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Adventure

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"PSYCHIANA"

THE NEW PSYCHOLOGICAL RELIGION

A new and revolutionary religious teaching based entirely on the misunderstood sayings of the Galilean Carpenter, and designed to show how to find and use the same identical power that He used.

FRANK B. ROBINSON, D.D.
Founder of "Psychiana."
Author of *"America Awakening"—"The God Nobody Knows," etc.*

"PSYCHIANA"

Believes and Teaches as Follows:

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SECOND—That this INVISIBLE DYNAMIC POWER is the self-same POWER that Jesus used over 2000 years ago when he held the MULTITUDES SPEECHLESS with his POWER to "Heal the Sick, Cleanse the Leper, Raise the Dead."

THIRD—That the so-called MIRACLES performed by the humble NAZARENE were NOT THE RESULT of any Supernatural power but WERE THE RESULT of a DIVINELY NATURAL POWER which on account of its VERY SIMPLICITY was entirely misunderstood by the listeners of Christ's day and by those who PROFESS TO FOLLOW HIM TODAY.

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CONTENTS

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RED SEA CARGO

By TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "King of the Khyber Rifles"

THE schooner *Tres Hermanos* slowly approached the Red Sea port of Hoseyn Shellabi Kabir. Captain Bridgeman Burgess stood near the wheel, a splendid specimen of Nova Scotian bone and muscle; his head looked captain of the man as surely as the man was captain of his schooner. Toward him along the deck, in silk pajamas, strolled Edward Harvey, who was obviously captain of nothing.

"They're all pirates on this coast," Harvey remarked. "Stay offshore until daylight. Why not?"

Burgess glanced at the stars; the sky was powdered with them. The pulse beat of the perfectly conditioned Diesel engine made the schooner seem like a living thing that felt her way intelligently.

"You don't know Red Sea Arabs," Harvey insisted.

"You're hired," said Burgess, "to talk Arabic, not to tell me how to run guns."

It had needed brains to get to sea with a thousand new Japanese rifles and a million rounds of ammunition manifested as cotton piece-goods.

"This isn't the sealskin trade," said Harvey.

"No, nor is it the heroin racket."

Harvey sneered. He had lost his medical certificate and self-respect and served a long term in an Indian prison for running heroin. He was out of his class on that schooner, and he knew it. He despised men who broke laws but kept promises. He hated Burgess because Burgess could see through him. But he knew his own value.

"How's your Arabic?" he demanded. He was the only man on the schooner who could speak Arabic fluently.

Burgess rang to stop the engine.

"Let go," he commanded, and the anchor chain roared.

The shadowy forms of half a dozen dhows were dimly visible, and there was a vague white line where the surf dashed on coral reefs. The dark shoreline was just discernible. It was a stifling, dark night—no wind at all. Tobacco seemed tasteless, so there was not even a glow from a cigaret.

Harvey fidgeted.

"You'll leave the negotiations to me, I suppose? I did the Bombay end. I—"

Burgess interrupted.

"This here Kahin, as you call him, talks English. That's what you said. Tell me again about him."

"He was booted out of Bombay by the Indian police," said Harvey. "He became a rajah's pet astrologer, but the rajah sacked him. Then he got himself the same sort of job here—astrologer, physician, interpreter, spy, intriguer. He needs expert handling."

"No one starts a sheet without my orders. Do you get that?" Burgess answered. There was nothing of the high seas bully about him; but he meant what he said, and Harvey flinched a little. "When were you here last?"

"Four years ago, on plague work. Hoseyn Shellabi Kabir means the Very Beautiful Fortress. It's the filthiest pest-hole in all Arabia. Sultan Mahmoud Quotch, who runs the place, is the financier, remember. He is supposed to have the money in English sovereigns wangled from the Arabs who fought under Feisal in Allenby's drive to Damascus."

Burgess eyed Harvey calmly and made a smug remark—

"Who cares how he got it, if he has it?"

"You'll find him difficult," said Harvey. "Your actual customer is a sheik named Dandan, who is said to be half French. His mother was looted from a caravan and liked it. He has no money—nothing but horses, camels, sheep and goats. Dandan is to take the rifles overland and trade them to the Kurds, who will pay anything for them—anything. They're in rebellion against Turkey, Persia and Irak."

"Sounds O.K. to me," said Burgess. "First man aboard with the money gets 'em. Better turn in, hadn't you?"

Harvey snorted and went forward of the cabin-house.

Obadiah Tingle, first mate, wandered aft with his thumbs in the belt of a pair of serge pants. His only other garment was a peaked cap.

"Hotter 'n hell," he remarked to Captain Burgess by way of not appearing too inquisitive.

He was a small man; Burgess looked nearly twice his size as he peered around the cabin-house to make sure Harvey was not lurking there to listen.

"Harvey has a scheme," said Burgess, and Tingle nodded. "He and this feller they call a Kahin may have figured we'd be easy picking for a British cruiser. But we're two days ahead of time. There's no cruiser at Aden or Perim, but one may come from Suez. There's a scheme to get our cargo free for nothing."

Tingle hesitated; then he stuck out his jaw and spoke his mind.

"I warned you when you signed him, Harvey's rotten."

"Had to have a man who knows the language," Burgess answered. "Turn in."

ALL grew quiet. About midnight a muezzin's voice whined from a minaret ashore, and dogs howled a response. Burgess turned in on a mattress on the poop, slept three hours and fifty minutes to the second, and awoke about sixty seconds before the steward came aft with his morning coffee. He shaved and dressed himself in spotless white, then stared at the shoreline until the sun rose over the town.

The fort of Shellabi Kabir, with the muzzles of ancient cannons peering through embrasures, stood sharp against the sky, above and behind a flat roofed town that presently emerged from shadow. There was a jetty in bad repair, a filthy beach, and a cemetery over to the right, as bleak and dismal as the sky was blue and cruel. Six dhows lay at anchor in the lee of a reef, on which the lazy swell burst green and white. And there were the fins of three prowling sharks.

Tingle, also dressed, came and stood near Burgess, after seeing to the spreading of the awning on the main boom.

"Three boats putting out from the jetty," he said, "and thirty Arabs in 'em. That's a proposition."

"Yeah, they look too innocent. Tell Joe to get the engine started. Heave short."

The Arabs made for the nearest dhow and swarmed aboard her. Tingle hurried aft again for orders.

"They're figuring," said Burgess, "to come alongside, and that won't suit us. Lay our spare spar forward. Set the butt of it against the bitts and make fast. Then get your hook, and send the quartermaster aft. I'm going to learn 'em manners."

The Arabs began hauling on their weed-foul cable, but it was a slow job; only four men could work at a time without impeding one another. Before their four-pronged anchor was awash a long spar, very firmly lashed in place, projected far beyond the jibboom of the *Tres Hermanos*.

"Grease it good," commanded Burgess.

So a man with a can of stinking tallow crawled out to the end. By the time the anchor was up and the tallow had taken the heat of the sun, no human guile was quite so slippery as that long spar.

"I'm going to lay 'em on the reef," Burgess remarked when Tingle hurried aft again. "Give four of the men rifles. Four's plenty. Not a shot unless I order it. Bullets ain't good for business—not at this stage."

Burgess swung the schooner slowly, and the Arabs proceeded to look innocent. They overdid it. The man at the masthead called a warning:

"They've swords and guns stowed handy behind the bulwark. I can see 'em."

Burgess rang for half speed, circling toward the dhow as if he meant to come alongside; but he straightened his course suddenly, and the light dhow reeled at the impact as the long spar struck her amidships, turning her bow toward the reef. Burgess reversed his engine, drew clear and resumed the assault from the stern.

Only then did the Arabs perceive it was not an accident. They yelled, screamed, imprecated and showed their weapons—too late. A dozen of them scrambled aft and jumped for the spar, not guessing it was greased; they had to let go their weapons and swim for the boats before sharks could get them. Those remaining on the dhow cursed mightily and fired three hysterical shots that did no damage.

"Steady now!" commanded Burgess. "I'll dock the share of the man who shoots without my order."

The dhow crashed the reef head-on at four knots, climbed it, half careened and sat there. Burgess backed away in time to save the spar from breaking, circled leisurely to observe the situation and then returned to his former anchorage. Not a man on the schooner except himself had spoken.

"That'll learn 'em to try to hijack

me," he remarked. "All right, unship that spar."

ONE of the shore boats left the dhow and drew near. Some one in the boat's stern shouted, and that brought Harvey aft. Burgess nodded to him. He shouted back in Arabic, and the boatswain lowered a rope overside. He in the boat's stern seized the rope, and the boat backed away in a hurry, leaving him waist-deep in water. The boatswain hauled him over the bulwark by the seat of his Allah-be-good-to-Arabia pants.

"Bring him aft," commanded Burgess.

So he came aft, lacking dignity in spite of Arab headdress and flowing garments.

"*Astaghfaru'llah*—" he began.

"Beg Allah's pardon in the mosque," said Burgess. "I'll forgive you for trying to hijack me, providing business is good. Who are you?"

"May God whiten your Honor's countenance, I am the Kahin, who in Bombay made negotiations with this man here."

"I'm the man with the goods," said Burgess. "Where's your money?"

"God be praised, we have it ready," the Kahin answered. "The Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch, whose representative I am, commanded me to bless your Honor's countenance and say that he will buy the rifles on the jetty."

Burgess grinned.

"Tell him the price is fifty pounds a rifle and a thousand rounds, in gold, on my deck."

The Kahin looked scandalized. His eyes sought Harvey's, but Harvey looked the other way.

"*Insh'allah bukra,*" he answered.

"Meaning, 'Please God, tomorrow'," Harvey interpreted. His smile suggested it would not be long before the captain would have to pass the buck to somebody who knew the Red Sea Arabs.

"Tell him I'm superstitious. Tomorrow's the thirteenth."

Harvey talked with the man in Hindustani, of which Burgess knew even less than he did Arabic.

"You must give him time," he said at last. "Your price is too high. Offer him a pound a rifle for himself and—"

Burgess shoved his fists into his pockets, hugely patient.

"What's the layout ashore?" he demanded. "Sheik by the name o' Dandan is to have the rifles? He's to take 'em off by caravan and sell 'em to the Kurds? But Quotch pays?"

"Yes, *effendi.*"

"Then I'll bet this ship and cargo against yonder dhow that Quotch has good security in hand. What hold has Quotch on that there Dandan?"

"His Calamity, *effendi*—his daughter. The Sheik Dandan has delivered his daughter as hostage. The Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch shall keep her as security until his Honor, the Sheik Dandan, shall return from dealing with the Kurds and make a settlement in full."

"Is she considered valuable?"

"She is so beautiful, *effendi,* that whole cities shed tears at sight of her. She is eighteen but not yet married because nations go to war about her. The Sheik Dandan seeks a suitable alliance."

"But he's put her in hock for the price o' the rifles, eh? Where is he?"

"Camped beyond the cemetery, with a hundred men."

Burgess glanced toward the cemetery, desolate and naked looking, on a dune against the skyline. Between it and the beach lay barren sand in windblown ridges.

"You go ashore," he said to Harvey.

The Kahin perked up. Even his wet trousers looked less bedraggled.

"I will take his Honor straight to Sultan Mahmoud Quotch," he volunteered.

But Burgess beckoned. Tingle strolled aft with the boatswain and two seamen. Almost before the Kahin knew what happened to him, he was borne away backward and lashed to the mainmast.

"They're just treacherous. They'd

doublecross 'emselves if there was no one else. So talk 'em turkey. My price. Cash on my deck, if they want the cargo. Go ashore in their boat," said Burgess.

So Harvey went, in helmet and silk pajamas.

Tingle drew near then and leaned against the rail until Harvey was well out of earshot, eyeing the lone sentinel, motionless as a vulture, on the roof of the fort of Shellabi Kabir.

"That guy 'ud see a cruiser's smoke before we did," he remarked. "But we'd see it and be out beyond the three-mile limit before the cruiser sighted us."

Burgess grinned.

"Suppose you were burning Admiralty fuel all the way from Suez on a hot tip, would you measure the miles offshore with a footrule before you picked on something our size? Rifles and ammunition under hatches, and booked as cotton piece-goods — we'd be logged within the three-mile limit if land was twenty miles off. What about our papers? We're going to have to use salesmanship."

BURGESS approached the Kahin, stared at him and grinned without a hint of malice.

"Better pick your bet soon, hadn't you?"

"I do not understand you," said the Kahin, writhing to ease his muscles where the rope bit.

"Very good. Words o' one syllable. I'll jettison the cargo if a cruiser shows up. Any share o' booty money you'd get wouldn't compensate for what my crew 'ud do to you. I've sent Mr. Harvey ashore to tell your Sultan Mahmoud Quotch that you've confessed that he was on that dhow with the intention o' pirooting me and my cargo. Mr. Harvey don't mind whether you said it or didn't. So you don't stand ace high with the sultan. You'll be bastinadoed to a frazzle any time he catches you. Is there a customs officer ashore? Has he a seal? Could you borrow it?"

"I could steal it, *effendi.* But what for?"

"Why does Dandan want those rifles?"

"For the Kurds, *effendi.*"

"That's what he says. Why did Quotch try to pirate 'em? To keep Dandan from having 'em? Then Quotch would have had the rifles, the money and Dandan's daughter, wouldn't he? He'd have set soft. Was that your idea?"

"No, *effendi.*"

"You're a liar. This here Dandan, does he like Quotch?"

"No, *effendi.*"

"Any fight in Dandan?"

"People liken him to the hot wind."

"Would he fight Quotch—for a fat stake?"

"But how could he? His daughter is a hostage. Gross indignities to her would be the consequence."

"I get you. It's a pity I can't trust you."

"But, *effendi,* I am purchasable."

"How much?"

"For a thousand pounds. By Allah, pay my price and I will keep faith!"

Burgess strolled aft and stared at the shore through binoculars. He could see Harvey in striped pajamas on the jetty, talking to about a dozen Arabs. Burgess returned to the Kahin.

"If Dandan was here," he said, "I'd proposition him."

"Five hundred pounds, *effendi.*"

"Fifty."

"In the name of the All Merciful, *effendi,* I am poor; and you have set the Sultan Mahmoud Quotch against me. I have lost my living. It is risky to go to Dandan. But for two hundred and fifty pounds—"

"A hundred. That's the limit."

"In advance, *effendi?*"

"Do you take me for a sucker? Hey, Tingle, take him below and set two men to watch him. Treat him decent if he's quiet."

Tingle, the boatswain and two men

spirited the Kahin out of sight as the man at the masthead reported a boat putting off from the jetty. Tingle returned and leaned on the rail beside Burgess, his eyes puckering in the Red Sea glare as he watched the small boat approaching. It was deep laden, burdened with nine men. Harvey, in helmet and pajamas, looked dwarfed amid those loose-robed Arabs.

Tingle spat into the sea.

"Harvey don't like us," he said. "He knows damned well we don't like him. For spite, he'd sell us out for half what he'd get by acting decent."

Burgess spat too.

"Get the hatch off," he answered. "Then come back aft and listen in."

Tingle was listening in, from behind the cabin-house, when Harvey scrambled overside to have the first word with Burgess.

"Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch in person!" he announced with an air of triumph. "How's that? Let me do the talking. You pretend to give me orders, but leave him to me. He came because I promised medicine."

"Bring him aft here and say what I tell you," Burgess answered. "Only one man with him. Let the rest of 'em stay in the boat. Fetch up cabin cushions for the sultan. Park him comfortable."

SO THE Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch recovered dignity after being hauled aboard by the boatswain, and walked aft awkwardly, as men do who have lived alternately on horse- or camel-back and harem cushions. Three pilgrimages to Mecca had made him supercilious. Sly and rather bleary eyes, a nose like Abdul Hamid's, a sparse gray beard that looked as if he tore it in times of anger, and the cutlery he carried at his waist decidedly offset the graciousness at which he aimed.

"In the name of the Almighty, peace," he said in sonorous Arabic. Then he sat down.

Burgess stuck his fists into his pockets while he studied the man.

"Peace?" he answered. "Why did he try to hijack me this morning?"

"For heaven's sake, don't speak about that," Harvey objected. "Keep him amiable. Let me do the talking."

"Tell him what I said. You hear me? He doesn't answer, eh? Tell him I wouldn't trust him a yard, not after what the Kahin told me. He can send me the money aboard, and I'll land the cargo afterward. It's fifty pounds a rifle and a thousand rounds. Say that to him."

Harvey turned the ultimatum into Arabic, sneering to show he did not approve; but his distaste was nothing compared to the sultan's indignation.

"Allah!" he exploded. His attendant clucked, scandalized.

There was a long pause. Then the sultan drew forth patience from the folds of his burnous and temporized.

"He says," said Harvey, "if he sends the money, what is to stop you from sailing away with it? He wants the rifles ashore before he sends the money. But he is willing to send you a hostage to remain on board until the rifles are ashore and you get your money."

"O.K. Tell him he may send me Dandan's daughter. Tell him, do you hear me?"

Harvey had to say it. Burgess knew sufficient Arabic to check him if he only pretended to say it. There was another explosion of "Allahs," another silence and then eloquent anger. Harvey interpreted:

"Verily saith the Prophet, all astrologers are liars; and that Kahin shall be bastinadoed into food for vultures! Dandan's daughter is a sacred trust in his charge. He would violate the law and his religion if he handed her over to any one else, particularly to an Unbeliever."

"Tell him," Burgess answered, "that the law's off when it comes to running firearms. Send the girl aboard and I'll put half the goods ashore. Send me half the money, then I'll set the other

half ashore. When he pays for that half he can have the girl back. Meantime, he can have you for an offset. You go ashore with him and check the goods against the money. Tell him."

The sultan's face betrayed no satisfaction. It was Harvey who could not conceal emotion as he interpreted the sultan's answer.

"Half the cargo and half the ammunition?" he asked.

"Yes," said Burgess, turning aside to wink at Tingle. His face looked wooden again when he turned to Harvey. "Take your medicines ashore and doctor the whole harem. Do you see that spit o' beach, this side o' the hollow where the sand dune humps between the shore and cemetery? That's where I'll land 'em, after I've sent a boat to take soundings. Tell him."

Harvey interpreted, and the sultan nodded, raising no objections. Harvey went below and was gone five minutes. He returned with a bulging suitcase. Burgess eyed that, but made no remarks; and Harvey hurried the sultan overside. There were no formalities. Tingle, leaning beside Burgess, watched the boat start shoreward.

"Damned quick work I'd call it, if you ask me!" he said. "I'd say you were crazy."

Burgess grinned.

"Aren't you on to 'em? I wasn't until he spoke up about ammunition. It's a dollar to a doughnut that he doesn't give a damn for Dandan's daughter! They expect a British cruiser, and they want my ammunition on the beach before it gets here. Cheaper to pay Harvey than to pay us, isn't it?

"We'd look pretty with an Arab's daughter on the schooner and half the cargo still on board. No money; Quotch sitting pretty with plenty o' rifles and ammunition; Dandan howling for his daughter, and probably no ammunition to fight Quotch with. Harvey 'd thumb his nose ashore. And some snooty Navy officer 'd charge us with stealing Arab women for the love-boat traffic! Fetch the Kahin, and tell the Second to put the port boat overside."

So the Kahin came aft again under the eyes of a roughneck escort, and the port boat took the water, four men standing by to man the oars. The second mate waited at a respectful distance. The Kahin did his utmost to assume grave dignity.

"Strip him to the pants, so he won't be recognized too easy," Burgess ordered, and the Kahin's dignity ceased to exist.

Burgess went to his cabin and counted a hundred pounds into a handkerchief, returned and showed them to the Kahin; he appeared to expect to be beaten, but the sight of gold made his small eyes glitter.

"Yours," said Burgess, "if you earn it. Fetch Dandan."

"How can I make him come to you, *effendi?*"

"Easy. Tell him his daughter is being put by Quotch aboard my schooner. Say I'll proposition him about her if he comes quick. See that spit o' sand? You see the hollow just beyond it? He's to come there with you and with nobody else."

"He will never believe, *effendi*, that the Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch would do such a thing."

"That so? It's your job to make him believe it. No one's paying you for nothing. After that, fetch the customs seal. If the customs man comes with it there's an extra fifty."

Burgess knotted up the handkerchief, returned it to his cabin, came on deck again and gave definite, detailed orders to the second mate. Then he spoke to the crew in a louder voice.

"Fellers, there's a cruiser coming, sure as tomorrow's the thirteenth. Harvey and this Kahin tipped 'em off for the reward. Harvey and Quotch have laid their heads together to get half our stuff for nothing before the cruiser gets here. You boys stick with me. There'll be double money for whoever gets hurt overcoming sales-resistance."

"Harvey?" some one asked, fingering

a holster.

Burgess glanced toward Hoseyn Shellabi Kabir.

"He'll wish we'd bumped him off before he's learned the names o' half his new friends! Here they come."

THEY watched a boat putting out from the jetty. Shrouded in black, three women sat in the stern, resembling vultures. Several men laughed.

"Mike!" said Burgess, and the cook approached him. "Fix up something sweet to keep 'em amiable. You're the chaperon. You get that?"

Mike arranged a kitchen cloth to resemble an Arab headdress. He grinned and returned to the galley to make sticky miracles.

Burgess turned to the Kahin.

"See her? Better hustle and tell Dandan, if you want your money."

The Kahin went into the port boat suddenly and lay face downward under the thwarts, between the rowers' feet. The port boat started for the sandspit, where a long dune cast a purple shadow. The Kahin's departure left no interpreter aboard, so there was a dramatic silence when the Arab boat came alongside.

The three women, whose eyes looked terrified above their impenetrable black veils, were lifted aboard by the boatswain, one by one, and received by Mike, who ushered them aft to the cabin cushions so recently honored by the person of the Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch. The Arab boat started back for the jetty at top speed, as if the crew felt guilty.

"One's a pippin," Mike announced, returning to the galley. "She has eyes like nobody's business. But wait till I've fed 'em. They'll have to raise their veils to eat molasses. Oh, boy!"

Burgess studied the shoreline through binoculars. Through a shimmering heat haze, he watched the second mate's boat touch the sandspit and then head back slowly, taking soundings. He saw the half naked Kahin leap overside and vanish almost instantly in shadow on the far side of the dune.

When the second mate signaled that the water inshore was deep enough and there was room to turn he started very slowly shoreward, with a man in the chains to check the soundings, and two men at the masthead.

"Mr. Tingle," he commanded, "serve out rifles and a bandoleer to each man. I'll be going ashore, so you take over. Bosun, in case of shore work, you command the port watch. I'll take personal charge of my watch." He took a rifle himself, examined it and squinted down the sights. "Get this, all of you. We'll act peaceful if they'll let us. Nobody fires a shot without my orders. But if a scrap's what these Arabs are after, shoot to kill!"

Less than a hundred yards from the stinking, crab-infested beach they anchored.

Burgess avoided the three women carefully, but observed that their heads, as they sat in a row on heaped up cushions, could be easily seen from the beach. The youngest looked mischievous. Her fear had given place to curiosity. She jingled necklaces beneath her voluminous black robe. It was very easy to see she was laughing at him.

"Starboard boat!" he commanded.

A man on horseback, followed by the Kahin, was just discernible against the cemetery wall; he started shoreward slowly along the hollow behind the dune. Burgess called to the men at the masthead:

"One of you watch me. One watch the horizon. Mr. Tingle, I want three blasts on the whistle when and if he sees smoke."

He himself had landed alone. The boat stood offshore, two men lazing at the oars, the boatswain and the other two on guard with rifles on their knees. Sweating, cursing the flies, he stepped into the shadow of the dune and stood still, with the rifle like a bird-gun beneath his armpit.

THE horseman rode toward Burgess, and they eyed each other for a full minute before the Arab dismounted. The half naked Kahin watched, seeming to expect bloodshed. Suddenly he found courage to introduce them.

"This, *effendi*, is his Honor the Sheik Dandan, chieftain of the Beni-Ayyub."

He looked like a man who had faced scorching wind and known the far spaced desert water-holes for as many years as Burgess had faced storms and fogs amid uncharted soundings. Each appeared to be a law to himself—simple in his own way and sufficient for the purposes he thought good. Neither stare flinched. Smoldering, angry, dark eyes, from beneath a white *keffieh* bound with camel hair, glared at blue-gray eyes that held the cold, dispassionate calm of sunlit ice.

When Burgess spoke, even the Kahin's mincing voice interpreting could not spoil the effect.

"Quotch has put your daughter and two other women aboard my schooner as security for fifty thousand pounds. That's my price for a thousand rifles and a million rounds of ammunition. What do you say?"

The Kahin interpreted that, and then the answer:

"By the nine-and-ninety names, it is time for doing; and may God dishonor me, as Mahmoud Quotch dishonors God, if I fail in the doing!"

"O.K. Quotch is shy ammunition. If you had a hundred modern rifles and the ammunition for them, could you lick Quotch?"

The sheik's eyes glinted; red fire seemed to glow behind their darkness.

"Had I the ammunition, there would be no Mahmoud Quotch to offend God's nostrils," he answered. "I have more than a hundred men beyond the cemetery."

"Can they fight?"

"They are the Beni-Ayyub."

"If you lick Quotch, will you buy my cargo?"

"Yes, he says he will buy it, *effendi*."

"Tell him I'll set a hundred rifles and ten thousand rounds behind this dune where he can come and get 'em. I'll set some more in the open to tempt Quotch, along with empty ammunition boxes to deceive him proper. He'll send men to grab 'em, the way I figure it. We'll sort of resist that. Can he bust into the town behind Quotch, loot his money and pay me?"

"*Insh'allah, na'am*—undoubtedly, if God is willing."

"Is he willing?"

"Yes."

"It's a deal. Hop to it. He can have his women and all my cargo for fifty thousand pounds in gold on my deck."

There was talk then between the sheik and the Kahin.

Burgess interrupted.

"Tell him to get busy. Say he'll lose his women if a cruiser shows up and I put to sea to escape search. You go and get the customs seal."

Burgess and the Arab looked into each other's eyes, hated and understood each other, scorning each other's souls —and were allies for a moment, like fire and sea uniting to make havoc.

TIME creaked by. Impatience, blue veined, sweated. Both boats, loaded almost to the gunwales, presently started shoreward, eight men leaping overside to wade through the shallow surf with the heavy ammunition boxes. Burgess made them set the ammunition and a hundred rifles in the hollow behind the dune, but he piled the remainder in full view on the sandspit.

They had hardly finished when shadow after shadow, purple on bleached white, touched the cemetery wall and vanished. In another moment men came like ants, needlessly stooping, scurrying along the shadow of the dune.

"Broach the ammunition boxes," Burgess ordered. "Dump 'em and let 'em help 'emselves. Set the empty boxes on the beach. Carry 'em awk-

ward, so they'll look full."

He set the example, staggering under an empty box. Then he returned to watch Dandan's Bedouins behind the dune; they pounced and squabbled like hungry wolves, filling the folds of their clothes with cartridges, cursing one another in low voices as they scrambled, snatched and hurried back toward the cemetery.

Second boatloads came—all rifles—carried ashore in hot haste to be piled beside the others on the sandspit.

"That should do," said Burgess. "That's a tempting bait for any Arab. They've no glasses; they'll guess that half of it's ammunition. All hands to the boats, and row back slow toward the schooner."

It looked like lunacy; and even Burgess's admiring, sweat-drenched seamen grumbled at the risk of leaving all that valuable booty. They were shareholders. They had a right to be considered. But Burgess watched the sand dunes from the stern seat of the starboard boat, shading his eyes under a gnarled hand. When he did speak he was sudden.

"Hard about, and give way! Back to the beach, boys! Learn 'em, damn 'em! Give way. One, two—one, two!"

He was first into the water and first ashore. The crews had to haul the boats out. He was alone behind the rifle cases when an Arab fired the first shot and a hundred others, hesitating, surged out suddenly from hiding and began to rush for the loot. Burgess fired deliberately at the leading Arab, dropped him and then took off his helmet and waved to Tingle on the schooner. There began a hot fire from the schooner's rail. It checked the rush. Half the Arabs were armed with swords and knives; but the others, short of ammunition though they might be, had rifles and took good cover on the undulating sand. The swordsmen waited for a chance to rush, creeping closer over sand that would have scorched a white man into impotence.

"Take your time and get your man," said Burgess.

The schooner raked their flank, but the Arabs gained ground.

"Pull your gats, and steady!" Burgess ordered. He was bleeding.

Then the second mate saw opportunity. Resenting being under boatswain's orders, he sprang to the top of the dune to prove his marksmanship with a .45. A bullet tore his right arm and another clipped him on the knee. The boatswain ran to haul him under cover and was shot in the neck. They crawled off the dune and lay cursing each other. Then the rush came—pistol work at fifty, forty and thirty paces. It was too late to retreat to the boats. They clustered around Burgess, dazzled by the glare; it was nearly impossible to shoot straight amid swarms of flies that crawled amid blood and sweat. Then some one thought of Harvey.

"Any one see Harvey? Don't forget him!"

"Harvey, damn him! Harvey!"

As if it were a magic word that touched the trigger of events—sudden, savage and almost too late—ragged and wasteful volleys ripped into the Arabs' rear. Dandan's men were in the field at last. They had the advantage of the higher ground between the town and the cemetery. They were out for murder, vengeance and pillage; to that were added new, good rifles and abundant ammunition.

"Harvey, damn him! Harvey!"

"Akbar! Allah akbar!"

Raked by a cross fire, potted from the schooner, decimated, utterly bewildered, two thirds of the followers of Mahmoud Quotch tried to scatter and run to their former hiding place. But they were cut off. They had to take to the beach.

A dozen of them, maddened by the hope of ammunition, charged almost to the feet of Burgess's men. One died, brained by the butt of Burgess's rifle. Five survived the charge by carrying away the wounded on their backs to serve as shields. But few reached Shellabi Kabir, and then only by means

of wading in the surf when Dandan's men were too busy slaughtering the rest to notice them.

"Chuck our wounded into my boat. Damn that Harvey, we could use him!"

THERE was firing within the town already. Dandan and some of his men were storming the ancient citadel; the remainder were either looting the dead and wounded, or racing to their chief's assistance in small groups, spurting, running with the funny, half-effeminate awkwardness of unhorsed Bedouins.

"It's three o'clock," said Burgess, wiping blood off his face with the back of his fist.

He stared at the schooner, at the skyline, at his little handful of men, at the dunes—where Arabs lay who might not be so dead as they appeared—and at the boats on the beach behind him.

"Harvey?" said some one.

"To the boats! The hell with Harvey!"

They launched the boats, and he eyed his wounded humorously.

"Double money? If I weren't hit too, I reckon I'd be out o' pocket this trip! Anybody hurt bad?"

As soon as they were out of the fly zone they bandaged each other with torn shirts; and by the time they reached the schooner it appeared that there were no really serious casualties, although the second mate was weak from loss of blood. He insisted he was fit for duty.

However, Burgess picked himself a boat's crew that was only thirsty. He had a word or two with Tingle on the schooner, climbed to the masthead, noticed that some of Dandan's men were busy looting the rifles on the sandspit and then turned the glasses on the town, where there were spurts of firing, sudden and intermittent. He returned to the deck and stared hard at the three black-shrouded women.

They returned the stare with interest, owl-eyed and inscrutable, although the youngest one seemed more amused than frightened. Tingle volunteered appraisal:

"If you ask me, they'd be good enough security for about a couple o' hundred dollars. We're stung, I reckon."

Burgess looked stung. But a glare of obstinacy grew in his eyes.

"Whip the cargo out on deck. I've sold it."

He then took his place in the boat's stern, calling to Tingle:

"All hands work cargo except one man at the masthead." Then to the boat's crew, "Give way."

He headed straight for the jetty, straining his eyes across the glare. The jetty was deserted, but he could see the spars of several small boats. There was not a human being visible anywhere, and random firing made the town sound even more dead than it looked.

The sweating crew lay on their oars, exhausted when they had rounded the jetty, and Burgess stood up to con the situation. He could see donkeys dozing in purple shadow; stray dogs lurking near a street's end; one camel, kneeling, masterless—but not a human being. Eleven lateen-rigged boats lay moored to the jetty without crews. There was high pitched shouting here and there—one sudden burst of rifle fire somewhere in the town—and then, when he looked up, innumerable heads along the roof of the fort.

"If those are Dandan's men—"

The words were clipped off. Three blasts shrieked from the schooner's whistle, and Burgess's jaw snapped like a trap.

"Cruiser!" he said grimly. "Set me ashore quick."

HE STOOD alone on the jetty, wondering what to do next. He was bandaged with a handkerchief. There was blood on his sweat-drenched white coat. His naked, hairy breast was a-stream with sweat, and he held his rifle like a caveman's club. Around the corner of the one street that gave on the jetty a

head appeared, cautious, turning to look behind, then watching Burgess as a cat examines a proposition. Suddenly its owner darted forward—the half naked Kahin, breathless with excitement.

"Allah! Listen to me! They have taken the fort, and Mr. Harvey—"

"Him? Where is he?"

"I am to say that. Will your Honor speak to him under flag of truce?"

"Yes."

"On your Honor's honor?"

"O.K. Fetch him."

The Kahin screamed between his cupped hands. Harvey, in his helmet and pajamas, stepped out from a shadow at the street end. He approached, not once taking his eyes off Burgess.

"You," said Burgess to the Kahin, "get crews for those boats, quick. Say I'll sink 'em all unless they hustle. There's a cruiser coming."

"Allah!"

"Did you get that seal?"

"Yes."

"Give it to me. Now then: Boats' crews and Dandan and the money. Damn you, get a move on!"

The Kahin fled. Three more screams came from the schooner's whistle. Harvey walked up.

"Well—" he sneered— "I lost my bet. But I've something to sell. Will you buy?"

"What?"

"Information."

"No."

"It's valuable. You're in Dutch unless you know what's happened."

"If it listens good, I'll tell you what then."

"Quotch is out," said Harvey. "Fled into the desert."

"Money with him?"

"Left it. No time. All his men deserted. But—" he paused— "you're out of luck unless you know the rest of it."

Three more blasts came from the schooner's whistle. Tingle seemed to be in a hurry, or a panic—perhaps both.

"Strut your stuff," said Burgess. "If it's good, I'll act according. Say what you know, or go to hell."

Harvey hesitated. Burgess turned away. Then Harvey spoke:

"I'll trust you." He ignored the curt answering laugh. "That isn't Dandan's daughter on the schooner. She and the other two are dancing women. They've nothing to do with Dandan."

"I suspected it. But does he know it?"

"He will if I tell him. Quotch took Dandan's daughter to the desert. He can use her to buy his life from Dandan. He may even get some of his property back."

Three blasts again from the schooner's whistle. They sounded nearer. Burgess stared seaward and saw smoke on the horizon—a mere smudge against brilliant sky.

"You're a skunk," he remarked.

"I bet on the wrong horse," Harvey answered. "No use crying about spilt milk. You're a man of your word. I—"

"Some o' the hands need surgeoning. I'll stake you to your hide and a passage. Where's your suitcase?"

"Lost it."

"Get into the boat then."

Arabs, shepherded by the Kahin, poured out, racing for the jetty. Three more blasts from the schooner's whistle shrieked for notice; she was coming in as close as Tingle dared to bring her. Tingle himself was waving wildly from the poop deck.

The port boat came hurrying shoreward.

"I'll need more than a passage!" said Harvey. "Dandan won't pay fifty thousand if I send word by one of these Arabs that his daughter—"

Burgess watched the Arabs man their boats. The schooner's port boat touched the jetty. A man leaped out.

"Mr. Tingle, sir, says only half the cargo's out on deck and there's a cruiser coming, full speed."

"Shucks, she's only doing ten or fourteen knots." Then, *sotto voce*, "Two of you take Harvey to the schooner."

The seaman beckoned a man from the

port boat. Burgess shouted to the Kahin, who was sawing a knotted mooring with his knife to free the last boat from the jetty—

"Where's your Dandan?"

"Counting the money, *effendi!*"

Two men rushed Harvey. He went into the port boat, struggling and cursing.

"Treat him lady-like. No one's to touch hide or hair of him," said Burgess. "Mind that." He turned to the Kahin. "Hold that boat for Dandan and the money. You cut back and say I'll give him fifteen minutes."

"But, *effendi,* he must count the money!"

"Count it on my deck, tell him!"

Then he jumped into his boat and was rowed to the schooner where the Arabs' boats clustered alongside. He could see the cruiser's topmasts.

"Send the women below and turn a key on 'em," he ordered. "Then set Harvey to work on the wounded. I'll take over. Clear out every last case from the hold. I've sold 'em. Let the Arabs have 'em."

"Money?" Tingle asked him.

"Do what I say!"

THE cases began to go overside into the Arabs' boats, the whole crew sweating at the job, impatient, angry, pausing by turns to wring their clothes and stare at the approaching cruiser's masts. Burgess went below, unlocked the schooner's papers and put the customs stamp on documents that bore a stamp in Japanese; then he returned to the deck to watch the last of the cargo go overside.

"That's that," said Tingle, glancing at the cruiser, already hull and all above the skyline. "Got your money?"

The Arabs' boats were making for the jetty, but there was one boat on its way to the schooner.

"Get your hatches on," said Burgess. "This is Dandan. He's due for what he won't like when he's paid his money."

"Money? Do you mean that?"

"Did I say it?"

The schooner was under way by the time the Arabs' boat threw up a warp and was taken in tow. The Kahin scrambled aboard, excited, triumphant. Then came two men hugely careful of two heavy little wooden barrels that had once held black powder. Dandan came last. His eyes smoldered. His mouth, just visible above the flowing end of his *keffieh,* smiled with thin lipped anger. He spoke abruptly, without bowing, and the Kahin interpreted—

"His Honor, the Sheik Dandan, says there is your money."

The insult missed fire. The money was promptly poured out, jingling, on a spare sail and surrounded by the crew, who squatted under the mate's eyes as if at a crap game and began counting it into heaps. Burgess eyed the cruiser, pretty close now and flying signals. He gave orders to the quartermaster, took the Kahin by the arm and dragged him in a hurry to the cabin.

"What's the customs man's name?"

"He is dead," said the Kahin. "He was shot on the beach."

"Sign his name here in Arabic. Sign it here again, and now here. Sign your own name below in English as witness. O.K. There's your money in that handkerchief."

"And the bonus, *effendi?* How could I bring you a dead man? It was not my doing that the customs officer was shot dead."

Burgess counted fifty pounds in paper money from the cash box.

"May I sign on?" asked the Kahin. "Hoseyn Shellabi Kabir is not a happy place for me. But if your Honor should need knowledge of Arabia, I—"

"See the mate about it."

Burgess returned to the poop and eyed the cruiser thoughtfully. Most of the money had been counted back into the barrels and checked by the mate with a lump of chalk on the schooner's log slate. Burgess changed the course a trifle, taking advantage of a reef be-

tween him and the cruiser to make offing before being overhauled. He ignored the cruiser's signals.

"One pound shy," said the mate after several minutes.

"Get that from the Kahin; he has fifty extra. Bring the women and help 'em overside."

The Kahin came and stood by Burgess, frightened, his eyes on Dandan's rifle. But the sheik's face was expressionless as he watched the women shepherded on deck and hustled overside, fluttering like black birds. He spoke then to the Kahin; and the Kahin, as he interpreted, was pop-eyed.

"Captain *effendi,* he says that those are not his women!"

Burgess looked brass faced.

"Nor mine either," he answered.

The sheik spoke again.

"He says, sir, that had they been his women, you and he should settle that on this deck, since he does not tolerate an insult to his women."

"I can lick him," Burgess answered.

"She who was a hostage is already recaptured from the Sultan Al-Hajj Mahmoud Quotch, who, his Honor the Sheik Dandan says, is now in hell if hell will have him."

"Perfectly O.K. by me," said Burgess.

"Nevertheless, he claims these, since it is his duty to protect them."

"Good enough," said Burgess. "I'd have wished 'em on him if he hadn't."

"In the name of names, he says, your Honor fought well and sold good rifles and ammunition, though at a scandalous price."

"Does he think we're Santa Claus?"

"Therefore he prays to the Prophet to bespeak God's favor for you in the matter of that cruiser. But in future, says his Honor, the Sheik Dandan, keep away from Hoseyn Shellabi Kabir!"

"He should come and visit me in Nova Scotia," said Burgess. "I'll act hospitable."

Without bowing, scornful and dignified, the sheik went overside. A knife cut the warp, and his boat fell astern. Four rifles from the schooner covered him until he was out of range. Then Burgess gave his orders.

"Stow away the firearms. All you wounded, take a watch below and kid you're sleeping. Lie so your wounds won't show if some one looks in. Send Harvey aft."

He stared at Harvey for at least a minute before speaking to him. First he eyed the cruiser, and then the shoreline.

"Surgeon the boys," he said at last. "I'll pay you off with fifty pounds at the first port. Look to it I never set eyes on you after that. Get busy."

Fifteen minutes later his Britannic Majesty's third class cruiser *Dorking* fired an "angry blank", and Burgess hove to.

About ten minutes after that, as the sun, like a hot brass disk, fell suddenly below the horizon, a pinnace fussed alongside and a lieutenant in white duck and gold braid stepped up the lowered ladder and walked aft.

"*Tres Hermanos.* Captain Bridgeman Burgess," said the Nova Scotian.

"May I see your papers?" asked the lieutenant.

"Certainly." Burgess led him to the cabin. "Here they are. They're in order. I'm a mite outside the three-mile limit, but I'll have the hatches off for you if you like. Hold's empty."

"You've a big crew, Captain Burgess, for a small ship."

Burgess smiled.

"Any o' your business? Hard times such as these, it's only right to overman."

The lieutenant eyed the bandage on Burgess's head.

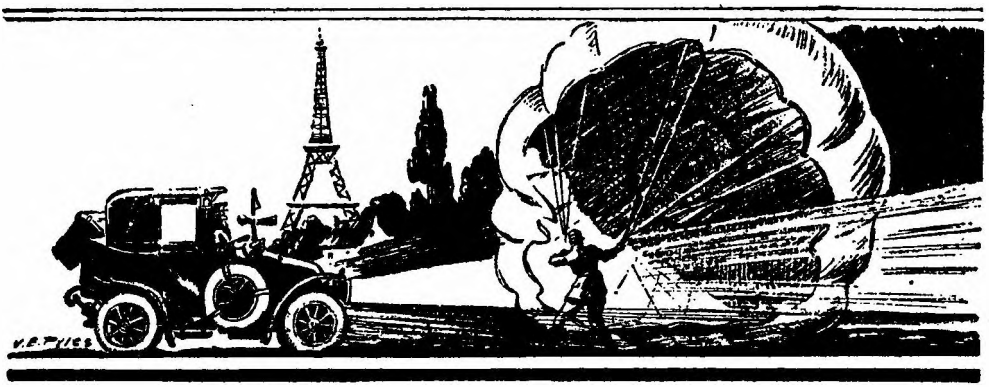
"Any trouble ashore?" he asked. "Fighting?"

"Hell, no. Flies as big as birds. They bite you like a horse. I'm peaceful."

"Cotton piece-goods? One of these days we will catch you, Captain Burgess."

"Oh, yeah? Fond o' fat duck? I'll be pickings, won't I?"

By the author of "The Spy Net"



Beginning

The HERR KAPITAN

By ARED WHITE

CHAPTER I

A CHALLENGE FROM SPA

LIEUTENANT D'AUTEUIL, staff representative from the French Deuxième Bureau at Paris, was becoming visibly irritated by Colonel Rand's bald insistence that the purported German threat was a bluff or hoax.

"But, Monsieur le Colonel," the Frenchman pleaded with a nettled toss of his eloquent hands, "nothing could be simpler for such a man as the Herr Kapitan von Poel. Yes, even if to carry out the order of death he must personally visit the headquarters of General Haig, the château of Marshal Foch—even your own American headquarters, here. The Herr Kapitan's audacity, it stop at nothing, messieurs!"

"Now see here, D'Auteuil," remonstrated the American counter-espionage chieftain, stroking his long, high bridged nose with a thought-provoking index finger, "let's not get carried away by theory, but analyze this whole situation logically. You'll admit that the most foolhardy audacity would be for the Herr Kapitan to come here to our G.H.Q. for a chance to kill—"

D'Auteuil's trim shoulders rose and fell, his black eyes snapped, and he blew a quick spurt of tobacco smoke straight in front of him.

"Not the more audacious, my Colonel," he cut in, "than his visits to the navy offices at London!"

The two argued warmly over the point, while Captain Fox Elton, the colonel's star field operative, sat behind his desk in silence, his blue eyes fixed upon the pin-littered map of Paris and environs that lay spread out in front of him. The argument centered upon the latest alarm sounded at the Deuxième Bureau from its trusted Russian spy-

double at Spa. The Russian warned of a blood feud against the Allied secret service. All operatives who had entered Germany by stealth were to be executed, even if they had returned behind their own lines.

Just how this was to be accomplished the Russian mercenary failed to explain. But D'Auteuil was insistent that no less a man than the Herr Kapitan would be charged with the executions. Von Poel's assignment to a mission in Paris had been tipped ten days before by the same Russian, and verified by the British. The nature of this Prussian naval agent's mischief had not been disclosed. Captain Elton had been wrestling for the past week with the puzzle of locating the Prussian shadow's elusive trail.

"Remember, Lieutenant," boomed Rand, "Von Poel is one of their most valuable operatives. Does it stand to reason they are going to risk his safety, take a lot of wild chances and waste his time just to do away with a few—"

"But, monsieur, the Herr Kapitan will have his secret crew of cutthroats to go where it is he send them and do as they are told!" D'Auteuil broke in.

"Pardon, but let's one of us talk at a time," Rand retorted. "There's a point I want to make if you'll only let me. I'm willing to admit that the Herr Kapitan is in France. I'll agree he's probably the most dangerous scoundrel in the Prussian Intelligence. I'll admit that with him in Paris we've got a problem on our hands.

"But I'm not willing to believe he'll waste time on any such foolish plan as that Russian of yours reports. If I believed it, I'd send Elton right back to the United States. But I don't believe it! Even if Von Poel was foolish enough to take dangerous risks for the sake of revenge, does it stand to reason we'd know what he was up to? Only the select few, high up at headquarters, would be in on the secret. Now, Lieutenant, I hope I've supplied enough pure logic to discount a lurid report. Let's center our attention on isolating this extraordinary Herr Kapitan!"

"As you please, my Colonel," the Frenchman assented. He pursed his lips, shrugged and turned to Elton. "Your own opinion, my Captain, since you are the one so deeply concerned."

Elton slowly raised his eyes from the pin-littered map and gave D'Auteuil a friendly smile.

"The only thing that makes me question your report, Lieutenant," he replied, "is a point which Colonel Rand touched upon. It seems to me such a decision would be kept a dark secret among a trusted few. The fact that it has gotten to the ears of your Russian makes me think it must be propaganda to upset our nerves and keep us busy watching our own—"

THE frantic screeching of a factory whistle in the headquarters village suddenly filled the air. The feverish intensity and shrill key of that siren left no doubt. It was the French village alert. Warning cries rose from the courtyard below and racing feet pounded the hard parade ground.

The three officers rose together and went to the window. American soldiers of the headquarters battalion were scurrying to shelter under the three old barracks buildings that housed the high command. Officers and men stood in stone doorways, pointing excitedly into the sky. There came the roar of motors overhead, in sharp, fitful bursts. Incredible as a daylight raid might seem when there were silvery nights for the German birdmen, the roar overhead was indubitably that of a German raider.

A moment later the plane swept low over the casern, turned sharply west across the Marne and circled away to the east, swiftly gaining height for its drive back to the Rhine. In its wake, over the headquarters, there floated a tiny red parachute weighted by a small black cylinder. Elton smiled at the discomfiture of the excited men below. Twice before the German flyers had

come this way to drop a bantering message, though taking care to release no high explosive. The Kaiser himself must have forbidden violence, having in mind possible retaliation against his own military lair at Spa, Belgium.

"An outrage!" roared the colonel. "Some whippersnapper German lieutenant venting his private mischief on headquarters. I'll have the squadrons at Colombes les Belles comb the air for him!"

Colonel Rand stamped out of Elton's office to the convenience of his own office with its network of private wires and nimble orderlies. D'Auteuil followed him. Elton settled back to his desk, his mind on the intricate military puzzle to which he had devoted the past week. It was his task to locate this troublesome Prussian needle that was embedded in the Allied haymow. Operatives of many nations had tried their wits at the quest before. Most of them had found only empty trails. The more capable and persistent had succeeded only in pricking their fingers. The Herr Kapitan von Poel, object of the diligent Allied man hunt, had developed an elusiveness that was nothing short of black magic.

Information of the Herr Kapitan was not wanting. On Elton's desk lay an excellent photograph, supplied him by the Deuxième Bureau, of the Kaiser's star agent. His past record was also well known. Von Poel had soared to his present rank in the Imperial navy not through gunnery and seamanship, but by reason of his nimble wits which had carried him into Allied capitals at will, and out again with valuable naval and military information.

His capacity had taken him to the head of Leipsigerplaz, whence he had organized and directed naval intelligence. And with Germany's fate now in the military gamble, Ludendorff had abstracted the Herr Kapitan from Leipsigerplaz and installed him at Spa for operations with the Imperial army.

Credited to Von Poel was an invasion of the Glasgow gun factories where arms were made for the British navy. Before the British woke up to his presence, the Herr Kapitan had the secrets of calibers, ranges, traversing and range finders. His careful estimates of Allied naval strength and strategy had brought on the coast-hugging tactics of the Imperial fleet, while German efforts by sea were lodged in ranging submarines.

It was Von Poel who had directed submarine audacities in British waters —and not from Helgoland, but from London. This was not mere conjecture. Von Poel himself had goaded the British Intelligence service to a frenzy by leaving his official card on the desks of high officials, and always at some bureau from which damaging information had been extracted. His latest feat was to furnish data for the Von Tirpitz campaign against Allied shipping, which had wreaked havoc on the high seas, though it had fallen far short of the German naval objective—starvation of England. Only Germany's latest extremity, facing the rising tide of American infantry overseas, had diverted Von Poel's sinister genius from Leipsigerplaz to Ludendorff's control.

THE hurried stamping of boots in the long corridor outside his office jarred Elton from his map study. He knew Colonel Rand's footsteps, and from their beat he could gage the colonel's humor. Never before had he heard his chief in such a hurry. And the fact that Rand was coming at such speed to Elton's office, instead of pushing a buzzer summons, was eloquent of some unusual development.

The colonel burst in at the door, his long, solemn face flushed a lobster red, his eyes snapping. He strode across the room and thrust at Elton a large sealed envelop.

"What's this, Elton!" he demanded. "It's addressed to you—by name and rank. Open it, and let's find what their impudence is now!"

Elton examined the missive coolly, with deliberation. The envelop was of linen, sealed at the flap with red wax, and addressed to Captain Fox Elton, Engineers, U. S. Army, in care of American Headquarters, Chaumont. "Personal and confidential" was written at the lower left-hand corner of the envelop. On the red seal were clearly stamped the Imperial German arms.

"Open it!" Rand commanded. "That Hun skylark dropped it here as he flew over the village. Only thing he did drop. What deviltry—"

"At any rate, sir," Elton broke in with a humorous smile, "it can not be a dun, as I paid my hotel bills in full before I left Germany."

"Cut out your infernal nonsense!" roared Rand. "Open that letter!"

Elton rummaged for his knife, ran the blade through the envelop, extracted the letter and read without haste. Rand, staring breathlessly, caught no change in his assistant's features as Elton calmly handed the letter across the desk. The missive read:

> Herr Captain Elton:
>
> A sense of courtesy moves me to inform you that I have been handed an order of execution against your person. It therefore becomes my unhappy duty to kill you at my earliest convenience. I most sincerely regret that this can not be handled as an affair of honor, in which you have equal chance; but the decision of my superiors must guide my hand, because of your unsolicited visits in disguise to Germany and your adherence to the Imperial blood oath which you took at Köln and once again at Geneva. It will greatly serve my convenience if you are going to be shortly at Paris. I do so much hope you will spare me a visit to your great headquarters, which are so remote to the important centers of interest in France. *Auf Wiedersehen,* my Captain.
>
> —VON POEL

Colonel Rand's temperature rose until, with the final taunting sentence, he exploded.

"That's an insult to American headquarters—an infernal insult!" he roared. "Just what I expected when I heard that Hun machine coming."

"Yes, sir," assented Elton. "I appreciated that angle at once. Will the Colonel please be seated? Thank you, sir. But I also caught the idea that Von Poel had a more serious purpose in view."

"Yes, yes, Elton." Rand's anger changed to sudden thoughtfulness; his voice became almost apologetic. "That Prussian's impudence is a small matter, after all, in view of his threat. Do you think he really means business, Captain?"

"Undoubtedly, sir."

"But—er—now mightn't it be just a Hun bluff, designed to upset our nerves a bit. Get us to spending our time on guard, so he'd feel freer for his mischief?"

"Very likely the way he reasons, Colonel. But, at the same time, I believe now that he means to go through with it. It occurs to me that if Von Poel, after dropping a flock of warnings, puts two or three of them into effect, he'll throw demoralization into the Allied secret service. And then he'll be safely rid of the dead ones, too."

"Sound reasoning, Elton. Sound reasoning. So D'Auteuil was right, after all?"

"I'm afraid his Russian was barking up the right tree, sir, strange as it sounded at the time."

Colonel Rand eyed the floor and indulged his pensive habit of stroking his long nose with an index finger.

"Then if that's the situation, Elton," he announced presently, "there's only one decent thing to do—assign you to duty back in the United States."

"Really, sir, that's very considerate of the Colonel," Elton put in quickly. "But I can't even consider running away like that!"

"Running away? That isn't running away, Captain Elton. D'Auteuil was right; Von Poel will have every advantage over you. You'll not know when or how he's going to strike. They may get you in the dark, poison you, knife you in the back, bomb your billet. You

wouldn't be safe anywhere with one of those snakes waiting in the grass for you to pass."

Elton leaned back and smiled at the colonel through half closed eyes.

"True, sir, if they struck first," he rejoined. "But I'm not quite ready to concede Von Poel the advantage he claims, notwithstanding D'Auteuil's estimate."

"But don't forget, Elton, that he's a cunning one. Look at his pranks in London. I'd say he's the shrewdest one of their whole wolf pack. There's plenty of our operatives who aren't on his blood list, without your taking—"

"Somehow, sir," Elton broke in, "Von Poel's little threat only quickens my professional interest in his case. In fact, sir, my nerves are more stimulated than upset. And with the Colonel's permission, I'm going to see this little affair through to an end."

"Not so fast, young man!" Rand admonished. "Better withhold judgment until I have another talk with D'Auteuil."

"But, sir, I've laid plans—"

The colonel rose abruptly, decision in his eyes, and cut Elton short.

"Elton, as a commander of troops before the War, I always kept the welfare of my men uppermost in my mind. I am still mindful of that responsibility. It is my duty to estimate this situation and determine whether I am sending you to a needless death. I will withhold this decision until I've talked further with D'Auteuil, who is waiting in my office. In the meantime, I want you to think coolly, uninfluenced by bravado. You youngsters are too much inclined, these days, to sheer audacity!"

"Audacity!" There was a quick gleam in Elton's blue eyes at the word. "That's the word D'Auteuil applied to the Herr Kapitan, sir. And, if I'm not mistaken, that is the Herr Kapitan's chief weapon—audacity. Well, two can play at—"

But Colonel Rand, having announced his decision, did not tarry for debate. He turned sharply on his heel and marched from the room, slamming the door behind him.

CHAPTER II

A PHONE CALL FROM PARIS

ELTON mused for a brief moment upon the attitude of his retreating chief, then knit his brows over his map. His own mind was made up. He would make up the colonel's mind when necessary, regardless of the colonel's conference with D'Auteuil. A division commander, preparing the maneuver of his brigades for attack, need not have worked out a more intricate terrain network of roads and positions than that traced by colored pins and strips on Elton's map.

Though his own attacking force was a handful of discreet Intelligence police, and his sole enemy the Prussian shadow, Elton's plan of maneuver covered a long, irregular triangle whose sides measured a total of more than a hundred kilometers. And while his quarry was reported in Paris, Elton's battle plan was laid to the north of that city. It had its apex at Pontoise, whence it dropped south to St. Germain, swung thence south by east to Nanterre, passed through Courbevoie into Neuilly, where it turned abruptly from the outskirts of Paris into Bezons and dissected the Bois de Maubuisson back to Pontoise. By no ordinary operation did he hope to land the Herr Kapitan in a bag.

There was in the photograph of Von Poel, furnished by the French, nothing of great value to him in his quest, Elton concluded, as he again studied the Prussian agent's figure and features. The photograph was clear enough, but registered no dominant features or strong characteristics that could aid in the Prussian's identification. It showed him in the dress uniform of a staff captain of the Imperial navy—a placid, youthful face peering over massive gold

epaulets.

The legend under the picture was brief but pertinent. Von Poel was credited with having prepared himself for his career at the best secret service and military intelligence schools of Germany, and was said to have had for special tutors some of the best men of the Czarist secret police. He had spent a year, the report noted, on leave from the navy as an actor in Berlin theaters in order to perfect the fine art of masquerade.

Except for two details, Elton was ready to sally forth into the battle of wits against Von Poel. The first of these was a telephone call from Paris, now slightly overdue. But since that call would come from Sergeant Walters, his faithful assistant, he knew he could depend upon it. The sergeant had never failed him, even in the most dangerous and exacting emergencies of their past adventures. There also remained the interview with Colonel Rand, which meant, also, a further chance discreetly to interview D'Auteuil.

He busied himself, while awaiting these developments, in fixing securely in memory every detail of his road net, since his map must remain behind for reasons of ordinary discretion. But he had not long to wait before three short rasps of the colonel's buzzer summoned him to the counter-espionage chieftain's private sanctum. On entering the anteroom he gave instructions to the telephone corporal that any Paris calls be given him without the slightest delay.

RAND'S moods were an open book to Elton. He read the colonel's decision instantly and smiled to himself. It would be a simple matter to change the colonel's mind. He had done that often enough to be sure of himself.

"Elton, I have a duty to perform in your behalf," Rand announced solemnly. He waved the captain to a seat. "For the time being, you must remain in seclusion, under reasonable guard, until the situation clears. There are plenty of excellent officers who are not on the Herr Kapitan's death list.

"I have talked this whole matter over with Lieutenant D'Auteuil, who assured me the Deuxième Bureau will protect its officers by using new men on Von Poel. Perhaps this situation will change in the light of certain later information, but in the meantime I take the responsibility of this decision."

"Pardon me if I light a cigaret," Elton replied casually. He blew a thoughtful cloud of smoke and said. "May I inquire, sir, what additional information you are expecting?"

"You will have to ask D'Auteuil that question, Elton. He can tell you what he told me in confidence if he sees fit."

"In the greatest of confidence," assented D'Auteuil. He crossed the room, closed the door that Elton had left ajar, then spoke in a whisper. "The Russian, he shall come very soon to Paris; then it is we may learn very much more of the Herr Kapitan."

"You mean your spy-double, the Russian from Spa?"

"Yes, monsieur. He comes for the Germans; and though he must be most discreet, we shall arrange a meeting."

Elton's eyes sparkled momentarily; then he cast a nettled look from Rand to D'Auteuil.

"I see no point in waiting on the Russian," he asserted. "The Herr Kapitan has made his intentions perfectly plain, nor do we lack information of his person and methods. It seems to me that a Czarist spy-double, who can not trap Von Poel himself, would be unable to tell us how to turn that trick. You can depend upon it that Von Poel is not trusting his safety too far to Russian mercenaries, even those he thinks loyal to Prussian gold."

"The more information we can get on this case, Elton," averred Colonel Rand, "the farther we'll get in the long run. What trouble is Von Poel up to in Paris? We know he's got a blood feud against you and a few others. But

what else? What information is he after? What more serious trouble is he concocting against us? We need the answer to those questions.

"You've always argued that it takes time to lay a proper foundation in these important cases. Damn it, Elton, you kept me on edge two weeks before you'd move into Switzerland after Von Kulm's nest. Now you object to waiting a few days for an important spy who may be able to tell us many things!"

"The Colonel overlooks the fact that I've been working on this case for a week. I'm satisfied with the foundation I've laid, sir."

"Pins and a map," rejoined Rand. "You told me this morning you had nothing better than a theory to work on."

"Very true. But it is an idea I borrowed for this case from a distinguished French officer named Napoleon, who contrived the notion of destroying the enemy by tapping his communications."

"What's the application to this case?"

A HESITANT tap at the door interrupted. At Rand's bellow a sergeant came in to announce a call for Captain Elton over the private wire from Paris. Elton lifted the receiver expectantly to his ear.

"Sorry if I'm a little late, sir," announced the voice of Sergeant Walters. "But the Cap'n can use his own judgment when I see him if it wasn't time well put in. And in the meantime, sir, I've got the Cap'n's billet. No. 4. Any change?"

"As scheduled, Walters. Wheels will be in motion in ten minutes. Everything goes as scheduled. Goodby." He hung up the receiver and turned with a resolute smile to Rand. "Just the call I've been waiting for. It's zero hour now."

"See here, Elton," Rand interposed, rising to glare at his star assistant, "what was that call from Paris? What do you think you're up to now? Are you proposing to ignore my judgment and wishes in this matter? If you are, I shall put them in the form of a definite order!"

Elton stiffened to attention and his face became coldly official.

"Sir, if the Colonel has reason to believe I am incompetent to perform my duties," he exclaimed icily, "I should be relieved from duty—but certainly I do not merit being relieved for cowardice in the face of the enemy!"

Colonel Rand bit his upper lip, in precisely the manner Elton expected he would, and turned an angry red. Elton studied the other's reaction with inner satisfaction. His words had produced the result he had counted upon. Rand was just short of an explosion as he retorted:

"Very well, Elton! If you feel that way about it, go ahead and take your fool chances! I was trying to consider your own best interests, and save you any embarrassment by making a sensible decision for you. I've never hesitated to send you into critical danger when I thought you had anything of a chance. This time you take the responsibility upon your own shoulders."

"Thank you, sir. If the Colonel has nothing further to say, there is a question I would like to ask Lieutenant d'Auteuil," Elton replied quietly. He turned to the Frenchman. "Your Russian—he will come to Paris by what means?"

D'Auteuil debated this question briefly and shook his head.

"It is the dangerous secret, my Captain," he evaded.

"I will consider it as such, monsieur; you can depend upon that. But it might be important for me to know."

"In the greatest secrecy," the Frenchman agreed. His voice dropped to a barely audible whisper. "The Russian, he will come to Paris by air in the uniform of the French air service."

"Sent by the enemy on German business?"

"But, yes, my Captain. From the

Imperial headquarters at Spa."

"Thank you, Lieutenant. That sounds like very valuable information. Will I be able to contact you at the Deuxième Bureau in the usual way?"

"I am returning at once to Paris, monsieur."

"Good." Elton turned to Colonel Rand and smiled warmly. "I hope I have not appeared unappreciative of the Colonel's kindness. With your permission, sir, I'll be on my way now."

"It might be pertinent, Elton, if you gave me at least an outline of what you propose."

"The most I can say now, in all politeness, is that I propose to locate the Herr Kapitan."

"In Paris?"

"The Herr Kapitan himself chose that place."

"Well," Rand replied, a wry innuendo in his voice, "this is one case where I haven't the slightest doubt you'll meet your man."

"I trust so, sir. But I do very much hope to arrange the conditions under which that important meeting occurs."

CHAPTER III

A BILLET AT COURBEVOIE

THE sun had not set when Elton entered the large staff car in the casern, drove at an unhurried speed through the village and turned into the Paris road on the Bar-sur-Aube, Troyes, Provins route. Corporal Larden, confidential driver on many secret adventures, accepted with enthusiasm the challenge that he clip something from his past record for the Paris run—three hours and fifty minutes.

Once out of the village, Larden ran at a terrific rate, slowing down only through the larger towns, and having the good fortune of open gates at the railway crossings. The hour was short of nine when the car dashed into Paris, with seventeen minutes clipped from the record.

Passing the eastern gates of the city, Larden slowed down to a conventional pace, crossed the Seine River and wound his way across Paris. In an unfrequented street he stopped long enough to change the convertible numbers on the sides, hood and rear of the big Army car; then proceeded on past the Eiffel Tower, recrossed the Seine, drove north on Avenue Kléber to the Arc de Triomphe and turned west through the Porte Maillot into the village of Neuilly.

Although he knew what he was about, Larden drove about Neuilly uncertainly, finally turning to the right from the main highway into Avenue du Roule where, upon passing a large park, he brought up at the end of a blind street, turned back and paused to ask directions of a soldier who had emerged from the park. The soldier obligingly offered to show the way out of Neuilly. He got into the front seat with the driver and borrowed a cigaret, then directed the way across the bridge that spanned the tortuous Seine into the outskirts of Puteaux, where they turned north.

Once clear of Puteaux and spinning north on the open road, the soldier climbed back into the rear seat with Elton.

"So far, as smooth as a clock, Walters," Elton greeted the old noncom. "No indications that we are being followed. Well, what luck?"

"Cap'n's billet is all arranged, sir," Sergeant Walters reported. "Got a house at the edge of town No. 4—Courbevoie. Nice, loyal old French couple. Not nosey about anything. We can get in and out without being seen from the road. Fact is, sir, it's just the kind of a place you was wishing for."

"That's luck. Got your men planted in the villages?"

"Yes'r. St. Germain, Nanterre, Bezons, Pontoise; and one of the lads laying out on tin willy at Maubuisson woods."

"Anybody suspicious? Any sign of any one watching?"

"Nos'r. It's worked like a charm. They think we're looking up billets for a regiment to rest in. All my men know how to act, and they ain't allowed to talk about anything except billets."

"All right. Now what developments? We'll be at Courbevoie before we know it."

"What made me late in getting to the phone, sir, was Sergeant Bragg coming over from Bezons just as I was ready to start for Paris. He was cautious and made me go for a walk. He says there was another plane along in the night about eleven o'clock."

"Landed near Bezons?"

"Nos'r. Just circled around, and then shot off over Paris. But the more he thought of it, the more suspicious he got, seeing that a plane landed there two nights ago. He says it was a French plane that come in from over Paris and went back that way. But do you know what he suspects?"

"That it wasn't just a French patrol plane snooping about at random?"

"Yes'r. And, judging from the height, that maybe it was dropping something —something alive."

"But has he any good reasons for thinking that, Walters?"

"Nothing more than what the Cap'n calls a hunch. The plane was up just about the right height and maneuvered around like it would if feeling for a handy spot to drop a man. Bragg hung around all day with his eyes peeled for anybody that looked suspicious, but he didn't see anything. It's so easy to get hunches I mightn't think so much about it, except for another thing. Bragg says he looked at his watch; and it was exactly eleven o'clock when that plane sailed back over Paris. It was about 11:30 when I heard an auto pass through Courbevoie hell bent for Paris. I didn't see it, but it sounded like one of them rickety Paris taxicabs."

"Excellent, Walters. It may be nothing; but we've got to check every lead. I want every hum of an airplane reported to me. This is an ideal section, not only for planes to land but to be kept ready under cover for a quick take-off. And if we don't find what I'm looking for in this region, we'll explore a circle around Paris, even if it takes the next two weeks. Even the Herr Kapitan can't travel back and forth between Paris and Spa without leaving a trail, and I'm going to find it."

"Village due ahead, sir!" Larden announced, slackening speed.

Walters clapped Larden on the shoulder a few moments later. The car came to a stop, Larden ostentatiously lighting his pipe while Elton and Walters slipped from the tonneau. When the car had rolled on into the distance, Walters led the way to the village, bringing up at a large, dark old stone residence. He unlocked the door, lighted a hanging kerosene lamp and introduced Elton to a cold dinner of mutton, greens and milk.

"A perfect place for the Cap'n," said Walters. "Old couple here go to bed with the chickens. Can't speak a word of English; but ten francs a day is sure eloquent to them. The roof's the limit, sir; the place belongs to us."

"My locker trunk is here, Walters?"

"In the Cap'n's room. Got it in night before last in Bragg's flivver."

"All right, Walters. You've taken good care of me. I'll stay right here under cover. You needn't report in until you've got something. We'll allow this region four days for developments before we move on. Good night."

ELTON'S billet was a large living room with medieval French furnishings and comforts—the best the house afforded—arranged for the generous American visitor. Elton was preparing for bed when the hum of motors caught his ears. He identified an automobile, which shortly sped past the house. It was not an American military car, the sound told him; nor did it have the sound of a well kept French army car. He strained his ears after the

sound, noted that the hour was exactly midnight and speculated upon the possible significance of the incident. Walters had reported a car at 11:30 the night before, following closely upon the passing of a plane. Had there been a plane overhead again tonight? If so, there might be an obvious connection between the motors in the air and those on the ground.

Elton put the subject aside for later inquiry and turned in. He was sleeping lightly when Walters returned from the night's vigil shortly before daybreak. The sergeant went to his own room, which meant that he had nothing to report. Elton went back to sleep, rose late, since he intended to keep out of sight pending developments, and spent an idle morning in his room. It was nearly noon before Walters turned out and looked in on him.

"Anything the Cap'n wants?" the sergeant inquired.

"Nothing—except for something to happen, Walters," Elton replied with a disconsolate smile.

"Nothing happened last night but an auto passing," Walters reported. "Maybe better luck tonight."

Walters disappeared into the village to spend the afternoon at his billeting ruse. Elton spent the hours checking over his plan, pacing the floor and reading. In midafternoon the distant hum of a plane stirred his pulse; but the machine was flying high and moving fast in a straight line to Paris. The afternoon and evening dragged on dully. Walters came in for dinner, but did not report upstairs. He returned to the village as soon as he had eaten.

As the evening wore on Elton put out the light in his room and sat by the open window, listening. The automobile came again, this time at 11:30. He stared into the darkness after it, but saw nothing save the blurry blue war headlights. But from its noise he concluded that it was the identical car he had heard the night before.

There were no developments again during the night. Elton questioned Walters sharply at noon the next day. Was the whole region from Pontoise to Neuilly thoroughly covered? Was Bragg on the *qui vive* at Bezons? Was Larden standing by at Nanterre with his car, ready to respond to an emergency summons? Were there any new faces in Courbevoie? Had Walters suspected that any one questioned the billeting party's purpose in the region?

On all these points Walters was sure of his ground. And there had been no airplanes over the region these past two nights. That midnight auto remained a mystery to Walters. As nearly as he could estimate, without inquiry, the car came from somewhere north of Bezons. He had watched for it each afternoon on its trip north, without result. Therefore, if the machine came out of Paris, it traveled north by another route.

When a third night passed uneventfully, Elton was stricken by a growing restlessness and dire misgivings. He began asking himself if he had made a false start on the Herr Kapitan's trail. Was his whole plan of campaign, depending as it did on a mere thread of incident and conjecture, at fault? Might he move on and on around Paris, listening overhead, finally to learn that he had spread his nets in empty waters?

Elton's whole plan had found its inception in a discarded report of the Deuxième Bureau. This report he had come upon after days of wearying search through Intelligence documents. Planes had landed on two nights in one week at a farm outside Nanterre. The quick suspicions of French peasants had been promptly communicated to the Deuxième Bureau, which had checked up with patient care. The bureau's investigation disclosed that the plane was French, the aviator a French officer of the Paris defense squadron, intent only on having a bottle of wine with hospitable neighbors.

A logical enough explanation, as the French bureau saw it. But the report had set Elton in motion where the

French left off, since it contributed substance to his own theory of where the Herr Kapitan's trail was to be picked up, if at all. He had sent Walters in next day, and from Walters had come the report of another mysterious airplane landing at Bezons. That had crystallized Elton's decision and shaped this first plan of maneuver against Von Poel.

Elton's morale was at low ebb when he retired to bed on the fourth night. His belief was unshaken that the Herr Kapitan would travel by air and send his reports by flying henchmen. But three empty nights cast somber doubts upon the selection of this region. It might even be that Von Poel's audacity had chosen the official landing fields at Orly, just out of Paris. Or that his entrenchment reached into the French defensive squadrons over Paris. In that event, the search for the Prussian needle in the Allied haymow might go on and on while the Herr Kapitan continued to wreak his mischief.

CHAPTER IV

BY ORDER OF HIS MAJESTY

WALTERS'S arrival roused Elton from a fitful sleep. It was still very dark and there were no cocks crowing. Elton consulted the luminous dial of his wristwatch and saw that it was almost one o'clock. He sat up with a start at hearing the footsteps below. Walters was not alone. Several pairs of heavy soled shoes trod the old walnut floor.

Elton was out of bed, into trousers and coat, and had the lamp lighted by the time Walters was up the stairs. A firm knock at the door, and Walters entered, his hand forcefully gripping the arm of a staring French officer.

"Rather thought, Cap'n," Walters announced quietly, "you might be interested in talking matters over with Lieutenant Guerat, as he calls himself."

"Oui, monsieur!" exclaimed the Frenchman with an excited jerk of his thin arms. "It is ze time I talk wiz some one in authority who will give ze apology for this outrage!"

"Of course, monsieur," said Elton politely. He placed a chair for the unwilling guest. "Let us talk everything over very calmly, bearing in mind that our one interest is that of your own France."

Elton made a quick estimate of Walters's prisoner. The Frenchman was thin to the point of emaciation, with sallow, muddy skin and large black eyes, deeply sunken and tragic, though blazing now with passion. In contrast with the man's lean cheeks and wasted body was his spick-and-span new uniform, of expensive serge and finely tailored. As to his nationality there was no doubt. Guerat was distinctly French.

"Now tell me, Walters," said Elton, "just what you have on your mind."

"Sir, things happened fast tonight," replied Walters, speaking in a quick, positive voice. "Soon after 11:00 Sergeant Bragg come rushing down in his lizzie from Bezons and says a plane landed up there but didn't take off. We drove back and separated to cover the roads. After while, Bragg comes in with this Frenchman—says he nipped him coming out of a field as an auto was coming up the road. Bragg covered him and held him back till that car moved away."

Guerat, stark eyes glaring at Walters, hands working fitfully at his tunic, burst into protest.

"Diable, monsieur!" he cried. "Better is it ze Americans not come to France! A pistol, it is shove in my face. Why? Because I walk on ze road. I demand ze apology!"

"Pardon, monsieur," said Elton, "but let's finish up our interview calmly, and then the apologies, if they are necessary." He turned back to Walters. "Where is Sergeant Bragg?"

"I turned him back at the door to watch outside, Cap'n. I can have him in here in a jiffy."

At Walters's call, Sergeant Bragg stamped in from his vigil, a large, deliberate, slow-spoken man, who weighed his words without passion.

"According to instructions, Cap'n," he reported, "I was listening for airplanes. One circled out the other side of Bezons just about 11:00. Next I see a lantern moving out in a field. These peasants go to bed with the sun, sir. Looked to me it might have been a peasant just out looking around, or it might have been a landing signal.

"I found this French officer coming out into the Nanterre road. Looked to me like he just come out of the grain. There was an auto coming, and I made him lay low until it was gone. That auto crept along slow, like it was expecting to pick up a passenger. But it didn't wait. This Frenchman tried to bluff me out. I took him down to where Sergeant Walters was waiting. That's all I know, sir, except that I didn't hear that plane either land or take off again. I thought maybe it might of dropped a parachute, sir."

"Might it have come down and left again while you were after Walters?" Elton inquired.

"It might have, sir, but I don't think so. I stopped four times to listen—going and coming—and I didn't hear it in the air any time after it circled Bezons. Must have been a parachute drop, Cap'n."

ELTON turned to the Frenchman, who had been holding himself in check with much difficulty. Guerat broke into a rapid fire of explanation and protest. He was of the 125th French Division, a lieutenant of howitzers, who had been long on the Front. His family had been driven from their homes at Fère-en-Tardenois as refugees in June. He had heard they were at Bezons and reached there on leave, only to learn from a relative that they had gone to Southern France. His cousin at Bezons would verify his visit. He was leaving there for Paris when stopped by the Americans.

Guerat slowly worked himself into a frenzy. He leaped to his feet and shook his orders under Elton's nose.

"*Bon dieu, monsieur!* Ze orders of ze 125th Division Française—zat my orders, ze orders of my general, shall be question in zis outrageous manner! Again, messieurs, I demand ze apology!"

Elton took the proffered orders and examined them with care. They were, as Guerat had described them, orders of permission for Lieutenant Henri Marcel Guerat, 624th French Howitzers, to visit Pontoise, Paris and Tours on personal business. The orders bore the stamp of the division and were countersigned in ink by a staff officer.

"You say, monsieur," Elton queried, "that your visit to Bezons can be vouched for by a relative living there?"

"But, yes, monsieur. For every minute of my time can I explain!"

"Your relative's name at Bezons, monsieur?"

Guerat blinked—an instant's furtive hesitation.

"*Oui, monsieur,*" he agreed quickly. "He is ze Monsieur le Bardonne, my cousin, who will verify what it is I say!"

Elton paused. The Frenchman's papers and story checked. But Elton's decision was shaped by a little mannerism of Guerat's, a nervous rubbing of the upper lip with a palsied forefinger. That gesture, added to the Frenchman's pallor and sunken eyes, conveyed to Elton a definite and most interesting possibility. Guerat's impatience quickly broke its bounds again.

"I demand ze instant release, messieurs!" he barked, leaping to his feet with flashing eyes. "It is Paris I must reach zis night, messieurs!"

"We do not wish to delay you, monsieur," said Elton quietly. "You will save your own time if you will permit us to do one thing more—search you."

Guerat's response was puzzling.

"Ze search, yes, messieurs?" He tossed his arms. "Search! Search! Zen

it is I go to Paris!"

But Guerat's ready assent did not reckon with Sergeant Walters's thoroughness in the fine art of personal search. Walters overlooked no possibility. First he convinced himself that Guerat's teeth were all his own and that there were no hollow molars. He combed the Frenchman's hair with a fine comb —even examined his scalp an inch at a time—then stripped him and examined his body for bogus moles or lumps that might conceal a cipher pellet. After this he searched uniform and shoes with meticulous attention to seams, heels and soles.

The search netted nothing. Guerat's personal effects consisted of several hundred francs in currency, a black brier pipe, a pouch of pungent French tobacco, wristwatch and comb. Walters checked these over, taking the pipe apart, prying in its stem with a match, breaking the comb, and inspecting the case and works of the watch. He turned to Elton with a dismal face.

"Don't seem to find anything, Cap'n," he reported, "unless I've overlooked something."

Guerat, who had been in a rising fever of impatience rather than fear during the search, renewed his demand for instant release. He strapped on his wristwatch and gathered up his clothes to dress.

"One other precaution," Elton said to Walters. "If you will escort monsieur into another room with his clothes, I would like to check certain details."

The Frenchman groaned at the further delay. He reached hurriedly for his pipe and filled the bowl with tobacco, then fumbled nervously in his clothes for a match. He had struck it and was applying the flame to his pipe when Elton snuffed the match.

"I can appreciate your desire to smoke, monsieur," said Elton. "But if you don't mind, I'll ask you to leave your pipe and your watch behind."

Guerat stared an instant in startled hesitation, then yielded with a show of easy indifference.

"Do as your please, messieurs," he cried, "but in ze name of ze *bon dieu,* please to make haste. It is to Paris I must go quickly!"

AS WALTERS and Bragg conducted Guerat into another room, Elton took up the pipe, emptied the bowl and examined it critically. The Frenchman's clumsy actions had betrayed pipe and watch to Elton's trained eye. That picking up of the watch before dressing, filling the pipe only when it came under definite suspicion, convinced Elton that he would not pry into those articles to no purpose.

Another deduction had gained form and substance during the search. It came out of Guerat's strange impatience to be on his way, a fever that had overshadowed fear or indignation at the search. If verified, it might lead to important developments, as well as explain the enigma of a Frenchman turned to treason.

With a sharp blade Elton cut into the outer surface of the bowl, Guerat's little gestures having told him where to search. A cipher pellet must be ferreted out with delicate care lest its surface be mutilated and vital symbols marred. He found the cylinder embedded in the heel of the pipe, a small black ball the size of a cherry pit. A magnifying glass and lancet aided him in reducing it to a flat sheet of paper, the surface of which was closely filled with symbols.

The watch offered more difficulty. It was not until he had taken the works apart and examined them under his glass that he finally came upon the hiding place—a double case so minutely fitted together as to defy the strongest glass. The cipher, on a frail onionskin sheet, was laid flat against the metal. A hasty comparison of the two messages told him that they were identical, which attested to the importance of the text. He saw that it was a familiar type of German substitution cipher, but he

laid the cryptograms aside without further attention and had Guerat brought back into the room.

"I'm sorry, monsieur," he said at once, "but I find it necessary to detain you further. You will understand, of course, when I say that I made some interesting discoveries in your pipe and watch."

The Frenchman cried out in a frenzy.

"But, *mon dieu, monsieur,* zat is impossible! My watch—my pipe—from ze dead Boche in battle I find them. I will—"

"Walters, you and Bragg take Guerat into your billet," Elton commanded. "Better handcuff him to his bed. Hold him in close confinement until I am ready for him. It may be—say, a week from now!"

Guerat's outcry filled the room. He turned in senseless desperation upon the two sergeants and tried to force his way through the door.

"A week, messieurs!" he wailed as they led him out. "A week, messieurs! Ze thousand times a mercy is a bullet in ze heart for Henri Guerat, messieurs."

Elton turned back to the cipher messages as the Frenchman was taken out and dismissed Guerat from his thoughts for the time being. There were tremendous possibilities in those symbols if he could strip them of their secrecy. But as he took them up he did not permit himself the hope for such good fortune. There was but on chance, and that lay in an unchanged German army cipher whose key he had already broken.

The quest of Von Poel could not wait through grueling weeks upon the breaking of a new German cipher with no better basis than the following puzzle:

M!) 7Q♯OX 7: LZ7U ♯XOHG I: M?VW QZ !) H
M!F7¼I?G ¼OLM QE♯W9: ?U !S.—ZXO

Fifteen minutes' work in testing letter sequences, and Elton was swept by a fever of expectancy. The first of those symbols seemed to work out into a familiar key. Another thirty minutes, and hope had given place to certainty. It was the identical cipher he had broken a month before. The Herr Kapitan, reporting from Leipsigerplaz, had accepted the army cipher, little suspecting that its intricacies had yielded to enemy skill.

Elton's only difficulty was in recalling from memory the precise key arrangement, one in which four of the more common letters of the English alphabet, E, T, O and I, had been given three symbols each. But an hour of letter juggling, and he sat back in acceptance of his handiwork. Under the alphabet he had placed each symbol of the German cipher key so that it exposed its true meaning by reference to the letter set above it. Under the four high frequency letters he had the three sets of symbols used to complicate the key. The exposed key read*:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
?	J	K	I	♯	5	½	!	)	6	/	W	H
				O				(				
				:				V				

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
X	A	L	S	7	¼	Q	F	9	E	4	G	H
	Z				M							
	2				U							

Applied to that key, the captured message yielded:

Thirteen. Report enemy detail to h i m Thursday Sept twelve at Hq—One.

The trail of the Herr Kapitan! Despite the garbled incoherence of the cryptogram, there were certain words that stood out to proclaim to Elton their importance. No. 13 had been used by Von Poel during his London invasion. Only such a man as Von Poel, with a contempt for superstition, would operate abroad under such a designation.

There was an eloquent meaning, too, in No. 1 appearing as signature to the German order. The number meant the first man in authority in the German Military Intelligence service at Imperial

* The English equivalents of the breakdown of all ciphers involved in this story are used in order to make the method of deciphering as simple as possible for the average reader.—ED.

headquarters—a function Von Ludendorff kept in his own hands. These two numbers, therefore, vitalized the simple abbreviation "Hq" into the term Imperial German headquarters located at Spa, Belgium.

The remainder of the cryptic message eluded him. Elton tried many meanings, but the term "him" refused to yield significance. He consulted his calendar and found that the next Thursday fell on the twelfth of the month, which meant that whatever report was ordered must be delivered on that date. In the thought of a possible error in deciphering, Elton canvassed his work painstakingly. The word "him" was plainly the one upon which the order hinged. But the symbols deciphered again and again into that word.

Report to him Thursday, September 12th. That much was clear. The phrase "report to" indicated a report in person, rather than by message. Except for the abbreviation "Hq" the order might intend a meeting in Paris. The meaning clarified suddenly. He saw that the symbols for "him" were slightly spread so that the word really read "h i m", thus implying a period after each letter. His Imperial Majesty.

The broken masquerade of that phrase gave him the whole message unmistakably.

"Report to His Imperial Majesty Thursday, September 12th, at Imperial headquarters." The term "enemy detail" meant that the agent must be prepared to report upon and discuss in detail the enemy program, resistance and temper.

A survey of the Allied powers of resistance, then, was the Herr Kapitan's larger mission in France. Was Allied morale breaking? Was there a growing public demand for peace? Would the enemy carry the War through another terrible Winter? Was there a determination to see the War through, in the belief that Germany's power was waning?

The gathering of such critical information was the work of a trained expert of the highest order. Upon it might depend the future German military program—even the decision for continued war or early peace. Such a mission would be trusted to no less a man than the Herr Kapitan Von Poel. And the Herr Kapitan's threats, then, had been something far more than whimsical audacity; they were really a shrewd maneuver to stand the Allied secret service on guard against petty violence while the Herr Kapitan pursued his larger objective.

But, by reason of this deduction, Elton did not minimize the danger to himself. Von Poel would attempt to strike often enough and hard enough to lend substance to his challenge and screen his true purpose.

On completing his work with the cipher message, Elton burned his work sheets together with Guerat's pipe, fitted the Frenchman's watch together and replaced the metal case containing the message. Then he went to Walters's room, whence Guerat's wails had reached him from time to time. He found Guerat lying face downward, writhing in agony. The sergeants had gagged the prisoner lightly to prevent his commotion's being heard in the village.

Elton turned Guerat on his back, examined the pupils of his eyes and left the room without comment. Walters followed him.

"There's something wrong with that Frenchman, Cap'n," said Walters. "Acts to me like a man going out of his head. We thought at first it was just bluff, or maybe he'd lost his nerve. But he keeps getting worse. And whatever queer thing it is that ails him seems to be something real.'"

"It's very real, Walters," said Elton. "He'll keep getting more and more violent. But the only thing you can do under the circumstances is keep him gagged. I'll be ready for him at about eight in the morning. In the meantime have one of your men ready to go to the American Hospital at Paris with a note to the surgeon in charge."

CHAPTER V

MONSIEUR ROBILLOT

ELTON sat at a table in his billet through the small hours of the morning, digesting the day's developments and fitting them into a plan of action. His first reconnaissance for the German spoor had fully justified itself. He had found exactly what he expected to find, and consequently credited events to no whim of fortune. There was but one unexpected development—the German misuse of Guerat. Of that atrocity he intended making the fullest use presently.

But while Guerat's cipher message was addressed, beyond doubt, to the Herr Kapitan, Elton held no belief that the Frenchman would be able to lead him to the Prussian's Paris rendezvous. Nor did he conclude that Von Poel would depend upon improvised landing fields for his flights to and from Spa. The Herr Kapitan would keep his own trail in Paris securely covered, unknown to bungling German agents or a covey of his own henchmen. Probably not more than one trusted and tried assistant would act as connecting link between the Herr Kapitan himself and the German courier system into Paris.

Therefore, the intercepted cipher would not serve as a letter of introduction or a free admission card to Von Poel's lair. It merely offered the foundation of a plan—one that must depend upon further developments.

The crowing of cocks in the village reminded Elton of the hour. He put out his light and turned in for a few hours' sleep. While the day promised to be one of important events, he planned no move until eight o'clock, by which hour he estimated Guerat would be ripe for interview. A few minutes before eight he rose to make ready for the Frenchman. Walters, who must have been listening for Elton's footsteps on the floor, reported almost at once with a worried look on his face.

"Cap'n, that Frenchman has gone clear out of his head," said Walters. "All he does is roll and groan and clutch at the air. He keeps moaning through his gag to get the doctor from Paris. I sent your note by Bragg into Paris, and he brought back this envelop for the Cap'n."

"Thanks. So Guerat is very much worse than he was last night?"

"Well, sir, he says he's dying. Bragg and me can't make out but what maybe he is."

"It would be a mercy for him if he could die, Walters. But get him on his feet and bring him in here. I think I can put him out of his misery in two minutes. But first there are some things he is going to tell me."

GUERAT'S stark eyes looked out from deep, haunted caverns. He began his feverish pleading for a doctor at sight of Elton and attempted to prostrate himself in supplication. Walters, at a motion from Elton, held the prisoner on his feet.

"Oh, monsieur, but you do not understan'," wailed Guerat. "It is zat I am dying, monsieur! A doctor! In ze name of mercy, a doctor!"

"Unhappily, Guerat, I understand perfectly," said Elton.

He opened the envelop Bragg had delivered from the surgeon at Paris and took out a thin vial. As he held this up before Guerat, the Frenchman nearly wrenched himself free of Walters's grip in an effort to rush upon Elton.

"Calm yourself, monsieur," Elton went on. "I clearly suspected the truth last night when you were brought in here. I could not be surer of the details now if you had given them to me yourself. The German secret service, by this foul means, has stripped you of your nationality and of your volition. You are the slave of this drug. I suspected morphine at first, as that is most commonly used in such cases. But your wrists show no marks of the needle."

Elton's words were lost on Guerat, who merely stared with feverish greed at the cocaine in Elton's hand. It was not until a small portion had been administered that the Frenchman was able to exercise any control over his faculties. Even then, Elton's promises of hospitalization, his assurances that there might be some way to escape the guillotine by a clear confession of everything—by turning his wits against his betrayer—were without effect. The fellow was so completely in the clutches of the insidious narcotic that only by promise of cocaine was his tongue loosened.

The whole forenoon was spent in exacting Guerat's story, winnowing truth from untruth and fact from fancy. He had been taken prisoner while wounded three years before. Drugs had been given him at first to relieve his suffering. Later, in prison camps, cocaine had been peddled by a Russian, though it had never occurred to Guerat that this was by design. Later his mad craving had been capitalized by the prison police, Guerat receiving drugs in reward for tips of plotted prison breaks.

From that petty treachery he had been taken by the secret police for training as spy runner. For more than a year past he had visited Paris once each month with cipher pellets. The secret police kept him on a sure leash. His cocaine supply would be shut off as he left Köln or Spa for Paris and renewed when he reached Paris with his messages. Thus they were certain Guerat would lose no time.

Out of Guerat's disclosures, Elton culled three vital pieces of information: the place in Paris to which Guerat delivered his spy messages; the secret identification signals used in his operations; his method of getting back to Germany.

As Elton had feared, the messages went to a receiving station, where they were delivered to a Monsieur Molin, who kept a small watch-repairing shop in the Rue Jacques Dulud, at Neuilly, just north of the Bois de Boulogne. Monsieur Molin always held the Frenchman virtually a prisoner in his place until time for the return trip to Spa. Messages for Germany were concealed in watch and pipe as were those coming into Paris.

Guerat's trips were made by airplane, landings being effected in various favorable areas outside of Paris. A taxi always passed through to pick up the runner and carry him to Molin's place. The mystery of the nocturnal auto through Courbevoie was explained in Guerat's statement that the auto made its rounds nightly, since there was no fixed schedule of arrival and departure except that the planes always landed well after dark.

On one point only did Guerat refuse to be shaken out of his efforts to cover up. He told conflicting stories of his return flight, finally insisting that he was to be met by a Belgian renegade pilot in a field near Chevilly, due south of Paris. But Elton, from deft examination, guessed the truth behind this deception. Shortly after noon he finished with the prisoner and had Sergeant Bragg return Guerat to his temporary prison.

"Get a dependable man in here from one of the villages to watch Guerat," Elton instructed Walters. "I've got more important work for you and Bragg tonight. Also, the first Frenchman you see smoking a ripe old brier pipe, buy it from him even if you have to pay a hundred francs."

EVALUATION of the information gleaned from Guerat occupied Elton until midafternoon. Out of that information he completed his plan. Contact with the German courier system, by appearing at Monsieur Molin's in Guerat's shoes, could bring him no larger result than a bag of minor German operatives.

Guerat clearly had never heard of the Herr Kapitan, of Castellaun, Von Strindheim, Von Kulm, or other master operatives of the Imperial service. Molin doubtless would know as little, except that he must receive and conceal run-

ners and pass their messages along to an agent calling at his shop. Intermediate agents would remain in the dark, except as to their own minor rôles. Any other system would leave the German organization exposed to the danger of its weakest link.

Elton cut his bait accordingly. He contrived a German cipher message to take the place of the one extracted from Guerat's pipe. An hour was devoted to the language of this message. The completed document read:

M!) 7Q‡OX KZF7V:7 A5 ! V H 7‡L27M¼ UZ G2F F7½OXQ—ZX‡

The German agents would thus be informed—or misinformed:

THIRTEEN. COURIER OF H I M REPORTS TO YOU. URGENT—ONE.

When Walters returned with a reeking old French brier, Elton reduced his cipher message to a pellet and concealed it in the heel of the pipe. The message in Guerat's wristwatch he left undisturbed. Three times during the late afternoon he had Guerat in for further examination in order to test out certain phases of the fellow's story. The early evening he spent in visualizing every probable move of the night, analyzing every conceivable eventuality of the next twenty-four hours.

Shortly before ten o'clock Elton prepared to move. He selected from the supply in his locker trunk a new French uniform, tacked on the insignia of a lieutenant of French infantry and concealed the insignia of other grades in the lining of the tunic. With the aid of small brushes and delicate French pigments he changed the whole appearance of his face by a few deft touches. Then he summoned Walters for final instructions.

"You and Bragg center your attention tonight," he directed his assistant, "upon the farm of Monsieur le Bardonne. If you see lights, close in on them carefully. If a plane lands, seize the pilot by force. Shoot if necessary, and take pains that Le Bardonne doesn't slip away. Have Guerat kept quiet here in the billet—a small portion of cocaine when he becomes too agitated. On the way out, give Corporal Larden orders to drive at once to Paris and stand by at M. P. headquarters, Rue Ste. Anne, in case I need him. I'm leaving shortly for the city."

"The Cap'n's transportation, sir? I didn't understand whether you meant for Corporal Larden to pick you up on his way in."

"No, I think he needn't bother, Walters. If I'm not mistaken, the Imperial German government will oblige me with a lift into Paris."

FROM a point beside the road, south of Nanterre, Elton caught the roar of an airplane soon after eleven o'clock. The unseen birdman made a wide circle and gradually dropped to earth in the vicinity of Bezons. The pilot for Guerat, Elton guessed. But, certain as he was that the pilot would land in the clutches of Walters and Bragg, Elton intended to leave that drama behind.

There was no more time to lose tonight. He was ready now for his first direct thrust at the Herr Kapitan. There was even the possibility that he would have the Prussian spymaster in custody before the night was done.

Half an hour passed before the familiar chug of an auto sounded in the distance, coming out of Nanterre on the road to Courbevoie and Paris. Elton waited until the car was fifty meters away, then struck a match to his cigaret. The car slowed down. Elton struck a second match as the car stopped.

"Monsieur, I see you drive a taxi," said Elton, repeating the words he had learned from Guerat. "If your tariff is not too expensive, I should like to ride to Paris."

"Where in Paris do you wish to go?" a shadow in the driver's seat inquired.

"Neuilly, near the Porte de Villiers, monsieur. I wish to stop at a shop on

the Rue Jacques Dulud, where I have lodgings."

"For six francs, monsieur, I will take you."

"Four francs, monsieur, and fifty centimes in silver. It is all I can afford."

"Bien, monsieur!" exclaimed the driver, and reached back to open the door. He added in a low aside as Elton entered, "But I thought, monsieur, I was to find no one again tonight."

"A slight delay," Elton replied. "So please see to it that you lose no time."

The chauffeur delivered him at record speed to the shop of Monsieur Molin, opened the door of the car to let him out, made a show of collecting the fare and drove off. The Molin establishment was a stone antique of three stories, the lower floor occupied by a shop over whose door appeared the legend: "Watches Repaired."

The upper floors had the appearance of living rooms, each window closely shuttered. A faint light shone in the rear of the shop. In response to repeated raps—delivered in prearranged sequence—a man crossed the shop and threw open the door.

"Monsieur?" he demanded in manifest annoyance.

"A watch I must have repaired immediately," said Elton.

"A strange hour to come for such a purpose," demurred the other.

"But I will pay well for your service, monsieur. As much as forty-seven francs, fifty centimes, if you will but repair my watch and good brier pipe at the bench of Monsieur Molin."

"Come in quickly. I am Monsieur Molin. Your face, it is not the one I was expecting to see."

"Let us not waste words on trivialities," Elton rejoined. "I am not the ordinary run of customer, Monsieur Molin, and my time is most precious."

Molin bowed a hurried apology and led the way to the lighted workroom at the rear of his shop. The man was French, or Alsatian, in his late fifties, small, wizened and taciturn. Elton classified him as a tradesman—a conniving, coldly mercenary rascal, but of no very high order of intelligence. He had doubtless been installed years before the War for this very purpose and specially trained in his work by the Prussian Paris agents. Molin's workbench was littered with watches and clocks in various stages of disrepair.

"The objects you wished me to fix for you?" Molin inquired. "A watch and a pipe?"

"Only a pipe, Monsieur Molin," said Elton. "The watch I shall hold for the time being. It has another purpose, as you shall understand later."

"Impossible!" snapped Molin, his eyes narrowing into those of a ferret. "The taxi, it will be here in two minutes for a guest who waits in my apartments. The watch, it must go with the pipe. My guest has been most impatient, monsieur! Since yesterday he has been waiting."

"Let us not argue to no purpose, monsieur," Elton retorted. "I know what I am about, even if you do not. Send my pipe along immediately, and I shall wait here with you until we receive further word."

Molin fidgeted in uncertainty for several moments, then accepted the pipe and disappeared with it. While he was gone Elton heard a car draw up outside. Its door banged shut and the vehicle sped off. Molin reappeared.

"Your pipe, monsieur, it has gone," he announced. "Your conduct we do not understand. Never before have I failed to receive the watch for repair, so I have sent for the instructions. You will please to wait in my rooms overhead until I know what is to be done."

"My own instructions, monsieur, are very definite," Elton instantly replied. "I shall obey them to the letter. And to one man only shall I deliver my watch."

TO BE CONCLUDED

MILLION DOLLAR EXTRA

By WILLIAM EDWARD HAYES

Author of "Snow in the Pass"

OSCAR ORSON possessed no sense of the dramatic. To hear his fireman tell it, he had little or no sense at all—an opinion which was not unusual when you understand that such is the generally accepted attitude of all locomotive coal heavers toward their engine mates.

Oscar was too sore now—too mightily wrathful—to be able to feel the pride which the normal man should have felt in the honor that so suddenly had been thrust upon him. He stood, his perpendicular clearance being something under five-feet-three, before the solid, bulging hulk of Division Superintendent Mayhew. The place was the main dining room of the Bellew passenger station; and the occasion was a dinner in the superintendent's honor, generously tendered by the road and yard employees at Bellew to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the boss's iron-fisted reign.

In Oscar's trembling hand was a package. Mr. Mayhew loomed over him, beaming down upon him with eyes that were singularly kindly beneath his shaggy brows. Oscar's mouth was dry, his lips quivering. Never before in his life had he been called upon to make a speech; and he told himself that, if he lived through it, he was going to find out if the wide faced, ugly Warts Glendenning was responsible. Warts was Oscar's thick-necked tallowpot.

Oscar realized, with a sinking sensation at the pit of his stomach, that the noisy crowd had subsided to a breathless silence. Knowing that he now had to go on with his part of the program, he licked his lips and said:

"Mr. Mayhew, the—the men. They gimme the jo—the honor to ma-make

this here present, an'—"

Applause cracked against his eardrums. He felt the sweat on his brow. It immediately occurred to him to thrust the package into Mayhew's hand and save himself the trouble of having to say anything more. The superintendent took the little square box, raised the lid and brought into view a handsome railroad watch.

Before Oscar could withdraw the superintendent was shaking his hand; and, still holding that clammy paw, Mr. Mayhew raised his new watch for all to see and gestured for silence.

"Men," he said, when the last throat was hushed, "you've known me too many years to know— Well, what I'm trying to say is, speeches aren't in my line. Like Oscar Orson here, I can only talk to you in few words; but I want every one of you to know that I'm thankful."

He paused and looked about, still holding Oscar's hand. Then:

"We've all been together a good many years; and sometimes we've slipped and made mistakes. That's human. What I'm most grateful for is not this little watch—not in itself, but what it stands for. The loyalty that I know 's in every one of you. It's been great to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, in this railroad game. I've read where the imaginative writing people have called it a drama, a romance of transportation. The older I get an' the longer I work with you, the more I think the writing people have used the proper words. I'm proud to be in the middle of it, an' I know you're proud. So—thanks!"

The dinner broke up with much handshaking and loud talking,. but Oscar Orson was not there. He couldn't remember just how he got out of it. But there he was, sitting on a baggage truck, his squinty eyes looking into space, when he became conscious of a familiar presence. He turned and glared.

"Whatcha wanna do that for?" he demanded. His voice was slight, like his person. "An' don't say you didn't arrange it. I know you did."

"What?" asked Warts Glendenning, a tall, thickly built young man with humorous eyes.

"Make a fool outta me!" Oscar snapped.

"Wait a minute," Warts said, holding up his hand. "Be calm, Oscar. Be calm. Wasn't you up before the super this P.M.?"

"Yes, I was," Oscar barked in righteous wrath. "An' that's what made it all the worse. You know danged well what Mayhew thinks of me personally. Didn't he bawl the heck outta me not five hours ago for flattenin' the wheels on a stock train by makin' a fancy stop? He did. An' you was on the engine with me when I made the stop. Could I help it? No. Didn't a lousy, mouse-brained telegraph operator throw a signal in my face? He did. An' you know what Mayhew says to me? He says, 'Oscar, you shouldn't 'a' been goin' so fast,' he says. 'If,' he says, 'you'd been approachin' the Casco yard limits under control you wouldn't 'a' made round wheels square.' That's what he says to me."

"He didn't pull you outta service," Warts consoled.

"No, he didn't," Oscar retorted. "But he says to me, he says, 'Oscar, you watch how you handle air brakes, or sometime I'm gonna take you outta service for about a whole month an' have the air expert teach you all over again.' An' me with twenty years of runnin' engines on this pike. This railroad game—hell!"

Oscar shoved a stogy into his wide mouth and ran a calloused finger along the side of his lean jaw. He was like a mosquito in agility and in prominence of proboscis. Sometime, a long way back, his nose had got in the way of a shaker bar that had slipped, and its classic straightness had been deflected off-center about the middle so that, when you looked at him head-on, it appeared to point to the right half of his upper lip.

"Didn't mean to put you in a tight

spot, Oscar," Warts said. "But I knew the Old Man'd been rakin' you over the coals again. An' I thought— Well, I talked with the chairman of the engineers' committee, an' we both figgered you presentin' the watch'd kinda make the boss soften up a little. You heard what he said about bein' proud he was a-workin' with you an' them others, an' how you all was takin' part in the big drama of—"

"Drammer!" Oscar got to his feet and proceeded to hop about on the platform bricks. "Where's drammer? Where's anything in this whole danged racket that's any better'n a dog's life. You show me drammer an'—an' what else was it he said?"

"Romance," Warts replied quietly. "Romance, Oscar."

Oscar considered the watch chain on the fireman's vest, rolled the stogy from one side of his mouth to the other, spat between his teeth and said:

"Romance! Drammer! Some day, Warts, I'm gonna buy me a farm."

THE man in the black hat opened the telegram brought to him by the chap in the dark gray cap. He considered its contents narrowly while the six others of the group watched him through the blue haze of smoke in that Harbison hotel room.

"Well," one of them barked impatiently, "what's it say, Flick?"

Flick, of the black hat, looked up slowly and put the telegram on the table. His sallow face was young at first glance, but there were lines of hardness in it. His eyes were dark, reflecting cold lights. A cigaret hung from the left corner of his lip as if pasted there.

"It says," Flick answered in a low, harsh tone, "that everything's all set."

"Gees!" another exclaimed, the word cutting the tense atmosphere like the sharp hiss of a snake.

"Now listen, you mugs," Flick said, speaking rapidly. "Listen close, see? I'm taking Lefty and Morg with me. There can't be any slip. You make the play like I tell you, and it's in the bag."

"Tell us an' let us get goin'," the man in the gray cap said. There was a hint of nervousness in his voice. He was stockily built, with the powerful shoulders and long arms of a gorilla. "We don't wanna hang around here too long."

"Keep your shirt on," Flick barked, crushing out his cigaret with his slim fingers. "There's plenty time. But one slip, and we'll see two hundred grand slipping between our fingers. You all got that?"

"You said it was a million-dollar train," a slight man said jerkily.

"It is," Flick retorted, "but we can't take it all. Ten cars of silk—raw silk in bales. A hundred-grand cargo in each car. We got three trucks. We'll get all we can."

"Give us the play," the gray cap demanded. He pulled his chair closer to the table, and the others followed his movement. "It's 10:30 now."

Flick spread out a map of Montana. He laid it flat and waited until the six were crouched over it. With no show of excitement he pointed a lean finger. He said:

"You see that town? That's Bellew."

"We can read," the gray cap said sharply.

"This red line," Flick said, as if he hadn't noticed, "that's the main line of the Big Pacific. Then under it—this other red line—is the North Trunk Route. You see it from Bellew to Harbison. The silk, at this minute, ought to be moving into Bellew from the west, over the Big P. Now look along this Big P. line east of Bellew. See that 'X' I marked? Twenty minutes ago a westbound freight train piled up there—Gimme and. Mike saw to that—piled up and blocked the Big P."

He paused, and the men looked up at him through the veil of stale smoke. They were hard featured men, shifty of eye; but in their glances there was a certain admiration for the slim, black-

hatted man.

"What happens?" Flick went on. "Nothing can delay the silk. In my day as a railroad telegrapher, I learned a lot about that. The silk must move. It's insured by the hour. If one line's blocked by accident, it's diverted to another. Right now that million-dollar train's being diverted to the North Trunk Route. I'll know when it leaves Bellew. Gimme and Mike will wire."

Again the speaker paused, lighted a cigaret and flipped the dead match with a quick motion of his fingers to a corner of the room. He inhaled deeply while the others again glanced up at him.

"Here—" Flick pointed to the map again—"you see a green line. That's the Federal highway. It runs alongside the North Trunk for fifteen miles between Pamby and a point three miles west of Silver Star. Silver Star is the only telegraph office open between Casco and Skygate. We do our job right in here." The lean finger rested beneath a green cross. "Two bridges. They're two miles apart—both wooden. Have the trucks at the green cross."

Flick folded the map and handed it to the man in the gray cap.

"And don't rush. There'll be plenty of time. As soon as I bring the train to a stop, you men stand by. I'll tell you what to do. We'll have a two-hour getaway before the division authorities will know what's happened. It'll take another two hours for a search to get started. As soon as Mike's code message comes, giving me the time of the silk's departure from Bellew, I'll take Morg and Lefty and leave for Casco."

Flick opened the traveling bag by the bed. His lean fingers removed two ugly automatics from it. Leisurely he inspected the magazines and put the clips in place. Setting the safety on each, he flipped them out of sight beneath his armpits.

"Look to your rods," he said tersely. "Don't use 'em unless—"

He shrugged his slim shoulders, found a chair and propped his polished black shoes on the writing desk.

FIREMAN Warts Glendenning, being a young man of understanding, had once said of Oscar Orson, engineer:

"He's a plain durn jumpin'-jack on the end of a stick. He's quicker 'n a rabbit when he makes a move; an' Lord knows he makes enough of 'em, in the course of a run, to wear out a average man."

Oscar's size accounted, in a measure, for his numerous activities. When the higher powers designed and built the 3000 class, mountain type locomotives, with their long boilers and high drivers, Oscar's stature was not taken into consideration. He had to stand up to open or close the throttle. He had to rise to his feet to blow the whistle, test his gage cocks and do a number of other chores that one more inch on his reach or height would have saved him. He did these things with quick, jerky movements and much hard breathing.

Oscar had started his railroading back in the days when engines were small and brawn was no requisite; and he wasn't going to let the big jacks whip him if he had to get a stepladder put into the cab.

It was 10:25 the night of the super's dinner when, having finished the job of oiling around the gears of a grimy old Mikado type freight hog in drag service, he climbed to the filthy cab, planted himself on the worn seat cushion and squinted back along the side of his tender. Warts, having completed his duties in the cab, rolled a cigaret.

"Well," Oscar said impatiently, "if we ever get a brakeman to take us down to the yards, maybe we'll get outta town sometime tonight. Purty howdy-do. Call us to leave at 10:30, an' here we sit at the roundhouse."

"Well," Warts opined, "we're gettin' paid for it, ain't we?"

"We ain't gettin' enough," Oscar barked. "Not for leadin' a dog's life like this."

"Think," Warts ventured, "of the romance an' the drama, Oscar." The fireman's blue eyes danced with laughing lights, and a broad grin illumined his features.

Oscar, bringing his head in from the starless Montana night, glared at the big man, crossed one thin leg over the other and said:

"You say them words to me again, Warts, an' I'll crown you. You make me sick to my stummick. Romance an' drammer—an' here we are, called for a tonnage drag, with a dirty ol' hog to ride in for the next fourteen or fifteen hours. Goin' in an' outta side tracks, spendin' the night cussin' an' fumin' when people with sense is enjoyin' sleep."

Oscar cocked his head to one side with a show of righteous indignation. He scowled tremendously and told himself that he was speaking the truth. He didn't realize—and indeed it never occurred to him to think—that if some one removed him from the railroad world for the period of a month, he'd be as lost as a trout flopping on the grass.

"You're crabbin' again," Warts said complacently. "You'll die crabbin', Oscar. Wait an' see."

It was at that moment, with the smoke plume from his engine drifting about him in a black, lifeless cloud, that he heard a fierce yelp. Turning, he saw a lantern waving in the hand of a running man.

"Oscar!"

He recognized the leather-lunged whoop of the roundhouse foreman.

"You an' Warts! Come down here!"

"What's eatin' that guy now?" Oscar demanded querulously of the roundhouse spur in general and no one in particular.

He hoisted himself from his seat with a little jerky bound and dropped to the cinders with Warts right behind him.

"What?" he demanded.

"Changed the dope," the foreman blurted. "Gettin' another engine out fer you."

"I got an engine," Oscar bawled. "Ain't it able to ramble?"

"Not with silk. Come on. Don't stand there like you are."

The foreman was running back toward the house. Oscar ran behind him, and Warts loped at his side.

"Drag," Oscar called between breaths. "I'm called for drag freight. Who said silk?"

"Don't ask fool questions. I don't know. I got a call from the yardmaster. He says get a high-wheeler an' the drag crew an' get 'em to the passenger station."

They stopped when they reached the turn-table. A big jack was nosing on to it. Oscar saw the number in the headlight—the 3037. He spat in disgust. One of those long barreled babies with the little cab—the kind that he had to bounce up and down on.

"Why didn't they decide on this," Oscar demanded, "before I went an' oiled round that other old scrap heap?" Just another example, he told himself, of official inefficiency.

"Quit your crabbin' and get on," the roundhouse foreman shot roughly.

"Who's crabbin'?" Oscar bounced up and down like his jumping-jack prototype. "That's the way with you guys," he mumbled, making his way to the big engine being wheeled off the table. "Let a feller express his opinion, an' he's crabbin'."

"Stop talkin' to yourself," the foreman ordered. "You ain't got money enough to allow you to do that. Get on that jack an' take it to the depot. Oil her there, if you got time. They're waitin' on you."

AT THE passenger station platform Warts helped Oscar with the oiling activities. Oscar twisted his stogy around in his mouth and spat. Behind him stretched a line of ten express cars and a crew coach for the conductor and his brakemen to ride in. There'd be some bulls with them, too. They always carried bulls on the silk. Oscar hoped he

wouldn't have any to clutter up the cab. All they were good for was sleeping.

Lights moved up and down as car inspectors examined the wheels and the brake rigging. *Tonk - tonk - tonk*—the hammers smacked the wheel metal to see if it were sound. Mr. Mayhew wasn't there. He'd left earlier on an eastbound passenger train for his headquarters in Harbison.

"I don't like this here silk," Oscar confided to the stalwart Warts as they tightened down the plug on the main bearing grease. "Expect a man to run his wheels off; an' if he don't get over the road like they tell him to, it's letters an' explanations he's gotta make. Too danged fast for me. Too fast for anybody with sense."

He poked the long neck of his oiler into a hole. He was working along his four great drivers with quick jabs of his oil can and swift, jerky steps.

"You was complainin' a little while ago," Warts said, "about us gettin' on a drag an' bein' on the road fourteen or fifteen hours."

"Who was complainin'?" Oscar swung his hand torch out, but didn't pause. "You're just like all the rest of 'em on this railroad. Let me express an opinion, an' I'm complainin'. If I ever started to complain, you'd hear somethin'."

Warts grinned. He said nothing, though he was probably thinking a lot. The conductor brought over the orders. The engine crew read them over with the skipper, checked their watches and saw that there was less than ten seconds' variation.

"If I ever get this silk to Harbison like that order says," Oscar piped, "I'm gonna be surprised. What they think I got here—a airplane?"

"You got a chronic bellyache," the conductor, a young man with a don't-give-a-damn swagger, said curtly. "Let's get out of town."

They got out of town at 10:44 to the accompaniment of earth-shaking thunder from the 3037's squat stack and the bellow of the helper engine in the rear. They left a wake of black smoke and waving lanterns behind them and charged at the western slant of the Continental Divide. Two little white lamps, one on either side of the boiler front where the headlight pointed into the mountain black, blinked bravely and designated their classification as an extra East.

Oscar climbed till he stood on the seat, propped one scuffed shoe against the water hose cock on the backhead of the boiler, and squinted through his lubricator sights. Satisfied that there was no fault to be found, he adjusted the opening of his throttle bar and felt out the lever for the proper cut-off in the cylinders.

He then squinted at the water glass and tried the cocks, capering about with nervous gestures. Finally, convincing himself that for the moment all was well, he sat on his cushion and bounced with the springs beneath him. The engine, having an automatic stoker, required no back-breaking effort from Mr. Glendenning, who reclined comfortably against the backrest of his seat and smoked his pipe.

You've heard the roll of a trap drum, starting low and increasing in a frenzy of sound. Multiply that roar a thousand times, and you have the bellowing crescendo of a silk train on the steel if you stand at any given point along the right of way and watch it bear down on you. No costly, varnished Pullman job, no fleet-wheeled mail can claim such breathless, withering speed.

Over the top of the world at Iceline, down the eastward breast of the slope to White Cloud and thence along the water grade through Digby, Willow Forks and Three Rivers, Engineman Oscar Orson hurled his million-dollar charge.

In the swaying cab there was no air of tension, no sense of great heroics. There were just two men doing a job, each in his own appointed way. Oscar bounced about, rocking, rising now to shatter the night with a crossing blast

from the brass throat of his whistle, then sitting back to cram a fresh stogy into his cavernous jaw. He was thinking about Mayhew and the way the super had bawled him out because he'd stopped a train of cattle with too little judgment, as the super had said, and about other times the super had found fault with his work.

The engineer was a man of pride and deep sensitiveness. Criticism of his engine driving was one thing he could not stand. He knew nothing about inferiority complexes, and therefore did not know that the querulousness he had developed through the years was merely an armor of bluff because of his desire to be a big man among the big men of his world.

Oscar was, in that dizzily speeding cab, an incongruous little man who, because of his size and his physical inconsistencies, had been the object of much kidding. Never had a division official slapped him on the back and passed him words of gruff, but well meant, praise. The brass-collared boys in the swivel chairs seemed conscious of him only when he made some little slip, such as stopping those cattle on a dime with flat wheels resulting from the skid.

He thought of the cattle and the watch he'd been called upon to present as his wheels bit into the long, sweeping curve above the town of Casco. His eyes, squinted against the pelt of the cinders, picked up a familiar landmark. Immediately he was on his feet again, shoving his throttle home, grasping his brake valve. The air from the brake exhaust blared through the cab, the wheels feeling the bite of the shoes along the dark, drumming line.

With his head out the window, turning backward, Oscar brought the silk to a halt so that the manhole on his tender was beneath the water tank spout. He saw Warts climbing back over the coal with his lantern, heard the spout chains creak as the manhole lid was thrown back with a metallic bang. Then came the sound of water pouring down. He took his hand torch and oil can and got to the ground.

He was halfway round with his oiling when his conductor's lantern came close and he heard the conductor say—

"Well, Ossie, ol' hoss, we're wheelin' on the tickets, all right, ain't we?"

"We!" Oscar paused in his chore and looked up quickly. "We! What the heck you got to do with it? You ain't doin' anything but ridin', are you? Where you get that *we* stuff?"

"That's all right, Ossie, ol' hoss. You're the guy. You're doin' it all. Reckon I am just ridin'. But nevertheless it's great runnin', Ossie, an' you're gettin' us over the railroad."

Oscar refused to be mollified. He bit down harder on his stogy and continued his work, the conductor looking on in silence. Finally the conductor ventured:

"I looked 'em over as I came ahead, Ossie. Not even a warm one on the wheels. Guess I'll start back now. Watch my lamp. Gimme a chance to get on."

Presently the conductor was on his way back, his lantern bobbing as he moved. Warts came down from the coal and looked after the steam cock on his stoker adjustment. Oscar climbed to the throttle, looked to the rear and whistled off as he caught the wave of his skipper's lantern.

Warts, crouched in his cab window, abruptly got to his feet and crossed over to tug at Oscar's sleeve.

"Think we got a coupla bums," he bellowed above the roar of the exhaust. His big arm gestured toward the tender. "Looked like a coupla guys runnin' for it. Pretty dark out there. I couldn't see clear."

"That's what we got bulls for," Oscar grumbled. "To keep 'em off. To hell with 'em. If the bulls can't be watchin' their job, let the bums ride. They'll eat plenty cinders back there. The bulls is probably sleepin' back in the coach with the crew. Fine way to run a railroad."

THAT stretch east of Casco through Pamby, Park Lodge and Silver Star to Skygate, twenty-five miles in all, was as lonesome as any place on the Montana division. From Casco to Silver Star there was no open telegraph office in nineteen miles. The track followed the banks of Yellow Water for most of the way and alternately was crooked and straight, up and down. It was certainly no speedway. But the time allowed for the silk was thirty-three minutes; which meant that Oscar, on the tangents, had to clip them off at seventy to make up for the sweeping curves.

He had just topped the rise on the way to Pamby and was on his feet adjusting his throttle for one of those bursts of speed, when he sensed a strange presence in the cab. He couldn't tell which informed him first—the yelp from Warts or a hard prod in his ribs.

Oscar whirled about, his eyes narrowed to slits. He saw, boring into him, an ugly automatic held in a gloved hand. Then he looked at the face above the hand and caught a glimpse of relentless eyes and thin, hard jaws. Two other strangers were a little to the left of this man in the black hat; Oscar saw Warts, hands in the air, eyes staring.

The man in the black hat spoke.

"Take it easy, hogger!"

The words, just loud enough to carry above the engine roar, came with the crispness of a rifle shot. Oscar experienced no sense of fear. He bristled, his backbone rigid, and spat his stogy to the deck.

"Put that gun down," he bellowed in his high voice. "Just what you tin sports think you're tryin' to do?"

The man in the black hat roughly shoved the automatic farther into Oscar's ribs, and the diminutive engineman was thrust on to his seat cushion without ceremony.

"No lip," the gunman said. "You do what I say, see? I got no qualms about ripping out your guts if you don't."

Oscar was sore. If it had been daylight, the red in his leathery neck would probably have been visible. He'd read about these dapper gents. He'd heard about them. The gunman, prodding him, didn't have to tell him what the trio was after—not with a million-dollar extra in his command.

Oscar's brain was as quick as his small body. There was nothing, he told himself, like being ready. He was damned if this gent with the black hat was going to get away with anything. He looked across at Warts and saw the fireman's staring eyes.

"Listen to me, hoghead," the gunman said, his hard face close to Oscar's lined countenance. "No trick moves. I savvy an engine, see? I know your throttle and lever and brake valve. From now on you run this engine like I say. Keep your paws off the whistle."

"Like you say!" Oscar spat. He tried to put derision in his voice.

"You heard me. The first thing is, ease off this speed. Bring her down to thirty miles an hour."

Oscar glared at his captor, turned and looked forward. The slightest hint of a smile touched his mouth. Down where his short legs hung in front of his seat it was dark. Near his left leg was the pipe which went from the brake valve equipment to the train line. Through this pipe the air flowed for the brake control. By lifting his leg slightly, his toe could touch a little brass cock in the line. The purpose of that cock was to cut out the brake equipment when this engine was the second on a double header; the first engine, when there are two engines, always controls the air.

With his toe properly anchored on the cock, Oscar suddenly stood up and jerked his foot. He felt the cock handle turn and knew that his immediate objective was accomplished. So this tin sport had a savvy of an engine, did he? Oscar would show him.

"Where you think you're going?" the gunman barked.

"You said ease off," Oscar shouted.

"I didn't tell you to stand up."

"I can't get the throttle if I don't."

"Snap into it," the gunman said. "No tricks."

Oscar closed his throttle. His timing was perfect. The engine was well on its way down a long, steady grade. The closing of the throttle in no way checked the rate of travel. Oscar's left hand closed over the brake valve handle. He brought it around for the regulation service reduction. The exhaust air blared through the port of chamber D. But there was no response in the wheels.

Oscar, leaving the brake valve where it was, whirled sharply.

"I ain't got my air," he cried. "You done somethin' to this train line."

The gunman's eyes widened. His gloved hand reached the brake handle and threw it at full emergency. It was like stepping on the accelerator of a coasting automobile with the switch cut off.

"No air!" The gunman brought his gun even with Oscar's throat. "You get this thing stopped."

"You fellers," Oscar bellowed, "got on back of the tank. You must 'a' stepped on a angle cock an' turned it so's there ain't any air in the train."

"You got to fix it," the gunman said nervously.

It wasn't a comfortable sensation to be careening on a downhill curve with the train apparently out of control.

"You bring a light," Oscar demanded. "I'll fix it."

He reached over and set his brake valve back to running position. Then he reached down to the floor and grasped a spanner wrench. As he brought up his hand in the dark he quickly turned the cut-out cock in the brake pipe to normal position. Then he straightened and led his captor up over the coal gates.

The man in the black hat explained something to his aides, then turned and followed Oscar, lighting the way with an electric torch.

On the back of the tank Oscar halted and maneuvered the gunman over to the outside edge. Oscar took the flashlight and leaned over, training the glare on the air connections between the tender and the first car. He handed the torch back to the gunman, dropped to his knees and turned so that his feet were hanging over the roaring space between.

The gunman was crouching, but he wasn't braced. Oscar, his wrath mounting by the minute, took his time. He had to do this thing just right. That he was about to take a human life did not occur to him. He thought only of that million-dollar cargo and his responsibility as a locomotive engineer.

The lurch on the curve at the edge of Pamby came. Oscar, facing forward, saw the engine lean with the sweep to the left. The gunman's slim legs were at his right. A foot beyond those polished shoes was blurred, black space. Oscar, heedless of the threatening gun that he knew was trained upon him, hurled himself, with the lurch of the tender, against the gunman's knees. He was conscious of a startled cry, scrambling legs and clawing hands, but only the backward rushing night was there for those hands to grasp. The man in the black hat suddenly was gone.

Oscar was sweating as he got to his feet, but he wasn't aware of it. Only a part of the job was done. Down in the cab there were two more, equally dangerous and deadly. He couldn't go to the cab, nor could he risk his life crawling back to the rear to notify the bulls and the rest of the crew. He had to stay with the engine. But how?

CAUTIOUSLY he crept forward on the outer edge of the tender, with the smoke veiling him. He presently saw the other two, standing with guns trained on the luckless Warts. One glanced back occasionally. They'd be missing the man with the black hat. One of them would be coming back to investigate any minute now.

Just when Oscar's ideas seemed at a standstill, deliverance came in the form

of two green lights on the front of a freight engine in the siding at Pamby. The engine, at the approach of the silk, whistled signals—one long and two short blasts to tell the silk that there was a second section somewhere to the east. Not that the silk cared; it had right of way over all. But it was railroad custom.

Oscar saw Warts hurriedly explaining something to the gunmen; then he saw them both stoop out of sight while Warts reached Oscar's whistle and replied with two short blasts. Oscar, his spanner wrench gripped tightly, was on the cab roof in a split second. It was only two long steps from where he'd been crouched. He crawled across it on his knees, looked through the ventilator in the center and saw the gunmen below him. They were standing again. He considered the possibilities of complete destruction by using his wrench, but decided that idea was poor. He might get one, but in the meantime the other could shoot Warts.

He made his way to the boiler top, slid out over the broad back to the right-hand running board that reached forward to the smoke box. He had to get control of his engine as best he could, and he couldn't get inside the cab to do it.

As he worked his way along, his left hand was gripping a long rod. The feel of it gave him a sudden idea. These hijackers were anxious to stop somewhere—probably along the Federal highway. The silk mustn't stop. But the throttle was closed inside the cab, and the engine couldn't drift forever. It had a grade in its favor now, but presently it would start nosing up.

The rod he held was the extension that ran from the cab to a crank arm on the side of the boiler. From this crank another rod went to the throttle valve which, on this type of engine, was not in the steam dome but right on the smoke box jacket near the stack.

An exultant light gleamed in his eyes. He fumbled over the bolt that held the reach rod to the crank arm, planted his wrench jaws there and twisted. He felt the nut give under his pressure and, within a few minutes, the rod was free. The throttle lever in the cab was useless.

A man of Warts Glendenning's strength would have had no difficulty, but Oscar had to tug at the short rod from the crank to the valve. That he was suddenly successful was attested by the fact that the stack was almost knocked out by the roots. The throttle came wide open; the engine lunged against its train. If any one in the crew coach at that moment had been standing, he certainly would have been laid flat.

Oscar looked anxiously toward the cab in a vain effort to see what the commotion might have brought about at that point. He hoped Warts would understand what he had done. He also prayed that nobody else would suspect his position and start taking potshots at him. Then he made his way down on the pilot and crouched under the headlight. Here was his only control of that million dollars' worth of silk—the angle cock on the air hose that hung down from the pilot. By opening that cock, he could stop the train at will just as if he had been bouncing on his cushion in the cab. He couldn't shut the throttle off but, after all, that wasn't necessary. The braking power was far in excess of the pulling power.

The wind whipped at him unmercifully. Flying insects, attracted by the glare of the electric headlight, splattered against his cheeks as they rushed on their way to oblivion. He didn't dare open his mouth, and he had no stogy. He was, of all good engineers, the most miserable. His goggles were his only protection; and he found himself calling down the wrath of the powers on all gentlemen of thieving tendencies, and especially railroad hijackers.

He roared past the sleeping cluster of houses and the deserted depot of Park Lodge and rolled with a hollow rumble

over the first of the two wooden bridges that had been marked with a green cross on a gangster's map. Suddenly, as the highway came alongside, separated from the railroad only by the right of way fence, he saw the trucks—three of them. A man was holding a match to a cigaret. Then he was past them.

Oscar, with sudden decision, fished in the pockets of his loose overalls. He brought forth his wallet, a piece of dirty message paper and a stub of a pencil. He braced himself with his short legs, used the back reflection of the headlight and began to scrawl. It was hard work. Nothing on wheels had ever rolled so fast over this given stretch. But he couldn't help it; it wouldn't be wise to slow down now, although the angle cock on the air line was within twelve inches of his hand.

When his scribbling was completed he replaced his wallet and his pencil. The paper flapped in his clenched fingers. With his other hand he explored his pockets until he found a bolt and a piece of string—standard equipment of all eagle-eyes. He wrapped and tied the message tightly. Everything now rested with the operator at Silver Star. If he were on the platform as the rules required, Oscar could make his coup complete. If not—

The operator was there. Oscar, as he bore down, saw the yellow dot of the telegrapher's lantern. He crawled over to the right end of the pilot beam like a monkey on a limb. He saw, suddenly, the blur of the gravel platform beneath his mile-eating front. He poised and heaved. He caught only a glimpse of the yellow slip skidding at the operator's feet. There was no way of knowing whether the man saw the message. Only time would tell.

The time actually was six minutes. To Oscar it seemed six hundred hours. His jaws were tightly clenched and the veins were standing out at his temples when the belt of lights, marking the outer rim of slumbering Skygate, loomed ahead. He saw them simultaneously with the first green of the switch lamps. If only that message had gone through.

There was a red light in the semaphore above the passenger station, then other lights. Men were lined along the platform. Oscar saw them, like fireflies, as he stretched out, prone, on the pilot and grasped the angle cock. He opened it easily at first, giving it the equivalent of a service braking pressure on his cab valve. Pinwheel pyrotechnics came in pale fire from the drumming wheel line. A little more open now, then a louder blast from the hose as he gave the train line the works. If any one had been lying down back there in the crew coach, he was standing now.

"Here's one," somebody shouted. "He's—"

Oscar felt strong arms pulling him from his perch. He started to fight. He was trying to talk. The men were smothering him. Finally he got out:

"In the cab, you fools. Look in the cab."

But it seemed that men were swarming all over that part of the locomotive, and he was being dragged through the mob. A sweet mess, he told himself, still struggling. He kicked and yelled. Then somebody clouted him on the head.

OSCAR came down to the Harbison beanery that afternoon about six o'clock. He saw no one he knew, and the lunch counter was deserted. A waitress he'd never seen before gave him his coffee. He gulped it down, paid for it and went outside. He was called for a westbound drag at 7:30. He stopped on the porch of the beanery where a bench ran along the wall.

Warts Glendenning was sitting there with a newspaper in his hand. He said:

"Hey, Oscar! You seen it?"

"You let me be," Oscar replied. "Don't you talk to me."

"Still sore?" Warts asked, the light of humor in his eyes.

"Who wouldn't be?" Oscar demanded.

"Havin' a fireman go an' make a fool outta me. Why didn't you come out on the pilot an' get me, an' let me come into my cab after you knocked the hell outta them two yeggs? Naw! You let me set out there eatin' bugs, an' then you let that mob sock me at Skygate before you told 'em I was the engineer."

"Listen, Oscar," Warts countered. "Like I told you when we got in this mornin', I couldn't come out on the pilot. When you opened that throttle valve from the front end with a bust of noise like you did, it scared the liver outta them yeggs. They was gettin' uneasy anyhow because their pal an' you was takin' so long. That gimme my cue. I waded in. I got 'em both down an' tied 'em up with the bell rope, like I said. But it wasn't done just like that. Hell, no. We was past Silver Star an' closin' on Skygate when I got my breath back."

"Heck of a note," Oscar returned bitterly. "You got a alibi. Me, I was eatin' bugs. The next time I betcha they can take the danged train. Only they ain't gonna be any next time. I'm gonna get me a farm."

Warts regarded his hogger with a twinkle. Then, holding up the paper, he said—

"You seen this, Oscar?"

"I ain't seen nothin'—nothin' but a lotta people makin' a fuss when we first got in, an' then some crazy birds sayin' they was from the papers."

"Better look it over," Warts counseled. "See if it's right. It's a good write-up. Got all the drama in."

"Drammer!" Oscar grabbed the paper, folded it tightly and placed it firmly beneath his arm. "Drammer! Dog's life, you mean. You show me anything in this railroad game that a self-respectin' man can find worthwhile, an' I'll eat your hat."

Oscar stalked off. He didn't glance at the newspaper until he was safely alone behind a bunch of lockers in the roundhouse crew room. Then he unfolded it and slowly read the big black type: "Heroic Engineer Saves Million-Dollar Train." Oscar's lips twisted slightly. He blinked and continued:

> Oscar Orson, in Face of Death, Outguesses Hijackers; Thwarts Robbery and Aids in Capture of Gangster Mob.
>
> A locomotive engineer, in one of the most startling dramas of railroading in the Northwest, stood grimly by his duty in the black hours of the morning, and, facing the sure fire of a gang of silk hijackers . . .

Slowly, as he read, his cheeks flushed. His spine became rigid, and a peculiar warmth went through him. He was oblivious of his surroundings. Looking up at the last line of the story with a bright light in his eyes, he saw Warts Glendenning smiling at him.

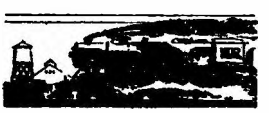
"You're a hero, Oscar," Warts said. "It says so in the papers."

"A lot you know about it," Oscar piped. "The papers—they never get anything right. Not a word in there about you beatin' up them men an' lettin' me stay outside an' eat bugs. If I couldn't do a better job runnin' a paper—"

"You'd crab in hell," Warts said.

"Who's crabbin'?" Oscar demanded. "That's the way. Let me express an opinion, an' I'm crabbin'."

He straightened and began to pull on his overalls. From time to time his glance traveled to the headlines of the paper. Knowing that Warts couldn't see him, he smiled a prideful smile.



By The Author of "Holy Judd" and "The Mob"

SAINT NOSEDIVE

By HENRY LACOSSITT

IN THE holy calendar of saints there is no Nosedive. Yet he owns his shrine. You will find it high in the heights of Haiti—so high that from it you can look far out to sea—and it is guarded by great trees. A crucifix is there, as well as a bottle of rum and curious voodoo symbols. And there you will also find the Army Distinguished Service Cross and the *Haïtien Médaille Militaire;* for, bound inextricably with the circumstances of his canonization, is the story of Captain John Gordon . . .

Captain John Gordon was the second son of an Eastern Senator—the first, in the family tradition, was serving his country in the secretariat of a foreign embassy—and a young man of great conscience. He believed, for instance, that the white man had a burden. His captaincy was in the Marines, his most recent assignment in Haiti; and, since he was the second son of an Eastern Senator, both were relatively simple to obtain.

He was tall, well made and athletic, with bright blue eyes, curly blond hair, aristocratic nose, gravely handsome mouth and a correctly jutting chin that was cleft. He was not at all unintelligent; but he had assured his mother, upon his departure from home, that he would brook no heathenish nonsense from "his" natives, which gratified that lady immensely. Captain Gordon's family was known to be very righteous. Also, he took with him clothes adequate for any social occasion in hot countries; for he had read many novels about Englishmen and Americans who go to the tropics.

When he arrived in Haiti, the high commissioner—no doubt annoyed by second sons—callously assigned him to a certain district far in the interior.

"Which," said the high commissioner with a crooked smile, "should fix him in short order."

The district was wild. It comprised high mountains, great deserts, thick jungle. It encroached on the Dominican border, and consequently fugitives were to be found within its limits. Its people were largely of the bush and out of

touch with the restraint of the capital. Its turbulence had been famous in the days of the *cacos;* and there still lived within its borders the dread Degoutte, a savage who was quiescent now, but who was never beyond the wary consideration of the military.

The military's caution concerning him was prudent, for Degoutte, although he had been put down rather forcefully, still owned a dangerous following. That he was the leader of several hundred men, who were ready to rise at the slightest chance for pillage and murder, was known; and that he still smarted from his rough treatment at the hands of the Marines and that his hatred for them knew no bounds was obvious. Degoutte would bear watching.

THE white population of the district was two in number, and they were notorious.

First, there was Hagan, the labor agent: a vast man with beetling brows, slate-gray eyes, blunt nose and thin, cruel mouth, who lived in the bush and procured labor for the great companies operating in the sugar fields of Cuba. He carried an enormous whip and numbered among his service the dread Degoutte himself, along with the *caco's* band of lusty cutthroats. He fostered Degoutte's hatred of the Marines, for the savage knew that Hagan had no love for the military either. Likewise, the cash that Hagan dealt out to Degoutte was liberal and persuasive. The labor procurer and the *caco* got on very well.

Hagan would drive great herds of natives to the sea, where he shipped them across the Windward Passage to the cane-fields of Cuba. That they received scant—if any—pay was known; that the procedure amounted to slavery was also known. But Hagan was powerful. The money of the great companies passed through his hands to those of the high officials in Port-au-Prince, and the crack of his whip and the flash of the machetes of Degoutte and his cutthroats held the natives in submission.

The Marines hated him, as he, in turn, hated them; but as long as his money reached the Haitian officials, they must bide their time. But a day would come, said the Marines.

The second of the white population of the district to which Captain Gordon was assigned was an individual known as Nosedive.

"Older than God," said the Marines.

He had snow-white hair and a flowing beard, mild eyes and mouth and a frail frame. He wore a long robe of crude homespun and walked on sandals of goathide; and he carried a long staff of pine hewn from the groves that grow in the mountains near Furçy.

Long ago—longer than the memory of any Marine—he had come to Haiti, a trader with goods to sell, a Bible he knew by heart and quotations from which fell easily from his lips. But his goods vanished with no profit to him, for white and black alike were shrewder than he. And finally he owned nothing but his Biblical knowledge and his gentle spirit.

Perhaps he was moved to emulate the prophets whose lives he knew so well. At any rate, he assumed the garb he wore and roamed up and down the land, a holy man. Were it birth, he could rejoice; were it death, he could console; were it marriage, he could—benefit of ordained clergy lacking, as it usually was—officiate; were it sin, he could regret and advise.

About him, gradually, there grew the aura of the mystic and supernatural. And because of this and his gentleness, he grew great among the natives. They loved him.

"He works like hell at blessing," said the Marines.

One vice he had—a craving for rum, of which he would drink great quantities to the point where his heart, which was a weak organ, would rebel, and he would pitch forward on his face in a coma. This quaint habit had been

discovered by the first Marines to come to Haiti, and it was an unknown member of their force who had named him. This man, gazing at the prostrate anchorite, had raised his voice and bayed drunkenly—

"Saint Nosedive!"

And so he had remained.

Hagan he disliked, and Hagan hated him; for Nosedive saw the evil of the labor procurer's practises, and his gentle spirit was revolted. Therefore, he strove to break Hagan's grip on the people until one day Hagan, exasperated, rode into the jungle to chastise the old man, for he feared Nosedive's influence. He found the old man and laid his whip cruelly across the thin shoulders. He raised it again, but it did not fall.

From the bush and from nearby huts natives emerged. They carried machetes, and in their eyes was a look that was not pleasant to see. They drew closer, their eyes beady and reddened, and fastened on the raised whip. The whip fell—but not on Nosedive.

For the natives were willing to brave that whip, as well as Degoutte and his cutthroats, that Nosedive should be unharmed. In their eyes, in the dusky hands gripping the machetes there was death—imminent and horrible.

Hagan never tried *that* again.

For, though Hagan was mighty, Nosedive was inviolate.

NOW, in the natural course of things, Captain Gordon was told about his white population. He set out in an antique Ford, with traditions and clothes, his cleft chin set determinedly. He set out, also, resolved to do something about both Nosedive and Hagan; he considered the old man's drinking a bad example to the natives, and Hagan's business revolted him. The politics of the latter situation bothered him not a whit, for he was, after all, young and the second son of an Eastern Senator.

He drove across savannas that were barren and desolate; he felt a sun, the viciousness of which he never had experienced before; he saw crinkled mountains of mystery and sinister jungles. He saw strange things, such as half naked negroes dancing voluptuously to the throbbing pulsations of deep throated drums; and he heard strange chants that stirred even his righteous blood. He was, however, shocked, and made a mental note that this was the first nonsense he would stop.

For two days he drove. Then, on the morning of the third as he rattled down the miserable road that led to the capital of the district, he saw a man who wore a long robe and who was carrying a staff. Captain Gordon recognized him immediately from his description.

The Ford wheezed to a stop.

"God is good," said the old man.

Captain Gordon stared. The old man smiled benignly.

"Have you a drink?"

"You are Nosedive?" asked Captain Gordon finally.

The old man beamed again.

"I am Nosedive," he said.

"I am the new commandant."

"God bless you. I will go with you." Nosedive clambered into the car. "Have you any rum?"

Captain Gordon ignored the inquiry. He started the Ford.

"Is it far?"

"It is not far. Did you say you had a drink?"

"I didn't say."

"'And in my thirst, they gave me vinegar to drink.' That was David."

Captain Gordon pursed his lips.

"I may as well tell you that you'll never get a drink from me. I consider it a bad example for the natives."

"You are young, my son."

"What of that?"

"You will grow older. Then you will give me a drink. It is the least you can do for an old man."

"It is the worst I can do."

Nosedive fell silent. Presently they rattled into the village which was the

capital of the district. Captain Gordon saw a sprinkling of thatched huts, three wooden buildings and many naked children. The three frame buildings were the church, the barracks of the mobile platoon—a body of crack black troops—and his own quarters. Captain Gordon was dismayed. He glanced sidewise at the old man, who smiled at him. The captain immediately quelled his dismay, but he was acutely conscious of the trunks in the back of the car. Therein lay his clothes for social functions.

The children scattered noisily at the approach of the car, which drew up before the barracks of the mobile platoon. The platoon itself, with its three machine gun units, stood with its commander, a magnificent negro, awaiting the new commandant. The new commandant, impressed in spite of himself, got out.

"I am Captain Gordon. You are Lieutenant Dubois?"

"Oui, mon Capitaine."

Captain Gordon inspected the platoon, found it neat, polished and excellent physically. When he had finished, he turned to the lieutenant.

"On my way here," he said, "I saw evidences of savage nonsense—I mean the drums and dances. I want them stopped."

Lieutenant Dubois's great eyes rolled. He stared at the finely chiseled face of his captain, and probably it was in his mind to demur. But Lieutenant Dubois was a good soldier. He saluted and gave an order. A squad stepped out. To them he communicated the captain's command. They blinked, but nothing was said. Then off they went to execute the command.

After Captain Gordon had inspected the barracks, he repaired to his quarters. He found, to his surprise, that his things had been laid out, his office put in order. Then he discovered Nosedive. The old man, staff and all, sat in a corner of the office. He grinned.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the youthful captain.

"I am always here."

"By whose leave?"

"Leave? I need no leave. The officers come. Perhaps, like you, they have not thought to bring a servant. They have no orderly. Therefore, how would they get along? I have done these things for many officers."

Nosedive smiled; the captain, although irritated, could think of nothing to say. After all, he had not brought a servant, and the old man had done him a favor. Also, the favor had been done quietly, unobtrusively. Nosedive seemed perfectly at home in the house. Captain Gordon experienced a queer feeling of helplessness.

"Now do I get a drink? It is the least you can do."

"You are impudent!" snapped Captain Gordon. "Get out!"

"When you give me a drink."

"Get out! Or I'll throw—"

Captain Gordon hesitated. He remembered what he had heard about the old man. Angrily, he sat down. But, as he did so, he heard the old man chuckle. He decided he would try to ignore it. Finally he summoned Dubois.

"Tomorrow," he said, "I wish to see Hagan, the labor agent. You will ask him to come here!"

"Hagan is evil," came the voice of Nosedive. "I will tell—"

"Mind your own business!" snapped Captain Gordon.

The old man fell silent again. Captain Gordon worked awhile on his reports. When he had finished he got up and walked out of the office. On the porch he found a table set for tea. At sight of it he was pleased; but then he saw the old man at the end of the porch.

"You are hungry?" asked Nosedive. He smiled pleasantly.

The captain then was forced to smile also. There was irresistible good humor about the old man.

"Yes," he said. "Will you have some?"

Nosedive would. When they had

finished, he said—

"Now do I get a drink?"

Captain Gordon decided to try a new tack.

"Do you know," he asked, "that you are likely to die when you drink?"

"Yes," said Nosedive.

"Then why do you do it?"

"I like it."

Captain Gordon delivered a learned lecture on bad hearts and alcohol. Nosedive listened politely, then said—

"I like it."

The captain stifled his exasperation.

"You'll never get it from me!" he snapped.

"Some day," said Nosedive. "It is the least you can do."

THAT night Nosedive prepared the captain's dinner; and that night, also, he performed for the captain.

In the square at the center of the village a great throng of natives was assembled in the light of waving torches. And in their midst, balancing on a chair, stood Nosedive. He was haranguing them and drinking, as he did so, from a bottle. Plainly, he was drunk.

"*Le bon dieu,*" he shouted, "is taller than the captain's house. His beard is as long as a man's height. He wears a hat that is as high as a young palm and He rides a horse that is the size of three."

The throng murmured with delight and clapped its hands.

"I have seen him, *papa,*" cried a native. "I have seen him!"

"You have seen him, my son?"

"*Oui, papa.* He gave me this."

The native proudly held up a scarred pipe.

"It is a good pipe and will smoke well," said Nosedive. He hiccoughed. "*Le bon dieu* is generous. *Le bon dieu* is pleased with His servant."

From his eminence, the old man spied the staring captain. He smiled and waved the bottle.

"'And when he had drunk,'" he intoned sonorously, "'his spirit came again and he was revived.' That was Samson."

He raised the bottle, as if in a toast to the captain, and drained it. Suddenly he stiffened and dropped the bottle. His eyes glazed. He pitched forward.

"Nosedive!"

Around the prostrate figure the natives were chanting rhythmically, apparently unconcerned by Nosedive's fall. Captain Gordon, angry at something he did not quite understand, plunged through them, reached the spot where the old man lay.

"Disperse!" he shouted.

The natives stared uncomprehendingly. Captain Gordon shouted again:

"I command it! And any one who gives this old man liquor in the future shall be imprisoned!"

Still the natives stared. They looked fearfully at the captain as, with a grimace of disgust, he stooped, flung the empty bottle away and lifted the unconscious Nosedive. As he touched the old man, however, the attitude of the natives changed. It seemed as if they grew tense and were about to spring. They muttered ominously.

He ignored them and carried Nosedive to his porch, but was aware that the throng followed silently at his heels. He turned, the old man in his arms, and faced them; and for a moment he felt a stab of terror. Hundreds of eyes glared at him with gleaming menace; hundreds of hands held a poised threat.

But the Gordons were men of courage.

"Disperse!"

They dispersed, for from the barracks came Dubois and the mobile platoon; and as they came the natives melted away. When the last one had disappeared, Lieutenant Dubois presented himself to the captain.

"Orders, *mon Capitaine?*" he asked.

No orders. Dubois saluted, wheeled and led his men back to the barracks, after extinguishing the torches. Captain Gordon stood on the porch and stared

out into the starlit murk above the village. Then he looked down at the frail old man in his arms. Nosedive breathed quietly.

The captain shook his head perplexedly, turned and went into the house. He laid the old man on a cot, covered him, then went upstairs to bed. But it was long before he slept. Strange thoughts seethed in his mind, and in the distance he heard the throbbing of the forbidden drums . . .

When he awoke, he discovered that Nosedive had prepared his breakfast.

" 'Strong drink is raging,' " said Nosedive. "I need one."

"Not from me!" snapped the captain. "And last night I told the natives I'd imprison the next one who gave you rum. You, with your heart!"

"It will do you no good," said Nosedive calmly.

"I'll show you!"

"Some day," said Nosedive cheerfully, "*you'll* give me one. It is the least you can do."

Captain Gordon thought best to let that pass. Then, suddenly, he was again aware of the incessant pulsing of the drums.

"Good Lord!" he snarled. He summoned Dubois. "Didn't I order those infernal drums stopped?"

"*Oui, mon Capitaine.*" Dubois shrugged eloquently. "They were; but if you stop them here, they start again there, is it not?"

"Imprison the drummers!" snapped Captain Gordon.

Dubois's jaw dropped. He drew in a great breath as if he meant to say something, then turned and strode rapidly from the room. The mobile platoon was sent out as ordered.

" 'All joy is darkened, the mirth of the land is gone,' " moaned Nosedive. "You are making a mistake. You imprison the drummers, and the people can not dance. If they do not dance, they are not happy. The dance is called *bambosch.* It is only their amusement."

"Only their hellish religion, you mean," amended the captain.

" 'The pit and the snare are upon thee.' "

Captain Gordon flung out of the room and into his office.

THAT afternoon Hagan came. He rode down from the bush and before him he drove a reluctant crowd of laborers. With him rode Degoutte and the other cutthroats, and before them, singing, shouting, raising a great cloud of dust, the natives ran. Hagan cracked his whip, and Degoutte and the others kept the laborers in line like herders driving cattle.

Captain Gordon, who had gone out to see, rode angrily back to his quarters to await Hagan, his righteous feelings revolted, his blue eyes gleaming dangerously.

Hagan arrived, accompanied by Degoutte. A villainous savage with reddened eyes and cruel nostrils, Degoutte stared unwinkingly at the captain. He carried a machete.

"I'll tell you now," announced Captain Gordon, "that I consider you a slave dealer! And I'll tell you too that you'll stop it!"

Hagan smiled wickedly.

"No," he said, "I won't stop it."

"I say you will!" Gordon leaped to his feet.

Behind Hagan, Degoutte's crafty eyes gleamed evilly. Behind Captain Gordon, old Nosedive, breathing stertorously, leaned tensely on his staff, his faded eyes bright with excitement.

Hagan lighted a cigaret deliberately. For a moment the two men looked hard at each other. Then Hagan inhaled deeply and blew the smoke across the table at Captain Gordon.

"Don't be a fool," he said. "Maybe you'd—"

He drew a roll of bills from his pocket.

But Hagan had never encountered the Gordon conscience before.

The captain rounded the desk and drove his fist with all the force of his

athletic build against Hagan's jaw. Hagan toppled backward, fell against Degoutte and slid to the floor. Degoutte, his lips split in a hideous snarl, tensed as if to spring. But Hagan, rising, held him back. Behind Captain Gordon, Nosedive, capering in a dance of glee, cackled with laughter.

Hagan did not smile now. His huge face glowered like an angry cloud. But his anger was matched by the chiseled sternness of the captain's righteous countenance.

"Tomorrow," said Hagan slowly, "I bring down the second shipment. It will be at the sea tomorrow night."

"It'll never reach there!"

Hagan smiled—a hard smile.

"That," he said, "would be unfortunate—for you." He turned and started toward the door. "I'll be here—" he looked at his watch—"at high noon!"

Degoutte at his heels, he strode through the door.

" 'The branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low!' " cackled Nosedive. "Praise God! I want a drink on it!"

"Get out!" snapped Captain Gordon. He was frowning in thought.

" 'There is a crying for wine in the streets,' " grumbled the old man as he went to the door. "And it is the least you could do—"

That night the drums in the bush rose up again, but Captain Gordon did not seem to notice. That night, also, the mobile platoon polished its bayonets, cleaned its rifles. Next morning it stood under arms in the square, with Captain Gordon, awaiting the arrival of Hagan.

THE sun mounted, approaching the zenith. Captain Gordon grew impatient. He paced up and down before the troops, occasionally glancing at his wristwatch, and felt very strange. That sun, those palm trees, these black troops, the labor agent and his slaves—all seemed figments of a weird dream. And when he turned, he saw the incredible figure of old Nosedive trotting at his heels. For a fleeting instant Captain Gordon thought of his mother and of his family and of the correct clothes he had brought here to the jungle. And then — curious circumstance — he laughed.

"Mon Capitaine?" Dubois had been posted at the edge of the town to watch the road. "They are coming."

Captain Gordon's order stood out crisp and precise in the midday heat. The platoon snapped to attention. They wheeled into a column of squads marching. At the edge of the town in a screen of trees Captain Gordon quickly deployed them.

Down the road came the drove, singing, shouting, looking back fearfully at the cracking whip and the flashing machetes. They came nearer, drew abreast the trees.

The mobile platoon stepped out at the double. They bore down on the drove, which stood motionless and silent a moment; then it broke, its members running wildly and noisily in every direction.

Hagan, with Degoutte and his crew, shouted; but the natives paid no heed. They scattered, terror stricken; and when Degoutte and his men made as if to follow, a peremptory shot halted them quickly.

The drove melted away, disappeared completely.

Captain Gordon, ignoring Hagan and his men, reformed the platoon and marched it back to the barracks. Then he went to his quarters.

He found Hagan there. Behind him, as usual, stood Degoutte.

"I told you," the labor agent said slowly, "that it would be unfortunate for you, Captain."

"I'll give you," said Captain Gordon equally slowly, "ten seconds to get out of this room!"

Hagan's lip drew back in snarling rage, but the captain only looked at his wristwatch. The labor agent turned and stalked from the room.

THAT night the bush flamed in rebellion.

The post at Maçeau fell first and was massacred; that at Marguerite went shortly afterward. They were within the captain's district and commanded by native officers. Marguerite, the nearest, was several hours' rapid march from the captain's headquarters; Maçeau beyond that. Captain Gordon, at midnight, was roused from a fitful sleep to hear about it.

His telephone bell jangled sharply. Answering it, he heard at the other end of the sputtering wire the voice of a gendarme who had escaped Maçeau and fled to warn Marguerite. Marguerite was, he said, sorely pressed.

"Who started it?" asked Captain Gordon.

"Degoutte, *mon Capitaine*," said the panting voice.

"Degoutte!"

"They say—" a confusion of noise all but drowned the gendarme's voice—"it is because you imprisoned the drummers."

Captain Gordon heard the confusion grow, heard a shriek. The phone went dead. He hung up the receiver and turned, his forehead dripping, to behold, in the wavering light of his lamp, the withered figure of Nosedive.

The old man was leaning on his staff and in the fitful lamplight he seemed a gnome, an inhabitant of another sphere. His eyes shone strangely as he stared at the white face of the captain.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Rebellion."

"Who?"

"Degoutte."

The old man's eyes narrowed.

"What reason did the gendarme give?"

Captain Gordon looked at Nosedive and remembered the old man's warning words. His pallor vanished in a flush.

"The imprisonment of the drummers."

Nosedive seemed to snarl. The captain turned again to the telephone and called Port-au-Prince. Finally, over the wire, came the sleepy voice of the high commissioner.

"Rebellion in the bush, sir—Degoutte."

"Damn it!" said the commissioner. "What've you done?"

"Why, sir, I—"

The captain paused. On his arm he felt the bony grip of the old man's hand. Nosedive's face was close, listening to the tiny voice in the receiver.

"Tell him about today," rasped Nosedive. "Tell him about Hagan. Say nothing of the drummers—that is a thing of straw. It is Hagan!"

Captain Gordon stared.

"Hagan, I tell you!" repeated Nosedive.

"What's that you say, Captain?" The commissioner's voice was impatient. "Speak up!"

"Why, sir—" Captain Gordon still stared at the old man—"I think it is because I raided Hagan's labor drove today."

"You *what?*"

"I raided Hagan's labor drove. I warned him yesterday I wouldn't stand for his slave-driving. He threatened me. He came down today, and I used the platoon. He threatened me again. Since Degoutte is in his employ—Well, I see no other reason for it."

The commissioner was silent a long time. Captain Gordon waited fearfully. In the silence, however, he fancied he could hear a faint chuckling. It came softly over the wire. But he attributed it to the miserable connection.

"You actually raided Hagan's drove?"

"Yes, sir."

Captain Gordon did not know how long the Marines had been yearning to strike at Hagan. Also, his knowledge of high politics in Haiti was sketchy. And it is probable that at that moment the high commissioner was amused. It is probable that he even entertained a sneaking admiration for this second son of an Eastern Senator, whom he had

classified as worthless, and whom he had consigned to the worst district in Haiti in order to break him quickly and get him out of the way as soon as possible. It is also probable that he indulged in the ancient axiom about the audacity of fools and angels.

"Do you need troops?" asked the high commissioner quietly.

The captain caught his breath.

"I don't think so, sir."

"Very well. Keep me informed."

That was all. The commissioner hung up. Captain Gordon turned again and stared at Nosedive. The old man's eyes glittered fiercely.

"Smite them, my son!" he said in a tense whisper. "'The day of their calamity is at hand!'"

Thirty minutes later Captain Gordon and the mobile platoon were on the march.

THEY reached Marguerite at dawn to find the post in ashes and the bodies of the little garrison horribly mutilated. The village was deserted, but Dubois and his troops dragged from the neighboring bush a few trembling natives, who told them that Degoutte had turned back toward Maçeau.

They reached Maçeau and found the rebels entrenched. Captain Gordon would have stormed their positions immediately, but Dubois showed him another method. He placed one of the machine gun units at his center, the other two in advance of the wings. The platoon was posed in a semicircle about the village. With the machine guns so placed, a vicious cross-fire could be poured from three sides. Dubois's tactics were to force Degoutte out on the fourth side; whereupon the wings behind the machine guns would move out obliquely to make contact in the rebels' rear.

The movement succeeded. Maçeau fell, yielding prisoners and many casualties, but Degoutte was not there. He had left the town garrisoned and hurried on in his retreat. Enraged, Dubois and the platoon pushed on in pursuit.

Captain Gordon, with a small detachment, sat down to question the prisoners. It was now afternoon. He asked them about Hagan, but they were mute. He asked them about Degoutte, but they were silent on that point also. He threatened, cajoled, but received nothing. They seemed to him to act like men foredoomed, for they were resigned to his threats.

For hours he wrestled with them, but received no information. And then, riding out of the forest on a burro, appeared Nosedive. The old man, gray with fatigue, dust encrusted, greeted him with a weary smile.

"I followed you," he said. "'The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in—'"

"Go home!" snapped Captain Gordon. "There'll be trouble."

"'I shall lift up mine eyes to the hills, from whence cometh my help.' Have you a drink?"

Captain Gordon turned away irritably and looked at the prisoners. They stood huddled and docile.

"You are questioning them?" asked Nosedive.

"Yes."

"They do not answer?"

"No."

"Then tell them that it is only Degoutte you want. They are afraid, now, of both you and Degoutte. But if you make them understand you will not harm them, they will respond. Tell them to go among his troops and say that the *blancs* will surely destroy them; but that if they will deliver Degoutte to you, all will be treated with kindness."

Captain Gordon stared long at the gray face of the old man, his thoughts a-whirl. But in that gray face of fatigue two glittering eyes thrilled him to action. He turned and gave the message to the prisoners. Immediately their faces brightened. With little cries

of relief, they fled his camp, disappearing in the forest. Captain Gordon turned again to the old man. He shrugged, shook his head and smiled ruefully.

"What do I do now?" he asked with curious frankness.

"Wait."

They waited. The day fell away and grew quiet; night sprang to life. From the forest came the strange nocturnal sounds of the jungle. Captain Gordon, overcome with weariness, still could not sleep. Nearby, in the little thatched hut, old Nosedive, his grizzled head nodding in the candlelight, dozed, too weary even to plead for his drink.

Captain Gordon rose and went outside. The night was moonless. Above the roof of the forest the stars sprang like silver flowers from the garden of the deep sky. He walked through the soft air to the edge of the trees and peered into the sentient blackness within them. For a moment there swept over him the strange feeling of unreality he had experienced the day before when he had awaited the coming of the drove, and he shook his head impatiently. Then, because the blackness seemed a haven and he wanted terribly to be alone, he plunged into it.

He stood there in silence for a moment, shrouded in the gloom; and the thought came to him that he had, in his several days in this strange land, lived many years. For some reason he felt older and wiser, and for the first time in his life he realized a certain confidence in himself that was beyond vanity or conceit or the traditions of his haughty family. If the white man had a burden, Captain Gordon forgot about it; he only remembered that he, himself, had a burden.

He thought affectionately of the old man within the hut who had, whether or no, appointed himself as his mentor and guardian, and it was in his mind to seek Nosedive's companionship. He turned, but he froze to the spot.

He had heard a rustle in the bush nearby. He turned his head toward it and, as he did so, something on the other side of him sprang through the blackness and landed on him.

Captain Gordon fought frantically. In the first seconds of his struggle he was too preoccupied to call out. But when other hands seized him, and a glancing blow from some heavy instrument dazed him and then, descending, hurt his wrist cruelly, he shouted.

And with the shout, the heavy instrument struck true. . .

HE AWAKENED with head throbbing and with something else throbbing in his ears. It was the drums. They beat steadily and were quite close. He lay prone on the ground, and when he opened his eyes he saw the flames of a huge fire. Looking beyond the fire, he saw that he lay in a clearing in the jungle and that, surrounding the clearing, was a great throng of natives. They were chanting monotonously.

He tried to rise, but discovered that he was bound.

It was then that he saw Hagan. The labor agent, followed by Degoutte, was coming across the clearing toward him. Looking around again, the captain saw the armed men of Degoutte here and there in the throng. Apparently they had escaped Dubois; apparently also—his heart leaped with sudden fear—the prisoners he had sent that afternoon at Nosedive's behest had not reached them.

Hagan came up, stood above him a moment, then reached down and loosed his legs.

"Get up!"

The captain, aided by Degoutte, rose.

"Degoutte, you see," said Hagan, "doubled back in the jungle from Maçeau. He could have attacked your rear, Captain. But—" Hagan smiled—"it wasn't war we wanted; it was you. I warned you it would be unfortunate."

The captain said nothing.

"Your stunt yesterday," continued

Hagan, "was a foolish one, and it might perhaps have caused more trouble for you than for me. But it is possible, since you don't know much about this country, that you might have muddled through. Therefore, I consider you dangerous. So I was forced to this.

"You imprisoned the drummers. Degoutte and his men—on my orders, of course—rebel again. They're old hands at it. He stirs up the niggers about the drummers. They'll follow him if there's enough excitement and fun in it. Then, instead of attacking you at headquarters, we pick on your outposts, for I know you'll come out to aid them, and that is what I wanted. Then I wanted you to divide your force, and you did at Maçeau. Now you're here as I wanted you to be. But—" he shrugged—"you've only brought it on yourself." Hagan spoke dispassionately, almost pleasantly.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Captain Gordon.

"I?" Hagan laughed. "Nothing. But the natives—" the labor agent shrugged again—"I'm afraid I won't be able to restrain them, now that Degoutte has aroused them so. They intend to kill you."

Sweat started on Captain Gordon's brow, but he shook it away angrily.

"Do you think you can get away with this?" he snarled.

"Of course." Hagan still smiled. "The natives, you see, simply rose against you because of your silly imprisonment of the drummers. The district will be pacified, an investigation held, and people will regret your misfortune. I shall regret it too, Captain. And who shall say that I was involved?"

Captain Gordon, staring at the labor agent, thought of Nosedive's warning words. He looked around the circle and saw hundreds of hostile, menacing eyes. He shuddered. He looked again at Hagan's hateful smile and suddenly tugged angrily at his bonds. That only brought him the discovery that his wrist had been hurt considerably by the glancing blow. The exertion sent waves of agony through his bruised head. He became quiet.

"Do you think you can buck the American Government?" he snarled at the hateful smile.

"I always have," said Hagan softly. He turned to Degoutte and said something, then turned back to the captain. "Well," he said casually, "we might as well get it over. But you can't—" he shook his finger playfully at the captain —"say I didn't warn you, my boy."

Hagan strolled a short distance away and leaned against a tree. Degoutte shouted an order. Several of his men sprang forward and rushed the captain back against another tree, where they bound him.

Degoutte harangued the natives.

"This man," he shouted in Creole, "has forbidden your dances, imprisoned your drummers, brought war, killed your brothers. He must die!"

The natives sent up an answering shout that echoed in the forest. Degoutte turned and said something to his men.

They advanced.

Captain Gordon only stared. It seemed a dreadful hallucination, as entirely unreal as the weird fantasmagoria of the mind in the moment before wakening. In the circle the throng muttered in anticipation; before him, he saw the strange, simian eyes of Degoutte's men. He looked to his left and saw the hateful smile of Hagan. The labor agent actually waved pleasantly, as if in farewell.

And in that moment Captain Gordon remembered irrelevantly enough the clothes he had brought for social functions. A nervous, almost hysterical, laugh escaped him.

It arrested the advance of his executioners for a moment, as they looked at him with surprise; but once more they came on. Then they stopped again. For behind them the natives had sent up another cry, as if in greet-

ing. Captain Gordon, looking past Degoutte and his cutthroats, started.

BURSTING through the circle of natives, his robe tattered, his face even grayer now, rode Nosedive on his burro. He dismounted and staggered forward. His hand was pressed to his rebellious heart; he leaned heavily on his staff. On his drawn face glistening globules of sweat stood out feverishly. He seemed so weary, so feeble, that Captain Gordon, even in that extremity, felt impelled to tell him to rest.

Hagan, meanwhile, had taken a step forward, his face twisted with rage and uneasiness. The men of Degoutte gave way. Nosedive advanced painfully to Captain Gordon's side.

"I heard your shout," he said, panting. "I followed you. 'The Lord is thy keeper. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand.'" And then, in a whisper, "Do not worry, my son."

He turned. The staring labor procurer stood nearby.

"What are you doing, Hagan?" asked Nosedive gravely.

The labor agent looked almost sheepish then. He grinned with embarrassment, finally breaking into an uneasy laugh.

"Why—" he began.

"You really mustn't do this, Hagan," said Nosedive with almost child-like simplicity. "You mustn't allow the captain to be harmed."

Again Hagan laughed uneasily. Around the circle, the natives were curiously silent. Nosedive smiled and turned to the captain.

"Have you a drink?" he asked, his weary eyes twinkling. "I surely need one."

Captain Gordon opened and closed his mouth in a gasp. The old man turned away without waiting for the answer.

As he did so, however, he was confronted by the huge bulk of Hagan. The labor agent was smiling again. In his hand he held a large open flask of rum.

Now Nosedive had traveled far and he had not drunk since he had left the headquarters of Captain Gordon. The rum sparkled merrily in the light of the flames and sent shafts of light into his eyes—eyes glittering with fatigue as well as with zeal. He looked at Hagan, smiled sarcastically and took the proffered flask.

He raised it, watching the light sift through it, and said:

"'My cup runneth over.'" Then he turned, gasping, to Captain Gordon. "In a moment, my son. I am weary."

He put the flask to his lips and drank. Captain Gordon, his body bathed in sweat, watched and wanted to cry out. For no man could drink like that. That is, drink like that and live! The liquor flowed smoothly down the old man's throat. In the bottle its level descended steadily—steadily, until the very last drop had disappeared.

He flung the flask to the ground, caught his breath convulsively, wiped his lips with his hand and turned to the captain.

And in that moment, Captain Gordon, his fear realized, felt his last hope and strength slip from him. For the old man's eyes glazed; he stiffened, clawed at his throat, pulled at his robe, whirled, gasped horribly and fell forward on his face.

But more than that—and this had struck the captain—upon his face a horrid purple flush appeared.

Captain Gordon, standing hopelessly at the tree, knew that Nosedive never would rise again. Mortally fatigued, shocked by the fiery impact of the stimulant, was too much. Nosedive's old heart had finally rebelled successfully.

The captain slumped against the tree. His head ached horribly; he felt the terrible despair of the hopeless. But the next instant he was alert.

Nearby, he saw Hagan; and Hagan was staring at the prostrate figure with fear. The natives, too, had drawn close.

They were looking intently at Nosedive. They glanced curiously at Hagan and back at the old man, then rushed forward.

Captain Gordon watched them turn him over, watched their realization that their holy man was dead, heard their ululations of grief. He watched them pick up the flask and sniff it suspiciously. And then, bemused, he watched them start toward Hagan. For Hagan, they knew, was Nosedive's enemy.

And Hagan was mighty—but Nosedive was inviolate.

"No!" screamed the labor agent. "I meant no harm! I swear it!" He turned frantically to Degoutte.

"Tell them I meant no harm! Tell them!"

Degoutte might have told them a thousand times; Hagan might have sworn a thousand times. He drew his gun, cracked his whip, but still they came on. Degoutte and a few of the armed band—the rest had turned with the realization of Nosedive's death—joined him, firing into the natives. They fired until their guns were empty, and then clubbed. But the throng, a wave of destruction, rolled steadily toward them. The wave broke over them—a wave of maniacal men and women and children—and Captain Gordon screamed.

Hagan, with Degoutte and the rest, died horribly.

Captain Gordon, weighted with pain and horror, fainted.

He presently became aware of voices, felt the shock of water in his face and opened his eyes. Around him stood the troops of the mobile platoon, and over him bent the impassive face of Dubois.

"You are all right, *mon Capitaine?*"

He said he was all right and struggled to his feet, aided by Dubois. His eye, surveying the scene, stopped at the discarded flask of rum. He brushed the lieutenant aside and, staggering a little, walked over and picked it up. He turned and looked at what remained of Hagan, Degoutte and the others. He nursed his wrist, which he believed to be broken, soothed his lacerated head, considered again the flask of rum and looked around the clearing. The natives had vanished. With them had vanished their dead and the body of their holy man.

Captain Gordon looked up, over the trees at the shimmering stars.

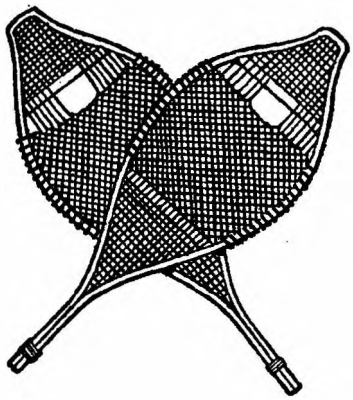
"Nosedive!" he muttered. "Saint Nosedive! Who knows—?"

CAPTAIN GORDON remained in Haiti; but he forgot completely about the burden of white men, about social functions and about heathenish nonsense. In his district the drums thundered joyously; in his trunks, enmeshed and forgotten in cobwebs, his fancy clothes moldered. He became an excellent administrator.

For the exploit of wiping out Degoutte and destroying Hagan and Hagan's sinister business he was awarded two medals: one the Army Distinguished Service Cross by the grateful Corps; and the other the *Haïtien Médaille Militaire* by Haitian officials, who could not but recognize Hagan's revolt and crimes now that they had been brought into the open, and must reward the man who crushed them.

But Captain Gordon carried both medals into the heights where stands the little shrine with the crucifix and the voodoo symbols, for that is where the natives had buried their Nosedive. And upon the shrine he laid the bright new medals.

Also, when he brought the medals, he brought a bottle of rum and placed it upon the shrine. It was the least, he said, that he could do.



HUNTING WALRUS IN THE FAR NORTH

By HERBERT PATRICK LEE

WALRUS hunting, when it is done from the deck of a ship, is on a par with shooting lions, lured to a jungle water-hole, from the safety of a tall tree. But when one goes after the big animals in a small boat, or over the thin ice of early Winter, with necessity instead of merely a desire for trophies providing the motive for the hunt, it is among the most exciting sports in the world.

The imperative need for fresh meat was the driving force behind all our hunting at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police post on Ellesmere Island, in the Far North. With eleven human beings—three white men and eight Eskimos—and forty dogs to feed, and only one ship a year calling to land supplies, hunting was one of our chief occupations. It had to be.

There were no people other than our little colony on the entire 76,000-square-mile island that stretches nearer to the North Pole than any other land mass. The next post and the nearest permanent tribe of Eskimos were at Pond's Inlet, Baffin Island, three hundred miles to the south.

The Summer had been bad for hunting, and we found ourselves facing the one hundred sunless days of the long Winter without fresh meat. Our stores, of course, contained no fresh vegetables or fruit; so that fresh meat, no matter of what kind, was indispensable.

Ice that froze along the coast, and then broke again with the pressure of wind and current, prevented us from doing any serious hunting until late in October. As soon as the sea ice became strong enough for the sleds, my two companions, Corporal Michelson and Constable Anstead, took one of the two native hunters and went off in search of caribou or musk oxen, leaving me to do my utmost to get walrus while they were gone.

The remaining hunter's name was Panik-pa. He was a veteran of Peary's Polar expedition and was reputed to be one of the best hunters along the North Greenland coast. Yet, in spite of having such expert assistance, the prospects of getting meat were not conspicuously bright.

The sun had disappeared for the last time below the horizon, and it would not return until February. Soon it would be too dark to hunt and too stormy to travel very far.

As a rule the walrus herds left the Ellesmere coast as soon as the ice began to form—for they spend the Winters in the open sea and do not use blow holes, as do the seals, except during the early Winter when the ice is forming. Luckily, this particular year several herds remained off Craig Harbor; but to hunt them was far from easy. The only way to get at them was across the newly formed ice, which was continually be-

ing broken off in huge pieces and carried away with the tide. Along the edge the ice was less than four inches thick and was literally perforated with holes where the walrus had driven their massive skulls through it as if it had been so much tissue paper.

Our first attempts were far from encouraging. We shot two walrus in the water, but the bodies were just out of harpoon range and we were forced to watch the current carry them away. A boat would have been useless in the freezing slush that covered the sea, even if we had been able to get it out to the floe edge.

ONE day we saw several walrus swimming in a water-hole in the lee of a big berg. The hole was freezing and the walrus kept shattering the young ice as they came up to fill their lungs with air preparatory to diving for clams on the sea floor. As we worked our way cautiously to the hole a big bull rose to the surface only a few yards away.

Panik-pa had his harpoon ready. The weapon consisted of a wooden bar about five feet long, to one end of which was lashed a straight walrus tusk. The harpoon head fitted over the pointed tusk, and the stout line of *oogjook* hide was fastened to the head in such a manner that when the harpoon struck the shaft would fly off and leave the barb embedded crosswise in the flesh of the victim.

The walrus was looking straight at us, but Panik-pa wanted to get behind him for a stroke with the harpoon, so we waited for him to dive and come up again. He remained above the surface nearly a minute, snorting and breathing great gulps of air. Then he went down with a sudden splash, and we crept right up to the hole.

Panik-pa carried his harpoon in his right hand and held the coil of line in his left. Under his left arm he carried a strong ice pick with which to anchor the line after the walrus had been harpooned, to prevent the wounded animal from dragging him under the ice.

It was bitterly cold as we waited beside the water-hole, I with my Lee-Enfield ready to drive in a finishing shot after the Eskimo had launched his harpoon. But the walrus came up in another hole. Our wait was for nothing.

Our luck came the third day. Perhaps it was Sadlo, the twelve-year-old boy, or Innoocushia, old Panik-pa's young granddaughter, who brought us good fortune; for we took the children along with us on the big Greenland sled.

We had driven about two miles when the low trumpeting of walrus rolled across the ice. I climbed a tall berg and picked out the herd with my glasses. The walrus were lying close together, like so many black grubs, on a thick floe of heavy ice which was surrounded by thin ice formed the night before. The problem was how to get at them.

Driving carefully, we managed to approach within a quarter-mile of the herd with the sled. The new ice looked dangerous to me. But Panik-pa knew more about ice than a thousand white men, and he led the way. Sadlo and I followed, leaving little Innoocushia to take care of the dogs. We did not walk in a straight line, but spread out in zigzag fashion, at intervals of five yards. In this way, with the elastic new ice bending ominously beneath our feet at every step, we made our way toward the unsuspecting herd.

There were at least forty walrus huddled on the pan. The entire floe seemed to be a solid mass of greenish-brown bodies, white tusks and occasionally waving flippers. Most of the walrus were asleep; but every few moments a big bull would look up, gaze around with his glassy eyes, grunt heavily and then flop back on the somnolent mass about him.

Now and then, at a sign from the old hunter, we stopped, pausing while he raised a finger to test the wind. Walrus are notoriously short sighted, but their sense of smell, like that of seals, is extraordinarily keen, and it was up to us to approach them upwind. By grad-

ually working round, we managed to gain the shelter of a low berg some twenty-five yards from the herd. There we halted and made ready for the final attack.

Panik-pa carefully shod his harpoon, coiled the heavy line and crept softly forward, the gleaming ice pick held under his arm. Suddenly he broke into a run and we raced across the last few yards of bending ice, up to the berg, over the top of it, and slap-bang into the herd. It was an astounding experience. Startled by our sudden attack, the whole herd lurched for the water, tusking each other and bellowing wildly in their efforts to escape.

I dropped to one knee in the middle of the floe and emptied my rifle into the heaving mass of flesh. It was impossible to miss at that range, but not one of the heavy .303 bullets found a vital spot. No doubt I was too excited to pay attention to where I shot, and so missed a chance to make a killing.

Panik-pa made no mistake, however. He picked out a big bull and plunged his harpoon into the animal's neck. In a flash he thrust his ice pick through the loop at the end of the harpoon line, driving the steel prong into a crack in the ice. While he was doing this I reloaded and killed another walrus on a small pan a few yards from the berg.

Panik-pa's bull put up a terrific fight. The harpoon blade was scarcely in his neck when he was over the side, crashing down through the thin ice for a deep dive. The line brought him up sharply, and he was forced to smash a hole through the ice and come to the surface. There he remained, churning the water into a maelstrom of broken ice, glaring at us and bellowing his rage. Alone, the three of us would have been powerless to hold the harpooned walrus, but the ice pick held him firmly. It was an easy matter to shoot him and drag his body under the ice toward the floe.

While we were doing this, the remainder of the herd bunched in a compact mass and came to the surface about fifty yards away, crashing through the ice on which we had walked a few minutes before. When I saw the veritable forest of tusks that waved menacingly in our direction I was glad we were on the thick floe.

An uninitiated white man would have despaired of ever getting the dead walrus on to the ice. He weighed nearly a ton, and the ice was between two and three feet high above the water. But Panik-pa set about confidently to cut a hole in the ice about five yards from the edge. That done, he leaned over and cut four long slits in the tough hide of the walrus near the throat, thus forming two loops of strong skin. Using the ice and the skin loops as his blocks, the old hunter wove his harpoon line through them, so that with the improvised block and tackle we were able, slowly and a few inches at a time, to pull the carcass on to the floe.

The moon had risen over the frozen mountains and was casting long black shadows in the lee of the tall bergs by the time we had the walrus cut up. It was past nine o'clock, but we did not dare leave the precious meat and blubber out on the floe, surrounded by thin ice which might break with a sudden storm and carry our spoils out to sea. The job of getting the meat on to the firm ice was difficult and dangerous. Five times we made the trip with the sled in the moonlight, each time caching several hundred pounds of meat, already frozen hard, near an especially tall berg where we would be sure to find it later on.

THE following day we drove out with the intention of bringing home some of the meat. Again we heard the low trumpeting of walrus. Panik-pa had only his hunting knife and I had just the nine cartridges in my Lee-Enfield, but the opportunity was too good to miss. The walrus lay on a low berg about half a mile from the meat cache. Apparently it was the same

herd we had attacked the previous day.

We tied the dogs to a block of ice and crept cautiously from hummock to hummock until we were under the very edge of the berg on which the walrus lay. For a few seconds we waited to regain our breath. Then I stood up, flung my rifle over the edge of the berg and opened fire. It was dreadful slaughter, for the nearest walrus was scarcely two gun-lengths away. The walrus were too startled by the sudden attack to make for the water immediately. They simply lay bellowing, while I emptied my magazine as fast as I could move the trigger.

We were virtually in the midst of the herd, and the noise of the frightened animals as they made for the water was terrifying. Rolling and wriggling their huge bodies like gigantic grubs, the walrus reached the edge of the berg and plunged straight through the four-inch ice that surrounded it on every side. A big bull was the last to go.

When the commotion was over, we found four dead walrus on the berg and a fifth so badly wounded that he could scarcely move. He lay breathing heavily, now and then raising his head to snort defiance. Frantically I searched my pockets for a spare cartridge so that I could finish him, but found none. Panik-pa walked behind him and tried to jump on his back so that he could drive his long knife into the jugular vein; but the big fellow turned savagely and made such vicious slashes at Panik-pa that the old man was glad to retreat.

In desperation I raised my rifle and brought the butt down on his skull with a crash. I might have struck him with a feather for all the harm it did. And all the time he was wriggling, inch by inch, toward the edge. It was maddening to have a ton of precious meat within our grasp and see it slip away. He was on the rim of the berg, when I darted forward and tried to grab him by the tusks. It was an insane thing to do, and I barely escaped being ripped by the heavy ivory blades as he reared up on his flippers and made a swift lunge in my direction. Only afterward did I realize that if he had caught me I would have been carried down with him as he gave a final wriggle and slid over the blood-stained edge.

As a matter of fact, we did not lose him. He must have died almost immediately. For the following Spring we found his carcass embedded in the ice near the berg. We dug him out of the eight-foot ice that had formed about him during the Winter and, although it was then June and we were getting plenty of seals, he was a welcome prize.

Our job was to cut up the walrus before they froze. It was several degrees below zero, but by dipping our hands in the warm blood as we worked we kept them from freezing. When darkness fell we had two whole walrus and part of another cut up and lying in huge chunks around us, each big chunk on a separate piece of snow. It was too late to tackle the other walrus, so after giving the dogs a feast of warm intestines we started homeward, flying fast over the ice.

So far we had six walrus, enough to keep our pack of dogs for ten weeks or so. We were not averse to the meat ourselves. The liver was rather a delicacy and only a little coarser than cow's liver. The meat made excellent stew, thick and satisfying.

Luck stayed with us, however, and next day we got another walrus, the biggest of the lot. We were on our way out to cut up the remaining walrus with an ax when I saw the dark head of a bull appear through the new ice covering an open lead. Panik-pa brought the team to a halt less than fifty feet from the snorting walrus and had his harpoon ready in a trice. The hunter's wife, Attoosoongwah, an amiable old lady, had come out with us. We left her to hold the dogs back while we crept softly toward the water-hole.

The wind, fortunately, was blowing in our faces, and our sealskin boots made no sound on the bare ice. Ten

feet from the walrus we stopped and waited. He was an enormous fellow, with a huge pair of yellow tusks. His heavy skin hung in folds about his neck and bore the marks of many a mating-season battle. He was too busy gulping air to notice us, and when he sank below the surface after a final snort I was chagrined. I felt we should have rushed in and harpooned him at once.

But the old master knew his business —knew the futility of trying to harpoon a walrus except from behind. Sliding noiselessly across the ice, Panik-pa crouched beside the hole, waiting for the walrus to reappear. A ripple broke the surface of the water hole. The old hunter stiffened, rose from his crouching posture as the dripping head of the walrus appeared above the surface. Like a flash Panik-pa hurled the harpoon into the animal's neck with all his force. Almost at the same time I shot twice, both bullets smashing through the thin part of the beast's skull at the base of the head. A third bullet finished him.

We had a hard time getting him on the ice, for the hole was not much bigger than his head. By working round it with ice picks, we managed to make an aperture through which we were able to drag him, inch by inch, by means of Panik-pa's improvised block and tackle. Even Attoosoongwah lent a hand on the line as we pulled, until we were able to cut off the two big front flippers and reduce the carcass to a more manageable weight.

That night the old Eskimo woman made tea on a tiny stove out on the open ice two miles from land. She had it ready for us by the time Panik-pa and I had finished hacking the half frozen walrus into chunks small enough to load on the sled.

It took several days to transport all the meat home, and in that time we secured another walrus, the last of the season.

Within the next few days all the herds left the neighborhood of Craig Harbor for the open water of Baffin Bay, where they would spend the Winter before returning to Jones Sound in April. But we had been more than lucky. And even if the other hunting party failed to get meat, we had enough to last us all through the dark months.

Luck, however, had favored them also, and they came back after an absence of fifteen days with their sleds loaded with skins and meat.

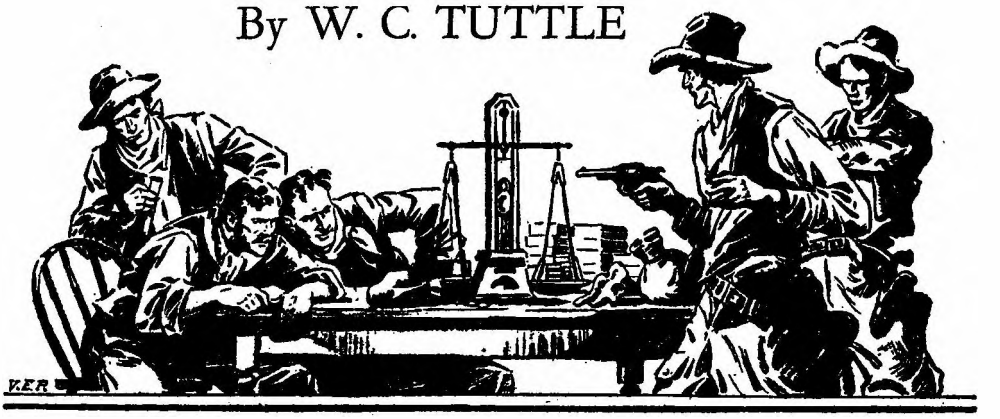
"Ten musk oxen!" they shouted when I met them at the door of the cabin. "No canned grub for us this Winter."

"And eight walrus!" I told them with equal enthusiasm. "I guess we won't have to kill any of the dogs, after all."

Concluding

RIFLED GOLD

By W. C. TUTTLE



Author of "Hashknife Hartley"

The Story Thus Far:

WHEN Hashknife Hartley, accompanied by his partner, Sleepy Stevens, went to Painted Wells, Arizona, to investigate the repeated theft of gold from the Comanche Chief mine, he told no one that he was a detective. As a volunteer cowboy at the impoverished Corey ranch, Hashknife did chores; but on frequent visits to town he gradually became acquainted with the circumstances of the thefts. Already one detective—Payzant—working on the case had been killed; and Silver Steele, owner of the mine, had closed it after a particularly heavy loss—the foreman shot and sixty ingots stolen from the safe.

To be convinced that revealing his profession meant instant death, Hashknife had only to consider the career of a young tenderfoot from the East, Cornelius Van Avery, who, mistaken for a detective, had narrowly escaped assassination on several occasions. Van Avery, however, could not be frightened out of the country, because of his devotion to Elene Corey. In fact, he was so partial to the Corey cause that he had tampered with the State's evidence against Ken Steele, when Ken, husband of Elene's sister Gladys, was charged with the murder of Milt Corey in order to steal $10,000 from him—a loan to Corey from Ed Ault. The case against Ken, especially in the light of Ken's own story, was clearly a frameup; so Van Avery saw no harm in substituting for Ken's pistol in the evidence the pistol of Ed Ault, proprietor of the Yucca Saloon.

But it was no joke to Ed Ault. As the creditor of Milt Corey and Ken Steele, and professing a great friendship for Ken's wife, Ault was uneasy. Hashknife suspected Ault had a guilty conscience about something. He also suspected Rick Nelson, local assayer and hardware merchant, whose false assay reports years before had won him the enmity of the late Milt Corey.

Hashknife could learn little from the old-fashioned law officers of the county, Sheriff Brayton and Deputy Hartwig, who were completely bewildered by the crime wave. When Bill Neer, one of Steve McCord's X8X cowboys, was killed by the bullet from a .45-70 cartridge which he was reloading with the shell in a vise, Hashknife kept the bullet removed by the coroner from Neer's body. This puzzled every one except Sleepy, who was familar with Hashknife's methods.

Hashknife had only one shred of written evidence—a scrap of letter paper found in the hotel room where Judge Frazer, lawyer for Ken Steele, was beaten into unconsciousness before the case was called for trial.

Before Hashknife had an opportunity to investigate further, he was kidnaped from the Corey ranch and thrown into an abandoned mine tunnel. He managed to escape and, following a sudden hunch, immediately hurried to Rick Nelson's

hardware store, forcing his way into the cellar where Nelson did his assaying. While searching the cellar, Hashknife was startled by an explosion in the bank next door. A moment later a man tossed a bag down the cellar stairs and disappeared. Hashknife seized the bag, dashed from the cellar and collided with Van Avery. The Easterner, knowing Hashknife could not be a bank robber and amazed to find him still alive, did not give an alarm, but followed Hashknife to the Corey ranch.

While Hashknife—reported missing and probably dead—awaited developments, Van Avery returned to Painted Wells and picked up gossip to relay to Hashknife where he lay hidden in the basement of the Corey ranch-house.

In the meantime Judge Frazer was gaining strength. The doctor said he would soon be able to talk. Silver Steele came into the Yucca Saloon, owned by Ed Ault, and remarked on the judge's recovery. He also said that the judge had been writing a letter about safecrackers when he was slugged.

"Did the letter mention any names?" asked Ault. "Or—"

"I've sure had a run of hard luck," interrupted Steele.

"You had a good break when they turned your son Ken loose on a murder charge," replied Ault.

"Yes, but that don't prove who killed Milt Corey."

"I WOULDN'T let that worry me." Ault smiled. "But I'll be damned if I wouldn't like to get my hands on the jigger who stole my gun and put it in the safe. I remember puttin' that gun under the bar where it would be handy for the bartender in case of trouble. I don't know how long it has been gone."

"It looks to me as though Ken was very wise in not talking at the inquest and at the preliminary hearing," said Van Avery. "He refused to admit ownership of the gun. And the prosecutor failed to make a complete description of the gun."

"He probably never expected the evidence to be stolen," said Handsome. "Anyway, it was weak evidence to hang a man on. I never did believe Ken killed Milt Corey."

Steele turned to Ault.

"If you'll make out a bill for what Ken owes you, Ed, I'll pay his debts and you can release Ken's property."

"Oh, all right, Silver."

"I think I'll take over the Diamond C," said Van Avery casually.

"You'll what?" grunted Silver Steele.

"Pay off that bank mortgage," replied Van Avery. "It's worth the money."

"Let me get this straight," said Ault quickly. "You mean you are goin' to pay off that ten thousand to the bank?"

"That's about the only way I could get it, is it not? I think the place is worth more money than that."

"Listen to me," said Ault. "Perhaps you don't know I loaned Milt Corey ten thousand. When you add that to the mortgage money, you'd be losin' your shirt on the deal."

"Would you mind letting me see that note?" asked Van Avery.

Ault lost no time in getting the note from his safe. It was merely a promissory note for ten thousand, due six months from date. Van Avery glanced at it and shoved it aside.

"That's merely a personal note," he said. "The signer is dead."

"Is that so!" snapped Ault, his face getting red. "It happens that the Diamond C is in Milt Corey's name, and I can collect from his estate. Just think that over a minute."

"I'm afraid that is true, Van Avery," said Steele.

Van Avery laughed softly.

"Wrong guess all the way around. What is to prevent me from paying off that mortgage? Nothing. That paper is killed. Then Mrs. Corey sells me the property, and I deed it back to her, in her name. When I buy it from her, I assume that note; but when I deed it back to her, I still assume that note. She gets the property free and clear of all encumbrances."

Ault's jaw sagged foolishly, and he stared at Van Avery.

"You'd merely be assumin' a ten thousand dollar debt," remarked Silver Steele.

"That is all very true. Ault could sue me and get judgment."

"By heaven, I'd take that money out

of your hide!" snapped Ault.

Van Avery nodded thoughtfully.

"And that might be the only way you'd ever get it, Mr. Ault."

"You figurin' on goin' into the cow business?" asked Handsome.

"No, I don't believe I will. But I am interested in mining. No, I don't know a thing about mines. One rock looks the same as another to me. But I've got a little money to spend, and I think I'll take over those claims that Milt Corey staked inside his north fence."

Silver Steele laughed and motioned for the bartender to serve them.

"Those claims are no good," said Steele. "Save your money. Corey merely located them to block Rick Nelson because he disliked Rick. That whole rim down there wouldn't assay four bits in gold."

"Well, I don't know about the values—" Van Avery laughed— "but it looks like a dandy place to dig."

"When is all this diggin' goin' to start?" asked Ault coldly.

"Oh, in a few days. I'm not in any hurry. I may go down to Red Hill tomorrow, because I've got to go to Phoenix for a few days. This deal will require money, even if I don't do any mining. I'll bring an engineer back here to go over the property and suggest what I need."

"You'll need payin' ore more than anythin' else." Steele laughed.

Ault was worried. After Handsome and Van Avery left the saloon he asked Steele if he thought Van Avery was sincere about paying off the Diamond C mortgage.

"I don't see why I should be the one to lose," he said mournfully. "I made that loan in good faith."

"Maybe he was jokin'," encouraged Steele. "He's a hard one to figure out. Your best bet would be to dig up the ten thousand and buy the mortgage from the bank. Van Avery would have to deal with you then."

"That's an idea," muttered Ault. "Thanks, Silver."

Fifteen minutes later Ed Ault entered the bank. They were still checking up on the robbery loss; but Don Elkins, the cashier, came over to Ault.

"I want to talk a little business with you, Don," said Ault. "You've got a mortgage against the Diamond C, haven't you?"

"We foreclosed on it, and—"

"I know about that," interrupted Ault. "What I want to do is buy that mortgage."

Elkins's eyes opened curiously.

"Somebody struck diamonds on that ranch?" he asked.

"Why?"

"Oh, I just wondered. Young Van Avery was in here awhile ago and made a deal on that mortgage. He gave us a deposit of two thousand, and is to pay the rest within thirty days."

"You mean I'm too late to buy it?"

"Yes, that's right, Ault."

Ault took a deep breath and turned away.

"All right," he said. "I just wanted to help the Corey family out, that's all."

"Sorry, but that's the way it stands now, Ault."

Steele met Ault at the saloon door, but Ault did not mention that he had been unable to deal with the bank.

LATER in the afternoon Steve McCord and Ike Berry, of Porcupine, rode in to Painted Wells. Van Avery saw them tie their horses at the Yucca. McCord and Berry were the two cowboys he had had the trouble with in Porcupine, and he did not want to meet them. So he saddled his horse and headed for the ranch. Just before he reached the road to the Diamond C he met a man driving a team and wagon.

The man was Brad Thatcher, from Porcupine. He looked curiously at Van Avery as they passed, but did not speak. Thatcher had not been at the X8X when Van Avery was there, but he knew him from descriptions. Van Avery did not know Thatcher, but he recognized

the team as one which had been to Painted Wells from Porcupine before; so he decided that it was Steve McCord's freight wagon.

They gave Van Avery a warm welcome at the ranch and let him into the cellar to talk with Hashknife. He recounted, as nearly verbatim as possible, his conversation with Ault regarding the mortgage and the note. Hashknife grinned as Van Avery said that Ault swore he'd take the value of the note out on his hide.

"You kinda had Mr. Ault stuck, didn't you, Blondy? That's great. You done it better than I could."

"I went further than that," continued Blondy. "I paid the bank a deposit of two thousand on that mortgage, and I've got thirty days to pay the rest. I just got to thinking that Ault might possibly do what I had said I was going to do. Anyway, I saw him go to the bank about fifteen minutes after I closed the deal."

"I'd like to know who in hell circulated the report that you was dumb," said Hashknife seriously. "Who else did you see in town? This is Saturday, and there ought to be plenty folks."

"Two men from Porcupine rode in just before I left, and I met the freight outfit from Porcupine just before I turned in here."

"Yeah? Well, that's fine. Anythin' new on the robbery?"

"Not a thing. Did you know Silver Steele was a heavy stockholder in the bank? He is. And I heard him ask Ault to make out his bill against Ken, and he'd pay it in full. That was nice of him."

"Steele is a white man, Blondy. What about Frazer?"

"He was almost conscious once today. I hope he gets well."

"So do I. You go on upstairs and visit the folks, 'cause I want to do a little private thinkin'."

Mrs. Corey and Elene had decided that they wanted to go to town after supper, and Sleepy was elected to drive the team. Ken and his wife were going to stay at the ranch. They asked Van Avery to stay and keep them company. The arrangement was satisfactory, except that Van Avery wished it were Elene instead of Ken's wife.

It was almost dark when they were ready to leave. Sleepy went down in the cellar to have a talk with Hashknife. Fifteen minutes after they had gone Hashknife came out of the cellar.

"I'm goin' to take a ride," he said. "If I'm not back until late, don't worry about me. You stay here all night, Blondy. I don't believe Painted Wells would be a safe place for you now. *Adios.*"

CHAPTER X

KIDNAPED

THE lighted windows of the town partly illuminated the main street of Painted Wells as Sleepy and the two women drove in. Two riders, heading south, passed them, and Sleepy recognized Steve McCord and Ike Berry, of Porcupine.

Sleepy tied the team in front of the general store where the women wanted to do most of their shopping; they told him it would be an hour or more before they would be ready to return. They had little money for shopping, but the proprietor graciously informed them that their credit was still good. They did not know Silver Steele had told the merchant what Van Avery intended doing. The Diamond C had always been a good account.

Sleepy found Handsome in the street. His rubicund nose was just a little redder than usual and he was grinning. It was obvious that he had looked upon the wine when it was red and that he was seeking congenial company.

But Sleepy was not in a drinking mood. He had to look after the two women. Handsome appreciated that fact thoroughly.

"Where's Blondy?" he asked. "Zassa

feller I want. Great feller. Got great capachity. Run out on me today. This 's worsh Shaterday night I ever sheen. Can' find par'ner. Steve McCord and Ike Berry pulled out on me. You shore you don't wanna drink, Sleepy?"

"Nope. Like I told you, I've got to take care of m' women. And besides, I ain't thirsty, Handsome."

"'S awful way for to be—not thirshty. Well, s'long, Temp'rance. See you at the rally in the church."

Handsome went bowlegging his way back to the Yucca. Sleepy grinned after the little deputy, then went down the street, merely killing time. He bought some tobacco and wandered around to the hardware store.

Dave Bush had several customers. Sleepy hoisted himself up on a counter and rolled a smoke, watching Bush measure out a rope for a cowboy. Bush seemed nervous, and was obliged to measure the rope three times to be sure of the right length.

Next he weighed a few pounds of tenpenny nails, dumped them into a paper bag which split open, and the nails went all over the floor. Instead of weighing out another lot, he got down on his hands and knees and picked up the nails, perspiration glistening on his nose.

Sleepy studied Bush thoughtfully. Sleepy was not ordinarily observant, but Bush's nervousness was very plain. Finally he cleared out the customers and went to the rear of the room, mopping his face with a handkerchief.

Another customer came in, carrying a five-gallon kerosene can. Sleepy saw that it was the swamper from the Yucca. Bush came slowly. The man gave Bush the can.

"I don't see why you always wait until dark," complained Bush pettishly. "When the sun goes down, you realize the need of oil."

The swamper grinned at Sleepy as Bush went out through the back door, heading for the shed where he stored his kerosene.

"Kinda touchy t'night, ain't he?" queried the swamper.

"Acts thataway," Sleepy replied.

Bush did not shut the back door.

As Sleepy's eyes shifted he saw the flash of a gun and heard the sharp bark of its report. Two more flashes came almost together and a double report followed.

The swamper grunted a curse. Silver Steele and Rick Nelson were coming through the front doorway, and they too heard the reports. Sleepy ran from the store, gun in hand, with Steele and Nelson behind him. The swamper, unarmed, followed more cautiously.

They found Dave Bush sprawled in front of the little shed. He was dead. They sent for Dr. Smedley, but there was nothing he could do except in his capacity as coroner. A crowd collected around the corpse, and every one demanded an answer to the question—

"Who killed him?"

No one knew the answer. So far as they knew, Bush had no enemies.

"At least two men did the shooting," declared the doctor. "One shot was in his back, two in the front."

Rick Nelson closed the hardware store. Sleepy went up to the general store and found that Elene and her mother had already heard of the murder. They were so excited and shocked that they wanted to go home at once. They had known Dave Bush.

"What in the world are we coming to?" asked Mrs. Corey nervously. "Poor Dave Bush, who never harmed any one."

Sleepy wondered why Dave Bush had been so nervous. Did he know some one was after him?

"What are you thinking about, Sleepy?" asked Elene.

"Oh," he answered lightly, "I look thataway when I git awful dumb. Ready to go home?"

Handsome, sobered by the tragedy, came up to Sleepy while he was taking the ropes off the team.

"Can you imagine a thing like that?" asked Handsome. "And you was in the

store and seen the flashes, eh? Poor old Dave. By golly, that's a tough thing to have happen! You didn't see Brad Thatcher, didja?"

"No," replied Sleepy, coiling up the two ropes. "He wasn't lookin' for me, was he?"

"He wasn't lookin' for nothin', except his team and wagon."

"Team and wagon? He didn't lose 'em, did he?"

"Says he did. Had his stuff all loaded to take back to Porcupine, and now he can't find his outfit."

Sleepy looked amused.

"Somebody playin' a practical joke on him?"

"I think he got drunk and forgot where he tied the team, if you ask me." Handsome laughed. "Well, I've got to go down to the office and listen to Banty cry for awhile, I suppose."

"Sleepy, why in the world would anybody steal a team and wagon?" wondered Elene.

Sleepy laughed and climbed into the seat.

"I dunno," he replied. "I've come to the conclusion that most anythin' can happen around here. This doggone country is hoodooed, I tell you."

"I'll be glad when we get home," declared Elene. "I don't know why, but I feel that everything isn't all right."

"Oh, everything is all right there," said Sleepy.

They drove to the fork of the road and turned in toward the ranch.

"There isn't a light in the house," observed Elene nervously.

"Curtains down," said Sleepy reassuringly.

"No lights anywhere," said Elene. "Ken would think to light a lantern at the main gate."

"Mebbe not. You'll find everythin' all right. You're jist nervous over what happened in town."

"It's enough to make a body nervous," said Mrs. Corey. "With all these murders, you never know what to expect at any hour of the day or night."

SLEEPY swung the team in close to the corral and quickly tied one of the horses to the fence. Some one should hear them drive in and show a light. Elene was hurrying toward the house when Sleepy caught up with her.

"Me first," he said softly. "I—I think everythin' is all right."

They went in through the patio gate. Everything was in darkness. Sleepy swore inwardly as he went up to the back door, which was open. In the darkness he heard a fumbling sort of noise. Whipping out his gun, he braced his shoulder against the side of the doorway.

"What's wrong in there?" he asked.

"Can'tcha help me a little?" groaned a voice. "I can't find the water."

Sleepy jerked out a match and struck it against the wall. There was Ken Steele on the floor, trying to sit up, with blood running down his cheeks.

"My God!" gasped Elene. "Ken, what happened? Ken, don't you hear me?"

"Take it easy," advised Sleepy. "Wait'll I get the lamp."

"On the table," panted Mrs. Corey. "Hurry, Sleepy."

When the lamp was lighted Sleepy gave Ken a drink. Ken was weak, but fully conscious. Sleepy noticed a red weal across the back of Ken's right hand; Ken had apparently been struck a savage blow over the head also.

Sleepy promptly searched the house. There was no one else present. Hashknife had told Sleepy he might go out—but where were Gladys and Van Avery? Sleepy went back to Ken, who was trying to remember what had happened.

"I'm not hurt much," he declared. "Never mind me, Ma. My head feels fine now. Wasn't Sleepy with you? Oh, there you are, Sleepy."

Sleepy appreciated the fact that Ken was just a bit lightheaded.

"But where are the others, Ken?" asked Mrs. Corey. "Mr. Van Avery and Gladys."

"I dunno. Ain't they here? Why, I

—I—my God, what happened to them? Those three men, all masked with black cloths. They sneaked in on us. Van Avery was tryin' to play on the guitar, and Glad was singin'. They warned us not to move, but I was afraid of what they might do; so I took a long chance."

Ken stopped and looked at his swollen right hand.

"One of them shot my gun out of my hand," he said slowly. "I don't remember what happened then."

"Somebody socked you over the head with a gun barrel, it looks to me," said Sleepy.

Ken nodded painfully.

"I suppose that's what happened; but what happened to Glad and Blondy?"

Mrs. Corey and Elene looked at each other helplessly.

"Hashknife went out, Ken?" asked Sleepy.

"He went out soon after you folks left. Can I have another drink of water? I've got to get on my feet and help you find 'em."

Sleepy gave him another drink.

"You lay down," he said huskily. "You ain't in no shape to ride anywhere. Lord, I wish Hashknife would show up. He'd know somethin' to do, mebbe. No use goin' for the sheriff. He'd be as good as a pair of loose crutches lookin' for a cripple. If I only—"

The scuffling of boot soles sounded on the porch, and Hashknife came in. He needed only a glance to know that something had gone wrong; and in a few short sentences Sleepy told him as much as any of them knew. Hashknife's lean face was gray in the lamplight. Sleepy told him about the murder of Dave Bush; told him in brief detail all the things that led up to the shooting, as far as he could remember.

Mrs. Corey sat stunned and helpless while Elene tried to assure her that everything would be all right.

"Saddle your bronc, Sleepy," said Hashknife. "We're takin' a long ride tonight. Elene, you and your mother are safe here. Make the best of it. Ken, you go to bed, and tomorrow we'll turn the doctor loose on your topknot."

"I'm goin' with you," declared Ken.

"Not in the shape you're in, kid."

"Have you any idea, Hashknife—" asked Elene shakily "—any idea what happened or why they took Gladys?"

"Not now, I ain't. But they won't hurt her. Somethin' went wrong, and they had to take her. You quit worryin'. I've jist about built a loop big enough to hang the whole bunch of 'em."

Sleepy came running up the steps to the doorway.

"All set!" he panted. "Don't worry, folks. I'm jist scared to death that everythin' is goin' to be all right."

Two minutes later the two cowboys were galloping down the dusty road toward Red Hill, not thinking of ambush this time. Both horses were in good shape; and for once in their lives these two cowboys were not sparing their horses.

Fifteen miles to Red Hill. Except for a lighted saloon, Red Hill was dark and seemingly deserted. But they did not stop; merely rode slowly through the town, found the road to Porcupine and spurred their horses to a gallop. This road was strange to them, but they knew it followed the railroad to Porcupine.

A PASSENGER train rocketed past them, the engineer whistling for Porcupine. Their horses were exhausted as they came to Porcupine—a huddle of three adobe buildings beside the railroad tracks. There was one light in the little saloon; and a bareheaded man, presumably the bartender, was standing in the doorway as they rode up with their horses breathing loudly.

"Could you tell me how to find the X8X outfit?" asked Hashknife.

"Shore could," replied the man. "Take that road runnin' to the right out there a piece, and it'll take you right to the ranch. It ain't more 'n a mile or so."

Hashknife thanked him, and they rode on. In a few minutes they found the place—a dark group of old buildings. No lights were visible.

"Do you think we'll find 'em here?" asked Sleepy.

"If we don't, it eliminates one possible place," muttered Hashknife as they dismounted in the darkness beside the old stable. "Shore don't look good to me—everythin' dark thisaway. But we're here and we'll see what we can see. One cinch, they won't expect us tonight."

They left their horses and crept in near the main ranch-house. There was a chance that the windows had been covered to cut off the light, but Hashknife found a window in the main room where he could see that this was not the case. It was a keen disappointment to him.

Apparently the place was empty. Hashknife and Sleepy crouched against the house, wondering what move to make next, when they heard a horse galloping. It came straight to the house, stopping near the corner and not over a dozen feet away. They saw the rider dismount. The horse was blowing heavily from a long, hard run. They heard the man crash open the front door, and from somewhere in the house they heard some one yell a question.

Hashknife and Sleepy crept past the horse and under the sagging railing of the porch. The door was still open. A lamp was being lighted, and two men were talking. Hashknife got to his feet and stood flat against the wall, where he could peer around into the room.

Standing with his back to the doorway was Brad Thatcher, while on the other side of a rough table was a bearded man, dressed only in an ill-fitting suit of red underwear. He had apparently been in bed and asleep when Thatcher arrived.

"No, Jim, I'm pullin' out," Thatcher was saying. "I'm goin' to be a hell of a long ways from Painted Wells by daylight."

"Won't the rest of the boys—" began the bearded man.

"To hell with everybody," said Thatcher huskily. "They won't be back tonight. Somebody stole the team and wagon. Bush is dead. I lifted me a bronc from a hitch-rack and pulled out. And I found the team and wagon this side of the Diamond C turn-off. Somebody's wise, I tell you; the box was gone!"

"Them shells?" asked the bearded one thinly.

"Gone, I tell you!"

"Yeah?" The bearded one shivered slightly. "Well, I told you, Brad. Ain't I argued with the bunch to be good? Didn't they laugh at me for tryin' to tell 'em that crooked work allus bends back on you? I'm only a damn old cook, but I spent fourteen years in Deer Lodge, Montana; and you can't tell me nothin' about crime bein' a payin' proposition."

"Don't preach! You're safe, 'cause you never had no hand in it. Mebbe they'll hang you on general principles—I dunno. But I know damn well they won't git me. To hell with the money—I'm savin' my neck."

"Uh-huh. You shore must 'a' made a fast trip down here."

"Cut across the hills from Painted Wells and hit the road between here and Red Hill."

"What about the rest of the bunch, Brad? Do they know what happened? You ain't leavin' 'em dry-gulched, are you?"

"I'm through, I tell you," snarled Thatcher. "Let 'em save their own skins. I've got enough to keep me a long time down in Mexico."

"But who got wise?" asked the cook. "Banty Brayton ain't got brains enough to—"

"What do I care who got wise? I'm—"

The floor creaked as Hashknife stepped in through the doorway. Thatcher whirled around. His eyes opened wide and he sagged back against the table. Hashknife stood hunched for-

ward, his long hands hanging at his sides.

Thatcher's left hand came up, claw-like, and trembled over his sagging mouth. He was looking at the ghost of a dead man. Hashknife's lips moved slowly with his voice pitched in a low monotone—

"You're goin' on a long trip, Thatcher—but not to Mexico."

"Damn you to hell!" screamed Thatcher, as he reached for his gun.

At the same moment Sleepy fired from the doorway, and Thatcher fell against the table, then collapsed in a heap. Hashknife was on him like a tiger and tore the gun out of his hand. The old cook did not move, merely shifted his eyes from one to the other.

Hashknife lifted the lamp off the table and knelt down beside Thatcher, who was looking up at him, a glare in his eyes.

"Come through clean," said Hashknife. "Where did they take that girl tonight?"

Thatcher blinked painfully.

"What girl?" he asked, and Hashknife realized Thatcher was innocent of that charge at least.

"They kidnaped Ken Steele's wife tonight," said Hashknife.

"I—I didn't know it," gasped Thatcher. "Turn that lamp up a little. I—I can't see you."

"He won't go to Mexico," said the cook dully.

Hashknife got to his feet and looked at the cook.

"I heard what Thatcher and you talked about," said Hashknife. "It means that I'm givin' you a chance to pull out.. Don't be here when they come to bury Thatcher."

"You are givin' me a chance to get away?" asked the old man.

"Unless you want to stay and testify against 'em."

The old cook shook his head.

"Not agin men I've cooked for for five years."

"Then don't be here, pardner. Are there any fresh horses on the place?"

"Six of 'em in the stable. We allus keeps a string handy.. Jist who in hell are you, anyway?"

"My name's Hartley."

"Hashknife Hartley? The hell it is! Well—" eyeing Hashknife in amazement—"I don't blame Brad for screamin'. You're the first ghost I ever seen, close to."

Hashknife reached out and picked up a letter from the table.

"When didja git this?" asked Hashknife.

"This mornin'. I went as far as Red Hill with the boys."

It was addressed to Steve McCord, and the letterhead was that of the San Francisco Mint. Hashknife tore it open and drew out a statement showing that the mint had credited the Hellbender Mining Company with eight thousand dollars' worth of gold.

Hashknife shoved the letter in his pocket and turned to the cook.

"We're borrowin' a couple fresh horses, pardner. I suppose it's all right with you."

"Ort to be. I'm borrowin' one m'self."

IT WAS a long, weary night for the Corey family. None of them went to bed. Ken suffered from his scalp injuries, the ache almost blinding him at times. They were all trying to be patient, to do as Hashknife had asked them to do; but daylight was more than welcome.

Breakfast meant nothing to them. Elene harnessed the team, and the three of them headed for Painted Wells. Ken needed the services of a doctor.

"If Glad is only safe," he said. "That's all that matters to me."

Less than a mile from Painted Wells they overtook the sheriff and deputy. Handsome was driving the X8X freight team, while Banty led Handsome's horse. They had found the abandoned outfit and were bringing it back to town.

The sheriff rode in close to the buckboard, while Elene told him what had

happened at the Diamond C ranch. Banty just looked at her with a dumb, wondering expression in his eyes. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. Without a word he galloped straight for town.

It was Sunday morning and there were many people in town, some of whom had been there all night. The sheriff went straight to the Yucca Saloon, where he faced those present and told them that it was time for every man in the county to help find Gladys Steele. In a few words he told them what had happened at the Corey ranch.

"We've got to smash that gang," he declared hotly. "It's plenty bad enough to murder men, but when they start kidnapin' our women it's time to put an end to things."

"All right," said Ault briskly. "What's the first move?"

The sheriff leaned against the bar, shaking his head.

"God only knows," he said huskily. "I'm jist the sheriff. Some of you think I ort to know what to do, but I don't. I ain't got no more idea than any of you have. They strike in the dark, and they don't leave no clues. Why in hell would they take a girl? Mebbe they think Van Avery is a detective. The damn fools ort to know better. He's no detective. Why did they try to kill Judge Frazer? Why did they kill Dave Bush? What assurance have we that one of us won't be the next one to git it? Damn you, do a little thinkin', can'tcha?"

Silver Steele was there. Some of the men looked to him, but the big miner had no suggestions.

"Do you think I'd be standin' here listenin' if I knew anythin'?" he asked them. "That girl is my son's wife. I believe that same gang murdered Milt Corey and tried to throw the blame on Ken. Last night they knocked him out and stole his wife. I agree with Banty that it's time to smash that gang—but how?

"There was one man—his name was Hartley—and I think he knew somethin'. But they got him. The prospector you knew as Jack Cherry, who was found dead in Rick Nelson's prospect hole, was murdered. His name was Payzant, and he was a detective hired by me. Mebbe Dave Bush knew somethin.' The same gang murdered Ryan and smashed my safe. They robbed the bank. It's time we put a stop to it. None of us are safe until that murderin' gang is wiped out."

"Well, let's do somethin'," growled Steve McCord.

"You suggest somethin'," said Ault.

"I wish I could, Ed; but this is beyond me. I'll foller anybody who wants to lead."

Some one mentioned that Handsome was bringing in the missing freight team, and the crowd broke up to go over across the street. The load was covered with a tarpaulin. Steve McCord removed it to check the load. Rick Nelson was on the sidewalk, watching Steve.

"Is everythin' all right, Steve?" he asked.

The boss of the X8X looked it over, and his eyes narrowed thoughtfully. It wasn't all there, and he knew it; but he nodded and said—

"All right, I guess."

"What in hell was their idea of stealin' your wagon?" queried Handsome.

"You ask 'em," retorted Steve evenly.

"I hope to."

Steve looked at him closely.

"Yeah? Mind tellin' what makes you think so, Handsome?"

"I said I hoped to."

"Oh!"

The sheriff drew Silver Steele aside.

"Was it true that somebody stole your horse and saddle last night?" he asked.

"They're gone," said Steele. "Mebbe broke loose, but I don't believe it, Banty."

The sheriff nodded solemnly.

"I've been wonderin', Silver. Brad Thatcher drove that freight team in last night. Somebody stole his team and

wagon. Brad Thatcher didn't stay here last night, and I can't find out how he got away. Never hired no horse."

"Mebbe Steve would know; let's ask him."

But Steve McCord didn't know. As he explained it:

"Me and Ike Berry wasn't goin' to wait for Brad, 'cause he'd take quite awhile on the road with that heavy wagon. We had an eye on a poker game in Red Hill, and would meet Brad there. Well, we went down to Red Hill, and the poker game wasn't so good; but we stayed pretty late. In fact, it was long enough for Brad to have easy made the trip.

"Then we was afraid mebbe he broke down; so we started back to find him, which we didn't. We came all the way back here, and they said the team and wagon had been stolen. That looked pretty damn funny to us. We don't know where Brad went. He wasn't here."

"Why do you suppose they stole the wagon?" asked the sheriff.

Steve laughed shortly.

"I pass, Banty. It's funny we didn't see that outfit beside the road, like Handsome said you found it."

"Not so queer," replied the sheriff. "Whoever stole it drove off the road down there. The tracks are plenty plain. Then they drove back beside the road. You prob'ly passed while it was still off the road."

It was a plausible explanation.

"We was wonderin' about Brad, 'cause Silver had a horse and saddle stolen from the Yucca hitch-rack last night," said Banty.

Steve looked curiously at Banty.

"Hell, you don't think Brad would steal a horse, do you?"

"I ain't accusin' nobody—yet. Brad never borrowed nor rented a horse last night."

Steve laughed.

"I dunno. Things happen so fast around here that we can't even make a guess at any of them."

The sheriff and Silver Steele went down to Doc Smedley's home, where they found the Corey family waiting for Ken to get patched up. They questioned Ken, trying to get some sort of description of the masked men; but Ken was unable to describe them.

"Where's Sleepy Stevens?" asked the sheriff.

"He went hunting for Glad and Van Avery," said Elene truthfully. "He rode away as soon as we got back home and found out what had happened out there."

"Which way did he go?"

"None of us knew, and he didn't say where he was going."

Steele and the sheriff went back to the street, where they met Steve McCord. He drew them aside and spoke confidentially.

"I've been wonderin' about that horse. I'd hate to think Brad would take a horse that didn't belong to him. In fact, I don't believe he did. But I've sent Ike Berry down to the ranch to find out."

"That's a mighty long ride to find out somethin'," said Silver.

"I want to know," declared Steve. "I won't harbor no horsethief, I'll tell you that. If we find out he did steal it, I'll make it right with you, Silver."

"Oh, that's all right, Steve. I hate to put you to all that trouble."

"Say! Trouble? I play square and I demand the same thing of my men."

"Well, I hope I'm wrong." Steele smiled.

CHAPTER XI

RIFLED GOLD

SHORTLY after the Corey family left the ranch Hashknife and Sleepy, hungry and weary from their fifty-mile ride, came back. With the team and buckboard missing, they knew the family had gone to town. Hashknife cooked some breakfast, which bucked up their spirits a little.

They wound up the battered old

alarm clock, gave themselves a two-hour limit for sleep and stretched out on the cot in the cellar. Sleepy could have sworn that he had just closed his eyes when the alarm went off. But he doused his head in a bucket of cold water and was soon wide awake again. He threw his saddle on one of the ranch horses and rode away, envying Hashknife, who stayed in the cellar.

He tied his horse behind the sheriff's office and was sauntering along the street before any one noticed him; but it was not long until he was the center of attention. But Sleepy was in a particularly uninspired mood. He didn't know a thing.

The sheriff, Silver Steele and Steve McCord took him aside and plied him with questions, not one of which he could answer.

He told them how they had found things at the Diamond C.

"It didn't happen so awful long before we got there," he said. "So I jist piled on to a horse and went circlin' the country. I've been poundin' leather all night."

"Why didn't you come right in and tell me?" asked the sheriff.

"What the hell could you have done?" retorted Sleepy. "My only chance was to ride fast and pray for a little luck—which I didn't have. What was that report about somebody stealin' the X8X wagon?"

"We got it back," growled Steve McCord. "Some damn joker thought he'd have some fun."

"You was here when Bush was shot, wasn't you?" asked the sheriff.

"I was in Nelson's store and saw the flashes of the guns."

"That's right."

"Where's the Corey family?"

"Down at Doc Smedley's place, I reckon."

Sleepy went down there and found Ken asleep, his head and hand bandaged. Sleepy called Elene outside and told her that Hashknife said they had all better stay in town until he showed up. Elene was anxious for news, but Sleepy could tell her nothing.

"It was a terrible night, Sleepy," she said. "We never went to bed. I've been trying to get mother to lie down awhile, but she's too worried. Oh, if we only had some idea where they took Glad."

"I don't know a danged thing," said Sleepy wearily. "What Hashknife knows he keeps to himself. And he knows somethin'. Last night he was singin' on the way back."

"Singing, Sleepy?"

"Well," dryly, "his kinda singin'."

"I didn't mean that. But why should he sing?"

"That's his way, Elene. He allus sings when he sees his way clear to start for the tall hills agin."

"I don't understand what you mean, Sleepy."

He smiled at her and shook his head.

"We're a queer pair—me and Hashknife. But don'tcha worry. I'm jist scared to death that everythin' is goin' to be all right."

Silver Steele went out to his ranch and brought in all his cowboys. He offered them to the sheriff, who said he wouldn't know what to do with them.

"Well, they're here if you need 'em, Banty," said Steele.

Sleepy listened to all the talk about forming a vigilante organization, and it rather amused him. There were plenty of armed men, plenty of ropes—and no one to hang. The sheriff was soured on everything. He looked upon the world with a jaundiced eye.

In fact, the whole place seemed at a standstill, waiting. But for what? The man-power of the Painted Wells country was assembled, but no one knew of a wheel to turn.

"Jist like a lot of buzzards settin' around waitin' for somethin' to die," declared Handsome.

"Yeah," drawled Sleepy, "and you'd be surprised if they got a good feed, wouldn't you?"

"I shore would, pardner. Another thing, I ain't goin' to stay here much

longer. Reckon I'll trade my hundred and fifty a month for a forty-dollar job over in the Patagonia country. I crave to wake up in the mornin' and rassle with a cold-jawed bronc, instead of wakin' up every mornin' and tryin' to find out who killed somebody last night. I'm gittin' so skittish that I look under m' bunk every night; and if there ain't a killer cached under there, I crawl under and sleep there m'self."

"I'm figurin' on goin' away pretty soon," replied Sleepy. "This country don't appeal to me none."

"Which way you goin'?"

Sleepy's blue eyes smiled, but his mouth twisted grimly.

"You never know your luck," he said soberly. "Every mornin', when you start out, the cards are either stacked for you or against you. You never git a chance to cut or deal. You play blind, and the Big Dealer either gives you your share of the pot, or He takes your last white chip. Then you drop out of the game for good. There's no chance to set in again."

"That's a funny idea," grunted Handsome. "Mebbe it's right. You know, sometimes I wonder what in hell we're doin' around here, Sleepy. What's the use of what we're doin'? There's a lotta dead men who done jist what we're doin'; and what did they git out of it?"

"You keep on wonderin' about things like that, and some day I'll come and see how you're gettin' along in the loco lodge."

"I suppose that's right. Well, I ain't goin' to worry."

Sleepy found a group of men at the Yucca bar, talking about Hashknife. Silver Steele, Rick Nelson and Ed Ault were there. Sleepy joined them and listened to their conversation. Steele was of the opinion that Hashknife had known too much about the bad bunch; and it seemed to Sleepy that they had an idea Hashknife had told him things.

"He never told anybody what he knew," said Sleepy. "There never was a better man than my old pardner; and if he could come back right now, I'd bet ten dollars against a dime that he could tell you who done all this devilment."

"That's what I think," declared Steele.

"But they got him cold," sighed Sleepy. "If they hadn't, he'd have been back long before this."

"I guess that's right." Nelson nodded "This gang must be pretty smart."

"How do you mean?" asked Sleepy.

"To spot Hartley as a detective."

"Who said he was a detective?"

"Well, wasn't he?" asked Ault quickly.

"Mebbe that's my fault," said Steele. "You see, I asked the Association to send me the best man they could find. The wire I got made me feel that the man had been sent. I guess mebbe Van Avery fooled the bad bunch as much as he did me, 'cause they shore tried to kill him off. But he wasn't the detective at all."

"So you decided that Hashknife was, eh?" grunted Sleepy. "Oh, it don't matter now. They got him cold, detective or no detective."

"Let's have another drink," invited Ault.

ABOUT four o'clock Sleepy strolled into the deserted sheriff's office, went out the back way, mounted his horse and rode back to the ranch. He knew he had not been followed, so he saddled Hashknife's horse and tied both animals in a little canyon near the ranch-house.

Hashknife was anxious for news, and Sleepy told him everything that had been said during the day. He was particularly interested in what had been said about the stolen freight team, but Sleepy only knew that McCord had said that nothing was missing from the load.

Sleepy cooked some supper for them both; and as soon as it was dark they sneaked out to their horses. Sleepy had no idea where Hashknife would lead him. But that did not worry Sleepy. He had never seen Hashknife more seri-

ous in his life; but the tall, drawn faced cowboy was singing softly and mournfully:

"And the cowboy riz up sadly
And mounted his cayuse,
Sayin', 'The time has come when longhorns
And cowboys ain't no use.'
And while gazin' sadly backward
Upon the dead bovine
His bronc stepped in a dog hole
And fell and broke his spine."

"Singin' time agin, eh?" asked Sleepy.

"She's been a long time tunin' up," replied Hashknife.

Hashknife led the way around to the east of Painted Wells. From where they skirted the open hills they could see the lights of the town. Their circle brought them toward the road to the Comanche Chief, but Hashknife decided to swing farther to the right again.

They rode steadily over this unfamiliar country, until to the west of them loomed the bulk of the Comanche Chief stamp mill and other buildings. They drew rein on the crest of a hill and gave the horses a breathing spell. Down the valley below them winked the lights of Painted Wells.

There was one small light visible at the mine, presumably in the office or in the assay room. They had rested their horses for about five minutes when the light suddenly disappeared. It came again for possibly ten seconds and then disappeared.

Hashknife grunted softly.

"Looked like a signal of some kind, Sleepy. That's why I didn't want to use the road. There's prob'ly a guard down there at the top of that long, steep pull, and he can git back there and notify 'em if anybody is comin'. C'mon."

"Was you expectin' that signal?" asked Sleepy.

"No reason to expect it, and I don't even know what it might mean. But it's a cinch they ain't sendin' no warnin' about us."

"I shore hope they ain't," sighed Sleepy. "I've seen better places to be buried in than Painted Wells."

They rode within a hundred yards of the mine office, where they dismounted. It did not require much time to discover that the light was in the assay office, a tiny bit of it showing beneath the door.

They walked up close to the door, where they could hear the hum of muffled conversation. The doorknob creaked and the door was opened an inch or so. Some one was evidently coming out, but had stopped to say something to those in the room.

"—can't figure that stuff by the ton," he said. "Looks to me a lot richer than any we've got before. There ain't much of—"

His explanation was broken when Hashknife flung his weight against the door, fairly knocking the man back into the center of the room. There were two men on their hands and knees beside a tarpaulin spread on the floor, on which were piled several pounds of ore.

The entrance of Hashknife and Sleepy was so sudden that the men merely gaped at them. Ortelle, the assayer, was on the floor, staring now at Hashknife through his thick glasses. He was looking at a ghost, and the sight did not please him. One of the men swore bitterly, but the gaze of the little assayer never wavered from Hashknife.

Sleepy looked them over calmly, his gun in his hand.

"That looks like high-grade stuff to me," observed Hashknife dryly.

Ortelle licked his dry lips and tried to swallow. He shook his head and his glasses fell off.

"What's the idea?" croaked one of the other men.

"I'd hate to be as ignorant as you are!" Hashknife smiled. "Go out and git our ropes, Sleepy. Mebbe you better look 'em over for guns."

One man had a bulldog .44 in his hip pocket, but the rest were unarmed. Sleepy brought the ropes, and they proceeded to show those ore thieves how a cowboy could hogtie a human. Ortelle didn't say a word. The appearance of Hashknife had numbed him.

"Goin' to leave 'em here or take 'em along?" asked Sleepy.

"That depends on Mr. Ortelle."

"Me?" whispered Ortelle. It was his first vocal effort.

"Yeah, you, feller." Hashknife hunched down in front of him.

"Where is Van Avery, and Ken Steele's wife?"

Ortelle blinked foolishly at Hashknife, who looked sharply at the other prisoners. Hashknife knew in a moment that none of these men knew anything about it.

"I don't know," whispered Ortelle. "I don't even know what you are talking about."

Hashknife took a deep breath and looked at Sleepy.

"Lord, that's good news!" he said thankfully. Turning back to the prisoners, he said—

"I'm leavin' you fellers here for awhile."

"Thank you," said one of the men.

Hashknife smiled as he added:

"As soon as you show me the signal that brings your guard back here. You see, I can't have him turnin' you loose."

The man swore caustically, but refused to talk further.

"What's the use?" choked out Ortelle. "They'd get him anyway. Lift up that window shade and leave it up."

Sleepy flipped it up. Five minutes later the guard came whistling up the road and stepped in past Hashknife and Sleepy, who were at the door to greet him. He was so shocked that he made no effort to escape. They roped him and added him to the collection.

"You'll hang for helpin' kidnap Van Avery and Mrs. Steele," Hashknife told him.

The guard's expression was comically blank.

"Somebody is shore crazy," he said.

"If they ain't, they will be." Hashknife chuckled as he and Sleepy went out and mounted their horses.

For several minutes the prisoners tried to loosen their bonds, but uselessly. Ortelle lay back, panting weakly.

"That was Hartley," he told them. "He was thrown into that old Kelley tunnel, and they blew down the hill on him. I tell you, I saw it and—and a gopher couldn't have dug out. He can't be out. There ain't no way for him to *ever* get out."

"You damn little fool!" roared one of the men. "Do you think a ghost could tie knots like these?"

"I—I can't help it. I've seen that cave-in, and I know. I wish I had my glasses."

"To hell with your glasses! Where they'll put you, you won't need glasses. What about that kidnapin', eh?"

"I don't know," wailed Ortelle. "They can't charge us with that."

"No? Hartley couldn't git out—but he is out."

"He couldn't," wailed Ortelle. "I can take you out there and show you why he couldn't."

"All right, I'll go with you: I'd give every hunk of gold I ever higraded, and every other cent I ever had, jist to be that far away from this damn place right now."

"Well, you ain't goin'," said the guard. "Take your medicine. Unless I'm damn badly mistaken, there's goin' to be plenty company."

"We ain't done nothin' but higrade," said another. "That is, all except Ortelle. He's been sort of a active member, you might say."

But Ortelle had nothing to say. He stared at the pile of gold ore on the tarpaulin and wondered how a man could be sealed up in a mine and still be outside and able to tie knots.

THE Yucca Saloon was crowded that evening. Silver Steele and Rick Nelson had decided to hold a mass meeting to see what could be done about the way things were going in the county; and they had decided to hold it in the Yucca. Ken Steele was there, his head swathed in bandages.

There had been much drinking that day, and the meeting was noisy.

"I don't see how you can accomplish much," said the sheriff. "It's been talked over all day, and there ain't been a damn one offered a suggestion."

"And another thing," added Handsome, "you don't know how many right in here belong to the bad bunch. I tell you, I suspect everybody—even Banty."

Steele was also dubious of any good resulting from a mass meeting.

"But we've got to do somethin'," he said. "A poor start is better than no start at all. What's your idea, Rick?"

Nelson thought it over grimly.

"As you say, we've got to make some kind of a start. Ault thought it might be a good idea for everybody to keep watch real close; and if they got anything to work on, let the committee know it. He thought a committee of five ought to be plenty. Say, Ault, Steele and myself, for three, and let the crowd pick the other two. Might include the sheriff, as far as that goes."

"Why report to any damn committee?" asked Handsome. "Believe me, if I got any kind of a line on them killers, St. Peter would have to appoint a committee to ask 'em questions. The thing to do is to shoot first and ask questions afterward. Mebbe we'd start another Boot Hill, but we'd soon clean 'em up."

Silver Steele managed to call the meeting to order. He recited the things that had happened, beginning with the ore-stealing at the Comanche Chief and the murder of Payzant, and making a brief summary of it all down to the kidnaping of Gladys Steele and Van Avery. Steele was a good talker, and the crowd listened to him. They laughed at the efforts of the bad bunch to kill off Van Avery, thinking he was a detective. By the time Steele finished talking they were ready to do anything to stop the murder and robbery in Painted Wells.

McCord shifted nervously. He wondered why Ike Berry didn't come back. There had been plenty of time for Ike to make that round trip to Porcupine. McCord wasn't worried about that stolen horse. And another thing bothered McCord—the box stolen from the freight wagon.

His eyes often shifted to Rick Nelson and Ed Ault.

Rick Nelson's speech was but a repetition of Steele's talk. Steele had told it all, and Nelson was only able to drive a few points home. He dilated on the murder of Dave Bush. Dave had been with him for a long time, and he hungered for a chance to put a rope around the necks of the men who murdered him.

There was no speakers' platform. The The men lounged against the bar, sat on the tables and chairs—even on the bar rail. Ed Ault stepped out from the bar, taking Rick Nelson's place as Nelson finished. And almost at the same moment Sleepy Stevens sauntered through the front door and came in at the rear of the crowd.

Some of the men moved aside to give Sleepy room, but he stopped at the end of the bar near the door, looking lazily around. He caught Handsome's eye, and the deputy edged back to him. Sleepy's lips barely moved, but Handsome caught the words, "Look out."

Casually his hands hitched his belt around a little. Banty Brayton was watching them. His eyes flashed around the room, and he dropped one hand to his side. The crowd seemed tense as Ault began speaking. His voice was a little husky.

"Men, we've got to clean up this country," he said. "You've heard Steele and Nelson. I can't add much to their talks. In fact, I can't add anythin'. I'd be—"

"Oh, yes, you could, Ault."

The voice was knife edged, pitched in a conversational key; but it fairly crackled in that smoke filled room.

Then came a sibilant hiss of indrawn breath, a choking curse.

Standing between them and the open rear door, like a gray ghost in the smoke, his long, lean face barely dis-

cernible beneath the low brim of his sombrero, stood Hashknife Hartley.

His head did not move as his keen eyes flashed from man to man.

"Lord!" exclaimed a strangled voice. It was Steve McCord.

Ault's jaw was sagging; he swayed weakly. The dead had come back.

A man, panting heavily, shoved in at the front door, stopping within a pace of Sleepy. It was Ike Berry.

"Hello, Fillmore," said Hashknife.

Berry jerked up his head, his face blanching.

"Steve, look out!" he screamed. "They got Brad!"

His right hand reached for his gun, but Sleepy's gun had swung up, flashed down, and Ike Berry fell in a huddle on the floor.

But many of the men did not see Berry; they were watching Hashknife.

"Ault! Nelson! McCord!" Hashknife snapped their names. "Thatcher is dead. Ortelle is all tied up for shipment. The game is over."

McCord came out of his trance like a wolf. Ghost or no ghost, Hashknife knew too much. Men dodged back. But McCord's gun hand had lost its cunning. He shot once, his bullet striking a rack of pool balls three feet wide of Hashknife. Then McCord doubled up and went down. The ghost rarely missed.

Nelson was not game in a pinch. He sprang back, intending to reach the rear door; but he crashed into Silver Steele, who tripped him, and they went down with a tremendous crash.

Ault didn't move as Hashknife came in close and shoved the muzzle of his gun against the gambler's ribs. He seemed hypnotized, unable to move. Other men helped Silver Steele hold the struggling Nelson, who was mouthing curses and denials as fast as he could talk.

Handsome put handcuffs on Ike Berry; but Ike didn't mind because he was still asleep from the blow Sleepy had given him with his gun.

"Talk fast, Ault," gritted Hashknife. "Where are they—down in Nelson's basement?"

Ault's frightened eyes shifted to the amazed crowd. He seemed unable to speak.

"Go ahead and talk," repeated Hashknife.

Ault drew a deep breath.

"Yes," he whispered, then grabbed at his throat as if unable to get his breath.

Hashknife did not turn his head as he said—

"Mrs. Ken Steele and Van Avery are in the basement under Nelson's assay office."

Ken Steele and his father were the first ones out of the place. Nelson was slumped down in a chair, quivering from fright and rage; but he was through making denials. The sheriff, his hands shaking, was putting handcuffs on Ed Ault. The reaction was almost too much for the sheriff of Painted Wells. It was difficult for him to believe that Hashknife was anything but a ghost.

They let Ault sit down in a chair. He had a gun in his coat pocket, but had made no move to draw it.

"Feel like talkin'?" asked Hashknife.

Ault licked his lips and shook his head.

"Where in heaven's name did you come from, Hashknife?" asked the sheriff.

"Oh, I've been around some. A number of these pleasant gentlemen knocked me out, put me in an old tunnel up there beyond the Comanche Chief and then dynamited the old timbers. Buried me alive. And that was their mistake; they should have buried me dead."

A CHEER sounded across the street, and Hashknife guessed that Gladys and Blondy had been found. Ault slumped lower in his chair, staring at Steve McCord, who had not moved.

Some of the crowd was coming back into the Yucca, and with them was Van Avery, hardly able to walk, his lips stiff

from the tight gag he had been wearing. His eyes laughed, but the lower part of his face was a frozen mask. Silver Steele was with them.

"They're all right!" he yelled. "We found 'em both down there in the dark, tied up tight and gagged."

Steele strode in close and looked down at Ault, who refused to meet his gaze.

"Damn you, Ault," said Steele bitterly, "you pulled that job! Gladys tore your mask off at the ranch, and you had to take her along. That alone would hang you."

But Ault made no comment. Steele turned to Hashknife.

"How did you do it, Hartley?" he asked huskily. "Think of it! Ault, Nelson and McCord! Why, they were goin' to head our vigilante gang. No wonder they froze at the sight of you. I thought you was a ghost; and I can imagine what they thought."

"I reckon I did give 'em a little shock." Hashknife smiled. "But they had a shock comin'. You've got to give a lot of credit to Sleepy and Van Avery. When you're playin' ghost, you've got to have a smart medium workin' for you."

But the crowd was impatient. They wanted to know things. Here was Steve McCord, pumped full of lead; Ike Berry, unconscious and handcuffed; Nelson, cursing everybody and everything, and Ault, as collapsed as a pin-pricked toy balloon.

They understood that Ken Steele's wife had torn the mask off Ed Ault's face, and that Ault was implicated in the kidnaping; but they wanted to know why these things had been done. The prosecuting attorney, red faced and puffing, shoved his way in. He had gathered scattered bits of what had happened.

Hashknife touched Ed Ault on the shoulder, but the gambler did not look up.

"A little talk can't hurt you, Ault," said Hashknife. "I've got the whole story, anyway. Thatcher killed Milt Corey, didn't he?"

Ault nodded.

"Ike Berry's right name is Fillmore, and he was the man who done all the safecrackin' for you."

"Well?" choked Ault. "You seem to know it all."

"Who killed Payzant?"

"Rick Nelson."

"You damn dirty liar!" screamed Nelson. "You was as much in that as I was. And I never killed him. Dave Bush hit him first, and all I done was—What do you want to tell so much for? Let 'em try to prove it."

The prosecuting attorney laughed cacklingly, and Nelson swore at him.

"You never went to Phoenix, Ault," said Hashknife. "You bought a ticket for Phoenix, but you got off at Porcupine. Then you helped the boys smash that safe at the Comanche Chief mine. I've got Ortelle and three other men all tied up at the mine. Ortelle loaded that gun for Ryan, didn't he?"

"Yes. I told the fool to get rid of that gun."

"And Ike Berry tried to kill Judge Frazer because he knew the old lawyer recognized him, eh?"

Ault nodded, his eyes on the floor. The crowd had massed around them, gasping at Hashknife's uncanny knowledge of what had been done.

"You had quite an organization, Ault. You made a lot of money. Higradin' the Comanche Chief wasn't enough for you, though. Do you know you made an awful mistake in killin' Dave Bush? You thought he doublecrossed you on that bank robbery money; so you shot him down for it. Pretty slick. You sent a swamper over to Nelson's store to buy kerosene after dark; and you had gunmen planted to git him when he went out to the storage shed."

Ault looked up at Hashknife, his face ashen.

"For God's sake, do you know everything?" he asked huskily.

"I know plenty. I know where that money is, and the bank will get it all

back. I wonder if you know where you made your biggest mistake? Well, one was when you gave me a chance to git out of that tunnel; but your really big one was when you gave Doc Smedley a chance to take that bullet out of Bill Neer's dead body.

"It was solid gold, Ault; a solid gold .45-70 bullet. Dipped 'em in quicksilver to make 'em look like lead, didn't you? I wondered why Neer would be unloadin' a rifle cartridge. Gold bullets are rare things, Ault.

"By the way, what was the idea of leavin' powder in them cartridges, when you reloaded 'em with gold bullets?"

"That was Bush's fool idea," said Ault. "He wanted 'em real, and he loaded a lot of 'em that way before Nelson made him leave the powder out. Bush was afraid somebody might get one by mistake and try to shoot it."

"I never did see a gold bullet," said Silver Steele.

"Well, I've got a whole case of 'em hidden down in the brush along the road," said Hashknife. "I stole 'em off Steve McCord's wagon. He was takin' 'em to Porcupine, where he'd cook 'em down in his own molds and send 'em to the mint from the Hellbender mine.

"Our fussy friend, Mr. Nelson over there, ran the gold into bullets in his basement and handed 'em over the counter to the X8X cow outfit. If anybody got suspicious and examined their load, all they'd find would be innocent lookin' cartridges."

Silver Steele snorted loudly. It was clear enough to him now.

"I reckon Steve McCord wasn't so awful worried about them shells, 'cause he thought mebbe Brad Thatcher had stolen 'em. Well, I don't mind tellin' you that Brad Thatcher ain't goin' to steal no more. And here's somethin' for Mr. Rick Nelson to chew on. It'll interest Mr. Ault, too. Mr. Nelson struck some mighty rich ore on that prospect where Payzant was killed. The vein dipped in under Corey's property; so Mr. Nelson schemed to get that property. As long as Milt Corey was alive, he'd block Mr. Nelson; so they killed Mr. Corey, stole back the ten thousand dollars, breaking the Diamond C; and they intended buyin' the place from the bank. If that vein holds good, I don't reckon the Corey family will be broke long. I guess Payzant found out what I did, and they killed him. They tried to kill me, but it didn't take."

THE crowd parted to let in the Corey family. Ma Corey was in the lead, and she came straight to Hashknife. For several moments she held both his hands, and then reached up and kissed him. She turned to the crowd, her eyes full of tears.

"I've never been in a saloon before." She sobbed. "I never kissed any man, except my husband and my son-in-law. But right now I could kiss all of you."

Hashknife laughed and put his arm around her.

"That's all right," he said. "I shore appreciate that kiss."

"And Ken has been cleared?" asked Elene. "Somebody said—"

"You betcha!" exclaimed Handsome. "Clean as a dollar."

Elene turned to Hashknife, her eyes shining.

"You've been wonderful," she said softly. "Just wonderful."

"Aw, shucks, I never done anythin', Elene."

"Do I have to climb up on something to kiss you?"

"Bend over, cowboy," gurgled Van Avery. "That's the stuff!"

Hashknife's leathery face was as red as a beet, but he gave Elene a hug and whispered in her ear—

"Don't forget that Blondy was my big helper."

"I won't," she whispered.

Hashknife turned to the sheriff.

"Banty, if you'll look in the brush jist off to the right of where I turned that freight wagon around down there, you'll find a case of rifle cartridges with gold

bullets. And down in the cellar of the Corey house, under the cot, you'll find that sack of money, which belongs to the bank."

Hashknife looked old and weary as he walked to the doorway. Silver Steele gripped his hand, but did not say anything. Blondy Van Avery was speaking, and Hashknife stopped to listen.

"Everybody around here thought I was a detective," he said. "I suppose some of you thought I acted a fool to disguise myself. But I didn't; I merely acted natural. My name is really Van Avery.

"You see, Jim Payzant was my uncle, and I thought a lot of him. He was sort of an ideal to me, because I've always wanted to be a detective. I was in San Francisco when I heard of his death; so I came out here to see if I couldn't find out who killed him.

"But I don't want to be a detective now. I just want to stay here. I've got some great ideas. In fact, I've had a great idea ever since I got on that train at Porcupine, with some of Steve McCord's gang shooting at me through the window. My idea was right there on that train, and—" Van Avery grinned foolishly— "I've been working with that idea in mind ever since. As Sleepy Stevens would say, 'I'm scared to death that everythin' is goin' to be all right'."

Elene's face was red now; but she smiled at Van Avery as he put his arm around Mrs. Corey's shoulder.

Hashknife stepped outside. Sleepy met him, and without a word they went out to their horses. Mounting quickly, they circled away from the main street and headed south. Their job was over and they were going away.

"We'll pick up our warbags at the ranch," said Hashknife, as they struck the road below town.

"Shore," agreed Sleepy.

They rode along silently for a mile.

"Got a match?" asked Sleepy.

He scratched the match on the leg of his chaps and looked at a slip of yellow paper. Just a glance, and he flipped the match away.

"It's made out to you, pardner," he said.

"What's made out to me?" asked Hashknife.

"Silver Steele's check for ten thousand dollars."

"I wish he hadn't done that," said Hashknife slowly. "Ten thousand! More money than we ever expected to own in the world. Still, I wish he hadn't done that."

"So do I," said Sleepy. "I shore wish he hadn't done that."

Hashknife chuckled softly.

"You liar."

"I'm not—honest. I wish he hadn't."

"Hadn't what, Sleepy?"

"Why, made it out to you, of course."

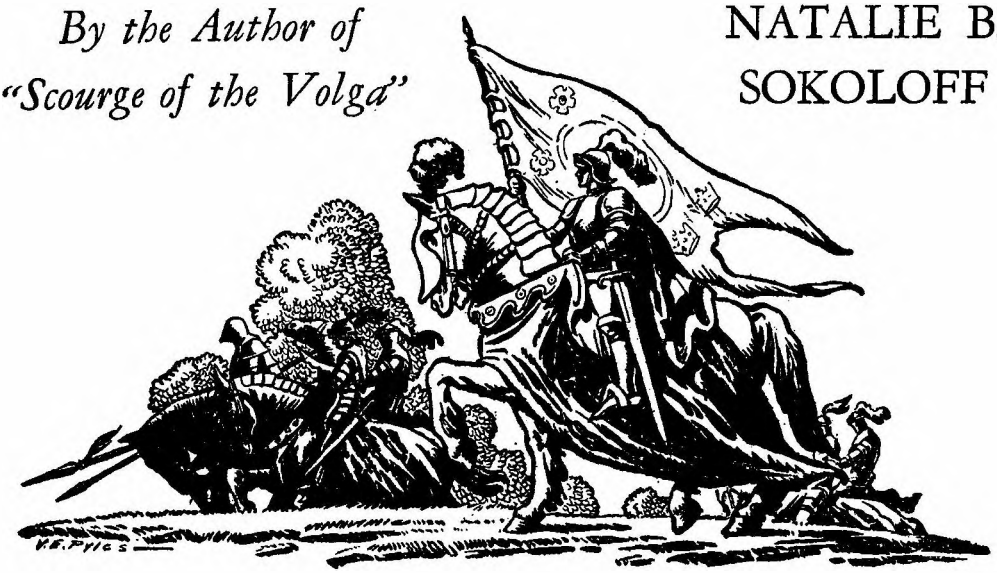
And they rode knee to knee down the dusty highway, free to do as they pleased. The tall hills were calling again.

THE END

The BLACK PRINCE

By the Author of "Scourge of the Volga"

NATALIE B. SOKOLOFF



IT WAS one of those narrow stone cells in the castle or fortress of some Swedish baron, more dreadful than the dungeons of Moscow Kremlin or the mysterious torture chambers of Spain. That much Nikolai grasped at once.

He was lying on moldy straw in the cell. The air was close, with the sickening smell of rats, damp stone and stale water. There was dim light filtering in from somewhere above his head—a warm light, the mass of bluish shadows retreating into the corners, while it spread through the gloomy chamber in a yellow haze, striking the wall opposite and glowing there in a thin orange streak.

Cautiously Nikolai moved his numb limbs and, with a start of amazement, realized that he was neither bound nor chained. Instead of finding comfort in the discovery, however, his heart sank apprehensively at the mystery of it all. But he was still too dazed to think coherently. Slowly he raised himself and turned to see whence the light came. A crack in the wall was golden with it. He dragged himself nearer and put his eye to it.

He was gazing directly at one of the magnificent pageants characteristic of those feudal days.

In the baronial hall, which was immense, gloomy and serene as a cathedral, the Swedish King, Olaf the Pious, surrounded by his vassals, barons, and noble ladies and knights, was making merry on the eve of the battle that was to decide the fate of Moscow. High overhead the vaulted ceiling was lost in brown shadows. But below everything glowed and sparkled in the golden haze shed by numerous tapers, torches and enormous oil lamps suspended on heavy chains. Logs blazed in the two huge fireplaces.

A massive table, laden with gold and silver dishes, ran the length of the apartment. Around it, on low couches spread with bearskins, sat the brilliant company. Crowds of nobles and their ladies moved about in chatting, laugh-

ing groups. The hall was packed with them as was the balcony above, and up and down the broad stairs they strolled in a glittering stream. Rich stuffs, jewels, the steel of helmets and weapons dazzled the eye. The veils of the women fluttered; their trailing skirts rustled. Plumes waved in the men's fur hats. Green, red and yellow were their velvet doublets. And among them, to and fro, moved the brightly clothed pages, servants, jesters, musicians and guards.

The revelry was at its height. The noise of laughter mixed with the sound of gay music and the howl and bark of large dogs, fighting over bones flung to them from the table.

But through all this din and above it rose the shouts and enraged cries of the prisoners, crowding against the iron bars of the cells which were built in the wall at the end of the hall. Long haired, haggard, half naked, the Russian prisoners had long ceased to resemble anything human. Packed into their cage-like cells so that the revelers might enjoy eating and drinking in full view of their hungry eyes, they shook at the bars and shouted abuse at the feasters. Some of the poor wretches pleaded and cried for food. Their chains rattled.

The women laughed. A knight with a good humored oath would fling them a bone. If not snatched on the way by the dogs, it sometimes reached the cage, and then the prisoners pounced upon it, struggling among themselves and howling like dogs.

Nikolai, his eye to the crack, shuddered at the sight. He was destined for one of those cages, he knew. For that end he had been kept without food in the castle prison with hundreds of other Russians captured in the battle of Gdov. They had been brought out and rushed through the stronghold, ruddy with sunset, through massive gates and down a dark corridor. And suddenly iron fingers gripped his arm, and he had been jerked out of the crowd and thrust aside into a passage. He remembered the face of the man holding him, a woman's voice whispering excitedly—

"He'll do."

He had been given wine to drink and, suddenly terrified by the mystery of it all, he had started to struggle. A heavy blow on his head, and he had awakened in this cell . . .

HE DID not meditate on his personal fate, however. He was thinking of the Russian army fleeing toward Pskov, the last remaining stronghold on the road to Moscow.

"If Pskov falls," he muttered to himself, "Russia is doomed."

Every man, however insignificant, he reflected bitterly, was needed there at Pskov—and here he was a prisoner, helpless, far away from the spot where the fate of his country was to be decided.

He gasped. There was a commotion in the hall below and in the throng on the stairs. A man was descending. Nikolai recognized him as the one who had thrust him into the passage. A tall, lean man, simple of dress and serene in manner, wearing long black hose, high boots, doublet of dark green velvet. Black hair framed his dark face. There was something domineering and sinister about him. Knights and ladies made haste to give him passage, bowing low before him. He walked straight to the table and, bending over the king, spoke in a low voice.

The king, a heavy man, was busy eating. He raised his large face, flushed with the food and drink he had already consumed, and frowned.

"No, Swendburg," his voice boomed through all the din and clatter. "The barons will be starting soon, yes, but I will follow later. There's no haste," he went on, quickly wiping his greasy fingers on a towel which a page was handing him. "The troops are there. Pskov will be ours tomorrow. And then Moscow—" His eyes sparkled. "Taking Pskov means we'll be feasting in

the Kremlin before the month is out."

"Oh, we shall take Pskov, Sire," one of the barons cried. "With the Black Prince, what but victory—"

He stopped short, meeting the king's steady gaze.

"I had not mentioned the Black Prince," the king said slowly.

From under his shaggy eyebrows his black eyes looked cruel and hard, but courage was there; his strong features, ugly with debauchery, were aglow with the spirit of chivalry hidden deep under his gross exterior. His graying hair fell about his shoulders in disorder, and a peacock feather nodded in his fur hat. For ease he had removed his sword, coat, armor and scarlet doublet, and now sat in his white shirt girdled with a silver belt.

"I had not mentioned the Black Prince," he repeated quietly.

He looked at the nobles, whose faces suddenly showed apprehension. And Nikolai, studying them intently, realized that it was not for themselves they were afraid, but for the man mentioned.

Then, as if recollecting something, the king's expression changed. He laughed.

"Heigh-ho!" he roared, striking the table with his huge fist. "More wine here! Let's make merry!"

He flung his arm about the woman in blue at his side, and she nestled close to him, laughing and chatting gaily. Nikolai, in the cell overhead, started at the sound of her voice. It was the same voice he had heard in the darkness of the passage.

The crack through which he watched was some ten feet above the head of the table where the woman sat next to the king. There was a great deal of love-making going on, for this was a royal banquet; but no one was so gay as she. Yet he caught her trembling as if with terror, and there was suffering and dread in her eyes even while she laughed. The diamonds in the low crown which she wore over her white veil told him that she was a princess of the realm.

"I was only thinking," said one of the barons, "that one never sees the Black Prince at a feast."

"But tomorrow on the battlefield," another spoke, "he will appear unexpectedly, as always, and lead us to victory and on to Moscow."

Swendburg was bending over the king again.

"No," the king cried, "I'll start later. I've something to do."

Laughing gaily, the princess clutched at his arm, trying to divert his attention, but he pushed her aside roughly.

"I've something to do before I leave the castle," he repeated. "Yes." He glanced at the nobles significantly. The drinks were beginning to tell on him. "Something of vast importance," he muttered half to himself.

"Sire," said Swendburg quickly as if in warning.

But the barons had caught a strange note in the king's voice. A terrible suspicion assailed them. Men sprang to their feet, hands gripping the hilts of their swords.

A swift glance passed between Swendburg and the princess.

"The king," said Swendburg quickly, "refers to a joke."

"Yes, yes," the king took him up hastily. "A joke I had prepared for your entertainment, my lords."

A diversion was created by the servants bearing gaily feathered pheasants on gold platters. Cooked in wine and stuffed with raisins, they looked like living birds, so ingeniously had the castle chefs assembled their original covering.

The barons resumed their seats. Nikolai saw Swendburg walk away and disappear in the brilliant throngs.

THE king meanwhile was giving orders to the guards, pointing toward the cells where the prisoners shook at the bars, shouting abuse at the revelers and crying for food.

"Three," said the king. "No, four. Give them—no," he cried, "bring them here. Yes, here! To my table!"

A sudden noise made Nikolai spring away hastily, back into the shadows of his narrow cell. Some one was fumbling with the lock outside. The door swung open slowly; light streamed in, and a man carrying a lantern entered quickly. It was Swendburg. Holding the light high, he cast a troubled look toward the straw-littered corner and a sigh of relief escaped him as Nikolai moved.

"You all right?" he asked briskly. "Here," he went on, producing bread, cold meat and fruit out of his pockets and throwing them into Nikolai's lap, "eat."

"What—what am I here for?" Nikolai stammered.

The other regarded him thoughtfully.

"That, as everything in the world," he said slowly, "rests with God and the king."

He opened the door cautiously, listened intently and went out, closing it after him. Nikolai heard the key turn in the lock. He ate hurriedly, then crept back to his peephole.

There was a commotion in the banquet hall. All who could had flocked to the table while the rest looked on from the balcony and the stairs, applauding and laughing merrily at the king's latest whim. The two couches next to his had been cleared of the barons and their ladies; and now four Russian prisoners taken out of the cages sat there. Haggard, wild haired, half naked, they were devouring the sumptuous dishes set before them while the king, his arms akimbo, roared with mirth. His jester, slapping him on the shoulder with his professional insolence, cried that their manners alone deserved titles of nobility, and he was rewarded for his sally by a burst of laughter from the women and a sharp clap on the ear from one of the barons.

"Never give pain on the eve of battle," the jester cried, shaking his rattler. "Bad luck."

"Indeed, Sire," cried the barons, "it's time we started."

"Yes," said the king. "But don't wait for me. Go; I'll follow at once."

He rose. But the princess clutched at his arm.

"No," she cried playfully, and her laughter rang false, for she was shaking with agitation. "The bard, Sire. I must hear him."

Laughing indulgently, he resumed his seat. She nestled close to him, chatting gaily. Suddenly Nikolai saw her hand stealing its way quickly along the king's girdle, her trembling fingers fumbling desperately with an object attached to it—a long silver key. Once the king turned sharply, and her hand fell away. Then again Nikolai saw it creeping stealthily along the king's girdle. Her fingers shook as they tried desperately to snap open the ring on which the key hung. Then suddenly she had it in her hand. Throwing her veil over it, she fell back on the cushions, exhausted.

Intent on watching her, Nikolai had not noticed Swendburg approach the table. He stood, bending over the king, his arm resting along the back of the couch. His hand opened and closed over the key as the princess slipped it into his fingers. Then, laughing politely at something the king had said, he walked unhurriedly away into the assemblage.

Gradually a marked change had come in the crowd's aspect. It had thinned. The barons, nobles and knights, putting on their armor and taking up their weapons, were leaving the castle in groups and singly. The women too began to disperse. Trailing their rustling skirts, they ascended the stairs to the balcony leading into the bedchambers. One after another the torches went out; the tapers were extinguished.

Shadows crept over the great hall, the one light shining about the table scattered with remnants of the feast where the king sat on with the princess and a group of ladies, pages, jesters and guards. A white haired bard, sitting at the king's feet, was playing his bandore

and singing ballads in a low voice. It was too dark now to see the cells, but the silence there told Nikolai that the prisoners had been led elsewhere. The four men who had eaten at the king's table were nowhere to be seen.

A stealthy noise at the door of his cell made him move away from the crack. Some one was fumbling with the lock again, and the sound rang ominously in the stillness. A shadow seemed to have fallen over the castle, disturbed but faintly by the clap of horses' hoofs as the troops clattered over the cobbles somewhere below, and the clash and creak of the chains as the drawbridge was lowered to let the soldiers across the moat.

The door opened, and Swendburg with the lantern stood on the threshold.

"Come," was all he said.

Nikolai obeyed. Emerging into a passage, they hurried along it, turned into another and, ascending a winding stairway, entered a moonlit chamber. Swendburg seemed in terrible haste. Running his hand quickly along the wall, he pressed his shoulder against it. Something creaked, moved. An aperture was revealed. Motioning to Nikolai, he slipped through it after him.

THEY were in a luxurious, dimly lighted bedchamber. Curtains, suspended from a gold crown, hid the great bed. All was still save for the tread of sentinels pacing outside the door. Casting a furtive glance in that direction, Swendburg closed the opening. It was concealed, Nikolai noticed, under one of the larger ikons covering that wall. Swendburg lifted a tapestry. A door was disclosed. With a long silver key—the key which Nikolai had seen on the king's girdle—Swendburg unlocked the door quickly, pushed him into a narrow passage and, using the same key, opened a door on the right.

They entered a large cell, circular in shape, evidently situated in one of the round towers of the castle. Bare, cold and dark but for the flicker of a wick in a sconce on the wall. A man, hardly discernible in the shadows, was sitting on the couch, his head in his hands, and he looked up indifferently. But at sight of Swendburg he sprang to his feet with a cry of indignation and amazement.

Nikolai stepped back, gasping, and stood motionless, rigid with superstitious awe.

It was the Black Prince, hero of the Swedes, the dreaded enemy of the Russians and the wonder of the century.

He was dressed in black and he wore what was known as the double cap. Close fitting, gathered about the neck on a velvet band, with three slits for the eyes and mouth, it hid his head and face completely.

To this headgear, originated by the monks of one of the Teutonic orders who considered it a sin to expose the features, men of all walks in life had taken recourse to hide their faces if ravaged by leprosy or the plague, common in those days.

But no one knew why the Black Prince wore it. He never removed the double cap. This and the fact that he was never seen except on the battlefield, his sudden appearance there, his many victories—all had their threads in that cloak of mystery which the populace had woven about him. Some said that he did not exist at all but was the spirit of victory itself. But every one knew that it was he who had swept the Swedish armies over the lands around the Baltic Sea, making all princes there vassals of Olaf the Pious.

It was his sudden appearance at the battles of Neva, Lake Volhov and Derpt, instilling fresh courage into the wavering ranks, that had brought victory to the Swedes. Eccentric, mysterious and —though a prince of the realm—shrinking from official position in command of the army, it was he who in moments of danger had led the troops against the enemy.

At his cry Swendburg stepped forward, imploring silence.

"You," the prince murmured. "You here? To laugh at me, to taunt me, to gloat?"

"Shh—for God's sake, Prince," Swendburg cried. "Be quick. Change clothes with this man." He motioned at Nikolai. "I will take you to my castle and keep you prisoner there. It's not far."

"What madness is this?" cried the other. "I to follow you, my worst enemy—"

"This is a matter of life and death, Prince," Swendburg cried. "We've no time to lose."

He bent quickly, whispered something.

The prince suddenly stepped back in horror.

"But why?" he muttered hoarsely. "Why this sudden decision?"

"We are to attack Pskov tomorrow," Swendburg explained hurriedly. "The king is leading the troops. He is afraid that in his absence your presence here might be discovered. But hurry. Change."

"How can I trust you?" the prince cried. "You hate me. It was you who made the king see a rival in me. You feared me, you and my sister. You two wanted power, and I was in your way. For after the king, who comes first in Sweden? I, the Black Prince. You've poisoned the king's mind against me—convinced him I was aiming to seize the throne. And, jealous of my popularity, he was with ease persuaded to believe you."

"I deny nothing," Swendburg said quietly. "With you out of the way, the princess and I can do what we like with the king."

"And I—I would have died for him," cried the prince. "You know that. I have only one aim—to serve him. My victories prove that. But my dream was to make the Czar his vassal. And now, when Moscow is near, you and my sister—"

"It's for her sake I'm doing this," Swendburg interrupted him. "She cares nothing for you, but she could not bear to have you done away with. It would have been unnatural had she felt otherwise. So she implored me to take you away tonight. She is keeping the king downstairs."

The prince laughed his scorn and then shouted wildly—

"You let her amuse the king!"

"She and I love power," Swendburg reminded him coldly. "The king is but a means to that end. But come," he cried. "Be quick. Of course, I must have your word," he added, "that you will make no attempt at escape."

"You have it," said the prince quietly. "I realize that I have no choice."

Swiftly he changed clothes with Nikolai and stood in the latter's rags, removing the double cap. Watching him, Nikolai shook with awe.

"Perhaps it's true what the people say," he thought, "that he's no ordinary man but a god or a spirit . . ."

The prince took off the double cap, and both Nikolai and Swendburg recoiled in horror at the face revealed. Disfigured by numerous sword cuts, it was like one enormous open wound, red with skinless flesh. Swendburg hastened to throw him a voluminous cloak, and the prince quickly wrapped himself in it, arranging the hood about his face so that only his eyes were visible.

Nikolai, dressed in the prince's clothes, was suddenly filled with misgivings. He looked toward the door, then recollecting the cages in the banquet hall, thought better of it. He put on the double cap and stretched himself on the couch, drawing the coverlet up to his neck, as Swendburg ordered. The latter then hurried out, followed by the prince. The door was locked.

The sound of their footsteps died away in the distance and all was silence.

Again a shadow seemed to fall over the castle. Evidently every one but the king and his retinue was already well on his way to Pskov.

NIKOLAI lay very still. Suddenly a nearby door banged open. He heard voices raised in argument, the rustle of a woman's dress, footsteps hurrying along the passage. Then he saw the king's large face pressed against the bars of the small opening in the cell door, looking at him.

"So," said the king slowly, "you do not even deign to rise in my presence? Rise!" he shouted in sudden rage. "Rise in the presence of your Majesty, Prince!"

"Let him be," the princess's voice cried from behind his shoulder. Her white veil fluttered against the king's long hair. "Leave him alone, Sire."

"It is as you have said," he cried to her. "The traitor's conduct now proves it beyond all doubt. See how insolent, how arrogant he is with me, his king. I now will recognize the danger. It was my throne he was aiming at, just as you had said, you and Swendburg."

The king pushed her aside roughly. Hate in his eyes, he peered through the shadows toward the couch. Yet fear lurked in his gaze.

"Rise, Prince," he shouted, "and come before me. I want to talk to you."

But much as Nikolai wished to obey, he restrained himself, fearing that at close range the king would guess the truth. He moved his head slightly and flung out his black-clad arm in an appealing gesture, leaving it to the king's whim to interpret it as he would.

"Not feeling well, eh?" the king muttered. "Listen, then. What I wanted to say is this: We are to take Pskov without you, Prince. Yes. And I, not you, will be the hero. It will be I leading the army, not you. It will be I, not you—" his voice rose triumphantly —"the crowds will be acclaiming, the populace paying homage to, calling their savior. And Moscow—I will enter Moscow, not you. And into the Kremlin—"

There was a sudden noise behind the wall along which Nikolai lay. The tread of heavy feet, the clank of weapons. A number of men were ascending the stairs leading into the tower.

The king also heard the sound. He listened; then, casting a quick, furtive look at Nikolai, hurried away. Nikolai heard him unlocking a door, letting some one in, closing it quickly again, shutting out the clank of weapons. The king's head appeared at the grating. He was unlocking the cell door, pushing it open. Four men slipped in, and he banged it shut and turned the key.

Nikolai lay very still, conscious of the king's eyes staring at him through the shadows. The four men were his fellow prisoners whom he had seen eating at the king's table. At sight of them he had involuntarily made to spring to his feet and the coverlet had slipped to the floor so that they saw him dressed in black from head to foot and wearing the double cap. They had stepped back in amazement, awed by the thought that they were in the presence of the Black Prince and that it was concerning him they had had their orders.

Nothing could be heard for awhile but the heavy breathing of the king, watching them all intently. Spurred by his presence, the men hesitated no longer. They rushed to the couch and sprang upon it. Nikolai struggled desperately. A pair of quick, strong hands gripped him by the throat. He gulped.

"Brothers," he gasped hoarsely in Russian.

The hold on his throat relaxed. He saw the faces bending over him grow blank with astonishment. He met their eyes, saw suddenly a gleam of cunning dawning there and knew that wits were working swiftly in those four great tousled heads.

"We've been promised freedom for this," one of them whispered.

Nikolai was again struggling desperately with them.

"Now keep still," came the order.

He lay motionless, holding his breath, while they scrambled to their feet and stood looking down at him and at each

other. Then one of them spread the coverlet over him. All this unhurriedly, like men who were doing only what was expected of them in the circumstances. Then they turned to face the king.

"Is he—is he dead?" he muttered.

They nodded.

The king turned and called in the direction of the bedchamber.

"You may begin now, Holy Father."

The invisible monk at once started reciting the long mass for the dead in a voice that rang hollowly against the stone walls. The king unlocked the door, entered the cell and stood undecided, casting furtive glances toward the couch. Evidently death itself could not diminish the awe and dread the Black Prince had inspired in him.

Nikolai lay very still. Suddenly he heard the king give an order—something about "the well". That iron ring he had seen in the floor of the cell . . . His limbs grew cold. He was drenched with sweat. It was the end. The men after a moment's hesitation began removing the slab of stone. A thought flashed through Nikolai's brain that this was the fate intended for the Black Prince. He was about to spring up when, with a swish of her skirts, the princess entered.

She glanced toward the couch and shuddered, then at the men; and her eyes grew wide with apprehension. She seized the king's arm.

"No," she cried. "No hands but mine shall touch him, Sire."

There were genuine tears in her eyes, for she was seized with fear lest the king, on seeing the body closer, should guess the truth.

"Come, I can't bear it here," she sobbed, clutching at his arm. "This awful cell and that monk praying—"

"Did you think me capable of depriving your brother of decent burial?" the king cried in indignation. "Am I not called Olaf the Pious? Moreover, the prince was a member of our royal house. It's only—"

"Yes. But come," the princess urged, drawing him toward the door. "It's time you started. They are waiting for you—"

The clank of arms, the clap of horses' hoofs and the sound of loud voices had long been coming from below the tower window; and now the blast of trumpets, announcing the appearance of the barons who were to accompany the king, rang sharply through the night. The woman's eyes shone at the sound.

"Pskov," she cried. "Remember, Sire, the fate of your nation depends on your taking Pskov. And then—"

"We'll be feasting in the Kremlin before the month is out," he cried.

Motioning the men to go, he followed them with the princess into the passage. Nikolai heard him letting them out, closing the door after them, then hurrying to his bedchamber after the woman.

FOR awhile all was still but for the voice of the monk whose solemn words fell on Nikolai's ears like the toll of a funeral bell. Behind the wall where he lay there was a strange silence. He had been aware of the guards waiting there on the stairs, but no sound had reached him to indicate that they were leading the men away. Moving cautiously, he put his ear to the stones and listened. Something was happening there on the other side of the wall—a muffled noise as of a struggle. Then distinctly the thud of something heavy striking the floor. He clenched his fists, for he knew what it meant. The guards were killing the Russians so that the secret of the tower cell, zealously preserved by the king, would die with them. And now they were descending the stairs. Again all was still except for the monk's voice.

Removing the double cap and thrusting it into the pocket of the black doublet, Nikolai slipped from the couch and crept to the door. A gasp of joy escaped him. The door was ajar. Carried away by his ambitious plans of Moscow, the

king had forgotten to lock it. Through it and down the passage Nikolai crept stealthily. The monk was still praying.

Nikolai saw him in the dimly lighted bedchamber, kneeling in front of the ikons. His back was to Nikolai, and from beyond the door came the tread of the sentinels, pacing outside.

The room was in disorder, testifying to the king's hurried departure. Garments were strewn about, and among them Nikolai caught the glitter of steel. A sword. Holding his breath, his eyes glued to the monk's back, he started creeping toward it. Already his hand was on the hilt, gripping it, when suddenly his foot stumbled against a low stool, knocking it over with a thud.

The monk was instantly on his feet and wheeling round. His mouth opened. But before he could utter a sound Nikolai had sprung to his side and was gripping him by the throat, choking him. He had snatched a sash from the heap of garments on the way and now stuck it quickly into the monk's gaping mouth. Then, dragging him to the ikons, he swung open the one concealing the secret aperture, forced the monk through it and, springing in after him, bore him to the floor. Nikolai bound the monk swiftly, stripped him of his robe, then sprang back into the room for the sword. Returning, he closed the opening and, stepping over the monk's motionless form, ran down the stairs.

A window showed him a patch of sky, gray with paling night. Everything was still. Evidently the king had already left the castle. But just as Nikolai, after reaching the arch giving access into a narrow alley, was debating how best to make use of these favorable circumstances, a loud clatter warned him of the guards' approach. He shrank back hastily. Soldiers crowded into the alley. He watched them, thinking they would be moving on. But evidently they were stationing themselves there indefinitely. He heard them talking and caught a glimpse of their helmets and spears, gleaming faintly in the dim light. He waited.

Time passed. The walls across the way glowed rosily with dawn. Sun rays glided over the gray cobbles. He could wait no longer.

His dress and sword concealed under the monk's robe, he pulled the hood closer about his face and with his head bent, his hands thrust into the loose sleeves, walking sedately, he emerged from the dark archway. He walked past the guards. Giving him but a vague stare, they moved aside to let him pass. Then suddenly one darted forward. Nikolai stopped, paralyzed.

"There's your horse, Holy Father," the soldier cried. "Your man's gone into the tavern. But the guard there is holding your mount."

The guard was already hurrying toward them, leading a saddled horse. He held the bridle respectfully while Nikolai mounted. Slowly, his heart in his mouth, his blood tingling with excitement, his limbs rigid with terror, Nikolai swung himself into the saddle. He nodded to the soldiers with all the unconcern he could master; then at a leisurely trot set off down the lane in the direction of the moat.

All was movement and noise now in the castle. Brilliant patches of color were the dresses of the women and children hurrying along the sunlit alleys. And dark and cool were the slanting shadows cast by the massive walls, towers and ramparts. The drawbridge had been lowered to let in the peasants —gay crowds clattering across in wagons, carts and on horseback toward the marketplace.

Pushing his way against this noisy stream, Nikolai reached the green fields on the other side, and at a brisk pace struck northward along the winding road.

He had caught up with the stream of wagons and crowds of merchants, pedlers and monks on horseback moving in the direction of the battle-field where their wares would be welcomed by the soldiers, when the thunder of guns told

him that the struggle had begun. And suddenly the scene of it came into view.

THROUGH clouds of smoke Nikolai saw the two armies in full action—the green doublets of the Swedes, the black coats of the Cossacks and the red kaftans of the Russians. Spears, armor and swords flashed silver in the sunshine. A rain of arrows speckled the air, which was torn with the clash of weapons, triumphant shouts, screams and cries of the wounded.

The Russians were retreating; and Nikolai saw Olaf the Pious, his large face flushed with triumph, leading his reserves to strike the death blow into the ranks of the desperately struggling enemy. Flinging off the monk's robe, Nikolai put on the Black Prince's double cap, spurred and at a gallop rushed into the midst of the troops following behind the king.

A tremendous shout of joy rose at his sudden appearance.

"The Black Prince! The Black Prince!"

The cries drowned the tumult of battle.

Rising in the stirrups, his black figure and head outlined sharply among the bright coated soldiers, Nikolai waved his sword. Already men were flocking to him from all sides. Suddenly turning, he set off at a gallop, and the troops swept after him shouting:

"Victory! The Black Prince. It's he! Victory—"

He was leading them straight into the low ravine between two wooded hills, which the Swedes, fearing a trap in that narrow passage, had scrupulously avoided.

Straight into it they now rushed, blind to all but the Black Prince, terrible and invincible. A storm of arrows descended upon them from above; and all at once they became a whirlpool of struggling horses and men, as suddenly they sensed the danger and endeavored frantically to turn back. And they fell, pierced by hundreds of arrows, and were trampled instantly by their own men who, rushing after them, were creating another whirlpool, trying in vain to struggle back, out of the treacherous pass.

From all sides the Russians were rushing upon them in a swift and terrible avalanche. The black coated Cossacks, the fierce Muscovites in their red kaftans! They were wild, shouting triumphantly, brandishing their swords that flashed silver in the sun. Down from the two slopes the Russian lines, reforming, descended in swift, overwhelming hordes upon the panic stricken Swedes. And from the plain they came rushing into the ravine, fiercely cutting right and left with their swords, blocking the Swedes' escape out of the treacherous pass at both ends. What had seemed certain victory for the Swedes quickly became a rout.

Searching for their wounded at sunset that day, the conquerors unearthed from the mass of mutilated bodies that of the mysterious Black Prince. They removed the double cap and stared in amazement to see the tousled head and homely face of their own Russian soldier. He had concealed his face and thus given his life that Moscow might be saved. That much they understood.

To this day, from all corners of the land, people flock to pay him homage in the small chapel that was built on that spot to commemorate the famous battle of Narova. But when strangers inquire the name of this hero whose fame has withstood the tread of centuries, outliving even that of many Czars, the old priest in charge spreads his hands and shakes his head sadly.

"His name is unknown. Could it be otherwise? He was one of many forgotten thousands—a common soldier."

The EAST INDIAMAN

By ERNEST H. BARBOUR

MOST of us know that an Indiaman was a ship plying between England and India in the latter half of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, but few of us know anything about the ships themselves. Just what was an East Indiaman?

The famous East India Company, or the Honorable John Company, as it was also called, was a chartered company of London merchants who had conquered most of India. The trade they received from the latter country was enormous, and they not only maintained a great mercantile establishment, but also their own army and fleet. The vessels were known as Indiamen.

The Indiaman was a stout vessel, built for comfort and safety, not for speed; and because of the many pirates in those days the ships were all heavily armed. Their officers were all former naval men. The crew was under strict naval discipline and wore uniforms; musket, gun and cutlass drill were held daily, just as on a man-o'-war. The vessels themselves were great frigates of imposing appearance, their tompions painted red and their gun ports checkered in white and black.

As we have said above, their first consideration was safety, and it is said that they took in sail every night, no matter what weather conditions confronted them. They were the last word in seaworthiness, however, and weathered the fiercest storms in safety. Their cargoes were very rich; so rich indeed that it is said that the people of the Scilly Isles, who lived primarily on the salvage from wrecks off their treacherous coast, used to pray publicly to the Lord to send them an Indiaman.

The Indiaman was not only the safest vessel of its day, but the most comfortable. They put to sea like floating farmyards. Cows, pigs, turkeys, chickens and rabbits all had their proper places aboard so that there was never any lack of fresh milk and eggs and meat. The sleeping quarters were luxurious and the saloons and smoking rooms were models of comfort. Even though privateers and pirates roamed the seas in those days like hawks in a chicken yard, the Indiamen feared no one, and proved their metal in many a hard fought encounter.

In the year 1804, when England was fighting Napoleon, the French made a determined effort to capture the East India Company's China fleet, and sent a strong force of men-o'-war to intercept them.

They met the Indiamen in the Straits of Malacca, but although far superior in strength to the English vessels, the Frenchmen received a sound thrashing.

The captains of the Indiamen had enviable positions. Not only did they receive generous wages, but they were allowed two personal servants, and extra food and wine for entertainment. In addition to this, they were allowed to do private trading for themselves, and a profit of $40,000 or $50,000 on a single voyage was quite usual. No wonder most of them retired wealthy.

In 1834 the company's charter expired, and with it the monopoly of the India and China trade. Fast clipper ships, the majority of which were American built and manned, snapped up the profitable tea and spice trade, and the Indiaman gradually disappeared from the seas.

By the Author of "The Were-Cougar"

RAYMOND S. SPEARS

The TUNE *of the* POISON DEAD

YANKEE COLE, a steel jawed trapper, built his main line cabin opposite the Wolf Track Brand outfit owned by Judson Wale. As it was a twenty-seven mile ride to Dugout, he seldom went to town; and only occasional visitors ever saw him in the Bad Lands. Few knew where he had his camp in Stewpan Hole, which was a round, high walled basin sunk in the prairie to a depth of more than two hundred feet at the level of Cave Creek flats. He lived there with a four-year-old dog whose head was wide like a wolf's but whose body was long, gangling and agile like a sight-runner's. Every fur season Cole killed from two to five hundred dollars' worth of fur, shooting ahead of his dog, Mutt; besides what he caught in steel traps and snare loops.

One morning Cole missed Mutt, who always slept out on a knoll in front of the cabin, rain, snow or starlight. After breakfast the trapper went down to his pasture, caught a horse and circled around, worried about his dog. It never stayed away long. Across the creek up on the prairie, Cole found a dead coyote lying on its side, with its neck twisted around, lips drawn back from its teeth, eyes bulging. And a few hundred feet beyond was another one.

"Poison!" gasped Yankee Cole, terror for his dog gripping his thoughts.

Circling, he found a dead cow. He

recognized some little white dots scattered over the sod—poison pills. Some one had planted them for a quarter of a mile around the big bait. The cow was one of the Wolf Track brand, and possibly had died a natural death, though the poison pills made that unlikely.

Looking fearfully over the rolling land, eyes quickened by what he had seen, Cole noticed a faint quivering in the grass toward the south on a low mound. Riding toward it, he found the quiver was caused by the prairie wind blowing through the hair of his dog. Mutt lay in the final spasm of death.

The trapper would have mourned Mutt if the dog had been just an ornery, useless beast not commercially worth the alkali water it drank. But in three hunting years Mutt had brought to bag nine hundred and forty-six dollars in furs and wild hides, and so much game that he actually fed himself and the trapper, to boot.

One reason why Yankee Cole liked the middle section of the Cave Creek country was because nobody ever used poison there. Game was plentiful, fur was thick, wild hides were handy for those who cared to hunt them. Now some one had come with poison. A country that yielded sixty to eighty dollars a square mile in skins and about fifty dollars in game meat was dosed. If that went on, Yankee's fifteen hundred dollar Winter income was done for.

Homesteaders dependent on furs and cowboys, who lived in off seasons on wild life, would find they could no longer support themselves on the bounty of nature merely by scratching the back of the prairie. For years many of them had needed their extra trapping money to take care of their horses, cows and taxes, which the land didn't quite support.

Yankee had been trying to get the homesteaders to see that if they'd stop buying food for horses and cows they could save money. But all the prairie people considered themselves farmers making a little money wildcrafting, though they were in fact supporting livestock on the profits of fur and hides, eating wild meats so they might raise domestic cattle to ship to the nearest market at a loss. Butchers purchased the beef for less than it cost.

When Yankee Cole found what had happened to his dog, Mutt, he headed straight across country for the Dugout court. He reined in his horse at the Wolf Track outfit long enough to ask Jane Wale if she'd heard anything about poison being put out.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "Daddy's real provoked. He told Secretary Bolph of the Live Stock Association it was foolish, but you know secretaries!"

"They got my dog, Mutt!" Cole said, turning away and heading for town.

He found an admiring crowd in front of the Chamber of Commerce building where stood a long buckboard with a crate frame full of carcasses behind the seat. A tall, oily faced but handsome man was leaning against the buckboard seat orating to the real estate agents, store clerks, commercial travelers and the kind of people to whom one can tell anything and they'll believe it, as long as it passes for natural history and sounds impressive.

"You see, gentlemen," the man was saying, "the way to get rid of these stock killers is to get rid of them. Why, hell, I do more killing in a week 'n all these damned trappers and coyote runners can kill in two Winters! All the hundreds of cattle horses and so on, that the coyotes and bobcats has been gettin', is going to be saved now. That's what comes of engaging the champeen pizener—"

"Just a minute!" Cole interrupted. "Do you call this animal a coyote?"

"Why—uh—of course!"

"All right, that lets you out!" Cole said. "This is German Joey's Black Forest police dog. And how about this one?"

"Why—why—" The man blinked, nonplused.

"This *dog*," Cole said, with sarcastic

emphasis, "belongs to French Louie over't the Packaway Springs. If you knew a coyote when you saw one, you'd know this is a Belgian cart dog, and no relation to a coyote closer than a thousand years ago when they began to tame wolves to make sheep dogs of them. And, yes, you got some coyote blood here—these are Jim Cancher's three dogs he bred from his tame coyote. And there's old Songster! I leave it to you, Joe Goodstake! Here's old Songster himself! Why, you damned fool, nine of these animals are dogs and seven of them may be wild coyotes. If you had any brains—"

"Nobody can call me a damned fool!" the poisoner declared with indignation. "I can prove by these coyotes—these killers—and these were all stock killers, these dogs—nights—"

"Vat!" A man crowded through the increasing throng. "Somebody say dot my Guten Tag is a killer and he iss daid? *Mein Hund! Mein Hund!* Yo' pizened him! Took dot, den!"

"Soak 'im, Joey!" the crowd yelled; but the poisoner hit German Joey in the jaw, and the rotund little man folded up.

"You killed my dog too!" Yankee Cole said, and swung in a bark-spudder's uppercut.

The poisoner was in good shape, with strong muscles and an agile frame. Enthusiasts backed the crowd away to give the trapper and poisoner room, and there were witnesses who declared it was the prettiest fight seen in Dugout Court Square since the prairie people stopped wearing sidearms for business and drinking legal liquor for courage.

Several of the observers noticed that Yankee was taking his time, defending himself while slamming home his large, coarse knuckles. He hit the poisoner on the nose, on his high cheekbones and in the eyes until the man was weaving on his feet. Finally the poisoner's knees began to bend; and his muscles were so weak that his arms hung down and his fists were too heavy to raise.

Yankee Cole apparently had been shambling around awkwardly and with difficulty protecting himself while inflicting those smacking blows, but suddenly he slipped around into a trained pugilist's crouch and let go—fist, arm, shoulder, hips and legs in a beautiful thrust that showed the restraint he had been exercising. The poisoner left the ground as if snatched by a rope around his neck, all limp, and headed over backward, turning like a projectile, to come face down in the dry alkali dust in the manner of a long bag of potatoes not too tightly packed.

MARSHAL DOLDRUM arrested Cole for disorderly conduct. The marshal hesitated as if to apologize, but the trapper told him he had his duty to perform. So they all went to the courtroom. Judge Lurkin called for order.

"I tell you, Judge," the trapper said in a low voice, recognizing the dilemma of the authorities, "I sure had a good ten dollars' worth!"

Judge Lurkin sighed as if relieved. Usually prisoners arraigned before him lacked appreciation and a sense of humor. Here was one after his own heart.

"Prisoner at the bar," the court said, "we can't let fighting go on in our streets. I sympathize with your indignation at losing your dog. We'll see that the law is administered impartially as soon as your late antagonist is sufficiently recovered. I hereby fine you ten dollars on account of the place where you done this personal matter."

Yankee Cole paid and departed. Homer Gerlack, as soon as he could walk without too much exertion, was brought in and fined ten dollars for fighting in a public place, and fifteen dollars for making an advertising and business speech without first obtaining a license and permit from the mayor.

Homer Gerlack paid his fines. A week later he explained to the regular monthly meeting of the Live Stock Association

that the loss in the several kills of beef and colts they had suffered during the previous year was unquestionably due mostly to dogs running at large, and that they were consequently benefiting greatly by poisoning. All he asked was a trial of his methods. If he didn't prove that the homesteaders' dogs as well as coyotes were eating live stock, he would eat one of the victims of his doses, risking secondary poisoning.

This sounded reasonable. The ranchers agreed to keep the matter secret. They had known that most of the killing of calves and colts was due to sneak dogs, so they approved of the arrangement entered into by Bolph. For the time being, and confidentially, they would pay seven dollars and a half each for stock-killing dogs as well as for coyotes; but they suggested that the poisoner should not display his trophies.

"Look out for Yankee Cole!" the secretary warned Gerlack after the meeting. "He's bad—an agitator and a hard citizen. You know, actually, I believe that man'd just as soon ruin the commission business in this country as not. He claims that it costs more to raise beef, sheep and grain than any one gets for them, and that all that keeps this country going is the fur and game. Now, of course, you can see if people lived on the country and didn't ship any grain or domestic animals, these towns around could not get any profits handling things. Look out for Yankee Cole! I'm fair warning you!"

JANE WALE went down to Cave Creek bottoms nearly a month later and turned upstream at the trapper's pasture. Coming to his peeled log cabin, she hailed from the terrace slope of the bench on which the structure was built. No answer came to her call. The door was closed. No smoke arose from the fireplace chimney. Over the scene hung the strange, quiet gloom of an abandoned human habitation.

After a minute of hesitation she swung from the saddle and went to the platform across the front of the cabin. She pulled the rawhide latch-string and thrust open the door.

Yankee Cole was lying on the floor near the table. A glance identified him, and his rigid position left no doubt that he was dead. She detected in the close air an odor like that of crushed peach-stones. She recognized it instantly as the odor of deadly acid. On the table beside which Cole lay was a brown bottle with the cork beside it. A small glass was lying on its side where it had been dropped near the bottle. Yankee always kept this bottle in his cupboard, its contents to be used as medicine.

In the sand on the hewn-plank floor she saw where he had stirred about after falling. His elbows, feet and shoulders had twisted, making a few circular marks. He had been stricken dead as suddenly as a bullet could have done a man to death.

Horror-stricken, sorry, yet cool, Jane Wale drew back without entering the cabin. She ran across the chip-yard, down the bank to where her horse was nibbling the bunch grass, and leaped into the saddle. She looked back at the cabin and then fearfully around the basin where the high walls of the Bad Lands showed the narrow slits of miniature canyons and the V-notches of deep draws and dry-washes. The chirrup of a bird, the whispering of the wind through the dead cottonwood leaves fallen in the Autumn, and unidentified brooding sounds seemed suddenly to impress on her the terror and mystery of that lonely, tragic death.

"He hated poison!" she gasped. "He feared and fought it, and now he's dead of it!"

Turning, leaning ahead, lifting her bridle reins, she did not need to speak. Her horse started without words, surging into a lope. Across the creek shallows, she rode into a deep slash in the wall and went for miles, ascending a dry-wash till at last her head came to the level of the prairie grass roots. There

she stopped, standing in her stirrups. She looked in all directions over the rolling lands and along the sides of the two tall buttes between which her trail would lead around to the Wolf Track outfit, her father's ranch. It lay at the foot of Birdnest Butte near a fine freshwater pool fed by an eternal spring gushing from the broken sandstone. No one was in sight, and she left the draw to ride home at a gallop.

At the corral rail were tied three saddled horses. In the sitting room she found around the fireplace her father and Homer Gerlack, Juke Parey and Bud Vanness. Barong, the ranch cook, was just bringing in a coffee pot and cups.

Gerlack sprang to his feet as she entered, showing off his etiquette, bowing like a gent and a gambler. The other men rose, and she greeted them, took a cup of coffee herself and listened.

"We're just riding by," Gerlack said. "'Lowed to say howdy to you, but feared we'd missed out. Fresh wind to be riding!"

"Yes—" she nodded— "very. The Bad Lands are whining today!"

"Been down't the Big Cuts?" Gerlack asked quickly.

"Sort of," she said. "The Bad Lands' moaning gave me the creeps."

"And that means plenty!" Barong said. "I don't like wind to talk!"

"You're always seeing ghosts," Jane said, "but nothing happens!"

"Don't they?" the cook retorted. "I never knowed it not to happen. I heard 'm an' that next day I lost my nerve. I never rode again."

"What d'ye mean?" Gerlack demanded. "I never heard nothing like that about the Bad Lands."

"It's just that when crime has been done," the girl said, "the wind screams and cries. They say it's the voice of the dead demanding justice."

"Nonsense!" Gerlack exclaimed angrily. "That's superstition! And what good'd it do—ghosts yelling for revenge?"

"You'll know," Barong said, "if you ever come a trick in this country. From Bird's Eye to Broken Horn along Cave Creek nobody ever got away with murder. The Sioux Indians said it. And the trappers found it was true. But after the homesteaders cut up the big ranches they had to learn it for themselves. Did you ever hear of the Vigilantes? They hung one too many; they found a stranger by the body of their captain and said he did the killing. He denied it, but they hung him over the Chalk Bank down't the Old Buffalo Crossin', not havin' any trees handy. Before they made him jump off, he told them they'd wish they had had the rope on their necks instead of on his'n. They laughed at him and give him a shove. He hung there all Winter. In the Spring the rope broke.

"There were seven of those men. They never knew sleep again. They never could eat that the food didn't lay in their stomachs. They rode with their faces over their shoulders. At night in the wind they heard that dead man's voice. Three killed themselves; two went crazy. And two were found dead —bones where they died, nobody knowing how. That's what happens if you do meanness from Bird's Eye to Broken Horn. It never fails."

"Nonsense!" Gerlack exclaimed angrily.

"A man can't even trick a coyote and not get his comeback, they say," Jane Wale added. "I've heard it ever since I was a little girl here at the Wolf Track. What'd they use to call it through here, daddy? Something about being on the level—"

"Fairplay Prairies," the gaunt, gray eyed rancher said, removing his fireside pipe from his powerful teeth. "And some said it's the Good Chance country, on account of it wasn't safe to cheat. I rec'lect a cheap sport came out here't claimed he was the real thing. He was shooting prairie chickens for market. He killed more'n anybody else, shipping in barrels full. Course, we all practised

wing shootin' them days. This pot-hunter claimed he was the real thing. He was good, too, drivin' the No. 6's home with a 12-gage English gun he swore by.

"One day I was out lookin' around with my glasses for some cows an' I saw this Snacker outfit drivin' along. He had three dogs—dandies!—and I could see'm come up into as purty a point as eveh I seen. He circled around with his light box-wagon; he swung out his seat an' picked the gawdawflest gun I eveh did see and let go. It bellowsed out a cloud of smoke like a cannon. Then he went over, an' I made out he picked up eighteen chickens with that one shot. He pushed the big gun in under his canvas and rode on.

"I circled the butte round an' met him. He claimed shooting was good. He'd killed fourteen dozen, so far, he told me, pattin' his 12-gage. I didn't say nothin'. Over't Dugout I told the boys what I seen. Four, five days later a feller came in sayin' he'd seen this Snacker over'n the Thunder Creek Hills. They rode out to bring him in. He had a gun with a barrel five foot long, an' 4-gage. Some son of a gun'd pushed a piece of hickory shovel handle up into the choke, an' Snacker hadn't looked through the barrel. Accordingly, the back end of the gun blowed out, takin' off the whole upper story of this here pot hunter."

"I don't call that supernatural," Gerlack declared. "That was just a damned dirty trick!"

"Two dirty tricks," Wale said. "Shootin' birds sittin' with a 4-gage, and plugging a gun choke with a wooden wad! That's what the Injuns claimed. Dirty tricks always travels in pairs through this country. An' so they kinda balance each other."

Gerlack choked over his coffee. His two companions didn't make any remarks, but looked at each other with sidelong glances.

"How's the bounty business?" Jane asked.

"Oh, I can't complain," Gerlack said. "The county treasurer'll sure have to pony out some coyote rewards come the holidays."

"You don't find all you poison, either," Wale said. "I was over on Lark Knolls last week. I counted seven coyotes on the way over and back."

"Seven? Seven? Why that's thirty-five dollars' bounty!"

"Sure! I bet for every coyote you find you kill three." The rancher chuckled. "And then you get a lot of foxes, skunks, buzzards and so on that eat the dead ones and gets poisoned."

"Where were they? I don't want to lose them—"

"Just between here an' Lark Knolls," Wale said. "They were some you got early. They were pretty far gone. In fact, the hair was blowing out of their skins down the lee. I don't believe in your poisoning, Gerlack. You kill off all the coyotes that eat gophers, prairie dogs and mice, while you never get a coyote that eats calves, colts or raids chickens. Coyotes that do damage don't eat dead meat—and if they don't take up dead stuff they don't get poison. What you kill are the valuable fur and hide animals."

"You've been talking to some of these damned trappers!" Gerlack said.

"Yes. I've been talking to the men who catch the coyotes that do damage to my calves," Wale said. "I'm glad you came through. I'm warning you not to put out any poison in my pasture. That means from here to Crowbeak west, and from here to the Old Migrant road northward, and this side those three buttes at the east. Keep your stuff beyond Cave Creek over south. That plain?"

"I reckon I'll go where coyotes are," Gerlack retorted. "I'm authorized by the supervisors. I'm hired by ranchers as important as you are; and where coyotes are I'm baitin' them, and I guess that's plain."

Gerlack caught up his hat and headed out for his horse. He was followed by

Juke Parey, but Bud Vanness hung back.

"He's payin' us to find his dead coyotes," Bud said doubtfully. "That's what he claims."

"Sure he isn't afraid some steel trap man'll shoot him?" Jane asked. "You know there's talk around, Bud."

"Why, they wouldn't be shooting poisoners, would they?" Bud gasped. "I hadn't thought of that! They wouldn't bother me!"

"You're known by the company you keep," the girl said.

Bud scurried out to the others.

WHEN the three were well on their way, and Barong was in the kitchen, Jane turned to her father.

"Yankee Cole is dead, daddy," she said. "You remember how that mine process stuff smells? That's the smell in his cabin. I found a wolf, a big lobo, in his set over against Leather Jaw Cut Bank. I shot the beast with my .22 pistol and went to tell Yankee. He didn't answer my hail. He's lying by the table. He'd just taken a drink. You know he told us he always kept a bottle in the cupboard—and he always took one, no more."

Wolf Track Wale stared at his daughter, speechless, his mouth open and his eyes wide.

"Yankee Cole dead—poisoned?" he gasped.

"Yes, I could smell the tang of it," she said. "I didn't go in. He said he had a cold, remember, when he was in Tuesday? He told me about his traps for gray wolves, and asked me if I rode out to pass over't Leather Jaw."

"Coyote poisoner—" Wale squinted. "Any sign around?"

"You know the creek bottoms. Hard gravel wouldn't show a man's tracks." She shook her head. "I looked going and coming. I thought I'd better not say anything."

"Just as well. Better call the sheriff," her father said, after a moment of thought. "Reckon you can ask the sheriff to come out an' he won't even ask why."

Jane stuck her tongue out at her father. Her grimace made her look even more attractive than he indicated she would be to Sheriff Burnham. She went to the telephone and gave a long ring. She told central whom she wanted and a minute later she spoke again:

"Sheriff, this is Jane Wale. . . . Yes, indeed! Could you come right over, quick? . . . Well—of course, if I didn't want you I'd. . . . Now, you know better than that! . . . Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Really, why don't you bring him along? He could stop at the Broken Wheel and pick up Laura. . . . Oh, stop your fooling! I'm in a hurry—and bring the doctor. Sure!"

She turned from the instrument, her cheeks an even brighter color than the wind had made them.

"That man never does talk just plain sense," she told her father indignantly. "But isn't it lucky that Dr. Cook's coming with him? You know, he's going to see Laura Curray at the Broken Wheel. They'll come right out."

She looked at her watch.

"I'd better call Laura to get her ready for them. They'll be right along—"

"Sixty miles an hour if I know Burnham!" Wale grinned. "He never loses any time coming here."

"Well, you can go saddle some horses and have them ready." His daughter spoke with asperity.

Less than fifty minutes later the sheriff, Dr. Cook and Laura drove up to the Wolf Track ranch-house. They came into the kitchen for a drink of coffee with Mr. Wale and Jane, and then the five rode away southward toward Cave Creek bottoms. Only when they were well on their way did Jane explain what they were about—that this was official business and not just a picnic.

Urging their horses to a gallop, Jane and the sheriff followed the old rancher,

while Laura and Dr. Cook brought up the rear. They dipped over the brink into the draw, rode single file down the long wash into the creek bottom, and, after giving their horses a drink, left them across the ford while they went to the scene of the tragedy.

No one had been there. Before entering, Burnham allowed the breeze to blow into the open door and air out the cabin —a precaution which he did not need to explain. The afternoon was well along and, while the coroner studied the dead man, Sheriff Burnham, on his hands and knees, tried to pick up the tracks, to find some sign of the trail of the man who had doped the bottle.

"Sure hit hard!" Dr. Cook said. He corked the bottle. The odor had practically disappeared from the cabin. "Yankee didn't live five seconds, probably, after he took that awful dose."

"He would have smelled it if he hadn't had that cold in his head," Jane said.

"Look here, Jane!" Sheriff Burnham exclaimed. "Who'd be likely to dope this bottle for the old trapper?"

"How would I know, Tom?" she said.

Coroner Cook looked over the grub supply in the wire-cloth box. From one of the shelves he took a box of cornstarch and crumbled a handful into fine dust. He sifted the starch over the brown bottle and then blew the loose particles away. On one side appeared the thumbprint of a big hand, on the other the prints of four fingers—and no more. A look at the glass revealed the same prints. A glance at the dead man's hand made it plain that the fingerprints were Yankee's, not the murderer's.

"You know as well as I do who did it!" Burnham turned to Cook. "You were telling me how Yankee here dressed Gerlack down."

"I heard that, too," Wale said. "I sure admired the trapper's eloquence. I'd thought poison was all right for coyotes. Now, doggone, I got a prejudice against poison fly-paper! Gerlack, Juke Parey and Bud Vanness came through just before Jane came in."

"Did you tell them?" the sheriff asked quickly.

"No—" she shook her head— "I thought I'd better notify the officials first."

"They're down in this country?" the sheriff asked. "Coroner, just suppose you and all the rest go back to the Wolf Track for the night. Leave me here, will you? Bring the undertaker out tomorrow."

"Better look out if you cook supper. No telling how many things were doped, Burnham," the doctor warned.

"I haven't any cold." The sheriff grinned. "Besides, there are packages in the cupboard that haven't been opened. I'll get along."

"But look out!" Jane said.

The four rode away.

NO TWO killings are ever alike. No two sheriffs work exactly alike. Left alone at the scene of the crime, the sheriff sat down to think about it. He sat for two hours on a bench, his elbows on his knees, his hands clasped as he leaned, staring at that inert figure, victim of desperate, treacherous and confident hatred.

Poisoners work on the theory that they have greater cunning than others. They love the reputation of familiarity with lethal, mysterious medicines. They constantly skirt the brink of doom themselves, for no tool is so dangerous to the user as poison. That acid was death to taste, to inhale, to handle. The sheriff could tell that the killer had expected suspicion and had covered up all betraying evidence.

Toward sunset Burnham went to his horse, rode down the creek to some good grass land. He found the trapper's three horses feeding there. Over against a Bad Land wall was a shed roof with saddle and blanket sheltered beneath it. The animals came prancing to the sheriff. He talked to them a minute. They were used to kindness and good

humor. He would have to look after them and gather up the other valuables of the trapper. The bounties and furs would amount to more than five hundred dollars, the sheriff figured when he looked into the fur shed back of the cabin.

Uneasy, dubious, cold with the thought of his lonely night vigil, the sheriff disliked the impulse that had led him to stay there. He counted eighteen coyotes, seven lobos, three otter skins; and he noticed that the otters all had a white claw on each forepaw. Two of the coyotes were split-ears, and one of the lobos was an enormous fellow. The skulls were left on the coyote and wolf hides, well skinned out. Yankee would have sold them for panels and made an extra five-spot on them. He knew his trade, that old trapper. Bad enough for foolish young coyotes—poison! To get a man with the stuff—ugh!

No search had been made of the body. Burnham went in and undertook the gruesome task. He found $88.90 in the trousers pockets and $750 in the man's horsehide belt. In a sheath was a beautiful stainless steel skinning knife, and a .22 pistol was in a holster. While he was working the sun went down, the long twilight deepened slowly, and the sheriff turned to the lamp, thinking to light it. Instead he paused with the match unstruck in his hand. He picked up a pair of Indian blankets from the bed, found one heavy enough and went outside to sit with his back against a ledge of rock on a bench of stone, where, all wrapped up, he waited.

"Better no supper than risk dying like Yankee," he thought.

Waiting in ambush on a dubious project, and with an empty stomach, is tedious; yet such is often a sheriff's duty in the Bad Lands.

In the dark his blanket, a curious blending of light and shade, was a sort of camouflage. Burnham snuggled down, chin on his knees, hands clasped across his shins, his revolver butt against his right palm, ready. Night sounds came to his uncovered ears: burrowing owls; the rippling of Cave Creek in the shoals; the fall of pebbles from the bluffs; the squeaks of mice and wilderness rats; the low murmurings that science pretends to trace to earth quivers and wind harps, but which the true believer knows are voices of the spirits. The sounds soothed but did not dull the senses of the waiting sheriff.

Presently he heard gravel crunching under thick shoe soles as a man approached close to the high bluff bank, a wraith in the gloom. His eyes flashed like green lights, warning Burnham not to display his own. Like a rabbit, the sheriff looked the other way. The figure passed not ten feet distant. It was Homer Gerlack's silhouette the sheriff saw against the pale earth in front of the cabin.

Perhaps murderers do return to the scenes of their crimes, but a jury of hardheads wouldn't convict Gerlack on that evidence alone. Burnham listened and heard the midnight visitor mumbling to himself, heard the latigo latchstring squeak and the bar within clatter as Gerlack shoved back the door. He obviously knew what to expect, sneaking into the cabin like that. The hardwood hinges creaked, and then the visitor struck a match.

"Nobody found you yet," Gerlack grumbled. "Mebbe I better report you. I could use this cabin."

He lighted a lamp, and the sheriff could see him standing there looking around, glancing back again and again at the figure lying on the floor; Gerlack's lips twitched at the corners, grins flashing across his countenance in nervous mirthlessness. Hate was in his glare.

"Pizen's no good, heh?" the sheriff heard him whisper. "Heh-heh!"

That could be construed as evidence, yet it wasn't proof. The testimony of man against man never is conclusive.

"A nice cabin," Gerlack remarked. "Logs peeled—all chinked—well built. Plumb comfy, a dandy headquarters! I could drag you out an' hide you. But

somebody might think something. They'd get after me then."

Queer how men talk to themselves when they live much alone! They have arguments, sometimes, like a dozen different talkers—voices all different, perhaps one Dutch, one Irish, one Swedish, and so on.

"I betcha you know pizen beats steel now!"

Gerlack jeered, reaching into his hip pocket, dragging out a plug of Indian Maid and biting off a big chunk. Somehow the chew didn't seem appropriate in that smooth, darkly handsome face. The strong white teeth, though, crunched with their cutting edges clean to cutting edges, and then the big grinders went to work on the compressed leaves, black with molasses flavoring.

THE fellow sat a long time, chewing slowly, gazing at the victim of poison. Gerlack liked the taste of the molasses in his brand of tobacco. After a time, when the bitter nicotine strength became more obvious to him, he walked over to the door to spit. He stood in the doorway a moment, listening and looking along the skyline of the bluff tops across the creek toward the north. Then he turned and looked doubtfully back into the cabin.

"Hell!" he grumbled. "The smell of it makes me feel sick. I'd ought to thought of that, the way that stuff evaporates into the air. I better leave the door open. I better open up the cabin. I can build a fire and let the draft suck out the close air."

He stepped outside, standing uneasily, his feet shuffling as he kept his balance.

"I feel it in my stomach," he said uncertainly. "Doggone, that's strong stuff —just that little smell upsets a man. It kinda gives me a pain. And Yankee said poison ain't no good— Cripes!"

He drew up in a quick twitch, then walked across the platform away from the door, out into the middle of the chip-yard. There he stood, bracing himself, in the light shining from the lamp on the table. A sweaty moisture gathered on his face. He turned his head from side to side, his hands unconsciously holding his stomach along his cartridge belt. He began to shiver. He pocketed his plug of tobacco after staring at it on his palm for an instant. His heart beats sounded enormously powerful. He began to sway, but caught himself by sheer force of will as a convulsion shook him and his knees began to bend.

A terrible amazement accompanied the seizure as Gerlack's face turned in the light, his eyes beginning to bulge. Sheriff Burnham watched, stricken with wonderment.

"Oh, oh—oh!" Gerlack gasped. "My gawd, it's griped me! I never oughta gone back to that cabin. What'd I do it for?"

He stumbled away from the door, staggering, writhing, lunging and looking back as if the dead man inside were pursuing him. His gasps rose into a thin, shrill shriek of mortal anguish. He choked. He cried, and his scream of terror, pain and realization echoed from the high Bad Land walls.

"It's got me! It's got me!" Gerlack whimpered, plunging into the dark, down the terrace slope.

Burnham heard the threshing and stumbling as the man scrambled through brush and pitched about over gravel, scuffling the crisp dead leaves of late Autumn.

Realizing he ought to do something, the sheriff ran into the cabin and looked around, trying to remember what antidote was good for the fumes of the stuff that had killed Yankee Cole. He looked into the cupboard and read the markings on salt, pepper, dried egg and other containers. As he remembered that he, too, might die of some poison gas, he snatched the dried egg and salt, turning to catch up a tin cup and small pail. And then he looked at the place where Gerlack had been sitting. He saw the cornstarch dust spilled when they were

bringing out the fingerprints on the bottle, then he caught a gleam from a little crystal on the bench. Leaning, he saw a dozen little nodules, translucent, different.

"Strychnine! Government strychnine!" the sheriff exclaimed as he recognized the stuff. "He had it in the same pocket with his tobacco!"

With that his indecision vanished.

"Emetic," Burnham gasped. "Lord, I wish the doctor was here. Yes, mustard —there it is—tannic acid too—tea!"

He ran to the creek for water, mixed mustard in a cup and carried it to the man who was rolling over and over on the ground. Catching him, the sheriff forced the mustard solution into his throat and stomach, despite the spasmodically clenching jaws. Sure of Gerlack's nausea, Burnham ran back to the cabin and found a teapot on the back of the stove with strong woodsman's tea in it. When Yankee Cole made tea he had always taken a handful of tea to two quarts of water; there was a batch soaking in case he should need a drink when he came in. A cupful of this poured into Gerlack's throat was practically a dose of tannic acid—strong enough to cure a prairie dog skin.

Burnham dragged the man back to the cabin. Gerlack had been relieved a little by the mustard. He took the tannin antidote. He was, however, caught in the spasms of the lethal dose that had been absorbed into his system. A grain of strychnine is death to ten pounds of animal. When the sheriff looked into the man's hip pocket he found a paper bag full of Government process vermin-animal killer. The plug of tobacco was salted with the stuff where the paper had broken against the corner of the chewing tobacco.

"I'd heard of poisoners doing things like that," Burnham gasped, "but I never believed it before."

Having done all that he could, he now stood by the trapper's bunk where the poisoner lay quivering, in spasms. Gerlack's stomach was empty, and the tannic acid was chasing the strychnine through his blood system.

"Good Lord, poison in chewing plug!" Burnham kept exclaiming.

Gerlack had discovered the poison too late. Burnham soon realized that the emetic and antidote were in vain. The sheriff stood by helplessly and watched the man die.

"I killed Cole—I killed Cole," the poisoner groaned, delirious between spasms, "an' I got a dose myself!"

Suddenly he wrenched up in a terrific coil of death and curled over like a wolf in the same affliction.

Sheriff Burnham drew back, sidled through the doorway and went to his blankets again. He huddled into them. He was sure that he could not sleep, but that was a mistake. The drain on his emotions and strength had been so great that he was exhausted. He snuggled down on the rock bench, the blanket drawn over his head. Even sunrise did not awaken him. The clatter of hoofs and the sound of a splash in the ford aroused him, and when the little cavalcade swung under the cottonwoods, he came up out of his wrappings like a pack-rat out of its nest.

"Sleep good?" Jane Wale demanded. "Why, Sheriff, what on earth's the matter? You're white. You're scared to death! What happened?—Quick!"

He motioned to the cabin, and Coroner Cook ran to look inside. He saw that other dead man on the bunk. Burnham indicated the gaping hip pocket with the plug tobacco and the broken container of strychnine, and in staccato phrases told what he had witnessed.

"Then Barong was right. Nobody ever got away with murder from Bird's Eye to Broken Horn!" Jane exclaimed. "He said you can't do meanness in the Bad Lands and not pay for it. And you heard the coyotes and wolves going by in the wind last night, daddy; and, Doctor, you know you did! That was the dirge of the murderer they were singing—the tune of the poison dead."

WHO WITH TOIL

By PERRY ADAMS

Author of "Song in Mahratti"

Let us now praise famous men
From whose bays we borrow,
Who with toil of their today
Bought for us tomorrow.
—RUDYARD KIPLING

"ABOUT this recruit, Rahim Khan: I don't think we should make any red ink entry on his sheet merely for a dirty barrack-box. Do you? Of course, I know you've been warning him."

"Repeatedly, Huzur. But he does not want to obey, it seems."

Hugh Tremaine smiled a little as he softly drummed his fingers on A Squadron's orderly room table. For some weeks he had been acting squadron leader in place of Major Beattie, away on long leave. Being "father" to the squadron sat lightly on his young shoulders, although he hadn't been long gazetted to the Lancers.

A man had a different feeling when he had a family background of a hundred years with the regiment, when he knew that many of the senior Indian officers had served under and looked up to his father before him. It was all so much easier and simpler, too, when one could talk to these fellows in their own language.

He glanced up at the right half-squadron commander, Ressaidar Muhammed Aibak, who stood before him.

"Did you always keep your barrack-box clean when you were a recruit?" he asked, a friendly tone dispelling the savor of bad taste in the question.

The Indian officer apparently had little sympathy for the recruit, Rahim Khan. He ignored Hugh's implication.

"He is not charged with keeping a dirty box, Huzur, but with insubordination."

"Which arises from failure to obey your orders to keep his box clean?"

The Pathan shrugged.

"Mine—and those of others."

"You think he should have a red ink entry for this?"

"It's discipline, Huzur. You will know

best what the punishment should be." The Ressaidar Muhammed Aibak's tone carried the merest hint of sharpness.

Hugh Tremaine absently glanced out the window. A mounted squad, with lances, was maneuvering around the dusty regimental *maidan,* deep in the fine points of tent pegging.

His gaze returned to the room.

"All right; march him in."

The Waziri recruit, Rahim Khan, was a little over twenty. He was tall and slim, with regular features and bold, piercing eyes. Hugh regarded him a moment. This man's grandfather, he well knew, had been risaldar-major of the regiment when his own father was colonel. It was a sort of family affair; it made things devilishly difficult, when the recruit was also aware of the warm friendship which had existed between the older men.

"Hm!" Hugh muttered severely as he picked up the crime report. " 'Recruit Rahim Khan: Repeated failure to obey orders, in that he refuses to tidy barrack-box when ordered to do so.' Well, what have you to say?"

"Huzur, nothing!"

"Do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

"What would you advise?"

There was an audible gasp, as Indian officers and N. C. O.'s stared at the offender. This recruit was either very green or—

"Come," said Hugh, unsmiling, "you were not brought here to get advice from me, but to answer this charge."

"I do the best I can. Possibly I am not a tidy man," said the Waziri.

"You plead guilty, then?"

"Yes."

"See here," Hugh admonished, "this won't do at all. Your sheet is clean so far; you're ready for your recruit's course in musketry, and then you'll be a *sowar.* Neatness is one of the first things a recruit must learn. Don't you know that?"

"Yes, Huzur."

"Then why are we having all this trouble with you?"

"I will try to do better."

"You must! Don't let me see you here again. I sentence you to three days' extra stable duty and to have your box inspected twice daily until further orders. March him out!"

It was the last case of the morning. Hugh scanned and signed a few returns. Routine over for the day, he rose and put on his helmet. All present stiffened to attention, while the Ressaidar saluted him smartly. He stepped out into the sunlight and turned toward his bungalow.

IN SPITE of childhood memories, everything was still new and fresh to him. Yet he could remember his early boyhood very clearly. The regiment had then been stationed at this same desolate spot near Dera Ismail Khan, on India's northwest frontier. Off to the west lay the crumpled hills of the Waziri country, from which sometimes erupted pillaging hordes of tribesmen, their greed and fanaticism fanned to frenzy by the bad advice of their holy men—the Mullahs.

Hugh came to the regiment as one opening his arms to destiny; it was a delightful resumption of those boyish associations so indelibly impressed on his mind. There was a rightness and a fitness about it, for the history of the regiment was the history of his people for several generations. A Tremaine had been an officer of the original Silladar corps, then known by another term, at the time of the Mutiny. Cups in the mess bore the family name. It was intimate and friendly. This was where he belonged.

At the time of Hugh's birth, his father had been a captain in the regiment. The elder Tremaine had followed the custom of the wealthier Anglo-Indians by seeing to it that Hugh was born in England, in this case at the ancestral seat in Surrey.

Little Hugh—or, to record the full name pronounced over his tiny body when baptized, Nigel FitzWilliam de

Luys Hugh Tremaine—was brought out to India when he was three years old. He remained until of school age. By the time he was taken to England to attend Harrow and, later, Sandhurst, he could speak Pushtu, language of the frontier, and Hindustani, *lingua franca* of India. Neither tongue had been forgotten when at length he was gazetted to the old regiment and returned to India to take up his hereditary profession.

Between Second Lieutenant Hugh Tremaine and Recruit Rahim Khan existed certain parallel bonds of hereditary influence. Both came of warrior stock; and pride of race and of family tradition was innate in each. Both, in their spheres, sprang from a long line of sportsmen; although such games as football and hockey would be assimilated slowly by the Waziri, while hawking and hunting in the Pathan manner might never be of great interest to the Englishman.

Yet how different were their backgrounds! While Hugh had babbled baby talk to an indulgent Indian nurse and toddled about in the minute regimental cantonment, his hand often as not in that of this recruit's grandfather, the risaldar-major, Rahim Khan had been learning how to shoot. And when Hugh was a fag at Harrow, the Waziri boy saw his first British flying column, against which he and his people fought a series of typically clever rear-guard actions.

For several months Rahim Khan had been fully occupied with his recruit's course. He went to school and learned many new things; he was taught square drill, dismounted; he attended riding school, where he found that the *jemadar* in charge had a great many ideas about riding a horse hitherto unsuspected by a Waziri recruit. There was lance drill: Rahim was not unfamiliar with spears, but these lances were the very devil, they were so long. When, dismounted, he had become reasonably apt with the lance, the weapon was included in riding school and he had to learn all over again. But squadron drill in full regalia, lance pennants fluttering, was exciting and enjoyable; it made up somewhat for all the rest—especially the perpetual trumpet call to stables.

Rahim Khan, dismissed outside the squadron office, returned to barracks and was met by his friend and fellow recruit, Ghulam Kafur, who raised his eyebrows questioningly.

"It is no use," said Rahim, bitterly. "That Tremaine has found fault with me from the start. Now he gives me extra duty with the horses, and every few minutes I must display my uniforms and kit to a *dafadar!*"

"A crazy world to which you persuaded me to come!"

"Yet my grandparent said this Tremaine would befriend me, as his father befriended my grandparent. Pah! I hate them all—Unbelievers!"

"I, too. Never fear, I shan't take any insults from them. You'll see."

THAT same week the recruits began the firing practise necessary to complete their musketry course. It happened that Hugh Tremaine and Wallis Lothrop, a young subaltern from another squadron, had been detailed to take charge of the range party.

They were firing prone, at a hundred yards, bull's-eye. Hugh Tremaine and Lothrop walked up and down behind the points. In Rahim Khan's group, and next to him, was his friend, Ghulam Kafur.

Rahim fired his clip and had an outer and four misses. And when Ghulam Kafur received five washout flags from the butts, the attention of the officers was drawn to the pair. As the officers approached, the two rose from their points and stood at attention.

"What is the trouble?" asked Hugh. "That was very bad shooting. The practise will have to be refired."

"We do not find the position comfortable or to our liking," said Rahim Khan boldly.

"No, your Honor," Ghulam Kafur

added. "If we might be allowed to choose our position, there would be a different story on the target."

"What do they say?" asked Lothrop, who was a beginner in Pushtu.

"They aren't used to shooting from the prone position," Hugh replied.

"No? How do they shoot, then?"

"Oh, sitting or leaning against something, as a rule."

Hugh turned to the recruits.

"In the army, every one must learn to fire lying down," he said. To a nearby Indian officer he called, "Please have them signal for a refire from these two points."

Both recruits lay down and reloaded. New bull's-eyes flashed from the butts.

"See," said Hugh, bending over Rahim Khan, "your left elbow is too far forward. That way you are unsteady." He pulled in the elbow a little and stepped back.

Rahim Khan scowled into his sights and said nothing. Both men began firing. This time Rahim was much better. But Ghulam Kafur again had five misses.

Lothrop tapped Ghulam's boot sole with his toe.

"You shoot like a woman," he said haltingly, using some of the few Pushtu words he knew—an unfortunate statement to make to a Pathan!

Eyes flashing, Ghulam Kafur leaped to his feet.

"When I shoot to kill, I always hit my mark!" he cried.

Lothrop did not understand the man's angry words or gestures.

"What does he say?" he asked Hugh. "What is the matter?"

Hugh did not reply. Ghulam Kafur was quieted down, and the incident passed without further comment.

On the march home—they were dismounted—Hugh and Wallis Lothrop were considerably in advance of their men.

"Great Scott, man," Hugh exploded, "that was a hell of a thing to say to the fellow—about shooting like a woman! These hill people are terribly sensitive; Pathans simply won't stand that sort of remark, you know!"

Lothrop looked puzzled.

"Is it as bad as all that?"

"Lord, yes! I'm afraid he won't forget such an insult."

Lothrop laughed.

"Oh, he'll get over it," he said lightly.

With the insight into frontier character which early contacts had afforded, Hugh thought otherwise.

"I hope so," he said doubtfully.

BY DINT of much coaching, Ghulam Kafur at length passed his musketry course, along with Rahim Khan and the others. The class now became full-fledged *sowars,* or troopers. Previously attached to Hugh's temporary command, the two friends were now formally taken on the strength, for A Squadron was the Waziri squadron of the regiment.

Because of their friendship, Ghulam and Rahim formed a *jori*—that peculiar partnership of each pair of troopers in Indian Silladar cavalry. They shared the expense of a pony and a groom for it. The pony regularly brought in grass for their horses and, when necessary, carried their field kit, which included a small service tent for two. In addition, according to custom, the men furnished their own horses, saddlery, uniforms and equipment, excepting rifles and bandoleers.

The names of the newcomers were next to each other on the squadron duty roster. Shortly they found themselves doing regimental guard duty at the same time. There were two posts in the officers' mess compound, and it happened that the friends were posted to these beats while the officers sat at dinner. After the sounding of Retreat, guardsmen carried rifles rather than the lances which they bore during the day. For a time the men paced their beats regularly; every few minutes they met under the low rear windows of the mess.

"He said I shot like a woman," whispered Ghulam. "Perhaps he will soon think otherwise!"

Rahim Khan understood the other's intent and was fearful.

"There will be better chances than this," he temporized, as their heads were close together. Ghulam did not answer.

After awhile, seeing that Ghulam was carrying on in regular fashion, Rahim stopped at the other end of his beat and stood at ease.

Through the open windows Ghulam heard a loud laugh; he looked in and saw Lothrop, head thrown back, amused at some joke. The Waziri's lips curled in a snarl of hate. There would never be any better chance than this. Unobserved, he quietly placed his rifle on the sill and took aim at Lothrop's head.

In a high voice he cried:

"When I shoot to kill, I always hit my mark!"

The shot followed his last word. The bullet entered the young officer's eye and plowed through his brain. The mess was in an uproar. Officers fell over servants in their haste to get to the rear windows. In the confusion, no one heard another shot.

Rahim Khan met the first of the officers to vault the sill.

"Quick—he made for the stables!" he shouted, like a man possessed.

By now the guard had been turned out. Every one streamed off in the direction indicated.

Rahim stood near the window and stared after them. All at once he had a terrific revulsion of feeling. What could he have been thinking of, to fire on his friend in the act of taking revenge for an unpardonable insult? Why had he told them which direction Ghulam had taken? It was Ghulam Kafur who mattered; these men—Tremaine in particular—hadn't they made things unbearable for him as a recruit? And how could he ever explain that shot to his people, if it were discovered that he had fired it? How, indeed, when he could not understand it himself!

Sadly, he pumped the empty casing from his rifle; as if mockingly, the shell struck a small stone and tinkled hollowly.

It had been Ghulam's idea to raid the stables, take a horse and make his escape; but he had no chance. The stable guard, roused by the shots and seeing his flying figure, knocked him insensible with a head blow from a rifle. He was carried to the guardhouse.

It seemed like a clear case for a general court-martial, until the guard was dismissed at Retreat the following evening. When ammunition was checked, Rahim Khan was found to be short one round. Upon close inspection, his rifle, which had not been pulled through, showed fouling from the round fired. The ground about his beat was searched, to reveal the empty casing almost directly under the mess windows. But the shell which had held Ghulam Kafur's bullet had been found in the breech of his rifle. Rahim Khan was promptly arrested.

Two shots had been fired, but no one in mess seemed to remember a second one. All had heard the cry from the window, "When I shoot to kill, I always hit my mark," but none could swear positively which of the two men had uttered the words, for it had all happened too quickly.

That night the colonel, who had not dined in mess, began to take a summary of evidence. Except the colonel himself, every officer was a witness. When Hugh's turn came, he began by telling of the incident on the range.

"Ghulam Kafur used the very words that were shouted through the mess window last night, and it sounded like the same voice," he said.

"Did any one else overhear what happened on the range?" asked the colonel.

Hugh explained that there had been several Indian officers and N.C.O's present.

"Their evidence must be secured first thing in the morning," said the colonel. "That point may save one man's life."

"Yet, what happened to the second shot," said Hugh thoughtfully, "and why was it fired?"

"The two were old friends and formed a *jori,* didn't they?"

"Yes, that's what makes it look bad for Rahim Khan," Hugh replied.

"Well," said the colonel, "we'll have Rahim Khan brought in tomorrow morning and hear what he has to say. This is a dreadful business."

But in the morning Rahim Khan seemed strangely unwilling to clear himself.

"I was excited; my rifle went off by accident," was all he would say.

The colonel tried a fresh line of attack.

"As it stands now, you will be charged with murder. Had you thought of that?"

"I made no attempt to shoot any officer," Rahim replied.

"You may find it hard to prove that," said the colonel dryly.

The mess was searched for signs of the other bullet. No mark was found. The shot which had killed young Lothrop was removed from his head and carefully packaged. This, with the rifles of the two men, went down country to the ballistics experts.

Even after the simple military funeral, a heavy gloom continued to hang over the regiment. The period of waiting for the report of the ballistics people seemed long, although actually less than a week elapsed before their findings were reported. It was proved beyond doubt that the fatal ball had been fired from Ghulam Kafur's rifle.

The charge against Rahim Khan was changed from murder to attempted murder. But it made little difference, should he be found guilty.

IN SPITE of the strong chain of circumstantial evidence against the man, Hugh believed that there was an explanation which had not come to light. With this in mind, he went to Rahim's cell, where they would be alone.

"Tell me the truth," he said, "so that I may help you."

The Waziri looked at him inscrutably.

"My grandfather told me you would be my friend," he said, "even as your father was his friend. Yet since I came here it has been otherwise. I do not feel you are my friend, and I shall say nothing."

In spite of the gravity of his errand, Hugh smiled.

"You think I am not your friend because of the sharp things I said to you when you were a recruit? All recruits do foolish things which must be corrected. That is past. Were I not your friend I would not be here now."

"Huzur, why have you really come?"

"I have told you. I wish to help you. On the present evidence you'll be found guilty and shot. I do not think you are guilty and I want you to tell me the truth."

"You do not believe my rifle was discharged accidentally?"

"Of course not!" said Hugh impatiently. "A man mounts guard with an empty breech; he must work his bolt before he can get a cartridge into firing position. You couldn't have done that by accident."

"Then, Huzur, why do you think I did not do what they say?"

"I do not think you are that kind of man."

Rahim shrugged.

"I am a Pathan," he said simply.

"Yes, that's the very point! There is no better family in Waziristan than yours. Your grandfather and your great-grandfather proved what manner of men they were, here in the regiment. You are of their blood."

Impulsively Rahim Khan opened his lips, then changed his mind.

"Come," said Hugh gently, seeing him hesitate, "tell me what happened there under the mess windows."

"It makes little difference now," Rahim said finally. "I will tell you. I was standing at the other end of my beat when I heard the shot. I knew

what he had done, for his heart was filled with revenge. As I started to run toward the mess, I could see him dimly, by the lights of the drive, running toward the stables. I pumped a cartridge into my breech and fired at him —my best friend! Then the officers leaped from the window and I told them where he had run. I was mad; a curse was on me!"

"But, if that's true, you simply did your duty!"

"Duty? You do not understand. A Waziri may not shoot at his friend, or inform against him; and this a hundredfold, when the friend was in the act of vindicating his honor."

"This will clear you, if we can get the court to believe it."

"Perhaps, in the regiment. But not with the Mullah, Firoz Malik, or with my grandfather. They will never forgive!"

"Why need they ever know?" asked Hugh quickly.

"They know," Rahim replied.

"But how can they?" Hugh persisted. An ugly thought flashed through his mind. "Have you spoken of this to any one else?"

The Waziri nodded his head wearily.

"A few nights ago men of my squadron were on guard here. Among them were some old friends from my own village. They asked for the truth, and I told them—it was safe with them. Later, one of my friends came privately to the cell door and said, 'You fool, you should have spoken more softly. Did you forget that the guard was within earshot, and that he is a nephew of Firoz Malik?' We had all forgotten, but it was too late. They dared not ask him to be silent, for they would have drawn the wrath of the Mullah to themselves."

Hugh sighed.

"That's bad—very bad. I'm sorry you spoke. And yet your grandfather, the old risaldar-major, would understand the thoughts which prompted you to do what you did. He has our point of view; and he is all-powerful among your people, is it not so?"

"He is powerful," Rahim replied. "Yet even if he could be made to see the matter as you do, I doubt that he would cross the wishes of the Mullah."

"What would the Mullah's wishes be, do you think?"

"Think? I already know. He insists that I take the life of an Unbeliever—of some officer of the regiment—to atone for my sin. Perhaps it is better that the court find me guilty, for I can not do this thing."

"But if the court cleared you, and you then refused to obey the Mullah?"

"His Ghazis* would hunt me down and kill me."

"If we can get you clear," said Hugh, "I know I could explain the matter to your grandfather so that he would help you, rather than side with the Mullah."

"Truly," replied Rahim, "my grandparent is the only one to whose counsel the Mullah might harken. But my village is far away, and my grandfather is too old to come here."

"I meant that you should take me to him."

Rahim Khan was intensely surprised.

"You would do this for me?"

"Yes, if the colonel granted permission."

"But it might mean your life!"

Hugh smiled.

"Don't think of that now. First we must have this court-martial over. Be of good cheer."

AT LAST the court-martial ended. As was inevitable, Ghulam Kafur would face a firing squad. But Rahim Khan was free. Technically a witness for the prosecution, it was largely through Hugh's efforts that the outcome for Rahim had been such a happy one.

Hugh had kept his own counsel in respect to his projected trip into Waziristan, for it hinged upon the finding of the court. But now, the sooner he had

*Ghazis: Extreme religious fanatics.

it out with the colonel, the better. He expected opposition, and was turning over in his mind the most telling arguments in favor of the trip and how best to approach his commanding officer about it, when the colonel himself solved the difficulty by inviting Hugh to his bungalow for tiffin.

Toward the end of the meal, when the servants had withdrawn, the colonel said:

"I don't want you to feel down about this affair, young fellow. It was mere chance that the men happened to be in your squadron. When Beattie comes back he'll understand, I'll see to that. It's a closed book now. It's over!"

"Thank you, sir," said Hugh. "But the matter isn't quite over, even now."

The colonel started.

"Not over? Whatever can you mean?"

Hugh told him. The colonel grasped the significance of the situation instantly. He had served the regiment for thirty-three years and he was wise in the ways of the frontier. He saw the grave danger to Hugh, but he also perceived the necessity for the trip, if Rahim Khan's life was to be saved.

"I'd say to take a strong party, but that would constitute invasion. It might start the devil of a mess. No, you and Rahim Khan will have to go it alone. You ought to be in uniform, though. Perhaps they'd respect that. I don't quite know; it's an unusual case. Think I'll call the brigadier this minute."

The brigadier, who had been at Sandhurst with Hugh's father, had watched the court-martial with unusual interest.

"Let the young devil go," he decided in the end. "These damned Tremaines take everything so personally—as if the life of one *sowar* were worth his! It makes me good and tired; but they're all the same, that breed. Yes, let him go."

The colonel hung up and returned to Hugh.

"All right, my boy. He says to go ahead. He agrees with me that the risk isn't worth it, but I feel there's no use appealing to your sense of proportion. Your father was my colonel too long for me not to know how you fellows reason where the men are concerned." He looked at Hugh quizzically. "And damned if I don't admire you for it, you silly blighters!"

BY SUNRISE the next morning, Hugh and Rahim Khan were many miles away, riding easily, well into the broken gray hills that mark the real beginning of Waziristan. The sun glinted on Hugh's shoulder chains and picked out highlights on his well polished equipment. Rahim rode in mufti—jodhpurs, khaki coat and turban. He led the pony which he and Ghulam Kafur would no longer share; the little beast was loaded with food, fodder, and Rahim's service tent for Hugh's use.

At dusk they made camp on the summit of a high, flat topped hill. Rahim pitched the tent, and each man cooked his meal over a separate fire. Throughout the night they alternated in keeping watch, two hours on and two off. Nothing happened. Yet, as Rahim Khan had said—

"Be very sure our presence is known."

They were away before dawn, for Rahim estimated that an early start and a long day's ride would bring them to his village by evening.

At noon the critical stage of their journey began; for the trail—it could not be dignified by being called a road—led through several walled villages. With the horses, there was no way of avoiding these.

Uneventfully, they passed through two of the villages. Heads appeared at the tops of the walls on both sides of them, and they faintly heard excited talk. The sight of a single British officer in uniform and one of their own people, obviously a trooper in mufti, was sufficient to set tongues wagging furiously.

"There is a small mosque in the next village," said Rahim Khan, "and there Mullah Firoz Malik spends much of his time. He will know of our approach.

If we are not stopped at that village, I have no doubt we shall reach my grandfather without incident."

The trail wound round a jutting promontory and dipped down into a valley. When they were halfway along the valley the village sprang into view. In single file, Rahim Khan leading, they rode silently for some minutes.

"Should we be stopped," Rahim warned, "do not draw your revolver unless they lay hands on you."

Presently, between the walls, they could see the empty trail stretching reassuringly through the village and beyond. Unhurriedly they rode along; but here no heads appeared above the walls. The silence was absolute. The place might have been uninhabited.

They were almost clear of the village when a large party of men suddenly appeared around the end wall and spread across the path, blocking the way. A tall, pockmarked Ghazi with shaven head and clad only in a breechcloth, stepped forward and raised his hand.

"You must dismount and come with me," he said.

His men were slowly surrounding the travelers.

"To what purpose?" asked Rahim Khan curtly.

"The Mullah would question you," replied the man.

"We have far to go; there is no time to stop," answered Rahim.

He gathered up his reins as if to proceed, but the way was barred. He had the choice of staying where he was, or of riding them down.

"I am the grandson of Khusru Khan Bahadur*," he said proudly. "Let the Mullah ask his questions here. We will not dismount."

The two stared at each other over the heads of the silent men. Finally the Ghazi lowered his eyes.

"I shall give the Mullah your message," he said.

He disappeared around the wall. There was an uncomfortable pause; Hugh and Rahim were unable to speak without being heard by those about them.

At last they heard the sound of voices; and a wizened old man, with flowing hair and beard, and the wild light of a true fanatic in his eyes, immediately appeared. He pointed a shaking finger at Rahim Khan.

"You dare to come here?" he cried in a high, cracked voice. "You dare—after what you have done!" His tone changed. "It is well you have brought this Christian Unbeliever as a hostage!"

"Let us have no words, holy man," said Rahim civilly. "This officer is the son of an old friend of my grandfather. Before Khusru Khan is gathered to his reward, it is his wish to set eyes on this son of his friend."

"A lie!" shrilled the Mullah. "He would not risk the life of a Christian friend by letting him come here."

"There is no risk," said Rahim. "At present the Waziris and the British are at peace."

"Peace does not cover the intrusion of an Unbeliever!"

Rahim's tone became very firm.

"You must step aside and allow us to pass. The officer is under the protection of my family. Upon our return we shall see you."

Again he gathered up his reins and Hugh did likewise.

The Mullah's beady eyes glistened.

"Seize them!" he cried suddenly.

At the same instant Rahim and Hugh caused their horses to rear, and then both sprang forward. Snorting with fear, the pony pulled back on his halter, nearly unseating Rahim. He let the pony go. Men were down in the dust, hands reaching for them. Hugh galloped clear; but one assailant grasped the tail of Rahim's horse and swung himself part way up on the animal's haunches. From the wall came the sound of many shots. With a groan, the man behind Rahim loosened his hold and fell heavily.

*Bahadur: A title given upon retirement to Indian officers who have received the Indian Order of Merit for bravery in the field.

Then they were riding helter-skelter away, bullets splotching the dust about them. Hugh was in the lead, with Rahim close behind. The trail rose sharply at the valley's end. They clattered through the gap and drew rein out of range.

"They can not overtake us if we ride quickly," Rahim panted. "Farther on there are many short cuts they will use, which horses can not."

BY DINT of hard riding—forcing their mounts over the rough trail at a pace disastrous to horseflesh—they gained the village by midafternoon. The horses were exhausted. Rahim called out to the gatekeeper, and they rode into the village, straight to the hut of Khusru Khan. The old man was asleep; but there was little enough time before the first of the Mullah's men would arrive.

Without ceremony, Rahim strode past the members of his family and awakened the old officer. Eyes filled with sleep, he slowly sat up and shook his leonine head.

"I know all, my son," he said sternly. He rose to his feet and looked at Rahim from head to toe. "All—and it is bad!"

Rahim was explaining what had happened back on the trail and the urgency of the situation, when suddenly Khusru Khan caught sight of Hugh and stiffened to attention.

"These old eyes play me strange tricks," he said, peering more closely. "No need to tell me who you are, Huzur—I know. It is as though I were back at the beginning, when I was young. He wore a single star, as you do. And he was my good friend, my very good friend!"

Hugh stepped forward and shook hands warmly.

"I remember you well," he said. "You had just risen to risaldar-major when I went back to England."

"True. I am thrice honored by your visit, Huzur. But why have you risked your life? Surely not to see an old man?"

"To see an old and great one, and to save a young one. My father would have done no less for you, Bahadur. Rahim Khan has told you the simple truth, and there is no time to be lost!"

The old man was greatly moved.

"It shall be as you say, Huzur. Go, Rahim. Tell them to beat the drum!"

Penetrating, vibrant, the alarm drum began to beat. As if by magic, the clan gathered. Shortly the large space about Khusru Khan's dwelling was crowded; more men were coming through the open gates from the fields outside the village. Erect, the patriarch stepped free of the doorway, where all might see him.

"My children," he said, his voice firm and clear, "you know that Rahim Khan shot at his friend, Ghulam Kafur—whom Allah guard—while he was avenging a grave insult. There are many among you who do not understand the ways of the British. I have spent nearly all my life in their service. And I tell you that in firing that shot Rahim but did his duty as they see it.

"But the Mullah Firoz Malik, in his zeal to slay all Unbelievers, and believing Rahim to be grievously at fault, would have him kill whom he may of the British officers in atonement. Or butcher this one, who has risked his life to come here that I might understand the true facts.

"I say to you that Rahim Khan is blameless and that the life of this officer is in our keeping. Soon the Mullah and his men will be here, thirsting for blood. Go, arm yourselves against what they may do. I have spoken!"

Shortly thereafter the first of the Mullah's people arrived outside the walls. They were armed, but made no show of fight; they seemed to be waiting. It was growing dark.

"By using the short cuts, they thought to arrive before us, perhaps," said Rahim. "Come, let us go up into the watch tower; from there we can see the trail back a great way."

They stood with their elbows resting

on the parapet, gazing off into the gathering darkness. Rahim was the first to see tiny points of light, so far away that they did not appear to move.

"See, Huzur, the Mullah comes, I think."

Silently they watched the lights until, one by one, they vanished.

"Where are the lights—what has happened?" asked Hugh.

"They were in the next valley, of which we can see the lower half from here. You will see the flares again, much nearer, when they reach the head of this valley."

It seemed to take a long time. The calm, quiet evening sounds from below reached them faintly in the tower. They felt detached, apart, as if the almost certain trouble approaching were something about to take place in another world.

"Huzur," said Rahim Khan dreamily, "today it has been given me to understand many things which have hitherto seemed strange. I know now why my grandfather would defy the Mullah. He does it for you and for your father more than for me. I understand. The regiment gives something to us; or does it take something away? And yet, what reward can you expect for having undertaken this hazardous journey, perhaps with death at the end?"

"Rewards are of different kinds," Hugh replied slowly, framing his English thoughts in Pushtu words. Some British sentiments seemed weak or forced when translated into the vernacular. Perhaps, he thought, that is one of the great troubles on the frontier. "What is my reward, you ask? Have I not the satisfaction of helping a friend?"

Rahim shook his head.

"It seems too much to have done," he said shyly.

The first of the torches appeared at the head of the valley.

"How long will it take them to get here?" asked Hugh.

"A half hour, no longer."

Soon the party was distinctly nearer; they could see the flares wavering in the night air. Presently they picked out a figure seated on a donkey, surrounded by many torchbearers.

"It is he," said Rahim Khan.

They left the tower.

OLD Khusru Khan bustled about as he might have done many years before. The walls were strongly guarded. Below reenforcements waited; the women were ready to pass up ammunition to those on the walls.

Outside on the trail a loud murmur rose as the Mullah and his party joined those who had waited.

Khusru Khan stood on the wall.

"Can you hear my voice, O Mullah?"

"I hear," said a voice faintly.

"The gate will be opened. Enter with your torchbearers only!"

Creaking, the heavy gate swung open. The Mullah, mounted on his donkey and surrounded by bearers, rode slowly in and stopped not far from the gate. With surprising agility for an old man, he dismounted and looked about him.

"I am here, holy man," said Khusru Khan.

He walked into the circle of light cast by the flares.

"Let us not bandy words," cried the Mullah. "You know why I am here. I want both your grandson and the uniformed Unbeliever. I want them at once. They have defied me; one of my men has been killed because of them!"

Khusru Khan stepped closer, while Hugh and Rahim Khan walked boldly into the light.

"Both are under my protection," Khusru Khan said with dignity.

"My word is law here. I demand both of them now!" The Mullah was working himself into a seething rage.

Quietly the other answered—

"I regret that I can not give them up."

"You defy me—you, as well?"

The old officer folded his arms and said nothing.

"What is the meaning of this?" shrieked the Mullah. "You are forcing me to quarrel with you!"

"Let there be no quarrel. Go your way in peace."

At these words, the Mullah seemed demoniacal. From his ragged cloak he drew a long ceremonial knife of the sort used to kill animals. With a wild oath he hurled the knife straight at Khusru Khan. It lodged in the old man's throat. He drew himself up proudly, defiantly. Then, with a gasp, he sank to his knees. The Mullah, berserk, rushed at him.

A heavy bullet from Hugh's revolver spun the Mullah completely around; he rolled in the dust, snapping and foaming at the mouth like a mad dog.

Unseen, two of his people had overpowered the gatemen; and those who waited outside rushed in. Torch after torch fell or was knocked to the ground. The light grew steadily worse.

Hugh leaped to the fallen Khusru Khan and dragged his heavy body to a nearby buttress in the wall. Momentarily the fighting swerved away.

He leaned over the old officer.

"Bahadur, can you hear me?"

There was no answer.

Men were calling to each other:

"Find the Englishman. Slay the Unbeliever!"

Through the gates came others with fresh torches. Hugh's position was discovered.

"There he is! Slay him!"

To leave the angle—to move beyond the range of light—meant abandoning Khusru Khan, who might not be dead. A rifle was discharged at Hugh. The bullet lodged in the wall beside his head. Mud chips flew out, cutting his neck. He stood fast. Perhaps this was the end.

He thought—

"No more Tremaines."

He felt calm and detached. Within those seconds the beat of time seemed measured, like the slow, rumbling basses of a great orchestra.

From the menacing mob two spearmen rushed at him. Hugh dropped one, and the other tripped over his falling comrade. But more were coming in.

Far to the rear a voice cried:

"I come, Huzur!"

RAHIM KHAN was rallying his grandfather's forces. Dimly, Hugh could see the black figures of men leaping from the wall, no longer a vantage point now that the Mullah's people were inside.

A sudden fusillade of shots caused those who were attacking Hugh to pause and turn. The defenders charged. Instantly the clearing was a snarling, writhing mass of fighting fiends, hand to hand in the increasing darkness, for torches were fast vanishing beneath lashing feet.

From this vortex of friend and foe, a tall figure suddenly spun clear and made straight for Hugh.

As he charged forward, spear raised, Hugh saw that it was the pockmarked Ghazi who had intercepted them that morning. In this light only a point-blank shot would do. Hugh fired and ducked. The spear slipped harmlessly over his shoulder, but the man's rush crushed Hugh against the wall, just as more shots were fired. Hugh felt the impact of two bullets as they entered the body of his foe. He pulled the limp form down, so that together they shielded the body of Khusru Khan, the Ghazi uppermost.

It was well Hugh did so, for a rain of lead spattered the wall above them as Rahim Khan's men sent one last volley through their thinning enemies. Hugh heard running feet, curses, groans and then the thud of the closing gate. A last handful of the Mullah's men, trapped inside, were quickly dispatched.

Suddenly it was all over, the noise subsiding. Rahim Khan, a rifle in his hand, stood beside Hugh.

"You are unhurt? But my grandfather—the knife?"

Hugh rose from where he had lain

over Khusru Khan. Some one pushed a torch close to the old risaldar-major's face. He seemed to sleep. Stiffening hands, that had perhaps sought to stanch his wound, lay as they had fallen, peacefully crossed on his breast.

Rahim Khan knelt down and touched one of the hands.

"*Aië*—it is the will of Allah!"

Sadly they carried the body across the clearing and into the hut.

Outside a man cried:

"The horses! They have slain the horses!"

Rahim Khan heard.

"Huzur, we must prepare to leave at once. I shall select six men to accompany us. The news of the Mullah's death will travel fast, but we shall be ahead of it. A hard journey on foot, but we have nothing to fear if we move with speed."

"But afterward?" Hugh asked.

"Ah, afterward. What will be, is written!"

Hugh smiled.

"I am ready, my friend."

For a moment Rahim Khan looked at Hugh with shining eyes.

He said:

"You are a brave man. You are my friend, and your life is in my keeping, Huzur!"

He went out to gather his little party for the return journey.

In the quiet hut, waiting, Hugh's mind seemed to soar to the top of some high place. If a man looked one way, there was the past. There came John and Henry Lawrence, Abbott, Edwardes, Cust, Montgomery, Nicholson —all that illustrious company who had changed the face of a continent; who had built, perhaps better than they knew, a splendid and lasting tradition. Their spirit of selflessness engendered respect, admiration, even friendliness, in these strange people.

If one looked the other way, there was the future. Hugh could see himself, a minute part of the whole, riding down the way blazed by those giants. Humbly he hoped, as he stood there waiting, that he might not ride in vain.

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

TOM L. MILLS, of Ask Adventure (New Zealand) sends in an interesting bit on the revival of an old custom of sailing ship days:

"A curious sailing ship custom has been revived recently in connection with the death of a London shipowner, Mr. Andrew McIlwraith. A 'mourning band' was painted round the hull of a steamer belonging to his firm. It consisted of a 4 in. royal blue stripe, and it will remain in position for a period of six months. Though this 'mourning band' was often painted up in the days when sail flourished, since the advent of steam the custom has almost died out."

FOR students and others interested in the Cattlemen's War in Wyoming, a rare book that offers a complete though doubtless biased history:

Rock Springs, Wyoming

I have been particularly interested in the inquiries and discussions regarding the Cattlemen's War in Wyoming, which have appeared in several recent copies of *Adventure*. The letter of Leonard K. Smith was of especial interest, since he makes the statement that the history of this affair has never been adequately told.

It happens that a very complete history of the affair was written by a man named A. S. Mercer whose book, called "The Banditti of the Plains or The Cattlemen's Invasion of Wyoming in 1892," was published as early as 1894. This book, while it can scarcely be called unbiased, thoroughly covers all phases of the Johnston County War, from the hanging of Ella Watson (Cattle Kate) and Jim Averill on the Sweetwater (which by the way was in Natrona County) to the killings of Tisdale, Champion and numerous others of the alleged rustler faction.

In a rather lengthy preface the author describes conditions which led up to the opening of hostilities, and in the final chapters of the book are copies of communications between the forces of the Cattlemen's Association and officials of the State and Federal Governments, as well as copies of affidavits signed by various members of the invading party.

ACCORDING to information given me by an old-timer who possessed a copy of the book, its publication was suppressed by several financially and politically prominent parties whose

names were mentioned (unfavorably) in the contents as being mixed up in the affair and, so far as I have been able to learn, there are only three or four copies of the work extant. I personally know of two copies that were never permitted to leave the libraries of their owners.

As previously stated, the work can hardly be called unbiased, especially since the author's subcaption calls the affair "The Crowning Infamy of the Ages," but it does contain a wealth of information relative to the organization of forces by both the Cattlemen's Association and the settlers—or rustlers—(as you please).

—Cleigh O. Powers

BEARING on our recent discussion about blowguns, here are a few words on a Mexican variety, by John Newman Page of Ask Adventure:

Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico

I have just returned from a camping trip of several weeks in western Oaxaca, principally in the Mixteca country, and find three issues of *Adventure* awaiting me. In the April 15th number there is a Camp-fire item on blowguns by Paul M. Fink, in which he describes the gun as at present used by the Carolina Cherokees.

During my recent trip I saw and handled much the same sort of blowgun while in the mountain-top town of Tilantongo. The principal difference between the two guns seems to be in the length, for the Tilantongo tube averages between seven and eight feet, while Mr. Fink has the Cherokee weapon run from eight to ten feet and tells us that in 1761 it was called a *sarbacan*. Tilantongans use their gun for birds and small game and call it *sorbatana*.

The similarity between the two names is not especially significant, for both are evidently corruptions of the Spanish *cerbatana*. May there not be some significance, though, in the fact that the Cherokees and Tilantongans use and for centuries have used the same sort of blowgun? The Tilantongans, prior to the Spanish Conquest, were members of the Mixteca Federation; and the Mixtecs are believed to have migrated from Asia, crossed the Bering Strait and worked southward through the North American continent. As in all great migratory movements, it is probable that groups stayed behind here and there, or wandered off and lost contact with the main body.

Were the Cherokees Mixtecs?

—John Newman Page

CARRIZAL—the ill-fated Cavalry expedition during the Border trouble of 1916. Can any of you supply further details of that battle?

Maplewood, New Jersey

In the Ask Adventure of May 1st I noticed Mr. O. L. Carrick's query regarding the Carrizal affair back in 1916. Captain Townsend gives losses incurred for both sides and one name struck me—Lieutenant Adair, who was killed. Those seventeen years have played havoc with my memory, but the lieutenant's performance on that eventful day seems to have been particularly striking, if I recall correctly. Though just a kid in the final throes of grammar school, I followed "Black Jack's" trip into Mexico with rabid interest. I felt sorry for Pershing at the time—he was supposed to be after Pancho Villa but he could go just only so far as Carranza and Wilson permitted him. I remember, too vividly, perhaps, Carranza's famous edict which cowed "Watchful-waiting" himself—to the effect that "any troop movement south of this point will be considered hostile and will be treated as such," and the War Office ordered Pershing *north*.

But back to gallant Adair, who died for Lord knows what. A young chap (What was there—or is there—about a cavalry officer that sets pulses racing?) in the prime of life, everything to live for, caught with his troop by Carranzistas. He fell, wounded, and used his pistol, machine-gun-fashion, until death intervened. Who, I wonder, in Camp-fire, can tell more intimately of Adair and his men? Perhaps some member was there?

—Wm. A. Bowie

ANENT the subject of water-giving Tropical plants, a reader describes a vine that serves up pure and palatable water:

Kansas City, Missouri

In his reply to Mr. Eduardo Salazar's inquiry in the May 15th issue of *Adventure*, regarding trees, etc., that contain water, Mr. Barbour states that he has never had much success in obtaining water by this means. Somehow he leaves one with the impression that it isn't done, and that it is about on a par with other tales told by "travelers" who write of their experience from the deck of a river boat.

As far as I know, there are no trees, except the cocoanut palm, that do contain any amount of palatable water; but there is, in both Central and South America, a vine known among engineers as "bahookas" (I am not sure of the spelling) that is a never failing source of a pure, drinkable water. I know that this vine is common in Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Colombia, Venezuela and parts of Brazil.

THE method of obtaining the water is simple. With a machete the vine is cut with a slanting stroke, in lengths of about three feet. A section is up-ended the same as a bottle, and the water allowed to run into the mouth. From one three-foot section about half a pint of water can be obtained. To my knowledge, there are two varieties of the vine, and only experience can teach one to tell them apart. However, after trying the wrong kind once, no one will have to tell you to use caution the next time, for the water from this variety tastes like a combination of green persimmons, quinine and asafetida. The water from the other variety has only a slight

brackish taste which soon becomes unnoticeable.

The vine somewhat resembles the wild-grape vine, the bark being very rough and of a brownish red color. The largest vine I have ever seen was about three inches in diameter. It is generally found growing on the highest ground. Ask any Tropical engineer about "bahookas" and the chances are that he will tell you he has lived for months without any other water, which won't be the truth. However such vines do exist, and many are the times that I have satisfied my thirst with them.—G. B. HUDDLESTON

IN CONNECTION with the recent correspondence in Ask Adventure (April 15th) on the subject of acquiring speed in baseball pitching, a reader contributes additional advice:

New York, New York

Fred Lieb knows so much baseball that it is dangerous to differ with him; but a pitcher *can* increase his speed by practice.

Low speed is caused by cutting across the arc with the hand instead of swinging the arm from the shoulder, as Johnson and Vance do. Let a young player swing and he will lose control; for the added speed affects the curve and hop, so that he must practice to get back.

Let the boy use the chestweights with the arm extended: light weights at first; afterwards both heavy for strength and light for speed. He must exercise *both* arms, so as to have an anchor for the throwing arm. A year of that made a cub amateur I knew almost unhitable. Of course, you must learn the same swing for a slow ball or curve.—T. J. JOHNSTONE.

THE passing of a most interesting character, eminent firearms authority and friendly contributor to our Camp-fire:

Chicago, Illinois

Capt. Herbert W. McBride has died suddenly of heart trouble at the age of 59. Only a few months ago his voice was heard at the Camp-fire in the sub-machine gun controversy.

Capt. McBride had a colorful career. A lover of the outdoors and interested in geology, anthropology, botany, entomology, etc., he had hunted, explored and prospected in Alaska, British Columbia and the Yukon. In the Klondike, during the gold rush, he missed the Spanish-American War, much to his disgust; but he served in the Boer War in South Africa and with the Canadians in Flanders. He was decorated with the British Military Medal in 1916 for the capture of 12 machine guns and with French Medaille Militaire for the capture of a German flag. Wounded seven times, he was invalided home in 1917, and in 1918 he was instructor at the Small Arms Firing School at Camp Perry, Ohio.

CAPT. McBRIDE was well known as a rifleman and an authority on firearms. He shot for many years on the Indiana National Guard team, winning State championships in 1905-6-7. He organized the Indiana State Rifle Association and was the State N. R. A. secretary for several years.

Capt. McBride was the author of "The Emma Gees," describing his experiences as a sniper and machine gunner in the C. E. F., and of a second book entitled "A Rifleman Goes to War," is in press. He wrote a chapter on the rifle in battle for Capt. Grossman's "Military & Sporting Rifle Shooting."

As a real soldier of fortune, Capt. Herbert W. McBride ranks along with Capt. Philo Norton McGiffin who commanded a Chinese battleship in battle of the Yalu.—ALLEN P. WESCOTT

ANOTHER contribution on the nature of tracer bullets:

Fort Monroe, Virginia

An item in your April 1st Ask Adventure on tracer bullets struck me as a little misleading. At the risk of being thought too critical, I should like to answer Mr. Panrush's inquiry thusly:

The tracer bullet is (not was) the same in outward appearance as the ordinary Service .30 cal. or .50 cal. bullet. Actually the .30 cal. tracer and .30 cal. Service weigh alike, and similarly the .50 cal. tracer and the .50 cal. Service weigh alike. But when the tracer pellets are burned out (consumed) the tracers of each calibre weigh 6 and 10 grams less respectively; this, of course, affects the ballistic properties of the tracers to a degree that is most disconcerting to the machine gunner.

There are three different colors of tracer fire: red, green and white. The pellet is in the base of the bullet and is ignited by the flash or blast of the propelling charge. The quantity of burning substance in each pellet is carefully measured because it is essential that each tracer bullet has the same burn out point. Thus the .30 cal. tracer consumes itself at 900 yards, and the .50 cal. tracer at 2000 yards. Sad to relate, these figures are not constants, as atmospheric conditions affect the burning rate. But as an approximation they will do.

THE modern tracer does not give off a smoke, but a brilliant light (almost a pin point) quite like the "red lights" we used to burn on Fourth of July nights. The tracer can be seen quite well by day except when shooting into the sun. Our tracers are manufactured by and at the Frankford Arsenal, Philadelphia, Pa. To differentiate them from the Service (ball cartridge), the shells are a very dark colored brass instead of the bright brass.

I offer these remarks merely to clarify the published description and not in any sense to refute the definitions of Mr. Wiggins, who was doubtless speaking of type initially designed for use at the outbreak of the World War.

—NELSON DINGLEY, Major, U. S. Army

ASK *Adventure*

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Tropical Gear

FOR Guiana a straw hat is considered superior to the swanky cork topee.

Request:—What sort of boots, clothing, socks and headgear would you recommend as proper equipment for an exploring trip into the Guianas?"

—MILLARD F. THOMPSON, Detroit, Michigan

Reply, by Dr. Paul Vanorden Shaw:—I would suggest boots of the Army style for heavy tramping, although I would certainly have slippers or sandals for those occasions when I was not on the march. I think khaki clothing is about as ideal as any, but not shorts. I would carry both medium socks and light, the medium for heavy tramping and the light for periods of relaxation.

A great many people wear cork topees, but I think that the straw sombrero often is as serviceable as any. You will probably not want an undershirt, although I would take one or two; but I do recommend the use of cotton shorts to wear under your khaki trousers.

Shark

FACTS about a much misunderstood denizen of the deep.

Request:—"Does a shark have to turn over on its belly to strike or to attack a man? We had a controversy in regard to its turning over when attacking anything. I have seen undersea pictures, and they didn't turn over once in them. Your word settles the matter."

—LESLIE W. REPPE, Oak Park, Illinois

Reply, by Captain Dingle:—There are very many kinds of sharks. I suppose you refer to the most generally known critter—the one which sometimes attacks human beings.

The only reason for a shark's turning belly-up to bite is that its mouth is underneath. Therefore, to take anything *on the surface,* that mouth must be turned upward, unless the shark rises from the water.

But a shark can and does take anything below the surface without turning belly-up. In short, anything that can be taken without the shark's rising out of the water is taken in the normal swimming position. On the surface—nearly always, but not quite always—the shark turns over to bite. But I have seen a shark come half out of the water to bite. Perhaps the clearest way of putting it is to say that, subject to rare exceptions, a shark takes a bite at what he wants in the most convenient position for himself.

Unfortunately, many myths die hard, in spite of our boasted education. There are sharks which you can kick on the nose with impunity. And whales do not spout water—and the throat of the sperm whale is not small. It could swallow the biggest man alive. All sharks are not man-eaters, and they do not always turn belly-up to bite. I hope this gives you what you want.

Boxer

CLASSIFICATION according to weight.

Request:—"What are the different weights in boxing and their names?"

—HAROLD FICHTER, Cleveland, Ohio

Reply, by Capt. Jean V. Grombach:—The different classes in boxing are:

— —112 Fly weight
112—118 Bantam weight
118—126 Feather weight
126—135 Light weight
135—147 Welter weight
147—160 Middle weight
160—175 Light heavy weight
175—Heavy weight.

Cap-and-Ball

'THERE'S life in the old gun yet.

Request:—"I have in my possession an old cap-and-ball revolver, and should be very grateful for any information you may be able to give me as to its operation. This revolver was brought over from Ireland by a cousin, who was under some misapprehension about the danger from

Indians in this country. It is of English manufacture, and the trade name of Conway, Black Friars St., appears on the barrel. (Black Friars St., Manchester). I judge it to be about a .40 or a .41. I have some .44-40 shells, and the lead is a bit too large to go in the barrel of this revolver. The gun has a set trigger, and the general workmanship seems to be very fine. Its cylinder holds five charges, and the length of the cylinder is just over an inch. I have the bullet mold which seems to belong to the gun, but I should like to know what powder to use, how much powder to use, what caps I should use, and where they can be obtained. It is such a fine weapon that I am anxious to try it."

—A. NEWTON GILBERT, Rosebud, Alberta

Reply, by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—In loading your cap-and-ball revolver, first be sure the nipples are clear of dust or dirt, firing a round of caps ere loading to clear them, if necessary. For the caliber you have described, I'd use a round or conical ball, preferably the former in case the mold casts both.

Use about twenty grains of FFG or FG black powder, and between bullet and powder place a greased felt wad; I cut mine from shotgun wads, with a punch of a little larger diameter than the bore, and soak them in melted tallow. After seating the ball, I also smear a little tallow or hard grease on the ball as it lies in the chamber, this seemingly adding to the ease of cleaning.

Wash the cylinder and barrel out with hot water after firing, and I think the old gun will surprise you with its shooting at close range, say up to twenty yards or so.

Sourdough

WHEN it smells to high heaven it's ready for the oven.

Request:—"I have read in different camping stories about sourdough. Will you kindly advise me just what it is and the recipe for same?"

—EDWARD L. SLONAKER, Pottstown, Pennsylvania

Reply, by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—Sourdough is a fermented mixture of flour and water, etc, that is used as yeast in making bread, mainly in the North, as it has the advantage of working at lower temperatures than ordinary yeast will do.

The sourings are made by mixing about two cups of flour, two tablespoonfuls of sugar, one each of salt and vinegar, with sufficient water to make a thin batter. Set this in a warm place to ferment, which will take two or possibly three days. When it smells to high heaven it is getting ready for use. Mix the greater part with the quantity of flour necessary to make a stiff dough, working in a little lard, sugar, salt and a small spoonful of soda, and set to rise overnight. This can be cooked in the morning; or, better yet, work it down and form into loaves, and let rise again before baking.

To the residue of the sourings add more flour and water and let sour again, continuing this process to insure a continual supply of yeast.

Pancakes can be made like bread, mixing a batter with the sourings at night.

Ski

NOW is the time to take a look at your Winter equipment.

Request:—"I have been using hot linseed oil about twice a year to preserve my skis, and ski wax to finish the running surface. Lately I have heard that some people shellac the ski four or five times, rub it down, and then wax it. Can you tell me which process is better?"

—ARCHIE MERCER, Staten Island, New York

Reply, by Mr. W. H. Price:—You are doing the correct thing in oiling your skis about twice a year in order to preserve them. The bottoms should be oiled with boiled linseed oil, best applied hot, a month or so before use. They should always be oiled when put away after the Winter season. New skis should be oiled repeatedly before using at intervals of a week or two, until they will absorb no more. Do not oil new skis more than once, however—if they are to be used within a few days, and if you are going to wax them—as the oil prevents the wax from penetrating or sticking to the ski.

Do not shellac the bottom of your skis; you may, however, varnish the tops, if you wish to.

Folding the Flag

THE triangle-fold is called the cocked —or Washington—hat.

Request:—"Why is the American Flag folded in the triangular shape? I believe it is called the 'Washington Hat'."

—PATROLMAN THEODORE W. PETERS, Monson, Massachusetts

Reply, by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—Army regulations prescribe that the flag shall be folded into the triangular shape when it is lowered at retreat. This shape is referred to as the "cocked", or Washington, hat. I am sorry that I can not state positively the origin of the custom. It is, I believe, of long standing; although I can find no mention of it in Army regulations published prior to the Civil War.

I shall attempt to gather further information on this subject which I will forward to you if, and when, found.

Bird

THIS Venezuelan stork could not be trusted with a baby.

Request:—"I lived in the interior of Venezuela for some time, and while there I saw on numerous occasions many individuals of a very large species of birds, which the natives called *pájaros soldados* (soldier-birds), or simply *soldados* (soldiers). At that time I was not especially concerned in finding out the English or scientific names of these birds, but I would now like to know these facts, as well as anything that may be known of their habits and regional distribution.

These birds are somewhat similar in proportion

to a crane, but are heavier and stockier, with fairly large heads and heavy bills. In color they are pure white except for the neck and head, which are black or very dark, and the bill, which is also dark colored. They are about 4½ feet tall, and when on the ground stand up very straight and stiff, or walk around very sedately, poking their powerful bills in among the rushes and other aquatic vegetation in search of living food. They appear to have a good deal of difficulty in getting off the ground, but once aloft they fly with considerable grace. They have a very wide wing-spread, and in the air appear much larger than a swan or a pelican. The young birds, until about half the size of the adults, are of a uniform brownish color resembling that of young pelicans.

Insofar as I ever noticed, these birds always frequented marshy places, or the shallows along the borders of the semi-permanent lakes and ponds of the country. The general locality where I saw most of them was between the Mapirito and Guanipa Rivers, and between the Tigre and Morichal Largo Rivers, in the state of Monagas, in northeastern Venezuela. At the first of these localities, the country may be described as park-like in aspect, with scattered patches of woods alternating with open grasslands dotted with marshes and ponds. At the second locality the country is typical "llanos"—that is, great open plains, with only very rare clumps of trees, or narrow belts of bush along the intermittent water-courses, along which the birds were always found."

—H. B. FIELDS, Marion, North Dakota

Reply, by Mr. Davis Quinn:—Your bird is a stork, *Jabiru mycteria,* related to the wood ibis group, popularly known as the Jabiru. Below the naked black skin of the head are two bands of loose, glossy, fiery red skin which the bird inflates when enraged. Hence the common name, from the Indian *Zabiru* meaning "blown out with the wind".

A wild, ordinarily solitary bird of far places, with little known of its intimate life history. Nest is inaccessibly placed, 40 to 70 feet high in a tree near marsh or plain; construction of sticks bound together by mortar of grass and mud, the whole topped by a flat mattress of grass. Resembles what a gigantic pigeons' nest might look like. Usually four eggs, laid in Sept., size of goose eggs, of dirty white or yellowish color.

Both parents incubate in turn, with a devotion that collectors have found to be fearless when danger threatens the nest contents. Young, covered with light colored down, appear about Oct., size of young ducks. They grow rapidly, almost to size of parents in a few weeks—fed mostly on fish—but their legs are too weak to permit them to stand upright till after the first plumage of grayish brown is acquired some weeks later.

The next important development is, of course, flight; my notes do not indicate exactly when this occurs. The adult white plumage is acquired only after several molts, and apparently when the bird is about two years old.

FOOD of the adults seems to include any live creature catchable, from such as rails which are bolted whole, to 6 ft. serpents which must obviously require desegmentation before swallowing. I have a record of a good sized 'possum gulped whole. Not even hard-shelled mollusks escape the formidable beak of the Jabiru.

One individual, which may be presumed to be about average, measured 5 ft. 10 in. from beak to toes, including a twelve-inch beak; wing-spread, 7 ft. 10 in. You must well know the grandeur of this huge bird on the wing. It has a tough time taking off and alighting, but once in the air the Jabiru soars like a buzzard with effortless case till dizzy altitudes dissolve it from human sight. Range: most of S. America. East to British Guiana and northeastern Brazil; south to southern Brazil, Asuncion, central Argentina; west to northwestern Argentina, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Costa Rica; north to Nicaragua, Venezuela. Breeds throughout its range.

Accidental in Mexico and southern U. S. (Texas). This latter is well. Had so conspicuous and magnificent a bird occurred in our latitudes, its fearlessness would long since have spelled speedy doom and extinction at the hands of thoughtless gunners. Witness the California condor and the eagles, particularly the golden eagle.

Coin

CURRENCY depreciation in ancient Rome.

Request:—"While doing some reading on Roman history, I found that, calculating from footnotes in a certain book, the aureus of Augustus was equivalent to 20 denarii, or 80 sestertii, each sestertius being the equivalent of 16 asses. In still another tome I discovered, greatly to my consternation, that there were (95-100 A.D.) 17 asses per sestertius and 100 ses. per aureus.

There was also a note to the effect that at the time the book was printed, about 1914, the English pound was equal to about 120 sestertii. Can you tell me how those figures are arrived at?"

—K. A. MUNROE, Elmhurst, New York

Reply, by Mr. Howland Wood:—During the Roman period they did not have a standardized coinage, and the only standard coin was the aureus. The copper declined in weight as time passed on and that is the reason why during 95 to 100 A. D. they had to give more copper coins to be equivalent to the aureus.

If they have figured out that in 1914 the English pound was equal to about 120 sestertii, it must be so; but we can not tell you just how they arrived at these figures.

WITH deep regret the editors announce the death of Lieutenant Francis V. Greene, for many years our Ask Adventure expert on Navy Matters.

The vacancy has not yet been filled. Readers who feel fully qualified to cover Navy Matters (United States and foreign) are invited to state their qualifications by letter to the Managing Editor, *Adventure,* 161 Sixth Avenue, New York City.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelop 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 this magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The expert will in all cases answer to the best of his ability, but neither he nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment. Ask Adventure covers outdoor opportunities, but only in the way of general advice.

Salt and Fresh Water Fishing *Fishing-tackle and equipment; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips.*—JOHN B. THOMPSON ("Ozark Ripley"), care *Adventure.*

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State Police FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 176, Farmingdale, N. J.

Federal Investigative Activities *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, Box 176, Farmingdale, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

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Dogs JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.*

American Anthropology North of the Panama Canal *Customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions.*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Cal.

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Ornithology *Birds; their habits and distribution.*—DAVIS QUINN, 3548 Tryon Ave., Bronx, New York, N. Y.

Stamps DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Ave., Denver, Colo.

Coins and Medals HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., New York City.

Radio *Telegraphy, telephony, history, broadcasting, apparatus, invention, receiver construction, portable sets.*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

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Football JOHN B. FOSTER, American Sports Pub. Co., 45 Rose Street, New York City.

Baseball FREDERICK LIEB, *The New York Evening Post,* 75 West St., New York City.

Track JACKSON SCHOLZ, P. O. Box 163, Jenkintown, Pa.

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Boxing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH.

Fencing CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., New York City.

The Sea Part 1 *American Waters.* Also ships, seamen, wages, duties, statistics and records of American shipping. Vessels lost, abandoned, sold to aliens and all government owned vessels.—LIEUT. HARRY E. RIESEBERG, 47 Dick St., Rosemont, Alexandria, Va.

The Sea Part 2 *British Waters.* Also old-time sailoring.—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

The Sea Part 3 *Atlantic and Indian Oceans: Cape Horn and Magellan Straits; Islands and Coasts.* (See also West Indian Sections.) *The Mediterranean; Islands and Coasts.*—CAPTAIN DINGLE, care *Adventure.*

Philippine Islands BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Arizona, care of Conner Field.

★**New Guinea** L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory of Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand, Cook Islands, Samoa** TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania** ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge Street, Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardross," Suva, Fiji.

Asia Part 1 *Siam, Andamans, Malay Straits, Straits Settlements, Shan States and Yunnan.*—GORDON MACCREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y.

Asia Part 2 *Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies in general, India, Kashmir, Nepal. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care *Adventure*.

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★**Asia Part 4** *Southern and Eastern China.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

★**Asia Part 6** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—GEORGE W. TWOMEY, M. D., U. S. Veterans' Hospital, Fort Snelling, Minn.

Asia Part 7 *Japan.*—OSCAR E. RILEY, 4 Huntington Ave., Scarsdale, New York.

Asia Part 8 *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

★**Africa Part 1** *Egypt, Tunis, Algeria.*—DR. NEVILLE WHYMANT, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 2 *Abyssinia, French Somaliland, Belgian Congo. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure*.

Africa Part 3 (British) *Sudan, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya. No questions on employment.*—CAPT. R. W. VAN RAVEN DE STURLER, care of *Adventure*.

Africa Part 4 *Tripoli. Including the Sahara, Tuaregs, caravan trade and caravan routes.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLEY-GIDDINGS, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 5 *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care *Adventure*.

Africa Part 6 *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar: West Africa: Southern and Northern Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, Firestone Plantations Company, Akron, Ohio.

Africa Part 7 *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal and Rhodesia.*—CAPTAIN F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Box 107, Santa Susana, Cal.

✠**Africa Part 8** *Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada.

Madagascar RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe G. I. COLBRON, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn.

South America Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care *Adventure*.

South America Part 2 *Venezuela, the Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, 457 W. 123rd St., New York, N. Y.

✠**West Indies** *Cuba, Isle of Pines, Haiti, Santo Domingo, Porto Rico, Virgin and Jamaica Groups.*—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America *Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala.*—E. BRUGUIERE, 365 W. 20th St., New York City.

Mexico Part 1 *Northern Border States of Old Mexico, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamanulipas.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Mexico Part 2 *Southeastern Federal Territory of Quintana Roo and States of Yucatan and Campeche.* Also archeology.—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

✠**Mexico Part 3** *Mexico south of a line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, Sureno Carranza 16, Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico.

Newfoundland C. T. JAMES, Box 1331, St. Johns, Newfoundland.

Greenland Also dog-team work, whaling, geology, ethnology (Eskimo).—VICTOR SHAW, Loring, Alaska.

Canada Part 1 *New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.* Also fur farming.—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Ave., Binghamton, New York.

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✠**Canada Part 4** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Chronical*, Arnprior, Ont. Canada.

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Canada Part 6 *Humers Island and English River District.*—T. F. PHILLIPS, Department of Science, Duluth Central High School, Duluth, Minn.

✠**Canada Part 7** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C.

Canada Part 8 *The Northw. Ter. and the Arctic, especially Ellesmere Land, Baffinland, Melville and North Devon Islands, North Greenland and the half-explored islands west of Ellesmere.*—PATRICK LEE, 189-16 Thirty-seventh Avenue, Flushing, New York.

✠**Canada Part 9** *Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Mackenzie and Northern Keewatin and Hudson Bay mineral belt.*—LIONEL H. G. MOORE, Flin Flon, Manitoba, Canada.

Alaska Also mountain climbing. THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 922 Centinela Blvd., Inglewood, Cal.

Western U. S. Part 1 *Oregon, Washington and California.*—FRANK WINCH, 405 N. Spaulding Ave., Los Angeles, Cal.

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Western U. S. Part 6 *Tex. and Okla.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

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Middle Western U. S. Part 6 *Great Lakes.* Also courses, distances, reefs and shoal lights, landmarks, charts, laws, penalties, river navigation.—H. C. GARDNER, 1863 E. 57th St., Cleveland, Ohio.

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