15¢

POPULAR PUBLICATION

Adventure

APRIL

SURPRISE ATTACK
by GEORGES SURDEZ

MEN UNDER THE SEA
by COMMANDER ELLSBERG

ARTHUR O. FRIEL

ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

Fine DIAMONDS Famous WATCHES Worthwhile GIFTS

Buy On Easy Terms!

10 Months to Pay The Easy Royal Way

$1.00 DOWN Then a few cents a day

You can buy a fine quality diamond—a nationally famous watch—beautiful gifts! No need to wait until you have the necessary cash. Send only $1.00 with your name, address, age, occupation (if you've had credit accounts mention where). Dealings confidential—no direct inquiries made. No red tape. No C. O. D. to pay. No extras or interest. **10 FULL MONTHS TO PAY—10 DAYS TRIAL.**

ABSOLUTE SATISFACTION GUARANTEED. If not satisfied return selection, we'll refund your $1.00 immediately. Otherwise pay in 10 small monthly payments.

BOTH RINGS Only $29.75

Just $2.87 a month

ND-1 . . . Beautifully matched engagement and wedding ensemble featuring 6 genuine diamonds set in rings of richly carved 14K Solid Yellow Gold. Both rings complete now only $29.75 — $1.00 down — $2.87 a month.

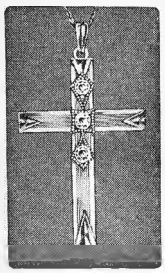
If Purchased Separately

ND-1A . . Engagement Ring only $19.75
ND-1B . . Wedding Ring only . . $12.50
$1.00 down — balance in 10 monthly payments

5 Genuine DIAMONDS Only $37.50

Just $3.65 a mo.

ND-2 . . . Exquisite engagement ring set with a specially selected centre diamond and four smaller genuine diamonds at sides. Finely engraved. 14K Solid Yellow Gold ring. Only $37.50 — $1.00 down — $3.65 a month.



Solid Gold Cross

3 Genuine DIAMONDS

Only $16.95

Just $1.59 a mo.

ND-3 . . . Newly designed cross of 10K Solid Yellow Gold, set with 3 genuine diamonds; 18 inch 10K Solid Gold neck chain. Complete only $16.95 — $1.00 down — $1.59 a month.

(For purposes of clarity, illustrations of rings slightly enlarged.)

GENT'S INITIAL RING

Only $16.95

Just $1.59 a mo.

ND-4 . . . Massive, ultra-modern initial ring of 10K Solid Yellow Gold and set with a genuine diamond and 2 raised white gold initials on genuine black onyx. (Specify initials desired). Only $16.95 — $1.00 down — $1.59 a month.

Just $1.87 a mo.

2 Genuine Diamonds Only $19.75

ND-5 . . . The "Royal Princess." Charming, square model case of Yellow Rolled Gold Plate set with 2 genuine diamonds. Fully guaranteed movement. Matched link bracelet. Very special at $19.75 — $1.00 down — $1.87 a month.

17 Jewels

$29.75 The "Lady Bulova"

ND-9 . . . BULOVA'S most popular ladies model! Dainty, Yellow Rolled Gold Plate case; silk cord bracelet. 17 Jewels. $29.75 — $1.00 down — $2.88 a month.

ND-9A . . As above, engraved, with bracelet. $33.75 — $1.00 down — $3.28 a month.

Just $2.38 a mo.

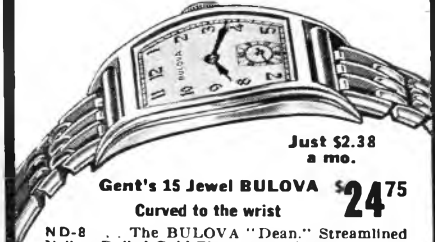
17 Jewel BULOVA $24.75

ND-6 . . . The BULOVA "Evangeline." Yellow Rolled Gold Plate case of charming simplicity. 17 Jewels; fully guaranteed. Matched link bracelet. A great Bulova value at $24.75 — $1.00 down — $2.38 a month.

Just $1.88 a mo.

Gent's 9 Jewel WALTHAM $19.75

ND-7 . . The WALTHAM Premier "Granville." A new model by this famous American maker of fine watches. Yellow Rolled Gold Plate case. 9 Jewels. Genuine leather strap. Only $19.75 — $1.00 down — $1.88 a month.



Just $2.38 a mo.

Gent's 15 Jewel BULOVA $24.75

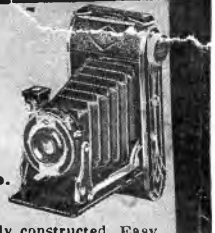
Curved to the wrist

ND-8 . . . The BULOVA "Dean." Streamlined Yellow Rolled Gold Plate case; triple link bracelet. 15 Jewel B-U-L-O-V-A radio-time movement. Fully guaranteed. $24.75 — $1.00 down — $2.38 a month.

AGFA ANSCO CAMERA

Only $14.50

Just $1.35 a mo.



ND-10 . . . Finely constructed. Easy and economical to operate. Takes full size pictures 2¼" x 3¼" or half size pictures (2¼" x 1⅝"). Achromatic fixed focus lens. Only $14.50 — $1.00 down — $1.35 a month.

Ladies' Fitted Case Only $22.00

Just $2.10 a mo.

ND-11 . . . Ladies' traveling case covered with genuine (split) cowhide leather. Removable leather covered tray, fitted with lovely 8-piece boudoir set. Specify choice of brown or black. Only $22.00 — $1.00 down — $2.10 a month.

FREE CATALOG

ADULTS—send for your copy today. New 32-pg. **"Book of Gems"** featuring hundreds of special values in genuine diamonds, watches, silverware and novelties.

America's Largest Mail Order Credit Jewelers

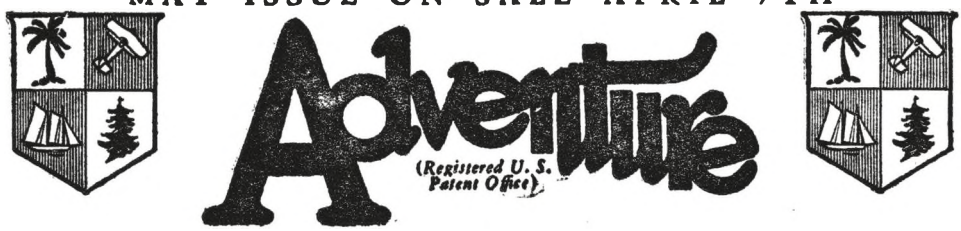
ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO. Inc.

Established 1895

Address - DEPT. 150-T

170 BROADWAY N.Y.C.

MAY ISSUE ON SALE APRIL 7TH



Vol. 100, No. 6 for April, 1939 Best of New Stories

Cover by William F. Soare

Headings by I. B. Hazelton, V. E. Pyles and George H. Wert

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Trade Mark registered.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or the fates. For the benefit of the friend you seek, give your own name and full address if possible. All inquiries along this line, unless otherwise designated, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, every inquiry addressed to "Lost Trails" will be run in three consecutive issues.

Word wanted of Robert Taylor, formerly of Seattle, Washington, and now somewhere on the West Coast—5 feet, 9 inches, blonde hair and smokes a pipe. Write Alec Hoyer, 990 Geary St. No. 106, San Francisco, Calif.

Wanted: Word from Arnold Wood. Last heard from U. S. M. C. Write "Irish", Box 1925, Juneau, Alaska.

H. K. Van Alen, P. O. Box 96, Champion, Michigan, would like word of John Edward Sylvester Schaeffer More who left his home in San Diego, Calif., about 13 years ago, saying he was going to the oil fields in Texas.

S. Senster of Cucumber, West Virginia, would like to know the whereabouts of Elmyra Edwards, last heard from at Winston-Salem, N. C.

Word wanted of Earl S. Stephenson, Canadian who served in North China, in 1927, 1928, in 15th U. S. Inf. Write J. W. McLaughlin, c|o H. Palmer, Route 1, Box 4, Pocatello, Idaho.

Captain Arthur Carl who served in the Machine Gun Corps, British Expeditionary Force in France during the World War, last heard of in Florida 1924, please communicate with Colonel G. Gauntlett, c|o Grindlay & Co., 54 Parliament Street, London, England.

Ninety degree section of Mexican Peso bearing initials AT would like to contact other 270 degrees. Address E. Stanton Brown, 4331 Woodland Avenue, Western Springs, Illinois, U. S. A.

Chester E. Baumgardner, 1020 E. Olive St., Bloomington, Ill., is anxious to get in touch with any former members of Co. "E," 51st Infantry during the World War.

Otterson. Word wanted of any of my mother's relatives who went to America from Ireland. John M. O'Callaghan, P.O. Box 50, Mossman, Queensland, Australia.

The following were all yeomen in Flag Office of Vice Admiral of the Pacific Fleet from 1919-1922:—Emery Dobson, "Spick" LaChance, Carl Dudding, Tom Girty, Roger Sherman, John Frew, Frank Bertin. Word wanted by former shipmate, Horald P. Gilmour, 22 Worcester Street, Boston, Mass.

Floyd Maby, last heard from in Seattle, Wash., about 1933. Home originally at Plymouth, Pennsylvania. Word appreciated by his mother, Mrs. Ida Maby, 191 N. Division St., Buffalo, N. Y.

Herbert Roig, 37, originally from Texas, last heard of in 1928 living at Marquette Apts., 965 Geary St., San Francisco, Calif. Was working for the San Francisco *Examiner* circulation department in 1928. Please write Stanley Jones, 1146 Webster St., San Francisco, Calif.

Dudleigh R. Wickham, 61 Holmes Court, Albany, New York, wants word of "Clifford Ogden" or "Clifford Cochrane," formerly of Oakland, Calif., undertaker, who served with him in the 63rd Infantry, also helped build the railroad from Seward to Fairbanks, Alaska. Also Bob Baker of San Francisco, who left Seward with him on the *Alameda*, who still has the Indian pestle Wickham found when they were shipwrecked near Vancouver, B. C. Understands Baker shipped to China.

Word wanted of Russell Stanley, formerly of 838 Jannette Street, Parkersburg, West Virginia. Was in Co. F, 20th Infantry, from January, 1930, to January, 1933. Communicate with Sgt. David H. Wagner, Hq. Company, 27th Infantry, Schofield Barracks, T. H.

Word wanted of Burton Funnell, who lived in Norwich, N. Y., and is racetrack enthusiast. Please communicate with Philip Schlit, 164 Durston Ave., Syracuse, New York.

Louis P. Stilwell, 100 Buckingham Rd., Brighton 1, Sussex, England, would welcome any news of his buddy, Louis Hudson, heard of in Lewes, England, in 1918 and later in New York.

Wanted: Address of Frank S. Jones. Was in Laona, Calif., then Los Angeles, when last heard from. Communicate with E. C. Wilcox, Yellowstone Park, Wyo.

Hans A. Schnell, 253 Cumberland St., Brooklyn, wants word of his brother, Fred Schnell, last known address Middlesex Hos-

pital, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Gilbert Thompson, about 43, Swede, former member of Medical Corps 89th Division during 1917-1918. Last heard of he was living in Cloquet, Minn., in 1925. Anyone knowing of him please write to James C. McKinney, CO. 3855 C.C.C., Groveland, Calif.

Anyone who was in the 4th Casual Company, Camp Lewis, Washington, please write to Clarence Parker, Gerber, California.

James P. FitzGerald, serving aboard the *U.S.S. West Virginia* in 1933, write to K. Downes, 231 George St., Petersboro, Canada.

Information desired regarding James Conroy Kennedy, originally from Wisconsin, last heard from in 1929 while working on construction project near Barranquilla, Colombia, S.A.—A. Kennedy, 2209 Barnard St., Savannah, Ga.

Wanted: Address of Alfred Willy, who was at Los Zanos, Philippine Islands, in 1915, Alfred W. Southwick, 78 Burnside Avenue, Newport, R. I.

Emile Cuschina, of San Jose, California, get in touch with old friend Bill Gianella, Marysville, Calif.

Wanted—word from Otto Meyne, formerly Battery D, 7th Field Artillery, Madison Barracks, N. Y. Nevin Hayes, 1012 Wood St., Wilkinsburg, Pa.

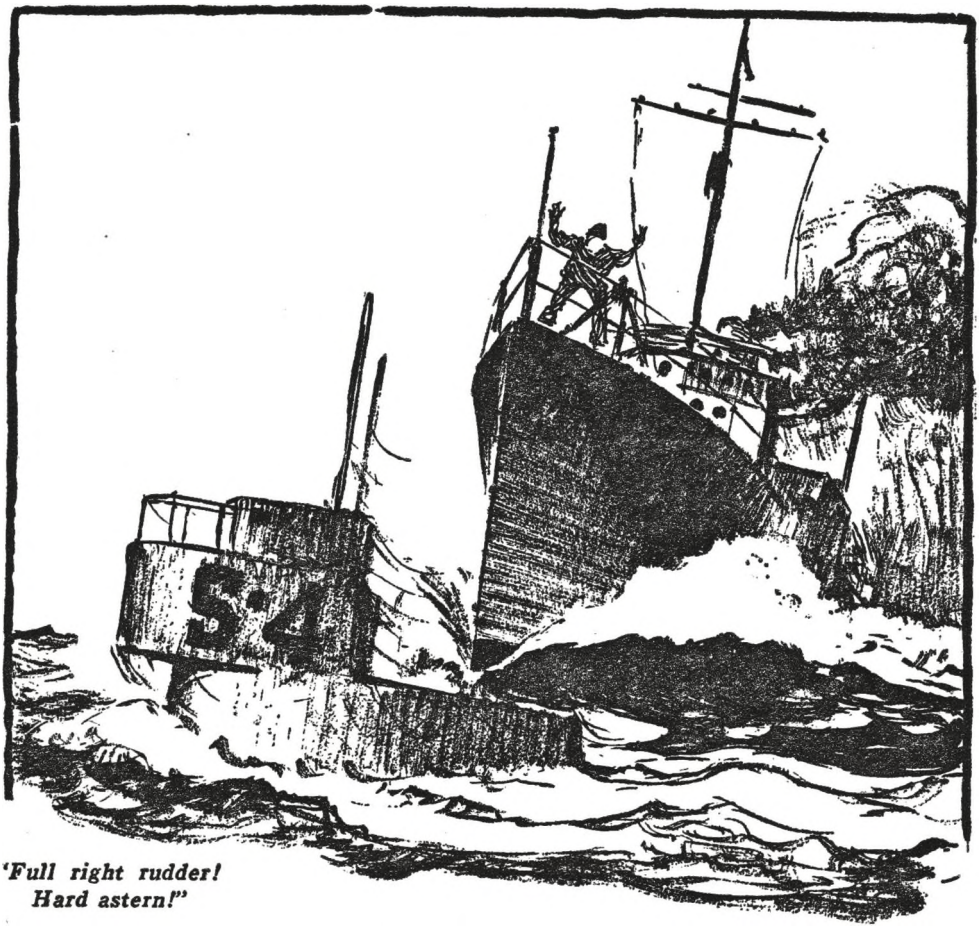
John V. Gatton, now 27, last heard from leaving Joplin, Mo., for New Orleans, in 1931. Notify mother, Mrs. Ida Gatton, Danvers, Montana.

Word wanted of Jack Oliver Hanlon, who left his home in Seattle, Wash., Oct. 23, 1932, and was a regular reader of Adventure. Notify his mother, Mrs. W. F. Hanlon, 2321 Fairview No., Seattle, Wash.

I would like to get in touch with Edwin P. Ford, ex-marine, *U.S.S. New Mexico*. Believe him to be in Baltimore, Maryland. H. C. Price, Route 1, Box 380, Modesto, California.

Duane William Peterson, was last heard from in Fort Bayard, New Mexico. Was formerly with Coast Artillery Corps—7th, Fort Scott, San Francisco. Mrs. Justina Rennie Cranz, 6298 Del Valle Drive, Los Angeles, California, wishes words of him.

S. F. Wilson, U. S. Navy, would like to know the whereabout of Harvey Ingersoll last heard of living at 509 Ganson Street, Jackson, Michigan. Write to him at 5529 Cranshaw, Detroit, Michigan, or U.S.S. Bridge, Mare Island, California.



'Full right rudder! Hard astern!"

MEN UNDER THE SEA

A Fact Story

By COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

SHROUDED in a web of frayed hawsers and dripping air-hoses, the submarine *S-51,* with a ragged gash laying open her port side from deck to keel, rested in the drydock. Looking down on that submarine from the towering sides of the dock were the divers who had lifted her and brought her in.

They were a wan group of men, those staring divers — weather-beaten, with cracked lips, seamed faces, sunken eyes, and lean bodies from which had been burned every ounce of fat by long hours of breathing excessive oxygen in heavily compressed air forced down to them during the months they had struggled on the ocean floor. For the hundredth time they leaned over the drydock rails, gazing at the ship they had salvaged.

Well, all that was over now and they had won. Singly and in knots of two or three, the divers stared down into the chasm of that drydock at the ship they had lifted—slight Francis Smith, big Jim Frazer, lanky Fred Michels, profane Tug Wilson, silent Joe Eiben, slow-spoken John Kelley, Tom Eadie, ace of divers, and red-faced Bill Carr, on deck a belligerent bosun's mate, on the bottom as steady-going a diver as ever I worked with.

The last order in the salvage squadron

had shortly before been posted where the men returning aboard from the dry-dock would see it—the list of honors recommended for the men who had raised the *S-51.* Navy Crosses went to six of the divers who had heroically distinguished themselves in extraordinary circumstances, promotions and letters of commendation to certain others whose services on the bottom had been only routine—if such a word can be used with regard to as perilous a job as diving.

In a tiny cabin on the *Falcon,* the scene of many a heartache while working over the *S-51,* I listlessly gathered up my few belongings preparatory to going ashore myself. I was through also as salvage officer. Never again should I go through anything like that. Once in a lifetime was one time too many. Sixteen years in the Navy, topped off with those nine months battling the depths off Block Island, was enough of a naval career for me, and when my report was in the hands of the Navy Department, I was through with the sea forever.

I began rolling up the blueprints. Some day, perhaps, when I had got back on myself the flesh that excessive oxygen under pressure had burned off my bones down there on the ocean floor, I might get over that sickening dread of momentarily expecting that in spite of all my planning and my care, the next instant something would go wrong on the bottom and that someone for whom I was responsible would suddenly be in deadly peril, fighting alone in darkness for his life against the—

Bang!

A vicious rap on the cabin door. I started involuntarily. Before I could say anything, the door flew open and there framed in it stood Bosun's Mate Bill Carr, waving a paper clutched in his brawny fist.

"Say, Mr. Ellsberg, look at that!"

Carr thrust the paper under my nose. It was the order containing the list of divers' rewards, evidently torn away from the bulletin board at the gangway.

"This order's all wet, Mr. Ellsberg!" bellowed Carr. "Jim Frazer an' Tom Eadie an' John Kelley an' Francis Smith an' Tug Wilson an' Joe Eiben have all been recommended for Navy Crosses, an' all I'm down for is a letter o' commendation. It ain't right, Commander! I've earned a Navy Cross as much as anybody, and I want it!"

"Haven't you overlooked something?" I asked as mildly as possible. "You're down on that order for promotion to chief bosun's mate as well."

"To hell with that," Carr barked. "What's it amount to in my case? I'd 'a' made a chief's rate before this cruise's over, even if I'd never seen a diving rig! But when'll I ever get another chance at a Navy Cross?"

I EYED my bosun's mate curiously.

"Look here, Carr. You're getting promoted from first class petty officer to chief, right now. And in spite of what you think of yourself, you might never make a chief's rate this cruise or any cruise. And on top of that, you'll get a letter from the Secretary of the Navy commending you for your services on the *S-51.* That's a lot for what you've done."

"Fer what I've done?" Carr bristled perceptibly. "Commander, I made more dives in salvaging that sub than any other gob in the outfit, an' your own records'll show it. If anybody rates a Navy Cross for that job, I'm the guy that oughta be gettin' it!"

To a degree, Carr had me there.

"Yes, Bill, I know that. You made more dives than anybody. I'm not disputing it with you. That's already been carefully considered. Still, you're out of luck. There were more than twenty divers, including you, on that job. But only six of 'em, the boys you mentioned, are getting Navy Crosses. Why? Because they did something especially heroic on the bottom. You didn't. I'm not saying you couldn't have, Bill, any less than those who did, but if it was your hard luck that things broke down there on the bottom so they got a chance to be heroes and you didn't, I can't help it. So you'd better take your promotion and that letter of commendation and be happy. It's a lot more than some of your shipmates are getting. I'm sorry, Carr, but that's the way it is."

The salvage squadron disbanded that

day. And when finally I had sent in my salvage report to Washington, I doffed my uniform for the last time, slid into civilian clothes, and after sixteen years in the Navy was once again just a civilian.

A year and a half went by uneventfully and Bill Carr and his troubles, submarines and salvage, had gradually faded out of my life, when one cold Sunday morning in December, 1927, a week before Christmas, I opened my front door to reach for the Sunday paper and froze into immobility at sight of a flaring headline screaming at me in large type:

"SUBMARINE S-4 SUNK! FORTY MEN TRAPPED!"

CHAPTER II

ON THE BOTTOM AGAIN

ABOUT noon on December 17, 1927, with a force 4 wind covering Massachusetts Bay everywhere with whitecaps, the U.S.S. *S-4* slowly pushed her sharp bow outside Provincetown Harbor and headed toward the "measured mile" off Cape Cod for submerged standardization trials.

The *S-4* was a large double-hulled submarine of 800 tons, fitted for surface propulsion with two heavy eight cylinder Diesels, while submerged she was driven by two powerful electric motors fed from a huge storage battery. For safety against accidental flooding, four stout athwartship bulkheads divided the ship into five separate compartments—torpedo room, battery room, control room, engine room, and motor room. The battery room, the second compartment from the bow, was the largest, furnishing, besides the battery cell storage, quarters for seamen and officers alike, save for the five torpedomen who slung their mattresses forward.

On this December day the *S-4*, always crowded, was even more crowded than usual. Lieutenant Commander R. K. Jones, her captain, had aboard, in addition to his regular crew of 38, two Navy Trial Board representatives.

It being in the heyday of Prohibition, it happened that that morning was chosen by the Coast Guard Destroyer *Paulding*—loaned by the Navy for combatting rum-running—for a high speed sweep around Cape Cod, it being suspected that with Christmas approaching, rum-runners would be unusually active. So at eighteen knots, with Lieutenant Commander Baylis, her captain, on the bridge, the *Paulding* dashed from Boston Harbor for the open sea with her bridge watch keenly alert to scrutinize everything that hove in sight. The *Paulding* had already been fighting the rising seas for some hours when the *S-4* left Provincetown with her crowded interior throbbing to the steady beat of her Diesels.

Off the barren tip of Cape Cod the submarine neared the "measured mile" which two white can buoys off shore marked roughly, while on the beach range marks of poles marked it exactly. Between these marks, running submerged, the *S-4* was this day to calibrate her speed.

Diving signal! Swiftly the *S-4* closed hatches, flooded ballast tanks, switched to electric motors, planed smoothly under to begin the trials. Gone immediately was the uneasy motion, the throbbing of the Diesels. Instead an eerie silence, except for the faint humming of the massive motors, gripped the submerged boat as she swam past the first buoy with only her two periscope tips above water.

Over the next few hours, Coast Guard Surfman Frank Simonds, from his observation tower at Wood End, a scant half mile from the course, noted occasionally the flashing periscopes of the *S-4* swinging back and forth between the two can buoys of the measured mile, but never a glimpse of her hull did he catch among the whitecaps.

At 2:46 P.M., having sighted no rum-runners in the open sea, the *Paulding* headed in to scan Provincetown Harbor and Cape Cod Bay. Shortly after, skirting the sandy fishhook which is Cape Cod, she headed southeast on a course taking her well clear of the "measured mile" off Wood End. For three miles the *Paulding* held this course; then, as a sea buoy off Wood End came abeam, she swung sharply to port, and for the first

time headed east for the "measured mile," which to the bridge watch on the *Paulding* was only a mass of tumbling whitecaps.

In the Wood End Station ashore, Boatswain Gracie, in charge, shoved his head through the floor of the observation tower, inquired of his surfman,

"What's doing, Frank?"

"Not much, sir. All I've seen is a submarine operating out there under the beach."

The boatswain clambered up, took his telescope, scanned the sea. Noting where the *Paulding's* new easterly course was leading her, he became instantly grave.

"Frank, where's that submarine gone? Seen her lately?"

"No, sir," replied Simonds.

Gracie trained his telescope on the nearer buoy of the trial course, to see there in the path of the racing destroyer the glint of a periscope, a thin feather of flying spray!

"My God, Frank! There's going to be a collision!" The startled boatswain scrambled down the ladder to launch his lifeboat.

HAVING rounded the buoy off Wood End, the *Paulding's* captain set his course east to clear the next can buoy which marked the trial course about a mile ahead, then stepped into the charthouse to study the harbor charts. Meanwhile his quartermaster, scanning distant Provincetown through his glasses, suddenly picked up two periscopes about one point on the port bow—and hardly a ship's length ahead! Simultaneously the officer of the deck sighted them also, roared out,

"Full right rudder! Hard astern!"

As the destroyer, shaking violently under suddenly reversed engines, tried to swing to starboard, two glistening periscopes and half the conning tower of a submarine broke water almost under her bow, and then came a tremendous crash! Alongside, the tapering tail of a submarine shot briefly into sight, vanished as the *Paulding* drove over her, and nothing except a few bubbles and some slowly spreading oil showed in the foaming wake of the *Paulding* as she came finally to a stop.

The *S-4*, planing upward toward the surface, shook under the terrific impact, rolled crazily to port, and immediately started sinking bow first as the sea gushed into her ruptured battery room. Lieutenant Fitch and his torpedomen forward, their way to the conning tower blocked off by that roaring cascade, instantly slammed the torpedo room door shut against the flood, jammed home the dogs, and locked themselves, six men altogether, into the torpedo room in the bow.

Amidships, things were worse. Too hastily housed when collision seemed inevitable, the forward periscope jammed on its way down, letting its slacked-off wires coil across the deck of the overcrowded control room to snare the unsteady feet of dazed men staggering under the shock of collision.

"Blow all ballasts!"

Frantically straining fingers worked over the blowing manifolds, twisting open the valves from compressed air banks #1 and #2 to each main ballast tank in the *S-4* in a desperate attempt to blow overboard their ballast water, to lighten ship, to float her surfaceward before she sank too deep. But the forward ballast tank was ripped wide open, and the precious air only whistled uselessly through the blowing lines to bubble away into the sea, blowing out no ballast. With added tons of sea water roaring continuously in, the waterlogged *S-4* plunged bottomward with ever increasing speed.

The battery room was flooding fast. A seaman stumbled forward through the cramped passage from the control room to close the forward door. He seized it, then paused. How about Fitch and his torpedomen forward? For a brief instant the door was held open, but nobody came aft. Then, with the rising water starting to flood over the high sill, the door was hurriedly slammed shut against the sea, and the solitary sailor there started setting the dogs to hold it.

At a terrifying angle now, the *S-4* sank bows down. Momentarily at least, the ocean was sealed out. In the control room, struggling men, clawing free of

periscope wires, manned their controls. With diving wheels at "Hard Rise," compressed air whistling through all ballast lines, motors at "Full Ahead," everything possible for an emergency rise was done now. Anguished eyes gazed hopefully at the wide depth gauge dials, only to see the needles there racing up the scales, inexorably registering greater depths—60 feet—80—100—

And then another shivering crash! Head on, the *S-4* smashed the bottom, plowed along there in a huge wave of mud, and finally slowly came to rest on an even keel.

ON THE bottom in 110 feet! Staring at the depth gauge, Jones and his men saw a glimmer of hope. They were not so badly off there in the *S-4*—the water was sealed off forward with nearly the whole crew safely aft. And there the survivors were in complete possession of the undamaged control room, its precious machinery, the priceless air still left in banks #3 and #4. Wholly unaided, they might float up the undamaged stern of the *S-4*, emerge from it. Hadn't their shipmates on their sunken sister, the *S-5*, escaped that very way from much deeper water only six years before?

A sudden eruption of freezing salt water, deluging them and the burnished copper contacts on the huge switchboard to starboard, told why not. Agonized eyes, looking upward for the source, saw that the ventilation main overhead, which carried the battery exhaust from the forward electric cells, had ruptured directly above the switchboard and was drenching it with water!

"Close off the forward ventilation valve!"

Over the forward door to the battery room, that battery ventilation main pierced the bulkhead, and there, intended as an emergency shut-off to seal the duct, was a quick-closing valve. The seaman at the forward door, still engaged in clamping it watertight, groped for the valve lever overhead, heaved it shut.

But that deadly stream of water did not cease! Electric circuits commenced to short all over the board; livid green lightning danced weirdly over the contacts, seared the electrician at the switchboard. While the lone seaman forward fought to shut the valve tight, his shipmates abaft struggled even more frantically to shield the switchboard from that death-dealing water with a hastily improvised canvas screen.

And still the water poured through. Unseen by the men in the control room, that ventilation duct in the flooded battery room had flattened out under the sudden pressure there and had torn completely away from the bulkhead. And as luck would have it, just forward of the bulkhead was a green baize curtain draping the door to the captain's stateroom. As the water in the punctured battery room rose, it floated upward this curtain on its surface until, reaching the level of the smashed ventilation duct over the door, it poured aft through that newly exposed valve toward the control room, carrying along in the torrent the folds of the curtain, to wash them into the open valve and block it against closing.

Beneath that valve was fought the fiercest battle for the *S-4*. With the switchboard momentarily shielded, the short circuits were stopped, but unless that valve was sealed off swiftly, the control room and everything its machinery meant to thirty-four frenzied men was lost. But in that restricted passage only one man at a time could possibly get at the valve handle. In the cramped space overhead, jammed with pipes and conduits, straining fingers and overwrought muscles struggled desperately to heave home the valve disks.

And failed. That unseen green baize drapery, streaming through the inside of that clogged valve, was deadlier now for the men of the *S-4* than high explosive bombs. Against that hidden menace the crew of the submarine struggled in vain, while the water rose higher in the control room, spreading over the deck, submerging the controls, flooding upward toward the high sill of the after door over which it began to pour into the engine room aft.

Thwarted by the valve they could not close, Jones and his struggling men abandoned the control room with its compressed air banks, its machinery, its

chance of floating up their undamaged stern—abandoned everything that to a pigboat sailor spells a chance for life, and fled helplessly aft into the engine room while yet they had a chance to flee.

AS THE last man stumbled through and the engine room door dogged closed, thirty-four trapped men, helpless now to help themselves, soberly regarded that door. Would the dogs hold it against the sea pressure? Were they safe at least here from quick drowning?

Swiftly the pressure built up against that door as the control room finished flooding. Then, before the terrified eyes of the crew, as the full sea pressure eame finally against the bulkhead, the door sprang from its seat on one side and a flat sheet of water sprayed on through into their last refuge!

Once more the battle to hold out the sea commenced. Overwrought men sledged down the dogs till they would go no further. But still some water gushed on through, and again the clang of hammers rang through the sea in a frenzied attempt to tighten the doors still more, only to have five securing wedges shear off under the blows, losing the grip of those dogs! To the horror of the men struggling to hold out the sea, the leak instantly increased!

Hurriedly the engine room was ransacked for emergency securing gear; a bit of planking, two inches thick, once used somewhere as staging, was dragged up, with other improvised material jammed in against the door, and the leak at last reduced to an insignificant trickle.

For the first time since the *Paulding* had crashed into the *S-4,* the panting men aft were for the moment safe from immediate death. But what faced them? Drenched, most of them, in icy sea water, thirty-four men packed in two small compartments with hardly space to stand comfortably between the engines, with no place except wet and oily steel plates to lie down, with no blankets, no bunks, no heavy clothing, no air except that fouled already from three hours submerged operation, with no means of getting rid of the carbon dioxide continuously exhaled from their own breathing and poisoning the air, with the steel shell forming their prison firmly gripped in the freezing water of the deep sea, soon chilling the engine room to 34° F., the trapped crew, powerless to do anything, began their weary wait for help from the world above. But long before the first sign of that help came, in the foul air inside the crowded stern, they had all lapsed into unconsciousness.

MEANWHILE, from the *Paulding,* in grave danger of sinking herself, a brief radio message flashed out:

COMMANDANT NAVY YARD BOSTON
RAMMED AND SANK UNKNOWN SUBMARINE OFF WOOD END LIGHT PROVINCETOWN.

PAULDING

The collision occurred at 3:37 P.M. By 4:00 P.M. that Saturday afternoon, in Boston, New London, Portsmouth, and New York, action had started. And as the sun sank that brief December day, everything that the Navy could muster for diving and for rescue was started for Provincetown.

Boatswain Gracie of the Coast Guard, hurriedly shoving off from the beach in his surfboat, commenced to sweep the bottom with a grapnel at the point marked by the bubbles of air and the oil slick rising from the *S-4.* Back and forth over that spot Gracie dragged with his hook in the gathering darkness. Finally, making a hard strike, he clung there in his tossing boat as the night wore on and the rescue ships began to arrive. But at 3 A.M., still awaiting the arrival from New London of the *Falcon* and her divers, his grappling line parted. Frozen but undaunted, Gracie boarded the *Bushnell,* which had just arrived from Portsmouth, borrowed stronger grappling lines, and in the freezing spray heaved overboard his new grapnel. Day dawned, but he kept grimly at it. Early Sunday morning, the *Falcon* steamed in under forced draft, stood by to commence diving. But until that grappling line hooked the *S-4* to guide the divers down, sending divers overboard was wholly futile.

Finally, at 11 A.M., Gracie's grapnel

Someone was still alive in that torpedo room!

caught again. Carefully, lest he lose that precious grip, Gracie buoyed off his line, got clear, and the *Falcon,* with something to work to at last, steamed up to windward, dropped her anchor.

The *Falcon* needed six heavy mooring buoys planted in a circle round the wreck to maintain position against sea and wind, but there was time neither to lay out buoys nor plant anchors. So she ordered the two minesweepers present, the *Lark* and the *Mallard,* to anchor off her quarters, and to each of them she ran out a hawser to hold her in position as best they could.

1:38 P.M. Sunday. Over the side of the *Falcon,* yawing heavily to the seas, went Tom Eadie, Chief Gunner's Mate, to slide swiftly down the grappling line toward the *S-4,* twenty-two hours now on the bottom. High up between the two periscopes of the *S-4* where the grapnel was hooked, his lead-soled shoes landed with a bang. Through the murky water, Eadie clambered down, the clanging of his weights ringing loudly out against the steel hull.

From forward, echoing through the water, he thought he caught a signal. Over the badly slewed gun, over the broken deck, he scrambled forward toward those sounds. Abreast the torpedo room hatch, he kneeled down, hammered on the cover. Instantly, strong and distinct, from below came six raps, repeated over and over. Someone was still alive in that torpedo room!

With another rap there for encouragement, aft across the torn deck to the conning tower went the diver. A rap there got no answer. Once more aft along the deck, to the steel hatch over the engine room, where he hammered again. But no answering signal ever came from there. Eadie signaled to be hauled up.

What to do? After carefully considering the situation, it was decided on the *Falcon* to blow the *S-4's* ballast tanks from the surface in an attempt to float up the whole boat, or at least her undamaged stern. So at 3 P.M., Bill Carr, a chief boatswain's mate now, was dropped over the side with a salvage air line, passing Eadie on his way up.

Making the hose connection was a tough task. With frozen fingers, working in the icy water and the semi-darkness through the tiny hatch in the side of the conning tower, Carr spent ninety minutes struggling with that coupling before it was hooked up.

Hastily heaving Carr to the surface,

the *Falcon* shifted to port to get clear of the rising *S-4*, and began blowing. For over an hour the laboring compressors on the *Falcon* hammered air down through that hose into the *S-4*, while on the surface anxious eyes watched hopefully. Then air bubbles started coming up, quickly spreading till they certainly balanced what air the compressors were forcing down, and spelled the end of any hope. What little water could be blown from the ballast tanks was gone, and the air was now evidently escaping uselessly from the tanks as fast as it was pumped down.

The *S-4* did not rise.

BY NOW conditions on the surface, never very good, grew worse. The threatening northwest storm broke at last, increasing rapidly in fury, with the wind soon blowing a gale and the *Falcon*, held only by a makeshift mooring, yawing erratically all over the ocean. It was apparent that the submarine could not soon be lifted, and that diving, which in that sea was already unusually hazardous, would quickly be utterly impossible for days to come. If the men in the torpedo room were to kept alive until that storm passed and diving could again be attempted, a hose must immediately be coupled up below to feed air into the torpedo room.

The *Falcon* was hurriedly dragged back over the *S-4*, centered there as well as possible for diving. In the black night, with heavy seas sweeping the *Falcon's* rails and breaking aboard to freeze immediately on the decks, lanky Fred Michels, last of the trio of *S-51* salvage veterans aboard, was hoisted over the icy rail, taking with him the air hose, and for illumination on the bottom, a 1000 watt submarine lamp.

Never had a diver gone overboard before in such a sea! On the wildly tossing salvage ship, Lieutenant Hartley strove desperately to hold the manila line down which Michels slid, over the *S-4*, but the plunging *Falcon*, moored only by hawsers to two ships yawing as madly as herself, made that impossible. Michels, dropping down the rope to the submarine, landed, not on the *S-4*, but somewhere far to one side of her in deep mud, and promptly felt himself buried in the ooze and utterly helpless to move. He telephoned up his plight, but not until thirteen men were heaving on his lifelines was it possible to haul him out of the mud and up into the water again. The next attempt to drop him on the *S-4* was more successful, but unluckily for Michels, this time he was landed squarely amidst the wreckage left on deck by the *Paulding*, where his numerous lines promptly fouled in the torn steel. Before Michels could clear his lines, he found himself being dragged down by the tightening loops across his back. The next instant he was sprawled out face downward against the broken deck of the *S-4*, with his own lifelines weaving in the wreckage, a tangled net in which he was hopelessly snared!

Trapped, with no chance to signal on his fouled lines, and the roaring of the air in his helmet making his telephone almost useless, it took Michels almost an hour to get through a few intelligible words indicating his danger.

In weather worse even than before, Tom Eadie went overboard in the midst of that December gale to save Michels, sliding down Michels' own air hose to guide him there.

By great good luck, in spite of the yawing of the *Falcon*, the tenders managed to land Eadie on the *S-4* on their first attempt. There, working in ice water for almost two hours, Eadie cut away part of the wreckage with a hacksaw, and untangled the web of hose. Just before midnight, the frozen Michels, who had spent three hours and twenty minutes on the bottom, was sent up—rigid as a board, unconscious, probably dead.

CHAPTER III

RACE WITH DEATH

"SUBMARINE S-4 SUNK! FORTY MEN TRAPPED!" Another submarine gone. I gazed at the black type with a heavy heart. Who ever would have imagined that the tragedy of the *S-51* would be repeated so soon? Now it had happened again to the crew of the *S-4*.

Had they had any luck in getting the watertight doors closed, or had the rushing water drowned them like rats in a trap? Nobody knew—yet.

Could I do anything about it to help? I was a civilian, no more concerned than any other of the millions of Americans who on that Sunday morning were reading the same sad news. But unlike most of them, I knew something of salvage and diving, and might lend a hand at rescue if by any chance anyone inside the *S-4* were still alive. By long distance, I got the Navy Department in Washington, and offered my services as a civilian volunteer. They were promptly accepted, and I was directed immediately to report to the commandant of the New York Navy Yard for despatch to the scene of the wreck.

But I promptly ran into a snag in the person of the commandant, Rear Admiral Plunkett. Plunkett, tall, almost lanky, gray, bespectacled and walrus-whiskered, formidable in an austerity which needed no gold lace to back it up, greeted me warmly.

"I'm all ready to swear you into the service again, Ellsberg, and send you right up to join the *Falcon*. Just sign these papers; then I'll administer the oath, and we'll have you on your way in a minute."

I scratched my head.

"Admiral," I objected, "I don't want to sign any papers and I don't want to get sworn into anything. I didn't come over here to join the Navy again."

"Don't argue with me, young man!" Plunkett fixed me with his stern blue eyes. "Do what I say. Don't think I give a damn about you, but I remember your wife. If you go up to Provincetown in the Navy and anything happens while you're diving, we can do something for your widow. But if you go as a civilian—" He left the sentence unfinished, paused a moment for his statement to sink in, then quietly concluded, "Sign here."

Shivering a little, I signed. Admiral Plunkett was right as usual. In a moment I was taking the oath, sworn back into the service in my old rank of lieutenant commander—except that it was in the reserve this time.

"Now, Ellsberg, I'll get you started," announced the admiral. "I've radioed to Boston to have a destroyer standing by there to take you across Massachusetts Bay. My aide's been checking train schedules; there's a fast one leaving Grand Central in twenty minutes. You go on that."

"In twenty minutes, sir?" I exclaimed in dismay. To get from the Brooklyn Navy Yard across the East River and through miles of Manhattan traffic to Grand Central in twenty minutes seemed a physical impossibility.

"Don't worry; you'll make it all right," assured Plunkett grimly. "I've a Navy ambulance below waiting to take you through. If I know that driver, he won't need twenty minutes! Get underway now, and good luck to you, Ellsberg, on the *S-4!*"

Again Plunkett was right. The driver landed me in Grand Central with minutes to spare. Behind clanging bell and shrieking siren, I clung to a stretcher in the back of an ambulance, while a driver who must have learned his trade amongst the shell holes on the Western Front steered the course, and startled police officers far ahead, held back the traffic to let him through regardless of traffic lights.

EARLY evening found me on the waterfront at the Boston Navy Yard, shivering in a piercing December gale in spite of my heavy overcoat. Alongside a dock there, the destroyer *Sturtevant* was waiting for me, steam up and safeties popping, ready to shove off. I scrambled up the narrow gangplank. With a blast of her whistle, the *Sturtevant* cast off her mooring lines and the water churned sharply into foam astern as she slipped out into the stream.

The weather in Boston Harbor was bad, but once clear of Boston Light it promptly got much worse. In the gathering darkness, the sea was rapidly building up. As we drew away from the coast, the unobstructed sweep of the wind increased and the seas driving before the wintry gale mounted higher and higher. The *Sturtevant*, which was soon forced to slow down sharply, wallowed

along, rolling as only a destroyer can, and pounding heavily into the waves. Her skipper nursed her along as best he could, but a crossing she might easily have made in two hours in better weather took well over twice that. It was past midnight when, in a fierce gale, the laboring *Sturtevant* finally neared Cape Cod.

Somewhere in the open sea off the tip of that cape, the *Falcon* was moored over the wreck. But the *Sturtevant's* skipper could not lay his destroyer alongside the *Falcon,* even in better weather, and he had no small boat which he cared to trust overboard in that storm to take me to her.

So instead of looking for the *Falcon,* the *Sturtevant* kept on considerably to the southward of her, directly for the shelter of Provincetown Harbor, in which haven I soon saw the lights of every vessel in the rescue forces except those of the *Falcon.*

But since the *Falcon,* with her divers and her diving gear, was still somewhere outside in that howling waste of waters, I had to get a boat and get out to her some way.

It was after one when the *Sturtevant's* anchor rattled out. I watched anxiously from the bridge alongside her skipper as the destroyer's blinker lights started to twinkle through the night, calling each ship present, asking for a boat to take me out to the *Falcon.* But from each vessel in succession came the same reply, a negative. Not one ship had a boat she would risk sending outside the harbor.

"No luck, Ellsberg," reported the skipper sympathetically. "And I can't say I blame any of 'em. No Navy boat I ever saw could make her way that far to windward against this gale. She'd swamp sure. Better spend the rest of the night here with me, and if the gale's gone down any in the morning, maybe you can get a boat then."

I shook my head. I had come a long way to join the *Falcon;* I was not going to stand by idly only a few miles off if by hook or crook I could get aboard.

"Put me aboard that nearest Coast Guard cutter, skipper," I asked. "Maybe they can fix me up."

AT nearly two I was transferred from the *Sturtevant* to the cutter. Mounting her side ladder, I soon found myself in the captain's cabin, to be greeted not only by her skipper but also by the Coast Guard supervisor for the whole New England district. Briefly I repeated my request for a boat.

"It can't be done," answered the supervisor. "We haven't a boat on the ship I'd risk outside in this storm."

"Yes, captain," I agreed, "but your Coast Guard outfit is in the lifesaving business, isn't it? And you've got a special motor surfboat ashore that's built to go out in hurricanes. How about something like that for me now?"

Here was a new idea. The Coast Guard officers looked at each other, then nodded slowly in agreement. The supervisor finally spoke:

"That's right. One of our motor surfboats could make it. Where's Bosun Gracie and that boat of his from the Wood End Station, Captain?"

"Gracie and his men are all knocked out, sir," replied the commander of the cutter. "But the boat itself is still tied up at the boom, in charge of some men from Truro."

"Fine!" exclaimed the supervisor. "Get that relief bosun up here immediately."

Soon there was a knock at the cabin door, and in came the relief bosun.

"You want me, sir?" he asked, looking inquiringly from one to the other of the two Coast Guard captains.

"Yes," answered the skipper. "Here's a naval officer wants to go out to the *Falcon* right away. Can you put him aboard in that surfboat you took over from Gracie?"

"Aboard the *Falcon?* Now? No, sir!" replied the bosun decisively. "Ain't a chance. I can get out there all right, but I can't land nobody on the *Falcon.* The sea running out where she lies'll smash the boat to matchsticks if I lay her alongside!"

That sounded like the end, but I caught at even the slight straw of encouragement in the bosun's answer.

"That suits me, Captain," I injected hastily. "Get me out there and I'll take my chances on getting aboard."

My two hosts looked a little dubious at this proposal. Ordinarily I would never have got the boat, but the district supervisor, feeling that since the Coast Guard was involved in the *S-4* tragedy, they must lean over backwards to help the Navy, finally ordered the trip.

AT two o'clock on the morning of Monday, December 19, I shoved off from Provincetown in a Coast Guard lifeboat for the last leg of my voyage and was shortly outside of the harbor. If the going had seemed bad aboard the *Sturtevant,* now, clear of the harbor, it seemed impossible to live.

The boat tossed wildly in the waves, rising with sickening speed on the crests, then lurching dizzily down into the troughs as the waves went by. Solid water came over the stem in sheets which would promptly have swamped an ordinary boat, but the decked-over forecastle and self-bailing cockpit of this lifeboat kept her buoyant and afloat while she drove through the darkness into the long storm waves. Slowly we ran to the northwest against wind and sea for the wildest ride of my life.

Crouched in the sternsheets alongside the coxswain, I quickly was coated with a sheet of ice from the waves splashing aboard, while the salt spray, turning to tiny icicles in the intense cold, drove like a stinging sandblast into my face.

Darkness, bitter cold, tumbling seas, and a roaring wind—for nearly an hour we battled them in that lifeboat to cover the three miles from Provincetown to where in the unsheltered ocean the *Falcon* lay. At the end of that hour, numbed with cold and mercilessly seared by the wind, we came at last abreast her, heaving erratically to the long seas sweeping by, yawing wildly about that cable to her bow.

It was three o'clock. Slowly the tossing surfboat worked its way past the port quarter of the *Falcon,* keeping a respectable distance off. The storm waves were beating fiercely against the ship, slapping her side on each roll, pouring in wide sheets from her bow each time she lifted. It was obvious that there was no chance of boarding on that side.

Continuing, we cleared the *Falcon's* stem, kept on well ahead to make sure we were clear of that surging anchor chain, which we could not see in the darkness. Then, turning carefully, we ran with wind and sea astern down the starboard side of the ship. Anxiously I scanned the weather on that side to see if it offered any lee, but there was no choice—starboard or port were quite the same, and both sides were impossible. We cleared her starboard quarter, with our lifeboat headed downwind toward Provincetown.

"No use!" roared the bosun, shouting to make himself heard above the screaming of the wind. "It's like I told you. I'm going back!"

I shook my head.

"Not yet!" I yelled. "Circle her again! We may get a lull in the gale!"

But there was no improvement. At one moment the racing crests were washing over the vessel's gunwale, the next moment the troughs were exposing almost her entire hull down to her bilge keel.

No small boat had even a slight chance of surviving an impact with the heavy sides of the rolling *Falcon.*

I LOOKED anxiously at the ship as we went by. Except for her anchor lights she was almost dark. Not a single man could I see on her decks anywhere, either to answer a hail or to give any assistance. And from the looks of the *Falcon,* anyone trying to clamber aboard her would need plenty of assistance, for her sides and gunwales were a solid mass of glistening ice from bow to stern! It was obvious enough why they weren't diving and why all the *Falcon's* consorts had gone into port—but what had happened on the *Falcon* that there wasn't even a watch visible on deck?

Once more we cleared the bow, kept on to make sure we were free of her cable, and then managed to get about and head aft before the gale, down the starboard side again. There was no vestige of a sheltering lee anywhere. Getting alongside was completely hopeless. The bosun was right.

"Head back now, sir?" he shouted.

"No!" I said. "Round to under her stern and head up her port side again!" I paused a moment for breath, then continued, "Pass her as close aboard as you dare without staving in your boat, and I'll jump for it on the fly!"

Clinging to his tiller, the bosun roared back,

"Don't try that, sir! You'll drown sure as hell!"

"Don't worry, I'll make it. Port your helm!"

Obediently he rounded to. The boat was his responsibility, but I was not. For the third time, the surfboat headed into the teeth of the storm, up the port side of the yawing *Falcon*. With engine slowed and with only enough speed on to keep steerage way and avoid broaching, the lifeboat edged up past the stern, past the quarter, and then sheered gradually in till we were not over eight feet away from the *Falcon's* side, while, poised on the lifeboat's gunwale, clutching the engine house, I clung precariously, watching the lifeboat rise and fall in the rushing waves.

There was no earthly chance of ever getting a grip on the *Falcon's* ice-coated rail—it was either clear it or land in the sea.

We dropped dizzily into another trough as the *Falcon* started rolling toward us. I braced myself, looked aft at the bosun, nodded. Along came the inevitable crest. The bow of the boat heaved up; the bosun sheered in a little. For an instant only, poised on that wave, I could see the *Falcon's* glistening side below me in the darkness, and the black water gap between ice-coated ship and ice-coated lifeboat narrowing. I leaped headfirst from boat to ship, shot over the gunwale, and felt myself sliding spread-eagled on my stomach down the *Falcon's* icy deck!

While I was still sliding, my bag, heaved across by the engineer, came hurtling over the rail to land with a crash astern of me.

By the time I had regained my feet, the lifeboat, with her engine at full speed once more, was already several boat lengths away and headed about, disappearing in the black night toward Provincetown.

A LITTLE shaken by my leap, I clung an instant to a nearby superstructure stanchion to steady myself, then started forward along the deserted deck. Near the bridge, a quartermaster hastily descending from the chart house met me, apparently recognized me from my last cruise on the *Falcon*.

"Where's the skipper?" I asked briefly.

"Turned in, sir, dead to the world. So's everybody else on deck. They're all knocked out. We've had a wild night diving. You remember big Mike? Well, he's in the recompression chamber now. Whether he's dead or alive, I don't know. Bill Carr and Eadie have been working on him in the tank since he came up frozen stiff a couple of hours ago, and they put the pressure on him trying to bring him to. It looks bad."

"How about the sub?" I asked. "Anybody alive in her?"

"Six of 'em, locked in her torpedo room. Mike went down in the storm to take 'em an air hose, but the gale shot everything to hell, tangled him in the wreckage below, an' he never made it. God help 'em now."

I scrambled across the deck to the starboard side where, built into the ship, lay the recompression tank, a huge steel cylinder for treating divers under air pressure. I worked my way through the double-doored airlock into the inner chamber, and my heart sank at what I saw.

On the deck, naked, stiff, unconscious, lay Fred Michels, whom last I had parted from long months before at the Navy Yard in New York. Working over him, one on each side, chafing his muscles, rubbing him with hot towels, were Tom Eadie and Bill Carr, striving desperately to bring him to. For over two hours now they had been at it. Without a word, I dropped to my knees alongside to help.

Neither Carr nor Eadie showed any surprise at my sudden apparition at that unearthly hour. Nothing in connection with the *S-4* would ever surprise them again. Wearily they moved over a little, accepted my help.

Silently we three worked over Michels. Unconscious, frozen through, saturated in every vein and tissue with nitrogen

from over three hours on the bottom under heavy air pressure, then as a final blow, brought up without the decompression necessary to save him from that dread disease of deep diving, "the bends," his chances looked slim. If we ever got him thawed out, the probabilities were that pneumonia would get him if "the bends" didn't.

Chafe and rub, rub and chafe—we kept endlessly at it. Then, at 3:30, Michels, whose last conscious moment had been passed at the bottom of the cold sea with his helmet pressed tightly down against the *S-4's* broken hull, came suddenly to, blinked his eyes questioningly, and then mumbled in surprise:

"Why, hello, Mr. Ellsberg!"

THE gale blew on. Monday morning came, but no chance of diving. Soon after Eadie's first dive, communication had been established with the men in the *S-4* by Morse code, signals sent on an oscillator from the *Falcon* or a sister submarine, the *S-8;* and answered by hammer taps from the torpedo room, one rap a dot, two raps a dash.

Just before Michels went down, the *Falcon* signaled:

"Is there any gas?" In dots and dashes, picked up by the *Falcon's* receivers, came the answer:

"No, but the air is bad. How long will you be now?"

"How many are there?"

"There are six. Please hurry."

To this, the *Falcon,* about to lower Michels over the side in the teeth of the gale, replied:

"Compartment salvage line now being hooked up."

But that air line was never connected.

For the next two days, the gale blew on and diving was impossible, but meanwhile there were more messages. On Monday afternoon, from the *S-4,* sunk now for forty-eight hours, came a question:

"How is the weather?"

"Choppy."

And then, later that night:

"Is there any hope?"

How should one answer that, with a gale raging about us and weather reports that it would continue to blow all next day? Captain King's face was set as he dictated the reply:

"There is hope. Everything possible is being done."

The storm blew on. From the Navy Department late Monday night the *Falcon* received by radio the following order:

"Transmit if possible the following message for Lieutenant Fitch inside the *S-4*:

"'YOUR WIFE AND MOTHER ARE CONSTANTLY PRAYING FOR YOU.'"

A little after midnight in the high-pitched vibrations of our oscillator the dots and dashes of that message cut through the icy depths of the sea to drum against the steel shell of the silent

S-4. There was no answer. Every ten minutes through that wild December night that message rang in our ears on deck, beat against the *S-4* on the bottom.

But on the *Falcon*, we who had to stand by helplessly, listening to that heartbreaking message, could only pray for a change in the weather.

And then at last, at 6:15 A. M. from the *S-4*, then sixty-three hours on the bottom, came an answer:

"I understand."

All through Tuesday the gale roared on. But on Wednesday the wind and sea eased off and the *Falcon* moored once more for diving. All signals from inside the *S-4* had long before stopped. Hastily divers Eiben and Wilson coupled an air line directly into the torpedo room, and the *Falcon* began pumping air down, then venting it out. But the case was hopeless. In spite of ventilation continued for hours through that hose till the air inside the torpedo room was purified, no one ever revived. The tragedy of the *S-4* was complete.

CHAPTER IV

SEA TRAP

WHAT injuries had the *S-4* suffered in the collision with the onrushing *Paulding?* Was her back so severed by the impact that she would break in two if we tried to lift her? To determine that, while the ventilation of the forward compartment went on, I was dressed for my first dive. Cased from ankles to neck in three suits of heavy blue woolen underwear, I went aft, seated myself on the bench on the *Falcon's* fantail, for all my clothing chilled in the cold wind, and the dressers went expertly to work on me, soon to drop down over my head a copper helmet to complete the job.

A quick twist on it from the tender to lock the screw joint, and I was ready. Completely shut inside my suit, I opened the valve on my air hose a trifle to get some air to breathe, and immediately my rig ballooned out under the slight pressure.

Two husky dressers seized me, one by each shoulder, and helped me to the stage. A bosun's pipe shrilled and a winch rattled into action. Up went the stage, out swung the boom, and the next instant I was swaying erratically with the stage outboard of the bulwark and only the sea beneath me. Again, muffled by the noise of the air whistling through my helmet, I heard the bosun piping, and down into the sea splashed the stage. Immediately my canvas suit, which had been grotesquely swelled out in the air, collapsed like a punctured balloon, its folds pressing in tightly against my frame, leaving only a little air space inside over my chest where the breastplate held it out.

Down a few feet, and the stage stopped. I sang out:

"Topside, there! All ready! Lower away!"

I felt the lifeline and air hose tauten up as my tender took in the slack; then a far away voice sounded through the transmitters over my ears:

"Okay. Step off the stage!"

I stepped off. The stage was promptly hoisted, and there I hung, dangling on my lifelines, with nothing below me now but the bottom of the sea, and in front of me only a line tied somewhere below to the *S-4*.

I grabbed the line, wound my canvas-covered legs around it, and the tenders started lowering.

The light, never very good, faded quickly as I sank. A few fathoms down and the hull of the *Falcon* disappeared from view, the surface faded away, and around me was nothing but water into which a little above me the manila line down which I slid seemed to dissolve, and out of which beneath my feet more line seemed to materialize constantly out of nothing. Down through seemingly bottomless depths, through an unearthly quiet broken only by the air whistling through my helmet and then out, leaving behind me a trail of air bubbles streaming from my exhaust valve, rising, expanding, breaking up in the water as they rose like huge clusters of grapes spiralling magically upward on some gigantic vine.

My eyes were down now, always down, peering through my faceplate at the de-

I felt myself going over sidewise.

scending line which was my guide. The line started to slope away more sharply toward the horizontal; I took a firmer grip with my legs to hang on to it. And then, vaguely forming out of the water below me, was the *S-4*, which, like the rope down which I slid, seemed to be materializing fantastically out of nothingness. A few more fathoms down the line and I stopped, shouted into my telephone:

"On the bottom!"

I WAS at last on the *S-4*. There she lay before me, silent, motionless, her bulk strangely magnified by the water. I was standing on her very bow, in the thin triangle where sides and deck met stem, a precarious perch with no railing for support. A little dizzy from the pressure, I paused a moment, clinging tightly to my guide line, while I readjusted air valves to suit conditions on the bottom. Then, checking my lifelines to make sure

they were not fouled round the descending line but were floating clear, I let go the manila which had been my guide till now. Signaling on my lifelines for more slack, I cautiously walked aft. The deck was level; the submarine had neither heel nor trim. I could see perhaps ten feet. Beyond that, like an opaque screen, the water shrouded everything.

I continued aft, lifelines trailing behind me in the water, helmet bent forward, looking for damage. So far, nothing. The *S-4*, silent, immobile, bow diving fins still trained out, rested there on the bottom as erect, as unhurt, as if she were simply bottoming for practise and might any minute start up her motors and swim gently upward.

The deck widened further. I was perhaps seventy feet aft and increasing my pace, when before me the deck suddenly vanished, torn completely away! In a tangle of torn steel, the deck ended where the *Paulding*, evidently riding across the submarine, had ripped the superstructure and the deck clean off.

Peering over the edge of the broken deck, I could see below me the cylindrical hull. Cautiously, so as not to cut open my diving suit on any of those jagged plates, I clambered down to the hull below, then continued aft again, eyes glued now on that round steel shell, searching for the rupture which had flooded the inside of the submarine. But there was no opening, no gash in it anywhere, just that smooth round hull beneath my feet with the superstructure wiped clean off, except to port where in an ugly looking tangle lay the twisted remnants of the superstructure in which Michels had been trapped.

For twenty feet more I kept on, scanning the exposed hull, and then there rose abruptly before me, torn and jagged again, the continuation of the deck, and just abaft that, looming massively through the water, the *S-4's* forecastle gun, slewed drunkenly to port, breech high above the starboard rail, muzzle down, as the careening side of the *Paulding* had twisted it from its normal fore and aft position and jammed it down on the deck.

Keeping to port, carefully, I crawled up over the broken deck, dragged my cumbersome rig up on the depressed gun muzzle, holding my precious air hose high to avoid fouling it in that mass of torn steel, and slid down off the gun to land on the undamaged deck. Inwardly thankful for the safer footing, I continued on aft until, standing sharply like a precipitous island, the conning tower of the *S-4* rose in my path, so far as I could see wholly undamaged and showing no definite sign of contact with the *Paulding*. Certainly there could be no damage to the boat there.

Puzzled, I stopped. Where was the *hole* in the submarine which had sunk her? Certainly it must be forward of me; somehow I had missed seeing it. Signaling on my lifelines to start taking in slack, I turned, retraced my steps to look for it again.

Once more I clambered over the slewed gun, dropped down over the broken deck edge onto the cylindrical hull, and started slowly forward, staring sharply down through my faceplate at the smooth round plates below me, searching from starboard to port for that hole.

A few steps forward, and then, as if a fog had suddenly rolled in, the submarine disappeared. From my waist down I stood in a cloud of mud, in no direction was any part of the *S-4* visible!

I stopped instantly, all sense of direction lost, fearful that if I took a single step the wrong way, I should go sliding overboard from the rounding cylinder on which I stood. Where was the fore and aft line now along the hull of the sub that I must follow if I were to stay aboard her? Perplexed, I looked around. The gun and the conning tower astern of me had faded away in the translucent water.

I WAS completely lost. I looked down at the clouds of mud billowing there in the water, blotting out my legs, blanketing the submarine. What had happened? Apparently in my passage aft along the sub I must have stirred up a fine layer of mud with which the sea had coated the *S-4*. Now, going forward again, I was caught in the resulting fog. Somewhere to port of me was the wreck-

age in which Michels had been trapped, to starboard the curving side of the hull. A step in any direction but the right one would land me in trouble, but which way in that mud-shrouded water was right? I stood there motionless, cursing myself for a fool. Why, when I was safely out of the Navy and through with diving forever, had I been idiot enough voluntarily to come back and get into—

And then it came. On the surface, the *Falcon* took a wide yaw among the waves. My lifelines suddenly tautened, jerked my breastplate, threw me off balance, and I felt myself going over sidewise, in another instant sprawled face down on the submarine, sliding helplessly through the water over the curving hull of the *S-4!*

Faster and faster I went, lead weights clattering, copper helmet banging against the submarine's shell, while involuntarily I tried to dig my gloved fingers into the steel plates beneath me, to get a grip on something, anything, to stop my fall. Useless. The plates were smooth and slippery; there were no projections. With increasing speed I shot overboard, still clawing wildly. No use. Down I went.

Suddenly a projection flashed before my faceplate! Out shot my right hand, grasped it. I stopped with a jolt that nearly jerked my arm from its socket, to find that there before my face was what I had made that dive to find. Through the faceplate of my copper helmet I was staring straight into the hole punched through the *S-4's* side into her battery room. And the projection I was clinging to was part of the *Paulding's* steel stem, still jammed like a broken lance into the *S-4's* death wound!

Dangling there in the water by one arm, completely forgetful of my own plight, I swiftly examined that hole. It was surprisingly small, hardly a foot across, to have sunk that ship and killed her crew, but still it had been more than enough.

A second look into that hole finished my examination. The damage was insignificant as effecting the strength of the ship to stand a lift—no danger of that trifling hole causing the ship to break in two when our lifting gear took a strain.

And with that, I swiftly forgot all about the submarine's troubles and came back to my own. We could lift the submarine all right, but how about myself? I had broken my fall. What could I now do to lift myself up on deck? I tilted back my head, looked out through the top port of my helmet. Then cold fear suddenly gripped me. A stream of bubbles were pouring upwards through the water from my hand. The jagged steel to which I clung had cut open my watertight glove, and from the highest point in my suit, I was rapidly losing all my air!

I felt the sea pressing in on my chest as the air went out, and breathing became more difficult. Despairingly as I dangled there I glanced up again at my cut glove, at the air bubbling away. There was nothing to do but to let go while still I had a little air left in my suit, and take my chances on the sea floor. I let go.

Down I went again through the water, faster than ever now, with little air to buoy me up, and that two hundred pounds of lead and copper dragging me into the depths. I got one last glimpse of the side of the *S-4* shooting by my faceplate and then—the light went out!

I had hit bottom, but instead of stopping there, I shot completely through it to find myself buried in soft mud, engulfed in total darkness, and still sinking helplessly, dragged down by my weights!

I CAME to rest at last, sprawled out sidewise in utter blackness, to feel mud pressing in on me from all directions, while the water which had leaked into my suit from my cut glove now all poured into my helmet and half strangled me.

Convulsively I tried to straighten myself, to get my feet down and my head up, but with each desperate flailing of my arms and legs I could feel myself only sinking deeper through that clinging mud, lead shoes on my feet, lead belt on my waist, copper helmet on my head, all equally dragging me down again with every spasmodic struggle. Was there no bottom to that mud?

Then at last I struck something hard,

quit sinking, came to rest still sprawled out on my right side. With a gasp of relief, I thrust my arm down hard, intent on getting my head up, that water out of my helmet, only to feel my arm go full length down again into unresisting mud. There was nothing solid under my shoulders; just my body was resting on anything.

Instinctively I began to wiggle along that supporting shelf, to get wholly on it so that I might work myself erect, but after the first motion, I immediately quit moving and lay still, terror gripping me completely. All along beneath me I felt sharp points jabbing upward into my diving suit! What I had come to rest on there in the mud was twisted wreckage torn from the *Paulding's* keel as she raked over the *S-4,* wreckage now sunk alongside her victim. And if I moved, those razor-edged steel plates would cut my suit wide open in a dozen places as the *Paulding's* bow had already ripped apart my glove, and drown me out of hand!

I lay still. No more struggling, no more efforts to rise. In the blackness, in the cold, in the mud twenty fathoms down, I lay quietly, not daring to move a muscle, hardly daring to breathe, desperately wondering what to do, with the one slim relief in my situation that I was resting on my right side, with my cut right glove beneath me so that I could still keep what air I had in my suit.

Then the answer came to me. Simple. No reason at all for me to worry. Inside my helmet I had a telephone, tied to my breastplate I had a lifeline. All I had to do to get clear was only to call my tenders on the surface, tell them to pull on my lifeline, and they would immediately heave me up off that terrifying broken steel, up through that clinging mud which was engulfing me in maddening darkness.

Carefully, slowly, I twisted my head around to bring my mouth opposite the telephone transmitter in the roof of my helmet, fortunately clear of the water lapping round my neck, and gasped out:

"Topside, there!" Then waited with straining ears for a reply. Had the water already short-circuited my telephone? With infinite relief I heard the answer from the *Falcon* in the world above me:

"Topside. What is it?"

"Heave on my lifeline"

"Aye, aye. Right away!"

My head dropped back thankfully. All my troubles were over. With muscles tensed and legs stiffened, I waited for the tug on my breastplate which would pivot me about my lead-clad feet, pull me erect, then up and off that terrible bed in the mud. But the tug never came and after what seemed to me an endless wait, with not the slightest pull on my lines that I could feel, I sang out again:

"Topside, there! Are you heaving yet?"

The answer fell like a sledge hammer blow on my strained nerves.

"Yes! Four men are heaving hard on your lines, but they can't get an inch of slack. What's the matter down there?"

Four men heaving on my lines and I couldn't feel even a slight pull! Then my lines must be fouled on something above me, probably tangled in the *Paulding's* broken stem, which had already pierced my glove! The strain that four men heaving hard on deck could put on my air hose fouled on the sharp edges of that jagged stem projecting from the *S-4's* side could easily cut my rubber air hose in two, leave me there in the mud to asphyxiate! In a strangled voice, I screamed:

'Topside there! Avast heaving! Slack off! Slack off, for God's sake!"

An agonized moment passed while I waited in suspense. Would they get that message in time, would they obey it? Then almost with a sob of relief I heard:

"We're slacking away! Do you want any help down there?"

Did I want any help? Heaven knew I needed it badly enough, but I could waste no more breath in talking. My head sagged back. I didn't bother to answer, and I heard nothing further. Despair gripped me. On top of all else now, my air hose fouled and likely to be severed, leaving me loaded down with heavy ballast to choke to death! And if I moved to extricate myself, the chances were excellent that I should cut my suit to pieces and drown in a flood of mud gushing into my helmet.

I tried to think. What could I do to save myself? But on the bottom, twenty fathoms down, with the pressure of the whole Atlantic numbing my brain, thinking was next to impossible. Then that paralyzing blackness! Light, light! If I were going to die, it would be so much easier if only I could see a little! And all the time there kept obtruding into my frantic efforts to pull my thoughts together, to think coherently if only for a moment, a shattering vision—the image of that silent, motionless steel coffin, the *S-4*, whose deck short minutes before I had been treading, with forty men stretched cold in death inside her. And there I was, the forty-first, already buried in the mud alongside their tomb, ready to join them!

SILENTLY, I lay there in the ooze of the ocean floor, trying to concentrate on my problem, momentarily expecting my suit to give way to that piercing steel, to feel the mud gushing in on me. Then gradually I became vaguely aware in the utter silence and blackness of that grave beneath the ocean floor, of a persistent murmur in my helmet, of a murmur to which long familiarity had made me oblivious. A small current of air was still flowing through my helmet, escaping with a gurgle through the exhaust valve somewhere near my chin. I still had air coming through my hose from above. Suddenly across my dazed brain that brought an idea. That air could save me!

Slowly, cautiously, not to let any movement of my body saw through my suit, I dragged my left arm through the clinging mud to my breast, fumbled with frozen fingers till I found the handle of the air control valve. My fingers closed on that valve handle, twisted it wide open.

Immediately a suddenly increased stream of compressed air roared into my helmet, started to inflate my suit. Under the increasing buoyancy, my helmet lifted a trifle; then, as if a giant hand had seized me by the shoulders, my body started to float upward through the mud, to come erect as my suit swelled more and more. Another moment and I was free of that bed of torn steel plates, erect once more, and could feel myself being dragged vertically upward through the mud by my over-inflated diving suit!

A little further and my helmet burst through the ooze of the ocean floor into the water.

Light! Blessed, soul-satisfying light streaming through my faceplate again! After the terrifying darkness of the mud, that dim half-twilight of the depths, to me seemed as dazzling as if the sun had suddenly risen inside my helmet! I had light now; anything was possible!

But my dangers were not yet over. Under the pull of my partially ballooned rig, I was still rising from the mud, excessively buoyant. If, when I tore free of that clinging ooze, I was still as light, I would shoot upward through the water with ever-increasing speed as the sea pressure decreased and the swelling air in my suit ballooned it out further, perhaps to crash at high speed into the *Falcon* above and kill myself.

No, thankful as I was over the light, I couldn't afford to take time giving thanks, or I should find myself "blowing up" from the depths. As soon as my helmet popped out into the water, my still-buried fingers were clawing again through the mud for my control valve, shutting off the air before it was too late. When the excess air had blown off through the exhaust and my ballooned out rig had shrunk back to more normal proportions so that I ceased rising, I found myself still buried to my waist in mud, with only the upper half of my body in the water.

I looked up. To my pleased surprise, my lifeline and air hose were floating vertically above me with no tangles in sight. Were they still fouled, or had my rise from below permitted them to slack off and so perhaps to come clear of trouble? I could quickly find out. Once more I called the *Falcon.*

"Topside there! Take an easy pull on my lines!"

A brief moment, and then I felt a gentle tug on my breastplate. My lines were free! Swiftly I bled more air from my rig to make sure I was heavy enough not to float and then,

"Topside there! Pull me up ten feet!"

My lines promptly tautened and up I went, legs tearing free of the mud, and when the heaving ceased, there I was, clear at last, a fathom off the bottom, dangling in the water from my lifelines!

My inspection was done—by a freak of fortune, successfully. A few more words over the telephone and I was started upward for the surface, a rise broken by lengthening stops every few fathoms as the water pressure decreased, to allow the air to work itself out of my blood gradually, to decompress me and avoid "the bends."

And so, step by step, I was lifted, until I could see once more through my faceplate that foam-flecked undulating sheet, the surface, with the familiar red underwater hull of the Falcon nestling in it. One more last stop, and then at last the welcome message: "Coming aboard!" and I was heaved up and dropped on deck. Dripping mud and water, I was seized by the tenders, dragged to a bench, my belt, shoes, and helmet hastily stripped off, and then without a pause, still in my dripping suit, I was rushed across the deck, jammed through the outer door of the recompression chamber into the first lock. A tender twisted open an air valve and in roared a stream of compressed air, once more to get me under pressure, to make sure that no bubbles of air formed in my veins.

TO MY surprise, I found I was not alone in that recompression tank. Stretched out on the floor of the inner chamber, clad like myself in blue diving underwear, was Bill Carr, while alongside him was Tom Eadie, rubbing his legs. I looked at them inquisitively. Carr, with his underwear half-soaked and his legs blue with cold, had evidently like myself recently come up from a dive.

"Been down, Carr?" I asked him.

"Yeah," answered Carr briefly, evidently too chilled to want to talk.

Eadie offered me a drink, one of our hot "submarine cocktails." I swallowed it greedily, thankful for the fiery warmth that went racing through my frozen form. As I drank, Eadie once more turned to work on Carr, kneading his arm muscles to warm them up. I sank down on a bench. Eadie, still working, looked up at me.

"Didn't you know Carr was down, Commander?"

"No," I muttered wearily. "I thought I was alone down on the bottom."

"Well, you weren't," said Eadie. "You hadn't been down five minutes when they sent Bill down with a fire hose to start washing a tunnel through under the port bow of that sub, so's we could get the lifting chains through under her there. You didn't see nothing of him?"

"Not a sign," I assured him.

"Well, he was there," continued Eadie. "And we telephoned down to him, seeing as he was already on the bottom, saying:

"'Commander Ellsberg's in bad trouble somewhere in the sub. Leave what you're doing, Bill and go over and help him!'"

I looked from Eadie to Carr, who was trying to signal Eadie to shut up. But Eadie, ignoring him, went on:

"And d'ye know, Commander, what Bill said when we told him you were in trouble and to go over and help you?"

"No, Tom," I replied, "that's beyond me. What did Bill say?"

"Well," concluded Eadie, "he sings out into his telephone, 'Aw, tell him to go to hell! I'm stuck in the mud myself!'"

This was too much for the prostrate bosun's mate. Carr came instantly to a sitting position, almost knocking Eadie over backward. His face, flaming red, turned toward mine.

"Say, Commander! You know I'd never say a thing like that! You wanna know what I really said?"

"Sure, Bill, don't worry. Tom's only kidding. What did you say?"

"Well," said Carr, "there I was alongside the port bow, washing away with the hose when the topside phones me about you. I drops that fire hose, grabs my descending line, starts climbing up the port side o' that sub, thinkin' o' the argument you once gave me in New York over that letter o' commendation because I'd never had a chance to be a hero. And when I gets on deck of the *S-4*, I starts runnin' aft four bells lookin' for you an' shoutin' into my telephone:

"Hooray! Here's where I gets that Navy Cross!"

Carr paused, looked mournfully at me, then concluded sadly:

"Aw, Commander! Why didn't you wait till I got there to rescue you?"

WHAT happened to the *S-4*? I made my report to Captain King, carefully outlining the condition of the submarine and salvage operations began.

By now, a few days before Christmas, our salvage gear had all arrived, and so also had practically all the divers used in the previous salvage operations on the *S-51*. A major problem was to decide whether to wait for spring and better weather for salvage, or to work on through the winter.

While this matter was being discussed, we had a visit from the Secretary of the Navy, Curtis D. Wilbur, who settled the matter for us. Regardless of the weather, the job was to proceed, he ordered. And so it did.

Captain King was put in complete command, with Commander Saunders as salvage officer, and I, with nothing further possible in the way of rescue, said good-by to my shipmates. On New Year's Day, I was speeding back across Massachusetts Bay in a dead calm, bound for home.

Fate, as if satisfied with what it had already dealt in the way of death and disaster, sent no more storms. Only the cold and the cold water remained as unusual obstacles; fighting these, the divers clung to the task. Using the same general equipment and methods by which, two years before, the *S-51* had been raised, they sealed up the inside of the submarine, expelled the flood waters from the undamaged compartments, tunneled under to pass lifting chains, sank and attached pontoons, and finally on March 17, 1928, three months to a day from the time the *Paulding* sank her, the *S-4* rose again from the depths.

Grim misfortune seemingly hovered over the *S-4;* first to bring her up inexplicably in the *Paulding's* path, then to clog the vent valve with a curtain and drive the crew from their control room, and finally to send a gale immediately after the accident to hold off the rescuers till the entire crew had died. But never again will that happen, for since then, at the hands of Lieutenant Momsen, skipper of a sister submarine, there has been developed a "lung" which permits the crew of a sunken submarine to escape without surface aid.

And there has been another result. Until 1927, our Navy suffered the sinking of a submarine on the average of once every two years, though not always with the loss of the crews. But so indelible a mark has the tragedy of the *S-4* left on the minds of Navy men, that since then twelve years have gone by without a single sinking.

It may well be that in the minds of our submarine sailors, those doleful hammer taps from the *S-4's* torpedo room still ring out as clearly as in that stormy Christmas week in 1927.

Commander Ellsberg tells, in the next issue, of the sinking and death-struck salvage of the EGYPT, down with $5,000,000 bullion a hundred feet deeper than the divers could go.

SUNSHINER

by
ARTHUR HAWTHORNE CARHART
and
C. C. STAPLES

A
Novelette

They floundered into the side of the prahu as it tipped

WEST of Jolo harbor, beyond Balaback Strait, the brassy sun poised to plunge into the jade green waters of the China Sea. The rollers ran lazily, as though their energies had been sapped by the hurricane earlier in the week. Kim Ransom had been guiding a crude raft toward Jolo when the blow began. He sheltered on a little island while the storm howled past. He thought he was in the luck when the raft held together until he reached Jolo.

As twilight ended his first day on the island, he knew his luck. All bad. The hurricane had put him in a sweet jam.

Before sunrise Kim Ransom had to be clear of Jolo. When daylight came he should be far enough on his way to hide his trail in the maze of channels among atolls and islands to the southward. If he got away he must have a seaworthy boat. He'd found only one that had not been disabled by the hurricane. That sound craft was a prahu hauled up beside the nipa hut of No Soap Strader, the sunshiner.

If he took it and Strader with him, Kim risked his life. If he merely took

it, there was another kind of risk. If he didn't leave tonight on the out tide, he might never leave the islands—just stay, caught in the net of the tropics, slowly going to pot.

Shadows spread in velvet bands across the narrow side street in the native quarter as Kim hurried toward Chino Charlie's. If he left Jolo tonight, he'd have to have the help of the big moon-faced trader. He could trust Chino Charlie.

Kim halted halfway along the shack-bordered lane and looked back with eyes squinted. He'd told Strader to go to hell. That wouldn't stop the sunshiner. Strader knew what was going on. He'd follow.

Friends back in the States would not have recognized this man in the street as Kim Ransom. His hair was uncut, bushy and sunburned. His shirt was torn, his trousers frayed at the bottoms. He had lived for weeks in naked freedom, like any other pearler. He looked like any American going to pieces in the tropics.

"Thought so," breathed Kim as Strader rounded a far corner. "Trailing me to get a share of the kill."

Strader knew his man was in a corner and he was in no hurry. If Kim left Jolo before sunrise, Strader was going to be cut in on the deal.

NOBODY knew Strader's past; nobody cared much. He was beefy, unshaven, and hid his meanness behind a show of jovial laziness. He lived with a Moro woman in a shack near the Chinese pier, just outside of the walled town. Strader might be forty, or sixty; his type—black-haired men with small lively eyes and abundant animal vitality—rarely show their true age. He wasn't downright filthy, but by ordinary standards he was unwashed.

"There," whispered Kim, his thought getting into soft-spoken words, "is yourself, Ransom——in a couple of years from now, if the islands beat you. And —you're on your way if you don't leave here on the ebb tide. You're on your way!"

Strader thrust blunt hands into pockets of pants more ragged than Kim's trousers as he halted. Joints on the sunshiner's fingers were tufted with black hair. He let out a puff of breath fumed with low grade gin.

"Don't play the fool, kid," said Strader thinly. "You've got to have that prahu. Let's talk business."

"I told you to go to hell." Kim's voice was level. Strader blinked. Then he smiled until his strong teeth showed black with betel nut stain.

"Pearls," said Strader. "A slew of pearls. In four fathoms, beside a coral reef near an atoll south of here where your prahu was cut in two. You'll have to take that prahu beside my shack if you hope to get 'em before someone beats you to it."

"A pipe dream," jeered Kim.

Strader wiped his full lips with the furry back of his hand.

"Yeah," he drawled. "Pipe dream, eh? Now listen. You thought your crew went to the sharks when the reef tore the belly out of your prahu. One didn't. He rode a piece of wreckage until some fishermen picked him up. He'd lost one leg to the sharks. Almost done for when some Moros found him."

"Which one—?" began Kim. That was almost an admission that all Strader had said was true. The sunshiner tightened his eyelids a little. "Show me the man you say was picked up," Kim challenged.

"He's dead." Strader chuckled. "He told what happened, but he didn't say where." Strader shrugged. "Think I'd be here if I knew the location of that reef? Use your brains. You're the only one alive who can go directly back to that wrecked prahu. Others would have to put in days hunting for the spot, and that's no part of the islands to linger in."

That was true enough. The pearls were in a little strong box beside shark-infested fangs of coral. Kim and his crew had been running from a threat of death haunting those islands to the south when they piled into that reef.

"Now look," said Strader. "There's only a couple of Moros who know anything about this. I've told 'em to keep their mouths shut. Sooner or later

they'll say something that'll spill the whole business. Maybe tonight, when they're full of nipa gin. Then every cutthroat on Jolo will be on your tail. Some gang might grab you and twist the information out of you. We're a couple of Americans, Ransom. Let's be partners in this."

If Strader hadn't inferred equality between them, Kim might have talked toward some deal. It was the realization that Strader, dirty, full of gin, living with Moros, considered there was no difference between them that broke out Kim's anger.

"You lousy island tramp," he said, "keep away from me."

"Don't pull that stuff," said Strader, and his eyes became wicked. "I'm just as good as you are. You're a tramp yourself, if you don't know it."

Kim left him, standing in the nipa hut shadows. He walked toward the thorofare leading to Chino Charlie's, and felt with a cold fear that he already was partly like Strader. God help him, he'd go like Strader if he didn't find a way of escape.

WHERE the side street met the road, Kim glanced back. Strader was picking his teeth. He saw Kim look his way, shrugged and started to follow. As though he saw a soggy nemesis creeping after him, Kim started tramping almost heedlessly along the middle of the street, through the multi-colored, many scented traffic.

A polyglot current of humanity shuffled, shouldered, shouted and laughed along the street. Young girls, their beautiful bodies full round at thirteen or fourteen, giggled and cast provocative glances. A half naked gook squatted on a heavy, solid wood wheel cart. His knees were high as his ears. A short-legged, long-horned carabao dragged the clumsy vehicle. A single line attached to a ring in the nose guided the animals. The other end of the line was held between the gook's toes. His hands were busy with a huge, home made cigar tied together with sewing thread.

Kim jumped with those around him, scrambling to the narrow, stone sidewalk, to avoid being run down by a two-wheeled *calesa* drawn by fierce little native stallions. Two Spanish women with sharp features sat in the *calesa*. The younger one glanced at Kim, and stared as though he were a zoo specimen. Kim laughed harshly. He was getting in a devil of a state. The thought of being human driftwood, like Strader, was bearing too heavily on his mind.

An official, a dour man in spotless white, passed in a carriage and Kim jumped again. A breech-clouted coolie stopped beside him. The burden bearer eased his shoulder under a long pinga pole with huge bundles hung on each end, tilted his solid, conical hat, swiped sweat with a finger, then hunched the load to a balance and plodded on. Two turbaned and bearded Sikhs walked through the hurly-burly with a great show of dignity. They almost tramped over Kim, and he suddenly cursed again as he hurried toward the trader's.

Something like curdled violence was loose within the big, half-shadowed store as Kim reached the porch under the board awning. The racket inside was only Charlie and another Cantonese haggling over a peseta's worth of guianmos.

The customer, a weazened Chinaman with small, bright eyes, trotted out of the hazy interior and down the street. Charlie waddled through the dusted sunlight of the big room, bulged into the extra wide doorway, stopped ponderously and rolled a cigarette.

"Whassa matta?" demanded Charlie. His voice was reedy, in ridiculous contrast to his bulk.

"What isn't?" Kim threw himself into a chair. "I told you this morning I had to find a prahu and go south tonight. There's only one boat on the island that could put out. It's on the beach at No Soap Strader's."

Charlie gave Kim a benign glance, trundled to a great chair especially built for him. There was no way of estimating the bony framework inside of Chino Charlie. His meat cased tightly inside of smooth, yellow hide. He was not merely big-bodied; Charlie was big in heart and the quality politely called intestinal fortitude.

Their friendship had begun one sticky night when Kim, wearing sneakers, walked into the store as two tong men closed in on Charlie. It was a merry battle—a tangle of knives, fists, hatchets and the canned goods Charlie threw with fine accuracy. Charlie's courtly expression of thanks was the beginning of understanding between them, and now the half caste Cantonese almost regarded Kim as an adopted son.

"Strader no good," Charlie said. He held the thin cigarette between fingers as round and hard as sledge handles.

"Well, he's got the only boat," Kim said restlessly.

"Mebbyso," Charlie nodded. "Maybe takee prahu, come dark."

"That," said Kim, tightly, "is an idea. Turn thief. So I might go back to 'Frisco and that girl waiting."

"Missy Janelake," nodded Charlie.

"Yes, Jane Lake," said Kim. "You ought to know. I've shown you her picture and read parts of her letters."

"Lotta girl, everywhere," said Charlie, delicately flicking ash from his cigarette. "You don't get pearl now, you get later. No get Janelake, plenty other women. Whassa matta; lotta pearl, lotta girl. No get now, you get after while. Allesame."

"Like hell," said Kim. "Those are my pearls and Jane's my woman. I've been here a year and I've made a haul, and I'd be buying passage to the States now if that confounded Malay pirate hadn't made us run and ram that reef."

"Lotta women, allesame." It wasn't certain whether Charlie meant it or was jabbing Kim to hear him protest.

Kim said "I'd give a leg if I could get a prahu tonight!"

A SINGSONG chant started beyond the store corner.

"A leg, a leg; I'm bid one leg. Maka it a pair; make it two; I'm bid one; anyone make it two?"

"Strader," said Kim, in disgust.

The sunshiner slouched around the corner, grinning. Somewhere in the past he had been an auctioneer. His chant was a way of suggesting, without saying so, that at some time he had been something besides a squaw man.

Strader helped himself to a chair. Charlie got up, brought a bottle of liquor from the store, and placed it on a low table between Kim and Strader. Charlie left while they eyed each other. Strader reached swiftly for the bottle, poured drinks into the two glasses, picked up the one nearer to him, sniffed appreciatively and gulped the liquor.

"I've got a prahu, and a native crew that'll sail it over Niagara and back up again, if they took the notion," stated Strader.

"And cut a man's throat as easily."

"If you're squeamish about how many wives they've got, or their record with the constabulary, or how many murders they've really done, or you're plain afraid—" Strader left the sentence hanging.

A pair of amorous curs always stop traffic in an island street. A crowd gathered about two luckless mongrels that struggled to abandon each other amid snarling and yelping. Women joined the men in making pungent remarks. There was giggling and laughter. Strader tossed a waterfront remark into the general talk, and stood at the edge of the porch laughing with his loose mouth open.

Kim got up, slowly, leaving Strader there with a half empty glass in his hand. Charlie was just inside of the doorway. Kim spoke softly.

"If I get that prahu, you stake me to grub?" he asked.

"Sure," said Charlie.

"You're making me a thief," said Kim, with a twist of his lips.

"Honest man first, then thief," said Charlie. "You do?"

"I'll get that prahu," said Kim, and turned back to the porch.

CHAPTER II

SQUAW MAN'S WAY

STRADER hadn't turned around when Kim slipped back to the porch. The sunshiner picked up the liquor bottle after he turned, and held it up so the light passed through it. He rubbed his hand across his lips.

"Hah," said Strader, with thick satisfaction. "That's real stuff. I remember a bar man in Des Moines who never used any other brand when he mixed—Never mind." He broke off suddenly and poured a drink. He downed it as a thirsty man would drink water. "The brand doesn't make much difference. If you get drunk enough you don't care whether or not a woman has teeth black from betel nut. Get drunker and you don't care a damn about anything, including women."

He sat down and fondled the half empty bottle. Kim thought he had made his decision to get away with the prahu when Charlie said he'd stake Kim to supplies. The clinching of his plan to steal the prahu really came as he sat looking at Strader. Theft was really trifling. He might even consider murder if it meant escape. Anyway, if he got back to Jolo with the prahu, Strader could have it again, and with some bounty for its use.

He felt cold and certain in his mind as he began crafty moves to get the prahu in the water. One man couldn't haul it off the beach. Even if several could, it would bring Strader and the Moros swarming from the huts. But if the prahu were afloat, hard paddling could get it around to the loading point and from there on he'd have a chance to use tide and breeze to get clear of the harbor.

"I thought you wanted to talk business," jeered Kim. "You put a few more of those slugs of liquor inside of you and you'll not know whether we're talking about a prahu or a pinga pole."

"You can't get where you want to go on a pinga pole," said Strader. He chuckled, his belly pumping with low laughter. "What about the prahu?"

"What about it?" Kim threw back the question.

Strader licked his lips. "It really belongs to Datu Lakat, cousin of my Moro girl."

The sunshiner began scratching his ribs. "Lakat's got two divers in his crew. Good ones. We'll deal for the whole business."

"What basis?" Kim watched the flicker in the man's eyes.

"Half." Strader reached for the bottle, halted his hand, and for several seconds stared at Kim.

"You wouldn't be thinking of taking all?" questioned Kim. "For instance, if I didn't come back."

"Sure." Strader laughed again. "I'd thought of that and knew you would. Moros might figure it that way. But you must remember, we're two whites, Ransom. I said half of what's in that box by the reef. Take it or leave it."

A gong orchestra started its infernal boom-bonging as they sat almost without moving. Dust hung in humid air. The smell of copra, the putrid perfume of the durian, a deliciously flavored, rotten-scented fruit, the aroma of dried fish eddied with the breeze. Odors, heavy, air, everything it touched, seemed to pulse with the gongs. The new night was coming alive, throbbing with a heartbeat of the East. If a man sat here, not caring, he would surrender to the spell.

Kim got up with a fierce shake of his shoulders.

"Get the prahu in the water," he said shortly. "I'll have supplies lined up and come by your place about midnight."

"Better come before that," said Strader.

"Midnight," said Kim, flatly. "Out tide still will be strong enough to carry us to sailing water."

HE TURNED into the store. If this worked out, by midnight he'd be under sail with Jolo fading behind him. Then let Strader, let anyone on Jolo try to follow.

Chino Charlie was packaging supplies as Kim entered the big room. Charlie knew what not to take, which was important. Kim checked over the stuff swiftly, and saw it was adequate.

"All there," said Charlie, beaming.

"One thing lacking," said Kim. "Dynamite."

"Whassa matta?" Charlie lifted thin brows.

"Dynamite for sharks." Kim grinned a little. "A few doses of forty percent powder down by that reef may clear the water long enough to get a man

down and up without having him chewed in two. One case of forty percent powder, Charlie, fuse and caps."

"All light." Charlie frowned, then beckoned Kim into quarters.

The trader was digging into a chest when Kim entered the rooms where Charlie lived. The chest yielded a long, cylindrical object swathed in oiled cloth. Charlie chuckled as he unwrapped it.

"Lord," said Kim. "A Browning. Where the devil did you get that machine-gun?"

"My cousin Ah Quong velly good pearler." Charlie wiped the smooth metal of the gun. "Ah Quong go home, Canton. Don't come back. Leave this for me. Dynamite good medicine for sharks. Browning gun good medicine for pirate fellah. You catchum pirate, he catchum hell, maybe. Big joke for pirate fellah, I guess, maybe."

"Bless your old Confucian soul," said Kim. "If I ever get back I'll pay you—"

"Whassa matta?" protested Charlie. "All jawbone. Too muchee talk. Get chow stuff on Chinese pier. I wait. You get prahu. You don't wait."

"You might," said Kim grimly, "burn a few strips of prayer paper to a joss or two while I'm getting that boat. Maybe joss fellah think white thief some good and help."

Before Kim started toward Strader's, the supplies were stacked on the dock. Charlie sat in a shadow, smoking a cigarette. The Browning had been hidden in the bedroll. Charlie had included all the ammunition he had, and it was enough for pirate trouble. That blunt weapon gave Kim a feeling of security he had not felt before.

The gong orchestra had beaten up to a higher rhythm. A waterfront woman sang a native song in a dive on a side street. Mists coming in from the bay made hazy nebulae of lamps supposed to illuminate the wharves. A "dama de noche" bush, which blooms once a month, and only at night, added its cloying perfume to the langorous drift of air.

Kim paused at a twist in the street that was black as a bend in a sewer and almost as noxious. He looked back. The night was blind, the air as soft as flesh. There was a shadow moving back among shadows, where columns of mist moved along the street in stately processions. A bat flickered by, stirring up air against his bare cheek.

He blew out his nostrils as he started down the side lane. But the next breath was humid and heavy. The islands—beautiful, lazy, seductive and lousy, like a wench with bright eyes and a dirty neck. You beat off an approach that sapped your will, but the next moment, the allure returned. And—to hell with it.

A Moro woman crooned in Strader's hut. At the beach, there was a little sighing sound where slow ripples ran over the shingle. Kim waited a long time beside a palm tree. If he were discovered there would be knives in the dark.

He finally stepped softly into the water and waded out against the ghostly shimmer of night waters. The prahu should be directly in front of Strader's. Kim was breast deep when he saw it. He had to swim the last few feet. His heart pounded as he hung for a long moment with a hand hooked over the gunwale.

There was a lift to this business of robbery and he felt it. He waited a few moments after he boarded the prahu, hearing the water drip from his wet clothes. There was no sound before he cast off and headed the prahu along the waterfront.

The tide was at full flood as he poled to the Chinese pier. He caught the plank edge and pulled along to where Charlie waited. They worked without a word until the goods were piled into the prahu.

The heavy bedroll came last and Charlie chuckled in the dark as he handed it down.

"Good medicine," said Charlie. "Go plenty quick, now. Tide run out. Pretty soon somebody find boat gone."

The shove from the pier sent the prahu gliding into the slow sweep of the tide. Palm leaves began to rustle like the dusty clapping of hands, and a sudden touch of breeze riffled along the waterfront.

KIM sat at the steering oar after he had eased up a bit of sail. The pile of plunder could be stowed under the suali deck after he was away from the harbor. Plenty of time, once he was clear. Time to put in at some of the islands south and find a good Moro crew to go on with him. If he had a boat he could get a crew.

Little waves slapped the bow. The smell of the sea came salty and sharp. Fog was thinning; he saw lights in the harbor. That helped; he wouldn't be ramming into shipping anchored in port. The water-paved way to escape lay open. He felt like standing up with a yell, and smiled as that impulse came.

The faint echo of the gong orchestra came in fitful cadence. Kim threw his head back in a quick gesture. He thought of Jane Lake, waiting. He was a thief, but he was glad of it, if at end of the trail he would find Jane waiting.

Then there was a sound—not offshore, but on the prahu. Kim suddenly felt his eyes staring, trying to pierce shadows. It might have been a rat, or it could have been some of the supplies shifting in the pile. The slap of water against the side of the boat seemed loud and heavy. His own breathing, the sound of the light breeze in the rigging, were magnified. He began to feel the nearness of someone, a strange presentiment that other beings were on the craft.

But no other sound came and the shadows were those of night under stars. The nerve tension passed a little; his muscles loosened.

The sound came again. The scrape of a bare foot on a bit of deck matting brought him to a half crouching position.

For one instant Kim glimpsed shadows charging from the suali deck house. Then they crashed into him.

He felt the touch of brown bodies as he struck wildly. The fire of a knife did not rip at his ribs as Kim expected. He felt their panting breath on his neck as they sprawled. Kim knew how he had been outwitted before No Soap Strader spoke.

"Neat business, Lakat," said the sunshiner out of the darkness. "Tie him and throw him in the deckhouse. He knows where to go and we're on our way."

Moros twisted him and jerked thongs tight over his wrists. He was carried and dumped into deeper darkness. For long moments, stacked into a corner, Kim Ransom beat his thoughts against the thing he faced. He summed it up in one answer.

The islands had him as in a net. Even though he came out of this with his life, he might never get away from the islands.

MORNING steeped up out of the eastward oceans. The Southern Cross glowed, then dimmed in a sky shot through with gold. Kim Ransom lay on the prahu's deck, listening to the whisper of the waters as the sharp bow cut southward. After they were well away from Jolo, Strader had ordered the ropes off Kim's wrists and ankles.

"If you have funny ideas, Ransom, about slipping over the side," said Strader, "think again. Think of sharks."

Lalon Bagusun, one of the Moros, had guided the prahu through the night. Kim had given the course and Bagusun steered by the stars. Datu Lakat was squatting beside the deckhouse. He was a wrinkled, evil-visaged scoundrel. He wore a wooden-sheathed barong strapped to him as though he had been born with it. Moros ask odds of no one when it comes to cold steel. But even that murderous knife would be useless against a stream of death jetting from a machine-gun. And the Browning was an ace in the hole. Kim had decided his course as the night waned. If he could keep the Browning hidden until the critical moment, he would get the whip hand.

Let Strader believe he had everything his way, wait until they had reached the reef, until the box of pearls was in the prahu, then meet the next move with the Browning—that was Kim's plan.

Strader would make no move until they had the box. After that it would be one man with a Browning against Moro knives and the automatic Strader carried. All hung on the play down there by the shark reef.

Strader came out of the deckhouse, grinned at Kim, then stood for a long moment looking toward those palm-cloaked islets where marching regiments of sprightly little waves tumbled over guardian reefs. The sunshiner was ragged, dirty, his hair matted and tangled. But there was light in his eyes as he turned to Kim.

"Realm of beauty and magic," he said slowly. "That's what gets hold of you, Ransom. You don't see the ugly things—the dirt, disease, heartbreak and degeneration—at first. Just see something like paradise scattered over the sea." Strader shook himself and dug at his teeth with his little finger. He stared at Kim moodily. "What in hell are you thinking about?"

"Something you said yesterday," Kim told him. "About white men fighting the islands to a finish—and if he doesn't win, he's an island tramp. He never gets away."

"Tripe," said Strader. He spat red betel juice and a little dripped on his beard. "Who wants to get away?"

"You do." Kim saw the flicker in the man's small eyes.

Strader cursed, slowly, then said, "Give me the price of good, imported liquor, meat roasted by a Moro woman, a brown-skinned wench that's young and—"

"And you lie, Strader," Kim said levelly. "You're thinking right now of crowds hurrying to the Ferry Building in San Francisco, of white women with teeth white instead of black with betel; you're remembering people hurrying along Michigan Avenue at dusk, or Locust Street in Des Moines, or—"

"You're full of foolish talk," cut in Strader, irritably. "Stop your blabbering."

He began stowing the supplies still stacked in the waist of the prahu. Kim made no move to assist. The way he rested against his bedroll, he could feel the hard metal of the Browning against his back. It was strategy to keep close to that gun; to keep between it and anyone who might discover it if they touched the bedroll. Strader uncovered the case of dynamite.

"Shark medicine," he said, straightening. "They're thick near that reef"

"Twenty-footers," Kim said. "Scampering around the coral like mice in a grain warehouse."

"You didn't say much about that last night," remarked Strader. "Didn't tell about the sharks there."

"Nor how it happened we were caught in the open sea when a blow came and rammed us into that reef. That, Strader, was because a fellow named Sultan Jahonda was chasing us. You've heard of Jahonda, Strader?"

The sunshiner's eyes were round.

"So there's where you were pearling," he breathed. "In waters that old Malay claims as his own private pearling grounds. That's where we've got to go!"

"You don't relish that," Kim said.

"Who would?" Strader tugged at his beard stubble. "I've taken chances in my life, but we better get in there and get out fast."

THE miles fell behind the prahu. Strader was moody. He smoked his evil-smelling herb cigarettes, watched shark fins that cut the water until they disappeared, then would turn to gazing at the line where sea and sky met, as though searching for a sail he feared might be there, like the wing of a bird of evil omen.

During the day, Kim bundled his bedroll and kept as near to it as he dared. When evening came he stretched out with the hard case of the Browning gun as his pillow. Night drew curtains of darkness over the sea.

They were lolling under the stars when Strader flipped his cigarette into the water and said, "Jahonda and sharks. It's a fine flock of risks you're taking us into."

"You invited yourself." Kim's dry answer was sharp as acid. "You don't like to think of those sharks, do you, Strader? Did you ever fish for catfish with chicken entrails? These sharks go after a man like channel cats gobble—"

"Oh, shut up." Strader shook his shoulders. "What you trying to do—get my nerve?"

"Could be." Kim felt the urge to raw-

hide the sunshiner. "But the sharks aren't the worst. Jahonda is the big hazard. Anyone ever tell you how that Malay mutilates a white man if he lets him live? They have? Well, maybe it would be good sense to make up your mind what you'd do, Strader, if it was a choice between the Malay and the sharks. Think it out beforehand, and you'll not have to decide in an instant when the time comes."

Strader cursed and got up.

"It's part of the islands," Kim jeered. "The beautiful, lazy, lousy—"

The sunshiner cursed, lurched to the bow of the prahu, where he sat looking ahead, as though trying to see what waited at the reef to the south.

The moon rose, lopsided and blood-colored. The twin outriggers skimmed the waves and the soft, sibilant music lulled Kim to slumber. One hot, angry word in Moro brought him awake with a start. At the stern there was a tense, significant grouping, the three Moros facing Strader. The squaw man came forward in quick strides.

"Ransom, you awake?" he asked, guardedly.

Kim raised on his elbow.

"What's up?" he demanded.

Strader knelt and said, "Those bone-headed Moros heard you talk about sharks and Jahonda. They're wanting to turn back."

"Maybe you ought to offer them more of a split, Strader."

"What you talking about?"

"Let's understand each other, Strader," said Kim. "You plan to pitch me overboard when you get that box. You could offer them half the booty. You shouldn't be too grasping about this."

"What gave you the idea I'd toss you—?"

"Put myself in your place, Strader, and reasoned it out. You've got nerve coming to me when you get in trouble with your natives. Play your hand through. I'll play mine."

"If that's the way you feel."

"That's the way."

"You'll find out, kid," said Strader dourly, "if you live long enough, that when the islands start to gang on white men, it's time for 'em to stick together."

He walked back toward the Moros. There was a splash of short talk in native tongue. Kim understood enough to realize that Strader was offering half the pearls. That was Strader's play.

STRADER kept with the natives after that. Kim waited. Nothing would happen until the pearls were aboard; then the outcome would balance on a needle point of time. A moment when they would come at him, thinking he was unarmed, and he would meet them with the threat of the machine-gun.

The sun slanted down toward Borneo when Kim saw the atoll where his wrecked pearling prahu lay, as the islet rose out of the waters. More than seven thousand islands dot the map of the Philippines, and of these, only four hundred sixty-six contain more than a square mile of land. It would be easy to make a mistake. There was a question in his mind as he pointed out the spot to Bagusun, the helmsman. Strader stood with stout legs wide braced.

"You sure?" he asked.

"It's the sharkiest place in the world," said Kim. "Look, Strader, there they are."

The triangular fins of two tigers sheared waves in the wake of the prahu. Strader stared at them with strange fascination.

"It seems curious," mused Kim, "that those devils can smell blood before it's spilled."

The sunshiner's face twitched. His eyes were uneasy.

The breeze died as they came to the wreck beside the reef. The little island, the graceful, slim-trunked palms, the lagoons, seemed caught in a hypnotic trance. The sea was glassy. Strader was leaning over the side, staring into the grottos of the reef, where troops of jewel colored fish lanced away from the shadow of the prahu. They came over the broken hull of Kim's wrecked prahu.

"There's the box," said Strader, suddenly. "There."

"Where I left it," said Kim.

The Moros peered into the water. Lakat said something to Andug, the big diver. The box was in plain vision, but

Lakat said no man could get down there with sharks hovering near.

Strader took an impetuous step toward Andug, the diver. "Why, you scum of hell, youre going down and bring it up. Over the side, you son of a pig!"

The big pearler straightened, his eyes bright with mad anger. Strader had thrown the highest insult a Moro may receive.

"They're your Moros, Strader," said Kim thinly. "Until you called Andug that name, you might have kept a grip on 'em. You've blown your hold on 'em now."

"I'll show you," Strader began.

He lunged at Andug. They floundered into the side of the prahu as it tipped. Andug held on, hanging over the water. Screaming, then, he fell. Something gray rushed below him as he clawed to get back aboard. His head went under and blood spread in the lashing water, where long forms swept and turned. It happened with stunning speed. A shark raced with a leg in its jaws. Strader stood staring.

"Look out." Kim's warning was instinctive. Lakat and Bagusun had pulled barongs and were closing on the sunshiner.

After Strader turned, automatic in hand, there were several seconds in which no one moved. Then the Moros slid barongs back into wooden sheaths and moved to the stern of the boat.

"Is this mutiny?" Kim flung at Strader.

"One of them is going down there," said the sunshiner. "Bagusun! Lakat! One of you are going after that box."

"You no use big powder," said Lakat soberly. "Andug feed shark. You crazy!"

The sunshiner's shoulders hitched.

"God, I forgot that dynamite," he said thickly. "Rig up a shot, Ransom. Then we'll see which of these two Moros will go down."

"No good, powder now." Lakat looked across the darkling water. "See—Malay."

A prahu, with blood-red sails marked with big white crescents, was slipping from behind the point of an islet. No breeze touched the water; the palms on the atoll stood with fronds drooping. The boat moved like a phantom. The hull was hidden by the lazy roll of the sea, but the red sails stood up boldly.

"Jahonda," breathed Strader, huskily. "We've got to run for it."

"Don't stampede," Kim said steadily.

Strader turned to stare.

"You don't know, maybe," he said heavily. "They tie you out on the deck, spread-eagled naked, in the sun, with wet bajuco, and the sun dries it, and it shrinks, pulling you apart. Get up that sail."

Kim caught him as he moved toward the mast, and they were close together when Kim said, "Act like a white man, Strader. If you've got nerve, you better show it. Our sail's down. We can't see their hull and they can't see ours. They'll miss the mast, seeing it against the palms on the atoll. The minute they see our sail up, we're spotted. In ten minutes it'll be dark. We can hang right here until first light tomorrow morning and then get going."

"Sit on this reef all night with that Malay around?"

"Sit tight." Kim grinned a little.

"Not on your life," said Strader. "We're here just long enough to get those pearls, and we're sailing out of here the minute we get 'em." He turned to the Moros. "One of you," he whispered, "is going down there, without the dynamite, sharks or no sharks." He raised his automatic.

"You don't shoot," Lakat said. "Jahonda hear."

"There's a breeze," said Strader, his voice rasping. "It'll blow the sound away."

"If you'll notice, my American friend," Kim suggested grimly, "the breeze blows toward the sultan's prahu. The report from a pistol would be carried right over to him. You've slipped, Strader; the islands have softened your mind along with the rest of you."

Strader seemed to shake panic out of him as he straightened. He licked his lips and grinned.

"If I had you around, kid," he said ironically, "I might make something of myself. I can wait as well as anyone, Ransom. I'll just prove it."

NIGHT closed suddenly. Strader leaned against the side of the deckhouse. There was a sense of relaxed waiting about him; every fiber alert but held loose, ready, if anything happened.

"Ransom, you're a nervy whelp," said Strader, and his voice was not unkind. "But you've not been soaked in this island life as long as I have. I sort of went nuts when I saw that box." He drew a long, hard breath and his cigarette glowed like a red firefly. "Wonder if they still have those band concerts at the park in Denver?"

He was silent a moment. The Moros talked in low tones at the rear of the prahu.

Strader flipped his cigarette over the side and drew a deep breath.

"I used to go out to that Denver park with a girl." Strader was letting memories get into words. "I had great plans. Seems a long time ago, but it wasn't so many years. Oh, damn this—"

He got up, went into the deckhouse and locked himself inside. Kim stretched out on his bedroll. A march of thoughts kept him from slumber. Maybe Strader's girl had agreed to wait, as Jane had. But no girl waits for years. Just over the side of the prahu was the means for going home before too late. Just over the side—

Tiny riffles of the sea against the prahu's side were like distant island gongs, repeating monotonous rhythms. The soft whisper of tropical winds in rigging, the breeze touching his eyelids, the boat rocking gently like a cradle lulled him to deep drowsiness.

The Cross blazed in the infinite depths of the skies; the fronds of the palms on the atoll began swinging like arms and hands of slim, brown maidens in a langorous dance, and he slept.

CHAPTER III

LAST STAND

KIM RANSOM'S awakening was blurred with bewilderment. He had been dreaming of the old Cherry Hills crowd and Jane. The hard touch of the Browning brought realities back. The first gray of dawn was stealing over the eastern rim of the world. He saw the two Moros huddled in the stern. Strader snored within the shelter of the cabin.

Kim rolled over, looked over the side, and saw the gray shadows of sharks sliding lazily through the water. He was watching them when a leader suddenly veered away, the entire troop whipped in formation and shot out toward the sea.

Sighting along the line of ripples cut by their triangular fins, he saw the reason for their going. A whale, probably sick or wounded, was being attacked by a mob of killers out in an open stretch of water. With their uncanny scent for blood, the sharks had raced toward the meat.

Kim turned back to look again at the water below the prahu. No shadows lurked there, but he could not see clearly. It was a risk, but he had to take it.

He was naked as he slid over the side. He got under without a splash. He kicked down, touched the box, but the throb in his body, the ache in his lungs, was driving him to return to the surface.

He fought the feeling of black suffocation, groped for the box, caught it and gave a mighty thrust with his legs that drove him up.

He came to the surface under the side of the prahu, hung there until he breathed more quietly. He pushed the box in front of him, easing to the deck. His hands trembled as he opened the small chest.

He shook all over as he lifted water-soaked bags out of the box. Under trembling fingers, he felt the tiny spheres of the pearls. He shoved the small sacks under the bedroll.

It had worked out so easily he couldn't quite believe it. When the others awakened, he would have the situation under full control. He heard a sound behind him. He turned.

No Soap Strader had opened the door of the cabin. There wasn't a chance of pulling the machine-gun out now. Strader was in a position to leap the moment

the weapon was revealed. In the moment he would have to spend setting it up, Strader would block him. The big sunshiner was rubbing his eyes. Under cover of his crouched body, Kim eased the empty treasure box over the side. Then he squirmed into the bedroll, as though he was trying to settle in for another wink of sleep. He hoped Strader was too drowsy to notice his head was wet.

He pulled a corner of the covering over his ears.

"Hey," said Strader, finishing his blinking and yawning. He was peering with squinting eyes against the growing light. "All hands out. Shake it up."

As though he remembered the treasure below the keel, he strode to the side of the prahu, glanced over, hurried back to the cabin, reached just inside the door and came back with a bundle of dynamite sticks.

The fuse dangled from one of the pieces of dynamite. The two Moros had come forward while Kim wrestled with his pants, getting them on under cover of the bedding.

"There's the box," said Strader huskily, as he looked over the rail. "See it, Bagusun? I'll pitch this powder to the sharks and over you go."

Strader touched the fuse with his lighted cigarette. The powder core began to hiss. A fin cut through the water near the outrigger.

"Take a dose of this," said Strader savagely as he tossed the dynamite.

The other three were looking at the sharks. Kim slipped an ammunition clip into the Browning and grasped the tripod. The powder let loose, water spouted up and a shark rolled, belly up.

"Over you go," said Strader, giving Bagusun a shove.

Kim was easing the Browning out of hiding. Strader was intent on what was happening in waters above the reef. The sharks were busy on the attack of the belly-up member of their tribe and the water swirled red. Bagusun shot up, one hand grabbing at the rail, the pearl box clutched in the other hand. Strader grabbed.

"Pretty nice," Strader was saying. "That's pretty nice."

Kim rose smoothly. He had the heavy gun under his arm and a couple of belts of ammunition in his other hand. He walked quietly aft. Strader was fumbling with the lid of the strong box. Kim squatted, set the gun on its tripod and waited. The box lid flew open.

"What lousy trick is—" Strader, half choking, whirled, looked at Kim, and saw the gun. He tried to swallow something in his throat. The Moros' features were as impassive as masks on native idols.

"It's empty, Strader," Kim said. "And this Browning isn't. The pearls are here." He patted the wet bulge in his shirt, where bags were cold against his belly. He felt a slow, hard grin pulling the corners of his lips.

That grin froze as it formed. He looked beyond the men in the waist of the prahu.

Majestically, with a bone of white in her teeth, the big prahu with blood red sails came from behind the atoll.

"RUSH him," ordered Strader. His back was to the pirate craft. He was reaching for his automatic.

"Look back of you first," Kim said hoarsely.

"It's an old trick." Strader's teeth showed in his taunting smile. "Try something else, Ransom."

"Jahonda!" Bagusun had shifted position so he could glance over his shoulder.

Strader whipped around. For an instant he was braced in taut surprise. Then he came alive with a jump.

"Cast off that anchor!" he rasped, jumping ahead of the Moros.

The empty treasure box was kicked aside. Bagusun and Lakat were throwing the anchor chain. The prahu began to move along the reef. A bullet hit the waves and whined into the sky.

"Faster," Strader gasped. He tugged at the sail.

Kim moved the tiller to head the prahu away from the reef. There was little headway. The boat drifted dangerously. Lakat crouched in the bow, barong

bared. Bagusun huddled back of the deckhouse, peered around the corner and watched the pirate ship. Strader knelt behind the low gunwale. Yells and gunfire broke on the pirate prahu as it skipped and danced down on them.

"Start shooting, Ransom!" Strader shouted. He fired the automatic, but it was short.

A Malay in the rigging spotted Datu Lakat. He fired. The old Moro spun to his feet, ran, staggered, tripped and pitched over the side. A shark circled him and rushed. Another sped to the scene.

Kim had to drive with all his will to turn the Browning until sweat-glistening bodies of the pirate crew were lined with the sights. The Malays milled along the rail, ready to leap as the two prahus touched. With every nerve crying out for him to press the trigger, he forced himself to wait until the first blast would sweep that mass back from the rail on Jahonda's prahu.

A wind suddenly bulged into the sails. The oar jerked and Kim felt the boat under him slide toward the coral knives of the reef. With a calm that was almost mad, he speculated on what would happen first—the meeting of the prahus or that sickening, raking jar that would cut their own craft on the reef. Unless something was done, it would be the smash of coral under the keel.

"Get on that outrigger, Strader." Kim heard the crackling coolness of his command and wondered if he had given it.

It was a fling at death for anyone to attempt to ride the outrigger to pull the prahu back toward an even keel so it could be steered away from the coral. Strader hesitated, then jumped. Something had pulled together in No Soap Strader in that instant he took to make up his mind.

As Strader's weight pulled the prahu over, it sheared away from the reef. The sunshiner shot at a shark and laughed defiantly. That glimpse of Strader would stay with him always, if he lived, Kim knew—all of this would be memory pictures, like a series of wire sharp etchings.

He lashed the helm. He must have some shelter. At the moment, it didn't seem as important that he might escape a bullet from the pirate craft as it was that he should stay on his feet and match the Browning against the boarders as they bore down. A mad game, matching his play against theirs.

One pirate leaped. He had crawled out on the bowsprit, to be first aboard. Bagusun swung his singing barong. Kim heard the steel smack dully into flesh. Bagusun was straightening as fire broke on the pirate ship. The Moro caved, falling over the Malay he had met.

Kim knelt back of the deckhouse. It was scant shelter. Strader still hung out there on the outrigger, between the sea, the sky and the yawning instant of the future which might begin eternity. Everything was moving like the rush of a hurricane wind and yet there was a trancelike deadliness that made every move seem slow and deliberate. Curious, Kim thought, that in this moment he should make such an appraisal. It had simmered down to a pair of white men, facing the fates of the island seas.

That was the thought racing through him as he squeezed the trigger on the Browning.

Men flung back from the rail of the pirates' boat. He saw that with a feeling of surprise and wonder. It was stunning to realize that one man with a modern weapon could play such havoc with the massed humanity on that other vessel. A bullet slammed close to Kim.

"Give 'em hell, kid!" Strader clung to the outrigger, shouting encouragement. "Remember the Maine!"

Two whites left. Kim grinned. Strader had forgotten his scratchy hide and native ways. Something within him was rising with the yell of battle.

JETS of death squirted from the machine-gun. Men spun, flung their arms and cursed. The gun clicked empty. The big Malay prahu hung over the smaller craft. Strader was leaping back to the deck. Kim heard his automatic blast. A Malay, who had leaped from Jahonda's ship, stacked up near where Bagusun lay still. Kim knew they were past the reef or Strader would not have left the outrigger.

"Here's medicine for you!"

"Shoot, kid," Strader was saying. "My gun's dry."

Kim fumbled with new ammunition. It didn't catch in and he forced it. It jammed. Malays surged back to the rail of the pirate boat as they realized what must have happened.

"Cut loose," Strader commanded hoarsely.

"Jammed." Kim struggled with the clip. "Jammed, tight."

Strader jumped into the deckhouse. Kim caught some ragged remark about dynamite. Maybe Strader had lost his head. The sunshiner should know that fresh dynamite will not explode as it is thrown. Old powder is touchy and may let loose when thrown, but not new dynamite. Kim felt sweat running down his neck. His hands were clumsy as he tried to clip in the ammunition of the Browning.

"Here's medicine for you," Strader was shouting as he leaped out on deck again.

Kim saw the sunshiner's arm whip back. He saw the glint of the little met-

al box. Strader had thought fast. Dynamite may not explode when tossed, but the touchy primer in the caps, powerful beyond any equal amount of powder, may blow even with a jolt. Fulminate of mercury will stand no rough handling, and Strader was throwing a whole fistful of the stuff into the pirate prahu.

The blast boomed into destruction. Kim sprawled. The middle of Jahonda's prahu seemed to be disintegrating. Their own little craft heeled over. Kim had one glimpse of Malay warriors tossed about as though slapped by a fabulous hand. Jahonda's ship was swung into the reef, grinding into snags of coral.

Kim clutched the edge of the deckhouse as he began to slip across the tilted planking. He heard the scrape of metal along the deck. The Browning slid toward the water. He reached, missed, saw it go over the side, even as he was sliding after it.

"Grab. Get a hold. Hang on, Ransom!"

Strader's voice suddenly seemed an infinite distance away, for something struck Kim's skull, deadening his feeling, loosening the grip of his fingers as he tore at the side of the prahu. He had a hazy flash of the sunshiner diving his way. He wondered, oddly, if Strader had hit him over the head to get the pearls.

If that was it, there was a grim comedy in the moment.

Strader was calling for him to hang on. Of course he had to hang on, until the sunshiner could get the pearls.

He thought he was laughing. Maybe it was a groan as he felt himself sliding toward the water.

If he went overboard he would take those pearls with him.

What a joke that would be on No Soap Strader!

KIM RANSOM resumed a life that was fantasy, in a world distorted, filled with strange and weird experience.

When the filmy curtains of the fever drew aside and he saw the immediate surroundings with some clarity, he looked at the palm thatch of a rude hut. Tropical winds whispered by. No Soap Strader came to his side with cooling drinks that were nectar to a parched throat. Or sometimes Strader sat cross-legged, smoking, looking through the doorway to where little waves lapped at sands that were white as drifted snow.

Then the fever would come again, and Kim struggled through strange scenes, raving. He hung to a tilting prahu. The wood deck tilted. Just over the edge of the deck, sharks fought for a place in the front line of gray killers. He dug his fingers into the planking, but could not stop sliding.

Or sometimes he stood on a liner, looking at a crowded dock, where people clustered so thickly that a girl, Jane Lake, could not get to where Kim fought other people in an effort to reach her side. Sometimes it was people who hedged him in.

But then a magic of threatening power would change them to islands—thousands of them, beautiful with wind-whipped palms. They blotted out the wharf, the people and Jane until there was only the isle-dotted sea stretching to a blue infinity.

When Jane was lost, when he could no longer see the white flutter of her dinky handkerchief, he struggled to escape the islands. His throat would dry with cursing.

Strader would come, anxiously, with quiet words and give him something to drink. That would seem to wash away a little of the nightmare moment, and he could focus his eyes on the narrow view of the beach outside the thatched shelter.

His head ached whenever he tried to apply logic to the situation. The unreasonable element was Strader—the way the sunshiner was caring for him. That could not be matched and balanced with what had happened back at the shark-haunted reef.

Morning coolness was in the hut when Kim lost the fever. He watched the dancing lights reflected from water ripples. Mirrored flashes came through the hut door and made constantly changing patterns on the roof thatch. It was very early. Shore birds piped at the beach. In stillness, he heard the lap-lap of little

waves. The animal sound of Strader snoring made him turn weakly, to look at the other man in the hut. More hairy than ever, his face up, Strader rattled and burbled in deep sleep.

Kim spoke weakly and the sunshiner came awake with a rush. He peered anxiously at Kim. His eyes were intent and bright under heavy brows and his features were half hidden in the bush of a beard. He rose to his knees, his ragged clothes hanging from his heavy body.

"How you feel, kid?" he asked solicitously.

"I've been out of my head." Kim made it half a question.

"You sure have. You're over it, you think?"

"Guess so." Kim lay back. "What happened? Last I remember, you or someone hit me a whacking blow on the head as I was sliding toward the sharks."

"Bullet hit you," Strader said. "I just got you before you went overboard. Couldn't let those pearls go to the belly of some shark." Strader grinned.

"Sure." Kim saw that. Strader had pulled him out because the pearls were under his shirt. "Jahonda—what happened to that outfit?" Kim asked, after a moment.

"Last I saw," said Strader, reaching for a herba cigarette, "the Malays were bailing and trying to beach their prahu. The dynamite caps I tossed must have opened seams all over that boat. Way I saw it, I had troubles of my own, so I left Jahonda to his and came hence." Strader blew a gray plume of smoke at the doorway and it billowed into new sunshine.

"Whereabouts are we?" Kim didn't care much, but it was worth asking.

"About a full day of sailing north of the reef." Strader looked out at the restless edge of the sea. "I started for Jolo. Saw you wouldn't make it if I kept going. Put in here after dark of the first night. Figured Jahonda might get his prahu patched up and come after us. This looked like a good spot to hide and I did."

"How long ago?"

"Over a week."

KIM lay quietly. Strader shook himself, got up, scratched, went to the doorway and stood there, facing against the morning sunshine. He looped his heavy fingers in his belt and gazed over the little bay.

"It's this morning mood of the islands that steals a man's heart and drugs him," he said softly. "It's pure beauty. The tops of rollers, like little white manes, out at the barrier reef. The palms swaying, like native girls, slim at the waist, dancing. The palm fronds hitting together, like clapping hands. And the drum beat of the waves when they run on the beach."

The cigarette hung from Strader's hairy lips. His nostrils widened with each deep breath. His eyes were narrowed with a touch of odd rapture.

"It's lovely," he said. "And it's hell."

"Paradise and purgatory; I know what you mean." Kim sighed. "When the islands are this way, a man can give his soul to them. He never quite gets it back."

"Judas," Strader said raspily, "we're getting sentimental. The hell with it. Dry up and rest. We've got to get away in another week. Supplies will run short. You've got to be strong enough to take a turn at the tiller. And you're the one who knows the way up through these devilish islands and channels. Get some rest, damn it."

He went toward the beach. The smoke of a little fire came to Kim before Strader returned with fruit and black coffee. Kim's thanks brought a scowl.

"Oh, shut up," he ordered. "You've been an awful trial, Ransom. I wonder why I didn't let you jump into the water that first day when you went crazy, before we hit this island."

"After you took the pearls off me, why didn't you?" Kim met the sunshiner's eyes a moment.

"Damned if I know," said Strader. "Maybe because I wasn't sure I could navigate that prahu alone. And maybe it's something else. I wouldn't say."

He was surly and short in his talk after that. As he reasoned, Kim came to the conclusion that Strader had stated the bald fact. He had to have someone

who knew the way back through the islands to make sure of reaching Jolo. False reckoning, a storm, the thousands of channels between atolls could get Strader off the right course, and he was saving Kim Ransom to avoid being lost.

A storm hit the end of a day when the air was thin, liquid brass. Strader tramped along the beach, with wind and water beating over him. In streaming blackness that arrived with the storm, Kim waited for the sunshiner to return —he had gone to make sure that the prahu was safely moored. It was a strange feeling that worked through Kim. If the sunshiner did not come back, the prahu held together, Kim could make Jolo alone. But he wanted Strader with him. When the sunshiner did come, there was a quick resumption of gruffness between them.

There was storm outside and storm in the hut. But any fury of tempest between the two of them would break later. It would be easy to raise an issue, provoke battle and Strader had the big edge of not being weakened by fever. He could put Kim Ransom over the side, then say that he had been lost in the battle at the reef.

Kim could feel the shadow of this crisis ahead as the hurricane swept the islet. With each passing hour, he became more convinced that only one of them would reach Jolo with the prahu and the pearls and that Strader would make his play to be that one.

"You look fit," Strader remarked a week later.

"I'm ready to travel." Kim was standing outside of the hut looking at the far seas.

"Sundown," said Strader. "Tonight. We'll pull out."

STARS blazed out as they passed the barrier reef. Dark palms waved against the indigo sky. The prahu slid along through dancing waves like a ghost running from its own fears. Little islands shouldered up out of the plane of the sea. Palms on beaches stood high, as though craning necks to see what passed, and the wake of the prahu trailed like a comet fallen on the waters.

That first night, Kim had confirmation of his hunch that Strader must have him to navigate the prahu.

"Which stars?" Strader demanded, with more than usual surliness, as he took the helm.

Kim pointed out the course and drowsed. It was past midnight when Strader's question roused him.

"I don't think we're headed right," said the sunshiner. "Which stars did you say?"

"I'll take over," said Kim, moving toward the helm. Strader was at least twenty degrees off the course.

"I sure don't know what I'd done without you, kid," remarked Strader.

"I know," said Kim, shortly. "Plain enough that you pulled me through so you'd not get lost in these southern islands."

"That's one good reason for being concerned with your health, all right," said Strader, looking out into the night. "As definite as I could have given myself."

"And once you see Bud Dao, the mountain, you'll call a showdown. We'll fight it out to see which one of us makes harbor." Kim kept his words steady.

"That," said Strader, quietly, "is one way of figuring it."

As leagues of the sea fell behind the prahu, Kim Ransom accepted the prospect of a man-and-man fight from which only one would emerge alive.

The moon silvered the sea as Kim took the helm. Atolls became black pools of mystery. Breakers spouted over coral reefs, broke and ran frothily to die on white sands. The flush of dawn was lost and the storm charged out of the muffled daybreak.

Strader lurched through the gloom.

"Better find an island and shelter," he shouted.

"Can't risk it," Kim called back. "Hang up on a reef."

A seam started in the hull of the prahu. Strader worked at it, calking it with rags of his shirt. He came back, naked to the waist.

"I'll have to take your shirt," he yelled against the storm road. "Mine wasn't enough."

Kim watched him stagger back to kneel in the waist of the boat and plug

the leak. After that, Strader bailed. Kim's arms grew weary holding the bucking helm. Blurring moments passed into several hours. The blow had eased when Strader came to his side.

"You know, kid," he said, half savagely, "if the right kind of men stick together they can lick this part of the world. I guess we've proved that. Give me the helm. You're tuckered."

NIGHT followed day, interminably. The monotony of the hours keyed the two on the prahu. Words between them were cut to edged curtness.

They sped on a laughing breeze. The everlasting parade of the islands trooped by. Waves skipped over reefs. Occasionally they saw groups of stilted nipa shacks sheltered in coves. Great mounds of banyans lifted above all other growth, their crowns majestic above cool jungles. Screeching sea birds whirled above the prahu. And when it seemed they would be going on this way for all time, it ended.

Strader was near the bow. He turned, suddenly. Kim's muscles tightened.

"See it?" asked Strader, huskily.

"Bud Dao," said Kim, tightly. "Jolo just ahead."

Strader looked toward the humped shadow lifting above the island forest; old Mount Bud Dao, the sentinel peak of Jolo. Strader shrugged and took a deliberate step toward Kim.

The sunshiner couldn't miss the harbor now. He could go the remainder of the distance alone. Kim reached for a club he had hidden in a coil of rope near the tiller. Strader saw the move and stopped.

"All right," Kim said, thickly. "You said there'd be a showdown, Strader. If we fight it out to see which goes on into the harbor, now's the time."

"I suppose," said Strader, "it is. But I hadn't figured it that way for quite a few days, kid." He shook his heavy shoulders. "You talked a lot when you were out of your head. About a girl named Jane. I had to listen. She's waiting for you back home."

Strader blew a breath between hairy lips. "Funny. There was a girl waiting in the States for me too. I stayed here too long. When we get to Jolo, you get the hell out of here while you can."

The lapping of the sea at the side of the prahu was laughter that jeered and chortled.

"When two whites set their necks to go some place, kid, they stick together and go." Strader half turned toward the bow. "Were going to Jolo together. I'll keep lookout. Take her in."

THE weekly freighter from Manila was a glowing raft of light beside the dark wharf as they slipped into the harbor. Native dogs yowled back of huts on the shore. The pearling fleet, in for the night, was a forest of masts. The scent of the "dama de noche" bush hung heavy in a blend of musty odors of copra. A native gong orchestra beat a throbbing rhythm. The prahu slid, almost wearily, to a berth beside the Chinese pier. There was a light in the tienda of Chino Charlie.

Kim climbed slowly along the prahu. Strader stood on the wharf. The sunshiner reached down a hand. There was a stout, sure grip as he helped Kim to the planking.

"Made it," said Strader, roughly. "Yuh know, there's something to this idea—white men shoulder to shoulder." He drew a slow, hard breath. "It's a sure-as-hell fact, I had a white girl waiting for me back home." He took a short step. Kim hesitated. Thinking of Strader, the islands, a girl waiting. The sunshiner whirled on him. "Come on," he snarled. "Get off the dime."

He was walking ahead as they entered Chino Charlie's. The moon-faced trader came heaving up out of the chair where he sat.

"Whassa matta?" Charlie looked from one to the other, quickly.

Strader slammed his big fist on the counter.

"Something with horsepower in it," he ordered. "I've got a thirst that's five hundred miles long and deeper than the keel of hell. Good American stuff. Charlie. If you haul out any nipa rum, I'll strangle you."

He picked up the bottle, tipped it, his hairy throat working.

"It's funny the things that'll make you remember," he said. "A tourist woman's laughter in the market place, the captain of a trader swearing in Yankee slang, or that kind of a drink. Some damnable little thing—and you think of back home."

"Well, you can go if you want to," Kim said rustily.

Strader turned wide eyes on him.

"You've got the pearls," stated Kim.

Strader pulled up his ragged pants and stuck his blunt hands into his pockets. He fished out the little bags, holding them up. and sounds came in from the outside. The island sounds throbbed just outside the doorway. With a fierce toss, Strader threw the bags on the counter and turned on Kim.

"Now, you young fool, get the hell out of here while you can," he roared. "Get the hell out!"

He swept the bottle from the counter and started toward the door. Kim caught up with him and spun him. They both staggered.

"And where do you think you're going now?" demanded Kim.

"Not going," Strader said, his voice deep in his chest. "I'm already there. The Islands. That's where. Blast you, get out of here."

Strader walked to the threshold and halted there, as though he had reached an invisible line, and if he crossed it, he could not step back.

"Strader," said Kim, "there's two of us. We've come this far together. If you go out there, I'm going too."

"You're off your nut." Strader turned back angrily. "What you talking about, kid? Go on home."

"There's one way," Kim said savagely. "It's no worse for one of us than the other to go under in these islands. If it's good enough for you, it's good enough for another white man."

Strader shook his head, slowly. He began swaying, drawing slow breaths between his teeth. He turned and walked to the doorway. He stood there, while seconds dragged.

"I damn well mean it," said Kim. "There's enough in those sacks to take us both where we want to go. Or stay here and hit the toboggan in a way that would be magnificent. Which way does a white man go, Strader? Out there? Or home?"

The sunshiner looked into the shadows of the street. The night air throbbed with the rhythm of the East. The breeze was thick with scents of the islands. Intrigue, something illicit and seductive, seemed just beyond finger tips in the velvet blackness. Suddenly Strader threw the bottle into the street. The glass smashed. Then the sunshiner laughed, not quietly, but with a great shaking bellow. He walked, walking back to the counter in long, lusty strides.

"There's a lot to do," he said. "I'll leave enough of my share of the pearls to take care of the Moro women. There's Lakat's wife and the others, too. You'll want to get off a wireless to that girl named Jane. We'll have to hustle, kid, to get on that freighter when she rides out on the tide at midnight. Out on the tide—towards home."

Having started to strike him, I could not stop.

SURPRISE ATTACK

By GEORGES SURDEZ

YOU ask me for information concerning the disciplinary company of the Foreign Legion at Colomb-Bechar, Saharan Territories. You presume that because you saw me in charge of the outfit several years ago I am likely to know more about it than most. That is not necessarily true.

You have heard, of course, the old saying that there is not one Legion—there are as many Legions as there are Legionnaires.

"The Legion is what one makes of it," is what they say. So far as externals are concerned, you know as much as I do, because you have seen the buildings, which are nothing to boast about even if they suit their purpose;

you saw my office—and you saw the poor devils at work.

Everything at the double, wheeling a barrow, swinging a pick, lifting a spade. You remember my second in command, the skinny German adjutant, nicknamed Schnaps, who kept them going on outside fatigues. That chap had a heart like a ball of steel and a liver like a rotting sponge, which somehow seems the ideal combination for a non-commissioned officer in the disciplinary company.

Get it clear in your writings that the inmates of the disciplinary are not criminals in any sense except the military sense. Most of them come because they can't learn to obey, or have a mental flaw that makes them explode into insubordination at irregular intervals. The scheduled stay is for nine months, but it can be lengthened indefinitely without further official trial, so that some men have spent four, five years and even more.

I went there because I was assigned to the job at a time when it would have looked bad for me to kick, because I had just emerged from a scrape. I have never heard of an officer volunteering to take charge of the 'Disciplinary.' The appointment is so hard that it counts toward promotion just as much as field service. I was picked, moreover, because I am constructed along broad and solid lines, as you will remember.

My first contact with my new charges came in the courtyard of the place. For the occasion, they had put on their blouses, which is rare with them. Most of the time, they work bare from the waist up. I saw nothing extraordinary about them on that afternoon, and if they had been equipped with rifles and bayonets, I would have imagined them ordinary sections of Legion. A good many of them seemed very tough, but there is a proportion of ugly-looking customers in any outfit of our corps.

I made them a little speech—routine stuff, that I would treat them justly, that those who behaved would get out soon and those who didn't would find me tough enough to suit them. And I had no sooner turned my back than I heard sounds of derision, incongruous, uncouth noises made with the lips. I whirled and saw my sergeants staring at the blank, sunburned faces lined before them, seeking the culprits.

"Never mind that," I called. "Schoolroom stuff. Dismissed."

Schnaps walked back to the office with me. He said: "Listen, Lieutenant, that was wrong. It would have been better to kick the stuffings out of a couple of them now."

As you can imagine, I suggested that he keep his advice to himself. I had small esteem for the sergeants, most of whom were volunteers, and almost without exception, had developed sadistic traits.

"Just the same, Lieutenant," Schnaps said, "I'll make you a bet that inside a week you sock one of them, regulations or no regulations. We have this always with a new officer."

THREE days later I was beginning to agree with him. It is impossible to describe the irritation of an atmosphere charged with hatred of you. And I saw that those lads made it a point of pride to do nothing willingly. They had to be forced and threatened. As a matter of fact, they are all more than a little mad. The simpler course would be for the Legion to discharge them. But if feigning madness was a way out, whenever a Legionnaire got fed up with his surroundings he would sham insanity. And the government would be out food, bonus money, without profit.

During the morning of the fourth day, a sergeant informed me that a *disciplinaire* wished to speak to me. He was not the first who had requested an interview. When a new officer takes charge he is always approached by the men in the hope that they can put something over on him through his ignorance of rules and regulations. That is why, if a *disciplinaire* disturbed me over a trifle I gave him special punishment for forty-eight hours.

The man appeared. He had dressed neatly, wore a white blouse.

"Laurens, Aristide," he introduced himself.

He was obviously French, as obviously from Paris. His speech, his attitude denoted that. A smart fellow in his own estimation, and vain as a peacock despite his lean, horsy face and his cropped skull. Instead of coming to attention, saluting, and giving his number as well as his name, he held his long-vizored képi in his hand, casually, like a civilian paying a call.

I decided to let that pass. "What do you wish?"

"*Monsieur* Tainton—"

"I'm a lieutenant, acting as captain," I reminded him.

"This isn't a military request. I am acting as a private citizen, not as a Legionnaire. I have never been deprived of my citizenship rights by any prison sentence—"

"But you gave up ordinary rights when you enlisted," I explained patiently. "I am a Frenchman, but as an army officer, I cannot vote."

"I am enlisted in the Foreign Legion as a Belgian," Aristide Laurens said. "Consequently, the Foreign Legion being different from the army in general, my using an assumed name in it, that leaves my rights—" and he continued this for several minutes. I understood, of course, that it was a 'gag,' something to entertain himself and his comrades with.

"What do you wish to do, anyway?" I interrupted him.

"I want paper and ink, a pen, and a table to write on. I have a complaint to make to the minister of war."

"What about?"

"About the food, the accommodations. We sleep on cement, with only one blanket. We—"

"All right," I agreed. "You have the right to write the ministry of war. Sit down there and write him, then hand me the letter. I shall pass it on to the regimental office to be forwarded—"

"I want to write direct. You can lend me stamps, *Monsieur,* until I am discharged from here and collecting pay again."

"My good fellow," I barked, "are you trying—"

Suddenly, he flung his képi into my face.

It dropped to the floor, and he stood there, laughing at me. If I took official notice of his act, he was due for twenty years in the penal camps: Insubordination, insults, assault upon an officer. I tried to carry it off casually. The scribes in the outer office had heard him laugh and had come to the door.

"You've dropped your képi, Laurens. Pick it up and go."

He answered me with a single word, the one you think of. That may not seem much of a plight to you, but for an officer it was annoying. I had to call upon the machinery of military justice to crush this silly fool, and that made me look ridiculous. Or, as I had told him to pick up the képi, I could make him pick it up, to save myself.

What I did not know was that Laurens had been complete master of the scene from the beginning, and that this course on my part was what he had led up to.

"Pick that up," I said.

"Hand it to me!" And he laughed. "Or call in the patrol to arrest me."

"Pick it up," I repeated, going nearer, my fists clenched. Under the special regulations of the disciplinary company, physical punishment cannot be inflicted summarily. But it is. In that place, I did not risk my commission if I struck a blow.

The sergeant-scribe started to come in, saying: "Don't, Lieutenant, don't!" And I did not understand then just what he meant. "Let me take him out, Lieutenant." He appeared frightened, and I believed that he thought Laurens might knife me. It was much worse than that, as I was to find out.

"Pick it up!"

"Go to hell!"

YOU may understand how it happened: I had given him an order in front of witnesses. He had defied me to force him to execute it without calling for help. I lost my temper. My right arm swung back and forward again. The punch caught him on the jaw. He made no attempt to dodge or to retaliate, went down and was on all fours.

I expected to see him reach for that képi. But he did not. He rose, shook his head, and grinned. He waited there, waited for my next blow. And through striking the first, I had lost the moral right to charge him with a military crime, I had made the matter personal. My personal prestige was involved. I had to make him pick up that képi.

I struck him for the second time, and down he went. He rested two or three seconds, rose and faced me. From the corner of that ironic grin leaked a thin stream of blood. And he repeated that same word to my repeated order. And, with the first sensation of the nightmare that was to come, I hit him for the third time.

In his own way, he was a keen psychologist. He had undoubtedly done this trick before, for the sergeant had known. He knew that having started to strike him I could not stop. And he knew that it was torture for a man of my type to hit again and again a man who did not defend himself.

He hoisted himself to his feet deliberately, spat his word of defiance. I understood that the pain of the blow did not frighten him. Perhaps he even derived a sort of rapture out of it.

"Get your képi and get out," I said.

"No. —— to you!"

It had become automatic. I struck him and he went down. This time, he was dazed and sprawled for fifteen or twenty seconds before stirring. I was about to order the scribes to lift him up and carry him out before he grew conscious again, when I saw that the sergeant had closed the door discreetly, to allow me to endure my torment alone. For, of the two, I was the one being tortured.

Laurens knew that I would not do as Adjutant Schnaps or any one of the sergeants would do, kick him around as he lay. This was a trick he tried only on officers, as I discovered later. If I had not been so sure of myself, so strict with Schnaps, I would have been warned. But, like most new officers, I had seen the prisoners' side and forgotten the guards' viewpoint.

How many times I knocked him down I can't remember. It was as if I had gone mad myself. I was covered with perspiration; my tunic was wrinkled—it happened to be one-hundred-and-thirty in the shade that day—and my hair hung wet on my forehead. I was trying to break his will. And he would lose consciousness, but not his will.

Once, when he rose, I believed he was about to break. But he mumbled: "I'll write that to the minister of war!"

"And write him this, too—" I said.

I was living as if in a dream, I had forgotten just how it had started. All I knew was that I must make that man pick up the képi. I felt degraded, ashamed. And, finally, I cheated. As he sat up, I picked up the képi and slammed it over his skull, gripped one of his wrists, hoisted him and pushed him toward the door. I slammed that open, and pushed him into the outer office.

"You'd have saved trouble picking it up the first time," I called out.

He reeled about and collapsed on a table.

"Didn't pick it up—didn't pick it up —" he mumbled, and passed out for minutes.

He was badly bruised about the face, and my knuckles were swollen. But what hurt more was the look on the sergeant's face. He did not believe that Laurens had picked up the képi; he knew that I had lied. Lied in actions if not in words. Schnaps told me as much that night.

"He's never been known to before, Lieutenant. And once, when he tried that képi trick, I called in two sergeants and we spent a whole evening. He went to the infirmary for four days that time, but an orderly carried his képi out." Schnaps shrugged. "It's his special pride, you understand."

THAT was only one case. I had over one hundred and thirty men under my orders. There was a Russian, chased out by the Reds, a former officer of Hussars, who had come down because he would not do manual labor in an ordinary formation. Nine days out of ten, he was normal and obedient. The tenth, he refused to work and nothing could make him work. Starving him was

no solution, because his fits were periodical, and after the day on which he had selected to refuse work was passed, he was quite willing to wield a pick for ten hours on end. I don't know what happened to that one, although I met some of the others later.

Then there was what I term the 'wine uprising.' According to regulations, the men in the disciplinary company are allowed one pint of wine a day, just as in ordinary formation. Privation of wine is a special punishment. Now, the *disciplinaires* get no money. They are not supposed to gamble, but they do. And they use cigarettes, which are contraband and forbidden them, for money, while those who do not care for wine mortgage their wine rations.

This custom led to drunkenness. A clever gambler who was fond of wine would be discovered drunk some evening, within post limits. The wine also served to purchase other pleasures. All over the world, men isolated from the mass develop queer habits.

I cut off the wine rations as a preventive measure. But I could maintain that order only a short while, because it punished the innocent with the guilty, and there were legitimate complaints from some *disciplinaires* that they were deprived of wine without cause. An honest officer must forward a legitimate complaint. I did and was berated for not handling the situation properly. No one could suggest what to do. There it was: Each man was entitled to a pint of wine if he wanted it. If he did not get that pint and there was nothing in particular charged against him, he was being unjustly punished!

So I allowed the wine to be distributed again, and the same troubles occured again and again. It worked harm on some of the very young—we had one or two lads barely twenty—because they loved the forgetfulness that comes with drink and were willing to pay any price for it. They did and that led to rows and jealousy. A man was stabbed; *disciplinaires* are not permitted to have knives, but someone had found one!

I could see that the men were amused, because they believed they had me. The guards were native infantrymen, and could be bribed with cigarettes or drink. If those inducements failed, there were others. To start with, I applied urgently for a transfer to a combat unit, and then decided that during the balance of my sojourn, I would end the wine racket.

That took some thought. I had to keep within regulations. The men not specially punished must get their wine allowance.

I solved this after a while. It meant a good deal of extra work for me. I had to be present at the distribution of food and drink. Here was my system: After the food rations had been given out, I ordered the men to stand at attention in the yard, in two long lines twenty feet apart. They stood with their backs to me, who kept in the center. Two soldiers carried the wine buckets, with a ladle.

Stopping behind the first man, I would order:

"Right about, face!" And when he had obeyed and was facing me, the only inmate to do so, I would ask him: "Do you drink wine?" If he replied in the affirmative, I would order him to present his tin cup, and one of the soldiers would fill it with the ladle: "Now, drink it down!"

And he would have to drain that tin cup, right before my eyes. I would go from man to man in person, supervise the drinking of the wine. I had them turned around so that if a man felt embarrassed, had promised his drink to another, he could not be threatened, intimidated, with a glance. I was keeping them from aeting together. It was a slight trick, but it worked.

I had complaints from men who declared that they did not like to drink wine like that, that they wished it with their food.

"Not stipulated in regulations," I reminded them. "Show me the article that states that wine must be drunk while eating food." They could not, of course. "So, my friends, as your complaint is not based on regulations, I cannot bother the colonel with it. Too bad, but I can't help you."

Strangely enough, that broke them, and a delegation came to me, promising to keep order. That small trick of mine

had caught their fancy; they thought me a pretty smart fellow, and I had little trouble after that. Naturally, when things started to run smoothly, my long delayed transfer came through. I was assigned to the fourth regiment, in southwest Morocco, and remained there a couple of years. Then I was wounded in a casual skirmish, went to France to recover, was promoted to captain.

ACCORDING to routine, I was shifted to another regiment when I went back to Africa. I reported at Meknas headquarters for an assignment, and was given command of the garrison at Dar-Rahib, on the Saharan fringe. Everyone told me it was a dump, that I was out of luck. From the photographs you could tell that there was not much grass.

But I started out, reached Midelt across the Middle Atlas Range by civilian bus. There I was informed that there was a convoy of lorries carrying supplies to the outposts due to leave the next morning. Ten trucks, guarded by Senegalese *Tirailleurs* and two driven by Legionnaires were lined up outside the town at dawn. The armored car which was to clear the way of possible marauders started out, vanished in a swirl of dust, just as I arrived.

"The Legion trucks?" I asked a twenty year old sub-lieutenant in charge of the convoy. I could have superseded him, and avoided a lot of trouble for myself, but he was so pleased with his authority that I made it clear I was still on leave, more or less a passenger.

"Back there somewhere," he said. "They branch off for Dar-Rahib at Kilometer Sixty-Three." And he detailed two of his Negroes, big, grinning fellows, to tote my bags for me.

And, on the front seat of the first Legion lorry, I recognized ex-*disciplinaire* Laurens, wearing the single chevron of first-class Legionnaire. He appeared healthy and strong, but his eyes still had the old nervous, darting glances. The man behind the wheel was Rene Berceril, who had been with the disciplinary company also. I cast a quick glance at the second truck, and recognized three out of four faces, although I could not recall the names immediately.

All saluted me as if they had never seen me. Laurens was superb, his stare unconcerned. He was evidently in charge, as he ordered one of his men to make room for me by passing into the body of the truck. Nevertheless, I grew somewhat worried. I settled myself and Laurens reached across my knees to take his carbine, which had been resting on my side.

The truck ahead, with grinning, squealing black soldiers piled above the crates, bales and barrels, started off. Our chauffeur released his brake, rolled down the gentle slope; then the motor hammered. The day was going to be hot; a copper vapor clung to the crests, not the red of approaching rain but the shimmer of the desert air after daybreak.

We rolled for twenty minutes or more in silence. Obviously, it was up to me to speak. I was the officer. And I wondered on a delicate problem of etiquette not foreseen by the manuals. What was the proper attitude for me to take toward my former charges? The thing to do, I believed, was to be very casual. As casual as I could be with at least six men about who must have grown to hate me over a period of months.

I brought out cigarettes, offered them before lighting one. They were turned down, politely, definitely. Yet Laurens was a smoker, and the chauffeur, judging from the stains on his fingers, also used tobacco. That was a bad sign. I started to wish that I had been less considerate, taken the first truck at the risk of disappointing the kid lieutenant.

"Where are you chaps stationed, Legionnaire?" I asked.

"At Midelt, mostly, *mon capitaine*," Laurens replied. "We're attached to the transport branch."

"You were with me at Discipline in Béchar, years ago?"

"Yes, Captain."

"So were some of the others?"

"Yes, Captain. All of the Legionnaires here are from the dump."

"How does that happen?"

"A section was sent to Menwarha, south of Béchar, to help build a sort of bridge over a gap. We had about twenty Moroccans guarding us, sent from Bou Denib." Laurens spoke softly, easily. "The slobs from Tafilalet jumped us—that was a few weeks before we took the place—and when the *Tirailleurs* were being cut to pieces, we pitched in with spades, shovels and picks. About a dozen were bumped off, and the rest of us were pardoned. Rehabilitated, they call it."

"And is Adjutant Schnaps still with the company?"

"No, Captain." The ghost of a smile appeared on his lips. "But he isn't far from it."

"Where is he?"

"In the cemetery, Captain. Found one morning on the Place des Chameaux, throat cut from ear to ear."

"Murdered?" I asked, foolishly.

"So they said." He cast a sidelong glance in my direction. "Some people even claimed a disciplinary inmate had done it—"

"Ah?"

"Yes. They said that a man couldn't go on forever kicking exhausted chaps in the stomach until they got up or died."

"And what do you think, Laurens?"

"Me, Captain? I never think."

He stared at the narrow road flanking the cliff. In the rear-view mirror beside the chauffeur, I could see the left side of his face. It was scarred. Perhaps the traces of my blows were there beside those of a hundred other blows. After a long while, he spoke again.

"I never think—I never forget."

WE HAD been out probably an hour when the Legionnaires on the last truck shouted to attract our attention. We stopped and alighted. There had been a slight mishap; the armored car closing the procession had broken down. I walked back and spoke to the young sergeant in charge. He did not understand it; it had never happened before. But he had a broken rear wheel and no spare. He would signal to the nearest watch-tower, and Midelt would send out another car inside an hour.

He sensed that I was under some sort of a strain, and he suggested that I remain there with him and his crew of four. But as he was not a Legionnaire, it would have looked bad for me to leave my own kind and hang around with him behind steel plates.

I got on the truck again and we started off. Soon, the armored car was out of sight around a bend of the trail. And we scuttled, with a drop two hundred feet deep on the right, hugging the cliff on the left.

"Ever see any shooting around here?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, Captain. It's seldom that a convoy goes all the way through without being fired upon." Laurens appeared to read my thoughts and added casually, "And a lot of the swine have Lebels. So that if a guy was shot with one, nothing else could be proved." And he took out his own cigarettes, asked no permission, but lighted up.

That was like a signal, because I saw his face grow hard, with that queer, mulish look that sulky privates get. And the chauffeur looked over at me, grinning nervously.

"Odd thing," he commented, addressing no one in particular, "Odd thing, that car breaking down. First time it ever happened. Just like we had been praying for it."

We reached a spot where the trail divided into two branches. The young lieutenant was waiting there. "Here's where we separate, Captain. If you get into any trouble, the rear armored car will be along and hear it." I told him what had happened, and he shrugged. "Well, the *bicos* couldn't foresee that, luckily. Of course, if you wish me to—"

There again, I could not do the obvious thing, inform the boy of my situation. It was unthinkable for an officer of Legion to appear afraid of his own men. And I was more worried than afraid.

We shook hands, and he left. I heard the chugging of his trucks a while, then the motor was started and drowned it out. We swung right, and rolled on the Dar-Rahib path.

"How far, Laurens?"

"Twenty-four kilometers, Captain."

"What do you ordinarily make it in?"

"Almost an hour, Captain. See, the road's not so good and you have to go in low gear most of the time."

He had not exaggerated. At times the curves in the trail were so sharp that the road seemed to turn back upon itself. The inclines were steep, tufted with bushes, strewn with boulders, ideal for an ambush. I had been in the region before, knew the natives. I felt that unless we kept going at a fairly good speed, we would be fired upon.

For an attacking party in that zone is not hard to gather. All through the hills are flocks of sheep, each one guarded by a mountaineer. And it is common knowledge that a sheepman in the Atlas usually has a carbine concealed within easy reach, so that he may transform himself into a raider if the occasion for loot or even for killing offers itself.

Those with me knew this as well as I did, evidently, for in each cab was a Legionnaire, with his carbine ready. They scanned the cliffs, the crests, the hollows. And, after some time, they relaxed, as I did, because they saw nothing. Ahead, when we chanced to be at a point of vantage, with a clear view, we could discern the walls of Dar-Rahib, very far, immensely remote, like a picture thrown on the screen of the blazing sky.

Then the path would dip, the mountains seemed to rise, and the vision vanished. I had an uneasy sensation that the men behind me were consulting. I could see Laurens and the chauffeur exchanging glances. And I knew that those men, who had been forbidden to communicate in words for so long, could come to an understanding by signs, signs beyond my perception.

Not criminals, but convicts, military convicts!

WE had reached a sort of a gap between the rocks, like a natural gateway opening on a platform, when the truck came to a stop.

I became alert at once. But Laurens politely excused himself for climbing over me, dropped to the road and walked aside in a most natural fashion. I imitated him, glad to stretch my legs a bit, and saw that the second truck had caught up, had braked right behind ours. The men alighted quietly, and from his seat the chauffeur hailed me: "Captain?"

I turned, looked up. At the same time, my arms were held from behind, I felt my automatic yanked from its holster. Then, immediately, I was released.

"What's going on?" I asked, keeping quite calm outwardly.

I knew that if they had taken my gun they intended to hold it. There was no sense grabbing for it, with nine men against me. For there were nine all told, counting the chaps who had been inside the trucks.

"Your life is in no danger, Captain," Laurens informed me. "We just want a little fun."

What was queer is that I understood them and vaguely sympathized. It was human to seek revenge for what they had undergone. But I was worried over what form their fun would take. I had heard stories, naturally, of such episodes. And the worst feature was that ridicule was stronger than tragedy.

I wore a *chech* around my képi, a khaki scarf wound like a turban. Someone took the end of it, yanked, and my headgear flew off, dropped in the dust. Instinctively, I bent over to recover it. And I was given a terrific kick on the most conspicuous part of my person.

I turned, and saw three men standing, all smiling. I could not tell which one had kicked me.

"No witnesses, Captain," Laurens announced. "You were not touched. All imagination. Remember?"

I did. Whenever a complaint of excessive brutality on the part of a sergeant was made, I would say: "Sorry, but you have no witnesses. The sergeant says you attacked him first. I have to take his word." I wanted to reason with them, and did not know how to start. All I could tell them, those men knew—that I had been but an impersonal cog in a machine. That what they were doing was foolish. That I would have a chance to avenge myself later.

Laurens, cigarette in the corner of his mouth, was very calm.

"You won't be struck again, Captain, if you behave. The gesture escaped one of us, who has been so kicked around that he could not resist temptation. That was not planned. All you have to do is to pick up your képi." He paused, grinned. "To pick it up at my order. Pick up your képi."

It was a perfect reversal, and I understood Laurens better now than at any time.

To obey him was impossible. It seemed that I would surrender my right to call myself a man forever if I did it. Yet, it was the intelligent thing to do, to pick that képi up, climb on the truck, and forget the incident. Or rather, forget it until I had an opportunity to settle matters.

And, by a weird compulsion of the brain, showing how near alike men are, all I could think of was that one stupid, vile word he had used to me. I said it, flatly.

THEY laughed.

"Listen," Laurens said. "We ain't being mean. Pick it up now, and it's all settled. Wait two minutes, and we'll make you pick it up with your teeth." He produced an imposing watch of silver with a snap-lid, and looked at the dial: "Thirty seconds gone, forty—"

The two minutes passed. I was struggling with myself to pick up that képi and end the scene. And I could not even move a hand toward it.

"All right—you asked for it." Laurens pocketed the watch. He spoke to the others just as if I had not been there. "Grab him carefully. Don't mark him. He can't talk about this himself, it's too funny. But if we beat him up, that changes it from a joke on him to a joke on us. A black eye is a bad witness."

Four of the men rested their carbines against the wheels of the trucks. They came toward me. I punched the first one in the nose, managed to hit again, a glancing blow. Then they had me, each by one limb, and swung me off the ground, face down. They were laughing so hard they could hardly hold me, even the one with the trickle of blood down his chin.

Laurens reached over and held me up by my belt, and together we shuffled until my face was directly over the képi. They lowered me within reach, with many admonitions to each other to be careful.

Normally, had they been my equals in rank, I would have laughed. It was a prank, just a prank. But it meant, in this case, that nine subordinates would have seen me humiliated.

"Bite into it, that's a good egg," Laurens said.

I clenched my teeth as they rubbed my face back and forth against the cloth. They were tiring. I could feel the throbbing of their muscles in their gripping hands.

I am not a light man, one hundred and eighty-five pounds, and I was struggling hard. Struggling hard, but feeling carefully.

My heel located a knee-cap. I kicked out. And that one leg was free, gave me a purchase. We fell in a heap, and I contrived to get clear. I knew what I intended, leaped for one of the carbines. The first man got the butt under the chin and dropped headlong, and I ran back along the road for twenty yards. By the time I turned, they were all armed and facing me.

"Enough?" I challenged. My fingers had verified the loading—I had three shots, a full clip.

Laurens seemed quite sober. "All right, Captain! We drop it."

"Bring me my képi."

They consulted among themselves. Again, stupid pride entered in. They refused.

"Listen, Captain, leave it here if you want to. Let's call it square."

"I don't move without it." I was thinking, also, that I had paid sixty francs for that képi. "Bring it here."

Instead, at Lauren's suggestion, they started toward me.

"I'll shoot," I warned.

"Listen, Captain, we've hung around long enough. By now, every *bico* in the hills is headed this way. It's dangerous to stick here much longer—"

"You should have thought of that before."

They kept coming nearer, and I was afraid they would get close enough to jump at me. So I dodged off the trail, down the pebbly slope, because the way was cut off on the other side by a sheer wall of rock.

"Keep away."

"Listen, Captain, listen—"

I shouldered the carbine, aimed and fired. The bullet struck between Laurens' feet, whined off, and he jumped like a carp at the end of a line.

And that shot brought others. I went down, feeling as if a trunk had fallen on the small of my back. I did not realize what had happened then, did not think much.

But I do remember Laurens' face close to my own, his urgent whisper begging me to quit fooling. Then carbines slapped out all around, some near, some at a distance. I was lifted, and the pain knocked me out.

When I came to, I was crumpled in the rear of the truck, and the motor was roaring. Every jostling bound felt like a red hot blade brushed through my kidneys.

A heavy weight rested across my legs. It was a man, a man I recognized: Berceril. He showed his teeth as if he were amused. But I realized that he was dead.

HOW long that ride lasted, I don't know. Less than thirty minutes at that speed. But it seemed like centuries, because I kept passing out and coming to, and Berceril was inching over on me at every jolt, pressing his dead mug against my cheek.

And I reached Dar-Rahib, my new garrison, only to be placed in the infirmary, due to be shipped away as soon as transportable. I was delirious for a couple of days.

It doesn't do one's system any good to have a slug removed from the loins, so close to the spine that it was a miracle I escaped with a good chance for recovery.

You will find that episode outlined in an official report, classified as an ambush. There's some very interesting dope about the pile of rocks across the path which made it necessary for all hands to come out of the trucks to clear them away.

Laurens was not a stupid man and knew he had to explain our presence in the open.

Only three men had been killed. And two others wounded. It is believed that seven or eight mountaineers were slain. I doubt that strongly, because most of the men were occupied carrying me back to the trucks. But an official report has to list enemy's casualties in excess of your own. Otherwise, it doesn't look so well.

Laurens gave me plenty of chance to talk—a week. Naturally, in a way, it was my duty to report them. If they had not stopped to humiliate me, nothing would have happened. But I found it hard to forget that when they had had a chance to leave me behind—no chance of my being found alive with the Chleuhs so near——they had reacted to the Legion's rule rather than that of the penitentiary. You can't send your saviors to jail.

On the eighth day, Laurens called to see me. He seemed a bit embarrassed. In one hand, he carried a khaki roll, the scarf. In the other, he held my képi, carefully brushed, free of dust, with the nape of the cloth shining, the gold braid intact.

He hung it on a hook in the wall without a word, turned his back on it. Then, haltingly, he started to thank me for not talking.

But I had learned something. The cost of humiliation. So I cut him short, again with that single, expressive word.

"Sit down," I invited, indicating the chair near my cot. "Have a cigarette."

He accepted, puffed in silence. Then he grinned, his normal, sneering grin.

"Three dead, two wounded," he said. "I bring you back. I bring the trucks back. And they'll make me a lousy corporal. There is no justice, Captain."

I looked at him and laughed.

"None," I agreed.

"Better be careful," Carteret warned.

THE OTHER UNWRITTEN LAW

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

JOE SHAWN'S quick flush made his hair seem even blonder. It burned through his tropic tan and with it his eyes flashed blue fire.

"Some day I'll take that cane away from you," he blazed at his employer, "and flog you to within an inch of your life." The tension of this last long year had snapped now, and Shawn was aching for a showdown.

Clyde Cartaret stood facing him, heavy-jowled, with the cane crooked over his forearm. It was a stout Malacca cane. The big, ruddy planter was never without it, using it out-of-doors for a walking stick, inside using it to gesture with when he shouted at his wife or the servants. What inflamed Shawn was that upon occasion Cartaret hadn't been content with mere shouting.

"Better be careful," Cartaret warned. "I'm British. And a Britisher's home is his castle, you know, in or out of the South Seas."

"Yes," Joe Shawn conceded, "you're in a pretty strong position here. You're deputy commissioner, and magistrate, as well as owner of the only plantation on the island. I'm just your overseer. That being the case, and I being insubordinate, why don't you give me the sack?"

Still with the cane crooked over his elbow, Cartaret lighted a cigarette. He answered derisively: "And why don't

you quit of your own accord? There's a ship leaving every month or so, you know."

Joe looked off down a lane of cocopalms to green-white combers rolling in from the reef. The flush on his lean face deepened.

"Why don't you duck out?" the planter challenged again. And when the overseer still made no response, Cartaret said with a dangerous softness, "Since you won't tell me, I think I'll go ask Adele."

He turned and strode stockily toward the bungalow, batting with his cane at hibiscus blossoms along the path. Joe watched him with savage impotence. Cartaret, he knew, would prime his temper with a few rum punches. Then, cane upraised and shouting, he would interview Adele.

WHEN this particular interview was over, ending like all the others, Clyde Cartaret reached for another rum punch. He stood then with his feet wide apart, the cane held in the vise of his armpit.

"I hope we understand each other," he said harshly.

Adele got shakily to her feet, her brown eyes staring at him from tortured depths. Her delicate loveliness was bruised, now, into waxen-white apathy. Unconsciously her clenched hands crossed to nurse arms she had used as buffers.

"I understand," she murmured drearily, "that the lowest form of life is a white man who beats his wife."

All at once he was shouting again. "Since you feel that way, why don't you leave me?"

"If I could, I would."

"No," he contradicted brusquely, "you wouldn't. Why? Because you know the Suva police are looking for our young overseer, Joe Shawn. I've shown you the circulars, with his photograph and description. It's murder on a dead-to-rights count. You wouldn't want to see him hanged, would you, my romantic Adele?"

She bit her lip. Her husband was right. Joe's jeopardy was holding her here, and her own jeopardy was holding Joe.

Cartaret tossed down his liquor, then put the situation succinctly. "*You* wont run away because if you do, I'll tell Suva where he is and they'll scaffold him. *He* won't run away and leave you, the woman he loves, to the tender mercies of her husband. So it's a stalemate, unless you run away together. The answer to which is right here."

He crossed to a cabinet, opened a drawer there to expose a heavy, loaded revolver.

"Whenever a boat's in port," he warned, "I keep a sharp watch on you both. And if I know anything about law, a husband is always acquitted when he shoots a man caught running away with his wife."

"It has never occurred to me," Adele protested wretchedly, "to run away with Joe Shawn."

Cartaret put his thumb through the trigger guard and twirled the gun. "The sanctity of an Englishman's home, you know!"

The way he said it, and the way his eyes gleamed, explained an attitude which had heretofore confused her. Why had her husband insisted on Shawn's eating with them, three times a day, here at the bungalow? And why was he constantly leaving them together? She knew now. Cartaret had been baiting them, waiting maliciously. Waiting for Joe to take her in his arms, or to comfort her on his shoulder.

Waiting for any overt intrusion which would justify use of that loaded, ever-ready gun!

Fear for Joe drove from Adele all fear for herself. She must make Joe leave the island—at once. This very night, after Cartaret had drunk himself drowsy, she must warn Joe Shawn.

Adele fled to her room and locked the door. She stood then with her face to a window, staring out upon the beach. It was moonlight. In the mellow sheen of it, the palms leaned crazily, casting queer bent shadows. Then she saw Joe Shawn seated on the sand there. She knew him by the shape of his head, by the tousled yellow of his hair, by the stalwart vigor of his pose.

His back was to the sea, the avenue by which he might escape. His face was toward the bungalow—and Adele.

IT WAS nearly midnight when she left the house. It was a risk, and she must be very careful. Although Cartaret himself was by now in sodden sleep, more than likely he had posted some native servant to spy upon her. She must not tell Joe of the scene tonight. She must tell him only to go away. Sensing the watchful eyes of a spy should make it easier, for then she wouldn't be tempted to put her head on Joe's shoulder and beg him to take her with him.

"Joe," she called softly.

He looked up in surprise and alarm. "What are you doing here, Adele?"

She sat down on the sand a little way from him and tried to keep her voice calm. "You must go away, Joe. Now. Tonight."

"There's no ship tonight," he said. Boats come not often to this small island where lived only three whites, the Cartarets and Shawn.

"You can hide in the bush until a ship comes, Joe. Then go aboard," she urged, "without ever seeing me again."

He turned to her almost angrily. "What's the idea of sneaking off like some criminal? You don't think I'm guilty, do you?"

"I'm sure you're not," Adele said quickly. "It's not that. It's—Clyde. Give him half an excuse and he'll—"

"I'm not afraid of him," Joe said. The light of sympathy in her eyes made his own soften.

She leaned a little toward him and he warned, "The house boy's watching us from the shrubbery, Adele."

"I know, Joe." She looked nervously over her shoulder.

"Just how much do you know, Adele? I mean about what he thinks he's got on me."

"Not much," she admitted. "He showed me a circular, that's all."

"I might as well tell you about it, then."

"Yes?" she prompted.

Joe lighted his pipe and puffed it to a glow. "It happened like this. A year ago I went broke in the Fijis. Lost my last shilling. Then I heard that a planter up here in the Gilberts wanted an overseer."

She nodded. "Yes, Clyde advertised in the Suva paper."

"Only way I could get here was to sign up as a deck hand on a freighter," Joe explained. "Deck-swabbing being something of a comedown for an independent planter, a silly pride made me sign on as Jack Jones. Then I spent my last evening in Suva mixing with old friends along the waterfront.

"At the Crown bar I touched elbows with a man I knew slightly, a diver from Thursday Island named Frost. Frost bought me a rickey. As we stood there, elbow to elbow, a squad of police came in. They arrested Frost and took him away."

"Why?" Adele asked.

"Without the faintest idea why they took him, I went out and knocked around the waterfront until after midnight. My last fling as a gentleman in whites, you know. Then I went to my hotel room. My bag there was already packed. Turned in, and when I got up at dawn I put on dungarees. Reported to my freighter as a deck-swabber, and immediately we weighed anchor for the Gilberts, via Pago Pago."

Looking at him, absorbed more with wondering what it would be like never to see him again, Adele almost lost the thread of his story.

"I'd packed a .38 Smith and Wesson in my bag," Joe said. "But when I unpacked in the fo'castle, I found it was missing. Then at Pago some of the crew went ashore and came back with a mimeographed daily news sheet published by the U.S. naval station there. I read this after we'd put to sea again. It said a diver named Frost had been found shot dead, on the Suva beach. The murder gun was found half-buried in the sand nearby. It was an uncommon gun—a Gold Seal .38 Special S & W. My own gun, easily traceable, so I knew I was in for trouble."

"But the circular," Adele exclaimed, more mystified than ever, "said something about pearls!"

"Wait. I read further and it said Frost, a few hours before his death, had been picked up by the police and searched for stolen pearls. No pearls were found on him and so he was turned loose."

"And then?"

"My ship arriving at this island, I took off my dungarees and put on whites—wanted to make a good impression on my prospective employer here. And from the coat pocket of those whites I pulled out a bag containing thirty fine pearls. It bowled me over for a minute. Then it was clear enough, don't you see?"

"He'd put them there, this man Frost?"

"No other way to explain it," said Joe. "He must have seen the police heading toward him, there at the Crown bar. So he got rid of them by slipping them into my side coat pocket. Later, when he was released, he hied to my hotel room to recover the pearls. No one there. He saw a packed bag and looked through it. No pearls. But he did find a Gold Seal .38. He took it, because he'd need it if I were obstinate about giving back the pearls." Joe smiled wryly, adding:

"I suppose he was out looking for me when someone accosted him. A struggle, ending with Frost beng shot by that gun."

"What," Adele asked breathlessly, "did you do with the pearls?"

"You understand what a jam I was in, don't you? I was seen that night in Suva with Frost, he was shot with my gun, I disappeared, and now here were the pearls actually on me. The only thing to do was go immediately to the nearest British authority, make an affidavit of facts, turn the pearls over to him and take a receipt. I did exactly that."

Adele stared straight ahead from shocked eyes. The nearest British authority, she knew, would have been none other than Deputy Commissioner Clyde Cartaret of this island. Too, she knew the solid dignity which Cartaret could assume upon occasion, the apparent probity which at first contact must have impressed Joe Shawn.

"I put the receipt in my wallet and thought I was in the clear," Joe said. "He assured me he'd report officially to Suva, attaching my affidavit—and he gave me the job as overseer. Six weeks went by and another ship came. I expected Suva police to be on it, both to question me and pick up the pearls. But no one came. I waited one more ship. Still no one came. Then I looked in my wallet and discovered the receipt was gone. I braced Cartaret—'What about those pearls?' He looked me in the eye and said, 'What pearls?' "

The moon had dropped behind the palms now. Joe could barely see Adele's dim, rigid outline there. A fruit bat whrred overhead. A coconut fell. Then again the night was soundless except for combers rolling in from the reef. Joe Shawn knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Is there anything else, Joe?"

He sat looking at her intently for a moment; then she saw the angle of his jaw harden. "Yes, one thing. I've got to know for sure, Adele. Does Cartaret ever—beat you?"

He stood up fiercely and she too arose to face him. It was hard not to tell him the truth. If she did, it meant she'd be in his arms this very instant. With a spy watching them. She thought of tomorrow, and of Cartaret's loaded gun.

"No, Joe," she said. She saw that he was incredulous. Before he could break in she went on, evasively, "He shouts, that's all. What he does to you is more humiliating than what he does to me. You can help me best by letting me help you."

"You help me? How?"

"By finding the pearls. If I do, you yourself must take them to Suva, Joe."

She turned away and disappeared through shrubbery toward the house.

THERE was a scene at the bungalow next day. Joe heard echoes of it, heard Cartaret shouting there. And when Joe went in to dinner, as usual, Adele did not appear to join them. Cartaret sat through the meal with a swollen, livid face, the cane crooked over the arm of his chair.

It took all Joe's restraint to keep from

throttling him. But he knew he'd only make it worse for Adele.

Cartaret waited until the house boy had withdrawn, leaving them with coffee and cigarettes. Then he said brusquely, "My wife met you on the beach last night."

"You've never forbidden our talking to each other," Joe retorted. "In fact, you've invited it. You've thrown us together. Always with a spy posted. Why spy on us?"

"To make sure everything's on the level," Cartaret said. "It had better be. There's an unwritten law, you know."

"*Two* unwritten laws," corrected Shawn.

The planter cocked an eye. "So? I was aware of only one."

"Some day," Joe said, "I'll teach you the other one."

An ugly truce set in. It became all the more dangerous when, during days which followed, Cartaret assumed a sly affability.

"After all you're a good cocoa-bean man," he admitted one day to his overseer in the groves. "We've had words, but I'm willing to forget them."

That evening he held Adele's chair for her when she sat down to supper. He complimented her gown, and the new way she had fixed her hair. These and other smug courtesies he paraded, even extending a box of cigars to Joe after the meal, but none of them deceived either Adele or Shawn.

By her eyes and the pallid tension of her face Joe could see that Adele was more frightened than ever.

In the living room afterward, Cartaret sent for a bottle of his best Burgundy. He told stories, laughing at his own stale jokes. Adele, although cruelly humiliated even to be in the same room with the man, nevertheless steeled herself to carry on. Above everything else she must help Joe Shawn. And the only way she could help Joe was to keep alert. In some way she must find out where her husband kept those pearls.

After drinking himself to a glow, Cartaret turned on the radio. The strains of a dance orchestra came to them from Honolulu.

"Adele," Cartaret suggested glibly, "why don't you take a turn with Shawn? I don't waltz myself, you know."

"I'd rather not, please," she said quickly. "So long since I've danced I'm sure I'd walk all over poor Joe's toes. What became of the cigarettes, I wonder?"

Pretending to look for cigarettes, she crossed to the cabinet and opened a drawer. It was the drawer in which Cartaret kept the loaded gun. She exposed it, for a moment, with a nervous laugh. "I wish you wouldn't keep this dreadful thing loaded, Clyde. We never have any burglars on the island."

Her eyes met Shawn's and he understood.

Cartaret persisted. On this and succeeding days he tried to throw them together. Sometimes when afield he sent Shawn on errands to the house. Always with a spy posted. But Polynesians do not make finished spies, and Joe was conscious of being watched every hour.

He did not take Adele in his arms. He took care not to speak to her except in the presence of Cartaret or a servant.

And so the taut truce went on, Cartaret chafing inwardly. The planter watched and waited. He looked ahead and schemed lucidly. To eliminate Shawn under protection of the unwritten law, he reasoned, would be better, because in that case the pearls needn't crop up at all. But if this strategy failed, he could always play his last card.

He could inform Suva that Shawn was here for the taking.

And by so doing inflict upon Adele a chastisement more severe than any belaborings from his cane. Her attachment, he saw, was growing day by day. And Shawn's love for Adele was like a steel spring waiting to burst bounds. Cartaret didn't miss the quick turning of Joe's head whenever Adele entered the room. Nor the light of tenderness in Adele's eyes whenever they met Shawn's. Restraint only served to tighten this invisible bond. And while this lashed Cartaret to new furies of resentment, his consolation was that it would make the final penalties maximum. It would hurt them all the more, now, when the law came to snatch Shawn in effect from her very arms.

When the next south-bound ship passed by, Cartaret sent off the information to Suva authorities. In part he wrote:

"—offered to sell me thirty pearls, which I declined. What he did with them I do not know. Needing cash, he hired out to me as overseer. Now I learn he's wanted on a murder charge, and your officers can pick him up here at will."

Posting this, Cartaret looked up boat schedules to determine the first ship on which the Suva officers might arrive.

They would come, he concluded, on the copra freighter *Dolphin*, due on the sixteenth of the next month.

In the interim Cartaret continued his pretense of affability toward Shawn. He continued to extend petty compliments and courtesies to Adele. The planter even held leash on his temper when, leaving Shawn in the groves one hot day, he returned unexpectedly to the house and found Adele ransacking his private desk.

She was searching for the pearls, he guessed. There were no pearls in the desk. Nevertheless veins of fury stood out on Cartaret's neck and he took a step forward, cane upraised. Then with an effort, he checked himself. Not now. He must bide his time, keep the truce. Any blow he struck now would only upset the stage for that more crushing blow due on the sixteenth, when police came on the *Dolphin* for Shawn.

WHEN the day came, Cartaret stood on the beach watching the southerly horizon. It was nearly sunset when a mast, and a coil of smoke, appeared there. The ship from Suva! This evening hour of arrival quite suited Cartaret. Not from his fields but from his house, with Adele standing by devastated, he wanted them to take Shawn.

The planter returned to the bungalow and found supper waiting. Shawn came in and Cartaret held the chair for Adele. He beamed upon them both expansively.

"A ship's coming in. Got that cargo ready, Shawn?"

"Right," Joe responded absently. "But I imagine they won't take it on until tomorrow."

"You never can tell," Cartaret said with a gleam. "Just a chance they might take on part of it tonight."

Joe Shawn, in his awareness of Adele's loveliness across the table, barely heard him.

After that, Cartaret timed things craftily. From a corner of his eye he watched the ship creep in through the reef channel. Just as it dropped anchor in the lagoon, the planter suggested adjournment to the living room for liqueurs.

Adele rose. Cartaret uncrooked the cane from the arm of his chair and followed her. Rather jauntily, Shawn thought, as he filed with them into the main room.

The cordials were served. Cartaret did the honors himself. Then he stood on the hearth with his legs spread, his face florid as he offered a toast to the king.

With a harsh laugh he refilled his glass. "And to all the king's men!" he shouted. "Here come three of them now!"

Adele glanced nervously from the window. She saw three sub-officers of the Suva police disembarking from a shore boat. Now, abreast, they were striding toward the house.

She turned bitterly and accusingly upon her husband. "You sent for them?"

"Exactly," admitted Cartaret.

Shawn looked and saw them coming —they had reached the garden. Then he saw Cartaret step quickly in front of the cabinet to guard the loaded gun in case Joe tried to escape.

"You're caught!" he taunted Shawn. All pretense was gone now. "Adele, take one last look at this gallows-bird before they drag him away."

Adele ran to Joe, crying: "If they take you, make them take me too, please."

Then came a knock at the door. Cartaret bellowed, "Come in."

Three belted policemen stepped in.

Their eyes swept the room and came to rest on Shawn.

"There's your man," Cartaret yelled, pointing with his cane. "Wanted for murder, is he?"

"Righto," the ranking officer answered briskly. "On an airtight count, sir." He produced a paper and took a step toward Joe. "Crown's warrant for you, Joseph Shawn."

Adele turned desperately to face the officers. "Take me with you too, please," she begged. "I can't bear to stay here alone—with him." Her harassed eyes indicated Cartaret.

"The lady's my wife," said Cartaret.

"Madam," the ranking officer said to Adele, "naturally we can't take you with us. You're not in this. Our authority extends only to the man Shawn."

"He's innocent," Adele cried.

"No use, Adele," Joe said. "They have to serve the warrant. And in just a few minutes I'll go with them peacefully."

ALL this while Joe had been edging toward the cabinet. He made a leap now and snatched Cataret's loaded gun from a drawer there. Before the three officers had time to resist, he was holding them up.

"Raise your hands," Joe ordered with an edge on his voice. "Not that I'm trying to escape. I'll go along with you peaceably enough. But first just give me three minutes—to invoke an unwritten law on Cartaret."

The ranking officer, although he held his hands shoulder high, was outraged.

"You can't do that, Shawn," he protested.

Joe ignored him and spoke to Adele. "I'm cocking the gun, Adele, and placing it in your hand. Keep them covered. No, I won't do a bolt. Are you up to it?"

"I'll do anything to help you, Joe," Adele said, and took a staunch grip on the gun.

"Hold on, lady," warned the head officer. "Aiming that gun at us puts you outside the law."

Joe answered for her. "Quite. She's holding up the king's men with a cocked gun. So now, even if I'm guessing wrong, you'll *have* to take her with you to Suva."

Then whirling quickly, Joe snatched the cane from Carteret.

"The second unwritten law," he explained to Carteret, "is this: if a man canes his wife, any other man has a right to snatch the cane away and whip the brute, publicly, to within an inch of his life. Like this."

Thwack! The blows were already falling. Thwack, thwack!

"This'll all count against you, Shawn," a policeman warned.

"Unless I'm guessing right," Joe challenged, "about why Carteret hasn't caned anybody lately. He's been pulling his punches. The other day he caught his wife searching his desk for pearls. It burned him to a fury. Up went his cane—but he didn't bring it down. Why?"

Thwack, thwack! Joe kept beating a steady rain of blows on Carteret's head, on his shoulders, upon his cringing back.

"And yesterday a house boy spilled soup on him," Joe went on. "Up went the cane, but again it didn't come down. It set me to thinking, wondering why he never even flicks at a weed with this cane any more."

"Stop!" shrieked Carteret. He was on all fours, groveling now. And as the last blow lashed his back, the cane broke at its middle. Spewing forth from the break came a glitter of revelation, like stars of shock jolted from Carteret, dancing there, then bouncing across the floor. The pearls!

"More, hell," said Bonniwell.

PEACE MARSHAL

Third part of four

By FRANK GRUBER

HARD fighting, hard dying, the old West was feeling the influence of Eastern capital. Already, in 1872, Eastern railroads were putting down tracks toward the setting sun. Soon would come the day when Texas cattle would be driven up the Chisholm Trail, shipped from a Kansas depot, and sold scant days later in seaboard markets at fabulous profits.

Towns and men were changing to suit the times. Mushroom cities sprang up overnight, flourished until the railroad had pushed beyond them, and settled down into sleepy villages. And people in the know could anticipate the trend of

population and make tremendous profits.

Such a man was Jeff Barat, adventurer, gambler and gun-fighter. With his brother, an Eastern railroad financier, he planned to buy up land in Broken Lance, Kansas, block the cattle trail to the railroad by cornering real estate in the vicinity, and assess a charge on every Texas herd that came up the trail.

It was a good idea, but another man had thought of it also. John Bonniwell, famous throughout the West after subduing four notorious killers single-handed, had recovered from five near fatal wounds and was back to try his luck again. With Tom Waggoner, a friend, he bought up land before the Barats could corner it—and the start of a feud began to flare.

Bonniwell had had his fill of living by a gun, but a few days in Broken Lance showed him that there was no middle road for a man who had worn a marshal's star. He would still have to fight on the side of the law, or be killed by friends of men he had shot down defending it. Wherever he went, now, it would

be to face vengeance from Texas guns, and men who knew no law.

The Barats proved surprisingly tractable at first. They bought heavily into Broken Lance, controlling the gambling and dance hall interests, and outside of importing several notorious gun-fighters to act as bodyguards, evinced no outward desire to bring about trouble. But the signs were ominous. Jeff Barat was making a strong play for the hand of Eleanor Simmons, an Eastern girl who had attracted Bonniwell's interest. He had openly stated that Bonniwell would have to throw in with him or take the consequences. Soon, Bonniwell knew, he would have to take up his guns again, and this time it would be against an organized gang of powerful foes, who would pay money to see him blasted from the face of the earth.

Inevitably the climax drew near. For the railroad sprang up in a single day, loading pens the next. And with them came Texas men driving wild Texas cattle. Between them and John Bonniwell, who had killed four of their leaders, there could be nothing but ceaseless enmity, with no quarter asked or given.

DAY by day the railroad came closer to Broken Lance. Before it reached the town, there was an impediment—a sea of bawling Longhorn cattle. The Texas trail drivers who usually drove their cattle a hundred miles farther, decided that the short buffalo grass surrounding Broken Lance was excellent beef fodder. They decided they'd be better off financially by fattening their stock for a month at Broken Lance, than driving farther and shipping sooner.

That was when the trouble began. The cattlemen knew of One Percent Simmons. They went miles out of their way to avoid crossing the acres he claimed. But now there was a city near Simmons' ranch, and a railroad shipping yard.

There were three thousand Longhorns in the first Texas herd to reach Broken Lance. Accompanying the herd were twenty hard-bitten riders. They had avoided One Percent Simmons' Ranch and were careless. They received a rude shock that evening when fifty men rode down to their camp and surrounded them.

Jeff Barat opened the parley. "You're on my ranch, folks."

The trail boss, a fiery Texas man, snarled at Barat, "What the hell you mean—your ranch?"

"I own all the land hereabouts that isn't owned by Oliver Simmons," replied Barat, grinning hugely. "You been payin' Ollie one percent for the privilege of *crossing* his ranch. But I wouldn't do a thing like that to you. I'll let you graze your herd here for thirty days, until the railroad comes here."

The Texas man saw the fifty armed men, knew that his own group didn't stand a chance. He said: "We'll drive on to Baker."

Barat shrugged. "Suit yourself about that. But—your steers have already trespassed on my land. They've eaten a lot of valuable grass that I needed for my own herd. So you'll have to pay. Two steers in every—"

The Texas man went for his guns. Jeff Barat shot him through the face. Another trail rider tried to avenge his foreman. Kelso, Barat's lieutenant, shot him in the stomach; then, when he was writhing on his knees, he rode down and coolly sent a bullet through his head.

After that the herd was cut, and if the Barat men took a few more than sixty head, nothing was said. Having paid the tax, the Texas men naturally remained at Broken Lance. They went to the city and talked about their grievance. They drank and they grew resentful. They quarreled with barkeepers. Lee Thompson buffaloed two of them with his long-barreled six-shooter. He and his deputy threw four more into jail and kept them overnight.

And then, overnight, there were a quarter million Texas Longhorns on the plains surrounding Broken Lance. Two thousand Texas men, each with a year's wages in his pockets, took possession of the town. They outnumbered any other group of residents and they took Broken Lance for their own.

They drank and they fought and they gambled. They rode their horses at breakneck speed up and down the streets of Broken Lance. They shot their guns

in the air, now and then at a window.

Broken Lance was, Abilene, Newton, Baker, all over again. All rolled into one. It was hell.

THE amazing growth of Broken Lance disconcerted Jeff Barat.

"Ive seen other boom towns spring up," he told his brother, "but never one like this."

"The location of this one is ideal," responded his brother, "but what about this cattle business?"

Jeff scowled. "It's about that I wanted to talk. I'm licked. You can hold up a single herd and make the drover give you two percent, but you can't hold up fifty herds, not if they all come in the same week. We've gotten five hundred head of cattle and that's all. If I tried to cut a herd now the Texas men would get together and wipe out Broken Lance."

The older of the brothers frowned. "You told me this man Simmons has been doing it for years."

"He has. But you must remember he was out here alone on the prairie. There weren't as many herds coming through then, and they didn't *all* come this one way."

"I don't like it, Jeff," said Ferdinand. "You assured me we could get fifty thousand head in a year or two. That was the basis of our campaign."

"It doesn't have to be," declared Jeff. "I can squeeze a million dollars right out of Broken Lance in a year."

"Can you?" Ferdinand squinted at his brother. "I never dreamed even a Western town could be as lawless and wild as this one seems to be. How much longer can you keep it under control?"

"As long as I want," retorted Jeff. "I've got some good boys lined up. They keep the cowboys from Texas stirred up, and the peace marshal has his hands so full with them he can't take time to see other things."

"But what about this man Bonniwell? I've heard some things about him."

Ferd shook his head. "Something's wrong with the man. My hunch is he's lost his nerve."

"That feat of his in Baker didn't look like it."

"A flash in the pan. He got all shot up in Haleyville last year, and it's my idea he don't like shooting anymore. At any rate, he had the chance to be marshal here and didn't take it."

"He's pretty close with this Waggoner."

"They're old friends. I heard that he don't get any cut from Waggoner."

"He's a fool if he doesn't. Waggoner's making money. He's selling farms, now, to the settlers that are coming in."

"They're suckers. This land isn't any good for farming."

"Perhaps it isn't," said Ferdinand Barat. "But they seem to think it is. I understand Waggoner sold forty acres of land yesterday to a sucker, as you call him, for sixty dollars an acre."

"What? Why he didn't pay over two dollars an acres for the stuff. Say—"

Ferdinand Barat grinned. "I'm ahead of you. We've got a couple thousand acres ourselves. We can get some more, a little ways out. If the boom lasts we won't miss those fifty thousand head of steers you promised me."

THE boom not only lasted, but it swelled. When the railroad was two weeks old, it came into Broken Lance twice a day. Each time it disgorged a record load of passengers. And they still came in—on horseback, in covered wagons and even on foot.

Broken Lance had eighteen saloons in its three-block business section. There were two women's clothing shops, now, in addition to Lou Sager's millinery shop. There were three barber shops, two poolrooms and a bowling alley. A man by the name of Bee came in and opened a photographer's establishment. He did a rushing business.

A cowboy came in from the trail. He first got a haircut, then some fancy clothes. After which it was only natural for him to step around to Bee's and get his photograph taken.

A man from New York stopped off one day and rented a large store. From then on Broken Lance had theatrical entertainment. Some of the leading traveling companies of the profession played in Broken Lance. At two dollars admission,

the theatre was packed every evening.

Before three herds of Texas Longhorns had reached Broken Lance, a half dozen well-dressed, well-fed men entered the town. They were cattle buyers. They flashed enormous rolls of greenbacks and were very liberal about "setting them up" in the saloons. By the time the first train came to Broken Lance there were fifty cattle buyers, more or less, always in the town.

All the buffalo hunters of the frontier made Broken Lance their headquarters. Josh Hudkins had in his yards, at one time, forty thousand hides. And he shipped twice a week.

With the advent of the farmer and the settler, a new industry sprang up, the buffalo bone business. For ten years the buffalo hunter had been slaughtering the buffalo on the prairies, for countless generations before him, the Indian. The plains were literally covered with bones.

Sven Turnboom bought a forty-acre farm from Tom Waggoner, at forty dollars an acre. He had seven children and a stout wife. The first month he was on his farm, he brought in enough wagon loads of buffalo bones to pay for his entire farm.

It got to be a joke around Broken Lance, that buffalo bones were legal tender.

The buffalo hunters were salty men. There was a natural enmity between them and the Texas cowboys, for the majority of the buffalo hunters were Northerners and had fought in the Union Armies. They were, however, greatly outnumbered by the cowboys, which did not deter them from fighting.

Lee Thompson, the marshal, favored the buffalo hunters. Which didn't go at all well with the cowboys, who maintained that if it weren't for them Broken Lance would roll over and die, and they should therefore be accorded special privileges.

IT WAS Sheidler, the owner of the Golden Prairie Saloon, who instigated the Sunday shooting matches. A mile south of Broken Lance was a small patch of cottonwoods. There was a five-foot swale in front of them and the double protection made an excellent target range.

Sheidler hauled out a couple of barrels of beer, a keg of whiskey and opened shop, at the tail of a wagon. Every Texas man was a marksman, and the buffalo hunters lived by their skill with guns. They wagered furiously, and shot it out at targets. Which was better than shooting at each other.

The Sunday shooting match got to be an important event. Most of Broken Lance turned out for the occasion, as did every cowboy in miles around.

The second Sunday a couple of Mexican cowboys brought a crateful of vicious fighting roosters. Broken Lance went wild over the sport.

Inside of two weeks, Harrison, the Wells Fargo agent, was complaining about the large number of chicken crates that were coming in to Broken Lance. Certain citizens were sending all over the country for game birds of all sorts and descriptions.

John Bonniwell went out to the shooting matches, but took no part in them, even though he was challenged repeatedly. He was a legend, and men who were themselves expert with guns wanted to see his marksmanship.

Wild Bill Hickok came to Broken Lance one day and stayed over for the Sunday shooting. A group of local sportsmen made up a purse of a hundred dollars to persuade him to give a demonstration.

Hickok consented and amazed the gunhawks with an astounding exhibition of skill. He shot with Frontier Model .44's at a distance of three and four hundred yards and hit a six-inch target. He split a bullet on the edge of a silver dime, cut spots out of playing cards; tying back the trigger of his gun, he demonstrated the art of "fanning" a gun, by striking back the hammer of the pistol with the flattened palm of his hand. The five shots that rolled from the gun sounded almost like one.

Bonniwell, watching, saw however, that Hickok's marksmanship was not very accurate when he fanned the gun. He talked to Hickok later.

"How is it you're not the marshal of Broken Lance, Mr. Bonniwell?" Hickok asked.

He was a tall man with hair that came down to his shoulders. He was the acme of courtesy and had the softest and smallest hands Bonniwell had ever seen on a man of his size.

"Since Haleyville I don't have the hankering for that sort of work," Bonniwell replied.

Hickok nodded. "I've lost it myself. It's bad for the nerves. There wasn't a minute of the time I was in Abilene or Hays that I wasn't expecting a bullet in the back. I'm going to do a bit of scouting for the soldiers. The Sioux will be a relief after these cowboys."

The following Sunday, Bonniwell was drinking a glass of beer at Sheidler's wagon, when he saw most of the crowd moving toward a group of men who were shooting with revolvers at a distance of a hundred yards.

"Kelso and Slingerland are shootin' against a couple of strangers," said a passerby. "They're gettin' beat, too!"

Bonniwell finished his beer and walked over to see the shooting. He came just too late to see the strangers shoot, but Len Kelso was popping away at a paper target, taking careful aim before each shot.

A man who stood near the trees, to one side of the targets, brought up the piece of paper at which Kelso had shot. Kelso looked at it and swore.

"I guess you're beat, pardner!"

The broad-shouldered stake-holder stepped aside to give the money to the conquerors of the Broken Lance pistolmen.

Then Bonniwell saw the two strangers. He drew a soft breath.

One of them was of medium height, smooth shaven, except for a full mustache. The other man was taller and more robust. His face was covered with a short sandy beard. His eyes were slightly staring and he moved as if his muscles were steel springs.

"Anybody else want to shoot?" he asked in a voice that was tense, even though he tried to make it casual.

"For how much?" asked Bonniwell.

The tall man turned a little and saw Bonniwell. He hesitated just an instant before he replied. "Five hundred or a thousand."

"That's pretty steep for me," Bonniwell said, accenting slightly the word "me". "But if you'd care to shoot for just the sport and twenty dollars, say, I'd be glad to accommodate you."

"I'll take you up on that, Mr.—?"

"Bonniwell."

The tall man extended his hand. "My name's Howard. And this is my friend, Mr. Woodson."

Bonniwell shook hands with both "Mr. Woodson" and "Mr. Howard". He had never seen Mr. Woodson before, but he was positive that Mr. Howard was a man he'd encountered on at least two occasions.

"How shall we shoot, Mr. Bonniwell?" asked the man who had given his name as Howard.

"I like a long distance," said Bonniwell.

The man called Woodson suddenly grinned. Howard stiffened, however.

"How about a hundred and fifty yards?" he asked.

"That would be fine. Ten shots apiece? All three of us?"

"No, I'll just watch," said Woodson quickly.

THE additional distance was paced off and targets put up. "Will you shoot first, Mr. Howard?" asked Bonniwell.

Howard shrugged. "Doesn't make any difference." He drew two revolvers from his holsters. Bonniwell noted that one was an old fashioned Navy pistol, the other a Frontier Model .44.

Howard stepped up to the line, threw up one gun and began shooting. He scarcely aimed, and fired the first five shots in less than three seconds. Then he shifted guns and emptied the second gun just as quickly.

He began reloading instantly and was finished when a man brought the target. A murmer of awe ran through the crowd. It was a long range for accurate shooting and the stranger had fired without apparent aim. Yet he had scored seven bull's eyes, and three shots within the circle just outside the bull.

"That's very good shooting, Mr. Howard," said Bonniwell. "I'm afraid you'll collect the money."

"I've heard you shoot very well yourself, Mr. Bonniwell," said Woodson, who stood directly behind Bonniwell, a fact of which the latter had not been unaware.

Bonniwell shrugged. He waited until the range was clear, then drew his guns. He smiled at the tall Howard, then turned toward the target and fired. His aiming was as casual as Howard's had been, but if anything the shots came a little quicker. His shift to the left hand gun was a split second faster.

When the man brought the paper target Bonniwell waved it to Mr. Howard. The tall gunman stared at it and wet his lips. "Nine bulls and the tenth just cuting the edge."

The audience, largely Broken Lance citizens, cheered roundly. Some of the Texas men even joined.

"Will you have a glass of beer with us, Mr. Bonniwell?" asked Howard, after he had given Bonniwell two ten dollar gold pieces.

"With pleasure."

But half of the shooters followed them to the refreshment wagon. Bonniwell got beers for himself and the two strangers. The shorter of the two then signaled Bonniwell to come to one side.

When they were out of earshot of others, the taller man asked:

"You know who I am?"

Bonniwell nodded. "We met on a train a few weeks ago. Your brother wasn't with you then."

"How do you know I'm his brother?" asked the man called Woodson.

"There's a family resemblance."

The shorter of the two looked a little worried. Howard said gruffly. "What are you going to do?"

Bonniwell shrugged. "I'm a private citizen. But there are a couple of men in Broken Lance who hail from Jackson County, Missouri."

"We're leaving right away," said the man who called himself Woodson. "We shouldn't have come, but Jess wanted to shoot. How much did you lose on the train, Mr. Bonniwell?"

"About a thousand dollars."

"We won that much today. Give him the money, Jess."

Mr. Howard, whose real name was Jesse James, scowled at his brother. But he produced a handful of money and handed it to Bonniwell.

A minute later the two men were mounting their horses, beautiful black animals. Bonniwell never saw them again. But he heard much of them, from time to time.

CHAPTER X

UNSEEN FOES

TOM WAGGONER said to Bonniwell, "The Texas men have practically taken over Broken Lance."

"They've taken over every town they ever visited," said Bonniwell. "They took Haleyville and Baker, Caldwell and Wichita. They used to tell me the Texas man was a desirable citizen. I've never had occasion to think so. If there are any good Texas men they stay at home."

Waggoner scratched his jaw thoughtfully.

"I've seen their rowdiness elsewhere, of course. I blamed the Kansas men for it. They wanted the drovers to bring their herds to their towns; did everything they could to antagonize them. They cheated them, mistreated and insulted them."

"What do you think Broken Lance is doing to the Texas men? Jeff Barat is charging them two beefs of every hundred for grazing privilege. He gets them into his saloons and takes away their money with his crooked games—"

"What do you mean saloons, John?" asked Waggoner.

"Besides the Broken Lance Saloon, the Barats own The Two Spot, The Texan's Friend, The Last Chance and The Trail's End."

"Are you sure?"

Bonniwell shrugged. "Whether you like it or not, Tom, Jeff and Fred Barat own Broken Lance."

Tom Waggoner cursed softly. "That was the one thing I didn't want to happen. That's why I rented our lots and stores, instead of selling them. I didn't want them to get into the wrong hands."

"You didn't buy enough of Broken Lance," said Bonniwell. "Furthermore, that newspaper that's starting up this week, *The Broken Lance Point*—well, that belongs to the Barats, too."

"That I knew. But he won't make any money from it."

"No? Perhaps not directly. But I know what a newspaper can do to the community. We had one in Haleyville that was owned by the wrong side."

Bonniwell's prediction was startlingly true. The first issue of *The Broken Lance Point* came out two days later. On the first page was set forth the editor's platform. It read:

BROKEN LANCE IS ROTTEN!

"*The Broken Lance Point* makes its bow to Broken Lance. It is the only time it will bow to Broken Lance. Its policy will be to thrust. It is independent and will remain so. When we decided to establish this newspaper we looked over the situation and decided that of all places in Kansas we knew, none was more suited for our endeavors than Broken Lance. None was more rotten and none needed cleaning up more.

"It is the duty of a newspaper to fight for the community's best interest and it shall be the object of this newspaper always to thrust where a thrust is needed, dig where digging is necessary. The goal toward which we aim is the betterment of Broken Lance. To that end we pledge ourselves.

"The lifeblood of Broken Lance is the cattle trade. Without it, Broken Lance would shrivel up and die. It is the duty of Broken Lance, therefore, to treat the men from our great sister state of Texas as we would want them to treat us, did we go to them with our largess. In the brief time we have been in Broken Lance we have observed things that have shocked us, that have opened our eyes to the crying need for a torchbearer like *The Broken Lance Point*. We have seen Texas men robbed, cheated, swindled, insulted. We marvel that they have not left us in disgust.

"We are rechecking some of the information we have probed, and we intend in our next issue to give the name to specific things that have been done in Broken Lance, to point the lance at individuals who have made Broken Lance what it is—ROTTEN!"

J. A. Monroe, Editor.

THE first issue of *The Broken Lance Point* was a complete sellout. The Texas cattlemen bought the paper in batches, took them to their camps and howled and roared.

Tom Waggoner, white with anger, came to John Bonniwell with a copy of the paper. "You said Barat owned this sheet. If he does, this man Monroe's crazy. He's come out against the very things Barat is responsible for."

Bonniwell inclined his head. "Barat's smarter than I gave him credit for, and a hell of a lot more vicious. The Texas men will be out of hand now, and when the next issue comes out and it calls by name certain men reputed to be cheating Texans, and those men are Barat's competitors—"

Waggoner gasped. "Lord They'd tear this town apart."

"They'll forget about Barat robbing them of a few head of cattle. They'll go after the men mentioned in the paper, and you can be sure Barat won't be one of them."

An hour later three merchants with folded copies of *The Broken Lance Point* went to call on the editor. They found him ensconced in a little shack next to the Broken Lance Saloon & Dance Hall, a huge cigar in his teeth, boots on a desk.

Inside the door sprawled a couple of men who were often seen in the saloon next door.

"Howdy, gents!" the editor of *The Broken Lance Point* greeted his callers. "Come to put an ad in *The Point*, have you?"

"We have not," said Josh Hudkins, the spokesman of the trio. "We've come to make a protest about this editorial."

Mr. Monroe took his feet off the desk. He was a flabby man of about forty, with an incredibly red nose and the worst teeth that had been seen in Broken Lance.

"Well, well," he said. "So *The Point* stuck you gents. Well, well. You're Mr. Hudkins, the honorable mayor, huh?

Hmm, I got a little piece here I was figurin' on printin' in the next issue of *The Point*. It tells how you and a few of the boys pulled a fast election on Broken Lance—"

"You print that and it's the last thing you'll print in this town," Josh Hudkins said ominously.

"Threatening the editor, Mr. Mayor?" chuckled Monroe. "Well, well. I'll have to make a note of that, too. Might make a story for the paper. What else did you have on your mind?"

"Nothin', I guess," said Dog Martin, the cattle shipper. "Nothin' that you'd understand. You're determined to get the Texas men to tear this town apart, and so there ain't no use talkin' to you. The only language you'd understand is—"

He made a quick movement and a Frontier Model Colt with a twelve-inch barrel appeared suddenly in his hand. But he didn't fire it. A voice behind him drawled.

"Drop it, Mister!"

The three visitors had foolishly ignored the two men sitting inside the door. When they turned now, they saw guns in their hands. And somehow they knew that these men wouldn't mind using them.

Dog Martin dropped his gun to the floor. Without a word the three men went out. The editor of *The Broken Lance Point* yelled after them: "That will make a story, too."

An hour later Len Kelso killed a Texas man on the sidewalk before Josh Hudkins' Mercantile Store. The cattlemen, more than slightly drunk, had come out of the store and collided with Kelso.

Kelso disappeared after killing the Texan. But ten minutes later a mob of a hundred cowboys marched down to Josh Hudkins' store and riddled it with bullets. A customer inside was badly wounded. Hudkins escaped injury by dropping to the floor at the first volley.

Bonniwell saw the advancing mob from the entrance of Tom Waggoner's office. When the citizens of Broken Lance took to the stores and buildings, Bonniwell turned casually and went through the office to the back room, where he dropped on a cot.

Tom Waggoner found him there a little while later. "Did you hear the riot?"

"Couldn't help hearing," Bonniwell replied shortly.

"The Texas mob blasted the hell out of Hudkins' store," exclaimed Waggoner. "And it was Kelso who killed that man Hubbard."

"Thompson arrest Kelso?"

"No, he can't find him. I think it's just as well. The Texas men have gone completely wild. Hear that noise?"

"I hear it," said Bonniwell, "and I don't like it. I'm thinkin' of taking a little trip. One'd do you good, too, Tom. You been working pretty hard."

"You mean you think I ought to run out?" exclaimed Waggoner. "Why, I couldn't run now, John. Not until things are settled."

"They won't be settled, Tom. Not for quite a spell. Texas has got Broken Lance treed, and there's nothing you or anyone can do about it. You wanted the Texas cattle trade for Broken Lance and you've got it!"

"Yes, but we didn't bargain for this violence. It wouldn't have happened, either, if Jeff Barat hadn't turned robber, if he hadn't got that damn newspaper—"

"Barat don't give a damn for the Texas business. Not after this year anyway. He figures on making a big enough stake this year so he won't need Texas. The way he's goin he'll do it, too."

"No, he won't. The Texas drovers need us as badly as we need them. If we treat their men right they'll cooperate with us. We're going to hire a couple more deputy marshals."

BONNIWELL took the street an hour later. The Texans had gone to the saloons and were drinking themselves soggy drunk. So unless they were unduly annoyed in the interim they could be expected to remain reasonably quiet for a couple of hours.

He passed Lou Sager's shop, and she saw him through the window and signaled to him. He went inside. She was waiting on a customer, a girl from one of the honky-tonks, and motioned to him

Texas men . . . took possession of the town.

to wait. He listened to the conversation.

"I like this hat," the girl from the honky-tonk was saying. "I ain't complainin' about the price, neither. I'll give you twenty dollars instead of fifteen if you'll promise not to sell one just like it to any of the other girls."

"I can promise you that easy enough, Gussie," Lou Sager replied smilingly. "I never sell the same style twice. I'm a woman, too, you know."

"Yeah, sure," agreed the girl called Gussie.

"And the price of the hat is still fifteen dollars," Lou went on. She wrapped it in tissue paper and put it in a square box. "Here you are, Gussie."

Gussie took her purchase, winked at Bonniwell and went out.

"Selling many hats to Texas?" Bonniwell asked then.

A slight frown creased Lou Sager's forehead. "Strangely, no. The Texas men spend all their money before they thing of going home. But business is good. That hat I just sold wouldn't have brought more than three dollars in Springfield, Illinois."

"So you like Broken Lance? Isn't it—kind of nerve wracking?"

Lou Sager shuddered. "I hear shooting in my sleep."

"Why don't you go back to Illinois? You can sell out your store at a profit."

She looked out of the window. "It's pretty hard to go back, John. Isn't it?"

"I've no place to go."

"Where'd you live before you came out here?"

"Indiana. But that was before the war."

She changed the subject. "Have you seen Eleanor Simmons lately?"

Bonniwell was silent for a second, then he said, casually: "The girl who came out here same time we did?"

But he wasn't deceiving Lou Sager. He looked suddenly at her and caught her regarding him with narrowed eyes. He turned to stare out at the street.

"She was in Broken Lance last week," Lou said quietly. "She asked about you."

"How does she like it at her uncle's?"

"I guess you know the answer to that, John. How *could* she like it there?"

"And she can't go home. She's out here for her health."

"Well, she was looking better." Lou Sager drew a deep breath. "Oh, I forgot to mention that she's coming to town again today. In fact, she's coming in right now."

BONNIWELL was startled. He had time only to give Lou Sager a reproachful look before Eleanor Simmons came into the millinery shop. She stopped just within the door, and said, "Hello, Lou," and then after a momentary pause, "How do you do, Mr. Bonniwell."

She wore a rather short, fringed skirt, a tan blouse with a bright scarf about her throat, soft elkskin boots. Her blonde hair was coiled on the nape of her neck and she wore a cream colored Stetson over it.

She was amazingly attractive in the Western costume—even more beautiful, Bonniwell thought, than she had been in St. Louis that day he had said good-by to her.

He said now: "How do you do. Kansas seems to agree with you."

"Thank you. Broken Lance seems to double in size every week."

She was coolly casual, but disposed to talk to him, anyway.

"In October," he said, "the town will shrivel up. Until spring, anyway."

A faint smile broke her calm voice. "Does it get very cold here in winter?"

"Quite," he began, and then stopped. The door behind Eleanor opened and Jeff Barat came in. He swept off his hat.

"I saw you come in here, Eleanor," Barat said. He shot a triumphant glance at Bonniwell. "You're having dinner with me tonight."

"Hello, Jeff," Eleanor Simmons said. "I don't believe I can stay in town for dinner."

Bonniwell moved to the door. "Got to see someone," he mumbled.

Jeff Barat pretended to see Bonniwell for the first time. "Uh, hello, Bonniwell."

Bonniwell did not look at Eleanor. But Lou Sager moved forward and his glance went involuntarily to her. He caught the expression of pity in her eyes and his lips became tight. He went out and walked stiffly up the street.

To Waggoner's office, less than ten minutes later, came a burly man in a broadcloth suit and a stiff-brimmed black hat.

"Bonniwell!" he exclaimed. "Been lookin' all over town for you."

Bonniwell got up and shook hands. "Jim Westgard! What are you doing in Broken Lance?"

"Business, John. You know I was appointed U. S. Marshal a few months ago?"

"I heard about it, Jim. I figured they picked a good man."

"I don't know. I've got a pretty big district. And our criminal average is kind of high."

"Who're you after? Jesse?"

Westgard sighed. No, thank the Lord! He's Bob Paulson's worry. My territory is south of the Missouri."

"Jesse was south a few weeks ago—"

"I don't want to hear about it!" Westgard exclaimed quickly. "He held up the state fair at Kansas City only last week. The boys believe he lit out for Missouri and that's good enough for me. I've got my own worry. A big one. Doug Sutherland—"

"What'd he do?"

"He held up a crossroads store over at Bellview. He killed the man who ran it, Jud Stanton, and got $22.00."

"Don't hardly seem like it was worth it."

"No. But Jud Stanton was the postmaster at Bellview and the $22.00 was government money. That makes it my job.

"Doug's usual gang was with him—Rafael Gallegos, Mort Reisinger, Jack Schiffkarten. They must have passed through Broken Lance yesterday or the day before. They know I'm after them."

"I didn't see them. I wouldn't know Doug, anyway."

"About your build, John. Sandy hair and usually a short beard. He's poison. I figure he's headin' for the Indian Nations."

"They usually do. They're hard to get there. Maybe the Comanches will take care of him for you."

"I can't depend on them. This Jud Stanton has a cousin who's somebody or other. He's making a big holler. That's why I stopped in to see you."

"Me, Jim?"

"Yes, I can guarantee you ten dollars a day and mileage to go after Doug. You know that country as well as any man south of the Missouri. I can't spend any more time going after him myself and I've got to get someone. I figure you're the best man for the job."

John Bonniwell frowned. "I didn't intend to wear a badge again."

"You didn't in Baker, John—oh yes, I've heard about it. It made the Kansas City papers. Just what are your plans? I understand you refused to be marshal of Broken Lance."

"I haven't any plans," Bonniwell replied. Suddenly he realized the emptiness of that statement. For days now he'd loafed about Broken Lance, the only man in the community who had no ambition, no desire to do anything or get anything.

He hadn't been contented during these weeks. He was an active man, normally. Idleness didn't make him happy. Someone on the street let out a wild whoop and fired his gun. Probably at the sky. It was a common occurrence. It made Bonniwell think of Jeff Barat.

He said: "I'll start in a half hour."

TWENTY minutes later, Bonniwell led a sturdy Texas bronc to the hitchrail in front of Waggoner's office. A rifle butt stuck out of the scabbard; there was a blanket roll tied behind the saddle. Bonniwell looked through the window and saw Waggoner inside, shaking hands with a man.

Bonniwell waited until the man left. Then he went in and said: "I'm going away for a little while, Tom. Maybe two-three weeks."

Waggoner stared. "What?"

"Jim Westgard, the United States Marshal has deputized me to get Doug Sutherland."

"Sutherland! Why, he was in Broken Lance the night before last. He and those cut-throats of his started a big fight, then lit out. I thought you were through with that sort of thing."

"That's what *I* thought. Got to do something, though."

"But why didn't you take the job of marshal of Broken Lance?"

"To be a walking target for every drunk in town?"

"Lee Thompson—"

"Won't be an old man. He's overdue already. In your place, Tom, I'd take a trip for a week or two myself."

"Can't, John. Too many things in the fire. There's a big herd on the way up from Texas, and I hear there's a flock of buyers and commission men coming to town in a day or two. But—you're coming back, aren't you?"

"Of course. And Tom, tell Lou I didn't have time to say good-by."

"It'd only take you a minute!"

"I'd rather not."

Bonniwell rode four blocks to the end of Main Street, crossed a little wooden bridge that had been hurriedly constructed over Indian Creek. Then he was among the Longhorns. As far as he could see, they covered the plains. Thousands upon thousands of them. Here and there a mounted cowboy, trying to keep his owner's animals from mingling with neighboring herds.

The Longhorns liked the short buffalo grass. Bonniwell thought the beeves,

despite the nine hundred mile trip from Texas, in amazingly good flesh. This was good cattle country. In a few years the railroads would be going down into Texas. The herds would no longer come up here. A man could start a ranch of his own here then, be a thousand miles closer to the markets and get premium prices. Bonniwell played with the thought.

A man couldn't keep from thinking. You couldn't live on a ranch by yourself. Hired men were all right, but a ranch wasn't home without a woman around. You had to have an incentive to do things. By yourself, you could always get by. You could hunt buffalo, do a little trapping in the winter. But when you've had five bullets in you at one time and you've been in a hospital for seven or eight months, the zest for those things is gone. You think about settling down.

This was a good country. The Indians were pretty quiet. Soon, when the buffalo was gone, they'd stay on their reservations. The country would become civilized. When the railroad went farther south, the boom towns here would become quiet country villages. It would be much like Illinois around here.

SIX MILES south of Broken Lance, Bonniwell came upon a man doing a strange thing. He was ploughing down the buffalo grass. Bonniwell stopped his horse and passed the time of day. Then he asked: "What you figure on raising here?"

"Wheat," the farmer replied. "This ground'll raise thirty-five, forty bushels of winter wheat to the acre."

"The first year, maybe," Bonniwell conceded, "but what if you get a good wind? It'll blow this top soil down to The Nations. You need that buffalo grass to hold it down."

"The buffalo grass don't bring any more," replied the farmer. "If the wind blows the farm away, all right. There's plenty more land. It's free."

Bonniwell rode on. Two miles farther he met two Indians mounted on scrawny ponies. One of the Indians was naked save for a loin cloth, the other wore a loin cloth and above that a dirty pink shirt without a collar, but a flaming red necktie almost choking him. On his head was a battered Stetson.

Bonniwell kept his hands on the pommel of the saddle and stopped a dozen feet from the Indians. They regarded him sullenly in silence for a moment, then the man in the "white man's clothes" grunted, "Got tobac'?"

Bonniwell had a half dozen cigars in his shirt pocket. He took out two, tossed them to the Indians.

"More!" said the Indian with just the loin cloth.

"More, hell," Bonniwell replied.

The Indian with the Stetson had a rusty Sharp's rifle across his horse. He lifted it with his right hand in an angry gesture. Bonniwell knew that he had obtained that rifle from a buffalo hunter and that the hunter had not given it away willingly.

He smiled at the Indians and dropped his hands to his sides. With the speed of light they came up, each holding a Frontier Model Colt. The right-hand gun thundered and the Stetson leaped into the air. The Indians' ponies moved without urging. They departed.

Bonniwell rode on. Twelve miles from Broken Lance he came to a stage station, a sod house with a corral behind it. A whiskered Irishman was in charge. He was overjoyed when Bonniwell got down from his horse.

"B'gorra and I hope you stay the night with me. 'Tis lonesome here."

"Sorry, but I can't stay. Tell me, did four men ride past here yesterday?"

"Did they?" snapped the Irishman. "Come back to my corral and look at the crowbaits they left me, after taking four of my fine horses. You're the sheriff. maybe?"

"United States Deputy Marshal. That was Doug Sutherland and his gang. It's well you didn't try to fight them."

" 'Tis ashamed I am that I didn't! But domned if they didn't get the drop on me whilst I was lookin' away fer the minute."

"What time was it when they left here?"

"Just about this time. A mite later. The way they went they'll kill those

horses, unless they get some others."

Bonniwell frowned. For fifty miles or more the stagecoach trail went the way the outlaws were heading. Sutherland, if he wanted, could get fresh horses at every stage station. He could increase his twenty-four hour lead before leaving the trail to cut south into The Nations.

Bonniwell climbed back on his horse.

"Sure, an' you'll not be tryin' to capture them four by yourself?" cried the station man.

Bonniwell shrugged. "There'll be a break sooner or later. I'll be ready for it."

He camped beside a little stream that night. But he slept well away from it. He was up with the cold, dewy dawn. Before nightfall he left the stage route and headed straight south into the wild Indian country. He had a cold supper in the saddle and rode until long after dark. He slept only five hours and was in the saddle an hour before the sun came up.

He lost a little time cutting the trail, but when he found it, he grunted with satisfaction. He was less than twelve hours behind. He didn't lose any during the day.

It started to rain that night and before morning the rain turned to sleet. Bonniwell got under the shelter of an overhanging bank and remained there all day, drenched to the skin. An ache developed in his left hip, where one of Sammy Taylor's bullets had once been embedded. He wrapped himself in a soggy blanket and shivered and dozed all night. The rain and sleet stopped before morning, but the sky was overcast and a raw, piercing wind came up.

The faint trail the outlaws had left was washed out. Bonniwell rode a zigzag course all day, but could not pick it up again. In the evening he made a fire, cooked bacon and coffee. He dried his damp blanket and clothes and slept soundly.

THE SUN awakened him.

He rode south until the sun was midway, then quit. Sutherland had changed direction during the rain. He might even have doubled back on his trail.

Bonniwell turned west. An hour later he had to take to cover in a small copse while a party of thirty Indians went by. They were Comanches, and Bonniwell did not like the way they traveled. They rode too stealthily.

He turned north for a few miles, then cut west again. In the afternoon of the third day following the rain and sleet he rode into the little town of Los Animas, Colorado. And there the hunch that had been riding with him became actuality.

He went into the Cattleman's Rest and found Leo Darby dealing faro to a lone player. When Bonniwell moved over to the table, Darby saw him and his eyes popped open.

"John Bonniwell!" He pushed back his chair and stuck out his hand. Bonniwell took it and the faro dealer pumped it vigorously.

"Hello, Leo," Bonniwell said. "How's things?"

"Rotten," exclaimed Darby. "Hell, there was a rumor that you were back, but I didn't believe it. I thought for sure you'd checked out at Haleyville."

Bonniwell smiled thinly. "It wasn't my time."

"I'm sure glad it wasn't. What are you doing here in Los Animas?"

Bonniwell shrugged. "Nothing particular. Like to have a drink with you when you get time."

"I was quittin' anyhow," said the faro player. He scooped up his money and went to the door of the saloon. There he stopped, shrugged and turned back to the bar.

Bonniwell sat down at the table opposite Leo Darby.

"Seen Doug Sutherland in the last few weeks, Leo?" he asked.

Darby was one of the best gamblers in the southwest. But the mere fact that he controlled his face so well told Bonniwell the answer.

"He's here," he said softly.

The faro player who had stepped to the bar, started for the swinging doors again. He walked sidewards, almost on his toes. Bonniwell shoved his chair to one side, said in a sharp voice. "Wait a minute!"

The man's face broke into a snarl and his hands, already hovering over his

guns, went down. Bonniwell drew from a crouching position, an awkward one. The bullet from his gun hit the drawing man in the left shoulder and spun him completely around. One of his guns, already drawn, flew out of his hand, ricocheted from the roughhewn bar, and clanged against the sheet iron stove a dozen feet away.

The man fell against a chair, crashed it to the floor and slowly lay down himself. He did not move.

Bonniwell walked over to him and looked down. Then he turned to Leo Darby, still sitting at the table. "Who is he?"

"Jack Schiffkarten," said Darby.

The bartender's eyes were on Bonniwell, but he polished a glass. There were two patrons at the far end of the bar. They were very much absorbed in their drinks.

Bonniwell slipped his guns into their holsters, nodded and went out of the saloon. He stood on the wooden sidewalk in front of it, looked up and down the street. There were a dozen or so horses tied at the hitch rails. Across the street, diagonally, was a clump of four horses.

A couple of men came out of the general store near the horses, looked toward the Cattleman's Rest and talked together for a moment or two. Then one of them began rolling a cigarette and the other walked back into the store.

Bonniwell rested his shoulder lightly against a post of the wooden awning over the sidewalk in front of the Cattleman's Rest. He stuck a cigar in his mouth, but did not light it.

After awhile he realized that he was angry with himself. He thought a moment about that anger and concluded that it was because of a familiar feeling. It always possessed him when there was impending action.

It wasn't a normal feeling. When a man knows he's about to be shot at, he ought to feel nervous, uneasy at least. He shouldn't feel ice in his veins. Because, hours later, there was reaction and it was not good.

But he knew, too, that no power on earth could make him leave his present post. No word of man, or deed, could force him to climb up on his mount and ride out of town. Not before the game was played out.

IT was a long time coming. So long that Bonniwell could figure it all out. They'd heard the shot across the street, knew that Schiffkarten had been in the Cattleman's Rest. So they had come out and seen only one man leaning casually against a post in front of the saloon.

The man rolling the cigarette was holding Bonniwell's attention. The man who had gone back into the general store was going out through the rear. He would circle around, cross the street far above and hurry into the Cattleman's Rest through the rear. If the receiver of the fired bullet was really Jack Schiffkarten, well, they would have the man in front between them.

Bonniwell's ears were always supersensitive at these times. He heard boots clumping inside the Cattleman's Rest, but only a whisper of voices. He leaned against the post, but his shoulder scarcely touched it. Yet he was relaxed.

The man who had gone back into the general store came out again and started talking to his friend, who had finished rolling his cigarette and was lighting it. They walked to the group of horses.

A man who wears heavy boots and has lived all his life in the saddle cannot walk too lightly on tip-toe. The outlaw in the saloon made only a tiny, scraping noise, but Bonniwell heard it. He heard the man approach the batwing doors.

He did not hear the click of the hammer being cocked. The man had cocked it before entering the saloon in the rear. But he sensed the exact second when the outlaw was stretching himself to peer over the top of the batwing doors.

Then Bonniwell took one step to the right. His hands darted for his guns; he half turned and his right-hand gun roared death across his own stomach. He didn't even seem to turn back to the street, but his gun continued to thunder.

A horse screamed and plunged. A man was down on his knees, firing at Bonniwell. Bonniwell's right gun was empty and he made a shift with his left that did not even interrupt the thunder.

And then he stopped firing. The horse across the street broke away from the hitchrail, plunged wildly out to the street.

"Bonniwell?" called a voice inside the saloon.

Bonniwell did not turn. "Yes," he said.

Leo Darby came out and stood behind Bonniwell. He was breathing hoarsely, while he sized up the situation. Then he said, in a tone of awe, "You got them all."

Bonniwell was silent for a moment, then he dropped one Colt into its holster and began reloading the other. "It's surer than the United States Court. And cheaper."

CHAPTER XI

SIX-GUN LAW

MARK STONER said "Morning, Tom," to Waggoner and continued walking. Waggoner reached out and caught his arm. "Wait a minute, Mark."

Stoner grinned, but his forehead was creased. "Sure, Tom."

"What's this I hear about you selling your store, Mark?"

The creases on Stoner's forehead became deeper. "Uh, this Kansas City fella, Burlingame, made me a good offer and—well, I just sold it."

"I merely leased you the store property, for two years," Waggoner said.

"All right, Tom," said Stoner. "I had a bad run the other night. Jeff Barat offered me two thousand for the lease."

"So you sold it and promptly lost the money back to Barat. And now he's crowded you out of the store."

Stoner sulked. "I know I was a fool, Tom."

"You were, to believe Barat's games are honest. Well, good luck, Mark."

Jeff Barat was leaning against the doorpost of the Broken Lance Saloon & Dance Hall. He was smoking a black cigar.

"Morning, Mr. Waggoner," he said.

"You really figure on owning all of Broken Lance, eh, Barat?" Waggoner said bluntly.

Barat grinned. "Come inside a minute, Mr. Waggoner. Like to talk to you."

Waggoner followed the gambler through the big saloon into an office at the rear. He noted as they went through that Len Kelso was playing solitaire at a table. Kelso had reappeared the day before and no one had said a word to him about the killing of the Texas man in front of Josh Hudkins' Store.

Barat sat down at a desk in his office and from a drawer brought out a tin box.

"Some of the boys didn't figure leases were worth money, Mr. Waggoner," he said. "I bought up eight-ten of them pretty cheap."

"You could have paid more for them," said Waggoner, "and still won the money back at your games."

"That's right, but a couple of them might have double-crossed me and taken the money to someone else's games." Barat rolled the cigar from the left side of his mouth to the right. "Mr. Waggoner, you can't fight our kind of money. In the long run my brother and I'll get you. But we like to do things quick. We'll pay you a hundred thousand dollars for all your holdings. A nice, clean sale."

"No," said Tom Waggoner.

"You didn't begin with more'n four-five thousand," said Jeff Barat. "That's a damn good profit. You've reached the top. In two months the cattle season'll be over and it'll be a long winter."

"Neither you or your brother have enough money to buy me out," Tom Waggoner declared steadily. "Anyway, why should you waste a hundred thousand dollars? You could kill me much cheaper."

Jeff Barat's eyes glinted. "I don't like that kind of talk."

"Then don't insult me!" Waggoner clumped to the door of Barat's office. He opened it and said, "In the end Broken Lance will lick you, Barat."

Waggoner canvassed his leaseholders and learned the worst. Barat had worked it insidiously. Some of the merchants weren't yet aware that they were in the clutches of the Barats. Yes, they'd sold their leases, but they were running their stores just as usual.

"And you wouldn't even tell me before

you sold it," Waggoner said bitterly to Ole Swenson.

"But hal, Tom," retorted Swenson. "There be twenty spec'lators in Broken Lance. You spec'late real estate yourself. I make little profit, so what I do?"

"You'll have to figure that out when Jeff Barat throws you out of this place and puts in one of his own men."

"He can't do dat," cried Ole Swenson.

"No," retorted Waggoner sarcastically. "But he will."

There were no customers in Lou Sager's shop, so Waggoner went in.

"The Barats have won another round," he told Lou. "They've been buying up my leases. I own a lot of stores, but Barat will run them. For a year or two, anyway, and after that I can have them again."

"I meant to warn you about that today," exclaimed Lou. "Jeff Barat's been awfully friendly to me lately. I thought it was because of Eleanor Simmons, but last night he offered me three thousand dollars for my lease. I thought it was such an absurdly high figure that I questioned him about it. I—I let drop that I didn't even have a lease and he shut up like a clam, then."

"Perhaps I'd better give you a lease," said Waggoner grimly.

"Tom!"

"Sorry," he apologized. "Barat's got under my skin. So has Broken Lance. You know, Lou, if I'd known what I was creating when I laid out Broken Lance for the railroad, I think I'd have bought all the land for twenty miles around the right of way and thrown the deed into the river."

"But the railroad's coming next week, and then they'll start shipping the cattle. Many of the Texas men will return home."

"Others'll take their place. There are now seventy-five thousand head of cattle on the plains around here. The drovers tell me at least that many more are headed here. And Broken Lance's reputation will get to them before they come near. The new lot of cowboys will be ready to pit themselves against Broken Lance. What we've seen the past week will be tame compared to what Broken Lance is going to see during the next two months. And tomorrow another issue of *The Point* comes out."

The Point came out the next day. On the first page was a scathing denunciation of the men in Broken Lance who were unfriendly to the "best interests of Broken Lance." At the end of the article was a list of names, with a subhead over it. "*The Enemies of Broken Lance.*" There were eighteen names in the list. Tom Waggoner's name was first. He checked the list and discovered that the seventeen other names were of men who were lessees of his. None were men who had sold their leases to Jeff Barat. And Barat's name, of course, was conspicuous by its absence.

Waggoner got his guns, strapped them about his waist and went out to call on Mr. Monroe, the editor and publisher of *The Point.* He was still across the street, when he saw the little group converging upon the office of *The Point.* The group consisted of Lee Thompson, the marshal, his three deputies and Mayor Hudkns. Waggoner ran across the street and caught up with the tail end. Schumann, the chief deputy, saw him and turned.

He shook his head. "Better keep clear!"

Waggoner refused to heed him. He pushed past, into the office. Monroe was behind his desk and his two gunmen were just inside the door. But Lee Thompson quickly stepped in front of the gunmen.

"Just keep your hands still!" he ordered.

Hudkins stormed up to the editor.

"I'm closin' up your shop, Monroe!" he said.

"You try it—" blustered Monroe.

"I have. I got an injunction. Judge Post. It's all legal. You don't get out another issue of this paper until it's settled in court. I'm suin' you personally for a hundred thousand dollars for slander—"

"Cut it!" snarled Lee Thompson.

One of the gunmen relaxed. Thompson's hands were on the butts of his .44's. He signalled to Schumann and the latter stepped around and flicked the guns out of the holsters of the guardians of *The Point.*

"I'm givin' you ten minutes to get out of town," Lee Thompson told the disarmed men.

"You'll save yourself a lot of trouble, Monroe," Hudkins said ominously, "if you'll take the same order."

"We'll see about that!" said Monroe, white-faced. He got up, pushed through the little crowd and went out to the street.

Thompson reached down and yanked one of the gunfighters to his feet. He slammed him through the door. Schumann propelled the other man outside, although with a little more gentleness.

"That's that," said Mayor Hudkins grimly. 'Either we have law and order in Broken Lance, or—"

The big window pane exploded into a million fragments. Thunder rolled into the newspaper shop and buckshot spattered over furniture and the men inside.

"Duck!" yelled Schumann, the deputy.

His command was unnecessary. Everyone in the room was already down. Lee Thompson, too. But he had not fallen of his own volition. His head was a mass of shredded bone and bloody flesh. He had taken the full blast of the shotgun.

A rifle roared and a slug crashed somewhere in the newspaper shop. A brace of pistols began stuttering. Schumann began crawling to the rear.

"The back way," he said.

"The hell with that!" cried Tom Waggoner. He started to get to his feet and a bullet tore at his coat sleeve. He promptly dropped back to the floor.

They retreated to the rear then, the three deputies, the mayor of Broken Lance and Tom Waggoner. In the alley they dispersed, Schumann and the deputies going one way and Hudkins and Waggoner another.

MAIN Street was strangely deserted when they reached it by a roundabout circuit of the block.

A jail had recently been built of solid logs. It consisted of one cell room on the first floor and a combination courtroom and marshal's office on the second.

Judge Stone was in the courtroom. He was the first lawyer to come to Broken Lance and had, by a vote of the city council, been elected judge. He was a somewhat seedy looking man of 35 or so, who enjoyed a poker game and liquor more than he did his judicial duties. At the same time, he was a sardonic, independent man with very strong convictions.

He fined cowboys a hundred dollars for disorderly conduct and at his first session fined the livery stable owner five hundred dollars for a similar offense. His contention was that a man should be fined according to his ability to pay.

"Lee Thompson's been killed," Hudkins told Judge Stone the minute he and Waggoner entered the courtroom. "I want a warrant for Jeff Barat's arrest."

"Barat kill Thompson?" asked the judge.

"Of course not. But you know he was behind it."

"No, I don't know it," said Judge Stone. "And unless you've got a strong case against him, I don't think I can issue a warrant for Barat."

Hudkins blew up. "Have you sold out to Barat? Who the hell do you think hired you?"

"The city council," said Judge Stone. "I guess they can fire me again if they want."

"You damn right we can! And if you don't give me that warrant in a hurry, that's just what's going to happen."

"Easy, Josh," cautioned Waggoner. "You know that Judge Stone hasn't sold out to Barat. He gave you the injunction against *The Point,* didn't he?"

Hudkins glowered. "Yeah. Well, maybe you're right, Judge. But if we get somethin' on Barat—"

"I'll be only too glad to issue a warrant," snapped the judge. "You know, Hudkins, I don't give a damn for Barat. But what the hell could I do, even if you did bring him to this court? Could I sentence him to the penitentiary? You call me a judge, but I'm merely a local magistrate, without much legal authority. I can fine someone if your law officers can collect it, but that's about all. I can't send a man to the penitentiary. Only the higher court at Baker can do that."

"He's right, Josh," said Waggoner. "Anyway, who could serve a warrant now? Schumann—"

At that moment Schumann came in. He looked around the group. "Stimson and Paige have quit."

Hudkins gnashed his teeth. "Schumann, from now on you're marshal of Broken Lance. Hire yourself some deputies. As many as you think necessary."

"No," said Schumann. "I won't be marshal. I'll be a deputy, but I don't figure on being the main target for the guns around here."

Mayor Hudkins glared at Schumann. "Lose your nerve?"

Schumann looked down at his hands. "I've been scared stiff ever since I've been in Broken Lance. Haven't you?"

Before Hudkins could reply, Waggoner laughed. "I have."

Schumann nodded. "You need a marshal like Hickok or that young fellow Wyatt Earp, who made Ben Thompson crawl into his hole in Ellsworth. Or John Bonniwell."

"Bonniwell's down in The Indian Nations," said Waggoner. "Anyway, he wouldn't take the job. It was offered to him."

"I think I'll take a vacation for a couple of weeks," said Schumann.

The boom of a shotgun rolled in through the window of the courtroom. Waggoner strode to the window, looked out upon Main Street. "Kelso's got a few of his friends together."

There were more than twenty. They had mounted horses and were riding up Main Street in the direction of the courthouse. Kelso was waving a double-barreled shotgun. Even as Waggoner looked he let go another blast at the sky. He followed it with a wild yell.

For two hours Kelso and his followers ruled Main Street. They rode from one end to the other, shot at the sky a few hundred times, sent a few bullets through store windows and yelled defiance to all of Broken Lance.

JACK McSORLEY still rode behind the buckboard when Eleanor Simmons went to Broken Lance. Arriving in Broken Lance, Eleanor gave Mose fifty cents and told him to be back at the buckboard in an hour. She shopped in a few of the stores, then went to Lou Sager's millinery shop to visit awhile.

Lou wasn't her usual cheerful self today.

"This town's gone crazy," she said. "It's as much as your life is worth to go out on the street."

"There's a bullet hole in your window, Lou," said Eleanor.

Lou shuddered. "Some of the cowboys think it's sport to break windows. I had three new panes put in during the past week."

Eleanor looked wide-eyed at Lou. "Did—did they shoot through the windows while you were in the store?"

"Of course. The mere fact that they might shoot a woman doesn't bother them any more. If things don't get better around here I'm going to sell—what are they up to now?"

The usual noise of mid-afternoon Broken Lance had risen to a tremendous crescendo. Lou walked nervously to the window and peered out.

"They're playing their new game," she said. "Some smart cut-throat invented it yesterday. They arm two Negroes with a bull whip apiece and let them whip each other. The one who quits first is the loser. The winner gets a huge prize—something like fifty cents."

Eleanor gasped. "But they might cut each other to ribbons with those awful whips."

"What of it? It doesn't hurt the men who put them up to it." She winced. "There they go!"

They could not hear the cracking of the whips inside the store, because the cowboys yelled too loudly. Eleanor covered her ears. But suddenly she heard Lou exclaim,

"Why, one of them is your man Mose!"

"Mose!" cried Eleanor.

"Yes, and he's getting the worst of it. It's—horrible!"

Before she realized what she was doing Eleanor was rushing from the store. Out in the middle of the street was a yelling, roaring, laughing crowd of three or four hundred men. In the center was a twenty-foot ring and in this stood the

"Anybody else want to make any objections?"

two Negroes, whaling away at each other with bull whips.

"Mose!" cried Eleanor. "Stop that."

Her voice was drowned by the roar of the crowd.

Eleanor clenched her fists and pounded the broad back of a cowboy.

"Let me through," she cried. "Let me through."

The cowboy turned and grinned at her. "Now, lady, this ain't the kinda thing you'd want to see."

"Of course it isn't, you fool!" screamed Eleanor. "One of them is my driver. I—want to make him quit."

"Why, sure, go right ahead." The cowboy, smiling broadly, stepped aside. But the men were pressed together twenty deep. It would have taken Eleanor ten minutes to force her way through. Meanwhile the cracking of the whips penetrated even the uproar of the wild audience.

Eleanor reeled back, dismayed.

And then a cool voice behind her said, "Go to Lou's store. I'll stop them."

She whirled and stared at John Bonniwell. He smiled crookedly and drew his long-barreled guns. Eleanor reached out to stop him. "No. Don't—!"

"It's all right," he assured her. He stepped around her, raised the muzzles of both guns to the sky and fired four quick shots.

The crowd promptly stampeded. Bonniwell, his guns thrust straight ahead of him, marched forward. Men fell aside, clearing a path for him to the Negroes, who stood now bleeding and scared, their whips trailing in the dust of Kansas Street.

"Beat it, you two," Bonniwell ordered. "And if I catch either of you doing this again I'll give you a beating you won't forget."

The Negroes dropped their whips and plunged into the milling crowd.

BUT now the half-drunken cowboys were beginning to understand that one mere man was robbing them of their sport.

"What the hell's the idea buttin' in?" one man yelled. He began tugging at his gun.

Bonniwell smiled icily at the man, took a step forward and smashed him along the temple with the long barrel of his gun. The man went down like a poled steer.

Bonniwell turned easily, swiveling his guns around with him.

"Anybody else want to make any objections?" he asked the crowd at large.

They didn't. They recognized him now. He was probably the only man in Broken Lance who could have got away with it.

"Bonniwell's back!" someone yelled. Men began to fall away. In a few minutes they were going to the saloons.

No one went near the unconscious man on the street. Bonniwell holstered his guns and stepped back.

"Where's the marshal?" he asked a man backing away from him.

The cowboy looked sullenly at him. "Ain't none."

So his prediction about the longevity of Lee Thompson's life had been accurate.

He was gone. He hadn't been told that Thompson was dead, but he knew it. Thompson had had more nerve than sense. And not quite enough stuff to back up his nerve.

He turned away to look for Eleanor. She had disappeared, gone back to Lou Sager's store, no doubt. But Tom Waggoner was running toward him now, coming from the direction of the courthouse.

"John!" Waggoner yelled.

John Bonniwell smiled his relief. These past few days he'd been thinking about Waggoner, a little afraid that he should not have left his friend in Broken Lance without his support.

They shook hands.

"I never was so glad to see you in my life!" declared Waggoner.

"Things been happening here, I gather," said Bonniwell.

"They have," said Waggoner vehemently. "For a week now Broken Lance has been hell. But come to my office. I've so many things to tell you."

They went to Waggoner's office. Bonniwell noted as they went in that the windows in front were broken.

"No use putting new ones in," said Waggoner. "They'd be broke again in a half hour."

Inside, Waggoner told Bonniwell of the things that had happened in Broken Lance during the past two weeks. "*The Point,* despite the injunction came out with its third issue, yesterday. It had a line across the top of the first page, "Order Prevails in Broken Lance." And right underneath, the editor printed a detailed list of the shootings and killings of the week."

"So Jeff Barat's taken over Broken Lance," said Bonniwell, thoughtfully.

"With a vengeance. He's calling a meeting of the town council for tomorrow morning, for the purpose of appointing Kelso as the new town marshal."

"What's he want to call the council together?" asked Bonniwell. "He and his brother make only two of seven votes."

"No," said Waggoner. "The setup in Broken Lance has changed. The Barats have bought Beak Nelson. And Doug Fletcher was killed day before yesterday in a fight over a card game. You were away, which left only five men on the council. They would have outvoted Hudkins and myself."

"Now it's three and three. That makes a tie. Hm." Bonniwell was thoughtful for a moment. "You say they own Beak Nelson?"

"Jeff Barat bought his lease. If Nelson doesn't vote as Barat tells him, he'll be thrown out of his store."

"I see. Well, I guess we'll have to attend that council meeting."

Waggoner sighed in relief. "I feel better already. But tell me, John, how'd you make out on your trip? You got Sutherland?"

Bonniwell nodded. "In Los Animas."

"You didn't bring him back, though?"

Bonniwell's forehead creased slightly. "They didn't surrender."

Tom Waggoner whistled softly. After a moment he looked at his watch. "It's after five. I'm taking Lou to supper. Want to come along, John?"

Bonniwell shook his head, then suddenly changed his mind. "Yes, or rather, I'll meet you in the restaurant."

He left Waggoner at the door of the restaurant and went inside. He passed up his usual place at a table against the wall and sat down near the window.

A couple of minutes later Waggoner appeared. With him were Lou Sager and Eleanor Simmons.

"John!" cried Lou Sager. "It's good to see you back in Broken Lance."

"I was glad to get back," he replied. His eyes were on Eleanor Simmons as he spoke.

"Mose is at the doctor's, so Lou insisted—" Eleanor tried to explain her presence.

"Kansas is agreeing with you," he said.

She flashed him a smile. "I didn't get to thank you for what you did outside a little while ago."

Lou Sager laughed. "What's on the menu? Beef steak or roast beef"

Tom Waggoner chuckled. "Saw a man bring a bear in this afternoon. Ever try bear steak, Lou?"

She shuddered. "Goodness, no!"

CHAPTER XII

"GIVE ME YOUR GUNS!"

BEFORE the meeting of the city council Ferdinand Barat gave earnest advice to his younger brother.

"We can show all our cards and wind up in a scrap. That's not the way to do it. We'll surrender to them, in the important things. Then they'll let us win a small victory. Our job'll be to build the little victory into a big one. You follow my lead, Jeff, and you'll see what'll come of it."

"All right," agreed Jeff Barat, "but I'm frank in saying I'm worried about John Bonniwell's return. The story's that he killed Doug Sutherland and his three men in a single-handed fight. The town's buzzing with the talk and I don't like it. Makes him too much of a hero to suit me."

"That's fine, Jeff, that's fine," said Ferd Barat, grinning craftily.

The council meeting this time was in the courthouse, which Judge Stone vacated.

The lineup of the factions was obvious in the seating arrangement, three on each side of the table that served as the judge's bench.

Mayor Hudkins opened the meeting. "Jeff Barat called this meeting. I figure he should do the talking."

"Before he does," said Ferd Barat, "I'd like to say a few words. It's obvious to all of us that Broken Lance has gotten out of control. Lawlessness and rowdiness are the order of the day. It is my idea that we need a law enforcement body headed by a man known for his courage. I want to propose that this council urge Mr. John Bonniwell to accept the post of marshal of Broken Lance!"

Tom Waggoner whistled in astonishment. Bonniwell, looking at Josh Hudkins at the moment, saw the merchant's eyes pop.

Bonniwell grinned crookedly. He said: "If the majority want me, I'll take the job."

The Barats and Doug Fletcher were as much surprised this time as were the others. The Barats had counted on John Bonniwell being adamant in his refusal and perhaps surrendering only after a long and serious appeal.

Tom Waggoner got over his astonishment quickly. Elated, he exclaimed: "I move that we vote on that."

It was a unanimous vote, of course.

"And now," Ferdinand Barat resumed, "I think the council should consider the matter of proper elections, both for the town of Broken Lance and the county. All of us hold offices by a flimsy private election, the legality of which is open to question. Broken Lance has become the most important town in the county. Unquestionably it will become the county seat. It is important therefore that we hold lawful elections as soon as possible."

Josh Hudkins looked about the group at the table. "What you say's true, Mr. Barat. For my own part I'm not stuck on the job of mayor. I'd rather someone who was regularly elected should have the job. It's a cinch his authority would be unquestioned then."

"Quite so, Mr. Hudkins," said Jeff Barat. "For my own part, I want to propose your name as a candidate for the office. I intend also to support you for the office."

Tom Waggoner nudged John Bonniwell. The latter knew that Waggoner was trying to guess what was behind Ferd Barat's apparent change of front.

Plans for the election were discussed. The Barats were tractable to every suggestion that was made by the others. On one or two little matters they disagreed, but on slight argument conceded the point. The result of the meeting was that the Hudkins-Waggoner-Bonniwell faction won on all counts. Anyone in Broken Lance had the privilege of being a candidate for an office, provided a petition containing five percent of the estimated voting strength of Broken Lance was secured.

TWO months ago John Bonniwell had told himself that he would never again use a gun against a fellow being, not for pay. Living in the West, he had to carry a gun. His life might depend on having one. But he would draw it only in self defence.

He hadn't wanted to be sucked into the maelstrom of frontier life. Yet he had been unable to avoid it. In Baker, on the first day of his return, had arisen an occasion when not his life alone, but the lives of others were at stake. He had used a gun to cow the drunken Texas men. While he hadn't fired it, he had nevertheless put himself in the position where he might have been compelled to use it.

The reaction had left him a little sick. But he thought it had merely strengthened his determination not to become again a professional gun wielder. Then his closest friend, had asked him to ride shotgun on the stage that was carrying other friends. He had used a gun, effectively, even though it had been at long range.

And then Broken Lance. He had taken a passive interest in it, had remained merely because Tom Waggoner was Broken Lance, because he thought Tom needed his moral backing. It wasn't because of Eleanor Simmons, he told himself, that he stayed in Broken Lance. No, it was because of Tom Waggoner. Eleanor had told him very plainly, in Baker, what she thought of him. That part of him was finished.

Yet because of a trifling incident concerning Eleanor Simmons he had accepted the deputation from Jim Westgard, had gone on a chase that was fraught with the utmost danger. He had faced gunfire again and had been victorious, as he always had been.

He had time to think things over then. Had finally and definitely faced the logical conclusion. He was absolute master of any man on the plains with a gun. It wasn't conceit. It wasn't because of any acquired skill. If a man grew to be seven feet tall, that was no feat of his own. It was in him. Some men may practice singing for ten years and never develop a voice. Another might sing in opera, without any training at all.

Bonniwell had the gift of guns. In a land and time when men practiced "the draw" daily to acquire proficiency, Bonniwell never touched his guns except to loosen them in the holsters now and then. Yet he could outdraw and outshoot the best. He had proved it time and again. That his talent was linked with a fatalistic coolness under danger was not unnatural. Without that quality his speed with a gun would not have developed.

Bonniwell was finally and reluctantly

convinced that he was the right man for a certain task. He had really known it for weeks, but had not wanted to admit it even to himself.

Broken Lance needed a marshal. Not just an ordinary marshal. It needed John Bonniwell. He was the right man for the right job.

BONNIWELL cleaned his guns in the back of Tom Waggoner's land office, oiled them and made sure there was no impediment in his holsters. Then he buckled the guns about his hips and tied the ends of the holsters to his thighs with buckskin thongs.

Tom Waggoner watched the procedure. "Maybe you were right before in not wanting to tackle the job. It's not a question of nerve any more. It's just that Broken Lance is out of hand."

"Do the drunks and thieves and ruffians own Broken Lance, Tom?" Bonniwell asked quietly, "or does it belong to you and Hudkins and all the other decent citizens?"

"I'm not arguing with you on that score," Waggoner smiled wanly. "It's just—well, you're the best friend I've got. And I'm worried about you. I can't for the life of me conceive how any man, even one like yourself could quell the horde of thugs that have taken over Broken Lance."

"Well, I admit Haleyville at its wildest was only an imitation of Broken Lance, but I think I can handle this job. The first thing I'm going to do is enforce the ordinance against carrying guns inside the town limits."

Waggoner gasped. "You can't do that! Why, the Texas men would as soon give you their horses and saddles as their guns."

"They don't have to give them to me. They can check them at the stores. If I can't get the cowboys and the others to disarm, I can't control Broken Lance. A gun is too much of a temptation to use if it's on a man's leg."

"But there are fifteen hundred Texas men in and around Broken Lance!" exclaimed Waggoner. "You can't make that many men disarm. Not if they ride in in groups, as they usually do."

"I've got to do it, Tom," Bonniwell said seriously. "If I don't I can't win. I've got to make the Texas men realize that there is a law in Broken Lance, that the town isn't theirs, to do with as they like."

"All right," said Tom Waggoner slowly. "We'll organize a committee to back you up in any emergency."

"No, a committee can't rule Broken Lance. It's got to be one man. All I want you to do, Tom, is see that printed copies of the gun-toting ordinance are put up in conspicuous places about town."

"They'll be up this evening. And John—" Waggoner stopped. He nodded at his friend.

The news that John Bonniwell had been appointed marshal of Broken Lance was known before he took the street. He passed men and they stopped to look at his back. On the other side of the street, they congregated in small groups and stared at him as he passed along.

The saloons were the logical centers for the checking of the cowboys' guns. Bonniwell went into them and talked to the proprietors.

"The cowboys are going to start checking their guns in town," he told Humphrey Small, who owned the San Antone Bar, "it'd be a good idea if you'd rig up a bunch of nails on the wall behind the bar, to hang the guns."

"You're going to try to enforce a law like that?" Humphrey Small asked in astonishment.

"I'm *going* to enforce it," said Bonniwell. "They can come into town with their guns and they can ride out with them, but they can't carry them while they're in Broken Lance. Not after today."

"You're the marshal," said Small. "I'm just a saloon keeper. If any men want to check their guns with me, I'll do it. But I can't make them do it."

"You don't have to. They'll want to do it of their own accord."

Bonniwell talked to four other saloon proprietors. Their reaction was much like that of Humphrey Small. He avoided the saloons that were owned or controlled by Jeff Barat.

On his way back from his trip up the

street, Bonniwell saw Tom Waggoner nailing a white notice on the outside of the office of *The Broken Lance Point.* Before Waggoner could walk away a dozen cowboys came from the Broken Lance Saloon & Dance Hall next door and surrounded Waggoner. Bonniwell could hear them jeering at his friend.

WELL, it was as good a time as any to start. Probably better than later, when the cowboys had had too much time to talk things over and fortify themselves with liquid defiance.

He crossed the street diagonally. When he was halfway across the group about Waggoner spied him and spread out to face him. Bonniwell raised his eyes so they were focussed on the awning over the newspaper office. He kept them there until he was on the wooden sidewalk directly in front of the Texas men.

Then he brought his eyes down and ran them slowly over the group. He stopped when his eyes came to a snarling face.

"You've read the sign, cowboy?" Bonniwell asked carelessly.

"Yeah, and I'd like to see *anyone* make me give up my guns!" exclaimed the Texas man.

Bonniwell's mouth twisted in a half smile. He held out his left hand.

"Give me your guns," he said.

It was the challenge. The Texas man had been singled out of the group for the test. He had made the boast and been challenged. It was up to him now to buckle down to Bonniwell, or do something about it.

For a second the Texas man was as still as death. Then he went for his guns.

No man there could have said that he saw John Bonniwell's right hand shoot for his gun. But all knew that suddenly the sun was flashing on metal and that Bonniwell was lunging forward.

He didn't shoot. If he had he wouldn't have lunged forward. But he laid the long barrel of his Frontier Model Colt along the left temple of the Texas man's head with a force that sent the man reeling back into the arms of his comrades.

The Texas man's gun didn't even clear leather. It was still in his holster when he ricocheted from the surge of his friends and slithered to the wooden sidewalk in front of the newspaper office.

Then Bonniwell stepped back. His gun was in his hand, held carelessly with the muzzle drooping.

"Does anyone else want to *make* me take his guns?" he asked.

No one said a word. But every man there breathed heavily. Again Bonniwell picked out a leader. "You," he nodded to a whiskered giant. "Take off your guns and drop them to the sidewalk."

With his eyes fixed on Bonniwell's in a hypnotic stare, the big Texan unbuckled his gunbelts and let them fall about his feet.

"The rest of you," Bonniwell ordered.

Every man of them obeyed. Bonniwell swept the guns together with his foot and pushed the heap to one side toward Tom Waggoner.

"Take them to your office, Tom," he said. "The men can have them when they leave town."

"You mean that?" one of the Texans found voice to ask.

"Of course. They're your guns. The city ordinance merely forbids you to carry them while in town. Beginning tomorrow there'll be a dozen places where you can check your guns when you come in to Broken Lance."

Bonniwell slid his own gun back into his holster. Then he stooped and twisted his hand into the collar of the unconscious Texas man's coat. Turning his back upon the group, he began dragging the man down the street.

ALL of Broken Lance, it seemed, was lined along the sidewalks. So that all could see him clearly, Bonniwell took to the middle of the street.

He dragged the unconscious man carelessly, even swerving a little to pull him through a small mud puddle. He wanted the lawless element in the town to see what happened to a man who dared to defy the law of Broken Lance.

Before he got to the stout courthouse and jail Henry Schumann came out of a store and joined him.

"I just got back from a vacation, Mr. Bonniwell," he said. "Wonder if you're looking for a deputy?"

Bonniwell let go of the unconscious man.

"I am," he said, "and you're hired. Take this to jail and see that he stays there until tomorrow morning."

"Judge Stone's in court now."

"A night in jail will take the fight out of a man," said Bonniwell. "We'll take them to trial only once a day." Without waiting to see the disposition of the man who had defied him, Bonniwell returned down the street. He walked on the opposite side from the newspaper office this time. But he walked leisurely. He wanted to give everyone a chance to see him, to make any protest they felt entitled to make.

Josh Hudkins was standing in his doorway.

"Fine work, John!" he praised.

Bonniwell nodded. In the door of the bank stood Jeff Barat and his bodyguard. When they saw Bonniwell coming they turned and went inside.

In the window of her shop Lou Sager signaled to Bonniwell. But he shook his head slightly and continued to Tom Waggoner's office.

Inside, he found Waggoner slumped in his chair, perspiration standing out on his forehead.

"You got away with it!" he said.

"Once," replied Bonniwell. "And now the rest of the day they're going to talk it over. And some of them are going to dare each other to resist. There'll be a showdown either tonight or tomorrow."

Tom Waggoner groaned. "Oh, Lord! I thought you were a goner that time. Why didn't you shoot that cowboy? You had every occasion to do so. He was drawing—"

Bonniwell's eyes slitted thoughtfully. "A real bad man doesn't like to be buffaloed and dragged to the calaboose. He figures a thing ought to be settled with bullets. My idea is to humiliate the bad man. I think the lesson will take better."

"I don't want to see your next lesson," Waggoner shuddered. "I'm a nervous wreck now."

Bonniwell had an early supper at the Trail City Restaurant. He ate heartily and lit up a cigar afterwards. He strolled down the street puffing easily on the cigar. He had to pass Lou Sager's store, but avoided looking in. He did not want to talk to Lou—yet.

TOM WAGGONER was gone from the office when Bonniwell returned. He found a copy of this week's *Point* and read it from first page to last. The reading consumed more than an hour. He looked at his watch then and found that it was six-thirty. Still too early. He went to his cot behind the partition and stretched out on it. He actually dozed.

When he awoke it was dark in the office. He did not strike a light. He tried his guns to see that they were not stuck in the holsters.

He went into the light-studded darkness of Kansas Street. He knew that it was quite possible there was a man or two hiding in the gloom who might take a shot at him. He couldn't help that. He had to take the risk. He walked across the street to Jeff Barat's main saloon.

When he hit the sidewalk his ears told him that the revelry inside the big dance hall and saloon was somewhat modified tonight. He had expected it to be. He pushed open the batwing doors and in his first glance saw that the stage was set for him. The saloon and dance hall was crowded; the games were playing to capacity; but there was a rather wide aisle from the door to the seventy-five foot bar. And at the closest end of the bar stood Len Kelso, Slingerland, and Jeff Barat.

Jeff Barat wore his flowered waistcoat and the Prince Albert with the velvet collar. There was a long black cigar in his mouth. No guns showed on his hips.

But there were guns on the other two men.

Bonniwell was spotted instantly. No one said a word, but a hush ran through the saloon. Bonniwell walked steadily down the lane that had been left for him, until another step would have collided him with Jeff Barat. Then he stopped.

"You men read the city ordinance about carrying guns," he stated, rather than asked.

"We read it," said Kelso, shortly.

"We're packin' our guns," Slingerland added.

Bonniwell nodded. Out of the tail of his eye he saw the look-out at the faro table, slowly swing sidewards, so his left hand was concealed from Bonniwell. But Bonniwell knew what the hand held.

He smiled pleasantly and dropped his eyes to Len Kelso's midsection. Then with the smile still on his face he smashed a terrific blow at Jeff Barat. It caught the big gambler completely by surprise.

The blow hit Barat high on the left side of his face and knocked him sidewards into Kelso, throwing the latter off-balance, even as he was going for his gun.

Bonniwell followed through on the punch. He took two quick steps to the right and behind Barat. He drew his right gun as he moved and when he came behind Barat he slugged him over the head with the barrel of the gun. Barat sagged forward, but Bonniwell whipped his left hand about his waist and kept him from slumping to the floor.

The lookout's gun thundered and a bullet crashed into the back bar mirror. Bonniwell, his smile now twisted into a snarl, stabbed out with his gun, around Barat's body and jammed it into lean Slingerland's spine.

"Up with 'em!" he said savagely.

Slingerland yelped and arched away from the gun. Bonniwell rammed it again into his spine.

"You, Kelso!" he said. "Drop your gun or Slingerland and Barat both get it!"

Kelso's guns were clear of his holsters. He was turning to shoot Bonniwell. But when he saw the turn the situation had taken he stopped. His eyes blazed with hate and anger, but his mouth was open in surprise.

"Damn you!" he said thickly.

"Drop the guns," Bonniwell ordered. "And that goes for the lookout and anyone else around here who has ideas. Drop 'em quick!"

It was the only thing Kelso could do. Slingerland's life he might have risked, but not Jeff Barat's. Barat was his employer. Without him, Len Kelso would not even have been tolerated in Broken Lance.

When his guns clattered to the floor, John Bonniwell gave the unconscious body of Jeff Barat a violent shove that threw it against Len Kelso. Then he whipped out his other gun. And with two guns in his hands there wasn't a man in the saloon who would risk drawing.

"All right, you two," Bonniwell said to the disarmed gunfighters. "Pick up your boss and carry him to the calaboose." He could almost hear the gasp that went up in the saloon, but he did not turn his eyes away from the men before him.

Slingerland half turned around. His guns were in his holsters and there was a look of inquiry in his eyes. Bonniwell refused to heed it. He made a gesture at Jeff Barat.

They picked him up, then, Kelso the shoulders and Slingerland the ankles. And so they carried him out of the saloon, Bonniwell marching behind. No one followed. Not right away.

But when they were halfway down the street, Bonniwell heard men stamping around in the dark. They were yet twenty feet from the calaboose when the voice of Ferdinand Barat called out from behind.

"Mr. Bonniwell—wait!"

There was a light in Judge Stone's court. The door was thrown open and Henry Schumann came out on the little porch at the head of the stairs. He peered down into the darkness and whistled. Immediately behind him appeared Tom Waggoner. He called out:

"John?"

"Yes," replied Bonniwell. "Henry, come down and unlock the jail. I got a couple of customers for you."

Schumann took the stairs two at a time. Quickly he unlocked the padlock on the jail door and yellow light from inside flooded the group near the entrance.

"Slingerland's still got his guns," said Bonniwell. "Get them."

Ferdinand Barat pounded up from the rear.

"Mr. Bonniwell, what have you done to my brother?" he demanded.

Bonniwell half turned. He saw that the banker was unarmed and slipped his own guns into their holsters.

"I buffaloed him," he said, shortly.

"But what are you going to do now?" cried Ferd Barat. "You can't—throw him in jail!"

"Watch!" said Bonniwell. "All right, Schumann, in they go. All three of them!"

SCHUMANN hustled the prisoners into the jail, to join the man Bonniwell had arrested in the afternoon. He pulled the door shut and took the padlock in his hand to snap it in the hasp.

Barat leaped around Bonniwell and rushed at the deputy. "You can't do that!"

Schumann rammed his elbow into the big banker's stomach.

"Don't monkey with the law!" he snapped.

Ferd Barat staggered back. Then he reached under his Prince Albert and brought out a .41 derringer.

"Give me that key!" he cried.

Bonniwell chopped down with his fist on the banker's forearm and the little gun flew out of his hand.

"Carrying guns, Mr. Barat?" he cried. He seized the corpulent banker by the scruff of his Prince Albert, kicked the jail door open with his foot and threw Ferd Barat bodily inside. Then he reached in and drew the door shut with a slam. He took the padlock from Henry Schumann's hand and snapped it shut himself.

"That's that," he said, grimly.

Tom Waggoner was behind Bonniwell by this time.

"Gawd!" he breathed.

The three of them climbed the stairs to Judge Stone's court. There were a couple of shotguns and a .50 caliber Sharp's rifle in a rack. Bonniwell examined the guns to see that they were loaded.

"I guess I'll stay up here tonight," he announced, "just in case any of the Barats' friends get a notion to break them out of jail."

Tom Waggoner was pacing the floor. "D'you think you did the right thing, arresting the Barats, John? After all, they are about the wealthiest men in town."

"All the more reason to arrest them. Jeff Barat put Slingerland and Kelso up to wearing their guns. He had a trap rigged up for me. It's only right that I arrested him. And his brother—well, he assaulted an officer of the law. I figure we got an easier chance to enforce the law in Broken Lance if we prove that it treats everyone equal, if he's a busted cowboy from Texas or the leading citizen of Broken Lance."

In that Bonniwell was right. The three of them, Schumann, Waggoner and Bonniwell remained in the courtroom all night. There was no disturbance outside. Broken Lance, it seemed retired earlier than usual.

And the next day men began going about Broken Lance without their guns. Bonniwell had won a victory—a temporary one, at least.

At ten o'clock, when Judge Stone opened court, the room was crowded with spectators and there were a hundred men or more outside. Bonniwell stood at the top of the stairs just outside the courtroom, while Schuman went down and brought up the five prisoners.

Jeff Barat came up first. His face was bitter and his eyes ringed. He had not slept in the calaboose. His brother followed him, still corpulent and dignified, but in need of a shave. He walked haughtily past John Bonniwell.

"Court called to order," announced Judge Stone, banging on the table with a small hammer.

Schumann herded the prisoners so they were lined up before Judge Stone's table.

"What're the charges?" the judge asked.

"For these three," Bonniwell said, indicating Kelso, Slingerland and the Texas cowboy who had been buffalowed the afternoon before, "carrying firearms in violation of the city ordinances."

"Guilty or not guilty?" asked the judge.

"Guilty," said the Texas man. Kelso and Slingerland looked at one another, then Kelso said gruffly, "Not guilty."

"Guilty," said Judge Stone. "Twenty-five dollars or twenty-five days in jail. Next."

"Jeff Barat is charged with inciting to riot," Bonniwell charged. "His brother,

Ferd—attacking an officer of the law."

"Guilty or not guilty?"

"I protest this high-handed . . ." began Ferd Barat, blusteringly.

Judge Stone pounded on his table with the hammer. "Guilty. One hundred dollars fine, each of you. Pay or go back to jail."

"The hell with you!" cried Jeff Barat.

"Fifty dollars more—contempt of court!" snapped the judge.

Ferd Barat caught his brother's arm.

"We'll pay the fine," he said. He pulled out a huge roll of greenbacks and paid their fines.

"Court adjourned," barked Judge Stone.

IT was a big county, yet, save for the scattered settlers, there were only two centers of population—Baker, at the northern end of the county, and Broken Lance, almost a hundred miles southwest.

Baker had been the big town, but was now on the decline. Broken Lance was in the ascendancy. It should, if for no other reason than bulk of population, elect the county officials. The voters of Broken Lance were confident of that.

Yet when the necessary candidates' petitions were filed, Bonniwell discussed them with Tom Waggoner. "They've put Jim Malachy, of Baker, up for sheriff. How do they figure to elect him?"

"They don't, I guess," said Waggoner. "Any more than they can hope to put across Olcott for judge. I really think you should have run for sheriff, though. Schumann's a good man and well known, but you'd draw the Baker votes. They remember how you bluffed Malachy."

"Being marshal of Broken Lance is job enough for me," said Bonniwell. "And as far as Baker's concerned, watch it. Something about their setup smells."

His intuition was uncanny. The day before election, *The Broken Lance Point* came out with a strong appeal for the Baker candidates for the county offices.

"We should have kept that injunction on *The Point*," complained Waggoner. "A big bundle of those papers went to Baker on the stage."

"I see the fine hand of Jeff Barat in this. And I think it would be a mighty good idea to send five or six good Broken Lance men to be at the Baker poll, right through the counting of the ballots."

"They'll start in ten minutes!" declared Waggoner.

There were two polling places in Broken Lance, one in the Barat Brothers Bank and the other in Josh Hudkins store. Three men besides the regular election officials were assigned to guard the ballot boxes. And John Bonniwell spent the day going from one polling place to another.

The voting was done with a surprising degree of quietness. It worried John Bonniwell. He was still not relieved in the evening when the ballots were counted and the results posted.

For Sheriff. Henry Schumann, 456;
Jim Malachy, 98.
For Judge: William Stone, 540;
George Olcott, 14.

The Broken Lance offices were practically unopposed and Josh Hudkins was re-elected mayor.

It looked like a victory for Broken Lance, but Bonniwell retiring early, was up with the dawn. A half hour later, four of the six Broken Lance men who had gone to Baker to watch at the polls, returned. One of the four had a bandage about his shoulder.

He knew before Pete Jasper told him: "Every damn Texas man in Baker voted. Jim Malachy got 1800 votes. Olcott the same."

Bonniwell sighed. "You tried to keep the Texas cowboys from voting?"

"You'll notice Zwing and Hunter ain't with us," Pete Jasper retorted. "They're buryin' 'em today."

Bonniwell awakened Waggoner and told him the news. Waggoner was fighting mad. "We'll declare the Baker ballots illegal."

"How? Baker's proud. The citizens are mad because Broken Lance has passed them. They'd fight to the last man. You'd have a civil war if you went to Baker with an armed force. Besides, it isn't so bad. We still control Broken Lance."

"But neither Olcott and Malachy like you." Waggoner grunted. "Funny, that

two men who were once such enemies should now be working together."

"Politics make strange bedfellows. Malachy can't go back to Texas because of the warrants that are out for him down there. Being sheriff up here is a good sport for him. An' being county judge is more profitable than being mayor of a dying trail town."

"Do you think they'll make their headquarters in Broken Lance?"

Bonniwell shrugged. "I don't know."

They found out before noon. Olcott, Malachy and a half dozen retainers rode into Broken Lance. They went to the Barat Brothers Bank and remained there for a half hour. Then word came out that Judge Olcott would make his headquarters in Broken Lance, but Jim Malachy would return to Baker. He would be represented in Broken Lance by a deputy sheriff, whom he was appointing.

The deputy sheriff was Len Kelso, Jeff Barat's chief lieutenant and executioner.

A little while later Kelso came into the Broken Lance courthouse. Bonniwell was sitting in a chair behind a desk. Kelso grinned wolfishly.

"This is county property."

"Broken Lance money built it," said Bonniwell.

"Yeah, but we made a dicker with the mayor. Broken Lance uses the jail for temporary prisoners. The county of Baker gets the court room and these nice upstairs offices."

Bonniwell got up and went out. He walked down the street to Josh Hudkins' store.

"The county officers have taken over the courthouse," he told the mayor.

Hudkins' forehead creased. "Couldn't help it. I was just talkin' to Tom. He thinks we ought to build an addition to the place. We still have Judge Stone as justice. He tries all small cases—civil cases, involving not more than one hundred dollars."

"I'll use Tom's office as my headquarters for a while," said Bonniwell. "That is if I'm still marshal."

"Of course, John!" cried Hudkins, quickly. "We'd be lost without you."

"I wonder," said Bonniwell and went out.

A Texas man was sheriff of Baker County and a notorious gun-fighter was deputy sheriff, with headquarters in Broken Lance. Kelso drew wages from the county of Baker, and regular pay from Jeff Barat, a saloon and bordello proprietor.

In Broken Lance John Bonniwell ruled, but a man could commit a murder in Broken Lance and, by making a dash outside the town limits, be safe from molestation, provided it suited the purposes of Jeff Barat to have him unmolested.

It didn't take the transient citizens of Broken Lance long to learn that. Two days after Kelso took over as deputy sheriff, a Texan under the influence made a test of the new setup.

He went into Josh Hudkins' store and asked for a left-handed monkey wrench. Hudkins wasn't in the mood for joking that morning and snapped sourly at the cowboy. Whereupon the cowboy reached into his shirt and brought out a short-barreled Colt. He took a shot at Mr. Hudkins' right ear and drew blood. Hudkins dropped down behind the counter and the cowboy, not wanting to exert himself, went outside. Men were coming out of the stores and saloons to see what the shooting was about. The cowboy looked up and down the street, let out a defiant whoop and sent a bullet or two crashing through the windows of the Golden Prairie Saloon across the street.

He timed things very nicely. A block away John Bonniwell dashed out of a store. The cowboy whooped and made a jump for his horse, which he had very conveniently tied to the hitchrail in front of the store. He got out of town before Bonniwell could commandeer a mount.

Bonniwell didn't think that it would do any good, but he looked up Deputy Sheriff Kelso.

"I want to swear out a warrant for a cowboy named Striker," he said.

"Yeah? What's the charge?"

"Disorderly conduct, carrying firearms in violation of city ordinance—"

"Striker's in Broken Lance now?"

"Of course not. You know damn well he rode out of town."

"In that case there's not a thing I can do about it. There's no county or state law forbidding a man to carry a gun."

"What about intent to kill?"

Kelso scratched his chin. "All right, I'll get out the warrant, but what good you figure it'll do? This is a big territory and I'm the only deputy sheriff around. I can't be expected to arrest every petty law violator. I've got a lot of things to take care of, and if it ain't a serious charge I might forget—"

"All right, forget all about it," said Bonniwell. "I just wanted to make sure."

Kelso grinned derisively. "And make sure too, Bonniwell, you don't try arresting anyone outside the city limits of Broken Lance. You're marshal of this town, but outside of it you ain't got any more to say than any cowboy from Texas."

Bonniwell walked out of the deputy's office. Thereafter he kept a horse saddled and tied to the hitchrail in the center of town. It didn't work, however. The cowboys spotted his horse and made sure to commit their depredations far enough away, so they could gain their horses and make a safe getaway. Two more shot up the town that afternoon and took to their horses.

Waggoner had a couple of real estate prospects and was out in the country with them. Around five o'clock John Bonniwell stopped in at Lou Sager's shop and asked her to have supper with him at the Trail Restaurant. She accepted readily.

Seated in the restaurant, Lou rested her elbows on the table and folded her hands together. Then she rested her chin lightly on her hands and looked at John Bonniwell across the table.

"Remember when we first met, John —on the train"

He nodded. "I guess I was pretty surprised at the idea of a girl starting a millinery shop out in this country."

"You practically told me I was crazy." Lou smiled. "Well, I've made good. I've got enough money to bring my mother out here. She's coming in a couple of weeks."

"Say, that's fine!" he exclaimed. But he couldn't quite conceal the little crease on his forehead. Lou saw it and said quietly:

"You don't think I should bring her yet?"

He looked down at the table for a moment. Then he said: "No. Broken Lance is heading for a blow-off. I hope it'll be delayed until the cowboys leave next month. But I guess that's expecting too much. Wait until—"

"I'd like to see her. Broken Lance is a lonesome place, you know."

"I know. Not much fun for a girl like you. At that, it's better than being on a ranch with no other woman around at all."

"You mean I'm better off than Eleanor Simmons?"

He frowned. He hadn't meant to talk about Eleanor. He shook his head quickly and tried to change the subject. He plunged into another delicate one. "Tom's out selling a farm. There's a man, Lou, whom it'll be worth watching. He's going to be one of the biggest men in this state one of these days."

"I know he is. I'm not worrying about Tom at all. But you—where'll you be in ten years, John?"

He shrugged. "I don't know. I never gave it much thought."

"But I have, John."

In panic, Bonniwell exclaimed, "Are you going to the dog races next Sunday?"

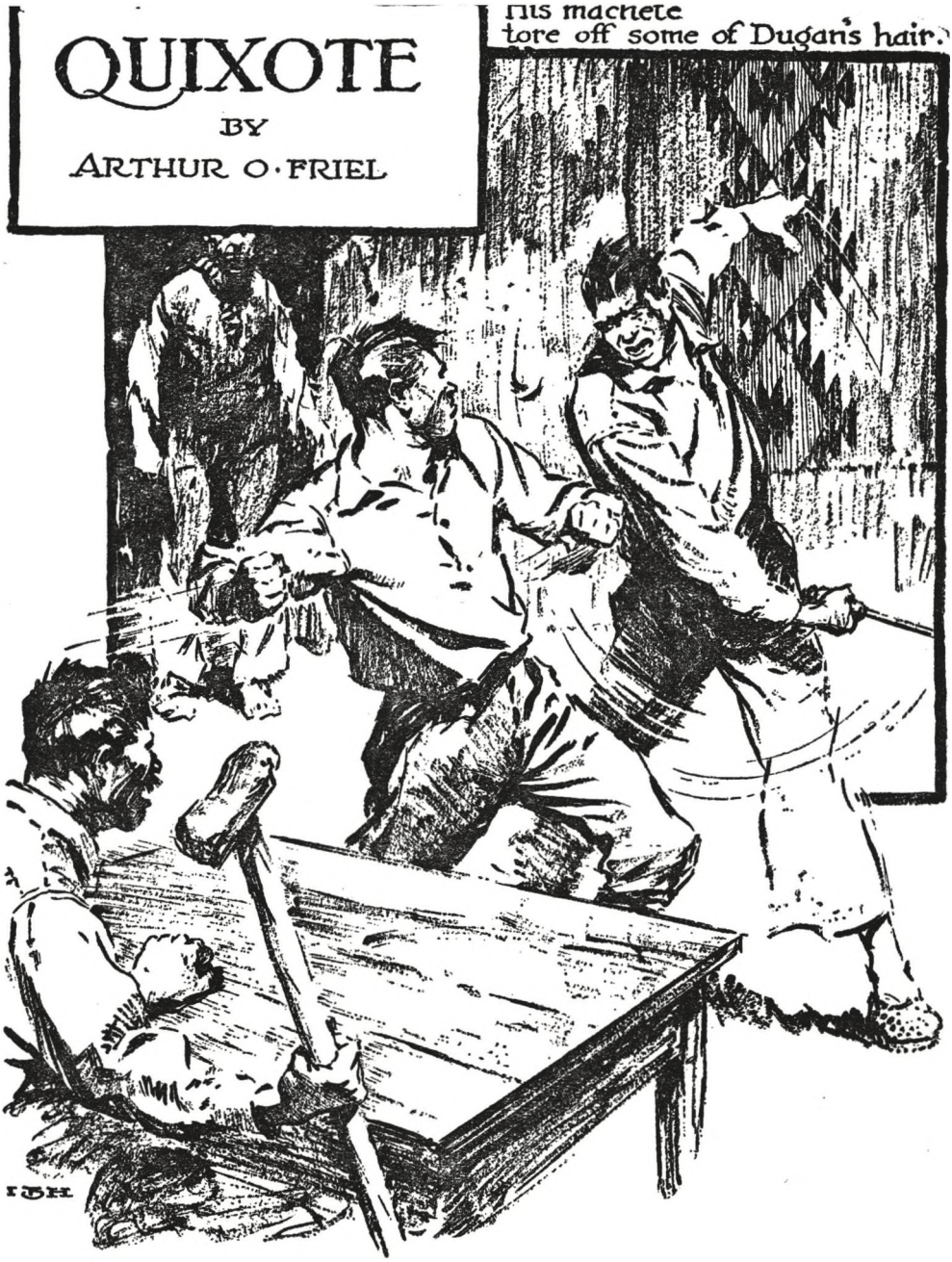
Lou Sager sighed. "I go to all the dog races, all the horse races and all the shooting matches. I think you're blind, John."

(To be continued)

QUIXOTE

BY

ARTHUR O·FRIEL



WHO said that?

Who said Dugan ever let down a friend? You? Well, mister, you've got some explaining to do. And you'd better do it quick.

What's it to me? I'm a friend of his, that's what. Named Hart. And who are you, and how do you get that way?

No, I won't have a drink. Come on, now, speak your piece. What do you think you know about Dugan?

Oh, that's it. You heard it from a young Venezuelan you met in a rum-shop down on the *llanos*. I see. Maybe I can guess who he was. Anyway, that lets you out.

Well, yes, I'll sit down now. And you listen to me, and get this thing straight.

Awhile ago Dugan was drifting along north over those blistering plains, moving sort of quiet. He'd had a fight lately—and not just a fist fight. Some bullets had gouged him. Army bullets. And there might be some soldiers riding around now hoping to finish their job on him. So he was detouring any sizable tree grove that looked as if it might hide a little *rancho*. What eyes didn't see, tongues couldn't blab.

Along about noon he saw a small *morichal*—a water-hole, you know—and let his horse head for it. It was a dreary-looking little place, with straggly brown *moriche* palms drooping in the heat, and no sign of life. Just the place, it seemed, for a bashful pilgrim to rest up. But he watched it, and made his horse step slow and easy.

They crept through the thicket with practically no noise. Then Dugan yanked his horse back, muttering:

"Hell's bells!"

Another man and horse were there. Both were asleep. The man hung in a cheap brown hammock slung between two dull *moriches*. The horse lay in the thin shade of other palms. Between them was a dead fire, with a small black cook-pot hanging on a stick. And the little water-hole was drunk dry. Just damp, dark mud, with some lizards crawling on it.

Dugan backed off. This wasn't what he wanted. But his horse thought different. A tough *llanos* horse, it was, with plenty of wind and muscle but not much brain. Now it smelled another horse and something like water, and it wouldn't go. It balked, then bucked, snorted, and thrashed around. The other man and horse woke up *pronto*.

The man dropped flat on the ground behind his hammock, with a gun aimed. His horse jumped up, then stood watching Dugan, ready for his man to spring on his back and make a quick getaway. A brainy animal, that one.

By the time Dugan had fought his own dumb beast down, the fellow behind the hammock was grinning and his gun muzzle was sunk. He had seen that Dugan was alone.

"*Perdonc*," said Dugan. "Excuse it, fellow. I didn't know you were here."

"That's all right," the other fellow said. "I don't own this place. Help yourself."

He stood up, gun hanging loose.

"Well, if you feel that way about it—" said Dugan. So he rode in again, swung off his horse, and let the animal do what it liked, while he and the other fellow looked each other over.

DUGAN was a hard-looking egg, big, dark, with black whiskers on his square jaw, a weatherbeaten straw sombrero pulled low, sloppy old clothes, and a .45 automatic on his belt. Also, with some holes in his shirt and dry dark stains around them. But the other lad, after a keen look, seemed to like him.

"Pascual Romero is my name," he said. "And yours?"

"Dugan," said Dugan. Usually he kept his name to himself. But this Romero looked decent, though very shabby.

His shirt and pants were worse than Dugan's—just rags, sewed together at the worst rips. His rifle was one of those heavy-barreled .44 repeaters that were new about 44 years ago, but clean. His black hair was shaggy, but scissored over the ears. And his horse was like the man, wiry, intelligent, and rather good-looking. Sometimes you can judge a man by his horse or dog.

Anyway, Dugan made himself at home. He dug out the mud-hole with his hands, got some water, and gave his horse a drink, then dug deeper and, when the new water cleared, stripped and bathed. Those bullet-gouges of his were itching worse than hives.

He bathed standing up, with his gun-belt handy and one eye on Romero. And Romero, sitting in his hammock, kept both eyes on Dugan, taking in the new man's big muscles, and body-skin much whiter than brown face and hands, and raw-red gashes on that skin. Finally he said:

"You've been riding through thorns, I see."

"No," said Dugan. "Just a nest of blind *avispas*. Wasps that missed."

"Large ones?" asked Romero.

"*Treintas*," said Dugan. "Thirties."

Which, being the caliber of army rifles, told Romero what he wanted to know. He grinned, saying:

"Nasty bugs, those *avispas.* I don't like them."

But then his dark eyes slid to Dugan's gun-belt, with its army pistol in an army holster.

"Don't worry about that," said Dugan, sliding back into his pants. "The fellow who used to wear it isn't around any more."

"Oh," said Romero. "He went away?"

Dugan turned a thumb down at the ground, then tucked in his shirt. And Romero lay back and laughed.

"*Bueno!*" he said. And no more. He could say plenty in few words, that lad.

So could Dugan, when he felt like it. And what he'd just said was true as far as it went. That gun of his had belonged to an army officer who now was very dead. But Dugan hadn't killed him. And the army bullets that had skinned Dugan lately had been aimed at some rebels he had happened to fall in with and was glad to get away from. But if Romero misunderstood, that was his own mistake.

Now Dugan hung his hammock on the other side of the water-hole, ate, and took a siesta, opening one eye now and then. The other fellow stayed put, sleeping or seeming to. The horses rested too, far apart. The wise one didn't like the dumb one, and the dumb one resented that. Just like some humans.

Toward night they livened up. Romero built a fire of palmwood and warmed up his cook-pot. The fire made considerable smoke, and he walked outside to breathe clean air. While he was gone Dugan stirred up that little pot and dumped out what he saw. Pretty bad, it was. And, being fairly well fixed with grub himself, he made up a new stew. When Romero came back he stiffened up, and his straight mouth turned thin. But then he said:

"If you are inviting me to eat with you, I thank you."

Very touchy in his pride, that lad. But Dugan made it all right by saying:

"I owe you something for your hospitality, *amigo.* A welcome from a white man and a good rest meant a lot to me today."

Romero bowed, smiling wide. And when the new stew was hot and the sun was gone he ate like a starved wild dog. Dugan didn't waste time, either. The pot was soon empty.

BY THAT time the night was very dark. Later on an old moon would come up, but now even the stars were dim behind a thin scum of clouds, and the ground was black. Romero threw more wood on the fire, and it blazed up high. Dugan, rolling a *cigarrillo,* said:

"Bad advertising, that."

"How so?" Romero asked. "There's nobody moving after dark."

"Maybe not," said Dugan. "But on a night like this, and flat land like this, a bright open fire sometimes shows higher than you'd think."

Romero shrugged.

"*No importa,*" he said. "It doesn't matter. I ride away at moonrise. Till then, let's be cheerful."

"Suits me," Dugan said. So they loafed and talked about nothing.

Nothing, I mean, that meant anything. Nothing about themselves, what they'd done, what they meant to do. Just idle yarns, while the night stayed dark and Romero kept the fire blazing. Two lonely drifters, glad of good company while it lasted, but not getting too chummy. Here today, gone tomorrow.

But about moonrise time Dugan began to feel uneasy. And the horses began to act the same way. They stepped in close to their men, and the wise one gave a low *whoof* through his nose, and the slow one looked down at Dugan. And both men straightened up in their hammocks.

They saw nothing new, just the same dull *moriches* and the dead dark outside. And they heard nothing but the dreary dry flap of long palm leaves in the night wind and the small snaps of the fire. But something new was around there. Maybe only a snake, or a prowling *tigre* that had smelled the horses and sneaked up to make a kill, or maybe—

Then Romero muttered:

"Hide your gun!"

Dugan gave him one look and obeyed orders. There are times when you don't argue. This was one. Romero sat like a statue, rifle half up, eyes set outside. Dugan slid his pistol inside his shirt and down under his tight pants-band. Then he slipped off his cartridge belt and tossed it back into the dark of the palms.

His horse stamped, and the fire snapped again, and that was all—for awhile. Then somebody spoke.

"Drop that gun!" said a voice outside.

Romero sat without moving. Quietly he asked:

"Who says so?"

"Drop it, or you'll find out!" said the voice, louder. Too loud. Too rough. Too important. Army or police officers don't speak just that way. And the fellow outside made it complete by shouting: "You're surrounded, *hombre!* Lift that gun and you die! Step in, men!"

FEET stepped in, but stopped before anybody showed himself. A gang was there, all right. A gang surrounding two tramps with only one rifle. A gang so brave that even the big-mouth of their outfit stayed out of sight. But all the more dangerous for that. It isn't the man who faces you that you need to be afraid of; it's those behind you in the dark.

Romero, though, seemed to feel relieved. Dugan felt easier too. The young fellow let his rifle drop. Then the big voice ordered:

"Sit still, you! Forward, men!"

The feet moved again. Among the scraggy palms appeared several shabby shapes—stocky, swarthy men with guns. Then their loud-mouthed leader swaggered in with a rifle up, watching Dugan now. A big fellow, that one, with a heavy face and small black eyes.

"You, there! Where are your weapons?" he demanded.

"There's a machete over there by my pack," said Dugan.

"No gun?"

His rasping voice got on Dugan's nerves. Dugan's funny that way.

Now he stood up quick and asked:

"Don't see any gun on me, do you? And what's it to you, anyway? Do you think you own this place?"

"Hah?" growled the big fellow. "*Cómo diablos,* who speaks so to Ciro Tunez?"

"*Yo mismo.* I, me, myself in person," said Dugan. "And if you don't like it lay down your gun and step over here."

Tunez didn't. But neither did he sound off any more. He looked Dugan all over, studying his Irish face and big hands and old clothes, with their bullet rips and stains. His eyes came back to Dugan's fists, which maybe were hanging as if he knew how to use them.

"Hm!" he said, through his nose. "You are a *Norteamericano.* And you have been in a fight."

"Right both times," said Dugan. "And ready to go on from there. So what?"

There Romero spoke up, smiling.

"My friend here," he said, "met some flying wasps, of size thirty."

"Oh. Hm," said Tunez. "Size thirty. Hm!" Then he turned from Dugan to Romero, asking:

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"Pascual Romero is the name," said the youngster. "And I rest here till—"

He nodded east. And just then the old moon rolled up, and the land outside turned light enough for night riders to travel.

Tunez let his gun sink.

"*Cra!* Romero?" he said, staring. "Pascual Romero? *Cra!*"

He looked around at his men. They were staring too, with their guns down. And for a minute everything was very quiet.

Then Tunez and his gang let their eyes slide around, sizing up Romero's camp, a starvation camp, with its dirty little water-hole and black little cook-pot and so on. Tunez grabbed up Romero's old rifle and looked that over. And all of them studied Romero again. Then the big fellow said:

"*Sí,* I see. Hmm! Well, now, Señor Romero, let's go over to our little place before you travel along. You and your friend."

Very civil, that. But an order, for all that. And Tunez kept Romero's rifle,

and his men kept watching the two strangers. Their guns were only little old muzzle-loading *escopetas,* loaded maybe with rough slugs of melted tin, but plenty wicked at short range.

"*Mucho gusto,*" Romero said. "Is it far? And do you walk?"

"No," said Tunez. "Saddle up."

ROMERO did. Dugan, mouth shut, followed suit. They worked fast and then walked out, leading their animals. It was one of those times when you move quick before slowpokes start poking around and finding things. For instance, a cartridge belt.

Tunez and his bunch followed close. Outside the bush Tunez grunted: "East." So they marched away east, leaving the fire burning, hammocks hanging, everything else just as it was.

As they walked, Romero began to hum a tune. Soon somebody snickered. Then some others joined in the humming, and suddenly Tunez let out a horse-laugh and brayed out the words of the song.

It was a *llanos* song about the President of Venezuela. And was it raw! But funny, too. So funny that when Dugan got the words he had to stop and laugh. And that exploded all the others. They stopped with him and howled, slapping their legs, laughing till they nearly choked. All but Romero. He just grinned and made some comical movements that made the idea go double.

When they moved along again they all walked like old friends, free and easy. That rascally song had made Romero solid with those rough lads.

Soon they came to a bunch of dark bush where horses were tied. The Tunez bunch swung aboard their beasts. Romero and Dugan mounted their own, and all rode on east, with Tunez leading. Nobody talked. After awhile another dark bunch of trees grew up ahead, and this one was wide. Which, on the *llanos,* means plenty of water, and probably a house.

And so it was now. Riding through the thick growth, they came into a broad clear space with a squatty gray clay house in the middle. Low, thick-walled, hard as stone, with a few narrow windows—one of those Spanish old-timers, and cold and dark as a tomb. Not a light at any window. Not a man, or even a dog, outside on watch. Dull, dead—

But it wasn't. Tunez, halting at the front door, knocked. Nothing happened. He rapped again, louder. Then a bar inside slid back and the door swung open. A dark face peered out, watching Tunez. And Tunez said:

"*Completo.* It's done, Frasco. *Dos.* Two of them. One is Pascual Romero."

"Romero?" The door opened wider. "Who is the other one?"

"*No sé.* I don't know. Shall they come in?"

"*Sí.* At once."

The man inside stepped back. He limped, and one shoulder hung low. A cripple, he was. And when Romero and Dugan entered they found another.

Behind a heavy table sat a bulky man with iron-gray hair and mustache and cool dark eyes. Between the table legs was just one leg of his own, ending in a slipper. Against his chair leaned an old-fashioned crutch—a straight pole, with a padded crosspiece at the top. Off to one side, a tall brass oil-lamp gave soft light. The small windows were thickly curtained. The master of the place sat with his back to a blank inner wall. And on the table was a big old revolver.

"*BUENOS noches, señor,*" said Romero, with a smile.

The other man said nothing. His gaze went all over Romero, not missing a thing—worn-out clothes, thin body and face, all the signs of a hard time. Then he gave Dugan the same keen once-over, stopping at Dugan's lazy, steady brown eyes. Then he looked away and said:

"Frasco, bring Ciro."

Frasco limped away fast, with a see-saw gait. One side of him was strong and straight, the other all warped and crooked, as if something had busted him up and he'd never grown together right. Maybe he'd been caught under a falling horse sometime. But his head looked all right, and his face too. Sharp-eyed,

square-jawed, clean though dark—a fighting man's face, with a brain behind it.

At the door Frasco ordered: "Ciro, *aquí!*" And Ciro Tunez, Mr. Big-Mouth awhile ago, came in and stood before the iron-gray man. He wasn't big-mouthed now. Fumbling his dingy sombrero around in his thick hands, he told a straight story: how he had caught these strangers, how they had acted, and so on. And, though he stood awkwardly, he kept his head up and his voice steady. An honest fellow, Ciro.

"*Bien,*" said his boss. "You may go."

Tunez went quickly. His boss smiled slightly at Romero.

"So you are that rascal who took a shot at the Governor of Guárico?" he asked.

"*Sí,* I am ashamed to say," said the rascal.

"Ashamed?" The boss eyed him queerly.

"Ashamed—because I missed," said Romero.

"Oh." The iron-gray man suddenly chuckled. "Ahem! Well, what are you doing in this neighborhood? And who is this man?"

"I'm traveling south, or trying to," said the young fellow. "But there seem to be soldiers riding the *llanos.* This friend of mine is— Well, he is traveling too. But, if you will pardon me, *señor,* I see no good reason to say more to a stranger. I may have already said too much."

The one-legged man quietly laid his revolver in a drawer and slid the drawer shut. Lying back in his tall chair, he said:

"My name is Jorge de Castellanos."

Romero stood silent. Then he eagerly asked:

"Castellanos? Jorge? *Válgame Dios!* My father's old friend! Is it possible?"

"An old friend of Vicente Romero." The older man nodded. "It is many years since I saw a lively little rascal named Pascual Romero, and some time since I heard of the death of Vicente. But I can well understand why Pascual should shoot at the governor who caused Vicente to be shot."

His mouth turned tight there, and his eyes gave the youngster a narrow, searching look.

"*Sí,*" said Romero. "And I have heard that Jorge de Castellanos has reason to dislike that governor also. But—Pardon me again, *señor,* but Jorge de Castellanos died of wounds, years ago."

Castellanos grinned.

"Perhaps," he said. "Or perhaps he cut off his own smashed leg with a saw-edged machete, and tied up the arteries with hairs out of his horse's tail, and—"

There he stopped, gritting his teeth. And to Dugan, watching him and looking around at the thick curtains over the narrow windows of this hidden house, things were plain enough now, up to a certain point. A hard old rebel, or an ex-outlaw, or maybe both, this Castellanos. A tough old fighter who, no longer able to ride and fight, had settled down out of sight, but might be glad to help deserving young fellows along. So far, so good. But—

There Castellanos saw Dugan looking at him, and his own eyes took on a peculiar sleepy look.

"But that," he said smoothly, "is all in the past, and I now am only an old man resting. Until tomorrow, let us all rest. Frasco!"

"*Sí, capitán,*" said Frasco. And Dugan, looking around, found the half-man standing behind him, with his good hand hooked into his belt. And right there Dugan made a social error. Maybe.

UP TO now Dugan had been playing dummy, waiting to see what he was drifting into. Nothing ever worried him much, and anything new was interesting. But when you're knocking around alone down here you get sensitive about some things. One of them is a man pussyfooting up behind your back. Now Dugan turned and scowled at Frasco. And Frasco made a mistake.

His elbow lifted and his fingers slid inside his pants-band. Dugan grabbed.

He grabbed Frasco's sliding hand and his throat. He yanked that hand out to one side, and saw a long thin knife. He heaved Frasco up, swung, slammed him down on the table. He twisted the knife-

arm, and the knife dropped. Frasco himself lay stunned. And, leaning over him, Dugan told Castellanos:

"Don't!"

Castellanos was reaching for the gun in his closed drawer. He stopped. But his eyes blazed as he asked:

"What ails you?"

"Nothing much," said Dugan, "except that I don't like a knife at my back, or being told when or where I can rest. Some rests are too long to suit me. I'll take mine outside."

"Oh, you think so?" snapped Castellanos.

"I think so," said Dugan. "If not, why not?"

The old fighter sat very still. Then Romero took a hand. And a foot.

Stepping up alongside Dugan, he planted one foot on one of Dugan's, meaning: "Shut up!" And, very formal, he said:

"*Señor,* I think I also shall go. When a friend of Pascual Romero cannot stand before a former friend of Vicente Romero without a back-stabber behind him, it is time for Pascual to go elsewhere."

Just like that. Just as if all he had to do was whistle for his horse and get it. Castellanos glared at him. But then, looking down at Frasco, the old fellow slowly smiled and settled back, saying:

"All right, boys. Let him up."

And Dugan, after another long look at him and a short one at Frasco, stepped back. Frasco's eyes were looking straight up, and they weren't poisonous. Instead they were saying: "All right. I'm down. What next?" And then old Castellanos said:

"I apologize for my man's error. And I assure you that you are quite safe in this house. Safer than you might be on the plains just now. So, as I said, let us all rest till tomorrow."

And that, with his easy smile, made sense. Dugan wasn't eager to push himself into any more army bullets just then. And Romero, stepping back, made a high-hat bow and said:

"*Muy bien, señor.* Let us forget it."

Castellanos gave him a lazy look. Then he asked Dugan:

"Do you, too, forget it, stranger?"

"It's all right with me," said Dugan.

"Very well," said Castellanos. Then, though he didn't seem to move, a bell tinkled somewhere. A side door swung open, and there stood a huge yellow fellow. Bigger than Dugan, but with a small low-browed head. A human gorilla, big enough to crush two or three average men with one squeeze.

"These gentlemen," Castellanos said, speaking slowly, "sleep here tonight."

The gorilla thought that over, ducked his head, and turned away. Romero followed at once, and Dugan trailed along. So the three of them reached another room where the gorilla lit a lamp, hung up two hammocks, walked out and shut the door. Then a bar thumped into a socket.

AND so Dugan and Romero were safe. Safe like men locked in a time vault, with no limit on the time. Hard walls all around, two slits for air, one heavy door barred outside. But to Dugan, thinking of what might be riding the *llanos* with guns out, it looked pretty comfortable.

Lying back in a hammock, he said nothing. Romero did the same. But after awhile Romero laughed. A very quiet little laugh, through his nose, with his mouth shut. So quiet that Dugan wouldn't have heard it if their cell hadn't been so dead still. And there was something about it that he didn't like.

But he just turned over on his hidden gun and took another sleep. Tonight was done, and tomorrow would be another day. Or so he thought. The night wasn't quite done yet.

Some time later he woke up suddenly, grabbing at his gun. The light was out, the room pitch black. His gun was where it ought to be. But something seemed to be going away. Something soft as a snake, sliding along the dirt floor, then gone. And his shirt was all unbuttoned.

The lowest button he had left loose anyway, just in case. And of course any man twists around in his sleep, and an old shirt can pull wide open. But Dugan got his gun out and dropped the clip into his hand and made sure it was still loaded. Then he listened.

Over in the other hammock Romero snored. But somewhere in that snore there was a phoney note. Dugan walked over and grabbed him. And Romero snored just a little too long before he jumped awake.

"*Qué pasa?*" he asked then. "What's going on?"

"That's what I want to know," said Dugan. "What's your racket?"

Romero stiffened up, getting haughty. But Dugan went on:

"Never mind the high hat. It's worked pretty well so far, but you can drop it now. And you'd better, if you want me to work with you."

Romero lay quiet, thinking that over. He couldn't see Dugan's face, but he could feel his grip and read his voice. After awhile he said:

"I have some personal business here."

"Uh-huh," said Dugan. "You wanted to come here, then. You wanted to get caught over there by your bright campfire. You wanted to use me to back you up. All right. These people are nothing in my young life. But I always like to see the cards. What's up your sleeve?"

The other fellow stayed quiet a little longer, then said:

"You put it strong, Dugan. And I won't argue. But I have reason to believe that Castellanos is two-faced. And one Vicente Romero, father of one Pascual Romero, was shot because somebody was two-faced."

"Oh," said Dugan, stepping back. "That's it."

"That's it," said Romero. And with that he shut up.

Dugan found his hammock and sat down and thought some more. Old Castellanos was a smooth old egg, and hard under his shell. And he had things well organized to take very good care of himself, though he used thick tools—clumsy peons and a halfwitted gorilla. But those tools worked. Worked better, maybe, than if better brains had gone into their make-up. Like those little old muzzle-loading *escopetas*, poor stuff, but able to kill without thinking when their boss touched a spring.

"Well, we'll see," Dugan said. "But get this. If you walk in your sleep, keep away from me. I had a funny dream about somebody trying to get too close to me. If I have it again it won't be funny."

Then he lay over and snoozed again. When he woke up it was bright day outside. And while that day crawled along he and Romero didn't talk.

A mud-faced Indian woman brought in food and water, with the big gorilla behind her, watching. The food was good, the water clean, the gorilla lazy. When the bar slid again the prisoners took it easy. To Dugan it was only another day. And Romero just ate and slept.

Toward sundown, though, the Southerner sat up and stretched like a cat waking up for its night prowl. Dugan got restless too. He thumped the door with his fist.

When nobody answered he walked up and down the cell, stretching his legs. So did Romero. Up and down, up and down—

Suddenly Romero stopped, staring at a picture on the wall. A dull old picture in a cheap old frame, so faded that neither of them had really looked at it before. But it was the only one in the bare room.

Now Romero sneaked up to it and tried to swing it. It didn't move. It wasn't just hung on a wire. It was bolted to the thick clay.

Romero turned pale. He backed off as if watching a snake. And he muttered:

"*Diablo!*"

Dugan stared, then asked:

"*Qué tiene?* What ails you?"

"*Nada,*" said Romero. "A trifling pain."

But his hands rose. One pointed to his right ear, the other made a small circle, meaning he thought there was a mike, or detectaphone, or hole in the wall, behind that thin cloth.

"Hm!" said Dugan. But, thinking back, he remembered that they hadn't talked since late last night, when everybody ought to be asleep. So he said: "Take it easy."

And he patted his gun-butt, and Romero eased up. But he still looked

worried. And soon after that things got tough.

The bar outside thumped hard. The door kicked open. And the gorilla, with a heavy machete in one fist, yanked his head back, meaning:

"Come out!"

"About time," said Dugan. And out they went. Out into a small patio, and in at another door.

OUTSIDE, the setting sun was roasting anything it could hit. Inside, cool and calm, old Castellanos sat at his table with his one leg stretched out easy. Behind him three men sat with backs to the wall, faces blank but eyes keen. One was Frasco. Another was big Tunez. The other Dugan didn't remember. His face hadn't been in the gang last night. And somehow it resembled Romero's.

"I hope," said Castellanos, smiling at Romero, "you have rested well."

Smooth, that was. Smooth as the purr of a cat that's caught a rat.

Romero didn't answer. He stared at the stranger who looked like him. Dugan said nothing either. He looked behind him. There stood the gorilla, eyes set on his master. So he just hooked his thumbs over his belt and waited, with his shirt bellying loose to hide his gun-butt.

Castellanos spoke again, still smiling lazily.

"Señor Pascual Romero, son of Vicente Romero," he said, as if introducing somebody.

The stranger stood up. A man a little taller than the Pascual standing beside Dugan. Ragged, long-haired, but newly shaved, with lines of hunger and hardship cut deep in his hollow-cheeked face, he was one of those deadly revengeful Spaniards. The kind that never smiles, never plays good-fellow, never eases up till he's killed his enemy.

Now, cold as a snake, he looked at the fellow beside Dugan. That fellow stood firm, but he swallowed once, and the little noise somehow sounded loud as the gulp of a horse. Then Castellanos smiled again—like a steel trap.

"Señor Spy, your luck is poor," he said. "Last night I believed you, for awhile. But strange things happen. And in the night it happened that voices spoke to me. Voices from a thick wall, if you can believe such a thing. They made me think I might be mistaken. And this very day it happened, most unexpected, that Pascual Romero himself came to my door. A queer turn, that, and most unfortunate for you."

There his face turned hard as the skull on the old pirate flag. And he snapped:

"Who are you? And who are you working for?"

The fake Romero still said nothing. His elbow nudged Dugan's rib, meaning:

"Do your stuff!"

Dugan didn't. He wasn't working for anybody, least of all, any army spy. So the other fellow had to play his own hand. And he did a good job.

Stiff as a gun-barrel, he said:

"Señor Castellanos, I am not in the secret service. For reasons of my own I grew curious about you, and I came down here to see what you were."

"*Si?* And what were your reasons?"

"Several," the lad snapped back at him. "There are some odd stories about you, *señor*. Some people say you would sell your best friend to the government or the rebels for the best price. And some say you put your only daughter into a convent to keep her from telling what she knew about you! But there are windows in convents. And some people know how to write notes! And—"

There he stopped, grinding his teeth. Then, stiff again, he spoke to the cold-eyed man against the wall.

"Señor Pascual Romero," he said, "I apologize to you for using your name. My own family name is one you might know if I spoke it. But now— Use your own judgment."

With that he was through. And all the men across the table stared at him. Then the real Romero's eyes shot at Castellanos. So did Frasco's. Big Tunez kept on staring.

CASTELLANOS himself turned dark red. His one leg jerked back, and his right hand slid toward his table drawer. Then he caught Dugan's eyes

and stopped. Dugan was near enough to knock him cold with one punch. And he had seen what Dugan could do barehanded.

So there they all stood. And if Castellanos had held his temper a little longer and talked things out, it all might have turned out different.

But he didn't. His hot eyes slid over Dugan's left shoulder. And Dugan went to work.

He ducked and swung from the hip. The gorilla at his back was swinging too. Nothing slow about that big ape, when his little brain got the signal he'd been waiting for. His machete tore off some of Dugan's hair. But when Dugan's fist cracked under his thick jaw, his dim light went out. He flopped, and his big knife flew wild and went *clank* into a corner.

Finishing his swing, Dugan snatched out his gun with his right and shoved back his boy friend with the other. And he said:

"If you don't mind, Castellanos, we'll be going."

The place was dead silent awhile. Castellanos sat tight, and the men behind him froze against the wall. Then Castellanos, hard-mouthed, asked:

"And if I do mind?"

"Life is short," said Dugan. "If you want to make yours shorter, now's the time."

The old rebel smiled again, slow and hard. And he said:

"You, stranger, are quite free to go if you will. Alone."

"Oh, yes?" said Dugan. "Thank you very kindly. But I met this lad before I saw you, and as far as I know he hasn't tried to cut my head off yet. And besides that, we have some things to talk over. So I'll take him along. And you can stick your hands up and stay that way."

Slowly Castellanos did. And Dugan said:

"Go get his gun, lad."

The lad did. He got Castellanos' revolver out of the drawer. But then, instead of backing off and out, he aimed at the real Romero's belly and demanded:

"Yours too!"

The tall fellow turned tight as a *tigre* ready to spring. He hadn't a gun on him—outside. But his eyes took on the killing glare. Then they suddenly looked at Dugan. And he said, sharp and short:

"I give you my word."

That word was good. Dugan took it.

"Come here, you!" he told the fake Romero.

The faker balked. Clicking back the hammer of Castellanos' gun, he gritted: "Your weapon, *señor! Pronto!*"

Dugan got sore. With one long step and a sideswipe he shoved the young cockerel off balance. The gun banged off and a bullet smacked into a wall. Then Dugan snatched the revolver and shoved it under his belt. And, facing the others, he said:

"Sorry, gents. I didn't think he'd act that way. But he's leaving you now, whether he likes it or not—or you, either. So, Tunez, old pal, walk over here and open the door for us. And tell anybody outside that it's all right, and we want our horses. And no fooling!"

Big Tunez looked again into Dugan's .45 and obeyed. He walked to the door, stepping high over the senseless gorilla, and gave orders. Dugan had guessed right. Somebody was just outside. Several somebodies. But Tunez let his big voice go full blast, and feet went away, and soon horse-hoofs came trotting up.

And Tunez said, respectfully:

"Ready, *señor*."

He stood aside. And Dugan, holding everything under control, swung onto his horse. And the fake Romero didn't linger. He jumped on his animal and tore out of there, lying low. So did Dugan.

They were gone beyond the trees before a rifle blasted after them. A rifle that slammed off nearly a dozen shots before it stopped. Shots that flew blind but didn't go far wrong at that. Big bullets racketed through the thick growth, and some hummed close. A one-legged man needs a little time to hop to a gun, but then he can sometimes shoot pretty straight.

But that was the end of that. No gang came boiling out after them. Maybe Tunez, after what he'd seen Dugan

do, decided to stay home and keep his health, no matter what his boss wanted. Anyway, the two wanderers soon reached their old camp in the *morichal.*

THERE Dugan found his cartridge belt, and felt better when it was again buckled on. And then he said:

"Now, Mr. Don Quixote, or whoever the hell you are, come clean! Just exactly what were you trying to pull off around here?"

The other fellow didn't answer. He took down his hammock.

"You," said Dugan, "damn near got me into some trouble. That's all right. And you took up a lot of my valuable time. I can afford that. But for awhile you made a monkey of me, and that's one thing I don't like, unless I know why. And you won't go anywhere till I do know. So now what?"

Still the faker stayed mum. Down on his knees, he began rolling up his sleeping-net. Dugan lost his patience. He grabbed. Grabbed the back of the neck, sunk his fingers in deep, yanked the lad straight up in the air. And, if you don't know it, that kind of a grip is painful.

It cracked the clever boy. Cracked his nerves and pride and temper. He went haywire.

"*Maldito!*" he snarled. "Damn you! You spoiled everything! You son of—"

He fought like a wildcat. Legs around Dugan, nails clawing, teeth snapping, he managed to twist out of the big fist holding him and tear in hard. He got a knee-kick into Dugan where it hurt plenty. So Dugan socked him once. He fell a yard away and stayed down.

Then came a queer thing, in its way. Something gave a sudden loud snort in Dugan's ear. And there, very close, was the horse of this young Don Quixote. With its ears back and big teeth bare, it snorted again and shook its head. If you know horses you know how some of them can talk. This one was saying:

"Lay off!"

That beast was ready to smash Dugan down with all four hoofs. And Dugan, though considerably sore, grinned and said:

"Lay off yourself, fellow. I never hit 'em when they're down."

And he passed a hand down the horse's nose, and the wise animal understood him. But he watched while Dugan got water and brought his owner back to life. Then he just loafed and waited.

That knockout had sobered the scrappy lad. And Dugan still wanted some answers. And, working easy, he got them.

QUIXOTE'S real name doesn't matter. But he was a distant relation of the Romeros, so distant that the fugitive Pascual didn't recognize him, but not too distant to have inside information about the family in-laws, not to mention outlaws. And these old families down here are very clannish, even if they hardly know their own kin by sight. And they never forget a dirty deal, especially if it spills some blood.

On the other hand, the young hotheads are fall guys for anything romantic. And this youngster, strolling past the convent and seeing a note tossed out and taking a good look at the good-looking tosser, had got interested and arranged a smuggled correspondence. And so—

"Blah," said Dugan. "You swallowed a wild yarn a girl behind some bars fed you."

"No!" snapped Quixote. "I am not so simple. I investigated. Certain members of my family are in government service. Not the secret service or the army. But postoffice men, telegraph men, secretaries of certain officials, see much an— I will say no more about that.

But what I told you about Jorge de Castellanos—who now lives under another name—and what I told him to his face, is more than true. He is treacherous as the devil. Once he rode and killed with his own hands, for plunder or pay. Now he sells men to other butchers. He sold Vicente Romero—"

There his teeth snapped shut. But his voice had been so positive that Dugan believed him.

"Well, just what did you expect to do about it?" Dugan asked.

"Stay a few days at the Castellanos place and learn all I could about him," said the lad. "Then, when he sold me out to the governor of Guárico, who has offered a large reward for Pascual Romero, I could cause his own arrest, and—"

There he stopped again. But Dugan guessed the end. Arrest Castellanos and force the release of his daughter.

"I see," said Dugan. "Just a little matter of sticking your head in the lion's mouth and then knocking him out. Very simple, if he doesn't bite. Your courage is a damned sight better than your judgment.

"If you'd come clean with me in the first place, or if you hadn't tried to sneak my gun off me last night— Just why did you try that?"

Quixote laughed shortly.

"I never saw you till yesterday," he said.

Honest enough, that. Playing his own hand close to his chest, using any lucky card that came his way, not caring a damn what happened to the card after he'd used it— A cold-blooded gambler, in some ways.

"All right," said Dugan. "But when your game turned sour, why did you try to get Pascual Romero's gun? Did you figure on selling him out yourself?"

Quixote almost jumped at him again. Then he swallowed and said:

"I consider that an insult. But—I admit that I lost my head there. Matters looked very serious. And Pascual is a dangerous man, and he thought Castellanos was his friend, so—"

There he drew a long breath and said, very wearily:

"Oh well, why talk longer? We had better be riding. You on your way, I on mine."

He went back to rolling his hammock. Night had shut down while they talked, and everything now was very dim. Dugan, looking around, said:

"That's sensible. This spy-spy-catch-a-spy game of yours is too damned complicated for my simple mind, and none of my business anyway. So I'll travel."

Then out of the dark came a cold, dry voice saying:

"One moment, *amigos!*"

PASCUAL ROMERO'S voice. The real Pascual. The hard egg who'd stood against a hard wall and sized up everything that was going on and kept his head working. And Dugan stopped short, with his hands down.

"*Gracias,*" the hard voice went on. "Thanks for the information. It completes something that you started in my mind before you left the *hacienda.* And if you gentlemen will pardon me, I will finish it to my own satisfaction."

And with that—

Smacko! A bright flash and a hard crack. Then horse-hoof's hitting ground and dying away into silence—southwest, towards the Colombian border.

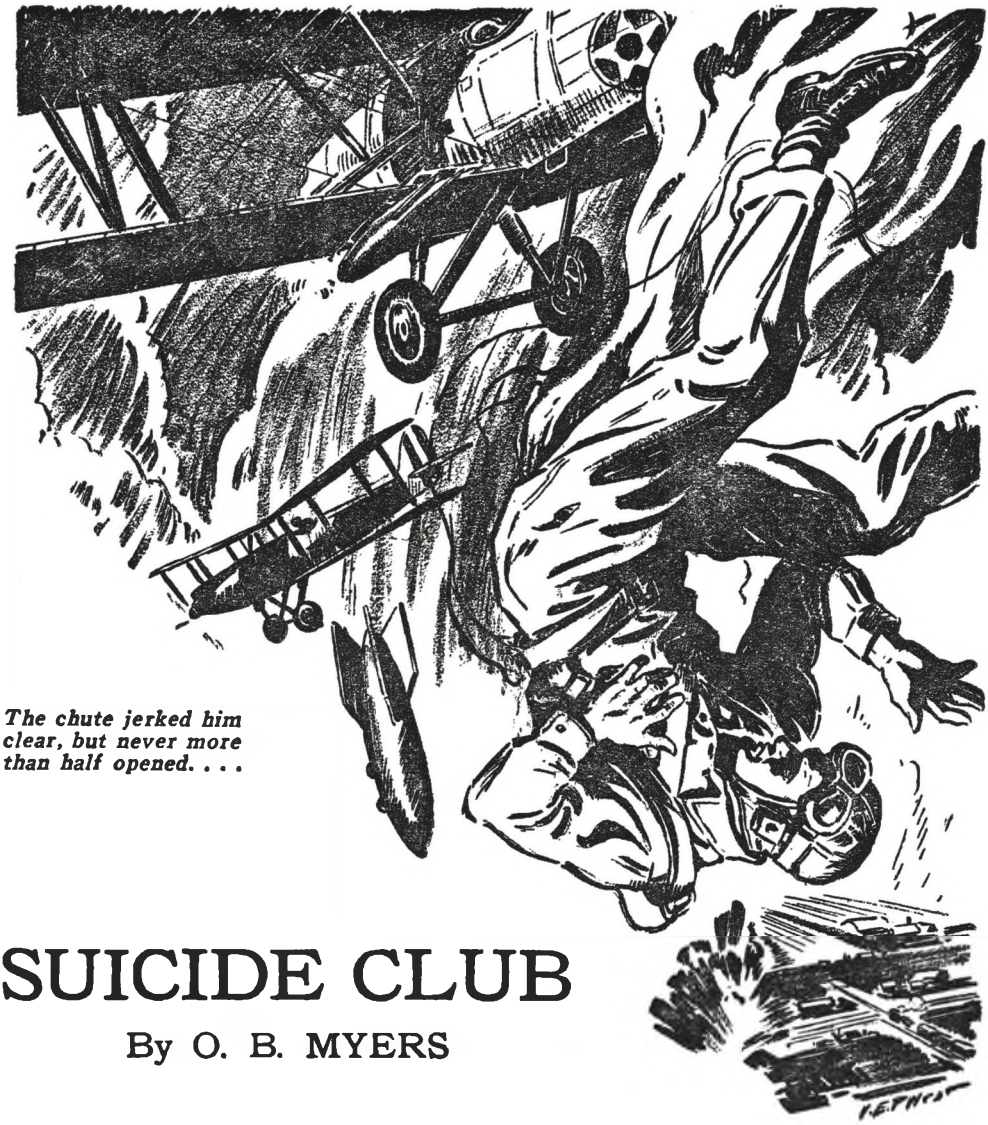
When everything was still again Dugan rode along out. And just outside the bush lay a dead man. A big dead man with tied hands and one leg and a big hole in his forehead.

And, riding along north, Dugan felt quite contented. Somehow he felt that by taking a hand in Quixote's game he'd made some friends: Pascual Romero himself, and big slow Tunez, and even the dumb shotgun men. Many a good man works for a crook up home and down here, because he can't see any other way to live. But all those lads at the Castellanos place now knew Dugan could have blasted their guts out if he would. And if Dugan had to turn back in a hurry, they wouldn't forget.

So he left Quixote to work things out from there. And he's heard since that the lad made out pretty well, in a way. He got the girl out of hock. But once she was out she ditched him quick and married another boy friend, and has been making her husband miserable ever since. She's got the Castellanos temper and trickery. And Quixote Junior ought to be thankful.

But, according to you, he isn't. He still thinks Dugan stole his big show and left him without any applause from the girl in the gallery. Well maybe he'll know better some day, when he really grows up.

Anyway, so it goes, when you're just a thirsty drifter beating your own way along alone down there. And, speaking of thirst, let's have one!



The chute jerked him clear, but never more than half opened. . . .

SUICIDE CLUB

By O. B. MYERS

MARTY rattled the newspaper and chuckled dryly.

"I see the wops are still getting publicity with their so-called suicide squadron," he jeered. "What a lot of hooey!"

I nodded. "Yes, I saw that."

"Suicide, my hind foot," snorted Marty. "You read about that outfit every once in a while—how the flyers are carefully chosen for their bravery, and sworn to sacrifice themselves outright. But you notice that you never read about them doing it. You never will, either. They're supposed to dive their ships, loaded with H.E., straight onto the deck of a battleship, or whatever the target may be. Nuts! It's against human nature."

"They say that over London, in 1916, a pilot deliberately flew his plane into the side of a Zeppelin," I remarked.

"Yeah, so I've heard. But with all due respect to the pilot, I still think it was an accident. A guy with guts will take risks, yes. He'll face ten to one against him, or a hundred, or even a thousand to one shot. But wipe out that one chance, and it's nix. Men just aren't built that way, that's all."

I swallowed what was left in the stein, and held up two fingers to the barten-

der. "Did I ever tell you about the raid on the railroad junction at Longuyons?"

"You've told me about plenty. That's all the 96th did, wasn't it? Or is this one I haven't heard?"

"This is one you haven't heard."

IN JUNE of 1918—I told Marty—I was on a little field way down in the middle of France. It was a training depot for balloon observers on their way to the front. They had an old sausage balloon there, for practice jumps, and a couple of classrooms where they boned over the theories of artillery fire and such like. Besides this balloon training, the place was also being used as a kind of research depot on parachutes, for experimental work.

Nowadays, of course, pack chutes are taken for granted; every pilot carries one, and if he gets in a jam, all he has to do is step overboard and pull the rip cord. But you must remember that in those days there wasn't any such animal. When a fellow went up with a plane, he came down with it, no matter what happened—or else they used shovels to scrape him off the field.

The chute they used in the balloons worked all right because it never had to be folded. It was slung over the side of the basket by a piece of string; the observer jumped out with the harness on, and when he had fallen far enough to straighten out all the shroud lines, his own weight broke the string, with the chute stretched full out. The trick they hadn't discovered yet was how to fold a chute small enough to go in a cockpit, and yet make it open up when its owner went overboard. There was a rumor that the Germans had such an article—in fact, I've learned since that they did, and were using them on the front by October. But the Allies were still experimenting.

I didn't know anything about parachutes, and had nothing to do with the research. My job was merely to fly the old AR that they used as a jumping-off point. What a crate that was, and how I hated it! I was fed up with the whole camp, in fact, and everybody in it, before I ever arrived. Like a lot of other crazy Americans in those days, I was anxious to get to the front, where all the excitement was. I was afraid the war would be over before I got there!

I remember the afternoon of the twentieth particularly, because it was my last day there. I had orders to Colombey in my pocket, and was leaving that night. They had sent a bird named Walker, from Avord, to take over my job. He was welcome. I was pushing that old AR around for the last time; I couldn't wait to get down and kick it good-by.

IT SEEMED to take an hour to get up to a thousand meters, but finally I levelled off and headed across the field. I was looking down, watching my position, when Captain Corbett prodded me in the shoulder blade. I turned my head; he was motioning to nose down. I shoved the stick forward a bit, and kept on watching the rear cockpit.

The plane lurched as the weight went over the side; I swung into a bank so I could see what was happening. Several hundred feet below me I could see a khaki figure, tumbling crazily. There was a tangle of lines above it, and a lot of rumpled, billowing silk. The chute seemed to be trying to open, but its own shrouds kept getting in the way. It puffed out on one side, but the other side only flapped and shook, and spilled air as fast as it caught it.

It was astonishing how fast it used up that thousand meters; apparently the chute wasn't checking the drop at all. It hit right near the middle of the field, and I could see sand splash like water. The folds of silk collapsed in a long, shapeless blot.

"Looks like another dummy washed out!" shouted the captain in my earflap. "Let's go down and take a look."

He didn't have to tell me twice. I shoved the AR into a glide and pretty soon rolled to a stop in front of the single shed they used for a hangar. The captain jumped right out and started toward the middle of the field to inspect what was left of the latest experiment, but a sergeant came trotting over to intercept him.

"Captain Corbett! There's someone in the office to see you, sir!"

"Well, tell him he'll have to wait until I—"

The sergeant was pointing violently. I looked too. In front of the nearest shack stood a big olive drab limousine with a chauffeur behind the wheel. It was thickly coated with chalky French dust, but you could still see plainly the two gold stars on the windshield.

"A general!" exclaimed the captain. He quickly stripped off his helmet and tossed it to the sergeant. Then he buttoned up the front of his tunic, and looked anxiously about him.

"Who's got a Sam Browne handy?"

It was no use looking at me. With the thermometer at 92, and hotter yet in a cockpit, I wasn't even wearing a tunic. If the general had any sense, he wasn't wearing one either. I just snorted, and went over to my tent to finish packing my bed-roll.

Twenty minutes later I was back in front of headquarters again. There was a truck going into town, and I could catch the seven o'clock train for Paris, but my clearance wasn't signed. The front office was empty; all the enlisted men were at mess. I could hear voices in the inside room, though the door was closed. I had seen the limousine, still out in front, and guessed that the general was in there, and I didn't quite have the nerve to knock.

Those Adrian barracks were never designed for privacy; the walls were like paper, and didn't even reach to the roof. As I stood there waiting, the voices in the inner office came through pretty plain.

I wasn't trying to listen, but I couldn't help noticing at least the general trend of the conversation. The visitor seemed to be insisting, doing his utmost to force a consent or an agreement from the captain, on some subject. Finally I heard the captain cry out.

"My God, you wouldn't want me to say yes before I was sure, would you?"

There was complete silence for several moments. The general muttered, so low I could hardly hear, "I hadn't thought of that—"

I moved over to the water bucket for a drink, purposely tramping hard. It worked; the general opened the door and looked out.

"See what this man wants, Captain," he said brusquely.

Corbett came out, looking flustered. The sweat was streaming down his face, though the thermometer would explain that. But I thought he seemed a little pale, under his tan, and his didn't recognize me at first. He was nice enough about putting his signature on my papers, though; never yapped about the orders being dated the 21st, which would give me twenty-four hours in Paris en route. He went to the door with me and shook hands, maybe a bit absently. I got the feeling that he was in a hurry to see me leave, and I noticed that he closed the outer door behind me before I had taken six steps.

BUT I quickly forgot Captain Corbett, and balloons, in the next few weeks. A man doesn't have much time to ponder past acquaintance when he's shuttling a DH back and forth over the lines with half a ton of demolition bombs under the wings. Your mind gets into a groove; the sides of the groove shut out everything except what's right close to you, and ahead you see your next time out. You never look beyond that. You don't let yourself think more than one patrol ahead. You don't dare; it might be bad luck.

The 27th was on a drome only about ten miles away, and I went over there quite a bit. Partly because Jud Hawkins was there; I'd bunked next to him at Issoudun, you know. And partly because their mess officer was a live wire, and they always had plenty of good Scotch on hand which visiting pilots were welcome to lap up—at three francs a lap. That's how I happened to be sitting in the 27th's mess the night the general came to pay his call.

Every pilot in the squadron was there; those that had finished eating were standing around the bar in the corner of the room. There was a commotion by the door; someone caught sight of two gold stars on a shoulder strap, and shouted, "Attention!"

"No, no," called the general. "At ease, everyone. This is not a formal inspection. I just want to talk to you a few minutes."

He stepped over to the end of the nearest table, and waited while the boys dropped back in their seats. He kept smiling in all directions, very genial and friendly, and then he started to feed them the old apple sauce. How he was proud of the 27th, what a swell record it was hanging up, how he envied them their experiences, and all that rot. When somebody muttered, "Nuts!" he didn't hear.

I wasn't listening closely; I was looking at the man who had come in just behind the general. I had to look twice to be sure I knew him. Captain Corbett had certainly changed in three or four weeks. His tan was all faded to a kind of pasty yellow, as if he'd been spending a lot of times indoors, and his eyes had that bleak, distant look of a man who thinks too much. I wondered what had happened to him.

"You're all so busy here," the general was saying, "carrying out your daily duties, that I suppose you don't get a very clear idea of the whole state of the front. Like not being able to see the woods for the trees. So that's what I'm going to tell you about."

He unrolled a large-scale map and held it up against the wall, and used a pencil for a pointer. The latest position of the lines was traced in red; it gave us a jolt to see how far the Germans had come since spring, and how near the deepest bulge was to Paris.

"The next few weeks will tell the story," he said. very seriously. "If they get across the Marne, it's going to be very bad. This enemy push has got to be thrown back, and damn soon, too. And the simplest way to do it is to cripple it from the rear."

His pencil began to move around the upper part of the map, where a heavy black line marked the railroad between Metz and Sedan, and another slanted down from Coblenz to join it at Longuyon. It sounded absurdly simple the way he explained it; you thought to yourself, "Why didn't they do that long ago?" As a matter of fact, the idea wasn't new. The French had been trying for four years to smash that junction, without much success. It was a goodly distance behind the lines, and well defended. The day bombers couldn't carry missiles big enough to do more than temporary damage, and the night bombers couldn't hit such a small target in the dark.

He didn't tell us who originally thought up the stunt of the plane to be loaded with H.E. and then dived into the ground. Some kiwi who'd never been in a cockpit, probably. But as an idea it had everything. The accuracy should be perfect, and by using the right type of ship a load could be carried big enough to make a direct hit terrific. They were preparing three S.E.-5's, he said, rigging them with wings off Nieuport 28's. By removing the guns, and all superfluous weight, they would be able to lift a quarter of a ton in addition to the pilot, and could be locked in a dive that would stay straight and true.

THERE wasn't a sound in the room by that time. Every eye was riveted on the speaker, and he must have noticed the expressions of incredulous suspense. He smiled in a fatherly way.

"You're thinking about the pilot, aren't you? Well, this isn't a suicide club we're forming, though it may sound like it so far. But I'm going to let Captain Corbett explain that part to you."

The captain moved to the table and leaned on it. He spoke as if he were in a hurry to get through.

"You don't know me. So much the better. If you do something I ask you to do, it won't be because we're friends."

He explained briefly that he had spent the past few months in charge of experimental work on parachutes, and had finally succeeded in developing one that would work from a plane in motion. That was how the occupants of the three S.E.'s would save themselves at the last minute. Of course there would be a certain amount of risk, and it meant spending the rest of the war in a German prison camp.

"I want three volunteers. You can stand up."

Just like that. No build-up at all. No flag-waving, no harangue about what heroes they'd be if it succeeded. Take it or leave it, as if he didn't care whether he got any response or not.

And for a minute I thought he wasn't going to.

"My God," I thought, "what if nobody steps up?" He had made his explanation so quickly that I guess it hadn't had time to sink in. But then I heard a shuffle of feet over by the bar, and got the surprise of my life. It was a bird by the name of Gurmer who stepped out. I knew from Jud that he dodged patrols whenever possible, and generally managed to come home with motor trouble every time a scrap looked imminent.

A bench scraped, and somebody else down at the far end of the room climbed to his feet. I heard someone mutter, "Aw, hell!" and then there was a regular scramble.

You know how it is; once it's started, they all jump up together. Jud, by my side, was on his feet, and I even stood up myself. Everybody was laughing, but rather nervously.

Everybody, that is, except Captain Corbett. He didn't even look pleased. His face was like a mask; you couldn't tell whether he was surprised or not. But he had noted who were the first ones up, all right.

"You," he said, beckoning. "And you, and you over there."

As Jud pushed past me I said, "You're a damned fool," but he only laughed, as if he'd just gotten a swell break.

"The planes will be ferried in tomorrow morning," the captain was telling them. "And we'll have a balloon here, so you can make some practice jumps. You'll drop your regular patrols, of course."

That was all. He didn't even say thank you. It was the general who shook hands with the three of them, almost too cordially.

On his way out the captain stopped in front of me.

"What are you doing here?"

I told him. "Come over to the bar; I'll buy a drink."

"You have your duties over at the 96th, haven't you?"

I nodded.

"Well, for the next few days you'd better give them your close attention. We're going to be pretty busy here."

It was something in his manner that demanded a salute, and I gave it to him, though I kicked myself for doing it, afterward.

"The damned desk aviator!" I bellyached to Jud. "Standing me at ease like the militia! And I used to think he was a regular guy. Running around with generals must have softened his brain."

I HAD no intention of staying away from the 27th because Captain Corbett had told me to, but as it happened the next couple of days were pretty busy for us, too. The weather was clear, and we delivered a lot of packages over in Germany. We even made a trip to Longuyons; I suppose that was all part of G.H.Q.'s strategy, to keep the wily Boches from suspecting something special coming that way. As the general had so aptly explained, we didn't do much damage; an observer's aim isn't helped much by the continuous cough of archies and a whole raft of Fokkers trying to part his hair with their Spandaus while he's setting his bomb sights. On the way back we lost three out of seven, and my bus was pretty well perforated. So the next morning I was up in front of the hangars helping the riggers dope patches on the wings, when Jud drove off the road in a side-car.

"What the hell are you doing over here?" I asked him.

"I brought my parachute along," he explained, dragging a bundle out after him. "I've jumped from the basket a couple of times, but I thought I'd like to try it from a cockpit once." He grinned. "Like the guy who drank a gallon of beer first before he bet, just to see if he could."

I remembered that they had no two-seaters over at the 27th.

"All right, I'll take you up. Just wait till we slap on one more patch. When are you heroes supposed to strike your blow for democracy?"

"We take off at ten o'clock," he told me.

"Today? Holy smoke, you haven't got much time."

"The traffic was fierce on the way over. But I thought you could hop me back in the D-H, afterward."

"Sure, I can do that. Come on—rig that thing, and let's start."

The chute wasn't inside a pack; it was just folded up and held together by an arrangement of tapes. There was a loop that he slipped over the locking handle of the tourelle, after he'd climbed in and buckled on the harness. I tested the controls in the front cockpit while a mechanic struggled with the prop, sucking in gas.

"All set? How high you want to go?"

"A thousand meters is enough. Yeah, all set."

He grinned, but the grin wasn't very cheerful.

"Contact!"

Three men locked hands and ran off with the tip of the prop, and the roar of the exhausts shook my back teeth. I took off as soon as she warmed a bit, and with no bomb load the big Liberty grabbed altitude fast. We had a thousand meters in no time. I circled so as to cross back over the field, and after a minute Jud poked me in the back, motioning to nose down. I slid the throttle shut and put her in about a forty-five degree dive. The wires were beginning to sing when I felt the ship lurch as weight went over the side.

I caught it, and swung into a bank so I could see what was happening. Several hundred feet below me I could see a khaki figure, tumbling crazily. There was a tangle of lines above it, and a lot of rumpled, billowing silk. The chute seemed to be trying to open, but its own shrouds kept getting in the way.

It hit right near the middle of the field, and dirt splashed like water. The folds of silk collapsed in a long, shapeless blot.

I went down in a vertical side-slip and made a wheel landing at about eighty miles an hour. I got there even before the ambulance. But I might as well have taken my time. Did you ever see a man who has dropped three thousand feet? Well, skip it. But it was funny; his face wasn't scratched, and I was just fool enough to hope there might be some chance. So I helped lift him in—we had to be pretty careful—and rode the step back to the hangars, where the doctor examined him.

The doctor knew I was waiting, and wouldn't come out for quite a while. When he did, I knew from the expression on his face before he said a word. I went over and leaned against headquarters shack and disgraced myself. I'd known Jud pretty well, you know.

IT WAS some little time before I had a thought.

"Hey! The other boys, at the 27th. We ought to tell them—"

"I called up already," the major said. "Talked to a Captain Corbett. He said it must have been an accident, and he'd investigate it later. Had an important patrol to get off, he said."

I was a little dazed, and it took a minute for that to sink in. Then, suddenly, I remembered that fragment of conversation I'd overheard almost a month before. The strange tone in which the general had murmured, "I hadn't thought of that—" All at once the answer was clear, right there before my eyes. Those chutes were no damned good from a moving plane—and the captain knew it.

"Why, the louse!" I yelled, and turned around.

My ship was still standing out there where the chute had hit, its motor ticking over just as I had left it. As I started to run Wally Shane, my observer, grabbed my arm.

"Hey, where are you going? We got a patrol—"

"Come on!" I yelled. "We've got to stop them!"

He had just time to follow me and scramble into the rear cockpit before I grabbed the throttle. I took off across wind, and went hedge-hopping across country at full throttle without bothering about altitude. It was quarter of ten by my watch when I started, and it didn't take more than five minutes to get to the 27th. I was in such a hurry

to land that it wasn't until after I was on the ground that I noticed there were no S.E.'s anywhere in sight. I yelled at the mechanic who ran out to grab my wing.

"Where's Captain Corbett? Where's that S.E. patrol?"

"They took off about five minutes ago," he told me.

I groaned. "Hell, didn't you hear about Jud Hawkins?"

The mechanic looked surprised. "Sure. The captain said he called up. The sidecar went in the ditch, and he sprained his ankle. So—"

My blood all turned to ice, and then it began to boil. The heartless devil! He'd told them that lie, and gotten someone to take Jud's place, and then advanced the time of the take-off so as to make sure they wouldn't learn the truth. But by God, there might be time yet. Longuyons was a long way off, they only had five minutes' start, and a D-H could cover ground when it wanted to.

Once again I took off cross-wind, with Wally shrieking questions and curses at the back of my head. This time I pointed straight for the lines, and never eased the throttle down by so much as an eighth of an inch. I had thought, up till then, that a D-H was capable of pretty fair speed in level flight, and actually it was. But that morning I felt as if I was flying an ice wagon.

I kept searching the sky ahead of me for three specks, and didn't know I had crossed into Germany until the black archie puffs were blossoming practically in my wing bays. I took a little more altitude then, but not much; I didn't want to sacrifice any forward speed to climb. But when I finally spotted the S. E.'s in the distance, I saw that I'd have to climb anyway. They were up at about two thousand, and I could also see the glint of sunshine on steel rails, only a couple of miles farther on.

I twitched and jerked in the cockpit, as if I were trying to lift myself by my bootstraps, and the D-H with me. I could only see two things; the junction at Longuyons, coming closer and closer, and those three ships, fanned out in a wide V, droning steadily along as if they were out for a sight-seeing trip.

When I was still half a mile behind, it dawned on me that I had no way of signaling them. How was I to convey a message across the open sky through the ear-filling thunder of exhausts? I ground my teeth, and thought fast. Maybe I could wave—I'd shoot off a lot of red flares—or perhaps if I got in front of them every time they started to dive, they'd realize what I meant. But I might as well have saved that anxiety.

There was a flash of green from a Very pistol, up ahead. Without a moment's hesitation the two S.E.'s on the flanks of the V began to nose over. Steeper and steeper, until they were pointed straight down, plunging like stones. I strained at my belt, and yelled, and waved my arms like a madman. But it was no use. They weren't looking in my direction. They were aiming for the spot they had picked out on the ground. Aiming for their graves.

There was a flutter of white from one cockpit. But the lines caught on something, and never pulled free at all. The other fellow's chute jerked him clear all right, but never more than half opened. The little sprawling figure kept on going down almost as fast as the plane, and was swallowed up in the mushroom of the explosion.

I was a little closer as the third S.E. plunged past; close enough to read the big number 13 painted on the side. That had been Jud's ship; his favorite pastime was flouting the superstitions of his mates. He used to walk under every ladder he saw.

It couldn't have taken more than a few seconds, but to me it seemed like hours. I wanted to look away, but I couldn't; I still hoped that there might be a possible chance that this one would work.

I could tell the exact moment when he did everything. Now he's cutting the switch . . . now he's aiming with the sights . . . now he's got them centered, and he's locking the controls . . . now he'll jump. . . .

I never moved my eyes for an instant. Yet I could have sworn that that third pilot made no effort to use his parachute whatsoever. There was no flutter of

silk; no figure left the cockpit. The explosion this time seemed bigger than the first two put together.

I guess I was in a kind of a trance. The next thing I knew Wally was pounding me on the back, and tracers were spraying through my wings.

The Fokkers had dropped down out of the sun.

THEY say that a man needs a real personal interest in a battle to fight his best. I had one then, all right. It had nothing to do with the Germans, either. I didn't care how many Fokkers we shot down, but I wasn't going to let any damned Boche shoot me down now. All I wanted was to get back across the lines and get my fingers around the neck of a certain captain, and squeeze until his bones cracked. That thought drove me like a whip, all the time.

Poor Wally; he was the one that really got the dirty end of that deal. It must have been just plain guts that made him fight so; he kept those twin Lewis guns of his going like riveting hammers until he lost so much blood he slumped down out of sight in the cockpit. Some Spads finally took the last of the Fokkers off my tail as I staggered across the lines, and I headed for the 27th.

I must have been a grisly sight when I climbed down and leaned against the wing. I couldn't have choked a rabbit.

"Captain Corbett," I croaked. "Where's Captain Corbett?"

The mechanics grabbed my arms, tried to tell me to lie down.

"He's not here; we don't expect him back. Now you just—"

"Where did he go, the so-and-so?" I cried, reeling.

A pilot ran up. "Corbett? Why, he went out with the S.E.'s. He took Jud's place in Number 13."

IT WAS Marty who held up two fingers to the bartender now.

"Better make it brandy this time." He turned to me. "And did they blow hell out of the railroad?"

"I never even looked to see, that day. I was in too much of a hurry to get back. And it was a couple of months before I got out of the hospital. The next time I saw Longuyons from the air was in October, and no signs were left. But I noticed by the news reports that the Germans started moving out of that bulge the week after the captain's raid, and once started they never stopped till November."

Marty shrugged.

"The general?" he said. "I suppose he figured it was cheap at three lives, the chance of shortening the war."

"I suppose so. And what's more, I think now he was right. Incidentally, he's a famous parachute expert now. I see him around the airports every once in a while."

"Yeah? Who is he?"

But I wouldn't tell him.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

COMMANDER Edward Ellsberg's new book, "Men Under the Sea", will appear this fall, after publication in our magazine. Already advance orders and inquiries assure it of a wide sale, as wide possibly as his "Book-of-the-Month" last year, "Hell on Ice."

The new book tells the greatest and most difficult and dangerous jobs of rescue and salvage that living men with modern equipment have pushed through under the sea.

As we present it, each issue will tell a complete story, and several of them will run as long as the usual novelette.

None of our readers need to be told of Commander Ellsberg's raising of the *S-51*, and his great book, "On the Bottom."

We have a tradition of avoiding advertising at Camp-Fire, and we'll go no further than the statements above.

WE WELCOME two new men into our Writers' Brigade—two recruits in the twenty-eight year parade of men with adventurous likes and variegated lives and a natural turn for telling a yarn.

Arthur Hawthorne Carhart, of "Sunshiner", is known to hunters and fishermen as a leading writer for the outdoor magazines, and known for fiction and articles in a wide range of publications. Says he, from a secluded spot in Colorado:

I've been a chautauqua entertainer, landscape architect, band director in the Army, bacteriologist, forest officer, city planner, writer and now I'm in charge of the research work of the Colorado Game and Fish Commission. This winter we're making a study of deer and elk herds; populations, food requirements, winter feeding, etc., and one of the stunts will be running bucks and bulls into deep snow, putting a couple of lariats on 'em, and putting metal tags in their ears. This, being done on skiis, means action all over the lot. Bulldogging a buck deer or bull elk in about seven feet of snow is something. I've taken this on because there's an important job to be done here to find out how many deer and elk we can carry on our lands. We're headquartering at a ranch, patrolling back country on skiis and altogether into it where the snow is deepish.

O. B. MYERS, of "Suicide Club", flew in the World War and is one of those who collected a piece of metal—but it was pinned on him, not shot into him. He gives this account of himself:

I'm just past the point where life begins. I was born in a suburb of New York, and I'm living in a suburb of New York now, but the interim is another story.

I emerged from Columbia University in 1916 with a degree of electrical engineer, and have never worked as an electrical engineer since. In 1917 I offered myself to the U.S. Army as cannon fodder; they sent me, via Halifax and Liverpool, to an aviation school in southern Italy. I spoke no Italian, and the instructor spoke no English, so we didn't waste much time on dual control, though I've often wondered which of us was the more nervous the day I went solo. It took several more months in various flying schools in France to make a pilot out of me, and two months on the front with the 1st Pursuit Group to net me a couple of confirmations and a hunk of bronze too small to drive nails with, and incidentally to scare me out of ten years' growth.

I spent almost a year in France after the armistice trying to find out what all those Frenchmen can't be wrong about, but came

back ignorant. Spent a short time barnstorming in Rhode Island; the outfit owned one plane and two motors, and many's the time I wished I had both engines along to help me off that abandoned racetrack with a two-hundred pound passenger in the front cockpit. The passenger, lucky stiff, never knew how close we came to the telephone wires.

Since '21, though, I've been quite sane. No more flying; just a succession of efforts to win bread in a gashouse, a Ford agency, the heel business, baling waste paper and mining asbestos. I discovered, eight years ago, that editors' checks seldom bounce. I've been a writer ever since.

Somewhere along the line I paused at an altar, and now I have a daughter nearly as tall as I am. She thinks writing is a crazy kind of a business. But who said it wasn't?

DID THE right foot know what the left was doing—or was it just a matter of take your choice? F. W. Hopkins, our *Ask Adventure* expert, has an inesting query based on "Enemy Boots." He writes:

Am a sincere admirer and devotee of Bedford-Jones, and have been for years, even had occasion to correspond with him on one occasion long ago, so hesitate to question his story "Enemy Boots." However, I am inclined to believe that boots were not manufactured in rights and lefts until some years after the Revolution. Some of your office might look it up if anyone has a passion for accuracy. Seems to me I saw a pair of boots that had belonged to Washington, or Andy Jackson, or somebody, last year when I made a sort of patriotic pilgrimage from the Hermitage to Mt. Vernon and places between and beyond. By the way, I can recommend such an expedition.

—F. W. Hopkins, Major, USMCR.

A GOOD letter has come to us from H. B. Parker of Lincoln, Nebraska, concerning that search for information on the Mississippi River gunboats which Charles H. Hall, *Ask Adventure* expert, and others were recently pursuing in the *Ask Adventure* pages.

My father, who has been gone for twenty years, was a soldier in the 46th Indiana Infantry, and as a boy I was always hungry for was stories. He was in war years just a big farmer boy, but one who had the open eye of curiosity, and a very acute memory.

About the Mississippi River Gun-boats: here are facts about them that I grew up on.

Most of them were converted "packets," rather "boat-shaped" hulls of small draft. Deck and upper works overhanging considerably. Fire-room deck either level with the main deck, or at most a couple of feet lower, but not lower than the water line.

The incident of the "Mound City" he told me often. His expression was that the shell struck the "steam-chest." They fished many of the survivors from the water, and dressed them with oil and cotton. He told of their bodies being swollen to several times proper size, and that they fed the sufferers with ginger-snaps dipped into coffee. He told of the shelling, and also of rifle fire upon the men in the water.

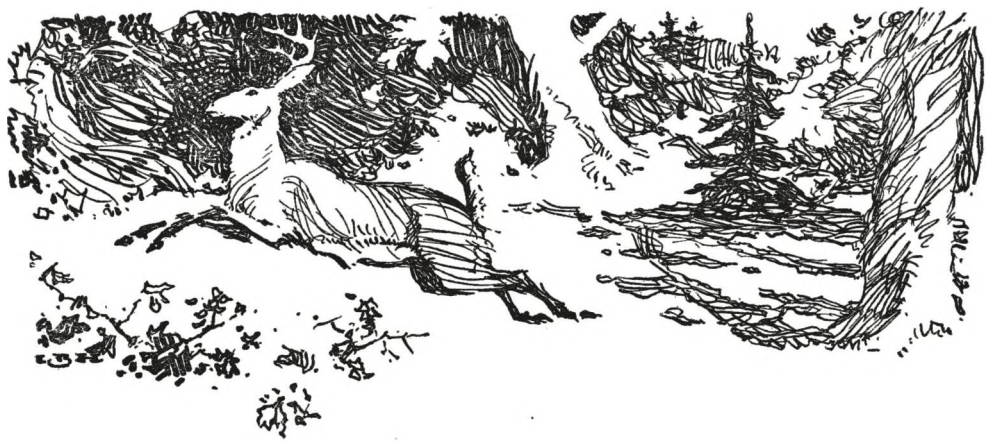
Other craft he often described were the "floating batteries." Some were apparently of the flat-bottomed scow type. Others had boat hulls with protruding decks with mortars mounted. When ready to fire, the crew all went overboard, except the man who pulled the lanyard, and he dived as he pulled, so as to escape the terrible concussion. He told of many gunners with the blood running from their ears. These floating batteries were anchored at both ends so that they could be held steady, and also hove round into position to fire.

WE HAVE a letter from a comrade in Holden, Washington, that brings up a new and startling subject. We'll put it up to you, and here it is.

I read in a magazine a few years ago a story about an island in the Pacific Ocean, where sailors on ships calling there were warned about going outside of town on account of the wild women up in the hills kidnaping any man they got hold of. Now I have a big bet on this, and to prove it I am writing this letter. Will you kindly give me the name of this island, its location and to what country it belongs? How do you get there?

Thanking you in advance.

We hope accounts of this place will come in to help win that bet. Cruise ships appear to have overlooked it, and it doesn't seem to be in the geography textbooks. Full information will be appreciated, such as the terrific resistance, if any, put up by the sailors. And the answer to the question, how do you get there? —H. B.



THE OLD BUCK

By S. OMAR BARKER

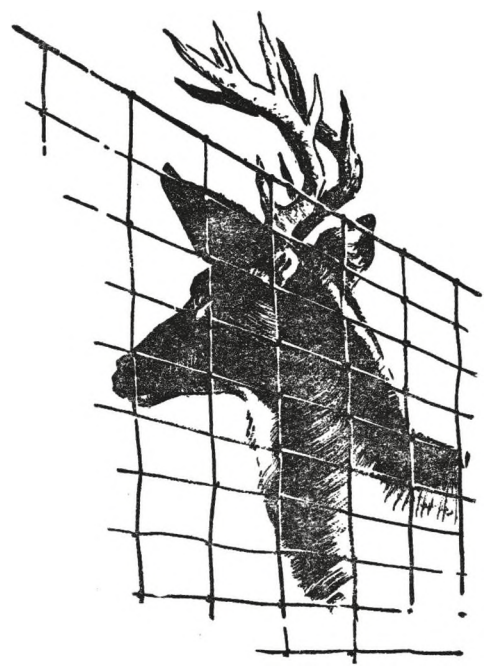
There is one tree where each returning fall
The old buck goes to rub his horns
And loosen itchy velvet—that is all.
What can he know of mountain morns
And antlers polished clean and hard and bright,
With many a snort, upon some clump
Of lusty willows new-found in the night,
When autumn fat is on his rump?

See how the ragged velvet clings today,
And in the paddock there he lies
And dozes all the docile hours away,
Nor cares that life holds no surprise
For him, demanding antlers sharp and hard.
Yonder the feed lot, there the keeper,
And here a fence to bound the dusty yard—
What makes the old buck such a sleeper?

His limbs are agile still, but can he hear
The panther's padded stealth upon
His track? With naught to fight for, naught to fear
Why does he pace the fence, at dawn?

See, now he drowses in the autumn sun
His antlers ragged, drooped his ears.
Security is his—why leap and run
In gallant challenge to old fears?

The old buck rubs his horns with sullen power,
Or begs a bite and wanders on
Content. . . . *But what of that intolerable hour*
When ghosts of freedom stalk the dawn?



ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

THE "American Turtle," submarine extraordinary.

Request:—I'd like information about the first submarine to be used in warfare. The commander was Ezra Lee, and he used the sub in 1775 or '76 in New York against the British, but aside from that, I have not been able to find much about the subject.

If you can help me out on this, I will be very grateful.

—Harold Jay,
Fairmont, Ind.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—David Bushnell, in 1777, invented what he called the "American Turtle," the first submarine to be used in the American Navy in warfare and, I believe, the first to be used in war anywhere in the world. It had a propeller worked by hand, and an airline to a float.

Handled by Sergeant Ezra Lee, of the Army, she made an attack on a British man-of-war lying off Staten Island, in New York Harbor. She had a mine to be attached to the enemy's bottom by a stout wood screw but the Britisher was coppered and Lee could not get the screw through the copper. As day was approaching, he finally gave up, cut the mine adrift, first starting its clockwork, and put out for home. The mine soon blew up, much to the astonishment of the enemy.

In August of the same year, another attempt was made, this time on the frigate "Cerberus," lying off New London. The mine was discovered, or rather the line holding it, and it was hauled aboard a prize schooner, when it blew up, killing three men and blowing a fourth overboard.

This is the same Bushnell who, in January, 1778, sent a "fleet of kegs" down the Delaware to annoy the British ships anchored off Philadelphia. One blew up and smashed a boat and all the men-of-war manned their guns and fired at anything floating until the tide turned. This gave the basis for Francis Hopkinson's humorous poem "The Battle of the Kegs."

THE little known "Telegraph Trail" to Alaska.

Request:—I'd like to have any information you may care to give on the Telegraph Trail from Hazleton to Alaska. When is it passable? What equipment is needed to traverse it? How long is it? Can supplies be procured along the trail? What is its Northern terminus?

—W. L. Rudy,
Ranta Rosa, Calif.

Reply by Mr. C. P. Plowden:—I fear I can give you little recent information on the

telegraph trail, as it is long since I was on that road. Recently much mining has been done in that vicinity which must have opened up the trail a lot, so all I can do is to tell you how to get the information you want.

The distance is approximately two hundred miles and there are nine log cabins thirty miles apart for the operators.

You would have to use pack horses and get all supplies in Hazelton. Midsummer is the only time you can get through, and you would need a guide. No shooting is permissible at that time of year. All information can be obtained at Hazelton from the police.

When you get to Dawson, you will have to find out which of the trails to Alaska is open and passable and possibly get another guide.

The men in the telegraph cabins rely on the annual pack trail for their food, so they could not supply you. This annual pack trail starts from Hazelton with about seventy horses and takes weeks through green forest, across rivers, round precipices, on trails so narrow that you never see them till you are upon them, and the flies are terrible.

Charlie Barrett, who owns the big ranch near Barretts Place, the Diamond D, is the pack boss and would give you information.

Usually the first night you stop at Burning Camp, next Big Flat, then Old Kildo, and on to Poison Mountain, Wire Cache, Totem Pole Camp, and past others to Blackwater.

Past the sixth cabin, trails run through ground-hog country, then north following Nass River with turn west to Quarterway and Little Summit, until you end your journey at ninth cabin by the roaring Nass. You can average seven to eight miles daily depending on feeding grounds and weather except for the thirteen miles between sixth and Nass which are easy.

Hope I have been able to help a little.

A SECRET the jungle won't give out.

Request:—Will you please give me some information about the wood called Black Palm? I don't know the scientific name.

It is said the natives in the tropics use it for hunting bows. It has been used for fishing rods in this country, I understand.

I would like to obtain a quantity of this wood. I have tried many dealers in rare woods, but they have never heard of it.

—Benj. B. Bassett,
New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. William R. Barbour:—I wish I could give you authentic information concerning black palm. I could use some myself.

There is such a wood. I saw bows made of it in the Lake Maracaibo region of Venezuela in 1929. It was said to be used by the Motalone Indians of the high mountain ranges on the Colombia frontier, but I never saw the tree growing.

Henri Pittier was then (he may be dead now) the recognized authority on Venezuelan botany. I had his book "Plantas Usuales de Venezuela," but he does not list it, and he never replied to a letter I wrote concerning it. I have also heard of it in Colombia and Panama, but never saw it. I believe it is a high mountain palm.

I am interested from the angle of bow making. I had a bow (lost in the hurricane of 1932 which destroyed my home in Puerto Rico) that looked like a toy but took a husky man to draw. The wood is almost jet black, as hard as horn.

I heard of a case in Venezuela where an arrow (also tipped with black palm) was shot over two hundred yards, passed through a copper screen, through the back of a wicker chair, and through an oil geologist who was in the chair.

Black palm ought to make good fishing rods, but for that purpose I believe would have to be glued up, as are bamboo rods, for the density of the wood decreases from the outside inward and a rod of one piece of wood would not bend uniformly. This would not hurt in bow making, since one could make a flat bow.

If you locate any source of supply, won't you let me know?

TREATING shoe leather like a school girl complexion.

Request:—I intend to take a walking trip this summer. I expect to be gone for about six weeks. Now, I've learned from experienced hoboes that the greatest problem while on the road is shoes; an ordinary pair wears out in three or four weeks.

Do you think a pair of Army shoes would be appropriate for a trip such as this? What would be the best method of waterproofing them? Any other suggestions you may make will be appreciated.

—William Klein,
New York, N. Y.

Reply by Dr. C. P. Fordyce:—Army shoes are the best for walking because of the broad toe room. They should be ankle high. You must count on much wear but this can be retarded by using a dozen cone-headed hob nails on soles. Be sure to take extra laces.

For the best waterproofer:

Melt six ounces of cocoa butter and six ounces of beeswax together, mix well and apply to the dried shoes. Pour a thin stream into the crevice between the sole and upper and rub the mixture well into all the leather.

Neatsfoot oil will do fairly well but washes out.

Get your shoes extra large; fit them over a pair of heavy wool socks and a pair of thin silk or cotton next the skin. This roominess and the thick pad of wool afforded by thick wool socks make a lot of difference.

And good tramping to you.

MORE about grease—for swimming.

Request:—Is there a standing offer of a cash award to anyone who swims the English Channel? If so, who is the person or organization offering this award? What is its amount? What are the conditions which must be met to receive it?

Is there any person or organization that would sponsor a swimmer, in his training and other expenses connected with swimming the Channel, whom they deemed of sufficient promise?

What is the best grease to apply to the body for long-distance swims? How and where is it applied?

What steps are necessary, in order to gain a place on the next Olympic swimming squad? When is the closing date for the first of these steps? From whom may entry blanks be obtained?

—C. H. Belcher,
Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. L. DeB. Handley:—I really don't know whether any cash award still is offered for anyone who swims the English Channel, so suggest your writing to the Channel Swimming Association, in care of "The Swimming Times," 4 Waddon Park Avenue, Croydon, England. I feel confident the organization will be glad to supply all the information you seek.

American newspapers have occasionally financed Channel trials, but the swim has attracted so little attention in recent years, I fear it may be difficult to get one to sponsor the undertaking nowadays.

Various kinds of axle grease usually are used by distance swimmers. They all seem to serve the purpose. As this purpose is to prevent heat radiation from the body, to keep it warm, you will realize that the chief consideration is not the distance to be covered, but the temperature of the water, and the tendency of the swimmer to chill. Some men, and most women, can swim for hours in water at, say, 70 degrees without feeling the least discomfort.

It is my belief, indeed, that distance swimmers often use grease unnecessarily, to their detriment. It clogs the pores and prevents their adequately expelling the poisons formed by the muscles while in action, the poisons responsible for fatigue and exhaustion. For this reason, I am not in favor of grease unless cold is a greater threat, and I advocate leaving part of the body free, that the pores may perform their function. The spots to coat heavily are those where large arteries come close to the surface, the neck, armpits and crotch, in particular.

To gain a place on an American Olympic swimming team one must take part in the trials conducted by the Amateur Athletic Union shortly before the team leaves for the games. It has been the rule in the past to select the contestants who finish first, second and third in each event. No preliminary steps are required. The entry blanks are issued some time in advance of the trials, but the closing date for the entries is set close to said trials. Only amateurs are eligible, of course.

THE voice in an armoured car.

Request:—I would like to join some unit of the Army. I'd like to get into an armoured car corps. I hold an amateur radio station, call W9UZH, and would like to get into some branch of the service that uses short wave radio for communication.

I am twenty-four years old and a high school graduate. Could you please tell me the nearest place to enlist?

—Denver E. Byrne,
Fremont, Neb.

Reply by Captain Glen R. Townsend:—I am sending you herewith a pamphlet of general information concerning enlistments in the Army together with a mimeographed memorandum describing opportunities in the Air Corps.

For service in all armoured car organizations you should apply for enlistment in one

of the mechanized Cavalry units which are stationed at Fort Knox in Kentucky (about thirty miles southeast of Louisville). The 1st and 13th Cavalry regiments at Fort Knox are the only completely mechanized regiments in the army. Your experience as an amateur radio operator should be of value to you.

To enlist you should apply at the recruiting office in the New Federal Building, 15th & Dodge Sts., Omaha, Nebraska, or at any branch office which may be nearer to you. A card to the Recruiting Officer in Omaha will bring you information as to the location of any branch offices nearer to you.

THE Indians were clever workmen (—) how they built canoes.

Request:—I am interested in learning how a birch-bark canoe is built. Do you think you can give me this information? If not, do you know of a birch-bark canoe that can be bought?

—Earl F. Phillips,
Ravena, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. H. S. M. Kemp:—I am afraid that any attempt of mine to describe the building of a birch-bark canoe without diagrams to illustrate what I am trying to put across will be as clear as mud; but I'll do my best. At least, I can tell you how the Indian goes about building his birch-bark.

To begin with, he locates his birch. This must be "canoe-birch," with a trunk clean of limbs and comparatively free from knots. He may girdle the tree and pry the bark off in six-foot slabs, or he may leave it till he has his ribs and gunwales ready. The ribs are made from spruce, about two inches wide, as long as necessary and planed down with a crooked-knife to a thickness of about $\frac{3}{16}$ths to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Remembering that the ribs go into the framework before the bark goes on, he will set about bending them to the required shape. And here he displays considerable ingenuity. With all the ribs planed to size, he will divide them into two equal piles, the ribs arranged one atop the other. These two setups of ribs he will leave in water until they are thoroughly pliable, then bend them en bloc until their ends meet. Tied there in that position, they will dry, and you can appreciate the result; the outer of the ribs so bent will fit into the canoe in the middle, and by a process of graduation the inner ones—now almost elliptical—fit into the bow or the stern. Next will come the gunwales, two pairs, planed down to size and tapered. These too are steeped, bent to shape and tied there to dry. About this time, the Indian will have to pull up the long, pliable roots of spruce-trees and split them, for these roots are the lacing to fasten the sheets of bark together and the bark to the framework. With his materials to hand, he is ready to commence actual construction. He will make a mold of the canoe right on the ground by driving in stakes. The position of the stakes—and consequently, the size of the canoe—will be determined by the gunwales that he has already prepared. This mold will be a mere skeleton, made of light spruce-poles with a temporary keel placed down the inside center. The ribs are then inserted in position; and as the gunwales he is at present using are the inside pair, the ribs must be fastened solidly to the outside of these. He now has a complete framework of the canoe; consisting of ribs and inner gunwales, the ribs also temporarily fastened to the inner false-keel. Now this framework is inverted and the birch-bark sheets laced on. The bark has, of course, been steeped, as has also the spruce-root fibres until both are thoroughly pliable. Remains the matter of lacing on the bark and the lacing of the sheets of bark together. This is a slow and laborious business, and great care needs to be exercised to see that the "lace-holes" do not tear open. Finally, the outer gunwales are put on, the false-keel removed, and all seams are doped with either native spruce-gum or else the white man's marine glue.

Now all this is quite a chore, and I'm not surprised when you ask if a birch-bark cannot be purchased ready made. It can be; and up to a few years ago a fourteen-foot canoe of this nature could be bought anywhere from twenty to thirty-five dollars. Just what they are worth nowadays, however, I do not know. Nor do I know just what sizes they run. At the present moment we are in the freeze-up period and all planes are grounded until ice thickens. But just as soon as winter flying is resumed, I'll drop a line to some of my friends at the nearer posts and get a quotation for you.

Turn to next page for list of Ask Adventure experts

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 304 W. Cook Av., Libertyville, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT S. BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo, the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 161 Ferguson Av., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Av., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—CHIEF STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining and Prospecting: *anywhere in No. America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 11628 Mayfield Av., West Los Angeles, Calif.

The Merchant Marine. GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—MAJOR GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 708 Angenette Ave., Kirkwood, Missouri.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, 1296 E. Hastings, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Yatina," 3 Lucknow St., Willoughby, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, 3482-16th Av., So., St. Petersburg, Florida **3** ★ *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, care of *Adventure.*

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany.*—G. I. COLBURN, care of *Adventure.*

★**Central America**—ROBERT S. BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure.*

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **2** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care *Adventure.* **3** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks, Camping.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 1163 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **5** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. F. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune,* Minneapolis, Minn. **6** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **7** *Northern Saskatchewan, Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 313 9th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure.* **3** *New Mexico (Indians, etc.)*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado, Homesteading, etc.*—E. P. WELLS, Box 203, Prineville, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and border waters; touring, fishing.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune,* Minneapolis, Minn. **3** *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi and Lake Michigan.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.* **4** *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. **5** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 29 Baldwin St., Almes Pt. Westhaven, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks,* New York,—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood Calif. **4** *New Jersey.*—F. H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J. **5** *West Va., Md., District of Columbia.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 842 Spring Ave., South Hills, Charleston, W. Va. **6** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.* **7** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

TRAIL AHEAD

TO Merv, the Jewel City of the Sands, the hordes of Genghis Khan were riding for their reckoning. And Alan de Courcy, ex-Crusader, who had gambled on a despot's mercy and lost, scaled a wall bristling with sentries. He remembered the torture rack that was waiting for him and how he had sworn to a grim-eyed man: ". . . failing to secure a pledge of mercy for ye, I will return thirty days hence to die at your hands."

Such is the powerful background of Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson's novelette of the Mongol Hordes —"Sword For Hire."

Commander Edward Ellsberg tells of the salvage search for the *Egypt's* $5,000,000 treasure waiting at the bottom of the sea—one hundred feet deeper than a man could dive and live!

In the same issue

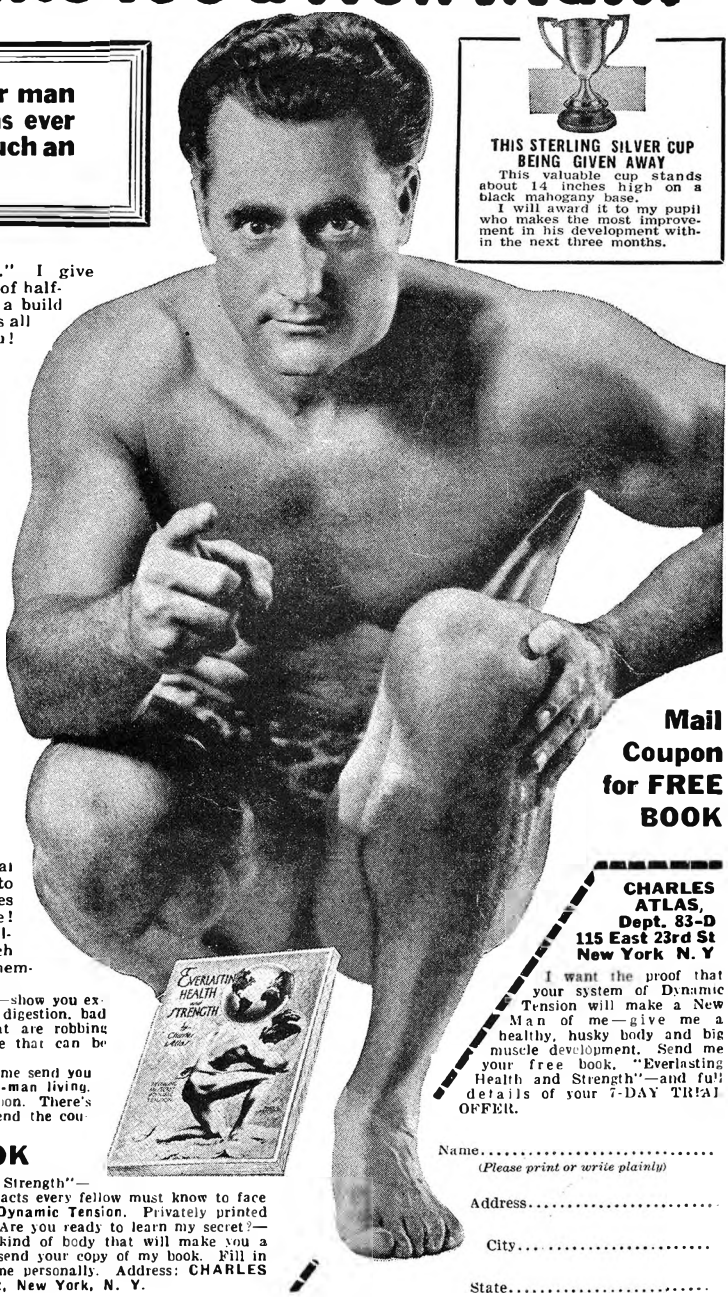
"A Friend in China," a story of a yellow man's courage, by Louis G. Goldsmith; the conclusion of Frank Gruber's serial, "Peace Marshal;" and other good fact and fiction pieces.

Adventure 15c

The May issue is on sale at all stands April 7th

"One Week from To-night You'll See PROOF that I can make You a New Man!"

NOTE—No other man in the world has ever DARED make such an offer!



THIS STERLING SILVER CUP BEING GIVEN AWAY

This valuable cup stands about 14 inches high on a black mahogany base.

I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months.

I GIVE MORE than "promises." I give PROOF! If you're sick and tired of half-baked ideas—if you really want a build like mine—then one week, 7 DAYS, is all I need to prove I can give it to you!

You've got a body, man. Why not make it a real handsome man's body! There's NO good reason why you shouldn't have rippling cords of mighty muscle across your neck and shoulders. No reason at all why your chest shouldn't be strapping, big and husky, like mine—your arms and legs powerful—your wind lasting—your vigor 100%!

I used to be a sickly, half-pint runt weighing only 97 lbs.—a "laughing stock" wherever I went. No fun. No friends. Right there I almost "fell" for some of these freak spring or weight contraptions to make me "strong." But THEN—by the luckiest break of my life—I discovered **Dynamic Tension.**

Apparatus is OUT!

Look at me now. You don't see any skinny, flabby, no-account bag of bones here, do you? This is what my remarkable secret has done for my body. Twice—against all comers—I have won the title, "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." No wonder I've got no use for tricky weights, pulleys, or machines that may strain your heart or other vital organs. I've found the natural way to build the husky, solid, fighting muscles that Nature means for you to have! And I've shown thousands of other fellows, many of them probably much worse off than you, how to develop themselves into champions MY way!

I'll give you clean-cut health inside, too—show you exactly how to get rid of constipation, poor digestion, bad breath, pimples and other weaknesses that are robbing you of the good times and things in life that can be yours.

Now make me PROVE I can do it. Let me send you the FREE Book that opens the door to he-man living. Just tell me where to send it. Use the coupon. There's no obligation. But—be MAN enough to send the coupon NOW!

Send for FREE BOOK

My big book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—packed with actual photographs and vital facts every fellow must know to face life—tells the whole remarkable story of **Dynamic Tension.** Privately printed for me, it's FREE if you act AT ONCE. Are you ready to learn my secret?—ready to learn how I can give YOU the kind of body that will make you a masterful leader? Then tell me where to send your copy of my book. Fill in the coupon below, and mail TODAY to me personally. Address: **CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83-D, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**

Mail Coupon for FREE BOOK

CHARLES ATLAS,
Dept. 83-D
115 East 23rd St
New York N. Y

I want the proof that your system of Dynamic Tension will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength"—and full details of your 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER.

Name.....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

City.....

State.....

● WITNESSED STATEMENT SERIES:

Right AT JUDGING TOBACCO

FRED EVANS has been an independent tobacco buyer for 18 years. His record shows he knows tobacco. Mr. Evans says: "I've smoked Luckies 12 years—I've always seen them buy the best line of tobacco." Most other independent experts also smoke Luckies.

Have you tried a Lucky lately?

Easy on Your Throat—
Because "IT'S TOASTED"

Recent tobacco crops have been outstanding in quality. New methods, sponsored by the United States Government, have helped the farmer grow finer tobacco. Now, as independent tobacco experts like Fred Evans point out, Luckies have been buying the cream of these finer crops. And so Luckies are better than ever. Have you tried a Lucky lately? Try them a week and see why . . .

WITH MEN WHO KNOW TOBACCO BEST—IT'S LUCKIES 2 TO 1

Printed in U. S. A.