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A HEAD FOR THE GAME
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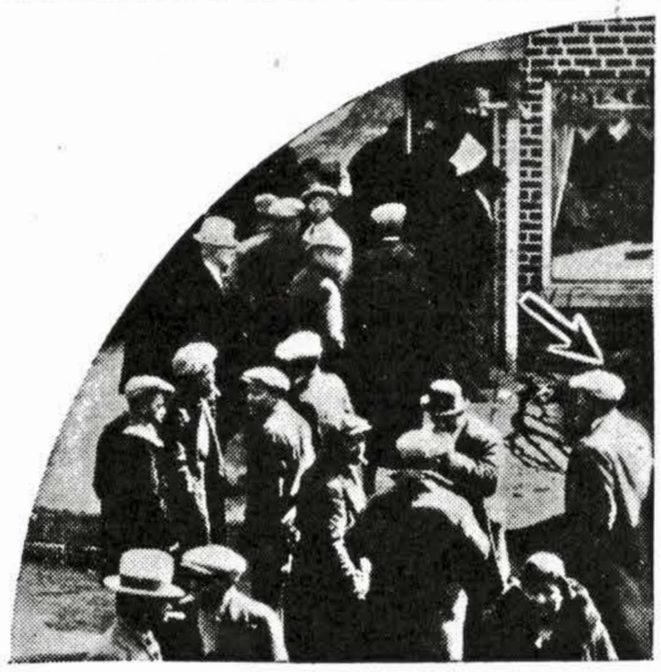

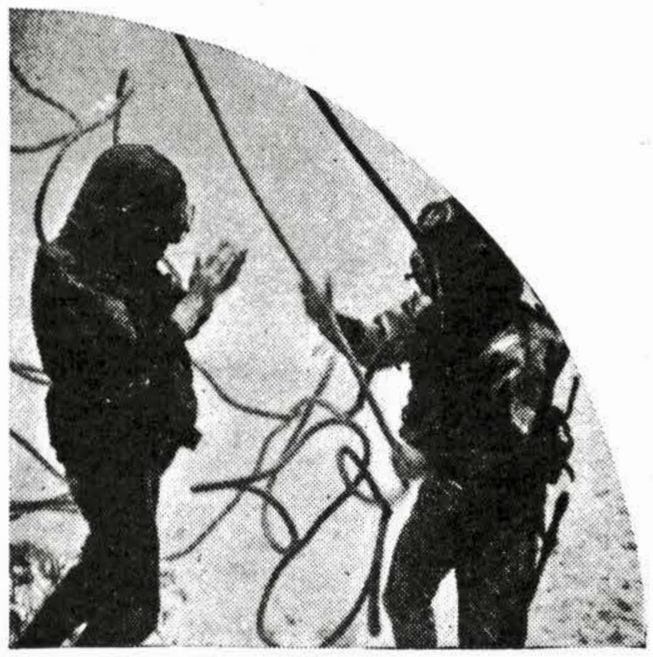

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A HEAD FOR THE GAME

A Novelette

By GEORGES SURDEZ

LIEUTENANT CAUVAIN first came into open conflict with the Foreign Legion at the combat of Lalla-Oum, in the Middle-Atlas. But long before that occasion he had considered all Legionnaires with suspicion, due to the tales narrated by his father, who had served in the Colonial Infantry during several campaigns side by side with units of the famous corps.

"Legionnaires?" the retired major had repeated often. "I admit they are splendid fighters. But you must watch them They are the biggest gang of thieving blackguards, the worst trouble-makers ever assembled. I remember one time in the Tonkin—"

The affair at Lalla-Oum has taken its place in official records with a few lines of small type: Another mountain engagement in Morocco. But those who participated in the mêlée will remember that it came dangerously close to being a repetition of the massacre of Laver-

"He dead too much!"

dure's column in 1915. And Cauvain was with the battalion of Senegalese *Tirailleurs* which bore the brunt of the surprise attack at dawn.

Cauvain was an Eastern Frenchman, twenty-three years old, tall, rangy, and rather handsome. He was not without conceit and believed himself a veteran, having been under fire three or four times. But he was to learn that morning that an officer was not a chief until he had proved himself.

The battalion was marching across a long slope toward attacking positions. The mist had been dispelled by the morning wind. The sun was coming out, and with the enemy reported two or three miles away, on the opposite side of a deep, wooded ravine, all was calm, orderly. The khaki-garbed Negroes, recruited from all West African colonies, were still chattering and shivering a bit after the cool night. But coffee had been issued, they were growing warmer, and the trumpets echoing from the camp as the supporting artillery started to move had a particularly cheerful ring.

Then, like grotesque figures beheld in a nightmare, tall silhouettes surged into view over the crest of the ridge, spilled down at headlong speed, seeming to drip out of the gray sky in a downpour of half-naked, bearded men. For several seconds there was no sound, as the battalion stood petrified—no sound save the

rapid slap-slapping of bare soles on solid soil. Then a sergeant, somewhere along the line, recovered from his start, fired his pistol.

"Allah—Allah—ah—ha!"

The frantic scream lifted piercingly. And the Chleuhs came on without firing a shot. The flanking sections were driven back into their companies by that yelling mob of mountaineers. Butts and clubs swung and cracked; flashing knives hacked and lunged; volleys of stones came pelting into the formations. The hillmen were singling out the white leaders, surrounded them like dogpacks worrying wild boar, and the tumult was swelled by scattered detonations, shrill yelps of panic in all the tongues and dialects used between Sahara and Congo.

Cauvain wanted to run. The effort to remain tore at his bowels, flooded his brain with rage. The avalanche of brownish *jellabas* rolling in his direction was awing. But flight was forbidden both by honor and by common sense. Negro soldiers, once they have broken, are hard to bring back into action.

"Halt! Halt!" Cauvain grasped the nearest men, wrenched them about to face the enemy. "Steady, steady! Fix bayonets! Bayonets!"

For one wild moment, he thought they would break; then, from long habit, they heeded his voice. The blades leaped into sight, clicked into place at the end of the rifles.

"Come on—charge!"

A counter-attack was the only solution. But the blacks hesitated to plunge into the mixup, and it was not until Cauvain was doubling toward the initial point of impact that they started forward. But once their minds were made up, new yells arose, the fierce, sharp kill-cries of Black Africa. A few nervous fingers pulled on triggers, hurtling bullets at random.

"Hold your fire, *Tirailleurs!* Bayonets!"

BULLETS fired into that mass might kill as many soldiers as natives. Cauvain pushed into the confusion. Here and there were small islands of resistance, each one with a white man as its core. For the Negroes, by instinct as much as training, huddled close to their leaders.

"Coming, coming—hold on—"

Cauvain's work was to link those islands, to somehow form a line, to recover the superiority of discipline and organization. And it was really work, hard work, to butt his way from group to group. Fortunately, he was given a chance to think of others at times, not merely of his own safety.

Although he had given no orders for it, he was protected, well protected. At his right trotted his orderly, the giant Sudanese, Kikosso, six feet five inches tall, who wielded rifle and bayonet as easily as a foil. At his left was Corporal Yaloke, a taciturn, chocolate-hued Bambara, a professional soldier from a tribe of warriors. Dodging in and out before the white chief was Kuffi, a pocket-sized Hercules from the Ivory Coast, with clan slashes ridging his cheeks and a lion's heart pounding in his big chest.

"Second group, face left. Fire at will up the slope—"

Cauvain had seen an angle where it was possible to shoot without danger of hitting French soldiers. And although the Senegalese are not ordinarily good marksmen, they could not miss at that range. There were other detonations, duller, the crackling of officers' pistols or revolvers.

The line of defense was forming, slowly, but forming. Groups contrived to link, and the swirling groups of hillmen did not pierce through as easily as at the beginning. Winded, trembling, Cauvain paused for breath after clearing the captain of the third company from a knot of assailants.

This officer was holding one hand over a cut across his forehead, to keep his vision clear, and blood dripped through the fingers, down his wrist and into his drenched sleeve. He was furious, and appeared to hold Cauvain to blame for his misfortune.

"Where in hell did they come from?"

"Search me, Captain!"

"That gully was stuffed with men and no one reported it! Fine scouting, fine

information, lovely mess! They're after our ammunition, of course. Do the best you can here, while I go take a look—"

He ran off, still clutching his head, still sputtering curses. And Cauvain was ready to follow that advice, to do his best. He knew that the object desired was to break off close contact with he mountaineers, to give automatic rifles and machine-guns a chance to operate.

BUT the Chleuhs knew this even better than he. They knew that they were safer in the hand-to-hand struggle, mixed up with the *Tirailleurs,* than they would be fifty yards away. And they fought on desperately. Under such conditions, it was hard to draw back without causing a panic. The enemy must be beaten away, not avoided.

And while the Moorish warriors kept up the fight, darting figures, women and children, moved about the space they had cleared, picking up rifles, carbines, stripping the fallen of ammunition after making sure the chap was dead. For the purpose of this maniacal rush had been to obtain cartridges—cartridges to continue the resistance. Lives were being sacrificed that the survivors might take more lives!

But reinforcements were appearing, Moroccan *Tirailleurs* and supply-service teamsters armed with carbines; here and there, an automatic rifle, a machine-gun, found a clear field and opened fire. Suddenly, without a signal which Cauvain could identify, the natives were in full flight. They covered the ground with incredible velocity, but some few of them failed to outstrip flying bullets.

"After them," Cauvain said.

He was animated by a very personal dislike for the mountaineers at that second. He had been too frightened for his liking. He led the pursuit to the ridge crest, but the down slope was already deserted, the last of the fugitives were crashing through the runted trees and bushes at the bottom of he ravine.

Then, dazed by the sudden cessation of movement, by the comparative silence, Cauvain realized that the pistol he gripped was hot, that the hand he passed over his sweating face reeked of powder. A dozen small scenes came into his mind, clear as etchings, events of which he had not been fully aware of when they occurred: A shaven skull hurtling toward him above a twisted, froth-flecked face; the glitter of a blade; fierce eyes that were blanked in a red smear. He remembered Kikosso's gesture of the forearms and wrists as he tore his bayonet out of an adversary's chest.

The entire skirmish could not have lasted more than three minutes, but Cauvain felt that he had aged ten years. His uniform was in tatters, torn at the shoulders and knees, stained with blood. The peak of his képi bore a gash; one of his boots had been slashed open above the ankle, probably by a man already wounded. All in all, he thought stupidly, this would prove an expensive morning; fifteen hundred francs for new clothes and equipment!

His captain appeared out of the clustering soldiers. Cauvain could not recall seeing him during the fight, but he had undoubtedly been somewhere around. His face and hands were clawed, bleeding, his nose puffed, both eyes turning black. Cauvain, who had resisted an impulse to run—who had saved the situation, he believed—expected a word of praise.

But, like the other captain, the man's chief emotion was rage against the staff, the cavalry. And at the moment, he did not appear to be too fond of Cauvain, for that matter.

"Well, what are you doing there, Cauvain? They're gone, don't worry! Now, we can expect a report from headquarters, warning us that the ravine is occupied! What a mess, what a mess—and I had to hold back those damn zebras of ours almost by main force. I'm none too sure that gun-butt in the mug wasn't presented me by one of them. Well, what are you doing here?"

"Waiting for orders, Captain."

"Orders, orders—well, before anything else can be done, we must round up the battalion's mules. The officer in charge of the convoy knew that the natives were after them, and turned them loose down the slope. Now, he's tearing his

hair, because a lot of them strayed off."

Cauvain took Kikosso, Yaloke, Kuffi and seven others with him. By this time, the blacks were over their first excitement, and grinned as usual. But Kikosso sought to make sure that his efforts had been appreciated.

"Me good, eh, Lieutenant? You look all I do?"

"Sure. You were wonderful, old chap."

"One man go for kill you. I kill him. I catch medal now?"

"I'll see the captain about it."

Kikosso was not hungry for glory, but he had a passion for ornamentation. His great sorrow was that he had no cross to wear.

UNTIL close to noon, they helped retrieve the scattered mules, their cargo. Then they came upon two disconsolate *Tirailleurs* seated on cases of ammunition, in the lee of laurel bushes fringing a shallow arroyo. The Negroes were weeping slow tears, a pack harness at their feet, mournfully considering a dead mule ten feet away.

They leaped to attention when they saw Cauvain. Most of the muleteers in the battalion were Pheuls, but these two were Yakomas from the Ubangi colony, large, muscular, very black in hue, and not over civilized.

"What's the trouble here?" the officer asked.

He understood little of their explanation, because their few words of French had forsaken them in their hour of need. The mule had been shot back of one ear, and there was an odd detail to note: The right fore-hoof had been severed. But that did not explain the two Negroes' chagrin, nor the bruises he now saw on their faces.

"Shut up a minute. Who talks their talk?"

Corporal Yaloke volunteered. The corporal was a linguist in his own fashion, having traveled with his father, a trader, in most of black Africa. He tried several dialects; then his face lightened with pleasure.

"They savvy Haussa talk, *mon lieutenant*. And Haussa almost same my talk, Bambara."

"Then ask them why they hide here instead of bringing in their stuff. Ask them if they are afraid, if they ran away."

"They say yes, they were afraid, yes, they ran away," the corporal translated. "They say now they afraid again, afraid come back because mule dead. They no kill mule. Him not their mule."

"Where is their mule, then?"

Another conference, with gestures, followed.

"They say dead mule belong white soldiers. White soldiers take mule belong to them, leave dead mule. They shoot him right here. They say they try to keep mule belong to them, but white men very angry, talk loud, hit hard. They say they know black men no good fight white men. They say too only two black men and six white men."

Cauvain was accustomed to these complicated transactions, problems that existed only because of the simplicity of mind and lack of education of his Negroes. There was a perfectly obvious explanation, but he found it difficult to obtain.

"Listen carefully, Corporal. Try to find out why white men should kill their own mule and take the one belonging to these chaps. It doesn't make sense."

Yaloke tried, and the Yakomas explained animatedly, crossed to the dead mule, indicated its teeth, its protruding ribs, patted their own chests.

"They say white men's mule old and skinny. Their mule young and fat. Their mule him much better mule."

"But why should they kill it?"

He felt very foolish when even these stupid bushmen laughed at his naive question. Yaloke pointed at the stump of leg.

"This foot catch writing, numbers."

Army mules had numbers branded into one hoof, for identification.

"What kind soldiers were they?"

His question was understood this time, and both answered as one:

"Legionnaires."

The word stirred Cauvain to anger.

It *would* be the deed of Legionnaires! Since coming to Morocco, his contacts with members of the foreign regiments had been rare. But he had resented, when in garrison cities, the casual salutes they conceded him when they could perform such splendid salutes for their own officers.

That was one thing—this was another! While he and his men were risking their lives to prevent the capture of these animals, those bandits in uniform had taken advantage of the situation to rob them. He would report this business.

Although he would not admit it even to himself, there was also the matter of corps pride. Men under his orders, honest fellows, even though primitives, had been mauled, awed, humiliated! He ordered the men to pick up the heavy cases, and led the way to the spot where the supplies were being gathered.

There he conversed with a quartermaster sergeant, who was checking the stuff as it came in.

"An awful lot of junk is missing, Lieutenant. You see, they moved in a company of Legion to be ready in case the slobs broke through us. And you know Legionnaires—they went nuts when they saw all that stuff with nobody to watch it. They got our additional sugar rations and peddled them to the Moroccan infantry."

"Didn't their officers stop it?"

"Oh, their officers were way ahead. It was the muleteers in the rear who did the business."

Cauvain located his captain, explained the situation.

"If you'll lend me your horse, I'll ride over and find that mule. The sergeant gave me its number. That won't give them time to camouflage it."

"Drop it," the captain advised. "In one way or another, you'll be holding the dirty end of the stick. Legionnaires have been stealing so long they know how to cover. And you'll get their officers sore. They'll shield the guys who did it, and punish them privately later. The best thing is to list that mule as dead."

"Why not try it?"

"If those chaps get the idea you're trying to make trouble, they'll get back at you. No, better leave Legionnaires alone."

"What could they do?"

"I can't imagine. They never do anything you expect."

NEVERTHELESS, Cauvain borrowed the horse and rode away. The Legion company was not hard to locate, less than a mile away. It was camped in a narrow plain. When the lieutenant asked for the commander, he was directed to a group seated about a cloth on the ground, eating.

The oldest was in his shirt-sleeves, suspenders hanging on his breeches. He was rather fleshy, bald, with a truculent red face.

The man at his right was quite young, big, wiry, and garbed as faultlessly as if he had been attending a social function. He was a lieutenant. The third was over thirty, resembled an old sergeant-major Cauvain had known, with his bony face and long black mustaches beneath a red hooked nose. He wore a tunic without braid. Cauvain dismounted, handed the bridle over to a private standing by.

"Had lunch yet?" the man with the red face asked. "If not, pitch in."

"I'm Lieutenant Cauvain of the *Tirailleurs.*"

"Captain Maurial," the bald man said, offering his thick palm. "Lieutenant Drouet, Sub-Lieutenant Leichling." He was cordial, but acknowledged Cauvain's formal manner by adding, in the same steady voice: "Guy holding your horse is Legionnaire Otto Ochs."

Young Drouet, possibly because he could spot Cauvain for a St. Cyr graduate—he must have come out within the past two years—winked quickly in a proffer of sympathy.

But Cauvain was in the mood to read derision into everything, and did not smile.

Tersely, he explained his purpose, and the more he talked, the calmer they grew. They made him feel very young and very foolish, like a fond mother com-

plaining that her child was bullied by older boys. Unfortunately, ridicule seldom killed stubbornness in Cauvain.

Captain Maurial had started to eat again, and spoke with his mouth full. "What do you wish to do?"

"I ask permission to look at your mules."

"You'll have a job, because the machine-gun company's beasts are with ours. Quite a few animals to inspect. If my chaps really swiped your mule, I'm afraid you won't locate it. However—" his voice lifted to a stentorian bellowing—"Eh, Durckheim!"

"Captain?"

A noncom doubled up. He stopped four paces from the cloth, came to attention and saluted, all in one gesture. He was a tall, fine appearing man, whose heavy features seemed molded in pottery clay. There were three rows of ribbons on his chest.

Maurial introduced Cauvain.

"He thinks that one of their mules might have strayed in with ours."

"I said it had been stolen from two of our men, Captain."

"What's the difference? Durckheim, what do you know about it?"

"Not a thing, Captain."

"Could I have a look at your mules?"

"No objections," Maurial assured him. "You will excuse us for not accompanying you, please? You see, we're having lunch, and the aroma of sweaty mules—you get it?"

Cauvain saluted again, followed Durckheim.

"I have the list of names and numbers for all the mules in our line," the noncom explained, producing a slip. "We'll check them off together. Lieutenant, without meaning disrespect, are you sure the guys who swiped that mule were from this company? I happen to know that the fourth company has a couple of old crocks they'd like to get rid of, and I wouldn't put anything beyond those crooks. They gypped me out of a brand new set of harness last week, and they got a field-forge from the *Spahis* last month. Of course, you got to get what you need where you can, but there are limits!"

"I made sure that they wore your company's disk on the collar tabs," Cauvain assured him.

"A lot of Negroes can't tell colors, Lieutenant."

Now, Cauvain wondered, where the devil had Durckheim gathered that information, which was absolute fact? A Negro may not be color blind but still may be unable to associate the name with the proper color, a racial peculiarity known to officers in black regiments through bitter experience—for instance, when trying to discover whether a signal flare was red or green.

THERE was a long line of mules. Cauvain refreshed his memory by reading the slip in his hand—name, number, description. As he examined the hoof of the first animal for signs of camouflaging of numerals, Durckheim went on.

"Two mules are away on water fatigue, down at the arroyo. If they don't come back by the time you're through, we can go to meet them. Will you read off the numbers, so I can check them off—unless you wish to do it yourself—"

"No. A list means little," Cauvain said confidently. "I'll identify the animal if it's here."

He progressed slowly, carefully. He was cautious enough, when a mule answered the general description, to scrape at the edges of the branded numbers. He moistened his fingers to brush the coats of the animals. Hair can be dyed; a gray mule can be turned into a dark mule in a few minutes.

"Through with these two, Lieutenant?"

"Yes."

"I'm sending off a party for fire wood, you see. We might camp away from wood, tonight. Always best to be prepared."

"All right."

Cauvain continued his inspection. But mule after mule passed the test. One held his attention a while, because there were definite indications that the numerals had been altered, a three changed into a five, a five to an eight. But the number, as reconstituted, failed to tally

with that of the missing mule. If this was a stolen animal, it had been stolen elsewhere.

He straightened at the end of the line, discouraged.

"There are two more, Lieutenant," Durckheim said. "Shall we—but it's useless, because here they come with the water. Eh, you, bring those mules over here!" While the metal kegs were removed from the packs, one of the privates asked Durckheim a question, and the sergeant handed Cauvain the list and a pencil. "Would you mind marking them off yourself, Lieutenant? I've to attend to this."

He did not move far, and as Cauvain examined the two mules, he listened, hoping that the talk was about the missing beast. But the conversation concerned bags of oats, which had been wetted. He checked off the remaining numbers, scanned the long list once more: Nothing of any use to him. The correct number of mules was checked, and the missing one was still missing.

He was about to leave, when Durckheim stopped him.

"Would the lieutenant please inform my captain that he did not find the mule? You see, I am under suspicion, and would like to be cleared officially."

Cauvain looked at him, saw a glint of amusement and triumph in his eyes. But what could he say?

The three officers watched him as he approached, and although they wore set faces, Cauvain guessed they wished to laugh. He knew that he had been fooled in some fashion, that these officers knew just how, and the thought made him furious all over again.

"Well?" Murial wondered. When Cauvain shook his head, he went on: "See, one should never leap at conclusions." He picked up a tin cup, wiped it with a napkin, poured wine into it. "Come on, have a drink. After all, the government pays for it in any case. Why worry?"

Unfortunately, Sub-lieutenant Leichling chuckled as he pulled at his long mustache. His eyes were very sharp and tremendously amused.

"Thank you, Captain, no." Cauvain knew this was the moment to make a dignified departure, but his hot temper urged him to have the last word. "May I respectfully compliment you on your cooperation? Not being a Legionnaire, I am somewhat puzzled by this form of comradeship—stealing on the very firing line from men engaged in combat."

Maurial nodded placidly.

"Have a drink anyhow, old chap."

But Cauvain drew himself up, saluted formally, and strode to his horse. He literally leaped into the saddle. As he cantered away, his eyes filled with tears of rage. He had been made to look like a fool. They had tricked him like a small boy. How?

It had something to do with the two mules who were away on water fatigue, with the two mules who had been sent on wood fatigue. But just what the trick had been baffled him. And now his own captain would be sore, because the Legionnaires would spread the story of just how the stunt had been performed throughout the column before the end of the month. For by that time, they would have had time to make a thorough job of the renumbering; possibly they would have exchanged that mule for one as good in another outfit. A mobile group in Morocco has hundreds of pack animals, and to locate one was almost impossible.

But he found the captain so angry at someone else that there was no scorn left for him.

"The general was up here, Cauvain. And he bawled us all out, from major down. It seems we didn't have our men in hand, and that it looked shameful, the way we cracked at the start. It was the first time, he said, that he had seen men in French uniforms flee before naked savages. He's sore, because this delays his success a couple of days. He asked the major why he had not ordered a quick and orderly jump backward, to have free play for his automatics."

"How did the major take it?"

"Pretty well. He told the general that it happened so fast that he had no time to consider his plight through field-glasses, which always makes a situation look easier. From the look the old guy gave him, he won't be a lieutenant-colo-

nel in a hurry. But he says it was worth it."

"What's the breakage?"

"Less than you'd think. Seventeen killed, forty wounded, not counting the chaps who got it like me." He touched his swollen face. "Well, another month and the cold weather will be near, so we go to winter quarters, in the plains."

CHAPTER II

AMBUSH

BUT a month may be a long stretch of time.

As the mobile group marched southward, skirmishing constantly with the natives, it was soon evident that there was ill-feeling between the seventh company of Legion and second company of Senegalese.

Actual hostilities did not break out at once. There were what might be termed diplomatic incidents, frontier skirmishes. When Legionnaires met *Tirailleurs* on routine duties, gathering fire wood or drawing water at the brooks, insults were exchanged.

Moreau, Cauvain's captain, was never in doubt.

"You started something with that visit," he told his lieutenant. "The swine are sore. We're due for trouble."

Within its own ranks, the Legion knows no lines of race, color or creed, holds no prejudice. And it is to be recorded that the two colored members of the Legion, one of whom hailed from the banks of the Niles, British Sudan, the other from Missouri, were the first to use vile epithets to their black brethren.

"*El ouesfan beni kelba—gobi, gobi!*"

The Senegalese do not like the word *gobi*, applied to them by other troopers. They had no nickname for the Legionnaires. For it is a strange fact that although practically all other units in the French Army have nicknames, the Legion has none. The Legionnaire does not feel the need of inventing one. He can conceive no greater praise than his title, and others can conceive no worse insult.

This extraordinary feud caused some surprise in the column. The Legionnaire seldom stooped to picking quarrels with the black troopers. They stole from them as from others, pushed them about a bit when they chanced to meet, but with scornful good-nature.

And at the beginning, their persecution took the shape of boyish pranks. With a hundred odd Negroes splashing nude in a stream, small groups of Legionnaires crawled to the bank, kicked equipment and garments into heaps. As the average Senegalese private is still an illiterate, the task of a white sergeant sorting the personal effects of five score of them can be imagined.

Then the repair kits of automatic rifles, always highly desirable, started to vanish in the Negro company. The machine-gun outfit lost gun parts as well. The Legionnaires found an interesting hobby in collecting a complete machine-gun piece by piece, so that it could be assembled and used without the loss of other than parts being reported. The barrel and tripod offered serious problems, successfully solved.

This was something of a feat, when one considers that there were sentries, definite sections of camp in which Legionnaires were not permitted to roam openly, especially after dark. *Tirailleur* officers raved, swore.

"No mystery about it," Moreau said grimly. "The Legionnaires nab the stuff."

"Don't let me catch one of them at it," Cauvain grunted.

"Don't fret, you won't."

And Cauvain did not. The Legionnaires flitted in and out like ghosts. Even during combats they had one eye on the enemy and the other open for an opportunity to annoy the blacks.

For several days nothing occurred that could be made the basis of an official complaint. There was no proof. And on the few occasions when Legionnaires actually laid hands on a Negro, they observed two rules: to be numerous enough to overpower the man without risking injury to themselves or to him, and to make the entire incident ridiculous, comical, so that Cauvain, at

whom they aimed, would be ashamed to relate the story.

On one occasion, they ambushed Kikosso in an isolated spot on the trail when he was running an errand. The Sudanese, given a fair chance, was powerful enough to beat up three normally powerful men. But they roped him, threw him face down, so swiftly that he could not identify a face. They went to work with shears, a brush and a pot of paint.

Kikosso returned to his mates with the seat of his breeches neatly cut out, his broad, coarse face painted white. He resented the loss of his pants more than the blow to his dignity, and after Cauvain had obtained a new pair for him, he had to be persuaded to use a preparation made up by the doctor to clean his skin.

"Same thing white man," Kikosso said. He felt little sense of humiliation, as he had belonged to the *kyondos* (Negro secret fraternal order) in his youth, where painting one's face white was a ritual.

When Cauvain did not appear at headquarters to ask for vengeance for his orderly, the Legionnaires increased their activities. They stole sacks of rice and sugar intended for the second company, raiding a party of muleteers. That time, they wore dingy rags on their heads, like turbans, and imitation *jellabas*. But the fact that they did not steal the guns of the two blacks they overpowered, the mere fact that they were left alive, was revealing.

"This must be stopped!" Captain Moreau snapped.

And the smallest party of blacks had to be led by a white non-commissioned officer, which meant additional work all around. There was nothing else to be done, for although everyone knew the Legionnaires were guilty of the raids and thefts, proving their guilt was impossible. Cauvain and his colleagues were unwilling to ask the Negroes to resist, wishing to keep short of actual murder.

Urging them to fight off white men physically would be poor policy. The unfortunate fellows would fight as if protecting their lives. They would use firearms, knives, bayonets, and in some cases, to be expected among the extremely primitive Bobos and Senoufos, bite like wild beasts. A fight for the pure sport of it, good-natured and amusing, was not within their understanding.

LONG-SUFFERING and patient, the *Tirailleurs* finally rebelled. The occasion for the open break came in a permanent camp, when the traders had been permitted to open their shacks. Each unit had a given hour or two of a given day reserved, and Legionnaires interfered with the normal routine.

The row was superb, fierce, lasted more than thirty minutes. The shacks were wrecked. A whole battalion of Moroccan infantry, neutrals only in name, for they had old scores against the Legion, was needed to quell the riot. Sixteen men were carried into the hospital—eleven Negroes and five Legionnaires.

But while the blacks suffered only from cuts and bruises, it was otherwise with the Legionnaires, who had been stabbed. One died, and the others were sent to Fez in ambulance planes. This caused such a scandal that officers on both sides were called before the general, soundly berated.

"At the next trouble," the commander in chief threatened, "I shall send the Legion battalion back to its barracks, and the Senegalese to occupy the blockhouses during the winter."

This was so much wind, and no one worried. The Legion was needed for the success of the operations, and putting blacks in snowbound forts for months was to give the key to peaceful Morocco to the raiding tribes. But the officers made a good attempt to end the conflict.

Cauvain found young Drouet at his side in the shack serving as an officers' café. Drouet appeared genuinely friendly. He told Cauvain that he remembered having seen him at St. Cyr, when he had been a *melon*, a first-year man.

"Listen," Drouet suggested after a while, "why don't you drop in and have

chow with us some day soon?" He added awkwardly: "Might be an excellent way to show our chaps we're all friends, eh?"

"What about you coming over?" Cauvain countered.

"It wouldn't do," Drouet protested. "It's hard to explain in words, but it would be the wrong thing to do. Our guys would think I was siding wtih you and all that, see? Your men pay no attention to such things. Ours do, a lot. And, anyway, you refused to have a drink the captain offered you. I think that's what got around, your snubbing the Old Man. And you practically called our fellows thieves, don't you know?"

"I called them thieves, sure." Cauvain shrugged. "Can you give me your word of honor they didn't steal that mule?" He grew irritated. "And our sugar rations? The kits? The rice? Thieves? I'll say I called them thieves."

Drouet's face paled.

"They're soldiers," he said steadily. "They look out for their own outfit. You don't understand, that's all."

"I suppose we're not soldiers, eh?"

"It's not comparable." Drouet's face set in an effort to explain something he believed in against all logic. "Our chaps —the company's everything to them. If you'd ever commanded them, you'd feel what I am trying to say. They think they're the best, and should get the best. And you know, the Legion's the stepchild of the army. We have to help ourselves, or we'd get all the junk. For instance, you chaps can get mules for the asking; we have to give a lot of reasons—"

"So you cut it short and grab one of ours? Nice!"

"It's a sort of a game with them too—" Drouet struggled with the words. "You know, putting one over? They'd be the first to admire anybody that could come back at them in the same way."

"Sporting fellows," Cauvain admitted, with a grin.

"Soft-hearted as kids, really." Drouet nodded. "Why, I have one guy you'd think was a cut-throat to look at him. Well, he's always going around doing things like putting splints on the leg of a canary, or curing some stray dog of distemper—"

"You'll have me weeping," Cauvain scoffed. "But as long as we're speaking openly, I can tell you I don't like the game you play. But what can you expect? I've seen your officers, your captain—"

"What about him?"

"Well, he exaggerates, really. The shirt-sleeves, the rough, gruff speech. And that—that whiskered sergeant-major—"

"Look here, look here!"

"Merely my opinion—"

"Captain Maurial is from St. Cyr, like ourselves. Ten classes before yours, and if he is still a captain, it's because he wants to stay in the Legion. A roughneck, eh? A roughneck who totes Tolstoi in his baggage. As for Leichling, he is from the ranks, true, but he is a brave man and no dummy." Drouet drained his glass, stood up. "But what's the use—you don't get what this is all about. I didn't, at first. But let me tell you this: Anywhere in the world, a professional soldier worth his pay will have the best available for his own outfit. Even if he has to steal it."

"Bravo!" Cauvain exclaimed, mockingly.

"And you're only sorry you're the goat. Bleat away!"

Cauvain caught the challenge in Drouet's eyes, and a surge of hatred flooded his brain. There was much truth in what Drouet had said. What enraged him, Cauvain, was the fact that he and his men were so easily outwitted, baffled, ridiculed. The odds were not even.

"I'll bleat, my friend," he said, rising. "I'll bleat as much as I wish, where I wish. And I'll call thieves by their right name. If you care to take personal offense, please don't hesitate on my account."

"Any time, any—" Drouet started.

But they had not been alone at the bar, and several others intervened, with the usual good advice: "Pay no attention to him, he's a *Legionnaire*—he's a *Tirailleur*—what the hell—come on and

have a drink, Cauvain—eh, Drouet, this way—drop it, you ass—oh, let them alone—whose business is it—well, he's right—the Legion—etc., etc."

CAUVAIN was escorted back to his company street by a youthful lieutenant, Failly, whom he had known well in school. Failly, born in Algeria, having studied Arabic as a boy, had gone into the Native Intelligence soon after graduation, and was connected with the staff. Cauvain was surprised to discover that this good friend was inclined to put him in the wrong.

"You can't blame Drouet. He knows his men. They'd die for him. What the hell, Cauvain, grabbing stuff is an old military tradition. Stealing? Remember that ham you got when we went out with the topographical class? We all died of thirst in the dormitory, eating it without wine or bread." Failly laughed. "Unless you lied, you never paid that inn-keeper."

"It was a joke. I was eighteen—"

"Those guys are soldiers, which means big kids. For instance, they didn't get mad at your trying to trap them—that was part of the game. But you gave their captain some lip. He was too much of a gentleman to shut you up, but his orderlies heard, and they'll make a monkey out of you."

"What do you expect me to do?" Cauvain wondered. "Go and apologize to him?"

"You might do a lot worse."

While Cauvain was thinking this over, and deciding against it—it would be too much like a surrender in the open field—Failly explained the trick with the mules.

It was absurdly simple.

As he had conversed with the officers, the mule he sought and another had been driven out of sight, behind a row of bushes. The absence of both had been explained with the water fatigue gag. Durckheim had been careful to cross off his list the number of the dead mule first, and that of the absent mule. Then, according to plan, when the two mules went off to the wood fatigue, they had been taken to the agreed spot, the barrels on the "missing" mule placed on one of them, which returned to the end of the line. By that time, the sergeant had given Cauvain the list, so that the lieutenant had checked off the numbers himself, killing suspicion.

It was too late to do anything about it, Failly declared. The lost mule had been exchanged since for a good animal taken from a convoy bound north, and was probably in Kheniffra by this time, perfectly disguised.

"Who told you?"

"Oh, I'm in the Intelligence Branch," Failly laughed. "I pick up information here and there. Those guys never know when I can do them a favor, so they let me in on most things."

THIS gave Cauvain an idea, which he thought over carefully as the march south continued the next day. If he could ever get advance information on

a Legionnaire's trick, he would give the participants a severe lesson, and then, while he held the advantage, be able to make his peace wtih Captain Maurial. He realized that his refusing a drink offered him had been a serious offense.

He spoke to a couple of his sergeants, who agreed to keep their eyes and ears open. The aspect of the matter had changed a bit. It was not a feud—it was a game? Well, he would play the game, and play it rough.

Three days passed without incident, so far as the private affairs of the companies were concerned. But at nine o'clock of the third evening, one of Cauvain's informers brought news. He had spoken to a friend of his who served in the Moroccan infantry, and who had been in the Legion.

"Something's planned for tonight or tomorrow night, Lieutenant. The guy's not quite sure what, and I didn't dare pump him too much, for fear he'd get wise to it. He says that some Legionnaires have been asking a lot of questions about the layout of our camp and supplies. I got to thinking that the officers had just bought cases of bottled wine—"

"That's it," Cauvain nodded. "That's it!"

He provided himself with a solid club, the sergeant took another, and they included Kikosso in the party, because he had a personal insult to wipe out. From ten until four in the morning, the trio waited in hiding, close to the officers' food boxes. Nothing happened. And Cauvain had scarcely closed his eyes when the bugles awoke him and he had to march away.

The next evening, weary but resolute, he went into ambush again. He had seen Legionnaires loitering near the *Tirailleurs'* lines until lights out, quite obviously scanning the ground. At nine-thirty, he and his comrades were settled for a long wait. They nodded from time to time, Kikosso snoring gently between prods in the ribs. At last, Cauvain consulted his wrist-watch. The luminous hands indicated two o'clock.

"Come on. It's no use," he said. He hailed the sentry nearest him: "Lieutenant coming in—"

"Ya bon, Lieutenant. All right."

Cauvain assured himself that the supplies were intact, and went to his tent. As he fumbled for his sleeping-bag, his skull met something hard and mobile. His groping fingers patted the hard damp soil, found nothing. He struck a match, and saw that the tent was bare, emptied.

Sleeping-bag, blankets, small trunk, mirror, shaving-kit, spare boots, a camera, a patent rubber-pillow—everything had vanished. Vanished while he was guarding the wine cases from a spot outside the lines!

It was needless to speculate as to who had done the trick. The culprits had left their signature. He had struck his head against a horseshoe, a bit of metal carefully polished until the steel shone like silver. And, hammered into the surface were numerals, numerals which were etched in his memory—Those of the missing mule!

The thieves had suspended it on a cord from the tent pole.

At that moment, Cauvain would have killed a few Legionnaires with distinct pleasure. He was worn out from his fruitless vigil; the money loss was serious, and his discomforts would be many. And the few absolutely needed articles he would be forced to borrow would reveal his fresh defeat!

He went out to question the sentries. One of them had spoken to a group of men sometime around midnight, and one had said: "Shut your big mouth, stupid. I'm the lieutenant."

Cauvain could not scold the sentry. For he had instructed all men on guard to be very careful not to shoot at random, as he would be outside for some hours, and might return unexpectedly. From start to finish, the damned Legionnaires had run the party. They had engineered his information, figured out exactly what he would do with it, and had even foreseen that he would be naturally very cautious, knowing how quickly a Negro will shoot into the dark.

He borrowed some blankets from his men. They were smelly and rough. But it was out of the question to awake his colleagues or the captain. They were irritated with him in any case for starting the whole feud.

There was nothing he could do. Complaining was useless. The Legionnaires would deny everything, and he knew by experience that they could hide their loot. Perhaps he could arrange to redeem his belongings through Failly.

He laughed ruefully. The job had been perfect. He was no match for Legionnaires.

THE next morning, soon after daybreak, Cauvain went down to the stream with the water party. For weeks now, an officer or a senior sergeant had been called upon to do this duty, to avoid trouble between the blacks and the Legion. His good resolutions of the night were ebbing, and the old sense of fury stirred him. The captain and his colleagues had laughed in his face, when he had asked for shaving tackle.

"We should let you grow a beard, so they won't know you!"

And Cauvain could see that they experienced some pleasure at his misfortune, and definite relief that he was the target for the pranks. For, since the serious row, the Legionnaires, undoubtedly warned by their officers, had not stolen army materials from the Senegalese. They still came in the dark hours to filch rations, risking bullets cheerfully for the sake of the adventure. The dangerous, hard-hitting official enemy they pursued was not sufficient to take up all their energy!

He sat on a boulder, his legs swinging free, and watched the picturesque scene —the armed men in colorful uniforms, white, brown, black, even yellow, for there were two or three Tonkinese orderlies brought by staff-officers, the fine little horses of the *Spahis* and *Goumiers*, the larger animals of the artillery, the mules. . . .

"Ready, *mon lieutenant.*"

"All right. Take it away—"

He allowed the laden mules to take the lead, strolling far behind, out of the dust and smells. And his mind centered on his financial problems: He had considerable stuff to purchase, at the exorbitant rates charged in the field. What with a heavy mess bill and some losses at cards, he was in a bad hole.

At a fork of the trails, in a shallow depression dug like a saucer in the center of the hills on which the column's camp was sprawled, he stood aside to permit a party of men to pass by. A half-dozen mules, loaded with bags of oats, led by Legionnaires of the seventh company.

They saluted him limply, and he touched the peak of his képi. He felt his face redden as, one by one, they passed by, staring at him, their lips straight, their eyes crinkling with controlled amusement. They knew—and they knew that he knew who was responsible. Possibly the very men who had robbed him were now laughing in his presence.

Sergeant Durckheim brought up the rear, seated sideways on one of the animals, a short-stemmed pipe between his teeth. He slid to the ground at the sight of an officer's uniform, recognized Cauvain, and saluted. If he had been as casual as the others, the *Tirailleur* would not have spoken. But Durckheim exaggerated his attitude of deference, granted him a beautiful salute.

"Good morning, *mon lieutenant!*"

"Good morning, Sergeant." Chauvain struggled against an urge to speak, feeling that he would lose out again. "May I have a word with you, Sergeant?"

"At your orders, Lieutenant."

The others had walked on fifteen or twenty yards, halted and turned around. Cauvain had his back to them, but could feel their glances striking his back, could *see* their grins.

"Let's get to the point," he said. How much?"

"How much what, Lieutenant?"

"For my stuff. Five hundred? Seven-fifty?"

Durckheim smiled in well simulated embarrassment.

"I'm sure that I don't understand the Lieutenant!"

"My entire kit was lifted last night," Cauvain announced. "It was a good trick, but good jokes must have an end. Eight hundred?"

"You mean, Lieutenant, that you wish us to look around for it, to try to find the thieves?" Durckheim asked.

"Precisely. I have an idea you know where to seek them."

Durckheim had knocked the dross from his pipe, placed it in his pocket. He stood there, very tall, very wide, with his hard face stern.

"I'd return the stuff for nothing, Lieutenant, if it were possible. Unfortunately, I have no idea where it could be found."

The two stared into each other's eyes in silence for a moment. And suddenly Cauvain lost control, finding a sharp, bitter relief in saying what he thought. He had forgotten that he was an officer addressing a subordinate. His choice of words was praiseworthy; he hopped from French to Arabic, back again, with an occasional raid into the German tongue, so richly supplied for his purpose.

The Legionnaires came back nearer, considering him, for the first time, with a certain admiration.

"It is cowardly," Durckheim declared, "to curse a man who cannot answer—"

"You'll answer this!'

Cauvain had been tempted by the fellow's massive jaws. There was a spot, just forward of the ear, where bone and sinews bunched like a target. Four weeks of pent-up resentment, of humiliation, were in that blow. And urckheim, powerful though he was, took an odd little dancing step backward, tottered. His képi rolled on the ground.

CAUVAIN tossed his own headgear aside, started to unbutton his tunic. "Now I'll show you, you dirty swine—"

Durckheim's big fists had closed; his face was a grimace of rage. But several of his men came between them, speaking all at once, and the sergeant's features relaxed. He smiled grimly, felt inside his cheek with a big forefinger.

"Man to man, I'd break you in half, Lieutenant. If anybody was to fight you, we'd pick somebody your size. I weigh ninety-two kilogs! But I don't fight officers. Not unless I respect them."

Cauvain nursed his hand absent-mindedly.

"I'll meet you anywhere you say. I apologize for striking you when protected by my rank. If you would prefer anything else, I shall oblige you."

Durckheim looked at him, then held up his closed fists.

"Oh, these have always done well enough, you know. But I don't fight nervous kids. Run along and forget all about it. You didn't hurt me and you couldn't insult me. Come on, Legionnaires, we can't stay here all day—"

"Durckheim!" Cauvain snapped, grasping his arm.

The sergeant shook himself free.

"If you're worried about your commission, striking an inferior in public and all that, don't. Nothing happened—nobody saw a thing. You can trust my men and myself for that."

The Legionnaires approved. And they walked away.

Cauvain readjusted his uniform, brushed his képi with his sleeve. He was surprised at the lack of combativeness in a man as large, as evidently courageous as Durckheim. To take a blow in the face, and do nothing about it!

And it was some minutes before he understood, when the incident returned to his mind to torment him. The Legionnaire had showed him pity—would not make charges, would not strike him back! He was being treated like a little boy who kicks his mother in the ankle in a fit of peevish temper!

They believed that the big Dutch lout could beat him to a pulp! They took it for granted that he would be helpless!

Durckheim weighed two hundred and six pounds, and thought that was all that counted. Cauvain grumbled furiously: "Twenty-eight pounds—well, so what? I wonder what would happen if he got hit in the liver a few times? I'd like to massage his sides just for a few moments!"

But how could he make Durckheim meet him? He thought that he might work on Drouet, through his corps pride, to arrange for the match. Meanwhile, they had won again, morally, and he was no nearer to getting his belongings restored to him.

And there was an attack due that afternoon.

BUT that night Cauvain had forgotten about his plans, his personal worries. Because war, forgotten in the private quarrel, took its toll suddenly. There

was tragedy for the Legion.

Cauvain, whose battalion was engaged on the left of the French line, was not an eye-witness. But he knew, very early, that something unusual was occurring where the seventh company of Legion was placed.

That outfit, considered as shock troops, had been given a most difficult goal, the crest of a hill with very steep flanks tufted with bushes.

The advance had progressed like the figures of a quadrille, conducted according to a stop-watch and a detailed plan. There were short rushes, with intervals during which the field pieces, the machine-guns, the automatics, prepared the way for the next surge onward.

Lieutenant Drouet was young, eager to distinguish himself, to prove his worth to men who already were convinced of it and would have followed him to hell.

Only the thinnest dividing line exists between audacity and rashness, in a military sense. The lieutenant went too fast, in his anxiety, to bring his section first upon the objective. At one time, his squad happened to form a spearhead planted in the enemy's flank.

Whether the Chleuhs had coaxed him into danger deliberately, whether they realized his precarious position just a few seconds before he did, remained an unanswered question. But they closed in like the jaws of a vise, cutting across the base of the triangle formed by his section, clipping him and his men neatly from the battalion.

Drouet must have realized quickly that he had been trapped, for he had given orders to halt, then to move back slowly upon the company. But it was too late, and an epic fight was started. The hillmen made the most of their moment. They fought without much hope of ultimate victory, fought to kill off a large number of the invaders, because it was proper and decent to fight until beaten.

They hung on like wolves. Three to one at the start, they were four to one within five minutes, and as other warriors not too occupied along the front learned of this splendid prospect, they were ten, twelve, twenty against one before the thing ended. They fought like maniacs. Some of them were seen clutching the hilt of the bayonet, the barrel of the rifle, with the blade dug into their chest, to immobilize a Legionnaire and leave him weaponless while comrades grabbed his legs, his arms, hacked at his neck and face, at his throat and belly.

"Allah—Allah—ah—ha—"

The Berbers of the Middle Atlas are not orthodox believers, and their battle call was as much an oath as a prayer. The combat groups were dislocated, broken into individuals, desperate men who, while fighting foes in front, were knifed from the back, from the sides.

While this massacre was carried out, the other sections of the Legion strove to smash through and help.

Young Drouet fought on, for a long time.

His stout walking-stick broke on one skull. He emptied his automatic. There was no time to reload, for the men flanking him were killed off one by one. At last, he was herded in the center of a small open space in the brush, with a circle of natives around him. There was a sort of an involuntary, awed pause. The Roumi was at bay.

They knew they had him, and he knew it. This was an end one might have foreseen, when one wore a fine uniform and felt pride in commanding fighting men. Four years of special schooling for military service, three years of experience, culminated in that: A white-faced boy, with fear clutching at his bowels, found himself alone before a dozen savage tribesmen, and somehow found the nerve to shout:

"Come on, get it over!"

They came, all together. He crouched, his whole remaining life poured into a single purpose. He dodged and struck. The butt of his automatic smashed one face, two. But some of his foes dropped on all fours, scuttled forward, clutched at his knees, clawed at his groin.

He started to fall, and the butt struck again—and again. It rose, and the hand relaxed, the pistol dropped. A knife had found his throat.

"Drouet, Charles-Jean, Lieutenant: Killed in action."

Two hundred yards away, the rein-

forcements were struggling up. Men who had escaped from the slaughter faced about and returned into it. A sort of frenzy gripped them all—those who were whole and those who bled. There was more than victory to be won today. There was a Legion officer whose corpse was held by the enemy. Tradition exacted that it be retrieved for honorable burial.

"This way—he was around here—"

Shots and blows, the drunken sensation of combat, nerves tense as banjo strings. Running natives, crashing through the bushes. And, suddenly, in the coarse grass, the sight of naked flesh, a human body, a ludicrously short body. Short because the head had been chopped off!

Stripped of uniform, of boots, of underclothes, in fifteen brief seconds—despoiled and mutilated, it had been a lieutenant of twenty-two a mere few breaths before.

"Sure it's the lieutenant?" Durckheim asked.

"Take a look: Remember that big ring with the crest?"

The speaker lifted the left arm, indicated a hand from which the third finger had been severed.

"They've got his head," Durckheim said, foolishly.

They looked at each other, turned and started to run again. But it was without hope; the natives were in full flight. One of them clutched a wrist-watch in his sweating fist. And another had the head in a sack improvised with his *jellaba*.

A superb trophy for the villages of the hills: The head of a brave man, the head of a Legionnaire!

CHAPTER III

NIGHT RAID

DROUET was buried without his head.

And the Legion mourned its dead and its shame. They felt particularly humiliated before the Senegalese, who on a recent occasion had contrived to preserve all bodies. For the black regiments, like the Legion, make it a point to leave no dead for the enemy to mutilate.

The Legionnaires drank as usual, but there was no boisterousness, no quarrels. When lights-out sounded, their lines were black, dead. It seemed as if those soldiers felt that they had lost the right to carouse, as if they feared that some one would come to them and say:

"You're noisy now. But where were you when your chief was beheaded?"

They wanted to fight, to wipe out within themselves, and from the minds of others, the memory of that afternoon. But the march resumed the following day, and even the consolation of action was denied them. The natives retired; there were only a few shots fired by the advance guard and their skirmishers. It was as if they were satisfied to rest on their laurels.

But that first night, the following night, the third night, fires blazed in the hills, spots of flame in the distance. Faintly, the beating of drums, the far-carrying, shrill howls of the women, could be heard. They were celebrating in the villages still unconquered, and the head of Drouet had the place of honor. It was being paraded around as, in more civilized communities, flags, cannon, helmets taken from the enemy are exhibited, to whip up patriotic enthusiasm.

The men did not sing on the march; the fatigue parties did not seek trouble. The *Tirailleurs'* lines knew unusual peace during the nights.

"They're going stale," an officer of Moroccan cavalry told Cauvain, in the canteen tent—for there was not a single Legion subaltern present. "Know what I'd do if I were in charge? I'd stop this expedition right here and turn that battalion loose. They'd all be killed in the end, but they'd put the fear of God in the natives for fifty years to come. As it is, they can't keep this edge for many days more."

A week passed by.

And for that week, the Chleuhs had refused to accept combat. But the tribes were being driven back so far that before long they would have the stark slopes of the desert hills behind them. They could not take their herds and flocks into waterless stretches, so that

One of the natives had the head in a sack . . .

they must either surrender or fight. For the French, it was a dreary business: marching and building roads, constructing one defensive wall after another. The only break in the monotony was the sight, almost every day, of squadrons of bombing planes going south, then returning.

Then, one afternoon, there was a parade, the reading of citations. All knew what that meant: They would be called upon for another effort very soon, possibly on the next day. A few hours later, when Cauvain dropped in at the trader's for an after-dinner drink, he found Failly occupied with a bottle of brandy.

He thought that his friend looked odd, somehow changed, then noticed that what caused the alteration was the shaving of his skull. And he recalled, suddenly, that he had not seen him for several days. That was strange, as meetings were frequent in the routine of the column.

"How goes it, Failly?"

"Rotten, thanks." The Intelligence man pushed the quart toward Cauvain. "Here, what goes into you can't hurt me!" He looked around the tent. A group of young lieutenants were playing dance records on a gramophone; two or three tables were occupied by card-players; here and there lingered a solitary drinker. No one was interested in Failly and Cauvain. "Well, it's done, old chap."

"What?"

"My first special mission." Failly indicated the horizon with his thumb: "I've been out there, across the lines."

"Among the dissidents? In disguise?"

"D'you think one goes in full uniform?" Failly asked. "In disguise, yes. I'd been wanting to try it for a couple of years, ever since I've been in the

service here. But they wouldn't let me chance it until a few days back. One of our native agents took me through. After that, it was very easy. An accent in their speech doesn't matter; very few outsiders speak their dialect, and I could claim to come from the Riff and get away with it."

CAUVAIN looked at his friend unbelievingly, then with admiration. In the hills, the punishment for a spy was not merely shooting, but torture. In one case, an officer spotted by tribesmen had been skinned alive, skinned from head to feet, away from an incision of his scalp, as one turns a glove inside out.

"Why did they let you risk it?" he asked. "Surely, native agents can glean all the information you could."

Failly nodded: "Information, yes. But the maps are incomplete, and I went over the ground of the forthcoming attack. I'm awfully depressed, though. You see, they brought Drouet's head through one of the villages where I stopped. It was gruesome, you know, recognizing the features. I'd spoken with him often."

The secret service man brought out his wallet, laid a small photograph on the table.

"I carried a small camera, strapped to my chest. If they'd got suspicious and searched me, it wouldn't have mattered. One look at my naked body and they could have seen I was not brought up in the hills. They can tell when the umbilical cord was tied up by a European doctor, for instance. Here's a glass—you can see details that way."

Cauvain peered through the lens, and suddenly felt cold perspiration on his shoulders and neck. He recognized Drouet's face on that round lump hung by the hair in a doorway. There was a row of natives squatted against the wall of the house in the background, and a tall, bearded man in a white cloak standing.

"Sort of a recruiting speech, you know," Failly explained, picking up the snapshot. "That chap is a holy man, and goes from village to village to keep their spirits up. You know, a lot of them are for quitting, especially the women, because the kids die off so fast when the gang's on the run. He garbles patriotism and religion together, the way it's done everywhere."

"Why? He must know they're licked in advance," Cauvain said.

Failly smiled bitterly. "Every few sentences, he'd turn his head over his shoulder and spit on that thing. I felt like a dog for being there and doing nothing."

The lieutenant took another brandy, sloshing the brandy within his mouth as if to kill a bad taste.

"But he'll get his. The battalion orders are out already, so I can tell you: Surprise move at dawn, the whole bunch of us. It will surprise them, because we've deliberately started reinforcement, ammunition and so on toward this spot and they think we're sure to wait. We'll walk right through them. Most of their first line men are with their women this minute."

Failly lighted a cigarette, illustrated with match boxes and movements of his hand. "It's all arranged. A mounted section of Legion will go right by the first objective, swing this way, and smash into this village—Zobzit's the name. That preacher guy's spending the night there, and he's got his collection of heads with him. Three of them. Drouet's, that of a white sergeant in the supply-corps—the egg who fell in the first ambush—and one which I think is a fake, not one of ours at all."

"Think they'll nab him?"

"If they're quick. He won't expect a quick raid, see? He'll hear the shooting and expect the usual thing, a protected attack—and he'll hang around and wait for developments. I noted every fixed post, and there are so few a detachment can get through easily. Look, here's the camp. Five hundred meters south you have a hamlet, Telfarat. You go around it, and—"

Cauvrain watched the demonstration avidly. He had a tempting idea, which he knew was impossible to accomplish, but it was amusing to toy with it as Failly showed with what ease the outposts could be avoided.

A staff officer entered and announced

that they were all to report at their battalion. Cauvain knew what to expect and heard the instructions without surprise: Immediate issue of cartridges, two hundred per man, grenades, flares, to be carried out with all possible speed and quiet. Following which the men would be permitted to go back to sleep. But all must be in readiness to abandon camp ten minutes after the order.

AS THE *Tirailleurs* settled back after distribution of supplies, Cauvain was tormented by a great yearning. What he had in mind would risk many lives that were not his to risk, and even if he survived, it would be to face a court-martial.

What would be the risk of a sentence? Dismissal from the service, possibly two years' confinement in a fortress. What was that to a man ready to gamble his life?

He knew that the Negro battalion would be with him to the last man, or at least the white chiefs would be. During this entire expedition, the Senegalese had been employed in actual combat as much as any other unit, but had not received a single task such as inspire pride in soldiers. They had labored, plodded, fought, a good number had died, at the routine, mass undertakings of war.

"For raids and ambush, we have the irregulars, the Legion—" the high command had decided. And many appeared to consider the Senegalese as armed laborers.

Yet they were good soldiers. The homeric campaigns against Samory, in the Sudan, the expeditions to Dahomey, Madagascar, Congo, had proved it. They had been used as shock troops in the World War, had confirmed their past in the Riff.

Cauvain believed that Captain Moreau would give him permission, because Moreau was a courageous man morally as well as physically. But why hide behind another?

He found his favorite corporal, Yaloke the Bambara. "Yaloke, you savvy what volunteer be?"

"I savvy, Lieutenant. No want to go, no go, no punish."

"Beautifully worded, Yaloke. Well, Kikosso and you are volunteers to come with me. Much walking, much fighting, maybe all killed. All right? Fine. Now you pick ten, twelve more volunteers. Talk to them proper truth: Trouble, maybe die. Must be good men, no scare at night. No boots, wear rest shoes, no chow, only water, cartridges, grenades—"

"Night raid, I savvy him good, Lieutenant."

"True, you rascal! I forget that you were in the Big War. Only volunteers, eh? No want to go, no go, no punish."

Cauvain replaced his képi with the red skull cap, the *chéchia*. He discarded his boots, put on *espadrilles* purchased at the Greek's to replace his stolen rest shoes.

He slung a canvas bag around his neck, with six grenades and four spare clips for his big automatic. He placed his small, personal pistol in one hip pocket, a case holding fifty cigarettes in the other, filled his canteen and was ready.

He found his raiding party waiting for him at the assigned spot, outside the mule lines. The brays, the clicking of chains, the stamping of hoofs, would cover the noises of his departure. There were fourteen men, fourteen lives for which he would have to answer. It was extremely doubtful that all fourteen would be alive within twelve hours.

"A mad undertaking doomed to failure—" Cauvain could hear the voice of the prosecutor addressing a court-martial. "Lives sacrificed for a personal motive—"

Corporal Yaloke named the volunteers in whispers. As his name was called, each *Tirailleur* stepped before Cauvain, snapped to present-arms, made way for the next. With the exception of Kuffi, all were from warlike tribes, Bambaras and Woloffs from inland Cayor, not yet spoiled by too much contact with Europeans.

Yaloke had thought of a detail forgotten by his officer. Each man carried a *coupe-coupe*, a long machete-like tool. It was the keen-edged steel beloved of Negroes everywhere, a species of titanic razor.

"No want to go, no go, no punish," Cauvain said again.

"We savvy, Lieutenant. We be volunteers!"

"Yes. From now on, no talk, no noise. No shooting without my order, whatever happens. Take the cartridge out of the chamber, to make sure." He waited for the clicks of the snapping breeches. "Fine. Come along now."

They started away in Indian file, down the slope.

CAUVAIN had a good sense of orientation, had consulted the map to check up on Failly's information. They knew the enemy's posts by heart. And although it was impossible to see objects at any distance, the faint light of the stars would prevent serious blunders. An hour of march brought them to the Chleuh's lines, and fifteen minutes later, they were through the outposts. Not once had they been challenged.

This would have been the right time for the Legion's party, Cauvain thought. Then he realized that there was a strong argument against it: His detachment would be on its own, without a chance of assistance, for a long stretch. This was the easiest method to start, but not the safest in the long run.

It was three-fifteen when the dark masses of Zobzit village loomed ahead, in the growing moonlight. Two hundred yards from the houses, Cauvain called a halt: He would not attack until daybreak. Not until the first shots of the surprise attack were fired. He had no right to stir the enemy into wakefulness and mar the whole scheme.

He and his men took shelter in a shallow depression. The Negroes' fatalistic acceptance of their lot amazed Cauvain once more. Most of them stretched out on their stomachs, cradled their heads in their arms and dozed off. Because a man is less likely to snore in that position. Kikosso, for instance, rested two feet from his white chief, like a stranded porpoise, and breathed gently, in a restful, dreamless sleep.

At four-thirty, after endless waiting, the first sounds came from the enemy, a party of men and horses, passing on the distant trail to the front. Vague chanting, an exchange of words that brought laughter, the clicking of metal on metal. Five o'clock. . . .

The troops must be moving out of camp by now. Carefully, for no sound indicated it. But could he have heard across five miles in a straight line, eleven by the paths he had followed? And his absence had been discovered, the absence of his men. Moreau was swearing, sending orderlies to look for him. Possibly, he was inclined to blame the Legionnaires for having kidnaped one of his officers and fourteen of his Negroes!

Perhaps, Cauvain thought, he should have left a word of explanation. As it was, this would be a new charge against him: Abandonment of post before the enemy! Legal penalty: Death after military degradation.

He nudged Yaloke. "Get the men ready, Corporal."

The Negroes rose and stretched. They were rested and quite satisfied with their situation. What would happen later must be worried about later. At his order, they loaded their Lebels.

DAWN came.

And the melodious chanting of the first prayer lifted from the village, from other hamlets about. A greeting to the sun, a voicing of eternal hope.

"Come on."

They followed him in open order, to the top of the low slope, across the open space toward the village gate. Cauvain had hoped that the guards would be praying. But he was favored beyond hope. There was one sentry, and he was asleep, long gun resting against a wall, huddled in a woolen cloak, feet, hands gathered beneath the folds, his head buried in the hood of the garment.

Suppressed giggles fused from those muscular blacks. This was humor they could understand. Kuffi, soundless on his bare soles, ran up to the sleeping man, stooped. His fingers plunged under the cloth, clutched the throat. Another man, standing nearby, placed a foot on the chap's wrist as he reached for his knife. The hood was pulled back, there was a brief flash of a mouth gaping, red

and toothy, in a tangle of beard. Then a *coupe-coupe* thudded.

"He dead too much!" Kuffi announced.

Cauvain placed his palms against the massive wooden door, a panel studded with big nail-heads, braced with massive iron clamps. It yielded under the push. But he shook his head, and waited there, his men crowding against the wall on both sides of the gateway. Once, twice, Cauvain looked from the red sky to the dial of his watch. Then he heard what he had waited for: A quivering of the air, a dull, distant crackling. The attack was started.

He drew his automatic, shoved the door open.

A street bordered by low houses of brown mud-bricks opened before him, deserted. For twenty yards he followed this, the *Tirailleurs* padding softly behind, then rounded an elbow in the alley, saw an open square. Women were busy about the doorways; men were occupied in the center, loading horses and mules with clumsily wrapped baggage. They were directed by a tall chap in a snowy white cloak.

"Charge!"

Startled, they turned, and saw the fourteen Negroes coming with lowered bayonets, like demons from the pit. They were brave men, and leaped for their guns.

Cauvain made for the man whom he had identified as the preacher seen in the snapshot, the one who spat on a dead man's face. He was not a foe to be despised, for he was young, young enough to be a fighter and not a talker. But he wasted time trying to yank a blade strapped in a bundle, and the lieutenant clutched his beard, lifted his arm. Putting the muzzle of his automatic under the chin, he pressed the trigger.

He released his grip, whirled, in time to see the end of the brief hand-to-hand struggle. There had been no more than a score of males in the village that morning, most of the warriors having started for the lines in the middle of the night, and the surprise had been complete.

The men disposed of, Cauvain sent Yaloke and two men to close the gate. Then he addressed the women, who had

huddled together in one of the buildings, with their children. One of them could speak French after a fashion and was less afraid than the others. She told Cauvain that she had lived with an officer as a young girl, in Fez.

"You pass out guns if you have any, and we'll leave you in there for the present. No harm shall come to any of you if you behave. But if there is a shot, a cutting, I let my black men loose."

A musket, two horse-pistols and an automatic were tossed into the yard. Cauvain placed two men on guard at the door and windows, with instructions not to let the women or children out save one at a time, to get water from the well.

Under the officer's direction, some of the men unloaded the pack animals. And very soon Cauvain found what he sought, the sack holding the preacher's gruesome exhibits. Three lumps of bone and flesh rolled on the sand of the place, and it was easy to know Drouet's head, for the sergeant had had a mustache, while the third head, as Failly had suspected, was that of a native.

"Put these two together, this one separate," Cauvain instructed. "Keita, I trust you with those things. No matter what happens, you carry them. Savvy?"

THE sounds of the combat were growing nearer. Cauvain climbed on the roofs and looked about. He could see swarms of mountaineers trotting back from the lines, and along some crests the signal smokes of the advancing soldiers. He placed the automatic rifle at his disposal, on the wall over the gate facing north, and when the fugitives sought to come near, opened fire.

There was little fight left in the poor devils, and they split before the village like water before a boulder, streaming by on the sides, seeking shelter from the frequent bursts. Cauvain's Negroes were having a splendid time, even those who had suffered cuts in the brief mêlée. To shoot at good targets, from perfect cover, that was a situation to dream about!

The spectacle of the natives' rout, seen from the walls of a village within their lines, would be something to remember. Perhaps, had these hillmen known that but fifteen men were defending Zobzit, they would have sought revenge. But they were crowded by the cavalry, and whenever they huddled, tried to reform, the mountain batteries, following close on the heels of the battalions, rained sixty-five millimeter shells on them.

They were still straggling by when Yaloke called out:

"Soldiers—French—do I open the gate?"

"Not until I give the order," Cauvain said.

This was the moment he had worked for! He sat down on the wall, legs dangling outside, lighted a cigarette. And he composed a splendid attitude of nonchalance and ease. When Maurial or Leichling arrived, he would have his fun.

It was a detachment of Legion, thirty-five or forty strong, every man mounted on a mule. And when Cauvain sought the leader, his heart seemed to swell within his chest as he recognized Durckheim, the proud Durckheim! This was far better than he had expected!

The big sergeant's expression would have been sufficient reward. He had been startled to see French uniforms, and his utter bewilderment as he spotted Chauvain caused his mouth to gape wide open. Mechanically, he reined his mount twenty feet from the wall, craned his neck.

"Hello!" he called out weakly.

"Good morning," Chauvain replied. "You got here early."

"I have orders to occupy this place, Lieutenant."

"You mean orders to take it from the enemy, Sergeant. This village is occupied by a field detachment of the second company, Senegalese Battalion. I take it upon myself to suggest you carry on with the pursuit of the enemy."

"There's something we want here—"

Cauvain nodded.

"I know. Lieutenant Drouet. That's attended to. It will be turned over to the proper authorities in due time. Don't worry yourself about it."

"But—we'd like to get it ourselves. You understand—"

"Perfectly. But it's a little too late."

Durckheim dismounted, and was surrounded by his men, talking all at once, waving their arms menacingly. This had cut through their pride—a Negro outfit had retrieved their officer's head! Chauvain heard the sergeant swear, saw him jostle men back into place, knock up the barrel of rifles.

"Don't go crazy, I'll talk to him," he shouted. He turned back toward Cauvain, came nearer. "Without disrespect, Lieutenant, may I insist? As you see, we'd like to take back the lieutenant ourselves. Surely, you could lower it in a bag, if you have orders to keep everyone out."

"It would be better to do that, you know!" a thick-set young private yelled. "We'll come after it, otherwise."

Cauvain hesitated. He had come to know that these chaps were not to be treated casually, that the restraint imposed on other men was not for them. No matter what occurred now, he had had his turn, had played a trick upon them that they would never forget. And he was aware, also, that he would not be able to bring himself to order his soldiers to open fire on the Legionnaires. Even though they would be blamed for the trouble in the end.

"I cannot yield to threats," he called back.

Durckheim's face was scarlet, but he contrived to speak the words of surrender: "We—I—well, make it a favor, Lieutenant. There's been some mixup in orders. We were supposed to take this place—"

"There's been no confusion," Cauvain assured him. "I am here on my own."

He regretted speaking this as he uttered the words. If these men knew that he had no official rights in the place, they would be encouraged. But he was startled to see their rugged, tanned faces light up with grins.

Even Durckheim's manner changed subtly.

"On your own?" he repeated. "You mean, just to get here ahead of us?"

"Yes."

There was another conference below before Durckheim spoke again.

"All right, Lieutenant. You win. Nobody here wants to make more trouble for you. But just the same, we'd like to get the lieutenant back ourselves. It would look better for us, as you see, and you'd be doing us a great favor. We'd do something for you sometime."

"I'll open the gate, and you can come in with two of your men," Cauvain grinned. "I have an idea to settle this."

Durckheim was not a fool. He laughed.

"I get it. Well, have it your way, Lieutenant."

A FEW moments later, Durckheim, a corporal and a private were within the walls. Cauvain gave instructions to his men. In any event, there was little to worry about outside. The infantry was crossing the plain in column formation; the skirmish line was eight hundred yards southward. The only need for haste came from the fact that before very long some one would come to arrest Cauvain.

"Come in here," Cauvain invited. They entered a structure which had been used as a stable. Durckheim's head was within four inches of the beamed ceiling, and he appeared more formidable indoors than out. "You refused to fight me once. It stuck in my crop, you understand."

"Sure, Lieutenant."

"So, you can have what you wish, if you beat me."

"Sorry you insist. I'll have to."

Cauvain unbuckled his belt, stripped off his tunic. Durckheim followed suit, but as he flexed his arms, he remarked, "Don't you think, as long as I have friends here, you should have some of your chaps?"

Cauvain shook his head.

"They'd probably knife you when you struck at me. They don't understand this sort of thing. Possibly they're in the right." He paced off the length of the room, about eighteen feet one way, fourteen the other. No chance of being hurt when falling. The tamped earth was yielding enough to avoid a fractured skull.

"Fists only?" Durckheim asked.

"Anyway you wish it. If you think you have more chance with *savate*, use

it. However, I was monitor for my class in that sport, in France."

Durckheim had watched him measure distances with some dismay. And Cauvain knew that when the sergeant, who knew physical condition and could judge muscles, had seen his shoulders and arms, his confidence had been shaken. Fighting a balky private was one thing, coping with a trained athlete another. Cauvain, who looked slim in uniform, emerged with imposing proportions when stripped. He was not quite six feet tall and weighed close to one hundred and eighty.

"There's nobody to bet with," one of the witnesses said ruefully.

And those were the last words spoken for several minutes. Durckheim had attacked. He was fast on his feet for a big fellow, and there was great strength in his blows.

He drove Cauvain about like a cork bobbing on water. And as his fists smacked against arms and shoulders, his friends grunted with joy. But Cauvain was watching the gentle curve from the lower ribs to the belt line—beer and wine, and the early thirties—

He ducked and hooked, ducked and hooked. And Durckheim's big elbows came down, and down, as his belly cringed. He was hunched over, did not dare launch his lashing swings so freely. He did not like the price at which he purchased them, sharp punches to the flanks.

And Cauvain shifted to the chest, above the heart—left after left. Then a right that cut Durckheim's lips, another one higher up which brought his brow down upon his eye.

His left hand went up to protect that eye, and Cauvain smashed the right under the heart. It was as he had expected, it was going his way.

Durckheim was giving away ten years. He was big and hard, like a workman. And his speed, which had won him many successes, only lasted a couple of minutes.

Cauvain caught one or two, high on the head, which made his ears ring, and one in the flank which did not do him good. But his wind was better. Throughout, he watched for a kick, for a trick of some sort. But Durckheim fought loyally enough, except that he sought to turn the match into wrestling several times. The officer allowed him to wrap his arms around his neck, and pounded away at the stomach.

And he could feel the vigor running out of Durckheim like meal from a bursted sack. He knew the meaning of the sobbing catch in his respiration. His hatred for the man had dwindled. He pitied him. And he would hurt him in his prestige far more than in his flesh. A man who is known to have been beaten is half beaten the next time out. Cauvain knew, furthermore, that the question of supremacy had been settled in the sergeant's mind as well as in his own. Durckheim fought because he wouldn't quit.

Cauvain clinched, held on tightly and panted:

"Don't you think this has gone on long enough?"

"If you say so, *mon lieutenant.*"

They broke, and Cauvain was rewarded by a look of gratitude from Durckheim. He felt that he had made a friend.

But the sergeant was a man who did not waste words. He accepted mercy as it had been offered, mutely. One of his men poured water on a cloth and wiped the blood from his face.

Cauvain buckled on his belt.

"I'll give you what you're after, now."

"PROVIDENCE watches out for fools," the general commented. "If Lieutenant Cauvain had lost lives, he would face a court of inquiry. As it is, send him to me to be admonished. I'll take the hide off him. But I wish we had ten thousand men with his initiative."

Cauvain was not worried. He knew that no man is given a tongue lashing if he is to be punished according to regulations. The improvement in his morale had been enough to repay him for what the general said. And he had the nerve, when the commander paused for breath, to suggest that his blacks had obeyed orders, and deserved some reward. He got the colonial cross for Kikosso, a citation for Yaloke, who already had the

cross, and a money reward out of the general's own pocket for the others.

Furthermore, two weeks later, when the mobile group, headed north toward winter quarters, stopped at the old camp, and Drouet's head was placed with the body with fitting ceremonies, he and his party were invited to participate. Naturally, Captain Maurial asked him to lunch. And Cauvain found himself between him and Leichling.

"For one reason or another," Maurial said after a few drinks, "my slobs appear to like you. Your battalion is going to the plains; we're staying in the region. I have consulted Moreau, who said I could talk to you. If you applied for a transfer now, you could replace Drouet. I have made the arrangements."

Cauvain hesitated.

"I've even spoken about your orderly. Your major agrees to his being detached out here until his time expires. You know your chances of fighting are a trifle better with us."

Cauvain pleaded for time, and the others exchanged looks. After the meal, they took him strolling through their camp. And showed him a tent. "Yours. Go in."

The Legionnaires had performed another miracle. His trunk, his boots, his mirror, everything was there. Article by article, wherever disposed of, had been retrieved.

He thought that the campaign was over for the *Tirailleurs,* that before the next spring he might have been transferred to some unit in France or Senegal —away from action.

"Do you want it moved to your lines?" Maurial asked.

"No. I accept, Captain."

"I should think you would. Few men are invited to join us!"

"I'll get Kikosso to—"

Leichling grasped Cauvain's arm, led him some distance away. Sprawled on a blanket, his huge fists closed tightly, the big black snored, his eyes shaded from the sun by the peak of a képi. Legionnaires, who had risen as the officers approached, saluted and stood about grinning.

"He's awfully funny when he's drunk, Captain," one of them said in apology. "I guess we gave him a bit too much."

"You see," Maurial resumed as they walked away, "they're making a Legionnaire out of him already. I'm glad you decided to leave your baggage right here. Otherwise, we'd have had to lend you a mule to carry it—and you know what thieves the *Tirailleurs* are. They'd have been sure to keep it."

Much later, when Cauvain was mounting to ride back and thank his former captain for his permission to transfer, Durckheim handed him a small parcel wrapped in tissue paper. "The men of the seventh offer you these."

And when on the trail, away from prying eyes, Cauvain opened it, he found the embroidered collar tabs bearing the Legion's insignia.

They were not new, had been laundered, cleaned, and without being told, Cauvain knew they had belonged to Drouet.

RENDEZVOUS

By PERRY ADAMS

An Off-the-Trail Story

WADE PURCELL'S tweed-clad knee rasped faintly across the minute rock outcrop where once Marcia had stood, and the illusion for which he had waited twelve months was complete. For an instant the passage of time held no reality—simply, she was there at the lower end of their shortened rope; in a few seconds she would climb up beside him. This was—wasn't it?—July Fourth, 1937, not July Fourth, 1938.

Only now there was no rope. Now, instead of turning to ease himself down to a face-out sitting position, that he might take in slack as she climbed, he knelt half sideways on the dizzy perch, body pressed hard inward against the Overhang. Nevertheless he said:

"Marcia. All set. Up you come, infant."

Quite motionless he clung there, eyes closed, thin, beaten young face raptly attentive—as if by some magic compounded out of his desperate longing, her reassuringly light reply must span the endless year. There was no sound;

his only sensation was of boundless space, the heady feeling of wheeling lightness he had so often known when confronted by high danger.

When he opened his eyes, they fell on a spot near his left knee, a spot he had willed himself to ignore at the moment of reaching the ledge. If anything of the illusion remained, it was shattered now. Now it was all 1938. For there on the rock, half obliterated by the howling, snow-filled gales of the past winter, yet still unmistakable, were the very marks left by her small, studded boots as they had crushed a rime of lichen and cautiously kicked away some loose pebbles, that she might have firm foothold for the climax both had known was to follow.

Methodically expert, a joy to climb with, light as always against the rope, she had worked her way up here to join him—a little of her, half of her, all of her—until her supple, vibrant body touched his. A year ago today.

A year at last ended. And now that he had kept this self-appointed rendezvous, little more remained. He would drag himself from knees to feet, would climb a distance measured by inches, until the tips of upthrust fingers brushed the underside of the Bump, apex of the Overhang.

But this time her firm shoulders would not be beneath his feet; this time he would have neither the support nor the reach to permit the lightning-quick upward arc of his ice ax over the Bump, where the pick end would grind along the slanting upper surface, grip, hold.

Alone, the lower side of the Bump was his limit. Then? Well, to retrace his steps was no part of the plan, even had it been possible. In the year gone he had changed enormously. Guiding values were all topsy-turvy, meaningless. He had looked on a new, ugly world through eyes stunned by a tragedy for which he held himself almost wholly to blame. Despising melodrama, the cheaply sensational, he had come here to die in this wantonly spectacular manner. Ever contemptuous of those who made away with themselves as an escape from life, he prepared to do no less. In the year past, for the first time, he had become profoundly convinced that there must be some sort of survival after death. In every fiber of his being he believed that soon he would be reunited with Marcia. Equally strong, if scarcely justified by reason, was the conviction that should he leave the world exactly as had she, their reunion would be quicker. Those in Wade Purcell's mental state are not prone to bother with the chilly precisions of logic.

Now he forced himself to a standing position, eager yet cautious, too—for that habit still lay strong on him. Long fingers, square-tipped, sure as a surgeon's, probed for, found the tiny crevices—here the only handholds. Using both hands and his right leg, he ascended some six inches, hard, lean body performing miracles of balance against this badly undercut, hideously difficult face of rock.

AT thirty, with fifteen summers, climbing experience, Wade Purcell was rated a better Alpinist than any but a handful of professionals. Though never in the Himalayas, he was often spoken of as the equal of 'the Everest crowd'—the most sincere compliment any climber may be paid. As with his father before him—a famous mountaineer who had ironically perished under the wheels of a New York taxi!—for Wade Purcell there had been Hotchkiss and the Alps, Yale and the Alps; and after his father's death, the elder Purcell's seat on the New York Stock Exchange, with vacations still in the inevitable Switzerland.

Motherless since boyhood, Wade Purcell found no great interest in the lighter diversions of his kind. During the New York winters he appeared just enough at the 'right places' to escape being labelled antisocial. When the day's trading ended on the Big Board, he'd spend an hour or so in his firm's offices high above Wall Street, more often than not walking all the way uptown to the Yale Club, where he had lived since his father's death in '32. An hour in the gymnasium, or playing squash, was gen-

erally followed by a fairly late club dinner in company with whatever friend were about; whereupon he might arrive late at some play, see a movie or make one of his infrequent sallies into what the press terms 'Society'. But since physical fitness was a fetish, as a rule he liked to be in bed before midnight.

Until he was twenty-nine he had never thought seriously enough about any girl to ask her to share his life. That he should have met Marcia Ladd and married her out of hand seemed utterly at variance with his careful, rather methodical mode of living. Actually it was no such thing: Marcia Ladd happened to be the only top-flight climbing woman he had ever met who genuinely attracted him.

His mind had never been more completely filled with her than now. Once briefly she had touched these very rocks. They had witnessed her end. For the first time since he had emerged from the Williams Couloir, Wade Purcell looked down.

Because of the Overhang, a sheer drop carried clear of the Couloir itself, to a point some five hundred feet below it, where the shelving immensity of *Die Grossmutter* fell away and away, finally to lose itself in the shaded grass slopes above Lauterbrunnen Valley. That first drop from the Bump on Grandmother's protruding forehead ended high on the bridge of Grandmother's polished nose. But a falling object would not stop there. A few bounding hops down the nose, a further drop of a thousand feet to the senile-long, wrinkled chin, then a final thousand to the rolling, lushy flabby folds about her grassy neck, and an inert glissade would end in some flower-strewn ravine selected by the foibles of chance.

Everywhere on this condemned northwest face the rock was rotten as wood long honeycombed by termites; nowhere more so than where Wade Purcell climbed.

The Bump was little more than thirty inches from his fingers when a right handhold pulled completely away. There was no right foothold.

Like a door thrown violently open, left hand and foot acting as hinges, Wade Purcell's body made a quick outward pivot. Newly, insecurely aligned on the infinitesimal rock scar that supported it, his left boot slipped clear. Instantly gravity swung him away from the overhung face. He was attached to the mountain by only the fingers of his left hand.

"Might as well be now," he thought.

BUT he did not let go. A queer kind of pride, a climber's pride, prevented his relaxing the tense, straining fingers. He had undertaken to get as far as he could—which meant reaching the Bump—and he hadn't quite made it. With welcome eternity waiting beneath, he commenced to debate the absurdity of quibbling over those few inches above. Now, or a few seconds later, the net result would be the same.

Yet not the same. If he let go now, the mountain would have beaten him. No mountain had ever done that. Hadn't this one, though? Hadn't the Grandmother done just that, this day twelve months gone? That—that had been accident; he'd be damned if he'd let the mountain take charge again before he was ready. There was a subtle difference.

No more than three seconds had elapsed since the mishap, yet sudden awareness of his numbing arm brought realization that matters might already be beyond his volition.

He tried to swing himself inward, left foot groping for its insufficient crack. Twice his boot nails scraped it, but the gravity pull was too strong.

His next movement was instinctive, unstudied. As he wriggled in a final struggle, body swaying, twisting, his *right* boot tipped the same hold, caught there. That out-of-position, meager support permitted use of his great strength. On right leg he forced himself up until right hand joined left. The hold was too small for all the fingers of both hands, but he took most of the weight with his right and clung, bathed in sweat, in the clear, thin air.

Before granting himself the luxury of

flexing the numbed left arm, with a movement swift, almost feline, he shifted feet. When the blood had flowed back into his dead fingers, he continued to climb until his battered gray felt hat, banded with edelweiss gathered in happier years, brushed the underside of the Bump.

This, then, was the objective. This was the end. And the beginning.

Now.

Without knowing why, for an inconsiderable fragment of time he continued to hang on. Perhaps in that split second an unconscious instinct for life was stronger than his resolution. Yet his mind was far removed from earthly considerations as he stared mechanically at the rock an inch from his eyes.

Against his will his gaze rested on, registered a strange thing, a condition which assuredly had not existed here in 1936.

Suddenly he was all attention.

Then, becoming conscious of delay, he tried to look away—failed.

To Wade Purcell, the revealed freak of nature was of compelling interest. For in the rotton rock a long, two-inch high fissure had opened; within reach of his right hand at its lower extremity, it canted up obliquely to lose itself beyond the Bump.

This meant—why, a man might be able to hand-walk up that fissure—might even, if it did not peter out too soon, actually climb solo over the Bump. A thing that had never been done. The climbing world would call this the Purcell Fissure, just as the Couloir-Overhang-Bump route up the northwest face was called the Williams Variation, after the renowned Basil Williams and his brother Blair, who had originated it a generation before.

Wade Purcell stopped short. What difference did it make—this small, new scar on Grandmother's forehead, this inaccessible crack on a route long since condemned by every Alpine Club, by the guides, by the very men who had discovered it?

None, of course. The call to have done recommended its insistent hammering in his brain. He had reached the Bump. Why delay? The contract had been carried out.

Wait, though: Hadn't he told himself he'd climb as far as he could? Mere evasion, a quibble. The natural assumption had been that he might reach this under side of the Bump. Literally, that had been the ceiling of his calculations.

And now it looked as if he might be able to go farther. How much? The desire to know commenced tearing at him like a sharp claw. His was the true climber's will to beat the mountain, not for the glory of it, but solely to know the moment of glowing triumph when, feet planted on a peak's summit, he might say inwardly, "I've taken the worst you could give and I've licked you!" That desire for triumph was asserting itself now like a great gale which blew more fiercely each instant.

"I couldn't foresee anything like this new fissure, Marcia." The thought formed audible words, with overtones of apology. Just a little delay: Marcia, of all people would have understood.

On its leather thong, his ax still dangled from his left wrist. With a deft movement he tucked the implement through the back of his belt and sighing, reached upward.

IT was late June, 1937. On the small, round iron table before Wade Purcell stood a fat little pot of golden clear honey, the small, crescent-shaped rolls called *croissants,* and *cafe au lait.* But he paid scant attention to breakfast, which he had ordered served here on the wide, gravelled terrace of Mürren's famous hotel, the Kurhaus. Rather, he had moved the big telescope on its sturdy tripod over beside him to focus it on the *Eiger,* his first planned climb of the season.

Beyond the terrace the ground fell sharply away until, lost in far shadow, it became part of the Upper Lauterbrunnen Valley. Three miles across this space Black Monk's sheer face. Three miles, yet from the terrace you could never quite escape the feeling that an outstretched hand would touch it. Directly behind thrust the broad back of

die Jungfrau, not well seen from this terrace; a slanting view of White Monk's snowy features was better. At the extreme left of the mighty trio—for Black Monk, while imposing from Mürren, could scarcely be included to make a quartet—the slimly pointed *Eiger* pointed a delicate, icy nose into the clean blue sky.

Much nearer and lower to the right lay a range composed of the *Elstab,* the Grandmother and lesser peaks, all rock, on this summer morning still patchy with snow and ice.

Grandmother was an inconsistent old lady. The regular southeast route to the top of her head was too easy to merit attention from any real climber; as with Mürren's much-advertised Schilthorn, it was no more than a tripper's outing, a mere long walk. But, as was well known to the initiated, on Grandmother's northwest face was a route so difficult and dangerous that it had long since been outlawed—the notorious "Williams Variation."

That suicidal few hundred feet Wade Purcell had no intention of trying; he was too experienced. His was the point of view of the guides, of fellows like Christian Zeigler, a huge, red-bearded man at the top of his profession, with whom Wade had climbed for ten of his fifteen summers. It was for Christian, due any hour, that the young American stockbroker was waiting.

Wade studied the *arête* leading to *Eiger's* summit, swung the telescope to the summit itself. A shadow fell between his eyes and the morning sun.

"The great Mr. Wade Purcell won't be able to do the *Eiger* just yet, if that's his intention," a girl's voice said. "It's badly corniced this year."

HE looked up quickly, saw a small, slim girl with friendly eyes standing there smiling at him. The sun through her light brown hair framed the neat head in gold. Something clicked in Wade's mind.

"Helen Ladd, by all that's wonderful!"

He rose, remembering a New York winter when on several occasions he had been casually thrown with Helen Ladd, whom he had not since seen. But on his feet, he saw suddenly that this girl, so like her, was younger—shorter, too.

"You—" He hesitated. "I thought—"

"Helen's my sister. I'm Marcia Ladd," she explained.

As they shook hands, he noticed how much more animation was here than in the merely pretty face of the girl he had known; the wide-set, hazel eyes were eager, questing, glad to be alive.

Wade Purcell reached back and pulled up a chair from the vacant table beside his own.

"If you haven't had breakfast, how about joining me?"

"I haven't, and I'd love to," she said.

Wade caught a waiter's eye and ordered for her.

"How does it happen a small child like you talks so glibly of cornices?" he demanded. "And how did you know there was such a bad one on the *Eiger?*"

"Don't let my size deceive you," she retorted. "Already I'm a veteran bacteriologist. That's been my job ever since I got out of Smith."

"Ever since?"

"Four years ago, if you please! As to the cornice, I know because I've been studying it through that telescope. The *Eiger* was one of the Bernese Oberland peaks I'd planned doing before we went off to Zermatt."

Wade grinned. "Don't tell me you're a veteran climber, too!"

She raised her eyes to his. "Just a very keen novice preparing for her seventh season, which will commence the moment Emil Tauchwalder shows up."

He knew instantly that he had made rather a bad mistake. Like his own Christian Zeigler, the Tauchwalder brothers never climbed with duds.

"Mighty little of the novice about you if Emil's your guide," he said with quick contrition. "Seems odd, though, that our paths haven't crossed long before this. Come to think of it, I haven't set eyes on Emil for several seasons."

"Of course you haven't." She was

generously matter of fact. "You see, for the past three summers I haven't been in the Alps. I've had Emil over home. We've been doing some of the Canadian Rockies."

"Great Scott!"

"Some of 'em are quite good," Marcia Ladd nodded. "The trouble is, you spend too much time on the approaches. If one's vacation is as strictly limited as mine, a season's bag of actual mountains climbed is apt to be pretty meager. You get more out of the Alps—they're so compact."

A true devotee, this! Wade, who had made it an unvaring rule never to climb with women, heard himself remarking that since they were both waiting for their guides, why shouldn't they do a practice climb or two together?

Her face lighted. "But—but I'm not in your class. I'd be just a nuisance."

It seemed to Wade, as it was often to seem in the days that followed, that everything he said and did sprang from strange, new impulses, almost as if he were being directed by the mind of a stranger.

"Nonsense," he said firmly.

"To be able to watch your work would be grand," Marcia told him.

Wade shook his head. "It's the professionals one learns from, not amateurs like me." Presently he suggested that they might do the *Elstab* on the morrow.

THEY roped a few moments after dawn. A fog, with them constantly since their lantern-lighted departure from Mürren at 2:30, had been all but impenetrable as they descended into and crossed the Lauterbrunnen Valley to begin the long, winding ascent up steep grass slopes. In first daylight, mists still shrouded their objective and all surrounding peaks. The sign that roping time was at hand had been the crunch of scree beneath their feet—the end of grass. With the advent of full light, *Elstab's* lower reaches became visible.

"What's left of this muck'll burn off," Wade said, removing the rope from his shoulder. Somewhere in the fresh, gray distances below them cow bells tinkled toylike, and once they heard a shepherd's horn, hoarsely abrupt, as if the fog had swallowed half of it.

Wade said: "The last time I did this one was with my father, unguided. I was just a kid. Dad led up on a fifty-foot rope. Fifty should be about right for us today." He paid out the length, watched her closely as she removed a short oiled silk slicker and an extra sweater, which she folded neatly into her rucksack before turning her attention to the rope. A few dextrous twists and it was knotted about her waist in approved fashion.

She looked up, caught his eye on her.

"I wasn't checking up on your knots," he smiled. "It's that hunting knife you're wearing on your hip. Unusual, isn't it?"

"Oh, that." She shrugged. "Yes, Emil kids me about it, too. You see, it's always been an idea of mine that when one climbs second on a two-man rope, there should be some way of breaking connections quickly in case of emergency. Seems squarer to the fellow top-side."

He nodded, liking her enormously. "Here's a short, fervent prayer you never get to use that knife."

His liking had increased by the time they approached *Elstab's* needlelike summit, some two and a half hours later. Nothing on earth reveals fundamental character more fully or quickly than real climbing. Quite aside from the fact that Marcia Ladd was a master of rock—he had assumed as much—Wade sensed that she was generous and fine to the core; such she had shown him in a hundred unstudied gestures.

Near the top they were able to rest on a broad shelf big enough for fifty people. The last of the fog had vanished and the day had turned coolly sparkling.

Wade glanced up at the last forty feet, sheer as the side of a house.

"We'd better eat here," he said. "There's room for only one at the top—a kind of narrow, natural seat that reminds you of those bucket affairs in racing automobiles. I've never seen another like it."

"You mean, you hadn't planned to do the last bit?" Her disappointment was manifest.

"No, no. Only that we can't both sit up there at the same time. When I did it with dad, I sat in his lap. With you, I thought—"

Her laughter echoed relief. "Bless the man's unyielding conventionality! Were every telescope in Switzerland trained on the spot I wouldn't give a hoot, so long as we get there."

"We'll eat when we come down then." Wade dropped his rucksack.

She sat watching him as he walked away, trailing the rope, she paying it out so that it should not foul. He was halfway up, moving with the easy assurance of a man mounting a ladder, when Marcia called conversationally:

"You know, perhaps you'd better sit in my lap. Give the telescope brigade more to talk about, don't you think?"

Wade's back was to her; she heard him chuckle. "But I'll be up there first. We'd better let well enough alone."

HE reached the top, settled himself, took in the remaining slack.

As Marcia climbed, she sensed afresh the perfection of Wade's rope handling. Never was there too much slack, and never the slightest suggestion of pull.

She looked up at him briefly. "Even Emil Tauchwalder could take a leaf out of your book on rope technique."

He peered down between his heavily hobnailed boots. "Rank flattery, madam. He and Christian may be at Mürren when we get back."

"I almost hope—" Marcia broke off, but her thought was clear enough. A moment later she was in his lap. They gazed about them, seemingly unconscious of their precarious perch more than ten thousand feet in the air.

Compared to the glistening giants around them, gray *Elstab* was almost a pigmy, yet they were high enough to get a magnificent view on three sides. So clear was the air that they could actually see the tennis players on the Kurhaus courts at Mürren. To the south the northwest face of Grandmother, next peak in the range, hung over them broodingly, vaguely sinister, blotting out all else.

Marcia shivered slightly. "That bad old woman has always fascinated me. The Williams Variation—"

"Don't ever think of monkeying around with that," Wade said quickly. "It's one of those things good climbers know enough to leave strictly alone."

He felt her shrug.

She said, "What about Williams? Wasn't he one of the best?"

"Sure. But did you ever read his account of the climb in the British Alpine Journal?"

"It's that I'm thinking of."

"And you don't believe his warning?"

Her reply was crisp. "The fact remains that he and his brother lived to tell the tale."

"The guides—"

"Oh, the guides! Keeping off that northwest face has become a sort of traditional convention with them. Don't you think it's about time our generation exploded all the abacadabra? It's almost a lifetime since Williams originated the route. The climb was made once. It can be made again."

"You mean, you'd actually tackle it?"

"Of course!"

"But not a guide in the country would touch it. You—"

"Perhaps I. wasn't thinking of the professionals," she murmured. Their faces were very close.

In that instant Wade Purcell forgot their discussion, forgot the implication of her last words. All he was suddenly sure of was that here was the woman of his life. His left arm, lightly about her for support, tightened. A rush of strange words filled his mouth.

"This—something's happened, Marcia. Here I've only known you a day, and now I want to marry you more than anything on earth. I must be crazy—"

"I'm terribly glad you're crazy," she whispered. . . . Presently she stirred, said—"The telescope brigade will never get over this, my dear."

Wade said dazedly: "Nor shall we, please God."

They were married the next day, at the home of the American Resident in Interlaken. They returned to Mürren, planning a climbing honeymoon.

CHRISTIAN ZEIGLER arrived. He had, he said, seen Emil Tauchwalder in Zurich. Emil craved the Fraulein's—*och,* Frau Purcell's—indulgence: There had been serious illness in Emil's family. He would be in Mürren, however, within forty-eight hours.

"All this talent here or coming," Marcia said to Wade that evening, "and for once it leaves me cold. For a while I'd ever so much rather climb alone with you."

"Me, too. But they're on contract to us."

Marcia laughed. "Not wanted, by a pair of climbing loons: Two of the best guides in Switzerland!"

Finally they decided to release the guides on full pay, subject to call.

"What money they picked with other parties would be velvet, sort of a reverse wedding present," Wade added.

"We owe them that. Did you see Christian's face when you told him about us? . . . Then, perhaps around the middle of July, the four of us could cross the glaciers to Zermatt, as I'd planned—"

"Yes! The *Matterhorn* from the Italian side, the Rothorn Traverse—"

"Let's go tell Christian this minute."

They left the Kurhaus in the late twilight, threading their way down Mürren's main thoroughfare. On both sides of the narrow little street crowded the flimsy stalls of the lace makers, the souvenir vendors.

The green of the hills was turned a velvety black; higher, eternal snows were coldly purple in shadow, while the last of the afterglow just tipped half a hundred white monsters with warm pink.

They came to the square little Station Inn with its wrought iron balconies and outdoor cafe, caravanserai of non-resident guides. Christian Zeigler sat alone, a stein at his elbow, peering at a newspaper. When he saw them he sprang up like a great, clumsy bear, upsetting a chair. It occurred to Wade that Christian always seemed clumsy—until you got him on a mountain.

Wade ordered beer and told Christian the plan.

"But pay me you do nodt until ve begin climbing togedder," protested Christian in his rumbling English. "Such oldt friends ve are—do you tink a few days' contract pay matters to me? Emil, he vill say de same to Frau Purcell. You talk money on such occasion as dis? Bah!"

They won him over at last, ordered fresh beer.

"Tell me, Christian," Marcia said suddenly, "what is the real truth about *die Grossmutter*—the Williams Variation? Is it as bad as people say?"

The guide's expression changed. Under his flaming red beard his lips moved oddly. Hard, corner-crinkled blue eyes, so like a flier's, stared at Marcia without a smile in them.

"V'y you ask dot?" Christian's glance flickered toward Wade, but the latter gazed down expressionlessly at his stein.

Marcia, too, looked toward her husband before replying.

"Why? Simply because I've always felt that what was done once can be done again."

"So!" He gave it the Teutonic sound: "Zo-o-o."

FOR a long minute he looked off toward Grandmother, now no more than a shadow among shadows. Then abruptly, he asked Marcia if she spoke German.

She nodded.

"Good; it is easier for me. . . . The summer the Williams brothers discovered their route I was eighteen and had just become a guide, second class. The day of their climb I had led a party up the Little *Schreckhorn,* and we had returned to Mürren by train from Grindelwald. My client had little money in his pocket, so I went with him and his friend to the Kurhaus, where he paid me off. Just then I saw the Williams brothers, whom I knew. They seemed very much exhausted. I joined the ex-

cited crowd about them. An American, correspondent in Mürren for the Paris *Herald,* was eagerly questioning Herr Basil Williams. Herr Blair had the misfortune to be deaf; as usual he said little or nothing.

"Herr Basil was explaining that they had started out merely to look for edelweiss on some of the spurs which jut from the mountain's southern slopes. It was from the tip of one of these that Herr Blair first saw the lower end of the chimney since called the Williams Couloir. Where did it lead? Perhaps nowhere. Curiosity aroused, they climbed to it.

"They had a rope, naturally, but no cleats, so their progress up the chimney itself was slow, difficult and extremely hazardous. Mere hobnails were too blunt to give ice footholds. They—"

"That chimney—is it always ice-filled?" Marcia interrupted.

"Presumably. It was on the one occasion I saw it. I am coming to that."

Christian continued—"About halfway up the chimney is an elbow. They had seen faint light above from the beginning, but at the bend they looked up see open rock. It was then they realized that the chimney must lead to the upper reaches of the northwest face, always considered inaccessible because of the three great overhangs lower down. When they gained the top of the chimney their surmise was confirmed.

"But even now, so close to making climbing history, Herr Blair was against attempting what lay ahead. To the limit of their vision was all overhang, the angle perhaps not utterly impossible for two such as they, had the rock been sound.

"They could see otherwise: it was eroded, everywhere rotten. But Herr Basil was persistent; though the younger he was ever the leader, and in the end he persuaded his brother that the effort should be made.

"The rest you must know. After two hours of almost unbelievable struggle, they came upon that final projection which in his written account, Herr Basil named the Bump. This obstruction was only surmounted when Herr Basil stood on his brother's shoulders and reached to its upper surface with his ax. He went up the ax shaft, drew his brother after him. Once over the Bump, it was a mere steep walk to the summit, a matter of a couple of minutes."

Christian's eyes were cloudy with memory.

"There was one thing which Herr Basil never wrote, nor did he mention it that day—publicly. Later, when the crowd had dispersed, he said to me, 'Christian, I was a fool. I had no right to risk my brother's life. The truth is, once above the chimney, *we went on because we could not go back.*'

"You—all experienced climbers have met such places, where holds possible for hands in the ascent are impossible for the feet when descending. . . . They returned, of course, by the simple *arête* to the southeast—the broad, safe route of old ladies and children.

"Herr Basil also said: 'I would not make that insane climb again for all the money in the world. Skill alone was not enough; we had great luck. I shall do my best to prevent anyone else from trying it.'

"Well, he was not only the best rock climber of his time, but a young man of absolute integrity, and his published account of that day's work gave full warning of the unfair hazards. Yet there were those who murmured that Herr Basil had magnified the difficulties in the hope that the accomplishment might never be duplicated.

"So? That same season, climbing three on a rope, Hans Lobert and his party were killed there; and later, the younger Kaufmann and *his* people—others, too. Thus it continued until the Swiss Alpine Club decided to condemn the Variation completely.

"As you doubtless know, such a step is never made final without investigation. For this the best guide in Switzerland was chosen—Fritz Lange. As his companion, to my genuine surprise, he selected me.

"Even with cleats, the chimney was intensely difficult. Fritz said: 'Though they cut steps, I do not know how the Williams brothers could have worked

through this with only hobnails on their boots.' Nor did I.

"When we came out on the face, Fritz took a long upward look, shrugged.

" 'Christian,' he said, 'have you ever heard any man call me coward?'

"I could not help laughing. His courage was a by word.

" 'Nevertheless,' he said, 'there's one piece of rock I am afraid to attempt.'

"I suggested we take back those very words to the officials. 'Coming from you,' I said, 'they will be enough.' . . . And they were."

WADE nodded into his stein, but Marcia seemed unsatisfied.

"What was your own feeling, Christian? You say nothing of that."

The guide frowned. "Is it not obvious? A hundred feet, perhaps more, badly overhung all the way, a final all but impassable obstruction, rock so rotten that one may pick handfuls almost anywhere —all this after an exhausting battle up a long chimney smooth as glass—what more is there to say? I have had many years' experience since then; now, more than ever, I say that devil's route was justly condemned."

Presently, as they walked back to the Kurhaus in the pale starlight, Wade said with sudden contrition:

"What a husband I turned out to be! It's just occurred to me I haven't given you any wedding present. When we get back to New York—"

"Why wait so long?" she asked lightly.

He misunderstood her. "Of course, we could stop in at Cartier's on our way through Paris."

"Jewelry doesn't mean anything to me —never has. There's only one present I really want from you."

Wade rushed unheeding into that feminine trap.

"You know I'll give you anything within my power."

"This is within your power, Wade."

"Then name it."

The lights of the Kurhaus were before them. They walked a few paces before Marcia replied:

"Lead me up the Williams Variation on Grandmother."

Wade stood stock still, stared at her.

Breaking that uncomfortable silence, she said, "Any climb Basil Williams made, you can. I refuse to believe otherwise."

"And I refuse to believe you're serious!"

"But I am."

"Don't ask something you know I've got to deny you."

"You won't do this for me?"

"Why, your own common sense—" He threw up his hands.

"My wedding present. It's all I want, Wade."

They argued for hours. At last—but only because he was deeply under her spell—Wade gave in.

The next morning he suffered an overpowering revulsion of feeling. His promise that they make the climb the day following—it was sheer madness! Yet that promise he had made.

Had she, with a woman's cold precision, sensed his vulnerability—taken advantage of it? She was not of that quality. Rather, Wade's climbing prowess, magnified by love, loomed to her in truly heroic proportions.

Never for an instant did she have the slightest doubt of their success; the clarion voice of danger was lost within his invincibility.

"Today's the Third," she said at breakfast. "We'll be doing the climb on the July Fourth—our personal Declaration of Independence against this wall of stuffy prejudice."

THE Williams Variation followed the well traveled regular route until, at a point a few hundred feet above grass, the easy way bore south, skirting the base of the rock escarpment. Here the Variation led laterally up that towering wall, all hard climbing to the chimney entrance.

But the Purcells took that phase in stride, to reach the chimney shortly after 8 A. M. They had eaten near the point where the routes separated, leaving rucksacks to be picked up for another meal

when they regained this spot on the easy descent.

There was no climbing the Williams Couloir with rucksacks. Backs must be free.

Wade looked up the icy funnel to the elbow, eighty feet away.

"Parts of that are going to be pretty wide for you," he said doubtfully, thinking of her small stature.

Marcia smiled at him. "With you at the upper end of the rope—"

He said nothing more and they put on their cleats. Then, his back against one side of the chimney, Wade chipped two breast-high steps in the other. A sudden movement and his cleats bit into the steps.

For an instant his body was almost parallel to the ground. He inched his back up, and when he was at slightly less than a forty-five degree angle, again the ax rang hollowly, and another pair of steps appeared about two feet above the first.

Up came one foot, the other. Again, the slow, cautious business of sliding his back higher. It was like walking up the wall in an ice-filled hallway with an eighty foot ceiling.

An hour later, bathed in sweat, Wade reached the bend, where the ice-covered outcrop charted by Williams afforded sitting room. He rested briefly, gathered in the rope; he had allowed himself a hundred feet. Marcia felt the tug.

"How was it?" Her voice came up to him, echoing. The upturned face was like a small white disc seen through the wrong end of a telescope.

"Not specially recommended," he shouted. "Come ahead."

Even with the steps ready made, her shortness made the stretch a strain. But she came up steadily, never once taking advantage of the rope, though she was badly winded when she reached him.

He looked up the remaining sixty feet of the chimney; her eyes followed his. A portion of the Overhang was visible.

"The enemy," she said.

"We aren't there yet. Get a good, firm seat; anchor the pick end of your ax, too. If I tumble now, it would be squarely on top of you. They'd find us at the bottom of the chimney.

"You aren't the tumbling sort," Marcia said.

He handed her the coiled rope to pay out, looked at his watch.

"We're in good time. We might be right on top of Grandmother's evil old head by noon."

"And back in Mürren by six?"

"Easily. With a side trip for edelweiss, if we aren't too tuckered."

"Edelweiss," Marcia said dreamily, "picked on the day we did the Williams Variation. There's a memento worth keeping!"

There was a V-shaped cleft at the chimney's top inner lip. In this, after Marcia joined him, Wade shortened rope to forty feet. Above, the forehead of the northwest face reached up in its terrible entirety, so undercut that the Bump looked like a black marble suspended far out in space.

Wade's very first handhold pulled away, but he was still standing in the cleft and no damage was done.

He said, "This stuff, Marcia," shaking his head. Yet now the fever for conquest had entered his blood. Hadn't they overcome the first big hazard, the chimney? Looking up, his practiced eyes discerned rock which looked slightly better, as if it might hold.

But hadn't Fritz Lange once seen everything he was now seeing? The great Lange had wanted no part of it—Christian either. It would be perfectly possible to retreat down the chimney, as had the guides. Once well upon the face it would be otherwise.

"Marcia—" he began.

"The Williams brothers went on," she whispered, reading his mind exactly.

The die was cast.

CLOSE beside the first handhold Wade saw another possibility. He reached up. It held. Ironically, in all that desperate adventure, no other handhold betrayed them.

And then at last, after two hours with death at their elbows, Wade came upon the small rock ledge noted by Williams as being close under the Bump. For the first time in an hour Wade spoke:

"Marcia. All set."

Up she came, a little of her, half of her, all of her, until she was beside him.

"Nothing—to it—so far," she gasped.

Wade asked grimly: "Got enough left for the shoulder stand?"

"Hold you for an hour."

Sweet liar! He watched her feet crush a rime of lichen, push away some loose pebbles; then he moved at once. Every second squandered against the inescapable drag away from this leaning horror meant sapping whatever reserves of strength they could still muster.

Against this moment Marcia had sewn felt pads on the shoulders of her sweater, but when Wade climbed past her and his hobnails bore down on her small frame, she prayed it might not be for long.

This shoulder stand, hanging to nothing, was the ultimate in climbing skill. Watch a pair of acrobats doing the same thing. The holder, feet firmly planted on a flat, friendly floor, more often than not steadies his companion with hands upthrust about the other's ankles. But with a sickening drop beneath the narrow ledge, Marcia's fingers were fully engaged in precarious handholds. Wade must steady, must balance himself as best he might—must also release one hand to swing his ax.

Without hesitation he did it, too, with the finely coordinated movements of a master. For a very awful fraction of a second it seemed the pick might slide back. But it held.

Before Marcia quite realized that he had succeeded, her shoulders were free of Wade's weight. Hand over hand he fought up the slippery hardwood shaft. She could not look, but she heard his grunt as an arm was flung over the rock, then a great rasping and scraping as he wormed his body up and across those vital inches.

Exhausted, Wade yet managed to begin taking in slack without delay; Marcia must be brought up quickly. That accomplished, success would be theirs.

The top of the Bump shelved sharply downward, the rock here smooth, but there was one high spot which would serve as a brace for Wade's heels as he faced outward.

It was in this position that he took in the last of the slack, gave the rope a slight jerk for signal.

Marcia, invisible, would walk up her rope: She would lean outward until her feet were squarely against the face, whereupon would begin the delicate maneuver of keeping the rope exactly taut as she moved.

All was going well. Wade had just spied the top of her white woolen toque; she was coming up nicely.

Without the slightest warning, the rock under his heels let go.

Then he was sliding slowly toward the edge on the seat of his breeches. Wade snatched a hand from the straining rope, tried to anchor with his ax. Driven at a poor angle and with insufficient force, the pick refused to hold.

He flipped over on his stomach, attemped to dig in with his toes. And again with the ax. It was no go. He was sliding steadily, relentlessly, but in slow motion. Time and to spare to stave off disaster. Yet no way to do so.

All at once Wade stopped sliding. He was lying on the rope; its bulk had a sudden vaguely different feel. *The tension was gone.*

He knew then.

"The knife!" He was screaming. "Marcia—oh, God—"

Marcia, squaring the books of her folly in this last magnificent gesture of sportsmanship. . . .

When, hours later, they found her, a sprig of edelweiss was wedged between her fingers. None of the guides and climbers who made up the searching party paid much attention to this.

None save Wade.

Something more he found too. The knife. It lay not far from her. With cold fingers he picked it up.

IN THE bitter days that followed, Christian proved a tower of strength. People were saying that Wade Purcell was through, that he'd never climb again. And Wade all but confirmed this, for on the eve of his departure for America he said to Christian:

"Next season it will be best, I think, if we do not renew our contract."

"I understand," Christian said gruffly. It was a bad wrench. He was very fond of Wade. Had money been a consideration, Christian would gladly have climbed with him for nothing.

"Yet"—Wade spoke half to himself—"I may come, after all." Even then the first seeds of his plan were being sown, and in one of those flashes of thought transference between folk mentally close, Christian experienced a definite sensation of uneasiness.

"If you come," he said, "I shall not be far away."

Nor was he. There was no word from Wade, but through a friend in New York, an attaché at the Swiss Consulate, the guide kept track of his friend; and when Wade sailed, a cable appraised Christian of the fact. From his home near Zurich Christian telephoned the manager of the Kurhaus in Mürren: Yes, Herr Purcell had booked accommodation from July First.

"I am booked only through July Fourth," Christian told Wade at their first meeting. He was shocked by Wade's altered appearance, by his nervous, abrupt manner.

Wade seemed to avoid or ignore the obvious opening. He said merely—

"They tell me at the hotel that you've been taking on trippers—anyone. You shouldn't be doing that, a guide of your standing."

Generous Christian reflected that in his abstraction, Wade doubtless had no realization of the true reason for his having guided the first people who enlisted his services.

Yet Wade's reply was evasive, too; that served to reawaken Christian's apprehension. There wasn't, he sensed, very much he could do. Without a booking, he could scarcely force his company upon Wade.

On the morning of the Fourth, coming to the Kurhaus at the effete hour of 8 A. M. to pick up his party for the day, Christian learned from the night porter that Wade, dressed for climbing, had slipped away shortly after two in the morning, destination unknown.

Christian waited uncomfortably for his party—a rotund gentleman from Idaho, his equally obese wife and their twelve-year-old son. They appeared a half hour late.

"Sorry t'keep you waitin'," the man said, "but we've been with a gang round the telescope. Seem's if there's some damned fool climbin' alone on the Grandmother—route folks say's condemned. I took a look.

"You c'n see him there. Terrible. Must be tryin' t' commit suicide, eh? Listen, ain't it the Grandmother you're takin' us up? You sure it's all right for mother here, an' the boy?"

"Der route I take you iss berfectly safe," Christian said stonily.

Too late, too late, after all this careful planning. If Wade could be seen from the terrace, it meant he was already high on the face.

WADE reached toward the fissure. His fingers curled over the lower side, their tips probing inward. Yes, there was depth enough for a grip. Suddenly his feet dangled as he hung entirely by his arms.

His left hand moved to the left; the right slid along close to it. But as he felt for the next hold, the crack's inward depth became ominously less.

No more than four feet away laterally and some eighteen inches above his hands, the long crack swerved upward to begin its course over the Bump.

Again Wade edged along with his left hand. No doubt of it, the depth was petering out. His latest hold gave access to but two finger joints. In his left forearm he felt the first spasm of cramp. It

passed into numbness, came again. A few seconds of that and he knew he would have to let go.

His hands moved more quickly, in desperate eagerness. He lost track of the holds. . . .

His fingers were slipping. The crack angled up more steeply. The world was a black void. Somewhere infinitely far away his hands clutched blindly—at what?

Then he was lying half over the Bump and something was poking into his side: The point of his ax.

Shifting to abate that acute discomfort was almost his undoing, for the lower half of him still dangled. On the flat of his belly, movements tortured, reptilian, he dragged himself to safety.

For a long while he lay motionless, too exhausted to think. Then he rose painfully, jerkily, like a badly manipulated marionette, and staggered to Grandmother's summit, where again he slumped down.

But in a little while he sat upright. Slowly he reached under his sweater, unbuttoned his shirt, felt for the handle of Marcia's knife. There in its sheath it had rested for a year.

He had thought never again to withdraw steel from leather, never again to look upon that eternal symbol of triumph and disaster.

Yet suddenly he knew that once more he would see the knife. And now he drew it out. Once used, once only. Used that he might have life. And he would have destroyed her priceless gift!

Not now, not now. He hadn't the right. He had never had it.

Cold lay the blade along his palm—cold, yet bright and shining and somehow alive. And Wade knew that this steely badge of courage must here find final resting place. Yet here it would live forever.

From the loose stone everywhere about he began to build a little cairn. And when the tapering pile was waist high he laid the blade gently down as on an altar, and over it finished the pyramid.

Blindly he turned at last, his breast tearing with a great, humble pride. He had moved but a little way along the southern *arête* when he came upon Christian and his panting trio.

Christian's face was set; he said nothing. Yet through the sweat-caked dirt on Wade's face Christian saw the altered look of him.

"Funny we didn't spot you ahead of us," gasped the fat man from Idaho. "Say, you see anything of the crazy guy was climbin' the part o' this mountain nobody's supposed t'be on?"

"Nothing," Wade said. And to Christian, in German: "If you're still free, old friend, I hope we may go on climbing together, as in the past."

"Ja wohl," beamed Christian.

"Dat's solid gold luck if dey ever wuz any."

HORSESHOE LUCK

By HUGH WILEY

THE Wildcat, prowling along the Stockton river front with Demmy, suddenly halted like a bird dog.

"Look at dat, Demmy!" he exclaimed. "Ain't I told you Lady Luck wuz runnin' dis parade? Look at dat horseshoe wid a million nails stickin' up! Dat's solid gold luck if dey ever wuz any."

"Don't touch dat, Wilecat," Demmy admonished. "Horseshoe luck wuz good in de hoss an' buggy days, but it's plain poison right now. Leave it lay."

"Boy, you is crazy. Halt whilst I reaps de harvest whut Lady Luck done showered down."

"Wilecat, don't you touch dat horseshoe whilst I is in yo' midst. I knows good luck f'm de bad kind. Dat horseshoe means just plain woe an' calamity for everythin' f'm balloon tires to us humans."

The Wildcat scowled at his sawed-off companion. "Dog-gone you, Demmy, I don't believe a word of whut you says, but—I won't bring it along." He stooped down and ran his fingers over the jagged nails in the horseshoe. "Jus' one li'l rub for luck an'—"

"Come along here, Wilecat. Come a-runnin' an' orate less," Demmy admonished. "Leave go dat horseshoe. You knows mighty well dat us is face to face

wid de job of gittin' two jobs befo' Old Man Trouble promulgates us into starvation. Come along!"

The Wildcat came along.

"I ain't so hungry now since I touched dat horseshoe," he said. "Boy, Ise ponderin' about who rings de supper bell just as much as you is."

Demmy grunted. "Wages is whut us needs. No matter whut else dat horseshoe meant it means hard labor for you an' me. Hard labor an' eatin' wages."

"Whereat you figger us gits in de collision wid dem wages?"

"Employdment office," Demmy explained. "Us takes de fust job us kin git."

In front of an employment office which the pair presently found, it was immediately evident that there was no shortage of work. Two long blackboards bore the legend of opportunity.

"Demmy, read me dat bill of fare of dem jobs."

"In de fust place swampers in a lumber camp, carpenter helpers, concrete gangs, brick yard, saw mill, three railroads on de grade, stackin' in a lumber yard—Here us is, Wilecat—feed hands wanted on a hog ranch."

"Hot dam, Demmy! I knowed Lady Luck heaved dat horseshoe at us. Where at is dis hog job? Ain't nuthin' more noble dan bein' chaperon of a pork chop factory, wid hams an' side meat loomin' bigger an' bigger right in yo' face. All you does is shake down de rations an' watch dem four-legged hams an bacons make hogs outta pigs whilst you loafs in de shade."

Demmy nodded his head in full agreement. "Wilecat, yo' tonsils is festooned heavy wid de truth."

"Horseshoe luck! It's hit us right in de wilderness when our hearts wuz bowed down wid woe. Read me some more, Demmy. Where at is dis promised land of milk an' honey where Lady Luck is got dem hungry hogs?"

"De writin' don't say. Us got to ask de man."

"How much is de wages?"

"Three dollars an' grub."

The Wildcat jerked Demmy toward the door of the employment office. "Come along here, sawed-off, find out where dat job is an' tell de man he is took on two hired hands."

THE Minho hog ranch was a twenty acre garbage dump on Arbor Island, five miles from Stockton. Surveying it from the levee road that paralleled one of the winding channels of the San Joaquin River, "Looks like dis Johnny Minho boss whut is got us hired owns all de hogs in de world," the Wildcat commented.

Black hogs, white hogs, red hogs and mottled varieties, breeds of all sizes seemed to cover the landscape as far as the eye could reach.

Demmy grunted. "I heard of folks bein' hog rich many a time but I never seed one befo'. Must be a million hogs in dis outfit. No wonder dis hog man craved help waitin' on de hog table."

Half a mile to camp down a rutted road, at the third shack of six that served as human habitations, Demmy halted.

"Looks like dis is de main house," he said.

The Wildcat scowled. "Call dis a house! Dese shacks ain't no better dan croppers cabins in de Tallahatchie mud."

"Nemmine, boy, knock on dat door. Don't forgit de main item—three dollars a day an' board."

"Demmy, board is whut I needs. Right dis minnit Ise so hungry I bet—"

"Hush up, Wilecat! Somebody comin'."

Somebody was Johnny Minho. He looked at the employment slip that Demmy had carried from the labor office and then, gruffly, "Come along wit me," he said.

A thousand feet from the ranch houses, facing a fenced area full of hogs that adjoined a two-acre garbage dump, "Chase one tousand dese hog into dose garbage," Mr. Minho directed. "Keep feedin' eight o'clock. Chase dis hog back eight o'clock an' feedin' him plenty water. Savvy okay?"

"Yass suh, boss man, sho do," Demmy answered.

"Sho does," the Wildcat echoed and then hesitated. "What about de grub

for me an' Demmy?" he asked slowly.

"Wen dis hogs is finish dose garbage an' drink his water plenty, you mans gitch big supper. Chinaman cook fix you up swell grub okay."

This seemed to cover the subject of orders for the day. Johnny Minho, without further conversation, turned and headed for his ranch house.

When his employer was halfway on his return journey, the Wildcat cast an appraising eye over the expanse of garbage into which he and Demmy were driving the hogs. "You spose dey's some good hotel leavin's out here where dem hogs is rootin'? You know, Demmy, dat half de fancy vittles whut hotels uses finally lands in de garbage trucks?"

"Sho I does," Demmy said, "but I don't aim to rassle no hog to see who is garbage champion. Tame dat appetite, Wilecat. You eats at eight o'clock."

"Dogged if I know kin I live dat long. . . . Wonder kin dat Johnny man see us from de main house?"

"Whut you aim to do?"

"Demmy, you see dat li'l shoat over dere associatin' so brash wid dem growed up hogs?"

"Wilecat, nemmine detourin' clean off de track a-lookin' for Old Man Trouble."

"I ain't lookin' for Old Man Trouble, Demmy, only dat shoat looks like he would barbecue mighty noble wid dem two fence rails down dere, wuz he supported through de fiery furnace on a couple of dem iron barrel hoops." The Wildcat smacked his lips.

"Boy," Demmy advised harshly, "banish dat barbecue idea outen yo' feeble mind befo' you has to outrun a baptizin' of hot lead from dat Johnny hog man's gun. Concentrate yo' mind to dis job an' forgit dem evil thoughts whut Satan is vaccinated into yo' mind. Git to work an' earn yo' money, boy. Rest for de weary an' rations by an' by. Git busy."

REST for the weary consisted of a short eight hours in a dilapidated bunkhouse surrounded by the nondescript crew employed by Johnny Minho. At six o'clock in the morning, back on the job, the Wildcat took time out to complain about the brevity of his rest period.

"Looks like us is hired on to give dis Johnny man two days' work for one day's pay," he grumbled. "Demmy, I be dog-goned if I like dis job as good as it sounded."

"Hit de ball, boy. Remember one thing: dis job kain't git no worse dan whut it is. It gets better by an' by, an' all de time whilst it gits better don't forgit de money keeps rollin' in."

The job was slow in getting better for the next ten days, and then, true to Demmy's prediction, Lady Luck favored her two orphans with a break in the monotony of their daily routine.

To Demmy and the Wildcat, "Today I shippen four-five hundred them hog to Butchertown in San Francisco," Johnny Minho announced. "I shippen you boys wid them hog. Steamboat bringin' barge to levee twelve o'clock today. Right now you feedin' dose hog plenty stockfish, feedin' him plenty more stockfish on trip to Butchertown. Captain on boat he tell you when to give dose hog plenty fresh water. Captain bring you back on boat next day. I bring some men out help you loadin' dose hog when boat comes."

That was that. When Johnny Minho had left the pair, "Hot dam, Demmy!" the Wildcat exulted. "Us gits a free steamboat trip to de big town."

"Looks dat way," Demmy admitted.

"How much money is us got comin'?"

"Less de Johnny boss deducts too much I figgers a even thutty dollars for you an' de same for me."

"Thirty dollars! Thirty dollars and San Francisco! Boy, dey better git ready wid a brass band when us hits town. You remember de time I starts in at de Clover Club on Fillmore Street wid ten dollars an' run it up to less dan a million in dat crap game?"

"Sho do," Demmy admitted.

"Sho did, you sawed-off half-pint of a busted sliver! Dis time I starts wid thirty dollars an' wid horseshoe luck I builds up to mighty big money."

"Git calm, Wilecat. Come along here an' help me wid dem salt rations for dese hogs like de Johnny boss said. We got business to do."

TRUE to prediction, ten minutes ahead of her schedule the *Mermaid,* in command of Captain Dan Hicks, nosed a square-ended hundred foot barge alongside of the levee that fronted Johnny Minho's hog ranch.

The *Mermaid,* owned by Captain Dan, was a little seventy foot stern-wheeler whose principal duties seemed to be puffing around on minor errands in the district between Stockton and San Francisco.

She carried a crew of three, beside her captain—Stubb Mitchell, her engineer; Highpocket, her fireman; and Hop Low, the Chinese cook.

Greeting Johnny Minho, Captain Dan Hicks yelled for speed in loading the hogs. "Highest tide in three months at six o'clock this evening, and I got to ride her down on the flow to make Butchertown by morning."

There followed a turmoil of activity on the part of Johnny Minho and his hired help. Within the hour the deck of the *Mermaid's* barge was black with grunting hogs.

"Even five hundred hog," Johnny Minho announced.

Captain Dan Hicks yelled at Highpocket, the *Mermaid's* fireman: "You check that count?"

"I make it four ninety-nine," Highpocket answered.

Minho looked sourly at the impassive Hop Low.

"Okay, boys," he said. "Four ninety-nine. I make you present dat one hog. Four ninety-nine, but don't come back tell me four ninety-eight. One fat hog plenty meat four men." Johnny Minho turned to the Wildcat and Demmy. "Get on board with dose hog," he said. "You remember like I tol' you—feed 'em plenty saltfish now, feed 'em plenty water just so soon when Captain tells you. Make 'em fat on water in the morning just like sellin' water same price pork."

"Yass suh, Mistah Johnny," Demmy answered. "Us understands de system. . . . Come along here, Wilecat. Hop dat barge an' git goin' wid dat saltfish lunch for dem hogs."

For the first hour of the trip the four-legged fish eaters kept well ahead of the Wildcat and Demmy, who were dealing stockfish from the supply bin as rapidly as they could handle the brittle armloads of the thirstful material.

Presently, having distributed another half cord of the delicacy to the hogs on the head end of the barge, the Wildcat noted with considerable satisfaction that the supply was gaining on the demand. "Take it easy, Demmy. Us is got 'em licked."

"Us takes it easy when de easy takin' time comes. Right now, boy, festoon yo' carcass wid six mo' loads of dis dried fish an' shower down on dem ravenous fools in de middle."

When the ravenous fools fore and aft on the barge had momentarily quit grunting their demands, "Come along here, boy," the Wildcat invited. "Let's see whut dis Chinee puts out for human vittles. De way my stummick feels, I eats me mo' dan all de hogs on dis barge."

Hop Low was absent from his domain. The galley of the *Mermaid,* equipped with an oil stove, an ice box, a ten foot table and six chairs, occupied an area on the main deck that had been the coal bunkers before oil burners had been installed under the *Mermaid's* boilers.

The Wildcat, searching for Hop Low, prowled aft from the galley past the boiler room and into the engine room. Here on the broad surface of one of the starboard cylinder timbers, Hop Low was dealing blackjack to Stubb Mitchell and Highpocket. Hop Low smiled at the Wildcat.

"You likee ketchum lucky card?" he inquired. "You ketchum acey facey I pay two time."

The Wildcat shook his head. "Lissen, Chinee boy, keep dat game. I never pay me no mind to dat blackjack business."

"Mistah Johnny boss he pay you wages? You ketchum money?"

The Wildcat nodded. "Thirty dollars."

"You likee play mebbe fantan?"

"Dat ain't my game."

"You likee stud pokee?"

"I don't bother dat game when it don't bother me."

"You likee klibbage, you likee pedlo, you likee pig knuckle?"

"Pig knuckles is my dish. Dat's whut I come back to 'vestigate. Whut time does you put out de rations? Me an' Demmy is hungry from de feet up."

Stubb Mitchell, the engineer, nodded at Hop Low. "Get up for'd there and deal out some grub for these two boys." To the Wildcat, pleasantly, "This damn heathen will fix you up right away. He'll be in the galley in one minute or I'll heave him over the high side. . . . Get up there, Hop Low, and get busy."

The heathen frowned.

"I ketchum," he said reluctantly. To the Wildcat, "What you likee? Mebbe pawk chopee, mebbe fly pawk—"

"Sho do," the Wildcat smiled. "Lay 'em both out for me an' Demmy, an' after us eats 'em we tells you which is de favorite."

UNDER the inspiration of his gratifying food and the momentary release from hard labor the Wildcat smiled benevolently upon a golden world.

"Demmy," he said, "I feel sorry for almost everybody in de world 'ceptin' you an' me. Here us is sittin' pretty loaded down wid big money, eatin' hearty an' de day's work most all done, all becuz we found dat horseshoe."

"Dat seems to be de way you looks at it."

"Den whut I claims is de plain truth. Us is sittin' pretty an' doin' noble. Boy, wait till I gits in dat Clover Club on Fillmore Street. Stops de game wid so much money dat de next thing us does is buy a hog ranch.

"Figger out for me how much does a hundred hogs bring in. Figger me how much us gits wid all dem hogs workin' night an' day gittin' fat an' promulgatin' de country wid small sized pigs whut don't cost nuthin'. Looks to me, Demmy, like Lady Luck got a even million dollars waitin' on de Christmas tree festooned wid horseshoe luck!"

Demmy scowled.

"Dat's de way it looks to you," he said sullenly.

"Sho is. Boy, you knows whut I does when I gits me dat fust million dollars?"

"Fust thing you better do is rent a room in de crazy house."

Ignoring this, "Fust thing I does wid dat million dollars is buy me a highgrade ten cent seegar."

"Go ahead," Demmy said. "You still got some change left."

"Den I gits me a shirt wid stripes in it sort of purple an' oxblood goin' both ways."

"Keep a-dreamin'. De million ain't spent yet. Dream fast, boy, you only got one minnit left befo' I wakes you up wid de sad news dat it's feedin' time once mo' for dem hogs."

"I ain't a-dreamin', Demmy, Ise fo'-castin' de future whut dat horseshoe us found is gwine to bring. Horseshoe luck is de best luck in de world. Rabbit foots an' fo'leaf clovers ain't nuthin' 'longside of horseshoe luck. No matter how downtrod Old Man Trouble gits a boy, when Lady Luck hits him in de head wid a horseshoe it means—"

Interrupting the Wildcat, Hop Low slid into the galley with a bulletin concerning a crap game that just then engaged Stubb Mitchell and Highpocket. "You savvy two dice game, ketchum money come sebben, come lebben?"

The Wildcat's eyes widened. "Chinee boy, where at is dat seven 'leven business?"

"You ain't got no time to fool wid dat," Demmy protested.

"Nemmine dem hogs, Demmy. Dat kin wait till I cools off. Right dis minnit Ise red hot. Come along whilst I cracks de whip on some horseshoe dice an' builds me up a payday wid de topside spots."

IN THE engine room of the *Mermaid,* coming out for two-bits and invariably falling over before the third pass materialized, Stubb Mitchell and Highpocket welcomed the Wildcat to their crap game with unmistakable satisfaction.

They frowned in vain at Hop Low, who clung like a barnacle to the Wildcat's starboard side.

"This ain't no game for Chinks," Highpocket objected. "Hop Low, you get back to your galley. Me and Stubb will handle this business."

"Galley him okay. I likee looksee this

boy ketchum large money. Mebbe I likee play lilly bit myself."

Stubb Mitchell tossed the dice to the Wildcat. The engine room was a bedlam of noises: the long-drawn soughing of the exhaust, the plopping of the buckets on the *Mermaid's* wheel hitting the water just aft of the bulkhead, the cascading spray raining down on the fantails, hog chains grunting, the muffled roaring of the oil burners under the boilers up ahead, but ringing clear above it all, the Wildcat's voice: "Shoots five dollars. Fade an' fall back!"

At the Wildcat's right, quick to grasp his opportunity—

"I ketchum," Hop Low said. "I fade you." A mysterious bit of juggling and a five dollar bill fluttered down from the opening palm of Hop Low's right hand.

"Listen, Chink," Highpocket growled, "leave some of that for me and Stubb."

"Bimeby plenty more time you ketchum," Hop Low suggested.

The Wildcat, mildly frustrated in his battle plans by the necessity of using the enemy's weapons, looked down at the dice in his palm.

"Orphan cubes, meet yo' new pappy! Steamboat dice, up de river! Payroll dice, roll yo' pay! Whuff! On de trail, money bloodhounds, an' I reads . . . dog-gone it! Burglar side up. I reads six twins. Hop Low, dat's yo' money. Yo' money till I reaps it back in de big harvest. I doubles de bet. Shoots ten dollars. Shower down, Hop Low, does you crave—"

Interrupting, "I likee ten dollar," Hop Low said, making no move to retrieve his winnings.

A ten dollar bill from the Wildcat's bankroll brought a scowl and a growl of advice from Demmy. "Boy, aim low till you gits high."

"Nemmine, Demmy, Ise aimin' low. Rifle dice, twenty dollars on de deck. When I pulls de trigger Old Man Trouble says howdy do to Hop Low. Starvation bones, nutrify on dat long green money! Luck eggs, hatch yo' prosperity. Wham! An' I reads a solitaire an' . . . snake eyes! Dog-gone it, Lady Luck, wuz you standin' by I'd bust you wid a rock. Rally 'round whilst I fifteens myself back to where dis fight begun. Fifteen dollars. Anybody. Shower down, folks. I falls down whilst you builds up, but de next rattle gwine to be plain C. O. D. Come on dice, git hot. Hop Low, fade an' fall back. I craves—"

Restrained by a glimpse of Highpocket's clenched fist, Hop Low contented himself with a five dollar bet.

"I'll take five dollars," Highpocket announced.

Stubb Mitchell in his turn nodded. "I cover five dollars. Roll 'em, boy, an' stick to your snake eyes."

"Snake eyes done went blind." The Wildcat massaged the dice to a fever heat between his magenta palms. "Leapin' leopards, on de trail. Git sunburned wid seven freckles on yo' face. Seven from heaven. Hog dice, gobble yo' greens. Wham! An' I reads . . . de fatal sixty-six! Old Man Trouble bumped my elbow."

Demmy sneered down at Lady Luck's kneeling orphan. "Dere goes yo' horseshoe luck, boy. Don't say I never predicted dat."

"Demmy, hand me dat thirty dollars you got an' hold yo' fire. Us is pardners, ain't us? Nemmine no preachin' 'bout dat horseshoe luck. Shower down dat thirty dollars befo' I desecrates you into six pieces an' feeds you to de hogs."

"Lissen, Wilecat, us ain't pardners for mo' dan—"

The Wildcat faced Demmy with a savage grimace. "Thirty dollars, boy, an' thirty me mighty quick! You know who instigated dis horseshoe luck whut you et on so copious just now. Come across, boy, befo'—"

Reluctantly surrendering to a superior force, Demmy grated, "Here's my thutty dollars wages. De last cent us is got. Dribble it out five dollars at a time an' mebbe Lady Luck catches up wid you befo' de bloodhounds does."

THE Wildcat snatched the folded banknotes.

"Dribble nuthin'!" he said. Once more facing the arena, he tossed his new bankroll on the deck. "Shoots thirty dollars. All I needs is a toehold an' dese dice builds me back in one flop."

"You is de flop," Demmy muttered,

turning away from a painful vision of plain butchery.

"Nemmine, li'l Demmy, us gwine to be mighty rich." Hope, springing eternal in the Wildcat's heart, nerved him to do or die. "Shower down, folks, whilst de ramblin' cubes travels my way wid a natcheral on de topside. Git poor whilst I gits rich. De spotted fever is got me an' Lady Luck is holdin' my hand."

"I ketchum ten dollars," Hop Low announced.

"Ten for me," Highpocket said. "Roll 'em, black boy, rub, roll and repent."

"Hold on, wait till I get aboard!" Stubb Mitchell entered the fray with a ten dollar bill. "Go ahead, boy," he said to the Wildcat, "give her the gong and hit the rocks!"

"No rocks in de Jordan River. Mule dice, you been stubborn. Now I gits you tame. Jazz cubes, step out wid seven. Freckle seeds, sprout yo' finance! Sugar babies, sweet me sixty! Jury dice, roll yo' verdict. Wham! . . . An' de old judge says—"

"De old judge says 'Hang de boy!' " Demmy announced the verdict that lay on the upturned faces of the dice. "Wilecat, you dog-gone fool, you is a midget wid aces an' a Samson for sixes, but when it comes to mixin' dem numbers—"

"Don't tell me no more, Demmy. I ain't listenin'."

"You better listen right now, boy. You come along wid me an' begin dealin' fish to dem ravenous hogs, else you gwine to be high an' dry widout no more job dan a king. Come along here befo' de captain heaves you over de high side wid a anchor in yo' stummick."

The Wildcat struggled to his feet. In the engine room door, scowling back at Hop Low, "Lissen, Chinee boy," the Wildcat said harshly, "it's about time you wuz puttin' out some rations."

"Bimeby you ketchum," Hop Low smiled blandly.

When the Wildcat had gone he reached out for the dice on the deck in front of him. He picked them up and threw them through the engine room door.

Facing Stubb Mitchell and Highpocket, "More better losem dicee quick. Black boy likee looksee dicee no ketchum numbah tlee numbah fo numbah fi numbah one bad pidgin."

Highpocket nodded.

"Chink, you got brains," he said. "You're wise as a hoot owl. What that Wildcat boy don't know ain't gonna hurt him none. The best place for them short numbered bones is over the high side.

To the Wildcat and Demmy up for'd on the main deck of the *Mermaid,* Captain Hicks advised, "It's about time you went out there and dealt some feed out to them hogs. Keep that saltfish going strong till we get way beyond Horseshoe Bend."

"Saltfish dem hogs," Demmy answered back. "Okay, Cap'n, us is saltin' dem hogs right now."

"One of you boys tell Hop Low to bring me some coffee."

"Ketchin' de coffee right away, Cap'n," the Wildcat sung back. Then to Demmy, "Ration dem hogs whilst I gits de Capt'n's coffee."

While the division of the spoils went into a new phase in the *Mermaid's* engine room, the Wildcat brewed a pot of coffee double strong. He carried it from the galley to the boiler deck and back to the pilot house.

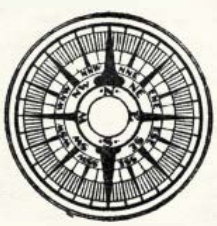
"Cap'n, suh," he announced, "here's yo' coffee."

"Where's that Chink?" Captain Hicks asked.

"Cap'n suh, de last I see of dat boy he wuz back in de engine room gittin' rich hand over hand."

"Whut do you mean?"

"Dey wuz sixty dollars layin' on de floor de last I knowed an' two dice



gam'blin' around on deck like lambs leapin' to de slaughter."

Captain Hicks sat up and took notice. "Sixty dollars, you say!"

"Yass suh, dey wuz mo' dan dat. Sixty dollars whut me an' Demmy brung into de battle. Like as not dat Chinee boy is deprivin' Cap'n Mitchell an' Highpocket of dat much money right dis minnit."

"Listen to me, black boy." A new animation marked Captain Hick's voice. "You ever steer a steamboat?"

"Cap'n, many's de time on de Mississip' up an' down from where I wuz raised in Memphis, Tenn-o-see, de pilots let me hold de wheel. Held de wheel in mighty bad water day an' night. In de riffles, over de shaller bars, an' in de channel where de fallin' river left jumpin' snags thicker dan bones in de carcass of a 'gator gar."

Impetuously, "Take this wheel and hold her steady," Captain Hicks commanded, scalding himself slightly with an oversized gulp of coffee in his haste to cut into the game below. "Hold her steady and don't cut the bends."

"Don't cut de bends," the Wildcat repeated. "Hold her steady an' don't cut de bends."

TEN minutes after Captain Hicks dived into the crap game with Hop Low, Stubb Mitchell and Highpocket, the Wildcat called down to Demmy on the hog barge, "Fetch de pilot a cup of coffee!"

"Fetch de who?"

"You heard me, Demmy. Come a-runnin' wid dat coffee. Us pilots needs coffee mighty copious."

Lingering in the pilot house with the Wildcat after he had brought the coffee, "Lemme help you wid dat wheel," Demmy suggested.

"Git away from dis wheel, Demmy. Don't pester wid de pilot. Dat's de fust rule of de river."

"I don't see me no river. All I sees is a li'l old channel windin' around between a million islands."

"Dat bein' de case go down on deck an' heave me de leadline. Sing out plain so I knows whut de water is."

"Lissen, Wilecat," Demmy objected, "dis *Mermaid* boat only draws mebbe four or five feet. You don't need no more leadline dan dem hogs needs wings."

"Git me some mo' coffee. Git it an' come a-runnin'."

Six cups of coffee in the next twenty miles refreshed Lady Luck's orphan, busy at the wheel, and then the monotony of the voyage was lightened with a heated argument relative to the direction of the current in the channel.

"No matter is us goin' upstream or downstream or if de tide is comin' in or goin' out, Ise de boss of dis pilot house," the Wildcat declared. "Demmy, one mo' objectment outen you an' I deckhands you on dat barge wid dem hogs."

Demmy smiled ironically.

"Go ahead an' deckhand me does you crave to," he said, sarcasm marking his voice. "Just one thing I likes to ask you befo' I 'filiates wid my four-legged friends on de barge. Just one li'l question—is you headin' east or west?"

A frown wrinkled the Wildcat's brow. The larger channels that lay between the various islands of the complex delta were all navigable. The tidal current between ebb and flow had slacked to zero.

"Swung to de left around four bends," he remembered, "den to de right, den we heads over to de left once mo' an' den—Dog-gone it, Demmy, which way does de sun rise an' set?"

Demmy permitted an expressive sneer to spread starboard and port across his face from his narrowed upper lip. "De sun sets in de west for most folks. Mebbe for a field-hand steerin' a steamboat she sets special in de east."

"Demmy, somethin' tells me de settin' sun oughta be shinin' right over dem hogs on dat barge." Doubt and fear weakened the Wildcat's voice.

"Somethin' tells you right," Demmy said emphatically. "Somethin' else tells me you got twisted someplace an' right now you is headin' for Reno, Rocky Mountains an' a fust-class jail."

THE Wildcat's jaw dropped something less than a foot. His grip loosened on the *Mermaid's* wheel. The little stern wheeler and the long barge headed across toward

the left bank of the treacherous channel.

Up ahead three lengths where overhanging willows masked a stretch of shoal water, a gentle breeze ruffled the surface of the channel.

"Haul away from dat bank!" Demmy advised. "Dere's a mud flat over dat point, sho as you is—"

The Wildcat, dismissing the problem of the setting sun, welcomed this latest debatable issue. "Demmy, you don't know a mud bank from deep water no more dan a hog knows heaven. Dat ain't no bar—dem is wind riffles on dat water."

"For de Lawd sake, who is dem boys? . . . Where at is us?" In the fading light of evening, Demmy made a sweeping survey of a group of yelling men on the levee to the right. "Wilecat," he said, "dat's de Johnny boss an' his hired men, else Ise a—"

"Look dere, Demmy, dat's de road down to de hog ranch . . . an' dere's de hog ranch! Us is back where at us started!"

Violently, "Nemmine where us is at, Wilecat! Haul away from dat—Dere you is! Whut I told you!"

The hog barge up ahead rose suddenly three feet above its floating level. Another lift and it lay two feet above the *Mermaid's* deck.

The *Mermaid's* bow came up out of the water, riding the bar with the shuddering progress of an intermittent earthquake.

High above the turmoil of squealing hogs, the voices of Captain Dan Hicks on the stranded *Mermaid* and Johnny Minho on the levee sounded in a profane duet that banished the last trace of courage in the Wildcat's heart.

"Come along, Demmy," he groaned, leading the way to an open window in the pilot house.

From the boiler deck, over the deep side, Demmy and the Wildcat dived toward sanctuary from hog ranchers, steamboat men and Old Man Trouble.

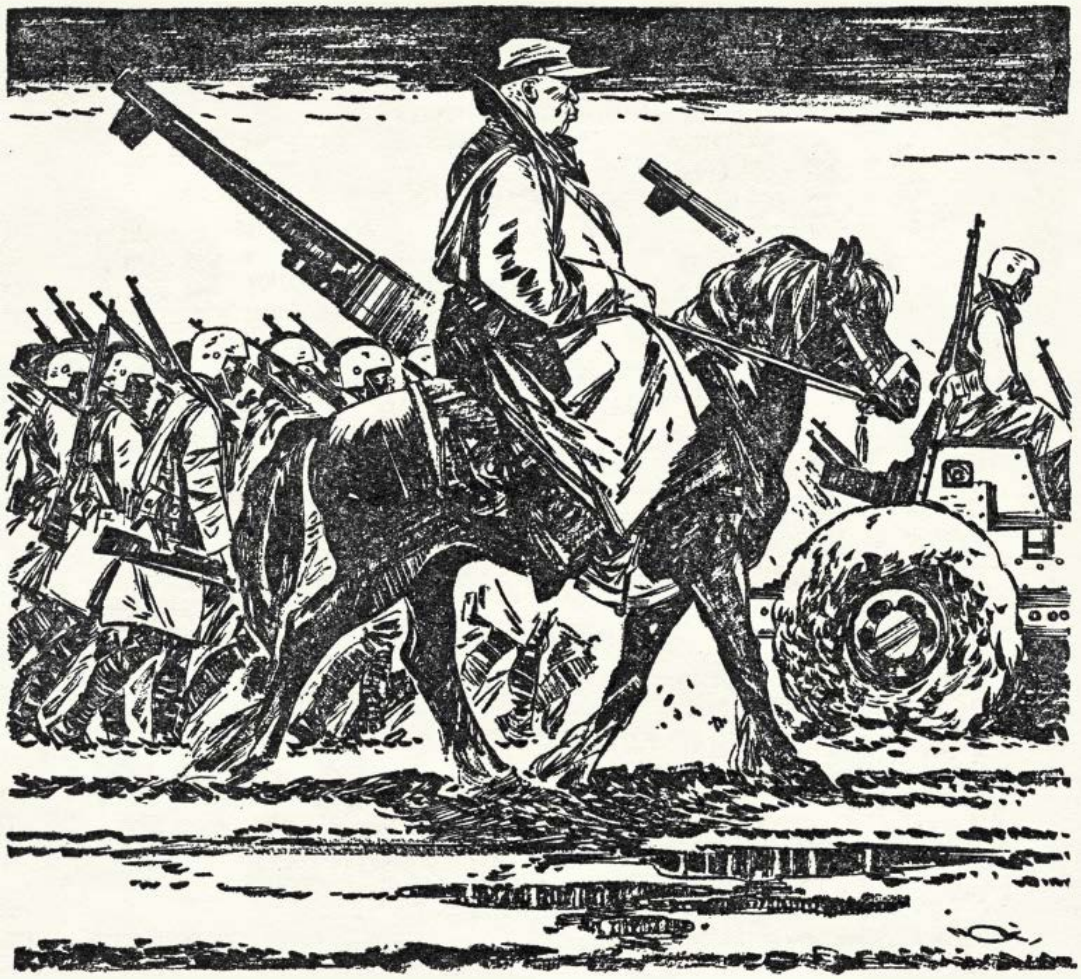
Swimming instinctively in the air ten feet before he hit the water, the Wildcat made the race to the shadowed shore six feet in the lead of Demmy.

Up to his hips in the mud, the Wildcat coughed himself free of a cargo of brackish tidewater. "Dere you is, Demmy! Only trouble wid dis whole business is I must of missed de mouth of Horseshoe Bend."

Demmy grunted. "No matter whut you missed you hit plenty, I'll say dat much—you an' yo' horseshoe luck!"

A long and garrulous defense of Lady Luck's side-tracked program formed in the Wildcat's mind. He scowled sideways at Demmy and then, with a sudden sympathy for his diminutive and bedraggled companion, "Nemmine, li'l Demmy," he said gently, "ain't no use clutterin' up de future wid mistakes of de past. Somewhere up ahead Lady Luck is waitin' to lead you into de land of milk an' honey."

"Mo' likely us gits led neck-deep into some mo' mud an' misery, you soggy jughead. Double time dem hind legs an' see kin us outrun Old Man Trouble an' de horseshoe luck whut smote us."



Hate and fear . . . the soul of war, the sinew of battle.

GENERAL YU DIED GLORIOUSLY

By ARED WHITE

THERE was no slightest rift, under the ominous roar of overhead motors, in the level set of Vontrop's face, nor in the straight line of his eyes that were fixed upon the gray-green battalions massed out in the ochre field. His stubby features were etched in severe lines, his wide brows set in a sharp scowl, the thin line of his bluish lips compressed in an inverted crescent like the parabola of a mortar shell.

But in Vontrop's gray eyes there glittered an inner satisfaction over the silent drama that unfolded itself in front of him. Those stolid masses of men were taking the gaff, standing up under Vontrop's violent whimsicality, thus giving him some basis of reckoning what he might expect of them in a day or so, when they drove into the red hurricane back of Shanghai.

Those were enemy bombers overhead —a full hostile squadron, racks filled with bombs, cockpits bristling with .50 caliber machine-guns. At 8000 meters they flew, in formation to the south, like geese at the end of summer. Old General Yu's division was not their meat, Vontrop well knew, yet what enemy flight commander would pass up the magnificent target of a hostile infantry division massed on its legs for parade?

Vontrop had passed the idea to General Yu, who was compelled by Nan-

king to take Vontrop's advice on tactics and technique, and put them into effect as his own creations. A superb test of the mettle of Yu's men, this. It had flashed into the facile Vontrop mind at first sight of the Nipponese war birds approaching out of the distance. And a test, too, of the inner thoughts of the inscrutable Yu, a matter of most vital importance to Vontrop just now.

Now if Yu's carefully disciplined masses stood here, motionless at attention, they might pass for some terrain feature, a part of the mud huts of the adjacent village. Of course, if the alert birds of prey saw movement below them and swung down to the attack, Yu was free to screech an order to his men that would free their normal impulses of self preservation and scatter them as one man while the anti-aircraft whipped into action to cope with the sky birds.

Tense minutes passed. Vontrop's eyes searched avidly down the ranks in front of him. His pulse quickened. They remained stolid, 9000 pairs of almond eyes set straight in front of them without a single upward glance. Perfect, discipline, that. Worthy of veteran soldiers.

The gleam in Vontrop's gray eyes burned brighter. He well knew that under those massed gray-green tunics there were hammering pulses and a racking tension, the driving impulse of a break for cover.

That they did not break was not an inherent courage, but the training he had laid out for them, in the name of General Yu. A training that hardened their bodies and fitted their minds, that put out fears with which to fight other fears; a fear of officers' pistols and the wrath of Chinese high command to cope with fears of enemy violence. Just now, fear was dominating fear. Discipline. Yes, Yu's soldiers were ripe for battle. Old Yu himself remained for some critical test.

The geese flew on into the horizon on some distant mission of violence. Hangkow, perhaps, or Canton. Presently, the menace passed, old Yu wailed a command in his shrill singsong and his division broke into orderly columns for the later left turn that would bring his troops past him in review.

Vontrop turned suddenly to Major Wang, staff officer assigned to him by Nanking. Wang's thick lips curled in a smile; his black eyes bubbled enthusiasm.

"*Hao, hao!*" Major Wang exulted, clapping his chubby hands. "*Hsieh-hseih! Hesieh-hesieh!*" Then he abandoned mandarin for his meticulous clipped English. "But have you ever seen troops to show finer courage, honorable *t'uan-chang?*"

"In front of Verdun, our German infantry—" Vontrop started to reminisce, then caught himself and nodded. "Yes, Major Wang, these troops of General Yu's gave us some indication just now of a solid discipline. I hope they will verify this when they move in on Shanghai tomorrow."

"*Shih, shih!*" exclaimed Wang. "I have no doubt of it, honorable *t'uan-chang.*"

NOW that the leading ranks were approaching Yu, Vontrop centered his cold eyes back upon the division in professional appraisal. A desperate gamble, the one he had just taken. But Vontrop could play recklessly when there was justification for it, and this one had been well worth while, even had it cost a few platoons. It had told Vontrop that ripe fruit had come out of his two years of slaving as military staff adviser to that old brigand of a Yu. And it had given him some hint of what he might expect from Yu, even if that hint mustn't be weighed too heavily just yet.

His blood warmed to the cadence of marching infantry as the platoons snapped past, snapping out the goose step with the smart precision of pistons. A stirring martial pageant now, with all those masses in movement, the field music sounding recurrent flourishes for General Yu, pennants whipping in the crisp wind.

But Vontrop's gray eyes were ice rinks again, critically searching the lines of men, checking the precise sloping of muskets, the fit and set of belts, the angle of low-crowned, sharp-visored caps, the hang of automatic rifles, of bayonets and broadswords, the alignment and condition of rolling material.

Even in masses, with Yu's battalions

formed in close line of companies, without interval, and moving at Vontrop's special cadence of 132 steps per minute, which is just short of a trot, a full hour was needed. In that hour of professional appraisal it seemed to Vontrop, now on the eve of battle, that he was reviewing his own work of the past two years—two years into which he had given the best of his profound knowledge of the exacting profession of arms.

From time to time Vontrop's eyes went to the figure of old Yu and his brows contracted. There was the unsolved enigma, the one possible flaw in all that Vontrop had created. General Yu sat his horse like a bronze statue, a humped, unromantic figure in padded tunic and round, long-peaked cap, indolently tossing off the return salute to each proud *t'uan chang* who rode at the head of a regiment.

It might be that Yu was thinking less of the sleek fighting machine before his eyes than of the faded glory of his days of brigandage in a remote northern province, and of his concubines, and of what might happen to him if these men he had brought with him got slaughtered at Shanghai.

Those brigand days were the days when Yu's word was the law of life and death, within the limits of his own violent realm, glorious days of unrestrained authority that had given place to this new sad era of hard training, rigid discipline, as part of a huge martial machine in which Yu was a mere symbol of authority; these days in which a foreign devil, invested with the sanction of the supreme war-lord at Nanking, told Yu what to do and just how to do it in the control of Yu's own men.

Vontrop had always looked upon Yu as a part of the mechanics of his job, a symbol of the fighting *shih* like the dragon's head on the division insignia. A fat old dumpling of a mongol, whose slits of eyes, burnished bronze cheeks and pendulous lips were as inscrutable as the graven scroll on a Ming tomb. A provincial war lord of yesterday, who had mastered the technique of rabble-raising and of pillage and petty throat-slitting necessary in the control of an obscure province, but who held no faintest conception of the exacting Occidental profession of arms with its precise formulae for mass carnage, of which Vontrop was the master.

But in submitting his men to the Vontrop transformation, Yu had kept one strong card up his padded sleeve—the personal control of his men. Outwardly, in the eyes of Yu's fighting men, Vontrop was the menial, the servant, the low man, the unworthy piece of a dog who served the honorable ssu-ling with slavish devotion. Otherwise Yu would have lost face, which was out of the question, even from the point of view of Nanking.

NOW the tail of the hour-long pageant was in sight. A new sparkle of satisfaction showed in Vontrop's eyes. Finished soldiers to the last man, Yu's division. Every man as hard as blackwood, the whole machine as perfectly coordinated in movement as the parts of a clock. Vontrop allowed himself a moment of something approaching exultation, a deep glow of professional satisfaction in successful achievement. Work well done so far as the mechanics of the thing went. Those men would take the gaff in battle, he opined, unless something went wrong in the weakest spot—old Yu's command post.

His mind dropped back in reminiscence to the raw material he had been given to work upon. A nondescript Chinese rabble, then, wholly without true discipline, operating on a scheme of punishment and reward. They had known pillage and unbridled passions. They had sacked captured villages. Their only law had been Yu's law, and he had known just the right tricks for holding such a leadership.

Recalling that raw material fed Vontrop's present satisfaction. Slowly he had forged about their necks the yoke of a hard, cold discipline. Ruthless methods had been necessary at first: firing squads and severe penalties. There had been long months of basic training. From the ground up he built them, shaped their bodies and minds to the military mould. He had installed schools for officers and noncoms, schools in tactics and technique, characteristics and care of

weapons, marksmanship, bayonet fighting, artillery support, liaison, rationing, administration and supply; then battle maneuvers for the whole division as a coordinated team.

All of this had been done according to a Nanking pattern, a higher training directive put out by supreme headquarters, which meant that it was the work of his Excellency the Lt. General Baron von Falkner, chief of advisers to the Chinese marshal.

But Vontrop had done more than follow a pattern. Into Yu's division he had injected his own personality, his own qualities as a soldier. A point of view that accepted no compromise in the execution of orders, that held to the belief that nothing short of death or wound must intervene between the soldier and his mission in battle. If it did—death must be the penalty of failure to face death.

Since they came to him without anything resembling patriotism, Vontrop had taught them patriotism. But he had depended more upon the development of two emotions. Hate and fear. The fires of hate had been easily kindled and brought to white heat in primitive breasts of men who were yet boys. Hate of an enemy pictured as being wholly without virtue, who was bent on extermination, who would show no mercy in victory, who tortured those whom he did not kill. Thus a hatred tinged with fear, which Vontrop knew from seasoned experience to be the most valuable of all hates to plant in the breasts of men who face battle. Hate and fear, to Vontrop's mind the soul of war, the sinew of battle.

The tail of the column passed. Yu climbed heavily from his shaggy pony and waddled to a military touring car that was waiting to take him into the village.

A VOICE boomed out close behind Vontrop.

"*Ach,* but that was very good, Herr *oberstleutnant!*"

Vontrop wheeled. Behind him, near Major Wang, was a huge man in blue tunic and drab riding breeches, his square, lined face wreathed in a smile, his cold, bulbous left eye glistening from behind a monocle, his right eye squinted against the light of the slanting afternoon sun.

Recognizing the huge man, Vontrop brought his heels smartly together and snapped his right arm to the visor of his cap.

"Thank you, Herr Oberst Weil," he said.

"Those men look fit and hard, Vontrop," Colonel Weil said, nodding his large, squarish head in approval. He spoke loudly but slowly, as if used to guarding his words so that no uncensored phrase escaped his lips. "In your judgment of them, they will stand up to it at Shanghai?"

"That is my judgment, Herr Colonel," Vontrop said promptly.

"Say for losses of—fifteen or twenty percent?"

"So far as I can determine, Herr Colonel."

"Or say twenty-five percent?"

Vontrop hesitated, the sharp lines of his brows narrowed meditatively. Troops capable of standing up under a loss of one man in every four had to be superb troops, minds perfectly shaped to the red ordeal, bodies properly seasoned to withstand the toxins of fatigue. Then there was the enigma of old Yu in the command post.

"I fully expect that they may give such a performance, Herr Colonel," Vontrop said finally, looking the colonel straight in the eyes. "But such an estimate is always difficult. My own motto is—to the last man."

"Good," Weil boomed. "My own judgment is that yours is one of our very best trained divisions, Vontrop. That means I shall recommend them for the left of the army position. That is a very great compliment to you, Vontrop. But it means losses, heavy losses. In fact our one hope is taking heavy losses, standing up at all costs and taking some of the arrogance out of our over-confident enemy."

"Thank you, Herr Colonel, I will do everything—"

Vontrop had meant to say that he would put all his own strength into the game of holding against heavy losses. But the hum of an airplane roared into

an ominous reality and clipped his speech. A wasp of a Jap pursuit plane flashed out of nowhere and swooped down over the tail of Yu's division, now in column of squads on its way back to the village.

The ranks scattered instantly, to offer less of a target. Automatic riflemen began unslinging their weapons and squatting into position. The anti-aircraft whirled into movement, setting up for action. Even in the stress of surprise, Vontrop noticed that the exposed elements of Yu's command behaved according to their training for such emergencies.

But instead of opening up with his machine guns, the enemy pilots zoomed into range, then made a quick sweep away and in a flash was gone. A scattering fire of the automatic rifles followed him into the distance.

Major Wang stepped forward and shook a fervid round fist at the vanishing skyman.

"*Nin ta-t'ing shen-ma!*" he shrilled, then with a muttered "again see" and a hurried salute to the German officers, he started rapidly towards Yu's staff.

Instead of hot lead, the pilot had dropped a single small cylinder which struck the ground close to Yu. A bamboo cylinder containing a message, Vontrop well knew. And a message addressed to the division's *ssu-ling,* General Yu.

Weil had shifted neither position nor posture. His searching eyes had caught all details of the brief drama.

"Your men behaved very well, Vontrop," he said in a matter of fact voice. "I presume you are organized to get your hands on the message General Yu is receiving from the enemy?"

"Major Wang will do a good job of that, I've no doubt," Vontrop assured.

Vontrop hesitated at the point of saying more, then decided to hold his tongue lest the Herr Colonel think he was passing along trivial fears which he should meet in his own way. In fact, Yu's conduct of the past fortnight, since battle orders were received and battle rehearsals commenced, had caused Vontrop deep concern. In that fortnight Yu had brooded in stony silence, and there had been a report of a mysterious visitor at the Yu hut in dead of night. An enemy spy, Major Wang suspected, but the operations officer, Major Kung, Wang's loyal henchman on the division staff, could not get to the bottom of it.

As if he read the thoughts behind Vontrop's impassive face, Colonel Weil spoke up in reassurance.

"If the Japanese were not dumb they'd use bullets instead of bamboo when they get a chance at us. They ought to know that Yu is helpless to sell out to them even if they offer him his price. But that's a good omen, the mistakes our enemies make. They still haven't a real idea of what a fine job we've done making twenty good divisions, and they're going to get badly scorched before they wake up, Vontrop."

"Very good, Herr Colonel," Vontrop said. "But, while I didn't intend mentioning it specifically, Yu's division will obey his orders. That's why I've kept a close watch over him lately."

"Nanking has let him know what to expect if he tries to pull stakes now," Weil said sharply. "But nothing like that must happen. However, I'm glad you mentioned the subject. I'll see that he gets another warning tonight—it would be a pity if we had to detach planes and troops right now to deal with this fine division of yours. Keep on your toes, Vontrop. *Auf wiedersehen.*"

Weil turned abruptly and joined his staff of three junior officers, Chinese graduates of Paoting. They strode smartly back to where a staff plane was waiting for them. Vontrop punctiliously saluted the retreating figure of his chief, and set off for his mud hut in the village to await the report of Major Wang.

AFTER Vontrop had eaten his ration of fish, cabbage soup and tea, he turned his disciplined mind to a final check of the move into battle. On his desk, prepared by Yu's technical staff under Vontrop supervision, was the detailed plan: a thick sheaf of orders with march tables, graphic overlays and technical annexes that left nothing to intentional misunderstanding. At dark tonight the first battalions would start their march to Suchow, whence they would move by

train to Naziang, thence by foot into battle positions, a network of trenches prepared in advance by engineers of corps and army. By means of smooth staff work and proper coordination of all elements, the whole division would be in position to fight by the second daybreak thereafter.

Another sheaf of orders and map overlays laid out the division's sector in the army battle line. The army front, a vital 12,000 meters, deeply organized for desperate resistance, had its right at a point some distance west of Suchow creek where that sluggish stream does a python turn east of Chapei, and extended north to Wusung creek near where it passes the village of Ukatsaung. Vontrop had Yu's command and staff prepared to occupy any one of the four divisional sectors. Now that he had it from Weil that Yu went in on the left, involving protection of the army right from Japanese envelopment, he had only to consult the appropriate set of overlays and pass the word along to Yu's staff.

An hour passed. Dusk was deepening into darkness, before Major Wang reported in. Wang contrived an air of very military nonchalance, though his round black eyes bubbled with triumph.

From an inner pocket of his tunic Wang brought a tiny square photograph, one so small that the symbols in mandarin appeared a smudge. A powerful glass picked them up.

Wang smiled and indicated the tiny camera strapped under his wrist, then brought forth from another pocket a folded enlargement of the picture, together with a translation sheet.

Vontrop took the message and read with a deepening scowl the orderly translation into English that his man Wang had effected from the mandarin symbols. It was an enemy reminder to Yu that he had pledged himself to the control of his northern province under Japanese aid and friendship. It ended with a sharp threat.

> If you obey Chinese order Shanghai go to fight Japanese soldiers, honorable *ssu-ling* must be posted a traitor and our generals will be commanded to destroy you and your division to the last man in battle.

"What, Major Wang," Vontrop calmly inquired, "appeared to be General Yu's attitude in the face of this ridiculous proposition?"

"General Yu have not spoke, honorable *t'uan-chang,*" said Wang. "He sit very still and look at the walls."

Vontrop consulted his wrist watch and his scowl lifted somewhat.

"In an hour our first battalions march. You will keep me informed of General Yu?"

"*Hao-lo,* can do," Wang agreed.

Vontrop went coolly about an estimate of the situation. If Yu gave the word, those men would follow him. That went without question. The dangerous penalty of building a straw hero. The trouble was that Yu, in the minds of his men, was responsible for their transformation. He was responsible for the glorious new ration that took most of the sting out of this new regime of hard drills and long marches. Dough balls, cabbage soup, fish twice a week, and tea for the officers' messes.

Yu, in their minds, wrought the miracle of regular pay days, of new athletic games to which long afternoons of each week were given over. Yu was the symbol and substance of the new order, the leader by whose word and in whose name all miracles were wrought, whose displeasure could bring death.

From the first Vontrop had known the inglorious swindle he perpetrated. But it had been the order from above. Those men from the provinces would best follow one of their own kind. Chinese generals must command, technical aides keep themselves in the background, even though theirs was the real job of command and staff combined. Otherwise the whole scheme might have collapsed at its inception.

But, Vontrop reflected, Yu must realize that he was helpless to give any command to move north tonight. Movement of 9000 men was not a matter for a few sing-song orders, as in the days of small brigand regiments. Time and preparation would be necessary. There would be delay enough, in such a change of march plans, for the full wrath of the Chinese high command to descend upon Yu. Vast squadrons of bombers could be

hurled over him in short order, a fact that had not been left wholly to Yu's own surmise. And—there was Wang, and the operations officer, patriots.

WHEN Wang came in an hour later, Vontrop looked up at him anxiously. His eyes lighted up at the message he read in Wang's face.

"Yu have said nothing," Wang exclaimed eagerly. "Our battalions are moving into the road for Suchow. Yu have just gone to the hut where is one of his women."

Vontrop hurried out into the night to watch the troops moving at route step into the narrow road in long, silent, sinuous columns. They traveled rapidly, a forced gait calculated to cover five kilometers in every hour, an exertion for which they had been carefully hardened. A grim, ghostly dragon of violence under the dim starlight. But Vontrop was the true soldier, cursed with no imagination, and his level eyes saw only the technique of movement and the evidences of a firm morale.

At midnight came the chug of a heavy motor car, equipped with caterpillar wheels, carrying Yu and his staff forward to the division's railhead. Vontrop followed along on a shaggy pony, conscious of a lessened tension now that Yu was committed to the advance. At the railroad Yu went direct to his train and was shunted forward to Yokazah, where his command post was set up for him back of the railway tracks.

Now there was the red fury raging on the skyline, an ominous red glow from a thousand burning huts, the racking detonations from Nippon fleets down the Whang Poo and the endless wrath over the Woosung forts. Vontrop watched the battalion columns as they trudged forward into their front lines. There was a visible tension, a straightening of shoulders, a turning of heads, but that was only normal.

Vontrop knew that fear was clutching at them, that the ranks were racked by the first throes of terror, that men were goaded by the impulse to turn back in flight. But they had been given fears with which to fight those fears. There was no lagging, no rift in discipline.

During the next night the take-over was completed. Artillery slipped in from corps and army to support Yu's small cannon in the defense. Fields of fire were organized and wired in, strong points laid out and manned, reserves established, aid stations equipped, field communications completed and tested, a plan of defense of the army's left flank effected. Yu's division was ready on the left, the other three divisions, fresh and ready for battle, were in line. Exhausted, desperate divisions that had borne the brunt of the furious assaults on Shanghai were to fall back and let the enemy hurl himself against these fresh troops in organized positions.

A neat stratagem. Vontrop guessed that his excellency, the lieutenant general, must have planned this. The enemy would come surging on, swollen with arrogance, in the blind belief that he was exploiting a rout. Then he would find himself against a withering wall of flaming steel.

"Hold at any cost! Withdrawal only on orders of Army!"

The edict came down at midnight from the high command. With it came a proclamation for the ranks. All depended upon them. Glorious death was better than defeat. Defeat meant ruthless slaughter. The invader must be hurled back into the sea! Hold to the last man!

YU SAT in his command post, staring at the wall. Vontrop noted that Yu's color had faded to a murky saffron. But his amber eyes were beady and alert and when, from time to time, he sipped hot tea, his chubby fingers were firm and steady. He accepted the reports of his staff with a stolid inclination of his head, spoke no word.

Vontrop went out ahead of dawn for a look-see with Major Wang. Yu's division was committed now, plans completed. There remained only the critical adjustments that must come with the impact and flow of battle when the enemy first waves struck in the morning. The enemy was hammering away with his siege mortars, his 15 cm. howitzers and his 75 mm. field guns. The skyline

was aflame, vivid gun-flashes in the distance lighted up the terrain with a ghastly flickering of red and yellow light. But the enemy guns were hammering short of Yu's front lines.

Yu's men were being assembled under cover by platoons. Officers were haranguing them in their local dialects. A translation of the message from the high command. But they were putting it out in the name of General Yu.

There was applause, a shrill, frenzied sort of applause. Vontrop's practiced ear liked the sound of it, with its strange goaded fervor. The commotion rose in crescendo with the name of Yu. This was Yu speaking to them, Yu their great leader, who must know what he was about. Yu, the remote man who spoke to them always through the lips of their immediate officers, but whose wisdom was the supreme law, the law by which they must live or die.

There was mettle, too, in the crisp challenges of sentries as Vontrop passed from trench to trench.

"Chan chu!" Their voices sang out with that same shrill overtone of the cheers from the ranks.

A roar of motors, a flash of color in the graying dawn. Enemy planes were poking their noses down, prying for information over the main line of resistance. Vontrop remembered that squadron over Yu's last parade. There was the crackle of musketry. Miraculously a missile from the first fusilade found its target, a pursuit plane dove into the ground.

Over the top flashed half a platoon, charging madly on the fallen pilot. Vontrop's drawn lips half parted in an exclamation of warning. Poor discipline that—and in a moment another pursuit plane flashed down, opened up its machine guns, spattered the ground with men threshing about in the grip of wounds.

The survivors charged on, threw themselves upon the wreckage, hacking savagely with their heavy swords to get at the fallen pilot. Three Jap planes dropped down, pouring hot lead. Half a dozen of Yu's platoons started into the reckless fray, only to be shouted back down by their officers. But the men who had committed themselves hacked on with desperate abandon until the last man was down.

"Hoa, hao!" exclaimed Major Wang, clapping his hands. *"Hsing-la, hsing-la!* Can do!"

Vontrop nodded slowly and a gleam came into his bloodshot eyes. Major Wang was right. Poor discipline, yet an unmistakable token of the fighting mood of Yu's men.

He turned back at once to his shellproof, far in the rear. There was a gripping pain at his temples and his legs buckled. Vontrop's martial spirit could stand up lightly against bodily mutterings when there was vital work to do. Twenty years ago he had waited out to observe the first assault waves in Flanders after ten days' loss of sleep. But then he had been forty-five, with stouter legs under him, and less susceptible to fatigue toxins. And in all reason, there was nothing to be done now since, in its first violent stages, the destiny of battle lay immutably in the hands of the front lines. Vontrop was promptly asleep.

IT seemed only a moment until he was sitting up, shaking his head in the manner of a groggy boxer. Consciousness brought the deafening uproar of a suddenly erupted volcano. The earth under him rocked with the force of the raging inferno outside. It did not surprise Vontrop that he had slept through this mad commotion. Years ago he had learned to snatch his sleep when and where he could find it.

"Nin hoa, honorable *t'uan-chang,"* Major Wang said cheerfully.

Wang was contained and his face was somber, with something gone of the bronze pigment of his cheeks, but his eyes shone. Vontrop got to his feet without haste.

"Hsing-la," Wang went on. "We are losing many men, honorable *t'uan-chang,* but that is because our men are fighting with the fury of dragons."

Vontrop examined the available reports of operations from the front lines. The enemy had struck at daybreak without artillery preparation, and the attack

had melted under the combined wrath of Chinese artillery concentrations, machine-guns and musketry. Then they had put down a fifteen minute preparation fire and struck again with successive assault waves that had carried decimated platoons into Yu's front line trenches, there to be torn to shreds by bayonets, swords, knives. More enemy platoons came on, gained a foothold here and there, rushed in local reserves to organize costly gains, only to meet abandoned counter-attack.

Yu's division was fighting furiously, with a reckless, frenzied abandon. Officers did not have to hammer their men forward. The trouble was in keeping them in hand, preventing them from pouring heedlessly into the crimson grapple of man-to-man while they yet had benefit of a field of effective musketry. Moreover, there remained a definite coordination, a cohesion of violence that gave mutual support to vital points. Officers, under the maddening strain of combat, instinctively were applying the lessons of battle technique that had been ground into their souls by Vontrop's endless schools.

Vontrop went into Yu's command post. Yu's staff men were drawn, their faces sapped of bronze, yet they went quietly about their tasks. Reports was multiplying now, fragments of information that came in by runner, by field telephone, by dropped message from observation ships that were conducting Yu's battle reconnoissance.

Yu sat in a chamber apart, under the light of an oil lamp. His amber eyes were set on the wall in front of him, beady, straight, unblinking. His round face, with its wide cheeks and thick lips, was an unchanging mask. To all appearances he had been sitting there since the night before.

He stirred only when an aide-decamp brought him another cup of his endless ration of hot tea. As for what went on about him in his name he showed no interest, absently inclining his head at the occasional battle summaries that were sung into his ear dutifully by a member of his staff.

Until night curtained an endless day the reeking red orgy of slaughter ran on, but without Yu's men having yielded a single *li* of critical terrain.

VONTROP nodded. There was a sparkle in his ringed gray eyes as he went to his shell-proof at midnight and pulled off his tunic. The front had quieted down to the sullen grumble of counter-battery. The staff had made its adjustments, its preparations for the storm expected at dawn. They had balanced the books of their losses. One man down in every seven. Yu's men had fought with an unyielding savagery. The officers had not been compelled to use pistols on malingerers. There had been no skulkers among Yu's men.

The good omens of Yu's last parade had been reaffirmed in critical test. Vontrop had observed, through his field glasses.

Twice he had been well forward. Behind the fury of Yu's men, behind the feverish serving of hot guns, behind the shrieking vaults into the grapple of cold steel, there had been hate, hate tinged with fear which gives to hate the vitality of violence and makes of it a living, destructive force.

Vontrop nodded again, to himself. The seeds of hate he had planted, the crop he had tended through two years of training, were bringing a full, ripe harvest.

But shortly he snuffed the lamp over his head, reminded himself that the final test must come in the morning. Not until tomorrow must he allow himself too full an optimism. Fatigue would lay hold tonight, and today's horrors would multiply through the long hours of darkness.

There must be real reserves of stamina for Yu's men to stand up to it again in the morning. Intelligence reports had come in the past hour or two of a heavy massing of enemy reenforcements moving out from Shanghai.

Vontrop started and sat up. The hand of Major Wang had shaken him firmly into wakefulness. Wang had lighted the oil lamp in the shell-proof. Vontrop scowled at his watch and saw that he had been asleep less than an hour.

"If you please, honorable *t'uan-chang*," Wang said quietly, "will you

come with me to the command post of General Yu?"

Vontrop had slept in field boots and breeches. He pulled on his tunic. He noted that Major Wang was strangely contained, held by some unfathomable mood. Wang did not speak as they strode the short distance to Yu's command post.

Under the half dozen oil lamps in the staff chamber stood Yu, facing his staff. Yu was addressing them in his high-pitched sing-song.

The staff stood rigidly at attention, faces grim and drawn, so many figures in bronze. Yu, now, seemed the only one to live and breathe.

Though he understood no words of what Yu said, Vontrop instantly sensed its terrifying import. Yu had decided to withdraw his men under cover of darkness. Yu stopped speaking at Vontrop's entrance, but did not shift his eyes from his staff.

Major Wang spoke up, in a cold prosaic voice of interpretation, addressing Vontrop.

"General Yu has information, sir, that five divisions of enemy infantry are massing tonight for the attack on us at dawn. With such odds against him General Yu has no chance of saving his men, sir, unless he withdraws them tonight. He will withdraw his division at once on Suchow, honorable *t'uan-chang.*"

"Tell General Yu that is impossible, preposterous, unthinkable!" Vontrop snapped out. His face went ashen, but his gray eyes burned with an ominous light. "Has General Yu informed Army of his intentions?"

"When General Yu's division is clear of the lines, he will send word to field headquarters by radio," Wang said, a strange quality in his voice that puzzled Vontrop and stung him, for it told Vontrop that Wang, the patriot from Nanking, the man he had counted upon above all others, had turned to Yu in this black crisis.

"Please inform General Yu for me," Vontrop bit out through purple lips, "that such conduct on his part is treason!"

"I prefer, honorable *t'uan-chang,* not to offend the ears of General Yu with such insults," Wang replied bluntly. "Major Kung will now execute the orders of General Yu. That is all, sir."

THERE was tense silence. Vontrop searched the faces of Yu's staff. Treason. Mutiny. Cowardice in the face of the enemy. All the vilest crimes against the profession of arms, and no voice raised in protest except his own! Kung, operation officer, said something to General Yu in Chinese.

Yu faced about and marched out of his shell-proof. An aide went with him. Major Kung nodded to Wang and sat down at his table. From his dispatch case he brought forth a sheaf of orders.

"General Yu himself will give the command to his left *lu,*" Wang said to Vontrop. "Then the command will be passed along by battalion from left to right. Major Kung already has the order prepared, sir. At the proper time he will put it on the field wires."

Vontrop strode out of Yu's command post, half ran to his own shell-proof. If the staff had not passed the word to the message-center, Vontrop might get through to Army on his own field telephone. He rang impatiently, time after time, then slowly hung up the transmitter. His practiced ear told him there was no connection.

Swiftly his mind scanned the desperate situation. A few moments sufficed to tell him of his own utter helplessness. There was no such thing as making his way to Army, even of communicating through the division on Yu's right. The blood was drained from his face; his eyes burned now in an impotent bitterness.

Those men would follow Yu. Yu, whose word was their law. He cursed the folly that had left such dangerous power in the hands of a treacherous brigand. He cursed the blind stupidity of Major Wang, on whose loyalty Vontrop had staked everything. Wang was no less a traitor, a traitor to Nanking, to the Chinese high command. And Kung. He cursed the whim of fate that had blasted his own career. The colonel would accept no excuses, want no explanation. But Vontrop meant to face his disgrace as a soldier. He would have no excuse to offer.

Major Wang appeared suddenly in the shell-proof. An hour had passed. At sight of the staff officer, Vontrop started, sat upright. Wang was holding in his fingers a sheet of paper covered with Chinese.

"The order is ready, honorable *t'uan-chang,*" Wang said quietly. "Major Kung is just now sending it by runner and field wire to all the battalions."

Vontrop was on his feet, eyes blazing.

"I prefer having no further words—" he cut out, but Wang's voice, low but firm, broke in.

"General Yu have changed his mind, honorable *t'uan-chang,*" Wang said. "Near the front lines there was the fire of machine-guns, and General Yu died gloriously in the line of his duty. His aide also died with him. I am very sorry, honorable *t'uan-chang.*"

"You mean—General Yu has just been —killed in action, Wang! I can't quite understand—what—what—"

"It is in the order, honorable *t'uan-chang,*" Wang said, in that same strange voice in which he had interpreted Yu's orders an hour before. "General Yu's men must know at once that General Yu died gloriously in battle. It will stir them profoundly, sir, do you not see? If General Yu gave his life, does any man of them dare to do less? Now, honorable *t'uan-chang,* General Yu's man will hold to the last of them."

Wang turned to the door, looked about to make sure he was not observed, then guardedly unholstered his old-model service revolver. Covertly he removed two empty shells and replaced them with loaded cartridges. He replaced the weapon in its leather holster, carefully ground the empty shells into the earth of Vontrop's shell-proof.

Vontrop's eyes gleamed in understanding.

"You have performed an unpleasant but necessary duty, Major Wang," he said. "I congratulate upon the splendid quality of your patriotism!"

THE hour was nearing midnight of the third night thereafter when the colonel's bulky form appeared unannounced at the door of Vontrop's shell-proof. Colonel Weil's face was wrinkled and drawn, his shoulders stooped, he looked his seventy years, but the gray right eye under the monocle was bright and vital. Vontrop, worn close to the point of exhaustion, found strength to leap to his feet and bring his heels smartly together.

"We've decided against feeding in any more piecemeal reserves, Vontrop," Weil said at once. "We're feeding in a full new division. They can absorb the few men you have left."

"Very good, Herr Colonel," Vontrop answered.

"I do want to compliment you though, Vontrop. We made no mistake on your outfit. Seventy percent casualties is close to a record. Fine training that. Of course, Yu is entitled to some posthumous glory. Surprised me he went out in front and took it with his men. It had a fine effect all down the line—showed a lot of cynics something about the meaning of real loyalty. Vontrop, I give you credit for a magnificent job of training."

A slow fire kindled in the depths of Vontrop's dead eyes. The colonel's words meant recognition of achievement, meant that the lieutenant general also must approve; meant that the word would pass around the globe by word of mouth, wherever there were men of arms: Vontrop had made over a rabble, had created a trained division that could stand up in a battle against the loss of seven men in ten, that would have fought on to the last man.

What higher purpose it all served, where and how it fitted into the intricate fabric of human destiny, was not for Vontrop's mind. His was the profession of arms and now he had proved himself.

"Your work here is done, Vontrop," the colonel said. "You are to have a few days of rest, then we're sending you to a new division at Canton. Russian officers have given it sound tactics, but you will shape the minds of the men for battle, teach them how to hate. Of course, you can't expect too much time at this critical stage of affairs. A month or two, perhaps."

Vontrop's heels clicked together again.

"I will do my best, Herr Colonel," he said.

Outside, the guns roared on.

"Smartly, man! I can hold them only a moment."

THE DEAD GO OVERSIDE

Conclusion

By ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

WHEN Abijah Mayo signed on as second mate on the schooner Diana for a voyage to the west coast of Africa, he believed that he was in for an ordinary trading trip. But hardly were they out of port when Lion Stanford, her captain, disclosed the Diana's real mission. She was a slaver, an outlawed ship, sought by British and American authorities alike.

Stunned, Mayo told himself that he would be a lot of things, but never a slaver. As it happened, however, he was powerless. Lion Stanford was no man to brook opposition. Any hostile move, 'Bijah soon realized, would mean his death.

Off Cuba, they ran into the *Sailor's Joy,* from Provincetown, commanded by Captain Hiram Adams, a neighbor. The schooner was now a death-ridden derelict, decimated by scurvy, with Lucy Adams the only survivor. 'Bijah had been in love with Lucy for years, but he soon realized that in Stanford he had a deadly and utterly unscrupulous rival for the girl.

At Fort Sao Sebastian, the Portu-

guese trading post, the Diana took on a prime cargo of blacks. On the eve of sailing, Stanford gave conclusive proof of his mental breakdown. Turning the Diana's carronnades on the port that had made him his fortune, Stanford blasted it to oblivion.

The jungle walls of Africa behind them, they set out for home.

Lion Stanford became increasingly surly as the trip progressed. 'Bijah had the active support of Da Souza, the supercargo, but he realized that sooner or later he would have to make a last stand against the captain, who had given unmistakable signs that he was not to reach port alive.

'Bijah took command of the ship, Stanford having been incapacitated through continual drinking bouts, and almost at once the dreaded climax came to a head. Fever hit the slaves in the hold, forcing 'Bijah to divide his watch and relax discipline in an effort to save the valuable cargo, and in that emergency Stanford played his last card. Getting the mate down into his cabin under the pretext of checking the log, he bolted the door and launched a murderous attack.

'Bijah was hurt badly before he could defend himself from the unexpected surge of the maddened captain, but once aroused, brought things to even terms by a savage counter attack. Da Souza shot him in the shoulder just in time to prevent him from killing Stanford with his bare hands. As it was, the captain was broken completely, both physically and mentally.

Da Souza, explaining that his shot had been one of mercy, in that he had acted to save Stanford's life, entrusted the ship to 'Bijah, who decided that his only chance for escaping alive was to try to keep control of the sullen and half loyal crew, force Stanford to remain a prisoner and run the blockade for home.

CHAPTER XXII

The Hurricane

TWO days afterward, with leadsmen taking soundings in a whaleboat ahead, the schooner stood in for a nameless speck of bush-covered land, which showed a rill of water trickling across a beach. In twenty-four hours 'Bijah had the casks filled, and several hundreds of coconuts collected, and the *Diana* spread her sails and went to sea again, threading a path between the creamy green patches marking shoals and coral reefs.

From the latitude of eastern Cuba he set a course to the northward, fetching a wide circle around the far-flung Bahamas. The *Diana's* luck held. The weather was marvelous, and the wind was generally favorable. Porpoises, harpooned by Barnaby with a boarding-pike, were served up by Lew as sea-pig, to the delight of everyone, including the slaves, who grew fat on his attentiveness to their simple diet.

This lasted until they were north of Florida, when 'Bijah awoke one morning to discover that, while the sky was still cloudless, the glass was falling. By the middle of the forenoon, the wind had

become puffy, and the schooner was plunging uncertainly, spars banging and slatting. The sun continued to shine, but there was an ominous glint to it, and clouds scurried across the sky in high-piled disorder. Dirty weather, and no doubt of it, he told himself. His first thought was to double-reef, his second to have life-lines rigged fore-and-aft, and all movable equipment lashed fast.

"Better strengthen the breechings on those guns, Barnaby," he said. "What do you make of things?"

"I think it be comin' on 'ot and 'eavy, sir," rejoined Barnaby. "If it turns to a calm, watch out. It might even be the like of a 'urricane."

'Bijah had never been through a hurricane, but he knew generally what one was like. He walked forward thoughtfully to advise Lew to take extra precautions with his pots and pans and the squat stove bolted to the deck beams.

OUTSIDE the galley 'Bijah realized the worst of his fears. The wind was dying, while the swell continued to toss the schooner like a cork. All color had left the sky. It was a poisonous leaden color. The sun was coppery. The air was lifeless, as if all vitality had been sucked out of it, and heavy in the lungs.

On a hunch, he ordered the fore and mainsails furled, stopped and double-lashed, and the booms lashed. The *Diana* did not take kindly to the loss of the great spreads of canvas amidships, but Tony, the Portygee, spinning the wheel-spokes tirelessly, taught her to ride to the steadying influence of the jibs.

Prowling aft to test the breech-stops of the guns, he encountered Da Souza.

"I'd suggest you do something like this to prevent Captain Stanford from being pitched out of his bunk, Senhor," he said. "We're in for heavy weather. Oh! And another thing, let out Estrellita. She'll go crazy by herself."

"It shall be done."

There was a dead calm now, but the *Diana* rocked on the swell as though she would topple over. Astern, the sky was all black to horizon's end, a monstrous black canopy, heaped to the zenith and toppling forward. 'Bijah swiftly lashed Tony to the wheel, and flung lengths of line to the other men, ordering them to fasten themselves to lifelines or rigging.

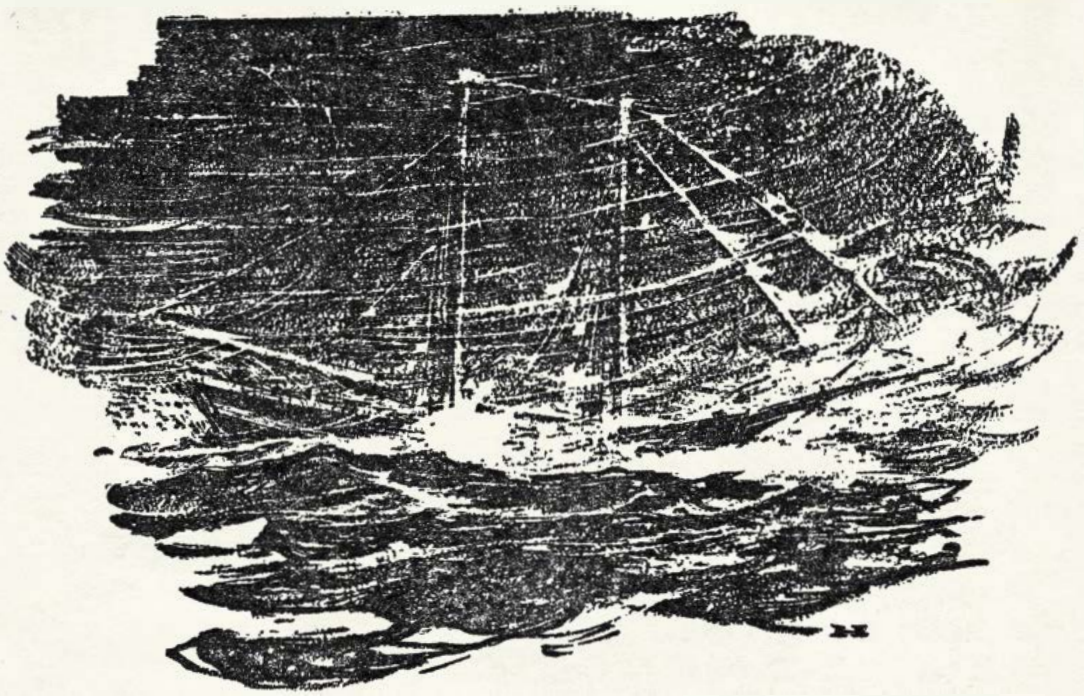
The hurricane was visibly approaching them, but actually their first premonition of its imminence was a thin wailing, which seemed to come from the void. 'Bijah thought it was the shrieking outposts of the storm. It wasn't. The slaves in the hold, primitively sensitive, had felt that disaster was upon them. When the voice of the storm was audible, the plaint of the Negroes was swallowed up in a skull-splitting roar such as might have been caused by the collapse of a range of mountains.

Then the great beast struck the *Diana*. The headsails were ripped from the ring-bolts, and went skittering into the murk. *Crack!* went the topmasts, riven to driftwood, clutters of rigging twitching behind them as they vanished in the lowering curtain. There was a crash amidships, and as 'Bijah had foretold, the galley, despite its lashings and bolted framework, was torn to splinters in an instant against the port bulwarks. And as if the loss of stability gained from this compact little structure had wounded her unendurably, the stately *Diana* tottered before the blows of the beast and reeled to her beam-ends.

'Bijah thought she was gone. He could hear the complaints of her fabric even in the monotonous roar of the wind beast around them. The spray was driving across her in sheets—the sea was beaten flat. It had yielded. But not the *Diana*. Perhaps it was the loss of her topmasts that saved her. In any case, she righted gradually, heaving tons of water through her gunports, came to an even keel, plunged unsteadily, swung her head downwind and raced away.

NEARLY as sore as he had been after his fight with Stanford, 'Bijah crawled to his feet to survey the damage. First of all, he thought of the men. Tony, beside him, was bowed over the wheel, eyes glazed, face like putty.

"I bleed," he croaked. His chest was bashed in. 'Bijah unbound him and propped him in a corner to die. There was no time to do more. Five or six of the other men had been torn from their lashings, Black Barnaby reported, haul-



From horizon's end to horizon's end, a monstrous black canopy . . .

ing himself aft along a life-line. The small-boats were fit only for kindling, and there was no galley stove in which to burn it. Rigging was rent and tattered. The *Diana* looked like a tramp, but she was sound, 'Bijah ascertained when they sounded the pumps.

THE slaves had suffered most. The fore-hatch had been stove in, and they were half drowned. But what nobody on deck knew at this time—because all were too busy setting things to rights and trying to bend a rag of a storm jib to keep the schooner before the wind—was that the contents of the storeroom had broached and knocked down the flimsy partition walling it off from the slaves' quarters. Several hammers and a chisel, not to speak of a cask of rum, had been washed into the laps of the nearest bucks in the fettered ranks—who, quite naturally, after pounding in the bung of the cask and regaling themselves, had gone to work to rid themselves of their shackles.

Nothing resulted from this, however, for many hours. The Negroes were temporarily contented with an unrestricted supply of rum, which made them forget their fear of the demons, at once unknown and unseen, assailing them without. When one cask was finished they opened a second, and in the meantime, clumsily in the darkness, with water swashing down through the grating overhead, they labored to release each other, the noise they made inaudible in the racket of the storm. They had no plan, no definite objective. Their actions were as natural in this strange situation as in any familiar problem of their native jungles.

On deck everything had been done that could be. The storm jib helped to give the schooner steerage way, and eased the pull of the wheel on Black Barnaby's muscular arms—none but he could have steered alone in that wind and sea. Men staggered about, blinded by the spray, the breath sucked from their lips before they could fully inhale it. There was no suspension in the hurricane's force, but at least it was steady. And the schooner drove before it at a terrific gait. Twenty knots an hour, 'Bijah guessed, refused to credit it, changed his estimate again. It was impossible that human beings could live under such conditions.

His last duty was to inspect the exterior of the cabin. The skylight was

undamaged, and through it filtered a faint reflection of lantern light, so he knew that Lucy must be alive. The hatch doors, to his surprise, were shut firmly and unsplintered. He would have liked to go below for a moment, but that would have been to abandon his post. He sent Lew, instead, who returned, grinning widely.

"Ye'd oughter to see it, 'Bije," he confided. "Jest the like of a picture off the wall. They got Cap'n Stanford on the starn settee, propped up with pillows, and him a-lookin' mighty content for a change. And Miss Lucy's settin' in a chair 'longside of him, readin' Byron's poems, with Peletiah at her feet, and Da Souza in another chair smilin' at 'em." He wagged his head. "Ye sartain sure did for Stanford, 'Bije—and who'd have picked ye for a killer?"

"I'm not," retorted 'Bijah, shouting to make himself heard above the roar of the hurricane. "Where's Estrellita?"

"In her cabin, with the door open, spittin' to herself like a cat. Da Souza said she wouldn't come out. She bit Peletiah on the wrist when he tried to make her. But don't ye fret, 'Bije. Everything's all right—everything except my fiddle. She hit the arms rack when the schooner went over, and there ain't nothin' left of her but powder. Well, what do we do next?"

"Sit tight, and hope we're alive in the morning."

'Bijah's smile belied the pessimism of his words, but he knew the danger of their plight. If the *Diana* was on the edge of the hurricane, she had a reasonable chance of riding it out. If she was menaced by its center, she could escape only by a miracle.

DAYLIGHT blended imperceptibly into night, a night little darker than the overarching embrace of the storm. The wind roared monotonously. The waves were beginning to reassert themselves sluggishly. Ocean fought back at the wind which had flattened it. White-fanged beast fought black-maned beast, and both fought the *Diana* and the shivering men who huddled on her drenched deck. And these men could do nothing but cling to the schooner's refuge, trying as much as possible to guide her attempt to outrun the attack.

'Bijah relieved Black Barnaby with two of the strongest of the crew, and sent Lew down to the lazarette to break out cabin stores and rum for emergency rations. Lew reported conditions in the cabin unchanged. Nobody could sleep, and the exploits of Don Juan were listened to as interestedly by Peletiah as by Stanford. Da Souza was immersed in a breviary. The yellow girl was still sputtering.

They gobbled the food and drank rum out of bottlenecks, crouched under what shelter the bulwarks afforded. 'Bijah was thankful for those fighting bulwarks. They turned the rising waves as valliantly as they had roundshot and grape. Without their protection more men must have been lost, for it required the unceasing attention of the helmsmen to keep the schooner from being swamped by following seas.

The night tarried on, hour after hour. If nobody could sleep in the shelter of the cabin, here on deck sleep meant death. When a man nodded, his comrades prodded him awake, flicked him with a rope's end, if necessary. It was past midnight, 'Bijah reckoned, when he noted a shift in the wind. The hurricane had come out of the southeast, driving northwest. Now, it seemed to be taking more of a westerly direction. He wondered what lay ahead of them. He had kept the *Diana* well out to sea, in order to avoid coastal traffic, but the violence of the hurricane had annihilated in a few hours distances ordinarily sailed in a couple of days, at least. A lee shore wasn't pleasant to contemplate in this tumult.

Dawn came as a relief, despite the gray rack of clouds pelting low overhead and the steep, slab-sided waves which assailed the schooner remorselessly, showering the deck with smoky spray. The one favorable circumstance was that the wind had diminished slightly, and 'Bijah determined to venture a second jib. Returning from overseeing this job accomplished, he noticed the clamoring of the slaves, but dismissed it as merely panic. He couldn't blame the miserable wretches. They must be hungry and thirsty as well as frightened.

MORE terrible hours. All hands exhausted, but not licked. The water rats of the foc'sle rallied up to their hardships like sailormen. At noon he tried for an observation. No use. He tried to calculate speed and drift. A hit or miss business, but the most likely estimate was that the *Diana* was somewhere off the northern coast of Georgia or adjacent to South Carolina, and obviously heading inshore. In the course of the hurricane she had probably logged about four hundred knots.

He was roused from his abstraction by a gasp from Black Barnaby:

"Gawblyme!"

He swung around, clinging to a shroud to support himself. An apparition was rising from the open cabin hatch—Lion Stanford, resplendant in his shore-going clothes, blue tailcoat, ruffled shirt, grey pantaloons and tall beaver hat, was climbing deliberately, step by step, to the deck. His death's head features wore on amused smile. His manner was light and casual.

"By your leave, Mr. Mayo," he said. "I believe the moment has come for volunteers."

"You shouldn't be up here, sir," gasped 'Bijah."

"Not at all, not at all! I shall do very well. But there isn't time for chit-chat. We have an emergency facing us." His manner became serious. "I don't know what is happening in the hold, but the Negroes are up to something. I could hear them through the partition. If you don't mind, Barnaby, I'd suggest swinging that sta'b'd carronade aft."

Barnaby was still gaping at him when a yell, as of all the lost souls in hell, burst from the hold. The fore-hatch grating flew up, and a torrent of naked, black figures poured up the ladder to the deck, brandishing shackles and chunks of iron bars and wooden clubs. 'Bijah was dazed. It was Stanford who assumed command of the situation. He stepped forward, an immaculate figure, balancing himself to the sway of the deck, and shouted an order in the Kishi-Aimani dialect.

The slaves, themselves, were bewildered by their freedom. They huddled in a mass around the foot of the foremast, staring at the angry waters, the shattered upper works of the schooner. But if Stanford had thought to cow them with his tongue-lashing, he was mistaken. For a few moments they listened in awed silence. Then his domineering bearing, his contemptuous poise, reminded them of all the insults and indignities they owed to him. Voices commenced to click and chatter amongst them. There was a tentative forward surge, which he stopped with one wave of a pistol he drew from his belt. He tossed it to Barnaby.

"You'll need that," he snapped. "Priming wet. Smartly, man! I can hold them only a moment longer."

Barnaby's thick fingers tore at the bulky breeching gear of the carronade, and 'Bijah, collecting his wits, stepped up beside Stanford. At sight of the young captain, who always had been kind to them, the slaves wavered again. He spoke to them in English, not expecting them to understand, but making his tone as soothing as he could.

"Bad," he said, motioning to the sea and the sky. "Go below, people. You stay—"

He pointed to the tumbling waves. The Negroes shuddered. They were afraid of the water. But once more the voices of ring leaders chattered, and the mass boiled with incaluable emotions. A man leaped out from it, brandishing a broken shackle. Stanford shot him down with a second pistol. The boiling movement was suspended.

Barnaby, with one twist of his powerful shoulders, heaved the carronade's carriage around and brought the muzzle to bear on the hesitant throng of Negroes.

Swiftly, with a precision not to be expected from his clumsy hands, he drew the charge from the pistol's barrel, emptied the powder into the vent and produced flint and steel.

"Ready, sir," he said hoarsely.

'BIJAH was thinking all the time: Is it loaded? Then, as the Negroes mustered their courage and rushed, he recollected that the two after carronades were kept always loaded against just such an emergency.

Stanford drew a third pistol and fired. 'Bijah reluctantly did the same. Other shots exploded. And the carronade went off with a thunderous boom, its low powder charge scattering grape the width of the deck. When the smoke blew away the area around the foremast was a shambles. The Negroes were plunging headfirst down the hatch.

A hand clutched at 'Bijah's arm.

"What is this?" demanded Da Souza. "Was it necessary?"

Stanford laughed, the old hell fires flickering in his eyes.

"If we hadn't done it, you'd have been barbecued, Paul," he answered. "Those blacks came from the forehold, eh? They must have been full of rum. How did it happen, Mr. Mayo?"

"I don't know," 'Bijah confessed. "They were supposed to be shackled."

"Well, they aren't, young feller. You'll have more trouble, if you don't look out. Better have Barnaby train a carronade down that hatch."

He glanced around at sea and sky, inhaling deeply the salty air, appreciating proudly the schooner's tight buoyancy.

"My *Diana!*" he murmured. "Oh, you beauty! They can beat you, too, my girl, but they can't whip you. Yes, by God, they can't beat me! I've a mind—"

He cast a speculative glance over 'Bijah's face, and his good hand toyed with a side pocket of his coat. The few sailors left shifted uneasily on the slippery deck. Lew moved nearer. Barnaby seemed at a loss what to expect or to do.

"Thought you knew it all, didn't you, young feller?" Stanford said jeeringly. "First time I ever had Negroes break loose on a ship of mine."

His steady eyes, blazing coldly, smote at the sailors, one by one. He had them cowed, 'Bijah realized.

"I think I'd better—" Stanford broke off, and commenced to hum to himself, scrutinizing sea and sky:

"So run the westing down, men,
The dead go overside,
And if the devil spares us—"

The yellow girl came out of the cabin hatch like a streak of flame—Lew swore she left a trail of smoke behind her. She slipped past 'Bijah and Da Souza, and flung her arms around Stanford just as the *Diana* lurched to port under the impact of a mighty sea. The carronade Barnaby had used broke from its lashings and hurled itself across the deck, smashing a wide gap in the bulwarks. And as if she had timed her effort for this, Estrellita whirled herself and Stanford after it. 'Bijah, on his hands and knees, had one last glimpse of the slaver's face as he disappeared overside. It was mildly amused. He might have been saying to himself:

"So you go like the rest of them, Lion Stanford!"

CHAPTER XXIII

SLAVER'S END

'BIJAH helped Da Souza to his feet. The old man was badly shaken. He had aged years in a moment. His frailty had become feebleness.

"Has he gone—Lion?" he quavered.

The *Diana* was riding the top of a wave forty feet from trough to crest. 'Bijah pointed over the stern at the heaving mountains of water racing to overtake the schooner. They held nothing but emptiness, miles and miles of foam-crested combers, tireless in pursuit of their prey.

He dropped to his knees in prayer, as a brazen roar came from Black Barnaby.

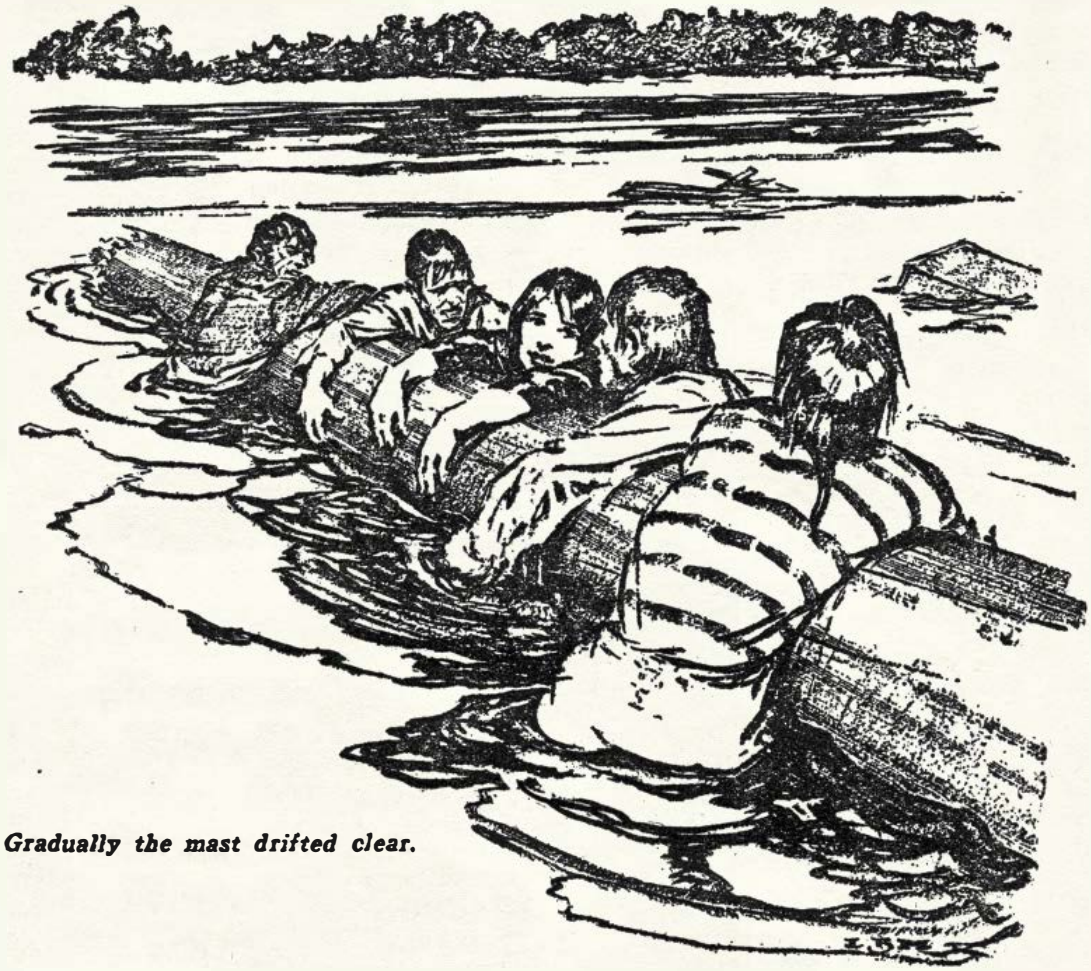
"Breakers! Breakers a'ead! Look 'ee, Cap'n!"

'Bijah leaped for the main shrouds, balancing himself precariously, shielding his eyes under one hand from the driving spindrift. The whole western horizon was barred by ragged fountains of spray. His heart was in his throat.

For a frenzied moment he weighed the possibility of wearing the schooner, and attempting to beat offshore; but instinct told him that it would only hasten the end. Once in the trough of the waves, the *Diana* would be overwhelmed, literally pounded to the bottom. There was nothing for it but to let her run before the wind and strike, hoping—hoping for what?

He dropped to the deck, calm with the calm of desperation.

"Nothing to do, Barnaby," he shouted. "You men, best shuck your boots and



Gradually the mast drifted clear.

coats. Strip light. When she strikes, if any of you are alive, grab for wreckage, swim for it. It's your one chance."

They heard him apathetically after the manner of men bred to the sea, who live with death always breathing on their necks. They had seen their comrades carried away. They had seen Lion Stanford, who had been their master infallible, go overside. Now it was their turn. They sat on the deck and pulled off their heavy sea boots, speechless, almost unconcerned. 'Bijah realized, with a tingle of horror, that many of them probably did not know how to swim.

He called Lew.

"Bring up Lucy," he said. "Tell her not to wear a cloak. Bring up rum. Peletiah can dig it out. We'll all need a dram." He grinned crookedly. "A wet end, eh, Lew?"

"Don't ye lose heart, 'Bije," the Indian-gypsy answered soberly. "We've been through plenty tough venturings. Maybe we'll weasel a way out of this one. A horse is never wore out 'till ye've traded him the last time."

'Bijah turned to Barnaby.

"What should we do about the Negroes?" he asked.

"Take the 'atch covers off, sir, but leave 'em be a while," said the big man. "I'm thinkin' of the masts. When we strike, they'll go by the board. And that 'minds me, sir—" He thrust his head into the cabin hatch— "Lew, fetch three of them boardin' axes. If so be we're spared, we'll need the like of them to slash free a chunk of wreckage we might make shift to drift ashore on."

Lucy stepped to the deck, lithe, gallant.

" 'Bijah" she exclaimed. "It seems as though you'd been away a Canton voy-

age." And as she felt the convulsive energy of his embrace: "Lew told me all the bad news. I'm not afraid. But I'm sorry about poor Captain Stanford. He was so happy last night."

Tears starred her eyes. "He wasn't all bad, you know. There was something about him— Oh, I don't know how to say it."

Lew emerged from the hatch, carrying the three axes, before 'Bijah could reply to her, and after him scrambled Peletiah, a bottle in every pocket, one under each arm and two clutched in his left fist. The cabin-boy's eyes were bright with excitement.

"Lew allows us how we're goin' to be wrecked," he panted. "I allus did admire to be in a shipwreck, Mr. Mayo, sir. What do I do?"

"Leave two of those bottles with us, and take the rest for'ard," instructed 'Bijah. "Tell the men to get themselves axes from the storeroom, and be ready to clear wreckage when we strike."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

And Peletiah staggered across the unruly deck as importantly as an aide de camp bearing word for the forlorn hope to advance. 'Bijah addressed the two sailors remaining at the wheel.

"Would you men reather stay aft with us or join the others for'ard?" he asked. The balance of the crew had gradually drifted to the bow, where they crouched under what shelter they could find. "I'm going to lash the wheel."

The two exchanged uneasy glances. One, a Nantucketer, cleared his throat.

" 'Seems as if there'd be more chance of gittin' away for'ard, Cap'n," he said.

"Suit yourselves," Bijah shrugged. He took a length of line and lashed the wheel firmly.

"Good luck, men," he said.

"Good luck, sir," they returned matter-of-factly.

Each of them ducked a bow to Lucy.

"Make ye my duty, ma'am," said the Nantucketer. His mate, a North countryman, wheezed.

" 'Sarvant, miss. We'm zhure 'ope 'ee make zhafe."

'Bijah watched them skitter along the starboard bulwark from the breeching gear of one carronade to the next.

"More liquor for'ard," he said, laughing shortly. "Well, Barnaby, Lew, let's have those hatch-covers off."

FIVE minutes sufficed for this task. The slaves were gathered in the after-hold, and 'Bijah peered down sympathetically at the black faces lifted appealingly to him, eyes so wide with fright that they seemed all whites.

"Oh, Senhor," he called to Da Souza, who continued rapt in prayer. "Will you come and talk to these people? Tell them to stay where they are until we go aground. Tell them—God forgive me the lie!—there isn't much danger."

Da Souza rose, without a word, and bent over the hatch, his thin voice clicking the Kishi-Aimani dialect, which sounded so out of place in those surroundings.

The Negroes simply stared at the old Portuguese, supine, spiritless, their brief experience of rum-inspired freedom forgotten. None of them answered him. The primitive instinct of their race detected the taint of death in the air. And who could resist death, if it were aboard, whether it came from the jungle gods, the water gods or the spirits of the air? All men must die. *Aay-aay-aay!* All men must die.

Da Souza resumed his devotions. He seemed utterly indifferent to what was going on. It was with difficulty that 'Bijah prevailed upon him to take a few swallows of rum.

The thunder of the surf was growing louder. They could see the spray spouting mast high above the breakers, forming a watery curtain which hid whatever lay behind it. 'Bijah was certain that this was not the actual line of the coast, but an outlying shoal. If they could pass it alive— He compelled the idea from his mind, saying nothing of his conclusion to his friends. It might only raise false hopes.

One thing he observed with satisfaction: the *Diana* was doing her best for them. Unsteered by man, she rode the waves lightly, surely, the scraps of headsails keeping her true before the wind. He found himself patting the salt-stained deck. What a ship! Abused, misused, her essential dignity violated, she was faithful to the last.

"Peletiah!" 'Bijah hailed sharply. "Aft, here!"

The boy scrambled back to them, cheeks flushed.

"Aye, aye, sir," he reported. "I wasn't leavin' ye. They say we'll strike any moment."

"We will," 'Bijah snapped. "Lie down, everybody. Lucy, behind the skylight, please. Senhor Da Souza, I must ask you to lie down."

The old supercargo smiled at him gently.

"Whatever you say, my son."

'Bijah drew Lucy close to him, so that when the crash came he could cover her quickly with his own body.

"I allus wanted to be in a shipwreck," Peletiah sniveled, "but I didn't figger to be drowned in one."

THE thunder of the surf was suddenly deafening. 'Bijah felt the *Diana* shiver throughout her length. Torrents of spray swept over the deck. The schooner lurched, straightened herself. There was a crash, a hideous grinding, tearing noise of timbers ripped apart. 'Bijah flung himself on Lucy. Overhead, he heard a prolonged rending thunder. And he looked up to see the mainmast break off fifteen feet above the deck, and topple crazily to port, smashing a broad gap in the bulwarks as it fell. The crest of a following sea topped the stern and licked at him, and he clawed with all his strength at the instrument rack on the side of the cabin skylight to resist it, one arm encircling Lucy beneath him.

Water choked his mouth and nostrils. He coughed and sneezed it out, fought for air. He raised his head. The deck was a torrent, slanting aft at a sharp incline. Then a second and more moderate wave rose under the schooner's stern—and she slid forward, her fabric groaning and protesting, into comparatively quiet water.

'Bijah scrambled to his feet, dragging Lucy with him. Black Barnaby was already on his feet, hauling a dazed Peletiah from entanglement with the carriage of one of the carronades. Lew was bending over Da Souza, who lay near the butt of the mainmast.

"Is he—"

"No, he's with us yet," Lew answered cheerily. He hauled a bottle from his pocket. "By the powers of Egypt, what a shame to empty a bottle has been through this, 'Bije." He forced a few drops between Da Souza's pallid lips. "Here, give some to Miss Lucy."

Lucy choked over a swallow, and 'Bijah took a drink for himself and carried it to Barnaby, who was squeezing water out of Peletiah's lungs.

"Aye, Mr. Mayo, sir, I'll have a dram," Barnaby said. There was a look of awe on his face. "Look fo'ard, sir."

'BIJAH followed the extended arm. The foremast, instead of pitching overside, had fallen forward, burying the foc'sle deck under a heap of wreckage. Not a groan or a call for help came from it to challenge the thundering of the surf on the bar astern.

"All gone," Barnaby croaked hoarsely. "Every sinful soul of 'em, sir! And if that mainmast had fallen at a leettle mite different angle—"

He left the implication unspoken. 'Bijah shook his head.

"There's such a thing as luck," he said. "What of the Negroes?"

"I heerd a few of the pore creeters bleatin' like lambs, sir, but I'd say most of 'em are done for."

'Bijah crossed to the after-hatch. The hold was two-thirds full of water, swashing around in rhythm with the sluggish movements of the *Diana*. A head here and there gave the illusion of floating on the surface, staring up at him in dumb supplication. The ladder had carried away, so he tossed down a rope from the mess of cordage binding the floating mainmast to the schooner, and motioned for the survivors to ascend.

Lew moved to assist them, having propped Da Souza against the stump of the mainmast, with Lucy to bathe a cut in his forehead. And 'Bijah set himself to studying their situation. The *Diana* had penetrated a lagoon or inlet sheltered by the shoal she had crossed. A mile or so away stretched a silvery belt of beach backed by a low growth of shrubbery. A current, apparently urged on by the pounding of the sea on the bar, was carrying her shoreward; but she was

down by the head, and the listlessness with which her hull responded to the miniature waves battering her convinced him she would not stay afloat very long.

He heard a gagging protestation behind him:

"N-no more sh-shipwrecks, ye b-black hel-lion."

Peletiah had come to, bedraggled and bewildered.

"Is he all right, Barnaby?" 'Bijah asked.

"As a cat nine lives, sir?" Barnaby responded in what was for him a tone of affection.

"Good! On your feet, boy. See what you can do for Miss Lucy. The schooner's sinking. We'll have to cut the mainmast free, and drift ashore on it."

They found two of the axes—the third had disappeared—and went to work slashing the tangle of rigging, shrouds ratlines and halyards, Lew aiding them after he had helped a dozen shivering Negroes to the deck. They had to work fast, for the schooner was settling rapidly, showing an increasing tendency to broach to the little waves of the inlet. Finally, the mast was held by only two lines, and 'Bijah dropped his axe.

"Your case knife will take care of those," he said to Barnaby. "Senhor Da Souza, will you explain to the Negroes that we shall have to go overboard to reach the shore?"

"I will try to," the old supercargo answered wearily.

He summoned the Negroes to him, but at his first sentence they scampered away for'ard.

"It is no use," he said. "They will not go voluntarily into the water. To them water means crocodiles."

The blacks continued to retreat into the half-submerged wreckage of the foremast, which was dragging the schooner lower as the water leaked into her shattered hull. They chattered angrily, and one hurled a fragment of wood at him spear-fashion with an accuracy which might have been deadly if he hadn't dodged.

"We can't risk the rest of us for them," he said, returning aft. "Maybe we can pick them up later. Senhor, let me help you into the water. Barnaby will take care of you."

The old Portuguese smilingly declined.

"You will find me as stubborn as the ignorant black creatures I have betrayed, my son," he said. "I stay with them. No, do not argue, I beg of you. The life is ebbing out of me as I lie here. I could not survive that distance in the cold water."

"But we can't go off and leave you," 'Bijah protested.

Lucy tugged at Da Souza's arm.

"Please come," she begged. "Here!" She lifted Lew's bottle to his lips, but he pushed it aside courteously.

"No," he said. This is the end for me, as it is for the *Diana*. It is for me to remain here, with the souls of these Negroes. At the least, they will be easier that a white man is with them when the waters roll over their heads. Poor children, it is not their fault that they are heathen. It is mine."

PELETIAH was blubbering. Lew and Barnaby shuffled their feet.

"I don't know what to say," murmured 'Bijah. "We can't make you—"

"You are not of the men who would make any human being do that which he considered the contrary of his duty," Da Souza assured him. "Take this, that you may remember Paul Da Souza, whose life was not such that he was said to yield it." He drew from a pocket a gorgeous abbatical crucifix, studded with emeralds and rubies, and thrust it in 'Bijah's hand.

His eyes closed. When he reopened them the light had charred out of them, and 'Bijah knew that what he had said was true: the springs of his life were draining dry.

"Go with God, my friends," he murmured. "But first—under my coat—a belt—loosen it."

'Bijah stooped, and unfastened a buckle. It was a money belt, heavy with gold.

"Two hundred sovereigns," the tired voice droned on. "Take it—lawful wages due you all—if you need more—Pinney, in Charleston—a bad man—be hard with him—you have worked—"

The voice ceased. 'Bijah felt his pulse.

It fluttered, stopped, fluttered—was stilled.

"He's dead," 'Bijah said.

Lew cleared his throat.

"The rest of us will be dead, too, if we don't git," he warned.

'Bijah nodded, buckling the money belt around his waist.

"Peletiah, you go first—look after him, Barnaby. Go ahead, I tell you. The captain goes last."

The *Diana* was so low in the water that it was only a question of wading out the gap in the bulwarks, and hooking an arm over the slippery surface of the mainmast. Barnaby and Peletiah clung to one side, 'Bijah and Lew, with Lucy, to the other. Barnaby slashed the last two lines with his knife and kicked away from the schooner's sodden hulk, and gradually, a foot or two at a time as the current seized it, the mast drifted clear. When they had progressed a couple of hundred yards 'Bijah felt a slightly heavier wave slap at his neck. He craned over his shoulder.

The *Diana* was going down, bow first. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun, low in the West, silhouetted the picture in high relief. A knot of dark figures were scrambling up the incline of the deck. The schooner tipped at a sharper angle, and one by one they slid off. 'Bijah blinked the water from his eyes. She was going, the *Diana,* Lion Stanford's beautiful *Diana.* He looked again, and she was gone, gracefully, smoothly, as she had sailed.

He throttled a sob. His first command, the vessel he had learned to be a man in—she was gone, gone to join the navies riding out the ages on Ocean's floor. He knew that he would never in his life love a ship as he had come to love the *Diana.*

CHAPTER XXIV

HOME PORT

IT was after dark, and they had been three hours in the water, when Barnaby announced that he could touch bottom. Five minutes later they floundered ashore, tripping and falling in the riffle of cordage cumbering the bulky spar. 'Bijah carried Lucy in his arms. She was exhausted, her teeth chattering, her body shaken by chills. But she rallied quickly after the three men and Peletiah had collected a stack of driftwood and built a fire above tide level.

Once she had been made comfortable, the men took torches and examined the beach for a quarter of a mile in each direction. They did not find so much as a corpse, nor was there any answer to the hails they shouted across the invisible waters. Peletiah had worked to better account during their absence. Exploring inland, he stumbled upon a pond of brackish water, and fetched back an empty rum bottle full of it.

That night they slept fitfully under the stars, replenishing the fire at intervals. They were afoot with the dawn, and decided to head north in search of human habitations. 'Bijah wanted to carry Lucy, but she wouldn't hear of it, and tramped along with them on the hard sand by the water's edge.

Two miles up the beach they met a bearded man on a pony, who introduced himself as Tom Jenkins—"Jedge Pleasant's overseer, seh. Yes, seh, this yah's Pleasants' Island. The jedge, he raises sea island cotton here. If yo' all will come with me—the lady kin ride the hoss, hit's right tame—I'll take pleasure in esco'tin' yo' to the Big House. The jedge will make yo' welcome, Cap'n Mayo, seh. We're right used to shipwrecks on that bar."

Judge Pleasants and his household did all that the overseer had promised. Lucy was put to bed. Peletiah was turned over to a stalwart son, who was much amused by the precocious urchin. The three men were provided with dry clothes and a breakfast which seemed interminable even to their empty stomachs.

Pleasants' Island, they were informed, was but a long day's journey from Charleston by barge, and the judge volunteered to dispatch them on their way after a few days' rest, although he would have preferred that they make what he called "a real visit".

Only with difficulty, and on the plea of urgent business in the North, could 'Bijah shake off the silken bonds of Southern hospitality; but on the sixth day after the loss of the *Diana* they reached Charleston, and secured lodgings

in the Rutledge tavern, a few steps from the Battery.

'Bijah had an ambitious program to carry out. First, he had to buy Lew a fiddle—without a fiddle he was afraid the Indian-gypsy would wander off in search of new roads to travel. Second, they all needed clothes. Third, he intended to marry Lucy without loss of time. Fourth, he must arrange transportation north. And fifth, he had a little matter of business to discuss with Major Pinney.

With the ready assistance of the tavern's proprietor the first four requirements were satisfied the next morning. Lew got his fiddle, a negro servant escorted them to the emporium of Hardesty & Jacobi, an itinerant Congregationalist preacher was produced for the ceremony and berths were engaged for the five of them in the Boston packet *John Adams,* due to sail with the tide two days hence.

The wedding became one of the traditions of the Rutledge. The wife of the host stood up with Lucy, and Black Barnaby was 'Bijah's best man. Lew stood in a corner, his fiddle under his chin and improvised tunes that were a weird mingling of the gypsy strains that had been bred into him and the hearty folk-songs of American pioneers. Even the lank, cadaverous preacher had to smile at the impishness of Lew's music.

Perhaps the person who enjoyed it most, though, was Peletiah. A lot was happening to Peletiah these days. For the first time in his life he was decently dressed, and living within the law. It was bewildering, yet strangely satisfying, to be taught to blow his nose on a handkerchief, and to sit at table for meals, instead of gobbling food out of a pannikin, and to be told that he was too young for rum. He was baffled, too, and again vaguely pleased, to be assured by Miss Lucy that he was no longer alone in the world, that he belonged to a family, and must act as became his new estate and grow up to be a ship's master.

'BIJAH thoroughly enjoyed the interview with Major Pinney later that afternoon. He could hear the red-nosed man cursing a hapless clerk as he entered the office. He didn't wait to knock on the door of the inner room, and Pinney ceased pounding the desk in front of him and looked up with a scowl.

"What the hell do yo'—" And then, perceiving 'Bijah's blue broadcloth and thick-napped beaver—"Ah, what can I do for yo', seh?"

"I'm Captain Mayo, of the schooner *Diana,*" 'Bijah answered coolly. "The *Diana* was lost off Pleasants' Island. Captain Stanford and Da Souza are dead. I wish an accounting of the funds they have outstanding with you."

The scowl returned to the blotched countenance.

"Yo' take a lot on yo'self, young man. How do I know what yo' say is true? And in any case, yo' have nothin' to do with whatever business transactions may have been had with me by Captain Stanford and Senhor Da Souza. For all I know, yo' may have murdered them. By God, seh, I have a mind to lay an info'mation against yo'."

'Bijah laughed.

"That's exactly what I propose to do with you, if you don't do what I tell you," he retorted. "Only my information will be laid with the Federal authorities, and will charge you with complicity in the slave trade."

"Yo' infernal—"

"I have four witnesses in town who were aboard the *Diana* with me," 'Bijah interrupted. "And Judge Pleasants and his family will testify to the loss of the schooner in the recent hurricane. As you know, and I can prove, I had no knowledge of the purpose of her voyage. Now, trot out your books."

The scowl became a wince. Pinney chewed at a cheroot, and looked out a window.

"I'll tell yo' what," he offered. "I'll compromise—"

"No, you won't. You'll pay up. I have three of the *Diana's* crew with me, who are going to be paid off in full, not counting myself. The remainder of the money I propose to use in accordance with Senhor Da Souza's wish."

"I'll see yo' in hell—"

'Bijah leaned over the desk, his face hard as granite.

"And I'll knock your teeth down your throat, if I have any more back talk, you yellow-bellied ape," he said quietly.

Shade of Lion Stanford!

The red-nosed man must have had the same idea, for he fumbled at a drawer, muttering to himself:

"Most irregular! Nevah heahed the like! No legal—"

"The most irregular part of it is you," 'Bijah rasped impatiently.

"What became of the cargo?" Pinney demanded as he dragged a leather-bound ledger from the drawer.

"I don't know how deep the *Diana* lies, but you'll find her inside the bar off Pleasants' Island. There must be two hundred dead Negroes in the hold, and plenty of silver in the lazarette—if that will be any use to you."

Pinney moistened his lips.

"Nevah can tell, nevah can tell," he muttered on to himself. "'Might do something some day. Well, seh, heah yo' are."

'Bijah scanned the pages with an unpracticed eye. It was an account between Hannibal Pinney, Esq., and Captain Lion Stanford and Senhor Paul Da Souza, trading as the *Diana* partners, and the balance at the end of the account showed that Pinney held for them precisely $11,483.37.

"Very good," 'Bijah said, shutting the book and tucking it under his arm. "I'll take this with me. And I'll also take two drafts on your Boston correspondent for—let me see—we'll make this in round numbers—easier for you that way, eh, Pinney? Draw one for $10,000, and one for $1,483.37."

There was a little more argument, but it didn't signify. 'Bijah walked out of the office with the drafts in his pocket.

THE Boston packet sloop, which made the run to Provincetown with heavy freight and foodstuffs once a week, ploughed into the harbor around Race Point through a scunner of thin ice. 'Bijah and Lucy stood together on the foc'sle, drinking in the homely beauty of the little town. It seemed too good to be true. The huddle of masts off-

"For all I know, you may have murdered them."

shore, the smoke drifting up from the chimneys, the church steeples rising above the low-roofed houses.

"Home," murmured Lucy.

"Home," 'Bijah echoed.

Behind them Lew was playing his fiddle, and Peletiah, all excitement, was shuffling an impromptu jig, while Black Barnaby held a learned discussion with the skipper about the blockade in the year '14. They ran alongside Dyer's Wharf, and went ashore without anyone noticing them, carrying their carpet-bags. It was on the verge of dusk, and almost everyone was indoors for supper.

'Bijah and Lucy led the way, setting a pace which taxed Barnaby's long legs. When they reached the Mayo house 'Bijah closed the gate softly behind them, and they walked around to the kitchen door. Before he knocked 'Bijah could smell Uncle Ira's pipe, and hear his aunt's crisp voice laying down the law. She was still talking as she opened the door for him:

"—and I say it's against the Lord's

providence to worry about a boy like 'Bijah—My land's sake, here he is!" She had her arms around him. "Oh, 'Bijah boy, where on earth—and Lucy, too! I vum! Ira, Ira, you slow-witted clam-digger! Don't you hear me? It's 'Bijah and Lucy—and they've brought a whole crew with them."

Captain Ira's fog-horn voice bellowed a string of genial profanities, which, for once, Aunt Tabitha suffered to pass unrebuked.

"By God, boy, ye've growed to be a man! I know that look. And ye've brought Lucy with ye! Damn it, 'Bijah, ye ain't been to Chiney and back? But come in the rest of ye, men. Make yourselves comfortable. Friends of 'Bijah's, friends of mine. Hey, leettle feller—" to Peletiah, suddenly ill at ease in unaccustomed surroundings—"come over here by the fire."

What a night that was in the warm kitchen! There was the tale of the *Diana* to be told—carefully expurgated for Aunt Tabitha's benefit. And the tale of Lucy's adventures. And 'Bijah announced that he was going to sea again as soon as he could get a ship.

"Won't be no difficulty about that, 'Bijah," his uncle told him, grinning broadly. "I've had ye in mind, boy. Had my eye on a sightly brig daown to Sandwich. She can be bought right. 'Make a good Indiaman, she will. Berth the lot of ye handsome." He turned to Barnaby and Lew. "What d'ye say, men? I take it ye'll ship with 'Bijah, won't ye? It's a shares proposition, and ye both'll figger in on it."

Barnaby rumbled immediate assent, but Lew, plucking nervously at his fiddle strings, was not so certain.

"I'll tell ye what, Cap'n Mayo," he said. "I like the sea fine, but I like the road, too. And I got this ag'in the sea. It ain't kindly to fiddles. And me without a fiddle to strum on is like Mis' Mayo there without a skillet. I'm mighty fond of 'Bijah and Miss Lucy, but I got a hankerin' for the ground under my feet, and—"

It was then Aunt Tabitha spoke her piece.

"Lew Taney," she answered, slapping down the skillet in which she was frying a fresh batch of doughnuts, "Lew Taney, you've been a good friend to my 'Bijah. But I've known your kind before. Here, there and everywhere, taking life free and easy and only such responsibilities as you can't avoid.

"Well, I don't aim to encourage you in such ways. Here you've got friends, and here you've got a bed and board any time you'll accept 'em. I don't aim to be unreasonable, Lew, but I want you to promise me you won't leave 'Bijah and Lucy. They're young yet, and they need a traveled man like you with 'em. You and your fiddle. I'll wager you can play a sight better afloat than ashore."

She stood in front of him, arms akimbo.

"Now, what do you say?" she demanded. "That brig won't be ready for sea until spring. You and Barnaby can go tramping a month or two, so long as you're back here in Provincetown for her outfitting. But that's got to be understood, Lew." Her voice took on a pleading note. "You'll promise, won't you?"

Lew wiggled with embarrassment.

"I guess the man don't live can talk ye down, Mis' Mayo," he acknowledged. "Ye got me scared to death, and compunctious too. Nobody never wanted me 'round this bad before."

"Don't you worry about that, Lew," she said. "And don't let me hear you talk any more nonsense. Play us that tune again that made me think of the wild geese flying overhead."

Lew dutifully drew his bow across the fiddle-strings. But his music was lost in Uncle Ira's bellow of laughter."

"I tell ye, she's a masterful woman, Lew. Once she gits her grapnels into a man—Aye, aye, Tab. I'll lay off. I didn't mean no harm... Ho-ho-ho! A masterful woman as ever was!"

Then Barnaby laughed, and the early fishermen down at the wharves, readying their boats to go out to the traps, heard them and said to one another:

"Hear to that! Big dewin's up to Ira Mayo's. 'Wouldn't wonder but 'Bijah'd come home."

THE END

"For God's sakes stop her!" he screamed.

DEAD RECKONING

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

FIRST OFFICER WILLIAM HULL flattened all expression on his face before he turned away from the engine room voice tube.

"The chief reports that the condenser tubes are leaking worse than ever, sir," he said to Captain Norris, probing him with intent, slate-colored eyes. "He wants to shut down."

Captain Norris was jingling his keys in his trousers pocket. He stopped at once.

"Gabriel on a raft!" he exclaimed and young Mr. Barry, the third, frowned. Norris stepped toward the tube in a hurry and spoke into it:

"What's the squawk, Mac?"

Rob Barry frowned again at this familiarity.

The middle-aged, florid master of the *Southern Pride* listened to what was undoubtedly a scholarly dissertation from below on the effect of salt water on the vitals of a water tube boiler.

First Officer Hull moved soberly over to the leeward door of the wheelhouse and stood there, waiting for possible orders.

Young Mr. Barry derived some comfort from the fact that at least the mate behaved as he had been led to believe in the training ship that a ship's officer would behave. Mr. Hull's cap was always set squarely on his head. Now he stared out at the drizzle and at the clouds that came scudding out of the southwest and dragged low over the long gray November seas. It was not a cheery sight.

And Mr. Hull, a solid man with limp black hair over thick, solemn features, was not given to cheeriness. Yet something about the set of his face conveyed a hint of satisfaction, if not of actual enjoyment, at this moment.

Rob Barry, who was standing by to take over the bridge for the forenoon watch, noted that expression and gave Mr. Hull a black mark for it. Yet the mate's attitude had been most correct when John Norris came swinging on board at Norfolk as new commander of this sturdy old tramper.

"But if Norris had lied about him at that hearing, why shouldn't Hull be wary?" Rob argued. He wished the training ship, which he had left ten months before, had gone into the matter of men more thoroughly and of ships a bit less. It seemed to be the men that gave most of the trouble at sea and needed most of the explaining.

Captain Norris deserted the voice tube a moment to look at the log and at the barometer.

He wagged his head sadly at both book and instrument, then turned back to the tube.

"How long will it take, Mac? If we miss that charter at Fowey— Right! Have a good time."

He left the tube hastily, to forestall some heartfelt remark from below. Testing and plugging leaky condenser tubes with a ship rolling in the trough and bilge water flying like spray is never pleasant.

"What the ship needs is a rabbit's foot!" John Norris said and flung his powerful, rather clumsy body in full stride out to the weather cab of the bridge and back.

"Better here than tomorrow near the mouth of the English Channel," he said to the mate and third with reviving optimism. "It may be thicker and dirtier by then."

He jingled his keys faintly.

Mr. Hull turned from the leeward door.

"Will this mean that you can't make Fowey in time to meet the time clause in that china clay charter, sir?" he asked in his mellow voice. "Will we lose it?"

"You tell me, mister." Captain Norris was curt.

He rang down the engines and stepped over the combing onto the bridge again. Eight bells were made. Mr. Hull, after a long look at the log and the chart, disappeared.

"I don't know which of 'em is worse," Mr. Barry told himself. "The master has no dignity and the mate is sore. But there's a big bust-up between 'em coming; that's certain."

CAPTAIN NORRIS no longer jingled, even occasionally. He had no cause to, with the ship losing way and falling off inertly into the trough. Rob Barry knew that getting her there for this charter was the skipper's last thin chance to remain with the line after losing his other ship. Half the Pride fleet was carrying china clay to Philadelphia. Running to schedule on this additional shipment might make or break that lucrative connection.

Rob wasn't at all sure that John Norris rated a second chance. No doubt he was a good man in smooth sailing. But Rob had seen the sea when it was tough.

And he could still hear Mr. Hull's steady voice replying to one vital question of the inspectors at that hearing on the stranding of Captain Norris's previous command:

"It was a matter of six or seven minutes before Captain Norris reached the bridge in response to my call. At least six or seven minutes. By that time eight bells had been made, the first officer had relieved me and the ship was beyond—"

Six or seven minutes! The inspectors had snorted. The dignified Mr. Hull, then second mate and keeper of the middle watch, had made it stick. The first officer backed him up and the helmsman had jumped the hearing. Having been asleep at the time, Rob was in no position to know the truth, but among the crew the story was damned for a tale. A popular, easy-going shipmaster, Captain Norris. Nevertheless the inspectors were aware that, whoever was lying, the ship had stranded and Norris was her captain. Three months suspension of license they gave him and that often meant the beach for life. And now, on a smaller ship but a greater job, it was Captain Norris and Mr. Hull again!

"Even owners should know better than that," Rob Barry fumed. "Of course they had to move fast on account of that charter."

He wagged his head sadly in unconscious imitation of Captain Norris and then glanced toward the weather wing. Norris was examining the low ceiling in his casual way. They had had no shot at sun or star for two days now.

Mr. Barry, too, searched the soggy clouds for a trace of the sun. He got nothing but a wet face for his pains. Her rolling was enough to disconcert the stomach of a brass monkey, but there was nothing to worry about in it. Not for the deck, anyhow, though the group of engineers gripping sliding tools around that hot condenser might think and say otherwise.

Captain Norris, giving up the sky, caught sight of Rob Barry's glum face and grinned.

"Hell, Rob, even if we don't make it we'll have had a lovely ocean voyage!"

It was that sort of thing that made the sober young third mate, ten months off the training ship, sheer away from John Norris.

"It's hard, having an engine breakdown just at this time, sir," Rob muttered. "Couldn't the chief—"

"Mac would never have stopped her if she wasn't on the edge of melting the tubes out of his boiler," the captain said.

He jingled perceptibly. "A fine engineer—a fine crew in her," he added.

Rob Barry searched Norris' red face for reservations, but discerned none.

"And a fine row on the way," Rob predicted under his breath.

THE approach of noon brought not even a lightening of the grayness over and under them. Sextants were of no more use than divining rods. And it was their third day on dead reckoning.

The chief engineer, invisible, wound her up to 10.6 knots when he got his up and down engine turning again. The southwester stiffened to more than half a gale, with a rising sea, but it was not a dead muzzler. The old *Southern Pride* churned on, shaking till she herself nearly jingled the keys in the skipper's pocket. The seas slapped her on the starboard bow in remonstrance at this undue haste. They broke in rattling torrents of spray that sailed up to the bridge and over the monkey island, but she never let them breach her green.

Night seemed to Rob Barry, when he went to the bridge, only a shade or two darker than Mr. Hull's four to eight watch had been that November afternoon. In spite of his nonchalance Captain Norris kept to the bridge, watching the helmsman and the visibility. It was still drizzling but there was no fog. Her roll made her hard to steer, and the chief reported that one of the coal passers had fallen over his own pile of coal on the plates and broken an ankle. But at the end of every watch the patent log still gave her close to 10.5. The chief was keeping her to it.

Captain Norris fixed up the man's ankle and returned to the bridge for a look into the interminable drizzle ahead. Then he sent the steward down with a drink for the injured man and tinkled his keys.

"Give me this much visibility until morning and we'll make our landfall on the Bishop sure," he told Rob Barry.

The third mate nodded wisely. He knew what the skipper was talking about. They needed that landfall. Back of the Bishop Light lay a granite trap —the Scilly Isles. Forty islets and a thousand rocks, twenty-six miles off the coast, the Scillies had been stern guardians of the mouth of the English Channel since Phoenician biremes came that way on the quest for tin. A tough landfall to grope for.

Rob took another look at the chart. Once past the Scillies Fowey was a scant ninety miles up Channel. They were due alongside the clay-smeared jetty in Fowey River before six next evening. It all depended on locating the Bishop—getting out of this filmy unreality and back onto the hard certainty of a position on the chart.

"Mr. Hull knows the Scillies well, sir," Rob told Captain Norris, to see how the skipper would take it. "He was describing them to the second and me—bunches of pinnacle rocks, tiny islands strewn with stone age relics, a few deep channels and plenty of fog in the winter."

Norris laughed shortly.

"A good seaman doesn't know anything about the Scilly Isles except to give 'em a wide berth," he said.

"Mr. Hull served on the packet that connects 'em with Cornwall, sir," Rob Barry explained.

Out of the leeward corner of his mouth Captain Norris expressed an explosive wish and retired to the chartroom.

THE old *Southern* plunged ponderously on through the blackness. Her forecastle head boomed in hollow rebuff of the charging seas and bursts of ghostly whiteness showed briefly on her starboard bow. Though they were closing in on the land after the long passage, Mr. Barry, staring keenly around the blackness, picked up no other ship's running lights during his watch. He didn't like that.

At intervals of an hour, as if awakened by some hidden alarm clock, Captain Norris would arise from the chartroom settee and roam the bridge and wheelhouse for brief minutes.

"Going through the motions," he confided to Rob Barry. "We're not due to pick up the Bishop until early in the morning watch, and the visibility's three or four miles. But always go through the motions, Rob, and one day they'll lay a liner in your lap."

He swung across the bridge.

"Unless you eat pie with a knife," he added as he turned into the chartroom again.

Rob Barry frowned.

"That's no way for a shipmaster to talk to a third mate," he told himself uneasily.

Had those four long hours to midnight been only as many seconds, conditions could not have changed less for the *Southern Pride.* She seemed to hang suspended in blackness, shuddering to a moderate sea, shut in in a low murky world of her own with no past and no future. Rob Barry was happy to leave her to her restless trance when Mr. Hansen, the yawning second mate, relieved him at midnight.

Before he left the bridge Mr. Hull, like a sedate ghost, appeared, turned his wary eyes on the log and went below again. Chief mates, due on watch at four A. M., are usually too deep in sleep at midnight to be interested in miles made good. But perhaps Mr. Hull felt as uneasy about their flippant commander as did the third mate.

Rob was just new enough to his job to regret fleetingly as he crawled into his swaying bunk that the exhilarating tension of making the landfall was not to be his.

Some time during his sleep, without awakening, he became aware that the *Southern Pride's* whistle was lifting its lugubrious note. Thickening up, that meant. So far his mind went but no further.

Later a different noise set him bolt upright in his bunk. It was the familiar metallic roaring that was completely out of place at sea. His feet were on the floor before he realized wholly what it was. They had let go her anchors.

Instinctively he braced himself for a shattering crash. But none came. An-

chors—out here off the edge of the continent? Through his head raced points in an instinctive estimate of the situation. His unsleeping subconsciousness was pouring information into his mind. She had been going dead slow. They had been using the deep sea lead. Now she was going full astern and bucking like an unwilling horse. Full astern! She brought up on her chains and stopped.

As these impressions flitted by Rob was shoving arms and legs into clothes. He headed for the bridge at a run.

The ship was no longer in the black and narrow world in which he had left her. This world was even narrower, but it was a gray world, a world of all grades of gray from the whitish, swirling fog to the deeper gray of the water.

Beyond the bow, he made out, amidst the breaking sea, a brown rock. It did not belong there. Neither brownness nor rock belonged here, in this gray sea world. But it was there.

Rob looked around. He made out other pieces of granite, rocks and ledges, and the furious flurry of torn seas. There was, he saw, a stiff tide running through those rocks, like hair through a comb, as well as a sea that was breaking on them. And already the ship had swung from her course and was lying to that tide. They were in the Scilly graveyard of ships, but they were still a living ship. On the decks men drifted about, calm enough after the first mad scramble to get up from below. There was something of a dream about this.

Mr. Hull was standing by the anchor windlass down in the forecastle head, with one of the watch. Captain Norris, thrusting head and shoulders out the window in the port wing of the bridge, was staring astern. The ship, drifting with the tide, slowly stretched out her anchor chains. When the cables checked her Norris squinted harder at that opaque sea under her counter.

"More scope!" he roared down to Mr. Hull. "Give her chain!"

The chains ground out into the sea. Norris sent a man with a hand lead aft to take a sounding and a moment later held up his hand to stop the windlass. Mr. Hull, a brisk model of seamanly efficiency, applied the brake himself. In sudden silence the ship lay to her anchors.

From somewhere to starboard came the boom of a gun. The second mate, beside Rob Barry, jerked up an arm to mark the direction. He darted into the wheelhouse to look at the compass and came back again slowly.

"Screwy!" Mr. Hansen muttered. "That's the explosive signal on the Bishop light. It sounds to south'ard now, but last time, five minutes ago, you'd swear it was to the northeast."

"Fog banks," said Rob.

"Yeh—different densities," gloomed the second. "Twist sounds like you'd crack a whip. Anyhow, we're somewhere in on the Scillies. Don't need no gun to tell us that."

Out in the wing of the bridge Captain Norris turned forward again and motioned Mr. Hull to come up to the bridge. The mate was revolving slowly on his feet, staring intently at the broken water and brown rocks around them. Rob made out a blurred hint of the satisfaction Hull had failed to hide when the condenser stopped them. This was no bad break for the mate. The master had been on the bridge. Mr. Hull's expression vanished as the mate saw the master's gesture.

Mr. Hansen jerked a hand toward Captain Norris.

"A good guy while he had it, but he ain't got it any more," he said in sepulchral obituary.

"Was he on the bridge all night?"

Hansen nodded.

"What's that got to do with it?" he asked. "You have to have luck in this business; there's no substitute for it. As a skipper he's gone west with that Fowey charter. His cake is cut."

CAPTAIN NORRIS came in from the bridge. His ruddiness had faded a little during his vigil and he was not jingling now. He spoke wearily to the second.

"Get out the detail chart of the Scilly Isles, Mr. Hansen."

Mr. Hull, coming up the bridge ladder, spoke quickly and with unusual animation:

"I can place you on the chart, sir. I know these waters well. We're in the worst nest of granite in the Isles. Ledges all around."

He jerked a hand to westward. "We've come past Steeple Rock and Biggal Ledge and between Roaring Ledge and the Castinicks. That's Roaring up there, with the Castinicks all around us. Our luck's been amazing; she should have had her bottom torn out half a dozen times."

"Once would have been sufficient," Captain Norris said.

The mate swung his arm from north through east to the southward. "Islands and rocks, sir, a chain of rocks round us in a small circle, islands beyond them in a greater."

The Bishop boomed in thunderous derision.

Mr. Hull shook his head ominously. "We'll be lucky to get out, sir. We can't even try until slack water, and only then if the fog lifts, the sea drops and we can induce a local pilot to board us."

Captain Norris nodded. He thrust a hand toward the bow and a hand toward the port beam.

"Roaring Ledge—Castinicks," he repeated. "Right? We'll skip the rest for the moment."

"Right," replied Mr. Hull. "It's too bad about that charter, sir."

Captain Norris swung his eyes around. He stared at the mate and the mate, making his face stolid and expressionless, returned his glance unswervingly. It was amazing. Rob noticed how steady Mr. Hull kept his eyes. And Norris, with his own eyes squinting as if he were going blind, was probing at the mate. He seemed to be trying to look right past Hull's eye sockets into his brain.

What was this—the start of that bust-up Rob had been predicting? Mr Hull was as rigid as an iron man. Rob's own body was tense and watchful. No bust-up, but something was happening.

The seaman with the lead line stuck his head up the bridge ladder.

"Eleven fathoms over the taffrail, sir," he reported.

"Eleven fathoms aft," Captain Norris repeated automatically. "Sound forward!"

He was still staring at Mr. Hull.

"You couldn't be mistaken, Mr. Hull?" he suggested almost coaxingly. "There isn't a chance we might not be so deep in among the ledges?"

"Not a chance, sir," the mate said inflexibly. "We're where I said."

"Very good," said Norris. "Enter the position in the log, Mr. Hull."

For a moment Mr. Hull's imperturbable face cracked.

"The position?" he repeated slowly.

"The exact position," said Captain Norris. "And the other details."

He turned and walked briskly into the chartroom where Mr. Hansen had spread out the Scilly chart on the table. Slowly Mr. Hull moved toward the log book on the desk in the wheelhouse.

The mate was a long time in making the entry in the log. But long as he was, Captain Norris, bending over the chart and consulting tide and current tables, was much longer. From within the mist came the roar of the Bishop's gun at intervals. Always forgotten, always startling, it marked time in the limbo of granite. No one disturbed Captain Norris except the leadsman, who reported fourteen fathoms over the bow.

Rob Barry, on the bridge, turned toward the wheelhouse when the idle helmsman sounded five bells. Then he and Mr. Hansen looked at each other.

"Six-thirty. Eleven and a half hours and ninety miles to Fowey," Mr. Hansen said with grim finality. "We'll be there come Michaelmass."

"If the fog lifted and—"

"—and the sea dropped and the tide slacked and a pilot came out from the isles we could do it yet," Mr. Hansen put in for him. "Also if Santa Claus towed us clear with his reindeer."

Captain Norris stepped out of the chartroom to scrutinize again those dingy chunks of granite in their circles of churning, thunderous white water.

"Get up the port anchor, Mr. Hull," he said.

"The port—" Mr. Hull was dumfounded.

Captain Norris nodded.

"The one on the left side," he explained. "The anchor. No use complicating this mess." Rapidly he re-entered the chart room.

Mr. Hull ground in chain. Fortunately there was no turn around the starboard cable. He got his hook up and let the ship drop back on the other. She did not drag.

CAPTAIN NORRIS came out on the bridge again.

"Get me the bearing of those rocks, Mr. Hansen," he said. Mr. Hansen climbed toward the pelorus on the flying bridge, with Mr. Hull's eyes switching rapidly from him to Captain Norris.

The skipper paused at the chartroom door.

"Run your men through the boat drill, Mr. Hull," he instructed briskly. "Give 'em something to do. Swing out boats but don't lower."

"Swing out the boats!" Mr. Hull said, jaw slacking off. He caught himself. "Boat drill, sir," he repeated.

Captain Norris, silent, returned to the chartroom after a pause to read the mate's entry in the logbook.

Mr. Hull put his whistle to his mouth. After a moment its shrill call split the vapor. He shouted his orders. The crew, black gang and deck alike, made for their stations and cleared the boats for lowering. The men muttered to each other. The mate kept close to the chartroom.

Captain Norris came out again.

"Watches below will remain at boat stations," he told the mate. "Come in, all three of you."

He waved the startled mates into the chartroom and stood beside the chart table. With a pair of dividers he indicated a cross on the chart.

"We're there, according to Mr. Hull," he said. "Right, Mr. Hull?"

"Right!" replied the mate slowly.

"And by six o'clock tonight we should be alongside the jetty in Fowey river," Norris said. He traced a course with his dividers. "After squeezing through the two near ledges, we will attempt to get out of here by holding South thirty East into this so-called North Channel. It should keep us clear of all dangers on either hand."

Mr. Hull let himself thump forward on his hands to stare at the chart on the table.

"South thirty East," Mr. Hull whispered.

It seemed to Rob that Mr. Hull's eyes were focussing lower on the chart, nearer to the black star and yellow spot that marked the Bishop light. It was only for an instant that Rob got that impression, for Mr. Hull jerked up his head almost at once to confront Captain Norris.

"You can't make it!" he cried. "You'd be grazing granite—and the tide's running fast! It's madness!"

"I've allowed fifteen degrees for the tide." Captain Norris's voice was mild.

"Fifteen degrees!" Mr. Hull's voice rose high. "D'you know Scilly tides? Eddies, whirlpools, maelstroms, set swirling by granite awash an' granite deep under! Fifteen degrees!"

"We'll be moving under full steam," said Captain Norris cheerfully. "All we've got."

He shoved his hands in his pockets and jingled his keys.

Mr. Hansen pushed his cap back off his forehead and laid a leathery finger on the pencilled course.

"My bet is it can't be done, sir," he muttered uncomfortably. "Look at them ledges! An eel would break his back—"

He coughed and was silent.

ON THE chart the course seemed utterly impossible to young Rob Barry. And when he lifted his head for a look outside at the thickening shroud of grayish white vapor it seemed worse. But there was something more than a course laid out there on that chart. He looked again at Mr. Hull.

The mate was licking his lips and staring now at nothing.

Captain Norris straightened up.

"Get up your anchor, Mr. Hull," he said with finality. He went into the wheelhouse, to the engine room speaking tube.

"Mac!" they heard him say. "We're getting under way. If she strikes hard get your men up at once. No panic. Get 'em up to the boats. They're ready."

Mr. Hull had been listening. Now he turned and walked out on deck. The Bishop's gun boomed.

Mr. Hansen fumbled at his cap.

"Cripes!" he whispered. "I ain't sure I oughn't to slap down the old man with a spike and let Hull take over. He's crazier'n two bedbugs!"

Rob Barry kept his eyes down on the chart.

"Look at your depths inside these ledges—seven, seven, eight, nine fathoms," he muttered. "And what did the lead give us? Eleven over the stern and fourteen over the bow."

"But the tide—"

Rob Barry pointed out the figures in the tide table.

"A spring tide between the first and second hours of the flood," he said. "That wouldn't account for the difference in depth."

Hansen wrinkled up his face to stare more intently into the third's.

"Hell, we're somewheres tough," the second said with a gesture toward the roaring rocks.

"Perhaps Hull wants to keep that hook on bottom a few hours longer," Rob suggested. "So he tells Norris he's in the worst place he can think of, inside Roaring and the Castinicks."

Hansen nodded slowly, with another look at the depths on the chart.

"If the old man, in a desperate effort to make Fowey on time, tries to worm her out of a position described by Hull in the log, and wrecks her because it turns out to be the wrong position—"

"Yuh!" agreed Hansen. "Two geese are cooked, but Hull's is a lot browner than the old man's."

Captain Norris came in, and at his approach they hurried out onto the bridge. The mate was standing at the head of the bridge ladder.

"Get your anchor up, Mr. Hull!" Norris said sharply. "When we're under way stand by your windlass. You may have to do some fancy letting go."

"Aye, sir," replied Mr. Hull. Slowly he descended the ladder.

Captain Norris peered down at him as he crossed the well deck. Then he summoned the two junior officers to him with a flick of his hand.

"This course may turn out to be screwy," he said. "We aren't hitting granite just to make good any course of mine." He levelled a finger at the second mate. "When we break out the hook I want you up in the eyes of the ship, Hansen. If you see any water threshed by rocks within three points of either bow point and yell like hell. Make me hear."

He looked at Rob Barry.

"I want you in the port wing of the bridge," he said. "If the fog should open or lift you'll see more than Hansen."

On the forecastle head the windlass clattered into action. Mr. Hansen paused uneasily at the head of the ladder. There was still a lot of chain to come in.

"If Hull's given a false position, why don't the old man sit here until the fog lifts and then blast him onto the beach by entering the ship's true position in the logbook?" he argued.

Rob Barry shrugged.

"Ask him," he said.

As the chain ground in Captain Norris ranged the bridge like a restless mastiff. Once he paused in his pacing to grip Rob by the shoulder.

"Whatever happens here in the next few minutes—whatever happens, understand?—keep watching for white water and seas humping up over covered reefs," he said. "Don't let me down, kid; we're doing this on eyesight and—" He stopped to look again at Mr. Hull.

"And what, sir?" Rob asked.

Slowly Captain Norris took his eyes off the mate.

"Dead reckoning," he said. "Dead reckoning."

He grinned queerly at Rob and tramped away. He went in to the chartroom and returned with the Scilly chart. He folded this once, to show the western half of the isles and dropped it beside the ship's wheel. Then he returned to the bridge.

THE massive links of the cable had been coming in around the wildcat with more obstinate resistance for the last few seconds. Now the windlass was silent and Mr. Hull, leaning over the bow, turned a gray face and hailed the bridge:

"Chain up and down, sir."

The voice was a high, wavering call,

like the wail of the wind. And Mr. Hull, like his voice, was different, no longer sedate or stolid. By the three boats the men were clustering, some looking toward the bridge but most of them staring at the sea-splitting rocks. All were taut and uneasy; it wouldn't take much to release that coilspring tension into swift, unreasoning action.

Captain Norris gripped the handle of the engine room telegraph. His eyes turned to starboard, toward the visible ledges.

"Break it out!" he rasped.

For an instant the chain grab gritted and struck fire from the obstinate links. Then the windlass clattered triumphantly and the chain came in faster. Mr. Hull's lips were contorted in queer curves as he turned to shout his unheard word that the anchor was off the bottom.

Again the Bishop boomed.

"We're off!" said Captain Norris dryly.

The telegraph jingled under the thrust of his fingers. He turned back to the helmsman, speaking softly. The ship, shuddering into life, lost ground against the tideway racing under her; then slowly surged ahead. The helmsman, with cold sweat welling out of his forehead in quick drops, glued his eyes to the compass and swung his wheel to starboard as she edged on. With tide and broken seas charging at her port bow she made increasing way. Her stem was slicing full toward the angry, gushing ledge that threshed the sea to port, but the whole ship was sliding sideways in the tide.

Captain Norris rang her up to half speed ahead. Rob Barry raced to the windward side of the bridge. He stared through slitted eyes at the ledge almost dead ahead. Then he glanced beyond it, toward mist-dimmed water where the seas had reformed after being broken up somewhere to windward beyond his ken. Were the waves humping up under the thrust of rock a few feet under the surface, or was that only wind that raised their crests?

Norris was still in the wheelhouse to brace up the helmsman, eyes tracing the course made good by the ship at half speed. He watched only the visible rocks on the weather side of the ship. The others were close, but Norris was bent on skinning the ledge to windward.

The ship drew on toward the ragged granite. But slowly her stem was dragged away from it by the tug of the tide. Captain Norris's course was good for the visible rocks. Unless these ledges thrust out undersea fangs into the gap this one danger was past.

Rob strained his eyes toward the enigmatic seas that rose, gray-capped and hissing beyond.

Below, in the eyes of the ship, Hansen's head and shoulders were swaying like a snake as he peered low first over one and then over the other side of the bulwark. Like a chained man in torment, Mr. Hull stood by the windlass friction brake, ceaselessly twisting from forward to stare up at the bridge.

Captain Norris reached for the engine room telegraph.

"Put her over!" he called to the helmsman. "South thirty East!"

He thrust the telegraph handle down to full ahead. As the engine room responded, his eyes dropped to the uneasy figure of his mate. He stepped out onto the bridge.

The ship, listing slightly as the wheel went hard over, turned her bow toward the weather. Then she swung steadily on toward South thirty East.

Mr. Hull took his hand off the brake. For a moment longer he faced the cresting gray seas, in which no ledges could be seen. Then his broad, imposing body shrank backward, recoiling in terror. His twisting lips framed words more visible than audible.

"No! No!" he cried.

Suddenly he ran back to the ladder at the break of the forecastle head and stumbled down to the well deck. He darted aft and started up to the bridge in a wild rush.

"Remember, kid!" Norris said swiftly to Rob Barry. "Eyes ahead! Watch!"

The men by the boats, rasping words at each other, were milling around in feverish uncertainty.

Mr. Hull stumbled, almost falling, onto the bridge.

"For God's sake stop her!" he screamed. "You're heading full for the rocks!"

Captain Norris had thrust his hands into his pockets and balanced himself on

widespread legs. Now, jingling his keys, he confronted his mate nonchalantly.

"What rocks, mister?" he inquired. "What rocks?"

"The Crim Rocks!" Hull croaked. "These are—the Crims! I tell you—"

Captain Norris whirled and darted toward the wheelhouse. His speed was startling.

"Hard aport!" he cried to the helmsman and caught up the chart. His quick eyes leaped across the white paper.

"West!" he said, before the man at the wheel had swung her far. "Due West!"

"Yes," muttered Mr. Hull. "West will clear everything."

CAPTAIN NORRIS turned to look at him. His eyes were sardonic.

"This time you called me six or seven minutes too soon, mister," he said.

Mr. Hull straightened up, drawing around his thick body the tattered rags of his dignity.

"Don't think that I'll crawl to you," he said hoarsely. "You've gotten away with this. But you did it by sheer reckless stupidity. The Castinicks would have torn her into scrap iron."

Captain Norris nodded. His voice was so low that Rob had to strain his ears in his whole-hearted effort to eavesdrop.

"The Castinicks would have torn her," he agreed. "But, mister, when the sun stays under and I'm in too deep to rely on my own efforts I can still rely on a liar to be lying and a coward to be quitting. They're as predictable as tides. Dead reckoning said you'd crack in time. Take the bridge, mister."

He walked into the chartroom.

Rob Barry stared at Mr. Hull. He didn't look like an efficient watch officer as he stood slumped against the bridge rail, propping himself up with shaking hands and running his tongue over his lips.

The Crim Rocks! Rob Barry knew little of the Scilly Isles but he did know the Crim Rocks. They were out on the edge of the group, standing even further to the westward than the Bishop itself. Any ship that had the luck to get through that compact mass of grief without touching granite would emerge with a long mile of deep water between her and the maze of Scilly menaces. The Crim Rocks! When he said she was in on the Castinicks Mr. Hull had told a lie that would take some beating.

A few minutes later a southerly course brought the Bishop's fog signal booming thunderously close in their ears, beyond the power of any fog bank to distort. And then, as if releasing them from their travail, the swirling mist opened. Rob made out the Bishop, towering mistily a hundred and forty-six feet in the air, as befits the most important light in the world.

They took a new departure from the light and churned up-Channel toward Fowey. Though the morning sun could not burn away the fog, it thinned the vapor as it climbed unseen above. The ship slipped back into dull routine

CAPTAIN NORRIS, clad in his most festive shoregoing attire and jingling cheerily, prepared to step down the plank onto the clay-smeared jetty that night. Already they were dumping the china clay into her, but that was no concern of the master. Following Mr. Hull's abrupt departure the happy Mr. Hansen was in charge of the lading.

Rob Barry greeted the shipmaster with a rather shamefaced salute. An uneasy feeling that he had been badly off his reckoning on Norris possessed him. Without so much as straightening his cap on his head, the captain had shown up better in an emergency than he had in plain sailing.

Norris responded to the third's greeting with a casual nod and passed on. Then he paused. Over his shoulder, by the glaring light of a cargo cluster, he examined the confusion on Rob's face. He came back and tapped the young third confidentially on the shoulder.

"Kid, if there's nothing in you, stuff your shirt!" he said. "Otherwise it's a lot more comfortable to be yourself."

He looked at his watch and an expression of concern crossed his face.

"I'll have to step," he said. "They close the pubs at ten o'clock in this town."

He hurried down the jetty.

Nothing this side of hell would take this man away now. . . .

TWO MEN IN A MARSH

A Novelette

By MEIGS O. FROST

IT WAS Richard Hardy's smile that infuriated Michel Trosclair most of all. It indicated complete self-possession, an admirable quality—but also it indicated amusement, and nobody could be amused at a Trosclair with impunity. Plainly as a smile could say it, to Hardy's cool gray eyes Trosclair's conduct appeared very much as the misbehavior of a spoiled child. That, for a Trosclair of Versailles Plantation on Bayou Teche, was not to be borne.

That was why Trosclair's languor fell from him like a garment angrily cast aside. And the realization that his voice was rising in spite of himself, that the languid bearing on which he and his friends so prided themselves was being revealed as a very thin veneer, infuriated him all the more.

For the moment, the little group of young men had that section of the Muggah Hotel gallery all to themselves. The slim brown Havana *cigarros* they had retired ostensibly to smoke, and had lit, lay amid the grass beyond the rail, sparks slowly dying in the dark.

Through the open French windows of

the great ballroom the strains of the latest waltz from Paris sounded clearly, even above the sea wind off the Gulf of Mexico. Here, away from the city, the elite of Louisiana's sugar plantation aristocracy had gathered in this summer of 1856. Back on the mainland across the bay, death stalked up and down the coastal cities and plantations, lashing the land with the scourge of yellow fever. Here in the sea winds they were free of that scourge. And they made merry.

But for the little group on the gallery, the voice of Michel Trosclair for the moment dominated music and slithering feet, rose above wind and wave.

"Monsieur 'Ardee," he said, "it is my privilege to inform you that the cut of your evening clothes is atrocious, and the material such as I would not expect to see even upon the house servant of a gentleman."

If that did not provoke this Yankee rascal into a duel, Michel Trosclair told himself, then this situation indeed was without precedent.

"I take it," said Richard Hardy, composed, amused, "that it is your pleasure as well as your privilege to impart this news to me. There seems absolutely no limit to the delicate attentions a native of Louisiana will shower upon a visitor from Boston. Believe me, I am grateful. These garments which have had the unspeakable disgrace to annoy you were made by Pierre in New Orleans. The management of the St. Charles Hotel assured me he was the best tailor in the South. I must speak severely to them on my way home. I am confident they will value your verdict. It is bad business for them to mislead a guest who lands in New Orleans scantily clad because of shipwreck."

And at that precise moment, from out of the shadows of the hotel gallery, a masculine laugh sounded.

MICHEL TROSCLAIR lost all control.

Sacred snout of a she-pig, his thoughts raced. Here he was where he had wanted to be for a week. Situation, surroundings, spectators, exactly what he would have ordained had this been a scene in a play, and he the director. His friends about him, listening with the languid air he had begun to lose already, to every word he spoke, like connoisseurs of chess watching every opening move of a master against an opponent of unknown caliber.

And with the whole ritual of the code of honor at his finger-tips, familiar to him as that of the very church in which he had been christened and confirmed, here was Michel Trosclair of Versailles Plantation on Bayou Teche, *tonnerre de Dieu,* with eight duels to his name, seeking to provoke the ninth, and being laughed at in public, being mocked, in effect, by this Yankee trader from Boston. This interloper who was finding favor in the eyes of lovely Eugenie Lalande of Cypremort Plantation, as everybody on Last Isle could see. And everybody on Last Isle, everybody in five parishes and New Orleans, knew that Mademoiselle Eugenie Lalande had been singled out to become Madame Michel Trosclair.

Why, here at the Muggah Hotel, where the Denechauds of New Orleans had brought him as a guest, this accursed son of penny-pinching peddlers of salt codfish, this descendant of psalm-singing, blue-nosed Abolitionists, had been paying open and obvious court to Eugenie Lalande, and openly and obviously she had liked it.

These the thoughts that raced, lightning-swift, through the tumultuous brain of Michel Trosclair. Now they leaped all restraint.

With his open hand, he slapped Richard Hardy in the face.

He heard the first breath of the gasp that went through the group of young men, their pose of languor forgotten. Then, the next thing Michel Trosclair knew, somebody was pouring water from a carafe into his face. He started to speak in expostulation; felt an intolerable pain in his jaw. He opened his eyes wider. He discovered to his intense astonishment that there was a blank in his memory; that he was stretched prone on the gallery floor and did not know how he had got there. Several of his friends, he observed, were holding Hardy by the arms, though Hardy was not struggling

in the least. Then Michel Trosclair understood what had happened.

Louis Maturin and Henri d'Aubigny, two of his oldest friends, were helping him to his feet, and rearranging his slightly disordered attire. He could not restrain his own hand from going to his jaw. A swelling was beginning to form there already, he noted. He, Michel Trosclair, had been knocked unconscious with a blow of the fist! The ritual of his code of honor came instantly to his aid. He was the puppet of blind anger no longer.

"Of course, Monsieur 'Ardee," he said, "nothing but your death, or mine, brings satisfaction for this. Louis? Henri?" In turn he looked at Maturin and d'Aubigny. "You will act for me in this affair, I trust? Ah, thanks. Monsieur 'Ardee, my friends will call upon you at your room tonight. I bid you good evening."

Across Hardy's face the red imprint of Trosclair's hand was clearly visible. But his amused smile, oddly, was unaltered, as he spoke to the youths yet holding his arms.

"Gentlemen, I have no intention of hitting him again, unless he slaps me again. Be good enough to remove your hands."

Almost sheepishly, for such violence in such affairs was without precedent in their experience, they yet go their grip.

"Just a moment, Trosclair—" began Hardy, as the young planter turned and started down the gallery, Maturin and d'Aubigny, his two seconds, walking stiffly, one on each side of him, like bodyguards. But here young Rigney Denechaud, Richard Hardy's host, stepped into the situation.

"Of course he will not speak to you personally, now, Dick," he said. "This affair has gone past that stage."

He surveyed his Northern friend carefully.

"Let us go to my rooms first, Dick," he suggested. Then, turning to the little group: "I would appreciate it if any of you would inform Monsieur Maturin or Monsieur d'Aubigny that Mr. Hardy will be at my rooms throughout the evening, and I shall be happy to act for him, in any event. It will not be necessary to seek him at his own room. Good evening, gentlemen."

Both bowed, received formal bows in return, and strode to the main lobby doors.

CANDLES in tall hurricane glasses gleamed on decanters and tumblers on a sideboard against the wall in the living room of young Denechaud's suite. Automatically the young Louisianian strode toward them.

"Would one of those brandy smashes you taught me how to mix be appropriate, Dick?" he asked. "Or are you of the school that believes it is better to drink nothing the night before an affair? Some say the hand is steadier, the eye clearer, in the morning, without cognac. And Trosclair is exceptionally good with the pistol, Dick."

"Go ahead. Mix the drinks, Rigney. I'd like one," said Dick Hardy. "Even if it did make a difference with the hand and the eye, it makes no difference with me. I'm not going to fight a formal duel with that young fool tomorrow morning, or any other time. That's what I tried to call him back and tell him when you stopped me."

A look of blank astonishment spread across young Denechaud's face.

"But—Dick! Good God! You've *got* to fight him! Why, he slapped your face in public!"

"Well, I knocked him flat in public, didn't I? And he wouldn't hit back after he started it and the going got too rough for him. That squares the account, as far as I'm concerned."

Distress and disbelief were struggling for possession of Rigney Denechaud's face.

"There is something here I do not understand," he said slowly, at last. "I know you are no coward, Dick Hardy. No man who went through that shipwreck with you would ever believe you a coward. Do you think I could ever live long enough to forget how you leaped into the sea after me when I slipped and went overboard, trying to shift from that sinking ship to the lifeboat? And you're a gentleman, as your father is a gentleman. My father wouldn't

have represented him as his attorney in New Orleans all these years if he were not. Yet you will not fight Trosclair—"

Then, at an idea, his face lighted up.

"Is it a promise you have made Eugenie Lalande?" he asked. "If that be so, let me talk to her. Our families have known each other, always. She will release you when she knows the situation, I am sure."

"Nothing so romantic, Rigney," said Dick Hardy calmly. "I have made no promises of any sort to Miss Lalande, nor she to me. Though I might hope, perhaps—but we won't discuss that. No, Rigney, you have been reading too many romantic novels. This is the year of Our Lord 1856, old friend."

He drank from the glass beside him.

"Duels!" said Dick Hardy. "Good God! Why don't you Southerners grow up? Are you going to keep on playing this age of chivalry game forever? Why not send for battle-axes and two-handed swords? Rigney, it's all so damned silly!"

RIGNEY DENECHAUD shook his head wonderingly.

"I confess I am not happy about this," he said slowly. "I had thought folk of our sort were the same, though your home is in Boston and mine in New Orleans. But I see now that we define our terms differently."

"If they taught you some of the less prominent facts of French history at the Sorbonne, Rigney," chuckled Dick Hardy, "you may recall that when the Marquis de Chatelet challenged Mirabeau to a duel, Mirabeau wrote him: 'My dear Marquis—It would be very unfair for a man of sense like me to be killed by a fool like you.' Why can't we let this foolish mess go at that?"

"I fear we can't, Dick. Your father's affairs in Louisiana are not small. Nor are his connections with men of affairs in Louisiana few. They are your friends and connections. They will be your affairs in time. If from no other point of view, Dick, you can not afford to be branded publicly as a coward, whatever close friends such as I know to be the truth. Michel Trosclair's family is old. They have friends. He will talk, in the clubs, in New Orleans. All this can only hurt."

"Let it hurt and be damned, Rigney. Hear me, now. You know I'm not afraid of this young fool. Nor of death, either. Nor of weapons. You know the tradition of four generations of our family. We win our master's papers, any tonnage, any ocean. We start young as supercargo on our own ships. We never send a ship where we wouldn't take one. D'you suppose I've been through that without seeing my share of fighting?"

Suddenly he stripped off his coat; rolled up his left shirt-sleeve.

"Look here, Rigney." The long, irregular white scar on his shoulder and biceps showed plainly in the candle light. "That came from the kriss of a Malay pirate. I killed him with a cutlass. Fighting! Hell, I was fighting my way around Cape Stiff in one of my father's ships when that young fool Trosclair was being pampered by black body-servants on Bayou Teche. I can use any weapon he can use, and you know it. I've come out all in one piece from waterfront fights such as he never dreamed of.

"This is the way I feel, Rig. If he attacks me, I'll defend myself and he'll be likely to get hurt. If he sends me word he'll shoot on sight, I'll load a gun and be ready for him. But I'm damned if I'll stand up like a trained monkey and go through a lot of dancing-master motions somebody else prescribed, for his satisfaction or for anybody else. And unless Louisiana gentlemen have gone in for murder from ambush to 'get their satisfaction', that'll be the end of it. Tell his seconds that for me, when they come up here. Or I'll tell 'em myself. No reason for you to get pulled into this, Rigney."

YOUNG Denechaud had listened attentively. Now, it was evident, he had reached a decision.

"I'm not pulled into it, Dick," he said, with a grave, slow smile. "I have placed myself in it, and I would not withdraw if I could. You are my friend. You saved my life. Now we will cease arguing about it. I will attend to his seconds, Dick. Your pardon, for a moment."

He reached for an embroidered bell-pull; tugged at it sharply. A moment later his Negro body-servant stood in the doorway.

"Wait a moment, Antoine," said Rigney Denechaud. He took paper, pen and ink, scribbled rapidly. "Now, Antoine, take this either to Monsieur Louis Maturin or Monsieur Henri d'Aubigny. If they are not in their rooms, they will be with Monsieur Michel Trosclair."

"I have asked them to come to my rooms at their earliest convenience, Dick," he said. "Now we will have a small nightcap, as you call it, and then may I suggest that you go to your room. I would prefer for personal reasons to be alone when they call."

"Anything you wish, Rigney—except to go through any damned silly formal duel stuff."

The drink was mixed. They raised glasses to each other and drained them. Then Dick Hardy laid a hand on Rigney Denechaud's shoulder.

"Before I go, Rigney," said he, "isn't the steamer *Star* due to reach here from the mainland tomorrow morning?"

"She was due here at the landing out of Oyster Bayou tonight, Dick. But Captain Muggah told me the wind was too high for her to attempt to cross the bay in the dark. She'll try again in the morning. Why?"

"Was he sure they'd make the run soon as they had daylight to go by?"

"Captain Muggah said he was sure, Dick. Are you expecting mail on her?"

"No," said Dick Hardy. All trace of everything but deadly earnestness had gone from his voice now. "Rigney, I wish you'd use every bit of family influence you have with your own and the Lalande families, to persuade them both to get aboard the *Star* the minute she gets in, stay on her, leave on her."

Rigney Denechaud looked keenly at his friend.

"Why, Dick, you sound almost tragic," he said.

"Things may grow completely tragic here, Rigney. I was about to speak to you of this, earlier this evening, when this young fool Trosclair went completely crazy, and it slipped my mind. Rigney, listen to that wind."

It required no strained listening to hear the wind, once the two voices in the room died down. Over the Gulf of Mexico it roared landward, a steady, relentless volume of sound, broken only by the intermittent louder crash of the surf on the beach. There was power in that sound, and menace.

"That means hurricane, Rigney, or I have no right to hold a master's papers," said Dick Hardy.

"But September is hurricane season, and September is full three weeks away."

"There's no law I know limits hurricanes to September. There's enough storm cooking up out there to lay everything on this island flat as the top of a billiard table."

"You're too apprehensive, Dick. This hotel and these houses on Last Isle have weathered heavier storms than this."

"Ships weather storms, too, old friend. But you and I have cause to know that storms also sink ships."

"Maybe you're right." Rigney Denechaud listened thoughtfully to the roar of the wind. "If you feel so keenly about it, I will do all I can to persuade Miss Lalande's family, and my own, to board the *Star*. Now, Dick, may I suggest you go to your room. Maturin and d'Aubigny may pop in here any minute."

RIGIDLY formal, the two seconds of Michel Trosclair were ushered into the room only a few minutes after Dick Hardy had departed. Rigney Denechaud was equally formal, equally rigid.

"Gentlemen," he said, "as you know, Mr. Hardy is my guest here. I represent him in this affair, with his consent. There are reasons satisfactory to me, which therefore it is needless for us to discuss, that make it impossible for Mr. Hardy to meet your principal in a duel. As Mr. Hardy's second, I have the right to take Mr. Hardy's place. I shall be happy to place myself at your disposal, at any time and place you care to name, under any conditions you care to impose. Though I have not yet had time to see them, my friends Mr. Charles Dupaquier and Mr. Christophe Lambremont are at this hotel, and I am sure they will be happy to act as my seconds."

"I assume, sir," said Louis Maturin, "that while we all understand you are within your rights under the code, you understand completely that the provocation on both sides is such that this affair must be *a la mort*—to the death."

"I understand completely." Rigney Denechaud's young voice was firm. "I understand also that substitution of a second for a principal in such circumstances is unusual but permissible. Certainly, I trust, there is no suggestion that I am unacceptable as an opponent against Mr. Trosclair?"

"None whatever," they hastened to assure him.

A few minutes later, Antoine, his negro servant, departed with notes for young Mr. Dupaquier and young Mr. Lambremont. On their arrival, Rigney Denechaud explained the situation, and retired to an inner room.

"Our principal," said Louis Maturin, "wishes pistols at ten paces, at five o'clock tomorrow morning on the beach at the west end of this island."

"That, sir, is satisfactory to us," said Charles Dupaquier.

"That much agreed," said Maturin, "our principal wishes yet another detail. He wishes the combatants to stand face to face, a pistol in each hand. The pistols held in the right hands of the combatants are to be discharged at the customary word. Should both principals be standing at the end of that first interchange of shots, both are to be free to use the other pistols at their own discretion, since this affair is to the death. They may fire with left hands if desired, they may shift the pistols from left hand to right hand if desired, or they may advance closer than ten paces, if desired. No word of command is to attend the second firing."

"Our instruction from our principal are to debate no points, sir," said Christophe Lambremont. "But—" and in the sudden stress of emotion he dropped his mask of formality— "but, Louis, those last conditions in effect are murder and you know it. We all know that Rigney Denechaud could barely hit the side of a house with a pistol."

"Christophe," said Louis Maturin, also for the moment forgetting the rigid ritual, "I suppose that what you have said is technically an insult, and I should take it up. If it were this Yankee visitor you were representing, I would have to. But this is Rigney Denechaud, and we have spent our boyhood together, we three. I can only tell you that I consented to act as second to my principal before this last stipulation was made, and no man lives who can say Louis Maturin broke his word when once he gave it. The course I shall take after this meeting is my own affair. I do not pretend to know why Rigney's friend will not, or cannot fight. But I do know that I have never seen a braver act than for a man to give up his life in youth to keep his friend's honor clean."

Thereafter they resumed their stiff formality, as men don a dress uniform. They made their arrangements to be awakened at four o'clock next morning. They bowed meticulously, each to the other, and withdrew.

Rigney Denechaud spent most of his night writing letters.

DICK HARDY slept soundly, unaware of all that had happened following his departure from his friend's room. And he slept late, to awake into a world gone mad with storm. Over everything was a strange and murky light, gray with a sickly mingling of greenish and yellowish tinges. Solid sheets of rain lashed slantingly at his windows, drummed steadily on the glass. His was a corner room. He rose and peered out in turn, from both angles.

The wind, he noticed, had shifted to northeast. It was driving from the mainland now, out across the bay, over Last Isle and out to sea. The tide was abnormally high. The beach, where he had swum in the surf so pleasantly all the past week, was completely submerged now. Great waves were surging over the tufts of coarse grass where normally the inland edge of the long, slanting beach began. When those waves broke, the water sluiced far up toward the higher land in the center of the island.

"Hurricane," he said, aloud. "And a ring-tailed twister, too, by the Lord."

He looked at his thick gold chrono-

meter watch on the table by his bedside. Nearly noon. He tugged at the bell-pull, the first ring from an awakening guest that always brought hot black coffee to the bedside without further order. The face of the Negro boy who brought it was ashen.

"What's the matter with you, lad?" he asked.

The young Negro's lips moved several times before he found his voice.

"Cap'n, suh," he managed at last to articulate, "hit sho' look lak disya sto'm's goneta kill us all. Me, I'd sho' be long gone outa heah, was dey any place t' go to."

Dick Hardy poured himself a cup of the thick, black, fragrant fluid. From a bottle on the table he added a splash of brandy, and drank the mixture. Then he poured another; laced it strongly with the brandy.

"Here," he said. "Drink this. You won't be half so scared."

The black boy lost some of his gray look as the brandy took hold.

"Thanks, suh," he said. "Sho' helps. Neveh did see no sto'm lak disya, all my bo'n days. Sweah t' Gawd, Cap'n, suh, disya sto'm's so bad, come daybreak, two gen'le'm'n was aimin' t' fight a duel oveh on de west end, an' dey couldn't stand up long 'nough to fight. Dey hadda give hit up an' come back."

"Who's fighting duels in this weather?" demanded Dick Hardy.

"One o' dem gen'le'm'n, he's Mist' Michel Trosclair, what's allus fightin' duels, suh," said the boy. "De oddeh, he's yo' frien' Mist' Rigney Denechaud."

"What!"

Before the explosive quality of that exclamation, the young Negro jumped as if touched by a hot iron.

"Ain't lyin', suh," he chattered. "Sweahs t' Gawd I ain't. One dem black boys wuks in de hotel kitchen, he sees hit an' he done tell me. Wateh's so high, hit's runnin' 'roun' dey knees. De gen'le'm'n w'at's wid 'em, dey fixes t' fight soon's disya sto'm ends."

"Know where they all are now?" demanded Dick Hardy, starting to hurl himself into his clothes.

"Mos' eve'ybody in disya hotel, dey's down in de big ballroom, suh. De music boys, dey's playin' to keep 'em from worritin'. Some of 'em, dey was dancin' an' laughin' w'en I done sta't up heah wid yo' coffee, suh."

"Thanks."

There was a grim set to Dick Hardy's jaw as he left the room and strode down the corridor. The hotel had started to tremble from the impact of the gale, he noticed, as he was halfway to the head of the stairs. He paused a second, peered out one of the big corridor windows. The waters of the bay, lashed by the steady drive of the wind, had begun to flow clean over the low top of the island; now they were running down toward the submerged beach in a steady flood, out into the Gulf of Mexico.

Down the stairs, into the lobby, he strode. There by the desk he saw a man he recognized as one of Rigney Denechaud's close friends—Christophe Lambremont.

"Mr. Lambremont," he said, stepping toward him in an effort to save time in search, "have you seen Rigney Denechaud in the past hour or so?"

Lambremont bowed coolly, with evident distaste.

"He is in the ballroom, I believe," he said. There was that in his look, his tone, which struck Dick Hardy almost like a blow. He paused a moment, eyed the Louisianian.

"You will pardon me," he said, "but before I start looking for him, may I ask if you know anything about a duel he was to fight this morning?"

"Something," said Lambremont, with a sardonic smile. "I was one of his seconds."

"He went out to fight Trosclair?"

"Certainly."

"Why? Did Trosclair slap his face, too?"

"There was no need," said Lambremont. "He went out to die at Trosclair's hands, for he is no pistol-shot and Trosclair is an expert, to keep what I suppose you call your—ah—honor clean, because you would not fight the man who slapped you, and Rigney Denechaud considered you his friend."

There was provocation for a dozen duels in Lambremont's cool contempt. But Dick Hardy let it pass.

"Lambremont," he said earnestly, "I want very much for you to believe me. The first I knew of this duel was when one of the hotel servants told me of it as he brought me my coffee a few minutes ago on my awakening. If you would care to come with me while I look for Rigney, you may ask your own questions and he will confirm what I am telling you. Then," he added tensely, "since you have said what you have said, I would appreciate it if you join me while I search for Michel Trosclair."

There was a faintly wondering look on Christophe Lambremont's face.

"I will be pleased to follow you, Mr. Hardy," he said. "May I suggest we try the ballroom first?"

THE wind had shifted to the southeast now. The long, sustained howl of it filled the air. Huge rollers out of the Gulf were marching up past where once the wide and sloping beach had been, were sluicing across the hotel lawn in hissing, racing maelstroms of black water. But of all this Dick Hardy noted nothing. Jaw set, face white, he strode across the lobby and into the great ballroom, Christophe Lambremont following him like a shadow. It was a strange sight that greeted their searching eyes.

Servants, shivering with fright, were lighting sconces on the walls—here at mid-day a dirty dark grayness had descended over everything. In their daytime clothes, the orchestra from New Orleans was playing a waltz.

From time to time some of the musicians reached into their pockets, drew out bottles of liquor, gulped deeply, and played on.

Along the walls stood men and women, the lips of many of them moving in the Act of Contrition—they had given up all hope on this earth. But out in the middle of the floor other men and women circled, dancing, over the waxed boards, some smiling bravely, others laughing and jesting openly. It was a study in how humanity meets doom.

Little of this registered on Dick Hardy's brain. All his conscious being was focussed through his eyes in his search for two faces. At last he saw them. Some distance apart, standing in groups by the wall, were Rigney Denechaud and Michel Trosclair.

Straight across the dancing floor Dick Hardy bored toward his friend, reached him, placed one hand on his shoulder. Christophe Lambremont stood close behind him.

"First of all, Rigney," said Dick without preliminaries of speech, "did your family and the Lalandes go aboard the *Star*?"

"They are there, Dick. I had a time persuading them it was safer than the hotel, but at last they went."

"Thank God for that. Now tell me, is the story true that you started out this morning to fight a duel with Michel Trosclair in my place?"

"Who told you that?" In Rigney Denechaud's voice and face were all the answer Christophe Lambremont needed for the question in his mind.

"Never mind who told me, Rigney. I was told. That's enough. It's true, then."

"Yes, Dick. Could I do less for the man who saved my life?"

Dick Hardy's hand gripped Rigney Denechaud's shoulder more tightly.

"They make no men finer than you, Rigney," he said. "Now come with me. And you, too, Mr. Lambremont."

Straight down the dancing floor he strode. He came to a stop by Michel Trosclair, who was talking to his friends.

"Trosclair," said Dick Hardy.

The eyes of the young sugar planter swerved from the face of the friend to whom he was speaking, passed across Dick Hardy's face as one looks at a total stranger, returned to his friend.

"As I was saying when interrupted by this peddler who has intruded among gentlemen—" Trosclair began, when his shoulder was gripped by a sinewy hand and his whole body spun around.

"To hell with your cute little parlor tricks, Trosclair," gritted Dick Hardy in a voice none of them had heard from his lips before. "Since when did a peddler of sugar cane get too good to talk to a peddler of anything else? You damned, murderous little rat! You'd take out a boy who couldn't hit the side of a house with a pistol, and you'd kill him in cold blood, would you, just because you

"Or are you afraid, Trosclair?"

aren't man enough to stand up to me after you slapped my face and I knocked you flat! You 'must have your satisfaction', must you? By God, Trosclair, you've got it. Right now. Let's see if you're man enough to handle it. Look, all of you."

With his left hand he seized Michel Trosclair by the front of his coat. With his right, he slapped the face of Michel Trosclair, coolly, deliberately, three times, the young Louisianian's head rocking from the force of the open-handed impacts.

"Now," said Dick Hardy, "you're an expert in your damned silly monkey code. You figure it out. Who has the choice of weapons? You or I?"

"I challenged you last night," said Trosclair, his voice thick with rage. "My challenge stands if you are ready to take your second's place. It is a matter of indifference to me with what weapon I kill you."

"Splendid!" There was a deadly ring of exultation in Dick Hardy's voice. "Now we have a solution that does not depend upon the weather. I want you

and your friends to understand this, Trosclair. I am not interested in whether you think I am a coward because I would not fight a duel with you before this. I am not justifying my courage to you. I am making use of your damned silly code to kill you. Not because you slapped my face last night. But because you would have killed my friend who had done you no injury. You're a pretty, perfumed sort of vermin, Trosclair. But when vermin begin to bite, they get exterminated.

"Up in my room, in my baggage, are a pair of fighting knives I bought in New Orleans. You and I are going up to my room right now. Bring your friends, all of them you can pack in. Call them seconds or witnesses or audience, any damned thing you please. I need none.

"We are going to take one of those knives apiece. We're going to take hold of the opposite corners of a handkerchief. We're going to go to work when one of your friends gives the word. The man who lets go of his corner of that handkerchief before he's dead is a coward, Trosclair. Come on upstairs with your friends right now. Or are you afraid, Trosclair? Do you prefer assassinating boys who don't know how to shoot?"

Michel Trosclair's face had paled. Like any man of his time, he knew of those deadly knife duels, born of the day James Bowie had emerged wounded close to death but grimly triumphant, his deadliest enemy dead, from the Videlia Sand Bar fight across from the high bluffs of Natchez. At close quarters, even, a pistol might miss; a knife never.

It was Christophe Lambremont who spoke first.

"It will be a privilege, Mr. Hardy, to serve as your second," he said. "And for anything my voice or manner may have intimated as to your courage, let this be full and public apology."

"But, Dick—" began Rigney Denechaud.

A woman's scream, ringing shrilly through the great ballroom, cut him short.

"My God!" Her voice slashed through the air. "Look! Look at the floor! The water! Oh, God, have mercy!"

CHAPTER II

LAST ISLE'S END

SOME of the polished floor boards had given way to the pressure from beneath. Fountain-like, water jetted upward from the gaps in the floor. It was ankle-deep already, in the midst of that first chorus of screams from the women. It rose steadily, as it began also to pour in through the tall French windows opening on the gallery toward the beach, the glass smashing under the pressure.

Now the scream of the hurricane wind drowned out all other sounds save the thunder of the huge waves as they came, smashing and breaking, roaring like charges of storming troops against the front of the hotel itself. The Gulf of Mexico was pouring over Last Isle from the seaward side.

Inside the ballroom now it was a scene of human stampede. The water rose knee-deep, higher yet, to thigh and waist of the tallest. Through it men and women splashed and struggled desperately, screaming, shouting, cursing, praying or grimly silent. Yet through it all the faint strains of music persisted. The orchestra was playing yet, with water already washing high over the dais on which the musicians sat.

One young gallant lifted his girl to the top of a great table by the wall. Leaping out of the water to the table top, he guided her delicately in the waltz the inrush of the waters had interrupted.

"And now, my dear," he said, "I have the chance to prove that I told you last night—that I could die waltzing with you."

Suddenly she clasped him convulsively, buried her face in his shoulder, and shook with sobs of terror. For the waters were rising about them, high over the top of the table. A sudden rushing swirl, and they were swept away.

Up and down the length of the great room struggling men and women were being swept off their feet. Bodies were floating. The last of the musicians had been swept off the dais over which the black waters roared. Only the voice of the storm was audible. Human voices,

human music, were all silenced at last.

VIOLENCE and death had Last Isle in their grip. Great waves from out of the Gulf raced clean across that long and narrow strip of land, surging into the bay, twelve miles wide, that separated Last Isle from the mainland. Those hills of rushing black water, the valleys between them, were dotted with human bodies struggling in the last desperate battles of life or limp in death, amidst tangled masses of wreckage that once had been homes.

Like a house of cards, the great Muggah Hotel had broken up. The summer cottages, staunchly built, many of them strongly braced at all four corners with cables fastened to buried ground-anchors, had weathered many a storm, but this was a storm they could not weather. Plantation folk who had seen storms come and go, had waited in them behind battened windows for this hurricane to blow over, too. Never before had they known Last Isle to be completely submerged in the hurricane season. Now husbands and wives, children and household slaves were a wave-washed, wind-swept welter of dying and of dead.

Swept along with the first rush of that mad stampede in the ballroom, Dick Hardy seized Michel Trosclair by the arm. Nothing this side of hell, he determined grimly, would take this man away from him. Battered by waves and by struggling, clawing, gripping humanity alike, his grip on his enemy's arm still vise-like, he found himself suddenly out in the open.

The whole landward side of the splintering, crumbling, disintegrating hotel had been blown outward. Under the sky in a world gone mad, Dick Hardy stood in water waist-deep, holding tightly to Michel Trosclair. For a moment some of the wreckage of the hotel, not yet entirely washed away, gave them just enough shelter to enable them to keep their feet. Then the grandfather of all waves came roaring up out of the Gulf, and they were swept from their foothold.

Dick Hardy kept his head. This was not the first time he had found himself swept along in roaring, stormy waters. Just before the gigantic wave roared over him, he drew a deep breath, shifted his grip from Trosclair's arm to the collar of his tightly-buttoned coat. And presently they came to the surface.

Fragments of wreckage were lashing at them viciously. Then, just ahead, Hardy saw a floating piece of wreckage he judged would be big enough to bear their weight. Hardy tightened his grip on the sodden coat-collar, and struck out for the wreckage, helped by a powerful leg-scissors.

It was like a raft, that piece of wreckage, he discovered. It tilted as he gripped the edge with his free hand and tried their double weight on it, but it didn't tilt too far. Trosclair had gone strangely limp in his grasp. A couple of minutes of desperate work, and then the man whose life he had saved, the man he intended so grimly to kill, was stretched face-down on the boards, and Dick Hardy was stretched beside him, panting furiously, holding tight.

It was part of the wall of a summer cottage, Hardy could make out now. It was some twelve feet long and eight feet wide, he judged. He felt about with exploratory hand. One side was of stout planks. The other, under the water, was of weatherboarding nailed at right angles to those planks. This was really luck, Dick Hardy told himself. That cross-bracing would hold the planks together if anything would.

In the middle of their raft, he now made out, was a window-opening. The glass had been blown completely out, but the sash remained. One batten blind of heavy plank still held to its hinges; the other had been blown away. Gripping the edge of the window-opening, Hardy hauled himself and his burden farther up on the raft.

"Take hold of this window-edge!" he shouted in Trosclair's ear. "Grab it and hold on!"

Then he discovered that Michel Trosclair was unconscious. A trickle of blood from a gash on his temple told the story. Some flying piece of wreckage had cut and stunned him.

Over the edge of the window opening

Dick Hardy hooked one arm at the elbow. He took a tightened grip on Trosclair's coat collar. Then he braced himself for whatever might come.

WAVE after wave washed clean over them. Jagged-edged fragments of wreckage drifted near, seemed to launch themselves at them with sinister intent as the great waves rose and fell. As best as he could, Dick Hardy fended them off with his feet, for both men lay across the narrower width of the raft, and their legs dangled in the water.

Then suddenly they were under water again, and a sharp stab of pain shot through Hardy's right knee. The wave had hurled another piece of wreckage against his leg. This was more than any mere bruise or wrench, he knew. But there was nothing to do save hold on.

They came to the surface again. Trosclair began to stir beneath Hardy's grip. Consciousness was returning to him. He began to retch violently from the muddy salt water he had swallowed.

"Can you hear me?" Dick Hardy shouted in his ear.

Trosclair's eyes opened and looked at the man beside him. His lips moved, and though Dick Hardy heard no sound, he knew the man had heard him.

"Get your arms over the edge of this window-hole and hold on!" he shouted, and the words of the man accustomed to giving orders in the midst of gales carried to Trosclair's understanding. He nodded, inched forward weakly, and some of the strain eased from the tug of his weight against Hardy's grip on his coat collar.

No more words passed between them. Both settled to their task of holding on. White faces of drowning and of drowned flashed within the range of their eyes from time to time. It was hopeless to try to help anybody.

They never knew how many hours of this they underwent. There were periods of complete blank, when either consciousness faded out, or they dozed in sodden exhaustion. But when Dick Hardy emerged from his nightmare of fighting jagged-edged drift with the one good leg with which alone he now could kick, there was light in the sky again. His left elbow yet was crooked with desperate strain over the edge of the window-opening in their raft; his right hand with equal desperation gripped the coat-collar of Michel Trosclair, who to all appearances was dead, stretched face down on the raft, legs dangling limply in the water, head rolling limply from side to side.

Dick Hardy looked around him in the gathering light.

Above the surface of the water on which they were drifting, he could see the tops of marsh grass and weeds. These growing things were not floating loosely like the raft. They were swaying uniformly in the same direction the raft was moving, to the drag of the current. The raft was passing them, clump after clump. It was like a wagon driven through a field of unmown hay. The great waves he and Trosclair had fought through those hours of that terrible night surged about them no more.

"Over the bay, by God!" Dick croaked through swollen lips.

A current was carrying them swiftly inland. The water on which they were floating must be some four feet deep over the coastal marshes, Dick Hardy judged; that was the usual height of the marsh growth that time of year, he thought.

"Probably leave us high and dry, stranded in the middle of nowhere," he muttered to himself. "But—" as his seaman's mind automatically appraised the situation— "that's better than being washed out into that damned bay again with the ebb. High tides are part of every hurricane. If we're stranded deep in the marsh, next flood tide probably'll give us water enough to fight our way out to the coast again. Sure as hell there's going to be some boats nosing around for survivors after the news of this storm spreads."

He looked keenly at Michel Trosclair. The man was unconscious yet. Dick shook him, shouted at him, but got no response, not even the flicker of an eyelid.

"I didn't carry you this far to lose you," he said to himself, as he felt a great drowsiness creeping over him in

spite of his recent return to consciousness. Clear perception of things began to float away from him, as their raft was floating over the marsh. He stretched his cramped body, hooked his elbow anew over the edge of the window-opening in the raft, tightened his numbed grip on Trosclair's collar, and sank suddenly into a profound sleep.

SOMETHING was trying to pull his arm out by the socket, he thought, as he came awake again. Then he saw that Trosclair, too, had returned to consciousness, and was trying to loosen his enemy's grip on his coat collar.

"Hold it a minute," croaked Dick Hardy. "You aren't going anywhere. It'll take me a little time to work my fingers loose."

He had to use one hand to loosen the grip of the other, so tightly had his fingers cramped in that grip. It was as if they had been frozen into the clutch. Then he sat up and looked around.

The raft had come to rest in an oozy marsh that now began to show above the retreating water of the tide. They were some fifty feet from the banks of a nameless little bayou, winding, twisting through the level reaches that stretched to a horizon that was a complete circle.

Around that circle of mist, rain, marsh growth and semi-fluid gray slime, the two men's eyes roved, and then their gaze returned, each contemplating the other. Each saw a scarecrow, red-eyed, unshaven, gaunt in the cheeks, sodden with water, smeared with slime. Dick Hardy was the first to speak.

"I don't know which of us looks more like a shipwrecked pirate, Trosclair," he said, "but neither of us is going to any dance tonight." And a grin started to spread across his face.

Michel Trosclair's mind was working in a situation without precedent to him, and he had spent his entire life following precedents.

"*Monsieur,*" he said slowly, "as I look back over what I remember of these past hours, it seems to me that you have saved my life. I am a poor swimmer. It is doubtful whether I could have reached this raft without your aid. Certainly you seem to have held me on it when I was unconscious. So, though we are by no means friends, it seems in fairness that I must thank you for saving my life."

"In equal fairness," said Dick Hardy, "I must tell you that if I saved your life, it was for the privilege of killing you myself, instead of letting the storm have the pleasure."

"That is logical," said Trosclair quietly, "for I promised myself the pleasure of killing you. Had the situation been reversed, I suppose I would have worked equally hard to prevent anything or anybody from depriving me of that pleasure."

"Then we have one point of agreement, anyway," said Hardy, and in spite of himself grinned again.

"I see nothing humorous about the situation," said Michel Trosclair, "but it would be stupid to bicker about trifles. I assume you are as weaponless as I am. After all, we are not savages, to fight to the death with bare hands and teeth. Have you any idea that we shall be able to escape from this marsh, so that ultimately we may fight with the weapons of gentlemen?"

"We are going to make one hell of a try," said Dick Hardy. "Would you care to call a truce, so to speak, until we can take up our little affair elsewhere?"

"I shall be happy to do so," said Michel Trosclair, very formally. "And since this is a new experience for me, and since I understand you have commanded ships, I shall be happy to place myself under your orders."

Dick Hardy nodded. "Let's see if we can get our bearings."

He couldn't help grinning. Of all the damned absurdities! Two men in a marsh, God alone knew where, without food or water, making formal speeches. Gentlemen, not savages! There'd be plenty of natural savagery to fight before they got out of this, if ever they did.

He started to stand up on the raft and look around. Sharp stabs of pain pierced his right knee as he rose. His right leg was not entirely straight when he placed his weight upon it. He pitched and fell forward on the raft. Every movement

punctuated by salty quarterdeck profanity, he twisted and squirmed his way to a sitting posture again.

"Your leg? Is it broken?" asked Trosclair.

"Don't know yet." Dick Hardy swung his arms, beat himself upon the chest, slapped his hands together to get some feeling into his fingers. Then, with his heart pumping faster, he began to feel around his knee. It was badly swollen. It hurt like the very devil. But he couldn't feel the grating ends of fractured bones. The knee-cap wasn't split, apparently.

Cautiously he rose again. This time he held his right leg rigid before he put any weight on it. Pain stabbed at him, but he could stand upright. It was only when he put weight on that leg while it was bent, that it gave way, he discovered.

"Tendons torn loose at the knee," he said. "If we can find a couple of pieces of small wood in the wreckage around here, I can rip up some cloth and rig a splint."

Trosclair was feeling gingerly at the long gash in his temple. It stretched across his white face, down into his cheek, like a black smear. The bleeding had stopped.

STANDING with his right leg held rigidly stiff, Dick Hardy scanned the whole scene with a seaman's eye.

"Trosclair," he said suddenly, "I think I've got our bearings. When I came to Last Isle with the Denechauds, we came by the steamer *Star* down Oyster Bayou and out across the bay. It was new country to me. I was in the pilot-house and I asked the pilot a lot of questions about his landmarks. Among them were two little islands in Bay Tanop. They were northwest. See if you don't make out what look like the outlines of two small islands through the mist off there."

Trosclair peered long and earnestly through red-rimmed eyes.

"I know those two islands," he said. "I think you are right. But my eyes are so inflamed with salt water, that I am not certain whether they are islands or darker spots in the mist."

"If you see enough so you think you see them, that's something to go on," said Hardy. "Now let's assume that's northwest. This little bayou near us would run south to the bay. That would put it about right, even allowing for the bayou's twisting. Now we can figure what we've got to do."

Trosclair had seated himself, was holding out cupped hands to the driving rain, and was licking the wet hollows of his palms with a swollen tongue.

"I have heard the phrase 'dying of thirst' and I have used it jokingly sometimes," said Trosclair, "but I think I know what it means now."

"You'll be a damned long time getting a drink that way. I'm thirsty as hell myself. Look over there, Trosclair. See those two planks?"

He pointed to a spot in the marsh some twenty feet from the raft.

"You've got two good legs," he said. "Go get 'em and we'll have a better drink while the rain lasts."

"I do not see now," said Trosclair, but he slid over the side of the raft, waded through the ooze, and returned presently with the two planks. One was a ceiling board, the other a plank from the side of a cistern, both wreckage of Last Isle.

"Take them down to the bayou and wash off all the slime you can," Hardy said. "And while you're about it, strip off your shirt and rinse that out, too. Here—" he tore off his own coat and shirt. "Hate to make a washerwoman of you, but this damned leg—"

Trosclair slid off into the marsh again, presently was back with three pieces of light ceiling boarding from a storm-wrecked cottage.

"If you can make a splint out of these—" he said.

"Fine!" Hardy grabbed them, measured them against his leg. "Now get this washing down, and we'll drink."

"I do not see how—" Trosclair repeated. But he went.

Dick Hardy took the smaller of the two boards, stood it on its long edge. He placed the cistern plank against it, to form a long, slanting runway. "Now wad up your shirt and put it at the bottom of this inclined plane."

Wondering, dumbly, Trosclair obeyed.

"Now watch how the rainwater sluices down the slanting board and soaks into the shirt."

He watched it a moment, picked up the soaked linen garment, held it above his head, opened his mouth and twisted the shirt. A slim stream of water ran down into his mouth.

"That's how," he said. "We won't die of thirst as long as the rain lasts, and it always rains quite awhile after a hurricane. Now go drink yourself full. And if I catch you trying to drink this salty marsh and bayou water, I'll beat hell out of you. I've seen men go crazy from drinking salt water."

"Extraordinary," said Trosclair, and went busily to work getting his shirt rainsoaked again.

Seating himself on the raft, Dick Hardy stripped, slowly and methodically. Against his swollen knee he measured again the strips of wood Trosclair had brought from the marsh. He tore his linen drawers to strips, and with these and the impromptu splints, he bound his knee firmly, stiff and straight. Then, resuming all his garments save his shirt, equally methodically he soaked that in the rain sluicing down the slanting board, and drank his fill.

Again that strange drowsiness was overpowering both of them. Trosclair already had stretched himself out on the raft, flat and relaxed beneath the pelting rain. Dick Hardy took one more look around at the level, constricted horizon of thickening gray mist that now had blotted out even the shadowy outlines of the two little islands in Bay Tanop. Then he, too, stretched himself on the bare wet planks, his injured leg stiff and straight, every bone in his body aching even through the numbness that flowed over him.

Side by side in that desolate, rain-whipped wilderness, the two enemies slept again.

AGAIN there was light in the sky, again the rain was falling heavily, when Dick Hardy came back to conscious life once more. He sat up, every movement an agony of stiffened muscles. Michel Trosclair had not moved from the sprawled posture into which he had slumped when that strange drowsiness overcame him hours before.

Systematically Hardy began to beat his arms against his chest to restore circulation. Then, stripping off coat and shirt, he wadded the shirt and slaked his thirst with rainwater wrung from it. He had just finished drinking when Trosclair opened his eyes.

"It is strange," the young planter said, "with all the water a man's skin can soak up, that he can continue so damnably thirsty. I was dreaming that I had been brought a pot of black coffee and was lacing it with brandy. What day do you suppose this can be?"

"Tuesday, I think," said Dick Hardy. "Probably we were all Sunday afternoon and night being blown across the bay. Yesterday must have been Monday."

"Then that means we have been at least forty-eight hours without food?"

"It does. And we're going to be hungry longer than that before we get out of this. I've gone a damned sight longer than two days without food, and I'm here yet."

"What man has done man can do, my tutor was fond of reminding me," said Michel Trosclair philosophically. "What is our next move?"

"We've got to get this raft into that bayou. It's a hell of a job, but it's the only way out. That bayou has to lead to the coast. That's where we're going to find any rescue boats that started for Last Isle after the news of the storm spread. None of them are going to get up here in the marsh."

"Do we try to push the raft over to the bayou?"

"We'll push, we'll drag, and we'll try to pry it over with these two planks. Then, when we get it afloat, we can use the planks for paddle and rudder."

Hour after hour, all Tuesday, they struggled at the task. They found they could move their raft only by inches from its resting place in the mud. Rest periods, when they soaked their shirts with the rain-water, wrung out the slim stream that trickled down their throats, seemed to do little to restore the strength

they spent. And the raft was only halfway to the bank of the nameless little bayou from where they had started, when night closed down upon them.

"About twenty-five feet a day! That's traveling!" panted Dick Hardy as he stretched himself on the bare, wet planks.

For a few moments Michel Trosclair panted beside him. Then he spoke.

"*Autre fois il y etait Monsieur Lapin et Monsieur Tortue—*" he said, and began to laugh.

"What's that?"

"Once upon a time there was a hare and a tortoise, as the old fable ran. We were tortoises today. But as I recall the tale my worthy nurse used to tell me, the tortoise won the race."

"An inch-worm would be laughing at us a mile away if he'd been entered," said Dick Hardy. "By God, we've got to get some rabbit blood into this ship-launching."

Again they filled their stomachs with rain water wrung and sucked from their shirts. Again they lay down side by side.

With nightfall the rain increased. The wind shifted to the north. Jagged flashes of lightning split the heavens like fantastic sword-blades. Yet through it all the pair slept soddenly, utterly spent.

CHAPTER III

RACE FOR LIFE

WEDNESDAY morning broke with dim gray light, amidst pouring rain.

"*Le bon Dieu* seems determined we shall not die of thirst, at least," husked Trosclair, as he rose on one elbow.

"That's something, anyway," gritted Dick Hardy, as painfully, laboriously, with numbed body and brain, he sat up and looked around.

"Another lap of our race with the rabbit, I suppose," said Trosclair, and his cracked and swollen lips twisted into what he meant to be a smile.

Dick Hardy didn't answer him. He had forced his way to his feet, and was looking around.

"I'll be damned!" he said hoarsely.

It was not time for flood tide, he knew. Yet the marsh was nearly covered with water. Why? His seaman's mind wrestled with the problem, as he watched the water flowing past them into that nameless little bayou, moving the raft with occasional jerky little motions in its passing. Then it dawned on him. The heavy rain of the night had flooded the marsh; it was flowing off to meet the incoming tide.

"Over the side, Trosclair!" he barked. "Come on! Quick, while this water lasts! Overboard and shove!"

The two scarecrow figures slid off the raft. They groped in the muck and ooze for some kind of a foothold, against the submerged root-clumps of the strong-growing, wiry marsh grass. They found them at last. And side by side they shoved with all their waning, exposure-sapped, hunger-sapped strength.

The raft moved!

"We've got to shove together to get the most out of it, Trosclair!" panted Hardy. "On signal, now. One! Two! Three! Shove!"

Into that effort of team-work they put everything they had. And suddenly the raft was free. It was sliding into the nameless little bayou. They had to grip hard, scramble and haul their tottering bodies to prevent being left behind.

Then Hardy raised himself on his elbows to check their precious equipment. There were their planks, their two wadded shirts. They were speeding seaward.

"Thank God I woke when I did," he thought. He was not sure in his heart that they would have had strength enough left to work the raft down to the little bayou, had the rainwater drained off the marsh while they slept. But what would happen, he wondered, when the out-flowing rainwater met the incoming tide? He was to find out soon.

Side by side the two enemies lay, panting from their exertions, while they drifted something more than a mile down the bayou. Then the raft began to slow down perceptibly. Then it stood still. And then it began to drift back inland over the course where it had been advancing seaward.

Hardy rolled over and grabbed one of the two precious planks.

"Quick!" he called to Trosclair. "Grab that other plank. We've got to work her over to the bank and beach her."

WITH motions slow as those in a nightmare, the two scarecrows inched the raft over to the bayou bank, where marsh-grass showed above the surface. With a supreme effort, Dick Hardy thrust the plank with all his strength through the window-opening in their raft, down into the soft mud. It slanted with the pressure of the incoming tide against it, but it held. They were stationary until the tide should start to ebb again.

Once more they lay awhile, sprawled inert. Then they sat up and looked around.

"I think a drink of our special white wine would taste good," said Michel Trosclair. He wadded his shirt against the raft to catching the pouring rain, and began to suck moisture from it. Dick Hardy followed suit.

"It must be something like sixty hours since we have eaten," Trosclair meditated aloud. "But over there above the water I see some weeds our slaves use in preparing pickles, because of their sour taste. They call them pickle-weed. I am going to try to get some. If we swallow them, we may be able to delude our neglected stomachs."

"I'll gather a share of them, too," said Dick Hardy.

They waded through the ooze to the spot of growth Trosclair indicated. But before he had taken three steps with his splinted right leg, Dick Hardy pitched forward, face downward, into the surface water and the mud beneath.

He came up again, struggling like a harpooned whale, and as soon as he spluttered his mouth clear of mud and swamp water, his shout rang out. He held up one hand. Blood was running from a cut in the heel of the palm.

We eat, by God!" he shouted. "Better than weeds!"

"What?" asked Trosclair.

"Mussels or oysters! I cut my hand on the shells when I fell."

Both groped excitedly about the spot where Hardy had fallen. It was blind groping in muddy water, but at the end nearly two dozen mussels lay in a little pile on the raft. Divided evenly, each man took off a shoe, used the heel for a hammer, and broke the little shellfish against the planks of the raft, devouring them voraciously.

"This is our lucky day," said Hardy. "Look."

Toward them was floating a piece of board about five feet long, another fragment of the Last Isle wreckage.

"Easier to handle for a paddle than the big planks," he said, retrieving it as it bumped against the raft. "Now we'll wait for the tide to turn."

It was about mid-morning, as nearly as Hardy could judge, when the bayou began to flow seaward again.

"Up anchor and shove off," said Hardy. He worked himself to his feet to tug the long plank loose from the mud. Leaning against it for a minute, for he was very weak, he scanned the horizon mechanically.

"Sail ho!" he shouted, galvanized into new life. Far over to his right he saw a sail bearing into the northwest.

"Look! Over there, Trosclair! And by the Lord, there's a smudge of smoke in the marsh over yonder! God! It's the old *Star* herself. She must be coming out of Oyster Bayou and heading for Last Isle! That means she got a load of survivors to the mainland, and she's going back looking for more!"

"Can we signal them any way?" asked Trosclair.

"Not a chance. At that distance they couldn't pick up the sight of our shirts on the longest plank we've got, if they were looking for them, and they aren't. We've got to get going. We've got to get down to the beach."

Over the side of the raft they slipped again, after Hardy had pulled up the plank. Mightily they shoved, and the raft was floating down-bayou again.

"Hold it where it is, Trosclair!" Hardy's voice was coming back, deep and strong, under the excitement. "My feet grated on some oyster shells when I shoved. We'll take some with us."

"But we can eat on the rescue boats," protested Trosclair.

"When we're aboard, not before. We're not out of the marsh yet."

Hastily he groped beneath the surface. He scooped up half a dozen handfuls of oysters; dumped them on the raft. Then, when his fingers could feel no more on the tiny reef, he hauled himself aboard.

They were in the middle of the small bayou's channel now, the ebbing tide carrying them seaward again. They fought with their planks, worked paddle-wise, to keep from grounding. Into a large, brackish coastal lake they floated. Out of it Dick Hardy could see another pass leading, apparently, to a wider bayou.

The ebb tide was flowing out through that lower pass like a mill-race. Desperately, clumsily, they paddled toward it. And just as they were about to make it, the wind veered to the southwest, freshening and strengthening every minute, dead against them. The raft stopped as if it had run against a reef. Then it began to drift toward the edge of the marsh, despite their most desperate paddling.

This was defeat, and Dick Hardy knew it. His deep sea profanity sounded until his voice died to a mere husky whisper. The two of them together had barely strength enough to shove their anchor plank into the mud to keep from being blown back to mid-lake again.

Side by side they lay sprawled, they knew not how long, both utterly spent.

"I think," said Michel Trosclair at last, "that this is the end."

"I'm damned if it is!" Dick Hardy didn't recognize his own voice. "We'll eat, and we'll rest, and we'll go on if I have to swim and shove this damned raft!"

Painfully, laboriously, he sat up, removed his shoe and attacked one of the oysters. It was hard work breaking the rough, thick shell with the shoe-heel as a hammer, he was so weak. But at last it split, and the meat within rewarded him.

Trosclair, of slighter build, was so spent that Hardy had to hammer most of his oysters open for him. Then they stretched out on the bare wet planks again.

ONCE more the low, moaning wind, inevitable presage of rain, crept over the marshes. Once more clouds thickened in the sky. Once more rain poured down upon them. Now that they had a board to take the place of the anchor-plank, Hardy arranged their two remaining bits of wood to form the inclined plane, and again from their rain-soaked shirts the two men slaked a thirst that was burning in them like fire.

Night came on. The knowledge that their fellow men, so close at hand, might as well be on another planet, made it a night of interminable horror. Hardy's injured knee, swollen now so that he had to loosen the pressure of its rag bandages against the rough splints that held the joint rigid, stabbed him continuously with piercing pains.

Chill began to bite deep into them. They tried to ease their pains by crawling off the raft and stretching on a spot of wet marsh grass, but land-crabs crawled over them. Back on the raft they crawled. One end of it was tilted down into the water as it lay against the muddy bank. Hardy felt of the water with his hand. It was warmer than the night air.

"Slide down this end, Trosclair," he said, as he heard his companion in misery groan. "We'll be warmer if we get under water. We're going to need all we've got tomorrow."

They inched their way, feet first, into the water as far as they dared go, and so, almost submerged, their arms hooked over the edge of the window-opening in the raft, they slept fitfully.

The rain ceased falling. The clouds cleared away to the push of the night wind. The moon rose. Stars were visible. They lay on their backs, watching the white glory of that moon, so remote, so peaceful, move slowly across the sky.

"Damnation!" said Hardy suddenly. "Those rescue boats might just as well be up on that moon, for all the good they're doing us!"

"I cannot disagree with you there," he heard Trosclair's voice.

Then both men, with hoarse cries, splashed and scrambled to their feet. Over the marsh, from the direction they

knew now Last Isle must lay, a glare of fire was visible. It was a steamboat coming through the night. A river-boat, for the glare they saw was from the fire boxes beneath her boilers on her lower deck.

"Damn them! Oh, damn them!" said Michel Trosclair. "If they'd only waited until daylight to go back! We might have made the coast by then and signaled them."

Dick Hardy felt his heart sink, too.

It was beyond human restraint not to try and make their presence known to those aboard that steamboat. Like two maniacs they began to shout through the dark. But their loudest shouts were only hoarse, feeble croakings, lost in the night.

Again they stretched themselves on the raft, weakened beyond their ultimate dreams of weakness, shivering with the cold. Then, just as dawn was breaking, another steamboat came back from Last Isle, her long banner of black smoke trailing in the grayness of the growing light. With mad speed, Dick Hardy tied his shirt to the end of their longest plank. Madly he waved it. Madly they shouted. And again their feeble voices died in the vastness of the marsh.

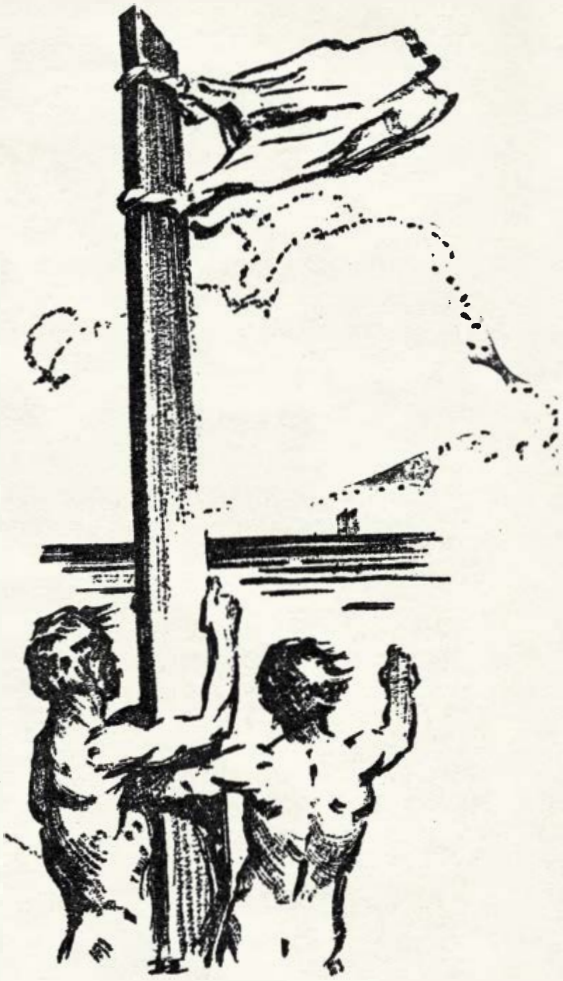
Michel Trosclair sank exhausted to the raft. But Dick Hardy stood, leaning now on the plank to which he had tied his shirt. He was staring fixedly across the marsh.

"That's it," he croaked. "Where that second steamboat swung around. That's the point where the pilot shapes his course for Oyster Bayou."

"What of it?" croaked Trosclair in reply.

"We've got to make that point. We don't know there'll be no other boats. Oyster Bayou's the route they'll come. We can't signal them here. Come on. The wind's slackened. We'll make a fight of it for that point."

Moving with greater effort than it had taken yet to stir, Trosclair joined him as they shoved the raft clear, and worked their makeshift paddles, their legs hanging down in the water through the window-opening, for Hardy had stripped off his splints and bandages now.



The sail was growing larger!

HOURS of agonized effort merged into a nightmare that seemed to have no end. But they were going seaward. And when at last a twist in the bayou channel caused them blindly to run ashore, Dick Hardy struggled to his feet and peered around out of bloodshot eyes.

There, some hundred yards across the marsh, lay a great bleached tree-trunk. It was high enough above the flat level of the marsh to be plainly visible. Not even the marsh grass could conceal it.

"I believe that's the beach, Trosclair," he said. "There's usually a ridge of sand or shell along the beach. That tree trunk has been there a long time. We'll have to make it across the marsh."

Unsteadily Trosclair rose to his feet and peered.

"If it should not be the beach," he said, "then what?"

"You mean if that tree was washed a long way into the marsh?"

"Exactly."

"Then we'll come back to the raft and navigate this damned corkscrew of a bayou some more."

"Or die trying, eh?" said Trosclair.

"Exactly." Dick Hardy repeated Trosclair's word of a second before. This man was his enemy. He had sworn in his heart to kill him. But as he looked at the slim, gaunt figure stepping off the raft to the muddy bank, a feeling of grudging admiration began to grow in his thoughts of Michel Trosclair. He might be a pampered son of a rich planter, schooled in a damned silly and murderous code, but he had courage.

"Better take one of these planks with you, Trosclair," said Dick Hardy. "If we bog down in the marsh, it'll help."

That stretch of a hundred yards of marsh became a nightmare worse than all their battle of paddling that morning. Twice Trosclair bogged to his armpits when through weakness he slipped into treacherous slime. Dick Hardy inched him out each time, with infinite labor and the aid of the plank. And then the same mishap befell him, and it was Michel Trosclair who inched him back to the surface.

Inch by inch. Endless shoving of the plank. Crawling at last upon their bellies, like snakes. Bracing their feet against root clumps of marsh grass and shoving themselves forward. Jaws clenched, breath coming short and sharp, sobbing up from constricted throats. Faces and hands scratched and bleeding from the saw-grass through which they pushed.

Until at last Dick Hardy's hand gripped a naked branch that jutted out from the giant tree trunk and hauled himself onto the first solid footing, it seemed to him, his feet had known for centuries. Painfully he dragged himself erect, and peered over the rampart of the tree, and a husky croak that he meant to be a cheer sounded deep in his throat.

Before him, down a little sand beach, he saw the waters of the bay. The marsh growth had been too high for him to see the bay from the raft, or during that last agonizing crawl. And as he looked around, Trosclair was climbing out of the slime behind him.

"By God, we won our gamble," said Dick Hardy. "Now we've got a chance."

Somehow the pair of them crawled, rolled and fell across the trunk, more than three feet in diameter. Down to the narrow little beach they staggered. In the clean salt water of the bay they lay and washed off their coating of that stinking slime.

Too weak to think of donning sodden garments, they lay in the sand and slept, in the grip of ultimate exhaustion, naked as the day each was born.

IT WAS Hardy who woke first. He worked himself up to his feet and looked about. Incredulously he stared at three small objects he saw on the sand. Two ears of corn yet in their husks, a melon with a rotten spot on the side toward him. Washed across the bay from some wrecked house on Last Isle. It looked like a banquet.

He picked up a shell from the beach, used it as a knife to split the melon and scoop away the parts too far gone to be edible. He stripped away the husks from the two ears of corn. They could be eaten. Then he shook the shoulder of the sleeping Trosclair.

"Come on," he said. "Breakfast, dinner, supper." Then, as Trosclair started to wolf the food: "Steady, there. Hold yourself. Small bite at a time. Chew it slowly. Or you'll lose it all."

Two bare corncobs and a thin shell of melon rind were left when they finished. It was salty from its immersion in the bay, but to them the flavor was royal.

Then as another idea struck him, Hardy rose and started for the old tree trunk. His thought was right. Rainwater lay in several little pools in the hollows of the wood. He called Trosclair, and they drank.

Awhile they sat on the sand, their backs to the trunk, trying to gather strength. Then Hardy hauled his worn-out body up on the trunk and peered out into the bay.

"Lord God, make it true!" he breathed.

Far away across the water of the bay, in the direction of Last Isle, a white speck showed. It *must* be a sail, he told himself. Strained and intent, he kept his eyes upon it until vision began to blur.

"Trosclair, by God, it *is* a sail!"

Up beside him crawled the naked emaciated figure that once had been the languid, impeccably groomed Michel Trosclair. And for a moment he went stark, staring mad. A strange medley of choked and husky sounds came croaking from his lips. All that was left in him was striving to reach out across the bay and carry the message of need of rescue.

"Stop it!" rasped Dick Hardy. "Save all the strength you've got. We've got a job to do."

He looked around. There at the marsh's edge was the long plank by grace of which they had not sunk during their last desperate crawl to the beach. There on the sand were their clothes.

"Trosclair! Help me get that plank up here!"

The two scarecrows lurched down from the tree-trunk. With infinite labor they dragged the plank up on top of it.

"Get me one of those shirts!" Dick Hardy was in command now. "This damned leg of mine! I'm going to need all I've got to brace with it."

Trosclair brought the shirt. By its arms Dick Hardy tied it to the end of the plank. Weakly they hoisted it, were able partly to wedge it in a split in the ancient wood of the trunk. The shirt fluttered.

"I'll hold it here," said Dick Hardy. "It would fall if we left it. Now you get down on the beach. Get your own shirt. This signal may not be enough to catch their eyes. Stand down there on the beach. When I call to you, walk back and forth on the beach, waving the shirt above your head. Between the two of us they may catch something if they come a little nearer."

Then, bracing his injured leg rigid, he centered his whole being on the two tasks of holding that signal aloft, and of watching that sail.

The sail was growing larger! He could see now that it was a small schooner. Then her sails winged out, and his heart sank within him. Was she tacking off on another course? His teeth gritted in an agony of strain. Then his heart lifted and began to beat like the pumping heart of a runner. The schooner came on toward them, driven by a stern wind.

Now she was less than half a mile away. He could make out part of her hull.

"Up and down the beach, Trosclair!" he called. "Fast as you can, and wave that shirt over your head like hell!"

Then as another thought struck him, he shouted again.

"Come up on this tree trunk, Trosclair! Run up and down it! Wave your shirt up here. It'll give us a better chance."

Up and down the trunk Trosclair staggered, waving the shirt as high above his head as he could reach, galvanized by hope.

But his weakness was too great for the effort to last. He stumbled on a tree bole that caught at his bare feet, and pitched headlong to the sand. There he lay, too weak to rise.

But a rasping shout of triumph rose from Dick Hardy's throat.

"By God, they see us!"

For he saw the schooner's mainsail sink, a flag rise and flutter at her peak, and the mainsail rise again. They were signaling that they had been seen.

Dick Hardy could see men on the little schooner's deck, now.

"Here they come, Trosclair! We're saved!" he tried to shout. But if ever the sound emerged from Dick Hardy's throat, it never reached Michel Trosclair's ears. Stunned by the impact of his fall to the shell-studded beach, Trosclair lay unconscious. And suddenly on the tree trunk above him, Hardy slumped, fell, and pitched to the sand beside him. His last ounce of nerve-sustained strength had gone from him, with the realization that here was rescue at last.

There the two enemies lay, gaunt and naked, side by side, sprawled on the sand.

And presently, through the gentle waves that lapped the little beach, came a rowboat with four men.

IT WAS perilously close to a miracle, agreed the gentlemen from Bayou Boeuf, back aboard their mail schooner with the two naked men they had rescued. They had heard of the Last Isle disaster. They had manned that small schooner, set out in search of kinsfolk and friends, for all the plantation folk of the coast had kinsfolk or friends at Last Isle. They had sailed straight for Last Isle. But the steamboats had arrived before them. So they found no living survivors. But they had not been deprived of some part in the great tragedy. They had been able to help bury the dead. They had been stricken with horror at the sight of the bodies of beautiful women, their fingers hacked off by ghoulish looters, the better to get at their jewelled rings. They had been privileged to help kill a few of those looters and wreckers, from some of the isolated little half-savage settlements along the coast.

Then they had speculated on the possibility of living survivors in the mainland marshes. They had been assured that no human being could be blown across twelve miles of hurricane-lashed bay and live. But, heading homeward, they had agreed among themselves that since they had come this far, it wouldn't hurt to spend a few hours more. So they had steered for the seaward rim of the marshes, instead of sailing straight home.

So the gentlemen from Bayou Boeuf were greatly excited, now. Why, just as the outer edge of the marshes came in view, one of them, peering through his spy-glass, had seen what looked like the flutter of some strange flag where no flag should be. Two flags, in fact, one moving strangely. Sodden shirts in the wind. Imagine! Now look what had come of that! *Incroyable!*

Two men, gentlemen unquestionably, by the cut and material of their slimed and ragged clothes found sodden on the beach. Two men, naked each as a jaybird. Two men emaciated, cadaverous, gaunt, with matted hair and bristling beards. Two men of such courage and tenacity that they had survived five days, mark you—five days, *sacre Nom d'un Nom,* and fought their way clear of it—in a foodless salt marsh! Two men so far spent that they had collapsed completely just as rescue reached them. So far gone that even wrapping them in warm blankets and forcing trickles of brandy down their throats could not at first bring them back from the blackness into which they had sunk. And as yet they had not opened an eye; they had not moved a lip to let their rescuers know who they had saved.

Tonnerre de Dieu! But what a tale this would be to tell, said the gentlemen of Bayou Boeuf. And what friends these two must be, to fight their way to the beach side by side, starved and battered and slashed by saw-grass. Men not even a marsh could conquer; a marsh in which no Indian, nor a runaway slave, would think of taking refuge, with its alligators and cotton-mouthed moccasins, venomous to the death!

Yes, the gentlemen of Bayou Boeuf had plenty to talk about, as they sailed along the edge of the marsh, and found no other survivors, and so up the Atchafalaya River to the little town of Brashear, where a physician and shelter could be found for these two unconscious men whose hearts yet obstinately refused to cease to beat.

They bore them to the home of Dr. Louis de St. Germaine at Brashear, at last.

"Put them in my guest room," said the physician. "I can keep an eye on them better, here. I think I can save them, though their vitality is very low."

There was only one bed in that guest room. In the huge mahogany four-poster they laid the two men side by side, and the gentlemen of Bayou Boeuf departed after frequent classical allusions to Damon and Pythias, whose love for each other was deeper than the love of brother for brother. It was appropriate, they felt, that two men who had fought death thus side by side, should win back to life side by side in the same great bed. Ah, the friendship of man for man!

THEY were side by side in that great bed yet, in the second week of their convalescence, for a man must sleep somewhere and there was no other accommodation in Brashear, and Dr. de St. Germaine ruled they must not be moved, anyway, when the door opened.

"Rigney!" said Dick Hardy, unbelieving.

"Dick!"

It was Rigney Denechaud himself, who strode to the bedside and grasped Dick Hardy's hands. And then he bowed to Michel Trosclair, who bowed in return as formally as one in bed can bow.

"But I thought you must have died in the storm, Rigney!"

"It's a miracle I didn't, Dick. Thanks to you, the family was safe on the *Star*. When the hotel went down, some freak of the waves washed me alongside. Men on the lower deck hauled me aboard unconscious. We all got to New Orleans safely. Then we thought you were dead, until we read in *The Picayune* you had been brought in to Brashear. Dr. de St. Germaine told their correspondent here, as soon as he learned your identities."

"Then all your family are safe? And the Lalandes?"

"All safe, Dick. And I hurried here with news for both of you."

"Both of us?" That was from Dick Hardy.

"News for me?" That was from Michel Trosclair.

"Yes. Both of you," said Rigney Denechaud. "When the news of the Last Isle disaster first appeared in *The Picayune* in New Orleans, Raoul Valeton de St. Bris appeared wearing mourning."

"Who the hell is Raoul Valeton de St. Bris?" asked Hardy wonderingly.

"Of what possible interest is the mourning of Monsieur Valeton de St. Bris to me?" inquired Trosclair.

"You will learn," said Rigney Denechaud, "for it seems to me this is a time to speak without reserve. The first story said that almost all on Last Isle had died in the storm. It gave a list of the score or so known to have escaped. The name of Mademoiselle Eugenia Lalande was not among those saved. Raoul Valeton de St. Bris appeared in mourning. He told his family and his friends that he and Eugene Llande had been secretly engaged to marry for nearly a year. Then she and her mother were brought to New Orleans with others saved from Last Isle, and she confirmed his tale."

The two men in the huge bed involuntarily looked at each other. Rigney Denechaud couldn't have missed the look if he tried.

"I can tell you further," he said, "that I alone am alive who know of your quarrel. Maturin and d'Aubigny are dead. Lambremont and Dupaquier are dead. We are the last of that little group that stood upon the gallery of the Muggah Hotel that night your quarrel started. Those who saw the sequel in the ballroom the morning the hotel swept away —they, too, have died. Michel Trosclair, you know New Orleans and all the coast is a sounding-board. Every detail of the storm has echoed in my ears hundreds of times. But not one word of your quarrel over—and I say it only to you two—your quarrel over a girl who flirted with you both while she was pledged to marry another. After what you two have undergone, do you yet believe one or both of you should die in a world full of beautiful girls, places to go, good food to eat, good wine to drink, and old friends with whom to enjoy what *le bon Dieu* has given us? I leave the room for you two to talk it over."

Out of the room he stalked. The door closed behind him.

The two men in the great bed propped themselves up on pillows and looked at each other in silence. Neither spoke. But through the minds of each a millrace of thoughts was pouring. Eugenie Lalande, lovely as she was; Last Isle and all its gayeties; somehow these seemed suddenly remote. Those five days of their grim battle for life in that salt coastal marsh had obscured all else. Their struggle against the death that threatened them both had done a strange task of welding.

Pictures flashed through their memories. They had sucked at the same rain-soaked shirts that they might not die of thirst. They had shared starvation ra-

tions, God-sent in a desolate, oozing wilderness. Anger, and their grim, deadly purpose, each of killing the other, somehow had faded into the background as they had fought death side by side and shoulder to shoulder, and had won their fight.

Neither of them could tell when the start of a grudging admiration for the other's courage and endurance had turned into complete confidence, each, that no matter what emergency might be hurled against them by forces beyond their control, the other would be in there with him, fighting by his side.

Neither could question the courage of the other, ever again. Neither could feel contempt for the other, ever again.

It was Dick Hardy who spoke first.

"Trosclair, I'm damned if Rigney isn't right. See here, if you feel bound to go through with that damned silly quarrel, I'm at your service, of course. You and I were reared differently. But I've got to admit your system produces men, too. If you feel about it all the way I do this minute, let's be friends."

He thrust out his hand.

"We were fools both," said Michel Trosclair, "but I, I think, the greater fool of the two. You saved my life in the water, in the marsh. I console myself I saved you in the marsh, too. I have found you the kind of a man I would be proud to call my friend."

And their hands clasped across the ornate bedspread.

"Ho, Rigney!" shouted Dick Hardy. The door opened again.

"Old Peacemaker!" jested Dick Hardy. "Listen to me, you two. It would be indecorous to do any celebrating in Louisiana, with all the dead and all the mourners. But one of my father's ships is putting into New Orleans from Havana in three weeks. That's the one I was planning to take to Boston. Come North with me, both of you. Once I get you both in Boston we'll celebrate this with a dinner that'll make your Louisiana chefs look like camp cooks. Is it a deal?"

"As soon as I get some clothes with which it is fit to appear in civilization," said Michel Trosclair.

"I'm naked as you are," said Dick Hardy. "I've got to outfit too. Who's your tailor?"

"Why, Pierre in New Orleans," said Michel Trosclair. "There really is no other. He is the best in the South. His cut, his materials—"

Then he had the grace to flush and join in the roar of laughter with which Dick Hardy and Rigney Denechaud were making the room echo.

I SHOOT DOWN A JAPANESE BOMBER

a fact story

by Captain R. W. Martin

NANKING. The flying field six miles out of town, over rough roads. Seven o'clock in the morning. Camouflaged hangars, and Chinese "grease balls" wheeling our twenty-three ships out in a hurry. Low winged, silver colored Northrups, all metal and shining in the early sunlight; savage looking Curtiss Hawks; lumbering Douglas 02 Observation two-seaters; and the Curtiss "75's". Two of them, one of them mine. They, too, are low winged; sleek and savage and deadly with their four Browning 50 caliber machine-guns, two in the wings and two shooting through the prop. And on her blunt nose behind the three-bladed steel prop a 1150 horsepower air-cooled motor that will slam her along at 250 miles per hour, and give her 350 in a dive.

All is bustle on the flying field, for the observation posts strung every ten miles along the hour's flight between Shanghai and Nanking have just phoned in frantic reports. 57 Japanese bombers on their way down the Yangtze to Nanking, they wail excitedly. 57 huge lumbering two motored biplanes logging along with their thick bellies bulging with steel eggs filled with high explosives. The drone of their powerful motors fills the heavens, sending terror to the villagers, who see and hear, and then hide. 57 monsters carrying one pilot, one bomber, and three machine gunners. On their wings the emblem of Japan. On their way to rain destruction upon Nanking.

Colonel Wang walks out of a hangar with several Chinese pilots toward the line of ships with motors idling. He looks at the sky, although the bombers have just left Pootung, near Shanghai. He looks at the 23 ships on the line—a slender educated Chinese commander who can handle a ship with the best of them. Again he looks at the ships. 23 against 57 invaders. 23 of China's meager 400 airplanes against 57 from a country turning out more than 400 every week.

"Save your ships," has been his stern order. "Lose your life, if you have to. But save your ships. They're more precious than gold."

He looks at me, who was hired in Seattle to bomb Tokyo, but met Madam Chiang Kai-shek and became her personal pilot instead—flying her huge twin motored Douglas over most of China to spread hope and cheer among the panic stricken. This before she let me go into combat work. He respects me, Colonel Wang, which is why I got one of the two Curtiss 75's. For somebody had told him of the five Boche I knocked down in France; of Nicaragua; of the Paraguay-Uraguay border dispute; of Ethiopia and service with Haile Selassie; of France and combat work against the Loyalists.

And, now, China.

SLEEK things, those 75's. The most deadly thing on wheels in China, with the four Brownings and their electric triggers on the stick; the nine incendiary and one explosive bullet in the belts. And he had given one of them to me.

"You go upstairs," he says, speaking perfect English. "High above the others. Watch for any who get through. See that they don't get here."

I nod, thinking of yesterday. 72 had come down then almost in a bunch, and 19 had gotten through. After all, we are but twenty-three.

I put on helmet and goggles and climb into the 75. 12,000 hours behind a stick and never a ship like her. The first three of her kind turned out of the factory in the United States, and one of them is mine. Old Betsey, I call her,

affectionately, for she's gotten me out of many a tough spot. There was that morning of the raid on Pootung, alone, when the three Mitsibishu fighters came bellowing down out of nowhere. . .

Everything is ready, all the ships warmed up. I look, from my cockpit, down the line of ships sitting in a row. Idling props; low wings on the Northrups and high and low wings on the Douglas 02's; goggled Chinese pilots stolidly waiting; goggled Chinese gunners in the cockpits of the 02's, working over their brace of swivel guns and ammunition drums.

Fighters, these Chinese eagles, and with the kind of nerve few men have—the kind of men who had sat in the hotel in town and played checkers while the Japs rained death on the women and children. "Save your ships," had been Colonel Wang's stern order. "They're more precious than gold." And more precious than human life, too. For life is cheap in China. Even the Japanese bombing pilots think so.

From the snugness of the 75's cockpit I look out at Colonel Wang, get his nod. I feed the soup to the twin Wasp, thrill to the surge of her 1150 horses as she suddenly breaks into an ear-splitting bellow and we slam down the field like a savage hornet.

How those 75's carry a man along! I lift her nose up, feel her slide into the air, and press the button on the electrically controlled landing wheels. The indicators flash on, on the dashboard in front of me, and I know her wheels are gone; her belly as slick as a hound's tooth. A lot of difference from those crates we flew in France twenty years ago. Five Huns—to make the world safe for Democracy.

The Yangtze winds it way below while I circle and watch the bobbing wings behind. "You go upstairs," Colonel Wang had said. "High above the others." And high I was going—but not too high. About 6000 feet. Enough for a good dive. I keep the throttle open and stick her blunt nose toward the sky, and the fourteen cylinders on the Wasp take us upstairs like a bat out of hell. 1150 horsepower. My French Nieuport had 120.

The sun has come up fast, and I swing over to get into its blinding rays, for I've spotted the Japanese bombers far ahead. The others, far, far below, have seen them too, and spread out. 22 to turn back 57, if there's a chance to do it without losing your ships. Fire at them, dart at their blind spots, knock them down—but don't lose your ships. The bombers come lobbing on like a flock of huge vultures hurrying to a feast.

"Wipe Nanking off the map," had been their orders. Colonel Wang had said, "Watch for any who get through. See that they don't get here."

THE two squadrons roar closer and closer to each other—and suddenly death begins riding the wings above the Yangtze. I throttle the Wasp back to idling speed and peer over the side as the Japanese raiders suddenly break up and start back. But only some of them—and for two good reasons. First, because their fuel supply is in their wings—and wings make big targets for incendiary and explosive bullets. Secondly, because if they spread out, some will get through unseen.

Three, among others, do get through. These I look down and see, from my blinding position in the rays of the sun. Three steel filled monsters lobbing on toward Nanking while others bank and circle, their machine-guns chattering. Aces of the Rising Sun. In the rays of the rising sun I bank the Curtiss 75 around and head back.

Then I slam open the throttle and shove forward on the stick, on whose top rest four little buttons in a row. Only this time my thumbs are on the master button, controlling all four guns; two shooting through the prop, two in the leading edge of the wings; all lined to cover a few feet of space at 150 yards.

The air speed indicator suddenly begins to dance wildly as the hand spins over to 350 miles per hour. No fear of stripping the wings from old Betsy at this bone snapping speed—bone snapping should you stick your arm from the cockpit into the air stream—for Uncle Sam is a bit particular about such

things. Even if China did get the first three 75's, one smashed in a China railroad tunnel while going through on a train.

The vultures loom up closer and closer, lobbing serenely along in formation, their gunners leaning indolently in the cockpits, watching out over the tails toward the place where three are falling in flames. Funny thing, I think, that Colonel Julian, the "Black Eagle" of Ethiopia, couldn't get the hang of flying that huge Sikorsky I'd delivered to Haile Selassie. A present from Marshall Field, Jr. of Chicago. The department store Fields, of Chicago. Wonder where the Black Eagle is just now? Probably in Paris.

The 75 seems to be a thing alive. The guns are alive, all four of them, as I press the master button at 150 yards and watch the four streams of smoking tracers lick out and sew the leading bomber from tail to prop. I catch a single glimpse of the gunner in the rear cockpit crumpling with his heart pulped by bullets as I roar down; bullets that slash through the wing tanks and set her afire, only one of them strikes a bomb—in passing through the gunner's body. The 75 almost bucks from the concussion of four 50 caliber Brownings yammering all at once.

Then as I swoop overhead—within feet of the top wing—with surprised goggled faces throwing startled glances my way—the leading bomber with a dead gunner in the rear pit explodes in a sheet of flame. One of the explosive bullets has struck a bomb. One of the many nestling side by side, noses down, in her thick belly.

A TERRIFIC roar reaches up to clutch at the 75's sleek belly, as I go through the explosion. The concussion strikes Old Betsey and hurls her straight up and forward with a terrible lurch. The air is filled with flying debris that rattles off the 75 from tail to prop. Rattles off, because later I find 138 marks on her, including a dented motor cowling, where pieces of the doomed bomber had struck.

Now, we rocket on toward the earth and safety. Safety from the other gunners and safety from coming out of a dive at nearly 400 miles per hour. No, you don't strip the wings off ships built for Uncle Sam—but you do have to scream at the top of your lungs while you slowly ease out of a dive; this to equalize the inside pressure against the outside pressure. One of my friends didn't, and he's now in an institution for the insane. Veins—they burst in his head.

I scream like a man on a torture wheel, and gently ease back on the stick, with the motor's throttle closed. She comes out nobly, but groaning, much like she groaned that day when the three Mitsibishu single seaters dived out of the sun. We got those three Japs the next day. Used a Chinese boy for a decoy at 9,000 feet while I and another American in a Northrup dived on *them* from 18,000. You learn lots of tricks like that in 23 years of looking for a fight. The Huns first used it in France. It worked in Paraguay, too. And in China.

The 75, at last, ceases her groans and levels off. I open the throttle and swing around for a try at the other two, but they've turned tail and fled. Back through the sunlight toward Pootung. Back along the Yangtze toward the carriers anchored at the mouth of the Whangpoo. I head for the others, but the fight is over. Seven invaders of the Rising Sun shot down in flames. Seven or eight more crashed along the river. The others fleeing back—until tomorrow—to the protection of the 48 warships lying off Shanghai.

We fall into formation and head back to Nanking, and see smoke arising within the walls. Some of them have gotten through. But nobody thinks about that now, for the raiders have been turned back—until tomorrow. Or next day. Seven down in flames; thirty-five eagles of the Rising Sun gone to their Emperor's gods. Thirty-five more winging to join them, their crushed bodies in the wreckage of the bombers strewn along the broad Yangtze.

We come in for a landing, and I press the button to let down the wheels nest-

ling inside Old Betsey's battle-scarred belly. Nothing happens. The cables have been blown in two. I reach for the hand crank. Thank God it works, for right ahead of me a young Chinese pilot in a Type 3 Curtiss Hawk has, in his excitement, forgotten his wheels. He makes a perfect three point landing on both prop ends and his tail skids. But *he* doesn't mind.

Nobody minds as he jumps from his ship, jerks off helmet and goggles and in mixed English and Cantonese shrieks, "Yippeee! Yippeee! Me get four! Me get four! Yippeee!" and he hugs a friend and dances wildly. He hugs a gunner, too, as I get out of the cockpit, somehow a bit tired, and look at the 75, and begin counting the wounds on her scarred belly and dented motor cowling.

Wonder what Colonel Julian is doing? Probably in Paris, lounging in his hotel in a pair of silk pajamas. And that reminds me—I suddenly feel thirsty. I need a drink.

LOST TRAILS

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

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

Any man who served with Ambulance Company No. 3, First Sanitary Train, First Division, A. E. F., write Archibald B. Oliver, 1747 Kentucky Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Captain Fred Ewing Ex-Marine of Santo Domingo, please get in touch with Mrs. Sarah Olson of 2103 N.W., Hoyt St., Portland, Oregon, or Ethel Ewing, 136-19th St., E., Holland, Michigan.

Will "Sarge" Ralph Kingsley of Military Specialist Company, A.P.O. 727, write to "Kid" Collins Ewing, Odessa, Mo.

Eugene Barry, in 1912 Chief Steward *S. S. Byron*, New York to S. America. Later heard of in New York and in the Middle West. His brother, William Barry, Tweenways, East End, Lymington, Hampshire, England, would welcome any news.

Richard H. Wells, Box 154, Clearwater, Florida, seeks news of his friend Lee (Bill) Elliott. Last heard from was in 1922, New York State.

Wm. P. Liebenrood, who worked on construction of Madera-Mamore Railway, last heard from at Puerto Veljo, Brazil, in 1914, please send word to G. C. Hagerman, 700 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles.

Mrs. Beatrice Stafford Grigsby, Box 203, Paintsville, Ky., wants word of her son, Jesse John Stafford Franklin, worked in Akron, Ohio, as John Stafford, for Goodyear Rubber Co., last heard of ten years ago.

Word wanted of Calvin William (Slim) Brown, once of Ranger, Texas. By Isaac Simmons, Bloom, Kansas.

Ralph Cornwall or Cornwell, formerly of "American Legion" in Canadian Army, transferred to Intelligence service, reported caught in Germany and shot. Lately reported living. Old buddy, Wayne G. Putnam, R.R. 3, Dayton, Ohio, would like word.

Hans A. Schnell, 253 Cumberland St., Brooklyn, wants word of his brother Fred Schnell, last known address Middlesex Hospital, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

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

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

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

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

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

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

LETTERS continue to arrive about the Peary-Cook controversy, with practically all of them in favor of the underdog, Cook. We have to thank C. W. Cantrell, of Philadelphia; Hardy Roberts, of Austin, Texas; Dr. Fred G. Whamond, of Chicago; "Teejay" of New York City; Robert Johnson of Geneva, Ill.

Excerpts from others follow:

I can't dope out all the technical figures in this "Who-Found-the-Pole?" dog fight going on in Camp-Fire—but I can't help flipping a fin and backing up Amundsen's statement about Eskimos "speaking to please the good white man."

I've stuck my fingers into more seal-oil pots than ninety-nine per cent of these birds who are tossing these fancy "pros" and "cons" at each other and seven years on the coast from St. Michael to Barrow are back of me—

Here's a true yarn to prove the point. Paul Davidovics of Kotzebue, Alaska, will vouch for it—

Old Henry Koppel was postmaster up there. A guy who is still living was Government School Supervisor. Old Henry had helped a lot of families through tough times—and there were always a bunch hanging around for a free cup of coffee. Now when this Superintendent hit the beach, he figured they weren't doing themselves any good hanging around Henry's place. So he called a meeting. Up there the government is "Uncle Sam" and Uncle Sam is alla same God so he got a turn-out and got a bunch of X's on a petition to throw old Henry out.

Well, old Henry just sent a boy out to ask the savages to drop by and he got those SAME X's on a petition to throw the superintendent out.

Anyone who knows Eskimos will tell you they think white men are nuts—Ask 'em!

—Harry Strong, Dallas, Texas.

I have devoted considerable study to the Cook-Peary controversy and also talked to Cook about it possibly hundreds of times. There is plenty about to the matter to be worked out but the public has been educated to accept Cook as a faker and fraud and apparently the newspapers don't want to change that viewpoint.

My interest is that Dr. Cook is an old friend and associate of mine. I have known him intimately for around twenty years and I *know* him to be a gentleman, honest and sincere, and what may interest you is that to my personal knowledge the charges placed against him in Fort Worth, Texas, where he was convicted of conspiracy and fraud, were a great miscarriage of justice. This state-

ment is based on the fact I knew Cook, knew the deal and the circumstances surrounding the entire matter—as I was connected with him—and suffered as he did.

I had the pleasure of a visit to Dr. Cook's home in Thunder Bay, Canada, two years ago and spent the evening with him and his daughter and her husband. I wanted to remain longer but was pressed for time. Cook and myelf went over the old days and he expresed his deep appreciation for what I had done for him in securing his freedom from Leavenworth prison—and you might be glad to know it was my efforts that liberated him.

As long as I was with Cook I never at any time heard him belittle Peary—but then if you know the Doctor you will realize his kindly nature. Cook stated that in his opinion Peary did not intend to try to discredit Cook but his wire was sent in a fit of anger—that Peary had spent most of his life in an attempt to reach the North Pole and when he found another had accomplished that he permitted his temper, which was always bad, to get the better of him—the ambition of his life had been accomplished by another—so it was too much for him. My study of the controversy clearly shows Peary could not have reached the pole. There was no reason why Cook should not have reached the pole, possibly not right on the "spot" but if he did not it was merely due to some slight misreading of his instruments and he could have placed himself on the "zero" point just as well. However, he reached the general location without question but there was no way he could leave a permament mark due to the fact all was floating ice. And in this connection did you observe the Russian Polar party showed a drift of about 750 miles in 200 days? Cook always stated the drift was around four miles a day and the Russians proved him correct.

—L. A. McKercher, Los Angeles, Calif.

COMRADE Wales H. Evans, of Montclair, New Jersey, who has sat at the Camp-Fire since its beginnings, sends a poem with this letter:

During the latter part of 1899 or the early part of 1900 there appeared in a small weekly country paper a poem entitled "The Reg'lar Army Man," which was said to be written by Private Arthur J. McKeel of the 17th U. S. Infantry then stationed in Porto Rico.

I thought it one of the best pen pictures of our Regular Army Men I ever read and I felt—and still feel—that had Private McKeel had the genius and reputation of a Kipling, his poem would be running more than a second best to the famous "Tommy Atkins."

It impressed me to such an extent that I have retained it in my memory all these years. I submit herewith a typewritten copy from memory believing that you might wish to use it.

THE REG'LAR ARMY MAN

He ain't no gold lace belvidere to sparkle in the sun,
He don't parade with gay cockade and posies in his gun;
He ain't no pretty soldier boy so lovely, spick and span,
He wears a crust of tan and dust, the Reg'lar Army Man,
The marchin', parchin'
Pipe clay starchin'
Reg'lar Army Man.

He ain't at home in Sunday School nor yet at a social tea,
And on the day he gets his pay, he's apt to spend her free.
He ain't no temperance advocate; he loves to fill the can.
He's kinder rough and may be tough, the Reg'lar Army Man.
The rarin', tearin',
Sometimes swearin'
Reg'lar Army Man.

He ain't no Mamma's darling and he ain't no ladies' pet,
But let a row start anyhow, they'll send for him, you bet.
He don't cut any ice at all in fashion's social plan,
He gets the job to face the mob, the Reg'lar Army Man.
The willin', drillin',
Made for killin',
Reg'lar Army Man.

There are no tears shed over him when he goes off to war,
He gets no speech or prayerful preach from Mayor or Governor.
He packs his little knapsack up and trots off with the van
To start the fight and start it right, the Reg'lar Army Man.
The rattlin', battlin',
Colt and gatlin',
Reg'lar Army Man.

He makes no fuss about the job, he don't talk big nor brave.
He knows he's in to fight and win or help fill up a grave.

He ain't no superhuman but he does the best
he can.
And he's the chap that wins the scrap,
the Reg'lar Army Man.
The dandy, handy,
Cool and sandy,
Reg'lar Army Man.

MAJOR T. J. BETTS writes from Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to give another sidelight to the career of Fritz Duquesne, about whom Arthur Sullivant Hoffman wrote a recent article for us.

In the fall of 1917 I was sent to Fort Totten, New York, as a newly commissioned second lieutenant of Coast Artillery. Fort Totten, while part of the seacoast defenses of New York City, was really a training center for heavy artillery regiments. The officer personnel was a cross section of America at war. We had a handful of regular officers, a few "dug-outs" from the retired list, quite a group of National Guardsmen, and almost a hundred of us, fresh from the training camps, eager, energetic and anxious to find out what made a war tick.

Prominent in our group was one Bill W—. I won't give his name, as his face is still red after all these years. Bill was a man of parts, of travel and of wide and varied experience, including some war correspondence. We all looked up to him and respected him accordingly. One day he came back from town and announced that he had met at the National Arts Club a Captain of Australian Light Horse, who was a veteran of the Gallipoli campaign and who, because of his wounds, had turned an unwilling back on the trenches and was now attached to a British mission to this country. This officer, whose name escapes me, was a charming fellow, said Bill, and could probably be prevailed upon to come out to the Fort and give us some first hand impressions of the War. We were delighted at the opportunity, gave Bill a free hand, and some three days later over a hundred of us assembled at the Club to hear Bill's acquaintance.

There was introduced to us a beautifully turned-out British officer, leather shining and brass blinking. His manner was perfect and typical of what we expected—self confident, modest and given to the trivia of his experiences, rather than to any deeds of derring-do. For an hour he regaled us with a straightforward, and as I have since learned, accurate account of Gallipoli. Then, after regretfully admitting that the campaign had failed, he transferred his attention to the Western Front. And here his presentation subtly changed. The French were hard to get along with, said he, and they were tired, so tired. The British were stout fellows, brave as lions, but they were up against an enemy possessed of devilish technical ingenuity and an absolutely remorseless capacity for destruction. The final impression that he left was that the war was practically lost and that we would shortly expose ourselves uselessly to incredible horrors in a hopeless cause.

He left us pretty wide-eyed. We weren't intimidated, but we were amazed at the war-weariness and pessimism revealed by an obviously intelligent and gallant soldier. Then one Captain R. D. Brown spoke up and said: "By God, that fellow is a traitor and is talking treason. I believe he is a German spy."

Sure enough, some two days later, we read in the papers of the arrest of Fritz Duquesne, for espionage, and by his picture and alias we recognized our dashing captain of Australian Light Horse. I don't think Brown had turned his name in, there hadn't been time, but rather that the civil authorities were already on his trail.

There was one thing about Duquesne that always puzzled me until I read A. S. H.'s piece, "Adventure and Avenger." Why did he, a most capable intelligence agent, jeopardize his primary mission by coming out to propagandize a small group of junior officers? By all the rules of the game, he should have built up his position by being apparently more sanguine of allied success than a whole regiment of Liberty Bond salesmen. I think, now, however, in the light of A. S. H.'s analysis that I understand. We were confronted, not by an agent of organized German espionage, but by an individual at war with the British Empire, on his own, catch-as-catch-can, no holds barred. He certainly turned in a daring, beautiul and momentarily convincing job.

GEORGE PARKE, of Farmhaven, Miss., didn't think our expert was explicit enough about a recent query, and he kindly fills in the details. He signs himself—Aged 70 and still fishing.

I was born near the Gulf Coast and made many a "cast" net. A "cast" net, not a "throw" net, is made in one piece, beginning at the centre, and adding stitches as you go along, in order to keep it perfectly flat when spread out. The center is first woven around a short section of cowhorn or a large brass grommet. Through this the puckering strings are run.

The net has no "handle" but there is stout cotton rope, about a quarter of an inch in diameter, fastened to numerous cotton lines

that are a little thicker than the ones of which the net is woven. These lines terminate just inside of the net when laid out flat, and are fastened strongly to the rope just where it passes through the horn or grommet. There should be a large ring fastened to the junction of the lines, that will prevent them passing through the horn when the rope is taut.

The ends of the lines terminate at the extreme edge of the net and at intervals of about two inches small lead sinkers are rove into the net's rim.

The net is thrown by spreading about half of it over the left arm and shoulder, gathering the rest into the right hand and having the rope fastened to the belt. Then by a swinging circular motion the net is thrown wide open as far as possible, so as to sink to the bottom and encircle a space of water in which a school of fish are found.

The net sinks and encloses the fish and then a sharp pull on the rope will pucker up the edges inwardly, but the ring inside the horn tube will stop any further movement. This forms a sort of bag at the bottom and insures a catch.

The net meshes can be of half an inch or more, according to the kind of fish to be caught. Almost any portion of the country has someone who can weave a net. If not, I will supply information. The shuttles are for sale at most sporting goods houses.

Cast nets are made from six to twelve feet in diameter and the mesh should be of strong cotton or linen twine. Yours for better information.

ACES and eights are still the dead man's hand, according to Ralph Chester Christian, Fleet Air Base, Coco Solo, Canal Zone; and Barney Jansen, Jr., Schofield Barracks, Oahu, Territory of Hawaii; not so, according to F. P. L. of New Haven, Conn. He says they're jacks over eights. He gives as authority the late Alfred Henry Lewis, but great as Lewis was as a Western writer, we think, in view of all the other testimony we have had previously at Camp-Fire, that Lewis made a mistake. Here is an excerpt from the letter:

Alfred Henry Lewis, who wrote of the cattle country back in the late '90's and who knew his West, speaks of this hand in his book "Wolfville." I quote from page 156.

"and three times straight I picks up the 'hand-the-dead-man-held', jacks up on eights, an' it wins every time."

Lewis wrote of a time where poker was played in its pristine form and had not been corrupted by nor cluttered up with such abominations as *deuces wild, one-eyed-jacks, pot-bellied-kings* nor *bow-legged-queens* and the like.

MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY sends in an interesting small item. He was reading "The Lost Battalion," by Thomas M. Johnson and Fletcher Pratt (Bobbs-Merrill, 1938) and on page 97 the narrative comes to an interlude of the desperate fighting in the Binarville ravine. Three American soldiers huddle in a trench and reckon up their scanty food. They debate whether to eat one cracker each or half a cracker and then smoke a cigarette. This sentence follows:

"It was half a cracker and a cigarette; with the latter Larney unexpectedly produced from inside the signal-panel roll a copy of *Adventure* magazine he had carried up through the advance, and began to read a story about pirates on the coast of New Guinea."

CAPTAIN MARTIN, author of "I Shoot Down a Japanese Bomber," returned recently from China. He was the first foreign pilot to bring down a Japanese plane. One of his valued possessions is a letter from Madame Chiang bearing witness that for a time he flew for her as her personal pilot.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

FOX 'em when you box.

Request:—I am an amateur boxer, eighteen years of age, fairly fast and have good wind. My big trouble is lack of hitting power. I just can't seem to hit hard.

In an amateur boxing tournament (A. A. U.) held in February, I won the championship in the featherweight B. class but did not get a single knockout. I didn't mind this so much, but I believe that hitting power goes a long way in the boxing game; so I want to develop a hard punch, even if it should lessen my speed.

If you can help me to do this I will sure appreciate it.

—Lloyd Wagoner, Roswell, N. M.

Reply by Captain Jean V. Grombach:—I know exactly how you feel because I also competed in the A. A. U. and won a championship without being able to knock out anybody when I first began boxing. I found that the main reason why I couldn't knock anybody out was because I deliberately tried to get knockouts.

A knockout punch in my opinion is half surprise and half power. If you do not believe this, just think a minute about how much worse it is to get hit when you don't expect it as against being able to either ride a punch, or at least mentally steel yourself to receive it. When you are trying for a knockout, you usually contract your muscles, cock your right hand and get set. This naturally gives your opponent a chance to adjust himself mentally if not physically for the punch. So my first advice to you is, do not deliberately try to knock anybody out but content yourself with the business of keeping relaxed, and of keeping on the move, and of mixing up your punches, and of using plenty of left hand, and of keeping your opponent from getting set.

The next thing to remember is that in order to generate the power sufficient to knock out someone you must have two things: timing and force. By timing, I mean the tautening up of every muscle in your body at the instant of impact from complete relaxation, which should be your condition as you box. By force I mean the power or strength in your punch which is acquired by the development of your hitting muscles in your shoulders and by your proper form in punching with regard to the follow through of your body.

These two things you can best attain by doing lots of work on both the light bag and the heavy bag. Then some day—as no doubt you will have the same experience as I had—without expecting it, you will suddenly begin to knock out your opponents and you will notice that they will all fall forward and not backwards. This will prove first, that they have been surprised, and second, that they

have been hit with a "shock punch" rather than a "push punch" and that you have finally coordinated power with timing and have contracted your muscles exactly at the moment of impact, or in other words just at the moment your fist met your opponent's chin.

Then you will have to be careful because you will begin to count so much on a knock-out that you may lose a number of bouts on points.

TRAIN slowly and patiently before you take the leap.

Request:—I have a three year old mare that, as far as I can discover, is from good saddle stock. She is very well built in the fore quarters, and is a classy type of horse.

While in pasture one day some boys chased her and she jumped over the fence, which, incidentally, is a four foot one, in as pretty and clean a jump as I have ever seen. Yet, when under saddle I attempted to take her over a small two foot hurdle she balked every time and absolutely would not jump. Since then I have seen her jump fences and obstacles about the place while she was out to pasture.

I would like to get your opinion about this mare. Is there some method I should use in schooling her to jump? She seems to like to jump when free, but absolutely will not jump under saddle. She is sound and has no other vicious or stubborn traits.

—Richard Frank Eiler, Indianapolis, Ind.

Reply by Major R. E. Dupuy:—Your letter presents a problem not infrequent—a horse with natural jumping ability but which will not jump while ridden. There are several possible causes. There may be some foot or leg weakness in front which, bringing pain to the animal when burdened, causes it to refuse; or the animal may have a sensitive mouth which you, unwittingly, may pull when jumping, again causing pain and, in consequence, a refusal. Or, for one reason or another, the animal has not connected jumping with being ridden. You say that the animal is only three years old. She may not have been sufficiently ridden to really regain her balance while being ridden—and in that case, unsure of her footing, just won't take a chance.

The first remedy is—don't attempt to force her. Lead her several times over small obstacles, like a log on the ground, and each time pet her and give her a bite of apple or carrot or handful of oats. Then, riding her, walk her over a two-by-four or small log lying flat on the ground, rewarding her again. When this has become a habit, take her over the same thing at trot and gallop, being particularly careful to let her have her mouth as she goes over. This is all-important. Then raise the obstacle, to about a foot—not more—and take her first at a walk, then trot, with someone on the other side with a reward—each time. Do nothing else for a week, but do it only a few times at any one period; don't let her get tired of doing the same thing. You will need patience. Sooner or later she will associate the obstacle with reward.

I am assuming that you know how to jump—how to sit your animal at the jump. If not, let someone who does train the horse.

Procure from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, a copy each of War Department Training Regulations No. 50-45, "Instruction mounted, without arms," 10c and No. 360-10, "Training remounts," 5c. Both will bear reading. Through the Cavalry Journal, Washington, D. C., you can procure "Riding and Schooling Horses," by Chamberlin, an excellent work.

MODEL ships for midget Magellans.

Request:—Can you recommend a book regarding the building of ship models—something that will tell me about the wood and tools to use and all necessary information?

—Josef von Freiberg, Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Charles Hall:—Let me suggest the following:

Ship Model Builder's Assistant, by Charles G. Davis. Also, any other books on the subject by him. Look them up at your public library.

Ship Model Book, by W. P. Douglas and others.; published by *The Rudder.*

Ship Model Making, three volumes, by E. Armitage McCann. Not as thorough as the Davis book but tells how to simplify.

Model Sailing Craft (Sailing and racing models) Daniels and Tucker. An English book.

Model Racing Yachts, by Thomas Daling.

You'll no doubt find others at your public library. Study them before you buy.

Kennedy Brothers, 205 East 42nd St., New York, has a good list of nautical books.

AN IDEAL vacation—just nothing to worry about.

Request:—A couple of friends and I are planning a camping trip and we would like to have a little information.

We are planning to go up to Bristol, Tenn., and come down the Holston River to Knoxville, and on down the Tennessee River to Decatur, Ala. We think we can do this in four weeks.

We would appreciate it very much if you would send us your opinion of our proposed trip and also a list of supplies and equipment necessary to make this trip. We would like to get by as cheaply as we could on the equipment, as we will have to discard most of it when we reach Decatur.

—George W. Estes, Jr., Birmingham, Ala.

Reply by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—I have delayed answering your letter until I could get in touch with two friends who went down the Tennessee River by canoe a couple of years ago, and get their ideas on your plan. From their comments I'd say, "Go to it, but why stop at Decatur?" These boys started at Knoxville and went to Memphis in three weeks, and at that spent quite a bit of time loafing and fishing en route. Kingsport, your probable point of starting, will be only three days from Knoxville, so with your four weeks available why not go on down the Tennessee to the Ohio, then to the Mississippi and down that as long as your time lasts?

Charts of the rivers, from Knoxville on, can be procured from the U. S. Engineers Office, Nashville, showing channels, shoals, sandbars, rocks, rapids, and often springs close to the bank. Write them for description and prices.

For outfit, in addition to boat and spare clothing, (be sure to include poncho or rain-shirt), I'd suggest something like this:

Tent, umbrella style, with poles. See Montgomery Ward & Co. catalog.
Waterproof ground cloth.
Cooking kit.
Cooking grate of light iron rods.
Axe, Boy Scout type.
Blankets or sleeping bags.
First-aid kit, with plenty of fly dope.
Fishing tackle.

All the way you will seldom be more than one day away from some town or city, so I'd not make any elaborate plans as to provisions, just two or three days supply, and then restock at each town. That way you will have fresh bread, meats, vegetables, etc., with a minimum of packing and preparation.

Best wishes for a successful trip.

THE good archer will get his game.

Request:—During the past several months, I have been increasingly interested in archery; and I am therefore writing to you to ask a few questions regarding my new fancy.

I would like to get me a bow and arrows with sufficient strength to kill the game animals which live in this territory. As you perhaps know, many sportsmen now enter the woods in hunting season with only a bow and quiver of arrows, and although they are hardly ever successful, they do enjoy themselves immensely.

I would appreciate it if you were to tell the name of some store where I could purchase a good stout bow and a quiver of arrows.

I would also like to have you tell me if a person could become sufficiently proficient in this art to kill rabbits and small game. Any instructions in handling the bow will also be appreciated.

—Norman W. Grigg, Rogers City, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—There are a number of places where you can obtain good Archery tackle near you. You might write to the Archery Sales & Service Co., 617 So. State St., Chicago, Ill.; to the Wolverine Archery Tackle Co., Coldwater, Michigan; to Wayside Craft Shop, Wayland, Mich.; to the L. E. Stemmler Co., Queens Village, Long Island, N. Y.

I would suggest that you send to a magazine called *The American Bowman Review*, which is published in Albany, Oregon, and get a book by James Duff called "Bows and Arrows" which will tell you all you want to know about shooting.

As to hunting, I can say that the bow will kill any game that walks the earth. I have killed everything from mountain lions down to mice with it, and when three men can go out in the snow and bring back twenty-seven rabbits, as three of us did back in 1932, it is proof that the bow alone, if properly used, will fill the hunter's pot, with all that needs to go therein.

THE skin game.

Request:—Could you give me information on the marketing of skins of wild game such as buffalo, leopards, etc., killed in Uganda?

What are the prices paid for the skins, and what skins are more in demand? Could you tell me what company deals in these skins?

—Otto Farrell Horton, Pearl Harbor, T. H.

Reply by Gordon Mac Creagh:—You're up against what I learned to my own great grief and unbelief.

This business of selling skins to commercial houses is one of the biggest blow-outs that a hunter gets.

You don't say whether you mean "dressed" skins, or just dried. Nor whether you have any skins on hand, or hope to get them after your hitch is up in that man's navy.

Here's what I have found. I went to Africa, South America, places generally. I must have brought back, all in all, half a ton of skins, one kind or another.

Disposing of them wide and large, buffalo (since you specifically mention that) didn't pay cost of the salt on the hide. Tanners get all the cow critter they can use. African angulates generally, (zebra, kudu, wildebeeste), don't pay the cost of transportation.

Soft-skinned or fur critters, (lion, leopard, tiger). It'll give you heart failure to learn what a dealer will pay. TEN DOLLARS! *If* you have a perfect skin. The reason; dealers have their agents in skin-exporting countries who buy up and ship fur skins in bales of a thousand at a time. You and I can't compete against that.

There remains the angle of "dressed" skins. That is to say, you import your skin, taxiderm it yourself, or have it done—and don't ever forget that, if you want to do it yourself, you've got to get it soft enough and white enough to compete with professional taxidermists. When finished, mounted, if you like, you can peddle it, not to furriers or stores. They get theirs cheaper than your taxidermy bill. You can peddle your nice skin among friends or from door to door.

So that's that for skin business. The best I've ever found out. And if you find out any better, I've got two fancy specimen robes right now at the James L. Clark studios in New York, waiting for a buyer who'll pay for good taxidermy.

AN HOBBYIST needs a lift. We'll forward letters to Mr. Kolbe if any readers have more information.

Request:—I have been constructing, on and off, small working models of the projectile throwing weapons of the ancients. Most have been constructed from pictures in history books, in which the small details are not shown. In particular the triggers, or firing mechanisms, have eluded me and my own designs are inefficient. One model of a ballista has a satisfactory release, but it is not adapted to mangonal or trebuchets, where the wheel and rope are the means of drawing the various arms and balances. Books on Arms and Armor in our Public Library do not discuss this type of weapons except generally, and I thought perhaps you might be able to give me a lead. A few weeks ago, *Life* had pictures of some models constructed by Jerome Laudermilk of California. But again the details were missing. My knowledge on these weapons is rather skimpy, and on such machines as the onager, scorpio, and Roman arrow machines, I have little or no ideas whatsoever. There are probably others about which I have not heard, but some day I hope to have a rather complete collection.

Any references in books or other sources known to you, would be gratefully accepted. If however this material is out of your field, my thanks to you for having heard me out.

—Harry Kolbe, Flint, Mich.

Reply by Captain R. E. Gardner:—Your letter was the first I have received relative to projectile-throwing engines, in eleven years with Ask Adventure. In my effort to answer your inquiry I was brought up short, with the realization that my notes on this very interesting subject were all too meager.

I find a note to the effect that one of the earliest allusions to such an engine is to be found in the Bible (Chronicles XX, vi, 15). This reference tells of the employment in Jerusalem by Uzziah of engines that would hurl arrows and stones. Harold Lamb in his "Tamerlane, the Earth Shaker" pgs. 265-66, alludes to the trebuchets and mangonae used during the Crusades by the Arabs to cast heavy shells of clay filled with naphtha. The ballista, catapulta, onager and trebucket are mentioned in the U. S. Ordnance Department, Handbook of Artillery, (U. S. Printing Office, 1931.) but technical details are lacking.

I would suggest that you try to secure "Ancient Armor," John Hewitt, at your local library. Try the various standard works treating with the development of artillery. Sorry that I can't be of more assistance.

Turn to page 112 for Trail Ahead—news of next month's issue.

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

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Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 603 Brainard Av., Libertyville, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt water; bottom fishing, surf casting, trolling; equipment and locations.* C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

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Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo; the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 161 Ferguson Av., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No 3, BOX 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3486 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Ethnology: *(Eskimo)*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America, Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Police, City and State—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★**New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, 245 Botany St., Kingsford, New South Wales.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

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Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

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Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 29 Baldwin St., Aimes Pt., West Haven, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **4** *New Jersey.*—F. H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J. **5** *West Va., Md., District of Columbia.*—ROBERT HOLTON BULL, 842 Spring Ave., South Hills, Charleston, W. Va. **6** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care *Adventure.* **7** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia.*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

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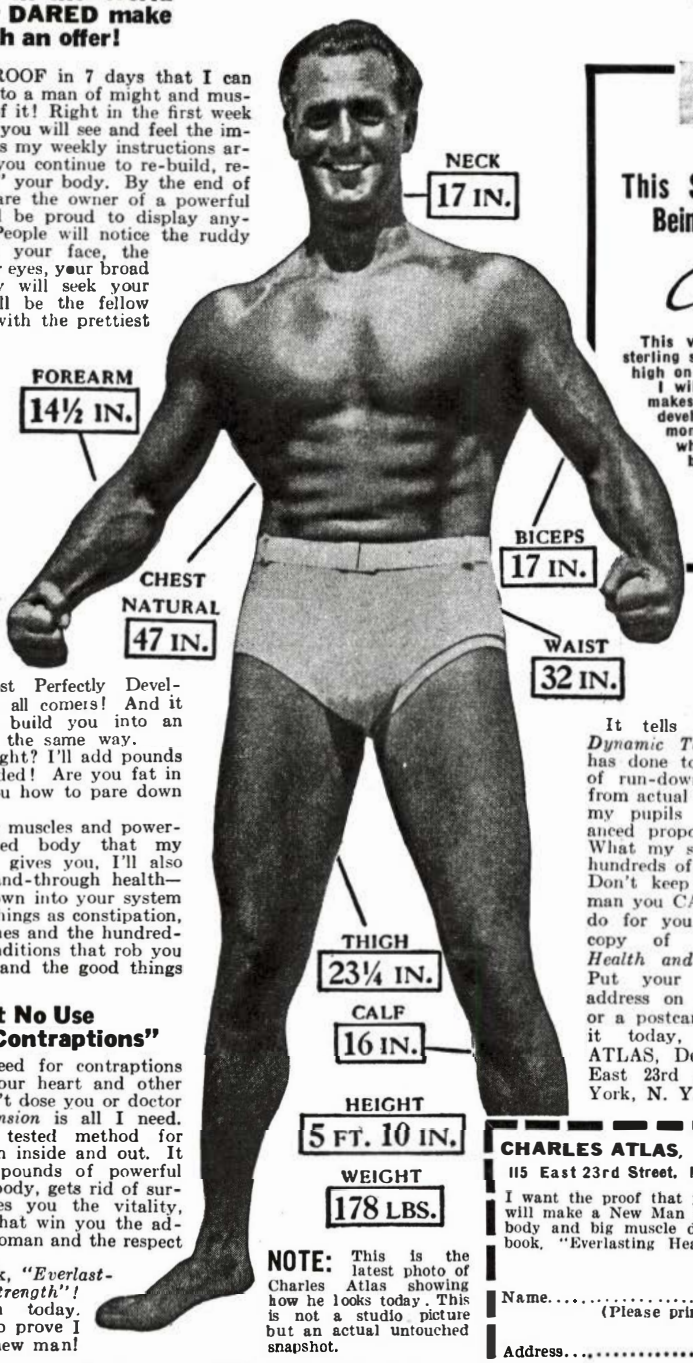

NOTE: This is the latest photo of Charles Atlas showing how he looks today. This is not a studio picture but an actual untouched snapshot.

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BUSINESS GIRL—1938 MODEL—Office manager Olive Tucker keeps disarmingly calm despite nerve-nagging phones, buzzers, interviews. "If anyone needs healthy nerves, I do," Miss Tucker smiles. "Camels never upset my nerves." Later—to the roof gym for a quick work-out. Shower—rub—a Camel—and she's off again! Tired? Miss Tucker's answer: "Camels give my energy a refreshing 'lift.'"

Cigarettes may *look* alike—but what an appealing difference there is in Camels!

You'll be interested to read what Miss Tucker, successful young office manager, said to Miss MacGregor about the difference between Camels and other cigarettes (at right).

MISS TUCKER entertains *thoughtfully!* There are lots of Camels around. Miss Tucker says: "Camels are the favorite with my guests and are delightful for topping off a meal. During and after dining, I smoke Camels 'for digestion's sake.' Camels set me right!"

"I'm very glad you've brought that question up, Helen. I've tried as many kinds of cigarettes as most people, I guess, and I'm amazed at how *different* Camels are. Camels are extra-mild—they never bother my throat. And Camels taste good, yet never leave that 'cigaretty' aftertaste. In so many ways, Camels *agree* with me."

A matchless blend of finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS—Turkish and Domestic

PEOPLE DO APPRECIATE THE COSTLIER TOBACCOS IN CAMELS

THEY ARE THE LARGEST-SELLING CIGARETTE IN AMERICA

ONE SMOKER TELLS ANOTHER

"CAMELS AGREE WITH ME!"

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