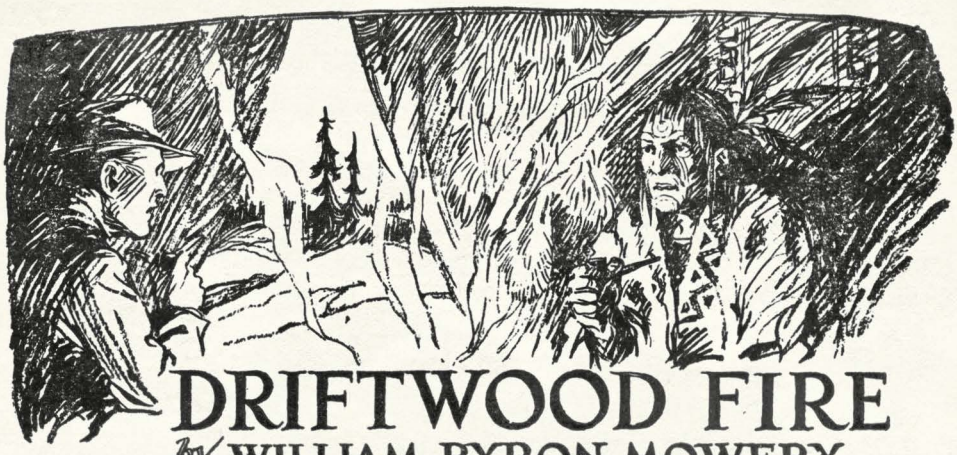
The river, racing, Winter-wild, bank-high,
Without our cave-mouth, trees and beasts in fright,
At the dark storm wind moaning from the sky,
We stood, unfearing, in the gold moonlight.

Standing above the stream, my gleaming skin
Caught the full moon ray. I was master then.
Diving the angry current deep within,
Rising, I heard my woman's laugh again.

We rolled and tumbled on the river-bank,
Chasing each other through the waving sedge:
Thirsty, we lay us down, and deeply drank,
And pushed each other from the river's edge.

Take you your cities, and your harvest's gold,
Take all the things that give you joy today—
Give me the nights I used to know of old,
When I first rose, stark naked, from the clay.

Teeth for the killing! Hands to strangle slow!
Eyes for the gloom where my young children play—
And that wild woman, crooning to and fro,
The mother of you all who breathe today.



DRIFTWOOD FIRE

By WILLIAM BYRON MOWERY

Author of "The Blood Trail," "As Gentlemen Should," etc.

THE Spring snow was slushy and our dog-teams heavy-footed from a long day; but Oponi the Yellow Knife guide had said that the chinook coming down the valley smelled of smoke—lodge smoke. There were several reasons why I wanted to find the Indian camp if one was near us. Primitive I knew they would be, in the head-water hills of that Arctic river; but our food was low, and we needed dogs to replace those which had run away into the woods. So in spite of good-humored growling from the two Mackenzie Crees, we treked on down the river spruce-belt through April evening gloom.

Oponi's bottle-nose was as good as a dog's. We had gone two miles and it was deep dark before we caught glimpses of lodge-fires ahead of us. The camp was a big one, we saw as we came near; at least two dozen teepees and many times that number of people. They received us courteously as we strode into the circle of light—a circumstance which put my Indians at better ease, for the coast tribes were in bad repute.

They were Hares, I saw at a glance; but that particular tribe had never been catalogued and pigeon-holed by any hand-book I had ever seen. They spoke a Tinneh dialect which we understood easily enough. The teams were quickly unhitched and fed, my men taken to lodges, and our outfits secured against their dogs. I was led to the teepee of the chief.

He rose to his feet, a tall, lean individual, as we entered. His face was in shadow then. While the one who had brought me explained our coming in brief and respectful language, I glanced about the teepee, noting its neatness and wilderness luxury—its fur rugs, carved weapons and feather robes. At a sign my guide left us alone. The chief waved me to sit. We faced each other over the fire.

My host was painted. Ocher and specular iron hid all his features except his eyes; and they were a dull, warm brown. I found myself staring straight into them. A silent minute passed. I tried to look away but it was flatly impossible. They held me in a strange spell. A quiver jigged up and down my backbone. I tried to analyze the cause, to discover what it was in those eyes which stirred me to my shoe-laces. It wasn't fear on my part; it wasn't mesmeric influence on his, for they were ordinary warm, brown eyes. I laid it to my tired nerves and waited for him to speak.

"You will eat and sleep in my lodge, stranger," he said at length in the dialect. "You have come far and are weary."

His words and his utterance had a friendliness to match his eyes. At least I would have sworn it so. Yet it seemed to me that outwardly he tried to appear cold and aloof.

While my food was being brought—a smoking joint of fresh caribou, marsh-fern bulbs and tart berry-mash—I spoke to him about the packing-dogs we needed and

supplies that would take us across the mountains and back to the Fort. He agreed without question of price. The only sign of life I got from him was a flicker of delight when he lighted up my present of *stemmo*.

All the while I ate and talked, the back part of my brain was turning over the problem of this chief's eyes. Twice I got hold of myself, dubbed it the effect of tired nerves, and put the problem out of mind. And twice it crept back, persistent.

This isn't a mystery story, so I will lay down my cards now and let you help play the hand. Maybe you can win where I couldn't.

It came to me forcefully that his eyes fascinated me because I had looked into them before. His features were hidden by paint, and his hair was long to the point of shagginess. I had only his eyes to judge by, and they were ordinary warm, brown eyes. Instead of trying to force my memory, I let it run back over the years where it listed; and it took me to the deck of a whaler, twenty-odd years ago, at the mouth of Kunayuk River south of Victoria Land. I was slipping a revolver and carton of cartridges into a man's pocket, and wishing him Godspeed—in a whisper—as he went over the side.

"Jim—" I leaned toward the fire and spoke in English—"Jim Stevenson, don't sit there and look at me that way —— you!"

The chief across the fire started slightly, but no more than any one would have done at the unexpected sound of another language. I couldn't believe that any man could play a part like that without betraying himself. I had hit straight at him without sign or warning.

"Your words are strange," he said at length. "Will you speak them in my tongue?"

Right then I believed I had made a mistake. Stevenson was dead—I knew that; dead twenty years and more. Even if he were alive, it was impossible to imagine him looking like this painted and feathered head-man of a primitive Hare tribe. Yet, what put the idea into my head? Tired nerves? Maybe.

"My words meant nothing," I said coldly.

"But they were spoken for my ear," the chief objected, and waited for an answer.

"I thought you were a man that you are not," I explained lamely.

"How is that? Were not your words the words that one white man speaks to another?"

"They were. This other was a white man."

"How is that? How can a white man so resemble me? I have seen them, many of them, many years since, when the great canoes followed the whales in the coast waters. Yet never have I seen one that wore my clothes or spoke my language."

"If you have seen the ships that chased the whales, you will follow my words with understanding. When that warrior—" I pointed through the tent-flap to a young buck of twenty-three—"when he was a papoose I was chasing whales on one of those great canoes. There was a head-man who gave commands to all of us. His name was Jodrell. There were three smaller chiefs, and I was one of them. There were five and thirty men. One of them was the man who—who made me address you with white words."

The chief nodded interestedly. He refilled his pipe and puffed expectantly. The way he took to that *stemmo*——

"This man Stevenson was tall, as you are tall; and slender, as you are slender. Before he came with us on the ship he had been a wanderer among the many tribes of white men. He followed no single work, as other men do. He was like a leaf drifting with the current. Wherefore he was called the Drifter.

"He was brought on the ship, out of a white man's city, when he did not know his right hand from his left. Head-man Jodrell had need of another man to work. He had a temper like a surly Spring silver-tip; so that his men deserted him just when the ship was ready to come up into these waters. So few were his men that his daughter went with us to see that we were fed as men who work hard should be.

"But man Stevenson would not work. He would not lend a hand to the ropes and white wings that carried the ship along. He would not wash the floor of the ship with water and a stone. When the smaller canoes were lifted down upon the waves and dashed away after a whale, he would not lean against his paddle. When a whale carcass was tied to the ship, he would not help cut out the bone with which you foot your *komatiks*.

"He said he had been brought on the ship against his will because a man had put

powder in his conversation water; but against his will he would not work. He was whipped across his bare back with thongs. For a week he went without food. For another week he was tied to a stump in the center of the ship. But he kept his word and did no work. His mind was as hard even as the mind of head-man Jodrell.

"After we were many days on the water, the head-man's arm grew tired of lashing man Stevenson and his tongue grew tired of calling him evil names and spitting upon him. The five and thirty men and the two smaller chiefs were at one mind with head-man Jodrell; they hated the one who would do no work. They thought man Stevenson was lazy. They did not understand why a man would not lend his hand to work when that was easier than receiving a lashing or going without food or being tied to a stump. They did not understand that his honor kept him from working. Not one of them spoke to him in kindness. He grew to hate them all.

"In the middle of the Moon of the Leaf, four men and a smaller chief went in a little boat to the mouth of Kok-Kanayuk to shoot birds for food, while the ship stood out in deep water. In those days your people, chief, and other tribes that came down to the coast were bitter against the white men, and slew such as fell into their hands."

"Because they robbed us in trade and profaned our women and gave drink to our young men," the chief said coolly.

"But since the ships that chase the whale no longer come into these coast waters we are at peace with white men and treat them kindly, as we have treated you, stranger."

"I gave no blame on either side," I said hastily. "I but said the coast tribes were bitter against the ship men. When this smaller chief and his four men were hunting along the beach, a band of warriors hid in the boulders and mocked the cries of wild birds. The white men ran up close and the warriors tossed spears through them. We on the ship were watching through a tube which makes things far off seem as near to hand.

"Thus thirty men were left to do the work of five and thirty. Again the head-man's anger flamed against man Stevenson. He was lashed with thong's and bound day and night to the stump and kept without food till he could not stand. He would have died if some one had not brought him food in the dark of night. But I did not know this until later.

"The anger of head-man Jodrell grew hotter each day. All during the Moon of the Leaf we had chased the whales up and down the narrow waters from Kok-Kanayuk to Kok-Ernivilik; but very few were the ones we caught. When the Moon of hardened Caribou Horns came, we had taken scarcely the price of the food we had eaten. It seemed as if a medicine was working against the ship. And the head-man vented his anger upon man Stevenson.

"Many times in the night, when no one was around to see, I would talk with man Stevenson. At first I tried to sway him from his purpose not to work, but he would not listen to my words. Later, when he was lashed, I asked to do it myself in order that I might lighten——"

There was a flash of fire in the eyes of the chief. It was no such sign as my story should call for. Again I could not hold myself.

"—— you, Jim Stevenson!" I broke off. "Can you sit there and listen to the account of your degradation without batting an eye? You can paint and feather yourself up and be chief of all the Hares that ever hopped, but I'd know you for all the twenty-four years since I laid the last lash on your welted back!"

In the eyes across the fire there was mild bewilderment and reproach. Never a sign of understanding or of surprize.

"Your words are strange," the chief said slowly. "How can I understand the tale you are telling?"

Whereat I called myself names for being twice fooled by tired nerves; got fresh hold of myself; and went on.

"But even the head-man's anger would have worn itself thin and man Stevenson would have been taken back to the white man's city if Jodrell had not discovered who was bringing food to the whipped man at night. A smaller chief with the tongue of a raven first saw the girl. He told her father. Head-man Jodrell watched. He discovered that she loved the man who had stood out against the whole ship for his honor's sake. He struck her—I saw him—when she said she would marry man Stevenson if ever they reached the city again. He told her, with an oath and a loud laugh, that man Stevenson would never return alive.

"The ship at that time was within sight of land at the point where Kok-Kanayuk meets the sea. It was there, on a peak, that the Coast tribe slew the smaller chief and his four men. Head-man Jodrell said to those about him: 'Fire a gun that the hill warriors may know we are near and will be watching for a boat to come ashore to them.'"

"According to his order a gun was fired. Though I watched through the tube I could see none of the warriors. Yet we knew they were hunting and fishing near the river's mouth. None of us guessed the purpose of head-man Jodrell until he commanded us to lower a small boat—which had been battered by the head of a white whale—down upon the water; and to throw into it man Stevenson without food or weapon.

"I unlashed him from the stump where he was tied. No one came near to hear me whisper to him: 'There is a salmon sheen in the sky which means a storm is coming quickly. Therefore pull a strong oar to gain the land before the storm breaks. Go warily on the shore if you would escape the coast tribes. Here is a weapon. I slip it into your pocket, with cartridges. God speed, and may I see you face to face again, Jim Stevenson!'"

I PAUSED. I thought that surely the man never lived who could keep from betraying himself when I repeated those words after twenty-four years. That somber evening, the hard faces of the wharf wolves on the whaler, the scudding clouds whipping out of a salmon sky, the curl and kiss of white-caps, the whine of sea-gulls over the rigging, and the penciled outline of a bleak, gray coast were memories unforgettable. I heard yet the promise which Theresa Jodrell flung at Stevenson as he was handled into the boat. I saw yet his gesture to her of final parting, as if he knew he was going to certain death. Then there was fast work to do on deck, for night and a storm were close at hand——

I was brought out of the reverie by a word from the chief, bidding me go on. He was leaning forward now, listening with deepest interest.

"The ship was in water too shallow for our safety," I took up the narrative again. "There was a harbor in the river's mouth, but head-man Jodrell with a loud oath swore we would get back into deep water and start for the white man's city on the morrow. Though all the men wanted him to guide the ship into the harbor, his word was law and they did as he ordered them.

"But the ship would not sail into the teeth of the storm. Its white wings were torn off. The big tree in the ship's middle broke in two and had to be chopped away with axes. We could not gain safety in deep water. Instead we labored back and forth along the shallow coast, getting closer and closer to green reefs that would tear the ship to pieces as a wolf would tear a marmot. Even the head-man lost his anger and was afraid, for darkness had fallen and where the harbor was no man of us knew.

"One by one the men ceased their useless work and flung the head-man's curses back into his teeth. It was such a storm as none of us ever before had seen. There were cries in the darkness that this storm was the Manitou's anger against us for sending man Stevenson to his death. And those who in the days gone had bullied him most and spoken loudest against him, now cried the loudest against this Jodrell for bringing a curse upon us all. For we were lost, without chance of surviving the storm in those wind-frenzied waters; and not one of us but knew it.

"It was the daughter of the head-man who first saw a tiny gleam shoreward. I was sitting with her behind a canoe, out of the whip of the wind, trying to comfort her with the lie that man Stevenson could escape the coast tribes, cross the mountains and go down a river to a white trader's post. But she would not listen. She kept looking out into the darkness, which was like a solid wall, in the direction where he had gone. And so it was she who saw the gleam.

"'It is he!' she cried. 'He has gained the headland and built a fire!'"

"Even as I looked where she pointed, the gleam leapt higher. It was such a fire as an Indian never would build, so I knew it must be the fire of man Stevenson. Moreover, the coast was everywhere so low, save at the high headland, that nowhere else could a fire be seen out on the water.

"I ran quickly to head-man Jodrell. 'We can steer the ship into the river harbor with that light to guide us!' I cried. After he looked at it once and again, he started shouting orders to the men. They dragged

up the heavy iron which was struggling to hold the ship in place; and straight as a feathered barb we darted through the darkness into the river harbor. There, with the iron on deep bottom, with the storm wind broken by the headland, and with the swift river-current butting against the shore-driven waves, we were safe through the night, till a gray dawn broke and the storm died to a whisper.

"That morning two boats full of armed men went ashore and I led them. We found the sodden ashes of a driftwood fire. It had been built on the wind-whipped peak of the headland, though all around were shelters of boulder rock and caves in low ledges. When the men looked at the fire, they saw and understood what the head-man's daughter and I had understood long hours since—that man Stevenson before darkness fell had seen our ship in the storm's grasp, and had kindled the fire to guide us into harbor.

"He must have known, too, that his fire would surely bring the coast tribe to him. In the wet sand were moccasin prints of many warriors who had crept upon him during the night. There was no blood or signs of struggle. Clearly they had not killed him there, but had taken him away, perhaps that all their village might enjoy his death. His shoe-tracks leading back into the savage country were the last signs I have seen of Jim Stevenson—until this day."

Those last three words I added deliberately, and in English. In the eyes of the other man there was a queer light. Tense, waiting for him to break, I met his level gaze. Right then I knew it is a lie that a man can read another's thoughts through his eyes. If I could have seen beneath his paint, perhaps his features would have settled my raging doubt. But his eyes betrayed less than nothing.

Some time after I finished, the chief pushed his fire-sticks toward the center, motioned to a bed of fresh spruce boughs for me, and lay down on his own bed, wrapped in a wolf-skin rug. I could not hold myself from a last stab, as I spread the blanket.

"Jim Stevenson, Theresa Jodrell is in Nome, unmarried."

That settled it for me. I dozed off to sleep half-amused with my fanciful imagination.

IT MUST have been two weeks later—for we were across the mountains and half-way to the first trading-post—when Paul, one of the Crees, came into my tent one evening. As usual when he was excited, he spoke so quickly in garbled French and Cree that I caught only the general drift.

I gathered that one of our pack-dogs which we secured from the Hare tribe had run off into the woods after feeding-time. Its pack had not been opened since we left the teepee village, until Paul opened it to distribute the load with the other dogs. We assumed it contained caribou jerkie, of which we had bought a good deal from the chief.

"But here, look!" concluded Paul. "Look, *m'sieur!* Look at this!"

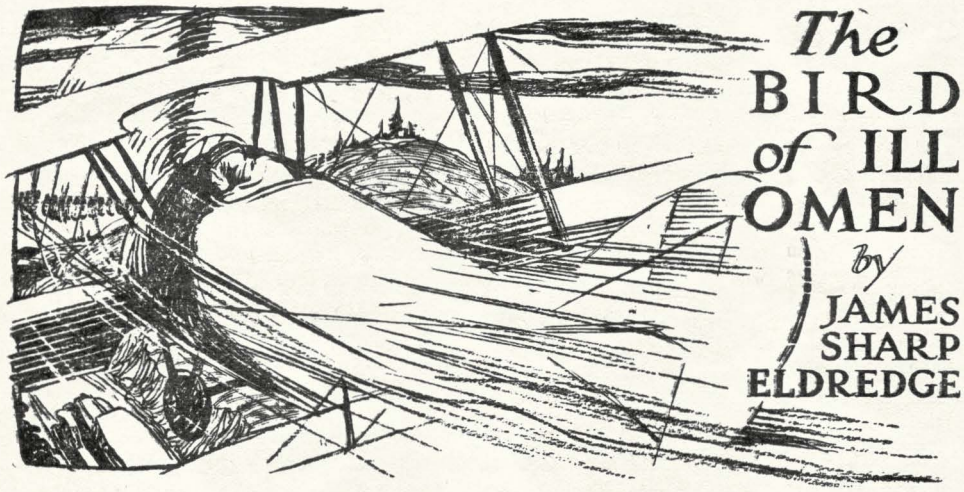
I was gazing at a robe, or rather a cape, all of fox-pelts. It was made of snowy-white Arctic skins and was trimmed with choicest black fox; but richest of all were the two beautifully matched silvers which criss-crossed in front. It was a king's ransom, that cape, or a queen's despair. The gorgeousness of it tied my tongue. And I saw, at a second look, that it was made for a woman.

Paul was breaking out again, and thrusting something else under my nose. "But that, it is not all! Look, look here!"

It was a revolver, an old thing speckled with rust, but unmistakable.

"What the ——!" Paul spluttered. "Smoke of smokes, *m'sieur!* I do not understand."

"But I do!" said I, after a pause.



The BIRD of ILL OMEN

by JAMES SHARP ELDREDGE

ABOVE the brilliantly painted billows that were the mountains of eastern Tennessee in late Autumn, the single-seated airplane wheeled lazily, the heavy, bubbling drone of the motor sifting irregularly down through the haze of early morning.

The leather-coated athlete in the cockpit of the plane—his name was Lieutenant Bruce Gordon, of the Air Service—peered unceasingly down at the brushy hills five hundred feet below, guiding his machine with unconscious ease. He had been searching that territory for over an hour. Nothing moving had escaped his black eyes. But the thing he sought—a touring car with a khaki-colored top which had been traced to the solitudes below and which carried two men, one a prisoner convicted of many crimes, who had escaped in the night from the guard house at Fort Crowley, fifty miles west, and the other his accomplice—the mountains had not revealed.

"It's a fool's errand, anyway," speculated Gordon disgustedly. "Has looking for a needle in a haystack beaten from the standpoint of useless occupations. I never knew there were so many cars in this deserted strip. —— knows I've looked at them all. And—" he smiled at the thought—"scared some of them, possibly well-meaning 'shiners, by my curiosity. It's all over now, though. I've forty minutes gas and fifty miles to go to make the home field. Kind of hate to quit without seeing him. But——"

The slightest twitch of the controls flipped the stubby wings of the sensitive plane to the vertical, and the machine whirled, sparrow-like, and straightened with its nose pointing west to Fort Crowley and the airdrome.

"Hello. There's one."

The home-bound Gordon's fingers caressed the joy-stick, and the airplane dropped like a rock for three hundred feet, leveled, wires screaming from the speed of the dive, and raced down a narrow, wooded cañon, at the bottom of which was a straight, wide, whitish ribbon. Along this ribbon, like a huge, dust-covered beetle, scurried an automobile.

Gordon throttled and gazed calmly at the car. Then he shook his head.

"Some farmer's flivver," he told himself, smiling as he saw heads sticking out of the side of the automobile. "Trying to keep up with the plane."

He opened the throttle again.

But the response of the motor, instead of being a smooth roar, became an ear-splitting scream. A blur in front of the nose vanished. The plane quivered like a stricken thing. Then it meekly subsided into stability and silence, except for the singing of the bracing wires, as Gordon switched off the ignition. The pupils of his eyes had dilated slightly, otherwise he was as calm as before.

"Propeller couldn't stand the gaff and went to pieces," was his conclusion, as he guided the plane swiftly toward the earth. "Lucky this machine is small so I can land it in the road. Saves a crash in the trees at either side. Steady—say! Slow down, you fool. Judas Priest!"

For the driver of the bedraggled car had made no effort to stop, but had increased his speed, and was staying almost abreast of the gliding airplane, which now was only a few feet above the road. One of the occupants of the automobile was leaning far out, waving.

"They think I want to race them," flashed through Gordon's mind. "Confound these backwoods sportsmen. Stop!" he howled in a vain effort to make the men in the car hear.

The descending plane slowly passed the car. It skimmed the road. It hovered above the wheel-tracks. Gordon's practised hand moved the stick. A jar—and a difficult landing had been accomplished. From behind came a screeching of brakes. Gordon started to turn his head. Then the plane heaved to an accompaniment of cracking wood and ripping fabric. Gordon's head was snapped into the cowl with a star-producing jar. He heard a crash like a thunderclap—the tinkling of broken glass. The penetrating odor of spilt gasoline assailed his nostrils. Silence——

Gordon shook his swimming head, somehow made the ground and started toward the bedraggled auto, which now, wrapped around a pole at the side of the road where it had struck on the skidding rebound, was a twisted mass of junk. The aviator had two purposes in mind: One was to have the driver sign a statement waiving all damage claims against the Government, thereby eliminating much red tape and saving Lieutenant Gordon much trouble, and the other was to lick the driver thoroughly and completely.

One of the overalled occupants of the car was standing dazedly by the wreck. His companion emerged as Gordon approached, then sank to the grass, one hand holding his head and the other resting in his lap. It was he whom Gordon addressed.

"Look here," began the aviator heatedly, leaning over and shaking a finger under the man's nose. "This is all your fault——"

The seated figure cut him short with a weary gesture.

"I know it—knew it—all the time." The man spoke half to himself. "Been running and dodging for an hour—changed cars, clothes—all the time up there watching — watching — watching — like a —— hawk!"

He turned to his standing companion.

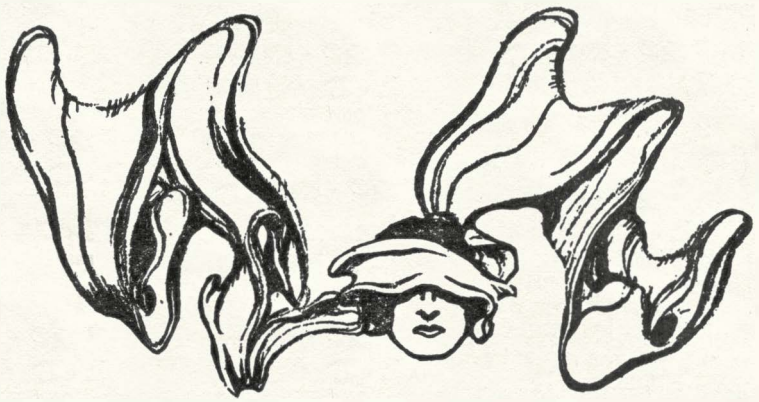
"Come on!" And to Gordon, "Here."

The hand in his lap moved and extended an automatic pistol to the aviator.

"Emptied it at you. No good. You shut off, and swooped down at us right after I finished firing."

He climbed slowly to his feet.

"What're we waitin' for? Let's go!"



THE BEGINNING OF STEAMBOAT NAVIGATION IN THE WEST

by **Raymond W. Thorp**

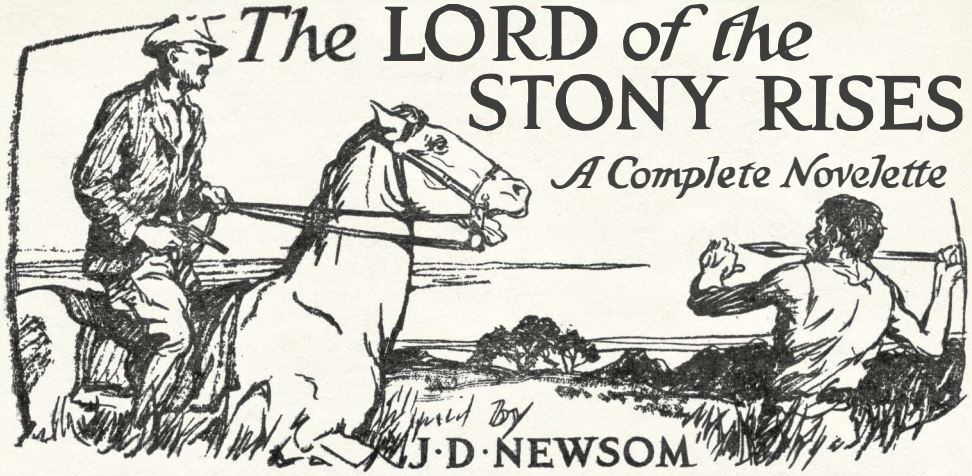
THE greatest economic handicap of the early Western pioneer and the greatest restriction on the development of his territory was inadequate transportation facilities for both person and product. The Indian path, the blazed trail and the pioneer post road were impassable at some seasons and were never entirely satisfactory. That is the reason why the early settlements in the West were along the rivers. The raft, barge and the cordelle were used, as well as the rowboat. Even these crude craft were preferred to the wagon in the transportation of heavy loads of freight. An event of importance, therefore, was the advent of the steamboat in Western waters.

The *Zebulon M. Pike*, usually referred to as the *Pike*, was the first steamboat that landed at the St. Louis wharf. The day was August 2, 1817. The boat had made the trip from Louisville, Kentucky, in six weeks. Great rejoicing greeted the *Pike's* arrival. The boat was driven with a low-pressure engine, with a walking-beam, and had but one smokestack, and in the encounter with a rapid current the crew reenforced steam with the impulse of their own strength. They used poles and running-boards the same as in the push-boat navigation of barges. The captain of the *Pike* was Jacob Reed, and the boat was named in honor of Gen. Zebulon M. Pike, the explorer, after whom also was named Pike's Peak, Colorado. From the year of the arrival of the *Pike*, steamboat navigation increased rapidly. Soon there were regular schedules. By the year 1819 the Missouri River was traversed as far as Old Franklin, in Howard County, the home of "Kit" Carson, the trapper.

The steamboat to make the first trip was the *Independence*, which reached its destination in May, 1819. The *Western Engineer* made the trip up the Missouri as far as the Platte River during the same year. These early steamboat pioneers in the West soon found that they had on their hands a proposition which taxed their ingenuity to the utmost. The Indians, who had watched developments in the steamboat pioneering from afar, came forward now in large bands to impede the progress of civilization, which they now noted with great alarm was beginning to encroach upon their lands with greater rapidity than they had thought possible. So bands of them were stationed at intervals along the river banks when a boat came along, which they would fire upon at sundry times, causing many casualties among the passengers. A stoker on the *Western Engineer* solved the problem of how to put a stop to this. He had noted that the Indians were seldom to be seen and never attacked during the daytime, but always waited for the cloak of night to envelop them before pouring in their murderous fire. This man, being of a mechanical turn of mind, constructed an apparatus very much resembling a huge serpent's head, which he caused to be attached to the top of the smoke-stack. Small mirrors were placed inside the thing for reflectors, together with a whale-oil lamp with a large wick. A row of small candles was placed all around the outside, and when they were lighted, a man was stationed there alternately turning up and down the lighted wick of the lamp, the whole outfit giving off such an unwholesome aspect that the Indians who gazed upon it whooped with fear and fled for their lives. Soon after this other boat captains took up the idea, and many curious contrivances were fashioned, all producing the effect which was desired.

The LORD of the STONY RISES

A Complete Novelette



By J·D·NEWSOM

Author of "Jackaroo," "The Deserters," etc.

THE October sunlight, the dancing sunlight of an Australian Spring, streamed in through the high windows of John Burdette's study and the south wind, playing with the stiff white curtains, brought with it into the room a faint smell of grass and wattle.

John Burdette sat with his forearms resting on his desk, his heavy shoulders thrust forward, his head slightly bent. Peering from beneath his thick white brows he stared at the vast sweep of country caught in the embrasure of the open French windows. From the house the ground fell away, fold upon fold, heathy down and well-grassed flat, with here and there a clump or a coppice of hickory trees. Near-by, down in the hollow, were the stables and barns fronting upon sanded paths and lime-washed border stones. Beyond were the fattening paddocks where the topped-up bullocks stood motionless, their noses buried in the clover. Far off to the east, no more than a black penciled line against the blue sky, stood a forest of giant gum-trees, while north and west lay the Shaw River marshes, flat and olive-green, studded with patches of high, dry land capped with trees like feathery plumes. Because the day was clear, far away to the northward and beyond the marshes could be seen the jagged outlines of the Stony Rises; the remains of some gigantic lava flow, mass upon scoriated mass of black pitted rock, cracked, creviced and honeycombed beneath a coarse matting of kangaroo-grass, which gave the slopes a deceptive smoothness.

As far as the eye could see the fat land belonged to John Burdette, owner of the Credion Run. He had settled here thirty years before, when Western Victoria was a pathless wilderness. Here he had come with his raw-boned Sydney-siders, and in the course of time the herd had grown from five hundred to a little more than six thousand. New blood and careful breeding had increased its value a hundredfold, and Burdette, with his land and his cattle, his barns and his plows, his canning factory and his mining interests, ranked second to none in the district. Some people called it luck that he should have amassed a fortune—as fortunes were understood in Australia some decades ago—but he, having made and molded Credion with his own hands and the labor of thirty years, knew better.

He believed in a Divine Providence, did John Burdette, and he believed in himself. Single and solitary, he went on living at Credion in the rambling house he had built and added to and rebuilt and filled with great pieces of furniture as solid and massive as himself, when he could have gone to Melbourne and lived the soft city life. He could, it was said, have become Sir John Burdette, but that was not his way. Titles meant precedence—he stood alone.

And Credion was proof of his strength and his courage. He had tamed a wilderness, conquered Nature, wrought, toiled

and fought for the wide boundaries of his land, which he held even when land was growing scarce, without deed or title, his one claim being priority and a squatter's indefinite license. His neighbors took what he left, the free-selectors and the diggers, then moving slowly inland, avoided Credion where, they well knew, there was no law but the law of John Burdette.

Great was his power and wide his knowledge. Not once had his name appeared on a councillors' list, he played no part in politics but—but somehow or other what he desired was accomplished, what he hated was eliminated. At one time in the Stony Rises had lived a band of blackfellows, the remnants of many tribes, driven away from their original homes, driven always inland, in toward the desert and away from the sea. The blackfellows, lurking for years in the chambers and crevices in the lava flow, had raided and hampered the squatters. Nothing was done to stay them until they killed two of John Burdette's milch cows. Then he took the situation in hand, went down to Melbourne, and passed like a whirlwind through the administrative offices. Beneath his baleful eye undersecretaries quickly recalled to mind the upper reaches of the Shaw river and the Credion estate. In a month the thing was done! The ringleaders of the predatory bands were caught and shot.

But Burdette was a humanitarian. He had a plan. It was adopted. The survivors were settled in a quiet valley—a strip of poor grazing ground. There, under the supervision of the Reverend Mortimer Jukes, they were allowed to grow lazy, civilized and semichristianized. They withered, as wild things always wither when subjected to abnormal, incomprehensible restrictions, but they died without fuss and John Burdette's milch cows were hamstrung no more.

Efficient and ruthless he guided the destinies of Credion with a hand of steel, without passion or compassion, demanding absolute obedience of his staff from Martin Gilding, his foreman, down to the lowliest stable boy. There were times when stockriders, dry-throated from the dust of a round-up, drank to excess, gambled and quarrelled and cursed. Such culprits, for they were culprits in the eyes of John Burdette, left Credion on the hour, at once, rain or shine. He sacrificed his best men, not angels but stockriders, on the altar of his austerity. No excuses were tolerated. He called it discipline. Perhaps it was, but in the long run only those who knew how to dissemble and lie and fawn kept their jobs at Credion. The others went elsewhere.

THAT October morning John Burdette was awaiting an interview with Tad Mitcham, one of his stockriders, who, according to Gilding, had been found drunk, helplessly drunk, when he should have been driving a hundred head of store-cattle toward the Dangore flats.

The very fact that the man's conduct had been outwardly blameless over a period of almost four years made his lapse from grace all the more terrible. It annoyed Burdette to think that perhaps he had been Mitcham's dupe month after month, for at Credion stockmen were expected to be officially pure, or to have their defects revealed with the least possible delay so that they might be hurled back into outer-darkness where they belonged. The outer-darkness has its amenities, no doubt, but John Burdette disapproved of them, therefore they did not exist. He sought to be a moral force, which is an ambition like another; that he did not attain his ambition was entirely due to his own intolerance. He called vices the pleasures he could not conceive himself enjoying. In this respect he resembled a great many other people but he didn't know it, nobody ever does.

He frowned and grumbled to himself and drummed on his desk while he waited, but as soon as a knock on the door heralded the culprit's approach he settled like a rock in his chair, his features became fixed and impassive, and only his eyes and his lip moved and were alive.

Tad Mitcham, hat in hand, grinned at his employer, a sheepish grin which made more pronounced the inherent weakness plainly written on his countenance. Wide, loose mouth, beady eyes, loose cheeks and receding chin—that was Tad Mitcham.

"Gilding tells me you were drunk yesterday," said John Burdette. "As you know, there is no second chance here at Credion. You leave at once."

It came out one slow word at a time, each word a bullet, and Mitcham quailed before the onslaught.

"Why, Mr. Burdette," he began, "honest now, it ain't as bad as all that. 'E's been

making a dead set for me, Gilding 'as."

"You were drunk. There is no possible excuse for drunkenness. Moderation, that's the thing. Moderation, Mitcham. Try to learn. This is the eighteenth. I am going to give you your full month's wages——"

"Gilding," protested Mitcham, "'e's been laying for me. I tell you, Mr. Burdette, it's true. All because I been 'ere a matter of four years, 'e's afraid, and 'e waited 'is chance——"

"You can't be expected to tell the truth," said John Burdette. "All drunkards lie, I know from experience. I am sorry, Mitcham. I trusted you, you failed me, therefore we part company. That's the inflexible rule. You leave today. It is there for you to read and remember— 'Go, and sin no more.'"

He spoke calmly, listening intently to the sound of his steady voice, pleased, too, to observe the sweat breaking out in glistening beads on Mitcham's forehead: Another man tested in the Credion crucible and found wanting!

"I wasn't drunk," declared Mitcham, crushing the brim of his hat in his clenched fist. "It's a —— lie. I 'ad a drink—sure enough I 'ad a drink. What's the matter with that? And up comes Gilding with 'is pursed up lips— Oh, you don't know Gilding, by —— you don't!

"'Caught you, my boy!' says he, just like that, soft and purring. 'Now you're done for. Go back to the bunk-house. I'll drive these bullocks myself.'

"——! I thought 'e was joking. And I thought this morning when I was told to come 'ere it was still a joke. 'Aven't I worked myself to the bone and 'aven't I slaved? I've done it willingly, Mr. Burdette, you know that——"

He broke off, looking anxiously at his chief, for he suddenly realized by the look on the latter's face that his case was hopeless. That look made him forget his fear.

"D'you mean it straight—I got to quit?" he demanded, swaying forward, his eyes blazing.

"You go *now*," answered John Burdette. "Your tongue drips filth. Lies, slander, abuse, profanity! Stay here—you? After this exhibition? Run the risk of having every man in my employ contaminated? A thousand times—no!" He checked his indignant outburst and concluded: "May you learn to repent, Mitcham, and in adversity conquer the evil in your heart. I can not help you. Here is your money. Gilding has orders to see you leave at once."

"Gilding be ——!" exclaimed Mitcham, taking a step forward. "You —— old fool, you sit there spouting your cant at me. To —— with you! You like to see a bloke act like a worm, your kind does. Moderation—and all I can buy at your canteen is slops and rotten whisky—you got prime port, ain't you? You don't drink—no, not 'awf, you don't. I know you! And I'm going, by —— I'm going, and before I'm done with you you're going to be sorry."

John Burdette never moved. His hands lay on the clean green blotting pad with all ten fingers splayed out, flat down—steel claws clothed in firm, pink flesh.

He said:

"I give you ten seconds to leave this house. If you don't go willingly I shall have you thrown out. That's all. Good day."

Nothing, it seemed, could move him, neither threats nor abuse. Angered and beaten Mitcham glared at his tormentor and the hot blood gushed to his brain in one convulsive beat of his heart. How or why it happened he never knew, but when the mist cleared from his eyes he found himself in mid-air springing at Burdette's throat.

Burdette kicked back his chair and at the same instant his right fist, backed by every ounce of his two hundred pounds of bone and sinew, swept upward and crashed against Mitcham's forehead. He was glad to see Mitcham's face suddenly run with blood. Without a word he moved swiftly forward, caught the stockrider in his hands, raised him off the ground and pitched him out of doors through the French windows.

Gilding, his round face white with excitement, came running up with two native houseboys at his heels.

"This man been making trouble, sir?" he inquired breathlessly.

"No," said John Burdette, his hands in his coat pockets, unruffled as ever. "He has not been making trouble, though he tried. I think I have cured him. Have I cured you, Mitcham? You won't answer, eh? That's much better. Now get up; you're not really hurt.

"Gilding, you might make sure he's on his way in thirty minutes. And send both these boys as far as the river with him. Arm them."

"Yes, sir," answered Gilding. "I'll see to it, sir. And if I may say so, I think it's wonderful the way you handled him. He's a powerful man, sir, very powerful. I was afraid——"

"Justice was with me," answered John Burdette. "Right always spells might. Now take him away."

Half an hour later Mitcham left Credion with a blackboy on either side. No one spoke to him, no one so much as said good-bye. His former acquaintances went out of their way to avoid him for they knew all too well that Burdette's anger would not die down for a week or more. They blamed Mitcham. He should have listened quietly to the owner's twaddle and gone his way without making more trouble for those who stayed behind. It wasn't fair to them. They would have to pay in some form or other.

At the ford the blackboys halted and Mitcham rode on alone. As he went slowly up the far bank the natives snickered and then laughed. The opportunity to shout abuse at a white man was not granted them every day in the week. They made the most of their opportunity and referred in shocking English to Mitcham's pedigree. Had he been of an inquisitive turn of mind he might have listened to a novel and unexpurgated appreciation of his more salient characteristics; coming on top of his recent one-punch defeat at Burdette's hands, however, this latest humiliation was more than he could bear. Shaking his fist at the cackling blackboys and wildly cursing, he dug his heels into his horse's flanks and fled hastily and without decorum.

His pride was wounded. He could have forgiven and forgotten Burdette's pile-driving blow, it was all in the give and take of life, he didn't very much mind being given the gate, nothing very extraordinary about that either, but to be cast adrift at the mercy of two blackboys with a primitively pornographic sense of humor—that *hurt*.

It hurt so much that as he rode across the open plain beneath the warm sunlight he swore to himself that before very long he would—well, by the heavens above, he would do something to Burdette. Physical violence? Very nice to dream about but impractical. He was not anxious to dangle at the end of a rope—not if it could be avoided anyhow. But what could he do? He was only a poor, vagrant, happy-go-lucky stockrider, Burdette was a —— squatter with all the resources of law and order to back him up.

Mitcham's impotent fury increased as he rode along.

"Shoot him in the back," his horse's hoofs seemed to thump on the turf. "Shoot him in the back."

No, there must be something else. He swore aloud at a flight of ring-tailed pigeons. He felt so —— helpless. You couldn't get at a man like Burdette. He was too rich, too powerful; he owned such a great slice of Australia— But did he though? Did he own such a —— big slice? Come to think of it he didn't—he just said he did, and nobody so much as dared to travel across the —— country without his blinking permission.

Mitcham's fury gave way to intense excitement. He forced himself to think and think and think—scraps of old conversations, hints and guesses, things men said in the bunk-house behind their hands—and gradually into his not very brilliant mind came a scheme. A real workable scheme, which would certainly be a success—if he could raise a few hundred pounds.

A cunning smile crept across Mitcham's countenance. He whistled and his horse, pricking up its ears, carried him along at a comforting lope instead of a half-hearted, stumbling jog. The world was good again.

"Got 'im," said Mitcham to himself, "and I'll make 'im fair squeal afore I'm through. Do me dirt, would 'e? He'll soon find out."

That night, while camping beneath the stars, he awoke trembling and weak for he had dreamed that he was gnawing like a dog at Burdette's thick throat. He had to rub his mouth with his fingers to convince himself that there was no blood on his lips.

MITCHAM took his grievance to Melbourne, which was an unwise thing to have done. Melbourne was cynical, tolerant and inclined to wink a sophisticated eye at the petty grievances of the blackblocks. Moreover, gold had just been found at Ballarat. Melbourne's sophistication was not proof against this form of exhilarating news. Docks, stores and stables were being abandoned by would-be prospectors. Those who stayed behind talked Gold until their mouths were almost

permanently rounded out of shape by this melodious word.

In point of fact Mitcham might as well have taken his passionate desire for vengeance to the bottom of the deep blue sea. The fishes, possibly, would have been more sympathetic than the citizens of the Victorian metropolis. Of course, John Burdette had enemies. Mitcham located them easily. Would they assist him? They would not, most assuredly not. He started on his quest for a partner at the top of the tree, among squatters and other magnates. Their indifference was absolute, in the Hegelian sense of the word. They talked enthusiastically of the price of bullocks, which, since the gold, had jumped from thirty-five shillings to seven pounds a head. Why should they waste their time and their money fighting the doughty Burdette?

When Mitcham's savings began to peter out he avoided the squatters and sought out the less influential men. Storekeepers, publicans and small farmers. Publicans especially. While his money held out they listened politely and quenched his thirst.

"Mitcham's Nightmare" became a byword from North Melbourne to portside. But why the deuce, inquired practical-minded people, didn't he forget his troubles and make tracks for Ballarat? He wasn't the first man who'd been a bit pummeled, nor would he be the last.

But he would not listen to good advice. He didn't want gold, he wanted to square his account with Burdette. At the back of his mean little mind the obsession grew and grew. The weight of it hurt his skull, which it seemed to fill with a constant throbbing desire. He was in such a frantic hurry and no one would help him! The more he talked the more he drank. Before his eyes, between him and the world in which he lived, hovered a fantom of John Burdette, bulky and scowling and disdainful. Then he could have killed the real Burdette, but he had sold his horse and his saddle, even his blankets for beer and he was tied down to the streets of Melbourne. He couldn't get out. The hallucination persisted. Always around the corner he expected to meet Burdette, around the next corner or coming out of some shop. So he walked very quickly through the streets, staring hard with blood-streaked eyes, his fists clenched, expecting every second to catch up with the fantom. Sometimes he ran along the crowded pavements and the people seeing the flicker of madness behind his pupils gave way before him.

His money was all gone. He was afraid to sleep because Burdette might slip past him while he dozed. He begged his food at back doors. Christmas found him in jail for petty larceny. In January he was abroad again. He took up his quest with the same unswerving determination. Burdette was always a little ahead of him, just a few short steps, or hiding behind a door waiting for him to go by.

At seven o'clock one hot morning in January he crawled from the top of the bales of wool in the goods-yard where he had spent the night and hurried back to Flinders Street. He shambled along quickly, forcing his way through the ranks of office-workers until he reached the busy corner of Petrie Street. Then he found he could go no farther. His knees gave beneath him. The sound of tramping feet, the rattle of the cars across the cobbles came to him in muffled undertones. Something was happening inside his chest. He couldn't breathe. Leaning against a shop-front he fought against the overpowering faintness. He needed food—three days since he had eaten. If he could get a bit of bread. Something to gnaw upon, and a thick slab of corned beef—Burdette's red neck bulging above the white collar——

People were looking at him. He sucked in the warm, dust-laden air through his open mouth. His hands pawed at the smooth surface of the plate-glass window at his back. If only he could get out of the crowd! In a minute he'd be down on the ground unless he could find some support.

He'd be down on the ground, underfoot—and Burdette would go by. He was making a fool of himself, a —— fool. Burdette was miles and miles away at Credion.

He threw himself away from the window. There, above the bobbing heads, he saw a flash of white disappear around the next corner! That was Burdette. Burdette!

He broke into a lurching run, the bystanders scattered. *Clump, clump, clump!* His feet were like heavy lumps of lead rooting him to the ground. He swayed above them, staggering, pulling them this way and that.

At the corner a man blocked his way. Not Burdette. He dodged, the man dodged. Mitcham screamed—

"Get out of my way!"

They collided heavily and fell. For a second or so Mitcham snarled and kicked, then exhaustion conquered him and he lay in the gutter, face downward. His victim picked himself up and retrieved his hat and an immensely long cigaret-holder of carved ivory. Though he was as yet unaware of the fact Mitcham had found a friend.

"He's been seeing things," declared the policeman, who had thrust his way through the crowd. "He's a bad 'un. All ginned up; I'll call the wagon. Now, move along there, move along."

But the gentleman with the cigaret-holder stood contemplating Mitcham's prostrate form with fresh interest.

"You say," he inquired, "he's been seeing things?"

"That's the strong of it. I've had my eye on him for some time. He's always yammering about what he's going to do to old John Burdette, the biggest man this side of Sydney, and him," he jerked his thumb at Mitcham, "just a bum!"

"You don't say? Burdette! How fascinating! Listen just a small moment, officer. I'll take him in hand. Feed him, you know, and so forth. After all I am the injured party."

"Well——"

"Oh, that's all right." Two half-crowns changed ownership. "Just help me drag him into that tea-shop. If he's starving, common humanity demands— He's coming to! That gutter must be a dismal spot in which to come to."

So Mitcham regained complete consciousness before a marble-topped table where there was coffee, bacon and eggs, bread and sundry other items. These he devoured without taking much interest in his benefactor, who observed a tactful silence until all the plates were quite empty.

He handled himself with what is sometimes called imperturbable calm. He was undisturbed by the waitresses' obvious nervousness, and he met Mitcham's scowl with matter-of-fact good nature. The situation to him seemed to be perfectly normal.

In appearance he was short and slim, almost slender. His hands and his feet were small, the former being encased in light tan gloves, the latter in light tan shoes. His neckware dazzled the eye. From tip to toe, by way of his carved cigaret-holder, he was immaculate, precise and, it must be admitted, quite out of place in the bustling, blustering city of Melbourne. Moreover, he rejoiced in the name of Harold Travers Burwell Rushton, which made him more out of place than ever.

"You got in my way," Mitcham remarked pleasantly as he finished the last of the marmalade. He didn't like toffs, Mitcham didn't, and he was feeling much better.

"I apologize," said Rushton. "It was my mistake entirely. I stood, so I heard later, between you and some enemy. I wouldn't stand between a man and his enemy for anything in the world!"

"You wouldn't?" pondered Mitcham, a cunning look in his eyes. "Who's been telling you about me?"

"A policeman. He, poor fellow, wanted to send you to jail. A great mistake."

"Yeh—jail. I know. I feel better now. Poor cove like me can't even faint without being sent to jail. My 'ead's been bothering me a bit." Mitcham stalled while he tried to sort out his ideas. Suppose he could interest this little fop in the scheme?

"It" must have money to burn. Suppose it could be induced to lend—and forget the loan—a few hundred pounds?

"You see," he went on with what was meant to be an apologetic grin, "I been in all kinds of trouble and it's been on my mind. To tell you the —— own truth there weren't no enemy, as you put it, only a crazy notion in my head because I been so sick."

"That's too bad."

"Yeh, maybe it is. And it's all due to Burdette—you've 'eard of 'im—'e drove me mad."

"Terrible! Do you mean *the* John Burdette?"

"That's 'im. Cruel bad 'e is to poor men like me. Worked me to the bone year in and year out and then, because of some little difference, 'e set upon me and *'ounded* me out. I can't get a job now. Can't work. He's too big for a lone man to fight. I been trying——"

"Then you shouldn't waste your time running around on Petrie Street after ghosts." Rushton's eyebrows went up slightly. "You should concentrate your attention on the real article. Ghosts are notoriously insensitive to pain."

Mitcham leaned over the table and spoke fast, pleadingly, for he felt deep within him

that the opportunity he had been waiting for had come at last.

"I'd be after Burdette in a brace of shakes," he declared, "but what's the use? Killing—murder! I'd be stretching a rope in no time. No, I don't want to do that. I'm a peaceful man when I ain't sick like this. 'Ard working, too, when I get a square deal.

"But I got an idea, see? All I need is a bit of ready cash——"

"Ah, that!" sighed Rushton, staring at the ceiling.

"Cash—not very much, and you," he slipped craftily into the use of the second person, "you could do Burdette in the eye fair and proper, and make a load of money besides."

"What an optimist you are. How stimulating!" murmured Rushton, playing with his cigaret-holder.

Mitcham's eyes almost popped out of his head his anger was so difficult to restrain. It was hard to sit opposite such a little shrimp and talk civilly. Still he persisted:

"I'll tell you, because I likes you, 'ow it can be done. Burdette, 'e thinks 'e owns all the —— country between the Shaw and Cape York. But 'e don't! Nothing of the sort. 'E's squatting on about fifty thousand acres, more or less, south of the river and 'e thinks 'e's got a right to fifteen thousand more on the north side. That's where 'e goes wrong. You can look up his title. And what's more, 'e's never 'ad a cow north of the Shaw in all the years I was at Credion. All he 'ad to say to 'is neighbors was —'Keep off!' and they kep' off.

"But supposing we went up there with our minds made up and we 'ad a small herd, then we could camp down on that strip between the Shaw and the Stony Rises. Burdette'll be needing it mighty soon. I 'eard 'e was going to buy up a bunch of store cattle and fatten 'em up quick now that boom is on at Ballarat.

"Now d'you see where we fit in? Take out the license right now. Take it out in your own name if you like, I ain't particular, though t'other way might be better, me knowing all the ropes. That would cover us, and then we'd buy a couple of hundred pig-meaters and boilers, any old thing so long as it could stand on four feet, and dump 'em down on that fifteen thousand acres. Pretty soon old Johnny Burdette would 'ave to buy us out, and we could soak 'im good, squeeze 'im until 'e 'ollers. It's a sure thing, Mr. ——"

"Rushton. Harold Travers Burwell Rushton, I'm sorry to say. But you may call me Harold."

"Har—" the word stuck in Mitcham's throat and a wave of ruddy color spread over his face and neck. "Har——"

Rushton stared placidly at the ceiling apparently unaware of Mitcham's intense emotion.

"You know," he remarked. "I'm an extraordinary fellow. It's simply amazing the number of people I meet who honor me with their innermost confidences. They unburden themselves so! I'm thinking of writing a book about it all some day. Not so long ago, when I was in Colombo, an aged tea planter——"

"Har— Harol——"

"—tea planter told me, after an acquaintance of not more than two straight whiskies, that his first wife had died of ptomaine poisoning. He went on to describe his emotional reactions. Didn't know me from Adam but he was very explicit. He said he could have thrown himself into the grave. Described the brick-lined grave. Described the Episcopalian ritual. Cassock and big sturdy boots beneath. Very sad. My tea planter apparently recovered and remarried a month later. Described that too. Then he said I was the most fascinating fellow he'd ever met," Rushton blinked solemnly. "He asked me for the loan of five hundred pounds to help him fight a breach of promise suit. You see, his second wife was dead by that time—"

"But—"

"Quite. As I say he wanted five hundred pounds. May I add"—he coiled up into what seemed to be a bundle of arms and legs and cigaret-holder—"he did not get the five hundred pounds?"

"Oh," said Mitcham, vaguely wondering whether the shrimp was quite as sobersided as he appeared to be.

"And what," inquired Rushton, "leads you to believe that I have money to invest in hazardous enterprises?"

"That's one thing I can fair smell," grinned Mitcham in his most ingratiating manner. "I can tell a gennelman a mile off and when I saw you I said to myself—

" 'I'll lay this gennelman won't turn a deaf ear to such a good scheme just because it comes from a poor man.' "

"Your sense of smell must be singularly acute," murmured Rushton. "But as a matter of fact what you say does interest me very much. Coincidence, one might almost call it. Yes, coincidence. I know of stranger things that have never happened. Indeed I do! Here I have been in Melbourne for a week or more and until you knocked me down I had really given up hope of finding a kindred soul. Kindred souls are quite scarce this year. Tell me more about this scheme of yours. It interests me, as I said once before."

Mitcham passed a hand across his eyes. The situation seemed to be slipping out of his control. Slowly, almost wearily, he went over the whole ground once again, step by step. He explained Burdette and Burdette's grasping meanness. He described himself as a man of sobriety, honesty and uprightness. He dwelt upon the value of the promised land—even as a permanent investment—and he went so far as to assert that though he did not make friends easily he was quite overcome by Rushton's charm. And all the time a fresh and subtle thought was taking shape in his mind, for he despised Rushton through and through.

If, he thought, he could induce this little popinjay to get together a herd and drive it west—well, the road would be long and lonely, and why should the popinjay share in the profits of a venture with which he had nothing to do beyond the financing?

Some obscure trace of decency, or it may have been cowardice, must have lurked within Mitcham for in self-defense he concluded:

"Of course, I wouldn't expect no gennelman like you to risk traveling on horseback all the way to the Shaw. You could stay here and reap the profits all snug and comfortable. Wouldn't be no trouble."

Rushton's eyelids fluttered slightly.

"I think," he said, "if you don't mind I should like to see something of the interior of this vast continent. Moreover, I disapprove of unearned increments. I want to work for my money."

"So you are coming in!" Mitcham almost shouted, much to the terror of the tea-room waitresses.

"My very kind sir!" Rushton held up one well-kept hand. "Not so fast! I must investigate a little before committing myself. I admit I am nibbling at the bait. The hook beneath it looks tempting enough to bite."

"But it's rough——"

"The hook? No, you mean the life out there. That's to be expected."

"And there's Burdette, 'e——"

"I am anxious to meet him. Suppose we do our investigating together? You can give me pointers."

"A'right," Mitcham agreed with alacrity. "Come on then. Let's be moving."

And he jumped up, refreshed and reinvigorated at the double prospect of getting even with Burdette and of teaching the little shrimp not to be funny with his betters. Why he despised Rushton so wholeheartedly he would have found it hard to say—probably because Rushton, in his estimation, was too smooth, too soft, too entirely refined. Not a man in fact. Merely a facile gabbler with more money than brains.

Mitcham, however, made himself as pleasant as he could possibly be in his unwashed and ragged state. He had no intention of letting the despicable creature escape him.

" 'urry up, 'Arold, old man," he called out. "We've a lot to do."

Harold, who was paying the check, said to the beribboned cashier:

"The poor man is so impetuous! And d'you know, I feel it in my bones, if he can he's going to murder me—he thinks so much of me! I saw it in his eyes; they're so expressive! Only a penny change! Thank you."

The cashier tittered and then went as white as the rouge on her cheeks would allow, for, woman-like, she knew that Rushton though he was a 'funny cove' had spoken no more than the truth.

RUSHTON, much to Mitcham's secret annoyance, was surprizingly thorough in his investigation. Vague and inconsequential though he seemed to be, he worked according to a very definite plan and in a week's time the whole thing was suddenly wound up and settled. Mitcham found himself somewhat disinherited. Instead of being a partner he was reduced to the hilarious position of salaried foreman, with a share of the profits, it is true, and the permission to call his employer 'Harold.' As he explained to the landlord of the Rose and Crown where he made frequent calls:

"This 'Arold business has got me rattled for fair. 'E does things so casual and

off-hand I can't tell whether 'e's fooling hisself or fooling me. First—what d'you know?—he digs up a sort of friend in the Survey office and gets a squatter's license in forty-eight hours—thanks to *my* information. T'aint fair, but what could I say? 'E paid.

"Then there's the cattle. I was all for buying a bunch of pig-meaters, something cheap, just good enough to shove on to the grass and keep old John busy buying us out. Well, sir, 'Arold 'e digs up another friend—Bill Coleman! Yes, sir, the packer, and Coleman lets him in on three hundred prime short 'orns, which 'e pays cash for.

"Says I—

" ' 'Arold, this is fine for you but I seem to be out in the cold.'

" 'Oh, not at all,' says he in that ladida way of 'is, which is worse'n poison to me. 'Oh, not at all, I'm merely supplying the properties, you'll have to do all the real work because I'm utterly ignorant. You'll be general manager and we'll split the profits evenly.'

"And let me tell you, Mr. Barton, I'm going to 'ave more than 'awf the profits afore I'm through with 'im and Burdette. I know what's coming to me."

"Hm," remarked Mr. Barton, busy wiping his counter. "Did you say that to your 'Arold, too?"

"Like —— I did," Mitcham snorted. "A few eye-openers won't do 'im any 'arm."

"You make a nice foreman," said Mr Barton with a heavy wink. "When d'you pull out?"

"Day after tomorrow. I got to rope in a couple of 'ands to 'elp with the bunch and that's another surprize for 'Arold."

But the chief surprize was handed to Mitcham when he broached the subject early next morning. They chanced to be walking down a deserted lane between two rows of stock-yard fences. Rushton halted in his tracks and said cheerfully:

"For once I have to disagree with you, much as it pains me. I don't think we can afford to hire two stockriders."

"We can't——"

"We shall have to do without them, because, quite honestly, I'm almost down to my last penny."

"Then the whole thing's off," growled Mitcham. "You can't expect me to tail a herd all day long and ring it at night for two weeks or more. Twenty-four perishing hours a day! Blimey, t'ain't worth it!"

"Have you forgotten Burdette?"

"Oh, him? That's right. Say, couldn't we take just one good man?"

"Here you are," Rushton gently tapped his fawn-colored waistcoat. "Here is the one good man. Your wish is rewarded."

"It needs an *hex*pert," Mitcham labored to explain. " 'Course, you're willing, 'Arold, I can tell that. But this 'ere business takes learning, and it ain't every man as can handle a whip and keep the bullocks on the move."

"I think I am just the man for the job," said Rushton. "As I am apt to remark with great frequency, I'm a most extraordinary fellow. My gifts may be small but how well do I use them!"

The sight of the gloved and complacent shrimp solemnly asserting his ability to handle an unwieldy herd exasperated Mitcham so much that he permitted himself the luxury of violent blasphemy: A short, sharp outburst, a squall across the deceitfully calm surface of his temper. Rushton slowly raised his hat and said:

"Amen."

"But, good ——!" exclaimed Mitcham, towering above the object of his wrath, "don't you understand? It's 'ard, tough work. Got to keep busy most all day long. You can't let up and drink tea out of dainty cups," which was his idea of complete effeminacy. "You got to sweat to hustle a bunch of steers from 'ere to the Shaw.

" 'Arold," he became a shade more tactful, "you got to realize things, as you might say. Your 'eart's big but you ain't cut out to be a stockman. You got to lemme do this my way and I got to 'ave another husky fellow like myself. What could you do with a twelve-foot whip like this one 'ere? Most likely you'd cut your ears off. No, it won't do. Come along, of course, if you want to, and welcome, but the work—"

"Let us," put in Rushton in a very gentle voice, "let us come to an understanding, most trustworthy Mitcham. Your solicitude for my well-being touches me deeply but you don't know the 'awf of it."

"The 'awf of what?"

"Of me to be sure. I am many-sided."

Rushton peeled off his gloves, smoothed them out and tucked them neatly into an inner pocket of his coat. From another

pocket he drew a cigaret-case of black leather with gold mountings.

"Do smoke," he begged.

"Coffin nails," grunted Mitcham in disgust. "Naw—I chew."

"Just one."

"Well, I don't want to break your 'eart, 'Arold. Here's a go."

"Now," Rushton went on, "be so kind as to lend me your twelve-foot whip."

"Look, 'Arold," quickly interposed Mitcham, laying a placating hand on the other's shoulder, "we ain't got time to experiment. I'll teach you later on. Takes quite a while to know 'ow to use one of these heavy fellows."

For no understandable reason, however, he found himself handing the whip to Rushton. Was it possible that the shrimp had suddenly ordered in a chilly, stinging voice—

"Hand it to me at once!"

Or was he dreaming? Surely the shrimp would not dare address him like that. Of course not. Still, thought Mitcham, he might as well humor the silly little fop and let him cut himself up a bit. Teach him a good lesson.

"Here y'are," he announced as if conferring a favor. "Now what?"

His question was quickly answered. Backing away a few paces to be well out of harm's way and the better to enjoy the fun, he was astonished, then amazed, to see the long lash leave the ground and writhe in a hissing circle in answer to the deft quick play of Rushton's almost motionless wrist.

"Luck," Mitcham told himself. "Any fool can do *that* first off."

Then he sprang back, mouthing angry oaths, for the lash had leaped out toward him and exploded loudly within inches of his face.

"Put it down!" he shouted. "Can't you see you're going to hurt somebody?"

Rushton, his countenance betraying marked signs of sleepy boredom, was performing double cracks and figures of eight.

"Stop it, —— you!" brayed Mitcham, red-eyed and spluttering because he had almost been injured. He was so mad that he took unnecessary risks and sidled in as close as possible with the intention of wrenching the whip out of Rushton's hand.

Without warning the lash again came straight at him, quick as lightning, and it cut in two, and very neatly, the cigaret that dangled between his lips.

His subsequent remarks were monotonous for his vocabulary was not very rich. Rushton halted his demonstration the better to listen to the flow of oratory. When it tarried he said briskly:

"All right, Mitcham, don't bother about the next instalment. We part company right here and now. I'm not keeping you. Here's your whip and good day."

And Mitcham, while he longed to choke the offender, was forced to plead for fully half an hour before he was reinstated. When peace was patched up several uncertainties no longer existed. Rushton was recognized as the head of the undertaking, they were to do without extra stockriders, and Mitcham was to give up the use of unnecessary profanity. Grievous to relate, he was not content to apologize, he positively crept and crawled, for he wanted at any price to get Rushton out in the open, away from civilization, and there, as he delicately put it, to 'rive the guts out'n him.'

"Why, 'Arold," he protested, "if you ain't a wonder! Fancy you knowing 'ow to use a bull-whip, and a twelve-footer at that! And, 'Arold, I'm mighty glad I got you for a partner, you're that modest I'll lay you know lots more'n you let on to most people, but we're going to work together and even if old man Burdette won't buy us out we can make pots of money on our own. Where d'you learn that trick, you tell me that now?"

Rushton was pulling on his gloves again.

"Oh, I picked it up somewhere or other," he said evasively. "I think it was in Nevada. No, it must have been Arizona——"

"In the States, eh? You been there?"

"I have been everywhere," Rushton admitted modestly, "if you except the two Poles and the Ashanti country."

"You —— liar," thought Mitcham.

But aloud he said:

"Is that a fact, 'Arold? My, my! You must 'ave seen lots of interesting things. I wisht I 'ad your luck."

Peace being fully restored a compromise was reached on the subject of extra help, for some one was really needed to drive the ox-cart that was to carry the supplies. Mitcham's selection was rejected. He had had in mind an aged ruffian who would have made an efficient accomplice but an indifferent worker. Rushton, with unexpected foresight, picked out a loose-limbed and gloomy young man by the name of Lund,

who was discovered sitting on the top rail of a fence staring at nothing in particular. During the interview with Rushton he momentarily lost all power of coherent speech and seemed to be on the verge of hysterical collapse. Mitcham, noting this sign, promptly decided that for his purpose Lund would do as well as any man and set himself to cultivate the youth's friendship.

That night over their last pint of beer at the Rose and Crown he opened his campaign.

"You see," he said to Lund, "it's me what's *reely* behind this 'ere venture. Make no mistake about that. 'Im, little putty-face, 'e's just doing what I says. I got to keep under cover for reasons you'll find out later, but I'm the real boss of this outfit. I'm just telling you all this quiet and friendly-like to show you 'ow things stand. What I want I get. See? Just now I want to do Burdette in the eye and after that maybe I'll keep this herd and settle down——"

Lund nodded drowzily—

"But supposing he wants to keep the herd?"

"Oh, 'e won't. 'E'll get tired of living in the backblocks. Trust him. 'E's just a—a—well, you know what I mean. Not that I don't like 'im. Clever chap, is 'Arold—that's what I calls 'im because of us being such good friends. But he ain't strong." The idea pleased Mitcham. "No, 'e ain't what you might call strong and I dunno whether 'e can stand the 'ardships you and me can stand. 'E might peg out—*pore boy!*"

"Lumme!"

" 'Course I don't expect nothing like that to 'appen. But 'e's 'ad warnings. Only this morning 'e says to me—

" 'Old pal, if anything 'appens to me everything I got is yours.'

"That's what 'e says to me. And if the worst should 'appen, well then, you'll be all right because I'll look after you."

The effect of his words upon the callow youth was unforeseen.

"You mean," shrilled Lund, "there's a man knows he ain't strong, knows he may not come back, and yet he goes straight ahead getting ready to go? That's mighty fine and I take off my hat to Mr. Rushton. He looks a bit funny but his nerve is just right. What say you?"

Taken aback Mitcham grunted:

"Oh, yes—that's one way of looking at it."

"And anything I can do to help him," Lund rushed on, "I'll do. My old man always used to say it wasn't a man's looks that meant anything, it was the size of his heart you had to go by."

"That's just it," sighed Mitcham. " 'Is 'eart is weak. I tell you, Lund, we're going to be in clover——"

Then the landlord of the Rose and Crown, leaning across the counter, remarked sententiously:

"You be careful, Tad Mitcham, my la-ad, you don't go to jail. Mark my words. And this is a decent house. You, Lund, go home. You've had more'n enough to drink as it is."

BENEATH the gum-trees close to the banks of Lake Wurumbugee glowed the dying embers of the camp-fire. Occasionally a little tongue of flame leaped up and for a second dispelled the thick darkness. Wrapped in his blankets Lund slept the sleep of the just and the weary. From the depths of the covers drawn well over his head issued rythmical snores, not unlike the shuddering sound made by a buzz-saw striking a nail. His steel-shod heels lay within a few inches of the hot ashes, his toes pointed skywards.

On the other side of the fire, against the wheels of the dray, lay the gray cocoon, which at every dawn gave birth to the pajamaed figure of Mr. Harold Rushton. He did not sleep with his clothes on, not even his socks. His garments hung beneath the dray like faithful servitors awaiting his good pleasure. There hung the white whipcord breeches, the steel-gray coat and the double-breasted waistcoat to match. There, too, was the white piqué stock that by day so thoroughly enveloped its owner's throat. On the bucket-hook rested his gray derby. Black top-boots with little box-spurs stood rigid as sentinels in front of the line.

No sound came from the cocoon, no movement, for the very good reason that Mr. Rushton was not, on this particular occasion, inside his covers. He lay on top of the dray, stretched at full length, and kept as still as possible; not very still, however, for whichever way he moved angular objects concealed beneath the tarpaulin jutted into odd portions of his anatomy. He had not chosen the spot for its comfort but, rather, for its strategic value. It was not exposed

to surprize attacks. He anticipated a surprize attack, and beneath him lay a trap. His blankets so deceptively plumped out gave shelter and warmth to one sack of oats and one bag of granulated sugar. He was prepared.

Out in the darkness Mitcham was supposed to be "ringing" the herd, and soothing it with his voice. But his voice usually so active had been silent for an hour or more. Possibly he was conscientiously performing his duties, but Rushton was taking no unnecessary risks. When he ceased to hear Mitcham's rendering of "The Last Ride of Drover McDonough" he had transferred himself from the ground to the wagon top with stealth and celerity. Mr. Harold Rushton was not quite such a fool as he cared to have the world believe although, it must be admitted, his efforts in this direction usually met with complete success.

Eight days' journeying had brought the party to the banks of the Wurumbugee Lake, more than half-way to the Shaw. Eight days of slow travel across undulating, lightly-timbered country, eight days of dust and glaring sun. From the very beginning Mitcham's surliness had been only too evident. He had, naturally enough, strongly resented Rushton's costume. This he could have forgiven or at least tolerated had Rushton lived up to his attire. Instead, he had an uncanny habit of knowing exactly the right thing to do. He rode well; heat, glare and dust had no effect upon him; he kept the herd bunched and moving over tricky, broken ground; he displayed no emotion when called upon to ride herd on a rain-sluiced night. By some incomprehensible feat he was always cool, clean and neat, always on hand where trouble might be expected. He knew too much and boasted too little, he was too quiet and too —— efficient. So little did he have to say of his share of the work that Mitcham before the end of the second day's march was fully convinced that he alone was doing all the toil.

Each succeeding day added to Mitcham's intolerable, though quite imaginary, burden. His resentment increased in direct proportion. The sweat of physical exertion soon drove the last fumes of beer from his brain. He ceased to be bothered by semi-apparitions of Burdette. He became normal and nasty. He wondered why he should have to share with Rushton the profits of an enterprise so wholly his. Rushton did nothing but get in the way, he was always underfoot. What if he had put up a bit of ready money? Anybody else would have been content with six per cent., he wanted a half-share. Greedy little ——. He was a fop and a shrimp and entitled to no consideration. Moreover, he might stand in Mitcham's way when the time came for a showdown with Burdette. He might be afraid of old John.

Such ideas and several others kept Mitcham constant company. Time and again he thought of disposing of Rushton, but Lund was in the way. Lund bothered him. Lund refused to be drawn into the plot. He was inert. Hints and suggestions were wasted upon him. He cooked indifferent johnny-cakes, brewed leathery tea and slept like a log. Mitcham was sufficiently wise to know that he could not hope to dispose both of Rushton and Lund and get away with it. Such things happened elsewhere, but in Victoria there was the constabulary to contend with. Inquisitive people, the mounted policemen.

Still accidents happened. What kind of an accident? The question kept Mitcham busy for several days. Then the solution came to him, almost an inspiration. The lake! They were to camp by Wurumbugee Lake. On a dark night a man riding herd *might* lose his way and get caught in the marshes, flounder about a bit and drown. There were quicksands. The body would vanish. Lund wouldn't be suspicious. He knew, surely, that Rushton was always doing idiotic things—chasing across country after kangaroos or trying to ride down bush-turkeys! And Lund slept soundly, he wouldn't hear anything. He'd wake up when the whole thing was over. They'd hunt around a while and then report the death at the nearest homestead, and then on! Mitcham would have a free hand and be ready to settle his grudge with Burdette as he saw fit.

Once all the details were settled in his mind he became more friendly, but he could not break himself of staring hungrily at Rushton's throat, nor could he keep his hands unclenched, nor could he always conceal his contempt for the weak little creature who dared, sometimes, to give him orders.

The day they reached the lake he was in fine fettle and boisterous in a back-thumping way.

"I'll take the first watch, ol' man," he

told Rushton after supper. "That'll give you a chance to get a good rest with—" his disgust pierced through the cheerfulness of his words—"with all your clothes off. And if I'm an hour late don't fret yourself. A fellow like you what's not used to 'ardships needs a lot of sleep."

"Your generosity is overwhelming," murmured Rushton.

"Oh, that's nothing. I'm just a plain tough fellow with lots of brawn. I'm used to this 'ere life so you leave it to me, 'Arold."

And having saddled up he rode off toward the cattle gathered in a straggling group on a high strip of land between the lake and a stretch of marshy swamp.

Rushton watched him disappear into the darkness and began to undress with his usual deliberation. When he reached the critical point of struggling with his boots, Lund, who was scouring a frying-pan, remarked suddenly—

"I don't know much, but if I was you—I'd look out."

Then, very red about the ears, he scrubbed at his pan for several minutes.

"Proceed," urged Rushton, hopping about on one foot. "Why should I look out and what for?"

"Haven't you noticed—nothink?" Lund asked in a whisper. "It ain't for me to be talking about——"

"I think I know exactly what you mean, and as a matter of fact I've been wondering how long it would be before something happened."

"Well, watch out."

"Don't make my flesh creep. Come down to facts and stop beating about the bush. What has happened to make you suspicious?"

"It's the way he looks, for one thing," Lund went on. "You've seen that too. He looks at you all funny, and his hands work—Then, he's been hinting at things. He tells people you ain't strong——"

"He's afraid I won't come back?"

"That's right. Have you heard him?"

"No."

"That's funny because he says there ain't much chance of you ever seeing Melbourne again, and he says you've turned everything over to him. I don't know, maybe you have."

"I'm always astonished at my own generosity," Rushton declared, "but to my knowledge I have made no such a promise to Mitcham."

"I wondered—because there's no telling—you don't act like most people out this way, and I thought maybe he wasn't lying. But then last night while you was on watch and he was asleep he started having a kind of dream and mumbling to himself."

"Go on, I'm listening."

"There wasn't much I could catch, except a word here and there. He said 'drown' or 'drowning,' I think it was, and after that he was very restless and tossed about. He was lying close to me so I poked him in the ribs. He woke up all of a start and shouted, 'It's clean!' What he meant I don't know. Then he caught sight of me and shut up. That's about all—but I'd be careful if I was you."

Rushton was loosening his stock.

"I'm afraid," he remarked placidly, "you've been reading too much about bush-rangers and detectives and pirates. Your mind, if I may say so, appears to be saturated with tales of crime. On the other hand, I read Ruskin and my mind is pure and—let's leave it at that. In other words I think you are quite wrong. Our friend Mitcham is not without a few minor defects, but at heart he is sound. As to the dream—we all dream. Many a time I have a splendid nightmare in which I toss people about like feathers, and then I wake up to the sad contemplation of my abbreviated person——"

Lund had gone back disgustedly to the scouring of his pan. He was through with Mr. Rushton for good and all. His mind was full of pirates, was it? Why, he couldn't even spell his own name, let alone read. Still, if Rushton chose to rub it in he wasn't going to bother about anything. It was no business of his anyhow. One boss was much like another, and he wasn't going to get mixed up in other people's troubles. It didn't pay. He had had a sneaking liking for Rushton, but that was over and done with.

So without further comment beyond a gruff "g'night," he finished his chores, washed his nose and a portion of his cheeks, shook out his blankets, curled up and was soon very much asleep.

Then Rushton's assumed nonchalance deserted him and he quickly climbed to the top of the wagon, there to await developments. Regretfully he looked down upon

the rugs which should have been sheltering him and he sighed:

"I hope I haven't made myself look too small!"

His vigil must have lasted close on an hour, his legs were cramped and an angular biscuit tin had temporarily dented his abdomen out of shape, when his straining eyes caught sight of a ripple in the long grass just beyond the circle of light. The faint movement became more pronounced. Slowly, softly Mitcham crept out of the darkness on hands and knees. He paused by Lund's outstretched form and listened intently for more than a minute to the rise and fall of the snores. Having satisfied himself that the boy was really asleep he continued on his slow journey, and now his right hand held a knife, broad, long and razor-sharp with a point like a needle, a knife Rushton had often admired, with certain mental reservations.

Mitcham's face, ruddy in the light of the embers, was not a pleasant sight. His eyes glowed in their shadowy sockets, the big loose mouth was a smear, beneath the wrinkled flesh on his neck a lump moved up and down spasmodically.

He reached the blankets and again paused as he glanced back toward Lund. Then slowly he raised the knife, his breath hissed through his teeth, and the knife came down—and buried itself to the hilt in granulated sugar. The lack of resistance on the part of his victim came as an unpleasant surprize, a shock almost. It threw him off his balance. He fell forward on to his face and before he could give utterance to one amazed oath something struck him in the small of the back, something hard and heavy. It knocked the breath out of his body and for a second or so stunned him beyond the power of movement. The hard and heavy object was Rushton, dropped from the skies to confound his would-be assassin. Before Mitcham could stir Rushton was firmly seated upon his shoulders and holding against his neck the needle-like point of the knife.

"One move," remarked Rushton, who fully appreciated the value of the time-haloed phrase, "one move, one infinitesimal wiggle and you are a very dead man. Am I explicit?"

Mitcham's first ejaculation was inaudible, subsequently it developed that he suffered acute pains, not of conscience, but in the lumbar region. His lamentations aroused Lund, who, having thrown some twigs on the fire, contemplated the scene with increasing excitement.

"Didn't I tell you?" he shrilled. "Can't say I didn't warn you! Can't say it's my fault. I knew all the time——"

"The situation is now well in hand," Rushton explained soberly, "but I am hanged if I know what to do with mine enemy. You know," he went on, attracting Mitcham's attention by a sharp prick beneath the right ear, "you have put us in an awkward predicament. I am indecently attired for such an event, I feel the need of adequate clothing, and yet I am afraid to move. You are big, brother Mitcham—one sweep of your mighty paw would be enough to account for me. Lund might withstand a couple more sweeps but that's about his limit. Four sweeps between us. A conservative estimate. So let us bind your wrists. Lund, fetch a lead-rope and a strong one."

With his hands pinioned behind his back Mitcham was propped in a sitting position against one of the wagon wheels.

"Listen here—" he began.

"Not now," objected Rushton. "Wait until I am dressed. You don't want me to catch my death of cold, do you? And I think our beeves can do without a nurse for an hour or so. Lund, you might as well hang around here for a while as a witness, and you might also brew us some of your famous tea."

"Just as you say," agreed Lund, "but don't forget, I warned you. I said, 'If I was you I'd look out.' "

"And I took your advice. I was on top of the wagon. Mitcham foully murdered half a hundredweight of the best sugar."

"He——"

"Never mind. The question is: Can we let him go loose or do we have to carry him about as surplus stores for the next few months?"

"Please," broke in Mitcham, "lemme explain. Honest, Mr. Rushton, I wasn't intending 'arm. I wasn't, *reely*. 'Twas a mistake." He whined and writhed and debased himself. " 'Twas a terrible mistake. And now I'm branded as a criminal—me, what's never 'ad anything said against 'im—never in my life. Lemme say I'm sorry and try to explain. You'll see—you know I wouldn't do no 'arm, least of all

to you. Ain't you been my friend and raised me from the gutter? Why should I turn against you? 'Course I admit, I been awnry at times, but that's because I ain't been well, and yesterday I 'ad a touch of the sun. I felt it coming on, and——"

"Do you mean to tell me," exclaimed Rushton, mildly incredulous, "that you have already found an alibi? Resourceful Mitcham! Splendid Mitcham! But I am holding you up. Forgive me, I chatter like an old woman when I am excited. Do go on!"

"He's a —— liar," said Lund, who, thinking the affair lacked dignity, tried to inject into the proceedings a more suitable tone. "*I* heard him talking in his sleep and I've watched him careful. He's bad——"

"Don't listen to 'im, Mr. Rushton," begged Mitcham. " 'E's young, 'e don't properly understand. It's the —— truth what I'm telling you. After the touch of sun I felt all giddy and my eyes started to play me tricks—like when I met you that time in Melbourne. All day it seemed to me Burdette was 'anging about——"

"What—again? You're sure it wasn't one Rushton who was hanging about?"

"No, no, no!" Mitcham forced himself to smile sadly. "It was old John and 'e drove me mad, but I didn't want to say nothing for fear of troubling you. And today it got worse and worse. Awful bad. I fought it tooth and nail—but, I dunno, it got the better of me out there while I was riding herd. There 'e was, sort of jeering at me and about twenty feet away, standing like 'e used to with his 'ead shoved forward and 'is fists on his 'ips. And when I started to drive 'im off, he 'ops another twenty feet, and I got so mad I tried to stalk 'im quiet-like, just to tell 'im to go away, and first thing I knew, so help me, Mr. Rushton, you was sitting on my back and I kind of woke up all dazed and trembly. I dunno nothing else and I swear——"

Rushton listened to the outpouring without so much as the flicker of an eyelid, then he said:

"Mitcham, I'm going to let you go. I don't believe a word of your yarn but I'm going to take a chance. You know as well as I do you stand to lose in the long run if you try that again. It won't work and it's foolish. Lund knows and I know. Two to one. Kill us both and still you lose. You lose your chance to settle with Burdette, you lose the cattle—everything, even your life eventually.

"And I need you, I admit. You are indispensable at the present moment. I can't drag you about tied to the wagon like a barbarian at a Triumph. I don't want to. Lund, what do you say?"

"Tie a stone to his neck and sink him in the —— lake. And the tea's brewed," answered Lund, thoroughly disgusted.

"Aw, Lund," pleaded Mitcham, "we've been good friends——"

"Yea! We have! Who's been picking about the grub and the harness and the water and——"

"Just trying to teach you a few things, Lund. I'm an old 'and at the game and I thought you might like to learn——"

"For pity's sake don't *whine*," Rushton said quickly. "If you do I'll follow Lund's advice. Just try to be reasonable and make allowances for the things you don't like about me. I'll do the same where you are concerned. Lately you've been acting like a lunatic. Think it over: Can you drive the cattle single-handed? Would Lund stay with you? Could you reach the Shaw without any help? Don't be a fool!"

"I see it now," admitted Mitcham. "So help me, I do. I've been rank bad. It's Burdette's fault, —— him! Before the trouble with 'im I was different, I swear I was, and if you'll gimme a chance——"

The strange thing about Mitcham was that he meant exactly what he said. He was completely reformed. Because he had failed, because Rushton had landed on the small of his back, he saw his actions—temporarily—in a totally new light and sincerely desired forgiveness. He didn't understand Rushton and was beginning to be afraid of the quiet little voice and the unwinking eyes.

Lund's disgust was obvious. He had expected heroics and bloodshed, something to talk about for years to come. Well, he couldn't talk about this show. It was a frost.

"He's harmless," he grunted. "It's just as you like, boss, let him go."

Rushton severed the prisoner's bonds. Dawn was in the sky, the steaming surface of the lake had turned steely-gray, the shadows were rolling back off the plains. An hour later the wagon-wheels screamed as the oxen bent to their yokes, and the dust began to eddy up above the tossing horns as the cattle milled and bellowed and

finally were hustled away from the lake-shore and again headed westward.

GILDING discovered the outrage. For several days there had been a rumor that Tad Mitcham had come back to the Shaw with a drove of cattle, but at Credion the rumor had been discounted. Such things didn't happen, that was all—but even if Mitcham was in the neighborhood he was no doubt on his way to the untenanted, unexplored territory beyond Portland.

The rumor persisted. Calling one morning at the Wallen ranch-house Gilding was told the dreadful facts.

"We had them here for a night," said Wallen, carefully hiding a smile. "That was, let me think, about ten days ago. They went due north from here, straight toward the marshes——"

"But there's no passage——"

"That's where you go wrong, Gilding. There is a passage! Mitcham is not as dumb as—as some people think. He knows more than I do about my own boundaries. There's a stretch of dry ground clear across, only you've got to know where to look."

"And he's over there now on Mr. Burdette's property?"

"You better believe it," laughed Wallen. "With three hundred good-looking animals too. And you should see his partner! Goes by the name of Rushton. He looks——"

"I'll see him soon enough," put in Gilding. "And speaking of Tad Mitcham, why didn't you let Mr. Burdette know what was happening?"

"I have nothing to do with it," Wallen said with great satisfaction. "I'm absolutely passive. Let 'em fight it out together. And unless I am much mistaken the north shore of the Shaw doesn't belong to Burdette anyhow. What's he kicking about?"

"Doesn't *belong* ——" spluttered Gilding, aghast.

"No. It does not. He's never had so much as a heifer over there in thirty years."

"But he's just bought two thousand head of store-cattle from——"

"Too late! Old John has found somebody to stand up to him at last. I never had the nerve to, worse luck! And the match isn't Mitcham. Have a good look at Rushton, he's the boss-mackaye of the outfit."

Gilding waited for no more. His own job was at stake. He rode back to Credion, fifty-odd miles away, at racing speed and appeared before his master as the latter was preparing to answer the summons of the dinner-gong.

John Burdette never allowed any one to disturb him until he reached the cheese-and-cracker course. Though he dined alone he dined in state, sitting alone and silent at the head of his candle-lit table. He drank port because his father and his father before him drank port, and his face by the time the meal was over took on the tawny color of the wine.

Gilding was obliged to wait for an hour or more and when he was at last admitted into the presence the words came tripping and tumbling off his lips.

"Wait," ordered John Burdette. "Have a glass of port, Gilding."

It was an inflexible ritual: Glass of port for the foreman, who drank standing. Foremen never sat in John Burdette's presence.

"Thank you, sir. Yes, sir. But this is very urgent——"

"Here's a glass. Help yourself. Good health, Gilding."

"Yes, sir. Good health to you, sir, and I've just come back from seeing Mr. Wallen——"

"That bounder——"

"Yes, sir."

"Keep your opinions to yourself!" thundered Burdette. "How dare you criticize Mr. Wallen?"

"I'm sorry, sir, but I'm all upset. Something terrible has happened——"

"Have another glass of port."

"Thank you, sir. If I may finish telling you—it's about Tad Mitcham. You may remember him——"

"That good-for-nothing drunkard!"

"Exactly, sir. He's come back and he's settled north of the river where you were going to turn loose the new batch——"

Burdette's face was swollen and purple, veins stood out in thick knots and cords on his forehead and neck. His right hand closing about the stem of a wine glass crushed it to tinkling fragments. His fingers dripped blood on to the table-cloth.

"Go on," he said thickly. "Tell me what you know. Make it short!"

While his foreman talked he sat motionless and inert, his head thrust forward as if listening—listening to some other voice which was very far away and difficult to catch.

"—and I'm sure," Gilding concluded all out of breath, "I'm sure it's not my fault, sir. They didn't cross any of our land. I don't quite know what to do."

"You're not expected to," snapped Burdette. "You're paid to do as you're told. We're leaving at once, that ought to put us across the river early tomorrow morning. I'll ride Gun Powder. Don't want an escort. Don't stand gaping at me, Gilding!"

"No, sir——"

"*Get out!*"

They forded the Shaw at dawn and threaded their way through the swamps. Then they emerged into the open, riding through knee-high grass. Topping the crest of a rise they came upon the trespassers camped by the side of a stream in a broad valley where the scattered cattle were like little gray dots against the green background.

A peaceful scene and an inspiring one: The onward surge of civilization, as typified by Rushton, Lund and Mitcham, rolling back a little farther the frontiers of modern Australia. There they sat, dusty, travel-stained and triumphant, boiling their billy-cans above their crackling fire.

Burdette's strength lay in his directness. He never went around an obstacle except as a last resort, he much preferred to butt it down and trample upon it. He dismounted and, having flung the reins to Gilding, walked straight up to Mitcham, tapped him on the chest, and barked:

"You can't stay here, Mitcham. Your bluff is called. Take my advice and shift."

In anticipation of this very meeting Mitcham had prepared a speech which ran, in part, as follows:

"Now we're beginning to be even, John Burdette! I have a title to this land, signed and sealed. *You* are trespassing. I give you two minutes to remount and begone. Once you drove me away shamefully, and now it is my turn——"

Instead, because Burdette's eyes were upon him, he mumbled—

"Aw, listen here——"

"Ragtag-bobtail outfit. Whoever heard of such nonsense? Do you think you are going to hold me up—me? With a hundred diseased cows? Get out of here, I tell you!"

Then Rushton, having brushed some dust from his boots, came to the rescue.

"We haven't been introduced," he began. "My name is Rushton. How do you do?"

"Jackanapes!"

"Indeed? I thought it was Burdette?"

Sounds issued from Burdette's throat. He made as if to bring down his mighty fist on the offender, but checked himself just in time. He turned to Mitcham and snorted contemptuously—

"What's this, Mitcham?"

"That's Mr. Rushton, sir: He's——"

"*Mr.* Rushton! Take him away with you, d'you hear? Don't leave him lying about. Confound you! —— you! Wasting my time like this. —— insolence! What's the world coming to? Land I've had thirty years and a stockrider tries to blackmail me to get possession of it! Arrant nonsense! I'll have you arrested and flung in jail. D'you hear? Get out immediately. I'm staying here until I see you move off my property!"

"Then won't you sit down?" urged Rushton, "and have some tea and a smoke. You may have to wait some time——"

"Shut up! I'm dealing with Mitcham—not with curiosities."

"It so happens," Rushton sighed, "that this land belongs to me. At least I have a license to that effect duly endorsed by the governor general. I also have several other documents, but so far I haven't had time to read them through. And these are my cows, and Mitcham is my gallant foreman on a profit-sharing basis, and this is Lund—"

"Who gave you a license to this land—my land?"

"The usual authorities I presume. Who else?"

"Don't believe a word you say. Won't believe it. I'll have the —— thing revoked. And in the meantime take yourself away at once!"

"Vaporings," Rushton said gently. "Vaporings! You have a great reputation, Mr. Burdette, but don't you think you are being rather silly?"

Burdette choked and tore at his collar, his eyes bulged. He stood speechless, apoplectic with rage. No one had called him silly in thirty years and this snipper *dared*——

"Here you—you mustn't talk like that to Mr. Burdette," Gilding broke in threateningly. "Don't you know who you're speaking to?"

Mitcham finding fresh courage burst out:

"Remember me saying you'd be sorry? I've done it! We're 'ere to stay! You'd

like to have this 'ere run, wouldn't you? And you thought you could 'ave it for the asking, but you'll 'ave to buy us out and you'll 'ave to apologize to me before one —— Credion cow comes across that river. This is only a beginning——"

"Buy you out?" sneered Burdette. "I'll *drive* you out!"

"A'right—try!"

"You're both slightly wrong," murmured Rushton. "The land is good, we shall stay, we shall prosper. Ballarat needs meat. We have the bullocks, the grass, the water. I am content. For once, Mr. Burdette, you are an also-ran. If any driving is to be done you are not going to do it because if you should try—you might have a criminal action case on your hands. You want to avoid that. There's the Travers affair——"

"The what affair?"

"Travers. Do you want that brought up against you?"

"This is too much!" stormed Burdette. "I've a good mind——"

"To go back to Credion. Times have changed, let me point out for your benefit, Mr. Burdette. I'm not keeping you, and you might care to have a look at this parchment before you go."

"You dirty blackmailer. You— Who are you anyhow?"

"My name as I said before is Rushton. Here I am and here I shall stay. And I wouldn't sell out to *you*, not for a million pounds."

"Would you give a million?" Mitcham laughed. "What's your best offer?"

"I'll deal with you later," Burdette retorted in a strangled voice. "And as for you," he turned to Rushton, "if it takes every penny I have I'll have you driven out before I'm through."

"Must you be going?" inquired Rushton.

"What 'ave you got on the old man?" queried Mitcham half an hour later, still dazed by the suddenness with which negotiations had been broken off. "Who's this Travers you were speaking about?"

"Just an extra string to our bow, that's all," answered Rushton. "I do not think very highly of your terrible Burdette. He makes a lot of noise, that's about his limit. And he's terrorized the countryside for thirty years! I don't quite understand it."

"Wait till you know 'im."

"I am quite ready to wait."

"That's another thing," Mitcham went on suspiciously. "What's that you said about not selling out. Didn't mean it, did you?"

"Of course I did. We can have this place paying hand over fist in no time. In a few years we can make much more than Burdette could afford to pay, and we'll still have the run. What more could we ask for? Forget your grudge, Mitcham, and settle down. We're going to do some work."

"I don't like it," Mitcham grumbled. " 'Tain't what we come out for. We said we'd put the screws on old John——"

"They're on, don't worry, and the longer we stay the tighter they are going to squeeze."

Mitcham scowled. The idea of staying so close to Burdette did not appeal to him, and now the scheme had been carried through so far he was anxious to rake in his share of the plunder and be on his way to Melbourne where the beer was good and the girls—not so good. Why should he work when there was a chance to make five hundred pounds without the least effort, for old Burdette was sure to buy them out before long. Work could wait.

"Maybe you're right," he said dubiously, "but we 'ad an understanding and we said——"

"Dinner up!" called out Lund. "Dinner-oh! Where are you going to build the shack, boss? On top of the hill there, by them trees?"

MITCHAM rode along the edge of the marshes, going slowly because the day was hot and still, with a promise of thunder in the air. In the distance the sharp, saw-toothed crests of the Stony Rises were black against the cobalt-blue of the sky. No breath of wind stirred the long grass and the cattle in little groups stood motionless in the shade of hickory-coppices scattered across the flats.

Ostensibly Mitcham was boundary riding in search of a russet Devon milch cow, a pedigreed animal by the name of Ripe Autumn, a very valuable animal which had strayed away two days gone by and had not since been seen. Mitcham said so; he was in sole charge of the livestock and his trained eye already knew every one of the cows, calves, bullocks and heifers either by name or by some subtle mark or sign.

On this particular occasion, however, his trained eye had strangely deceived him,

for Ripe Autumn was at that moment chewing a peaceful cud on the shady side of a white gum tree not two hundred yards away. Ripe Autumn was merely an excuse. Mitcham was bored and restless, he wanted to be alone and free to work out for himself certain problems which vexed him sorely. He did not like or approve of Rushton's increasing activity. Rushton was building a house and planning to enclose a fattening-paddock with a pretentious five-rail fence. The house and paddock spelled permanency, and Mitcham could not resign himself to such a fate.

The day after their brush with Burdette they had held a council of war. It was decided that while Lund split slabs for the walls of the house, Rushton should do the carpentering, and Mitcham be left to suppress any migratory tendencies the kine might display.

The sight of Rushton, with gloves on his hands, sawing, hammering and whistling had an unnerving effect upon Mitcham.

"To my way of thinking," he once remarked, "building a shack is just wasting time. We'll 'ave to get out sooner or later so what's the use?"

"The underside of a dray isn't home," drowzily explained Rushton, tired after a long day's work—the corner posts were "in," and the first slabs ready to be nailed—"and besides, we're not moving for some years to come."

"You got a lot to learn about old John. 'E'll get us out if he 'as to corrupt every man in the Survey and if that fails 'e'll chase us away. It's my opinion we'd best strike a bargain and make a nice tidy sum o' money while we can, because——"

But Rushton had fallen asleep.

Lund said in a whisper:

"Hey, you, Mitcham, what's your trouble now? Burdette ain't said a thing about money—and ain't this place good enough for you?"

"Good enough? —— no! Think I want to work 'ere on a tuppenny-ha'penny run after being what *I* been? No chance to go to the city, nobody to talk to, nothing to do——"

"You might help split slabs."

"I'm a stockman. What d'you think I am? Makes me fair sick, this does. We come up 'ere to bleed old John Burdette, instead of which we settles down like —— squatters."

"Why not?"

"For one thing, I don't want to. For another I likes a man to stick to his word. 'E 'asn't."

"Slush," commented Lund. "I know when I'm well off. I'm staying round for a while."

"Oh, so'm I. Might as well now I'm 'ere. But good gosh—all this building and planning and goings on—what's the use? We'll 'ave to get out."

"Nobody's keeping you."

"Drop it," grunted Mitcham. "I'm staying—that's enough, ain't it? But we're too close to old John. There's no telling what 'e'll be up to next."

Old John, for a week or more, made no move, and the house began to take definite shape. It was to have one large living-room and a kitchen combined, one bedroom and a storeroom. Stools, tables, doors and bedframes were all to be made out of the split slabs of white gum—the stand-by of the bush-carpenter. Lund was already talking of further improvements, such as water-tanks and troughs and a vegetable garden. Rushton, too, displayed an unwarranted degree of enthusiasm. He went on hammering and pounding and whistling even though his gloves were worn out and his hands broken and blistered. His clothes, coming in contact with many nails, lost something of their smartness.

So Mitcham in self-defence, invented the disappearance of Ripe Autumn and set off early one morning to locate her. He didn't know or care where he went, but his horse took him at a sleepy pace toward the swamps and then, without guidance, sought the shade of the track leading through the dense scrub. The horse developed an inquisitive turn of mind and went ambling along the path that led across the marshes to the Credion Run. Mitcham was too deep in thought to notice where he was going and he was suddenly startled to come upon Gilding, who, having dismounted and tethered his mare to a tree, was engaged in the task of lighting a stinking pipe.

The marshes were neutral ground. Why be nasty to Gilding? After all Gilding had to obey old John's orders.

"Hello," said Mitcham. "What're you doing 'ere?"

"How do?" said Gilding. "Hot day, isn't it? Why, I'm looking for some strays. Getting on all right up your way, Tad?"

"Oh, fair. I've lost a Devon, seen anything of 'er?"

"Devon, eh? Why, no. By the by, you seem to have some pretty good stuff along with you."

"Yeah, pretty good. So you ain't seen my Devon?"

"Positive. And say, Mr. Burdette——"

"Don't want to 'ear 'is name mentioned," declared Mitcham. "No, sir! The way he treated me——"

"I know. Great shame. He's got a fiery temper, but he's not so bad at that. 'Course you got to humor him—"

"Got to be a —— slave, that's nearer the mark."

"I wouldn't say that—no. But, look here, what are you going to do up yonder?"

"What d'you mean 'do'?"

"Of course old John—well, he needs the land. We're overstocked as it is and then we're expecting a fresh batch——"

"That's fine! I've got 'im just as I said I would."

"Yes—he's sore. You know old John: What he wants he gets."

"He's laying off *us* all right."

"There's no hurry, not sich a great hurry. He's been writing a lot of letters—to Melbourne, you know. He's waiting. Say, get down and be sociable for a while. It certainly is a hot day. Looks like thunder to me."

They sat side by side among the ferns and talked of thunder-storms, cows and the gold strike. They really had a great deal in common. Mitcham found himself liking Gilding, who seemed to be quite human and used words a man could understand. By degrees the conversation veered around to Burdette again, and Gilding said with a laugh:

"Old John's a funny bird. You'd think he'd hate you like poison."

"I'll bet——"

"That's where you go wrong. He likes pluck, and he said to me only yesterday—

" 'Tad's got more grit than I thought he had.'

"Lots of people say they're going to get him, but you're the first one who——"

"And I'm not through with 'im yet," Mitcham declared. "Sending me off between two blackfellows——"

"That certainly was a mistake. He admits it. Why, he's sorry he did that—but, listen, old John's not through with *you* either. As soon as he gets things shaped up a bit at the other end you'll hear from him. He's going to fight——"

"We're ready——"

"Maybe so. I don't know. It'll take a whole lot of money. If he can have you ousted—he's got influence, I don't have to tell you that."

"He'll go to court, eh?"

"He might. There's no telling. But it's like this: He's taken a fancy to you and he said to me in strict confidence, he said——" Gilding left his sentence dangling in mid-air while he relighted his pipe.

"Go on, shoot!" urged Mitcham.

"Maybe I better not. It was confidential."

"What's the odds?"

"Well, I don't suppose it matters much. He said:

" 'Fighting this out at Melbourne'll take time and cost money'—he hates throwing money away on lawyers—'and, by George, Tad Mitcham has got so much nerve that I don't like to do it anyway. But I must have that land if it takes every penny I own.'

"That's what he said."

"Would 'e buy us out, d'you think?"

"If you're quick—yes, he might. In fact, I'm sure he would. Save him trouble. He doesn't want to, but he'd do it just because you've stood up to him——"

"I see," Mitcham paused. "D'you think he'd give—a thousand?"

"More'n that, though I shouldn't tell you. Fifteen hundred is what he has in mind."

"Wheee! Fifteen hundred quid!"

"He wants that land mighty bad now that new batch is on the way. He——"

"——!" Mitcham came down to earth with a thud. "It makes me —— mad! That there Rushton holds the license and he says he *won't* sell."

"Rushton, eh? He wouldn't sell—for fifteen hundred?"

"Says not. He's a —— little fool, if you ask me."

"Balmy! It's his outfit isn't it?"

"Yep."

"Shame—"

"But *fifteen hundred!* Maybe 'e'd listen——"

"And, by the way, it's private talk, but if you do sell out—old John—I think he'd let you have your old job——"

"You don't say!" breathed Mitcham. "Why, 'e's never done that before. Take me back, eh? The old blighter!"

"Good men are few and far between. If you aked him, maybe——"

A long, contemplative pause. Then Mitcham, his eyes averted, remarked casually—

"Well, let's suppose Rushton don't want to sell, and suppose something 'appened to 'im, would——?"

"You think it over," Gilding answered briskly, jumping to his feet. "Say, we've been all of an hour, Tad! Good gosh! I've still got to find those strays."

"Same here—sure you ain't seen a Devon down your way?"

"No. But why not meet me here tomorrow at about the same time? And if you know anything we'll see what old John has to say. We'd like to have you back at Credion, old man."

So they parted with mutual expressions of good-will. The thunder clouds were massing against the horizon as Mitcham, having found his cow, turned his horse's head toward the shack.

AT FIVE O'CLOCK, at the height of the storm, John Burdette sat before the log fire in his study, stretching his toes toward the blaze. Standing on the opposite side of the hearth in a little pool of water that dripped off his trousers and squelched from his shoes Gilding was giving a faithful account of his search for—strays.

"We can count on him," he asserted. "No doubt about it, sir."

"Keep off the rug," said Burdette. "Stand on the hearth stones if you must drip."

"Yes, sir. And I said I'd meet him tomorrow."

"That's right, but remember: Don't implicate yourself. Keep out of it—absolutely. Mitcham is the rottenest kind of creature. He's low, shifty, a coward. Promise him anything you please. Stir him up! If you don't he'll quit because that's exactly what he is—a quitter. I've had too many dealings with that kind of scum."

"Yes, sir. I understand."

"And," John Burdette leaned over to toast the palms of his hands, "that little snip, Rushton, is not to leave the district—alive."

"No, sir."

"No. It's up to you for the present. Go about it in your own way, only I fancy you'll fail."

"Mitcham——"

"Blast Mitcham! And get *off* that rug! Haven't I told you? Stand over there. Now, listen to me, Gilding: Rushton thinks he can blackmail me. Oh, not just an odd fifteen hundred pounds, but big money. You understand. Well, I want him eliminated. That's final. If Mitcham can be made to do it so much the better. If he does I'll see he has enough to get to Western Australia, but I don't think it'll work."

"Mitcham was keen——"

"Go put on some dry clothes, Gilding. The idea of coming in here dripping like a sponge! Get away, and," he grunted, "you've done a fine day's work. I shan't forget it. Report tomorrow night, same time."

"Thank you, sir," gushed Gilding, overcome by the words of praise. "Yes, sir, and thank——"

"Oh, get out!"

WHILE at Credion the storm was no more than a patter of rain against the panes and a gust of wind down the chimneys, on the far bank of the river it changed the placid countryside into a howling, gray hell.

Here the wind drove the breath back into the lungs, eyes were blinded by stinging drops, the mud was ankle-deep. As the day waned and darkness closed in, vivid lightning revealed the damage wrought in a few short hours by the tempest. The house—it had lacked but the thatch on the roof—was gone, wrecked, smashed and obliterated but for one broken corner-post. The wagon had been overturned and had belched its contents in the slime. But wind and rain alone had not caused all the havoc; the cattle, maddened by the thunder and lightning, had stampeded in one plunging mass, and the beginnings of the homestead had stood full in their path. Three bullocks were gored and dying among the wagon-wheels. A little farther away a stock-horse Lund had ridden lay with its belly slashed open and a bullet in its head.

Near the crest of the hill, out of reach of the rising water, the settlers had taken refuge beneath the cracking, groaning branches of a hickory-tree. They were

drenched, torn and filthy. Lund, on his back in the grass, one arm thrown up to shield his face, was fast asleep. He had given all that was in him, to the last ounce, and he had collapsed the very minute he had been able to drag himself back to Rushton's side.

The latter, leaning against the tree-trunk, was talking to Mitcham in a clear sharp voice that carried above the shriek of the wind.

"You saw the storm coming up," he was saying, "yet you made no move to help us. Gilding delayed you! What is Gilding to you? Your place is here."

"I don't 'ave to be told," growled Mitcham. "Gilding said——"

"He made you an offer for the run. Fifteen hundred pounds! And you think I'm going to sell, you think I'm going to creep up to Burdette and accept his —— bribe?"

"It's a fair price. And 'e may change 'is mind if we ain't quick about it. Anyhow the whole show's bust up proper after tonight."

"It seems to please you."

"Since you put it that way—it does! What did we come here for—to grow daisies? We came to bleed Burdette, and 'e's crying for mercy already. But we can't fight 'im, 'e's got too much power, 'e can do things to us. 'E just wants us to move on quick, see?

"And what's more he knows 'e's up against me and that makes 'im go easy-like, because 'e wants me to tie up with 'im again——"

Rushton laughed.

"So this is the climax of your fine fury! Because Burdette sends his foreman to offer you one thousand five hundred pounds and a chance to work for him again you are ready to crawl at his feet."

"I'm not and don't you try——"

"To crawl at the feet of the man who haunted you through the streets of Melbourne, the man who insulted and struck you! Mitcham, you have the pride of an underfed guinea-pig."

"If you say——"

"And you think you can make me sell for fifteen hundred pounds? How simple you are! How cheap! Yes—cheap, and don't clench your fists like that or you'll frighten me. This outfit cost about five hundred. On a fifty-fifty basis we should have a thousand pounds to share."

"What more d'you expect for a couple of months' work?"

"Much more. But I won't sell. We're going to make a success of this run instead of trying to blackmail Burdette."

"Yeah, and a sweet chance you've got. Cattle all gone to ——. Stores and fixtures busted up! What can you do? Old John ain't going to leave us alone much longer. Either we meet 'im awf way or 'e'll turn us out. And I want my share—it'll do me."

"Then work for it," Rushton countered. "Why didn't you hustle back instead of flirting with Gilding? Lund and I couldn't hold the cattle; with you to help we could have turned 'em—if you had the guts."

"I've taken enough of your lip," Mitcham shouted. "You shut up for a while and do some thinking. I'm taking no orders from you—I'm giving orders from now on. Get that? We're closing with that offer tomorrow or I'll stretch you out."

"Very well," said Rushton, "since you like Burdette so very much go to him. The quicker the better. Work for him and try to knife him as you tried to knife me. So far as I am concerned we're through."

"We are, are we? ——! Why did I ever let you in on this? I might 'ave known. Don't you talk about old John. 'E's a man, 'e is, not a —— little runt like you. What if 'e is 'ot 'eaded? Ain't 'e said 'e was sorry 'e done me wrong, and ain't 'e trying to do the 'andsome thing letting bygones be bygones and offering fifteen hundred pounds when 'e might 'ave us chucked out for the awsking? 'E's square, old John is!"

Half-seen through the dusk and the rain Rushton taunted him:

"A fine frenzy, my dear Mitcham! Splendid! You do it to perfection. Don't allow yourself to relax! In a minute or so you are sure to reach the homicidal stage and precipitate yourself upon me——"

With a roar Mitcham lunged forward, both arms flaying the air. He was indeed crazy-mad to hurt, to mangle, to kill. The long-repressed bitterness of many days boiled over and made him forget all caution. He went stumbling through the mud and the slippery grass in pursuit of Rushton, who dodged away and stayed just out of reach.

As the seconds passed and his prey still escaped him, Mitcham's fury redoubled. He felt huge and strong and unconquerable, the blood raced through his veins, yet he

could not reach Rushton, could not land the one smashing blow that would put an end to the conflict, for afterwards—after the blow had landed—he was going to take Rushton's head between his hands and beat it to pulp. Beat it to pulp.

It was a confused, awkward pursuit; a fumble through the darkness after a shadowy figure, a sudden rush, a lunge—and empty air, and a laugh that came from behind him.

Soon he was panting, his lungs cracked, his mouth hung open. For an instant he stood still, his arms loose at his sides.

Then Rushton pounced as swift and as sure as a cat. Crash! Mitcham's head rocked back on his shoulders, driven back by a trip-hammer blow beneath the chin. Before he could recover he was butted in the chest, struck again and again. He covered up. He was tripped. Down he went, torn down, full length in the mud. As he struggled to his knees Rushton leaped upon his back and hanging there bore him to earth again.

There were no rules to that struggle. It was fought in the dark, to the rumble of receding thunder, in a wind-driven downpour of rain. It was merciless, silent, savage. By the glare of the lightning they saw each other's eyes and what they read there set them at each other's throat with renewed ferocity.

When his brain cleared after the first shock Mitcham shook off his assailant with one sweep of the arm, but he could not follow up his advantage, he was slow on his feet. Most of his blows fell short. Those that did strike home made him grunt with pleasure as he felt Rushton give to the impact. They were torn, bloodied and battered, still they maintained the same hurricane pace.

Rushton's mouth was an open wound, his right cheek-bone lay bare, his whole face was wet with blood, but he was not giving ground. Strangely enough it was Mitcham who broke away, a step at a time, wincing at every glancing blow, for he was no longer quite so sure of himself and astonished that Rushton should still be facing him and fighting him. He was hurt, too, and he did not like pain. His scalp was torn open. It throbbed. He could feel a warm trickle down his back inside the clinging wet shirt. He was dizzy, faint, yet he had to keep his leaden arms up in front of him and parry the rapier-like blows that shot through to his face, his neck, his heart.

Rushton was a will o' the wisp, a wasp with a hundred stings. His blows found the open cuts where his fists seemed to twist as they landed, making the gashes each time a little deeper, a little bigger.

At last, crazed and blind with fear—fear of defeat, fear of death, fear of more punishment—Mitcham with a scream gathered together the tatters of his strength, bunched himself for one last effort—and Lund, stealing up from behind, dealt him one crack on the top of the head with the handle of a stock whip. The scream became a gurgle as Mitcham slithered down and out.

When Rushton found his breath he gasped:

"What made you butt in, Lund? I was just polishing him off nicely. You've spoiled everything. When he comes to he'll think he's still the strong man from Borneo."

"That's gratitude for you!" exclaimed Lund. "Here I wake up out of a sound sleep and run about hunting for where the noise is coming from, and bust Mitcham over the knob just in time to save you from ex-tinction, and you ask why I butt in! You ask——"

"My mistake," said Rushton. "You are hereby appointed foreman of the Stony Rises Run for conspicuous valor, but I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to finish him off all by myself. If we can find a couple of cows we'll start—" the words were thick on his tongue and his knees sagged—"we'll start a new herd, a new——"

He fell forward all of one piece on top of Mitcham.

Lund said:

"Foreman, eh? I'm doing good, if it lasts!"

Then he dragged Rushton by the shoulders, heels trailing along the ground, to the shelter of the tree and left him there while he made fast Mitcham's wrists and ankles with a leather belt and a scrap of rope.

When dawn crept into the sky the storm had blown itself out. The country lay green and fresh and glistening in the light of the rising sun. But the wrecked house and the corpses by the overturned wagon were a blot on the landscape. So, too, was Rushton's face as he limped painfully down the slope toward Mitcham. He was, literally, battered beyond recognition.

He sat down beside Mitcham and inquired—

"Are you fit to travel, ex-foreman?"

"——!" said Mitcham, "I'd 'ave rived the guts out'n you if it 'adn't been for Lund."

"You are fit to travel," Rushton went on. "And please don't laugh because I'm a bit dilapidated. You should see yourself! You're a filthy mess, ex-foreman! I'm going to turn you over to your friend Burdette, and you can tell him from me that I'm staying right here with my two cows and Lund and the wagon and what's left of the frying-pan."

"When I get loose——"

"We're going to take you down to meet Gilding and you can kiss him on both cheeks. We'll each have a gun—if we can find a couple—and if you say so much as 'Merry Christmas' we'll both fire simultaneously. You don't want to run any unnecessary risks because I'm in a highly nervous condition and Lund's mad because you spoiled his night's sleep and kept him from catching cold. You better have some hot tea before we start."

"You're marked," growled Mitcham, "and by ——, next time I'll finish the job."

Rushton tapped him on the shoulder.

"Next time," he said, "I'll not only help you finish the job, I'll help nail the coffin and you'll be inside."

His words were so very unexpected that Mitcham found no ready answer. In fact the more he pondered over the remark the more ominous it seemed to be. He did not like it at all; moreover, the back of his head was very painful, so he lapsed into gloomy silence, which persisted until he was handed over to the astonished Gilding, who, when confronted by the mute summons of two wide-mouthed Colts, led him quickly away, meanwhile muttering beneath his breath:

"What will Mr. Burdette have to say? What *will* he have to say?"

Before he was through Burdette was destined to say and to do many extraordinary things.

"FIRST thing to be done," said Rushton, ten seconds after Mitcham had passed out of sight down the track, "is to round up what's left of our beasties. The rest can wait."

They explored the run from end to end and found stray bullocks scattered over forty miles of country. Some were found at the foot of the Stony Rises, others wallowing in the mud-holes by the river, yet others in the heath and the scrub, and a few strayed across the marshes on to the Wallen estate. Two hundred and ten were gradually brought together again at the price of unending, grueling toil. Alone, Lund might have given way in despair but Rushton spurred him on. A new Rushton with little to say for himself, even when his neighbor, Wallen, fearing Burdette, apologized for having to refuse the loan of two handymen to help rebuild the house and retrieve the stores that still lay on the ground. Rushton spilled Wallen's whisky on the floor and left without a word.

They salvaged some flour, bacon, salt, tea and ammunition, and these they packed in a tin-lined box, which they hid in a thicket down by the river.

"Safer," Rushton explained. "Can't tell what may happen while we're away."

He was right, for some days later while they were scouring the high grass at the foot of the Stony Rises some one from across the Shaw River made a dash for the overturned dray and set it alight. Not only was the wagon and its contents burned, but the ruins of the house were thrown upon the blaze. Not only was the whole camp reduced to ashes, but eight of the best cows were hamstrung.

"What do we do?" asked Lund. "Quit?"

"We do not," said Rushton. "We'll buy fresh stores first chance we have. For the present we'll change camps every night and keep both eyes open all day."

Lund shook his head.

"We can't fight Burdette," he said mournfully. "They've got us cold. We might as well chuck it: It's such filthy tricks they're up to!"

"Filthy is right. Would you like to pull out now—honestly?"

"Well, if you're going to stick it I suppose I'm game. Don't know as it's much use——"

"Never mind that now. The thing to do would be to get in touch with the mounted police, but we can't—we're cut off. I can't spare you. The nearest telegraph station is Yorke, seventy miles, almost three days there and back! No good to us. We've got to nurse what's left of the herd——"

Hot, dusty, high-tension days. They lived like pariahs, always sharply glancing

over their shoulders at the slightest rustle, the least sound. The hovering flight of an eagle-hawk, the harsh screams of parakeets fluttering out of some coppice, the leaping rush of a startled kangaroo brought them up rigid and taut with their hands on the butts of their guns. At night, while they slept drugged with fatigue in some sheltered spot, the slayers crept back. They awoke with the sound of shots or the angry bellow of maimed beasts ringing in their ears.

And each time Rushton said:

"Wait! Let 'em go."

"He's losing his nerve," Lund decided, for he was eager to be off in pursuit. "He's afraid to tackle them."

But at last came a day when the run had been explored from corner to corner, crossed and recrossed, and for a day they lay idly in the sunshine on the crest of a hill, and Rushton flat on his back in the grass, his hands locked beneath his head, dispelled the doubts in Lund's mind.

"Surprize," he explained, "that's what counts. It's no use running after them, we must run into them. From behind if possible. Lately we've been too dog-tired to do much scouting after dark. I know I couldn't. We've both done the best we could, even if I do say so."

Lund made deprecatory sounds in his throat.

"Yes, sir," Rushton went on. "I take off what is left of my hat to the two of us. But I'm wandering. Now, we want to explain a thing or two to our friends over yonder, particularly to Mitcham, who, I presume, is doing most of the dirty work. He's a lad is Mitcham, a lad of the village, and he must be rating himself rather high these days, so we shan't have much trouble cornering him. He probably thinks he's been too clever to be caught, and the chances are he imagines we're afraid to tackle him——"

"No wonder! Four nights running he-——"

"But tonight, my dear Lund, we shall waylay him. We are going to settle what is called his hash. Are you feeling murderous?"

"If I get close enough to him——"

"That's the proper sympathetic spirit. The plan is simplicity itself——"

At twilight they left the hilltop and on foot, keeping well under cover, went swiftly toward the break in the scrub where the track across the marshes opened out upon the plain.

Here they settled down to wait. An hour went by and another. Lund was fidgety. He talked in whispers, keeping close to his companion for he dreaded the task ahead though he would not admit it even to himself. He was used to fights, bitter and brutal, waged with steel-capped boots and fists and tooth and nail. But to kill in cold blood from ambush! He found himself trembling so violently that his teeth rattled.

All about them in the darkness things crept and crawled with soft little sounds, and from the marshes came the bullfrogs' chorus—

"Clunk-clunk! Clunk-clunk!"

It went on and on, exasperatingly monotonous and regular compared with the disordered beating of his heart. And there were water snakes and great marsh worms, slimy and blind and five feet long.

His confidence in Rushton vanished as the minutes went by. Rushton was a puzzle: A good cattleman, reliable, steady—but queer, different from the ordinary run of men. To Lund's way of thinking he was too self-possessed and master of himself. You couldn't tell what was going on inside his mind. There he kneeled, motionless, his head bent a little to one side, listening. On his knee rested his revolver, its polished barrel faintly luminous in the starlight. And it was as steady as a rock. Lund came to hate that very steadiness. Try as he might he could not copy it.

"Think they're coming?" he whispered. "It's getting late——"

"Hardly twelve," answered Rushton, and as if he could read Lund's thoughts he added: "Stick it out. It won't last long now."

"It's this waiting. Killing a man when he hasn't a chance—I don't like it."

"I know," agreed Rushton. "I feel the same way about it. If it can be managed I'm going to take 'em alive and trot them down to Yorke. But if they won't surrender then let 'em have all you've got and don't shoot wild."

"Are you——"

"Shut up!"

A barely perceptible sound had reached Rushton's ear. Seconds passed and it grew louder, more distinct, changed to the thud of horses' hoofs pounding the soft turf. Then came voices and a muffled laugh.

"Mitcham," breathed Lund, no longer trembling. "That's him! I'm going——"

"What, wait!" pleaded Rushton. "Wait until they're clear of the bush and you can see them. Whatever you do don't shoot yet."

"Hobble 'em 'ere?" came Mitcham's voice.

"It'll do."

That was Gilding speaking.

"I wonder how many more nights' sleep I've got to lose? I've had enough of this slaughterman's job. I wish you could get at this Rushton of yours."

"'E's balmy, if you awsk me," said Mitcham, "but 'e's cunning. Can't get no nearer to 'im by day than you can to a —— yarri, and at night he loses 'imself somewhere. I can't make out what's keeping 'im 'ere."

"You poke around a bit and see if you can unearth him," grumbled Gilding. "He must be near that box of stuff he stowed away. I'll do some more dirty work. Old John's going to bust a couple of blood-vessels if this goes on much longer. Besides it's risky. Where's that —— hobble of mine anyhow?"

"Aw, what the ——?"

Rushton had stepped out behind them blocking their retreat down the track.

"Stick 'em up quick!" he ordered. "And keep 'em up."

There followed a pause, then came an oath, a scurry of feet, red flames spouted in the darkness, detonations echoed and re-echoed beneath the low vault of the scrub. They fired at point blank range. A horse reared up, its forefeet beating the air. Above the crash of the guns arose a scream, high-pitched and shrill, the scream of a man in torture. Somebody fell heavily. A figure leaped upon the back of a bucking horse.

"Get him!"

But the horse bolted, thundering down the track. The man on the ground coughed and coughed, gurgled and coughed again and died. The man was Gilding.

By the light of a match they looked at his face, and quickly blew out the match. One glance at the smashed face wiped from their minds all feeling of exultation.

The last throbbing echo of the battle died away and again came the bullfrogs' chorus—unhurried, unchanging, everlasting—

"*Clunk-clunk! Clunk-clunk!*"

It rang in the ears like a dirge.

"They asked for it," exclaimed Lund, angrily defending his action. "If they hadn't tried to fight back——"

"But they did," Rushton snapped. "Let's get away from here. I want to lie down somewhere where I shan't have to listen to those —— frogs!"

Later, as they hurried through the mist, Lund grumbled:

"I wish it had been Mitcham——"

"Amen!" said Rushton. "That's not such a bad epitaph. And now we might as well begin worrying about the next move Burdette will make. I don't think he's going to be particularly pleased when he hears the glad tidings."

IT WAS all very well to talk of dispossessing Rushton but the simple truth about the matter was that it could not be done. With his one helper and his handful of badgered, bellowing cows he held on to fifteen thousand acres of first-class land like a limpet. He could not be frightened off, he could not be driven off, nor could he be legally ousted. Water reserves, traveling reserves, mineral rights, squatter's rights—he had covered himself at every possible turn. And John Burdette when he read his attorneys' report, the report of his friend in the survey department, the report of his friend on the government staff, all these, went very red in the face and tore off his collar which was choking him.

John Burdette was stumped, perplexed, apoplectic—and more firmly convinced than ever that by hook or by crook he would eventually come into possession of the Stony Rises Run.

But everything he tried failed. Gilding died. The death had to be hushed up and lied about. Every man working for him was suspicious. None of them could be trusted. Oh, they were sober and quiet and industrious, but not one of them was loyal. They hated him and he knew it. They would bleed him if they ever found out. Then there was Mitcham to be silenced and paid for his silence, paid and paid and paid. Ten pounds here and ten pounds there. Mitcham, the grinning ape, getting even at last!

The mob of store cattle, two thousand strong, came up the day after Gilding's death. They had to be taken care of. Instead of being bundled straight across the Shaw on to virgin soil they had to be left to eat their heads off in the lucerne and rye grass.

And, of course, the story was "out," all over the country. Burdette had to admit partial defeat to the foreman who brought up the mob. His bluff was called at last. It meant the beginning of the end—others would follow in Rushton's footsteps. There was all that good plow-land at the southern end of the estate. Free-selectors would be sure to encroach upon it again. If he wanted to keep it he would have to buy outright at survey prices. More expenses!

Burdette hadn't met with stiff opposition, hadn't had to fight to a finish for fully fifteen years. Since then his name, his money, his bluff had carried him through. People were scared. And now that he was up against a fighter he was at a loss for a plan. He tried everything he could think of offhand—cutting down the cows, destroying the stores. Pin-pricks. That kind of thing led nowhere except toward more complications. In former times he would have gone out after the offenders, now he had to rely upon blundering fools like Gilding and Mitcham.

If only Mitcham had been killed, too! That would have simplified matters. Instead—there he was with a knowing leer on his face, privileged to ask for money, privileged to loaf about the place as if he owned it. It made Burdette's blood boil, which was bad for him because his arteries were not what they had been once upon a time.

So things dragged on and across the river Rushton had built himself a hovel of strip bark and started to erect a rickety fence to enclose a paddock. Time and again Burdette rode as far as the marshes with the intention of making peace and buying back the land which by right belonged to him. At the ford, however, he always halted and turned back. He couldn't face it. It stuck in his throat to have to surrender to the beggar across the way.

And Mitcham made matters worse by constantly repeating:

"You give me a free 'and and one thousand pounds, Mr. Burdette, and I'll 'ave 'em out of there in a week."

"How?" inquired Burdette, on the first occasion.

"I'll fetch a couple of lads I know back in Melbourne, and they'll——"

"I want no more blackmailers around here!" snarled Burdette.

"Aw, say——"

"I'll deal with this myself. Get out!"

"Well—all right, but I could do with a new saddle, and I been thinking——"

Burdette paid for the new saddle. Had he been twenty years younger it is doubtful whether Mitcham would have left the office alive, but he was growing cautious, he thought of all the risks—and he stayed his hand.

The strain and the worry, the sense of frustration told against him. His nights were sleepless, his thoughts barren. Though his nearest neighbor was sixty miles away he felt hemmed in and under constant observation. He was afraid to act.

Then came the Reverend Mortimer Jukes from the Towanda reservation seeking rest and relaxation. Old John didn't wear his troubles written on his forehead, he listened to the missionary and endured him for two days. Jukes had a long nose, a tremulous upper lip and a "here-endeth-the-first-lesson" voice. He, too, was burdened with cares. He needed a school building and "noobody" would hear his plaint. He thought, he explained, dear Mr. Burdette would help him reach the ear of the influential ones.

For two days he drank—he sipped Burdette's port and talked of his own fruitless efforts to alter the beliefs of his sullen charges.

"Outwardly they are *converted*," he complained, "they understand the ritual and they *sing* so well in a *minor* key, but spiritually they are *un*touched. I mean to say, the elders. I want to reach out for their minds and *mould* them, as it were. But environment is everything. I need a fresh, airy building——"

For two days!

When he was not intoning he was exploring, preceded by his long nose, and he was *so* sorry to hear poor Gilding had died *so* tragically—mysteriously, one might almost say. Poor, poor Gilding! Such a charming man. Drowned in the swamps! Ha-ow tragic!

Yes, agreed Burdette, his neck crimson and swollen, it was —— tragic. But poor, dear Gilding had probably had too much to drink—that was the story Mitcham had brought back. Yes, Mitcham had found Gilding's horse and an empty bottle in the saddle-bag.

"Aie see," murmured Jukes.

But he didn't see at all, nor did his little heart-to-heart talk with Mitcham enlighten him. He wasn't quite sure whether he

ought to believe everything Mitcham said. Still, if Burdette approved of such uncouth creatures——

The port was good, so he stayed two full days, and at dinner the last night retold in detail all his troubles and difficulties with the aborigines of the Towanda reservation.

"They are *so* unreasonable," he protested. "Not content with their pleasant surroundings at Towanda they want to be *free* to roam all over Australia, as one might almost say. Ha! Ha! The old people show so little tact! They excite the young men with fantastic tales of kangaroo-chases and wars and what-not. It's very trying, but the work does *pro*gress, I am glad to say.

"There is an element of unrest—a something—a feeling—I don't know—sometimes I wonder—

" 'Do I need help from outside to curb their more elementary passions?'

"But *always* I tell myself:

" 'Noo, I do not need help. I shall *reason* with them!'

"Nevertheless, outbreaks have occurred, not at Towanda to be sure, but——"

And as he listened, an idea crept into Burdette's brain. It made him quickly lower his eyes that Jukes might not read his thoughts. It solved everything, brought success within measurable distance, if——

With a quick shrug and a grunt he dismissed the idea. It was contemptible, vile, debasing.

"Here, Jukes, more port!"

"Noo, thanks, Aie have had quaite enough. Thank you so much all the same. As I was saying: I have to be very firm at tames. They are *so* strange! One thinks one has them well in hand and then a trifle upsets them. Puts one back yeahs. If they were not so credulous!"

Back crept the idea into John Burdette's mind, creeping and writhing there like some unclean thing. He fought it: It grew, slavering, it poisoned him, tainted him—and then it ceased to be loathsome. It whispered excuses, made itself desirable. Burdette's doubts vanished. He looked Jukes full in the eyes again.

"Come on, old man, just one more. You won't get port like this when you go back to Towanda."

"No, quite true. Well, just one small gl——"

"Help yourself. Now, about this school of yours—how much do you need?"

Jukes left the next day with a bilious headache and a check for fifty pounds.

"God," as he told Burdette from the top of his cob, "loveth a cheerful giver."

"Thank you for enlisting my services," answered Burdette, "I'll take the matter up with Melbourne and in the mean time I'll send you enough material in a day or so to make a rough start."

Then he called in Mitcham. They were closeted together in the study for over two hours. The owner of Credion was still in a generous mood, for Mitcham left the room with one hundred pounds in crisp notes tucked in his money belt. He swaggered out of the house buoyed up by the knowledge that if certain events took place he was to receive an additional four hundred jolly old quidlets. Burdette, apparently, was throwing money about in a most extraordinary fashion.

Before nightfall the rumor spread that Mitcham was leaving Credion. Leaning against the cook-house door, his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest, he substantiated the rumor.

"Where going, Tad?" inquired the cook.

"Oh, I need a change. I'll wander down to the Big Smoke and go on to Sydney for a spell. Don't fancy being foreman here——"

"Who're you kidding?"

"Not *hany*body! I 'ad the offer, but no. Me and old John, well—you know 'im and 'is ways. We're parting friendly and he's sorry to lose me."

"You don't say!"

"Yes, sir, I do. We buried the 'atchet. Why, seeing as 'ow all 'ands is tied up with the new draft of pig-meaters needing branding, the old man asked me to take a load of stuff across to the mission at Towanda on my way out. Now, would he ask me that if all wasn't rosy between us? 'Course not."

"What kind of stuff are you taking?"

"Oh, bit of corrugated iron, cement, match boarding."

"Gonna bring back the cart?"

"No. Jukes is to keep it as a present."

"The old man's daft about Jukes and his blackboys!"

"Seems that way. He'd make a fair sinchaser 'imself if 'e weren't so gone on cows. Good lad, old John!"

So Mitcham trundled off forty-eight hours later with a cart-load of building materials and his own horse hitched to the tail-board. No anxious thoughts caused

his brows to furrow. He was very pleased with life and on the way to Towanda spent the lazy hours mapping out the most agreeable ways in which an upstanding stockman might rid himself of several hundred pounds in the city of Sydney. He dreamed of large cold mugs of beer, double whiskies and gin and gingers, shared with convivial souls of both sexes, but mostly of the latter. And further to whet his appetite for pleasure was the fact that he had done old Burdette in the eye as Burdette had never been done before, and that before very long he was going to teach Rushton, the little shrimp, a lesson in manners and deportment as taught in the backblocks by strong, tough men. In fact, everything pointed to Rushton's sudden demise long before the end of the lesson.

THE Rev. Jukes was awfully glad to see Mitcham and invited him to stay at Towanda for a few days. Mitcham tarried. He said he would help a bit with the building. He said them were Mr. Burdette's orders. In the end he took complete charge of the work, for Jukes was busy writing an account of the Yarrakurra birthright ceremonies and their relation to matrilineal descent, which he was anxious to submit to his Alma Mater on the off chance that he might collect an honorary Ph. D. and a more prominent post.

Occasionally he trotted out to see how the work was progressing and invariably, because he was really grateful, he thanked Mitcham for his kind assistance. Mitcham declared it was a "fair treat" to be in such pleasant surroundings.

The mission house stood in a glen among high trees, close to a clear little brook, and there were flowers in the window-boxes, and the branches overhead were full of birds. Beyond the brook, across a mile-wide valley, arose heavily-timbered hills. Downstream was the native village, ten minutes' walk from the house. It was a pleasant place: Two rows of huts, white-washed, clean, neat—like soldiers on parade. Fat brown babies played in the dust falling over and under chickens, dogs and razor-back pigs. The remainder of the population killed time in various ways—smoking, gossiping, chasing an odd kangaroo or hurling sticks at the birds in the trees, or if everything else failed they sometimes worked a little at their gardens. The women, draped in verminous woolly gowns, were without grace, the men wore singlets and drawers. The entire population, with the possible exception of the very young, was sulky, sullen and depressed. Their eyes were haunted, they went round-shouldered as if confined in some invisible cage, and they dragged along from day to day hoping for nothing better than free rations and a speedy death. Migratory people with Stone Age minds do not take kindly to modern ways. They "convert" readily and die with the same ease.

Mitcham was given the whole village to draw upon for his labor. He chose them young and fierce, the fiercer the better. The first day they worked spasmodically and resentfully, the building trade bored them—but the following morning they flocked to the site, men and women clamored for the right to saw, chop and hammer and dig.

"How splen*did*," exclaimed Jukes. "You must let me know your secret."

"Oh, I can 'andle blackboys," grinned Mitcham. "It's easy when you know 'ow."

His secret was simple. Beneath the lumber and the iron sheets in the cart lay four cases of very bad gin. Gin was tabu at Towanda, so that he was much beloved. Moreover, he gave it free.

At the end of a week when of an evening he wandered alone down to the village he was greeted with many flattering remarks, and the words of wisdom that came so readily to his lips were listened to with attention.

Jukes, who was finishing the last chapter but one of his thesis, the subject of which was gerontocracy, gave Mitcham a free hand, for he was fully convinced that his first opinion of Mitcham had been false. The man had a stimulating influence upon the aborigines—he made them want to *work*.

So Mitcham spent many an evening in the village and he talked eloquently to the simple, drunken folk gathered about him. Much that he said escaped them but some of his utterances struck home and kindled an incredulous, doubtful light in many a sleepy eye. The light grew bright and blood-red with hate as he went over his story again and again and they began to understand.

Their place, he told them, was not here in this narrow valley where the air lay so heavy and the trees shut out the sun. They should be living in their real home, up in the honeycombed lava-flows where to the north lay open, limitless scrub and desert

and to the south fat green lands where game was abundant.

Why had they been transplanted? Why? Because of one man, a small evil man, who had come to live upon the fat green lands and brought with him many cows. Good eating! This man had caused them to be decimated and driven away so that he alone might have the land. But it did not belong to him; it was the sole property of the mighty hunters gathered together in the Towanda village. If they went back no one would stop them for the small evil white man no longer had a friend among his own kind. And if this thief were to die —no one would come to claim his corpse.

Wait, though—it was just possible that this man had one friend.

Who? The missionary! He might try to hold them back. He would certainly lie to them—was he not their jailer? Did he not report insubordinates and have them taken away by the men in blue to the great gray house to the south where the sun never penetrated?

It took ten days and three cases of gin to work the people into a state bordering upon mass hysteria. They went about their labors because Mitcham told them to do so, but their frenzy became all the more terrible from being contained.

They worshiped Mitcham, who had brought them the word. Because they were superstitious folk with many deities and spirits in the streams, the trees, the clouds, they endowed their liberator with divine attributes. Unbeknown to himself he became a living god endowed with magical properties. They placed him on a footing of equality with the witchetee grub and, in secret, worshipped him. One old woman, excited beyond measure by the growing tension, and seeking to overcome the neglect her years enforced upon her, had a vision and heard voices in her sleep. Her message from the outer world of ghosts and spirits caused a fresh sensation. She declared that Mitcham was beyond doubt immortal, and that all the wounds he had received in battle since the beginning of time healed instantly, leaving no scars. Moreover, stammered the old woman, she had seen Mitcham bring a dead warrior to life again by the simple expedient of placing between the corpse's teeth a tiny sliver of his own flesh. Thereafter Mitcham became more popular than ever.

The pent-up longing for the old life at last burst all bonds, snapped without warning, without any definite final cause and sent the whole people streaming up the valley headed for the open, for the uncharted places where life was not all free rations and well-aligned hutments.

Jukes was at breakfast with Mitcham when the vanguard came roaring up the trail.

He said:

"Dear me! What does this mean?"

And went out-of-doors at a trot to stay the uprising with his two empty hands.

The mob frenzy caught hold of the house servants and sent them flying to join the marchers. Mitcham stood on the veranda steps and wondered whether he ought to wait for the end or bolt before things got too hot. He decided to wait because his orders were emphatic: If any slip-up occurred he would lose four hundred pounds, not to mention his life, which might well come to a close at the end of a tight-drawn rope. So he stayed.

Jukes died quite gamely. He faced the mob standing firmly in the middle of the path as a child standing on a sand castle might face an incoming tide. For a second he stood there, arms outstretched, bare head thrown back, shouting at the tossing sea of black twisted faces and upraised arms. A loud, angry bellow answered him. The mob closed in. Out of its midst came one agonized, freezing scream. The mob passed on.

Mitcham went quickly through the house toward the stables. His horse, ready-saddled, awaited him. As he slipped the bit into place he heard running feet coming up behind him and loud, imploring cries. He fumbled with the bit. The blackfellows poured through the house. They were calling to him. He cursed and as he did so his whole body suddenly ran with sweat. Without bothering to fasten the curb chain he backed the horse out of the stable and flung himself upon its back—seconds too late. The crowd was upon him, cheering him, fawning upon him. Though he struggled they did not harm him, for he was their living god, the giver of life, come to them out of the unknown to protect them. He now belonged to them. When he choked and ceased to resist he was dragged along and hurried out of the valley on the road to the Stony Rises.

RUSHTON, looking more like a second-hand scarecrow than a human being, crawled one February morning from the smoky depths of a small bark hut in answer to Lund's urgent summons. It was dawn. In the hollows and over the swamps hung a fleecy blanket of mist, the grass, the bushes were studded with dewdrops, above the thick black mass of the gum-forest a thin band of gold heralded the coming sun, and all earth lay steeped in silence, for the birds, deserting their nests, hovered high in the air where they had leaped in their thousands to greet the birth of the day.

Barefooted in the cool moist grass Lund stood motionless, staring off toward the northern horizon where the gaunt outlines of the Stony Rises were still black against the graying sky. Out of the tumbled mass arose a dozen unwavering columns of smoke going up and up until they suddenly eddied at the touch of a breeze in the upper air, then dissolved and vanished as if smudged out by some invisible finger.

"Blackfellows," said Lund, jerking his thumb toward the pillars of smoke. "I wonder——"

Rushton hitched up about his middle the remains of a pair of whipcord breeches that had once been white. His face behind an eight weeks' growth of reddish-brown whiskers became gloomy.

"Do you think—?" he began and stopped.

"I ain't thinking much," answered Lund, "but if you're thinking of going to Portland today you might as well forget it. Blackfellows mean one thing and that's trouble, especially the kind that's most likely to be up there now. Maybe they've just come in from the desert, Aruntas or some such tribe, or maybe they're just a roving band being chevied by the Mounted from here to —— knows where. That kind ain't good to rub up against."

"For eight weeks," sighed Rushton, "I've been promising myself some clothes and a shave and a hot bath. But you're right I suppose."

"I *know* I am!"

"——!" Rushton remarked placidly. "And we do need a few more cows and lots of supplies, not to mention a couple of extra hands about the place. Lund, we are sick and tired of living in a bark hut. It makes a good kennel but I am not a dog. No sooner do we dispose of Mitcham and Burdette than we are confronted by hordes of aborigines; but perhaps they are friendly people."

"My uncle Alec got friendly with some of 'em up Lake Yurra way," grunted Lund. "First he has about six working for him, then about twenty, then the whole blessed tribe turned up. When he tried to turn 'em out of his backyard they up and stuck him full of spears. He had one —— of a time. He's all right now, but he's not so partial to blackfellows as he used to be. See what I mean?"

"Clearly, only too clearly!" Rushton hunted all through his rags and tatters for a non-existent cigaret. "I'll have to postpone my trip to the city—or I might send you?"

"Not either. And leave you alone here to get killed? Naw. Ain't tired of life are you? Burdette's been laying low since we bagged Gilding but he ain't through with us yet, not by a long shot."

"Then the whole thing is off," agreed Rushton. "I shall go without a shave for a few more months. But we must get a few more bullocks or those we have are going to feel lonely."

"And they'll be lonelier than ever with those people about. They'll think nothing of carting away the whole lot unless we stop 'em before they really get started."

"After breakfast we'll ride over and talk to 'em. Perhaps they are only transients."

"Transients, eh?" grunted Lund. "Got any matches?"

They brewed tea dust in a leaky billycan and ate the remains of a cindery Johnny-cake. Their rations were almost exhausted. True, there was an abundance of game, but they were down to almost their last ounce of flour, a pinch of salt and less tea. Days ahead they had planned that Rushton should ride down to Portland to procure a new outfit and, if time permitted, to have the gap in his mouth stopped up. Handicapped by the loss of tools, short-handed, always under the shadow of impending danger, they had been forced to toil ceaselessly week after week, trying to keep up with the hundred things that had to be done at once. The cattle required unceasing vigilance for they were panicky and always restless, always attempting to force their way back along the road they had first traveled.

And now the smoke rising from the scarred ribs of the Stony Rises warned of a fresh menace.

Their meal was soon over and having caught their horses they set out across the open plain, moving swiftly to avoid traveling in the heat of the day. They passed small groups of grazing cattle and a kangaroo rearing up above the tussock grass went bounding away toward the shelter of a dense clump of bushes. Their way led past the thicket and at their approach a pair of eagles arose almost from under their horses' hoofs. Abruptly they drew rein and Rushton whistled mournfully, for at their feet lay the remains of three beasts that had been hacked to pieces and the flesh carried away.

"Told you," growled Lund. "They're hunting trouble. Better go easy."

"We'll go easy later on," said Rushton. "Cows cost money. We'll take it out of their hides. Come along!"

The trail was fresh, undisguised. They followed it at a gallop, and a mile farther on they caught sight of the marauders, fifty or more, who, strangely enough, stood firm when Rushton hailed them.

Short, squat, immensely broad-shouldered men, they stood in a sullen, lowering group and faced their pursuers without a trace of fear. Brutal black faces harking back to a time when man was not the Lord of Creation, but a creature low down in the scale of things. Their almost animal appearance was heightened by the raised scars and welts that ornamented their bodies, and their teeth, which were filed down to sharp points as a proof that they had reached full manhood. Matted, filthy hair covered their heads and cheeks. The blood of the beasts they had killed had stained the clothing they wore and on their shoulders they carried dripping red mounds of flesh.

Waist deep in the grass they turned upon the white men and one of their number carrying a short stabbing-spear stepped out to meet the horsemen.

"You killed the bullocks back there?" asked Rushton.

"Sure he killed 'em," put in Lund. "He don't understand——"

"I killed bullocks," the man answered defiantly. "People hungry—we kill. Take more soon. You——"

"I am glad you speak English so well," Rushton went on. "Tell your hungry people that the next man who kills one of my bullocks——"

"Your bullocks? No! Belong me, belong blackfellows. All things here belong blackfellows. We take! You go or we kill——"

Rushton's hand crept down toward his holster for the native was working himself up into a state of fury. Foam bubbled at the corners of his mouth, his eyes were streaked with fiery red lines, and his broad flat nose twitched like a dog's.

"Where d'you come from?" snapped Lund. "Desert?"

"We people—always here—belong here. Come back for live." The words came jerkily from the man's lips. He glared at Rushton and shook his spear as he shouted: "You no belong here. All for me. Give horse, then you go."

A murmur of approval greeted his utterance. They were a tolerant people; they would let these two men live if they agreed to go away on foot.

"You want us to give you our horses—is that right?" exclaimed Rushton. "But my dear man, you——"

"Give!"

Rushton stood up in his stirrups and suddenly bellowed at the muttering group:

"Drop that meat and get out! Don't argue. First man raises his finger gets shot dead! Next time I catch one blackfellow running wild down here I'll——"

A howl drowned him out. The leader raised his spear—a bullet in the chest toppled him over. A black knot of shrieking natives leaped at Rushton's bridle. A hurling-stick crashed into his knee but he felt no pain. He lifted his horse straight at the mob and rode it down, went through it, swerved and raced back toward Lund, who was hemmed in by a solid mass of humanity. He picked his men with care: Brought down three more, stunned another with a blow between the eyes. Then side by side they fought clear of the pawing hands. Their guns were empty but they wheeled again and went back at a gallop, trampling underfoot those who tried to stop them.

The mob broke and scattered in the long grass. Not a rustle betrayed them, they vanished and silence came back to the sunlit plain. The dead lay in narrow troughs in the tall grass, and above the lumps of meat buzzed clouds of flies.

"Listen!" cautioned Lund. "Do you hear?"

Faint and far off, from the hidden depths

of the lava-flow, came a wail, a cry of dismay and a song of vengeance, a gust of primitive sound, halting and quavering, and carried on from note to note by the triple beat of a drum.

"Bunches of 'em," Lund went on as they trotted away. "Whole tribe on the warpath. But where did they pick up their English? It doesn't come natural to a desert tribe."

"No—and they wore clothes, most of them. I wonder—could they be the people off the Towanda reservation?"

"Looks that way, and if that's the case we might as well pack up and get out. We can't hold 'em off—just the two of us. ——! It's just one darned thing after another on this run."

"Exactly," agreed Rushton. "And my knee is going stiff as a board. We aren't going to pack up and get out though. Not yet anyhow. Something's gone wrong at Towanda, and from what the blackboy said we're not wanted here at all. I have an idea the whole thing is a put up job. I wouldn't be surprized if Burdette——"

"He wouldn't dare——"

"We'll soon find out. Tomorrow you'll ride over to the reservation and talk to the man at the wheel. If he's still alive he's probably in touch with the Mounted by this time. If he's dead keep on going until you reach Yorke."

"And you——"

"I'm going to stay here and observe developments. If anything goes wrong I'll amble over to Wallen's place, but I'd rather not. I want to wind up this business all on our own."

When they reached the bark hut Rushton's left leg was swollen and almost useless. With Lund's assistance he dressed and bandaged it, but the kneecap had been damaged by the blow and little or nothing could be done to alleviate the pain.

During the last hours of daylight Lund stacked all their belongings inside the hut. He fetched water, chopped wood, and in his deliberate way tried to make Rushton as comfortable as possible for the three, perhaps four, days he would have to spend alone. While he worked he grumbled. There was no manner of sense, he declared, in leaving a sick man all by himself. Why couldn't they both ride over to Towanda where they were sure to find medical supplies?

"You got fever," he snapped, "and you need a doctor, but I suppose your mind is made up——"

"It is," promptly agreed Rushton, struggling to keep down the pain. "I don't want to be pampered, but then I'm really an extraordinary fellow. All I want you to do is to bring back a dozen constables by the shortest route. I'll be as fit as a fiddle by then.

"I've an idea Burdette won't trouble us any more for the present because I'm sure he's behind this outbreak, or whatever else you care to call it. Trust old Burdette for that!"

"You're raving!"

"I don't doubt it. In the mean time, how much ammunition have I at my disposal? Even if I don't have to use it, it will be nice to have close at hand."

"'Bout a hundred and fifty rounds for the revolvers and twenty for the shotgun. That's all."

"An arsenal!" cheered Rushton. "Keep an army at bay with that. And I shall lie me down in the doorway and look at our dear, dear cows and think of you——"

"All right," grunted Lund. "I better be making tea. I might as well fetch a bit more water."

Dusk was closing in as he went down the open slope toward the banks of the stream, shadows were thickening, but one particular shadow that suddenly moved and disappeared behind some shrubs at the water's edge brought him up rigid in his tracks. Then a throwing-stick hissed by just above his head and fell with a rattle among the stones. Waiting for no more, for he was unarmed, he bolted back uphill. Behind him the shadows came to life, a shower of spears leaped past him, and a shout of triumph greeted his flight.

"They're out!" he warned Rushton as he reached the hut. "We must——"

"Saddle your horse and clear out," Rushton ordered sharply. "It's the only thing to be done. You know the blacks better than I do—they won't try to fight at night if there's no moon. Afraid of ghosts and things. I can hold 'em, don't worry about me——"

"But——"

"—— you! Get out. They'll kill the horses if you don't watch out and then we'll both be done for."

"I don't like——"

"I don't give a —— what you like," barked Rushton, losing his temper for the first time on record. "—— your insolence! When I give an order I want it obeyed."

"Your leg——"

"Mind your own business. If you say another word I'll give you the gate too and run this place all alone. Now saddle up as quick as you know how. I'll stand here where I can see you and pump lead into anything that moves. Hurry!"

Ten minutes later Lund was ready to leave.

"I'm going on no fool's errand," he said wrathfully as he rode up to the shack. "It would take me a week to get to Yorke and back. Can't expect a grass-fed horse to sprout wings. I'm going straight over to Wallen's. If he won't help I'll blow his face through the back of his head and then rouse every man between here and Melbourne. I sha'n't be long."

"Oh, go to the ——!" Rushton shouted at him.

Then they shook hands and Lund was away ——-for-leather over the brow of the hill and out of sight in the darkness.

Listening intently Rushton heard Lund splash across the shallow ford. Angry cries broke the stillness. Lund fired twice. The cries died down. After a while from the opposite slope came the faint beat of the horse's hoofs drumming upon the turf. Lund was safe.

Rushton hobbled back to the doorway of the hut and a grin spread over his face. Though he was not at all sure the natives would not risk a night attack he was glad to be rid of Lund. There was no reason why Lund should be sacrificed, for nothing could save them if the blackfellows changed their minds and rushed the place before morning.

Of course, at a pinch, he too might have been able to straddle a horse and stay on its back long enough to get clear of the spears. But he didn't want to do that. He was going to stick right there and fight it out. The run was his, it stood for almost every farthing he had been able to scrape together—and for many other things besides. Sentimental reasons. He wasn't going to leave the run at the mercy of the blackfellows and of Burdette, who, if he found out the land was unoccupied, could snap it up.

All about him in the night the natives had kindled fires, twenty or more spread out in a wide circle. Time dragged by. He waited, he dozed—and a spear tore a hole through the thin wall at the back of the hut. Prowlers. He drove them off with a double charge of buck-shot. Again the silence, so intense that the low voices of the men gathered about the fires drifted up to him.

The pain in his leg became a torment. It recurred in sharp stabs each time he relaxed his vigil. He was weak and faint. The gun was like lead in his hands.

From the shelter of the trees came a rustle, a sharp scraping sound, the rattle of an overturned stone. They were preparing to rush him. Peering through the darkness he thought he saw vague shapes crawl across the open. He rested his revolver on his raised elbow, took careful aim and fired.

One man, hit in the back, shrieked and clawed at the grass. His companions leaped to their feet and advanced a few steps in one solid, yelling mass. Detonation followed detonation. Another man fell. The rest wavered and broke. Night fighting was not to their liking. They wanted to see their prey, for who could tell what evil spirits were not helping the white man belch death into their ranks?

Dawn crept into the sky. The real attack began. The hut rang to the tune of the spears and the throwing sticks. Literally it fell to pieces, bit by bit. There was no concerted rush, not at first. Small groups of warriors crept up to within striking distance, then dashed up always to swerve aside after inflicting as much damage as possible. They fought like wolves—slash and run—darting in from all sides. Some of them climbed into the trees whose branches brushed the roof of the hut. From their perch they flung stones through the flimsy roof until Rushton firing through the gaps brought them tumbling to earth again.

With the sun came scorching heat. Hour after hour Rushton lay inside the remains of the hut and staved off his assailants. During one swift encounter, when the natives poured in upon him from three sides at once, he expended the last round of buck-shot he had left. Soon the revolver blistered his hand.

Midday. He groped about blindly for the pannikin of water only to find it overturned and burst open. Thirst was added to his torment. His leg was afire with pain. Dragging it behind him made him crawl more slowly from spot to spot. The ring closed in tighter, each rush swept a

little closer. The earth was all dotted with sprawling bodies.

The revolver jammed. With an oath Rushton threw it from him. He levered himself to his feet—the pain in his leg vanished—and gripping the gun like a club he went out to meet his aggressors.

They stared at him stupidly, unable to believe that this one little man would have dared to face them in the open unless he were protected by some superhuman power.

A small band, hardier then the rest, stealthily closed in upon him, crouching close to the ground, like apes. The others waited spell-bound, fascinated, ready to join in the kill, equally ready to break and scatter at the first hint of malevolent magic.

But Rushton was without magic save the courage born of despair. Three steps and his strength ebbed from him, still he limped on hoping for nothing save a quick kind death and peace. Powder-blackened, bleeding, exhausted, sobbing for breath, he cried at the natives:

"What are you waiting for? What the ——are you waiting for?"

Although he shouted with all his power his voice was no more than a faint whisper in the sunlighted silence on the hilltop.

He waited, bracing himself to withstand the last rush, willing his blurred eyes to see, his deafened ears to hear. And a shout went up from his stalkers for at last they understood that he was so weak and so powerless that he could no longer even raise to his shoulder the gun he leaned upon for support.

Rushton heard the shout and he steadied himself that he might meet his foes face to face—and then as the black forms arose from the shelter of bush and grass-tuft and rock another sound pierced through to him: A pounding, thudding, rumbling sound, growing more pronounced each second. A volley rang out. The shout of anger changed to one of dismay. The blackboys were running, running away, scattering to cover. And up over the rim of the hill came a line of horsemen, who showed little mercy as the hands went up in token of surrender.

Out of the clamor came a voice:

"Hold on, Rushton. Hold on!"

He held on long enough to see the blackfellows routed, long enough for Lund to catch him up as the gun fell from his hands and his legs bent beneath him.

"Got a drop of water?" he croaked, and then added faintly: "Came too soon, Lund—you're always spoiling my grandstand finish. Who's the crowd?"

"Wallen, whole blessed outfit. Got 'em on the jump. Bit of luck. Forty-three of 'em—branding. Every man, cook and all—"

"Cook, eh?" muttered Rushton. "Thoughtful chap, Lund, thought——"

Then he slid to the ground and for a time forgot his pain-wracked body.

WALLEN was a bit of a moral coward, and he knew it. He didn't want to fight anybody, especially not Burdette, who controlled the meat packing plant at Portland and sundry North Melbourne abattoirs. It was expedient to be strictly neutral when Burdette went to war.

But it was another matter altogether to go to the help of a man who was really fighting for his life. Burdette ceased to count. Burdette was free to chase himself all the way to Freemantle and back for all Wallen cared.

"I'm selfish," Wallen admitted when Rushton was able to take an intelligent interest in his surroundings. "If these blackboys had rolled you up they would have been on my trail within a week. If you don't mind being left behind we'll clear them out of the Rises while we're on the spot. The boys are of one opinion on the subject: We had enough ambushes and scares a few years ago to last us a lifetime."

"Do you think," exclaimed Rushton with returning vigor, "you are going to leave me behind to watch and wait?"

"You've done enough."

"Then you are very much mistaken," Rushton said wrathfully. "I am going with you because this is my run and I want to witness all the killing that takes place upon it."

"You're crazy. Why, with that leg——"

"Leg be ——, my dear sir! You don't seem to realize what an extraordinary fellow I am. Leg—nothing! By tomorrow morning——"

"Better let him be," cautioned Lund. "Once his mind is made up—might as well give up and let him have his own way."

"So I see," laughed Wallen. "I give in. And—er—by the way, hereafter, if you need any help I'd like you to know——"

"Thank you. The hatchet is buried," Rushton put in quickly. "When do we start?"

Exactly thirty-eight men laid siege to the natives' stronghold the next day. Leaving their horses down in the plain they advanced cautiously across the pitted ground, moving slowly, for the scoriated lava, beneath its mantle of coarse grass, tore heavy boots to ribbons and slashed at unwary hands. Pot-holes, gulleys, channels and caves were everywhere. From every nook and cranny as the line went forward came an avalanche of missiles. Swaying awkwardly on narrow ledges, crawling along crevices, slowly, steadily the attackers routed the black-fellows from their hiding-places, and the crash of the guns boomed and rolled in the hidden caves.

After their first stand the natives' retreat grew faster and faster. They fled from the deadly guns for their hearts were no longer in the venture. Their short freedom had been a curse. Too many dead lay stretched down below on the plain, too many more were falling to hideous deaths on the jagged points of the lava rocks down in the hollows. Where they had anticipated an easy victory and an abundant food supply they found themselves crushed and harried and decimated.

Those who were too old or too weak to run "came in" with upraised hands. Of these the greater number survived. They were herded into a deep gulley and left there under guard.

After a time the battle degenerated into a climbing contest with little or nothing left to shoot at. But Rushton from the very beginning had found the pace too severe. He struggled as far as he could and then sat down on a fairly level spot the better to curse his infirmity. Cheers floated down to him from the summit and he turned his head to stare gloomily at the ant-like creatures gesticulating on the sky-line.

Then before his startled eyes arose a native, sprung out of what seemed to be solid earth; a great, slavering brute of a man, who covered the space between them in one leap. Before Rushton could draw his gun he was half-lifted, half-dragged off his feet and toppled into a ravine with the shiny, black face pressed close to his own. They went rolling over and over, ripping themselves open on the knife-edged rocks. It was all over in a quarter of a minute. Rushton was ground down, shoulders pinned to the ground. Wrenching his right arm free he clutched at his revolver and fired even while the blackfellow knelt on his chest. Not one bullet missed its mark. The upraised club dropped harmlessly to the ground. Rushton dragged himself clear of the dead body.

"I may be extraordinarily lucky," he told himself as he rested his forehead against the side of the gulley, "but I think I shall need a most extraordinarily good surgeon. Thank the Lord the climate is bracing—where did that originate anyhow?"

An inarticulate cry, a gurgling, sobbing wail of agony had come from a passage that dipped steeply down into the earth. The cry was repeated. It made Rushton's hair bristle on the back of his neck.

"Some poor —— crawled in there to die, I suppose," he muttered. "But I'm hanged if I care to go down there alone."

With the muffled cry still in his ears he tried to climb out of the gulley, but his aching body was not equal to the task.

Lund and Wallen discovered him some minutes later and let themselves down beside him.

"Thought you were scuppered," explained Wallen. "I happened to glance back— To tell you the truth I didn't expect to find you looking so well. By the way, the show's almost over. The Mounted can take charge if they get here this side of Christmas."

"Somebody is down in that hole," panted Rushton, "and I don't like the sound of his voice. I want to put him out of his misery. Do you hear him?"

"Let him die in peace," urged Lund. "He don't want to see us, that's sure."

"I'm going down there," doggedly asserted Rushton, "to help that fellow out of his misery. Will you go with me, Wallen—as a favor?"

"Certainly—as a favor. But these blackboys are best left——"

"The sooner he's at rest the better. I'm just about played out myself, if I have to stand here and argue——"

They went groping their way down into the utter darkness of the passage. On hands and knees, sometimes flat to the ground, they worked their way along and as they went the voice grew louder until around a sharp elbow they entered a low-vaulted chamber lighted by the smoking butts of a ring of torches.

And in the center, sagging and collapsed in the bonds that held him to a stake,

Mitcham groaned and mouthed and cried. Things had been done to him—abominable sickening things—and, very mercifully, he was dying. But he was still terrifyingly conscious, aware of his plight and of his surroundings.

When he saw the three figures crawl out of the smoke-filled depths he screamed and writhed, a mere quiver of raw nerves and mangled flesh. Then, as they drew nearer and he saw their faces he laughed, for he was really beyond all feeling of pain, and after a while, when they spoke to him, he began to sob, softly, endlessly, like a heart-broken child.

They tried to cut him down, but he howled crazily as Lund drew near, and they drew back because they were afraid that something about him might snap if he squirmed at all. He might rip open—

"Don't touch me!" he implored, his eyes rolled up and white. "Don't touch me, I can't stand it! They been 'acking bits out of me because—" the laugh came spluttering back to his lips—"they thought I was God! Thought I could make 'em bullet-proof. Ah—!"

The silence lasted a full minute, while by turns he sobbed and chuckled. Then he looked up again, straight at Rushton, and he whispered:

"You, Rushton, you win. We almost 'ad you, but you're too smart. Too smart for old ones like Burdette and me. Burdette thought it all out—sent me over with the gin——"

There was foam on his lips and his voice was a sigh, thin to the breaking point

"Burdette sent you over with the gin——" prompted Wallen.

" 'E thought 'e could get at Rushton that way. Why did I do it? Why, why, why! They killed Jukes and they made me God. Oh! And they brought me along and they prayed to me. Prayed to me——

"And when I tried to run they 'eld me. They were afraid, but they 'eld on. And something must 'ave gone wrong for they come back with a corpse and, " tremors ran through him, "it was all so dark—just the old men and the corpse and me—here—and they had a knife——"

He choked and whimpered and after a time said distinctly:

"They kept coming. No more prayers then. Oh, I was a fool! I shouldn't 'ave waited to see Jukes die, but Burdette 'ad promised— They were going to get you, Rushton, and I'm sorry—because I know—better—now."

His head jerked forward, his mouth fell open, he moaned and the last flicker of life died out.

Much later, when they stood in the sunshine again, Wallen, his face still very white, remarked—

"That, unless I am mistaken, spells the end of Burdette's reign."

"The end of Burdette," Rushton repeated as he leaned heavily on Lund's arm, "but for heaven's sake let's go about this legally, I'm sick of this unquiet life."

STANDING on the threshold of the open French windows of his study John Burdette watched the party ride up toward the house. And he grunted with relief, for he knew that the end had come. The days of doubt and anxiety were over at last. Almost, but not quite, the last chapter of his story was written. No longer would he be obsessed by the thought of Jukes—Jukes, harmless and fussy and weak—whom he had caused to die. No longer would he curse himself and grow hot and ashamed and angry because he had been blackmailed and made a fool of by Mitcham. No longer would he have to lie awake hoping, wondering, waiting for the news that did not come. Was he safe, had he won, could he take the last trick?

Well, he had lost, and he was glad he had lost, for the memory of Jukes was a curse.

When he saw Rushton and Lund and the troop-sergeant dismount and come toward him, he retreated into the study and from a drawer of the desk drew a gun, which he slipped into the pocket of his coat.

Even now, at the very end, when the world he had hacked out for himself was crumbling to pieces, when he knew that for him there was left nothing but dishonor and shame and the execration of those who had formerly fawned upon him, even now he did not flinch, he was true to himself. His mind was made up: He would pay the price of defeat but he would set the price. As he had lived so would he die, master of his destiny to the end.

He would die—surely—he was ready to die at his own hand, choosing his time. But first one man must precede him and that man was—Rushton, the cause of it all.

Hardly was the gun in his pocket but his

captors were upon him. First came Flinders, the troop-sergeant, overanxious, excited, his chest swelling inside his tunic, bubbling over with words before he was through the door.

"Painful duty, Mr. Burdette— Under suspicion—evidence—arrest. Very sorry—grave consequences—uprising. Missionary—murder—Mitcham——"

A stumble, a jumble of words.

Burdette cut him short with a sharp:

"What's the matter, Flinders? Afraid to put me under arrest? Think I'll bite you? You —— old fool, calm down!"

Behind, edging into the room, came Wallen, smiling nervously, eager to miss nothing, yet afraid to go too far lest Burdette, somehow, should wriggle out of his predicament and turn the tables against them.

And bringing up the tail of the procession entered Rushton and Lund. The former limped painfully and his face was hidden beneath lint bandages.

"That's it, Mr. Burdette," the troop-sergeant went on. "Have to place you under arrest. It don't seem right, I do admit—you being what you are. But duty——"

Burdette laughed:

"You'll be sorry for this, Flinders. Trying to link me up with a piffling uprising——"

"Mitcham," put in Wallen with great deliberation, "Mitcham confessed, just before he died. He told us about the gin——"

"Oh," Burdette slowly nodded his head. "I see——"

Now that the end was close upon him he felt eager to have it over and done with. His heart was racing and a queer ringing sounded in his ears at each beat, as if his heart was a muffled gong.

But he was not through yet. There was still Rushton to be dealt with. Rushton, who stood in the background, studying him thoughtfully. Rushton, the only quiet, assured man in the room.

Flinders took a step forward, stammering—

"So I'll have to request, Mr. Burdette, that you accomp——"

"Stand back, all of you!" snapped Burdette. "Line up!"

The gun flashed out of his pocket.

Flinders' hand went to his holster.

"If you do," Burdette warned him quickly, "I'll shoot to kill."

He backed them up against the wall, where they stood with their hands held ear-high, and he laughed at them, laughed even though the gong-like sound in his ears was deafening, and his face glistened with sweat that gathered by his temples and ran in cold rivulets down his cheeks.

He must act, for his eyes were blurring and the four men he held at bay were becoming indistinguishable shapes. Yet to the very last he bluffed them, imposed his formidable personality upon them. With a supreme effort he forced his eyes to see, and his ears to hear, he steadied his flaccid muscles.

"Rushton," he ordered sharply. "Come here! Come closer!"

Rushton stepped out, a pace or so.

"Closer!"

Three feet from the gun-muzzle he halted his prey and peered at him intently, hunting for some sign of weakness. He found none. It infuriated him, for he wanted to see Rushton quail, wanted to make him plead for mercy.

"You are going to pay," he said thickly. "I'm going to wipe that grin off your face. You and your kind be ——! You had a continent to choose from and you tried to steal what was mine. I've no time for the law. I make my own laws, and when I'm ready—you are going to die."

"Not yet," Rushton said softly.

"Not yet? No! By ——, no! Not until I'm ready. Rushton—" why did the words stick so in his throat, why was his mouth so dry?— "Rushton, you ——, you've yet to learn that I'm not to be beaten, you dirty blackmailer. You dug up a story, I remember, about Travers, and you thought you could frighten——"

"Yes," agreed Rushton, "about Travers." And then his tone changed. It cut like a lash. His whole body swayed forward as the words shot out: "Travers—you can't forget it! Because Travers once owned two-thirds of Credion. I know—because Travers was my grandfather——"

"Your—" choked Burdette, and the gong rang unmuffled inside his head, loud and clamorous—a summons.

"And you drove him out, burned him out because you couldn't have his daughter, because she turned you down. I know, I tell you, because she's my mother, and I promised myself that, some day, I'd square the account. Now shoot—but you can't. You're done for!"

And John Burdette, though he tried,

could not fire, for his hand gripping the gun was palsied.

"Shoot!"

Rushton's face dissolved and only the eyes remained, the eyes of the woman, who had once lashed him across the face with a crop.

"Shoot!"

Rushton's voice pierced through the din in his ears, a mocking taunting voice, unafraid.

The summons rang louder in Burdette's ears as his racing heart flooded his brain with blood. His last conscious thought took him back thirty years in a flash. The gun dropped from his hand, he choked and pawed weakly at his collar, and he said——

"It's all right, Mollie. I won't hurt him."

He was dead before he reached the ground, but his grim lips were smiling as they had not smiled in thirty years when Rushton turned him over.

A COLUMN of dust drifted across the sunlit flats and out of the dust came bellows and the crackle of whips. The first drove was leaving the Stony Rises for Ballarat. Four hundred mud-fat bullocks complaining against their fate.

Up the hill toward the newly finished house galloped Lund flushed and wide-eyed with excitement. He slid to the ground and waved his hat at Rushton, who reclined almost spineless in a vast wicker chair, a long carved ivory cigaret-holder between his lips.

"We're off," shouted Lund.

"My dear man, you needn't shriek," Rushton reproved him. "I see you are off. The symptoms are unmistakable."

"Well," Lund remarked gruffly, "you can't say they aren't mud-fat, the whole blasted bunch."

"They plumped up prettily," admitted Rushton. "We were wise to go to the Credion auction. I picked up those beeves for a song. Trala!"

"Trala!" snorted Lund. "Say—you're quite sure you're not coming? It's our first bunch——"

"Quite sure. I'm far too busy. Very, very busy. And, besides, one mob of cattle is very much like any other."

"All right," said Lund, "so long."

"So long," grinned Rushton, reaching out with his hand. "And don't get lost. Everything has been attended to at the other end."

Lund shook hands again because he rather enjoyed the sensation and then wheeled abruptly about, mounted and dashed away.

Rushton settled back in his vast wicker chair and inserted a fresh cigaret in his holder. For several minutes he reclined lazily as if he had not a care in the world. His face was blank, his body relaxed. Then, slowly, his fingers began to drum on the arm of the chair, his gaze shifted from the green-painted veranda ceiling to the moving cloud of dust. Several times he said emphatically—

"Ridiculous, childish, idiotic!"

And then he was on his feet shouting orders in several directions at once.

Some minutes later Lund riding down the flank of the herd to head off a ponderous bullock very nearly collided with his boss, who bore down upon him yelling like a two-year-old.

"I knew darn well you'd come," grunted Lund.

BATTLE of a THOUSAND HOOFS

by BARRY SCOBEE

Author of "The Price of a Horse," "Bandit's Glory," etc.

DOWN here, once in a while, one will hear some superstitious old Mexican saying that buzzards smell a battle days before it is fought and flock to the feast.

Seventeen or eighteen buzzards floated in a circle above the Texas town of Rodela del Sol—Target of the Sun—and its cousin the Mexican village on the southern side of the Rio Grande.

The birds lay high in the frosty blue reaches of the atmosphere. In imagination one could feel their coat of rusty feathers cold to the back of the hand.

The keen eyes looked down upon a hot and ashy land set with gray mountain clumps and divided in two by the twisting, yellow river, and upon the two scattered adobe villages set opposite to each other, motionless and lazy as sunning lizards.

Down on the earth, in this near-empty country, two men glanced up once or twice at the floating specks. One grinned sinisterly to himself; the other shuddered.

He who grinned was the Mexican border raider nicknamed "the Straddler." He sat cross-legged in the shade of an adobe house in the Mexican village oiling his ivory-butt revolvers, and he kept looking across the yellow river to Rodela del Sol with the hungry eyes of a buzzard.

The man who shuddered was old Joash, nondescript. He sat on the top rail of a corral on the rocky slope above Rodela del Sol, looking at the Mexican village, looking at Target of the Sun's scattered, sleepy houses; looking at the buzzards, and finally at the two hundred fifty burros in the corral, that regarded him unblinkingly.

In little old Joash's mind not buzzards and battle but buzzards and burros were connected, for he had corralled the animals to slaughter them. Now he did not have the heart to kill, nor the courage to turn the long-ears loose and lose his last penny that he had invested in them.

In this vacillating attitude the whole village was making sport of him and calling him chicken-hearted. Even the buzzards mocked with their presence and reminded poignantly of the butcher's task before him.

He slid miserably from the fence and began to circle the pen. Every eye followed him hungrily, heads swinging slowly on necks, hoofs shifting. There were black burros and gray burros, dun and mouse-colored; little and big, gaunt and fat burros; and one and all they eyed the little man with expectant, accusing gaze.

For an instant Joash was tempted to open the gate and let them out, to go scattering in the four directions. It would lift the horrible burden of cutting their throats from his mind; but it would add two other burdens—financial crash, and verification of the charge of chicken-heartedness so that he would never hear the end of it.

Not an eye wavered; every ear pointed at him. In sudden anger he cried out testily:

"Quit! Quit eying me! Shoo!"

He flung his arms and stamped a foot to break their hypnotizing stare.

A chuckle sounded behind him. It was

the village goat-herder going out to round up his flock for the evening against milking-time.

"Those donkeys like you, hey?" he called out to Joash in Mexican. "Maybe they beg you to subdue your ferocity and not kill them!"

The man tittered. Joash, little as a jockey, tilted his old soiled Panama hat on one side of his sandy head and tried to laugh jauntily, but it was a weary attempt.

"When will you slaughter, *señor?*" asked the herder. "I wish a job."

"Oh, soon; right away now," declared the old man.

"Tomorrow maybe?"

"Maybe, maybe. I'll see."

"I do not believe the tales the people tell, *señor*—that you are too chicken-hearted to have the slaughter."

The herder tipped his big sombrero, but a grin behind it changed the courtesy to an act of derision.

The Mexican was hardly gone when Joash beheld a bareheaded and ragged man coming up out of a gully giving on the little plain where the corral stood. The old man stared and pushed his jaunty hat to the other side of his head.

"Why," said he aloud in surprize, "it's Jim!"

A young fellow in rags and tatters and dust, with a patchy beard, came forward, the picture of shiftlessness.

"Gosh!" exclaimed Joash. "Where'd you come from?"

Rags and Tatters failed to show any gladness. He seemed more weary and perplexed than the older man.

"Come from down East," he answered.

Joash jumped to sharp interest. "Down East" was his native land. He shoved the hat to the other side of his head.

"You come from down East!" he echoed. "State o' Maine?"

"Might' nigh it. Kansas City."

"Huh!"

Joash was disgusted. He added scornfully—

"Kansas City must be a tough place; rough on clo's."

Jim looked down at his rags and dirt.

"I got these coming home through Mexico. But at that K. C. ain't God's country like this."

The young fellow let his gaze roam over the shaley hills, the herder's white flock; over the distant mountain clumps that were purple or the blue-gray of a postman's uniform; over the yellow river and its emerald-green cottonwood-trees, over the vast emptiness of land and sky—utter desolation to many an eye, but to him, God's own.

"Coming home through Mexico?" derided Joash. "Maybe you come past Timbuctoo and Halifax and London Town also, coming home to Texas from Kansas City."

"I came through Mexico after I got to the Rio Grande at Laredo. Wanted to see how it looked for work. Been sleeping under the brush and eating weeds. Wonder if we couldn't go home and eat, Joash?"

"Home" was the adobe shack of the old man. Rags and Tatters, hardly more than a boy, was the protégé of the little man. They had been chums for a year, except on the boy's trip with a train of cattle to Kansas City, which caused a month's absence ending with his arrival now.

"Eat!" echoed Joash. "Boy, the house is emptier than these burros' bellies, and they ain't fed since three days, when they had a wagonload o' pasteboard packing-cartons."

Jim had been eying the corral and its occupants with a growing wonder. Now he spoke.

"What'n thunder is them for, Joash? Burros in a corral! More or less like raisin' dandelions in the house up in Missoura."

"Them's for profit, boy."

"Profit? You talking Dutch, old man. No profit in a burro."

"Didn't ye ever hear tell about the doctor up at Mariposa? Bought up five hundred burros and slaughtered 'em. He sold the remains in San Antonia and El Pasa, the bones for fertilizer, the hides for leather and hair, the hoofs for glue or paperweights or something, and the tallow which he rendered out, for soap. I'm wagging the same projeck. Some I bought, some I rounded up. They cost me four hundred dollars."

"The four hundred you been saving!"

"Yep!"

And Joash danced a step or two to show how little he was concerned.

"Ever' cent I got is invested in them cunnin' little things."

"Don't like it."

Jim shook a doleful head.

"Got my nose full o' gut-stink around them slaughter-houses in K. C. Don't like to see this heah man's country stunk up. But since we got 'em and got the money invested in 'em, sooner we slaughter and sell the better, I reckon. Sooner we eat, too. When do we begin the killing?"

So the sore problem was confronting Joash again, standing up in front of him and looking him square in the eye.

He tilted his hat to the other side of his head, but before he could make answer the boy remembered something. He went tense, startled.

"Say," he thrilled, "I'm so starved hungry and glad to get home I forgot to tell you something. Say, Joash, you'd better be realizing quick on these donks or you ain't likely to realize at all."

"Why?"

"Listen. I got to the Mexican village over there yesterday. The Straddler's there!"

"You don't say!"

"I walked in on 'em and heard them plotting and the Straddler throwed me into the dungeon room at the end of their long 'dobe."

"I peeked in it once!"

"He left me there in the dark, starvin' and thirstin'. I felt around and found a tin pan and big old saddle-girt buckle with a long tongue, and used them to dig a hole through the wall. I didn't get finally through till they were sleeping their *siesta* this afternoon. Then I busted out and snuck over here. But, Joash, all the time when I listened I heard what they were doing."

"What, boy?"

"They were cleaning their guns and sharpening knives and filling cartridge-belts and singing songs that they made up—raw songs about coming over here and cleaning us out, hide, hair and toenails. Joash, the Straddler is aimin' to raid our town tonight and kill off all the Americans!"

RODELA DEL SOL, which the sun beamed down upon just about three hundred and sixty-five days out of the year, was one of the scattered mud-house towns that give the Rio Grande Valley the appearance of a foreign country. The adobe dwellings sheltered six American men and about two hundred Mexican men, women and *niños*. Otherwise the place evidently had no purpose in the scheme of the world.

There were two small general stores; a moving-picture show operated Saturday and Sunday nights sometimes; a restaurant with a dirt floor, and a tiny post-office that floated the Stars and Stripes day and night the year round, and that was reached twice a week by a mail hack from the railroad. But these people and things were ample in the way of gringos and loot to arouse the killing and plunder lust that burned so hot and red in the infamous border raider.

There was no telephone wire to connect Rodela del Sol with the outer world; no automobiles, because of impassable sand-flats; and it was seventy miles to the railroad and guns and soldiers.

Old Joash—nobody knew whether it was his first or last name—and Jim started down the stony slope with drawn faces. They talked in jerks. Joash scanned the Mexican village across the river but could make out no sign of life, and he said so.

"But they're there all righty," asserted Jim. "Twenty or so, all armed with short saddle carbines and automatic pistols."

"Twenty! Lad, we ain't got the shadder of a chance. Them cutthroats are the fightingest on the border. Savage as red Indians."

"Talk I heard, Joash, when I laid in the dungeon starvin' and listenin' was that they're aimin' to hamstring every American they get their hands on to."

Joash mopped his forehead with a blue bandanna and pondered in mental anguish as they stumbled along. Suddenly he broke out—

"These news would panicky-ize the town, Jim!"

"The Mexes over there," continued Jim, driving the grim information in, "they were tying gunny grain-sacks together to make saddle-bags to pack the loot back in, four sacks to each man's horse. They aimin' to carry the heads of us gringos on sharp poles."

Joash groaned.

"Jim, them bandits will drive off my burros. Then we won't have any tallow, bones, hide, hair er hoofs for paperweights."

"Or money for you to start your photo gallery with, Joash. Or your shoe-repair shop. We got to give the alarm and organize for a battle."

"No, no!" denied the old man. "If we give the alarm the news will panicky-ize the whole population. They will turn into

rampant refugees. They will flee in fear and consternation. They will seize the only transportation available. *They will ride my burros off!*"

Jim sighed wearily.

"Let's don't think about it now," he pleaded. "Let's go and eat."

"You and me, Jim," Joash went on with unexpected cunningness, "we won't tell the populace nothing about the raid. We'll wait till dark and drive our burros off into the hills. Ever man for himself first, and then the next feller if they's any time left. Hey, Jim?"

Jim's somber, hungry face lighted for an instant with amused derision at this queer turn of the kind-hearted old man.

"You crool old fake!" he said.

The two approached the first clump of adobe houses. Mexicans, men and women, were lounging in the shade. They eyed Jim's rags and tatters curiously and spoke brief greetings to the returned prodigal, and then they called out sociably to Joash.

"Hi, *señor*, how are the mocking-birds today? Will they not be flying over the top of the cage pretty soon to catch some worms for food?"

There were snickering and grins.

"When will the great slaughter be, *señor?*" We would see your bold hand swing the bowie-knife on their throats."

"Is it true, Señor Joash," rattled a toothless hag, "that thou wouldst kill the sweet long-ear mice that squeak he-haw-he-haw!"

The crowd roared with mirth.

Joash was very uncomfortable, but he tried not to let it be seen. These people were just being friendly. He liked them. They liked him. He laughed and waved a hand. One more derisive shout came—

"We do not think you are chicken-hearted, Grandpapa!"

When they were well past, Jim scrutinized the little man's face.

"What they driving at about you?" he asked curiously.

"They think I haven't got the nerve to kill them donks."

"Have you?"

Joash laughed apologetically.

"Not hardly," he admitted.

"How long you had them burros cooped up ready to slaughter?"

"Full week, Jim. I'll tell ye—I'll confess to you. I ain't killed 'em—can't afford shells to shoot 'em with, and it's too doggone cold-blooded to cut their throats. The cunnin' little things with their soft, reproachful eyes. It'd be like killing off some folks you know, or monkeys. I'm right square in the middle of a pickle-lil, Jim, and I've got to do some thinkin' to get out."

"Not now, Joash. My thinker's flabby," urged Jim. "Let's get something or other to eat."

"Jim, there isn't anything in the shack but a half-box of oatmeal."

"Let's go to Tubby's rest'runt then."

"No credit. You know Tubby."

"Joash, you *are* chicken-hearted. You ain't got enough he about you to slaughter the donks, and now you ain't got the audacity to ask Tubby for a little time on some chili and cawfee."

"Who? Ain't got the nerve? Me? Why, I'll make that Tubby fill you up like a sack. Come on, and while we eat we'll figger a way to unhorse the Straddler."

TUBBY was fat and greasy and frowning. When Joash and Jim arrived at the place of food, the proprietor stood on the dirt floor behind the counter with his fists laid out among salt shakers and ketchup bottles, frowning at his prospective customers suspiciously. Joash slid his hat to the other side of his head and spoke ingratiatingly.

"Howdy, Tubby. How's tricks today?"

"Tricks are all right. What do you want?"

"Jim, he's been living on sand and cactus, Tubby. We'd like to get a few meals on tick till I realize on my burros."

"You ain't goin' to realize on your burros."

"No?"

"They say you're too chicken-hearted to kill them. I think you are."

"But we got to eat."

"Not off o' me."

Tubby raised a thick arm and pointed a thick finger to the wall. Joash and Jim read the sign there:

Absipositively

NO CREDIT

THIS MEANS YOU

Recollect Where You Entered

To remind them where they entered, Tubby swung his thick finger to the door.

"But look here, Tubby," began the old man in brave protest, sliding his Panama to the other side of his head, "confound it, we've got to eat."

Tubby's thick finger and frowning eyes never wavered.

"No chicken-heart can eat here free," he rumbled.

A moment Joash and Jim withstood that pointing finger; then they slunk through the door like whipped dogs. When they were out of hearing of the pariah-making Tubby Joash managed choked speech—

"I'll undergo rank famine sooner than ask him for credit again!"

"Let's hit for the oatmeal," whispered Jim. "Front o' my shirt's caught on my backbone."

They hurried along among the scattered houses to the place Joash called home—a little two-room adobe with dirt floor and screen windows.

When they arrived they saw that chickens had flown up on the table, upset the oatmeal box and eaten the contents. Tracks were visible in the film of white powder remaining on the red-and-blue oil-cloth.

Jim flung himself down on the cot that he had called his. He was almost ready to weep. Joash sat himself down in the doorway and tried to whistle; but the pucker was in his stomach more than in his lips, and he soon petered out on the tune.

"Sort o' makes me want to do something desperate," said he. "Don't know where we'll get breakfast."

Jim sat up. He regarded Joash in the essence of disgust.

"Where," he flung out, "are we goin' to get supper?"

"Here comes the Texas Ranger," replied Joash. "Let's ask him."

EVERY one of the six Americans in Target of the Sun was there largely because he wished to be, even Ranger Bud Milroy, who was temporarily stationed in the town at his own requesting.

There was Coons, the general merchant. And Brisket, who had been a sergeant in the Army medical corps and now sort of practised medicine and ran the picture show and dance-hall and was postmaster. Then the other three were Joash and Jim and Hunt, who had no particular visible means of support, unless the tales were believed that Hunt was doing a bit of smuggling from Mexico.

Joash and Jim and Hunt were remnants of that long skirmish line stretching from the mouth of the Rio Grande across the continent to San Diego—a skirmish line of men waiting for Mexico to get just right for them to go in and risk their money and time, or to get jobs with fair likelihood of pay. Many had trickled across, and these three might have been gone had they not found a liking for the sun-baked village, a liking that in Joash and Jim, at least, amounted to genuine affection.

Love for Target of the Sun in fact had grown on Joash until he began to treasure the thought of setting up a photograph gallery and shoe-repair shop in his little house. He had had enough experience in these businesses to know that four hundred dollars would not go far. More money had been required, and on sudden impulse, which was his nature, he had entered the financial adventure of rounding up the burros for slaughter. His savings went like smoke.

But it was not in the nature of the little old man to let red blood flow with a knife. Burros had been his sole companions on many a solitary prospecting-trip in the bleak mountains of northern Mexico. These lone trips in the altitudes had given him a tenderness of nature that comes to some men much alone. Yet the tendency to do queer, impulsive things was his.

Joash looked at the corner of his front room where he had meant to set his camera with its black cloth; and at the opposite corner where in imagination he many a time had seen a cobbler's bench littered with awls and tacks and leather scraps and ragged shoes galore. He hardened his heart. He would slaughter the burros, and he would refrain from any act that might jeopardize his possession of the animals.

This meant that he must be traitor to his beloved town and its people and not inform about the Straddler. Even in the making of his decision of silence he groaned.

"What's matter now?" demanded Jim.

"I was thinkin' of telling the Ranger about the Straddler, but——"

"Tellin' Bud Milroy! Don't you know Rangers well enough yet to know the first thing he'd do would be to grab all us

Americans and go to organizing a defense? Then where would we be, and our burros?"

Old Joash mopped the sweat from his face.

"Oh, I ain't aimin' to tell," he said. "Gosh, but this is a sweat to be in, between hanging and hades! Sssst! Here's Bud."

Bud Milroy, famous officer of the Big Bend country, grim-looking until his friendly eyes were near enough to break the illusion by showing twinkling half-amusement, stepped up. He wore fancily stitched boots, a neat gray flannel shirt with red tie, and a big hat.

"Hello, Bud," greeted Joash. "How's tricks?"

"Tricks are all to the ha-ha," answered Bud. "But you're perpetrating a crime against humanity, starving those jackasses up there. Why don't you butcher them or turn them loose?"

"Yes-sir, yes-sir," hastily answered Joash.

"Yes-sir, what?"

"Which?"

"What? I say, butcher or turn 'em loose. Because whichever you do, I suggest you do *pronto*."

"Yes-sir."

"The sooner the quicker."

"Yes-sir."

The Ranger started on. Jim and Joash shot a look at each other. They were eager to know whether Bud knew about the Straddler. Joash cleared his throat.

"What's the local news, Bud?" he asked. "I been so busy lately. Whatever has become of the Straddler we was hearing so much about last week?"

Bud laughed mirthlessly.

"Three days ago," said he, "that renegade was at Santa Clara, forty miles south of here, but since that time I can't get hide nor hair of him. Plumb crimped for information. What do you know?"

Joash laughed delightedly and jauntily slid his Panama across his head.

"Thanks for the compliment," said he. "If what I don't know was put in books they'd be enough to start a small library."

"Well, look after those mocking-birds," admonished Bud and went on.

"Borry a dollar from him!" hissed Jim. "So's we can eat."

Joash shook his head.

"We can't let Bud Milroy—white folks—know we're financially strapped. Tighten up yo' belt. You know, Jim, Bud not knowing about the Straddler being over in the Mexican village makes the situation look awful bad. The Straddler has kept it secret. He means business. He'll come like the thrust of a rattler's head. Boy, we're up against it. The populace is up against it. I feel like a dog, not giving the alarm."

They sat still a long time, mired in their thoughts; then the old man broke out with a summary of his complaint.

"They say every trouble has got two sides; but this of mine has got several. If I keep the burros I've got to cut their throats."

Joash shuddered.

"If I turn 'em out the people will call me chicken-hearted. If I don't warn the town about the Straddler I'm a cur. If I do I lose my donks and the four hun'rd bucks they cost me. I'd be willing to plank down five cents in cold cash if I had it to have this thing settled up all peaceful and right."

Joash's face was wrinkled with worry until he looked to be in the bottomless pit of despair.

"Aw, shut up!" spat Jim. "Quit lookin' thataway. What if you was plumb starved like I am? Come on, let's go and drive them burros back into the hills so's we can get some money out of them and eat now and then."

Jim pulled the old man to his feet and they set out. When they arrived at the corral the two hundred and fifty burros all faced their way and eyed the two men unblinkingly, hungrily. Nobody was in sight. The sun was just setting.

"Redder'n blood," whispered Joash. "Let's turn the donks out and head 'em for the hills, quick."

"And be curs," said Jim, leaning against the fence and not making any move.

The words made Joash cringe. He went and sat down on the brink of the table-land, to be soothed by the sunset.

"Lordy," he sighed, "I'd give a dollar to have this all settled."

The vast, far-reaching country that the buzzards had looked down upon throughout the day was shadowy now. The Mexican village lay dark save for one star-point of light. That was in the long adobe occupied by the Straddler and his crowd, or so Joash surmised from his knowledge of the location of the place.

Joash, gazing, began to plot and dream,

as was his habit when alone in the mountains and on the mesas. Presently—proceeded his vision—the bandits, led by the wily Straddler, would leave that point of light and ride their lean, swift horses down the hillside toward the river. Before arriving at the water they would enter a gully that was like a deep-cut road and come down it to the yellow stream.

When the vicious riders had waded the shallow water of the river they would again enter a gully and climb the hill to the table-land. They would come out of the gully at the corral, right here where he sat, and spread out on the town below like a pest.

That gully on the other side, and the one on this side, they were like a road—Joash believed they were a road, a veritable highway, cut by the feet of Indian hordes in other centuries traveling back and forth between the north and the south. If only they were marching along now—so went Joash's dreaming—how quickly the bandits would flee and Rodela del Sol would be saved!

Or if there were a troop of cavalry to ride down this ancient trail and up the hill on the other side, a troop of good U. S. cavalry, how quickly the Straddler would run away!

And just there old Joash's dreaming reached a high point. He sat up sharply, as if a giant had thumbed him in the ribs.

"What's the matter?" Jim jerked out irritably.

"Say, boy," sang the old man under his breath, "I've thought of a way to settle this whole thing!"

"Do I eat?"

"You eat. And the town is saved. And I don't have to worry any more, or be a cur!"

"Sing the next verse."

"The next verse is this: I'm going down into town. You stay here and watch for the Straddler. If you hear him coming let down the bars so's the burros can get away, and come a-shoutin' down the hill to give the alarm. If you don't hear him coming, wait till I get back and we'll start something. Oh, boy, if we won't start something!"

WITH his scheme in mind as a whole, the details came readily to Joash. The first step was to go to a spot where he had that day seen three Mexicans making adobe blocks. There was the bale of hay for straw, and a barrel of water, and the mud-hole where the barefoot Mexicans tramped straw and water and earth together. Joash got the strong shovel that was there, and as an afterthought took also part of the bale of hay.

It was thoroughly dark when the old man, carrying hay and shovel, arrived at Coons' little general store, built of adobe. The long-nosed merchant was not present delving in account-books by the light of a kerosene lamp, as often he was. Had he been, Joash would have gone to the other store, owned by a Mexican.

Joash went to the side of the building, selecting a spot which his knowledge of the store told him would offer no obstacles within, and began to pry and dig at the bricks with his shovel. He strove to make as little noise as possible. At first the dry, pebbly earth came away easily, but the farther that he penetrated into the ten inches of compact straw and adobe the harder the work was.

A full three-quarters of an hour of listening and peering into the darkness for the approach of unwanted people, and of digging, was required to break into the store. Joash believed that digging through the side of a house to effect an entrance was as much a crime of burglary as breaking in by door or window.

He chuckled at the whimsicality of his thought, and remembered Judge Roy Bean, who was once the law west of the Pecos. The story had it that a cowboy was haled before the judge charged with shooting a Chinaman. The court, after searching his law book carefully, announced that he could not find a word about it bein' unlawful for a cowboy to kill a Chinaman, so he dismissed the prisoner forthwith.

When Joash got inside he used the knowledge he had gained in a year of trading with Coons to burglarize efficiently. First he went to a pile of boxes that had arrived only two days before and, opening cartons, appropriated two that suited his plan. Next he went to the grocery division and added a box of matches and four cans of canned stuff to his collection.

"Got to take some feed to Jimmy," thought he as he stuffed the cans into his shirt front.

His final act was to measure off about one hundred feet of small rope from a spool and to find a ball of strong twine. All this he

did without a light. And as cautiously he got the stuff through the hole in the wall and loaded himself up, hay and all, and made for the corral.

When he arrived at the place of the shifting hoofs he found Jim waiting for him in the darkness.

"Where's the eats?" hissed the youth eagerly.

"You starved wretch!" panted Joash. "Take some o' this burden."

Jim put out his hands, got the two pasteboard cartons and the chunk of hay.

"Hay!" he snarled. "I can't eat that. What's in these boxes?"

"Hold your horses, boy."

Joash led to a big boulder and there, in partial concealment, he struck a match. Jim tore open one of the cartons.

"Firecrackers! Joash, I'm of a mind to slay ye."

Joash pulled the cans from his shirt bosom and struck another match. Jim pounced on to them.

"Got a can opener?" he demanded.

He held match and can close together to read the label.

"Concentrated lye!" he gurgled madly.

He snatched up another can.

" 'Superior Oil for Leather Goods'." He snapped up the other two cans. "Bluing! Both of 'em!"

"Lordy!" moaned Joash. "I got one shelf too far over. Meant to swipe wienies and beans."

Jim got to his feet, and even in the dense darkness it was plain he was threatening murder, though he only gesticulated and swayed.

"Wait, wait, boy," pleaded Joash, changing the subject. "I got a plan. We'll tie firecrackers to the burros' tails and let them charge the Mexican village. We'll scare the livin' gizzard out of them bandits. The Straddler will think it's a regiment of cavalry."

"Of all the fool schemes!" Jim boiled over.

"Yes, yes, but it will work. Sure. Anyhow it will disperse and scatter the Mexes till they won't be able to make the attack. You'll help, won't you, Jim?"

"No!"

"Then I'll go by myself and do the best I can."

"You're a fool."

"Maybe, but I'm going to try it."

Old Joash gathered up the hay, the two cartons and the rope and twine.

"I'll let the bars down at the gully," said he. "The donks have been going down to the backwash of the river to drink. They'll go down now, or anyhow follow the rustle of this hay. You drop in behind and shove 'em along. They'll follow this hay across, and when we get on the other side we'll halt and get ready."

Joash lowered the bars. The hungry burros spilled out on his heels at once, reaching for the hay. He held the hay in front of him, as he started down, and was forced to elbow at the burros' muzzles to keep them back.

He was not certain that Jim was following but he kept on, knowing that in the end the boy would not let him go alone.

At its lower end the gully spread out and afforded room for a pool of backwater. Reaching this spot, Joash was taken back sharply at sight of a man lurking in the shadows of the high bank. He stood petrified for a moment, until in the thick gloom he made out the stooped outline of the American, Hunt.

"Hi," called Joash. "That you, Hunt?"

Hunt, not ten feet away, laughed apologetically and sat down a sack of tinkling bottles. Joash disliked law violation; but, coming but red-handed from burglarizing a store, he could say nothing on that subject, so he turned to something else.

"By golly, Hunt, I'm glad to run across ye."

"What's up?"

"The Straddler's over in the Mexican village."

"He is?" Hunt was startled. "That's bad."

"He's going to raid Rodela tonight unless I stop him. Will you help out on a scheme?"

"Sure. What is it?"

As Joash outlined the plan, a little ashamed at the absurdity of it, yet determined to push it along, Jim came up.

"Good boy!" praised the old man. "Knew you'd stick by. And when we get in the gully on the other side we'll hold the donks and fix them up with the crackers. Then I'll go on ahead— But come on, we'll work it out as we go."

Joash shoved the cartons into Hunt's arms, and they started into the river, Jim agreeing to bring up the rear. The burros

followed the rustling, fresh-smelling hay eagerly. The water was nowhere over waist deep and offered no difficulty.

When the long string of crowding animals was finally in the dry-wash on the Mexican side, Joash gave instructions about how to proceed.

First Hunt, in the lead, was to tie securely some of the big and some of the smaller firecrackers to the burros' tails and to dragging lengths of rope. He was to tie four burros neck-and-neck and fasten firecrackers to them, and ride them up the hill at the given signal.

At the rear Jim was to do exactly the same thing. Joash helped them. When the plan was ready eight burros at each end were held in a group so that the firecrackers could be lighted quickly before they began exploding. Each man was to turn four burros loose to scatter through the herd, and keep four under control to rush up the hill to the village.

"Coons got the crackers in," said Joash, "for the Mexes to celebrate Cinco de Mayo with. They never saw such big ones before I'll bet. They'll make the Mexes think they're besieged with machine-guns. Oh, scat!"

The old man danced a step or two and slid his Panama across his sandy head.

"I'll go on now and locate 'em. Give me fifteen minutes. When I hear the hoofs a-pattering on the rocks and the crackers a-crackin' I'll sing out to the Straddler and his gang, wherever they are, that the Yankee cavalry is coming. And they'll listen a minute, and beat it helter-skelter!"

"What if they don't?" asked Hunt.

Joash shrugged. Now that he was doing his duty he felt pretty good.

"I'd just as soon get hamstrung on this side of the river as on the Texas shore," he said. "One of us anyhow is certain to get back to tell Bud Milroy what's happening."

Joash did not add that he was honorably getting the burro-killing scheme off his hands, or that he would go broke with the scattering of the burros, or that in his heart he thought it a pretty silly plan. He didn't care. He was about to be free once again, from any burdens.

As they were on the point of separating, Jim began to sniff the air.

"I smell barbecue!" he thrilled. "Barbecued goat! Let's go!"

"You poor starvelin' wretch!" sympathized Joash. "Give me fifteen minutes to get up there and then come along, whoopity-bang. Maybe you can find some o' that barbecue. You both got matches? Well, here goes nothing!"

And Joash scrambled past the burros crowding around the lobe of hay, climbed the bank and struck out for the village and the lair of the Straddler.

FOR two years the Straddler had been the king outlaw along the Rio Grande, and for more than a year he had been the coveted *hombre* of every State and Federal official engaged in hunting criminals. He got his name from standing spraddle-legged, and further from the habit, as the Americans said, of straddling the Rio Grande—first on one side, then on the other, thus evading capture in either Texas or Mexico.

The Straddler was the leader of at least three successful raids on the Texas side. He was vengeful and cruel, burning and destroying and killing with a savagery that grew out of one thing—his terrible fear of the gringos. He knew that if ever they caught him his finish was at hand. His great fear made him hate greatly, and nothing was too cruel and wanton for his hand. It was as if he wished to have revenge for his own passing while yet in the land of the living.

The extent of the Straddler's fear and cruelty had got abroad because of an incident that was talked back and forth wherever border affairs were discussed.

At Ojinaga an American youth had been pushed into taunting, or had possessed the simple audacity to taunt, the Straddler with what the gringos would sometime do to him.

"They'll put a rope around your neck," the youth had shouted, "up there in some Texas jail, and let you drop six feet. Tick-tock, just like that."

The Straddler—so the tale went—had turned gray under his brown skin, had tottered on his outspread legs and had put shaking hands to his throat as if already he felt the tightening hemp. And then, in fury at the way his fear had betrayed him, he had seized the youth and killed him with his bare hands, for the Straddler was a brute in strength.

Old Joash had heard this story, and

others more or less like it. He was aware of the cruelty of the man, did not doubt his savagery. Yet he was made of the stuff that went into the heart of the American pioneer and Indian fighter or of the present average border citizen. He was used to facing danger. Protection of himself and others was in the day's work. So now he kept on toward the clutter of adobe huts there on the hill.

Presently he was passing dark, empty shacks. Bandits long ago had driven the dwellers permanently away. Farther along a burst of laughter smote his ears, then dwindled away. A light shone through a door. He made for that point.

Joash, from the darkness, made out the long room that was adjacent to the so-called dungeon. There were beds down upon the floor, and blankets; and a long table down the middle of the room, made of boards and wooden "horses." And around the table was a gang of men gambling.

Rather, only two were gambling. The others were standing, some of them well back, looking on.

Another man straightened up, spraddle-legged. He was big and thick. Joash knew him for the Straddler. The men not engaged in the play regarded him deferentially.

The Straddler pulled out a big silver watch and looked at it.

"Hi," he bawled in Mexican, "finish there now. It's time to go over and hamstring the gringos."

"I speak for Bud, the Ranger," sang out one of the men.

"And I for this scarecrow of rags that we have in the dungeon."

"He's yours if he isn't starved by the time we return."

So, thought Joash, they didn't know yet that Jim had got free.

"Come on!" snapped the Straddler to the two remaining players.

"One more play," begged one of the men. "I have everything he owns but his pistol. Let me win that."

The Straddler laughed at that and nodded. The two players flung down their guns. One of the men had a pile of stuff around him that he evidently had won—a knife, a watch, a hat.

"If you win the gun," said the Straddler, "you must give it back until after the raid. We can lick the gringos without guns, but it's more fun to shoot them and see them squirm."

Joash pushed in nearer, the better to see and hear. The Straddler had got around to the end of the table. One side was to the door. He stood looking down upon the two players. Joash saw the two men dealing and taking up cards, saw their guns lying there.

Another odd impulse came to the old man. Why not step inside to give his mock warning to the Mexicans? To slip in so close, to be among them before they knew it, would be a great joke on them. It would be told, whether he lived to tell it or not, up and down the border and would put the Straddler to shame.

He knew well that any one of the bandits might shoot him down, but—something urged him on.

He stepped inside. Every eye was intent upon the final play for the gamblers' guns. He easy-footed it to the corner of the table, no more than four steps from the doorway.

The Straddler became aware that some one had stepped to his side. He glanced down, and stood petrified.

"Hello," said Joash easily.

The Straddler licked his lips and shot a glance to the door to see if others had slipped in on him. Other Mexicans were looking at Joash now, and one grunted in surprize.

The old man slid his Panama across his head and grinned.

"Pardon my intrusion, *señors*," said he, "but I have come across the river to warn you."

"Warn us?" roared the Straddler.

"Of the gringo cavalry. In a moment you will hear the beat of hoofs and the firing of guns. You'd better run."

"Run!" bristled the bandit chieftain. "Why, you little wart——"

He got no farther. His thought was drowned in a sudden rattle of racing hoofs and a crackle as of musketry.

Joash listened curiously to this audible manifestation of his visioning. It was odd gunwork. Something of the oddness must have held the ears of the Mexicans, for every man was listening with a growing terror upon him.

The shooting was ragged, about like that of American troopers getting tuned up. But, strangely, some of the shots were much louder than others—not like machine-gun work, but heavy, roaring.

Joash expected every instant to see the Mexicans break and run. But they did not do so. He tried to frame words to get them started before they should discover his trick. Once they were on the run, he himself would flee also toward the river to get back to Rodela del Sol and warn the populace—if it still needed warning. Chances were, the band would be too much scattered to raid tonight.

Yet they did not run. They stood horrified. Then the Straddler himself burst out:

"*Caramba!* The gringos have got new guns that shoot little bombs."

He referred to the roar of the larger firecrackers.

The rattle of hoofs sounded loudly, like a regiment. They would be around the house in a moment, and his trick would be revealed. His eyes roamed around to see a way out. He saw the two guns on the table. He reached unobtrusively and picked up the nearest one. He stepped back and covered the gang instantly.

"Hands up!" he yelled. "Poke 'em up high!"

Hands went up, high. In the light of the two waving candles Joash saw that the Straddler was white of face.

Joash's heart went hard, and his face went grim. The Straddler was his prisoner. He meant to keep him such. Joash was a living threat all at once to the Mexicans, and they realized it. The gun he gripped was bobbing, threatening.

Ready to fire at less than an instant's notice, he reached out and lifted the Straddler's guns from their scabbards. The first he dropped to the floor, the second he cocked and shoved into the leader's ribs.

"I'll kill!" he cried out venomously. "Surrender to the gringo cavalry! Everybody!"

Two doors were at the far end of the room. From having been in this room once before when its occupants were friends, the old man knew that one of the doors opened to the dungeon and the other to an ordinary room. This second door stood open.

"File into that room!" he bellowed to the harassed men.

To get quick action he fired a shot. He was no marksman. He did not own a gun. He almost got a man by the shot. A hat flew off. But the shot had the desired effect. Those nearest to the door turned and walked through. Joash fired again. The others crowded to the door, arms up.

Joash did not pause to wonder why the bandits were crowding into the room rather than opening fire on him. They may have been afraid of him, or of the approaching racket outside. Or they may have thought to escape, once beyond the door.

As they crowded, with backs to him, Joash hissed at the Straddler:

"Come! Come to me!"

The chieftain, arms elevated, followed after the gun that Joash held as if it were a rope drawing him. Outside the door, Joash slammed and hooked it, then sprang behind the Straddler and, poking savagely with the pistol barrel, ordered him to run toward the river.

"I'll kill! I'll kill!" he threatened.

The Straddler broke into a clumsy trot. In a moment they were going down the hill. And at the same time running, scattered burros began to cross their path. A firecracker on the tail of one exploded. It seemed to be the final shot.

The Straddler comprehended the trick that had been played on him. He turned around bellowing.

Joash fired pointblank. The bandit's right arm fell limply.

"Trot to the river!" spat out Joash. "I'll drill ye!"

The Straddler trotted.

At the water's edge he faced around once more to protest.

"Wade in!" ordered Joash. "I'll turn ye over to Ranger Bud Milroy or I'll kill ye!"

He fired over the man's head to accelerate movements. The Straddler went splashing and plunging toward the Texas shore.

THE early morning sun was beginning to get hot. Old Joash and his young friend Jim sat atop the fence of the empty corral. Buzzards floated overhead. Joash liked buzzards, in a way. They typified freedom, so high up there, and flying where they pleased; and they suggested the cool breath of altitudes.

"Only two of the birds this morning," he observed to Jim. "And they're flying powerful high."

"Wish they'd come close," said Jim, dandling a six-shooter. "I could eat a buzzard."

"Too bad you didn't get any barbecue over there last night."

"Huh, it was only the bones I smelt, and the stick the animal was spitted on over the fire. As I said, there maybe was meat around some place, but when the Mexes found out the dirty trick you played on 'em they got to stirrin' around and didn't give me any chance to look much. They shot several times at me and Hunt before we got away."

"The gang's busted up anyhow, with the Straddler in jail."

"We could eat if you'd let me take this ol' gun and sell it," urged Jim.

"No-siree-bob! That gun was taken off the prisoner, and I'll turn it over to Bud Milroy all right and proper. Reminds me, we got to find some way to pay Coons for them things I stole last night. Lye and bluing and superior leather oil and——"

"Shut up!"

Jim was haggard from hunger. Had he not been in that condition more than once before he would have called himself sick. Joash knew by the emptiness of his own stomach how the youth must be suffering, and after pondering a while he took pity.

"Tell ye, Jim," said he. "We got to drop our pride and hit Bud for a loan so's we can eat."

Jim brightened.

"There's Bud now, coming up the hill."

The Ranger, evidently out for his morning stroll, came along slowly. The two men on the fence waited tensly for the outcome of their plan. When at last Bud was in hailing distance, Joash called out:

"Hello, Bud. How's tricks?"

"Tricks are all to the merry, Joash, and the Straddler's still in jail. You're all right, old man."

"Say, Bud, yuh couldn't loan us a dollar, couldja, for a few days?"

Joash and Jim held their breath. The Ranger looked them over with a wise eye. He delayed answer while he scanned the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. Burros—little figures against the brown earth—could be seen here and there moving about hungrily and nibbling at the sparse foliage.

"Reckon all your property is over there on the other side," observed Bud. "Reckon your little scheme o' pattering hoofs to break up the Straddler's raid busted you financially, didn't it, Joash?"

"Kinda," acknowledged Joash. "But I'll get on my feet somehow. May go to work."

The Ranger pulled out a silver dollar from his pants pocket and tossed it to the old man. Jim grunted at the, so to say, impact.

"Reckon you know, don't you, Joash," asked Bud, "that the Government's been offering a thousand-dollar reward for the Straddler?"

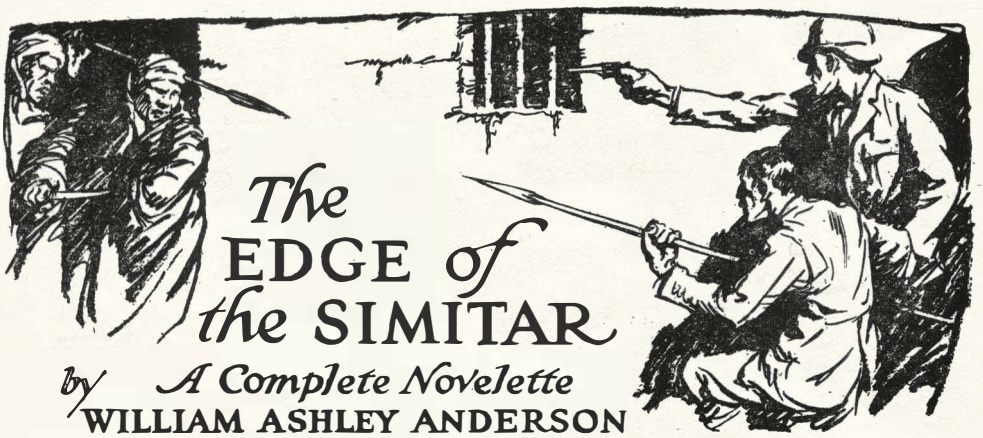
Joash and Jim slid from the fence with pop eyes and sagging jaws.

"What did you say?" asked Joash.

"Sure; a thousand dollars reward. All you got to do is apply for it with proper proofs, and I'll help furnish the proofs."

Joash slowly pushed his hat to the other side of his head, then, changing hands, he pushed it back again. His diminutive figure gyrated in a half-dozen dance steps. He brought up rubbing his hands together and looking at the Ranger comically.

"Say, Bud," said he, "loan us another dollar and we'll take you to breakfast down to Tubby's."



The EDGE of the SIMITAR

A Complete Novelette

by WILLIAM ASHLEY ANDERSON

Author of "The Elevation of an Emperor," "The Trial of a Timid Man," etc.

IT WAS one of the calm, languid nights of Aden's August in 1916. Hillot Cohusac, stretched out in a long Bombay chair of teak-wood with an inlaid tabouret of Cairo workmanship beside it, turned his pallid face up to the vast, cloudless sky and let out a strangled sigh. He let it out slowly, because even in the sanctuary of his roof-top he took no chance of cracking the shell of courage that sustained him. Thin to the point of frailness, suffering pain at almost every movement, he turned gingerly in his cushions and shifted his gaze to the small table, spread with immaculate linen and gleaming glass and silverware.

All at once he smiled at a memory—a dazzling smile, a smile that was almost of madness. Slowly, with slight jerks, wincing at every movement, he sat up and swung his feet with elaborate precautions upon the cement floor. Then he reached trembling for a cigaret, lighted it, dropped the cigaret from his lips and put his face into his hands.

"What a rotten end!" the Frenchman murmured with real anguish. "What a rotten way to end it all!"

His glossy black hair fell in long wisps through his white fingers. He was a figure of complete dejection. A huge, bare-footed Arab in a long white *kanza** and white embroidered skull-cap appeared at the door that opened on to the stairway.

"*Effendi!*" (Excellency) he said quietly.

Cohusac lifted his head sharply, brushing his hair back in the same motion, and smiled quickly.

"What is it, Hamid?" speaking easily in Arabic.

"The meal is prepared, *effendi.* Shall I serve it?

"*Bismillah!* In the name of Allah!"

Hamid came forward and assisted his master to the table. From this position Cohusac could look out over the neighboring roofs. The clustering white, block-like buildings of the old city lay almost precisely in the center of an ancient crater, the eastern portion of which had fallen into the sea. On all sides therefore rose the barren, honeycombed slopes, whose ragged edge stood outlined against the deep-blue sky as if torn out of cardboard—on all sides except the gap in the east, through which the moon poured a silver flood.

Against the rising moon, and thus far effectually screening it, rose the abandoned citadel of Cirrir on top of an isolated promontory, around which the moonlight poured. Moonlight shone through the gun-ports; Cohusac could imagine the bats whirring breathlessly in the dark wells that were ammunition-hoists.

"That," said Cohusac bitterly, "is like me! There is nothing left but a history and a shell!"

He took a sip of the innocuous Amer Picon beside his plate, then pushed it aside with a slight air of amused exasperation.

"It is turtle soup," said Hamid, placing a dish in front of Cohusac and dropping a slice of lime into it.

Cohusac liked this, and he ate it slowly, in silence, while Hamid retired to the doorway, keeping his eyes upon his master with

* A garment resembling a nightgown.

an expectant but detached air. As soon as it appeared that the soup was done, Hamid returned with a plate of crisp panfish. This was succeeded by a pilau of chicken, tenderly cooked and carefully shredded through a pile of rice and almonds and raisins. Afterward there was an orange-colored sherbet made from mangoes which had arrived that day by the rarest of luck straight from Bombay.

"It is all excellent, Hamid," said Cohusac; and the big Arab, profoundly gratified, murmured appreciatively.

He lighted a cigaret for the young Frenchman and poured the sweet Mocha coffee, which foamed in the cup like rich chocolate.

"It is all excellent; but it lacks one essential to a perfect meal. Where are the guests?"

"*Effendi*, between the cook and myself we may serve a meal; but guests are the gift of Allah!"

"Good, Hamid! Do you remember the guests who used to sit at this table—the the English, the Germans, the French, the Americans, the Italians? *Sahibs* and *memsahibs?* Do you remember the music? We used to dance there in the moonlight when a mailship came in! They were gay, those people!

"You were the gayest, *effendi!* The laughter in your heart made merriment for all! You were master of their hearts—you were master of their wit—you were master of their courage!"

"Thank —— for Hamid!" murmured Cohusac, but with a disparaging gesture.

Aloud he said:

"Well, what is it that has done this? Why is it that the object you see before you is nothing but a wreck—an incapable wreck—and of all those people you used to see dancing, laughing, calling — there — and there — and there! — nothing remains but shadows? No! Nothing but a memory!"

"It is fate, *effendi!*" declared Hamid, moistening his lips.

"No! It is this cursed war!" exclaimed the Frenchman wildly. "It is this cursed, incomprehensible war! If I could get my hands upon the throats of those who are responsible! It is the result of a selfish madness. If I could for one moment meet face to face the instigator!

"Pah! You see, Hamid, sickness makes us cowards! I talk like a fool! There is no power that can bring back the day that is gone—there is no power that can recall the friend that has passed!"

At this moment an Englishman appeared at the doorway—thin, burned by wind and sun, quick, almost furtive, in his movements. He hesitated only to see if Cohusac were alone. Then he advanced quickly, slinging a battered sun-helmet into a chair.

"Hello, Cohusac!" he said crisply. "Hello, there, old boy! *Bismillah*, Hamid! Get me something to drink."

Hamid gave a hissing sound and recoiled a step, jerking his hand up to his lips. Cohusac rose straight out of his chair, toppling it over backward; stared with wild eyes for an instant as the sandy-haired Englishman moved toward him; choked over the words that crowded to his tongue for utterance. Finally he managed to stammer over and over again:

"Hickson! Hickson! Hickson!"

"You look as though you heard the shrieking of the banshee," said Hickson. "Come out of it! I'm no blinking ghost! Hamid! For Heaven's sake! My throat's powdered with resin! You didn't keep me waiting like this the last time I was here!"

Cohusac rushed forward with awkward, shambling strides and seized him by hand and shoulder, crying out:

"I was entertaining ghosts! Hickson! You are a manifestation! You are soaking wet—your legs caked with mud— Look, Hamid! He needs a shave—the immaculate Hickson! Sit down—oh, my old friend, sit down! What has happened? Something has happened! Quick! There is something in the wind! Hamid! *Impshi, y'homar!** Don't stand there like a donkey! Bring Hickson *effendi* something to eat!"

"Bring me something to *drink!*" yelled Hickson with sudden exasperation.

Cohusac gave a shout of hysteric laughter and fell into his chair.

"It is the real Hickson," he said, spluttering. "To the life!"

"Yes," said Hickson, sitting down and emptying the dregs from the various glasses on the table. "Yes; it's me all right. Half-dead! Old boy, Cohusac! Think of it! My ——, you look as though they'd skinned you and stuffed you with Camembert! Heard you'd got a knockout; but you act spry enough. Where the dickens has Hamid gone with that drink?"

* Clear out, you donkey.

Hamid entered with a tray, on which were two bottles, a bowl of ice, a fresh siphon of soda and two glasses.

Hickson poured out three fingers rapidly, gulped it down feverishly, twisted his face in a grimace, smacked his lips and murmured—

"Rank stuff!"

Hamid prepared a second glass in a more leisurely manner, filling it with chipped ice and foaming soda. He caught the Englishman's eye and both involuntarily broke into broad grins, Hamid murmuring, "*Effendi*, you cool the eye!" and Hickson, "Good old Hamid!"

At the same instant there appeared the cook, a long, dark, furtive Goanese, followed by a little fat shuffling *chokra* with nothing on but a *footah*—a garment like a colored petticoat twisted about his waist—and a skull-cap, both bearing dishes of food hastily retrieved from the remains of Cohusac's repast, and looking appetizing enough in the fresh dishes. At their appearance Hickson jerked nervously about in his chair and looked hard at them. The Goanese whispered a faint greeting; the *chokra* swelled with self-consciousness.

"Well, well, Diego Felice Fernandez! How are you?" said Hickson with relief. "Sticking to Mr. Cohusac, what! It's lighter work now with the gang away! Seems empty without 'em, Cohusac; doesn't it?"

"It is empty."

"Lonely, what!"

"Yes. Lonely."

"I don't get a chance to feel lonely; and yet, do you know, so help me bob, you're the first European I've laid eyes on in three weeks!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Cohusac incredulously as his friend began to eat his meal with a famished air, occasionally lifting his head to mumble replies with a full mouth and look quickly about him. "How is it possible for you to be here without having seen some one—at least at Steamer Point?"

"Didn't come that way," said Hickson.

The servants had retired. Hickson paused to make sure that he heard their voices below the landing. He waved his fork toward the dark, ragged mountains.

"Came that way," he said.

"What!" exclaimed Cohusac softly, leaning over the table and watching his friend greedily.

"*Dhow*," explained Hickson. "I'm playing hookey. I suppose your blasted servants will blow the news all over town in the next few hours. Oh, well, *hathur!* * I'll be on my way by that time. There! I've finished that. Thank —— for a hearty meal! Well, old boy, if you'll just get Hamid to clear away the wreckage I'll tell you everything. Matter of fact, I want your help."

COHUSAC clapped his hands, and the servants reappeared and cleared the table, while Hickson rose, lighting a cigaret with trembling hands, and walked over to the parapet whence he looked down upon Aidroos Road, shadowed in square patches by the buildings that lined it. He listened in silence, smoking, collecting his thoughts, harkening to the irregular bursts of sound that rose above the curious, incessant murmur of the bazaar.

"What's the bright bluish light over by the courts, near the edge of the *maidan*?" he asked over his shoulder.

"A cinema," said Cohusac. "Come. Sit down. We're alone."

"Fancy! Good lord, I might go down and see a moving-picture show!"

"We'll go tomorrow night," declared Cohusac with enthusiasm.

Hickson gave a short laugh.

"No chance. If the wind and the all-merciful Allah favor me, I'll be in Africa again tomorrow."

He sat down at the table with his lean freckled hands twisting and untwisting before him. At last he reached over impulsively and laid his hand on the Frenchman's forearm, which felt bony within the sleeve of the mess jacket.

"Old boy—I—I'm awfully sorry to see you crocked up like this! They told me you got it bad; but—but I didn't expect—Well, hang it! The contrast, you know, of you sitting there like you are now—and, eh, and the way I remember you right here on this roof——"

"I feel it myself," said Cohusac. "Sometimes I feel it very acutely."

"Is there much pain?"

"Well, naturally. But not always. If I'm distracted it doesn't bother me so much. You look worn yourself, Hickson."

Hickson shrugged with an air of contempt, as if the physical burdens that were

*No matter!

imposed upon him were worth hardly a thought.

"How did it happen?"

"Which?"

"Good ——, did they get you more than once?"

"Well, yes. Once under the ground; and once up in the air." The Englishman made an inarticulate cluck of sympathy; and Cohusac explained.

"The first time, I walked into a barrage. It was muddy. A shell exploded beside me; but all I realized was—there I was all at once in my grave!

"Just about as I was getting ready to look for the pearly gates—*pam!*—another one!—and there I was sitting on the edge of a crater without a stitch of clothes on, face to face with my officer. His eyes were bulging out. What do you suppose he said? He said:

" 'You, Cohusac! Where the —— have you been?'

"What could I say to that?"

"I can imagine it," said Hickson with fascination. "Were you hurt?"

"Well, I don't know; but my skin was blue color for a month. When I came out of the hospital the doctors shrugged. But when they examined me for the air service there was nothing wrong."

"Oh, that's where you got the other. I remember now. A bullet in the stomach or something like that, wasn't it?"

"A tracer bullet, Hicky."

"Oh, good God!" said Hickson with horror.

"Right up here, tucked under the muscles like a cigar. Have you ever had the head of a match fly off and—eh—sizzle on the end of your finger? Well, they said the phosphorus was sizzling for sixteen hours——"

"Oh, good God!" repeated Hickson, shuddering and gripping his friend's arm with desperate sympathy. "And you lived!"

"Partially," said Cohusac with a sardonic smile; "but it doesn't do me very much good. Frankly, I find it meaningless. I lie here in the hot sunlight and read, and after a while it bores me. At night I lie here and look at the stars, and after a while they rather frighten me. It makes a man lonely. Every one is busy, you know; I have little company. When I go out, Hamid carries me into a *gharry*, and up and down stairs. I disgust myself."

"What do the medicos say?"

"Oh, I am very interesting—psychologically! My wounds are healed; but my nerves do not heal. They say I will be dead in six months. Pah! What do I care?" he cried with sudden passion. "I tell you, this sort of existence is hell! It is hell!"

For a moment the two friends were silent, Hickson still holding on to Cohusac's arm, feeling instinctively that that sympathetic contact might communicate some subtle reassurance.

"You see," said Cohusac in a quieter tone, as if trying to justify himself, "I think when I was buried my surface nerves must have been bruised or something of the sort that made them particularly sensitive; and then the other thing—in my vitals, you see—inflamed everything. That's about it. I feel flames inside me—and sometimes running over me."

"Ugh!" said Hickson. "And fools like me go about grousing because we have a little extra work chucked at us!"

"No, no, no, Hickson! That is the wrong idea. We all take chances. Who knows what our fate is going to be? No! It is this cursed war! If we could only say this is the man who instigated it, or that is the clique that is responsible, and single them out for appropriate punishment, there might be some gain to humanity. We would not mind so much this suffering. But it is the futility of the pain that is killing. It kills the body first perhaps; but it also consumes the mind."

"Do you mean," said Hickson, picking his words, "that you might find some relief—in distraction, say—if it were possible for you to locate a man who is deliberately instigating war, and help in his punishment?"

"What pleasure!"

"That," said Hickson grimly," is just what I am trying to do at the present moment!"

After a pause, during which the two looked at each other steadily—Hickson with pale-blue eyes inflamed from sun and sea and Cohusac with eyes of velvet that could be as expressive as a storm or as unfathomable as a dark, cloudless sky—the Frenchman said:

"That is what ten million armed men in Europe are attempting at the present moment. I know you are a person of great daring, originality and initiative; but I can not quite believe you are stalking the Kaiser. Still, you are capable of the effort."

"My job," said Hickson dryly, "is trying to govern, and uphold the prestige of the British Empire, in a piece of Somaliland that's as big as Switzerland and as wild as —as— Well, I don't know any place that's wilder! There are about ten million armed men in Europe, as you say, trying to enforce law among civilized people; I've got nine white men to assist me with five hundred camel constabulary—with dervishes raiding the grazing-lands and intertribal scraps breaking out every fortnight. I give you my word, the little Dutch jigger who tried to keep the sea out by plugging the dike with his finger had nothing on me!"

Cohusac began to laugh gaily, shaking his head derisively. While he was laughing the *chokra* came in and salaamed; Cohusac dismissed him; Diego Felice Fernandez followed; then came the second boy; and after him, Hamid, a magnificent figure, salaaming with dignity.

"Hamid," said Hickson suddenly, "is Yusuf Sangoi still in the bazaar?"

"Yes, *effendi*," said Hamid with a look of displeasure.

"What is the talk?"

Hamid stirred uneasily, looking from the Englishman to his master; but Cohusac's air of smiling expectancy reassured him.

"*Effendi*," said he, "you are an official of the Government; and the new law says no one is to repeat a rumor."

"Do you consider that a word in my ear is a rumor? It was I first mentioned Yusuf Sangoi."

"*Taibl** There is no real news, *effendi*. Yusuf Sangoi sometimes gets restless and talks mysteriously to Somalis. The Somalis are insolent, of course; but that is the nature of a Somali. We have heard there is a mullah who is waving the green banner."

"Ever since 1910, when our forces were withdrawn to the coast," interjected Hickson bitterly, "we've had to fight to bolster up our lost prestige. Any mad mullah who waves a green flag and calls on the Prophet can get a following large enough to make trouble for us. You have no idea of the terrific potentialities in that country! Anything else, Hamid?"

"No, *effendi*."

"How about Abyssinia?"

"Allah!" murmured Hamid.

"Abyssinia!" exclaimed Cohusac with sudden interest. "What is happening there?"

"Ah, what *is* happening there?" said Hickson with a look of fierceness. "That's just the question."

"*Effendi*, there has been curious talk about Abyssinia—much talk—talk about this—talk about that—but who knows the meaning of it? There are Abyssinians in the bazaar. I have seen them. Many ivory merchants come to the house of Abu Khalil."

"That is just around the corner," said Cohusac with suspicious mildness. "I have done business with Abu Khalil myself. He is a well-known merchant and has a large establishment."

Cohusac glanced at Hamid and caught him grinning. He nodded his head with a reproving smile.

"Hamid, you see too much! You have my permission to go. *Salaam!*"

Hamid retired. The old, pock-marked watchman came in with his lantern, announced his arrival and shuffled downstairs to take his place at the door.

"Now," said Cohusac earnestly, "what is this about Abyssinia?"

Hickson began playing with the matches on the table, frowning. He was nervous, uncertain, rattled; and, having just concluded an exhausting and dangerous voyage in an open *dhow* from the Benadir Coast across the Gulf of Aden and on foot over the towering, crumbling slopes of the promontory, he was fatigued, and his impatient nature was rapidly becoming irascible. Anxiety increased his nervousness.

"On the other hand," said Hickson decisively, looking up suddenly straight into Cohusac's eyes, "what is this about the house of Abu Khalil? What do you know about it? Can you see it from here?"

A bland, fatuous look softened Cohusac's countenance. His eyes became dreamy. His sensuous lips curved in a serene smile.

"All I know," said he, "is that there is an extraordinarily beautiful woman in the *harimlikl*"*

"Oh, ——!" exclaimed Hickson furiously.

Rising abruptly to his feet, he paced up and down near the parapet, scratching the back of his head with both hands, darting his head over to peer down into the street, occasionally lifting his eyes with a quick movement to the moon and stars as a desert

* Correct!

* Place of the harem.

traveler takes note of his position and the passing of time. At last he controlled himself and came back to his friend.

"Cohusac," he said plaintively, "you don't quite understand. I didn't come over here on a lark. There is something of appalling significance about to happen in Abyssinia. In these days no one who has the remotest connection with the Government at home gives a —— about what is happening in northeast Africa. They leave it to us poor beggars to keep our districts in order. But we've got to do more than that. And we are!"

"And what has this to do with the pretty lady at Abu Khalil's?"

Hickson permitted an exasperated laugh to express his feelings.

"I suppose you're incurable on that score, Cohusac! If I could keep the woman in the foreground, I could hold your interest! Unfortunately the affair has little to do with women except as to the part they play as agents. No! I'm here trying secretly to avert another war; or, if I can't do that, to try to swing it in our favor."

Cohusac whistled softly.

"It's as bad as that?"

"Every bit. You heard what Hamid said. Ever since the beginning of the war, when Somalis were permitted to stalk around in the streets of Aden carrying their spears and their insolence with them, it has been getting harder and harder to control the tribes. Here's this Yusuf Sangoi, executioner for the old Mad Mullah, boasting within yelling-distance of this very house of the rotten atrocities he has committed.

"That's nothing! Creatures like that are simply pawns. But, I assure you, the Somalis are stirred up. They're ready for a spark! And all my information shows that the spark is coming—coming from the direction of Abyssinia——"

"But, Hickson," interposed Cohusac, "what has this to do with me? Why have you come to me?"

"Old boy, I'll tell you. You know the international jealousy that has existed for years over Abyssinia? How every great European power has been trying to get its finger in that pie? And how they get their fingers burned, too, by the way? Well, there is so much suspicion among the representatives of the nations with legations in Abyssinia that no one trusts the other. This part of the world is lousy with agents, each spying on the other. There is no cooperation toward a common end—which just now ought to be to insure the safety of the Allies until the end of the war in Europe. That's so, isn't it?"

"Exactly, *copain!*"

"Well, certainly I'm an authority on conditions in Somaliland; and I know—by ——, I *know*—that something serious is going to happen! And yet I can't impress the seriousness of the situation on my Government. When they realize it, it will be too late. There's only one thing left for me to do, and that is—go it alone! I came over here to Aden secretly—without any authority—I'll probably be cashiered if it's discovered!—to see you!—because—because—" Hickson brought his fist down on the table with a crash that defied all sentimentality—"because you are the only intelligent man I know with ideals, courage and the freedom to act."

Hickson's voice dropped.

"But no," he added bitterly; "the war has already crippled you."

"You might be surprized at what I can do with a little inspiration, Hicky!"

Cohusac's eyes were smoldering. He walked unaided to the edge of the roof, craning his neck to look about the corner. Returning, he said—

"When must you go back?"

"Tonight."

"I see. Well, if you can take these risks out of an extraordinary sense of duty you may count on me to help you. I can understand that Aden is a center of much intrigue. I will keep my eyes open. You know what that means! Now if you want a look at the house of Abu Khalil, I know a place where you can obtain it without exciting suspicion."

"I'll be recognized on the street," said Hickson, pressing Cohusac's hand to show his gratitude.

"It is only a few steps in the shadow around the corner. A friend of mine lives there—an American named Sevier—a fine fellow, representing an American firm of exporters and importers. You will like him. From his living-quarters on the third floor we can peek over the roof-tops at Abu Khalil's."

"Can you walk?" asked Hickson.

"In the name of Allah! Give me sufficient inspiration and I'll return to Africa with you!"

II

SEVIER had returned from a boring evening at the moving-picture show, where he had sat for two hours looking at a ridiculously antiquated film that had amused him in Philadelphia ten years before. The evening, however, had not been precisely wasted. The audience was sufficiently entertaining.

Gentlemanly Parsees with varnished hats and long dusters; bearded Khojas with coiled turbans of tarnished tinsel; tall, thin Somalis, whose delicate features showed their Asiatic origin despite their black hair; Bedouins, sun-tanned, hairy, half-naked, with a wild and furtive air about them; red-faced English soldiers in short breeches that showed their bare knees; silky-bearded Jews with weeping eyes and curls dangling over their ears; beautifully featured Banians, mild-eyed, with girded loins and the caste-mark on their foreheads; sallow-skinned Arabs of all sorts, in nightgown-like *kanzas*, *footahs* of all colors, tinseled jackets, turbans, tarbooshes and embroidered skull-caps, bearded, smooth-shaven or with the crisp little mustaches of *boulevardiers;* and scattered among them all, pale-faced Europeans with long red noses, sun-bleached eyes and an air of ineffable boredom—all had interested him. With hazel eyes, easily lighted with good-humor, yet calm with an expression that showed the American was always under safe control, he had watched the audience.

What stories! The Bedouin fingering the handle of his *jambeer* * and looking furtively at the spindly *askari* on guard at the door! Two Arabs with clasped hands covered with a scarf, discussing a deal in coffee through the silent medium of the fingers! A fat English soldier staring with bulging eyes at a slim Somali girl laughing loudly to show her beautiful teeth!

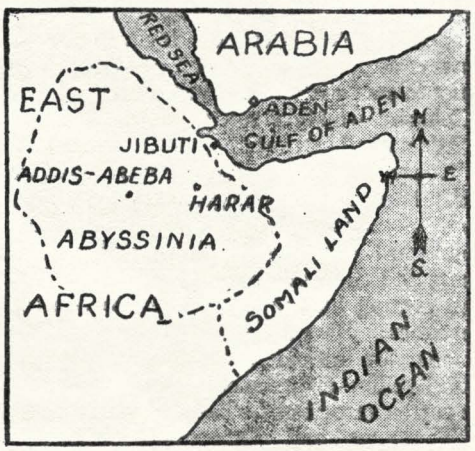
Desperate-eyed youngsters wriggling on their bare bellies under the walls of woven palm! The fat, arrogant Jew accompanied by a large, smirking family! A group of Abyssinians with short, curly beards and broad-brimmed felt hats, looking with somber eyes at the astounding spectacle of *Nick Carter* being pursued through the sewers of Paris by *Sherlock Holmes* in a Canadian canoe!

* A curved, double-edged dagger worn in the front of the belt.

These Abyssinians had made an impression on Sevier. The faces of many of the men in the audience were familiar; but the Abyssinians were figures out of the ordinary. Moreover, they had noticed him, calling one another's attention to his presence, and this attention filled him with a slight uneasiness.

When he reached home Sevier undressed thoughtfully; but instead of going immediately to bed he passed through the vast arched chamber that was his dining-room and out on to the broad veranda that opened upon the *maidan* and looked out upon the silvered bay. The white, shining moon was directly overhead. The light was so clear and brilliant that it was quite possible to read without a lamp.

Sevier noticed that the sleepers on the roof-tops and on *charpoys* drawn across the doorways of the gray-and-white buildings



had carefully taken the precaution of drawing blankets or sheets over their heads; they looked like sacks of coffee thrown about haphazardly.

The crowd from the moving picture had filtered away into the bazaar. Sounds of active life were rapidly dying away. He could hear the distant rumble of the disposal carts going about their unpleasant business; but in the bazaar behind him there still sounded occasional bursts of laughter.

Abu Khalil's house on the street behind was particularly lively. The arcade was brightly lighted with huge kerosene force-lamps about whose blue globes a cloud of insects buzzed. The raised floor of the arcade

was in use as a piazza, with handsome rugs thrown upon it and cushioned divans placed against the front of the building.

Attracted by the loud talking and bursts of laughter, Sevier turned away from the deserted street in front of the house and shuffled in sandal feet through the shadows of his own spacious quarters to the rear of the house. From here he could look over the roof of his godown and see all that was going on.

Abu Khalil had guests. Some were standing arguing in low, earnest tones, gripping each other's hands; but others were seated on rugs whose colors shone richly against a background of white cement. They were smoking hubble-bubbles and playing chess and parchisi. Sevier had met some of them in the course of business—two sheiks from Osman with tanned, taut skin and wrinkled eyes, who had made the long journey across the Indian Ocean in an open *dhow* with a cargo of honey, dates and rugs; a deposed sultan from the Hadremaut, a full-figured, arrogant man with a short, thick, black beard and a turban of white silk beaded with seed pearls; two recent *hadjis* who had made a pilgrimage to Mecca in spite of the difficulties of war-time, and were seated with their backs against the wall, eyes lowered reading the Koran with all the concentration of freshly inspired devotees; and the black-cloaked Abyssinians whom he had noticed at the show.

The Abyssinians were talking to Abu Khalil. Abu Khalil was a large, affable man with a smooth-shaven chin. He wore a decorated jacket over a plain white shirt, a bright plaid *footah* hitched high to show his powerful hairy calves, sandals of mother-of-pearl inlay, and a jeweled *jambeer* whose hilt protruded from a sash wound round his waist. He wore a simple white turban twisted on a skull-cap. His good-natured, swaggering appearance was emphasized by his small, pointed mustache; but somewhat belied by the uneasiness of his eyes, and his air of expecting some unwelcome person to appear suddenly from around the corner.

With the Abyssinians he spoke volubly in a hoarse whisper, his head thrust forward, his hands flung outward with every emphasis; while they listened, solemnly nodding their heads, occasionally turning to look behind them. Sevier watched every movement with curious intentness. In fact, so effectively did he project himself that he was entirely unaware that any one had entered his own house until he heard Cohusac's voice behind him—

"*Hodi!*"

On some strange impulse Sevier whirled about and flung himself deeper into the shadows; but too late for the movement to escape the trained vision of the man from Somaliland.

"There's some one!" he whispered to Cohusac, guiding him into the dining-room. "I saw him through the arch there looking across at Abu Khalil's!"

"*Hodi*, Sevier!" called Cohusac again.

"Hello!" said Sevier walking out of his bedroom, his touseled hair and sleepy manner indicating that he had just turned in. "Come in. Have a drink. The boys have all gone for the night, but if you'll sit down I think I can rustle out a bottle. How in the world did you manage to crawl up here, Cohusac?"

The Frenchman's manner suddenly changed to one of whimsical lightness. He introduced Hickson with a flowery phrase. The American acknowledged the introduction without any great degree of warmth, because he seemed to feel that there was a sort of latent hostility toward him on the part of all Englishmen in uniform. Hickson felt equally reserved, but his natural impulsiveness could not be kept in restraint long.

"I'm showing him the night life of great Aden—sentinel of the seas!" exclaimed Cohusac airily. "Hickson can not remain long. He is a bird of passage—a night-bird—*un papillon de nuit*."

"No! So help me bob! I draw the line at that!" said Hickson indignantly. "Cohusac's inordinate sense of the romantic and his command of language—of languages, I may say!—carry him too far!"

"I've had experience with both," said the American dryly, walking about the room with a fresh bottle of whisky in his hand, looking for tumblers and a corkscrew.

"There are the tumblers on the tabouret there," said Hickson. "And we don't need a corkscrew. Here. I'll fix it."

He took the bottle from Sevier, turned it upside down and pounded it on the bottom with his palm. Having loosened the cork, he drew it with his teeth.

"A handy thing to know!" said Sevier.

"A man gets to be resourceful when he spends most of his time in the interior of Somaliland."

"Oh!" said the American with sudden interest. "You know Somaliland?"

"To the regret of the Somalis," said Cohusac. "What is happening at Abu Khalil's, Sevier?"

"You've got me," said Sevier, looking into his glass. "I don't show enough interest in my neighbors, I'm afraid. I haven't got the community spirit."

Hickson experienced a flicker of apprehension at the American's air of complete indifference, having fresh in his mind the picture of the American in silhouette darting abruptly into concealment at their approach. What discovery did he fear?

"Speaking of neighbors," said Cohusac sweetly from the long chair upon which he had stretched himself, "and of our friend Abu Khalil in particular, did you see Miriam today? The ravishing Persian peri? The jewel in the lotus? The warm Kashmiri raindrop turned into a pearl?"

"You see, he is in form!" observed the American with a short laugh; but he flushed, nevertheless, and his dark eyes glowed for an instant with anger. "You ought to accompany your questions on a guitar, Cohusac."

"But have you seen her?" insisted Cohusac.

"Look for yourself!" said Sevier irritably.

"Come," said Cohusac, rising awkwardly to his feet and taking Hickson's elbow. "If we are lucky you will see the most beautiful woman outside of France!"

The three, with their glasses in their hands, made their way to the spot from which Sevier had been looking down at Abu Khalil's guests when Hickson first saw him. The scene was exactly the same. Sevier would have added nothing at all to his previous impressions if Hickson had not ejaculated—

"There are Somalis, too!"

"Servants," said Sevier.

"Not at all. Those are tribesmen—men of importance. By ——, I know some of them!"

At that moment the tribesmen, the Abyssinians with whom they were talking, and their host, Abu Khalil, turned and looked upward at the house of the American. Moved by three distinct sets of emotion, the three Europeans, as if they had been standing upon a moving platform, sank slowly below the edge of the parapet. Cohusac began to giggle, moving with an awkward cramped shuffle to a place of better concealment; with Sevier in a state of rage and confusion following him on hands and knees, abandoning his glass; and Hickson, last of all, walking like the heraldic lion of Siam on three legs with his glass instead of a simitar held high above his head.

WHEN they reached the shelter of the dining-room Sevier burst out angrily:

"Why the ——, Cohusac, do you insist on making awkward situations for people? You know that I have business with Abu Khalil. What will he think of me hanging around in the shadows spying on him?"

"Especially with a beautiful woman in his *harimlik*, what!"

"That's just it."

Sevier turned to the Englishman.

"Some time ago I happened to look across from my bedroom, and there was a girl looking out of Abu Khalil's house, watching me. I admit that she was beautiful; but that's not so much in my line as in Cohusac's. Well, as soon as our romantic friend here heard of it, he began camping in my bedroom, ruffling himself like a partridge, smirking, waving, whistling—making a darned scandal in my house!"

"Any success?" said Hickson to Cohusac, grinning over his glass.

Cohusac brushed the curls back from his forehead and, rolling his eyes languishingly, murmured—

"You'd be surprized!"

"That's rot! That's —— rot!" said Sevier explosively. "That kind of woman is unapproachable—and she certainly would not be making assignations. I can picture you climbing to her window!"

"Give me sufficient inspiration, and you will be astounded at what I can still force this flimsy body to do."

"Sorry, old boy! I'll bet you're right, too! Eh, Col. Hickson, do I understand that you've just come over from Somaliland? I didn't know the *Tadjoura* had brought any passengers."

"Oh, I come and go; I come and go," said Hickson uneasily. "The Protectorate has an interest in Aden, you know. We have a wireless station here; and a lot of our supplies are stored here."

"Any good shooting over there?"

Hickson laughed.

"Not much chance for me, unless the game walks into my gun. No! We're too busy these days for sport."

"I understand there's talk of another Mad Mullah running loose."

"What! Have you heard that, too?"

"Oh, rumors, you know. We hear all sorts of things. This news from Abyssinia is the most picturesque, though. Rather confused, but it sounds interesting—even though it does shoot holes into the market. I suppose that Mad-Mullah business is all talk; but the Abyssinian trouble seems real enough."

"So the Somalis seem to think."

"Is that so?" said Sevier a bit too eagerly. "What is their attitude?"

"Just about what you'd expect," said Hickson smoothly, picking up the bottle and looking at the American expectantly in order to catch the expression; but Sevier's countenance only showed an impersonal interest as he shook his head. "What do you hear on this side?"

"Not much more than we get in the official dispatches. So far as I can understand it the situation is this: Since the death of the old emperor, Menelik the Great, the throne of Abyssinia has been occupied by his grandson, Lidj Yassou, the son of the King of Wallo, Ras Mikail. Lidj Yassou is said to be a weakling and a particular friend of the Somalis. Anyway the French and Italian and British ministers at the capital, Addis-Abeba, have been protesting against the Abyssinians sending arms and ammunition into Somaliland and stirring up the tribesmen. They all seem afraid of trouble starting in Abyssinia."

"Quite right. My ——, do you realize what it means!" exclaimed Hickson excitedly.

"Not quite," said Sevier blankly. "What is the chief danger?"

Hickson cursed himself.

"Why—eh—tribal warfare! This tribal warfare is rotten business!"

"Abyssinia is a Christian country," said Sevier after a pause, looking calmly from Cohusac, who was watching him with eyes twinkling with interest, to Hickson, who was looking into his whisky-and-water and swilling it about nervously. "It's a Christian country. It's been Christian since the third century—as fanatically Christian as, well, as the Senussi, for instance, are fanatically Mohammedan. Surely you don't expect them to fraternize with the Somalis in tribal disturbances?"

Hickson was ready to explode with pent-up information; but he restrained himself with an effort.

"You don't seem to understand that Abyssinia is *not* entirely Christian. Abyssinia is an empire—not a tribe. It is divided into four great groups—the Gallas in the south and southwest; the Shoans in the center; the Tigreans in the north; and the Dankalis in the east.

"Among these there are a lot of other races and tribes mixed—from savage negroes in the southwest to the purely Jewish Falashas. Somalis are mixed with the Gallas. The Gallas are mostly Mohammedan; the Dankalis are entirely Mohammedan and under very slight control by the Abyssinian Great Council; and the Tigreans in the north are mixed.

"Only the Shoans—the dominant nation in Abyssinia—are absolutely Christian. In other words, numerically there is a pretty fair balance between the Mohammedans and Christians; and if you throw the weight of the Somalis with the Mohammedans then the Christians are outnumbered!"

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Sevier, "that you honestly believe Abyssinian Christianity is in danger of being overthrown? That Lidi Yassou's interest in the Somalis is carried to the extent you suggest?"

"Mr. Sevier, I have seen Lidj Yassou within the last month with a turban on his head!"

The Englishman had no sooner said this than he felt he had said too much. His own intensity of interest in the matter had carried him away. The conversation had got beyond him. Without another word he rose abruptly to his feet, Sevier in his excitement rising with him.

"Come, Cohusac," blurted Hickson; "I'm dog-tired!"

"*Nu!*" said Cohusac with a sigh. "In other days the evening would be just commencing. What an exciting time! A lecture on political geography!"

"Excitement will come of it!" said Hickson.

"If you wait until I put some clothes on," suggested Sevier, "I'll give you a hand. My ——, you mean you actually saw him with a turban on his head?"

"Exactly that, sir!"

"But that," said the American, overwhelmed by the significance of this simple bit of news, "is certainly the beginning! It is an open avowal!"

HICKSON and Cohusac took many minutes negotiating the long, dark stairway of stone that led straight down to the street, Cohusac groaning and staggering at every step but making a joke of his progress nevertheless until they stepped out into the dust and moonlight.

The declining moon cast deep, inky shadows along one side of the silent street, but bathed the opposite side in a light that was as clear and pervasive as a sunless day. With Cohusac leaning heavily on his shoulder the Englishman kept well to the center of the street. On the lighted side the white walls were unbroken except by heavy bolted doors; but on the shaded side several narrow alleyways, thrown completely into deep darkness by the high buildings that flanked them, opened into the broad street.

"It's an instinct with me," said Hickson apologetically; "but I think we'll keep more on the sunny side!"

"I wish you'd have as much regard for my comfort as for our safety," said Cohusac plaintively. "I can well spare the extra steps."

"Ah, say you so!" exclaimed the Englishman loudly, pushing Cohusac violently so that he staggered, stumbled forward several paces and collapsed inconspicuously in his white jacket against the white wall, uttering a cry of mingled pain and fury.

At the same instant Hickson fumbled desperately in his pocket for his revolver, cursing the lack of a holster, and finally brought it forth, ducking his head involuntarily as a sound like the fluttering of bats passed over his head.

Hickson fired three shots into the mouth of the alleyway—the reports shattering the calm stillness of the night as if the air were porcelain—and backed toward the wall where Cohusac was beginnning to rise to his feet. With his left hand Hickson jerked out his whistle and began to blow a shrill, continuous alarm. The calm night awoke with clamorous sounds—*charpoys* overturning; a yabble-yabble of high-pitched, frightened voices; a tinkle of broken glass; the rattle of whistles as the *askaris* took up the alarm and thudded in their bare feet through the dusty streets looking for the disturbance.

Cohusac had regained his feet, but stooped again to pick up the spears that had clattered against the wall above his head and fallen down upon him as harmlessly as light sticks. To him it seemed that the affair was over. He claimed the souvenir.

"There they are!" said Hickson, spitting out his whistle and firing two more shots into the shadows. "By ——!" he exclaimed sharply. "They're rushing us!"

A half-dozen scattered figures, swathed in black cloaks, came out of the shadows, converging toward them like clouds of black dust whipped up by a squall. They came without a sound, determined, merciless. The Englishman, with tight-drawn lips, cursing under his breath, fired his last shot, halting one of the attackers; then he flung the empty weapon with all his strength at another. Unarmed, with his back to a wall, unable to run because of his crippled friend, Hickson looked down in an instinctive frenzy for some rocks.

"Here you are, *copain!*" said Cohusac calmly, and thrust one of the spears into his hand, at the same time placing himself on guard with another.

They were safe from knives. The six men swerved, halted, hesitated. One exclaimed explosively—

"*Deen Mohammed!*"

At that instant a huge flower-pot, flung from Sevier's *barasa* (piazza), burst like a bomb at his feet. The six promptly whirled and fled in the shadow.

"Ah!" said Hickson angrily. "I thought it was about time we had a demonstration from that quarter."

"Here come the *askaris*," said Cohusac; and, taking three very awkward steps, he flung his spear after their assailants. "*Bismillah!* That's not so bad!"

The *askaris* came panting upon the scene, long, gangling, frowning Somalis, towering over Hickson's slim, taut figure and the diminutive Cohusac. Sevier appeared in his wrapper, with a knobkerry in his hand. A well-greased and odoriferous crowd rapidly assembled, all yammering, like an orchestra of wind-instruments tuning up. Hickson began to explain to the Bengali inspector of police:

"Attempted dacoity, that's the whole sum and substance of it. Thugs! They saw Mr. Cohusac there, who's crippled as you know, staggering on my arm, and probably thought we were drunk and easy——"

"Who fired the pistol?"

"Mr. Cohusac."

"Oh, *lal*" said Cohusac, turning his head. Waving angrily at the crowd, he added:

"Stand back! Do you not see I am busy?"

And he continued to pace with extremely erratic steps the distance he had flung the spear.

"I threw the pot down from my *barasa*," explained Sevier.

"Yes," said Hickson dryly; "he threw a pot. But why the —— are you standing here asking questions? Get after them, man! We'll make all the explanations necessary in the *choki*,* tomorrow."

"Very well, sir," said the inspector, saluting.

"They went in the direction of the Somali Bazaar," said Abu Khalil obligingly, having mingled unobtrusively with some of his guests in the crowd.

Immediately the crowd scattered, and the chase was on.

"Let's push off, Cohusac," said Hickson. "They'll never catch them. I want some rest; and it'll be a rotten thing for me if my name gets mixed up with the report of any row."

Sevier walked with them as far as the corner, Cohusac with an arm around each friend's neck. At the corner Hamid appeared and, lifting his frail master to his shoulders, carried him the rest of the way. By the time they had reached his quarters, however, the Frenchman was in a condition to walk up the stairs himself had there been any necessity for doing so.

"Your demonstration," Cohusac said to Hickson with enthusiasm, "was very complete! Who were they after?"

"Me!"

"You should be proud! It was well done!"

Hickson reloaded his revolver, took the drink Hamid offered him and motioned the servants away.

"Now," he said, leaning over the table, "you are convinced?"

"Oh, I was convinced before; but I had no idea there would be action so quickly. I can't account for it."

"I must have been recognized. Those tribesmen who looked like servants to you—they know me. Couldn't you tell by the leather collars and amber beads that they were not servants? We won't go into that, though. I haven't time. Do you feel up to it? Do you think you can help me?"

* Jail.

Cohusac stood up and clapped his white fists against his frail chest.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "You have already put new life into me! I feel it tingling in my skin! Did you not see? I hurled that spear fifteen yards! If a man had been so silly as to interpose himself he would certainly have been injured!"

"This is not comedy," declared the Englishman impatiently.

"It is high romance!" murmured Cohusac, resuming his seat.

"My whole hope," said Hickson, "is to try to prevent an appalling war."

"Oh, ——!" said the Frenchman in a low, strained voice, his face turning to marble and his dark eyes blazing. "I have been forgetting the real issue! Hickson, you have really put new life into me. I told you that the doctors had graciously given me six more months. My past I gave to France. If I can give the remaining six months to humanity, I do not care what happens to me then. Tell me your plans—and count on me absolutely."

THE Englishman was deeply impressed. He had been under high pressure for days making the risky crossing from Somaliland. His sudden contact with civilized conditions had eased the pressure to a dangerous degree. In his own opinion he had blown off too much. The reaction left him mentally weary.

As he looked up at the high mountain yet to be crossed and considered the risks of getting away to sea before dawn a wave of dejection had swept over him. He had felt that the strain was a little too much. But at his old friend's words the fires suddenly leaped again. If the Frenchman could be unconquerable, he would be inflexible.

"All right, Cohusac," he said quietly; "I'll depend on you to do your best in Aden without falling into official snarls. Don't run any risk of crossing Government wires. They may have secret plans of their own.

"What I expect you to do is to ferret in the bazaar. All this sort of intrigue centers here. Use your own judgment what to do if you discover anything. I have no intention of trying to build up a scheme of cooperation, because it wouldn't work. All I hope from you is some concentrated sniping. You saw what they tried on me tonight. Well, that's what I hope you'll do, reversed!"

"Not assassination, *copain!*"

"Certainly not! But suppose I had become involved in such a way tonight that it had been necessary to place me under arrest. So far as Somaliland is concerned I would have been placed completely out of action at a time when it is of the utmost importance that I be in Somaliland in control of events."

"I understand. I am to follow every suspicious trail and set traps for dangerous persons. That means I shall haunt the bazaars in disguise."

"Is it really possible for you to do that?" said Hickson incredulously.

"It is almost second nature with me. How do you suppose I became master of my Arabic? You will see. I will be enjoying the confidence of the fair Miriam while the doubting Sevier is still biting his fingernails and staring out his back window."

"Ha!" exclaimed Hickson. "That is something that requires explanation!"

"What?"

"Your friend, Sevier. I don't trust him."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Cohusac, somewhat shocked, for he felt a genuine affection for Sevier, in whose company he spent many pleasant hours. He had found him to be a man of strength and balance—a man of assurance, surprizingly well educated, not merely in the academic sense, but also in the rich curriculum of the world.

"I tell you I don't trust him. His interest in Abu Khalil, who, I happen to know, is without the shadow of a doubt deep in this Abyssinian business, is more than casual."

"His interest in the house of Abu Khalil is in the woman Miriam."

"No, no, no, no! How can there be any common ground between the *harimlik* and the Arab's guests? If you can't keep your thoughts away from women, at least place them in a special category. This is strictly a man's business."

"But what possible interest can Sevier, an American, have in Abyssinia? His own country has no territorial ambitions there. And he is certainly too high a type of man to be used as a petty agent for some other interested power."

"Petty! Good lord, you haven't yet got the thing in right perspective! Let's appreciate the situation. We've just fought a doubtful naval battle off Jutland. We're withdrawing from Gallipoli. Verdun is being shaken badly. Mesopotamia is in pretty much of a mess. The Turks have twice almost succeeded in cutting the Suez Canal. And down south in German East Africa we're having the ——'s own time trying to clean up the colony. That's the general situation—very, very dubious! Any new and unexpected development that threatens our vital communications will be almost fatal. That's clear.

"Well then, what's the situation in Abyssinia? There is an empire that has never been successfully conquered, with a history that runs back into the time of the ancient Egyptians; it has several times overrun Egypt and established dynasties there. Once it sent an army of a milion to Palestine and raised the siege of Jerusalem. Cambyses, who conquered everything, could not even penetrate Abyssinia. Even in modern times no one has been able to touch it. The amazing power of the Mohammedans at the height of their success when they swept clear across Africa and up into Spain, and southward beyond Zanzibar, could not shake Abyssinia. The Mahdi who blanketed the Sudan for years could not hurt it. The Italians, who sent the flower of their Army to invade it, were annihilated. The Somalis, whom we have always considered among the best warriors in Africa, are looked down upon by the Abyssinians with contempt. The Egyptians——"

"I see! I see!" said Cohusac impatiently. "In other words, the fortunes of the Allies are at the lowest at the present moment; and the unexpected appearance of a new and powerful enemy at a vital point would be disastrous."

"Obviously. The Abyssinians have a standing army of two hundred and fifty thousand armed men, always ready to take the field. At Addis-Abeba at this moment there are seven batteries of artillery and a quantity of machine guns captured from the Italians at Adowa. Well, there's the weapon to be used against us, if any of our enemies are powerful enough to use it."

"You think the Germans are trying to influence Lidj Yassou?"

"It may be the Germans, Austrians or Turks. They all have legations at Addis-Abeba. When the war broke out every German in this part of the world got into Abyssinia as fast as he could, in order to be in neutral territory. So they're well equipped.

"But our representatives there are first-rate men, too; everything that can be done

in the usual diplomatic channels will be done. My private opinion is that the Germans have been fanning this pan-Islamic movement in order to burn us up with a holy war. We know they have been encouraging Mohammedanism in their colonies, for instance."

"Austria would never consent to that," said Cohusac thoughtfully.

"Perhaps not. But Turkey would! And Turkey is a far more important ally of Germany in this part of the world than Austria.

"Now as to your friend Sevier. He knows too —— much for a merchant whose business is confined to Aden. He shows too marked an interest in the house of Abu Khalil. And Abu Khalil shows too marked an interest in him.

"Remember this: America is a neutral power so far in this war, and from all accounts it has no love for us. In fact our relations are pretty strained over the contraband-cotton business and our insistence on the North Sea blockade. Sevier, as an American, can get passports anywhere."

"Is it possible?" mused Cohusac, feeling a miserable sense of doubt and loss.

"I must go," said Hickson, passing a trembling hand over his aching forehead, rising to his feet and looking involuntarily toward the craggy heights which he had yet to cross. "Anything is possible. Overlook nothing. If I know you're doing your best to anticipate events here in Aden I'll feel my mind more at ease in holding down Somaliland."

"Hicksy," said the Frenchman with deep emotion, "you come to me tonight almost in answer to a prayer. You stepped right out of the dreams of my old days—the days when you and I were learning something of the world together. I was in pain—miserable—I felt that I was dying. That is all changed. You've brought something back. Old friend, we will go adventuring again together."

"Right-o!" said Hickson bruskly, shaking hands hurriedly. "Let Hamid come over the hill with me, will you? I keep an old man there on the lookout, in Shark's Bay. He'll take messages for you; and if you ever have to make a secret getaway from Aden he'll have a *dhow* ready for you on twenty-four hours' notice."

Fifteen minutes later the Frenchman was again leaning over the parapet of his house. The thin shell of courage that had sustained the wracked war-cripple sinking rapidly under an acute form of melancholia had suddenly hardened into a coat of armor.

The declining moon seemed to be pushing the wall of the mountains nearer and nearer the house where Cohusac stood watching the figures of his friend and his faithful Hamid pass suddenly into the shadows and disappear completely a moment later behind the minaretted walls of the mosque that stood at the base of the long upward slope. He watched, motionless, alert and silent, until twenty minutes later the two figures were outlined for an instant against the moon, and then disappeared on the long downward slope to the sea. Cohusac straightened with his face turned up radiantly to the moon.

"Good!" said he. "I am fit for something yet! *Bismillah!*"

III

THAT night Cohusac decided there was so large an element of possibility in Hickson's suspicions of the American that he would plan to eliminate Sevier from any active participation in an Abyssinian intrigue at the first opportunity. As he considered the matter further he realized that it was up to him to create the opportunity.

Sevier was a friend, and the thought of injuring him was repugnant. Under ordinary circumstances Cohusac would not have given it even the most fleeting consideration; but Hickson's obsessing anxiety over the balance of power in northeast Africa, added to his own judgment of the case and emphasized by the murderous attack that had been made upon Hickson the night before, put Cohusac's duty in a clear light. He was determined to eliminate Sevier; but he was equally determined that in this case there would be no violence.

In the morning Cohusac appeared at the *choki*, where he explained the circumstances of the attack on the previous night, taking on himself the credit for having fired the revolver shots. The *askaris* had not succeeded in making an arrest or in finding any clues that might lead to a discovery. It seemed obvious that the case was a plain attempt at robbery. Cohusac declared that his friend was too busy with military affairs to

appear in person, and, since no case developed, Hickson's identity remained safely obscured.

As Cohusac came out of the *choki* and stood for a moment balancing his twisted body on a pair of heavy sticks, he looked down with alert, darting glances, into the colorful current of humanity that swirled by the steps, as a man looks with pleasure upon the water before plunging in.

Stalls lined the hot, dusty thoroughfare, shimmering in the heat of noon. Camels loaded with mountains of fagots; donkeys tripping along sleepily with drums of water slopping over into the white dust; fawn-colored bullocks swaying from side to side drawing carts piled high with hides, fish and bales of cotton; *hamali* (coolie) carts, shoved and hauled by yelling, sweating, singing, half-naked Arab *hamals;* dilapidated automobiles shimmering with heat, with thumping engines and wheezy horns—they all zigzagged, crossed, intermingled, amid the shouts, curses, whistles, laughter of a weaving crowd drawn from all parts of the African coast and most parts of the Orient.

From the steps of the *choki*, the visible seat of authority to this motley, ever changing mob, the Frenchman looked down and marveled for the first time at the diversity of the British Empire and the appalling maze of problems in which its administrators were involved. He looked with new respect at the shambling black Somali *askaris*, carrying their heads with haughty insolence; and he noticed with fresh interest the letter-writer, squatted on a worn and faded rug at one side of the bulletin board, writing out petty petitions for the miserable litigants who squatted on their haunches in front of his desk explaining in picturesque language the causes that brought them to appeal to the law.

"After all," thought Cohusac, "this dejected letter-writer becomes a person of importance. He is like a priest, sitting there, listening to confessions."

All at once Cohusac thought of the other services to which the letter-writer is often put—petitions of another sort that he is called upon to write—and he reflected—

"But decidedly the resemblance ends there!"

As he watched the letter-writer, with *tarboosh* pushed back on his narrow, withered head and his bulging eyes watering in the white-hot glare from which even the shadow of the *choki* did not protect him, sniffling as if with a cold, an idea flashed into Cohusac's head—and a moment later it flamed into action. Catching the letter-writer's watery eye, he beckoned to him.

For a moment the letter-writer hesitated. He was sensitive of his scholarly dignity and did not like to admit that he was at the beck and call of any casual European who nodded insolently to him. But on second thought he considered that to serve a European might mean a matter of rupees, while his clients of the bazaar begrudingly doled out to him thin annas and pice that were slimy with sweat. Flicking the ashes from his cigaret, he rose with composure, consoling himself with a quotation:

> Then to the rolling Heav'n itself I cried,
> Asking, "What Lamp had Destiny to guide
> Her little Children stumbling in the Dark?"
> And—"A blind Understanding!" Heav'n replied.

Approaching the Frenchman, the letter-writer touched his forehead, lips and heart, murmuring:

"*Salaam!* Your lordship wishes to speak to me, and, *hudhal* * I obey with a blind understanding!"

"With you be peace! Your blind understanding is the essence of wisdom—and is precisely what I desire. I ask pardon of God! But this matter I have to communicate requires secrecy—secrecy, scholarship and the ability to use expressions of very fine feeling——"

The letter-writer suppressed a yawn. He was profoundly flattered; but at the same time he had no intention of being fooled into giving valuable service for anything less than its value.

"*Effendi*, exactly what is the thing you wish?"

"A letter to a very beautiful woman!"

The letter-writer showed his upper gum in a supercilious and mirthless smirk and flicked ashes from his cigaret.

"The letter," said Cohusac, swaying on his sticks like a mischievous bird teetering on a twig, "will be short—a few fanciful strokes of the pen, embellished by an apt quotation perhaps from Saadi—and behold! A rupee!"

"I am a letter-writer," protested the scholar, his weak eyes watering as he attempted a look of reproach. "*Astaghfary'llah!* May Allah forgive me! This is not

* Behold!

business that a gentleman would approve!"

Cohusac shrugged and shifted his weight as if about to make off.

"Perhaps," said he, "Allah will make a better opening for you elsewhere. A rupee per letter, and a letter to be written each day, is no business at all to a man who has no need of money!"

"You have brought a blessing!" exclaimed the letter-writer, sniffling with panic lest the opportunity be lost. "Command is obdience!"

"Very well. Take a pad and pencil and make a note of the particulars. Remember, it is worth money to you! The least I will pay is a rupee for each letter. If there comes the favor of a reply, on that day I will pay you twenty-five rupees. Other rewards will be in proportion to your interest in this affair——"

"Father of ——!" murmured the letter-writer, opening his copy-book with a trembling hand.

The two retired to a secluded corner of the terrace in front of the *choki*, where an *askari* insured their privacy.

"I have a friend who is in love with a woman," explained Cohusac; "but he is a man of great shyness. A woman's glance makes him a coward. He is an American. His name is Essevier Effendi——"

"Allah! I know whom you mean!"

"Good! Then there is so much less to explain. You know him. Praise be to God, he is a man of great accomplishments—a lord of men. He is my friend; and in this affair I desire secretly to do him a great service. Do you comprehend?"

"There will be poetry in this!" murmured the letter-writer, wiping his nose with the back of his hand.

"The woman lives in the house of Abu Khalil."

"Allah the Compassionate!" cried the letter-writer, trembling. "These letters, your excellency, will be worth at least six annas more apiece!"

"The price is determined by success," said Cohusac. "Write! Your business is to write the letters. I will make other arrangements for their delivery. Her name, I believe, is Miriam; I have learned that much myself. Her description is this: Young; her hair is black and soft, and it falls in deep shadows upon ivory shoulders; her features are clear and perfect, with large, slumbering eyes—eyes that dream and waken, dream and waken! There is extraordinary reserve in her face; yet sometimes it shows expressions of the greatest animation. Her arms are beautifully curved, and her wrists are like silver. Her lips have the seductive sweetness of honey and jasmine."

"*Bismillah!*" said the letter-writer with awe and admiration. "Did I misunderstand? In whose name is this letter to be written?"

"Essevier Effendi, the American."

"So I at first understood. But your excellency himself has the gift of poetry in a bewildering degree!"

"It is the result of experience," said Cohusac modestly.

"Truly said! Particulars are not necessary in the description of a woman loved. The song is always the same. She inflames the heart and ravishes the eyes."

"*Peste!*" said Cohusac to himself. "This fellow is a cynic. He will serve excellently."

COHUSAC rapidly concluded the business and departed. And in the course of the next few days his impression of the letter-writer's capability was well confirmed.

Each day the letter-writer came to Cohusac's house and wrote according to the Frenchman's instructions. Each evening after the muezzin's second call to prayer, when the men of the household had gone to the mosque to pray, Cohusac himself managed to deliver the letter with a cleverness and daring that were made possible by a sense of humor combined with genuine nerve.

He disguised himself as an Arab hunchback troubadour. Over an ordinary singlet he wore a loose white *kansa*, open at the neck and flapping about his legs. Instead of sandals a dilapidated old pair of brown shoes covered his feet. An enormous Indian turban was twisted about his head, emphasizing the smallness of his body and the peaked wanness of his face, in which his eyes were deeply shadowed. Upon his upper lip was a scraggly mustache, and his chin was decorated with a scrubby growth that increased the long saturnine cast of his features. The hump was achieved with a very little padding and his natural inclination to hunch his shoulders and sink his head upon his chest owing to the pain of his ailment. A long-handled mandolin slung over his

shoulder beside the hump completed the costume.

The effect was perfect.

Cohusac risked it with assurance, feeling that if he was to be discovered he could turn the whole affair into a joke. With success, however, he gained assurance; and with assurance he began to take on the characteristics of the rôle. He ended in boldly entering the offices of Abu Khalil, making himself at home upon the *barasa* and singing a melancholy, homesick song of Chateaubriand's in a small, pleasant tenor that reached the ears of Sevier.

Cohusac delivered his first letter to Miriam by taking a lucky chance when she appeared veiled at the doorway at the side of Abu Khalil's house opening into the alleyway and handing it to her with a small bottle of attar of roses. As Cohusac passed the note to her, at first she recoiled with an expression of disgust; but Cohusac's earnestness and the intelligence that gleamed in his eyes changed her mind.

"Mistress of hearts!" breathed Cohusac. "He is one of the favored ones of Allah!"

And the irrepressible Frenchman, bending over his mandolin, continued slowly along the alleyway, strumming on his instrument, and singing:

"Till the shadows of the pyramids fade away!"

At the end of the alley Cohusac turned around, hunching his head under his shoulder, and he saw that the woman had neither thrown away the letter nor raised an alarm, but was staring after him fixedly. That unswerving look from a woman of the *harim* brought a slight uneasiness to Cohusac, who was accustomed to considering Arab women as little more than sentient dolls designed to give pleasure; it made him shamble along with a little more care as to his disguise.

"Nevertheless," said he sardonically, "the ancients were right in ascribing the fall of man to the power of curiosity!"

The next evening at the same time he surprized her at the grilled window staring toward Sevier's quarters with drawn brows and glowing eyes. He tossed her a small packet, containing another letter and a box of chocolates procured from the steward of the P. & O. mail-boat returning from Bombay. She withdrew from the window hurriedly; but there was no sign of repulsion, and there was no alarm.

Cohusac returned to his own quarters after darkness had fallen and before the moon rose, in time to change into light white evening clothes and hobble around to visit Sevier.

The American was in a mood of abstraction, and obviously anxious to drive down to Steamer Point both for dinner and the opportunity to see some friends there at the Union Club.

"I can not understand," said the Frenchman with an affected sigh, "how you can run away from your luck. Look! Every day at that window of Abu Khalil's is that girl staring at you—and I assure you she is a beauty. What a fool to run away from that! For what? A game of bridge—gossip with a lot of stupid blockheads——"

"Escape, my lad," said the American bruskly. "I'm taking no chances of getting involved in any *harim* mixup. I don't care how beautiful the girl may be!"

"You are a very queer fellow," said Cohusac, studying him with half-closed eyes. "To all appearances you are a man of great imagination with a fine sense of the romantic—passionate—and—eh, brave! Why the —— shouldn't a man take a chance for such a prize as that? I tell you, if I had your strength and good looks I'd be up that wall like a squirrel!"

"I haven't any doubt of it," said Sevier dryly.

He called sharply for the houseboy, a short, fat Hindu.

"The *sahib* will remain for dinner; but I'm going down to the club. Talmadge Sahib will probably have dinner here too. Report to him before you leave tonight."

"*Sahib!*"

"As for me," said Cohusac, making a wry face, "I must decline the invitation. If you will give me a lift in your *gharry* I will go down to Steamer Point also. There are some things I can do there. And the company of your excellent but unimaginative assistant does not interest me on such a night of moonlight."

Cohusac realized then that his task of involving Sevier in a scandal that would bring him prominently to attention and necessitate his leaving Aden was not so simple as it had promised to be. It was obvious that Sevier was exercising extraordinary restraint and caution. Since the American appeared to be doing an active business with Abu Khalil it was possible, of course, that

he did not intend to jeopardize it by attempting an affair with a member of Abu Khalil's household. It seemed more reasonable, however, that Sevier's restraint was due to his fear of the political consequences, for no matter how close his association with Abu Khalil and his conspirators might be the Arab would immediately overthrow everything if a stranger made a scandal in his household.

It was necessary, nevertheless, for Cohusac to act quickly.

The next day he rolled his letter in yards of variously colored silks which he had purchased in the days of his wildness before the war to be used for shirting, and this he threw into the window where he knew Miriam would be expecting him. As he was about to turn away a beautiful white arm was suddenly thrust through the grill and a note flicked in the dust at Cohusac's feet. His heart bounded as if the message were actually for him. With an effort he restrained his shout of triumph and delight, and shuffled awkwardly but hurriedly to a spot where he could read the message.

Cohusac's ability to read and write Arabic was far more than ordinarily good. In employing the letter-writer in the bazaar it had been his intention to start a rumor and fan it well into a blaze regarding the American and the woman in the house of Abu Khalil. Had secrecy been of first importance, therefore, he might easily have secured it by getting Hamid to procure a go-between who would have handled the matter while Cohusac stayed in his quarters reading a book. Cohusac not only wanted to get Sevier in trouble; he wanted also to beat the bushes himself to see where the game lay, and the more he talked about Abu Khalil the more he knew he would learn.

There was no doubt in his mind that the plump, affable Arab's house was the center of intrigue involving Somaliland and Abyssinia. Men of seeming importance from both these countries were constantly coming and going under the guise of merchants. The enormous godown extending for hundreds of feet behind Abu Khalil's four-story house was crammed with hides and skins of all sorts—spongy camel hides, bullock, horse, even zebra hides; goat, sheep, leopard skins; yellow ivory; coffee from Mocha and Harrar; while scattered about in odd lots were pails of honey, sacks of dates, boxes of wax. In the coffers within the *divan* were small boxes of stinking civet and ambergris and velvet pouches containing cloudy amber and the pink pearls that come from the Benadir Coast and the Bahrein Islands.

Dealing in these commodities, it was a simple matter for Abu Khalil to receive in his house men of importance from places as remote and as distant from each other as Damascus in the north and Lake Rudolf in the borders of Uganda. He was a friendly man, generous to the needy and always ready to speak well of the Government and to subscribe to Government loans. Cohusac knew him well as one who purchased large quantities of soap from the Marseilles firm for which the Frenchman had had the agency in his days of vigor, and from whom Cohusac had bought in return coffee and hides.

Nevertheless, Cohusac had no scruples about Abu Khalil. He knew that beneath the smooth, affable exterior there was a calculating and dangerous nature. He was a man who appeared virtuous in his dealings, because a good reputation was of more value to him than robbery. To every one who asked his charity he gave something, dusting his fingers after handing out the dole, murmuring piously—

"Verily, from Allah comes bounty!"

But in his heart he cursed at every profitless outgiving. Intensely selfish, his method was not to demand what he required, but calmly to roll over it, absorbing it. His ambition to possess was an overpowering passion; his passion was of that incredible sort that is capable of imprisoning the object of its desire in a solid block of masonry to preserve it thus eternally inviolate.

Cohusac's knowledge of men and the passions that control men was sufficient to enable him to understand Abu Khalil's nature. The Arab had amused him. Cohusac might have despised him, had not Hickson opened his eyes to the political power that the Arab merchant was secretly building about himself.

Cohusac was astounded at the prompt response with which the woman of Abu Khalil's household had responded to the American's pretended wooing. He marveled at her courage.

The note which Cohusac opened as soon as he was certain that no one from Abu Khalil's house could see him contained only

two lines—a quotation from Jami and the time:

"'The nightingales warbled their enchanting notes, and rent the thin veils of the rosebud and the rose.' The slave of love yields unto her lord. The roof above the alleyway when the moon is on the decline tonight."

When Cohusac read this he began to tremble, feeling a sickish sensation in his heart. It was his accomplishment, and he a cripple! What romance! And what a stupid fool to play the hero!

Torn with uncertainty, Cohusac waited that night in the Greek Hotel at Steamer Point until ten o'clock. Then, not daring to miss Sevier, he took up his post opposite the entrance of the Union Club, lolling in a dilapidated *gharry*. Newly aroused interest, excitement, the delight of using his mind in a fresh adventure, had given Cohusac new strength; yet the interminable waiting, stretched on the weather-beaten seat of the *gharry*, smoking cigarets, cramped him until he ached from head to foot and shooting pains ran through his body.

With sun-helmet pulled down over his face he watched the people he knew pass homeward. Advantage had been taken of the presence of the mail-boat in harbor, and a dance was in progress. The scratching music of the violins came to him on the mild, still air—bursts of laughter—sudden silence filled by the scraping music again, the hissing shuffle of feet, the clicking of billiard balls on the tables below—more laughter—clapping of hands—ship bells sounding over the water—the preliminary rumbles of the sanitary carts starting on their rounds—the moon, rising, rising, rising with Cohusac's bursting heart—then starting on the downward slope!

At length Sevier came out of the club alone and called for a motor *gharry*. Cohusac struggled out of his seat and went staggering across the road, crying out to him, just as the automobile started off. Sevier saw him, and the car halted while the American gave his friend a hand up with much groaning and banter.

As the car swung around the coal hills, driven recklessly by the Parsee driver, who was anxious to get home and to bed, Sevier suddenly informed the Frenchman that he was in a particular hurry because he had just received an invitation to go over to Djibouti, in French Somaliland, the *entrepôt* for Abyssinia, and intended to do so. This was the second shock Cohusac had received that day; and for a while he was incapable of saying anything.

Presently with the car swaying exhilaratingly and roaring across the short, bleak plain of Maala, littered with dust and volcanic cinders that were turned to pure bronze and silver in the moonlight, Cohusac began to sing. It was a song of home; and Sevier was touched. He was more than casually interested in the little Frenchman; he admired him, and secretly held for him a certain fondness; and he felt at this moment that he would probably never see him again. Cohusac perceived the softened mood and told him that he had at last succeeded in reaching Miriam.

"What!" cried Sevier with a sudden spasm. "How do you mean you have reached her?"

"I have a date with her tonight!"

Sevier laughed unpleasantly.

"You do not believe me!" exclaimed Cohusac. "Come with me then and see!"

Sevier hesitated, torn painfully by conflicting emotions. All at once his reserve crumbled.

"All right, ——— it!" he said passionately. "I'll go. But, remember, there'll be no entanglements. I'm leaving tonight on the *Vixen*, and if I'm delayed I lose the chance. Besides, I have to see old Juda bin Ismael about a draft on Addis-Abeba. I'll go—but I'll go only to stand by and watch you do as you say. How the —— can you climb a wall in your crippled condition?"

"All I need," said Cohusac with a complacent smile but glittering eyes, "is the inspiration!"

FIFTEEN minutes later the two stood in the darkness of the alleyway that ran by Abu Khalil's godowns. There, by the servants' quarters, was a low parapeted roof not more than fifteen feet above the ground. Ordinarily the smooth, white wall would have made even this low height inaccessible from the alleyway; but a large crack in the cement ran diagonally up the surface, providing a precarious foothold. If some one let down a rope from above the climbing might be a simple matter.

All at once Cohusac took Sevier by the arm, clutching him with trembling hands, and confessed to him that the assignation was a hoax—that it was not the Frenchman

the woman expected, but the American! Freid with his sense of romance, Cohusac said he had acted secretly as a go-between. The girl knew Sevier—had she not watched him day after day from her window? Cohusac's letters and gifts had simply given her the opportunity for an avowal. And she had made the avowal!

Cohusac took the note from his pocket and, opening it, held it up in the moonlight for Sevier's startled eyes to read. Familiar with Arabic as Sevier was, the full force of the quotation immediately struck him. Involuntarily he looked upward, scanning the wall—swaying—hesitating—his mouth dry with sudden fever—his heart pounding suffocatingly.

Dare he risk it? Was it possible that the madly imaginative Frenchman was lying?

"For ——'s sake, climb!" said Cohusac hoarsely, leaning weakly against the wall. "You fool, what more wonderful adventures can life hold than this?"

Something in the Frenchman's blazing eyes—something in his high-strung intensity—his suggestion of melodrama—all at once struck Sevier cold.

"No!" he said shortly. "Go yourself!"

He deliberately walked away without turning until he reached the end of the alleyway. Then he looked back.

Cohusac was clambering up the wall, holding on to the end of a rope!

Adaptable as a cat, Cohusac decided the instant Sevier turned his back that the adventure was too promising to be ended so soon. He knew that the girl was waiting. He realized thoroughly that her disappointment at encountering the wrong man might be dangerous for him; but that did not bother him. What did bother him was his weak, undependable body. The low wall seemed a thousand feet high. As he stood there uncertainly, looking upward, suddenly in the shadow he saw the wavering outline of a figure—a white arm stretched toward him—and the end of a rope flicked at his feet.

"Ah! *Mahabubie!* Sweetheart!" cried Cohusac huskily.

Forgetting all his plans for trapping Sevier, forgetting his aches and pains, forgetting danger, forgetting that he was an impostor, he seized the rope and, putting his feet in the crevice of the wall, ascended it with extraordinary ease!

His reception was not what he had expected.

It was a beautiful arm undoubtedly that assisted him over the parapet; but as he rose to his feet to fling his arms about the woman who faced him, unveiled in the darkness, suddenly she recoiled, crying out with a gesture of rage and disgust:

"No! This goat is not the man! We are fooled! There is no power or strength save in Allah the exalted and mighty! Seize him! Seize him!"

At the same instant two other figures materialized out of the darkness and before Cohusac could fling himself over the parapet, leaped upon him and bore him with violence to the cement floor. Cohusac fought for his life but might quickly have lost it if the woman had not cried out, catching the men by their shoulders:

"Don't kill! Don't kill! His friend knows! There will be an inquiry! Don't kill!"

All Cohusac knew was that after a desperate struggle, of which he could tell nothing except that he bit and kicked and writhed to get free, his head was brought down against the cement with a crack that scattered his senses. He relaxed into a very small, inert heap, his last conscious thought being, as he floated away, that the nurse would tell him about it all in the morning.

He regained consciousness a few minutes later, though for a moment it was difficult for him to understand what had happened. A sight of the declining moon gradually brought a realization of his situation back to him. His body was so sore and crippled that he could not move, and he lay in silence in the gutter of the roof where he had been thrown, while a fierce argument went on a few paces away within the arched chamber that was used as a kitchen.

For a while the angry hissing and guttural monosyllables of the repressed argument did not interest Cohusac. His body felt superior to discomfort; it was only when he attempted to move it that he understood it was of no use at all for any immediate purpose. His whole interest was centered in the beauties of the crystal moon, and the rise and fall of the angry voices came to him only as a pleasant murmur. As his sense cleared, however, words began to impinge upon his reviving consciousness.

"By Allah, he was too clever for us! Did I not say that such a one could smell a trap?"

"Baited by himself? No! The fool left his

courage behind when he entered the alleyway. Who is this dog he sent as a substitute?"

"A Frenchman—a gibbering gadabout—an insolent mocker——"

"Allah will reward his servant who sends that goat into the seven hells!"

"Father of witless ones," said the voice of the woman with shaking scorn, "did I not say there would be an investigation if violence is done the European? Consider! The big man knows the Frenchman is here! If he does not return there will certainly be an investigation of this place!"

"*Taib!* That is said with wisdom!"

"Wisdom! Wisdom is Allah's! Let us throw this dog off the roof. He arrived head first; let him descend head first. On whom can blame fasten?"

"Who spoke of blame? Who cares if you throw even a thousand *Nasrani* into the pits of Eblis? Allah is my witness, you men reflect with your hands and act with your tongues! Make an effort to be sensible! Is the cause of Allah of such light weight that you will risk it for a little private vengeance? This Frenchman is but an incident.

"Reflect! It is better that I send him away with soft words, caresses, the memory of hope deferred— He will make a tumult to return! He will advertise his hopes! Show a man but one of the eight heavens and he will walk happily through all seven hells to return to it again!"

"*Wau!*" said the voice of Abu Khalil angrily. "It is not becoming for you to bring men to this housetop! It will become a byword! Consider your reputation. The strength of a woman's mind can never equal that of a gossip's tongue."

"My strength is in Allah!" declared the woman in a voice of extraordinary sweetness and assurance. "I have no fear of men. God places them before me as instruments of his will."

"There is this possibility," said another voice. "The man we want may yet return. He did not go toward his own house. He went the other way and turned into the bazaar."

"To Juda bin Ismael's!" exclaimed the woman. "He will return!"

Cohusac's head was in no condition to follow the words of this conversation, spoken rapidly in whispers and hisses that rose and fell, broken with exclamations and curses; but he distinguished the voices of men and the woman arguing as if on an equal footing, without attaching blame to her. He didn't understand. All he wanted now was to rise over that parapet and drop into the street.

The voices within all at once simmered down into silence. Two Arabs came out and looked at him. Presently one gave him a tentative kick in the ribs with a bare but toughened foot.

"Ouch!" grunted Cohusac involuntarily, as pain shot through him.

"*Taib!*" said the Arab pleasantly. "He is a gift of Allah!"

They went and stood by the parapet, looking down in silence, shadowed by the high roof, while the woman remained in the doorway, looking up at the moon. All at once a wave of apprehension swept over the Frenchman. The prolonged silence and inaction had something extremely ominous about it.

While he was beginning to speculate with decreasing humor on his dangerous situation one of the Arabs stepped away from the parapet and again approached him. For a moment he stood looking down at the inert figure.

The Arab who had remained at the edge of the roof made a sharp gesture. Instantly the other began to kick Cohusac violently. The shock and the pain of the attack surprised a cry of pain out of Cohusac. He made an effort to rise; but the Arab knocked him down and proceeded to beat him brutally.

A moment later Sevier swarmed over the parapet.

At the sound of his friend's voice crying out in pain Sevier had come up the wall like a cat. He landed on the roof on all fours; but before he could get to his feet the Arabs were upon him. The American was bowled over by the suddenness of the attack. Even as he fell he knew that capture probably meant death; sprawling, he fought with the savage abandon of a leopard.

One hand had his closest assailant by the beard, and the other clutched the loose neck of his *kansa*. Falling on his back, he dragged the Arab down on top of him; doubling his legs, he placed his feet in the man's stomach and shot him head over heels with considerable force against the stone parapet. On his feet in an instant, the American then flung himself upon the second Arab, taking him at such a disadvantage that he toppled him off the roof.

The falling man gave a short scream, but after he landed he lay in the dust in silence in a crumpled heap.

By this time the first was again on his feet, dazedly groping for his *jambeer*. Sevier hurled a water-jar at him, following this with a wooden stool and chunks of broken masonry until he had the man groveling on the defensive with his knife up before his face; then he beat him into insensibility with a bucket.

For a moment he had time to breathe, and in that moment discovered the slight, moaning figure of Cohusac. Slipping off his cummerbund, he passed it through Cohusac's belt; lifted the Frenchman over the edge of the roof; and, lowering him as far as he could reach, dropped him into the soft dust.

Cohusac lay in a trance. He had not completely lost his senses; but they were dull and slow in responding. He knew in a dreamy sort of way that Sevier had come to his protection after he cried out with pain; he knew too that the American had lifted him over the parapet and lowered him to the ground. But then he lay there for several minutes insensible to what was going on until Sevier himself dropped heavily into the dust beside him and, heaving him on his shoulder shuffled down the alleyway, still panting from his struggles. He knew, too, that spears fell about them.

By the time they reached Sevier's quarters the Frenchman was slowly coming round; but Sevier was too infuriated to offer him any further assistance. Leaving him in a long Bombay chair, he called his assistant, Talmadge, and giving him brief instructions, ran down the stairs two at a time. Cohusac heard the cough of his big motorcycle—and knew that the American had gone.

FOR the next three days Cohusac lay doggo in his quarters, puzzled, angry, sore from head to foot. He wrote a full report of the occurrence to Hickson in Somaliland. He knew, of course, that his identity as Cohusac was known to Abu Khalil. But by no stretch of his imagination could he reconcile the order of events as he had seen them with what he considered to be the truth of the situation.

From almost every possible indication that an Arab woman can give Miriam had plainly showed an interest in Sevier that amounted to passion; yet in the end it seemed that she was waiting to betray him! But betray him to whom? And for what purpose? If Sevier were acting in the interests of Germany in regard to Abyssinia, why should Abu Khalil, who was serving the same purpose, wish to trap him? It was easy to understand why the Arab would make no attempt at violence upon an enemy in daylight while transacting ordinary business; there would be too many witnesses; but why lure a man through the influence of a woman?

On the fourth morning when Cohusac began to feel the love of life and action flooding through his veins, Hamid came and stood before him and said:

"*Effendi*, it is said in the bazaar that Abu Khalil will pay a man a reward who will deliver a message to the hunchback that sang before the windows of his *harimlik*. Have I your excellency's permission to collect what Allah places in my hand?"

Cohusac studied Hamid's face, good-humored as a friendly dog's, stubbornly faithful, yet marked by the faint line of a scar from the corner of his left eye to his lip—souvenir of an episode in Zanzibar.

"What is Abu Khalil's purpose?"

"Allah knows, *effendi!* But there is no sign of vengeance. Who knows that the hunchback—Allah give him strength!—is the friend of my lord?"

"Go!" said Cohusac. "Collect your reward. My secret is in your hands."

"It is as if it were in the grave!" said Hamid fiercely.

"Allah have mercy on your dead ones!" exclaimed Cohusac, averting the omen. "Make it understood that the hunchback is no friend of mine."

Before the day was done Cohusac had received this letter:

His excellency, the esteemed brother, the laudable friend, the father of song and bringer of happiness, may he endure in strength!

Consider the misery which Allah the all just has ordained for me! May there be none in your case! After our heart had been rent with joyful anticipation, so that we harkened to your words as the antelope of the dusty plains listens to the bewitching murmur of cool waters, and we dreamed of nothing but the wishes of your excellency's lordship, behold! We are desolated by an appalling silence. May Allah visit His compassion on this one!

What have we done? Why does your excellency's lordship remain silent, while my oppressed heart longs for him?

We ask Him the Most High to continue to us your friendship and to make us able to repay you,

in order that we may embrace again the opportunity to converse with you discreetly upon the matter that engages our heart. You know the time and you know the place! May Allah preserve you!

It was not from Abu Khalil! It was from Miriam!

Cohusac went over the message many times with the greatest care, studying it for the slightest hint of irony or overburdening of flattery that might indicate either a determination to have vengeance or a genuine desire to open up relations again with Sevier. Sevier had left Aden at night, and on board a British gunboat with whose officers he was friendly. His departure had been sudden and secret. It was possible, therefore, that Abu Khalil and his friend might think that the American was still in Aden, in hiding, recuperating from wounds.

"I believe," said Cohusac, "that she means it. But what the —— is Abu Khalil's interest in this correspondence?"

Cohusac considered for a moment, made a wry face, then smiled brightly.

"By Jove," said he, "I will risk it! Only those deserve high adventure who will take the risk of looking for it."

Again Cohusac in his hunchback disguise made his way down the long, dark alleyway with all the sensations of a man passing along on a moonlit night through a particularly dangerous communication trench. Again he stood looking up expectantly but fearfully. It was very late. The distorted moon was on the decline.

Plucking his mandolin lightly, the Frenchman began to hum in broken phrases, in the manner of those bellowing operatic stars who know their scores but not the words that are intended to interpret them:

"Ah, Moon of my delight that knoweth no wane—
Again I am an idiot! Again! Again!"
(*Plunk-a-plunk! Plunk-a-plunk! Ter-r-r-rum!*)
"How oft hereafter shall I look—
That's it—looking! Looking!—look—in vain!"

The end of a rope struck his upturned face. He suppressed an oath, shivering nervously. A soft voice called:

"In the name of Allah! Ssh-sh! Grasp the rope and climb!"

Cohusac flung the rope from him as if it were the end of a noose.

"The Compassionate!" he exclaimed. "Look down! Light of the heavens, look, and say if you behold an acrobat! It is written that I mount no walls! It is written that the mountain was immovable and could not come to Mohammed——"

"Peace! Enter then by the godown door. All is arranged; you may come in safety."

"The poet admired the lioness from afar. '*Hudhal*' he cried. 'Behold the Queen of the Desert, the beautiful Sultana of the Mountains!'

" 'Friend,' said the lioness, 'draw near that you may taste the jasmine and honey of my lips!'

"Pah! What is it you fear?"

"Mistress of hearts, I tremble for the blame you may attach to me. By the beard of the Prophet, I proclaim my innocence! But who is believing?"

"Are you afraid of a woman?" whispered the voice. "You a man—and yet you fear a weak woman?"

"Weak? In what sense? Your rounded arms are capable of snapping these matchsticks of mine—your firm and supple figure might crush this miserable body as easily as your tapering fingers crush the thin-shelled walnut!"

"You—you admit this!" exclaimed the voice incredulously in a vibrant tone of satisfaction. "You — a man — admit the superiority of a woman in even one thing? What of the spirit? What do you think of a woman's soul?"

"Was not Fatima a woman?" said Cohusac in a tone of reverence, delighted at the conversation. "And is she not a saint?"

"*Taib!*" said the woman above decisively. "You have spoken well. Friend of the faith, enter without fear! Allah bear witness, you will return in safety! In testimony, *hudhal* I recite the *Fathal*!"

In a voice that had the flute-like cadence of cooing doves the woman recited the first chapters of the Koran.

"After that," said Cohusac to himself, "I am a coward if I don't go up."

He waited until the door of the godown was drawn slightly ajar and followed a Somali carrying a dim lantern past ragged cliffs of hides smelling overpoweringly of naphthalene and up a narrow stone stairway that led out upon the roof. Keeping in the shadow, his guide led him into a room of the second story, where the woman Miriam was waiting for him with her head swathed in a white cloth, and a black cloak wrapped about her, covering her from her head to her feet, which were slippered in black kid slippers with slightly upturned toes.

"Peace!" said Miriam without moving. "Enter and sit!"

Cohusac looked about him for a divan or a rug, and in doing this discovered to his horror that he was the center of a ring of men — Abyssinians, Somalis and Arabs. Chief of these was Abu Khalil, who sat slightly elevated on a pile of cushions, having about him an air of authority. But the woman Miriam seemed to dominate the situation. The Somali who had escorted him to the room remained at the doorway, spear in hand.

Cohusac had presence of mind enough to salute the assemblage with an unctuous bending of the body, touching his forehead, lips and heart, murmuring over and over again that greeting which is used only by and to Mohammedans—

"Peace be on you!"

"And on you be peace and the mercy and blessings of Allah! Be seated," said Abu Khalil with an air of arrogance and power that was new to Cohusac and explained much.

When Cohusac had taken his seat, cross-legged, in such a position that all eyes could be turned upon him, he looked up at Miriam, who came and stood before him, unveiled now; and despite the uncertainty in his mind he could not help admiring even then the firm yet supple poise of the woman, and the strength and beauty of her countenance. Most astonishing of all was her air of assurance before these staring men of mixed races, and the marvelous fact that they looked at her and listened with respect though she stood unveiled and unashamed before them.

"These friends—warriors and defenders of the faith, all of them!—will bear witness to my respectability," declared Miriam firmly, looking at Cohusac with smoldering, thoughtful eyes. A murmur ran around the circle—

"We bear witness, in the name of Allah!"

"*Wa haihata!*"* said Cohusac in a slightly whining tone of humility. "Alas! May He overlook my shortcomings! What am I but a servant who obeyed? I was told to be certain in my own head that she to whom I delivered my master's messages was one under the spell of a genuine infatuation. I am your slave!"

"You are excused from blame," said Miriam contemptuously. "The fact is it was—it *is*—necessary for me to interview him. There are things it is necessary for us to say to each other—for the strength of our faith!"

"*Deen Mohammed!*" murmured the listeners.

Cohusac felt the hair riffle on his scalp; and he restrained with difficulty an almost irresistible impulse to scramble to his feet and make a bolt for it as he heard again this echo of the war-cry of the Mohammedans.

"Who are you?" demanded Abu Khalil suddenly. "If you are a resident of this city, how is it I have not heard of you before? Often I provide entertainments, through the bounty of Allah, and there are no performers who have hitherto spurned my *baksheesh.* How is it I have never before set eyes on you?"

This was a question Cohusac had been anticipating. Without hesitation he took upon himself to some degree the character of *Said the Fisherman* and *Gil Blas*, having this in common with those heroes—a capacity for prevarication that was equal to any demand.

"Sir," said he with resignation, mingled with just sufficient bitterness to impress his hearers, "of what avail is lineage? Of what use is a name that is already honored if Allah has destined the bearer of that name to misfortune and hardship? Life is a pilgrimage through many vicissitudes. I am Hussein Abderrahn bin Sudi bin Abdullah, and through him my ancestors trace their descent from Noah!"

"Once there was a man," said Abu Khalil dryly, "who had an ancestor who stood so high his feet did not touch the ground!"

Cohusac raised his hand and touched his forehead with humility, murmuring in a polite tone as if to ward off the omen from his hearers—

"Allah keep your posterity clear of such a thing!"

An unmistakable smile lighted for a brief instant the serious caste of Miriam's features. Abu Khalil was furious. His eye constantly watched with a furtive, hungry look the movements of the woman's supple body and the fascinating changes in her expressive countenance. He saw her smile, therefore, at Cohusac's veiled retort; and his heavy face hardened and his eyes burned.

"Tell us without evasion," he demanded roughly with a threat in his voice, "in what city were you when this war broke out?"

* Alas!

"I was in Beirut," said Cohusac calmly.

"What were you doing there?"

"Your lordship," said Cohusac, bowing his head, "fate had brought disaster to my household. It was the will of God that for many days I went hungry. In my misery I remembered the teacher under whom I had studied in the college at Beirut, and I went to him seeking charity.

"At that time it happened that there was a tumult in the town. Truly is it said that a crowd has many arms and many teeth but no heart; they took from me the little I had, so that I was utterly penniless and starving, and when I approached the college in rags the servants no longer recognized me and drove me away with stones, calling me beggar."

"It is enough," said Miriam. "I believe him."

"You believe!" said Abu Khalil, raising his voice. "By the beard of the Prophet, you are easily convinced! One question from me. I, too, have been to Beirut. The college you speak of is a college of Christians. How can a true believer mingle at the same time with the enemies of his faith?"

"Is it not written," said Cohusac mildly, hunching his shoulders as if fearful of the big Arab's anger, "that if an infidel drop a pearl, a true believer may pick it up and yet not lose his soul? Behold, within that college there was much to learn; and it had been the intention of my father to make me study many things, going first to this college and then to that, as the will of God permitted. Truly, before I was ten I was already a *talib* and could recite many sayings of the Prophet. Have I not worshiped at the great Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem?"

"It is enough," said Miriam sternly. "I am satisfied."

"*Waul*" said one of the Somali chieftains with high impatience. "Who cares where this one studied? Let us have action. Tell us, friend of the faith, where is the *Nasrani?* Where is this American who calls himself Essevier Effendi?"

Cohusac saw that Miriam was looking at him with her lips parted as if she had caught herself in the middle of a question to hear the answer to this.

"Allah alone knows where he is now," said Cohusac with indifference. "I did him a service, and he paid me well."

"After he paid you," asked Miriam faintly, "what then? What became of him?"

"Oh, after that," said Cohusac blithely, "he suddenly left Aden altogether. He left in the middle of the night to go to Djibouti, and it was his intention, if God willed it, to go into Abyssinia. Beyond that how should I know where he is?"

INSTANTLY there was an uproar. The effect of Cohusac's words could not have been more positive if he had emphasized them with pistol shots. Every man leaped to his feet, with exclamations in many languages. They ran about clutching at one another, shouting, cursing. Abu Khalil roared at the top of his voice. Only Miriam remained silent, standing staring at Cohusac with a dazed expression in her widely distended eyes.

"He has escaped!" she murmured.

"By Allah, yes!" said Abu Khalil, froth bubbling on his lips as he approached her. "I gave my wits to a fool and listened to a woman! You! What use has it been to listen to your fine talk?"

Putting his heavy hands on her arms, thrusting his handsome face, distorted with passion, almost against hers, glaring with blazing eyes into her dark, smoldering orbs, he said in a voice that was choked and guttural:

"Your place is in the *harim!* By Allah, it is time you saw reason!"

At this affront to Miriam, who had not moved, there was instant unity of purpose. Arabs, Somalis, Abyssinians rushed at Abu Khalil, and despite his bulk tore him away from the woman, yelling, dragging at him, while he, for the moment lost to all reason, tried to wrest his hand loose so that he might whip out his *jambeer*. Weapons gleamed in the darkened room; the whites of eyes that had been sunk in wells of black flashed and sparkled.

Cohusac, hunched on his mat, darting his head this way and that, felt as if he had fallen into a roaring whirlpool among jagged black rocks. Confusedly he wondered what chance he might have of crawling among the black legs to the door and making a bolt to dive over the parapet. The only thing that prevented him was the attitude of the woman.

Miriam had remained without moving, her hands crossed upon her bosom, her fingers weaving about her throat, as the men struggled about Abu Khalil, forcing him

to his seat and urging him with many cries upon Allah to restrain himself.

The Frenchman now received his first marked impression of Miriam's really extraordinary beauty. She suggested some Babylonian queen. Cohusac's mind flew from one type to another, trying to form a satisfactory comparison—something of the wildly passionate Salome, an unrestrained daughter of Bedouins; something of the noble Greek, a Sappho, heartsick and yearning for an unattainable ideal; something even of the Maid of Orleans, pure-minded, indomitably courageous, capable of any sacrifice to attain a lofty end. He felt a curious stirring of sympathy within him.

When Abu Khalil had first laid his hands upon her the Frenchman smiled to himself cynically; but now as he studied her the tragic beauty of her face disarmed him. There was an enigma here! She possessed first that perfection of ardent natural beauty that instinctively arouses the desire of men; but in her forehead and eyes there was a contradiction. There was a powerful mind in that small head; there was a spirit of flame and steel in the strong, graceful body. Amid the uproar she stood alone, poised firmly, chin level, eyebrows drawn down in an expression of contempt and anger.

All of once, like most bursts of violence in Africa, the anger of the men subsided.

Miriam spoke in a husky voice that was at first tremulous, almost passionate, but grew clear and ringing as she gained the attention of the men. These, somewhat shamed by the outbreak, sat on their rugs in silence, breathing heavily, watching her, with their cloaks lifted to their mouths.

"*Wallah!* In the name of Allah the Compassionate, are you beasts or men? Are you followers of the Prophet or servants of your lusts? Be shamed! While you wrangle and snarl like dogs, *hudha!* Our enemy is behind our backs, burning our fields! Mock me for my woman's body; but of what avail is that? It is written that the house divided against itself shall fall. Behold, while you fight among yourselves over that which is unattainable to you, the enemy is in your villages like a leopard in a sheepfold.

"By Allah! Ghabah, what will you say to your Gallas when they flee in the night for want of your leadership? You, Omar Georgios, are the *tokhuls** of Tigre secure while you permit your heart to turn to water in the shadow of the *harimlik?* As for you, Abu Khalil, it would be better for us if we had the leadership of Gholee Beabu, demon of the wastes, than that of one whose master is lust!"

"There is no power or strength save in Allah the exalted and mighty!" growled Abu Khalil.

"*Deen Mohammed!*" cried a Somali chieftain, leaping up.

His cry galvanized the others to action. All leaped up, repeating the cry.

"*Taib!*" said Miriam, lifting her hand for silence. "My brothers, let us take council in calmness! This Essevier Effendi has escaped us. It was the will of Allah. So be it. But are we to remain here like dogs chained by the neck, while he brings the powers to devour Abyssinia? The time is at hand for us to draw the simitar and arouse the faithful. *Deen Mohammed!*"

"That at least is sense," said Abu Khalil.

"Behold, I am ready!" said Ghabah, his large eyes looking eagerly at Miriam for approval.

"Your excellency," said Miriam calmly to Abu Khalil, "have you the means? Let us end talk. The moon is descending over the mountain. Let us plan. It is not possible to take passage in the steamer without discovery. Nor is it advisable to land together in Djibouti, where some of us will be recognized. Yet we must go.

"Now! His Highness, Lidj Yassou, has already abandoned Christianity and espoused Islam. He has gone to Dire-Dawa and thence to Harrar, where plans are perfected for an alliance with the Somalis. The Dankalis, true to the faith, have already risen and cut the railroad that runs from Djibouti to Addis-Abeba. You of Abyssinia must go and arouse your *rases** and your *shums*† to rally to the Prince; you of Somaliland must go instantly to your tribes.

"The time is at hand. The spark has been struck. The flame of Islam will sweep all before it. Death to the infidel! *Deen Mohammed!*"

"All is provided," said Abu Khalil. "I have kept a *dhow* in readiness, cruising off Ras Morbat, watching for a signal flashed from the *qabbah* on the western slope beyond the Mount of the Vultures. Within half an hour the captain will know he is expected. If you are agreed we can embark before the moon has set."

* Huts.

* Feudatory chiefs. † Lesser chiefs.

"By Allah, let us go!" exclaimed the chieftains and sheiks.

"The *dhow* will come close to shore along the bay between Cirrir and Ras Morbat——"

"Your excellency," said Cohusac, finding his voice after having been momentarily overwhelmed by finding himself in the heart of conspiracy, and with the knowledge that Hickson's prophecy had come true—the *jehad* was about to break!—"your excellency, today the *Vixen* returned from Djibouti. It was on this warship that Essevier Effendi left Aden. Will it not patrol in the moonlight and discover any *dhow* that attempts to approach the inner bays?"

"*Taib!* That is true. How do you know these things?" demanded Abu Khalil suspiciously.

Cohusac shrugged disparagingly and in a whining voice said:

"Am I not a wanderer? Allah has blessed me with eyesight. I would be a fool if I could not make deductions."

"See that this hunchback does not leave our sight," said Abu Khalil to the guard. "There is but one other place," he added, "where we may embark without discovery—if it is the will of Allah. West of Ras Morbat is the Bay of Sharks. The *dhow* can approach the shore there in safety."

This was what Cohusac had hoped for. He knew that neither Abu Khalil nor any of his companions would give even a moment's thought to the risk of permitting him to go free, once he had heard the object of the conspiracy and looked upon the conspirators. Rewards for information were too easily collected in time of war! Nevertheless, having safely established himself as a Mohammedan, Cohusac believed himself in no immediate danger so long as he acted with discretion.

Arriving at this conclusion, he decided that his most urgent duty was to get a message to the French consul and one to Hickson. In the rush of his thoughts, with the men about him crying out and jabbering in several different tongues, from all of which he tried to catch scraps of information, he finally recalled the watchman whom Hickson employed in the Bay of Sharks!

Having succeeded, then, in inducing Abu Khalil to signal his *dhow* to approach this spot, Cohusac sank back into discreet silence once more, watching the preparations with half-closed eyes, alert for an opportunity to scribble a note.

There was very little further talk. The men moved here and there like shadows swiftly passing, and within ten minutes were ready to depart. The woman, Miriam, was also ready. She refused the assistance of a servant of her own sex. At the same time she realized the importance of aloofness—for it was obvious that there was not a man among these men who did not feel the power of her beauty and secretly longed for her. Nevertheless, she felt an overwhelmning desire for a friendly association of some sort, and Cohusac appeared to her gaze as a blessing.

Touching him lightly on the shoulder she said in a gentle voice with an involuntary wistfulness of which she was not aware:

"Father of song, in the name of Allah, be to me as a brother! May there never be such loneliness in your case! With the help of Allah I will befriend you."

The Frenchman's romantic and impressionable heart was instantly flooded with pity. Safe in a rôle which he fitted as if it were his own true character, he prostrated himself before her, murmuring:

"Mistress of hearts, queen of courage, I am your slave! Command is obedience!"

And Cohusac felt at the moment that in some sense this woman's cause might be made his own. Even as he kissed the hem of her black robe he thought to himself—

"By Jove, Cohusac, you are making yourself the hero of a ballad!"

IV

IN ONES and in couples the conspirators slipped out of Abu Khalil's godown door, down the dark alleyway and, keeping close in the shadow of the buildings on the broader street, made their way toward the mosque that stands at the base of the ridge over which Cohusac had watched Hickson pass hardly more than a week before.

The waning moon shed a less brilliant light than on that occasion; so the black-robed figures managed to pass along the narrow, cindery path that twisted tortuously upward without much danger of observation. At any time that climb is exhausting. In the heat of a Summer's day it is almost impassable for one unaccustomed to the climate; but the night was

cool, the men of races that are capable of great endurance, and all were buoyed up by very powerful emotions.

A runner had gone forward, a Somali, who actually skipped up the trail, using his long spear as a staff, and disappeared along the ridge and down the slope to the *qabbah*, a low-vaulted tomb whose arches, opening to the major points of the compass, made it possible to signal to boats at sea without much chance of discovery from the shore.

The excitement, the activity, the extraordinary stimulation to mind and body, which Cohusac had experienced in the last week had made a revolution in his physique. He was extremely light. Not much strength was required to lift his weight. With the aid of a staff, therefore, and an occasional helping hand, he managed to reach the top of the slope in safety. He felt heartburn; the blood throbbed painfully in his thin neck; his head ached with strain—but he had surmounted the ridge!

As he lifted himself over the razor edge of the crater's rim and looked down upon the silver sweep of the precipitous slope falling straight into the sea two thousand feet below him, he gave a cry and staggered with vertigo. It was the first time he had looked down from a height since that fatal day when the tracer bullet had lodged in his stomach. All the horror came back to him; his head filled with blood; his senses swam. He reeled toward the precipice.

Abu Khalil, who had turned his head at the cry and saw the hunchback lunging helplessly toward destruction, instinctively crowded close to the cliff, grunting:

"It is written! *Bas!*"

But Miriam rushed toward Cohusac and clasped him in her arms. Her momentum and Cohusac's sagging weight brought them to the edge, where Miriam stood for a moment swaying but holding tight to the Frenchman. After a while she caught her breath; her nerves steadied; and two Abyssinians drew her back.

From this point downward Cohusac could progress only by keeping his gaze turned inward to the wall that rose above his left hand, halting every little while to regain his strength and courage. He was badly shaken and sick at heart with secret shame; but it was a fear utterly beyond his control, and when his gaze was drawn with a horrible fascination to the abyss that fell away at his feet, the path being no more than four feet wide, all the strength of his will could not prevent him from involuntarily recoiling and clinging to the rocks. The character of the rocks which he clutched for support added to his terror, for they were rotten and crumbled and broke away at a touch.

Once he dislodged a mass which shot down the slope, gathering speed and volume as it roared its way to the bottom, sending startling echoes crashing and echoing from slope to slope. That time every one crouched close to the wall, praying fervently; but when the danger had passed they cursed Cohusac with great earnestness and fluency, prodding him with their sticks to urge him more rapidly along the path.

"By Allah," said Abu Khalil savagely, "if you are the cause of so much as one broken wrist, we will hurl you down!"

Cohusac arrived at the bottom of the slope in an exhausted and dejected condition. Sinking upon the pebbly beach, he buried his face in his hands, trembling. It was minutes before he recovered his composure; but this weakness served him a very good turn. Every one either laughed or sneered at him, and it was tacitly accepted among all these men of intrigue and of war that he was a hopeless weakling and a coward.

The bay curved like a crooked finger with the point toward Africa. Drenched in silvering light, the irregular, volcanic slopes had the appearance of a scene on the surface of the moon.

As Cohusac raised his face and studied the scene at first he saw no signs of life except the little party which he had accompanied. The sea twinkled with light; the land seemed like the scum on molten lead. Along the pebbled beach were many lumps of brain coral, weirdly suggestive of skulls and weathered bones.

In this scene of magnificent desolation, all at once a small figure appeared before Cohusac's searching gaze. It seemed to emerge from the moonlight, though in reality it had been standing there immobile, watching the approach of the strangers. At length as Cohusac gained strength, he rose on his staff and limped closer to the figure. It proved to be a wrinkled, weather-beaten old man, naked except for a loin cloth and a small turban, engaged in the occupation of catching sharks.

A stake was driven firmly in the beach behind him, serving as an anchor when he

managed to hook his quarry and to begin working it shoreward. Six other stakes were driven in the sand beside him, and on each of these the dripping head of a small shark had been placed. The bodies were stacked farther along the beach. The little old man was undoubtedly a fixture, and from the nature and successful results of his strange occupation was perfectly familiar with the beach from long association with it. If this were so, he must have known Hickson.

Abu Khalil interviewed the lonely fisherman with threatening arrogance and was convinced of his stupidity. Others questioned him, but he answered little, his face having upon it that rapt, entranced look which is characteristic of every fisherman with a line in his hand, whether he expects to hook a perch or a leaping tuna. At length, when a sail rounded the point and all eyes were turned upon the *dhow* arriving with a ripple at her bow, Cohusac's opportunity arrived.

He had regained sufficient strength to stumble across the pebbles to the side of the old fisherman, where he squatted, apparently interested in the man's occupation. After a while Cohusac drew from the sash wound round his body under the *kansa* a small copy of the Koran. In the brilliant moonlight it was possible to read. Bowed over his book, he appeared lost in prayer; but in reality he held between his thumb and forefinger the leaded tip of a shoestring, with which he managed laboriously to scrawl a message on a blank page:

Abu Khalil conspirators destination Somaliland to lead tribesmen in holy war in alliance with Abyssinia embarking by *dhow* now (about 3 A.M. Thursday) Shark's Bay. Their plans are organized. Their intention positive. Inform French at Djibouti and Hickson Somaliland. I am accompanying. COHUSAC.

He carefully extracted the page, folded it lengthwise and, unslinging his lute-like mandolin, tucked it among the strings at the tip, as if he were tuning the instrument. Then he began to play very softly, strumming a meaningless accompaniment, occasionally raising his voice in broken phrases as if he were searching his mind for a song. Abu Khalil's friends were familiar with his music, so they paid no attention; but the fisherman turned his head once or twice and looked down. Each time Cohusac instantly said:

"Hickson Effendi! Hickson Effendi! Hickson Effendi!"

Cohusac's manner puzzled the fisherman. He looked at Cohusac more intently. All at once the meaning of the words struck him. His eyes flashed in his dark, seamed face. Hauling in his line to rebait the great hook, he bent lower, grunting:

"Yes! By Allah! Hickson Effendi!"

Cohusac seemed to catch the air he was seeking and strummed with liveliness; but the words still appeared to evade him. He hummed aloud, so that the acutely attentive fisherman heard:

"*Hudhal* Pluck it as you would a rose—from the end of the instrument as I rise—the nightingale warbled its message—to the Political Officer!"

The fisherman gave a violent jerk of his line, sending it as if by accident over Cohusac. Cohusac rose cursing shrilly to his feet; and the fisherman, apparently mumbling apologies as he untwisted the line, said:

"I understand. In the name of Allah, go in safety!"

"Come, warbler!" cried Abu Khalil roughly. "We don't intend to leave you behind to sing ballads in Aden."

"Come, father of songs," said Miriam wearily.

THE *dhow* had been brought alongside a ledge of rocks, over which hundreds of crabs clattered and the low swells scattered showers of almost tepid water. Drenched, hungry, racked with fatigue, Cohusac huddled in the bottom, his aching head somewhat at rest now that his message was safe.

The *dhow* was an open craft, scarcely thirty-five feet in length, with a very small decking aft where the head boatman stood, tiller in hand, yelling at his Somali sailors. The short, stocky mast was stepped just forward of amidships and raked sharply forward, being kept in place by a mass of heavy stays. From the mast hung the great spar, the forward end made fast to the prow, the after end carried in a sweeping curve far aloft, so that the brown patched sail, filled out by a light breeze, resembled the wing of a bird lighting upon the water. Though the craft was cumbersome, being built of very heavy planking and seamed with pitch, it was very tight and extremely seaworthy. Equipped with

thole-pins, it could be rowed when wind failed.

In order to disguise the character of the *dhow* the boatmen had been engaged in fishing; the bottom was therefore filled with a slimy heap of gleaming bodies, beautifully colored but very odoriferous. Abu Khalil and his friends made themselves comfortable aft, somewhat protected by the planking of the narrow deck.

Miriam huddled herself under this little deck, fixing herself a divan of sacking and a coir mat. Cohusac made himself as inconspicuous as possible near her.

Satisfied that he had done all that was possible in sending the message to the Political Officer, Cohusac relapsed somewhat after smoking a cigaret—begged from one of the Arabs. His soul had craved that smoke, and he did not relinquish the cigaret until it burned his lips and his fingers could no longer grasp it. Then he curled up on his mats and fell asleep, soothed by the gurgling ripple of the water under his head, the sonorous, incessant talk about him, the creaking of the rigging and the cool breath of the sea that fanned his face.

He was awakened before dawn by the cry of the *hadjis*, reminding all of the hour of prayer. He went through the prostrations without difficulty, his awkwardness being ascribed naturally to his crippled body. Refreshed, he watched the sun rise in a flaming flood that poured across the waters of the Gulf of Aden, turning them to purple, then to slate-blue and, finally, as the sun swept up from the horizon in a paling ball, to the vivid, sparkling blue of the tropics.

As the day advanced the sky became white. The heat settled in palpable layers. The wind died down completely. The sail was furled aloft, and the Somali sailors shipped their long sweeps and commenced to row, singing a grunting chant as their black, sweating bodies swung to the work.

Up forward a fire had been lighted in an earthenware stove. Coffee was roasted, pounded in a pestle and boiled with sugar and cardamom. It was served to Abu Khalil and his warriors first and then down to those of lesser importance until even Cohusac had his; all gulped it down boiling hot at a single draft, leaving nothing in the bottom of the cups for the jinn. Afterward brass trays with boiled rice and fish, heavily spiced and mixed with raisins, were placed for the travelers, and all, baring their right arms to the elbows, plunged in, devouring the food heartily.

After eating there was nothing to do but wash in the sea-water and doze in comfort under a canopy that was improvised out of the coir matting.

During the night and early morning until the breeze fell suddenly with the rising of the sun, the *dhow* had hissed through the water with astonishing speed. After the sail had been furled the boatmen, rowing in relays, kept the craft speeding away westward. Long before the white-hot sun had reached its highest point the high headlands of Aden had disappeared behind a haze of heat.

Up till this moment Abu Khalil had been strangely silent, oppressed by his thoughts. Too late, he had begun to conjecture on what would happen if the British Government officials learned of his conspiring and treachery. He wondered for the first time if it were not better to be looked upon as a distinguished and wealthy merchant, secure in the Government's favor, envied and respected by all, than to chance losing it all to make himself monarch of a kingdom of sand and thorn-bush and law-defying Somalis.

As he looked out over the unbroken waters and up at the unflecked sky and considered the frailty of the little craft that held him, his mood of pessism deepened. The smooth rise and dip of the *dhow* on the breathing bosom of the ocean displeased him. He felt a weakness in the pit of his stomach.

Then the surface of the sea that seemed so restless yet so empty of all life suddenly broke as a strange, black sea-monster appeared for an instant and sounded the fathomless depths again with an abysmal sigh. All who saw it cried out in terror of death—

"Truly we belong to Allah, and unto Allah shall we return!"

Even Cohusac was for the moment frightened. But Miriam, turning to him, said—

"Father of songs, sing to these cowards!"

Cohusac played "Alexander's Ragtime Band," and followed this with the breathless, rollicking air of "Funicula." By the time he had reached, "*Je sais que vous êtes très jolie*—" the frowning Abu Khalil believed himself once more capable of ruling the world.

"Enough!" he cried. "In the name of Allah let us talk."

Cohusac gratefully retired. Crawling and stumbling to the mast, from which hung the dripping *chaguls* of water, he put his lips to the opening of the skin and drank feverishly. Refreshed, he resumed his former position and sat there listening with languid eyes as the Mohammedans disclosed their amazing plan of conquest.

There was nothing haphazard about it. Every man among them—Somali, Abyssinian and Arab—had his part prepared. These two were to go into the land of the Dankalis, who were Mohammedans yet a very wild people, and keep them aroused to the work of cutting the railroad that leads from Djibouti on the sea to Addis-Abeba, the capital of Abyssinia itself. This Somali was to stir up his countrymen to raid along the Juba River and into British East Africa. The sphere of these Abyssinians was Shoa, where they were to take their positions in the councils and openly support the Prince Lidji Yassou in his apostasy. The rest were to concentrate in Harrar.

This seemed to be the crux of the whole scheme; for Harrar, a city of fifty thousand inhabitants, of whom three hundred are Europeans, is the great metropolis toward which the Gallas turn. It is the center of the coffee trade. Cohusac learned that Lidj Yassou was already on his way to this city, having become apostate from Christianity.

The plan was for him to receive the Somali chiefs in that city, permitting them to bring with them their retainers. Having made sure of the control of the city, he was to move northward, re-establishing himself in his formerly Christian country as a Mohammedan monarch.

All the conspirators, therefore, were to concentrate upon Harrar as rapidly as possible, fanning the flame of a holy war and bringing with them all the warriors they could rouse.

Miriam had been a great puzzle to Cohusac. Now he learned that her part was to go to Harrar and personally exercise her influence over the Prince Lidj Yassou and any of the other great notables that were near his person. His cynicism was again hardened—and again dispelled; for he learned further to his astonishment that Miriam was one of those amazing Mohammedan women who since the war have shown that many of the great movements in Mohammedan history have originated in the *harimlik*. She, a woman, an annoyance to men, was looked upon with universal respect for her intelligence.

Despite this, however, the Mohammedans were too deeply set in their prejudices to approve of the boldness with which she went unveiled. Had she been in Arabia her conduct would have been considered of so immoral a character as to make it impossible for the sheiks and *hadjis* to treat her with anything but disapproval and contempt. The fact, however, that Somali women are never veiled, and Abyssinian women are not only unveiled but have also as much personal freedom as Europeans, made it impolitic, if nothing else, to express their disapproval openly.

At the same time they never overlooked an opportunity to snub her if they felt they could do it in safety, since they feared her also on account of the power of witchcraft she was supposed to have—reading men's minds, seeing through the covers of books, prophesying with accuracy. Once the angry-looking deposed sultan with the crisp, black beard, annoyed at circumlocutions exclaimed—

"These are things that are not decided by the tongue—they are decided by the sword!"

"A sword in the hand of a fool," said Miriam, "is of less avail than the tongue in the head of a dog. Both have this in common; they can frighten cowards by the noise they make."

The straight, all-seeing look with which this remark was made forced the sheik to exclaim with furious exasperation:

"By Allah! No stranger will ever look upon the face of my women!"

"By Allah!" retorted Miriam with feeling. "If they have not virtue in their heart, you may encase them in solid cement, and yet they will dishonor you! Do not forget, sheik, that brave sons and virtuous daughters are the offspring of mothers!"

"*Taibl*" murmured the others. "In the name of Allah that is truly said."

Nevertheless, secretly these men of barbaric races stole glances at her voluptuous form with increasing desire, and if they had not been bound together by ties of religion and patriotism there might have been trouble; but their minds were too much engaged with their ambitions, their fears, their suspicions and their hopes to leave

much room for women. They felt the power of Miriam's mind and will and acknowledged the influence of her intellectual leadership, while looking upon her sex with contempt.

As for Abu Khalil, it was a struggle with him to maintain his composure in his relations with Miriam. She recognized that he held the necessary wealth and influence to be the logical head of the movement in Somaliland; but she hated his coarse egotism, and his gross dynamic body was repulsive to her; while the Arab felt an overpowering passion for the woman. Accustomed to gratifying every desire, it was all he could do to keep from seizing her openly and defying the consequences. An uneasy fear of her occult powers was probably the factor that restrained him. Her tricks of mind-reading and prophecy held them all in awe.

As the afternoon wore on they occasionally caught glimpses of the Arabian shore to the northward; but the low shore of Africa was still far below the horizon. The sun beat scorching hot upon the backs of the weary oarsmen; yet they continued to pull steadily, while the passengers argued, smoked, talked endlessly in monotonous voices of their own histories, told astonishing stories of fighting and of intrigue. At three o'clock another meal was served—a great platter of stewed mutton and vegetables with slabs of fried bread, and dates and cakes. Steaming hot, it was eaten with great gusto, while the perspiration beaded on the foreheads of the diners.

AN HOUR later the declining sun became hazed with yellow; the heaving waters looked gray and sullen; a feeling of uneasiness oppressed the occupants of the boat. All at once it began to grow dark. The exhausted boatmen stopped rowing, and a small patch of sail was broken out on the long spar, tightly reefed. Everything was made secure.

Cohusac managed to procure another cigaret. Satisfied with whatever fate awaited him, he drew the matting over his shoulders and huddled as close to Miriam as he could, thrusting his mandolin for protection as far as he could reach under the deck. As the storm broke upon them the Mohammedans called upon Allah for protection and were swallowed up in the darkness of the sea.

All night they tossed and plunged in the little craft, beaten by the hammering wind, drenched and suffocated with the downpouring rain and the briny spray that was whipped over the sides and prow of the boat. Compassless, swept into a cavern of impenetrable darkness, swirled this way and that, swaying, sinking, being tossed high in the air, then dropped sickeningly into yawning pits, none could tell where fate was sweeping them. The waters hissed about them, the gale roared overhead, the rigging rattled against the spars, and every loose object in the bottom of the *dhow* was banging and sloshing about in a slimy welter. The terror of all was increased by the recollection of the monster they had seen that day. Once out of the darkness came another moaning sigh.

"*Wallah!*" shrieked one of the boatmen. "It is Gholee Beabu! It is the Demon of Desolation!"

"Truly we belong to Allah," muttered Abu Khalil, furious with secret fear, "and unto Allah we will return!"

"It is Gholee Beabu!" shrieked the sailor.

At this instant the rope that stayed the bulging patch of canvas parted, and the sail flapped wildly, careening the craft until the waters rushed in and the long spar whipped about like a fishing-pole. Only the greatest courage and activity on the part of the other boatmen saved the craft from capsizing. It seemed that they were about to be engulfed.

"*Wallah! Wallah!* Gohlee Beabu!" shrieked the Somali.

The screaming worked havoc upon the nerves of all. Abu Khalil was trembling violently. When the boat righted itself and was plunging again with its prow to the seas, he cried out hoarsely—

"By Allah, that man is the Jonah amongst us!"

The terrified man was instantly seized. When he realized his fate he became frantic, twisting, screaming, gasping, frothing at the mouth. But in the powerful, hairy arms of Abu Khalil, whose strength was increased by his own terror, and in the arms of the others, he had no chance. With his feet pressed against the gunwale, eyes rolling, throat corded as he strained backward, he was jerked upward and flung sprawling into the howling darkness.

As Cohusac heard his suddenly smothered scream, he sank deeper into his obscurity,

swallowing hard. This movement brought him pressing against Miriam. She laid her hand firmly but with gentleness on his shoulder, as if to reassure him. The Frenchman again felt his heart warm with sympathy for her.

"This woman," he thought to himself, "must be saved."

After several hours the stars again came out, the waning moon shone coldly from above, the seas flattened out, and a clear breeze made it possible to break out the sail once more and continue westward with a foaming bow for the coast of Somaliland.

By dawn the *dhow* had been baled dry and everything made trim.

Abu Khalil, proud of his assumption of the power of a sultan in virtually condemning the Somali sailor to death, had placed himself upon his prayer-mat spread upon the little deck. From this point, with a hookah beside him, he looked down frowning upon the boat and all its crew. Cohusac avoided his gaze as much as possible; he was in constant terror of discovery.

The drenching downpour had thoroughly soaked him. Far worse than that, it had softened the scraggly little mustache and chin-whiskers, and they had come off!

He knew as he sat huddled in the shadow that discovery would certainly mean death; but that possibility had faced him every moment since his interview with Miriam. He now feared, however, certain refinements of torture, and his harassed nerves stung at the thought. All day he sat with the end of his turban twined round the lower part of his face in Bedouin fashion, hunched with his chin upon his chest, refusing all food or drink, his eyes fixed upon the planking, dazed with the suffering of thirst and hunger.

To all questions, all orders; he was dumb, merely shaking his head, until every one came to the conclusion that the tempestuous night had sickened and unnerved him. After that they made a joke of the hunchback, mocking and trying to tantalize him. Cohusac made no motion of resentment, only to grunt when Miriam, moved with pity, offered assistance.

The heat was even more stifling than on the previous day; but the wind had carried the boat within sight of the low-lying African shore, and when the wind failed the Somalis took to the oars with fresh enthusiasm. Cohuac's appearance of sickness gradually became reality. The long, rocking motion of the boat as it climbed to opalescent slopes and coasted into the hollows; the hot, stifling sun, the overpowering smell of polluted bilge-water and the stench of bad fish were too much! He could hear the hollow grumble in his stomach; his temples began to contract with dangerous tightness; his lips and mouth were dry, though the saliva began to trickle into his mouth faster than he could swallow. Though he clenched his teeth, his jaws began to float. He had to reach the gunwale of the boat or bring uncleanness to those about him.

Staggering to his feet, he lifted himself to the gunwale and, pulling aside the cloth that veiled his face, ended the agony in a series of convulsions. The Somalis laughed and yelled at him. Knowing that he was the center of observation, he dared not lift his head.

"Wallah!" exclaimed Abu Khalil with mock severity. "Cease, warbler! We do not like that song!"

There was a shout of laughter from the Somalis. All at once there was a sharp exclamation from the sheik with the black beard, and sudden absolute silence. The oarsmen stopped rowing. The boat rocked and creaked, the water hissing about it as it dipped in the blue water.

Cohusac hung on to the gunwale, praying, expecting any minute to feel the shock of a *jambeer* plunged into his back, or to be seized by the heels and tossed into the sea. Instead, nothing happened. Unable to stand the tension any longer, he lifted his head and turned defiantly. Not a man was even looking at him!

All eyes were fixed upon a ship that had appeared on the horizon.

AT FIRST it was vaguely outlined, gray against a French-blue sky. It might have been a *dhow*, also bound for Africa; but as they looked a faint thread of smoke appeared.

The sail turned into the superstructure of a ship, the mast into a funnel. There was a shout of rage and fright. Without waiting for the order, the oarsmen swung their weight on the sweeps; the captain of the craft, thrusting the tiller into Abu Khalil's hand, ran lightly over the thwarts forward and began again to unfurl the sail.

The evening breeze was stirring in a light

breath over the flattened sea. The sun was plunging into Africa behind a veil of heat. Though the ship behind them was not more than eight miles away, the shelving beach of the shore was still six miles away. Whatever the character of the steamship, it was headed straight for the *dhow*, and discovery was unavoidable.

While the oarsmen pulled desperately upon their sweeps, Abu Khalil, shouting alternate curses and prayers, ordered all unnecessary weight flung overboard. Crates, fish-traps, mats, boards, *chaguls*—all went by the board. Even Cohusac was in danger of being jettisoned; but that peril no longer worried him, since he knew the pursuing ship would pick him up in less than half an hour. Nevertheless, he determined to avoid the risk, and he crawled closer under the deck to escape the insane contemplation of Abu Khalil.

"Essevier Effendi has done this!" said Miriam bitterly.

"Essevier Effendi?" repeated Cohusac blankly. "In the name of Allah, how is that possible?"

"Essevier Effendi has sent this warship after us," repeated Miriam with positiveness.

"There are no German ships in these waters," muttered Cohusac behind his swathing cloth. "How is it possible for Essevier Effendi to have done this?"

"*Wallah!*" cried Miriam impatiently. "Father of stupidity, do you not know that Essevier Effendi is high in the secret councils of the British? His *baraka** is strong and has been felt at times from Kabul to Mogador.

"We know him! By Allah, we know him, even though the British themselves, except those in high places—may Allah wither them! May He dismember the souls of all infidels!—even though the British themselves know him not for the power that is his!"

Cohusac's hands went up to his mouth. He felt an indescribable sinking sensation in the pit of his stomach, mingled with a desire to shriek with laughter. Sevier a British agent of supreme importance! Wrapping his arms about his stomach, Cohusac rocked back and forth.

All at once something tore stammering through the air overhead. Every one ducked involuntarily. Cohusac was familiar with this sound, and he craned his neck out from his shelter to see. Another shell ricocheted on the water and went screaming shoreward. The light cruiser had come up at full speed but, reaching shoal uncharted water, dared not continue the chase. It had hove to and was trying to pick off the *dhow* before it passed out of range.

Abu Khalil at the tiller was the color of old putty, but he kept the *dhow* steady on its course. The great sail had bellied out with the rising breeze. The oarsmen, working in rapidly shifting relays, kept the craft foaming over the water. There was a possibility that the *dhow* might pass out of range and still evade capture.

Looking shoreward, Cohusac could actually see the light breakers feathering upon the flat beach. All at once he staggered and was thrown into the bottom of the boat; the oarsman went heels over head, the sweeps flying from their hands; the *dhow* careened and swung into the wind with the sail flapping like pistol shots. It had plowed heavily into sand.

When the black-bearded deposed sultan regained his feet, he shouted with flashing eyes:

"*Hathur!* It is the will of Allah! The water to the beach is shallow. Let us leap into the sea and wade ashore. In the name of Allah, scatter!"

"*Taib!*" roared Abu Khalil, rising above them on the small poop. "You have said well. In the name of Allah, let us scatter! Each man remember his duty. Scatter now; but if we must fly from one another when we reach shore, remember to gather again in Harrar where Lidj Yassou expects us! *Deen Mohammed! Deen Mohammed!*"

To give emphasis to the urgency of the matter, a shell, dropping close to the *dhow*, buried itself in sand where it exploded, sending a geyser into the air and drenching the craft. Instantly every man went overboard and started wading frantically toward shore, pushing a wave before his straining chest—every man except Cohusac and Abu Khalil.

The former chose what he considered the lesser of two evils and remained where he was, desiring nothing better than to remain unnoticed. The latter had been struck instantly by an unexpected occurrence.

The *dhow*, lightened instantaneously by the extent of between two and three tons weight, rose clear of the sand. A long swell caught it as it rose, swinging it so that the

* Warrant—blessing—personal influence.

wind filled the sail and carried it clear of the bar. Within the bar was deep water. Grasping the tiller, Abu Khalil put the *dhow* on a steady course, and it went foaming away, not headed toward the beach but following a curve of the shore that promised rapidly to bring them out of range of the cruiser's guns.

"*Hudha!*" cried Miriam, who had also remained on board.

She was standing up so that she rose head and shoulders above the decking upon which Abu Khalil squatted.

"They will be captured!" she cried. "Look! A cutter is coming from that warship!"

Abu Khalil did not bother to turn his head. There was in his face the look of an oriental despot—sensual, tyrannical, overwhelming—the undisguised face of the barbaric tyrant he hoped to be. He reached out his powerful arm and, passing it around Miriam's neck, drew her face up to his and crushed her lips with his hungry kisses. Panting with horror, Miriam managed to twist herself free.

"By Allah," said Abu Khalil huskily, "of what avail is it for you to struggle? Behold! In the empire which I shall build, you will be my first conquest!"

Another shell sent a geyser leaping above the sand-bar, and a yell went up from the marooned conspirators. Abu Khalil involuntarily turned his head.

Assuming that this was about the best opportunity that would offer, Cohusac rose from his hiding-place, and, swinging his staff with both hands, brought it down on the prospective sultan's neck.

Where Abu Khalil found bottom, he was up to his neck in clear water. From this lowly point he looked out upon the flooded world with an expression of bewilderment and injury. As if Allah considered that his degradation was not sufficiently pointed, he set a sting-ray under Abu Khalil, and Abu Khalil stepped upon it with his bare foot. The four-inch barb pierced his instep. He screamed as the agony of the poison shot up his leg; but he could not bend over to seize his wounded leg, and he screamed only once for fear of drowning.

Suffering all the tortures of the seven hells, he floundered toward the shallower water of the sand-bar where the marooned conspirators were waiting with a certain degree of satisfaction to receive him, hoping that he would arrive before the naval cutter put them under more complete physical restraint.

Cohusac, who had drawn himself up hastily to the tiller which Abu Khalil had so unexpectedly relinquished, first assured himself that he could hold the *dhow* under way, then gave a long, appreciative look at the deposed monarch. Completely satisfied with the arrangement, he turned then to look down at Miriam, who had staggered back against a thwart and was sitting there with hands clasped, staring at the hunchback with gratitude. All at once Cohusac realized that she must recognize him without his artificial adornment; and with a sense of shame he raised his hand to his chin.

Behold a miracle! Cohusac's face was covered with an unkempt growth! For three days before assuming his disguise he had refrained from shaving in order to make his artificial beard more secure upon his face. Two additional days without a razor had completed the transformation. Being of a hirsute disposition, not even Cohusac's most intimate friends would have recognized him in this disheveled cripple.

"*Bismillah!*" said he gaily. "Mistress of hearts, I swear by the Beard! You will be landed safe in Djibouti! Behold, I recite the *Fatha!*"

The CAMP-FIRE

A MEETING-PLACE for READERS, WRITERS and ADVENTURERS

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.

AN INTERESTING contribution to the discussion on the use of tobacco among the Cossacks:

Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.

Just a line or two regarding the discussion of tobacco in the issue of May 20, 1924, with particular reference to its use among the Cossacks:

LAMB'S observation that the Cossacks might have had the tobacco introduced to them by the Spaniards *via* Constantinople and the Turks seems based on his statement that the English trade with Russia through the Baltic was negligible in 1630 (the approximate time of the Czar's ban against the use of tobacco). The real explanation is that tobacco was introduced to the Russians through an English trading-post established at Archangel on the White Sea. The White Sea had been discovered in the time of the Tudors (the Tudor reign ended with Elizabeth in 1603) and a Russian Company was formed for the purpose of establishing and conducting the Archangel post. Yearly fairs were held there where Jamaica sugar, pepper, knives, etc., were traded for hemp, tallow and the "roe of the sturgeon of the Volga," according to Macaulay. But, continues Macaulay, "there was a secret traffic"—tobacco. Cow's horns, perforated, served the Muscovite for a pipe. "Every Archangel fair" . . best "Virginia rolls," "speedily found their way to Novgorod and Tobolsk."

There is the cycle complete—the roe of the sturgeon of the Cossack country for "Virginia rolls." The Czar's ukase, it would appear, was designed more to wipe out a strange new vice (?) than to dislodge a custom. Since tobacco was under extensive cultivation long before James I died (1625) it would readily appear that the tobacco had been introduced to the Volga country through Archangel, possibly as much as 10 years before the Czar's proscription of 1630.—H. L. W.

TOM L. MILLS of our A. A. staff, sends a coo-ee across to Camp-Fire from New Zealand and hands us an Australian newspaper clipping setting forth a large snake-story. The Albury district, he explains, is on the border between Victoria and New South Wales.

A snake story, which is remarkable even among stories of that class being featured in the Press. A youth named Clifford Scholes, residing in the Albury district has been in hospital five times during the past few weeks for treatment for snake bites. The remarkable features of the case are that since the fourth bite he has been carefully guarded by another boy to prevent the snakes from attacking him, and that the snakes have not been seen by other people. Scholes himself declares that they

smell him, and that in their presence his functions become paralysed.

The doctors are non-committal, as the wounds have always received first aid treatment before they saw them.

After refusing an offer by a theatrical firm for show purposes, Scholes decided to come to Sydney and place himself outside the danger zone, being convinced that his life would be endangered in the vicinity of any snakes. As proof of this, he points out that nobody else on his home farm has been attacked, that very few people have seen any snakes this season, and that three bites were received during the night time.

MR. MILLS does no vouching for the story, but he adds the following:

Thank heaven, St. Patrick must have come out here after purging Ireland, for there are no snakes in New Zealand, not even as few as there were in Eden's apple-tree.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom James Sharp Eldredge rises to introduce himself on the occasion of his first story in our magazine:

Chattanooga, Tennessee

Born in Salt Lake County, Utah, in 1898. Raised to five feet and a half on a farm in Salt Lake County with sulky plows and Jerseys as playmates. Then moved to St. George, which is down near the Arizona line and ninety miles from a railroad (at that time), where I alternately went to high school and shot quail. It was here that I reached six feet and began to feel independent. So I emigrated to a ranch near Bingham Cañon, far from the parental roof-tree, and began a career as cook for eight men. After a month of this I decided that heaven had never meant me for a chef and quit before I was fired.

I WAS saved from starvation by the mobilization of troops on the Mexican Border and eventually landed in Nogales, a disillusioned buck in the Field Hospital of the Utah National Guard. My adventures along the border were restricted to administering to the personal wants of 29 mules, the Hospital's allotment of trouble. In spite of this I persisted in growing and pushed the measuring-stick up to six feet four and a half when the world war came along and I violently contracted the flying bug. I guess I was sick of mules.

After being transferred to Ft. Riley, Kansas, and then to Camp Kearney, California, I finally made the aviation section, learned to fly, and was commissioned at Sacramento. My next move was to San Antonio, Texas, where I fought the battles of Brooks and Kelly Field as a dual flying instructor. But I liked flying, and, following the armistice, passed my examinations for the regular army and remained in the service.

THEN I married, was transferred to Chanute Field, Rantoul, Illinois, and there caught the journalistic bug. Persistently abetted by my wife, whom I was never able to convince that flying was not a perfectly safe and logical way for a man to earn his coffee and cakes, I left the Army to become the editor, manager, copy boy and printer's devil of a weekly newspaper in central Illinois. After a while a kind man bought me out, pleasing my itching feet, and I set out looking for trouble, in which I have achieved marked success. In the meantime I toured a part of the East, wrote countless reams of juvenile fiction, sold some of it, and am now writing editorials for a sheet here and fiction in between times.

AS TO adventures, if you choose to call everyday flying an adventure, then I had a five-year term. Sometimes it was fun; sometimes hard work; and sometimes just a part of the routine. The greatest thrill to me was seeing new country. The nearest I ever came to death followed a forced landing in Lake Michigan when my motor went bad over the business section of Milwaukee. The fabric on the lower wings of the plane was rotten and ripped when I hit the water, letting the ship sink. I had a half mile swim in ice water and was burdened down with heavy flying equipment which was hard to shed. Trying to avoid being both drowned and frozen proved an engrossing task. I suppose I had better land before I get up too high. I'm mighty glad to know you all.—JAMES SHARP ELDREDGE.

THE following letter to the New York *Sun*, published in that paper's issue of April 22, 1924, was sent in by Clement Heaton of West Nyack, N. Y. I'm glad to reprint it. We are, for the most part, a kindly folk and if we see a boy or a man causing some horse or cat or other animal needless suffering most of us step forward to end the cruelty, even if we have to fight to do it. And yet—

It is a source of melancholy interest that, in the whole course of the excellently written leader on the above subject in your Saturday's edition not a syllable suggested the fact of the rights of the trapped animals or of the cruelty involved. Will you allow one who has been a trapper and who has spent many years of honest and unprejudiced study of this subject to chronicle the following facts?

According to Miss Agnes Laut's late book, "The Fur Trade of America," there were, a couple of years ago, about 100,000,000 pelts offered for sale in the three big markets of North America alone, and the average, as you state, is growing no smaller. For example, Miss Laut noted the quadrupling of the fur output on account of the fashion of wearing "Summer furs!"

Now at least four-fifths of these hundred million animals were taken in steel traps which do not kill, but hold the victim by the foot until (after varying periods of time) it is killed by the trapper; or by other animals, or by hunger or freezing or thirst or exhaustion, or it gnaws its own limb or foot off. In most cases, it suffers horrible agony for a long time, and in every case for some period. Multiply this awful suffering by, say, eighty million, and you will have some conception of what furs cost every year. And I will cheerfully donate any good, large sum (for my finances) if you can, in all literature, produce one instance of the mention of this easily proved fact, except by myself. Others have exclaimed against the cruelty of trapping, but nobody has come near the horrible greatness of the truth.

Think of it! One hundred millions of poor, dumb creatures martyred, often to death, on this continent alone every year, and this is still going on.

A few protests, from unorganized individuals, that's all. And the pity, the awful iniquity, of it is that it is unnecessary. There are good traps which kill immediately, and there are fur farms which would be much encouraged if the trap were abolished by the legislatures, which I am trying to bring about. And, please mark this, if less fur were caught and marketed, neither the trapper nor the dealer would suffer, but only the wearer, which is just and right, as furs, except in the far north, are really not actual necessaries.

What will be done about it? Well, people will go on talking about vivisection, oil scandals, Dempsey, hell fire damnation and other things, with the mass martyrdom of some eighty millions of dumb animals still going on right under our noses.—EDWARD BRECK.

SOMETHING from Leonard H. Nason in connection with his story in this issue:

. . . . . .

. . . There is some mention made in the story of the *"Fresh Yank's"* being a recruit. This does not mean that he has recently enlisted. A man in any regular service is a recruit his first year, or was at the time of the story, and a man of even two enlistments might be called a recruit by a man of four or six enlistments.

The words of the *Yank* regarding traditions, nicknames and so forth of the American service are not mine. The American army has glory enough. As for nicknames, that of the Buffaloes for the 10th Cavalry, the Twelfth Umbrellas for the Twelfth, and the Handsome Dogs for the Fifth are three that come offhand to my mind.

I would also beg the *companeros* to remember that this story was written for an American audience, which necessitated some of the off-stage matter being written in an idiom that would be readily understood on this side of the water.—STEAMER.

You naturally associate Leonard H. Nason with stories of the war, but he is by no means limited to war stories. Some day you'll see his name on the cover and find the story inside deals with the sea, for he has served his time at sea and knows whereof he writes. And sometimes he uses both in his stories—war and sea.

ONE of you wrote me concerning great events to occur before many years, according to reports he had heard. He asked me to answer through Camp-Fire, perhaps not realizing that an answer can not thus reach the newsstands for several months after being written. Nor, under the conditions he himself imposed, can I answer him fully or clearly by this method. But, because the subjects he presented are of interest to all of us, I venture to take Camp-Fire space for at least a general reply:

I do not agree with all his theories and points of view nor am I clear as to some of them, but am in sufficient agreement, and believe I am sufficiently unprejudiced, to give the full case full attention if he presents it either in person or by letter. I pledge good faith, but exact the right to submit the exhibits, for their judgment and advice, to those of my friends whom I'm willing to trust with my own personal confidential affairs.

There is no money available here for the purpose in question, but there is earnest interest in preserving or building up at least some of the things he seems to have at heart.

SEEMS pretty well established from our discussions that one can't generalize about the effects of bites from various bugs and such:

Indianapolis, Indiana.

There has at different times been discussion in Camp-Fire in regard to the effect of bite and sting of various so-called poisonous animals, reptiles and insects and I have about come to the conclusion that the danger depends a good deal on the person bitten or stung.

A FEW issues ago a writer told of the men in Southern sawmills being stung repeatedly by scorpions and suffering no ill effects, but saying that centipede bites were supposed to be worse, but the Filipinos called the scorpions *muy malo* and the kids catch centipedes and pull off their pincers, tie a thread to them and let them run over their arms.

I have never been bitten by a tarantula or stung by scorpions, but old Mr. Centipede sure likes me. I have been bitten by them in Cuba in the coffee country, in Guam and the Philippines and personally I would rather be bitten by a centipede than stung by a honey bee. And that brings up another thing thing spoken of a few issues back. Whether some people are immune to attack from various insects. A flea or bedbug will not bite me and I have been where there are plenty of both. Mosquitos do not bother me if other people are near me, and it was reported that Victor Blue the surgeon said that he was immune to bubonic plague because a flea would not bite him.—A. W.M.

GLAD to publish the following information concerning the Citizens' Military Training Camps:

Chicago.

The Government is offering this year without expense a month of out-door life to 40,000 young men between the ages of 17 and 24. Thirty Citizens' Military Training Camps will be conducted at points distributed throughout the country. No military obligation is involved in enrolling at these camps, which are maintained by the War Department to promote health and good citizenship. The program calls for military drill and instruction in the forenoon; the afternoons are given to a variety

of out-door sports under expert supervision and indoor entertainment is provided for the evenings in the form of amateur dramatics, lectures, concerts and moving pictures. Army Chaplains direct the religious life of the camps for men of all faiths and Army Hostesses are in charge of all soci l meetings. Good citizenship is promoted by lectures, conferences, classes and debates. The men are quartered in permanent barracks or in large well-floored Army tents. The mess is under the direction of experienced officers, who are authorized to purchase an abundance of meats, fresh vegetables and fruits, thus affording a well-balanced and appetizing ration, prepared by well-trained Army cooks and served with due regard to the table manners of a typical American home. Thirty days of outdoor life with all expenses paid.

Your readers may get information in regard to the nearest camp by addressing the respective Corps Area Headquarters or by sending inquiry to this office.—GEORGE F. JAMES, Executive Secretary, Military Training Camps Ass'n, 210 Mallers Bldg., Chicago.

WHILE we keep away from praising our own writers in "Camp-Fire," we don't hesitate now and then to print a word of appreciation for the good work some of our writers are doing in giving us a better understanding of history, particularly the history of our own country.

But the main reason for printing the following is its comment, from a stout Englishman, upon English propaganda in our school histories. His letter was written to Hugh Pendexter:

Taumarunui, Kings County, New Zealand.

The very first two shillings I ever earned working overtime were expended in the purchse of Parkman's "Montcalm and Wolfe" (Everyman's Library edition). To me history had always been interesting and I can take it straight or in fiction form with equal pleasure so long as the writer of fiction knows (as you do) what he is writing about. However, to many the very word "history" conjures up a horrid recollection of a mere arid assortment of names and dates and it is to such that you are rendering so great a service.

Well, I want right now to thank you for your stories; if I may be permitted to say so, they ring true, both in matter and in action and that is the highest praise I know of and it is the least you deserve.

I SEE there is an attempt to foist pro-English histories on some of your schools; nothing could be more deplorable. Of course, I am English, and incidentally feel under no obligation to apologize to any one for it, but it is not right that this kind of partisanship should intrude into schools, especially when it entails supression of the facts. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth alone, is sufficient where history is concerned and anything else most emphatically will not do.

If it is true that seven pages only are devoted to the American Revolution in the history in question (Muzzey's), it is damnable. Why, my school history found room for Paul Revere's ride and even mentioned Patrick Henry, and it was an English one. The Boston Tea Party was not made a matter for horror. If I remember rightly it was utilized to show what might happen if "taxation without representation" were insisted on. Of course, you will find many good Englishmen who are "on the side of the angels" in this matter. Your fight for liberty had its influence on political thought in Britain long after the event and the great men of the Revolution were an inspiration to many brave Englishmen struggling to improve the conditions of their countrymen.

WE ENGLISH have some shameful things in our history and some glorious ones too, and in any event I think that we re still men enough to wish for the simple truth and nothing else in both cases. Personally I don't mind John Bull being knocked when he deserves it and I like him to get credit when he deserves it. The individual who can see no good at all in the old fellow and won't can go to —— so far as I am concerned. He's either a —— fool or a liar and often both. I reckon you feel much the same about Uncle Sam?

Although we will never meet I thought I'd like to tell you that your writings have given me pleasure and that I appreciate them. After all we don't exist on dollars alone; some one said, and I think it's right, "we live by love and hope and admiration" and that is my excuse. Cheerio.—JACK MURRAY.

WHERE did the Moroccan Berbers come from? Here is an interesting letter from George E. Holt of our writers' brigade, whose stories of *Mohammed Ali* we've been reading:

San Diego, California.

It is highly improbable that we shall ever be certain as to the origin of the Berbers of Morocco, that dark-skinned people which have occupied the mountains of Atlas and defied subjection by "superior" races since, and before, the beginning of recorded history. Perhaps when the origin of the American Indian is discovered light will be thrown upon the ancestry of the "Indians" of Morocco. Whence came they and when? Were they descendants of the Canaanites, as some have held? Were they Libyans, powerful enough then to wage war against Egypt itself? And, as still others have suggested, did the ancient civilization of the American aborigine come from these same people, or were both descendants from the fabled lost Atlantis midway between Africa and America?

A VERY impressive opinion, because of his standing, is that of Dr. Bertholon. "There would appear to have been in North Africa at the time of the Ægean immigration only a population that had not got beyond the stone civilization. A few tribes, akin to the quaternary man of Neanderthal, were at the stage of chipped flint; others, more numerous, of the same race as the Iberi ns, were raising megalithic monuments and were living in a less profound state of barbarism." And in his opinion the Libyans or Celto-Ligurians, some fifteen hundred years before the beginning of the Christian era, emigrated from the banks of the Danube to North Africa. But whether or no his conclusion is correct, the fact remains that for almost four thousand years Morocco was occupied by a people who, in order to have

reached the stage of civilization they possessed, must have spent many centuries among the plains and hills and mountains of that section of the world.

A MOST interesting light is cast upon the screen of Moroccan history by a record left by Procopius of Cæsarea. He was secretary to Belisarius, who served in Morocco in Justinian's Vandal wars. He recorded that there then stood beside a spring near what is now Tangier, then Tingis, two columns of stone which bore the legend: "We have fled before the face of Joshua the robber, son of Nun." From this he drew the conclusion that Morocco had been settled by descendants of the Canaanites, and in this opinion he is endorsed by many Arab historians, who attribute this origin to the Berbers. And according to another profound scholar, Dean Milman, the inscription upon these pillars was described by Moses of Chorene in his history of Armenia a century before the time of Procopius. The disappearance of these pillars from history is undated, but a certain fact should not be overlooked. When Procopius referred to Tangier he unquestionably meant not the present city, which is now called "New Tangier" by the Moroccans, but to "Tanjha Baili," or "Old Tangier," of which the ruins may be found at a distance of some miles eastward around the bay from the present town. These ruins, which for the most part are covered over, are supposed to be the remains of docks and storehouses and barracks built by Seutonius Paulinas about 41 A. D., when on his way to conquer the savages of Britain. Walls still remain, showing evidences that the bay, which is now far away, once lapped about them. And it is probable that it is near here the pillars stood—possible that they lie beneath the earth of ages which has piled over the ruins.

FIVE hundred years before Moses of Chorene, Sallust advanced the theory that the Berbers were descended from the army of Medes, Persians and Armenians which Hercules led into Spain; and Yakut, the geographer, wrote that columns similar to those above referred to existed at Carthage as copies of ancient ones existing at Tyre. And when it is remembered that Hanno the Carthaginian explored the Moroccan coast about 500 B. C., and that later, long before the Romans came, Carthage had three hundred trading stations on the Moroccan coast and half a dozen cities in the interior, it appears quite possible that they are the ones who erected the "pillars near Tangier."—GEORGE E. HOLT.

A DEFENSE of the automatic and some words on their care and use from one who should know about them.

His name is signed in full, not for the reason he mentions at the end of his letter, but simply because we've begun to draw the line against publishing letters whose writers ask not to have their names printed. Sometimes there's good reason for such a request, and generally one with no discredit attached, so there will still be in Camp-Fire some such letters. But our cache is full of good letters, more than we can get space for; it is only just to bar out the "no name, please" ones as a class and use our space for the others.

Also, the others are more in our line. Our Camp-Fire is pre-eminently a place for a man to stand up on his two feet and do his talking in plain sight of all, instead of calling out from the obscurity of the shadows outside our firelight. He's welcome if he takes his place openly among us; not so welcome if he talks to us from behind a tree.

Atlanta, Georgia.

For twelve years I have lingered in the shadows of Camp-Fire, never missing a talk except for several months in 1917 and 1918, but now I arise to defend my old friend and buddy, the automatic pistol.

TOO many of our comrades at Camp Fire express opinions instead of knowledge and to prove that this talk is not an assumption of my knowledge, let me state that the pistol, especially the Colt automatic, .45 caliber, is my hobby; that I have used it under practically every condition in the United States and France, and I assert with pride fostered by affection for the weapon instead of braggadocio, that I conducted one of the best pistol schools known to the Army in the Winter of 1918, with 3200 odd officers and noncoms as pupils.

Some men prefer auburn-haired girls, some blondes, others brunettes, or just plain red heads. But after a man really learns to know the right sort of girl, he doesn't care what color hair she possesses. Some men malign the automatic pistol, because it doesn't look as good to them as the revolver, and because their knowledge of it is limited. Fellows, that's unsportsmanlike. You Camp-Fire adherents are not the kind to give a man a black eye just because you don't understand him. So why anything else?

The automatic pistol is a wonderful weapon—if understood. But too many men try to operate it like a revolver and become discouraged when it naturally functions differently.

ABOUT jams. The .45 caliber Colt automatic is properly made, and it will *not* jam of its own accord. Most jams with this pistol are caused by failure to keep it clean or by a misunderstanding of it. The user often subconsciously releases the magazine catch preventing the magazine from feeding cartridges; or slightly pushes in the slide-stop pin; or obstructs the backward movement of the slide with the thumb behind the hammer. Occasionally a jam is caused by defective ammunition, as similar trouble occurs with every bullet-firing weapon. The user needs to clean and look out for his ammunition just as much as he does his weapon. The jam from defective ammunition can be corrected in a second, but most men get rattled and have to stop too long to think. They don't fully understand their weapon.

MORE often than defective ammunition, and yet in rare instances, jams are caused by the magazine. The average man empties a magazine and carelessly tosses it off to one side. He doesn't seem to realize that a dent in the side made by a pebble or something else hard, will interfere with the easy flow of cartridges through the magazine; nor

does he seem to know that the magazine follower (upon which the bottom cartridge rests) while strong, *can* be bent by a sudden, hard jolt, thereby crippling the magazine and destroying its effectiveness. Then the magazine spring sometimes becomes weakened through misuse and the user becomes discouraged with the jams that occur because the spring has insufficient tension to force the cartridges fully into the chamber. But nine out of ten jams are caused by the user's unfamiliarity with the weapon or his carelessness with it.

Remember the first time we smoked or chewed tobacco? Well, we shouldn't condemn a thing because we don't know how to use it.

ABOUT firing. One of the comrades of Camp-Fire recently commented somewhat sarcastically about hip firing. The best shots with the pistol (automatic or revolver) can fire with accuracy from the hip. It's instinctive, just like pointing the finger without sighting. My granddad followed the trails of the West in its rawest period; my father before the law was enforced, and I have had friends and companions who *had* to be good shots with the pistol to survive the early days of the West. Most of them were unable to explain their accuracy and generally attributed it to luck. Here's what the writer has discovered from those old-timers:

Find the one spot of *your* hand between the last joints of the thumb and forefinger where the stock of the pistol rests to enable you to have one straight line from the muzzle to the elbow. Practise holding that position until it becomes second nature and you'll very quickly be hitting around the bull's-eye, and there is less strain and better shooting if you use this posit on with the forearm resting against the waistline or hip. Most instructors call this the grip, but it's really more than the grip. It's the position the old-time gunman had to practise—he had to learn to get that pos tion naturally just as quickly as his hand could yank the pistol out of h s holster, which always hung low on his thigh.

THE best way to carry the automatic ready for use is with chamber loaded and hammer drawn back and locked. Even should the safety lock be accidentally lowered, there are st ll two safety locks hold ng back the hammer which can not go forward until both are released.

To use as a striking weapon, grip the "barrel" (or receiver) in the hand and strike with the rear sight, but the average blow means the undertaker. That is the best way to keep from damaging the weapon. There is a solid block of cold steel (except for the small hole drilled for the firing-pin) just below the rear sight, and it protects against any damage to the pistol. Never strike with the stock or you'll ruin the magazine and probably damage the stock so the magazine will not go into the stock.

A FEW more pointers about firing: Squeeze the tr gger straight to the rear with the ball of the forefinger (not the joint) and without deflecting the muzzle of the pistol. Nine out of ten men, even after practise, group their shots low and to the left. The conformation of the average hand causes the forefinger to pull down and to the left, although it is rarely noticed. It has to be combatted. But practice the "grip" first and you can depend on getting your man.

THIS rambling little talk is intended only as a defense of my greatest hobby, the Colt automatic pistol. And, after firing the German Luger (it's really Belgian), I'll stand alongside of it any day with a .45 caliber Colt automatic and do more damage with just as much accuracy.

I am not looking for free publicity, and natural modesty after such a know-it-all talk makes me hesitate to sign my name, but if the editor has any suspicion that I am one of those spineless conceited asses who is not proud of Camp-Fire, then I invite him to put it down entirely.—RAYMOND V. BERGEN.

THIS letter enclosed a poem dealing with the mothers of wanderers. The poem, unfortunately, was not quite adapted to our needs, but the letter, because of its message to other wanderers, is published here:

The enclosed is a thought that the writer set down while in a hotel room 1,500 miles from the grave of his mother.

I am one of the first members of the old American Legion—way back in '15 and have read *Adventure* when I could get it, all over the world.

I'm sending it to you to see if you can use it—with the thought that perhaps some bird of passage like myself can read it and do some of "those things we have left undone" and make his mother happy now.

I'm settled down now. This was caused by going back to the same room where I got the wire that my mother had passed on to the "great Adventure."

HAVING voted for Prohibition, I am not to be arraigned as one who does not see and deplore the evil of liquor. But I have lived to regret my vote, for the old evil has not been removed but is in many ways worse than it was before, and the attempted remedy has brought us an even more serious evil in our growing disregard for law and lawfulness. The Eighteenth Amendment and Mr. Volstead's application of it are accomplishing far more for anarchy than for temperance. They breed hypocrites and pharisees as well as law-breakers, and have done more than anything else to strengthen our idiotic and ineffective habit of trying to cure evils by blithely passing a law against them when we can't enforce the law we pass and when the only real remedy is a more fundamental one.

While not agreeing with his views on various other matters, I quote from the New York *Herald Tribune* the outspoken opinion of Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University:

If the Anti-Saloon League on the one hand, and the bootlegger and persistent lawbreaker on the other, had conspired together to bring nom nal glory to the first and certain profit to the second,

they would have united in urging the precise course of action which has been followed.

THE time has come to speak our mind on the shocking and immoral conditions which have been brought about by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. As a result of it we have now a nation-wide traffic in intoxicating liquors which is unlicensed, illicit, illegal and untaxed.

We have brought about a situation in which we challenge the ingenuity and sporting instinct of millions of young persons to test whether or not they can safely violate a law for which they have no respect. We have invited and induced a spirit and a habit of lawlessness which is quite without precedent and which reaches from the highest ranks in the nation's life to the lowest and most humble.

THE reason why the national prohibition law is not enforced is that it cannot be enforced, (he continued). The reason why it cannot be enforced is that it ought not to have been passed. No liberal can possibly defend it.

The appeal is now to be made to the men and women of religious faith, of moral principle, and of public spirit to cast off the scales that have closed and darkened their eyes and to face the terrible facts that confront them on every hand. Senators and Representatives in Congress and members of State legislatures nonchalantly vote for prohibitory legislation and quickly betake themselves for refreshment to a drink of alcoholic liquor. Judges sentence men to fine and imprisonment for having been detected in doing what other judges do without detection.

WHAT can one say of those who, while calling themselves ministers of the Gospel of Christ—God save the mark!—pass resolutions of confidence in a convicted criminal, tender him a substantial gift of money wrung from their deluded dupes and roll their eyes to heaven giving thanks they are not as other men?

There is a close parallel between slavery and prohibition. I look upon the Volstead act precisely as the abolitionists looked upon the fugitive slave law. Like Abraham Lincoln, I shall obey these laws so long as they remain upon the statute book; but, like Abraham Lincoln, I shall not rest until they are repealed. The issue is one of plain, simple, unadorned morality.

Now note what happened. Here is the kind of thing the prohibitionists seem not to count an evil:

Immediately the State superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League, Arthur J. Davis, successor to William H. Anderson, tried to bring about Dr. Butler's dismissal as president of Columbia University, as stated in the *Herald Tribune* of the next day. If you want evidence of another of the evils growing from the attempt to enforce prohibition, here it stands. Talk about suppression of freedom of speech! Because Dr. Butler dares express opposition to their opinions they at once try to "do him in" by depriving him of his job. Is that intolerance and bigotry, Cossack stuff, coward's stuff, the mean work of narrow-minded fanatics? Or is it a manly, American, democratic way of fighting for an idea?

AS I understand the Christian religion, the essence of it is charity or love. There seems little of it in the prohibitionist attitude. Rather they seem entirely centered on the always pleasant work of attending to the other fellow's vices and there seems to be precious little charity or love expended in their methods. I wonder, now, whether God, judging men by the teachings of Christ, has a balance on the credit or the debit side of the book recording the prohibition activities of Arthur J. Davis and the many others of similar kind. Good work, let's say, in trying to make the other fellow better by force—the same kind of good work to be credited to Charlemagne for cutting off the physical heads of all who refused to be converted to Charlemagne's religion, just as Mr. Davis attempts to cut off Dr. Butler's metaphorical head. But on the other hand, how much forgiving of enemies, how much turning of the other cheek—and, by the way, how much have these earnest Christians done in the line of turning the money-changers out of the temple?

THEY can, of course, answer all these questions volubly and with entire satisfaction to themselves, but no single one of them can disprove the fact that if there's any real Christianity in their campaign they put all their emphasis on some minor phase of it, neglecting its vital principles. If Christ had been among us when the Eighteenth Amendment was proposed they wouldn't, of course, have hesitated merely because its passage would have been a demand for Him to reform and change His principles, since He never voiced disapproval of wine drinking, but it is difficult to guess how they would have explained to Him their zeal against the other fellow's vice when it is logical to assume, they being human, that they have some weak points of their own that are in at least equal need of Christian reformation. That is, of course, if they would have given any more consideration to Him in actual presence than to the real essence of the teachings he left behind Him.

One could have more respect for them if

they based their campaign wholly on the need of relieving human suffering and debasement instead of confusing the issue by attempting to make prohibition part and parcel of Christianity. That is another argument against prohibition—it breeds hypocrisy. As well as intolerance, lawlessness, narrow-mindedness, hate, boot-legging, poisoning and other unpleasant odds and ends.

NOW just suppose that all these good people whose moral activity naturally takes the course of correcting the other fellow's vice by sending him to jail if he indulges in it and they can catch him, were asked to turn their militant attention to that vast evil that rots its way through every part of our social, political and economic fabric—graft and betrayal of public trust, breeding theft, lying, perjury, disloyalty and more human misery and suffering and moral debasement than is bred by drink. Would they be enthusiastic for that campaign? Not any. As a matter of fact, the need has always stared them in the face and they look the other way. Partly because they're not sufficiently intelligent to see or understand a need that isn't shown in such crude cause and effect as a man drinking a glass of liquor and then lying in the gutter or beating his wife. But chiefly because for many of them this is not the other fellow's vice but their own, while many of those spotless of this vice would be confronted with the duty of hunting down this or that pillar of the congregation and this or that wealthy contributor of stolen money for foreign missions.

Any of them reading this will of course say I'm not a Christian. Well, I try to be, though I'm not very proud of the result. I'm not a sectarian, if that's what they mean. And when I go gunning against an evil, as I do against graft and political corruption, I don't send up any smoke-cloud of misapplied Christianity.

WELL, Mr. Davis doesn't seem to be getting anywhere in furthering the cause of prohibition by his Christian attempt to deprive Dr. Butler of his means of making a living for daring to exercise his American right of free opinion and free expression. The trustees of the university seem to understand the meaning of democracy and manly methods. Some of them even dare to express their own adverse opinion of prohibition. For example, Frederic R. Coudert, well-known authority on international law:

The prohibition experiment has been tried and found wanting. It has, in my judgment, tended to hypocrisy, inebriety, immorality and a general reign of lawlessness. Intelligent American opinion must occupy itself with the revision of an impossible situation. I can speak only for myself, but I believe this view to be held by many representative men in all public institutions devoted to education and general welfare.

Joseph P. Grace:

I agree with Dr. Butler that the Eighteenth Amendment should be repealed. I see no reason why his official position should interfere with his making a straightforward statement on the subject of prohibition.

Willard V. King:

Speaking as an individual, I concur in Dr. Butler's views on prohibition and I see nothing inconsistent therein with his leadership of Columbia University.

Lucius H. Beers, trustee of Barnard College, allied to Columbia:

I agree with what President Butler said regarding prohibition, and I think he performed a national service in stating the facts honestly and in urging that candid and intelligent attention be given to this great and growing scandal. I think his views are consistent with his leadership of a university. If this were not so, then universities would not promote clear thinking and candid speech, when these are required in the public interest.

DON'T forget that most of our original cover paintings are for sale to the highest bidders. Send in your bid any time. Each cover will be sent express collect to the highest bidder one month after the magazine which bears it appears on the news-stands. Minimum bid, ten dollars.

SERVICES TO OUR READERS

Lost Trails, for findin missin relatives and friends, runs in alternate issues from "Old Songs That Men Have Sun ."

Old Songs That Men Have Sung, a section of "Ask Adventure," runs in alternate issues from "Lost Trails."

Camp-Fire Stations: explanation in the second and third issues of each month. Full list in second issue of each month.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons, etc., runs in the last issue of each month.

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, each 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.

Back Issues of *Adventure*

The Boston Magazine Exchange, 24 T Wharf, Boston, Mass., can supply Adventure *back through* 1918, *and occasional copies before that.*

WILL BUY: All issues 1922 and first half 1923.—Address HARRY S. CAHOON, Box No. 34, Warren, Mass.

WILL SELL: Mar. 20, Apr. 10, June 10, all August. Sept. 10 and 20, Nov. 10 and 20, all December 1923. Thirty-six issues all in excellent condition. What offers?—Address EDWARD H. DAVIS, 333 East 148th St., New York City.

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WILL SELL: All issues from 1916 to 1924. What offers?—Address HENRY WILLYARD, R. F. D. No. 5, Marion, Ill.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. 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 address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, 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 J. Cox.

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, *un*stamped envelope.

If check or money order is sent, please make it out to the Ridgway Company, *not* to any individual.

Missing Friends or Relatives

(*See Lost Trails in next issue*)

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

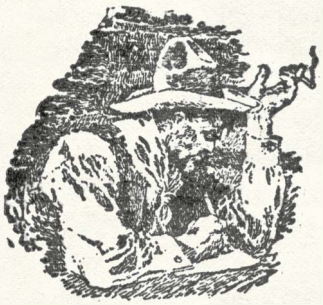
Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

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.**
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, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey
27. Asia Minor
28—30. Balkans. In Three Parts
31. Scandinavia
32. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
33. Great Britian
34—36. South America. In Three Parts
37. Central America
38—39. Mexico. In Two Parts
40—46. Canada. In Seven Parts
47. Alaska
48. Baffinland and Greenland
49—54. Western U. S. In Six Parts
55—58. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
59—64. Eastern U. S. In Six Parts
Radio
Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Tropical Forestry
Aviation
Army Matters, United States and Foreign
American Anthropology North of Panama Canal
Standing Information

Personal

READERS have been asking for the autobiographies of "Ask Adventure" editors; and those staff members who believe that a few words about themselves will promote better acquaintanceship all around, are responding to the request. The order in which these autobiographies are printed doesn't signify anything. They are withdrawn from the file at random:

East Hampton, N. Y.

Being born a girl is a handicap if you're also born with a taste for adventure. But I'm young and optimistic enough to believe that you can do almost

anything, if you want to hard enough; and so far being a girl hasn't been allowed to make my life dull.

May I state my qualifications for admission to the circle around the Camp-Fire?

First: Seafaring blood. Grandfather was a whaling captain in the good old days when New Bedford and Sag Harbor ships roamed the South Seas. Father has spent most of his life on the sea, has also killed whales off our own beach. My brother is in the Navy. I like outdoor life—swimming, fishing, riding, camping.

Read all the time; mostly travel, history and adventure.

I was "finished," not educated, in a Washington private school. Then, by request, turned loose in New York for six years, first to learn to earn my own living, then earn it. Lived and made friends in nearly every one of the different villages that go to make up the Big City—from Greenwich Village to the exclusive East Sixties; from the Columbia University section to the model tenements on the East River.

Took every chance of travel in this country, and finally came the chance to travel abroad. Spent a year in Constantinople (1921-22), during the Allied occupation. Constantinople was said at that time by some one who ought to know to be the "wickedest city in the world, not excepting Shanghai"—and a most interesting place to inspect under the wing of a six-foot brother with a good right arm!

My brother had been there three years as supply officer for our Navy, and of course knew everybody. I met all kinds of people—Turks, Armenians, Greeks, hundreds of Russian refugees from Bolshevism. Lived for a time in each of the two principal hotels; then kept house for brother in an apartment with servants of three races, none English-speaking. I had orders never to go alone into any building in Stamboul, but of course did.

"If you want to be murdered, you can be murdered," so the commandant of the allied police told me. "Just wander around in dark alleys!"

In mid-Winter three other young women and I spent six weeks going slowly down the coast of Asia Minor, stopping at Smyrna, Beirut, the Greek Islands; then to Egypt, the Holy Land, and back to Constantinople.

Going out and on the way home I visited Naples, Athens, Budapest, Vienna, Venice, and, for a month, Paris.

Since coming home I've spent a year in Virginia; have written a series of letters about Turkey for *Outlook;* at present am a "colyumist" on a small newspaper; and your fellow "Adventurer," ready and willing to talk about Turkey at any length.—JEANNETTE F. EDWARDS.

The Hogback Oil Structure

SO RICH that the crude petroleum can serve as fuel without being refined at all:

Question:—"Have inquiries about a New Mexico oil product from Eastern parties. They want me to go and look over same, and if country looks good to me to try to secure a large block of acreage to put down a test well.

You will excuse me if I overstep the limits of what 'Ask Adventure' is intended, for I should like to know where would be the best place to go for a proposition of the kind mentioned. Have been to Artesia but find the grade of oil very heavy. Had in mind that the northwest counties should show good indication. Has any oil ever been found there?"—GUS HEDMAN, Griffin, Ark.

Answer, by Mr. Robinson:—The Midwest Company have brought in two or three wells in San Juan County, on the Hogback structure, which is on the Navajo Indian Reservation. At about 800 feet they get oil under pressure that flows about 1,200 barrels from the two wells.

This is the the highest grade oil ever discovered, I am told; it tests above 62 degrees Baume as it comes out of the well and carries 72 per cent to 74 per cent. gasoline. I know that automobiles put the crude oil in their tanks and run without any trouble, and people with tractors are buying the oil as it comes from the well to run them with. So I guess it is sufficiently high grade for any one.

There are five great structures on this reservation, and they were sold by auction on the 15th of October at an average bonus of ten dollars an acre for the period of the proposed lease. They are bound on the larger leases to put down not less than three wells to a depth of 3,000 feet unless the oil is encountered at less depth, etc.

There will be other sales of reservation leases after these have been tried out. They must begin drilling on each lease withing 90 days of the sale, so it should not be very long before it is tried out over a considerable area.

Off the reservation drilling is going on, and oil in small quantities has been found near Farmington, and big gassers brought in at Aztec. South of these fields and north of Grants other strikes are reported.

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.

Railways of the Sudan

BY WAY of explaining a couple of terms you'll come to in a few minutes if you read the subjoined Q. and A.: A *feddan* is as much land as can be plowed over with a pair of oxen in one day—about an acre and a quarter. *Sudd* is a floating mass of vegetable matter that forms in the White Nile and obstructs navigation. As for the place names mentioned below—go to the map, thou sluggard:

Question:—"I am engaged in writing a paper on the 'Railways of Africa,' for a course in the geography of Africa at the University of Chicago, and I am having considerable difficulty in finding recent material which is accurate and up-to-date. Most of the available material dates from before the war, and I understand that considerable progress in railway construction has been made since that time, both during and after the war. I am very anxious

to know definitely just what progress has been made, so in dealing with the Sudan part of the paper I find it necessary to write to a man who is on the spot, and who therefore would be better able to give me the most reliable and recent daza on the subject. Would you be so kind, then, as to answer the following questions:

1. The projected railway to El Fasher. Is the line shown on the General Staff map of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (scale 1: 3,000,000) as projected from Rahad Station, on the Sennar-El Obeid Railway, through El Odaiya and Sharafa to El Fasher, at present under construction? If so, when is it expected that the line will be completed? If not, when will construction be commenced?

Will the value of this line be primarily strategic or commercial? If the latter, what kind of traffic will it be called upon to carry? If the former, what is its strategic significance?

Is the country through which the line will pass primarily agricultural or grazing? What are the possibilities of an ultimate connection with the proposed extension of the Lagos-Kano Railway to Lake Chad, or with the lines in the French Sudan, thus constituting a Trans-African Railway through the Sudan?

2. On the same map there is shown a proposed line from a point on the line to El Fasher, about thirty miles east of Sharafa, southeast to Abu Gabra, and on in the same general direction to Kafia Kingi, near the French border. Is this line under construction at present, or will work on it be started soon?

Will the line be primarily of strategic or commercial importance? What sort of a country, economically speaking, does the line pass through, and what kind of traffic would it probably carry?

3. Before the war the Belgians surveyed, and were planning to construct, a line from Bumba, on the outside of the great bend of the Kongo, through the Kilo gold-fields and the Uele district, to Rejaf. Did the construction of that part of the proposed line in the Sudan ever receive the sanction of the Sudan Government, and if not, why not? If sanction was granted, was the Sudan Government to have aided in the construction? Would this line be of any considerable economic value to the Sudan?

4. Herbert Adams Gibbons, in his book, "The New Map of Africa," states that when he visited the Sudan there was sentiment against the construction of a line up the White Nile to Lake Victoria, ba d on certain engineering and economic reasons. Do these objections still exist, and if so, just what do they consist of, besides the obvious problem to be faced in building a line through the Sudd?

5. What is the outlook for rail connection between the Sudan and Egyptian State Railways? Would a connecting line of necessity have to follow the river-bank?

6. The map above mentioned shows a projected railway from a point immediately east of Enika Station on the Atbara-Port Sudan line, south to Kassala. Has work begun on this line yet? If not, when will work begin? Purpose of the line—military or commercial? What is the economic character of the country to be traversed, and what kind of traffic can be expected?

7. There is a line shown as projected from Suakin to Tokar. Has construction been initiated thereon? What would be the value of this line?

8. What is the economic or strategic value of the line running up the Nile from No. 10 Station to Kareima?

9. What was the total amount of traffic which moved through the respective ports of Wadi Halfa and Port Sudan, freight and passenger, during the last fiscal year?

10. What progress has been made in the construction of irrigation dams on the Blue Nile and on the White Nile, reservoirs in the Abyssinian highlands, and irrigation canals in the region between the two Niles?

What is the possibility of railway construction in this latter area?

11. Are there any plans afoot for the drainage and subsequent irrigation of the Sudd?

12. I would be very much obliged if you could refer me to any books or article dealing with the Sudan State Railways, and if you could tell me how to obtain any descriptive folders or pamphlets which the Railway Administration may issue. Any additional information besides that requested in the above questions would be highly appreciated.

Also, what publication of the Colonial Office would contain the yearly report of the Railway Administration; and do you happen to know where I could obtain a recent map of the Sudan, which shows the railways, present and proposed?

If you could send a time-table I would be able to judge of the running time of the passenger trains, and compare with the results obtained elsewhere in Africa and in this country.

You will find enclosed an international reply coupon to cover the return postage."—JOHN A. MORRISON, Chicago, Ill.

Answer, by Mr. Moffat:—In answering your questions in the order you have placed them I will refer you in some instances to two publications which will give you the information you desire. The two publications in question are:

1. Annual Report, Sudan Government Railways and Steamers.

2. Sudan Almanac.

These publications can be obtained from the European Traffic Manager Sudan Government Railways and Steamers, 5 Northumberland Ave., London. Total cost, about $1.50.

1. The projected railway to El Fasher exists as far as El Obeid, and El Fasher is reached by camel from the railhead. The value of the line to El Obeid is primarily commercial, El Obeid being the largest gum-arabic market in the Sudan. The surrounding country is of both agricultural and grazing nature.

2. There is at present no line under construction south to the French border, and from a financial standpoint the country is not in a position to meet the enormous outlay which would be involved should the proposal materialize. If the line was constructed it would certainly be from a point of commercial value, as large quantities of ivory are brought through this area from the French Sudan in transit to the home markets.

3. I am not in a position to give you any information on the construction of railways in the Belgian Kongo.

4. White Nile to Lake Victoria. I have heard of no objections against this link; but as I mentioned previously the country at present is not in a position to stand a large outlay of capital.

5. Connection of Egypt and the Sudan by rail. The two outstanding objections to a connection by rail between the two countrys are:

(a) Political reasons.

(b) Enormous upkeep of a line laid across the desert.

The line would not necessarily have to keep to the river-bank.

6. Line to Kassala. A line is now in the course of construction from a point six miles east of Thamian Station on the Atbara-Port Sudan line to Kassala. The purpose of this line is to open up the fertile delta of the Gash River north of Kassala. A company known as the Kassala Cotton Co. have been granted a concession for growing cotton in this area and have entered into an agreement with the Sudan Government. The line is expected to be working by October, 1924. Total length, about 217 miles.

This new line when completed will be of great economic and commercial importance as it will enable quick transit for cotton to Port Sudan. For further information see publication No. 1.

7. Suakin to Tokar. No line exists. A light line owned by a private company exists in Tokar itself, being used to convey cotton from the Tokar cotton-fields to the local market. It is then loaded on camels and brought to Suakin.

8. No. 10 Station to Kareima. This line is the connecting link between the main line and Dongala Reach. From Kareima a ferry connection across to Merowe. This is of commercial importance as the produce of Dongala Province is brought down the river to Merowe and is then taken across to Kareima and put on rail.

9. Publication No. 1 will give you all this information in detail and recapitulated form.

10. Big progress is being made in construction of irrigation dams in this area. A large dam is in the course of construction at Makwar—to be called the Makwar Dam and canalization to irrigate an area of 300,000 *feddans* for the purpose of cotton-growing. The dam is expected to be completed in 1925.

11. Yes.

12. You can obtain a map which will serve your purpose from the Survey Department, Khartoum.

In concluding I would point out that the upkeep of railway line in the Sudan is very expensive. During the rainy seasons the line is invariably washed out in large lengths, and traffic is sometimes held up as long as three weeks.

My personal opinion is that the Sudan has a big future in front of it, and as the country progresses financially large strides will be taken to link up the interior, especially south to the Abyssinian frontier, as a connection with Abyssinia by rail would divert a large proportion of traffic through the Sudan which at present is practically monopolized by Eritrea and British East Africa.

I am enclosing five papers dealing with the Sudan in general which may interest you.

Pearling in Mexican Waters

MORE troubles than pearls:

Question:—"Are any of the pearl beds of Mexico in reserve? If so can you give me the name of the location? Is any license or permit required? What would it cost?

Can you give me an idea of how the oysters are handled after being brought to the surface? Would a 38-foot auxiliary be large enough for the coast? How many oysters will one good diver—without diving-suit—bring up in a day?

What is the average pearl worth?

What is the general appearance of the land as seen from a boat?

My partner and myself are thinking of outfitting one boat—Columbia River type—and going down the coast just to see what we can see. How many different kinds of trouble are we going to run into?

We spent three years on the Alaska coast, from Cook Inlet to Ketchikan, on fishing-boats. Have some knowledge of navigation. But we haven't the least idea of what we will run into in the way of customs duties, etc. Can you help us a little on that?

We are not starting out with the notion of making a fortune; just of having a —— of a time. Please do not use my name."—E. L. C., Dayton, Ore.

Answer, by Mr. Mahaffey:—At present I can not conscientiously advise you to ramble around the coast of Mexico on any such expedition as you mention. If I were you I would strike south to the coast of Central America, as around there you will find more chances and a better deal all round.

Regarding the pearl-fisheries on the west coast of Mexico, they are pretty well controlled by Mexican firms, and more and more the motto is "Mexico for the Mexicans." It takes a great deal of red tape to secure a concession for pearl-fishing, and quite a sum of money; also time. I do not know locations of reserve pearl-shell beds but do know that sections of the coast are reserved for a time. These locations are usually put up for rent to the highest bidder, who pays for rent, also exploitation tax on shell and pearls taken. It takes a man with much knowledge of the general cussedness of the Mex and especially of the sea-going Mex, who is, if it is possible, more cussed than the average.

After pearl oysters are hauled up they are opened on the spot, not left to rot on the beach, as practised in the South Seas. It is a hard job to keep the openers from stealing you blind; and if you do catch one, under present conditions it would do you very little good, as they would tell him not to get caught next time and go 50-50 with him (the police). Mexico is the paradise of the I. W. W. nowadays, and if you have any dealings with the sea-going Mex you will have more gray hairs than you have now!

I have no idea of how many oysters a diver can bring up. About as easy as figuring the length of a piece of string. It all depends on thickness of oysters, depth of water, danger of sharks, ability of diver and so forth.

The boat you mention should be big enough.

Almost all the west coast of Mexico is rocky or with mountains a short distance from the coast. For data on the coast buy Hydrographic Office Publication No. 84; costs 90 cents. It gives you dope on coast from San Diego to Panama. It also gives size, price and number of charts covering the coast.

The best country for your purpose is along the coast of Costa Rica and Panama. I have been all along the coast a number of times, and that is where I would go if I were you.

There are said to be plenty of pearl oysters all around Coaiba Island, about 300 miles northwest of Panama City. A trustworthy description says shells big as small plates can be seen in shallow water all around inside the island, and several other islands in the vicinity. A water telescope or square wood box with a glass bottom is fine to locate oysters on the bottom.

A good place to hang around would be the Gulf of Fonseca. There are no doubt plenty of pearl oysters around there, and you might pick up a living around there. Provisions are cheap enough.

Shark-fishing would be a good line to follow. Shark-fins are worth about 60 to 75 cents a pound. Hammer & Co., 310 Clay St., San Francisco, can handle all you ship to them. They are a square outfit and will treat you right. They handle pearl-shell and many, other things too numerous to mention.

Regarding customs troubles, you will not be able to do any coastwise trading on the Mexican coast as that is reserved for native vessels. You will have to enter and clear at all ports. That costs quite a bit, as they soak you pilotage even if you do not use them. Even a canoe must clear on a port-to-port trip. From that you can see you can hardly afford to move around much on the Mexican coast.

A large number of boats have gone south to Mexican waters, and very few have made it a go. They usually sell boats for about half what they are worth and glad to let it go at that.

There are more natural products on the Central American coast, such as ivory-nuts (tagua), coconuts and rubber; and shark-fishing is not carried on very much. More behind the times down there. Nothing worth going after in the Gulf of California.

Why not write to Mr. Charles Bell Emerson, Adventure Cabin, Los Gatos, Calif., and ask him as to his opinion of my idea? I am sure that you will be able to do very little on the west coast of Mexico. I tried the fishing game there on the Gulf of California at Topolobampo and was unable to do much.

You will find the coasts of Panama and Costa Rica more attractive, living cheaper and more opportunities than in Mexico.

As far as the average value of a pearl goes it is hard to tell as no two are alike; depends on size, shape, color, etc. Two or more matched pearls are worth more than same number separate. Pearls have gone out of date more since introduction of so many artificial ones.

"Flying Coffins"

ALSO something about "air pockets," "spins" and "stalls," as aviators use these terms:

Question:—"Being mightily interested in aviation, I am going to take up a little of your precious time in asking the following questions:

Can you give me a general sizing-up of the plane known as the DeHaviland?

Is there any such plane known as a Bramley Rover? If so, can you give me the differences between it and the DeHaviland?

If a plane gets caught in an 'air pocket' has it any chance of getting out of it?

If by any chance these questions should get into the *Adventure* magazine, then do not use my name, but use this appendage—"THE DUKE," Philadelphia, Penn.

Answer, by Lieut.-Colonel. Schauffler:—The De-Haviland plane was designed by the British during the world war and for some months was one of the best planes of the two-seater variety on the front. However, like all planes at that time, it soon was practically obsolete. When the United States entered the war and commenced a huge building program of "production planes" the DeHaviland was picked to be the "goat." Why they should have picked the "D.H.," as it is generally known, is beyond me and beyond the comprehension of any of us who were overseas.

The United States built thousands of these two-seater planes and expected them to be so numerous in the air over the Hun lines that it wouldn't matter how many enemy planes attacked—there would always be a few more D.H.'s. That wasn't the case, however. There were a few squadrons of them at the front late in the Fall of 1918; but during all my time in France, two years, I never flew an American-built plane.

The D.H. as it was built and sent over to the A. E. F. was a perfect death trap. The fellows who had to fly them dubbed them "Flying Coffins," and they weren't far from hitting the truth. The pilot was cooped up under the upper wing section with no chance at all of seeing anything, and the observer was 'way in the stern of the ship, just back of the gasoline tank, so far from his pilot that it was almost impossible to communicate in time of trouble. The gasoline tank was unprotected, and many mighty fine fellows were shot down in flames on account of this.

At the present time the D.H. is still used by the Army Air Service, the Navy and the Marine Corps and the United States Air Mail Service, but these machines have been practically rebuilt. As a peace-time cross-country plane they are all right, and I have flown many hundreds of miles in them; but for war purposes they are NO GOOD.

The power plant is a four hundred horse-power Liberty motor. The plane is a two-seater for general purposes, although some of them have been made over for passenger-carrying. It will make about one hundred miles an hour on an average, with the motor turning up 1,500 revs a minute. This speed has been greatly increased by trimming up the plane, stream-lining the wires, etc., but I can not really say the D.H. is a fast ship nowadays after the records of two hundred forty-three and two hundred fifty-nine miles an hour which have been hung up by Navy and Marine Corps pilots at Mineola.

If you want to get the complete detail description of the D.H., drawings, etc., write to the information section, Army Air Service, Munitions Building, Washington, D. C. I could go into many pages of description here, but I think the information I have given is just about what you wanted.

I have never heard of the plane called the Bramley Rover. It sounds like a British-built bus, but there are so many planes coming out every few weeks overseas that it is hard to keep up with them all. I have asked several men here in Washington whether they had ever heard of a plane by that name, and none of them had.

An air pocket is not a dangerous condition in the air in these days. You often read in the newspapers that a plane was caught in an air pocket

and the pilot was killed because he could not get out of it. That is not true. Air pockets are merely up-and-down air currents which are very much like ocean waves. You will find in flying that you have "smooth" days and "rough" days. The modern high-powered, high-speed plane goes through these air waves very much as a fast ocean liner cuts through the water.

The thing that happens when a pilot is thrown into a "spin" or a "stall" is that he loses flying speed, and in so doing does not have the driving-force behind him to carry him to safety. If he is high enough he will be safe, for the plane will drop into a dive, the slip-stream will act on the controls and the plane will again be under control. Careless pilots, obsolete planes and low flying cause most of the deaths, and not air pockets.

If there is anything more I can do for you please do not hesitate to call on me.

Good luck always.

A Questionnaire on Canada

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY—dog-sleds—parkas—mining—literature:

Question:—"No doubt the following questions may seem absurd to you; but here goes anyway:

1. I would like to have you explain just what the 'Hudson's Bay Company's posts' are.
2. In what part of Canada are they located?
3. Is each post independent of the others, or are they cooperated?
4. About how many are there altogether?
5. Can gold be found in Ontario and Quebec?
6. If so, what part?
7. What is meant by 'Height of Land'?
8. Can gold be found there?
9. Where could I obtain maps of this part of Canada?
10. What would I have to pay for them?
11. In some stories one may read where the dogs are hitched to a 'sled,' then again it mentions 'sledge.' Is there any difference between the two? If so, please state.
12. What are the most useful articles of wear when one is obliged to travel in the Winter time?
13. What is meant by a 'parka'?
14. What kind and what articles of food, are best to carry when traveling in Canada in the Winter time?
15. Could you tell me where I might obtain instructive geographical books of Canada?

I am interested in the northern part of Quebec. Any information that you would care to give descriptive of this country (Quebec) would be highly appreciated.

If you see fit to have any of these questions printed, please use initials only.

Am taking the opportunity at hand to heartily thank you and *Adventure* for this helpful service."—F. K. W., Guymon, Okla.

Answer, by Mr. Sangster:—You ask more than I can cover in any letter. Will try briefly to cover questions:

1. H. B. Co. posts are trading or fur posts scattered throughout the North primarily to gather fur from the Indians.

2. Located all through the North from Labrador, James Bay, northern Quebec, northern Ontario, to the Rockies.

3. Each post is under a factor. Groups are under a superintendent.

4. Can not give you total number—about 125 to 160, I'd say.

5, 6. Gold and silver are found in northern Ontario and Quebec.

7. The Height of Land is the watershed from which flow the waters northward to James Bay and south into the St. Lawrence Basin.

8. Yes, in parts gold is found.

9. Maps can be had from the Department of Lands, Toronto, Ont., and same department at Quebec, P. Q.

10. Nominal charge made for these.

11. Dogs used with sleds and toboggans. Sledge same as sled.

12. Mackinaw pants, coat and jumper; warm all-wool underwear, heavy woolen socks, woolen mitts, woolen cap.

13. Parka is a loose slip-over with hood, made in the arctic of sealskin. In other parts of heavy wool; some Indians make them of rabbitskins.

14. Food items impossible to list without knowing specific trip.

15. Geographical literature may be had from Geographical Surveys Dept., Victoria Museum, Ottawa, Ontario.

The Clearwater District

THERE'S gold there:

Question:—"I would like you to give me all the information possible about the Clearwater district in the western part of Idaho. We are thinking of going in there as soon as the weather will permit on a prospecting trip, mostly for placer.

Which route would be the best to take us to the north fork of Clearwater? What would you advise us to take along on a trip of this kind, say for about three or four months? Is there any U. S. Geological map of that district, or anything that you think would help along a couple of rovers to make a trip like this a success?"—OTTO SCHUBERT, Basin, Mont.

Answer, by Mr. Newman:—The Clearwater district you refer to is located in Clearwater County. Broadly speaking, Clearwater County comprises the drainage area of the north fork of the Clearwater River, a large stream with many branches rising on the western slopes of the Bitter-Root Mountains, which joins the main branch of the Clearwater at Lewiston, Idaho, thirty-five miles north of the Clearwater County line. The north fork flows through a deep valley containing small flats and bars of limited area.

It was the gold discoveries of 1860 which first drew the white man to Clearwater County. Since that date all the richer placer grounds have been worked over. Dredges are now reworking the bars with good results. The future of mining in the Clearwater County awaits the development of more adequate transportation facilities. The mineral possibilities may develop into big things in the future when the county is thoroughly prospected.

The mean annual temperature at Orofino, the county seat, is 50 degrees. The average Summer temperature is about 90 degrees in the lower levels, but much cooler on the prairies and higher elevations. In Winter the temperature rarely goes

below minus 5 degrees. The nights in Summer are invariably cool.

In general the temperature may be classed as mild at all seasons of the year, extremes either of cold or heat being the exception. So I would advise you to take along just an ordinary camping outfit and your mining equipment and your fishing and hunting outfits, as the Bitter-Root Mountains are widely known for their unsurpassed beauty and as a recreation ground for hunters and fishermen. The north fork and its tributaries are among the best trout streams of the Northwest. Deer, elk, mountain goat, moose and bear frequent the higher ranges.

If you are going *via* auto, a good route is *via* the Yellowstone Trail and National Parks highways up around Missoula and the Cœur d'Alenes and down to Lewiston, and if you are going *via* rail you can go direct to Lewiston, by which place you strike the north fork; or go to Hamilton, Mont., and cut across the mountains. These places can both be reached *via* Northern Pacific Ry.

Apply at library at Lewiston or Orofino to see U. S. Geological maps. Call at the Continental Oil Co's office, or at one of their service stations, for a large folder map of blazed trails in Idaho.

The Bahamas

"WHERE every prospect pleases ——"

Question:—"I'm planning a trip to the Bahama Islands, and would like some information regarding same.

What temperature could one expect?

Do you need a passport? If so where would I procure same? Could a white man get employment at Nassau, the capital city?

What would be the best way to get there from Norfolk? Please withhold name in case of publication."—P. S., So. Norfolk, Va.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—The average general temperature of the Bahamas is around 70 degrees in Winter. It gets hotter in Summer. There is a rainy season from June to October.

Find out about passports either by writing to your Secretary of State, Washington, or applying at any tourist agency, Cook's for example. Such an agency would be able to tell you about route, too. The nearest way I know of is for you to travel by train either to New York or Miami, then take steamer. Miami would be my choice, I think.

I don't know what you can do, so can not advise you about getting employment. If you ever expect lucid advice on that subject, never merely ask—

"Can a white man get employment there?"

If you are a railroad man there are no railroads. If you are a store clerk you may find work which will give you a living. If you have capital, expect to take up land and settle as a cultivator, there are openings. Otherwise I think your only way of finding out is to go down and see.

Nassau is choked with men now, and even negroes leave their jobs to get knee-deep in the liquor business. Prohibition in the United States has bred a nest of nastiness in these charming islands. Nassau is full of Americans, not of the best sort, and all seem prosperous. Perhaps you might well take the trip on chance. You would scarcely lose.

Orange Culture in Florida

SIXTY per cent. a year return on your equity in a grove:

Question:—"I am thinking of retiring from indoor work. Have about $10,000. I want to find some good place to live where there is a lot of fishing, and have a few acres of good land to raise part of my living. Could you give me some good location of this kind where it is healthy for a Northern man? I always had an idea that most of Florida was rather unhealthy.

If published please do not use name."— —— ——, Asotin, Wash.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—First let me tell you that Florida is not an unhealthful place to live so long as one drinks good water, keeps away from the swamps and mosquitoes and observes the average laws of health. Our record is probably better than that of any other State in the Union as concerns health; and one should take into account the fact that many people come down here at the last minute to die. To me Florida is a paradise.

As I see it, after five years down here, the best bet for making a sure living here, and an easy living, is in oranges. If I had $10,000 and wanted to get on "Easy Street" I would buy ten acres of grove that was either bearing or about ready to bear, and pay $5,000 down on it, which can be done. This grove should net you about $3,000 per annum; you sell the fruit on the trees, and don't have to pick it. You can pay 1,000 per year on your indebtedness of $5,000 and have left $2,000 to live on.

The $5,000 you kept out of your original $10,000 you can do as you please with, but my advice would be to put it into something absolutely safe as an investment. Then if we have a killing freeze, which comes once in every ten to fifty years, you can start all over again, whereas a man with no resources would be broken up.

Our last big freeze was in 1895. I know one man who bought 100 acres of frozen groves, budded them from the root, which was not killed, and now is worth half a million or more.

As for a good place to live, I recommend Orlando in Orange County, Eustis in Lake County or Lakeland in Polk County. These are the best orange and grapefruit counties we have, the best towns we have, and are in the fresh-water lakes region, where there is any amount of fishing for such fish as bass and pickerel.

Now let me sound a warning. If you buy a grove, be sure the trees are the right kind as to budding stock, that they are not diseased in any way and that they are on the right kind of ground. Worthless ground often lies close to good land, and it is easy to be deceived. You should get next to the citrus-fruit game in regard to the above before you put money into it. Make every possible investigation, and don't accept the first price that is offered you; they'll all come down more or less from the first price.

If you get down into my section and there is anything further I can do for you, let me know. The ten-cent stamp you sent is not necessary, and I am returning it herewith.

P.S. In saying above, "Something absolutely safe as an investment," I mean something on the order of Government bonds, nothing less.

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 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 envelop and reply postage (*NOT* attached). Write to Mr. Gordon direct, *NOT* to the magazine.

Conducted by R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif.

A MOST valuable contribution arrived last week from Mr. R. W. Phillips of Akeley, Minnesota—a forty-six-page manuscript of twenty-two songs, every one of them worth while! I have sent Mr. Phillips, in your name and mine, our heartiest thanks. May his voice be heard often! There is room here for only one song, but I'll see to it that he has the issue of August 20 entirely at his disposal.

Lovel

(Text of R. W. Phillips)

As Lovel was walking, a-walking one morning,
He espied two pedlers, two pedlers a-coming;
He boldly stepped to them and called them his honey,
Saying, "Stand and deliver, boys, for all I want is your money!"
Lol-te-de-a-de-um, lol-te-de-a-dum!

"Oh, we are two pedlers, two pedlers are we, sir,
And you are Mr. Lovel we take you to be, sir!
Oh, we are two pedlers that have lately come from Dublin,
And all that we have in our box is our bed and our clothing."

As Lovel was walking up Kingsbury Mountain
He espied two rich misers; their guineas they were counting.
First he cocked his blunderbuss, and then he drew his rapier,
Saying, "Stand and deliver, boys, for I'm a money-taker!"

"O Lovel, O Lovel, my poor heart's a-breaking,
For little did I think, my love, that you ever would been taken!
And if I had known that the enemy was a-coming,
I'd have fought like a hero, although I'm but a woman!"

O Polly, O Polly, my poor heart's a-breaking,
If it had not been for you, my love, I never would been taken!
For while I was a-sleeping, not thinking of the matter,
You discharged my pistols and loaded them with water!"

As Lovel was walking all up the gallows ladder,
He called to the sheriff for his Irish cap and feather,
Saying, "I have robbed many but never killed any—
I think it hard that I must die for just grabbing money!"
Lol-te-de-a-de-um, lol-te-de-a-dum!

MR. E. D. BAKER of McGill, Nevada, who sends in some welcome additional verses of "Brady," says:

"I can give a few verses that I remember hearing sung by negroes. It was composed by negroes, each one writing a verse to suit himself. I have heard one of them sing for an hour at least and not sing the same verse twice. I heard the song in the Spring of '93."

Brady

(Text of E. D. Baker)

Duncan and his brother was playing pool
When Brady came in acting a fool;
He shot him once, he shot him twice,
Saying, "I don't make my living by shooting dice!"

Brady, Brady won't come no more!
Brady, Brady won't come no more!
Brady, Brady won't come no more!
For Duncan shot Brady with a forty-four!

"Brady, Brady, don't ou know you done wrong
To come in my house when my game was going on?
I told you half a dozen times before,
And now you lie dead on my barroom floor!"

Brady went to hell lookin' mighty curious.
The devil says, "Where you from?" "East St. Louis."
"Well, pull off your coat and step this way,
For I've been expecting you every day!"

When the girls heard Brady was dead
They went up home and put on red,
And came down town singin' this song—
"Brady's struttin' in hell with his Stetson on!"

"Brady, Brady, where ou at?
Brady, Brady, where ou at?
Brady, Brady, where you at?
Struttin' in hell with his Stetson hat!"

A CORRESPONDENT in Indiana, who requests that his name be withheld, sends in the following fragment. Can any one complete it?

Olive Jackson

Gather round, all you ladies and gents.
A tale to you I'll tell
About that Olive Jackson—
Poor boy, you know him well!
When you lose your money, learn to lose!

Olive was a gambler;
Rolling dice was his game;
Came all the way from Kansas
To take the poor boys' change.
When you lose your money, learn to lose!

Olive went down to the riverside,
Ordered up a large crap game;
They rolled the dice at Olive,
Olive returned the same.
When you lose your money, learn to lose!

. . . . . .
. . . . . .
Olive shot six bits; it was his last;
Rolled 'em on the table; "Come up, crap!"
When you lose your money, learn to lose!

(Olive then shoots Jack Dixon, the saloon-keeper's son.)

Olive walked into the barroom,
Ordered up a glass of beer.
Bartender says to Olive, "You killed my poor boy Jack!
What the —— you doin' here?"
When you lose your money, learn to lose!

Olive picked up the beer,
Drank it from a silver cup.
. . . . . .
. . . . . .
When you lose your money, learn to lose!

THIS issue has been frankly given over to desperado songs. It would be easy to find more poetic material, but hard to find anything of more interest or value to the student of folk-song. "Lovel" is, of course, an English broadside; but "Jackson" and "Brady" seem to be indisputable American folk-songs from start to finish. Such waifs and strays are on the verge of disappearing. Send in more!

SEND all contributions of old songs and all questions about them direct to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Avenue, Berkeley, California. DO NOT send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

AUGUST 10TH ISSUE

Besides the new serial and the **three complete novelettes** mentioned on the second contents page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

JINX — *J. Allan Dunn*
The mark of the Gila monster.

THE BANNER OF MALABON — *Ralph R. Guthrie*
The Moros learn of American ways from a strange source.

PEARL-HUNGER Conclusion — *Gordon Young*
An auction and a fight at Kulicos.

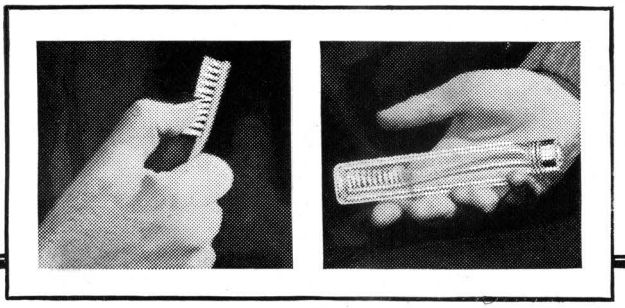
COME HOME TO ROOST — *Nevil Henshaw*
Joe Jeta forgot the buzzards.

THE JOKE — *Gordon Hill Grahame*
He was afraid of tarantulas.

THE DESPERADO — *F. St. Mars*
An American wolverene in English woods

Still Farther Ahead

THE three issues following the next will contain long stories by Joel Townsley Rogers, F. R. Buckley, Hugh Pendexter, W. C. Tuttle, William Byron Mowery, Frederick Moore, Arthur D. Howden Smith, Georges Surdez and H. C. Bailey; and short stories by Clements Ripley, Leo Walmsley, John Webb, Douglas Oliver, Dale Collins, F. St. Mars, H. C. Wire, Alex McLaren, George E. Holt, John Scarry, H. Mortimer Batten, J. Allan Dunn and others; stories of Naval aviation, York Staters in Indian days, cattle-rustlers on the Western range, traders in the South Seas, viking-farers in Norwegian fiords, prospectors in Borneo, desert-riders in Morocco, gobs in Central American waters, French troopers in Africa, knights-at-arms in the Middle Ages, adventurers the world around.



Which tooth brush do you buy?

ISN'T this first picture brought home to you vividly at times? Tooth brushes—lying exposed on a counter; picked up and thoughtlessly fingered; then put back for you to buy? Even those packed in cartons are taken out to be seen and thumbed!

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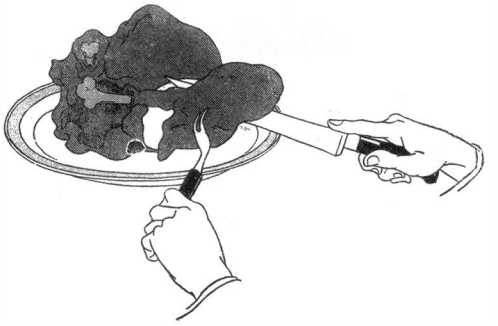
THE OWENS BOTTLE COMPANY, TOLEDO



What sort of figure do you cut when you carve?

WHEN a crisp brown turkey or leg of lamb is placed in front of you and you sharpen the edge of your carving-knife—do you know the exact spot at which you should start to cut? Do you know where to insert the fork before you carve? Charles Faissole, maître d'hôtel of the Ambassador Hotel, New York, tells you how to carve poultry, roasts, fish, steak, legs and even roast pig in The New Butterick Cook Book.

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