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Adventure

DECEMBER

THE JAWBONE OF SHAMUS MACROOM
by WM. CHAMBERLAIN

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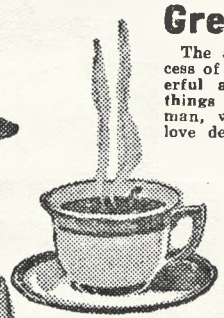

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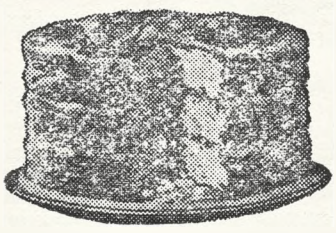

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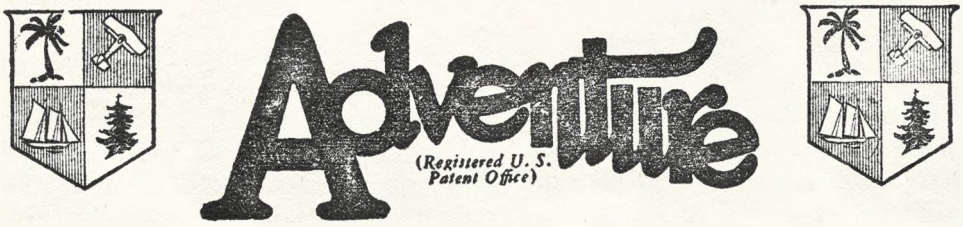

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Cover by Wesley Neff

Headings by John Clymber and I. B. Hazelton

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

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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.

John F. Rush, formerly of Tacoma, Wash. Last heard of in Chico, Calif. Any news of him or his whereabouts will be gratefully appreciated. Address any information to Mrs. Marie A. Carney, 6445 N. Commercial Ave., Portland, Oregon.

Lou Raitt. Served in Co. 980, C.C.C. Baker, Oregon. Later served in the U.S.A. in the Philippine Is. Last heard from he was working somewhere out of Oregon City, Ore. Anyone knowing his whereabouts please write to Hilton Collins, Gen. Delivery, Anchorage, Alaska.

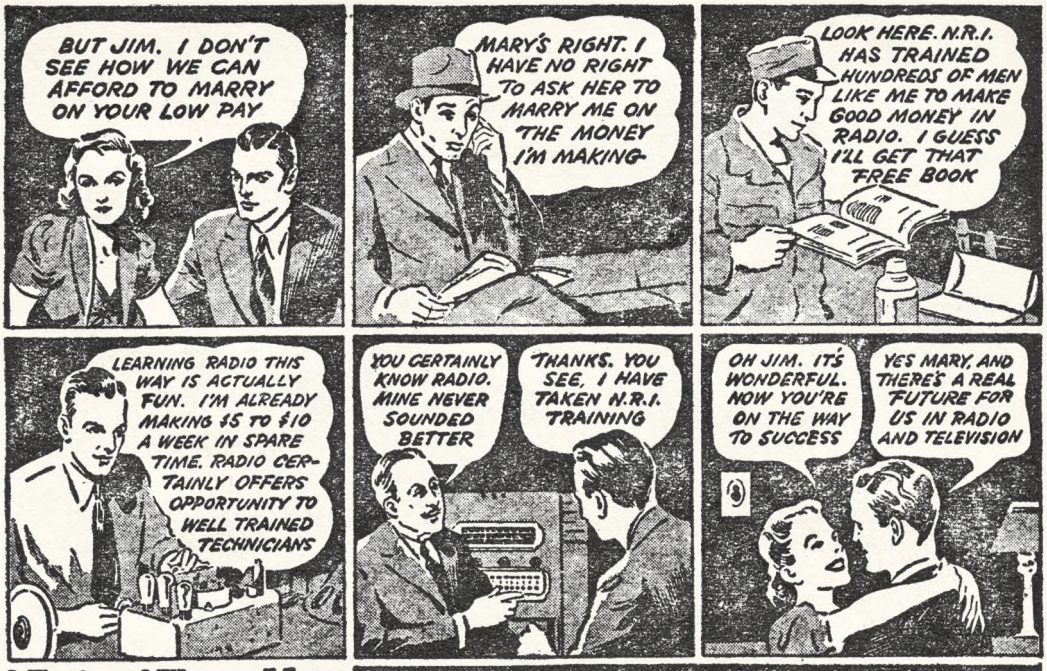
Wanted: Information concerning Frank Arch. Rowan who lived in Brooklyn, N. Y. and married Ellen Duffy. About twenty years ago he went to war. Very urgent. I have good news for him. Philip Eichorn, 126 E. Jefferson, Detroit.

Wanted: Information of one Dolores Perkins whose last known address was c/o Wagon Lits #27, Alcala, Madrid, Spain, June 9, 1935. Her mother is ill and very anxious to hear of her whereabouts. Communicate with Mrs. Frances Brewer, 1166 West Jefferson Street, Los Angeles, California.

Joseph Kubrich, usually known as Jess or Jay Reid. In 1932 he was in Upton, Wyoming, on the 3-S Ranch; at one time worked on the old 101 Ranch, also for S.Y. at Gillette, Wyoming; also at C/O Ranch, Newcastle, Wyoming. He is now 34. Write his sister, Theresa K. Ostrowsky, Venice, California.

The "East-Midwest Post, Veterans A.E.F. Siberia", is appealing to your very helpful "Lost Trails" column in trying to locate the scattered remnants of the Siberia Expedition of 1918-20. To all ex-Wolfhounds located, I shall gladly send information regarding the

(Continued on page 125)



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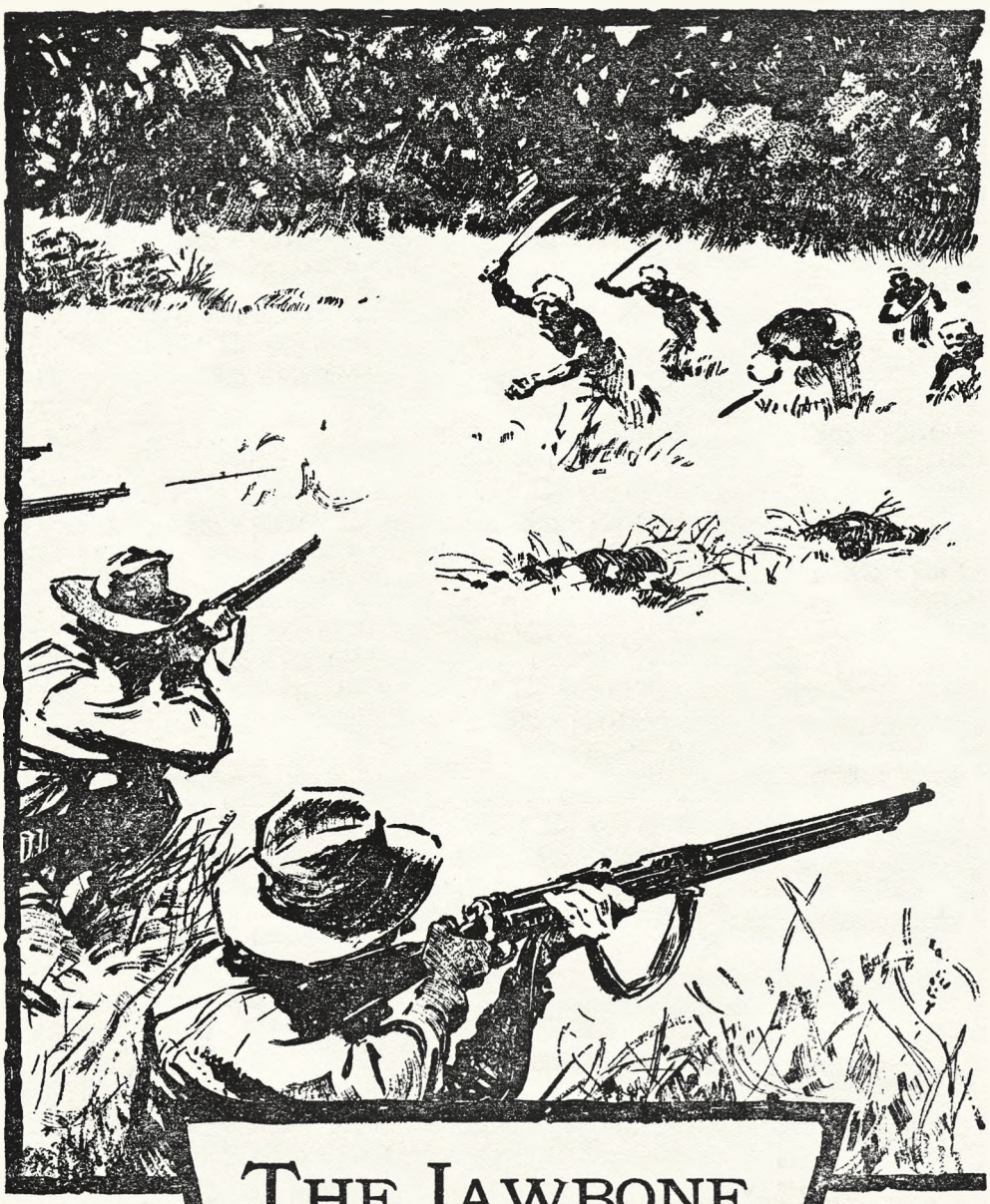


THE JAWBONE OF SHAMUS MACROOM

eight men with Krags -usin' them cool an' careful—can do a lot of execution.

by WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

And Samson said: "With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jawbone of an ass I have slain a thousand men."

Judges—15:16.

THE story is an old one and it is long since I have read it last. Still, as I remember it, it goes this way.

The thing happens some time ago down in the River Jordan country. There is a young feller there who goes by the name of Samson, although it is likely that O'Samson would have suited him better, since he is an umbrageous lad with red hair an' a temper which is sudden an' scandalous to see. Not that he is a bad lad at heart, you understand—he is good to his folks an' a hard worker when the spirit moves him.

No, the main complaint that the neighbors have got to make about the boy is that he persists in brawlin' continuous with the Philistines. These Philistines happen to be the party in power in the Jordan Valley at the moment, the Outs

—the same comprisin' the Samsons an' their neighbors—havin' about the same status as a Republican livin' in Texas. That bein' the case, the activities of young Samson prove embarrassin'. So they call a town meetin' one evening.

A feller in a long gray beard gets up an' makes a speech at some length.

He says, shakin' his head solemn: " 'Tis not entirely clear to me mind just what we are goin' to do about ye, Sammy. A week ago, come Friday, ye attends the party which old Jephenneh, the Timnite, throws for his daughter."

"Aye," says this Samson, grinning. "A grand party it was, too."

The gray-beard scowls an' goes on. "Well, what happens? Ye break the heads of a half a dozen Philistines, an' now we have a fresh batch of grief upon the heads of us!"

"One of 'em was a squint-eyed man, an' I cannot stand squint-eyed men," says young Samson. "The rest just sort of got hurt incidental."

The gray-beard is some bitter.

"All well an' good—for you!" he says. "A pretty kettle of fish for everybody else! Instead of visitin' their reprisals on your own head, where they belong, these thrice-condemned Philistines work off their spleen on the rest of us who are as innocent as babes new born."

The old man pounds on the table for order again.

"Sam," he says, "we want an answer. Either you are goin' to promise that you will stop stirrin' up rows with the Philistines or we are goin' to take steps."

"What steps?" Samson asks.

The old man says grim: "Just one more ruckus, Sam, an' we will tie you up with a piece of new clothes line an' will deliver you to the Philistines in person. Like as not they will chop you up for fish bait, such bein' in the nature of the heathen."

"Then they would be right surprised at the fish that they caught," Samson says under his breath.

HOWSOEVER, bein' a good boy, he promises, an' for a while he lives up to his word like a gentleman. Them that knew him well predicts that it won't last long, though, an' it don't. Maybe I have not mentioned that Samson's mother-in-law is a Philistine but she is that an' an old hellion to boot.

It is largely on account of her that the lad gets into trouble fresh with the city fathers—howsoever, that is another story.

Well, the board of aldermen hold another meetin'. Samson is again present, only this time he is tied up tight, the same as promised, in a piece of new clothes line.

The grandpappy hammers on the table for order.

"Sam," the old gaffer says, "we have give you fair warnin'. Do ye have anything in the way of mitigatin' circumstances to offer before we throw ye to the wolves?"

Well, Sam is tryin' to look downcast, but there is a merry light to the eye of him, for he has spent a dull fortnight past, bein' on his good behavior, so to speak.

He winks at a couple of pretty colleens who are in the crowd an' scratches an ankle with the toes of his other foot.

"What would ye consider to be extenuatin' circumstances, grandpappy?" he asks.

"Well," the old man says judicial, "floods, fires, storms at sea an' acts of God are considered as such in the usual case. 'Tis not plain to me mind how any of these would apply in your own case, howsoever."

"Ah," Samson says, laughin' crooked out of the mouth of him, "it is plain that ye do not know me mother-in-law, then."

"Enough!" the gray-beard says, angry. "Clerk, do ye read the charges to the prisoner."

So the town clerk, who is a skinny little runt with chin whiskers, gets up an' reads through his nose from a long paper.

"Whereas," says the clerk, "the said Samson has again committed a breach of the peace, towit: he has collected three hundred foxes together an' he has tied the tails of the three hundred foxes together, two by two, an' he has tied a firebrand to each pair of said tails an' he has lighted said firebrands an' has

turned foxes an' firebrands loose together into the fields an' vineyards of the Philistines; an' whereas said firebrands have lighted fires which have caused considerable damage to said vineyards an' fields, to say nothin' of the olive trees, an' whereas said Philistines (a pox be upon the lot of 'em) are more than somewhat upset on account of the afore-mentioned events an' promise to be considerable ugly about the whole affair; be it hereby resolved, then, that the said Samson—he bein' directly responsible for the whole unpleasantness—shall be bound with a rope an' delivered to the said Philistines forthwith."

"Delivered to the Philistines, eh?" Samson says.

"To do with as the Philistines sees fit," the clerk concludes, sour. He squints at Samson. "An' may the Lord have mercy upon 'em," he adds under his breath.

WELL, to make a long story short, they take Samson an' they set him out on a rock in the sun an' leave him there to reflect upon his peccadillos. It is maybe four o'clock in the afternoon an' he is gettin' drier than one of Father Mahoney's sermons when he hears the sound of men an' horses comin' up the gulch. He raises up, then, an' sees that it is young Jake Pharpar with maybe a thousand men of his bodyguard behind him.

This Jake Pharpar is a face card of some kind among the Philistines—just what sort I do not know, but I gather that he ranks some place between a pair of sevens an' a busted straight. Be that as it may, he is a pimply faced young rat with a soul which is steeped black in meanness. He sees Samson tied upon his rock an' reins in his horse.

"Aha!" he says nasty. "Do me eyes deceive me, or is it me friend Samson spread-eagled there upon the rock like a big frog?"

"'Tis me, ye brown ninny," Samson tells him short. "Me tongue is like a piece of sandpaper in the mouth of me an' do ye be gettin' me a drink an' that quickly!"

This Jake Pharpar laughs ugly an' sings out to his men an' they all close in on the rock. Jake dismounts an' swaggers up slow. Two years before Samson has stole his girl away from him an' he has not forgot.

"Water?" he asks sweet. "Aye, it is water that you'll be screamin' loud for, friend Samson, before ever I am done with ye! Here is but a taste of it!" an' he cuts Samson a dirty one across the face with the lash of his ridin' whip.

Well, Samson lays there very quiet while he looks at this feller. Then he looks at the Philistines who are gathered around to see the fun.

He says slow an' with a great dignity: "Jake, ye should not have done that. Now do ye loose me an' get me a drink of water, else I am like to lose me temper with ye."

"I will cut me initials in the feet of ye with a red hot iron!" says this Jake Pharpar. "I will pick out your eyes an' will feed them to the goats! I will—"

Sayin' which, he hauls off an' hits Samson again.

Well, as I have said, this Samson is a reasonable an' a peace-lovin' young feller, but it is too much to ask of the boy that he lie there with the thirst bad upon him while this Pharpar squirt polishes him off with a ridin' whip. So he busts the ropes which they have tied him up with an' he climbs down off of the rock. There is the jawbone of an ass layin' there an' Samson picks it up an' looks at Jake Pharpar.

"Jake," he says quiet, "I reckon you had better scoot back home to your maw because this has been a long an' tryin' day for me an' now I feel a mad comin' on."

"Take him, men!" this Jake screeches, not havin' no more sense than has a tomtit.

Well, to make a long story short, Samson lights into Jake Pharpar an' his Philistines in a manner which is little short of scandalous. When the dust has cleared away the sight in that gulch would have done an undertaker's heart good to see, an' the only live Philistines is maybe a half a dozen which is footin' it across the hills in considerable haste.

Samson looks around reflective.

"With the jawbone of an ass," he says sort of meditative like, "I have killed a thousand men. 'Tis an unconventional weapon, to be sure. Still, it has its uses as perhaps the soldier men who come after me will find out likewise."

Well, the story goes on that this Samson later gets into trouble over some woman down in Gaza an' comes to a bad end. Howsoever, trouble or no trouble, he was a good lad an' the job that he did there in that gulch has been equalled but once since to my knowledge.

That once is down in Samar, an' it brings to my mind one Shamus Macroom —a laughin' an' red-headed man who is a fighter of parts in his own right.

IT IS in the year 1905 an' I am in Manila on sick furlough while I recuperate from a hammered iron slug which one of the little brown brothers down in Mindanao has bunged into the leg of me a while back. The wound is well healed now, but me furlough still has a matter of some thirty days to run yet an' I am in no hurry to get back to Zamboango.

For one thing the Moros have all become inflicted with peace an' quiet down there at the moment. The regimint is doin' nothin' but garrison duty, an' me friend, Sergint Pinky Malone, writes me that things is about as excitin' as a Sunday in Philadelphia. Then, too, there is another reason why I am content to dally in Manila.

Her name is Marguerita an' she has got black eyes an' a manner of lookin' at a man out of the corner of 'em. Well, I am young in them days with no more sense than has a dickey bird —not havin' learned as yet that trouble flourishes around a woman as weeds flourish in an onion bed. Be that as it may, on this night I am prancin' down the Calle Santo Tomas with a flower on me coat an' the head of me full of tender sentiments an' little else.

Me face gets red still when I think of it.

Up to the moment I have courted Marguerita more or less sub rosa, so to speak, she havin' told me that her folks is unreconstructed Don Castiles who look upon the American soldiery as bein' considerable pernicious in any way, shape or form. I am not musical by nature, but maybe a week ago Marguerita has spoke thusly to me when we meet in secret in the little patio down the street.

"My Michael," she says, "eet ees thee song that you mus' learn so that you weel then come an' seeng to me beneath thee balcony, no?"

"Why?" I ask her puzzled. "It has seemed to me that I have been doin' right well here in the patio in the dark up to now."

"Ah," she tells me, "eet ees that you do not onderstan'. Eet ees thee *costumbre* that thee *caballero* ees seeng beneath thee balcony of thee lady. You weel come, no?"

" 'Tis small experience in troubadorin' that the O'Hares have had," I admit. "Still, if it's the thing to do, Michael O'Hare will be there come Saturday night."

Well, like I said, there is no depth of depravity into which a woman cannot lead a man. I buy a guitar an' I get hold of one Pepe Fernando who tends bar down at the Oriental. I pay him five dollars Mex an' durin' the week he teaches me to play a few chords an' to sing one song. The words is in Spanish an' translated they run something like this, as I remember:

"Little yellow bird, sittin' on a bough,
Tomorrow I will shoot you an' put
you in a pie."

The sentiment is not exactly amorous, bein' more on the utilitarian side, but Pepe tells me that it is highly esteemed as a love song an' I let it go at that. So it is that on this Saturday night I sally forth to my serenadin'. It is a nice night for it, too, the moon bein' three-quarters full an' the evening not too hot.

Well, to make a long story short, there is lights in the windows of Marguerita's house an' so I take station under the little balcony which juts out over the sidewalk an' I raise my guitar to the ready position. I try a chord ten-

tative or two an' then launch out into a recital of the doin's of the little yellow bird.

IT IS my maiden debut in public, so to speak, an' I am a little shy at first. Howsoever, after I have sung it once through I am considerable more confident an' so, on the second lap, I pull out the stops an' get into the swing of the thing. The O'Hares might be a little shy on the melody side of singin' but they ain't ever been accused of bein' lackin' in volume. I hear windows bangin' shut up an' down the Calle Santo Tomas.

I am just startin' on my third chorus when I hear footsteps on the balcony above me an' see a dark figure leanin' over the rail.

Well, I am into the spirit of the thing now, so I sling the guitar on me back and reach for the posy which is pinned to the front of me coat. I pull it loose an' toss it up.

"A rose for me lady fair," I say, or words to that effect.

A voice which a screech owl would not have owned up to answers me back. "Peeg!" it says. "*Americano* peeg! Go away from here queek!"

Aha, I think. Marguerita is bein' coy an' she has sent her mama out to talk with me. I will flatter the old lady with some honeyed words—it will do me no harm to get in good with the family.

"A good evenin' to ye, Madam," I say. "'Tis nice weather that we are havin'. Sure, it is young an' pretty that ye are lookin' this evenin'."

I do not make much headway.

"Peeg!" she says. "You 'ave make thee howl like ten thousan' tomcat. Go away from here!"

Well, something tells me that all ain't well but I am persistent. I have not sweated in the back room of the Oriental Bar for nothing.

"Madam," I retort dignified, "'tis sorry that I am if me voice does not please ye. Howsoever, it was not meant for ye in the first place. If ye will kindly ask Miss Marguerita to step out for a minute—"

She interrupts me with a cacklin' sound which I take is meant to be laughter.

"Marguerita!" she says. "Marguerita ees marry Don Felipe three—four days ago. She ees go to leeve een thee Calle Dos Hermanos w'ile you seeng thee song here like thee great calf wheech ees lose hees mama, no?"

Well, it is a bitter blow at the moment an' it comes to me that I am indeed a great fool to be standin' there in the moonlight with me mouth hangin' open as though to catch flies. The cacklin' of the old hag standin' up there on the balcony does not sooth me either.

"Grandmaw," I say to her impolite, "do ye hush the silly sounds that ye are makin' up there on your perch before I come an' give ye the spankin' that ye deserve."

She screeches once more an' then is quiet—I can hear her feet go shufflin' across the balcony. She will think before she bandies words with an O'Hare the next time, I reflect grim. Well, like I have said, I am young an' do not have the sense which God gives to little potatoes an' majors in the sanitary corps. Later on I learn not to stand under balconies with infuriated females upon 'em.

The water pot catches me square, settin' me down on the stern of me in the street an' soakin' me in a manner something scandalous. Up above that old she-demon is cursin' in seven languages all at once.

Well, for a minute I set there. Then I am aware that I am not alone. There is a man standin' there in the moonlight in the middle of the Calle Santo Tomas. He is a big man, I see, wearin' the stripes of a sergint on his arms, an' he is laughin' with great whoops which displease me considerable.

I get to me feet slow.

"Ye have seen something that has amused ye?" I inquire icy.

"Amused me!" he says. "Friend, I have not seen anything so funny since the day we hanged Bogardus Smith down in San Antonio, Texas. If ye could only have seen yourself, sittin' there with the rim of the water pot about the neck of ye!"

I walk forward slow.

"I am a patient an' long sufferin'

man," I tell him quiet. "Still, if ye do not stop the ass's bray of ye, the two of us will have trouble. Do ye understand?"

He goes into a fresh spasm of laughing, bendin' over an' huggin' his stomach with his arms. "The look on the stupid face of ye!"

I unsling the guitar from around me shoulder an' I swing it with a full an' easy swing. I have paid six dollars Mex for that guitar but I do not regret it. It catches this feller fair an' his head comes poppin' up through it like a gopher poppin' out of a hole in the ground.

"So," he says, "that's the way ye feel, is it?"

"That is the way I feel," I tell him.

WELL, we go to it, an' for the space of some ten minutes it is as pretty a little fight there in the Calle Santo Tomas as ye would care to watch. We are even matched; he is made a little the taller but I have a pound or two of the weight of him. He catches me with a right hand which jars me down to me heels an' then con es in fast swingin' a left which is like a cleaver. I dive away from it, hittin' him at the knees an' the two of us go down into the dirt.

"Laugh now, ye big hyena!" I say, crammin' his face down hard.

He gets a scissors around me body but I go over backwards, breakin' it an' gettin' his boot into me teeth at the same time. I am conscious that there is a hell of a fuss goin' on around us there in the street—doors are openin' an' people are runnin' out screechin': "Fight! Fight! *Los* terrible *Americanos!*" something scandalous.

"Little yellow bird!" this feller says between pants.

I split his lip with a right hook, but I see that he is still laughing. Then he closes one of my eyes with a snappy one-two an' down we go again. I am just twistin' around a little to get a hammerlock, so that I can break his arm, when I hear the sound of boots comin' along fast in the dirt.

"Poleece! Poleece!"

I desist in me activities for a moment an' look. A squad of military police is roundin' the corner at the gallop an' bearin' down on the two of us fast. This sergint sees, too.

"Friend," he says, "it looks to me as though an armistice might be in order for the moment. 'Tis me suggestion that the two of us form an alliance for the purpose of dispersin' the forces of law an' order as represented by these Johns which are now approachin' the front of us. Later we can resume our own private argument."

Well, there is much to be said for the idea.

The squad comes along nice an' deploys somewhat so as to surround the two of us. I see that a tough lookin' corporil is in charge. He saunters up an' stands with his hands on his hips while he looks at me companion.

"So it is you again, is it, Sergint Macroom?"

" 'Tis not William H. Taft," this Macroom tells him soft an' easy. "What do ye expect to do about it, friend Gallagher?"

This corporil smiles, about as friendly as a bucket full of hop toads.

"Ye have been creatin' a riot an' an insurrection in the Calle Santo Tomas," he says, pleased. "Such conduct bein' prejudicial to good order an' military discipline, I am goin' to escort the two of ye to the hoosegow an' lock ye up."

"Oh, ye are?"

"I am. All right, men!"

I glance at Macroom out of the corner of me one good eye an' I see that he is grinnin' crooked. He sings a little ditty out of the corner of his mouth. It is a fightin' ditty in Manila in them days, especially when sung in the presence of the military police, so to speak.

"The Bridge of Spain will groan with pain,
When the M.P.'s march out to battle!"

Well, ye can get much the same result by tossin' a match into an open powder keg. These M.P.'s are big, tough men an' there is a considerable commotion there in the Calle Santo Tomas for

the period of some minutes. Howsoever, me an' Sergint Macroom have a little the advantage, for we are already warmed up an' into the spirit of the thing. For a while we hold our own, but then the M.P.'s begin to get their second wind an' it is plain that the time has come to withdraw in good order.

"Let us counter-march, me friend," Sergint Macroom says to me low. "We will speak again with the Corporil Gallagher upon an occasion when the odds ain't quite so great."

We beat a hasty retreat out of the Calle Santo Tomas an' go down a dark alley at the double. There is sounds of pursuit behind us but, havin' discarded the guitar, we are in light marchin' order an' keep ahead. There is another side street an' we turn into that—strange enough, we come presently to the back door of the Oriental Bar.

"Do ye execute a column left, friend," says Sergint Macroom. "We will outwit Gallagher an' his flatfoots by the superior intelligence of us, to say nothin' of wettin' our whistles at the same time."

So we go in fast, closin' the door behind us. There is a little room, empty, with a table an' maybe a half a dozen chairs an' a kerosine lamp which is smokin'. Macroom stands at the door for a minute, listenin'. He smiles crooked then, an' presently I hear the sound of boots stampin' on away down the alley outside.

"Corporil Gallagher is a good little man but he lacks imagination," Sergint Macroom says. "'Tis a fault that I have noted in him in campaign, so 'tis better that he employ his talents as an M.P. Do ye sit, friend."

CHAPTER II

"DEATH TO *Americanos!*"

PEPE FERNANDO comes in then an' presently he goes out an' comes back with a bottle an' two glasses. Sergint Macroom fills them an' passes one across to me as the two of us sit. Pepe is reachin' for the bottle to take it away but the big man waves him off.

"Scat, ye brown heathen. Do ye not see that me an' me good friend here is thirsty? Leave the bottle be."

"But eet ees five peso, *senor*," Pepe says. "You mus' pay me thee five peso."

Sergint Macroom looks sorrowful an' shakes the red head of him.

"Presently, presently," he says. "Ye have a mercenary cast to the character of ye, Pepe, which grieves me horrid. Do ye now depart into the front room of your grog dispensary an' worry no more about it."

"Five peso, please," Pepe repeats stubborn.

Well, of late I have been havin' a bit of luck at the poker table an' it so happens that I have money this night. I reach into my pocket an' bring out a five peso note, passin' it across the table toward the little brown man. Pepe has almost got his fingers on it when Sergint Macroom picks it away neat.

"No, no, me friend," he says. "This is on Shamus Macroom. Laugh at ye in the Calle Santo Tomas, I may do—allow ye to pay for the first round of refreshments, I will not."

He turns to Pepe. "Me friend, when I say scat it is scat that I mean. Do ye now be on your way instanter."

Pepe goes, sad. "Eet ees now thee thirty pesos that you owe me, Sergeent," he says melancholy. "Pretty soon thee beezness she ees bus,' I'm theenk."

The door shuts behind him.

"To the red nose of ye," Sergint Macroom says, liftin' his glass an' pocketin' me five peso bill absent. "'Tis Sergint Shamus Macroom of the infantry toastin' ye."

"Sergint Michael O'Hare, Cavalry," I answer him back, liftin' me own glass.

"Cavalry, eh? A strange an' incomprehensible breed," Shamus Macroom murmurs. "Still, every man to his own poison, O'Hare. I daresay 'tis better than the quartermaster corps, at that."

Well, we drink an' then we drink again an' presently I begin to feel better. Of a sudden I realize that this Marguerita has been nothin' but an episode, so to speak, an' that the proper pastime for a man is fightin', with maybe a drop or two of good whiskey now an' then on the side.

'Tis after the third one that I perceive that this Shamus Macroom is a man after me own heart. A witty an' entertainin' man who has travelled here an' about an' who has seen the elephant an' hearn the owl, so to speak. After a while Pepe brings us another bottle an' I pay for it, although I can see from the face of him that Shamus Macroom considered it a waste of good pesos.

Howsoever, he says friendly: "O'Hare, although ye are a simple little man, I find ye much to me likin'. 'Tis a shame that ye are not in the army, for it comes to the mind of me that ye would make a good soldier."

"I am in the cavalry," I remind him.

"A noncombatant branch," he says careless with a wave of his hand. "Howsoever, O'Hare, do ye not be embarrassed about the same—we will talk no more about it."

The same displeases me somewhat an' I say stiff: "I carry a chunk of Moro iron in the left leg of me, Sergint Macroom. I am thinkin' that the best that ye can show is bottle scars for the campaignin' that ye have done with the infantry."

Well, Shamus Macroom eyes me thoughtful for a minute. Then he puts down his glass an' unbuttons his shirt slow; he pulls it back so that I can see the naked chest of him. The light is dim back there in the rear room of the Oriental Bar, but it is not so dim that I cannot see what I see.

I am an old man an' I have seen the marks of battle upon many men, yet, never before or since, have I seen a man battle-marked as is this Shamus Macroom. Long, clean cut scars which is white in the smoky light of the kerosine lamp.

"Bolo," Shamus Macroom says proud, buttonin' his shirt again. "Simeon Grueso an' his merry little *ladrones* gave me that down in Batangas a couple of years ago, O'Hare. They laid me on the ground an' chopped at me like I was a piece of firewood."

"Talk on," I say.

SHAMUS MACROOM fills his glass again. "There is little to tell, friend O'Hare. At the time there is a platoon of us at Pagbilao, which is a pleasant enough little *barrio* at that. Things are just active enough in the hills to be interestin' an' me an' the twenty-five men with me enjoy ourselves something scandalous. 'Tis this way, do ye see.

"There is a band of maybe one hundred of the little brown men who have their headquarters back in the hills at the time. They are commanded by one Colonel Juan Dalmacio, who is a fat little man of a cheerful disposition, although a good fighter. Mark ye, O'Hare, I have said that these were *insurrectos* an' not *ladrones,* for there is a difference."

"It seems to me that a Filipino is a Filipino," I say. "Furthermore, 'tis me observation that most of 'em are bad."

"Well," Shamus Macroom tells me, "ye have done your fightin' in Mindanao an' maybe do not understand, so I will explain. Briefly speakin', a *ladrone* is essential a robber an' an outlaw—he is a guerilla addicted to buryin' people in ant hills an' similar unpleasant practices. He is such a man as would make a bonfire out of his old grandmother to read the evenin' paper by.

"Howsoever, it was not so with Colonel Juan Dalmacio's little brown *insurrectos.* They were what ye might call regular troops, organized an' disciplined proper an', accordin' to the lights of 'em, fightin' for their country. Good fighters, too—I have not met up with any since that it has been more pleasure to fight with.

"Well, like I have said, I enjoy the war the way we indulge in it down in Pagbilao at the time I'm speakin' of. We hear rumors now an' again of a big band of *ladrones* which is organizin' somewhere in the interior, but they give us no trouble an' so we give scant thought to 'em.

"Our job at the moment is to chase Colonel Juan Dalmacio an' his men, capturin' 'em when we catch them, takin' away their Remingtons an' sendin' them down to Lucena as prisoners of war all orderly an' proper. Unnecessary blood lettin' is frowned upon somewhat severe by both sides.

"It is in the middle of the hot season an' the *insurrectos* an' ourselves have got sort of an understandin' that we will

confine our campaign to the cool of the day, leavin' all hands free to take a siesta in the afternoon. It was a great plan an' it worked like a clock, O'Hare."

"The thing sounds somewhat irregular to me," I say, tippin' up the bottle again.

"On the contrary, it is a civilized way to make war," Shamus Macroom informs me, severe. "There are enough discomforts that a soldier must put up with without bein' shot in the middle of a hot afternoon. Down in Pagbilao we chased Colonel Jaun Delmacio an' his little brown *insurrectos* enthusiastic over the hills all mornin', but when noon came we knocked off prompt an' went home to lunch. Aye, O'Hare, them were pleasant times down there before this condemned Simeon Gruesco showed up on the scene."

I have paid six dollars Mex for that guitar but I do not regret it.

"He would be the one that used ye for a choppin' block, Shamus Macroom?"

"The same. I will get to him presently. Well, there is only one place in Pagbilao where a man can get a decent drink an' I am there late one afternoon. It is a little place which is run by Colonel Juan Delmacio. I—"

"Wait!" I interrupt, scandalized. "Are ye tellin' me that this Colonel Juan Delmacio, who is the number one boy of the *insurrectos* that ye are chasin', also is the proprietor of the grog dispensary in the town where ye are billeted?"

"Why not?" Shamus Macroom asks, imperturbed. "I told ye, did I not, that it was a civilized war that we are fightin'? Durin' the mornin' Colonel Juan Delmacio puts on his uniform—which is a pair of red pants an' a slouch hat—an' we chase him over the hills. In the afternoon, after siesta, he puts on an apron an' dispenses liquid refreshments—'tis a very satisfactory arrangement.

"Well, I am in there on the afternoon of which I am speakin'. I have a rum an' water in front of me an' I am feelin' good, for we have captured a couple of Colonel Juan's *insurrectos* that mornin', complete with Remingtons an' twenty rounds apiece. They are sittin' outside now waitin' to be sent down to Lucena.

"'Juan,' I say, jokin', 'we will be gatherin' yourself in one of these fine mornings before long.'

"Colonel Juan wipes his forehead with a rag an' grins at me. Maybe I have said that he is a fat and good humored man.

"I take another sip of me rum. 'If ye do not stock better drinkin' liquor soon

we will hang ye to a tree when we do catch ye, Colonel Juan,' I tell him. 'Such as this is a scandal an' a disgrace an' is fit only to melt out the bottom of kerosine cans with.'

"Well, I am about to heap more abuse upon him, so to speak, but I see something an' I stop sudden.

"A door opens at the back of the room an' a girl comes through. The light is some dim in there for it is gettin' along in the evenin', but it is not so dim that I cannot see that she is a beauty. She is the color of old ivory an' she has a red flower stuck in her hair."

SHAMUS MACROOM stops sudden an' reaches for the bottle again. His face looks a little old all of a sudden as he fills his glass full an' drains it. It is some minutes before he goes on, an' I have sense enough to keep quiet.

"She talks to Colonel Juan for a minute an' I sit there lookin' at her, for it is a long time since I have seen anything like her, O'Hare. She turns, then, to go out, but before she goes she gives me a long an' steady look. I know then that we will meet again or Shamus Macroom is not the man that I think he is.

"'An' who would the colleen be, Colonel Juan?' I ask casual after she was gone.

"'It is me brother's girl,' he tells me in effect. 'Her father has died recent an' she has come down from the hills to live in peace an' quiet for a while, such conditions bein' somewhat scarce in the interior at the moment, what with the *ladrones* an' all.'

"'Ah,' I say, satisfied. 'It is plain to see that she is intelligent as well as good to look at. The interior is no place for the likes of her.'

"Colonel Juan Delmacio shrugs his shoulders.

"'Vairy bad,' he says sober. 'Thee *ladrones* vairy bad mans. You 'ave hear of thees Simeon Grueso, no?'

"'A rumor here an' there,' I tell him. 'Not much that ye could put your finger on.'

"Colonel Juan Delmacio mops slow at his bar an' I can see that his fat face is some worried.

"'He ees the bad mans,' he says again. "Maybe he don' like wan fellow—he ees burn those fellow's feet een thee fire—vairy bad.'

"'Well,' I tell him, 'cheer up, Colonel. You got the *Americanos* here to take care of ye—'tis not likely that this Simeon Grueso will dare give ye trouble.'

"Colonel Juan shakes his head dolorous. 'He ees got maybe wan t'ousand mens—those wan. Vairy bad.'

"He speaks the truth, as I find out later."

Shamus Macroom takes a black hod out of his pocket an' packs it slow, then sets there with it between his teeth, not botherin' to light it. I note that the good humor has not yet come back into his face.

"Well," he says, "to make a long story short I find out that her name is Felicia, an' in the days that follows, I gets to know her well, O'Hare." Shamus Macroom stops again an' looks off across the room for a long time. "Aye," he goes on finally, "I knew her well, an' I have not known a woman before or since—white or black—who could hold a candle to her.

"It is one evening when the two of us are sittin' in the dusk an' watchin' the moon come up that I feel her shiver a little in me arms.

"'My Shamus. I mus' go back to thee hills.'

"'Do ye not be silly,' I say.

"'You 'ave heard of Simeon Grueso, *querido?*'

"'Aye, I have heard of him,' I reply absent, for I am more interested in watchin' the shine of the moonlight on the black hair of her.

"Well, I feel her shiver again. 'He has sent me thee word, Shamus. He has said that I mus' come back to heem.'

"'What!'

"'It is that you do not understan',' she says an' her voice is low an' sad. 'Simeon Grueso is my brother. He hates thee *Americanos*, an' he has heard of thee an' me. I mus' go, else harm will come to you.'

"'Nonsense,' I say to her, laughin' unconcerned. 'Do ye trouble the pretty head of ye no more about it. In maybe ten days now me relief will come; then

I will take ye back to Manila where ye will be a great lady.' "

SHAMUS MACROOM fills his glass again an' tips it down. He lights a match, then, an' holds it above the bowl of his pipe but I notice that he does not set the baccy alight an' the match burns down till it scorches his fingers. He drops it on the floor, not seemin' to notice.

He goes on bitter after a minute: "Well, it was a convincin' tongue that I had an' presently I convince her that no harm will come down upon the two of us out of the hills. She wanted to believe, O'Hare. I meant it, God help me—but I did not know the devil that lay in this Simeon Grueso.

"It is in the mid-mornin' two days after while we are out roundin' up Colonel Juan Delmacio's *insurrectos* as usual. We come into a little clearin' where there is a strip of cultivated ground an' a house set at one edge of it. There is a half a dozen black birds hoppin' around the ground in front of that house an' they flap away as we come up.

" 'There is something wrong here, Sergint,' Corporil O'Mears tells me, but I have seen already an' the sight makes me a little sick to my stomach.

"It is Colonel Juan Delmacio which is layin' there. The manner of his dyin' is all too plain to see—a cruel, hard way for a man to die.

"Well, we bury him there an' we fire the volleys over his grave, for he has been a brave an' cheerful little man an' a foeman for whom we have had respect. It is when I am turnin' away from the grave of him that I see something that I have not seen before. It is a scrap of dirty paper pinned to the house with a bit of thorn an' I take it down an' read. It says:

> " 'Death to all *Americanos!* Death and torture to all who befriend the *Americanos!*'

"It is signed: 'Simeon Grueso.'

"For a minute the black anger has me over the thing that this sneakin' an' cowardly *ladrone* has done to Colonel Juan Delmacio. Then, sudden, I remember what Felicia has said to me back there in the dusk. Me blood is like ice in me veins, O'Hare, as I give the word an' the patrol starts back to Pagbilao.

"Well, she is gone, an' the same note is pinned to the house where Colonel Juan Delmacio had used to serve us rum an' water in the cool of the evening."

Shamus Macroom stops an' runs a hand through the red hair of him.

"Ye did not see her again, Sergint Macroom?" I ask finally.

He looks at me for a long minute an' I understand that he has not heard an' that he does not see me there at all. I reach for the bottle, though I know that I am a little drunk by now—it is better so, I think. It is better so if Shamus Macroom is drunk too, an' I push the bottle toward him.

"Drink up," I tell him.

"Aye," he says. "First we will drink, O'Hare. Then we will find Corporil Gallagher an' I will close the other eye of him. 'Tis a great comfort what drinkin' an' fightin' can be to a man upon occasion."

"Ye did not see her again," I ask him soft once more, for I sense that the black dog has come upon him an' it is better that he shake it off. Talkin' will sometimes comfort a man in such cases.

"I saw her again," he tells me. "Me relief comes in due course, but I do not go back to Manila, stayin' on there at Pagbilao instead. Howsoever, the old easy days is gone now, for Simeon Grueso, an' his *ladrones* have come down out of the hills an' are lootin' an' burning an' killing in a manner that would turn the blood of ye to cold water. Bad men, as Colonel Juan Delmacio has once told me.

"Well, I will not bore ye with all that went on, but get to Simeon Grueso. It is late in the year an' I am on a scout into the interior with three men. The thing has been well planned, for we walk neat into an ambush an' the *ladrones* take the four of us. We have no chance; they swarm over us sudden like a wave swarms over a beach. The three with me go down under the bolos in the first rush; for myself, I am not hurt beyond bein' knocked silly by a clout on the head with the flat of a bolo. Later

I find out that there is a reason for that.

"When I come to I see that I am lyin' on the ground bound up like a pig for the market. It is close to dark, but in between the streams of shootin' stars which trouble me eyes some, I see that I am in a *barrio,* for there are houses around me. I try to twist about to see better an' then somebody kicks me hard in the ribs.

"'*Americano* peeg!' a voice says.

"It is a squat an' ugly man who is standin' over me an' lookin' down. His hair has been cut short so that it stands up in little bristles an' his face is crisscrossed with scars. Well, I do not feel so good at the minute an' I wish that I was back in Brooklyn, New York.

"'*Americano* peeg!' he says again for he is not a man with what you might call an extensive vocabularly. 'So you 'ave fall into thee trap wheech Simeon Grueso 'ave feex for you, eh?'

"I have felt bad before but I feel worse now. While I have been lookin' for this Simeon Grueso for three months gone I have never figured to meet him while tied up like a pretzel.

"This Simeon Grueso sings out something an' presently half a dozen little brown men come up at the trot. They carry bolos swingin' at the sides of them an' I figure that they are goin' to polish off one Shamus Macroom right then an' there. Howsoever, Simeon Grueso has other plans for me, as I find out.

"'*Americano,*' he says nasty, 'Simeon Grueso weel show you thee leetle bed that he has feex for you, eh? Vairy fine!'

"'Fine,' I tell him hearty. 'A good night's sleep is just what I need, for it has been a tryin' day. I thank you kindly for your hospitality. Do ye come down to Pagbilao sometime an' I will see to it that ye are hanged upon a tree.'

"He grunts to his ugly henchmen which has gathered around. They pick me up as if I am the Yule log an' they lug me down the street an' out into a little clearin' which has been chopped into the jungle. There is just enough light so that I can see as they stand me on me feet.

"'*Americano* peeg', Simeon Grueso says, stickin' his ugly face close up into me own, 'I show you thee vairy nice bed, eh?' He waves his hand. 'You take thee look, no?'

"Well, I look but I am not comforted any by what I see. Maybe a half a dozen feet in front of me there is an ant hill —a big one, standin' maybe two-three feet above the ground. It is too dark to see the ants but I know that they are there—big red fellers."

SHAMUS MACROOM stops for a minute an' lights his pipe. Some of the tightness has gone out of his face as he talks about himself an' that gives me a good measure of the man. A tough one, an' scared of nothin' that walks on the earth or swims in the sea. Me liking for him grows.

He goes on. "While I am standin' there I am reminded of a school teacher which I have once had back in Brooklyn, New York. She is a tall an' ugly female an' she was always exhortin' us to be like the industrious little ants. She had a poem which went something like this, as I remember:

"'*The little ant he works all day,*
An' never, never stops to play.
Runnin' about on legs so fleet,
He gathers in good things to eat.'

"'Tis no doubt a pretty sentiment, but it leaves me cold at the moment. I wish that that teacher is here an' that I am back in Brooklyn teachin' the second grade. Howsoever, me pride will not let me show this Simeon Grueso an' his dirty brown *ladrones* that I am perturbed.

"'Well, do ye get on with the business,' I say, 'for I have no wish to be in the company of ye any longer than I can help. If any of me friends was to see me it would be me social undoin'.'

"He smirks at me nasty. 'Ah,' he says, '*manana* we weel make thee beeg fiesta an' then we weel put heem een hees bed, no? Eet weel be so vairy fonnee to watch thee leetle ant when she ees try to get thee honey een his mouth. Yess.'

"So they take me back an' they dump me down on the dirt floor in one of the houses, still leavin' me tied up like a

Christmas package. I suppose that they put a guard at the door, but I am alone in this room as far as I can tell in the dyin' light.

"Well, O'Hare, it is a sick an' scared man that I am—I do not mind admittin' it to ye. I have no doubt but that the *ladrone* will carry out the thing that he has promised an' I remember the day that we find what has been Joey Murphy—he, too, has been treated so.

"Time creeps along slow but nobody comes into the hut, though I can hear voices now an' again an' feet paddin' by in the dust outside. Me tongue is like a sponge in the mouth of me an' me head is one big ache. Howsoever, in spite of it, I must doze for a bit. Then I wake again. Everything is quiet now an' from the cool of the air I guess that it is past midnight. I try again to wiggle me hands loose, but I know that it is no use, for the feelin' has gone out of me fingers from the tightness of the ropes.

"Then, sudden, I hear a faint rustle an' I know that there is somebody in the hut with me. I lay quiet—there is nothin' else that I can do. Then a voice whispers quiet into me ear:

" 'Shamus Macroom,' it says.

"I would have known that voice in hell, O'Hare. It is Felicia. Her fingers are slippin' soft down across me wrists.

" 'Girl!' I says.

" 'Hush,' she whispers. 'We must be careful, my Shamus. They sleep lightly.'

"A knife point pricks into me bare arm an' I can feel the cool of the blade slidin' down. The ropes at me wrists jerk a little an' then come loose. A minute later me ankles are free.

" 'Come,' she says. 'We must not talk.'

"Her lips brush across me face for a second an' then she is helpin' me to me feet. I can scarce stand, an' pains like hot irons torture me feet as the blood seeps back into 'em slow.

" 'Come,' Felicia says to me again.

"She lends me her shoulder to lean upon an' leads me, stumblin' awkward, to the back of the hut. The grass wall has been cut away here a little an' she helps me through the holes an' presently I am out in the starlight. The wind is cool an' good an' I breathe deep of it, for I have not expected to breathe it free again.

" 'We mus' hurry, my Shamus,' she whispers close to me ear. 'Simeon weel be like thee crazee one w'en he finds thees theeng that I 'ave done.'

"Well, we go cautious among the houses, though I am stumblin' like a man that is drunk—me feet will not behave an' I have no more use of me hands than has an armless man. Then we set foot on a trail which leads into the jungle.

"O'Hare, I have known from the first that it cannot be.

"We have been on the trail maybe five minutes when I hear all hell bust loose back there in the *barrio*—an unpleasant sound. I try to go faster, leanin' me weight heavy upon the girl's soft shoulder, for me feet have no more feelin' than chunks of wood. It is no good.

"By the sound of them I know that the *ladrones* have found our tracks in the trail an' it is a matter of minutes before they come upon us. I stop.

" 'It is no good, darlin',' I say. 'It is grateful I am for the thing that you have done. Now ye must do one thing more for me.'

" 'Yes, my Shamus?'

" 'Ye must give me the knife. Then ye must go—an' quickly, for it is not good that this Simeon Grueso find ye here. Do ye kiss me first.'

"She is quiet for a long minute an' I wonder if she has not heard. Behind us Simeon Grueso's *ladrones* are givin' tongue loud on the trail—not far behind at that.

" 'I weel go with ye, Shamus,' she says sober. 'Whereever you go, there I will go, too.'

"Well, I try to drive her away, but it is no good, for she will not go. So the two of us slip into the jungle an' crouch down there in the creepers a little off the trail. We hear the *ladrones* go hellin' by, but I know that they will not be fooled for long an' I am right. Presently they come back, sniffin' like dogs on a scent.

"It is close to dawn when they find us, O'Hare." Shamus Macroom stops an' tips the bottle into his glass. I see that

the old lines have come back into his face. "I remember it well—it is close to dawn."

I SIT there turnin' me empty glass around an' around in me fingers. Outside, in the front room of the Oriental Bar, there is hilarity, but I do not feel hilarious here underneath the flickerin' kerosine lamp. Shamus Macroom goes on:

"Me hands are not much good to me but I have the knife an' I account for several of 'em—I do not know how many —before they get to me with their bolos. Then I go down an' they swarm across, hackin' as though they are choppin' their way through the jungle. It may be that there are so many of 'em that they get in each other's way so that they cannot swing free for I am still alive when they leave me there.

"Well, O'Hare, man is a funny animal an' hard to kill, for I do not die. It is maybe noon when a patrol from the company comes along the trail an' somehow I drag meself out. They bind me up an', after they have burned the *barrio* up ahead, they take me back to Pagbilao. After a while I get well."

"The girl?" I ask although I am afraid to find out.

Shamus Macroom looks at me an' his face is drawn an' haggard. "They found her back in the *barrio* which they burned, O'Hare. She was dead—that devil had put her to the torture for helpin' me to escape."

Shamus Macroom puts down his glass slow an' deliberate an' there is a black hardness to his eyes. "I will find Simeon Grueso if he still lives, O'Hare. I will exact me own price from him for the thing that he has done."

Shamus Macroom slouches down in his chair, starin' at the wall across from him, an' I know that he is back down in Batangas. It is not good. What has been done has been done an' there is naught that will change it now. So I hammer on the table an' presently Pepe Fernando put the head of him in through the door.

"Do ye bring us another bottle, ye brown monkey," I yell at him.

He comes back an' I fill up the glasses once again. I am not sorry to do so, for the thing that I have heard has not been a pleasant one.

"We will have another drink, Shamus Macroom," I say. "Then we will go out into the night an' see what the city has in the way of diversions an' dissipations."

Shamus Macroom rouses himself, shakin' the big shoulders of him an' grinnin' a little crooked, although there is still a tightness to the lips of him.

"It is a good little man that ye are, Michael O'Hare," he says to me. "Ye have listened patient an' I am grateful for it. 'Tis not often that the thing comes back black upon me."

He lifts his glass an' drinks.

"There is virtue in the idea which ye have propounded," he says. "We will therefore sally forth an' descend upon Manila in search of gaiety an' amusement. To the good health of ye once again, Michael O'Hare."

I am aware sudden that there is something special goin' on out in the front room of the Oriental Bar. The noise has quieted an' I can hear the sound of many heavy-booted feet scrapin' across the floor.

Shamus Macroom looks interested an' goes across to open the door a crack an' listen. Then he closes it again an' turns back to me, grinnin'.

" 'Tis that thus-an'-so Pepe," he says cheerful. "He has not been able to forget about the five pesos that I owe him. Corporil Gallagher an' his merry little men are now descendin' upon us in force, O'Hare."

"Well an' good," I say, for the liquor has dissolved the depression which has been upon me. Anyway, it is not good for a soldier to reflect over long on what has gone past—'tis enough to take care of the present, I have found. "Well an' good. We will descend upon this Corporil Gallagher like an army with banners, so to speak, an' we will discommode him considerable."

"Easy, easy," Shamus Macroom says soft, paddin' across the room to the back door. "It comes to me mind that the evenin' is yet young an' it would be a pity to spend it in the guardhouse. There is still plenty of time to attend

to Corporil Gallagher. Howsoever, for the present we shall simulate the shadows of the night an' steal away quiet, as the poet says, goin' out by the back door as Gallagher comes in the front."

SO WE go outside into the alley again. We go along for maybe a hundred yards an' then Shamus Macroom slams into something in the dark. There is a terrible clatter an' bangin', to say nothin' of some feller who starts to orate Spanish at us in a loud tone of voice. Me eyes have got accustomed to the dark some by now an' I see that it is a *carrometa*—which same is a two-wheeled cart with one of them undersized Filipino ponies hitched to it—that we have run into.

"Hush, ye noisy Dago!" Shamus Macroom says in a whisper which would wake a man from a sound sleep a hundred yards away. "Can ye not see that we wish to move quiet, attractin' no undue attention?"

"But *senor,*" this voice protests, "eet ees that you 'ave upset thee bucket wheech ees hol' thee food for thee leetle Jose an' Pedro an' Maria an' Christopher Colombo. Now those one weel not 'ave thee breakfas'."

I recognize the voice then. It is old Vespacian, who lives out Cavite way an' who comes to town in the evenin' to collect the scraps from the Oriental Bar an' similar places of refreshment. Shamus Macroom turns to me.

" 'Tis a clumsy ox that I am, O'Hare," he says contrite. "I have took the bread out of the mouths of babes an' sucklings with the great feet of me. Would ye be havin' five pesos about ye?"

"What is this about babes an' sucklings?" I ask.

"Do not quibble, O'Hare. Ye have heard the man—little Jose, Pedro, Maria—to say nothin' of Christopher Colombo."

"Sucklings, maybe," I tell him. " 'Tis old Vespacian's pigs that ye have been namin' by name."

"*Si, si,*" old Vespacian puts in. "Thee leetle peeg, no? You should see heem, *senor.* She are so cute."

"Pigs, eh?" this Shamus Macroom says thoughtful. He turns dignified to me. "O'Hare, it is a wicked an' wasteful life that the two of us have been pursuin' an' it is grateful that I am that this good man here has come to show us the error of our ways. We will forsake the fleshpots this night. Instead we will seek the simple life, so to speak. We will go out an' look at the pigs."

Well, as I have said, the two of us have partaken of a nip or two an' the night air is exhilaratin', so presently we are sittin' in the back of old Vespacian's *carrometa.* The old man is sayin' his prayers in Spanish, but at Shamus Macroom's urgin' he pokes the pony into a

trot an' we proceed down the alley.

He has brought along the fresh bottle which I have purchased back in the Oriental Bar an' so the two of us sample it, so to speak. After all, we are strangers in a strange country an' it does not pay a man to take chances with the damp. After a minute a thought strikes Shamus Macroom an' he taps old Vespacian on the shoulder.

" 'Tis a long an' tiresome day's work that ye have done, no doubt," he says. "Do ye have a drink, my friend. 'Tis a special brew which I have found to be good for ailments rangin' all the way from fallin' hair to housemaid's knee."

Well, old Vespacian, bein' on the reprobate side anyway, is nothin' loath. So the three of us proceed along, marchin' in easy stages, an' beginnin' to enjoy the evenin' considerable. The moon is beginnin' to come up now—one of them big Philippine moons which lights up things wonderful.

"There is one thing missin'," Shamus Macroom says after a while. " 'Tis the custom in the infantry to sing upon occasion. Can ye sing, O'Hare?"

"Did ye not hear me back there in the Calle Santo Tomas?" I say.

"I had forgotten," Macroom tells me apologetic. "At the moment I do not remember the song. Still, it is me recollection that it would have put Jenny Lind herself to shame."

So the three of us sing, such bein' a pleasant enough way to pass the time while we are goin' to see old Vespacian's pigs. We do not sing too loud at first, Shamus Macroom cautionin' us that Corporil Gallagher is likely to be still about an' maybe will not understand that we have forsook the mistaken practices which we have indulged in earlier, an' are now respectable citizens.

WE TURN into the Calle Concepcion, which is a wide street with a light here an' there. Howsoever, the moon is well up by now so that we have no trouble seein' where we are goin'. Old Vespacian pokes his pony into a trot an' Shamus Macroom an' meself launch into "There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight," which is popular at the time an' has a very pretty sentiment. Old Vespacian is enjoyin' himself, too; he does not know the song but he sings one in Spanish an' the two blend in nice together.

We are approachin' a buildin' which I recognize as the Elite Café as we finish. Shamus Macroom says: "A lovely song, indeed, O'Hare. Howsoever, there is another for which I have always had a great fondness."

"Indeed?" I answer. "I do not recollect that one."

" 'Tis a shame," Sergint Macroom tells me. "Well, the thing cannot be helped, so I will sing the words an' ye can hum the tune."

Shamus Macroom gets to his big feet an' stands there swayin' back an' forth, for the street is rough an' the *carrometa* jounces around considerable. He puts his hand on the chest of him an' sings:

"Oh, the Bridge of Spain will groan with pain,
When the M.P.'s march out to battle!"

Well, there is something familiar about the song which Shamus Macroom is bellowin' at the top of his voice but I do not remember what it is. Me attention has been diverted by the activities which is goin' on in front of the Elite Café. There is a crowd gathered there an' considerable hubbub takin' place.

"Hah!" I think. "A fight. It would be interestin' to stop off an' see it."

Shamus Macroom, payin' no attention to anything but his singin', is just startin' on the second verse. It is just then that I see that it is not a fight in front of the Elite Café after all. It is Corporil Gallagher. It is apparent that he has discovered us comin' down the street, for he is gallopin' out grim with his merry men behind him.

Corporil Gallagher sings out nasty: "Halt! I see ye, Sergint Macroom. Do ye come down off that lumber wagon immediate. The guardhouse has been waitin' over long for ye!"

"I was afraid that me friend Gallagher would misunderstand the motives of us," Shamus Macroom says sorrowful. "Maybe we had better go away from here."

He leans forward an' takes the whip out of old Vespacian's hand an' whacks the Filipino pony smart. This pony has been trottin' along all nice an' easy, thinkin' about nothin' in particular, an' the whip awakens him rude. He puts on a burst of speed sudden which is wonderful to see, an' we go by Corporil Gallagher in a cloud of dust.

Well, to make a long story short, this Corporil Gallagher is not as dumb as ye would judge from the looks of him. There is another *carrometa* standin' there in front of the Elite Café an' Gallagher, together with two of his men, pile into it an' take off after us down the Calle Concepcion. Shamus Macroom looks back.

"Well," he says very pleased, "so it is a race. 'Tis a nice night for it. Me brown friend, do ye see if ye cannot coax another knot or two of speed out of yon small beastie."

Old Vespacian has got into the spirit

"I account for several of them—I do not know how many—before they get to me with their bolos."

of the thing by now. He bounces up an' down on his seat, wavin' his arms an' shoutin' at his horse an' generally creatin' the sort of disturbance which is peculiar to dog fights or Democratic conventions. We go faster but it is apparent, after a little, that old Vespacian's entry is some outclassed. Corporil Gallagher is overhaulin' us at a rate which is scandalous.

Shamus Macroom takes a small nip from the bottle an' estimates the situation. Then he climbs up into the front seat with old Vespacian.

"Do ye let me try me hand," he says.

WELL, it is an exhilaratin' experience, as I look back at it. I do not have time to mourn for Marguerita.

The mouth of the Calle Rebosa looms sudden ahead of us in the moonlight an' Shamus Macroom braces his feet an' swings hard on the reins. "By the left flank—ho!" he says.

The Filipino pony, bein' of a bad disposition an' more than a little put out by the whole business, turns on a dime an' we go into the Calle Rebosa on two wheels. We lose old Vespacian. He has not been expectin' the maneuver an' he skates off the seat into the dirt, howlin' Spanish curses as he goes.

"Siggy, ye broom-tailed quadruped," Shamus Macroom says an' we siggy.

Howsoever, this Corporil Gallagher is not to be fooled. He turns into the Calle Rebosa likewise, though at a slightly slower pace, an' he begins to creep up on us again. We are travelin' at a good clip now an' the *carrometa* is rockin' an' swayin' like a ship in a heavy sea.

"Halt!" Corporil Gallagher yells an' it is plain to see that he is some irritated. "Halt, ye condemned thus-an'-so's! I will beat ye to death with me club, otherwise."

Shamus Macroom looks back over his shoulder. "Halt, is it?" he asks sarcastic. "Do ye hang tight, O'Hare, to the chariot. We will be showin' Corporil Gallagher how this Ben Hur wins his race in the Circus Maximus."

Well, Shamus Macroom refreshes himself from the bottle an' then he stands up on the seat with the reins flyin' loose in his hands. He speaks to that horse in the same way that Saint Patrick, Hiven rest him, has once spoke to the snakes in County Clare. It may be that the horse has got a touch of snake in him for he accelerates himself more than somewhat an' we pull away a bit.

It ends sudden, howsoever.

Shamus Macroom has been intent, so to speak, upon his chauffeurin' an' has not been keepin' a close eye upon the road ahead. The Calle Rebosa ends in a big wall in which there is a gate; it is too late to stop an' so we go through, missin' a gate post maybe by the width of your little finger. We are on a driveway which runs up to curve around in front of a big house maybe two hundred yards away; there is flower beds all around.

"O'Hare," Shamus Macroom says over his shoulder, "we are in the wrong pew."

"We are," I agree. I am beginnin' to think that maybe it is better if I have stayed in Mindanao.

"There is nothin' to do but to negotiate the turn," Shamus Macroom yells. "Then we can go out again in the way in which we come in."

We do not make it.

There are people all dressed up in white clothes sittin' on the veranda of the house, I see. Then me line of sight is upset, so to speak. Like I have said, we are travellin' at a high speed an' the *carrometa* wheels can get no purchase in the loose gravel. We skid in a way it is a scandal to see an' then I am flyin' through the air with me mouth open while I flap me arms an' glide down to a landin' in a flower bed.

I sit up presently an' I look just in time to see old Vespacian's *carrometa* disappearin' through the gate again. Howsoever, I am not interested at the moment. Me attention is distracted by sulphurous language which a fat party in a white coat is dischargin' from the veranda in short bursts. Shamus Macroom is on his hands an' knees on the walk, lookin' up.

"Good God!" he says distinct. " 'Tis the general, himself—old McKenzie!"

Well, to make a long story short, Corporil Gallagher an' his M.P.'s arrive then

an' that is how I come to go down into Batangas with Sergint Shamus Macroom.

CHAPTER III

WHERE BOLOS WAIT

I WAKE up the next mornin' with a taste in me mouth, which is somewhat on the fury side. Me head hurts something scandalous an' I have sundry other aches an' pains besides. I am layin' on a hard cot, an' from the barred shadows which is across the floor, I know that I am in the guardhouse. Presently I find that I am able to lift me head.

Shamus Macroom is layin' on a similar cot across the way. I think sour that I have never seen a fouler sight. The red hair of him is standin' on end. His face looks as though the Russian army has tramped across it in their hobnailed boots, an' his uniform is in a state of considerable disrepair. He sits up after a little an' looks at me.

"Tch! Tch!" he says. "The sight of ye on a Thursday mornin' is a strain upon the eyes, Sergint O'Hare."

"Ye are nothin' soothing to look at yourself," I retort discourteous, for I am feelin' bad an' wish that I have stayed in Mindanao, where there is a measure of peace an' security an' a man is not exposed to such menaces as Sergint Shamus Macroom.

He feels of his head, touchin' it with the tips of his fingers as though he expects that maybe it will explode.

"It must be that I ate something last night which did not set well with me stomach," he says thoughtful. "'Tis a bit of a headache that I have this morning."

"Ye will have a worse one presently," I tell him. "Maybe ye do not remember assaultin' a major general upon his own front porch last night?"

"Tch! Tch!" he says regretful. "Well, me old mother always said I was a bit hasty. Howsoever, it is probable that old McKenzie will take it all in fun."

"'Tis probable that old McKenzie will have the two of us shot against a wall," I retort sour.

"Let him get on with it, then," Shamus Macroom says in a hollow voice. "A nice, cool grave would be a great comfort to me at the moment."

I am about to upbraid him further when I hear voices an' then boot heels come poundin' down the hallway outside the door. The corporil of the guard is unlockin' the cell an', behind him, I see there is an officer.

I get to me feet somehow, as does Sergint Macroom, as this officer comes into the cell.

He pays no attention to me but walks across to stand in front of me cell mate. He is a captain, I see, a big man with a black head an' a grand pair of shoulders to him. There is the mark of the Irish about him an' that comforts me a little.

"Sergint Macroom!" he says.

"Yes, sir."

"What devil's holiday is this that ye have indulged yourself in this time?"

"Sir—" Shamus Macroom begins.

"Quiet!" this captain tells me. "I will do the talkin' for the minute, Sergint Macroom! Ye will do the listenin'!"

Well, I have been in the army for a long time an' I have heard many a soldier dressed down, but I have not heard one take a tongue lashin' such as Sergint Shamus Macroom took that day. 'Tis a grand vocabulary that this Cap'n Murphy—for such I learned his name to be—had. He speaks for ten minutes straight an' he does not repeat himself once.

Shamus Macroom stands there an' takes it, the face of him sheepish, for he knows that he has it all comin' to him an' then some more. It is a funny thing, but I can see by the look of Shamus Macroom that he thinks this Cap'n Murphy is gold an' rubies even while he is nailin' him to a cross with his tongue. Standin' there, I take the measure of the man. A good company commander, I think—one who has the love of his men. I find I am not wrong.

"'Tis not three weeks gone that I have extricated ye from the guard house last time, Sergint Macroom," he concludes. "I have a good notion to leave ye here an' let them hang ye to a tree as ye so richly deserve."

"Yes, sir," Shamus Macroom says sorrowful, though he knows well that the captain will not do such.

"Not only should I leave ye but I should bust ye to the grade of private an' drum ye out of the outfit. I would do that, too, did I not need every man for the expedition which we are embarkin' upon tonight."

SHAMUS MACROOM'S chin, which has been restin' heavy on his wishbone, comes up sudden. "The cap'n would not be meanin' that we are goin' back to Batangas?"

"He would not," Cap'n Murphy answers him grim. "We are goin' to Samar where the *katipunan* has flared up again. There is a new Pope down there, a feller calls himself Papa Grueso, who has gathered him maybe a thousand bolo men. He has come down out of the hills an' set the west coast of Samar aflame."

Shamus Macroom looks up an' I see that his lips are thin. "Ye would not be knowin' whether or not this Papa Grueso's first name is Simeon, would ye, Cap'n?"

"I would an' it is," Cap'n Murphy says. He looks at Sergint Macroom curious. "Ye know of him?"

"I know of him," Shamus Macroom answers.

Well, it is a funny thing how a man can change sudden. Not five minutes gone, Sergint Macroom has been standin' there, nothin' but an untidy man with a red eye an' a hangover to him. Now he has become a soldier again with his headache forgot in the thought of the comin' campaign. 'Tis maybe an illusion, but it seems to me that the slackness has gone out of his face, leavin' it lean an' hard to match the hardness of his eye.

"We will be movin' soon, sir?" he asks.

"We board the Coast Guard cutter *Mindoro* come eight o'clock tonight, Sergint. I have arranged for the release of ye. Do ye now get out an' be about the various an' sundry duties which need to be done."

Shamus Macroom salutes an' is about to turn to the door when his eye lights on me, standin' there at attention with me thumbs along the seams of me trousers. He turns back to Cap'n Murphy.

"Sir," he says, "it is Sergint O'Hare, Cavalry, who is standin' over there. He an' I are friends, in a manner of speakin', an' I would not like to leave him here to suffer alone for the joint peccadillos which the two of us have perpetrated last night. Cannot the cap'n arrange for the release of him also?"

Well, this Cap'n Murphy turns around an' looks at me for a long minute. He has got a hard eye, but I see in him the type of man that I can respect an' get along with.

"What is your regimint, Sergint O'Hare?" he asks in a tone of voice which would snap the top off of a beer bottle.

I tell him an' explain that I am in Manila on sick furlough. He says that I do not look sick, barrin' the various cuts an' contusions which I have received in the recent Calle Santo Tomas action. So I explain further that I have been recuperatin' from a hammered iron slug which the Moros have give me to remember 'em by. His eye softens a little at that.

"Moros, eh? They are good little fightin' men an' I have a respect for 'em," he tells me. "Your furlough still has a month to run?"

"Yes, sir," I tell him.

"Well," he says, grinnin' a little, " 'tis a highly irregular proceedin' an' probably contrary to more of the rules an' regulations of war than ye could stuff into a gunny bag. Howsoever, a soldier is a soldier, whether it be in Mindanao or in Samar, so I will take ye to Llorente with me. Such is better than leavin' ye here to be shot against a wall by old Fuddy Feathers."

I agree whole-hearted an' starts to give him me thanks but he waves 'em away with his hand.

"It will be a vacation in a manner of speakin'," he says, "for 'tis probable that it will not be much of a campaign—say three weeks at the outside. Now do the both of ye be upon your way."

Well, he is wrong about the campaign, for it is a long an' bitter one an' that regimint does not again see Manila for

more than a year. Cap'n Murphy, himself, does not see Manila again at all—but that is another story.

I LEARN about Samar an' I learn about this *katipunan* as we go down to Llorente. As I understand it, it is a sort of secret society which ranks some place between the Knights of Columbus an' the Fourteenth Ward Athletic an' Chowder Association. Just at present its various an' sundry chapters is goin' in for a bit of wholesale blood lettin', the Samar chapter bein' particularly active in that respect. The Samar bunch is known as *pulajans*, though referrin' to themselves polite as "The Militant Sons of the Church."

Shamus Macroom says to me as we sit on the deck of the *Mindoro:* "The militant is all right. Howsoever, I misdoubt the church part of it, O'Hare. These *pulajans*, from what I hear, are as unreconstructed a bunch of hell-raisers as ye are like to come across in a long day's sail. From talkin' with them that have known 'em well I gather that they are considerable addicted to murder an' similar reprehensible practices, such as ham-stringin', loppin' off of ears an' other types of plain an' fancy mayhem."

Shamus Macroom's tone is banterin', but there is not any banter in the eyes of the man. There is a lean hungriness about his face, the same sort of thing which ye may see in the face of a dog who is strainin' against a leash an' wantin' to be away. I do not wonder, for I have not forgot the story which he has told me back in the Oriental Bar.

"Ye believe that this Simeon Grueso is the same one whose acquaintance ye made in Batangas?" I ask him.

"The same," he tells me. "I have made inquiries now an' again about him, for it has long been in the mind of me that the two of us would meet again. Howsoever, it is a long while since I have heard of him in Luzon an' I have been afraid that something has happened to him."

"Such would be a shame, Sergint Macroom," I say.

He looks at me straight an' there is a hard, bright light to the eye of him.

"It would indeed," he answers me grim.

So it is we go to Samar.

WE ARE at Llorente for three-four days gettin' shook down an' then we strike back into the hills. A *pulajan* deserter has come in with the word that Simeon Grueso is concentratin' at a place called Igcagona in the interior. This feller says that recruits are still comin' in and that the Pope will not be ready for maybe a week an' is hopin' that we will remain quiet durin' that time. That bein' the case, Cap'n Murphy decides to strike him sudden an' hard.

I find that this Samar is a harsh an' a bitter land. It is all up an' down, so to speak, bein' filled with deep gorges an' mountains which go straight up. Daylight never gets into the jungles, the same which is filled with nasty lookin' snakes an' leeches the size of a man's thumb, which turn the blood of you cold when they fasten onto you. At night the *boudjons*—which is native drums—talk constant from the hills. It is an unpleasant country.

Well, we move out at daybreak one mornin', followin' a dim trail which the deserter has showed us. Not much of interest happens in them first two days, except that one Private Schmidt runs into a spear which has been planted in the jungle an' is removed permanent from a world of care an' trouble.

The night of the second day we camp in a little flat where two rivers come together. The trail we have been followin' has been gettin' broader an' deeper as we get back into the interior. Here it forks, one branch leadin' away to the right up one of the rivers. After we make camp Cap'n Murphy sends for Shamus Macroom. I go along.

The cap'n is squattin' in the dirt with a map spread out on the ground before him. He looks up as Sergint Macroom an' me salute.

"Come tomorrow mornin' ye will go on a scout, Sergint," he says. "Take along a squad an' one of the Macabebes —Corporil Bustabo is a good man."

"Yes, sir."

Cap'n Murphy points to the map—

which is little more than a rough sketch. "Accordin' to the map, Sergint, the trail which branches off to the right here runs up the river a matter of some ten miles; then it swings back to the right again an' crosses the ridge to drop back down into the main valley."

Shamus Macroom stuffs tobacco into his pipe an' squints at the map.

"Yes, sir," he says.

"Ye will move out before daylight, takin' care that ye are not seen, an' follow that trail. By hard marchin' ye should rejoin the main body in the valley by tomorrow night."

"Yes, sir," Sergint Macroom says. "Has the cap'n got any special instructions?"

Cap'n Murphy rubs a hand across the bristles on his chin an' then folds up the map.

"Sergint," he says, "we have been marchin' for two days now but we have not seen hide nor hair of a native. 'Tis queer an' I do not like it."

Shamus Macroom nods, silent.

"It comes to me mind that this Pope Grueso is cookin' up some deviltry. It is not hard for him to keep out of the way of the column, for a hundred men make considerable noise when they march. Howsoever, he may not be expectin' a small patrol which will move swift an' quiet up this river to the right —the same bein' the Orasio, accordin' to the map. Ye will avoid fightin', but ye will bring in prisoners for questioning if it happens that ye run onto any. Have ye any questions?"

"No, sir," Shamus Macroom says. "The cap'n does not think that the big battle will come off tomorrow? It is hatin' to miss it that I would be."

"Igcagona is still a good two days' march away," Cap'n Murphy says. "There will be no battle until we get to there."

WELL, it is close to noon the next day an' we have been marchin' for eight hours. We have seen nothin' of the *pulajans*, though off an' on, durin' the morning, we have heard the *boudjons* goin'. Like the map shows, the trail swings off to the left, leavin' the river an' beginning to climb toward the big hogback which separates the two streams. Shamus Macroom halts us an' we eat our lunch at the lower end of a little plateau which is bare of the jungle an' filled with *coogan* grass.

" 'Tis thinkin', I am, that your *pulajans* are a harmless little people after all," I say to Shamus Macroom. "They appear to be more given to plantin' spears an' keepin' themselves well hid than they do to fightin'. Take a Moro, now—"

I do not finish.

Shamus has posted a sentry on the trail, but we cannot see him for the tall grass. We hear him, though. He screeches once an' then his screech dies away in a gurgle which prickles up the hair along me spine.

Corporil Bustabo sings out shrill: "*Pulajan!*" an' grabs for his shotgun.

I hear it then, an' I tell you frank that I do not care to hear that sound again as long as I live. First it is the *slap-thud* of bare feet poundin' down the trail; then it is a high-pitched scream.

"*Tad-tad! Tad-tad!*"

"Chop! Chop!" is the meanin' of it an' I learn that those ain't idle words. I see 'em then—maybe half a hundred red-shirted bolomen bearin' down on us at the run. It is not a pleasant sight.

Shamus Macroom has posted his men well an' the Krags start speakin' steady. Even so it is touch an' go there for a longer time than I like to think of. Personally, I have me hands full. A *pulajan* comes at me from the side while I am tryin' to reload an', as I see the wicked light shine down his bolo, I think that Michael O'Hare is about to figure prominent in the casualty lists tomorrow. Howsoever, Shamus Macroom takes the man on his bayonet an' me head settles back onto me shoulders once more.

There is a hell of a lot of noise goin' on, but eight men with Krags, usin' them cool an' easy, can do a lot of execution. The *pulajans* cannot stand it an' presently they break an' retire, disappearin' into the tall grass as quiet as they have come. We reload an' take stock of the situation.

Private Schmidt, a brother of the one who has walked into the spear earlier,

is dead, split to the middle by a bolo swing. Private O'Halleran is dead, likewise, as is Private Thurston, the sentry. The rest of us are scratched up some, but have still got all of our arms an' legs. Out in front I estimate that there is maybe twenty *pulajans* piled up like cordwood, where the steel jackets of the Krags has caught 'em.

Well, we sort 'em out cautious an' we find one who is still alive, though he has got a bullet through his middle an' it is plain that he is not goin' to be with us long. He is an officer of some kind an' we bring him in.

Shamus Macroom props him up against a rock an' feeds him a little whiskey out of a flask. The *pulajan* drinks, his eyes spiteful in the face of him; then his hand moves sudden. Shamus Macroom jerks back but not before the knife has slashed him deep across the cheek.

Sergint Bustabo jumps in, swingin' his Krag up to bust in the *pulajan's* head with the butt, but Shamus Macroom stops him. Blood is runnin' down his cheek but he pays no attention.

"Ask him where Simeon Grueso is," he says to Corporil Bustabo.

The Macabebe puts the question, but I can see that he would rather put about a foot of bayonet into this feller. Well, the *pulajan* won't talk at first. Shamus Macroom gives him more whiskey an' then more after that. It loosens his tongue finally an' he begins to talk—boastin', for he is a tough little man who knows that he is dyin'.

Pope Grueso is not at Igcagona, he says. The deserter who has come to us at Llorente has lied. He has been sent there to lead the expedition into the trap which this Simeon Grueso has set. That trap is goin' to be sprung tonight in the big valley, which we are headed for, an' there are a thousand *pulajans* who will do the springin'.

Our prisoner then dies peaceable.

"Ye believe him?" I ask Shamus.

He nods slow, wipin' at the blood which still drips from his cheek. "I'm thinkin' that he spoke the truth. It comes to the mind of me that he had good reason to believe that we would not carry the word to Cap'n Murphy in time to warn him."

I think of them red-shirted *pulajans* who have disappeared into the *coogan* grass an' I think of the miles of trail that we have got to cross to reach the next valley.

There is reason for the *pulajan's* belief, I think.

"What are ye goin' to do, Shamus Macroom?"

"March," he says short. "We have got little enough time to carry the word to the column."

Well, that march will stand out in the mind of me for a long time yet. Five times more durin' that afternoon do we beat off attacks. The only thing that saves us is that the little brown men have not learned to move in quiet. Always there is that pad of runnin' feet an' that "*Tad-tad!*" screamin' against the afternoon. It gives us a minute to get set.

We lose two more men, leavin' them where they fall, for we cannot clutter ourselves with the bodies of 'em if we are to reach the valley in time. Sergint Bustabo gets cut nasty on the arm, but he ties it up an' goes on.

IT IS durin' the rest of that day that I learn that Sergint Shamus Macroom is indeed a great soldier. When the attacks come he is everywhere at once, his red head flamin' an' his face laughin' beneath the dried blood. He carries his men along in the palm of his hand, so to speak, leadin' them when they will follow an' drivin' them when they will not. A lesser man than Shamus Macroom would never have brought his patrol out of Orasio Valley that day.

It is sunset when we cross the hogback an' see the big valley stretchin' out below us. The trail is more open now an' it goes down fast. Strange enough, we see no more of the *pulajans* for a time. The moon has come up by the time we hit the valley floor; we cut the main trail an' Shamus Macroom halts us. It is a broad an' deep trail.

Corporil Bustabo comes up.

"The column has passed?" Shamus Macroom asks him.

The Macabebe nods, pointin' to signs here an' there.

"Maybe three-four hour before," he says.

"You think this is the road to Igcagona?"

The little brown man spits into the dust. "Maybe. Big trail. Much carabao go along this trail."

"Simeon Grueso's supply trail," Shamus Macroom says thoughtful. "We will be gettin' on, O'Hare."

So we march once more. We move slow, like drunk men up the trail, for our legs have stiffened in the rest—we have been marchin' an' fightin' for close to eighteen hours now. The valley narrows gradual in front of us until it is more like a canyon with the walls steep an' high on either side.

I hear something movin' ahead of us in the night, then, an' Shamus Macroom calls out soft to halt. He goes forward with Corporil Bustabo an' is gone for five minutes. Then he comes back.

"Carabao," he says to me. "Hundreds of 'em penned up in the canyon farther down. We are on Simeon Grueso's trail all right, O'Hare."

We go on an' presently I see 'em in the moonlight. They are penned in a big corral which stretches half across the bed of the canyon, an from the uneasy millin' of 'em, I know that they have smelled us. I am glad that the corral is there, for there is no animal more wicked than a carabao when he is mad.

The *boudjons* have been murmurin' from the hills for the past hour, off an' on, an' now they are beatin' faster. It is a message of some sort, for sudden a shot sounds faint against the moonlight. Then maybe half a dozen more. Well, I think, it is time to be pickin' a partner, for the dance is beginnin'.

Shamus Macroom says, "We have not got there in time, O'Hare. Howsoever, we will go on."

The canyon here is maybe two hundred yards wide an' it now begins to open out more with walls that lift up maybe three or four hundred feet. The floor is slopin' with no vegetation except the *coogan* grass. The trail goes down through the middle, but Shamus Macroom leads us off toward the walls. Then, presently, we halt where we can look down.

THE moon is high now an' it is easy to see. There is a big bowl down there where the canyon has opened out wide, maybe a mile across. On the far side a big heap of rock has drooped from the rim an' it makes a little knoll, maybe fifty feet high, close to the other wall. As I look I see little flashes spit out now an' then from the top of this knoll.

Shamus Macroom sees the same thing. "The company is there. They have made the boulders into a fort an' are holdin' their own for the moment."

'Tis not at the knoll that I am lookin', howsoever. Down, perhaps a quarter of a mile to the left of us, I see shapes in the grass. There are more shapes to the right an' there are shapes down in front. *Pulajans!* I think that our prisoner has not lied when he has said that there are a thousand of 'em—ten thousand would be nearer my guess. All of a sudden I am homesick for Mindanao.

From where I am I can see that they are massin' into a rough formation. Shamus Macroom calls out soft to Corporil Bustabo.

"They are about to rush, Corporil?"

The Macabebe shakes his head. "Not yet. You have heard the *boudjons?*"

"I have heard."

"They are saying that they will wait until the moon has touched the pointed mountain," Corporil Bustabo says in effect. "Then they will get up an' they will run across the valley with their bolos an' make a great killin'."

Shamus Macroom sits there for a long time, starin' across the valley. I see the pointed mountain, which Corporil Bustabo has spoke of—the moon is maybe three-quarters of an hour above it yet.

Finally I ask: "Do ye have a plan, Shamus Macroom?"

He turns an' looks at me for a long minute. Then he grins an' I can see the recklessness which is in his eyes.

"Have ye ever heard of a lad called Samson, O'Hare?" he asks.

"I do not recall him," I answer short, for it is a poor time to be reminiscin' about past acquaintances.

"He was a strong an' sudden man who used to live down in the River Jordan valley," he tells me. Then, sittin' there

on the rim of the canyon, he tells to me the yarn which I have repeated for ye at the beginnin' of this.

Well, when he has finished, I look at him amazed. Crazy as a coot, I think —still, it is little wonder.

"O'Hare," he says, "ye will now take charge here. I must be about the business of me."

He slips back along the rim an' is gone before I can lay a hand on him.

Well, we cannot sit twiddlin' our thumbs while the company is fightin' for its life across there on the knoll. So finally I call Corporil Bustabo an' tell him that we will slip down into the canyon an' try to make our way across before the attack comes. He shakes his head.

"No good," he says an' points.

I see that the moon has sunk down until it is just touchin' the top of the pointed mountain. Sudden the *boudjons* begin to give full tongue an' I know that it is too late. Down there in front the *coogan* grass looks as if it is alive.

It is the *pulajans*—hundreds of 'em that seem to sort of spring out of the ground. In the moonlight I can see 'em plain as they bunch into long lines for a minute. Then that damned *"Tad-tad!"* goes up shrill an' the little brown men are goin' across the canyon floor at a boundin' run, with their white capes flyin' out behind 'em an' the moonlight flashin' on the wicked blades of the bolos.

It is a grand an' a fearsome sight. Fire blossoms from the knoll, but the bullets make no more impression on that screamin' mass of men than does a pebble make an impression upon the sea. Me heart is cold in me, for I know that they are too many—they will roll over that knoll an' then the company will be gone. I stand there an' cannot move as I watch the *pulajans* reach the center of the canyon.

It is Corporil Bustabo's voice which brings me back to me senses. He is yellin' an' pointin' up the canyon with the finger of him. All of a sudden I am conscious of another sound which is drowndin' out the *boudjons* an' is liftin' above the scream of them crazy men down there.

Well, I have never seen anything like it before or since.

There is a dull red glow which is mountin' into the sky back up the canyon, an' ahead of that glow there is a dark line which is flowin' down across the level floor of the canyon as a wave flows across the beach. A thunder is boomin' up an' then I understand.

"Carabao! Carabao!" Corporil Bustabo is screamin'.

Shamus Macroom has loosed that herd of carabao which we have seen up the canyon, an' he has stampeded 'em down upon the *pulajans,* usin' fire for the purpose. I can see 'em plain now an' I know that no power on earth can save that close packed mass of men which is full in their path.

It is a terrible an' a magnificent sight.

The *pulajans* have seen an' a long wail goes up into the night as they understand that their death is close upon them. The wave is over them then. It flows around the little knoll an' it rolls swift on by. Presently it is gone an' the canyon is quiet with a great quietness.

WELL, we are back in Manila before I learn all that has gone on that night. I have not asked, although when Shamus Macroom rejoins the column at daybreak that mornin', he looks worse than he does the night we meet in the Calle Santo Tomas. He is near dead from a half a dozen nasty cuts an' his left arm is half chopped away.

I am due to sail for Zamboango in the evenin', so before I go I smuggle a couple of bottles under me coat an' go up to see Shamus in the hospital to bid him goodby. He is sittin' propped up in bed, bandaged up like a mummy, an' he grins at me as I come in.

We sample the beer an' talk of this an' that.

" 'Tis sorry that I am to see ye go, O'Hare," he says. "Maybe sometime I will visit ye in Mindanao to return the call."

"Ye will find it tame for your tastes," I tell him. "Howsoever, we will do our best to provide ye with entertainment—say a fight every second day with a double-header on Sunday."

He grins again an' then his face tightens a little.

"Ye remember that I have spoke to ye of one Simeon Gureso, O'Hare?"

"I do." I inform him.

"I had got the bars of the corral broke down," he says soft, "an' I was on me way back to start the fire. Then, sudden, a half a dozen *pulajans* come out of the *coogan* grass directly in front of me. Simeon Grueso is with 'em."

Shamus Macroom sips at his beer. Then he goes on.

"He recognizes me, O'Hare. At his word the others slip around so that I am cut off.

"'It is thee Sergint Macroom,' he says.

"'The same,' I tell him. 'Do ye stand aside, Simeon, for I have business which I would be about. After I have finished I will come back an' settle with ye.'

"He smiles nasty.

"'We weel settle now, my fren',' he says. 'Me, I 'ave wait thee long time.'

"Well, I am an impatient man, O'Hare."

Shamus Macroom finished his beer an' eyes the empty bottle regretful, favorin' me with a reproachful look that I have not brought more.

"Ye will be finishin' the story, Shamus," I tell him firm.

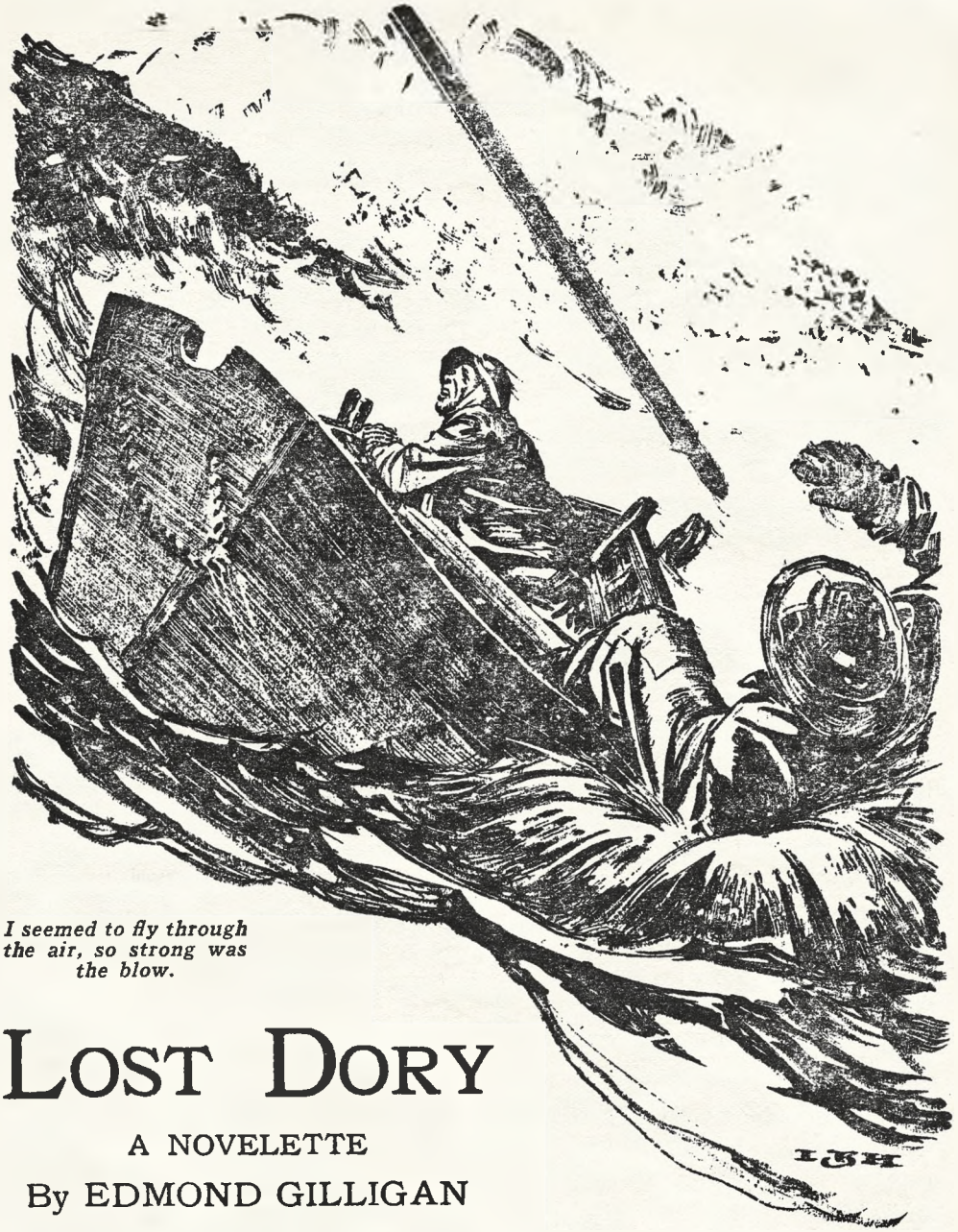
"Oh, that," he says. "There is little to tell. I got him by the throat, a thing I had long been wantin' to do. His men were hackin' at me some but I broke his neck. Afterward I took his bolo an' dispersed them that was able to disperse. Afterward, I was able to set me fire in peace."

"Ye are a strange an' sudden man, Shamus Macroom," I say to him reverent.

He grins again an' scratches at the red bristle on the chin of him with one of his bandaged hands. "Would ye be recallin' the story that I told ye about this Samson down in the River Jordan valley?"

"I would."

"Well," says this Shamus Macroom, "'tis me belief that the jawbones of an ass are scarce commodities in Samar. I had to do the best that I could with the tools which I had to the hand of me."



I seemed to fly through the air, so strong was the blow.

LOST DORY

A NOVELETTE

By EDMOND GILLIGAN

I LOOKED astern of the *Susan* as she slipped away from us and saw the other dories rise to the crest of a wave and then slide smoothly down into the trough and out of my sight. A burst of sunlight flashed through the light clouds, struck the sea in a pretty dash of green, and then passed over the full sail of our schooner, making it shine snow-white. A flight of gulls flew above her and the sunbeam touched their dark wings. The *Susan* stood on and away and then—

"Now, Sebastian!"

Christy, my dory-mate, made the end of the trawl fast to the anchor and flung it over the side. I slowed my stroke and he began to let the trawl go over, throwing the baited hooks out one by one, each with a clear movement, so that they wouldn't become fouled. Only once did he break the easy movements of his

hands and arms, and this was to hold up an empty hook and shake his head reproachfully. I hadn't fixed the bait securely and just to make sure that I should remember my fault he took out two baits, thrust the hook through one and threw the other at my head. I might have dodged it, but, ever the willing penitent, I shut my eyes and let it smack me full on the face.

Soon we had let out the first skate and then, while I rowed on, he knotted the second to the first and this went on until all our trawls were in the water. At the last, the sixth trawl was bent onto an anchor and its usual buoy.

When these were thrown over, the process had been completed and the scores of baited hooks were sinking down into the larder of the halibut, which, we hoped, were dining on fare less desirable than our herring. I then turned the dory and rowed back along the line of our trawl. From time to time, one of the other dories appeared in the sunlight or rose out of a glitter of spray; and then, beating down the wind, came the *Susan* to pick us all up. The dories came safely aboard and not one untoward chance was reported—a great comfort to us, since this flying set is not an easy task and requires good sea-legs and hands to carry out promptly and without error.

It soon came time to haul.

"I feel it in my bones," said Terence, "that this is an end of it. They're feeding all right. I can hear them gobbling up the herring and complaining that there's an iron taste to them this year."

The tide was running strong to windward and the seas were beginning to break, but it seemed wise enough to venture out, even though some harsh gusts began to strike us.

Christy and I set forth to our trawls, after the other dories had been sent over, and we safely hauled the larger part, with fair fishing at first and then a good strike of three big fish, enough to give us more than a safe load.

We took them in and started back to the vessel, aided by the tide, but the big fish wouldn't lie still and they hawsed up the dory in such a manner that her side was open to the sea. At this moment, a gust of wind struck hard and with it came a huge sea, suddenly rising out of moderate water.

Both wind and wave struck the dory and us at the same time, and with such force that Christy lost his footing and went headlong over the side, but he was fortunately near enough to grasp the gunwale and climb back into her. He was no sooner over than back again.

I tried to trim her down, but his weight and pull, and the weight of the fish shifting toward him, left us in a worse position, so that I was helpless when the next sea, even larger, broke over the dory with such violence that I was flung out.

I seemed to fly through the air, so strong was the blow. I had only time to take a deep breath and to commend my soul to God before the waters closed over me and I sank.

My heart seemed to halt, so intense was the clutch of that Atlantic chill. I spread out my arms and stroked three times quickly, seeking to check the force of my descent, and I kicked with my legs. Soon I lost my swimmer's calm because the dead weight of my sea clothing dragged me downward, hampered the vigor of my strokes.

I saw the greeny deep flow by me. I blew out part of my wind, arched my back and swam again with all my strength, stroking and kicking furiously in that instant. I think I was two fathoms under by this time.

My great effort halted my plunge, but there was little time left. Oh, then there came over me that strange willingness of the soul to let go, to leave its mortal walls, to put on the incorruptible. Against this heavenly yearning came the cry of proud, young flesh and of a beating heart, not to cease forever in that undersea gloom, not to sag off to windward with the tide. In anger, my heart compelled my right arm to strike out and the fingers, already wrenched free of the encasing mittens, fumbled against a line of the trawl.

I blew out the last of my breath, closed my eyes in the salt, and I laid my left hand above the right and heaved. I raised my right and heaved again. Freely I rose and the strength flowed back into my fainting heart, indomitable amidst

suffocation, demanding its life, threatening me with terrible things if I did not struggle.

Hand over hand I raised my body and its burden and opened my eyes again, eager to see the water breaking. Yet I was not free. In the fourth or fifth grasp of my right hand, one of the hooks caught my forefinger and, before I could feel the danger to my chilled flesh, the barb passed through me.

This was death. A sinful rage seized me that I should lose the game when I had won it fairly. Again I shouted inwardly and I appealed to God once more for my release. Grimly I damned the New Haveners who made such keen-cutting hooks.

I lifted my left hand again, hauled hard and thrust out my legs, and then I rolled away, giving a desperate pull on my right hand. Thus I tore the hook out, tore it through the flesh. I made two more hauls, hand over hand, and burst into the air. The gunwale of the dory lay careening over me. I seized it. I filled my lungs, ended their wonderful fast, and dragged myself forward, for I feared that I might upset the dory, which was near enough to pitch-poling anyway. I roared out: "Christy! Christy! Here I am!"

I saw him then, poised on the thwart, his jacket off, ready to come down after me. He bent over, seized my bloody hand, and tumbled me at his feet.

"Glory be to God!" he cried.

I held up my bloody finger and then I said: "On with your jacket, Christy! You'll freeze standing there!"

"Did you swim? What's that wound, Sebastian?"

"I could not."

"I told you so! What! You hauled yourself up on the trawl?"

"Yes. Here I am."

He ripped a piece from his shirt and bound up my finger. He pulled me to my feet and said: "Bail!"

We went to work again and I bailed swiftly because the dory lay low in the water. I felt no pain, only gladness. I swung my bucket back and forth until we were clear and then lay to the oars until we were alongside the *Susan*. By agreement, no word was said of my peril, and we stayed aboard only long enough to change our clothing, replace our mittens with dry ones, and drink our tea. Christy bound up my wounded finger again and then we rowed off to finish hauling.

BY THE time we found our buoy and began to take fish again, the wind had gone to N.W., which was not fair for us, because it left the dory to leeward of the schooner and meant a hard pull back, but we took all our fish, pulled in the trawls and stowed them without using up all the daylight.

We were still over two miles from the vessel and the wind kept rising; and then, swiftly and with no warning, the snow came on the back of the wind. A hard snow it was, too, bitterly touched with hail. The sky grew dark. The fall of snow increased so quickly that in quarter of an hour we couldn't see more than a dory-length away, except when the wind whirled through a valley of the sea and blew the flakes away for a brief while. Even then, nothing showed but the desolate, empty water.

I rowed with a sharp stroke, but he cautioned me to take it easy, because he already saw that there might be need of much strength to keep afloat if we didn't soon come upon our vessel. He rowed, too, and we went easily along, one of us stopping now and then to bail.

Christy sang out: "We're to windward of her now. Must be. Hold her so."

"It's so thick, Christy," I said, striving to peer through the fall. "We could pass under her bowsprit and see nothing of her." I turned my head the other way and listened. "There!" I cried. "hear that? 'Tis her horn blowing for us."

"Yes, Sebastian. Where would you say it was blowing from?" He turned the same way and listened. "No, it's not her horn. It's the gale blowing up. We'll never hear her horn in this racket."

The heavy dory clambered sluggishly up the wave. Its crest broke over her. The journey down was so swift that I became alarmed and held my oars in deep to steady her.

I said to Christy that the wind had changed again. It had been blowing on

my back and now I couldn't tell where it was coming from.

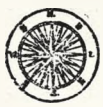
"I can't tell what's happened to the wind!" He was leaning backward and couldn't hear my voice amid the hissing of the snow. He studied the cargo of halibut and, without a word, flung off three or four into the sea. I knew by this that our situation had become perilous.

He signaled to me that he was going to anchor. He did so and came to my side and gave it as his opinion that it would be best to anchor there until the snow ceased.

"It won't last long, Sebastian," he said. "It'll stop soon."

"Yes, Christy, soon. And then we'll see the vessel bearing down on us."

"Yes, and all will be well. She'll show her light and we'll be safe on board before we know it. But we've overloaded a bit and I thought it best to rid ourselves of a few fish. To make it easier."



FOR a while the dory rode easier and once the snow seemed to lighten, but I had hardly time to call him up from bailing before the flakes came whirling at us thicker than ever. The wind gathered flakes and hail and spray, flung them into our faces, and filled the bottom of our dory. The little anchor held her head right and we busied ourselves with our gear, not caring to be idle. Often we looked to leeward, hoping to catch sight of the *Susan's* familiar gleam. No sign showed in the twilight.

Night fell. Little change came in the light around us, because the snowfall had long since shut off the dim rays of the setting sun; yet I knew that night had come because the feeling of loneliness grew in my heart and the howl of the wind came louder, passing in a curve over the face of the waters.

Christy handed me the jar of tea.

"Sup it up," he said.

There was little left. I drank it. I held out the jar to him so that he might stow it away. I saw that he stared to windward. He raised his arm and cried: "Look there! She's to windward of us! Now I call that hard luck."

At first I could see nothing, so thickly fell the snow. I gazed where he had pointed and then I saw the light of our vessel rise in the dark and fall. All our rowing and hard work to get to windward of her had been in vain. That task, doubly hard and dangerous because of the night and its rising gale, still lay before us, unless she came down on us by good chance in a search. We watched, in the hope that we might see her move. Her position didn't change. He then said that it would be best to make the effort now, while she lay in plain sight. I took in the anchor and we lay to the oars again.

I heard him shout a sentence. All that came clear amid that din was: "I must tell—" but the gale came between us and I cried out to him that I hadn't heard all. So he turned, cupped his hands, and shouted: "We are rowing for our lives!"

I had rowed for many things, but not for my life. I put my back into it. I spared nothing, bit deep and pulled hard. I let my right hand know what my left was doing and bade it do better. We had lost a dory-length and more in taking up the anchor, and all our strength and skill couldn't push us back to where we started. No, not that much. The sea coursed under us and broke over us. The water in the bottom gained a little with every stroke and the snow fell with such a heavy rush that it alone seemed enough to defeat us. I struck hard with the oars—once, twice, thrice. I shortened the stroke and doubled it. Gusts of the gale struck broadside on, then whirled and battered the bow. The dory sank lower and lower. At last, in desperation, I shouted: "Any headway?"

"Not a fathom! She's just as far away!"

I glanced over my left shoulder and saw no light. I looked the other way and found the warm beacon. We had done nothing.

Christy shipped his oars and let go the anchor. Off we fell, whirling rapidly. Soon the anchor took hold and the dory brought up. We began to bail. We went hard at it, because the water was up to our knees and our gear was beginning to work loose and wash about. I took several big fish and flung them over the

side. The sea spun them away. I saw their fat, gray sides gleam. Even in that dire moment, I couldn't help thinking that it was a sinful thing to waste such hard-won booty.

By this time, we had lightened the dory considerably. Nevertheless, the force of the sea and the force of the gale put such a strain on her anchor that it began to drag.

Off she went, faster and faster. I jumped to my oars, meaning to keep some order in her flight, if I couldn't stop her. Ice was making now. It lay thick and harsh across the thwart and I had to break it away before I could get a rowing-seat. Christy turned to bailing, this being even more needful than rowing to block our wild flight from the schooner.

Night dark and night cold now lay hard hands upon us. Spray turned into rattling icicles that cut my cheeks and forced me to work with eyes half-closed. This new burden of ice drove our little boat down deeper and deeper until at last it seemed that she couldn't keep afloat.

He seized the greater part of our gear and flung it into the water. He turned to bailing again, flailed the water out and then let go all but one of our precious halibut. I turned at that moment and saw him a-straddle in the gloom, his face shining pale under the rime on his hat brim. He held the last of our fish in his hands. He didn't throw it. He stowed it up against the kidboard and secured it somehow. He bailed again and I rowed hard. The casting away of the gear and fish put us in better shape and we began to ride easier.

I heard a happy cry from Christy. I looked backward. There, not twenty fathom away, came the *Susan* on her search for us. I saw her hull plainly and dimly made out her sail. There was no mistaking the bright star shining in her rigging. I listened.

Christy cupped his hands and roared: "Ahoy! Ahoy, the schooner!"

I shouted the long "Ahoy!" and then listened. I tried to shut out the scream of the gale and thunderous flow of water so that I might hear her signals, and it seemed to me that I caught the mellow blast of her horn. There was no good in shouting and we had no lantern. We waited. Soon the *Susan* vanished.

He came toward me and said: "She'll be around, Sebastian. The old fox won't lose a dory in a millpond like this."

"Aye! Christy," I replied. "She'll swing around and soon we'll be safe aboard. He won't scold us this time for being greedy."

WE LET the anchor go again. This time it held. Christy and I sat forward to keep her head down and help her behave. We stirred only to pound ice and to bail. Midnight came. Our hope then changed to expectation of dawn, because we knew that it wouldn't be hard to find us, if the gale wore itself out. I broke off a bit of ice from the gunwale and tasted it. I found it salty and spit it out. I fished around until I put my hand on the tea jug. It had hardly a drop in it and Christy flung it into the sea in disgust. The Boston crackers had turned to a sodden dough in my pocket. I ran my fingers into the mess, nevertheless, and stuffed the dough into my mouth. I made him do likewise.

Hour by hour, the northwest gale ran over us. Hour by hour, we fought against it with all the tricks that the Grand Banks years had taught my dory-mate. He knew all the sly ways and cruel ways of the Atlantic and fended us against them. In silence he labored and directed the work of my hands. When it was done and a truce gained, he spoke cheerfully of the fast-waning dark. He made me look to the east for the break of day. When I saw it, a gray arc in the blackness, he sang out: "We haven't long to wait, Sebastian! Aboard for breakfast, and how I'll relish it!"

Daylight came through snow and spray. The wind changed to N.E. and tossed the snow to one side for a little while. A hilly sea lifted us so high that we could see far around us. He looked to the north and east. I looked south and west. The sea passed under us and we sank down again. A hopeful glance passed between us. Once more a great sea lifted us and again our eyes swept the horizon. There was no vessel.

I saw Christy's face clearly when the light increased, and he saw mine. In his face, I saw the pinch. His cheeks seemed thin. His brine-encrusted mouth told a tale in silence. I cannot tell what he saw in my face, yet I was sure he read no sign of fear or lack of trust in him, a great sea-farer. He had my heart and I had his: each man firm to do a dory-mate's full share in the duty now plain before us.

"Time to think, Sebastian." He went into the bow and crouched there by himself in poor shelter. I bailed her clear and flung over the odds and ends of our gear. I knew now that every ounce meant a pound for us to carry on the long journey.

He came down to me and said: "No use in lying idle at anchor here, Sebastian. Something's happened to our vessel. Who knows if even one dory got back to her. Maybe she's alone herself, like the *Moonhawk* I told you about. We must up anchor and go."

"Right!" said I cheerfully. "Where to, Christy?"

He looked at me with a gentle look—aye! a tender look—and replied: "Newfoundland."

"Others have done it," I replied. "Jeremiah's father and John's uncle together." My heart shook at the memory of their tale. "What one man can do, another may try. How far do you reckon it is to land, Christy boy?"

He let out a sudden cry that seemed almost a sob, a protest at our fate. This he put away from him, seized my hand and held it between his icy mittens. He laughed triumphantly. "Ah, Sebastian! I said back there you were the huckleberry for my basket and you are! You are!" He looked away at the sea, measured in his mind's eye the heaving billows in their miles, pondered, and replied to my question. "A hundred mile and more, Sebastian. As the crow flies, that is."

"Sure of our course, are we, Christy?"

"Not certain sure, but it's a broad target."

"Sure it is, Christy. We can't miss it very well."

"No food, Sebastian. Remember that."

"My belly tells me so, Christy. But we'll make up for it once we run ashore."

He gave me that close look again and said: "Now, my friend, before we begin, one more word. You won't hold it against me that this befalls you because you came with me? No, I see you won't do that. 'Twas the chance we took. I did all I could and I all I knew, and by this time we'd have been safely aboard her, if something hadn't happened in the gale. It came up so suddenlike. Give up all hope of her and think only on the land." He dashed the frost from his eyes and added: "Ah! someone must have been driving nails on Sunday!" He laughed ruefully. "Give up all hope of her. Better so."

"I will," I answered. I took his hand and said: "I will hold nothing of this against you, Christy, and indeed, nothing can be held against you, for I am here of my own free will. But tell me that I haven't failed you as a seaman. I'm proud of that, Christy, and it would go hard with me to hear that another man might have done better by you."

"Don't say that, Sebastian. I never seen a stronger man in all my life or a better pair of hands at the oar ends! No! No! All's well between us and I thank you for all that you have done for me. Now then—row!"

I set to the oars and he drew up the anchor. I began to row. This was early in the morning of our second day and at the end of our first night.

FORWARD I drove the dory in the bleak morning. When we rode over a sea, and paused a brief while at the top of our watery world, I gave a short light stroke and pushed her over. In the wild descent, I held the oars free and kept them so until the new ascent began; then I let go with a will.

'Twas well, yet not well enough. What pair of arms could pierce that gale? Not mine, not mine. I spent myself in that first hour, spent abundantly, and failed. I labored so hard that the freezing pains in my feet ceased and the blood flowed warmly through me. I strove amidst the horns and bugles of the gale, ever hearing on my right and on my left the howl going in a circle; wolfish, wolfish howl,

as in the wilderness of Saskatchewan by our red fire.

Seas broke on her bow and coursed the gunwales and followed after, leaping in our slow track, racing by, and turning again to leap under the oars. I clenched my hands desperately onto the handles and struck deeper and deeper, yet I struck against foam one time and the right oar swung wildly.

I fought to keep balance, drove my heels down to firm footing and tried to keep her head on the course. The dory fell off, whirled, blew backwards with the gale, shipped water. In the last moment, I caught hold again and brought her head to the sea. His hand touched me and I saw him hold up the only part of our gear that we had saved: a buoy made of a keg.

He knocked its head in and flung it into the water washing over my boots. He then sat in his place and took up the oars to pitch his Gloucester skill against the storm. I rested a brief while, saw that he too could make no gain, and then added my oars to his. Even this was of no use. Two rowers could not prevail against the sea.

He shouted: "It's no good trying now! Rig a sea-anchor. I'll hold her head on."

I bailed first and then fished out the stern painter. I took my mittens off so that I might throw a sound knot into the painter and let them fall into the water in order to keep them soft. At that instant, a great sea broke over the bow and rushed through the dory. I had barely time to drop the sea-anchor and seize the bucket. Out went the anchor and, as I soon discovered to my sorrow, out went my mittens too. Christy shouted a warning and I bailed as I had never bailed before, for there was as much water in her as she could hold and still float. The anchor gave a sluggish movement to her. A cloud of vapor came softly down and covered us.

The danger passed for the time being. I sat a while until he came to my side and pointed at my hands. The reddish color seemed to be changing to white. They gave me no pain; even the wounded finger felt all right.

"Look!" he cried. "Your hands! Ain't they too cold?"

I shook my head. He took the mitten off his left hand and touched my wrist with his bare finger. I shrank from his touch. It sent a barbed pain through me.

He said: "Take these!" He pulled off his other mittens, held them out to me.

"No! No!" I said. "I lost mine and must suffer for it. I'll be all right, Christy."

"Take one!"

I shook my head again and sent him back to his place. Yet I was frightened in my soul that we might have to row all alone for that hundred miles and I knew that I couldn't keep my fingers on the handles very long if my hands froze. I considered that I might tear out some part of my inner clothing and wrap my hands in the cloth. This was folly, because the cold was so intense that it would have slain me as with a spear.

I fastened my fingers hard around the handles and rowed while I pondered. I looked fondly at my right hand, gleaming frosty white. I gave it a poor smile, thinking of all the wonderful things it had done for me in play and love and water skills. Fondly I looked, too, at my left, gleaming frosty white. "This is my hand!" I said and a voice replied: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest." Thus the old pagan gave me his interpretation of the thing and I resolved to let my hands freeze where they were, in order that they might be of some service to my friend. I did this, knowing full well that my arms and shoulders and my back would go on and on, even if my hands were insensible and their sinews devoured by the cold. This was a sailor's judgment. I could ask no more of myself at the time.

I curled my fingers around the oars while they were not yet too stiff. Spray ran over them and the sea poured upon them. I sat there without moving until my hands were frozen to the shape of the oars. I saw the crystal brine gleam where the dark flesh had gleamed. I wept a little inwardly. I loved my hands so. I rowed on. I uttered my morning supplication to the Lord Who sitteth upon

the flood and to Him I commended the soul of the man by me.

DARK as night, the water ran beneath us. Gray as the stormy sky, the fog drifted over us. The waves, immeasurable in strength, fell against our anchor and against us. In silence, we toiled. Ridges of ice formed on the bow, crept down into the dory. Often the water in the bottom froze before our eyes. Then I would withdraw my hands slowly from their grips and pound the ice with an oar, or I would take the bucket in my fists and bail awkwardly. Often I smashed the ice with my hands, for I could feel no pain or blow through the gauntlets made for me.

In this time, Christy worked in silence or crept into the bow to rest a moment under the scant shelter. I saw that his store of strength waned fast. Yet he spoke manfully, saying: "Stick it out, Sebastian! A vessel will bear down on us. She could see us."

I knew that this was not so. A schooner might have knocked us from our course and not see us, so thick was the vapor and so great the unceasing din of spray and water.

We took in the anchor. All that day we bailed and pounded, pounded and bailed. We could hardly row at all because there was so much to do in order to keep afloat. At noon a glint came through the flowing clouds and I fondly dreamed that the sun might come out of the wrack and bide by us. Soon the glint turned to a bar of deeper darkness and rough hail flashed out of it. I turned my face to the sky and thrust out my raspy tongue, thinking a pellet might strike it and melt there. None did, although the hail lashed at my face.

I bowed my head and rowed on. I spelled Christy at the bailing. Once in every quarter of an hour, as our second day in this desolation came to its close, one of us had to rise and bail. When the new twilight moved across the sea, an immense wave rose over us and filled the dory nearly to the gunwales. It was his turn to bail. He lay in the bow, taking shelter. I turned, in the midst of my struggle with the oars, and saw him huddled there, his arms bent under him, his head bowed.

I shouted: "Jump, Christy! Bail her, Christy boy! Bail her!"

The water dashed over him. I saw his head move weakly and I sprang to his side. He said: "I can't see it. My eyes! Ah, what's this? What's this?"

I lifted his head. His eyes lay closed beneath a skein of frost. He moaned and tried to rise, saying: "The bucket, Sebastian! Put it in my hands. Put it in my hands."

I soothed him. I held his face up to the meagre light and looked upon it. This was a thing I had never seen before. No, nor heard of. I let his head fall gently and I left him to begin the bailing. Having cleared her once again, I returned to him and again lifted his head. His breath came slow. His face turned whiter and whiter as I gazed. Crouched in the bow, I held him in my arms to protect him against the unspeakable cold of the gale. I blew my breath against his eyelids.

He murmured a word that I couldn't hear. I soothed him with words, bade him be of good cheer. He replied: "There's no use, Sebastian! We can't live through the night. 'Tis better to die now than stretch it out." He sobbed and cried out: "My eyes! My eyes!"

This was a hard thing that he said, and I didn't know but what was there some truth in it. I mean, about stretching it out. Yet it was also an undeniable sin. I spoke roughly to him. My words came hastily, because I didn't wish to bear the burden of loneliness, too. I guess that was the way of it. I didn't wish to be alone in that sea, where I hadn't been before.

He moaned. Once he began, he kept moaning and at times there came words of little meaning from his frosty lips. The dory shipped a sea full of fragments of ice. It poured in a harsh stream over his twisted knees. He cried out clearly the name of that woman of Gloucester, for whose sake he had come to his present pass. "Martha!"

I jumped to my feet and bailed. In the midst of this labor, another sea came over bearing ice and I saw there was no use in lying down. I had all I could do

to keep her free of water. So I resolved to lie down no more. He talked loudly then and I heard him say his own name over and over again. He babbled of green fields. He asked for water and something to eat.

"There's no water," I said, "and there's no food but the fish and that will kill you, Christy."

I took up a piece of ice between my fists and placed it in his mouth. He pushed it out with his tongue and lay silent. He then began to recite a prayer over and over again. He said it in a hasty way and I trembled to hear, knowing that he had seen the vision. "For Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me. For Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me." Over and over again, speaking in his childhood rote, for he became a child again, now in the hour of death. "Stay near me, Sebastian. Stay near me." He raised his arms, clashed his icy mittens together and whispered: "Sebastian! Take my mittens. I'm all right now."

I lay down by his side in the bow.

"I'm here, Christy," I said. "Be comforted, Christy boy. 'Tis warmer now."

I blew my breath upon his eyes again. I held my breath until the inner warmth of my body warmed it and then I blew upon him. His face lay hidden, turned into the gloom. My hands couldn't feel his cheeks because the blocks of ice encased my fingers. So I put my cheek to his cheek in order to find the warmth of life in him, if it still lived. His cheek struck a chill into mine, it was so cold.

I blew upon his eyes and said: "Can you see now, Christy? Is that better?"

"Yes, Sebastian." His voice came in a sleepy murmur. "Yes, I can see now."

He died.

I began to cry. Where to, Christy? Where now, my huckleberry?

I LAY there by my noble friend until my own heart roused itself, stirred in its bereavement and loneliness. "Hear my prayer, Lord, and give ear unto my cry; hold not Thy peace at my tears, for I am a stranger with Thee and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover my strength before I go hence and be no more."

I watched my chance, and, when the dory lay right, I bent down and took up the body of my companion. I carried him in my arms and laid him in the stern. Jack Frost strewed flowers of spray upon him: yew of ice and a harsh laurel. The dory shipped a sea and the ice began to make on his stiff limbs. I bound him well, because I was resolved that he should lie in the earth and sacred words be said over his heroic head because, in his wandering, he had repeated the words: "Christian burial! Christian burial!"

And I whispered to him: "Christian burial. You're not for the sea, Christy, not for the sea." I made him secure with the stern painter.

I then took off his mittens and tried to put one on my right hand because the wounded finger gave me a new pain, though all else lay numb and painless. I broke away the ice on that hand and blew my breath on it and then I saw that it was swollen so much that the frozen mitten could not pass over. So I soaked it in the water at my feet until it became soft, a thing I had often seen Christy do.

I drew it on again and this time the fingers and the knuckles slid slowly in and this hand found shelter. Such a great boon this seemed! I thanked God most earnestly for my good fortune and I set about the same task with the other mitten. This I also accomplished in the dark of night.

I then went to him again and took off his jacket, for he had no need of it now. I broke the ice off it and went forward to the bow. There I lay down and drew the jacket over my head. I found a sweet relief in this. Thus I shut out part of the cold and the incessant clamor of wind and wave.

I rested. Yes, I rested for many minutes before I had to bail again. Thus the second night passed and the third day of my labor began.

At the break of day, the wind changed into the west and the sea became calmer. I saw the sun rise, watched its dim fire shine through a lattice of green bars and gold. A sea mew flew over my

head. The black hue of the water changed to the deep-water blue. Soon, above the arc of the sun, now lifting itself through the yellowish foam, an area of leaf-green grew and flowed brightly to the south and north. One splendid ray of light pierced the gloom overhead.

I rejoiced. I took up his jacket and laid it over his dear face. I hauled in the sea-anchor, made it secure at his feet, and bailed. I cut a little slice from the chicken halibut and thrust it into my mouth. It sickened me and I spat it out. I cut off a piece of skin from the backbone and chewed on this. The salt seemed to have been worked out of it by the ice. It gave my jaws something to work on.

I then spied a thinner block of ice swimming by, knocking against the dory. Something strange about it warned me, so I drew it into the dory and broke off a bit. I placed it on my tongue and found that it was pan ice from a river. I couldn't feel it at first. At last, part of it melted and a trickle of sweet water ran down my throat. I shouted in my joy. My thirst, which was like to kill me, broke. My veins leaped with life as if the drink had been good wine.

"Now, Sebastian!" I said aloud, "There's a chance yet!" The cold turned in my lungs with the chill of steel, but the thought of a river flowing gave me hope.

I sat down to the oars. I found the same difficulty in rowing because my hands were harder than ever and would not bend. There was neither pain nor comfort in them, only awkwardness. At last, I managed to squeeze the curved fingers back onto the handles and then I saw that blood had come through the mittens. I also saw a little bit of the flesh of my right hand come away.

I rowed all that day. Three times the dory shipped big seas, these all in an hour, thus bringing me close to failure. I bailed and wore my hands back onto the handles and rowed on, although the strokes came slow and faltering.

I scraped off a bit more of the frozen fish and found that some change had come over it, making it much too salty. My gorge turned. I gave this up, after cutting a piece out of the head, thinking for no good reason that the flesh there might not have changed. I grieved a little at this loss, let my burdened head topple down until the rime and ice of my hat brim rested on the ice covering my hands.

When I raised my eyes, the moon lay in my sight. A swirl of black vapor ran across the moon's face. I looked long at this fair vision, seeking a clue therein. A bird flew through that solemn, silvery flood and others followed, some flying below the leader, others above; yet I couldn't say for sure that they were birds of the land.

I began to row. To the dull progression of the weary strokes, my soul sat listening. Dipping feebly and not too far, lest the sea deprive me, I made my puny stirs in that vast welter and never knew whether I stayed on a landward course. Over and over again, I forced my shoulders to go forward, raised my arms, forced my shoulders back.

I began to count. I ran the figures before my mind's eye, tried to show a lively interest as the sum neared one hundred; and on the hundredth stroke I eagerly left off rowing and sat down in the bottom of the dory, my back to the wind. I persuaded myself somehow, by some mad angle of reasoning, that this was a proper thing to do, although the wind still blew against me. I thought that it came from N.W., but I wasn't sharp enough to say for sure.

In a little while, I found that the moonlight hurt my eyes. I began to grumble churlishly against her beauty and said many times aloud: "Wish she'd set. Wish she'd set and have done with it." Yet I could not leave off gazing. My desire to look into that sunny fire became so keen that I even twisted into the wind to give my eyes full satisfaction and full pain.

Between me and the light lay a wintry sea, of which the greater part heaved in darkness, unaltered in its gloom, save when a greater sea rose and broke in tumbling gleams of foam. In a part of the sea nearer the moon, I saw waves splash and play and at times this moonward sea brimmed over and flowed without high seas, as if some strange influence

played upon it from the stark deserts of the moon.

I fixed my hands to the oars again, rowed on. I counted, too, and because the wind seemed lessening, I resolved to count this time to the two hundredth stroke. I accomplished, one by one, the first half of this labor. At the one hundred and first stroke my heart cried out: "I can no more!"

I ceased to row, lifted my eyes to the moon, for I meant to pray a little to stave off the waning of my strength.

I had no need of prayer. A wondrous thing happened in the moonglade. A flower of flame bloomed in the darkness below the moon, a flower of flame that stiffly shone below the moon and high above the sea. This cold glare came and went like a sunbeam striking a flower of glass and showed me that I had seen a form of ice, fired to a golden hue in that moment.

A shadow fell upon this flower and hid its vast petals, and then a greater darkness passed between me and the moon, robbing the sea of all that lovely light. This darkness swam toward me, rushed over the shimmering radiance of the unbroken water, and cast so thick a pall that I could not even see that white face looking at me from the stern.

I stared at the moon when its glow appeared again, dim and obscure beyond the wall of darkness. This glow increased slowly until, at last, a flash of light, green as the depths of an emerald or of the morning star, stood where I judged the moon itself should be. By all these signs I knew what I was to see. Trembling, I awaited the great emergence. I listened for that never-to-be-forgotten sound of surf above the tumult of the wind and waves. I held out my frozen hand to feel the deadly chill of that majestic presence. I could not hear that rumble nor feel the greater cold. Yet I was sure.

"Christy," I said to that silent form, 'a guide is coming to show us the way."

A WIND sped under the moon, split the flow of clouds, and made a vast area of clear dark-blue sky, where a star gleamed clearly and then vanished when the moon-fire outshone the lesser gleam. It had been long since I last saw a star and my heart cheered, even in its amazement.

The moonlight rushed toward me, even as the darkness had come before, and the whole world turned to a rousing glow. Into this glory of calm light there now came, in the sublime pace of yore, the first outpost of the wandering berg: a black headland, whereon breakers climbed and threw up jets and fountains of sparkling spray. Next there came an immense battlement, a glittering, yellow tower that thrust itself halfway up the face of the moon. To the east of this height, the high wall of porcelain lay, not deadlike now, but adorned with banners of blue and amethyst and blue-bell blue and the blue of the forget-me-nots of our fields.

Ice had been making on those crags during all the days and nights of wandering. Freezing gales and winds of hail and high-flung spray had added parapets to the fortresses and thickness to the wall; grandeur piled on grandeur. Flares and camp-fires and eerie beacons burned on the vast plateau and bright cascades trumbled in moony splendor. Yet I looked on this with none of my old awe and terror.

He was a green hand in the ways of God, that stripling who first hailed the wandering continent of the Grand Banks. No, I now counted in my soul the heartening beat of a new song, hymn of the invincible soul itself, song of recognition, song of salvation. Inwardly I knew this solemn procession to be a sign of my salvation. My body, in its dread weakness and soreness, shrank away, but I—I greeted the appearance of the great obelisk, kinging it among the vasty ruins, with a throaty cheer. A frosty croak it was and nothing more, but I let loose. I sang out: "Ahoy, there! Ahoy!"

I sat to the oars. I worked my hands again until they slid onto the handles. I made my supplication and struck hard. I made five strokes and turned toward that monument, a pillar of fire east of the moon. I rowed five more strokes and turned, five more and turned again; and then I saw the obelisk move tower-

ing on until it lay athwart the moon itself, and the cloud-high column took to itself all that glorious light, turned itself into a column of molten gold.

I saw the course it took and I lay mine with it. I rowed the hundred strokes and the two hundred. The moon set and darkness came again over all that country of ice. I rowed on. The snow came and covered Christy, and the flakes drifted over my boots. I would not cease from rowing. The pain in my feet grew again until I had hard to keep from crying out. Even this pain drove me on, for I knew that a body which could yet suffer had much life left in it.

All night I rowed. Twice I stopped and sat in the bottom of the dory and there bowed back and forth, back and forth, to keep from freezing, even in that defended spot. All night long I rowed in stormy darkness. When daylight came, I saw an island amidst breakers to the north. Glaciers and wide fields of snow covered that island; only far off, where hills rose against the break of day, were there signs that this was actually land. These signs were dark spaces, where evergreens seemed to be growing.

I rowed past this island because I saw no sign of man upon it, and I struck harder blows, knowing that the mainland couldn't be far off. I then changed my course so that I ran between the island and the mainland. It seemed to me that if my strength gave out I should be able to steer the dory down upon the shore of the island.

At high noon, with the sun barely in sight, I rose to my feet and looked into the north. I saw the land! I went back to the oars once again and drove onward, resolved not to cease this time until I felt the pebbles of that distant shore roll under the dory's thrust. Often I looked backward, peering under the icicles on my hat-brim. Some hours later, I looked to the east and discovered that I had run past a headland. I looked to the west and saw another spur of ice-bound land. I looked down into the water streaming by the dory. Fragments of the ice I had found before now floated there. I fished one of these fragments aboard with an oar and kicked off a bit with my boot. I leaned down and caught it in my teeth. Its taste was good. This was ice from a spring far inland and I exulted in my victory. I ground the ice between my teeth and let it melt. I drank down the liquor with great joy.

"Sebastian!" I said, "You have won! A river mouth!"

I then felt the thrust of the river current setting against me. I shortened my stroke and doubled the time. I knew that this was the last mile, the last knot I had to make. Land rose in barren hills about me. Great clouds of snow whirled down from the hills and drove across the river. I dared not look up from my oars, fearing I might make an error that would set me drifting in that seaward current, a death to be died in the night at sea. Once the right oar slipped. I missed the stroke. The dory swung around, but I back-watered, seized the oar again and swung her back onto the course.

I HEARD a shout. I looked to the eastern shore and saw only the dancing hills of snow and one bare, black tree. I looked to the western shore and, in the slow turn of my head, I heard the brave music of that shout again. A man stood on the shore. Beyond him, there was a cabin, half-buried in a drift. Another man hurried lamely from the cabin to the shore. He stumbled, fell into the drifts, struggled slowly to his knees, rested, and then stood up. He came on at a straggler's pace. These men were dressed in black and their heads were bowed. I rowed ten fathoms above them and then turned. I let the dory come down toward them and I edged her into the shore.

I sang out: "Ahoy there. A lost dory-man and his mate!"

One of them answered with words I couldn't understand. I expected that they would dash into the water to lay hold of the dory, and when they didn't move to do this I sang out again.

"Lively now, boys! Take hold of her! I can't row!"

By this time, the dory floated hardly a length away from them. I could see their faces. By my soul! I will never

forget them! Never! Nor cease from praying for them. They were starving men. I saw, in that terrifying instant, that they were father and son, or brother and brother. Famine had carved the same gashes, cuts and hollows in each face, had struck them off with the one dreadful die.

They tried to speak, but they couldn't make the noise I had heard before. I cried to them in the name of God to seize the dory. The one who stumbled on the land now stepped weakly into the water while the dory came whirling on. His companion valiantly thrust out his hand to catch the oar. I leaned on it to bring up the blade, but it slipped through his bony fingers. Then the other fellow fell headlong into the stream. In despair, his companion flung up his hands, turned, grasped his companion by the arms and began to drag him out of the water, holding his face upward in a look of agony as he strained backward. The current drove the dory off from the shore. I cried out and fell down at Christy's feet. The sea-anchor struck my forehead. I lifted myself to my knees and, with the last of all the strength that God had given me, I flung it over the side. This was of no avail. The dory ran lightly outward on the current. Soon I heard the breakers, soon I heard the Atlantic pouring once more under the bow.

In my despair, I lay long in the bottom of the dory. I opened my eyes at times and saw the gray light of waning day fall upon the snow that drifted against my cheek. Night came on swiftly. With it came a greater cold, so fierce that pains in my hands and feet ceased and numbness crept over them.

"I won't be long alive now," I whispered to myself. "Not long. Not long."

I wept again, sobbed like a child. It seemed so hard to me that I should have come so far and, in the end, be unable to bury my comrade according to his Christian wishes, or hear for myself, as I lay dying, a human accent raised in prayer for my soul. I wished not to hear in my last hour this Atlantic voice, laying its mighty curse on the dignity of man. My heart attended to my woe; anger came slowly into its recesses, once so gay, once ringing with the songs of love and of blue, far seas and flowered islands.

MY HEART stirred, bade my body to rise. I sat to the oars. I rowed seven strokes against the drag-anchor, then drew it in and I rowed with the tide until I saw the bleak hills and the wooded hills of the island which I had passed on my inward voyage.

I drove straight for the shore, then held her off until I saw a break in the surf. Through this I dashed and once more beheld solid land about me, headlands of a little bay. I entered and saw the tumbled stones of a little wharf upon the shore. Above it lay a wreck of timbers, where fishermen once had been. I rowed the dory straight into this place and made the bow painter fast to the ruin. I arose and bade my companion to rest yet a little while before I entombed him in the face of the earth.

I crept out against the wind, seeking to drive my feet down through the snow to the earth. I turned my back on the sea. I crouched in the twilight by the lee of a great stone and thrust my icy mittens under my jacket and against my belly. I held them there until the pains began again in my hands and I once more found comfort in this and said: "They may yet be saved."

I then wandered forth and in the evening I came to a house, a ruined cabin, slouched on the windy plain. First, before I saw the house, I saw a shadow in my path, a shadow on the snow. I looked up and I saw the half-gone roof and naked boards. I let my head go down into the rime of my jacket collar and closed my eyes in order that they might not betray me with false delight. Thought I: "Wait a bit, good Sebastian. Keep your heart out of this, my huckleberry. Here's a mirage for you. Mirage of the land."

Obediently, I tarried a while, letting the wind search my heart. Keen as briers, sharp as thorns, this searching; and by the north wind, too, he whom I had loved. Now his deep thrust was like to slay me where I stood, sinking into the snow. He came out of this

cabin and bellowed, a Bull of Bashan, and bade me retreat now from his domain. I would not yield to him. I opened my eyes and stared down at the shadows of the naked boards. I put out my right foot until it broke the splintered line of the shadow and with joy I saw the shadow fall upon my glittering boot. I pushed forward my other foot and then dared to look at this habitation.

I cried out: "Halloo! Ahoy, the cabin! Anybody at home?"

I waited in silence. I lurched forward. Three times I forced my knees to rise upward. Three times I flung my lagging feet forward and then I fell headlong. I beat against the snow, fearing it would smother me. I turned my face to the sky and breathed a while; then I crawled onward and flung myself against the door. There was none. I fell full length across the threshold, rolled over and over until I struck a corner and there rested, quite content. I found it rather comfortable. I suppose I was no longer in my right mind. I giggled like a schoolgirl and said aloud: "A bit stuffy, ain't it, Sebastian?" I fell asleep.

I awoke refreshed. I stood up and jumped about a bit in the gloom. The wind had fallen off; the snow also had ceased. A dry moon rose and shed a gentle glow upon the desolate land. By this light, I examined my quarters. There were two rooms, the one I had slept in and a larger one. To enter this second one, I had to break a well-latched door.

The door, however, was all that had held together. The snow lay knee-deep in that room. I searched it, thinking there might be a morsel of food or rainwater, but there was nothing, except a ruined net, fish lines on a broken reel, and a lot of Canadian hooks frozen in a lump of tallow, too hard for my teeth.

In one corner of this room, I found a tub of brine. In it were two cod, which had been well-preserved. I took these out and flung them into the snow on the floor, thinking that they might thus be freshened, for I had hopes of making a fire in that place. I also found some loose boards. One of these I split with my boot and then wrapped the net around the end of it, making a sort of broom, which I held between my icy fists.

With this device, I swept out the snow. I lay down again in the corner and closed my eyes for a little while, but my body trembled and my teeth chattered out such a lively tune that I couldn't rest again; besides, my hunger and my thirst were great. I arose, therefore, and determined to make a fire at once in order to melt ice and snow and boil a piece of fish. There were matches, I knew, inside my shirt and there was wood enough. I lacked only a stove or a hearth and a pot. I searched high and low, found nothing. I swept away the drifts near the house and ran my mittens over the lumps that I overturned, thinking there might be an earth dish, broken and flung aside. It was in vain.

"I'll set fire to the house," I said. "I'll drink the melting snow and I'll roast a bit of fish. Should the owners come—and I hope they will—I've gold to pay them."

I set about this business at midnight. It was not foolhardy, thus to destroy a shelter, if it could be called such, under any circumstances but mine. The fishermen had abandoned it at the end of the cod season. As for myself, I now regarded the cabin as a trap. A sleep in it without a fire might have been a long one.

I resolved to burn it first on the lee side, so that a rising wind might not make too brisk a flame. At one side, I built a runnel of snow and ice and at that point I piled up the snow so that it would melt and let the water run down. I thrust a stick through each fish and then I bethought me of the halibut in our dory.

Thinking this would be safer and tastier, I turned and made my way back to the wharf.

Alas! my weakness had led me into an unseamanlike error. I should have made the dory fast at both ends. Now I saw that the plug had been knocked out of her and the oars and thwarts had floated out of her. She lay deep in the water. Christy's body lay there, held by the lashings. The halibut had been fortunately caught in the tangle of the sea-anchor. I dragged Christy to the shore and cast the fish, frozen rock-hard, into the snow.

I FOUND the oars and one of the thwarts floating under the wharf. These I took out, although I had hard work to do it, groping about by the scant light of the moon. The dory had suffered somewhat, because the tide had knocked it against a flat rock there, but I managed to right it, and after a long search I came upon the plug and restored it.

I then grew so weak that I couldn't use my fists any more. I rested and then searched out the gaff. I thrust the hook into Christy's boot and dragged him along the drifts to a place into which I had almost fallen, a depth of three fathoms of water between the shore and the flat rock. This formed a quiet pool. I thrust his body into this pool, thinking that he would be safe there until I could come back and give him the ritual he had requested when he lay dying.

I managed to get a turn of the painter around one of the timbers of the wharf and then pulled the dory nearer to the rock. I ventured into the water and waited until the bow swung toward me. I seized the bow painter and got a turn of that around another timber. All this was necessary, because I had seen no sign yet that made escape by land a certain thing and I needed the sea as a last avenue, though hated, hated.

Leaving these matters thus righted, I returned with the halibut to the cabin and entered the swept room. I got out my knife and scraped off a few chips from the wall. This task took me a wretched time, because my hands were worse off than ever and my legs were so far gone that at last I did the work on my knees.

I broke off a few larger pieces of wood and carefully piled my fire. I chipped off a bit of the frozen tallow and added this to the splinters. I then found that the condition of my hands made it impossible for me to take out the matches. Had I done so, I should have been unable to button my clothing again, especially my jacket, and thus I would have encountered the last blow of the cold which, I feared, could not be far off.

"There's no help for it, Sebastian," said I in as cheerful a tone as I could muster. "Ye must go to sea again."

I took up the gaff again and dragged the body of my companion out of its refuge, laid it on the icy shore. I then decided that it would be better, since I didn't have far to go to determine my fate, that I should leave him there in the water. He was safe. So I sank him once more in the pool. I turned my back on him with one last fond look at that countenance, half-seen in the greeny deep, and again I made the dory ready for sea, intending to run her before the wind and pass all the way around the island.

I began to row. By now my head lay fixed in the collar of frost around my shoulders and I had no power to move it. A shroud of ice encased my neck. I knew my course, had no need of steering about, and set to it. I hadn't made four strokes before the dory brought up sharply.

"Ah!" I thought, "I've gone aground."

I gave another feeble stroke, then summoned all my little strength for the last pull. I couldn't budge it. So, for a while, I sat, my eyes staring down into the puddle at my feet, pondering on this new reverse. I lifted my head as much as I could and then I discovered that I hadn't cast off the stern painter. I laughed miserably, crawled forward and tried to haul the dory back with my hands. This, too, proved too arduous a task and I, at length, had recourse to my teeth. I took hold of the painter in this way, reared back and then seized the line between the icy blocks of my mittens. I reached forward again with my teeth and sank them into the briny drip and again drew my head back slowly and again pressed my mittens on the line.

The sun was well up before I thus forced the dory back under the wharf and loosened the knot. I then rode clear and passed out into the open sea. There I encountered much ice and a slow current. Nevertheless, I began my circuit of the island. I ran toward the sun and soon rounded the headland. Seeing it now in back of me, I stood up in the dory and managed a sight of the land. On the rise of a hill, where a few hemlocks stood, their green boughs weighted with glittering frost, I saw a strange dwelling. At first I thought it must be the wreck of

a great sailing vessel, for a great mast stood in the midst. I then spied a thin rise of smoke flowing from the timbers. It would have escaped me entirely had it not blown across the dark branches of a tree beyond.

"Those people are burning coals," I said.

I kept staring at this welcome sight until I heard a shout. I forced my head to swing to the left. I saw two men standing beyond the surf. One took a few steps toward the water and eagerly signaled to me. I held up my hand and started to row again.

"Coals!" I whispered, and I let drive straight through the surf. I missed the first roller. When the second rose under the dory, I gave two sharp strokes. The dory flew toward the shore at a speed fit to stove her in if a rock raised in the way. This effort left me all tuckered out. I knew that I was done for, unless those people on shore proved to be a livelier breed than the last I had seen upon the mainland. The oars sagged and pulled and went free of my stiff grasp. I cared not a tinker's dam; for I was resolved to be taken from the water this time, if not in one way, then in another. I rolled over, thrust my knees under me, and stood up. I threw up both my hands to give them proof that the deed was up to them.

A strange thing: they wore uniform coats, long thick, woolen garments, with elegant brass buttons and I said to myself in a fine humorous vein, considering the circumstances: "What! Have I come all the way for this? To fall into the hands of Her Majesty's men?"

The man who had signaled to me was the first to see the exact nature of my plight and the need of precise, daring action. He spoke in that same, eager boyish fashion to his mate, but the other, an older and heavier man, shook his head and, in a hopeless way, pointed to the surf breaking at their feet. He flung up his hands.

The other, giving him the deaf ear, ran into the surf up to his waist and stood valiantly in that torrent, awaiting the inward dash of the dory. Hard work he had, the hero, to keep himself upright in that rough wash. His action was too good an example for the older man, a scrawny, dark-bearded fellow, who now turned toward the dwelling, uttered a useless shout that came only to me, and then ran into the surf.

I cried out in dismay when he fell headlong into the water and I feared that these, too, had been struck by the famine of the coast and I wondered if this brave man near me lacked the strength to perform the task his courageous heart demanded of him.

I LOOKED into that staring face, saw it clearly while the dory ran onward. I became sure of his strength and skill and I threw up my right hand and nodded calmly in the clamoring rush. Calmly, too, he nodded and I saw a look of high firmness set the thin lips straighter still and suck in the famished cheeks.

The dory faltered. I put one foot on the thwart and waited until I made sure the boat would go no nearer to my rescuer. I once more flung up my hand weakly in a signal that I meant to drive toward him. He smiled. Foam rippled out from under the dory. It paused and began to fall back.

I shouted in a terrible voice. "Stand by, sailor!"

For his answer, he took another step deeper into that thundering flood and raised his hands, showing them ready for the task.

I brought up my other boot, filled my lungs with air, and then hurled myself into the foam. I struck the water heavily, waited until I sank a bit, and then thrust out with arms and legs. I heard a noise, ringing clear like the scream of a cheated gull, and then a hand seized me by the head. Another struck hard at my neck and then slid down swiftly to my arm.

I lay easy and waited for the struggle he had to make. He heaved me to windward, thrust his shoulder down, and began to push me before him, inch by inch, slow step by slow step. Presently he stopped and cleverly brought my head up. I breathed and sank back into the water, so that I might float a little and thus help him. Once more that fierce cry rang above the clamor of the sea and wind, this time a note of triumph.

My feet dragged on the ice of the shore. He let me turn until I could bring my knees to bear upon the bottom. He staggered forward upon the bottom. I rose to my feet, took one long stride with him, and then swooned in his grasp. In the last moment of my consciousness, I felt the sweet, snowy embrace of our earth again.

I AWOKE an hour later, or thereabouts. I had no memory then of what had passed. My memory had had enough and to spare. I lay in the cabin of a great ship, so it seemed, lay flung out upon a soft bed, set under a porthole. Old habit turned my gaze, half-blind though it was, toward the weather and, in my delirium, I saw spray and hail rise and beat against the great globe of glass above me.

I remember that I set myself alert to feel for the roll and pitch of the vessel and to see how she was handled, for these were perilous waters, famed in Gloucester and Newfoundland for great losses of ships and sailors and passengers. I lay long in this dream, sank once or twice beyond the dream in the darkness whence I had come, and then began to breathe calmly.

I lay naked. No pain came to me. I didn't feel the warmth of the cabin, nor was I aware of past peril. I then remembered the coil and burden of ice upon my back and said to myself that it would be well to know if this had gone away. I moved my head and my neck bent easily. Made happy by this knowledge, I turned my head to the right and then my eyes, becoming a little accustomed to the gloom and the warmth, feasted on the rich furnishings of that place. Panels of dark walnut reached almost to the ceiling and from the main beam of the ceiling there depended a gleaming candelabra of silver, hung on silver links, each one of which shot out dull beams of light.

I let my eyes linger long on that lovely haze. I slept and dreamed a dream of home.

I awoke and saw that the candles had burned a full inch and, again with no pain except the numbness, I resumed rapt gazing and turned a little more toward the other source of flame and light: the fire of coals. Now, indeed, my wonderment increased because, in the slow, delighted passage of my eyes, I encountered three ship's compasses set side by side against the dark wood of the farther wall, which seemed a strange place for such instruments. There were also two large chests of maple wood, each bearing a coat-of-arms in fine silver work. Between them stood a tall, cushioned chair. Its back was formed of two high columns of mahogany wood and a broad, joining piece of rosewood.

"Fit, indeed," said I in my dream observation, "for an admiral of the fleet."

A great rug lay before this chair. It was made of well-woven wool, wine-colored. Wrought in it by threads of gold and crimson silk, there gleamed a design similar to the markings of the chest. Again, in the open space between that kingly chair and the hearth, there lay another rug, still larger, and all of one glorious hue, a blue shade, even richer than the ruby color of the first one. On this second rug there stood a table of mahogany which bore two singular objects: a golden-barred bird cage (where no bird sang) and a rude earthernware dish, full of some dun-colored liquid.

This common dish struck me as being all the more queer because it lay next to a gleaming tea service of majestic silver, ornamented with golden lovebirds. There were many pieces; how many I cannot quite remember, but lordly, lordly, they stood there; and I prepared myself (in my half-dreams) for the deft entrance of a steward, bearing hot water and tea leaves to furnish my first repast since last I emptied the cold tea-bottle when our fate unrolled.

There, too, my fond eyes lingered while my thirst, provoked by dreams, choked my heart and my belly raged in its desire for meat. My eyes could no longer tarry upon these reminders of the halls of home and I explored beyond the quiet pool of the burnished tables, full of stars of candlelight, until I looked, at last, at the fraternity of our fire, a beauteous thing of sea coals.

Such were some of the articles that charmed my eyes and enthralled me as

I lay there, and there were others, all of similar richness and sombre, well-bred luxury, which are beyond recall of memory. These will, indeed, justify the astonishment that filled my heart and my mind also, for it seemed to me that this could be none other than an admiral's apartment of a great Indiaman, an argosy of olden times.

A door to the left of the fireplace opened. A child cried fretfully. At first I could see nothing in the doorway, because my eyes were tired and I suffered again. I closed them to combat a sickness that tormented my belly. I heard a voice speak and another answer. A woman, whose cracked, shrill tone described her age, cried out a long sentence that I couldn't understand.

A hand touched my head and a voice, seeming to speak from far away, uttered a word. I gave no reply. I could not. I knew the words to be English, yet I couldn't solve their meaning and my memory, striving to run the race back to Fortune Bay and the accent of old Nicholas, furnished me at once with the voice of my dead dory-mate and I knew that he lay dead and I wept and groaned for him.

I said in the sweet dusk: "Captain, have you brought my dory-mate aboard? If so, have your men bring him by here, then give him a Christian sailor's burial, for that was his last desire."

A hand touched my harsh lips. Firmly the deft fingers parted the flesh and a voice soothed me in gentle sentences, repeated over and over, until at last I heard clearly: "My poor dear man! My poor dear man!" as I had heard before by the brook of the willows.

The fingers held my parched lips apart and a trickle—nay! a drop—of liquid fell into the furnace of my mouth, fell and ceased. I lifted my hand to open my lips for more. Another's hand gently seized mine, held it down. The water coursed in drain of fire across my tongue, dried in my throat. I retched and convulsions seized my belly.

I heard a man's deep voice say mournfully: "He is dying."

An answer came; I know not what, yet spoken in that chief voice of my comforter.

I cried out: "More! Give me more! My thirst! My thirst!"

"No," said the gentle voice, "no more, my poor dear. 'Twill kill you. Wait a little. Wait a little."

I waited and at the end of a little time I said: "Have you taken my dory-mate aboard? Have you found him?"

"He wasn't in the dory," said a voice.

I gave up speaking and passed into a feverish slumber, wherein dreams came; and this time I dreamed of a white halibut swimming up the sky and of four figures in white hoods and four white hoods without figures.

ONCE more the fingers pried apart my lips and let in a trickle of water. This second drink did me good. I took care not to ask for more. The two men lifted me from the bed and I then saw an old woman pouring cold water into three tubs: one large and two small.

These were placed near the fire, but the youth, my rescuer, found fault with this position and moved them farther from the heat, which would have warmed me too quickly. The larger bucket was placed in front of the lordly chair and the smaller two were placed on stools on either side of the chair. These two men lifted me, or tried to, but their strength was not equal to the burden and I had to set my bare feet on the rug, a thing I didn't relish because my feet were far gone.

I sat down in the chair and they put my feet into the bucket and my hands into their buckets. Then, into each of the buckets, they poured coarse salt from a sack, making a brine strong enough to cure herring.

Soon this brine began to draw the frost out of my feet and hands. Thus began the true pain of frost-bite. Had they been fiends, drawing red-hot wires through my flesh, the suffering could not have been greater. I strove hard to keep the tears from my eyes, for these, I knew, were good people and I had no wish to cause unhappiness among them.

I shut my eyes, thrust my head back against the chair, and stayed so until the sweat of my agony came out upon my brow and trickled down. My breath

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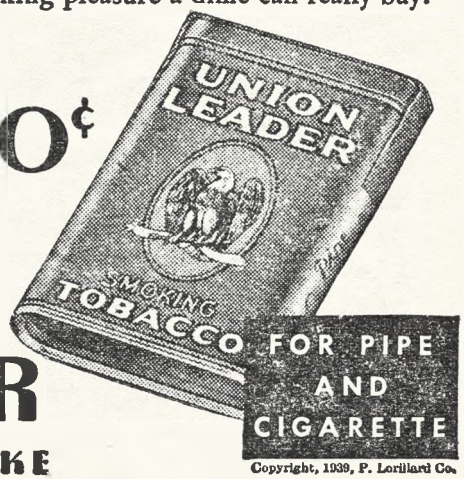

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came and went quickly; then came slowly and my heart seemed once to falter. That voice murmured again near me: "My poor dear man!" Again the fingers pried open my lips and again a trickle of water came to help me in my need.

"How long must this go on?" I whispered.

A hand touched my head and the voice answered: "An hour. You are so frozen that you must stay a full hour. It is half gone. Be patient. 'Twill save you, perhaps."

I strove hard not to take out my hands. The pain in them seemed far greater than in my feet. Only once did I feel so keen a piercing in my wounded finger that I couldn't bear it and I began to lift it out of the brine. That watchful one held my wrist and wouldn't let me go. In time, this came to its end and they laid me once more on the bed, where the old woman came with the earthenware dish from the table. The stuff in it was a mixture of fish oil and flour.

My rescuer, whose face kept flashing clearly before me and then faded as my eyes grew dim, made a poultice of this stuff and wrapped my hands and feet in swathes of fine linen taken from one of the chests. He also took a pot from the fire and fed me two spoonfuls of a strong liquid, made of herbs. Having done this, he left me and I composed myself to sleep, but I couldn't close my eyes until long after midnight. I talked aloud in a delirium that waxed and waned. Twice the fire was replenished and often some person came and sat by me for a time. Once in every hour, fingers held my lips apart and poured in drops of liquid.

The morning came. The two men and the old woman returned and gave me more water, this time half a cup. When I had swallowed this, the woman gave me some spoonfuls of gruel. I kept this on my stomach well enough. They waited to see that this was so, then lifted me from the bed and carried me to a bench placed in front of the fire. I heard children crying again on this day and I think it was then that I learned (clearly, at least, for I may have been told before in my fever) that I wasn't aboard a ship, but on an island off the Newfoundland coast. I can't say who it was who told me or why; I guess that some remark of mine concerning our course brought forth the answer.

This I do know for a well-remembered fact: that there began on this day, because of the thing that I am now about to tell, a terrible desire on my part to go home. Not to Gloucester, but to Piety Corner, where there were no half loaves.

Well then, I sat in front of the fire and the older man said: "Hold up your right hand, my dear man."

I did so and he began to unwrap the folds of linen. He paused in the midst of his task and said: "Are ye strong? Can ye stand it?"

I told him that I could stand anything, if it came amidst such warmth.

He unfolded more of the cloth and I gazed at my good right hand as he freed it of its bindings. A movement to the left caught my eye. I saw that the old woman had flung her apron over her face.

"Think nothing of it, Madam," I said.

However, she wouldn't take down her apron. Her hands trembled.

At this moment, the man gently put down my hand and turned away, murmuring to himself. I anxiously watched him by the dim light of the coals because their agitation had communicated itself to me.

"Get on with it, my good sir!" I said and tried to smile, doing poorly at it because my sickness increased and I grew faint.

"I cannot!" he said.

Therefore, my rescuer, who had stood silently in the shadow of the hearth, stepped forward and resolutely took up my right hand. He, too, murmured to himself and let his thin hands rest a moment gently upon me. He then unwrapped the linen and I saw the little finger fall off into the rolls of cloth. I looked up dumbly at him and clung with my gaze to the gaze of those strange, sea-green eyes, those Buddha eyes, which beseeched me to stand by in good order. I shut my eyes, let my head droop a little.

"The others?" I whispered.

"We'll save those, dear man," said he, in a whisper faint as mine. "But you'll never fish again."

I OPENED my eyes. I saw that the skin of the other fingers had split in places. The hurts were clean, however, owing to the power of the curing salt. Even the finger that the fish-hook had gashed was all right. Yet some dead parts lay here and there and these had to be taken away to keep me from poisoning.

My rescuer turned to the table, moved the candles nearer, and took up a pair of silver scissors. He took up my hand and made ready to cut.

I said: "Please don't cut my other fingers off."

"Dear man, I will not. I'll clear them and in eight days they'll heal. So close your poor eyes and trust to me."

This I did. Well for me that I could. He had no choice. He had to look. Once I heard him groan and repeatedly he whispered to himself. Soon he finished his work and poured an ointment over my fingers and wrapped them in strips of linen; and then, without pausing, he unwrapped my left hand. He looked keenly at the fingers and in a tender, joyful voice, told me that not one of these fingers had to be lost.

"You're a brave man," said I, "and a good, noble one to help the stranger so."

"I'm not a man," said my rescuer. "I am a woman."

"Steady so!" I whispered and tried to catch hold of myself, but the sickness, coupled with this revelation, struck me hard amidships and I keeled over, sprawled out on the bench. I lay thus only a little time, keeping my left hand free, but my rescuer calmly heaved me to my seat and simply said: "I'm not a man. I'm a woman. I'm the daughter of that man." These words, too, came in the curious accent of the Newfoundlanders of that coast and I had trouble at first, as I had with old Nicholas, in understanding, but I soon learned. Also I know that when they conversed with strangers they made a special effort to speak as the stranger spoke.

I looked down at those hands, then, and knew them to be the hands of a woman and I looked up into the strange, sorrowing eyes and I knew that they were the eyes of a woman.

"Twice in your fever," she said, in a calm, low voice, meant to interest me while she worked, "you spoke to me as to a woman when I sat by you at night. And once you called me by an odd, foreign name. And then, when you were better, you called me 'Captain' and 'Skipper' and bade me take aboard your dory-mate. Where may he be, your dory-mate?"

"My dory-mate," said I, "is safe enough, Madam. He lies in four fathoms of water by the flat rock under the wharf yonder."

"This will be Christy that you called upon in your fever?"

"That was his name."

"I'm sorry for you that you lost your dory-mate."

I stayed silent and then I said: "This is no work for a woman, cutting the dead flesh from a half-dead man! Go out, therefore, and send in a man to do this thing."

SHE knelt before me and took up my right foot. She began to unwrap the folds of linen and, in so doing, she began again in her clever tone and told me of the distress of the island, saying that there was little food for the women and children and less for the men, because the winter already had held them cut off from the mainland for many weeks. Three men, who had gone to the mainland for supplies, had not been able to return and no one knew whether they still lived.

And she revealed to me, as she undid the cloths, the secret of her dress and of the strange apartment in which I lay and she showed me also the cause of that antique air which lay upon the rich furnishings. This island had been in the past a scene of many shipwrecks and once, in her childhood days, a winter storm had cast a great ship upon those rocky shores in the night; and in the morning her father had gone out under a blue sky and had found hundreds of

bodies lying in a vast sorrowful ring around the island. Again, he had once set forth in a boat and had taken one hundred and thirty men, women and children off a ship from Ireland that had run upon the rocks. Aye! and he had fed them, too, until they were carried away by the government people.

"All these things," she said, "come from the wrecks of vessels and our garments come from their broken chests and those we saved sound. Those that are not broken are kept safe by my father against the day the owners come for them. For he believes they will come to take away the precious things. So we use only what we must."

Thus, while she murmured at my feet, she prepared the ointment and unwrapped the bindings from my feet, first, the right, which was whole (as I knew it would be because of its fierce and constant pain) and then the left, which had been in the days of my voyage in the dory, and now showed its loss. I didn't look down. I kept my eyes fixed on the fire until I felt her hands pour on the soothing ointment and then I turned to her and said: "Is my right foot whole, ma'am?" And she said it was and that it would heal in good time. I then said: "Is my left foot whole, too?" And she shook her head and turned away so that I might not see her tears.

It was true, indeed, this matter of my left foot. The second toe had gone the way of the little finger and I went back to bed a maimed man. At first, I stretched out in sorrow for myself and didn't wish to live any longer and I bewailed my folly in making the trip.

And then, turning carefully between the sheets of good linen, I saw my rescuer bowed before the fire, the trousered legs thrust apart in a deck pose, the cropped head bent in thoughtful attitude, the saving hands joined together.

And I knew that I had been saved by those clasped hands and had been nursed from death by them and would be made whole again in good time, except for the things that were separated from me, and I said to myself: "Count yourself lucky, Sebastian." So I fell asleep.

By PERRY ADAMS

These bloody 'eathen—he'd show 'em 'ow a British sergeant could die.

SUNDAY SOLDIER

AL STONE stood on the rolling hillside of young barley, a cold feeling in the pit of his stomach. A hundred feet below his helio station Jat lancers were filing along a cattle trail which, far below, could be seen dipping into a valley, crossing the stream which flowed along its floor and winding up toward a rock *sangar* on the opposite hill, the lancers' objective.

From that *sangar* Zakka Khel rifle fire ploughed through the green barley spears like string dragged erratically across a lawn, and everywhere Al looked were

riderless horses and troopers without mounts.

So far, the Afridi tribesmen had concentrated their fire on the moving target, the cavalry. But off to his right, Al could see the last section of the last troop coming along. Once the horsemen passed, the fire would lift to the still target—himself and his men. That was why Al's stomach felt clammily empty.

He kept peering anxiously at a black, sausagelike cloud which sailed with maddening slowness across the sun. Here was a nearly summer sky otherwise clear as the inside of a blue-burnished copper bowl; at the critical moment—just as Al's operator had made contact with the main column—the helio had been rendered useless by that single cloud.

Would it drift by before the last of the lancers passed? Perhaps there would be a few seconds' grace—that chance was what held him. He was scared clean through; stubby fingers fumbled with the end of a graying walrus mustache; no other sign betrayed him. His three sappers wanted to cut and run, too; their mounting panic stabbed at him with an urgency tangible as a dagger thrust.

Duck for cover! There was plenty lower down, where his commanding officer crouched behind a fold in the hill with the fancy Dans of the wireless. Damn all such newfangled nonsense as that stuff! If it was any good in a pinch, why didn't those jaspers raise the column now?

Wireless was the washout Al had known it would be. Let ships at sea play around with it. The army could manage fine with the good old standbys—flags, telephones, helios—honest things a *pukkah* swaddy could understand and bank on. Aye, what had been good enough for Lord Roberts and Kitchener was good enough for Al Stone, senior sergeant of the Peshawar Signal Company.

Sixteen miles across the hills of the Interzone no cloud obscured the sun. The puzzled operator of the main body heliograph waited, then "opened" his light, thinking Al's man might have lost his alignment.

Presently the distant instrument winked impatiently:

WHAT'S WRONG SEND MESSAGE WE ARE MOVING

Al cursed. As if he didn't *want* to warn the column that his mounted scouting party had made contact with the Zakkas! Why did they think he and his lads were standing here, risking life—for fun? It was here or nowhere? The instant he moved to safety, lower down, intervening hilltops would cut the line of sight to the other heliograph.

And now the very last Jat lancer was passing. The cloud was still over the sun.

Red-headed Sapper Carson, the operator, spoke through his teeth.

"Never make it now, Sergeant. Suicide t'wait. Strike station, I says."

The others muttered agreement. A miracle that the Zakkas had left them almost alone. It could not last.

Again Al squinted at the cloud. "Few seconds an' we'll 'ave sun. Stand fast, lads."

With that the helio mirror flew into a hundred glittering wedges and Sapper Carson, directly behind it, clutched his groin and went limp.

"Strike station—quick!"

The other two jumped to obey. Al picked up Carson, slung rifle and all, but another slug spattered his head across Al's broad chest. This time Carson was done for. Al stripped the rifle from him, followed downhill after the others.

MAJOR THAYER, the C.O., eyed the gory mess on Al's tunic.

"You hit, too?"

Al's lined face was bitter. "No, sir. This is poor Carson. That bloody cloud! I didn't want ter risk stoppin' up there, and I didn't want ter quit wivout gettin' word through, neither. I failed both ways, sir."

"No fault of yours," the major said. He was years younger than Al, but big and sandy, too. Even after weeks in the field, he managed to preserve an air of scraped-down smartness. "No, Sergeant, you did your very best. If only this wireless were working, everyone could have stayed under cover."

"That thing!" Al scowled at the unfamiliar, queer looking gadgets and at

the young man who, grease-blackened to the elbows, worked steadily to locate the fault.

"A Sunday awfternoon toy," said Al out of a full heart, "an' Sunday soldiers wot tends it."

By moving only a few steps, still under cover, Major Thayer was enabled to watch through his glasses the lancer attack on the *sangar*. Al Stone followed, stood beside him. Despite the gulf of rank, these two were old friends. For years they had labored shoulder to shoulder to bring the company to its present high efficiency.

"This ought ter show yer wireless ain't got no place in our equipment," Al murmured. "No, an' it never will 'ave, sir. On a ship it's diff'rent, mebbe. But these 'ere little sets packed on mules—orl they'll ever do is let us dahn, like now. Even when they works—wot abaht range? Eighteen, twenty miles at most—wot good's that, as we reckon distance on th' frontier?"

It was the year Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary had sailed away after paying the historic visit to India. The World War was two years in the future. In far-off America a man named C. P. Rogers had recently made a coast-to-coast flight by air—time, eighty-four hours. A wonderful achievement, but the unpredictable Yankees seemed more absorbed by a strange new dance called the *Turkey Trot*. The International Radiotelegraphic Convention, discarding the cumbersome "C.Q.D." as the signal for ships in distress, had finally fixed upon three dots, three dashes, three dots — the terse and unmistakable "S.O.S." of the Morse code. Marine wireless was growing up. In the army, this newest means of communication was still largely unproven; the Peshawar Signal Company was trying out the first mule-pack sets ever devised for India. And they were terrible.

For a moment or so Major Thayer watched the attack before replying to Al Stone's objections.

"Don't be misled by what we have now, Sergeant. It's only a beginning. The day's coming soon when pack sets will send and receive clear across India—further, if need be. Nor will they be constantly breaking down like this. Why, you'll live to see wireless supplant every other form of equipment we have. Mark my words—"

"Mebbe, sir. But ain't it a fact that even th' general staff was dead against issuin' us pack wireless? Sort of 'ard ter laugh that orf."

"The general staff is made up of old men, Sergeant."

AL STONE knew only vaguely of the bitter fight his commanding officer had waged, almost single-handed, to gain permission to use pack wireless under actual service conditions. The bigwigs had been solidly for further experimentation.

Major Thayer felt this would spell years of unnecessary delay. He argued that the only worthwhile proving ground was in the field, and in the end his intense earnestness had prevailed. As skipper of the signal company he had left his rightful place with the headquarters section, main body, to follow the fortunes of the pack set entrusted to the scouting party; he wished to study what would happen.

And mostly everything had! Briefly he lowered his binoculars to glance back at the young fellow still hard at work.

"Found out what's wrong this time, Betts?"

"Not yet, sir."

Al Stone said "Huh" with a disgusted air. "Fine stuff ter depend on."

"Oh, he'll get it working soon," said the major, again raising his glasses.

"'Im?" Al lowered his voice. "There's anuvver bad angle ter wireless, sir—it brings chaps like Betts inter th' company. Mebbe—mebbe it's time fer old sweat like me ter go 'ome an' start knittin' wool wotnots fer th' Lambeth Ladies' Auxillery."

"Nonsense! And what have you against Betts, Sergeant?"

Lately to Peshawar with an infantry draft fresh out from Blighty, Betts had papers upon which appeared the notation, "Ship's wireless operator, junior grade." The signal company was in urgent need of men with just such training. The major had requested Betts'

transfer shortly before the company took the field as a unit of a punitive expedition against the Zakkas, who had been persistently raiding on the British side of the border.

"Against 'im, sir?" Al shrugged. "The man ain't done nuthin' t' me, personal, but—well, even the men 'ave nicknamed 'im 'Tramp'."

The shadow of a grin lighted the major's face. "Pretty natural, that, for a fellow who admittedly served some time in tramp steamers!"

"If 'e 'ad a good berth in th' merchant marine, w'y didn't he stick to it?" Al asked darkly.

The major frowned. "Oh, come, Sergeant! The man didn't quit under pressure—he has an honorable discharge. Simply, he didn't happen to like the life. He explained all that to me. I like the chap, and he knows more about wireless than the rest of us put together."

"That may orl be, sir. But"—and here was the real heart of the matter, as Al saw it—" 'e ain't no soldier, an' time'll prove it." To Al, brought up in a service with roots deep in the Victorian era, Tramp Betts typified the disturbing, confusing new order of things. Tramp's very mastery of a technique which Al Stone thought of as black magic—and pretty poor magic at that!—seemed to stamp the newcomer as one lacking the old army virtues.

With a magnificent display of horsemanship, the Jats at last swept over the *sangar* and disappeared in pursuit of the tribesmen.

"A fine bit of work, but foolhardy," said the major, casing the binoculars.

Tramp Betts was just getting to his feet. He was a lanky youngster with a thin, sensitive face, topped by a shock of black hair.

"Fault, sir—found it. A condenser, and no spares left. Maybe I could fix this 'un, but it'd take time."

"How much time?"

"Hard saying before I get the thing apart. Several hours, anyway."

The major sighed. That the scouting detail had made contact with an outpost of the slippery Zakkas was news of the first importance. It was an almost sure sign that the main *lashkars* were in the immediate vicinity. Had it been possible to pass on the word by wireless, attention would have been favorably drawn to the immediate practicability of the equipment. As it was—

"We've still the problem of letting the column know," the major said, "and it begins to look as if we'd have to deliver our message in person. By then the Zakkas will have vanished again. This delay will doubtless cost us weeks of extra campaigning."

He blew two blasts on his whistle, signal for the party's horses and mules. Two Sikh troopers led the animals around from the far side of the hill.

"There's a spare 'elio mirror wiv the mules, sir," Al said. "No danger o' settin' up now, neither. Only thing is, th' column's prob'ly on the move agin. Mebbe we c'd catch someone's eye, mebbe not. Save a heap o' time if it worked, though."

"Right, Sergeant. By all means try."

ARMED with the spare mirror, Al Stone and his two remaining men again trudged up the hill. The helio tripod, case-strap neatly looped over the legs according to regulation, was still erect beside the fallen Carson. In the sky, eager vultures already circled.

"I'll tend the 'elio," Al said gruffly. "Get out yer intrenchin' tools an' dig a grave." Carson had been a favorite and the best operator in Al's section.

While the others dug, Al aligned the new mirror on his previous mark, apex of a *V* between the hills. He held his light open then, for several moments without response.

"Well, they *said* they wuz movin'," he muttered.

Began the weary task of traversing—of rolling the mirror back and forth on the lateral worm gear in the hope that some distant watcher might catch a flash of the light. Should that happen, the main body helio would be aligned on Al's instrument, and communication could be resumed.

Al stopped only when his men finished digging. The three lowered Carson gently. Hard earth began rattling on his body—a horrible sound. But soon he was

covered; muffled now, earth settled upon earth with dull finality. A light haze rose from the ground. They stood back, very silent.

"Dust to dust," Al murmured. "Sleep well, boy."

Awhile he looked down expressionlessly. Then, grim mouthed, he turned back to his traversing. Without speech the others broke down their entrenching tools, helves from blades, and took up posts as watchers for an answering light.

But no answer came.

"Carry on, one of yer," Al said at length. "I'm fer a word wiv the C.O."

He found the major watching Betts. The wireless man had the bad condenser out of the set and had begun to dismember the delicate mechanism.

The major looked up. "No, go, Sergeant?"

"Not a peep, sir."

Major Thayer consulted his watch. "Just noon—you've been up there forty-five minutes. I expected the lancers back long ago."

"Mebbe they expected us ter follow on, sir."

The C.O. was thoughtful. "It's possible. We'll move at once."

Al semaphored to his men, and while they were coming down, Tramp Betts and his helper struck their antenna and packed away the wireless. Tramp scooped the condenser parts into a cloth with great care. With the arrival of Al's pair, **yackdans* were hooked on the mules and all hands got to horse without word of command.

"We'll make for the *sangar,*" said the C.O. "Almost sure to spot the lancers from there. Walk-march."

They picked their way past Jat lancers who would never ride again. When they reached the *sangar,* signs of the running fight were as plain down the far side of the hill as on the approach; but tribal bodies, not those of the cavalry, dotted the further slopes. The chase had carried clear out of sight. Major Thayer trained his glasses downward.

"They—yes, they turned north when they reached the valley—I see more bodies. We'll follow up that valley."

A twenty minute ride brought them to the head of it. Here there was nothing to indicate which of two further valleys the pursuit had followed. The signal party had reached a blind fork.

The major produced a map, laid it across his horse's ears.

"Here's our present position, sergeant. Approximately—you see? I wish this gave more detail, the smaller villages and so forth."

Al fumbled with his mustache. "Not so 'ot, sir. Even with th' best map ever made, there's no tellin' where or when we may run inter some Zakkas on th' loose; an' if we tykes th' wrong valley, chances are we'd miss th' column anyways."

"Well, I still can't believe the Jats expected us to close on the column without them. It's against all the rules of mountain warfare. And hang it, they *knew* their job was enemy-contact, not combat. Why did they chase those fellows so far?"

"Wotever the answer, sir, even this 'ere ain't no 'ealthy spot t' be in wivout support, neither. So whether we pushes on or stops 'ere a bit, we'll need some luck, I'm thinkin'."

Tramp Betts urged his horse closer to them. "If we could halt again for an hour, sir—two at most—I'd have that condenser fixed."

Although not given to indecision, the major hesitated now. Much as he disliked the idea of further delay, the dangers of pushing on without escort were all too obvious. It was possible, too, that a survey from some high point might still disclose the lancers. Another halt seemed justified.

"Very well, Betts." The C.O. swung about in his saddle. "Dismount, all. Find cover. Sergeant Stone, you might see something of the Jats from that hill to our left. And take your helio along; you might even get through to the column with it."

The little party stirred and Al ordered his men to break out the needed equipment. Wireless or no, the C.O. still leaned heavily on the old standby, Al saw, and it pleased him mightily.

"Any contact made, sir, it'll be by 'elio, not that other balmy contraption!"

Already busy, Tramp overheard. He

* Sole-leather containers, two per animal, for transport of equipment.

caught Al's eye. "Wanna bet on it, Sergeant?"

"This is no competition," the major said sharply. "We're all working for the same end. Get on with your jobs, both of you!"

AL HALTED his men near the top of the hill, a few feet under the skyline. They were just setting up the tripod when Al's eye caught movement below. From behind the great glacial boulders so common in frontier valleys, Afridis popped into view until a score or more were visible. Al reasoned that they must have been waiting to ambush the signalers; the unexpected halt had forced a change of tactics. The sergeant's gaze shifted to his own people. He could see that the two Sikhs had been posted as lookouts, but it was plain that neither had an inkling of the advancing tribesmen.

"Them sneakin' devils'll be on the C.O. afore 'e knows wot 'it 'im," Al cried.

The three tried to attract attention by yelling and waving their arms. To no avail. Al fumbled with his rifle, released the safety catch, worked the bolt. His single shot had the desired effect. Those below stared up at him.

"Danger," he semaphored, and marked an immediate bustle.

"Pack up an' follow down," he ordered his men. The skipper would be in desperate need of every rifle he could muster.

Slipping and sliding, Al threw himself at the steep hill. Over the noise of descent he began to hear the cough of rifles. Bullets pinged and thudded about him.

Briefly he took his eye off the course to watch developments below—lost his footing and fell on his back, facing uphill. One of his men lay very still. The other, laden with tripod and helio, slithered abreast as Al picked himself up. In a typically generous gesture, he reached out and pulled the helio from the man's back; Al never made pack mules of his sappers. Choking in self-made dust, the pair stumbled on.

Then the sapper said "A-argh," and flopped on a few steps with the grotesque aimlessness of a decapitated chicken. As he pitched forward Al caught a split-second glimpse of the neat hole in his forehead.

Al salvaged the fallen man's rifle and the tripod. With two rifles and a complete helio he felt like a Christmas tree. He kept going, bathed in sweat, remembering the third rifle dropped by the man on the hilltop. Get it? No, a goner, that one; a prize for some woolly Zakka. Prize? A Lee-Enfield was worth a thousand rupees to any Pathan!

Nearing the valley now, All saw the rest of the party, mounted, waiting for him behind a rock shoulder. A handful of tribesmen bobbed up on higher ground, enfilading the cover. They opened fire.

The Sikh holding the helio party's horses—four, including Carson's—was suddenly in trouble with his own mount. Apparently wounded, the animal reared, wheeled on hind legs and, pawing the air, overbalanced to crash backward upon the rider. The freed horses galloped away.

The major had his Welby out. As well as he could be from the saddle, he and the two wireless men returned the fire. All at once Tramp's helper dropped his rifle and leaned forward very slowly, arms dangling, as if about to whisper in his horse's ear. The charger shifted nervously; head first, the man slid to earth.

The second Sikh had his hands full with two terrified, plunging mules. The solid *thunk* of mule hoofs against the Sikh's horse carried clear to Al. That kick set the horse bucking. The Sikh took both hands to him and the mule jerked his lead away. Perverse like all his kind, the powerful little animal ran only a short distance, then began quietly browsing among the rocks.

For a moment Al thought the Sikh would get the better of his mount. Suddenly the horse was wholly out of hand. With the frantic *sowar* sawing at his head and dragging the remaining mule, he broke straight toward the tribesmen. The fallen wireless man's animal followed.

Al regained the major and Tramp. Three men, two horses.

"Up behind me—quick!" the major barked.

Al made no move. "Pair o' yer get awye while yer can."

The Zakkas were closing in.

Tramp jumped from his saddle—prodded Al with his rifle butt.

"You old goat—get on my horse!"

As if it were settled that he stay behind, Tramp slipped a fresh clip into his magazine and found himself an arm-rest among the rocks.

The major sensed Tramp's intention. "Betts, out of that! Stone—both of you—"

Al sprang into Tramp's saddle, jammed the helio tripod into the empty rifle-bucket, spurred close to the rocks. He stood in his stirrups, reached out a long, thick arm, grasped Tramp by his tunic collar, swung the younger man up in front of him.

"Damned idiot," Al growled.

They were away then, but not before the major, in a neat bit of riding, booted the nearby mule into a gallop, overtook him and recovered his halter.

THEY had not gone far when it became obvious that, dragging the laden animal, the major could not keep up. At that the pace was slow; Tramp's mount carried a double burden. Scattering shots still reached them as Al reined in.

"Gossakes, sir, let th' mules go! We don't need them *yackdans*—nuthin' but 'elio parts in 'em."

The C.O. looked puzzled. "But these aren't the helio *yackdans*. Those were on the mule that got away."

"No, sir"—emphatically—"that mule 'ad th' wireless."

"Wanna bet?" Tramp threw in.

"Shut yer fyce," Al hissed in Tramp's ear.

"Best make sure." The major pulled the mule forward. He leaned from the saddle and was about to open a *yackdan*, when Al saw his face contort with pain.

"Ain't copped one, sir?"

The officer nodded. "Knee. . . . Be all right."

Blood welled through the tight whipcord.

Al fumbled in his haversack for a field dressing.

"No time," the major said. "Ride on."

They broke into a gallop, the mule still trailing. Al kept a close watch on his skipper. And it wasn't long before the major, face drawn and eyes screwed shut, was reeling dangerously. Again Al pulled up, boot to boot with the wounded man.

"What's this?" the major's voice was thick. "I said to ride on."

Al swung from Tramp's horse up behind the major, put a supporting arm about him. With free hand the sergeant disengaged the halter from his fingers, releasing the mule; then he spurred forward.

Tramp lagged; the instant Al's back was turned he recovered the mule.

Al heard the double hoof beats and looked back.

"Wot! Get rid o' that mule or I'll shoot 'im!"

On top of the slow pace, the halts had not improved matters. Behind Tramp, Al saw that some of the fastest running Zakkas had actually gained on them.

But now Tramp was staring forward, over Al's shoulder.

"Look," Tramp said.

Al followed his eyes, saw the telltale flutter of turbans among the rocks ahead.

"Cut orf, eh? Wotever 'appens, don't be tyken alive."

"I know. What about the C.O.?"

Al gazed down at the head on his shoulder. "They'll never get t' torturin' *my* skipper. I'll blow 'is brains out first. Then you an' me ups wiv our rifles an' pulls triggers together."

"We aren't licked yet."

"Skip th' boy scout stuff. Our number's up. Scared, Sunday soldier?"

"Sure, I'm scared," Tramp said.

Al was scared, too; but he'd never admit it. These young softies—bah!

They wheeled from the line of flight toward the nearest cover—a cluster of great, round rocks under the valley's clifflike northern flank. Horses would be no good to ascend that, nor were they of any use among the boulders. The men dismounted, eased the major to the ground. Half furtively, Al slipped the helio tripod from the saddle boot before the horses wandered away. There was a kind of queer comfort in keeping a complete helio by him to the end; he could not have explained why.

Tramp, still holding the mule, saw Al's gesture.

"What good's a helio now?"

"Wot good's the stuff in them *yackdans?*"

"So you did know! You knew it was the wireless all the time."

They glared at each other. Al was the first to glance away.

"Shut up an' get set. They'll be on us in a minute."

But Tramp was studying the hill.

"A *nullah* there, Sergeant—starts in behind these rocks. 'Stead of stoppin' here to be done in, how about—"

Al looked, shook his head. "Mebbe *we* c'd work up it a ways"—he nodded toward the major—"but not wiv 'im."

Al chose his rock, crouched behind it, rifle ready. He had made up his mind to die here, had ceased thinking in terms of life.

Tramp had done neither. He kept thinking of using the *nullah* to win clear. Without horses to carry them on, once they gained the heights, escape seemed doubtful, but anything was better than this! As to the major—

"The mule!" Tramp cried. The sure-footed, sturdy little animal would go almost any place man could.

Al was squinting along his sights when he felt a hand on his shoulder.

"Quick!" Tramp pleaded. "The C.O.—tie him across the mule. The *nullah*—we can all make it—"

They tied Major Thayer's wrists about the mule's neck with a short length of rawhide cut from the halter. The *yackdans*, flush with the animal's back, made a platform-like stretcher.

At the last second Al spied the tripod on the ground. If the wireless was to be kept, so was his helio! The case was still strapped to him; as they moved away, he poked the closed tripod between the mule's carrying braces.

DRY at this season of the freshets which had scoured it from the hillside, the twisting *nullah* offered as good protection from fire as a man-made trench. Men and mule were well above the round rocks when a babel of voices below told them that the Zakkas had reached their former position.

"Blighters won't relish followin' awfter I've picked orf th' first 'uns t'show," Al puffed.

Tramp pulled the straining mule across a smooth rock slab.

"With any luck we should make the top all right."

But Al had had time to think; also, he had begun to resent Tramp's assumption of authority.

"Huh. Th' top—then wot?"

"Well—"

"I'll tell yer wot. They'll knock us orf goin' downhill."

Inches from his head a bullet *whammed* into the earth. He spun around. Far down the *nullah* a Zakka had flung himself among some rubble, insufficient to screen him from above. Al aimed, squeezed his trigger. The man did not move again.

Tramp hurried the mule around a bend, kept going. But Al waited. Sure enough, another enterprising tribesman showed. Al got in the first shot, knocked him over. Then Al ducked around the bend, too.

He was amazed to see Tramp, without the mule, coming back to meet him.

"Guess our luck's run out, Sergeant."

"Wot's up?"

But beyond a further bend the *nullah* straightened, and there was no need for Tramp to explain. The *nullah* vanished into the hillside. Their useful trench was the bed of a one-time stream which rose underground. The sweating mule was silhouetted against a gaping hole.

"Maybe we could boost the mule up that left bank and go on in the open," Tramp said, "but we'd be exposed and—"

"Them blokes'd pick us orf like clay pipes. Spankin' idea, you 'ad! Less trouble to 'ave stopped dahn by th' rocks." This was what came from listening to a draftie!

It was baking hot in the mid-afternoon sun; the mountain seemed like some sprawled, sleeping giant. In the steaming stillness a faint rattle of stones warned Al that the Zakkas were following relentlessly. He went prone, trained his rifle downhill, unaware that Tramp had quietly moved from his side.

Tramp disappeared into the hole. In a moment he popped out.

"Hey, Sergeant! This opening—once you get inside there's room enough for a platoon—kind of a cave. We can—"

"No yer don't, me fine bucko. Cave or no, there'll be no dyin' like rats in a trap. We stops 'ere, in the open. Them's orders!"

Unseen by either man, the long barrel of a Martini-Henry slid around the curve of the *nullah;* a bearded face followed; a shoulder. The butt of the Martini was against that shoulder.

Tramp saw it first. Before he could yell the tribesman fired.

Al felt a redhot poker smash across the bridge of his nose. Half stunned, he staggered to his feet. He was in utter darkness; a cotton-wool silence told him he was deaf as well.

Tramp's first thought was of the major, to pull the mule into the cave. He rushed to do it.

Al felt him brush past, misunderstood.

"A quitter, like I thought," he mumbled. It never occurred to him that Tramp had no inkling of his condition.

Well, these bloody 'eathen—*he'd* play the man for 'em, any'ow. Show 'em 'ow a British sergeant could die.

He was very dizzy. Only the sharp slope of the ground told him the direction of the enemy. He turned toward them, stiff and proud, useless rifle held loosely across his breast, waiting for the finisher.

TRAMP came from the cave, firing. His second shot drilled the man who had wounded Al. More Zakkas, as yet unseen, were pounding up the *nullah.* Any second they'd show. Tramp yelled at Al, pointing to the cave-mouth. For the first time he saw that Al was hit, but he little dreamed that the sergeant could neither hear nor see him. Tramp grabbed him by the arms, but the old N.C.O. stubbornly resisted all efforts to lead him to safety. In desperation, Tramp got behind him, laid violent hands on the seat of his breeches and his collar, to turkey-walk him through the opening.

Tramp moved like a sparrow on a hot tin roof. He grounded his rifle near the cave-mouth and, with a wary eye down the *nullah,* whipped out his field knife and cut the thong which bound the major to the mule's neck.

The major said "Thanks" in conversational tone. Tramp, in the act of pushing the mule further into the cave, jumped at the unexpected sound of the voice.

"Thought you were still out cold, sir!"

"Don't remember much. First thing was when you pushed the sergeant in here. What's the matter with him?"

"Blood on his face. I'm not sure, yet. Acts queer. *Wait.*"

Tramp had not relaxed his vigil. What he saw outside caused him to go to all fours and creep toward his rifle. Five tribesmen were in plain sight, moving stealthily upward.

Without particular aim, Tramp let drive. The five turned tail and vanished down the *nullah.*

Unaided, the major managed to get off the mule and to hobble over near Tramp.

"You go take a look at the sergeant. I'm no use except lying down. I'll take over this job of covering the *nullah.* Our friends may hesitate to rush us again in daylight."

Tramp caught the slight emphasis on the last word, shrugged.

"That knee of yours should have attention, sir."

"Best left alone, I think. It's stopped bleeding. Tight grip of these breeches did that. But the sergeant—"

"Right, sir." Tramp went to Al. Enough light filtered in to afford fair visibility. Tramp saturated a field dressing with water from his bottle and wiped the blood from Al's face.

"Seems like he's just deeply skinned across the nose, sir. A clean wound. He's breathing regular enough."

"He's probably suffering from shock. Stretch him out flat. Rest should bring him round."

After Tramp had made the unconscious N.C.O. as comfortable as possible, he unlimbered both *yackdans* from the long-suffering little mule. Al's tripod fell from the harness. Tramp, who had just pulled the helio case from under Al, grinned in spite of himself. The old boy

had certainly hung on to these things!

Tramp spread out the wireless without further delay and got down to work.

Major Thayer turned on his elbow. "So those were the wireless cases after all. I thought the sergeant was wrong."

Wrong! Tramp's head came up, his lips opened, then his face went blank.

He said merely, "Oh, it was an easy mistake to make in the excitement."

The major nodded and resumed watch of the *nullah.*

"Why are you finishing the repair now? Even if you get the set working, you couldn't possibly send from inside a cave, or receive a message here."

Tramp said quietly, "Why not?"

Why not—why not? The major turned that over.

"Simply because—hang it, so far as I know such a thing's never been tried. An antenna underground—"

"I never heard of it, either," Tramp admitted. "But I been thinkin' back over the book stuff I had to learn before goin' to sea. I guess you know a lot more about theory than me, but can you give one good reason why, at reasonably short range, it shouldn't work?"

TWO hours later the light in the cave had begun to fade. A setting sun filled the opening with a rosy glow. Major Thayer still lay on guard. The Zakkas had made no further demonstration; doubtless they awaited nightfall, as the major had hinted.

For some time Al Stone had lain exactly as Tramp left him. Then, muttering, he had begun to thresh about with arms and legs.

The mule had sought the back of the cave. Comically doglike, it sat there on its haunches. The mule was all in.

Tramp had ceased work only to give both men periodic sips of water. Now the repair was finished, the set reassembled and set up. Tramp wiped his hands on grimy breeches and sighed.

The major studied his map. The big, squared sheet lay on the ground under his eyes. He said, without particular enthusiasm;

"If by some miracle you *should* raise the column, there's the matter of our exact position. The map's a dud. With its lack of detail, it's impossible to spot this cave. I scarcely know how to make a map reading that you could transmit—one that would lead help to us."

Tramp nodded. "Been wondering about that, too, sir. I heard you complain about the map this morning—figured we might run across that snag. Well. . . . You got matches, sir? Or maybe I could get some off the sergeant. I don't smoke."

"Eh? But—*matches?* I've plenty. What on earth—"

"Great! Then maybe we won't have to worry about a close map bearing. The valley down there—*that* shows, don't it?"

"Yes. It's in here—square J-8."

"J-8. We'd give 'em that, sir."

"Not exact enough. They still wouldn't know where to look for us. And they might march through, if at night, without our being any the wiser."

"We'd tell 'em to let off rockets."

The major sighed. "Whatever the matches mean, I don't believe you've thought the thing through. We see the rockets and step from our cave to join the column—step straight into the arms of the Zakkas!"

"Nothin' so potty as that, sir. There's a pound package of cotton waste in the *yackdan,* and a pint of kerosene. And you have matches. When those rockets go up, we soak the waste with oil, light it, and toss it into the open. Column's been warned to watch for that signal. We hang on, inside here, till *they* come for *us.*"

"Good man! Yes, it might work." The quick enthusiasm in the major's face slowly died as he peered down the *nullah.* Gone now was the warm rose light; the earth had a sudden dead look, the rocks were cold, somber. Twilight. "It might work indeed, if only we weren't taking such an awful lot for granted."

Tramp said in a flat voice, "We'll soon know."

He touched his dials, made all final adjustments. Over his head went the receivers. The fingers he placed on the key trembled a little. Despite the frightful pressure of time he dallied slightly, for he had dreaded this instant.

And now he pressed down on the key.

Blue-yellow, a fat, angry spark leaped across the circuit gap, tearing the silence to shreds.

That much he had expected, for he knew his work was right. But would his message be going out on the air? He began to send the scouting party's call letters, "SA."

The two men waited—a lifetime of a pause.

Waited—until across the shadowed cave Tramp's miserable eyes at last met the major's.

"No matter," said the officer, his voice warm with appreciation. "You've done everything humanly possible. Your resourcefulness and guts have been a downright inspiration, my boy. There's such a thing, you know, as magnificent failure."

But even as the words died away, Tramp's expression was subtly changing. The weary droop to his shoulders was gone. Suddenly he was tense.

"We" — His voice broke — "we're through, sir!"

Faint in his ears:

"HQ G HQ G." ("This is headquarters, go on.")

AND Tramp did go on. And when he had finished sending, listened.

"They're only about an hour away from this valley," he told the major at length. "The lancers were ambushed, wiped out. One trooper got back, told 'em about leavin' us. The column swung this way but halted to wait for daylight. They're pushin' on again at once. We'll see those rockets in an hour, sir."

The rip of the spark had roused Al Stone. In overhearing Tramp, Al realized that his ears must be all right again. He could see a little, too, but everything looked so black.

"Is—is it night?" he quavered.

"Close on," Tramp said. "Feeling better, Sergeant?"

Aloud Al said "Yes" and "Thank God" under his breath. His head was splitting, yet what did such things matter when he had his sight and could hear again?

Their voices droned on, but old Al Stone lay there in the gathering darkness, unheeding. He was thinking back over a long, tough day, and of a kid he had called a Sunday soldier.

No great shakes at introspection was Al, but in his limited fashion he was commencing to see events in their true perspective. That useless helio to which he'd clung like a jealous child—yes, and he'd have deliberately cast off the wireless, too—in the light of what Tramp had accomplished with his funny gadgets, there was something kind of sad about the helio. There it lay beside him now. He turned his head and peered at it with strange eyes.

Young, new men, new ideas—a new order! Al thought it over for a long time, until the mouth of the cave was draped in the black velvet of night. A new order, and why not? If the new men and the new things were as good as Tramp Betts and his wireless—by God, Al thought, the service would be in safe keeping.

Across his absorption cut the major's hoarse whisper.

"Movement in the *nullah,* Betts. They're getting ready to rush, I think."

Abruptly Al was aware that Tramp hovered over him.

Their hands touched, slid into a firm grasp.

"No matter wot I said, kid, ye're a first-chop, *pukkah* swaddy," Al murmured. He dropped Tramp's hand as if half-ashamed of such a display of emotion, lumbered across the cave, went prone beside his skipper, rifle ready.

"You and I will need a little patching," the major whispered, "if we come out of this."

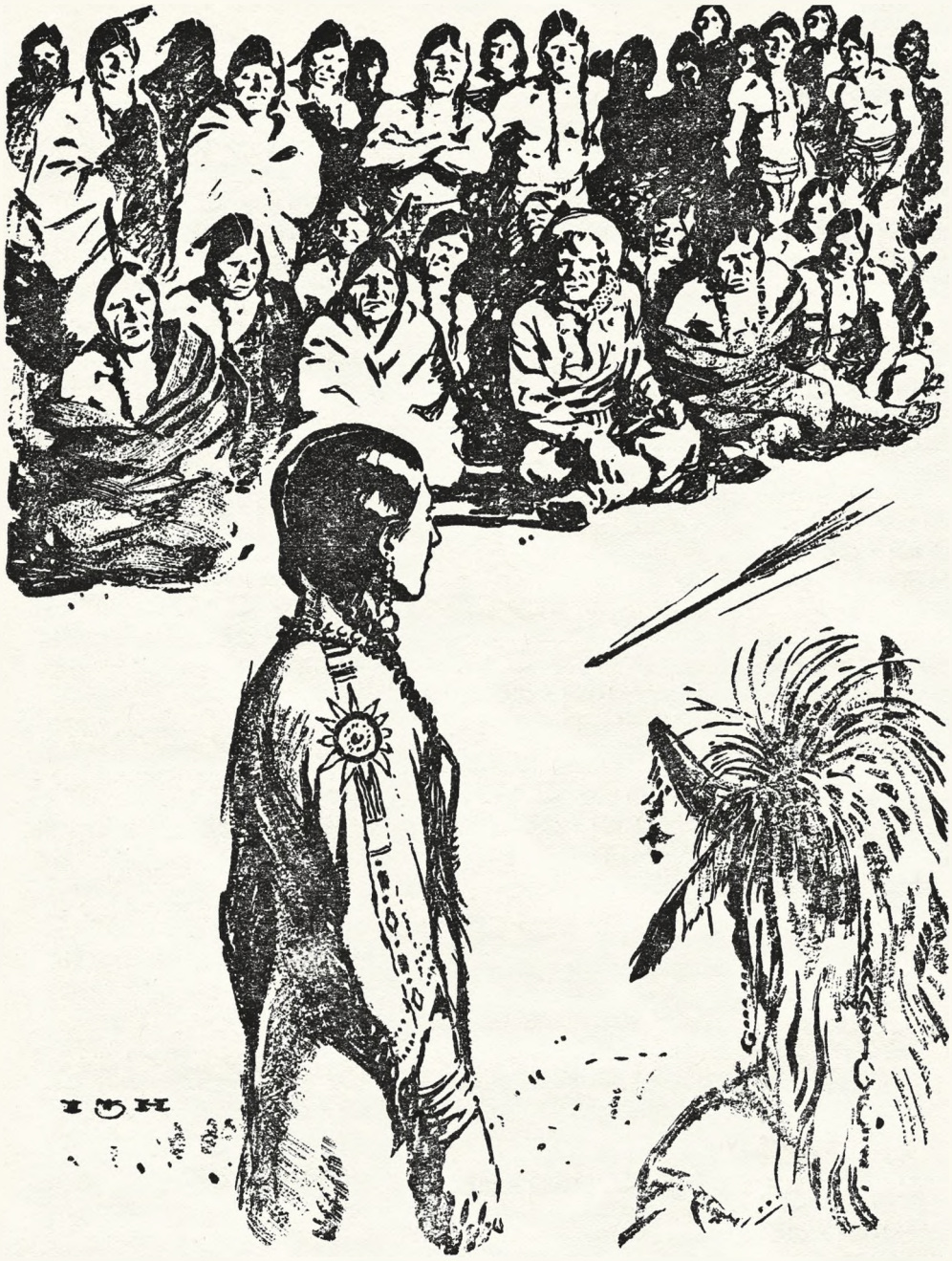
Like an answer from another world, the lower valley came suddenly alive with pretty fireworks.

In the cave a match flared. For a second Tramp's face was high-lighted—strong and young and dirty, but solemnly happy.

He held up a package of waste by its loose binding tape and applied the match.

The oil-soaked cotton sputtered, died down, then burst into flame.

Tramp slung it through the cave-mouth. It landed in the *nullah,* high burning, bright—a beacon of hope, of faith fulfilled.



BURGER, grizzled beard, big mouth and all, came cursing into camp toward sundown, and Sargent watched him curiously. Sargent had been with Hood's Texas brigade during the war, and knew this large, stooped man lied about cavalry service. General report said that Burger had been a squaw man for twenty years and more, and was turned white again. Sounded true.

Not that it mattered to Sargent. Here on the buffalo range, with the Civil War nine years gone, men had enough to do keeping their tempers without opening up the past. The hides and Indians were all that mattered these days.

Burger swung off heavily, stamped to

ATTACK AT ADOBE WALLS

By
H. BEDFORD-JONES

The two youths notched their arrows, drew, let slip.

the supper fire near the wagon, and chucked his old carbine upon his blanket, spread as he had left it under the wagon. He swigged a dipper of water from the cask, emptied his pockets of cartridges, and sat by the fire.

"Not a kill," he growled. His eye rolled like a stallion's but was too deep-set to show the white. "But I nigh killed an Injun or two. I aim to do it tomorrow."

This was bad news. Tabor spoke up from his bed.

"Comanches?"

Burger nodded, filling and lighting his pipe, pausing in his report.

Tabor, a smallish sandy man, had been sick today, alkalied from a sinkhole. Sargent had stayed by him, to tend camp. Now Burger, his pipe going, spoke on.

"I reckon. They was mostly bent on skeering the buff'lo. And they done it proper—set 'em on the stampede with waving and yelling. Then they come over for me."

"What did you do?" queried Sargent, short and direct.

"They made sign for a talk. They had plenty guns, and the buff'lo were gone hell-bent anyhow. They told me to get out; orders from Quana himself. And I had a prime stand, point blank of a waterhole," grumbled Burger. "Buff'lo were trailin' in, plumb crazy to drink. Reckon they'd been dry for two days, way they acted, with tongues hangin' out. I could ha' shot till dark."

Tabor cursed feebly. "Quana, hey? He's that Quana Parker, chief of the Antelope Eaters wild bunch. Mother was a white woman."

Sargent nodded. "Cynthia Ann, old John Parker's girl. Forty years ago the Comanches carried her off from Parker's Fort settlement in east Texas. Come time, she married a head warrior of the Antelope Eaters clan—Kwahadi, they're called. I hail from the Navasota country myself. I was with the Rangers when they got her back in 1860, twenty-five years after she'd been taken."

"Well, ain't no half-breed Injun bossing me," declared Burger. "Not when I have a show to talk back with powder and lead. If them Comanches are camped at that hole in the morning, we'll take scalps."

"Count me out," said Sargent, running his hand through his long flaxen hair. "If Quana sent that word, he means business."

Burger jeered. "Little backward about comin' forward, ain't you? I don't take no bluff from ary man, white or red or half-and-half."

"I notice you didn't hold to your stand," said Tabor. Burger scowled.

"I wan't ready. And I got this short-range gun. I calculated I might's well git back hyar and draw cyards for to-morrow."

"Did they say where Quana is?" asked Sargent.

"They p'inted to eastward. You aim to find him and ask will he please let us hunt?" rasped out Burger. "Who the hell is he, to tell white men to git off this range in the white man's Panhandle, state o' Texas? What's his Injuns doin' outside the territory?"

"His Comanches never signed that treaty," Sargent rejoined. "Why should he go on a reservation? The treaty says white men hunt no buffalo south of the Arkansas River."

"So he stayed out to raise hell," Tabor spoke up.

"Sure. You can't blame him. The treaty's busted anyhow. A railroad is heading through on the Santa Fe trail, and I reckon three million buffalo must ha' been killed on this southern range in the last three years."

"Sarge talks like a friend of his'n," sneered Burger. "Must know him right well."

"I do," barked Sargent. "He used to come down into our parts to see his mother. He was a smart boy and he's made a smart chief. That cross strain in him isn't wasted. But his heart's Injun, and if he says to pull our freight, you bet he's talking Injun." Sargent pulled down his hat brim, stood up, and began getting supper. "You fellows might as well roll your tails for Adobe Walls in the morning. Take the wagon in."

"Yeah?" said Burger. "And you hob-nob with them Comanches, mebbe git to stay here?"

Sargent threw back his head, dropped his right hand a little forward, checked himself, short of the cavalry pistol that was not there. His gray eyes hardened on Burger.

"Might prefer that company to yours in a pinch; then I'd be sure of straight action. No, I'm going to see Quana and learn what's up."

"That's damn' foolishness," struck in Tabor. "Them Injuns wanted that waterhole 'fore the buff'ler riled it, and they run in a fifth ace on Burger. I'm for Adobe anyhow, to get me a good dose of castor oil. My innards are plumb irritated."

"All right, let him go to Quana and be damned," growled Burger. "There's white men enough at 'Dobe Walls to skin buff'lo and Injuns too. The store at 'Dobe may deal out castor ile for belly-ache, but there ain't no cure for lead pizen."

THE three ate. The dusk seeped from the hollows and purpled the swells and low buttes of the northeastern Panhandle. A blank, waiting kind of country, with winter shelter of timbered, watered valleys for the buffalo of the great southern herd as they drifted south from the Kansas plains, and back across the Arkansas for the north again.

"We ain't got scurcely hides enough this trip to pay for ammunition and grub," Tabor complained. "Injuns say the engines have scared the buff'ler so they stay hid in holes underground down in the Staked Plain."

Sargent grunted. "Truth is that the U.P. up along the Platte split the northern herd from the southern herd. The Kansas Pacific by the Smoky Hill trail for Denver split the southern herd. The new road on the Santa Fe trail splits the southern herd again. Last year those three roads shipped out a million hides."

Burger held a light to his pipe. The flame showed his morose features darkly puckered; it touched a thong about his neck, the beaded top of a small buckskin pouch at his open shirt-front. There was the answer to any who doubted his past. A "medicine" bag such as only Indians, squaw men, or old-time plainsmen wore.

"Plenty buff'lo for the finding," he growled. "You tell your friend Quana what I said about lead pizen. He ain't got no medicine to cure that."

Night settled down, broken by the snorts of the team and the saddle horses,

and the far rally calls of wolves ranging for stripped carcasses, or scenting the small stack of hides and the picketed animals.

Burger was still surly when the wagon was loaded at daylight. From his saddle, Sargent watched the outfit take trail for the buffalo-hunters' post of Adobe Walls, on the South Canadian in the southwest. Tabor drove, Burger rode.

Sargent rode eastward. He had not met Quana Parker for several years. Must be about thirty now. Had a big name among the Comanches, a name to be reckoned with in Texas. All the Comanche raids were laid to him. To be head chief of the Antelope Eaters meant that he had proven himself in a large way.

Sargent wondered how he would fare in a Comanche camp, with his Sharps buffalo gun and his skinning knife. It was a toss-up, even if Quana recognized his face. All the plains Indians were ugly over the railroads and the buffalo killing. He shrugged and rode on.

The sun of the long June day was setting crimson in the broken horizon, when the big camp hove in sight, a camp noisy with dogs and children and scolding squaws. The cross poles of a host of lodges fretted the sky. Not all Comanche lodges. By paint signs, by fashion of vents and entrances, by a certain bunching in groups, here were Arapaho, Kiowa and southern Cheyenne as well.

As Sargent rode in, the gaze of the men held steadfast and lofty; the sullen eyes that looked through him rather than at him made his throat tighten. This fixed hatred was too deep to be vented, except by the eyes. Not a yell sounded.

Sargent drew rein to ask the way to Quana's tipi. He asked of a dirty Arapaho, who had no business so far south except by suffrance of the Comanches. The name, the sign for tipi, the sign for "Where?" did the work. The fellow grunted, pointed briefly, and turned his back.

Sargent ambled on. A hide butcher's nose is not sensitive, yet the smells astonished him. He located Quana's dingy white hide tent by the yellow sun painted on it, and the lance with red streamer planted in front of it. He got off his horse, and, before the chief's very lodge, drew easier breath. The old squaw at the tripod kettle called in Comanche something about "white man", and Quana ducked out through the entrance.

HE WAS in shirt and leggings, black hair slit by a red-and-yellow dyed eagle feather, ears ringed with silver as large as a Mexican dollar, bare arms jingling with brass rings. Above his shirt showed a thong, likely leading down to medicine sack. The Kwahadi clan were the strong medicine clan of the Red River Comanches. Since the old days, Quana had widened out considerably.

Recognition gleamed in his eyes. He said, "How do?" and shook hands. Slanting a squint at the horse, he clapped his palms. A boy of clout age, not yet warrior, came and led the horse away. Sargent relaxed. The horse was to be cared for and returned to him.

Quana signed him to a seat on the buffalo robe beside the entrance. The squaw at the pot began to ladle stewed meat with a wooden spoon into a bowl of clay. She set the steaming bowl between Sargent and Quana, and they dipped into it with their fingers. Six or eight other men came and plumped down; the squaw lifted the pot to them, and they all dug into it. Nobody uttered more than grunts.

Sargent helped clean out the bowl. Quana sucked his greasy fingers and wiped them on his leggings. He was light for an Indian, with gray eyes, honestly come by. His father was Pete Nokoni, but he was tagged with his mother's name. These Comanches were pretty well mixed with white and Mexican blood, anyway.

A young squaw brought a pipe, stuffed it with tobacco, lit it at the fire. Quana drew, spurted the smoke through his nose, and Sargent took a turn. A few puffs finished the pipe. Quana regarded his visitor for a full minute, eyed the knife, the Sharps .50, the bloody grease on boots and pants; then spoke with white man's bluntness.

"What you want?"

"Once we were friends," said Sargent. "I came to talk again with Quana Parker."

"That other time was long ago, in the days of the buffalo. Where are the buffalo?"

The chief had some English words. What with English, a trifle of Spanish and Comanche, and sign-talk, Sargent could get along very well.

"Where you find them," he replied. "I hear Quana orders white men out of this country."

"The white men promised not to kill buffalo south of the Arkansas; they lied. All the country stinks. It is white with bones. If this is not true, where have the buffalo gone?"

"They are plenty," Sargent said. "If not, why order the white men out?"

"The white men have built another iron road." Quana spoke entirely as an Indian, his three fingers at work. "One took the buffalo of the Sioux. One took the buffalo of the Arapaho and Cheyenne. This one takes the buffalo of the Kiowa and Comanche. Buffalo are damn' few. Go tell the white hunters to kill no more. The buffalo are ours."

"That's big talk, Quana. You know the white men will stay. Buffalo are plenty."

Quana flared up. The other Indians, Arapahos, Kiowas, Cheyennes, were intently watching and listening, and Quana talked for them rather than for the visitor.

"The Great Spirit gave the buffalo to the Indian, who killed few, used all. The white man kills many, wastes all, takes the skins, leaves the rest to the wolves. The buffalo have no place to go. In the spring they are not born again from their holes in the Stake Plain, to travel north. The holes are shut now."

Sargent eyed him, wondering if he believed this fantastic yarn. But the other redskins were muttering and nodding; they, at least, believed it firmly.

"Talk to Washington, Quana, and get the white men ordered off."

"Washington lies on paper. Why do you sit there and tell me to talk to Washington?" Quana spoke with a hard, thin smile. "I will show you why we do not need to talk to Washington."

At his command, the younger squaw brought out a gun and handed it to him. A new repeating Winchester, a center fire .44-40. Sargent felt a heart-throb of realization; if the redskins had repeaters, look out! Crisis was at hand.

Quana gestured contemptuously at the Sharps, laid aside with muzzle propped upon a lodge pin.

"That shoot one time, maybe buffalo run away. With this," and he brandished the Winchester, "shoot, shoot, shoot!" He handed the rifle back and went on speaking.

"You are damn' poor; you come hungry, no meat, no skins. You are here. You will see why we do not have to talk to Washington.

Evidently, thought Sargent, Quana did not know the precision and power of the Sharps buffalo gun, driving a .50 calibre ball with 120 grains of powder. But this man, he saw, was a born leader, was conscious of power, and was now shrewdly able to play up the medicine beliefs of his people to suit himself.

COMMOTION was stirring the whole vast camp. The sun had just set; there would be a long twilight at this season. In the west, a splendid evening star was poised like a flashing lamp. Men and women were moving, flocking to a common center. Drums thumped with the beat of calloused knuckles upon stretched hide. Criers called. A chant sounded, rising and falling in excited cadence.

Quana stood up. From the tipi, the young squaw passed him a blue blanket —not the shoddy agency or Indian trader stuff, Sargent noted, but a good wool army blanket, a soldier blanket. Quana draped this about him from shoulders down and stalked away. The other Indians followed him. Sargent picked up his gun and made after.

The rendezvous was at the outskirts. Indians, Indians, Indians! Full fifteen hundred by Carson's reckoning; a host of blanketed and buck-skinned forms jostling into a huge semicircle, there to squat, motionless, while a medicine drum whanged its measured notes and a chant passed from lips to lips until the wail-

ing strains were here, there, everywhere, saturating the twilight air.

Sitting beside Quana in the middle of the half circle, Sargent caught the word "buffalo" much repeated; they were singing of the buffalo.

The chant died away. A stir ran through the round of figures. The medicine drum changed its rhythm to a long rolling crescendo; something was due. It came. A figure stepping around the end of the half-circle, pacing into the open space on wizened, crooked shanks. A medicine man, mystery worker, doctor, priest.

He wore a crest of buffalo horns and feathers, a painted skin mask with eye slits and a grinning mouth daubed on, and a loose paint-daubed cotton shirt with flaps reaching half down his bare thighs. He shook a tufted rattle as the drum ceased. Now, halting with legs apart, he rattled to the west and to the south and to the north, and yapped out something about buffalo. He uttered a high, quick call, and stood with arms extended, body rigid.

Two young warriors sprang out, into the open; a breath of excitement, of intense interest, passed through the crowd. The two had strung bows, arrows ready. They pulled up thirty paces from the medicine man. The bows came up; one released, then the other, with vibrant twang of bowstrings. The racing shafts twinkled in a flat streak. Sargent thrilled with quick horror—it was sheer murder, an execution, a sacrifice!

In a pulse-throb the arrows reached the mark, dully rang upon the medicine man's chest, and rebounded, the deadly strap-iron heads doubled.

From the Indians gusted a huge sigh, welling to a mighty yell of amazement, of plaudits. Sargent sat staring, incredulous. He heard Quana's voice at his ear.

"You have seen. We have powerful medicine. Why talk to Washington?"

"It's a trick by one man."

"Wait."

The two youths stood where they were. The medicine man tossed the blunted arrows to the crowd, to be passed around, and trotted away. In a few moments he came back, but not alone. He brought a girl, whose woman-rounded figure fetched a quick breath from Sargent. No common squaw here! She was uncovered of head, was all in doeskin, smock and leggings. A warrior maid, Cheyenne by her clean-cut features and light tawny complexion and beadwork—Cheyenne, and a beauty.

Sargent stared. He knew that sometimes the Cheyennes maintained a young woman, such as this one. A sun woman, set apart for medicine rituals, and for good fortune in war.

The medicine man stationed her. He made motions, uttered a rapid singsong, and stepped aside. The two youths notched their arrows, drew, let slip. The shafts flitted. Each drove squarely home. One bounded away, the other clung in the doeskin a moment, then dropped.

"I-sa-tai! I-sa-tai!" Awe floated upon the murmured word, the name of the miracle worker. Sargent grappled his own amazement. At that distance, a Comanche arrow would split an inch plank. Did she wear leather armor? No. The doeskin smock was slim and rounded, the swelling curves of her body were clearly indicated; also, the arrow-impact had been sharp and hard, not hollow.

"The medicine is good!" proclaimed Quana. "It works for all!"

Sargent tapped his rifle. "The arrows are weak. How about trying this?"

"Your gun is like the arrows, no bueno. The medicine is a strong shield."

"The hell you say!"

Sargent leaped up, then checked his insane impulse. The warriors were chanting. The girl, standing proudly, sang with I-sa-tai, the medicine man. Sargent's quick eyes caught something moving, low on the ground, two hundred yards out beyond the girl and the masked rascal. A dog or brindled badger, clearly shadowed in the soft, mellow light.

He leveled the Sharps, the sights lined up steady and true. A chorus of cries dinned up; all thought he was firing at the girl. The trigger yielded and the heavy explosion jarred the air. Dimmed by the veil of smoke, the animal spun topsy-turvy and lay like a blotch.

"No bueno! No good!" scoffed Quana.

The girl and medicine man were unhurt. All thought the bullet had missed them until a boy, sharp-sighted, ran out and came to pause over the blotch. Then they saw the truth.

The boy yelled shrilly, voice thin and excited. A clamor in Comanche rocked the air; other tongues joined in. The medicine man was shrieking and cavorting. Weapons flashed, knives came out. Sargent felt Quana's hand clapped on his shoulder.

"You are a fool! You have killed a skunk. Your life is now a small thing, but you shall go safe." The chief cried out in command. The crowd, yelling, brandishing weapons, made way. "Come with me; quick."

"Why not a skunk?" demanded Sargent, puzzled. He fell in step. The chief, blue blanket held close, hurried at full stride.

"You bring bad luck. Why the damn you do that? I-sa-tai says the medicine is spoiled and now he must make more."

They came to the lodge; behind, the turmoil still rose, the crowd surged.

"Your horse comes," said Quana. "Now you get out damn quick or you are dead."

"I don't shoot arrows," rejoined Sargent. "Let I-sa-tai come; I'll put my medicine against his."

"Do you think he is a fool, too? You spoiled the medicine for tonight. Now hear me." Quana spoke in sterner tone. "Go to the American hunters in that mud fort on the Canadian. Tell them I give them one day to leave that fort, leave the country. Tell them to kill no more buffalo. If they do not get out, we will burn them up."

"You can't run that say-so," replied Sargent. The other comprehended.

"Tell them what you have seen. Their bullets will be like the seeds of a gourd; I-sa-tai will see to that. When they are dead, we go after other white men. Then I-sa-tai will bring the buffalo out of their holes. Everything south of the Arkansas will be as agreed on the treaty paper."

"Quana Parker knows white men. He can think white. Does he believe all this medicine nonsense?" Sargent demanded sharply.

"Quana Parker is all Comanche. He has seen. You have seen. The Comanche, the Arapaho, the Cheyenne, the Kiowa, all saw. They believe. Now," added Quana in picked-up English, "you get to hell out of here."

He made the cut-off sign, cut the talk, was finished. He turned his back.

Sargent rode away. The twilight had faded, the babel of the angry camp ebbed away in the dusk. Yes, he had seen.

He had seen a big gathering of Indians gone crazy. Perhaps Quana did not savvy the trick, but he was smart enough to back it up and let the gathered tribes believe. Here was the reason for the big camp—a council of the plains tribes, a show put on by I-sa-tai, with the Cheyenne girl as proof that the medicine protected all from harm!

Arrows, to be sure. Something blunted the arrows. They were not power-driven lead, but no matter. The medicine had worked. Those Indians would ride hell-bent into smoking muzzles at the word of I-sa-tai.

Sargent's mind ran ahead. How many persons at Adobe Walls? A smattering of Mexican clerks and helpers in Rath's general store and Hanrahan's saloon. A freighter outfit now and then, looking for a haul of hides. Hunters drifting in from camp. Perhaps a muster of twenty-odd. One woman anyhow, Rath's wife.

A man could not blame the redskin madness. The treaty had lied. The whites were in on the last range, killing the buffalo like cattle, yanking off the hides, leaving them. Now the buffalo were scary, stampeding at a gun-crack, keeping to the level, not to be stalked until they were thirsting to water. This gave dead shooting, for nothing turned them when they were dull and blind with thirst.

Sargent knew what Adobe Walls would say—arrows, hell!

IN THE sun of late afternoon, he rode in. A couple of wagons were here. One man was stepping briskly for a wagon at this end of the hot little street. This was Billy Dixon, government scout and buffalo hunter in between times. Sargent

swung off, and at his sign Dixon strolled to meet him with quizzical sally.

"Heard you went to palaver with Quana Parker."

"So I did. Found him, all right."

"And what about it?" demanded Dixon.

"We have twenty-four hours to clear out. All of us."

Dixon stared, with eyes narrowed. "On whose say-so?"

"Quana's. I sat with him in a big camp of Comanches, Kiowas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, over in the east." Sargent was conscious of other men gathering, of Burger's stooped form lumbering forward. "They're making medicine. They're acting crazy. War crazy."

"And they let you go?" asked Dixon.

Burger cut in. "The hell they'd let him go if they was planning war! Let him go, to warn us? For why? This is the line of talk you handed out to make us quit the waterhole."

"Sounds queer to me, Sargent." Dixon gazed hard. "How many Injuns you think you saw?"

"Fifteen hundred, half of them fighting bucks. Four tribes, and likely Kiowa Apaches to boot. If I told all I saw, you wouldn't believe me."

Dixon shook his head.

"Seeing you've been there, you can find the place again. Go back and tell Quana we've heard that talk before. We've killed buffalo in the Canadian country two year, and we'll keep on killing while the buffalo last." Billy Dixon turned on his heel, and flung back his final words. "As for your fifteen hundred Injuns, you must have drunk trader whiskey."

Laughter, as the men scattered. Sargent felt his cheeks burning.

"Didn't work, did it?" said Burger, who was lurching drunk.

"Meaning?"

"Mebbe you saw Quana, mebbe not. If a man could run a sandy about Injuns and git a clear field for hisself a while, he might do purty good." Laughing, Burger lurched about and headed off. "Calculate to stay here and risk your hair?" he called back.

"I'll stay here to see your medicine go bad," said Sargent. With difficulty he held himself in check. It was a poor time to fight or shoot; the yellow streak in Burger was thinned by whiskey, the game was not worth the candle anyhow.

Sargent strode off, put his horse in Rath's corral for a good grain feed, and presently sauntered into Hanrahan's saloon. Tabor was sitting in a corner, other men were here. Over his drink Sargent exchanged nods, and read the questioning, curious faces aright. Damn it, he was under suspicion! Burger came in, and at a beckoning jerk of the head from Tabor, Sargent left the bar and joined the other man in the corner. Tabor was friendly.

"What's all this about fifteen hundred Injuns, Sarge?"

"Let's go where we can talk. I got to unload to somebody."

"The stack of hides behind the store is a good place. Hello—wait a minute!"

They turned. Burger had been pouring in more liquor. Now his voice lifted.

"Medicine, you bet! Big medicine. Cheyenne medicine, and best kind." He was fumbling with the little sack under his shirt, two other men grinning at him. He hauled out the thin buckskin to show them.

"The damn' fool!" muttered Sargent. "Everybody knows it's the worst luck to show your medicine or expose it—by gosh, look at him!"

"He's roarin' drunk," said Tabor, a worried look on his sandy face.

True enough. Burger, goaded by his companions, bared what was in the buckskin. It was the half of a silver dollar, nothing else; a dollar, cleft in twain by a strong blow. Here was half of it strung on the thong. He laughed in maudlin jollity.

"Heap strong medicine, you bet! I got a gal in the Cheyenne country. Look her up some day. She's got the other half, makes big medicine!"

Sargent scarcely heard the words at the moment. He turned about, disgusted, and pushed for the door with Tabor following.

The general store, separate from the saloon, was forty feet long, warehouse and sleeping quarters in the rear, with an overflow of hides stacked out in back.

The two men settled down on the hides and lit their pipes. Sargent pitched into his story and gave all details.

"Believe it or not," he concluded. "If I hadn't been there, I wouldn't swallow it either."

"Hm! You didn't tell Dixon about those arrows?"

"Hell, no! I wouldn't give him another chance to call me down."

"They say sopped buckskin will stop an arrow."

"It will if it's hanging loose, but it won't blunt a strapiron head. And that girl wasn't wearing sopped buckskin. Her shirt was dry and was fitted close."

"Well, you aim to stay here?" Tabor asked.

"Stay, to show I don't believe my own story? Or back my play by pulling out?" Sargent grunted decision. "No. I stay."

"It was all a bluff," Tabor said easily. He glanced at the thick adobe walls, the loop-hole windows. "It ain't Injun way to ride against a place like this, fire and cannon proof. Billy Dixon knows Injuns, knows they don't take chances losing men."

"But I tell you that crowd is crazy! They all think they can't be hurt! They saw the medicine work."

"Mebbe so, but I can't believe they'll come in earnest."

Nobody believed. The post went about its usual business.

Sargent, himself, began to doubt. That mixed camp with its locoed mob seemed a long way back. Quana might make a raid on the stock, for a scare, but a few shots would prove I-sa-tai a liar and settle his hocus-pocus forever.

SUNSET approached. Sargent started for the warehouse, to meet Tabor and make a final tally of their joint bales, ready for shipping out in the morning. Between saloon and store he came upon Burger sitting against the storefront, old carbine between knees, head and shirt soaking wet—doused, sober now, keen of eye. Burger looked up and spoke.

"No hard feelin's, I reckon?"

Sargent halted. "Yes. But if that's your move, I'll call it quits."

"Fair enough. Look, now! If we ketched up and pulled out, we could travel a long stretch 'fore dark, and be all set for shooting tomorrow. Tabor 'lows he's willing."

"Not with you," said Sargent. "Sobered up, have you? And you don't hanker for the picnic that Quana promised, eh? You're yellow as hell, and you're bad company."

"Ain't good enough for yuh, huh?" Burger spilled a vicious oath.

"No. You showed your medicine today. You're due for bad luck."

"I never!" Burger came to his feet, alarm and fear in his eyes. "I never!"

"You showed it to everyone." Sargent drove in the remorseless words. "Showed the half of a dollar in your medicine pouch. Told about your girl with the Cheyennes—"

"My gal? Ain't seen her in ten year or more!" broke in Burger. Panic was in his eyes, now. "Drat it, I knowed I'd done something—that was it!"

"Well, travel alone, unless you're afraid," said Sargent, and swung away with a sour laugh.

He went ahead with the tally, stood the bantering at supper in the Rath house, and saw no more of Burger. Night closed in warm, with the sky hazed.

The post bedded down anywhere—in wagons, on buffalo robes, in the store, in the saloon. Sargent stretched out beside Tabor, in the rear of the store. The laugh and talk simmered low and petered out. The night grew very still. He caught a last mumbling jeer from Tabor:

"Injuns, huh? You got to produce to make good, Sarge. Injuns, huh?"

"Injuns!" The word seemed an echo of Tabor's sleepy utterance, a loud echo. Sargent opened his eyes. The air had lightened, the night had passed, the dawn was here. "Injuns!" The echo persisted, and bounded from wall to wall.

"Injuns!" The street clattered with shouts, the store was emptying. Tabor was sitting up, frantically hauling on his boots. "Your damned Injuns, Sarge!" Hastily, Sargent fumbled, tugged, grabbed gun and belt, and pounded along at Tabor's heels for the street.

Here faces looked to the east. Burger showed, rumpled, in bare feet, clutching

the old stubby carbine. Voices yapped wildly. Billy Dixon was giving cool orders. A herder running in from the grazing ground, still yelling in a voice shrilly keyed to terror: "Injuns! Comin' like hell! Hundreds of 'em!"

"Man alive! Look!" gasped Tabor, and Sargent turned to the east, banded crimson by the coming sunrise.

Above the open bottoms of the Canadian a wide rank of feathered crests cut the horizon glow, like surf breaking over the swell of ground. Rank pressed upon rank, mounted riders lifting against the sky.

"Inside, everybody!" yelled Dixon. "What they get, they'll pay for!"

The first high yips sounded, rising to a chorus. Men bolted for cover. Sargent plunged into Hanrahan's and found himself beside Burger at a window loophole.

"My Gawd, we'd ought to've got out when we could!" cried Burger.

All the view was suddenly filled with gay crests, fierce daubed faces, painted bodies, fluttering robes, dipping lances, guns at flourish, ponies massed in solid front while the ground drummed to their rapid hooves.

Someone fired. Burger's carbine barked. Sargent loosed, felt the jar of the Sharps; the report was lost in the clamor and gunshots, but he had not missed.

The smoke eddied, as the charge struck it and swept it away, split upon the buildings, and passed on in a flurry of dust, leaving a tumbled rider in the street just short of the saloon. A covey of dismounted or dropped warriors scuttled hither and thither for vantage points. Lead and arrows pelted the saloon loopholes and were answered.

So broke the fight, all in a moment, with a rush and a bang. It went on for a long spell of smoke and din, without let-up. Warriors shuffled among the buildings. The stacked hide bales, seventy-five yards out, gave shelter. The window embrasures, three feet thick, limited vision. The rear of the store and saloon were blank except for doors. Mrs. Rath and a Mexican boy were firing from the house on the other side of the store.

Among the hollows and the bunch grass, the redskins settled to a siege—scampering from cover to cover, springing up, vanishing, maintaining a long range fire with arching shafts and Winchester repeaters.

Burger raved, cursed the short range of his carbine. Sargent kept the Sharps hot. Dixon was at the next window with a spyglass. Hanrahan, the red Irishman, running with sweat, let out an oath and a shout.

"There's the devil in person! Look!"

Sargent peered. "I-sa-tai, by thunder! The medicine man, his ragged headdress outlined against the sky, pranced and wigwagged on a rise behind the skirmishers. "Chief medicine maker, for sure," proclaimed Dixon, using the glass.

"He's the hell-raiser," said Sargent. "They believe he's made 'em proof against arrows and shot. You didn't give me a chance to tell you—"

He went on and told. He was believed now. He had suddenly become a man to be heard, to be credited on all counts.

"Settle him, and we've got 'em licked!" cried Dixon. "Mike! Mark my shots with the glass!"

"My Gawd, kill him, kill him!" Burger was gasping, eyes wild with panic.

Dixon was shooting a fifty, Creedmore pattern, sighted to a hair. He squinted over the long barrel. The balls spurted the dust in quick puffs small to the eye. "You're short." That was Hanrahan, using the spyglass. "Lift your lead!"

"I'm a-lifting," grunted Dixon.

"The son of a gun hops like a cricket!"

The dust puffs traveled. "You'll fetch him if you don't overstrain your iron," said Mike Hanrahan. Dixon fired again.

I-sa-tai leaped aside in a high sprawl, a hop in earnest this time. He brandished defiant arm, his taunting yell sounded through the lull, and he disappeared at a lively hobble. Ragged cheers went up.

"Scotched him in a leg, I reckon," said Dixon.

"But you didn't down him," cried Burger. His voice lifted to a scream. "Look, look! Look at 'em!"

At long range, six hundred yards and more, ranks formed as though sprung from the scant sod. A majestic feathered bonnet and a yellow-red splashed body

—Quana! The bad luck from the skunk had passed, the medicine of I-sa-tai was working again, lead had failed to kill! Quana had seized the moment, was hazarding all on a charge. And, by heaven, it stood to win if it were pressed home.

"Gimme your glass, Dixon," exclaimed Sargent. Another rider posed at the front, with something familiar in the erect form.

The spyglass cleared the field, the mounted figures jumped for the eye.

"The girl!" Sargent cried. "The sun woman I told you about, the medicine woman! That's Quana's play now. She's leading, with him."

Dixon had the glass now, and put it aside after a look.

"No. She's a young 'un; by gosh, she's pretty as a picture! White men can't kill women. Mike, pass the word about her. Spread it, quick! Hold fire for pointblank; let 'em close up, then loose hell. But mind the girl."

HANRAHAN bustled out, dodging to the store, giving the order. A throaty chant echoed against the hills. Dixon's voice growled.

"Medicine song. We'll make their medicine bad! If we can bust this charge there won't be another. But we got to bust it or bust ourselves!"

"They're coming!" Burger blatted. The man was in a swelter of funk, oozing terror from every pore.

The chant dwindled, the solid ranks moved slowly down the gentle slope with ponies at an amble and the great plumed war-bonnets of Comanche and Cheyenne fringing the row of heads. The girl, upon a white mount, rode the advance. She looked slight and lonely; she was bare of head, trim in her close doeskin, her smooth cheeks touched with vermilion.

The chant lifted again, broke into a full-lunged united shout flung through the air upon an up-toss of arms and weapons. The girl turned, as to a salute, her head lifted in a beckoning sign. The ranks quickened a little. Amid the stillness, the girl's clear voice sounded in a medicine song.

Six hundred yards, five hundred . . . the distance lessened. There was something cocksure, determined, triumphant, in this steady and gradual movement. Chiefs reined here and there, but the ranks timed themselves to the measured canter of the sun woman. Upon the spell of wonder sounded Burger's cry, harsh and frantic.

"The she-devil! They cover up with her! Won't nobody kill her?"

A sudden jerk of movement, the room rang to the explosion. Burger had fired, his carbine smoke jetting beyond the window. Dixon yelped fury.

"You damned fool! You hit her—I heard the smack! Too far, a fool try, you yellow coward! No blood—too far. They'll think it the medicine. Now hell's popping."

Too far for carbine range. The ball had landed, for the girl recoiled in the saddle, but she straightened. A wild, exultant yell from warrior throats pealed defiance, confidence and victory. Rabid in his dismay, deaf to the oaths and angry shouts hurled at him, Burger cried out again in panicked accents.

"I held two foot above her. Damn that short gun! Poor powder and spent lead. But she ain't no witch—"

Sargent felt the buffalo gun snatched from him. He woke up too late. The Sharps bellowed in his ear, the smoke clouded his view as Burger fired again. He heard the savage oath of Dixon as he struck; his fist sent Burger staggering with bloody face and he regained the Sharps, too late.

A blether of piercing cries came from the Indian array. The white pony was coming in, now at full gallop, unguided. The girl was bent backward. She straightened; blood was spurting from her breast, but the Indians behind could not see it, thought her unharmed. The heavy conical ball of the buffalo gun had torn through her.

They came at full gallop. The fire from the adobes opened. The white pony with its jolted body shied in the very street, threw the dead girl wide as it plunged down to a ball. Other bodies plunged down. The buffalo guns worked havoc. The charge was broken; it split widely as the slugs hammered through the ranks. It passed away on either

flank, with wails of despair drifting back in its wake.

Sargent was first to bolt out into the street, rage and sorrow in his heart. He stooped above the girl's body. He still marveled, knowing that the carbine ball had shocked her, landing full, but not harming her. Lying limp, with calm clear face cold, she yielded the secret.

The doeskin smock was torn and rent by the smacking lead. Sargent stared, knelt, fingered. Steel! A shirt of finely woven steel, in pattern as fine as the small scales of a fish, flexible, light of weight, toughly tempered. The medicine power! Worn by the girl or by I-sa-tai in the showing of mystery. Now the medicine had failed. The power of Quana was broken; the warriors would not rally again.

Men had surged around. Burger was there, blowing blusty words amid threats and oaths; fury against him was rising high. Some talked of stringing him up, others of riding him out of town. Dixon looked down at the sweet dead face and the steel shirt.

"Shirt of mail," he said. "Spanish were in these parts long time back. A rusty suit of armor was found in Colorado a few years ago—"

"I give her lead pizen!" babbled Burger. "Else we'd all been massacreed."

"Look!" said Sargent, still kneeling. "Look, Burger, and go swab your yellow soul!"

Silence fell. He had jerked something on a thong from the girl's bloody breast, and held it up. Burger stared, speechless, breath hoarsely wheezing. Mutters passed among the staring men—one telling the other about Burger's medicine.

Sargent suddenly leaped, in a rising spring. He leaped at Burger, caught the thong from about his neck, broke it, sent him staggering. He knelt again, as the silent throng craned to see. He picked up the half of a silver dollar from the girl's crimsoned throat. He held against this the half-coin from Burger's medicine sack. The two fitted.

"By Gawd!" said somebody in a hushed, awed voice.

Sargent rose, stepped away. The crowd moved aside, shuffling back amid the dust. Burger was left alone, staring down at the dead girl, his face twitching. His head jerked up, he glanced around with flittering eyes, then he turned and shambled away at a run. No one moved to stop him.

Dixon spat and grunted. "Ain't no doubt. That was his own girl. Surely is bad luck to show your medicine! Let him go."

The drumming hooves of a horse, ridden upon terror and futile remorse and cowardice, died away.

The Byzantines hurled themselves upon the thick of the surprised Vandal column.

ALL SAVE ONE SHALL DIE

By F. VAN WYCK MASON

IT WAS 533 A. D., and Rome had come upon evil days. Vandals, Goths and other marauding tribes had been hammering at her outposts for decades, and a once powerful nation had shrunk to a decadent ruin.

But of all this young Octavian Claudius knew little and cared less as he bade his wedding guests make merry at his Burnum farm and watched Lady Fulvia, his patrician bride, sing of the glories of their empire.

Death struck suddenly out of the night, and the young bride's song was stilled, halted by an arrow which pierced her shoulder. It was a raiding party of the Vandals. Stunned, Claudius rallied his guests into a brief and futile resistance, but the Romans were outnumbered.

Claudius recovered consciousness on board the pirate's galley, only to learn that his home was in ruins and most of his people were killed. It was said that Fulvia had perished in the massacre.

A few days from land the Vandal fleet ran into a Byzantine convoy and Octavian, escaping from his chains, managed to rally a ragged handful of prisoners into a counter attack which turned the tide of battle and routed the Vandals.

But on board the Byzantine ship Octavian learned that his action had only brought him into fresh trouble. Denounced as a spy by the commander,

he was put into chains, to meet trial and probable execution in Constantinople.

Through the aid of some sailors, he managed to escape just as the ship reached port. But unused to the customs of the strange city, he ran afoul of a hostile mob and killed a police official, escaping only by a blind flight through the harbor, followed by a fight for life in the mazes of the underground sewer.

Octavian at last found an outlet and pulled himself out to safety. He was, it appeared, in the grounds of some large estate. And almost immediately a couple of Nubian slaves fell upon him and brought him in to face a young girl. She was Irene Bringas, the daughter of Duke Martin, the prefect of the city. To him Octavian invented a story of having journeyed overland to the imperial capital, of having been robbed and left for dead.

Through Duke Martin, Octavian met Belisarius, in command of the imperial army, and, having established his royal descent, was enrolled in the army which was embarking to war against Carthage.

Again disaster struck. The ship bearing Irene and Claudius was wrecked, and the girl, seriously injured, was brought to shore by the Roman. They were the only survivors, in an unknown, hostile land.

CHAPTER IX

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAD

NOT knowing what to expect, he took a fresh grip on his club, thrust open the door and stepped out, amazed to find moonlight flooding sea and shore,

though the great seas still rumbled and boomed along the beach. He started—what seemed to be people were busy among the far-strewn corpses of men and beasts.

Could these be cannibals or monsters such as seamen sometimes mentioned in their cups?

He flinched back into the shadows, aware that out on the disjointed bricks of a terrace below had trotted a hideous, dog-like creature. He distinguished grotesquely huge ears and a hump above its fore shoulders. Pointing muzzle towards the stars, the apparition then halted and uttered a horrible laugh like that which had first alarmed him.

Jackals Octavian had seen aplenty in Europe, but this was the first hyena he had ever beheld. Sickened, he watched the ungainly beast hurdle a fallen column and amble down the beach to join its fellows in tearing at the dead.

Shivering with more than the night's chill, Octavian made fast the door and was turning when Irene's voice came to him.

"You—all right?"

"Yes. We're safe in a deserted villa," he said, kneeling beside her. "You've given me an awful scare, so lie still."

"I'll try." Revealed by the uncertain firelight, he saw a girl very different from the perfumed and painted young tyrant who had all but blinded him in Byzantium. "What's wrong with my arm?"

"It's been broken, but not badly," he reassured her and gently brushed a strand of gleaming hair from her eyes. "Relax as much as you can. I'll have to set it in a little while."

"What of the others?"

"All dead, as near as I know," Octavian replied. Seated beside the fire, he was using a broken knife to fashion splints from bits of driftwood. To occupy her mind he then described their situation in as cheerful a light as possible, but braced himself for the storm of complaints and reproaches which was now considerably overdue.

All she said was, "I owe you my life, Leo. I—I can't understand why you've gone to such trouble over me."

"You held me on the wreckage after the shipwreck," he reminded. "Now we're quits. By the way, I've found a skin of wine. Better have some; it'll hurt plenty when I set your arm."

"What a pitiable thing you must think me!" She sighed, then sat up, her eyes hot. "Please set my arm at once." And she held out the forearm that was cruelly bowed.

Catching his breath, Octavian slowly straightened the arm. Duke Martin's daughter gave no sign of the suffering she must be enduring. Nonetheless, a fine sheen of perspiration broke out on her brow and cheeks.

"You—you're v-very skilful," she she gasped when he had finished binding the splints in place. "And now I—I think I'd like a little of that wine you mentioned."

"*Perpol!*" he burst out. "None of the peasants I've doctored were half so brave! You were like a woman of old Rome!"

Flushing, she gazed shyly up from her rough couch. "You—you really mean that?"

"Yes. A broken arm hurts. I know, I've had one myself."

Wine color stained Irene's cheek then, inexplicably, she turned aside her head and began to weep. In a moment he was beside her, comforting her and, man-like, quite misunderstanding the origin of her tears.

"Don't get frightened," he soothed. "I won't let anyone hurt you, little Kyria. Like as not we're on the territory of one of the rebel chiefs Belisarius sent us to see."

But Duke Martin's daughter only shook her head and sobbed until presently she dropped into an exhausted slumber.

Alarmed by dreadful noises on the beach, Octavian at length got up, threw fresh wood on the fire and placed additional props against the door. Save for the inscrutability of Fate, he and Irene might be out there too, prey for a pack of scavengers.

He raked together another mound of dried seaweed and cast a final glance at Irene, lying sleeping with her hair a lustrous torrent pouring over the dead officer's cloak.

Fainter grew the Mediterranean's booming, and at last the mad cackle of hyenas was silenced; they must be gorged at last. Gradually he grew drowsy, but a hundred impending dangers made it imperative to stay awake. Accordingly, he made a series of figures appear and disappear amid the fire's uncertain glow. Shrewd old Uncle Domitian and Count Manuel materialized, then Fulvia as he had last seen her, eyes staring and lips rigid with horror. And Genzo, too, bawling commands on the stern of his bireme.

At length he visualized Burnum, all green and gold in the sunlight with cattle standing knee deep in the lush meadows. Gradually a sense of rest relaxed his knotted nerves.

But would he now be content to spend his days soberly discussing stock and crops? The doubt amazed him. Strange, what the past weeks had done to him! Was the turbulent blood of the old Claudians, of Augustus, Tiberius, and Germanicus asserting itself? Certainly the days spent on Belisarius's staff, learning and absorbing far more than his mentors guessed, had been far from unpleasant. He even was beginning to feel at home in greaves and breastplate.

AWARE of light beating on his eyelids, he roused himself. Sunlight! *Perpol!* He could not have been asleep. Then he realized that Irene, a mocking smile on her lips, was bending above his cot. She was smiling gayly, though purplish shadows lay beneath her eyes.

"Come, Master Sleepy Head," she cried. "It's a grand new day and I've started breakfast."

She had made the announcement simply, as if it were nothing extraordinary for a sorely bruised girl with a broken arm to arise, kindle a fire, draw water and to fill a clumsy copper pot at the cistern.

In contrite haste he sprang up, dashed water on his face and then, misreading the pain in her eyes, re-adjusted upwards the rude sling she had contrived.

"That'll keep the blood from running into it," he explained. "You should be in bed this moment."

"Oh, but it's too lovely a day," she protested, "and my arm doesn't hurt much. I've had a grand time wandering about the late Scipio Catullus Niger's villa. Wonder what he'd think of his present guests?"

"He'd like one of 'em a lot," Octavian laughed, water dripping from the stubble on his chin.

Irene blushed and bent to stir the pot. "Go along with you, sir, I look a fright. Oh, if Chloe, my old tire woman, could see her darling now!"

Somehow Duke Martin's daughter had managed to twist her hair into a tight gleaming casque, and in her man's tunica of blue dyed wool she more resembled a graceful stripling than a girl.

"What a glorious place this must have been thirty or forty years ago," she remarked, her dark blue eyes intent on the pot.

Then elaborately casual she added, "Octavian—"

"Yes?"

"I'd dearly love an egg for breakfast."

"So would I, but—"

"I saw a wild pigeon's nest in an eave of the slave quarters."

"Then eggs for breakfast we shall have, my dear."

"What did you call me?" She peered back over a smooth shoulder.

"I called you 'my dear'."

"You—you don't have to, you know," she stammered. "There—there's no need of keeping up a pretense."

"But I meant it, little Kyria Irene. You—you're rather splendid in a lot of ways," he replied and hurried out.

By the time he returned she had set their rude camp to rights, and had even arranged sea shells and jugs of earthenware amid the dewy ruins of a little summer house.

"It's nicer out here, don't you think? And there are some finches singing beyond the old lily pond. Wouldn't it be fun to rebuild this wonderful old place?"

"Rebuild," said Octavian slowly. "Yes. Rebuild."

All through the meal Irene kept up such a gay chatter that presently he, too, forgot to worry about a future brightened by very few shafts of hope and joined in her nonsense.

Several times when she interrupted her eating to push aside hair which kept slipping from its makeshift confinement, the great emerald he had set upon her finger gave off its maddening rays of green fire as a perpetual reminder.

"Let me fix your hair; you'll be eating it soon."

Eyes dancing, Irene Bringas laughed. "My good sir, just how much do you know about hairdressing?"

He shrugged and grinned. "Every farmer has to plait his team's tails in thorny country. Your hair's about the same length, so—"

Suddenly she began to laugh until her whole slim body shook. "Octavian, you silver-tongued flatterer, you'll be the death of me. I've had my hair compared to embodied sun beams, to a river of gold and to a hundred other things, but never, never, has anyone mentioned it in the same breath as a horse's tail!"

Flushing, he demanded gruffly, "Do you want me to fix it or don't you?"

"By all means," came the meek reply and she bent her bright head to his touch. "But I warn you, Abydos of the Baths of Zeuxippus will probably sue you!"

"It's so soft it's hard to work with," he said presently. "There."

When Irene Bringas arose, her tresses had been gathered into firm double plaits looped back on themselves and expertly bound with threads pulled from one of the ragged mantles, an effect which was far from unpleasing, so Irene declared after viewing herself in a pool of rain water collected in the depths of an old swimming bath.

"Come along; you've cause to become a feminine Narcissus," he warned. "Before it gets too hot we'll take a look from the heights."

ON THE summit of the headland they paused, spellbound and more than a little awed by the vastness of the theater in which they seemed to be the only actors. Not even a hyena was visible. Perhaps half a mile offshore and black against the incredibly blue sea, lay the *Saint Theodore,* resembling nothing so much as a half-tide rock because of the countless sea birds wheeling above it. The beach and the red-brown land beyond swept away until a blue haze hid the actual horizon, but inland stretched a terrific vista of plains, low hills and ragged outcrops of red volcanic rock.

Here desolation ruled supreme. Though broken aqueducts and irrigation ditches appeared in the distance, not a single green field, not one smiling orchard relieved the monotony of this heat-tortured terrain.

Not far off the castaways beheld other silent and obviously abandoned villas and farms. Like whitish specks beneath the sky's immensity they dotted the earth.

"Looks like a road yonder," Octavian commented rousing from the spell of the tragic scene. "Might be a good idea to see if it's been used lately."

He was right. The whitish streak was indeed one of those magnificent stone highways which had bound the Roman Empire together so long as she could muster legions to travel them.

"Evidently parallels the coast," Octavian observed. "And look there!"

Camel and horse droppings at intervals dotted its rutted and often deeply pitted surface, but none of these traces seemed recent.

"I think," Irene said, "I see a milestone over there."

They found it was indeed a mile post, though some long dead barbarian had knocked head and wings from the eagle surmounting it, one could still read "*Via Thapsvs.*" Also two inscriptions. "*Stadia* and *Grassvs xc*" and "*Stadia Tvnes lii.*"

"Tunes!" Octavian peered intently on the inscriptions picked out by traces of dull red paint. "God help us! We're not over seventy miles from Carthage!"

Irene's eyes widened. "Then we're in the very midst of the Vandals?"

"If you doubt it, look there!"

The young Roman's outstretched finger pointed northward where a dust cloud was advancing along this ruler-straight imperial road. Ominous sparkles of steel shone in its midst.

"Cavalry," Octavian muttered. "Too much dust for infantry. Quick, we've got to hide."

"In the ruin?"

"No. We'd have to cross open ground and they'd see us. This way."

Hearts in mouth, the two survivors sought refuge amid a grove of twisted, silver barked cork trees growing from a tumbled pile of boulders.

"Will they see our footprints?" she queried. "We aren't over a hundred yards from the *Via Thapsus*."

"Hope not," he replied though sharp misgivings assailed him. "They may be scouts of our army. Remember? Caput Vada isn't so far down the coast from Grassus."

"Byzantines coming from the north?" Irene challenged quietly.

So clear was the air that an increasingly hot half hour passed before the troops rode near enough to dispel all doubt. They were Vandals, marching along the Roman road in a shifting, disorderly column.

For the large part they wore an odd miscellany of helmets; and Octavian was interested to note how the older warriors clung to the traditional horned and winged headgear, though the young men favored casques of Roman origin. But one and all the Vandals had disdained armor beyond a wide-studded belt. Significant of this hardy people's new found love of ease, Numidian slaves, black as midnight, trotted along carrying their masters' huge round shields, battle axes and heavy javelins tufted with horsehair.

"They can't help noticing our footprints," Irene whispered. "Hadn't we better run? Maybe we could hide in the ruins?"

"No. Don't make a sound," he whispered. His heart pumped painfully when that barbaric, infinitely picturesque column rode nearer. At its head trotted a towering, hairy-chested chief; naked to the waist, he sat his stallion like a figure of bronze and slashed powerfully with a long sword at twigs thrown up for his benefit by a wretched slave boy. Gold gleamed on the Vandal leader's muscled arms and the twin braids of his red hair were clasped with the same metal. To a man these barbarians were sturdy, and not a few of them, especially the younger warriors, were clean shaven.

"If they come," Irene breathed in his ear, "use your club on me. I don't fancy the life of a barbarian's concubine."

Octavian felt his mouth go dry. A Vandal riding on the edge of the column had halted; swinging off his horse, he began to study the ground. Promptly three other young horsemen followed him and, bending low on their saddles of young camel's fur, began riding along the castaways' plainly marked trail.

"Good-bye, Octavian—Leo," Irene hurriedly whispered, pressing into his hand a small hard object. "Your ring. I was going to give it back this evening. You'll kill me?"

"Yes," he muttered through colorless lips. "Bend your head when I say. It—it won't hurt."

Nearer! Nearer! Their enemies were so close now that the hollow-cheeked Roman could see flies clustering about a quarter of mutton dangling from the foremost Vandal's saddle bow. His fingers tensed themselves about the club—there'd be just time now to bring it crashing down on the base of his companion's skull before Vandal swords began to sear his vitals.

"HOLA! HOLA!"

The Vandals remaining on the *Via Thapsus* had reined in and were scanning the desert. "Beltung! Nurno!" A command from the leader sent two men standing on their saddles.

Octavian, bathed in the sweat of mortal anxiety, heard one of the lookouts sing out, "Riders! Ten of them!"

Impetuously the mounted Vandals flogged their horses and went tearing out over the desert, with the four curious warriors hard at their heels. To Octavian's intense relief, the infantry and slaves continued their progress along the ancient post road.

For over an hour the castaways remained crouching among the boulders, uncomfortably hot, but satisfied to see their enemies vanish in the direction of Grassus. Only then did Octavian absently jam the emerald ring on his finger and say,

"We'd better get back to the beach."

More parties of barbarians were appearing in the distance and arms flashed

down the road, too, so Octavian took care to traverse a pan of naked rock, as in a series of quick dashes he led Irene down to the shore.

They regained the shelter of Scipio Catullus Niger's ruined villa and paused amid the cool shadows of the cistern to dip up cup after cup of water.

"*Perpol!* You're a cool one," he cried smiling. "I was scared stiff."

"So was I." Irene Bringas, resettling her injured arm, looked honestly surprised. "What good would it have done to make a fuss?"

"No. I meant about—well, what you told me to do."

"Kill me?" she smiled. "I'm afraid you even yet don't understand us Byzantines."

"I don't," the Roman admitted. "You've such a strange assortment of vices and virtues."

"You don't understand why I, who would think little of blinding an enemy, should cavil at being pawed by a smelly savage? Is that it?"

"Yes."

A tremulous smile wavered on her sunburnt features. "I could only yield to the man I love."

A sudden humility kept him silent for some time; then, having rearranged her bandages, he helped this surprising girl back to their camp. Located in the shade of a bluff, it proved to be cool and comfortable, save for a persistent plague of flies.

"You'd better get some rest," he advised, warned by an unnatural brightness of her eyes. "Please sleep while I hunt something for supper."

When she had washed her face and her dusty, bruised feet, she gave him a quiet little smile and closed her eyes, leaving him free to seek the beach.

Almost at once, he came upon a stout legionnaire's sword strapped to the corpse of a Thracian, who also furnished him a lorica, or mail shirt of finely tempered steel scales sewn on leather backing. Further down the shore he came across stout cothurns and a pair of darts which had been light enough to float ashore. Now lacking only a helmet, he felt somewhat more confident, though a hundred dangers threatened.

He was securing the last of his lorica's tie thongs when a snort drew his attention; down the beach were trotting those horses he last had seen staggering out of the surf. A black and a roan, they were evidently suffering from thirst, for they advanced with heads outstretched, as if glad to have human aid in solving the problem of existence.

Octavian watered the beasts, then tethered them with rope from a stranded spar and left his captives to crop grass below the ever-useful cistern. Food, too, he discovered in the waterproof compartment of some officer's chest, so, far sooner than he had expected, he was free to seek a pinnacle from which he could, at some risk, watch the plateau above Scipio Niger's villa.

THERE was plenty to see, and little of it encouraging. All afternoon dense masses of Vandal cavalry clattered southwards amid a miasma of golden dust, and gradually Octavian came to respect the soundness of Belisarius' misgivings.

Almost without exception, the barbarians and their horses were magnificent specimens.

Riding under standards made of leopard skins, human skulls and horse tails, at least eight or nine thousand brawny savages passed within range of the Roman's vision. This, he deduced from a total absence of ox carts and camp followers, must be a flying column flung to surprise the newly landed expeditionary force.

Later, towards sundown, he was puzzled by a curious phenomenon: roughly parallel to the *Via Thapsus* a long white cloud resembling smoke began to rise behind a distant rock ridge.

The Mediterranean was no less troublous; over its ultramarine surface the heat wrought amazing mirages of galleys and ships still lost behind the southern horizon. Ships to the south? Was this the Byzantine fleet, working up the coast towards Carthage? Or—an awful possibility—could yonder ships be the main Vandal fleet under Tzazo returning unexpectedly from Sardinia?

Towards sunset a Vandal scouting gal-

ley threshed by, but interrupted her descent of the coast long enough to circle the wreck of the *Saint Theodore* ere she turned her blue dragon prow southwards and rowed away, with her oarsmen bawling out a savage *Kriegslied.*

In all this the young Roman found food for furious conjecture, especially when far down the *Via Thapsus* a mushroom-shaped cloud of dust rose into the sky and hung there for nearly an hour. This, he imagined, must be caused by a cavalry engagement of some sort, but he was torn by a hundred doubts and indecisions by the time night fell. He clambered down, aware that Vandals were still riding the road, though hundreds of camp fires dotted the plain, especially on the hither side of a mountain barrier striking inland from the coastline.

"Lo! Mars do I see—descended from Olympus, armor, sword and all," Irene mocked from a broken marble balustrade. "But where's the shield poor old Vulcan made for you?"

"I left it with Venus," he retorted. Then, laughing a bit uncertainly, he corrected himself. "I'll have to think up a better one. Venus stands before me."

To his surprise the girl blushed from the low-cut bosom of her male *tunica* to the roots of her hair. "Octavian Claudius Leo, I declare, you've the makings of a courtier in you! Where did you find those horses?"

"Bought 'em from Neptune. Come along, my good wench, and get to your cooking. You're a lady of leisure no longer and I'm hungry."

Their supper beside the dancing flames proved quite the most pleasant meal Octavian had enjoyed since Genzo had swooped down upon Salona. Perhaps it was because the night was warm and a huge full moon peering above the sea, transformed Scipio Niger's ruined villa into a honey-tinted dream palace; possibly it was because Irene's nimble wit kept him continually chuckling.

He was concluding a description of his observations during the afternoon when, somewhere in the darkness above, a low, agony-thickened voice began to cry out in Greek, "Help! For the love of Iesous, water!"

"Don't go! You risk your life!" Irene urged fiercely. "It may be a trap."

"But the poor devil's hurt." He ran to the door to listen. Presently he beckoned, whispering, "Come, there may be more. We'd better stay together."

ONCE he had drowned the fire with water kept ready for just this emergency, he drew his sword and led the way into a gallery in which the moonlight created a weird black and white pattern.

Over the bluff's edge slipped a small cascade of pebbles, preceding a man who half fell, half scrambled down to the beach level, to lie there, gasping painfully. By the clear moonlight they could make out a bearded, wild-looking fellow who was naked save for a breech clout and a dark rag bound about his chest. Feebly the unknown began to crawl towards the sea, probably under the delusion that it was fresh water.

Before Irene could check him, Octavian called in low-pitched Greek, "Are you alone?"

"Yes," the wounded man wheezed. "Water—as you hope for heaven, give me water!"

In a few instants Octavian was holding a jug to the unknown's lips, marveling that he had lived so long despite the hideous wound in his side.

"Even if you are Vandals I—I thank you," the unshaven wretch murmured in clearer tones.

"We, too, are refugees," Octavian said soberly. "Who are you?"

"Meander, tetrarch of Naxos until Tzazo's accursed Vandals ravaged the island. I escaped from Carthage last night." He held up wrists hideous with festered manacle marks.

"Last night?"

"Yes, it lies hardly sixty miles to the north."

"Please," Irene pleaded, "rest and be quiet. I will try to dress your wound."

"I kiss your merciful hands, Kyria," came the Greek's husky voice, "but death is near. I—I'm glad to be quit of this wretched, troubled world. Is it true that the Byzantine emperor has landed an army at Caput Vada?"

"Yes. Five days ago."

The haggard features fell. "I fear he'll lose it! The Vandals win everywhere at sea. But listen. Reach the Byzantines and tell them that their only chance, a poor one at best, is to fight the accursed Vandals tomorrow!"

Heads together and shoulders touching, the castaways knelt above the dying Greek. Teeth a-glint in the moonlight, he continued.

"No. I'm not raving; I overheard my master, Prince Ammatas, who is second only to the king, say that within three days the Vandal fleet would return, bringing thousands of reenforcements."

"Won't Geilamir wait for his brother?"

"I think not. Like most barbarians he's impetuous and selfish for glory. No. He can be provoked into fighting before Tzazo appears."

Irene caught her breath. "You are sure the fleet is not already back?"

The Greek's gaunt head shook feebly. "Some ships came in from raiding in the Adriatic, but they were few. The main fleet lay at Nora last week and so cannot possibly get here before two days."

"How many men has Geilamir at present?" Octavian broke in, warned by the increasing chill of the man's body.

"Forty thousand at least, mostly cavalry armed with swords and shields."

"Forty thousand!" Irene gasped.

"Has he any horse archers?" the Roman wanted to know.

"Very few. Can you reach this Belisarius?"

"God alone knows," was Octavian's sober reply. "The whole barbarian army lies between us and them."

"Though Cerberus himself blocks the road, you *must* get through," insisted the stricken Greek. "God forbid the Emperor's army should suffer the fate of Vandal captives in Carthage!"

The Greek's sweat-spangled features contracted. With a dreadful effort he rallied a little.

"One last thing," he whispered. "Warn —Belisarius, Geilamir has sent—gifts and—embassy to Goths begging—renewal of their alliance."

"When was this?"

"I—I—" But the Greek's eyes closed and in the moonlight his wasted lips moved as he muttered, "*Iesous Christos nike!** Mercifully receive my spirit, O Panagia!"

INFINITELY sobered, the castaways faced each other, and the thought of Irene's injured arm made a battle ground of Octavian's mind. The girl must have guessed his dilemma, for she said quickly, "I'm going with you. Get the horses while I find us some food."

"But your arm?"

"It can be tied tight across my chest," she replied carelessly.

He gazed at her in wonderment. "Aren't you forgetting we've no bridles or saddles, only ropes and a ragged blanket or two?"

"With a hackamore I can manage, and I need no saddle," said Martin Bringas' daughter. "It's many a colt I've broken on my father's stud farm."

*Jesus Christ conquers!—the war cry of the time.

He eyed her doubtfully. "Wouldn't it be better if you mounted up behind me?"

"Not if we meet a Vandal patrol."

Scarcely a quarter of an hour after the Greek had died, he and the girl, her bare legs very long and white against the roan mare's barrel, went trotting off down the beach towards a declivity affording easy access to the table land above.

With ever increasing force Octavian understood the dire necessity of warning Belisarius, but also he perceived that their only chance of reaching him was to make a long, time-wasting detour inland, staking everything on the chance of entering Belisarius' camp from its rear.

Moreover, by this maneuver he might satisfy his curiosity concerning that odd white cloud seen at sunset.

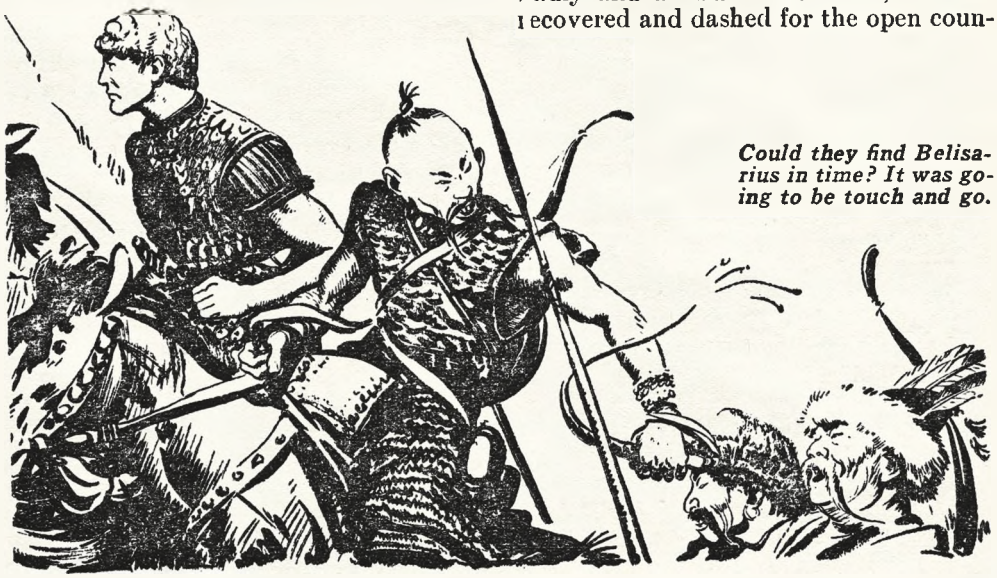
Their progress away from the *Via Thapsus* and the seacoast proved a ticklish business, for on all sides Vandal camp-fires glowed. More dangerous still were scattered parties of tribesmen who, to obviate any chance of missing their share of the imperial army's spoil, had elected to march by moonlight.

Twice Octavian and the girl halted breathless in the lee of an outcrop and watched parties of Geilamir's Moorish allies ride by, chanting a wild refrain. On such occasions the two crouched together, biting lips and praying that their beasts would not stamp or snort.

Finally the remains of a towering aqueduct loomed on the plain like the skeleton of a titanic serpent and so intrigued the travelers that they blundered upon a handful of Vandals who had dismounted to graze their horses on a patch of vegetation. Taken by surprise, both parties shied apart, but the castaways were the first to recover.

Safe in the knowledge that Irene's mount was faster than his, Octavian raced for the aqueduct, with King Geilamir's followers close behind and roaring futile invitations to halt and be killed. An ancient irrigation ditch loomed unexpectedly and the gelding took off like an embodied Pegasus. With wind whistling in his ears Octavian watched the earth swoop up to meet him; fortunately the black landed fair and hurtled on towards a mound of rubble choking the old aqueduct's arches. Irene passed him amid a clatter of flying dust and pebbles; a superb horsewoman this, but could she jump bareback and with her crippled arm?

The arch shone pale in the moonlight and ever louder their hoofbeats were flung back at the fugitives. Ha! Now! A tangle of fallen stonework flickered by and Irene's mare stumbled, pecked badly and all but went down; but she recovered and dashed for the open coun-



Could they find Belisarius in time? It was going to be touch and go.

try. He fortunately selected a less formidable arch and began to close in on Irene, who rode two lengths ahead.

Breathing a prayer of thankfulness, Octavian bent low over his mount's neck when the Vandals, appalled at the height of the stone barrier reined in and began to hurl javelins.

"Oh! Look! Look ahead!" Irene cried, pointing wild-eyed at the edge of the *erg*, or sand desert. Yonder a patrol of about ten riders was circling undecidedly ere they lowered their lances and closed up.

CHAPTER X

BATTLE STATIONS

ON glimpsing the stature of these shadowy horsemen and their curious high peaked saddles, he uttered a gasp of relief. The patrol was composed of Huns!

"*Hajjuk Bakr, Roum! Roum!*" He found breath to shout that battle cry so often heard in Belisarius' training camp below Constantinople, but to make assurance doubly sure he pulled his black on its haunches.

"Who calls in friendship?" Covered by the drawn bows of several followers, a squat, thick-shouldered officer rode slowly forward.

"I am the Spatharios* Octavian." Octavian called out his rank and remained motionless, enduring the inspection of easily the most hideous humans he had ever seen. The Hun, like all his fellows, was slant-eyed and boasted a flat forehead, malformed in childhood by the pressure of a board. Hairless because tribal custom demanded the searing off of all facial hair with exception of long and stringy mustaches, he wore a pointed leather cap trimmed with squirrel's fur and leather armor reinforced by big steel studs. Shoulders, neck and arms were left bare. Apparently he had heard of Duke Martin's protege and showed teeth filed to dog-like points in a ferocious grin.

"Oktar of the Black Messagetes salutes you," he announced in mangled Latin, and rode forward to rub his greasy snub of a nose against Octavian's. Suddenly he turned in his saddle and with a flick of his fifteen foot whip, pulled from the saddle the top-knotted trooper who was about to lay violent hands on Irene. Cackling, he recoiled the whip and his subordinate remounted.

Brief questioning revealed the circumstances which had sent this lone imperial patrol wandering so deep in Vandal territory. The mushroom-shaped cloud he had seen at sunset had been raised by a hard cavalry action fought between the Byzantine advance guard and a Vandal scouting column under a chief called Ammatas. The barbarians, badly beaten, had fled so precipitately that the Byzantines followed too far and had, in turn, been defeated and scattered. Since sundown Oktar and his handful had been dodging converging parties of King Geilamir's warriors.

The Hun, however, could give him no information concerning that mysterious white cloud which had risen beyond the ridge, but agreed that chances of rejoining the imperial army would be as good in that direction as any other.

Presently Justinian's ugly mercenaries ceased rubbing down their horses, tightened their cinches and with the ease of monkeys leaped up into their saddles. Last of all they shifted onto their backs small round brass-bound shields and, clucking and cackling, made sure that thongs securing the arrows in their quivers were tight.

"I hate to ask," Octavian paused beside Irene, "but can you stand a hard ride?"

The girl's small chin rose and she forced a smile. "Of course. Shouldn't we see all we can before we rejoin the army?"

"To rejoin the army we must be very lucky," rasped Oktar and spat resoundingly. In quite unconscious humor he added, "The whole countryside still swarms with barbarians."

Maintaining a sharp look-out and trusting that his intuition would serve in place of experience, the Roman led off for that tall ridge of rock and sun-blasted clay which formed the western horizon.

*Spatharios—roughly corresponding to a present day colonel.

While trotting along, Octavian made a couvert inspection of the flat faces beside him and shuddered. Seen by moonlight the Huns, thanks to their short bodies and enormously long arms, suggested embodied nightmares. Three of these fierce Asiatics carried human heads tied to their saddle bows by long blond hair and Oktar's snaggle teeth shone like the fangs of a dog.

It being the Roman's desire to learn everything possible, he ordered his followers to ride in a wide semicircle and bend low in their saddles. This they did, steadying the lances which swayed restlessly above them.

"Good at first but later worse," the pillar saint had predicted. Well, Octavian reflected, he'd a bit of good luck in Constantinople; perhaps it now was time for his good fortune to end? Certainly his glaring inexperience as a soldier was not going to help matters.

What of Irene? He glanced back to see her long white legs a-glimmer in the moonlight as she rode along, scanning the countryside as thoroughly as any trooper.

Perpol! She was fascinating—almost frightening in her inscrutability.

A SOFT hiss from a horse archer riding out on the left flank terminated his reverie and the moon glinted on the Hun's braceletted arm when he indicated a wide swath of trampled earth. Promptly Octavian and the Hunnish leader dismounted; the former silent lest he betray his ignorance.

"Very fresh," Oktar grunted. "See? They look for water at that old well yonder."

"Friends or enemies?" Irene demanded, more comfortable now on the improvised saddle of sheepskin a Hun had rigged for her.

For some instants the Roman only led his charger, but at last he straightened.

"These are Vandals," he anounced.

"But how can you tell?" the girl persisted.

"These hoof-prints are too big to have been made by any Moorish animals. Then the absence of shoes proves the riders weren't Byzantines." A note of excitement entered his tone. "*Perpol!* These men were riding for the ridge!"

Octavian struck the gelding a sudden blow on the flank and as the charger broke into a startled gallop the Roman threw both feet forward and by utilizing the black's impetus swung deftly up onto its back, thereby earning a guffaw of approval from the Huns.

"Show-off," jeered Irene in Greek, then bit her lips as she tightened her sling in preparation for an ascent of the ridge.

With a cold wind off the Sahara beating in his face, Octavian led his little command up a winding path so steep that, ere long, even the tough little savages from Asia were sweating and cursing mightily.

Just below the ridge top Octavian reined in then. On hands and knees, he approached the crest and peered over. One after the other, the Huns, now extremely malodorous, joined him, to remain immobilized by the unforgettable weirdness of a scene rendered in an unreal, startling white. At their feet lay the remains of a once prosperous town, the blank, moon-silvered walls and broken columns of which were etched in sable shadows.

IT WAS an amazing sight. What seemed to be a sea of ice, flat and white as an altar top, stretched away to mountains lying blue-black on the horizon. In the moonlight this vast plateau shone like a burnished silver platter of Titanic proportions. The Huns gaped.

"Witch work!" Oktar muttered. "No ice could form in this accursed hell of a land."

" 'Tis the angels' dance floor! Oh, isn't it beautiful?" Irene cried.

Deeply puzzled, Octavian remounted, spurred downwards and soon was clattering through a street half choked with rubble and tenantless save for the furtive forms of jackals and a few owls which went fluttering among the broken columns.

"*Septimvs Servervs Imperator,*" he read on the noble facade of a crumbling public building, but his real attention was on the remains of a sort of wharf

thrusting far out into this alabaster tinted sea.

"It *must* be sand," he told himself. "But I've never seen sand so bright and flat."

He was wrong, for a moment later the substance beneath his charger's hoofs rang hard! Still mystified, he commanded a Hun to dismount and with a dagger point to excavate a piece of the substance. It would, he found, crumble readily and on tasting it he made a wry face.

"It's salt, with a good bit of sand in it."

"Djins have done this." Oktar was stubbornly shaking his head.

"I have seen something similar in Syria, so maybe I can explain," the long-legged girl interrupted. "In the spring there are rains and because trees or fields no longer grow to hold it, the water rushes freely into the nearest low place and lies there. Such water becomes stagnant and the summer sun evaporates it until only the salt remains." Thoughtfully she regarded the old stone pier. "And to think that boats once tied up to that. What kind of a place do you suppose this was?"

His hawklike features picked out by the moonlight, Octavian studied the ruins. "Judging by the size and number of the stables I'd say it's been a posting station."

The party had started to ride southward along the shore of the *shott* or dry salt lake when one of the stubby-legged Hunnish stallions pricked ears to the east. Instantly the cavalcade peered back over their shoulders and beheld a singular spectacle. Some miles away a dark river was pouring over the salt lake's moonlit surface and came crawling along like a great sable python.

"*Perpol!* A flanking column!" Octavian breathed. "You men ride back over the ridge," he commanded, strangely sure of himself. "Get your horses' heads low and hold their ears.* We'd better try to learn what these devils are up to."

Even the stupidest Hun in the party soon realized that squadron on squadron of Vandal heavy cavalry was riding hard and circling to gain the Byzantine army's rear!

Octavian shut his teeth with a click. "Mount up. Keep together and follow me."

Casting Irene an anxious glance, the Roman swung up into the saddle and galloped off, making good time over the hard, dead level surface of the *shott.*

Mile after mile the patrol rode beneath the pallid moon, armor flashing and plumes whipping in a cold wind which made their eyes stream.

Once, when they were forced to scale a high ridge, the sweating Roman looked back and was surprised to see how far the Vandals had advanced across the salt lake. Could he find Belisarius in time? It was going to be touch and go.

Irene said nothing, only rode with lips tightly compressed, her slim body yielding mechanically to the roan mare's stride. Like a ragged gonfalon, her unbound hair floated out behind to trap the moonbeams in its yellow snare.

On and on rode the patrol until Oktar begged that the horses be breathed. But when the trio dismounted it was not to halt, but to go hurrying on, leading their lathered mounts up treacherous slopes of shale and down dusty ravines which coated horse and rider with grit.

Octavian became so utterly numbed with fatigue that dawn had been streaking the sky for some time before he noticed it. Miracle of miracles, not a single enemy had been encountered in this wide detour!

Oktar, who was riding ahead, uttered a loud croak of joy on gaining the crest of still another of those endless undulating hills beyond the *shott's* southern shore.

"The camp! Alajai Mundzuk! Bleda! Bleda!"

IT SEEMED as if the iron hand which for hours had been clamped about Octavian's forehead had fallen away. Far below and in the lee of a narrow defile lay the Byzantine encampment, complete with horse lines, baggage cart parks, fodder dumps, entrenchments and palisades. Above it hung a miasma of

*A horse cannot neigh without raising his head.

smoke and the vapor raised by sixteen thousand men and their beasts.

Also to be seen were hundreds of ships drawn up on the beach to lie there like stranded marine monsters. But down yonder there was already movement. First one galley, then another and then many more slid down the beach and out into the Mediterranean's glassy surface.

Passing the tip of his tongue over salt-caked lips, Octavian uttered a grunt of surprise on watching a company of infantry march down to the sea and begin to board a galley which, steadied by its oars, bobbed like a duck over the lazy swells.

"Look! Do you see what I see?"

"Why—why they are embarking!" Irene burst out and clung weakly to her mount's mane.

The Hun could make nothing of this maneuver, but to Octavian's practiced eye this and certain other operations meant that the Byzantine army was preparing to take ship.

"Come!" he cried giving his weary black such a cut that it bounded as if fresh from the stable.

Fortunately the outposts in the rear of the camp were Huns, who immediately recognized Oktar and detached a few men to form an escort.

"Get moving, you infernal chicken thieves," Octavian snarled. "We haven't all day."

Oktar added a few pungent reflections on his countrymen's ancestry, so that they mercilessly flogged their shaggy mounts and tore past a squadron of yellow-plumed Tracians who were striking their tents. Howling like wolves, the Hunnish escort next ploughed headlong through a column of Isaurian archers and only pulled in when the purple and gold pavilion of Belisarius loomed ahead.

"Do you want me to go before the *imperator?*" Irene gasped. "If so, let me tidy up just a little."

"No. Go to your father's tent," Octavian directed. "I'll come as soon as I can. You've been perfectly splendid and I—I've something I want to ask you—"

At a loss to understand this pre-dawn activity, Octavian was further puzzled to read fear and a sullen despair written broadly on so many of the faces about him. He went cold at the thought of the barbaric squadrons galloping to pounce upon this strangely demoralized army's rear."*

"Get back, you stinking rascal!" A burly protector unwisely attempted to bar Octavian's entrance to the commander's tent and to the bandy-legged Oktar's great delight got knocked flat for his pains.

A moment more, then both dusty and hollow-eyed riders broke in upon a council of war.

"Very well then," Belisarius was saying. "We will rendezvous at Malta. From there we can perhaps take Sicily and so not entirely waste our effort."

"No! Carthage, not Sicily!"

The heads of the staff whipped about, wide-eyed with astonishment.

Annoyed, Belisarius beckoned a pair of protectors. "Seize this madman!"

"Valiant Excellency—wait, listen!"

"Octavian!" The *imperator's* figure, bigger than ever in a suit of gilt armor, swung violently about. "Holy Panagia! Why aren't you among the Moorish chiefs above Bulla Regia?"

"Never got there," Octavian gasped. "Shipwrecked. For God's sake stop embarkation!"

"No," Belisarius grunted dejectedly. "We must go, while we can."

"Why?" Boldly, the sweat-streaked Roman swung up to face his commander.

A grizzled Armenian general supplied his answer. "Three days ago the Vandal fleet returned to Carthage; now it lies only a few miles up the coast."

"Who told you that?"

"A Roman hostage who escaped from the city," Duke Martin snapped from his place at Belisarius' right.

"Then that fellow lied!" Octavian seemed to see once more the earnest pallid face of the Greek called Menander. "Tzazo's fleet can't reach Carthage for two days more. I know this!" His fist, crashing down on the council table, made

*In his description of the battle and some ensuing scenes, the author has modified certain facts and intervals of time to suit the story's requirements, but in the main, historical accuracy has been adhered to.

various ink horns rattle and, quite without certain knowledge of Geilamir's intentions, he sought to force the issue. "I implore you to cancel the embarkation orders, Excellency! Inside of an hour thirty thousand Vandals will attack and find your army half embarked!"

Belisarius restored order by THEN indeed did the polyglot corps of officers surge to their feet, clamoring until pounding on the table with his sword hilt.

"The *spatharios* has no call to be alarmed," drawled a blond Herul officer. "The defile is well guarded and our men will have plenty of time to embark."

"But the Vandals are coming by two routes besides the defile!" Octavian flung at the speaker.

"By two other routes?" Belisarius seemed suddenly breathless and his big red head was thrust far out from his shoulders. "Geilamir isn't fool enough to contemplate three attacks?"

"It seems so, Valiant Excellency," Octavian panted and presented the sum of deductions formulated ever since he had climbed the pinnacle above Scipio Niger's villa. "One division under the king himself is marching on your rear; another under Gibamund, the king's nephew, will attack from the left flank; while the third under Prince Ammatas will charge through the defile."

"You know they will attack at once?" snapped the *imperator,* his shrewd peasant's eyes narrowing. "Give me false information and I'll have you skinned alive and rubbed with salt."

"I'm not sure," the Roman admitted, "but a battle can be forced and a victory is possible if Tzazo's veterans aren't there to reenforce Geilamir."

He in the golden armor bent over a map, started to speak, but instead fixed upon the Roman's heated face a slow, penetrating look.

"The fellow lies! Retreat, Excellency, while there is yet time," urged a Greek staff officer. "Already many troops have embarked."

Belisarius continued to deliberate, tugging irritably at his short red beard. In the end he began to question Oktar.

A hand plucked Octavian's wrist; Duke Martin, his pale eyes a-glitter, whispered, "Tell me, is this a trick of yours, or is it true? Is the main Vandal fleet really away?"

"Yes! All is lost if you don't persuade the *imperator* to stay and fight! The Vandals have ridden all night and expect no attack. Most likely they'll stay in their present positions until Tzazo's reenforcements arrive.

"Very well," grunted the *logothete,* "but 16,000 men against 40,000 is—well, one must break the shell to eat the egg, I suppose." Bending low, the *logothete* poured a torrent of urgent words into Belisarius' ear.

Gradually, then more frequently, the *imperator* began to nod. At last he held up a hand.

"We stay. Siccas! Ascan! Pharas! Duke Martin!"

In quick succession the brigade commanders leaped to attention taking orders which, fairly crackling from the *imperator's* sun-cracked lips, launched them into a furious activity. Within thirty seconds the headquarters tent was empty save for aides and orderlies waiting to ride with dispatches.

Beside Belisarius sat Octavian, gulping a pitcher of wine and swallowing rashers of cold meat. Briefly, he was answering the *imperator's* curt queries, venturing an occasional suggestion and marveling at the unerring skill with which this big chestnut-haired peasant was dividing his forces.

By sun-up all the mounted *federates**, *stratoi, comites* and allies were formed up, horses kicking and squealing and riders cursing amid blinding whirls of dust.

"But, Excellency, what of the infantry?" Duke Martin hurried in to inquire. "No orders have been issued concerning them."

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*The Byzantine army at this time (533 A.D.) was composed of (1) *federates,* cavalry composed of recruited barbarians but under Byzantine officers; (2) *stratoi,* which were regular government troops; (3) the *comites,* a recent innovation, troops privately raised by various generals. That of Belisarius at one time numbered over seven thousand. (4) The allies were barbarian mercenaries under barbarian officers.

Belisarius paused in the act of securing his helmet's cheekplate thong. "They will remain to guard the camp. Speed will go far to win this battle. Our one chance lies in hitting the barbarians when they're halted and our impact will be felt." Over a golden Gorgon's head clasp on his shoulder he shot a glance at Octavian. "Has Geilamir many horse archers?"

"Few or none, Your Excellency. The Vandals will rely chiefly on swords and lances. I—er—where is my war chest?"

The *imperator* uttered a barking laugh. "What? Haven't you had enough yet? Why, you're dead on your feet!"

The dusty young Roman shook his head and a dogged gleam lit his gray eyes as he said,

"It's long since one of my family has had a chance of fighting under the eagles. You understand?"

"By Saint Kosmos!" roared the *imperator*. "Old Martin Bringas was right for once. Ho! Lucius! Fit out the Spatharios Octavian from my war chest." Then to Octavian. "Pick anything you want, and keep it. If we win I'll have arms and to spare. If we lose—" a restless grin lit that rugged countenance—"which we very likely will, all I'll need is six feet of earth."

OUTSIDE, an undertone of activity swell like a diapason note on an organ; voices bellowed strident commands, clarions sounded incessantly, and a clatter raised by twenty-four thousand hoofs beat against the morning sky until it reverberated like a gigantic kettle-drum.

So perfectly disciplined was this compact little army that already the baggage was rising in neat mounds, and not far offshore the fleet had maneuvered into battle order. Meanwhile, on a plain beyond the camp, the Byzantine cavalry was forming up into three discouragingly small divisions. Hurriedly they wheeled and counter-marched in the new sun with armored heads and bodies glittering like the waves of a sunlit sea.

Astride a spirited gray stallion, Octavian rode after Belisarius' plume of blue horsehair bordered with feathers of imperial purple, and in passing noted many strange standards. Swaying above the Teutonic Heruls was the gilded effigy of a wild boar, while the dark-skinned Persian mercenaries followed an immense falcon skilfully stuffed and boasting enormous rubies for eyeballs. Bawlout a fierce war song, a regiment of Huns cantered by in the wake of an ensign composed of a cross-arm tastefully decorated by dangling yaks' tails and topped with a golden disk representing the sun.

As for the *cataphractoi*—Byzantine regular cavalry—they rode under the traditional legionary eagles, even if they had abandoned the long lance of the ancient Roman *equites* in favor of a heavy bow and two quivers of arrows.

It was with these and under Duke Martin's orders that Octavian elected to ride, unspeakably thrilled by the sight of an eagle of massive gold perched upon a tablet bearing the time hallowed inscription "S. P. Q. R." And he was further pleased to learn that to this division had been assigned Oktar and perhaps five hundred of his half naked little yellow horse archers.

The first force to move off was that of John the Armenian, directed against those barbarians lurking beyond the defile; next Duke Martin's command sounded its *tubas* and *cornus*, and at their blast, harsh and imperative as the screams of fighting eagles, Octavian felt the skin grow taut over his temples. Harness jingled and armor rattled when the division trotted off, heading for the *shott*. Fervently its commanders hoped to pierce the flank of that division Octavian had seen by moonlight.

Upon command, a detachment of furclad Huns deployed and rode out ahead, blinking their slant eyes this way and that as if to say that this thirsty and tireless country compared but ill with those green forests and lush meadows among which they had ended their long migration from Central Asia.

With their shadows cast long and blue before them, the staff then cantered up to join the advance guard and, thanks to Octavian's guiding, reached the last ridge above the *shott* apparently undetected.

But disillusionment awaited the 2000 Byzantines; Geilamir must have received a warning of some sort, for on peering warily through intersections in the rocks they could see whole squadrons of Vandals in the act of mounting up.

"Euge!" gasped Duke Martin, peering over the ridge top. 'Must be at least fifteen thousand men down there!" And indeed the salt lake's glossy surface was literally swarming with the enemy.

"Many must have come up," Octavian explained unhappily. "There weren't half that many last night."

"Well, they're there and we're here, so we won't worry about a few more Vandals," remarked Irene's father, wiping the dust from his features as he and Octavian ran back to their waiting horses.

FOR the young Roman it was vastly interesting to see how unhesitatingly Duke Martin issued a crackling fusillade of commands. The Byzantine was almost likable, now that his eternal half mocking smile and suspicious manner had been cast aside.

Such of the Byzantine regulars and Huns as carried lances thrust them point-down into the earth and strung their bows. This done, they fastened said weapons to their pommels with thongs.

Cackling, giggling and apparently well pleased with the prospect of impending carnage, the Huns next cast loose their quiver tops, while brawny Thracian peasants, composing the *cataphractoi,* cracked coarse jokes and poked fun at the short horn bows of the Asiatics.

On a low pitched word of command, two-thirds of Duke Martin's force retrieved their spears, formed a long, but dangerously thin triple line and commenced to climb the last ridge.

"Lead the charge," Duke Martin rasped and gave Octavian a grim smile that held a world of meaning. "Let the world see what the Claudian strain amounts to nowadays. God be with you." Then he added, "No matter what the situation, retreat when the trumpets sound!"

Riding up, Octavian beheld hundreds of armored backs and plumed heads briefly silhouetted; then, galloping ahead, he raised his sword and, with heart hammering madly led his men over the crest.

If only it were the VIIth Augusta he was about to lead!

"Justini Nike! Alajai! Alajai! Ave Roma!" Hunching over their lance butts, the Byzantines hurled themselves upon the thick of the surprised and badly prepared Vandal column.

With a sharp slope adding impetus to their charge, some twelve hundred cavalry rode screeching at those big horsemen still maneuvering uncertainly out on the *shott's* table smooth surface. Prince Gibamund's men, though surprised, closed ranks and trotted out to meet the charge, but their gait was as nothing to the whirlwind impact of the attackers.

As in a nightmare, Octavian glimpsed whole rows of brawny barbarians going down; horses reared and, screaming horribly, fell over backwards, crushing their riders and tripping the beasts behind.

"Ave Roma!" Into the thick of this struggling windrow of flesh he led, as in deadly earnestness Byzantine lances began to dip and thrust.

Alas that the odds against Duke Martin's men were as six to one! Out on the dry lake the hard-pressed Roman glimpsed dense masses of warriors yet unengaged, working themselves into such a berserker fury that they flung away lance and shield and, brandishing four foot swords in both hands, came galloping to join in the mêlée.

CHAPTER XI

THE ROMAN WAY

WITH difficulty Octavian controlled an impulse to join in a struggle centering about one of the eagles, but he had become soldier enough to remain behind the second line, where he could fling supports into situations where his *cataphractoi* fared badly.

A towering chieftain in a leopard skin cloak charged through the salt dust at Octavian, swinging a long sword over

The Roman ducked under the ponderous slash and drove his sword into the Vandal's tattooed chest.

his head. The Roman found it surprisingly simple to duck under his enemy's ponderous slash and to drive his sword into the Vandal's tattooed chest.

"Ave Roma!" A wild, unfamiliar exultation seized him when his hand became suddenly hot with blood. "At them! At them!" And joyfully the legionnaires closed up to follow this wiry fellow with the features of an ancient emperor.

Meanwhile the *logothete* and his staff remained on the ridge top, watching, waiting, the gorgeous crests of their helmets whipping in the morning breeze. Like those of a questing eagle, Martin Bringas' pale eyes peered through dazzling clouds of salt dust, and he grunted in satisfaction to see the heavy shields and armor of his men deflecting the light Vandal darts.

Though only sixteen hundred against easily three times that number, Octavian's force pressed on, thrusting and stabbing as they went, until the breaking of their lances sounded like kindling under the axe of a Titan.

All at once, and to the Roman, quite inexplicably, a trumpet sounded the recall. What had gone wrong? He peered wildly about but could see nothing. Nevertheless, he recalled Duke Martin's parting injunction.

"Retreat," he yelled. "Back to the ridge!"

At once the attacking force faltered in its triumphant advance and the Huns, apparently terrified by overwhelming odds, began flinging their remaining lances to earth. In complete panic they wheeled and began riding off to the left, scrambling back up that same slope they had descended.

Octavian, cursing with disappointment, turned and rode slowly after the heavy cavalry who also were in full retreat, presenting armored backs to the amazed and delighted Vandals, whose unprotected bodies had suffered so cruelly from Byzantine lance thrusts. Flogging their mounts, the *cataphractoi* clattered off to the right, leaving the imperial center quite unguarded.

"Hoch! Hoch!" A huge Vandal chieftain raised on high a horse skull insignia and led a furious pursuit.

"Fall back, sir!" Octavian galloped up to Duke Martin, quite bewildered at the turn of events. "Give us time—we can reform!"

He started to ride after his command, but Irene's father checked him, bade him wait. The *logothete* sat his horse, immobile, his long yellowish face taut but otherwise blank. Equally impassive were his staff officers; they disdained to retreat without command, it seemed.

"Fall back, sir," the Roman pleaded. "So far we've lost hardly any men—"

In a delirium of disappointment Octavian beheld dense masses of mounted Vandals hurdle forward. Howling war cries, they raced for the ridge, swords and winged helmets flashing in a breathtaking display of power.

Until the foremost barbarians reached the foot of the ridge, Duke Martin remained motionless, fingers frozen over his sword's hilt; but once the Vandal horses had slowed their gait to climb, Irene's father circled his right hand above his helmet.

Startled, the charger all but leaped from between Octavian's legs, for from behind was rising a sudden outlandish clamor! In a trice the whole Byzantine reserve appeared on the ridge crest with arrows ready on strings. Halting there, Hun, Persian and Thracian sped thousands of arrows deep into the bodies of those Vandals toiling up to reach them.

WITH magnificent courage the bronzed barbarians pressed their charge, though the stout bows of Duke Martin's men often pierced more than one Vandal with a single arrow. Then horses gone mad with the pain of these stinging missiles reared and commenced to rush blindly about, spreading confusion in all directions.

To his last hour Octavian would remember the sight of that slender disciplined line, standing steady though the Vandal effort rolled up to within a spear's length.

But the battle had now become a wholly one-sided struggle. Not a lance, not a single arrow flashed up hill, and by the hundreds King Geilamir's magnificent tribesmen perished without even wetting their sword blades.

Unconcerned as if on parade, Duke Martin remarked to Octavian, "I hardly thought they'd fall for so crude a trap. Along the Persian border we'd be laughed at for even trying it."

"It's splendid," burst out the Roman. "We've hardly lost—"

"Splendid?" Martin Bringas vented a staccato laugh. "Not yet, but soon, I hope. Look over there."

From among the ruins of Ad Decimum had reappeared the *cataphractoi,* no longer in feigned flight but riding in steady ranks which rapidly deployed out as the squadrons advanced.

"Justini nike!" they roared and spurred forward, gripping the bows they had substituted for sword and lance.

Almost simultaneously the Huns reappeared on the Vandals' right and pounded at a dead gallop for the halted and dismayed barbarians.

"Per Baccho!" Octavian gasped. "Let me go in!"

Duke Martin shook his head sharply.

"No, stay with me. You fought well in that charge—kept your head and obeyed orders. Let the common men get killed; that's all they're good for."

Assailed on three sides, Prince Gibamund's charge halted, all the while roaring dreadful defiances which killed no Byzantines. But when arrows from the flanking forces commenced to darken the sky, they turned and began a frantic, helter-skelter retreat, thus throwing away their only chance of survival. Foolishly, they forgot that the imperial mounts, having made no night march, were fresh and therefore faster.

"Ten minutes ago all seemed lost," Octavian burst out. "And now—"

"Have a fig?" A bleak grin decking his countenance, Duke Martin produced a lump of fruit from his saddle bag. "Imagine you had a slim breakfast." He glanced casually at the *shott* upon which Persian mercenaries were methodically slaughtering seriously wounded Vandals. Unharmed and slightly wounded barbarians they secured by first tying their hands behind their backs and then haltering the luckless wretches in long lines.

It was grotesque, Octavian found, to watch these savages in adversity. Blubbering, the big fellows clung to each other like frightened children or lay on the ground, hammering their heels in an access of futile despair.

Duke Martin presently licked his fingers and gathered his reins.

"Pharas, go call off Oktar's yellow boys before they chase those damned barbarians all the way to Carthage."

Followed by Duke Martin's bodyguard, the staff presently rode on to the *shott* and with interest viewed the bodies of princely barbarians laid out like game after a royal hunt. How bright their blood shone on the trampled salt!

For a long time the Hunnish ram horn bugles sounded the rallying call in vain. Martin Bringas was furious by the time his division fell in, though it was weighted with valuable plunder and herded nearly three thousand prisoners in its midst. But his men were happy—less than twenty of them had fallen in this smashing little victory!*

*A fact.

Now that the excitement was over, Octavian fell prey to a sharp reaction and was sickened to watch dozens of king vultures come scaling down to rip and tear at the scattered dead. But what shocked him worst of all were Vandal horses which, a-bristle with arrows, came limping up in dumb misery to struggle along on the flanks of the victorious column.

DURING a march northwards in the direction of Carthage, Octavian watched all that transpired, carefully noting and remembering various points and problems.

What a lot he had to learn! He wished that, like poor Otho, he had had the good sense to study for an officer's commission. Sooner or later his ignorance must cost him dear. He heaved a sigh. Otho! How he missed the lad's gay friendliness.

A phrase used by Duke Martin that morning came to his mind. "Two empires are at stake." Exactly what had the *logothete* meant? The Vandals and Goths had kings, Justinian was the only emperor. All at once a suspicion came home, so sickening that he blinked as he rode along. Were Belisarius and Duke Martin conspiring to set up an African empire? Well, he'd not become involved in such a plot, but to retreat would be difficult. Firmly he dedicated himself to wariness and still greater caution. These Byzantine foxes might be fooled.

"So you were castaways together?" chuckled the *logothete,* riding up and removing his helmet in order to mop his bald forehead. "Must have been fun in those romantic old ruins, eh, my boy?"

Dangerous sparkles began to play in Octavian's eyes, but fortunately the *logothete* rambled on with, "Well, in a few minutes we'll hear how the *imperator* made out."

Before long it became evident that King Geilamir's fate at the *imperator's* hands had been no better than that of his nephew at Octavian's and Duke Martin's. In the far distance a disor-

dered stream of fugitives could be discerned retreating to the northwest, and soon scattered parties of Vandals, blundering across the path of Duke Martin's conquering force, found sudden death.

The sun was swinging very low ere the *logothete's* weary squadrons topped a rise and there reined in, awed by the grandeur of a vista which for over a hundred years had been lost to Roman eyes.

Girdled by a belt of luxuriant and well irrigated countryside, Carthage city lay all encrimsoned by the setting sun, towering like a man-made mountain above the Bay of Tunis. Battered watch towers rose above the city's yellow-red battlements and beyond them amber spires topped countless white domes, sprouting like Cyclopean mushrooms about the base of Byrsa Hill. On its summit imposing temples and palaces were thrown into bold relief and above the city's highest towers were soaring the usual buzzards, storks and pigeons of a North African city.

Though the height and extent of Carthage's walls was breath-taking, Octavian noted that many sections had fallen into disrepair. Moreover, several gates lacked valves of any sort.

"Har! Altrai!" The Huns began licking the salt dust from their chops and, like hounds scenting their quarry, raised a ferocious clamor. The stolid Thracian legionnaires merely gaped, while the Greeks speculated on the quantity of loot and the comeliness of Vandal women.

Two couriers, flogging lathered horses, came sliding down a barren hill and, scarlet-faced, reined in before Duke Martin.

"Hail, O most fortunate *Logothete!* The Imperator Belisarius rejoices with you that the Panagia has granted all three of His Sacred Clemency's forces a victory!"

"The king was badly beaten?" demanded a grizzled *doryphon.*

"Aye, sir. Geilamir was utterly routed and saved his life only by cowardly flight."

"What are his Valiant Excellency's orders?" Duke Martin inquired. He seemed to be a little anxious.

"Tonight the army will rest before Carthage. Tomorrow, if it does not surrender, we will carry the city by storm."

"—Unless Geilamir rallies during the night," corrected a leather faced spartharios. "Only a small part of his force was slain, and on that cape we could easily become penned between Geilamir and the city."

DUKE MARTIN, however, did not seem to hear; he was reining in beside Octavian to clap that weary Roman such a blow on the shoulder that his tunica gave off a puff of dust.

"Smile, my boy. Tomorrow night you'll be a married man. Aye, and you'll have such a bridal feast as—" He broke off abruptly, pale eyes on the emerald decorating Octavian's finger. Then over the *logothete's* face came a look of murderous fury. "You dog! How dare you go back on your word? What is that ring doing there?"

Unflinchingly the Roman stood his ground. "It was not I who broke our engagement, Duke Martin, but the Kyria Irene."

Watched from a distance by a frankly curious staff, the *logothete* stiffened in his saddle. "What in Hades are you saying?"

"Just that." Octavian flushed. "I am sorry, because—well, I have come to understand and to love the Kyria Irene—"

Over the Byzantine's long face crept an expression of shrewd suspicion. Plainly he was seeking an ulterior motive.

"Don't worry! After your romantic castaway adventure, she'll marry you or take the veil."

Octavian said steadily—and well aware of all the dangers the avowal entailed, "Only of her own free will, though. I love your daughter more than I thought I could love any woman."

"Splendid! Capital!" Duke Martin relaxed and perceiving the nearest riders to be out of earshot, he bent sidewise in the saddle and continued in a swift undertone. "Be wary—after today there will be many men jealous and afraid of you. Keep out of dark places.

Another thing—I want you to *make friends* with the captured Vandal chiefs; show them every consideration."

"If you wish it," Octavian replied, stifling a rising alarm. *Perpol!* He had been right about Duke Martin's ambitions!

As soon as he could, he reined back a little to consider what might happen and how best to turn events to his purpose.

TO THE little Byzantine army's relieved surprise, Carthage surrendered at dawn the next day. The highly emotional Vandals, they learned, had been so utterly demoralized by the flight of their king that they were willing to let his capital fall without a single blow in its defense.

Fascinated by all he saw, Octavian entered Carthage amid Belisarius' own *comité*, even as the last of King Geilamir's brawny warriors rode off to the northwest, a broken, dispirited mob wincing under the jeers of their women.

Joyfully, Greeks, Moors, Syrians and Jews, long oppressed survivors of Roman days, ran out to meet the conquerors. From every house-top palm branches were waved and loud huzzas floated down from battlements which had been allowed to fall into disrepair on the arrogant assumption that no one would dare to attack the Vandal capital.

So sweet smelling buds, fruit blossoms and flowers came pelting down on the stalwart Heruls of Belisarius' *comité* instead of stones, melted lead and boiling oil. Merchants tossed gaudy bolts of silk down from their balconies. Dogs barked, women waved and children shrilled, making the iron shod Byzantine horses rear and curvet as the armored columns tramped into the pirate king's capital.

Here and there a few big-boned Vandal women glowered and spat at the invaders, and two or three fanatic warriors earned swift death by trying to hurl darts. But in the main there was little disorder—Belisarius having issued orders that, at all costs, the good will of the citizens must be cultivated.

Octavian, detailed to clear the city's principal square, beheld the *imperator* ride into view, splendid in dress cape of purple and diamond-studded helmet. As a tactful reminder that he served the emperor and a still greater power, Belisarius with one hand continually indicated a standard carried just behind him. It was Justinian's personal banner topped by a golden XP—the monogram of the Savior.

To the average onlooker it was an ever memorable sight, but to Octavian it was an omen. He had come far in these last months, further indeed than the distance separating Burnum from Carthage. To an important degree he had influenced Justinian towards this campaign, and but for him Belisarius might have sailed away, his task undone. *Perpol!* It seemed as if the East Roman eagles were flying as he wished, but would he, and they, prove strong enough to wrest old Rome from a cleverer and less degenerate people?"

Briefly he visualized this same column passing beneath the battered and moss grown arch of Titus. He heaved a sigh. How changed and empty the world had become since Titus built his triumphal arch! Irene said that disease and war had reduced all populations to a fraction of their former number. Even proud Constantinople could scarcely find ten men—and foreigners, at that—where Old Rome could easily have mustered a hundred hardy legionnaires. *Per Baccho!* A consular army deemed requisite for an expedition of this magnitude would have numbered 80,000 men at the least, and Justinian had sent Belisarius forth at the head of a scant 16,000!

Come what might, the Roman reminded himself hastily, Carthage had been won. With fresh interest he looked about. The city, he quickly realized, had not prospered under the Vandal rule; beyond the all-important export of grain and an uncertain traffic in the spoils of piracy, trade was dead. Grass blades sprouted between the cobbles in many a side street; the city's public buildings and baths were in bad repair, and a general uncleanliness predominated. Yet it was still a great city, this second Carthage, built by Rome on the ashes of the Punic city she had exterminated.

"*Ave Caesar!* Hail to the *imperator!*" bellowed the troops when Belisarius dismounted, removed his helmet, and entered a church hurriedly put to rights by the overjoyed Christian population. There this simple soldier of peasant origin knelt together with all his principal officers, including even the Pagan Heruls and sun-worshipping Huns, and humbly offered thanks to God. Once the service had come to an end, Belisarius became characteristically practical and sent conscripted citizens to labor on the walls at top speed.

OCTAVIAN had finished posting pickets along the city's main aqueducts when Karlmann of Duke Martin's staff appeared and summoned him to what had once been the residence of a powerful provincial noble.

"The *quaestor* and I are about to survey the loot taken in this quarter." Duke Martin grinned. "If you've finished your detail, perhaps you and Irene might look in and select a wedding present or two for yourselves. Don't worry, my boy. I'll deduct them from my share."

"Wedding?" Octavian hesitated.

"Yes. A decree of divorce is being prepared—just in case," the *logothete* added.

Divorce? How could one divorce a girl who had probably long since been dead, or a wife he had scarcely known? Strange, all these months he had not once felt or thought as a married man.

"My daughter has rested and is asking for you. You'll find her beyond the yellow door at the end of yonder corridor."

Clad once more in the garb of a Byzantine princess, Irene Bringas stood awaiting him in the library of some Vandal princeling's palace, brave with priceless tapestries undoubtedly looted during Gaiseric's raid on Rome in 456.

They remained just a moment smiling into each other's eyes, the Roman very brown and sinewy in his armor, and Irene Bringas, thinner than of yore and also sunburned, but straight as any marble pillar.

Pulses surging with uncertainty, he removed the emerald from his finger and, looking into the depths of her eyes, waited.

"Oh, Leo, my very dear one," she sighed and extended her third finger. Upon it he replaced the ring. For a long time they stood there, silent and a little awed.

The fragrance of her cheek pressed against his, and her uninjured arm crept up to encircle his neck as she murmured fiercely, "It's you, only you I've ever wanted! I'd have walked through fire, robbed, even murdered to have you! Aye me, Leo, what great things there are for us to accomplish!"

He chuckled. "Among them the minor matter of getting married."

"You'll be getting a battered bride," her laughter rippled out, "but if you want her I suppose you'll have your way, as usual. And Leo, what do you think? The *imperator* himself is to stand as your man of honor! That is, if he's sober enough after all this strain. Father says he's well pleased over your services before and during *Ad Decimum.*"

A DISCREET cough sounded in the passage beyond the yellow door.

It proved to be a messenger from Duke Martin, stating that an inventory of loot and captives was about to be taken.

A tribunal had been improvised on a platform occupying one end of what had been a banquet hall, and on it sat the *logothete,* surrounded by various officers of his *comité.* Among them Octavian recognized Karlman, and Titus, the one-eyed Italian. All of them arose and bowed to Octavian with no less obsequiousness than they accorded the Kyria Irene.

Certain *quaestors,* officers charged with protecting Justinian's interests, fingered long sheets of parchment and chatted with powerful legionnaires, who were already engaged in sorting a vast mound of loot.

Upon a curt command from Duke Martin, more slaves commenced to carry in bulging sacks of plunder.

"Ho! Look at that!" chortled Titus when some prisoners staggered in car-

rying a throne curiously fashioned of massive gold. Even the *quaestor,* blasé in such matters, gaped and grinned.

With eyes starting from his head, Octavian saw brought before the treasury officers salvers of massive gold, dozens of goblets decorated with gems of incredible size and richness and wrought into a thousand weird shapes.

Hundreds of bracelets, collars, headdresses, buckles and brooches clattered onto the scratched black marble floor, forming a maddening heap before Duke Martin's bright blue buskins. More soldiers, sweating with effort, then carried in church vessels, crucifixes, and exquisite rosaries of ivory and gold. There were sheets of cloth of gold, and robes of heavy China silk so brilliantly embroidered that they rivalled the jewels in dominating this maelstrom of color.

Wider and wider grew the smiles of Duke Martin and his men, and Octavian stared in wonder, unaware that this scene was being duplicated in three other quarters of Carthage. One of these other *quaestors* gained lasting fame by unearthing the famed seven-branched candlesticks which had stood before Jehovah's high altar in Jerusalem until Titus took them to grace his triumph in Rome. Gaiseric in turn had stolen them and now they were in Roman hands again.

But Octavian's smile faded on recognizing whole sacks of rings torn from the hands of slaughtered Roman knights; and as a poignant reminder of a nightmarish past he noted bits of armor marked with familiar names.

"What's that?" The Roman ran down from the tribunal and retrieved a small object. Features alight, he held up the battered figure of an eagle which had been cast in massive gold.

"A legionary eagle," Titus commented. "Which one?"

He strode over to Duke Martin, curiously inspecting this lump of gold which, no larger than a big man's fist, had inspired a thousand heroic deeds.

"The Seventh Augusta's!" Octavian said in hushed voice. "That—that was my grandfather's legion."

The *logothete* leaned forward, brows puckered. "How can you be sure?"

"By this, and this—" His forefinger indicated the names of many Claudians engraved on the back of the tablet—commanders who had led the VIIth Augusta Legion in battle over half the known world.

"Take it. It is yours, of course," Duke Martin said, while the Byzantine officers crowded about to finger the relic.

The steady segregation of spoils continued until all the plunder had been weighed, classified and sacked in bags bearing the imperial monogram.

"We'll take a look at the prisoners now," Duke Martin announced.

They filed by, dozens on dozens of big blond and red-haired people, sullenly to state their name and rank and make offer of ransom money. Octavian noticed that every now and then the *logothete* muttered an aside to a private secretary and that this happened only when the prisoners were men of substance.

Octavian and Irene, seated together, had lost interest in the proceedings when a murmur of surprise drew the Roman's attention to a slightly wounded Vandal. Apparently unused to going barefoot, the young prisoner was limping, but in distinction to many of his companions he neither wept nor wailed; instead he held his head high, glaring about like a captured hawk.

"Your name?"

"Goetar, you Roman pigs!"

"How many men do you command?"

"Before the battle," proudly announced the prisoner, "over a thousand warriors followed my standard."

"Bring him forward," the *logothete* directed. "I like his spirit."

"Jump, you Vandal dog, when his Excellency speaks. And you, get back till you're called!" The armor of a legionnaire clashed as he shoved back the tall young woman who had pressed eagerly forward.

"Please, I'm no prisoner! I'm—I am Roman, freed from slavery."

If an arrow had penetrated Octavian's chest he could not have started more convulsively when, glancing up from the VIIth Augusta's eagle, he beheld *Fulvia Julia, his wife!*

(To be concluded)

Joe swung viciously, brought his gun barrel down on Brace's head.

THE RAT'S NEST

By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

IT WAS nearing sundown when Young Joe Hardesty, on his way from Bowdry to the Mebbyso mine, finally reached The Pinnacles. As he sat his horse, gazing at the gaunt desert spires which marked the gateway to the badlands, his eye happened to light on a bundle of interwoven sticks nestled between two high rocks, like a tumbleweed that had settled down for life.

Mr. Pack Rat was smart, locating his wickiup where the desert wind

wouldn't tear it to pieces. Mr. Pack Rat was also a nuisance around camp—stealing bits of soap, matches, a candle, or anything he could make away with.

Stole things just for the hell of it. Some folks were like that. In Mr. Pack Rat's case you set fire to his nest. But shucks! This old camp thief wasn't bothering anybody, out here in the badlands.

About to ride on, Young Joe's gaze was caught by a metallic glitter. He dismounted and picked up a bright new thirty-thirty cartridge. Had he found a gold watch out here in the desert, twenty miles from nowhere, he could hardly have been more surprised.

Pack rats never traveled far from their nest. But human rats, like the gang that had recently tried to rob the Bowdry bank, moved around considerable. Smoked out of Bowdry after a hot gun fight, and leaving a litter of empty thirty-thirty shells on the street, along with a belt partly filled with soft-nosed ammunition, the gang made for the Blue Range country. A few days later a report came in that they had stolen some horses from Old Man Orpington, after shooting him down in his cabin doorway.

The outlaws were next heard from in Grant, where they robbed the general store and made an easy get-away. Since then the gang had not been heard from.

It was rumored that they had made for Old Mexico. It was also rumored that Tonto Charley was riding with them, but Young Joe didn't believe it. Tonto might have come back to Arizona. But he never would have stood for the killing of Orpington. Orpington and he were old friends.

Joe tucked the shell into his pocket, telling himself that someone riding through the badlands had dropped it. Nevertheless, he decided to look around a little before he watered his horse at the desert spring below. Crawling to the top of the ridge, he peered down. Long, tapering shadows of the Pinnacles lay across the sandy basin like giant fingers. Near the spring was a mound of dead ashes. There was no one in sight, and no sign of a camp.

Joe held on to his hat as a gust of wind swept across the ridge and spiraled up in a whirling haze of sand. The wind subsided. He rubbed the dust from his eyes. Shucks! The afternoon heat had got him to imagining things. That faint sound behind him—that was only Shingles shifting a leg to rest himself.

"Looking for somebody?"

Joe turned his head, stared at the narrow-faced man on the roan horse. The muzzle of the carbine lying across the man's legs shone like a questioning eye.

"My pardner said he would pull into the water hole yonder about sundown," said Joe. "He was comin' from Bowdry."

"Always lay on your belly when you're looking for him?"

Joe got to his feet. "I was layin' down to keep out of the wind. Seems like he ain't around anywhere, so I reckon I'll be on my way."

The man on the roan took some loose tobacco and a brown paper from his pocket and curled a cigarette with his left hand. A cowpuncher usually curled a one-fisted smoke with his right. And cowhands drifting through the country seldom packed rifles. Joe began to feel pretty grim.

"Bedrock," declared the narrow-faced man, "ain't been in Bowdry for quite a spell. Howcome you headed for The Pinnacles instead of keeping to the foothill road?"

The narrow-faced man lighted his cigarette, again using his left hand. His voice, his rig, his spurs all said he was a Texan. Yet he seemed to know the country, and knew Bedrock by name.

"I left town late," said Joe. "Took the cut-off to save time."

"Saving time monkeying around that pack rat's nest yonder?"

Joe's dark eyes snapped. "Hell! Can't a fella look at a rat's nest? I was goin' to touch a match to it, like anybody would."

"Out of matches?"

Joe began to get hot under the collar. No matter what he said, the Texan was always one jump ahead. Joe drew the thirty-thirty shell from his pocket. "This here is what I was lookin' at."

The narrow-faced man glanced at the bright shell.

"What do you make of it?" he said easily.

Joe turned the cartridge over in his fingers, fumbled it, purposely dropped it. He stooped as if to recover it. As he came up he kicked the roan horse in the chest. The horse reared and bolted for the open desert. Joe made a running jump for his own horse, and spurring over the ridge, swept down the trail into the basin. Behind the high rock wall bordering the spring, he could stand off the Texan, drop him from the saddle if he was fool enough to follow.

As he flashed round the shoulder of the wall, Joe's pony Shingles set himself up with a snort. Three men stood near their horses, as if ready to mount. A beefy, round-faced man, with an eye like a blue marble, stepped forward and signed to Joe to dismount. A glance told Young Joe what the men were. He stepped down.

"BOYS," the beefy man gestured, "meet Young Hardesty. Folks say he is a tough kid. Now I'm wonderin' just how tough he is?"

"If I had a gun on me," said Joe, "you wouldn't be doin' any wonderin'."

One of the men laughed. The big man swung his right. Joe dropped, staggered up, and came back at him like a wildcat. The beefy man swung again. Joe went down in a heap. As he lay half-conscious, he was aware of the faint sound of voices, and an answering halloo from the ridge. That would be the Texan. Then Joe heard someone say, "What you aim to do with him, Brace?"

Sick, dizzy, Joe crawled over to the wall and sat with his back against the rock, staring at the figures moving to and fro in the dusk. Firelight flickered up, played on faces weather-seamed, unshaven, on battered Stetsons, and belts heavy with shells.

The men were wolfing down grub, and talking in low tones. A man rose from beside the fire and stalked over to Joe. It was the Texan, who offered him a cup of hot coffee. Surprised by this unexpected attention, and conscious of the aching lump on his jaw, Joe drank the coffee. He began to feel better.

"Looks like you made a mistake for yourself," said the Texan.

"You mean headin' for The Pinnacles? If I'd 'a' knowed what was here, I would sure rode wide of this rats' nest."

A smile touched the Texan's hard mouth. He glanced over his shoulder. "I ain't got no call to grease your wagon wheels, but I saw you stand up to Brace. I kind of liked that. What I mean, the boys are on the prod. They don't like visitors, nohow. If you do any talking, do it through your teeth." The Texan turned and strode back to the fire.

Joe realized that he was in a mighty tight pocket. Figuring a way out of it was like a sum in arithmetic. The idea was to do your figuring right, and not worry too much about the answer. Apparently the outlaws had not considered it necessary to put him under guard. They had his horse and his gun, and there was no way out of the rock walled basin except the ridge trail. To reach that he would have to pass near them. But if a fellow were to crawl along the base of the wall and could manage to get into the corral without being seen—

With a glance toward the group round the fire, Joe sank down and began to worm his way toward the horses.

He had almost reached the corral when the argument round the fire ceased, and a figure rose and stalked toward the spot he had recently left.

"Where in hell is he?" the man called.

"Take a look at the horses," Brace called back. And rising he started toward the corral. He all but stumbled over Young Joe in the darkness. Joe jumped up, and dashed headlong into the man who had been sent to fetch him.

THE fire had died down to a blur of red embers. Squatting between his captor and the Texan, Joe's quick glance went from face to face—the Texan, Brace, the short thick man with a bristle of beard, and the man whom Brace called Hargis. They, in turn, gazed at the smouldering fire. Brace rolled a cigarette.

"Kid," he said casually, "I figure we don't need you around here any longer."

Surmising that this was a bait, Joe said quite as casually, "I was goin' to bush here tonight, anyhow."

The man called Hargis laughed. Brace blew smoke through his nose. "Just how do you figure this outfit?"

Young Joe straddled the question. "I ain't been doin' any figurin'. Mebby you fellas don't know who you are, either."

Again Hargis laughed. "He's got you on the run, Brace."

Joe wasn't fooled by their easy going attitude. Just one bobble, and they would put him away for keeps. Brace, who seemed to be running the outfit, was a bully.

Most bullies had a yellow streak. And yellow was a whole lot more dangerous than plain red.

"Seein' you were figurin' to bush here," Brace spoke as if the thought had just occurred to him, "how would you like to throw in with us for a spell? We could use you."

Joe hesitated. First Brace had said they didn't need him around there any longer. Now Brace could use him. There was something fishy about that. "You mean ride with you fellas?"

Brace nodded.

"I dunno," said Joe. "I'd kind of like to think it over."

The man called Stubby spat into the fire. "I ain't for it. The kid ain't, either. He's just stringin' you along."

Joe flashed a hard look at Stubby. "Who's runnin' this talk, anyhow?"

"I'm runnin' it," said Brace.

"Then I'm talkin' to you." Young Joe made a cigarette. "About joinin' up. I'm kind of tired of pushin' a wheelbarrow and swingin' a pick. Anyhow, the Mebbyso is peterin' out. Now if all you fellas was to vote me in, regular—" Joe fumbled in his pocket, frowned. He turned to Hargis, "Gimme a match, will you?"

As Hargis, squatting next to him, raised his arm to reach in his shirt pocket, Young Joe snatched the outlaw's gun from the holster. In a flash Joe was on his feet, facing Brace and the man called Stubby across the fire.

"Hell, kid! You didn't have to do that," said Brace.

"Like you beatin' me down. But let that ride. Right now I'm collectin' them votes."

"Go get your horse," Brace waved his hand, "and call it a day. Nobody's goin' to bother you."

Again Brace had changed front. Young Joe knew that it wouldn't do for him to back down now.

"I'm stayin' right here. What you goin' to do about it?"

The men stared at Brace. It was mighty plain that the kid meant business. Moreover, it was now a personal matter—something for Brace and Young Joe to settle. Brace's heavy face flushed.

"You win," he said grudgingly. "Put up that gun."

Young Joe had made good, temporarily. He knew his luck hung by a mighty thin thread. He didn't trust Brace, not for a minute. But it wouldn't do to let Brace know it. "All right, Brace." Young Joe's tone was level, businesslike. "I had to kind of talk you into givin' me a job. Now I got it, all I want to know is where in hell the grub is at."

"I told you he was as good a man as you are," said Hargis, grinning at Brace. "The grub," Hargis continued, "is in the cache this side of the corral. Wait a minute. Here's that match."

"Thanks, pardner. I come right near forgettin' it. Here's your gun."

Aware that they were watching him, Joe turned his back on the group, and strode over to the cache. He had voted himself into this rats' nest. Just now the rats were sticking together. But when it came to a showdown, it would be each rat for himself. If he could manage to hang on till then—

In the shallow cave in the rock wall he stripped a wet gunnysack from a shoulder of beef, hacked off a chunk. When he returned to the fire, he noted that the man Stubby had disappeared—was probably taking his turn as lookout up on the rim. Hargis and the Texan were talking about the Tonto Valley cattle war. Brace lay near the fire, his eyes closed. Joe gave his attention to the skillet and coffee pot. The Texan rose and walked toward the corral.

"Where in hell did you get this meat?" said Joe. "Off a bosky?"

Hargis chuckled. "Thought you was tough." The outlaw glanced up at the

starlit sky. "Pretty night," he said, yawning. "Reckon I'll turn in."

Hargis had gone toward the eastern end of the basin. Shortly afterward Brace got up and disappeared in the opposite direction. The man called Stubby was up on the rim, standing guard. The Texan was bedded down near the horses. In case of a surprise the outlaws wouldn't be caught bunched together. Joe took the skillet and coffee pot to the cache. As no one was around to watch him, he walked over to the corral. That still shape was the Texan. Apparently he was asleep. Joe slipped over the wall and stole toward his pony, Shingles.

The Texan sat up. Starlight glinted on the barrel of his carbine.

"Brace is up on top with Stubby," he said pointedly. "No sense crowding your luck."

"I reckon two of 'em would be one too many," said Joe, "seein' my old Sharps is a single shot. Now if I had that little gun you're holdin' on me—"

"How long do you figure to stick with the outfit?"

Joe hesitated. The question came as a surprise.

"If a posse was to ride into this here basin and start shootin' " he said finally, "I would be behind a rock whangin' at the posse. Because why? Because me bein' here, they would put me out as quick as they would any of this bunch. But if we-all was ridin' the ridges, and I took a notion to change my luck, that would be different."

"You please me most to death," said the Texan. "Right now you better bed down alongside me, here. Lay on your belly and cover your back with your hand. We're short on blankets."

JOE was awakened by the sound of voices. Round about, the giant pinnacles towered into the morning sky. The Texan was filling some gunnysack morrals with corn. There was an extra horse in the corral—a bay, sweat-marked as if he had come a long way.

Joe rose and stretched, cocked his hat over his eye, and bowlegged up to the breakfast fire, where a tall, heavy man in jeans and rowdy, and wearing Chihuahua spurs, was talking with Hargis and Brace.

"Sit in and eat," said the tall man. He slanted a quick look at Young Joe. "Brace, here, was tellin' me you joined up last night."

"He ought to know," said Joe.

Hargis chuckled.

"He beat Brace to the draw. With my gun, at that."

Again the tall man glanced at Young Joe, a question in his eyes. Joe's mind was a riot of questions. Why had Tonto Charley pretended he didn't know him? Why had he left Mexico? What game was he playing? Young Joe filled a tin cup with coffee, blew on it, stared into the fire. Not many years ago, he and Tonto Charley had been in some pretty tight corners together. If Tonto pretended he didn't know him there was a mighty good reason for it.

"Lost your appetite, kid?" said Hargis.

Joe grinned. "Not any. Howeome, I lost a friend a spell ago. I was thinkin' of him."

"Tough hombre like you?" Brace sneered.

"Hell, no! Folks called him Sweet William. His business was plantin' stiffs."

"Don't let your feelin's get bogged down too deep," said Tonto Charley, grinning.

Joe finished eating, took his plate and cup to the spring. Tonto Charley had dropped a hint. But why only a hint, when they were old friends? There was something mighty queer about the whole business.

Joe was in the cache, replacing his plate and cup, when he heard someone shuffle up to the corral, heard the Texan's easy drawl.

"I'd kind of hate to beef him, at that. But with this here job coming up—"

"It ain't only the job," said Brace. "Reckon you didn't see him and Tonto lettin' on they didn't know each other."

"Would Tonto make the ride to tell you Collins and his posse is over in The Blue range, if he wasn't all right? What's biting you? We're heading for Bowdry. And the sheriff is out of town."

"A couple of years ago," said Brace, "I seen Tonto and the kid ride into Bowdry and clean out the Silver Dollar, leavin' three men on the floor. But this mornin' they don't know each other. Somethin' funny about that."

"That don't sour my stomach any," declared the Texan. "What I mean—if Tonto and him are friends, the kid ain't going to carry a bone to no peace officers. Hell, Brace, you act like you're getting gun-shy."

BRACE and the Texan were out of sight around the shoulder of the wall. Joe slipped out of the cache and walked over to the breakfast fire where Tonto Charley was squatting on his heels, talking with Hargis. Tonto flicked his cigarette into the fire and rose. "Hargis, here, was tellin' me you was obliged to borrow his gun last evenin'."

"Not havin' my old sawed-off Sharps handy," said Joe.

Tonto Charley laughed. "That ain't a gun. That's a one-tunnel lead mine. Here." Tonto unbuckled his belt and handed the short, heavy gun and holster to Young Joe. "Next time you won't have to borrow off Hargis."

Next time? Joe swung the belt on and buckled it. A fellow just couldn't figure Tonto. You never knew what he was up to.

But anybody that took him for a fool just because his name was Tonto, was riding a lame horse.

Hargis looked puzzled. "I didn't know you and the kid was friends."

Tonto Charley's eyes, under heavy, ragged brows, leveled to Hargis' face. "Me, I ain't got any friends. What I mean, I don't need any."

Young Joe grinned. You never could figure Tonto. One minute he would be joshing you. The next he would be telling you where to head in. Was he telling Hargis where to head in?

"Come on over to the corral," said Tonto, turning to Joe. "Brace ain't seen you in your new clothes."

Joe would have given considerable to have had a word with Tonto Charley alone. But the men were all in the corral now, taking up slack cinches, and getting ready to leave the basin. Tonto Charley whistled as he stepped round his horse. Noting Joe's "new clothes", Brace glanced at the Texan, then at Tonto Charley. Brace turned to see Young Joe grinning at him.

"Git along, little dogies," said Joe.

Tonto called out, "Hey, Brace, got any extra thirty-thirties?"

"I heard tell there's a belt full of 'em in Bowdry," stated Joe. "Fella must 'a' been mighty scared to jump through his belt and leave it behind like that."

Brace stiffened, glared at Young Joe.

Tonto stepped up to him. "About them shells, Brace?"

Brace shook his head. Whistling, Tonto strode back to his horse.

"We'll hit Bowdry long about six this evenin'," said Brace as they moved toward the ridge trail.

"I'm figurin' to send Stubby and the kid in ahead to look around, before we get busy."

"Sure!" Tonto laughed. "You would do that."

This undercurrent of animosity didn't escape Young Joe. Brace was running the outfit, yet Tonto seemed to have some hold on the gang. If the rats started quarreling among themselves . . . Young Joe grinned. They were on top of the ridge now. As they passed the spot where he had had his little run-in with the Texan, Joe stepped down and picked up the thirty-thirty shell and stuffed it into his pocket. Hargis waited until Joe had mounted.

When they reached the desert flat below. Tonto turned to Young Joe.

"We-all are headin' for Bowdry." He gestured. "Which way are you ridin'?"

"That's all settled," said Brace. "The kid is ridin' with us."

"Which way are you ridin'?" said Charley, ignoring Brace.

Joe knew perfectly well that Tonto's insistence meant considerably more than a challenge to Brace's authority. Tonto was reckless, especially when drunk. But he was sober now, knew exactly what he was doing. There was something back of it all that Joe couldn't understand. Tonto's heavy features were expressionless, his eyes unmoving, fixed on Brace.

"Why, I'm ridin' with you fellas," said

Joe, as if surprised by Tonto's question.

"I was figurin' you would," said Tonto.

The outfit moved on. Hargis was muttering to himself. "Now what did he mean by that?"

LONG before they reached Point of Rocks, Young Joe came to the conclusion that Tonto Charley, although known throughout the territory as one of the toughest of the wild bunch, would not have deliberately encouraged him to side with this gang, unless there was a mighty good reason for it. To the contrary, Tonto would be the first to warn him off.

"The game," Tonto once told him, "is no good. I ain't, either. That's why I'm playing it. You stick to Bedrock and the mine."

Joe was puzzling over this apparent inconsistency when Hargis, gazing between his horse's ears, said in a low tone. "If you'd 'a' pulled your freight back there at The Pinnacles, it looks like you would 'a' sure started somethin'."

"That's what I figured," said Joe. "Say, pardner, how long has Tonto Charley been ridin' with this bunch?"

"Ask me after it rains. It's too dam' hot to talk right now."

Brace and Tonto Charley were in the lead, followed by Stubby, sour-faced, silent, alone. Hargis and Young Joe rode side by side. The Texan, on his big roan, brought up the rear. Young Joe reined up, waiting for the Texan. But the Texan immediately stopped. His carbine across his legs, he sat his horse, a lean statue of vigilance.

"Hell!" snorted Joe, "I was just figurin' on our havin' a little talk. Hargis says it's too hot."

"Same here."

Joe rode on, overtook Hargis, who seemed to have regained his usual good nature. Joe gestured toward the far peaks of the Mebbyso range. "Rainin', over yonder."

Hargis chuckled. "You're good for a laugh, any time. But Tex takes his job serious. What I mean, I'd kind of hate to see your saddle empty."

"I been figurin' on keepin' it warm, ever since Tonto joined up," said Joe.

Hargis' expression changed.

"Brace," he said unsmilingly, "is runnin' this outfit."

"Tell that to me after it rains," said Joe. "Right now it's too dam' hot to swallow."

Slowly Point of Rocks became outlined against the western sky as the dusty cavalcade plodded across the glaring emptiness. Brace and Tonto Charley, who had been riding together during the early part of the journey, had drawn apart. Tonto was now riding beside the man called Stubby.

Speculating upon Tonto Charley's connection with the gang, Young Joe could arrive at no satisfactory conclusion. Although Tonto was capable of any kind of deviltry, in this instance he didn't seem to fit into the picture. And it was plain enough that he hadn't been with the outlaws when they made their unsuccessful attempt to rob the Bowdry bank. He was well known in Bowdry, would have been recognized, and his name mentioned. And had he been with them in The Blue Range, they wouldn't have killed Old Man Orpington. Tonto wouldn't have stood for that. Many a time Tonto had laid low in Orpington's mountain cabin when the peace officers were combing the country for him.

No, Tonto didn't fit into this picture. Yet here he was, apparently quite at home with the gang, and apparently sure of himself. That run-in with Brace, now. A man with half an eye could see that Tonto Charley wasn't taking orders from Brace. And it was mighty plain that Brace didn't like him a whole lot. Even Hargis didn't seem any too glad to see Tonto around.

Young Joe shrugged. Maybe when the gang reached Point of Rocks and made their final plans for the Bowdry job, whatever it was, a fellow would be able to make some plans of his own. Right now it was a case of hang and rattle.

That diamond-back, coiled in the shade of that rock, yonder. He wasn't worrying any. He didn't even buzz. Had his head up, though. Wasn't asleep. More through habit than anything else, Joe pulled the gun Tonto had given him,

and fired. The rattler flopped and writhed. The drowsy outfit came to life in a flash. Brace, Tonto and Stubby whirled their horses round.

"Just a rattler," the Texan called out.

Brace cursed, holstered his gun. Tonto laughed. Stubby was holding his six-shooter on Young Joe.

"Show is over," said Tonto.

A fool thing to do, shooting the rattler. Joe knew it. And he didn't especially care whether the rest of them liked it or not. He had found out something. Stubby was only waiting for an excuse to shoot him. Else why had Tonto been watching Stubby so closely? Maybe Stubby had forgotten that Tonto wore a shoulder holster. And Stubby was Brace's dog—a bad dog, with a mean look and a crooked mouth. All Brace had to say was "Take him!" and Stubby would get busy. Joe had chalked that on his slate even before they started to make the ride to Point of Rocks. But how did Tonto know it? Easy. "I'm sending Stubby and the kid in ahead . . ." says Brace. It was then that Tonto had caught on.

Joe boiled. At the moment he didn't care if he set off the whole bunch of fireworks. He pushed his horse up alongside the bristle-faced outlaw.

"I got me one rattler this mornin'," he said, as if recounting a rather pleasing experience. His tone dropped a note. "But he wasn't packin' a gun. And he didn't wear whiskers."

With still and curious eyes, Brace, Hargis and the Texan sat their horses, watching the two. Stubby seemed hypnotized by Young Joe's rigid gaze.

A grin spread across Tonto Charley's heavy features.

"It'll be cooler, this evenin'," he said, lifting the reins as if about to ride on.

THE tension let down. Again they all became conscious of the heat, of sun glare and shadeless reaches. Brace humped his heavy shoulders and rode on. Stubby whirled his horse viciously and followed. With an unreadable glance at Young Joe, Tonto Charley fell in behind Stubby. Reins hanging on the horn, as he rode along, Hargis was carefully winding a length of string around the cracked handle of his six-shooter.

"That rattler, back there," he said without looking up from his task, "you sure messed him up. Now I was lookin' to see you shoot his head off, neat."

Young Joe turned hot, sullen eyes on Hargis. "I ain't that good. Mebby you are."

"Hell, no! But Stubby, now, he's poison. I've seen him chuck up a two-bit piece and plug it before it hit the ground."

"I've got two bits," said Joe.

Hargis, the youngest of the outlaws, was chuckling to himself. Good natured, good looking, with a clear blue eye, he was always ready to laugh. Although Hargis made no pretense of being tough, Young Joe surmised that he had more real nerve than any of his fellows. Except, perhaps, the Texan. He was different again—didn't talk much, seldom smiled. Kind of cold-blooded. And mighty steady. Took more than a scare to touch him off. As for Brace and his dog Stubby, they were yellow, mean, quick to kill because they feared being killed. But there was no use borrowing trouble when you already had a lap full of it. Anyhow, there was old Tonto, chousing along right ahead—easy going, solid, the only one that hadn't had a gun in his hand following the shooting of the rattler.

Immediate conditions and hazards had limited Young Joe's horizon. Suddenly, as if he had reached the crest of a mountain, the horizon expanded, swept on and out, clear to the Blue Range, and Old Man Orpington's cabin.

Joe cursed his own stupidity. He had seen it all along, that question in Tonto's eyes. The Bowdry job was simply an excuse. Not that Tonto would lead the gang into a trap. He would be more likely to fight for them if they were cornered by a posse. Tonto was after the man who had shot Orpington down as he stood unarmed in his cabin doorway.

Young Joe shrugged. Tonto had given him a gun. Tonto had also given him a chance to get out of this mix-up, back there at The Pinnacles. Tonto was counting on him. Well, he could, if he didn't count too fast.

A SCUM like bronze dust lay over the Point of Rocks water hole. The horses plodded across the white, crusted mud and drank. From the foothill brush a quail called complainingly in the noon heat. By common consent the outlaws drifted up into the shade of the hillside junipers. Their movements were apparently casual as they dismounted and tied their horses. Yet each man, as he sat or reclined, placed himself so that he could watch his fellows. Stubby, however, left them and climbed to a high ridge north of the water hole. Point of Rocks shut off all view of the desert to the north save from the ridge.

Across from Joe, Tonto Charley squatted on his heels, near Brace, who lay with his hand propping his head, his hat brim over his eyes. Hargis sat whittling a bit of broken branch. Beyond him the Texan lay on his belly, his head turned sideways, facing the others.

There was no talk. Even Hargis, usually up and coming, was silent, an expectant look in his eyes. The outfit was heading for Bowdry—up to some deviltry. But that didn't account for this tense silence. Nor did the possibility of a flare-up between Young Joe and Stubby. Stubby was yonder at the ridge.

With a lookout posted and with two or three hours to loaf before setting out for Bowdry, the gang should have been taking it easy. Heavy-set men like Brace and Tonto probably would have slept through the noon heat.

The heat was bad enough. But the silence was worse. Joe sat turning a long, forty-five Sharps' cartridge over in his fingers, contrasting it, in his mind, to the slender, tapered shell he had picked up at the pack rat's nest.

Old timers called the new thirty-thirty a pea shooter, and stuck to their heavy caliber rifles. But this outfit; even Tonto Charley packed thirty-thirties, used soft-nosed slugs. The Sharps' forty-five would knock a man down, stun him even if it didn't kill him. The thirty-thirty soft-nose would tear a hole like a pancake where it came out. Like the slug that got Old Man Orpington—just one shot, but that had been plenty.

Joe sat gazing at the distant figure of Stubby seated alongside a rock on the high ridge. Why didn't somebody say something, or curl a smoke? Sometimes, when a fellow wants to cover up, he curls a smoke. Gives him something to do. Wondering if anyone else would follow suit, Joe rolled a cigarette. He turned to Hargis with a grin, "Say, gimme a match, will you?"

Hargis stopped whittling, and with mock formality pulled his gun and offered it to Young Joe.

"I reckon it's the heat," said Joe. "I said, a match."

From beneath his hat brim Brace watched this by-play. Tonto Charley had his eye on Brace. The Texan had raised his head as if listening. Hargis holstered his gun. Joe took a match from his own pocket and lighted the cigarette. His gaze drifted to the distant ridge. A few seconds ago Stubby had been sitting in the shadow of a big rock. Joe's tense gaze searched the empty ridge. Stubby had disappeared. That seemed queer. Had he seen anything suspicious he would have signaled. Had he been on his way back to camp, Joe would have seen him. It was hot. But Joe's back grew cold. Every man in the outfit in sight but Stubby.

The ridge was in full view of Hargis, the Texan and Brace. Tonto Charley, with his back toward it, wouldn't know that Stubby had left his post.

Young Joe tried to catch Tonto's eye. But Tonto was now gazing at Brace's horse, a stocky, mouse-gray, dozing in the shade of a juniper a few yards up the hillside. It was one of the horses stolen from Old Man Orpington. There had been no attempt to blot the brand. Hargis was also riding one of Orpington's horses, a sorrel with a light mane and tail. But that was no sure sign that Hargis or Brace had killed the old man. It might have been Stubby, or even the Texan. Joe's gaze drifted toward the ridge. There was no sign of Stubby.

A faint roll of thunder echoed from the distant Mebbyso range. The drowsy horses cocked their ears, shuffled.

"Change of weather," said Hargis.

"About time," said Tonto Charley.

"Slicker in the bunk house, and rainin'

like hell," chanted Young Joe. He was looking at Stubby's horse which stood with ears forward expectantly. The rifle scabbard on Stubby's saddle was empty. Joe didn't recall having seen him take the rifle with him. Evidently he had. But why? On a lookout as near to camp as that a fellow didn't need a rifle. If he spotted anyone coming across the desert he wouldn't start shooting. He would slip back to camp and warn the gang. No, it wasn't natural to pack a rifle around, in that heat, when a fellow had a sixgun, and wasn't over fifty yards from camp.

SUDDENLY Hargis stopped whittling and put his knife away. His face was stiff, expressionless. Young Joe rose and stretched. Stubby had been gone from the ridge ten or fifteen minutes. Again Young Joe tried to catch Tonto's eye. Tonto had turned to Brace, was staring at him in a peculiar manner, when a voice from the junipers up the slope broke the tense silence. "Hey, Brace!"

Brace sat up, leaning on his left hand. "That you, Stubby?"

"Sure it's me!" came Stubby's voice. "Three fellas are headin' up the ridge north. One of 'em is Collins. I know the buckskin he's ridin'."

The Texan was sitting up now. He and Hargis were staring hard at Tonto Charley. He had told them that the sheriff was over in the Blue Range.

"Stubby," said Tonto softly, "is a damn liar."

"Tell him," snarled Brace. "He's got you covered."

It came to Young Joe in a flash. This was a frame-up to get Tonto Charley. Had Collins and his posse been heading for the ridge, Stubby would have seen them long before they reached it, and would have signaled the camp.

Out of the corner of his eye, Joe watched Hargis and the Texan as Tonto Charley said slowly, "There's one man in this outfit ain't said his piece yet. He killed Bud Orpington. Somebody give him a name."

The Texan went for his gun. Tonto Charley chopped down and let him have it. Both Hargis and Brace opened up on Tonto. Young Joe dropped Hargis with a shot through the body, swung around to throw a shot at Brace, when a rifle snarled on the hillside. Tonto Charley staggered and dropped to his knees. Joe dodged behind a juniper and came round behind Brace.

"Drop it!" he cried, shoving his gun into Brace's back. Brace lowered his arm, let his gun fall to the ground.

Again the rifle snarled on the hillside. Tonto's hat jumped as if someone had jerked it from his head.

"Try her again!" he cried. "You're holdin' too high."

The Texan sat forward, his arms braced wide, his eyes dull and staring. Hargis, on hands and knees, coughed, vomited. Young Joe saw Tonto Charley struggle to get up, waver and sink down. Stubby's first shot had got him. Brace had framed it all. Joe swung viciously, brought his gun barrel down on Brace's head. The Texan was on his feet. As if asleep he started to walk toward his horse. Young Joe had him covered, would dropped him, but the Texan suddenly stopped, as if listening, swayed, said something to himself, and crumpled in a heap.

Hargis, now. He was out of it. Joe's face was white, his mouth tense. Too bad to have to plug Hargis, but he had had it coming. All of 'em had it coming. Tonto was done for, shot down from the brush by a killer that didn't have nerve enough to face him.

Keeping under cover of the junipers, Joe stole toward the horses. His rifle wasn't on Shingles' saddle. Stubby had taken it, hid it somewhere. But there was Tonto's carbine. Joe was pulling the gun from the boot when a shot from the hillside tore through the cantle of the saddle. He jerked the carbine free, and ducking, made a run for the next tree. He peered up the hillside. Stubby's thirty-thirty had left no smoke. But he was up there somewhere, high enough to see the camp, or any open spot below him. That would make it hard to circle and get above him.

It was a case of crawl and climb, with always the chance that Stubby would spot him from above. Joe had been at

it but a few minutes, when pausing to rest he heard the faint clatter of a rolling stone. Peering round the rock behind which he lay, he could see nothing but the green of the junipers and the bare, blazing rocks. He wiped his face on his sleeve. That spot of gray, yonder, looked mighty like the peaked crown of a Stetson. Stubby wore a gray Stetson.

Might have been the heat waves, or maybe the gray spot had moved a little. Yes, it had moved. The tiny, gleaming circle of a rifle muzzle showed beneath it. Joe hugged the ground, drew a careful bead between the gleam of metal and the gray above. He squeezed the trigger. The carbine was empty.

Young Joe's eyelids flickered. Someone had emptied Tonto's rifle and replaced it in the scabbard. Unaware of this, Tonto would have counted on it in a mix-up. Brace and Stubby had not given Tonto even a fighting chance.

Having seen Young Joe take the empty carbine from the saddle, and knowing that Young Joe couldn't reach him at that distance with a sixgun, Stubby came from behind the distant rock, stumped across an open space and disappeared among the hillside junipers. Fumbling in his pocket, Joe took the thirty-thirty he had found at the rat's nest and shoved it into the chamber.

Stubby was somewhere in that clump of junipers, slowly working across the hillside. Once he got through the clump to the west he would be behind Young Joe, could pick him off easily. For an instant Joe thought of making a dash back across the rock-studded stretch up which he had climbed. Probably Stubby expected him to do just that. But Stubby wouldn't expect to meet him in the clump of junipers.

JOE crouched and crawled toward their shadowy edge. Rising cautiously, he peered round. There was no sign of Stubby in that lace of sunlight and shadow, no faintest sound. Suddenly a bird left a branch and rose in the air, chattering shrilly. His gaze fixed on an opening among the trees directly ahead, Young Joe heard a faint shuffling sound, saw a low branch move. His heart jumped, steadied as the squat, gray-shirted figure of the outlaw appeared.

Young Joe stepped out of the shadow. With Tonto's carbine centered on Stubby's belt buckle, he said quietly, "Here you are, if you're looking for me."

A crafty light gleamed in Stubby's eyes. The kid thought he had him covered. Well, let him think so. The kid's gun was empty. Get him to press the trigger, and give him the laugh. Make him sweat blood. Then let him have it.

Joe saw it all in those narrowed eyes. Stubby would torture a man—kill him slowly, grin and keep throwing lead into him, if he got a chance. Hargis had said he was poison with a gun.

"Got you right where I want you," said the outlaw, his teeth showing under his upper lip. "Tough kid, eh? Tough—but that gun is empty."

"Any bets on it?"

A queer look flashed across Stubby's face. He had emptied the carbine himself, and had put it back in the boot. What did the kid mean? The kid's mouth was set in a grin. Folks said Young Hardesty always went through to the finish. Well, this was the finish.

Young Joe saw it coming, pressed the trigger of Tonto's carbine. The shot crashed through the silence. Stubby wilted down as if struck by lightning. His hands clutching his belly, the outlaw turned and twisted. Young Joe stood over him, watched him bend upward like a spring, then fall back. Joe wiped cold sweat from his face. This squared it for Tonto.

This—and Hargis. Too bad about Hargis. But naturally he would side with the gang. The Texan? He had as much as said he killed Old Man Orpington. Tex was a killer, all right. But it was hard to believe that he shot the old man down. Now if it had been Stubby or Brace. . . . Young Joe turned from the dead man and began to walk down the slope. He cursed himself because he felt sick. The rats all had it coming.

NEARING the camp, Joe thought he heard voices. He had knocked Brace out, hit him hard enough to have cracked his skull. Maybe Brace had

come to, was loco and talking to himself. Slipping past the horses, Joe paused at the edge of the sunlit circle in the junipers. Brace lay on his back, his hands under him. A glance told Joe they were tied. Tonto Charley was on his knees, picking small bright objects from the ground. Too stunned to speak, Young Joe stood still and watched him.

Gold pieces were scattered about the clearing. Tonto's shirt was torn in front. The ends of his belt dangled. He reached for another gold piece, groaned and cursed. He glanced up.

"Come on in and sit down," he said. He picked up still another gold piece. "Have any luck?"

"Plenty," said Joe grimly.

"Heard a shot. Get another rattler?"

"Another rattler."

The Texan lay on his face near the horses. Tonto Charley read the question in Joe's eyes, and nodded. "He's all through. Thought Brace was, likewise, till he started to crawl around looking for his gun. I hogtied him."

"Where's Hargis?"

"In the brush, yonder. Reckon he's tryin' to get to the water hole." Tonto Charley was white, his eye was wild. But he continued to search for the scattered gold pieces.

Joe stepped up to him. "Listen, Charley, quit that. You're plumb crazy."

"Now you're talkin'! But this trip I got a good excuse." Tonto pulled back the edges of his shirt, disclosing a black and blue patch on his belly as big as a saucer. "Slug ripped my money belt all to hell. Came mighty nigh spoilin' me."

Joe stared at the black and blue patch. Stubby's shot had struck the gold packed in the money belt, ripped the belt to rags, scattered the coins, and knocked Tonto out. A soft-nosed slug might do that. A steel-jacketed bullet would have gone clear through.

Young Joe stiffened as he heard a groan. It wasn't Brace. And certainly it wasn't Tonto. Joe crossed the clearing. A few yards from the water hole he came upon Hargis, lying on his back. The young outlaw stared up at him, tried to speak. Joe fetched a canteen, gave him water. Hargis's lips moved.

"Thanks, kid," he whispered. "I guess I've got mine." He paused, his mouth twitching. "It wasn't Tex got Old Man Orpington."

"Stubby?"

"No."

"Well, it don't make no difference now, anyhow," said Joe.

"Not to me." Hargis almost grinned. "You might ask Brace for a light. I'm out of matches."

A spasm of pain shook Hargis. His head fell back.

Hargis had gone out with a joke on his lips. But was it a joke? Young Joe turned and strode back to camp.

Tonto Charley was standing by his horse.

"We better head for the mine," he said. "I ain't good for a hell of a lot. Feel like I been sawed in two."

"How about Brace? Leavin' him tied like that?"

"He's restin' easy. Want me to sit and hold his hand?"

"It's your party," said Joe. "I'm headin' for the Mebbyso."

Skirting the foothills, they dropped down to the desert road. Tonto glanced north and south. As they moved on, Joe said, "Did Brace know you had all that dough on you?"

"Not any. It's Mex gold. I fetched it from Chihuahua."

"Hargis," Young Joe hesitated, "I was talkin' to him just before he cashed in. He said it wasn't Tex got Bud Orpington, or Stubby."

Tonto Charley glanced sharply at Joe. Joe's jaws were clamped tight.

"My mistake," said Tonto, reining round.

"Tonto!" cried Joe. "Hold on!"

But Tonto Charley kept grimly on his way. Sick at heart Joe sat his horse, waiting. He heard a distant shot. A few minutes later Tonto returned, his face a mask.

"You got me wrong," he said as they rode on. "I told Brace what I came back for. I untied him and give him his gun. He didn't give Bud Orpington even that chance."

Young Joe had nothing to say. He was gazing at the distant Pinnacles, thinking of the cartridge he had picked up near the pack rat's nest.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

WE'LL publish a novelette by Georges Surdez soon, and meanwhile we have something from him on different lines. We know no writer who is a keener student of European military campaigns. He dropped in and we questioned him, because he knows the armies and the terrain, about the big war problems on the other side. Then we asked him to put it down for the Camp-Fire comrades, and here it is:

What are England and France doing?

The Poles were crushed by overwhelming forces. Warsaw is taken. Cold facts remain. The Allies lose the official stakes of the present conflict, for a time in any case. What are they going to do about it?

What can they do?

During the First World War, a million men died around Verdun, and when the combatants drew breath, the situation was unchanged, the decision had to come from other factors. The defense of Verdun consisted of a few permanent forts linked by field fortifications, trenches exposed to artillery fire. French and German soldiers to whom I have spoken agreed that many times it was impossible to distinguish a trench among the shell holes. Yet, in the open, they resisted successfully, to a stalemate, with machine guns and grenades.

A steel and cement fort was taken, Douaumont, but only through the neglect of the French and the initiative of an infantry subaltern of the III German Corps' Brandenburgers, Lieutenant Brandis.

The entire Franco-German frontier has been turned into a super, a *kolossal* Verdun, a double-Verdun, where the Maginot Line faces the West Wall. There the defendants may remain under cover, beneath vaults of cement and domes of steel, risking nothing from field artillery and not very much from the heavier calibers. Those lines are fifteen to twenty miles deep, so that a partial success, the occupation of a first fringe of pill-boxes and blockhouses, means little.

A successful attack would have to be sustained for fifteen miles. To win less than half of that distance, over ground defended by open trenches, the German Armies took from February 21st to 25th, 1916. A few months later, the French divisions commanded by General Mangin covered the same ground by surprise attack in a few hours—then encountered a prepared foe and were checked for good.

The equipment for attack remains the same today as then. Save for the tanks—and those have been provided for, obstacles are ready. Formidable against infantry in the open, the tank is not so effective against fortifications. Special cannon have been designed that will blast it to scrap metal. The militarized civilians of the Spanish Loyalists coped rather well with the tanks sent against them, by improvised methods. The tank, like the airplane, is merely another tool of war, not a solution.

Those fortified lines will not crack before tanks, will not be blown up by aviation bombs. They must be attacked, overwhelmed, cleaned out by infantry using grenades and bayonets. That infantry must face shell and machine gun fire from defenders sheltered in cement rooms. Can human material stand the strain of an attack lasting several days at maximum intensity? And what would be the cost in human lives?

Could the attacking nation bear up under the tremendous punishment? In April, 1917,

on the 16th, the French attacked along the Chemin des Dames, against trenches. Seventy-five thousand men had fallen before night, and the Government ordered General Nivelle to stop. Perhaps rightly—it was after that one day that mutinies started in the French Army.

Everyone is speaking of the Burgundian Passage. But its opening is blocked by the end of the West Wall, and even if the French broke through it, their columns would be in a poor position, squeezed against the border of neutral Switzerland, cramped, unable to maneuver. Unless the West Wall was taken for a considerable stretch, the advancing troops would have to pour through a narrow lane, narrow enough to be thoroughly bombed from the air, narrow enough to be closed by a German counter-attack from the flank, which would trap the advanced divisions inside Germany.

The Allies cannot dash themselves against the West Wall recklessly. There must be groping about, for a weaker spot. Careful preparations for war appear to have nullified war in Western Europe.

The Germans will face the same problem, the baffling search for a vent. German soldiers are good soldiers—and the divisions fresh from victory in the East will have a high morale. But morale, discipline, courage, mean nothing against shells and bullets fired from behind steel and cement. With conditions as they are, war on the Western Front reassumes its familiar aspect: A protracted siege of Germany.

A WORD of explanation about "Lost Dory," by Edmund Gilligan. Gilligan works on *Fortune Magazine* and in other hours he writes books. "Lost Dory" is excerpted from his latest. The book in entirety was submitted to us. We enjoyed it very much but did not like it as a serial. There are editorial reasons why some good books do not make good serials—they won't divide nto instalments, for one, and books depending largely on mood and style, as this one does, do not carry over readily from issue to issue. For us the cream of the book was the part we now call "Lost Dory."

Readers who want more will find it in "White Sails Crowding," to be published by Scribner's soon after this issue goes on sale.

SOME notes from H. Bedford-Jones on the way he blended some historical elements in his pioneer fighting story, "Attack at Adobe Walls".

This is a curious example of the nicety with which scattered information can be woven into a fictional account of a real happening. Quana was moved by I-sa-tai to the Adobe Walls attack, probably not sharing the general belief in I-sa-tai's medicine. He was too smart for that, but undoubtedly thought the few men at the hunters' post would go down before his huge party and his Winchesters. The Cheyennes, in another attack upon white men, used a sun-woman as shown here, and I combined the incidents. I-sa-tai kept at safe distance during the fight, but Billy Dixon shot another Indian at longest range, as told. Later, the Indians related that the medicine had been spoiled by the killing of a skunk—and there was everything needed for the translation of fact into fiction, with authentic background.

If ever the "decisive battles" of the continental conquest are written up, Adobe Walls will take one of the tricks. Small as it was, it checked a "buffalo war" that would have swept the whole Southwest, it broke the Comanche power, and marked the end of an era. That is why a seemingly unimportant skirmish bulked so large in the eyes of seventy years ago; they knew what it meant, and the bloody tide that would have surged along the plains had the fight gone the other way.

ANOTHER book comes from our list of *Ask Adventure* experts and writers, and a very timely one—"World in Arms," by Major R. Ernest Dupuy. Major Dupuy wrote, with Major George Fielding Eliot, the book "If War Comes" which caught wide attention, and readers will recall the two-part article, "The Soul of the Soldier," these men wrote for our pages comparing the characteristic fighting abilities, the guts, and brains, of the soldiers of various nationalities.

"World in Arms" is a large book with many maps and listings, in picture form, of army, air and navy strengths. The maps cover both hemispheres and emphasize military geography; they give the natural lines of invasion and defense imposed on each country by its own terrain and position in respect to the sea. Bombing routes, distances and times are here also. It's a first-class book for anyone following the progress of a war anywhere on the globe. The book is pub-

lished by the Military Service Publishing Company, Harrisburg, Pa., and costs two dollars.

WE HAVE an unusual request here that reaches back across a span of years. We'd like Mr. Wilson to let us know just how it comes out. The following letter is from F. L. Wilson, Wilson-Page Company, 1417 Fourth Avenue, Seattle, Washington:

Some years ago I purchased an aneroid barometer in a pawn shop in San Diego, California. Some time afterward I had occasion to take it apart for adjustment and found it to have evidently been a gift to the former owner. Thinking perhaps he may still be living and perhaps now sorry he disposed of it (or it may have been stolen from him!) I thought through *Adventure* it might be possible to find him and let him know where his aneroid may be found.

Inside the case is engraved:—

To
Earnest Marshall
A token of esteem from his
Former confreres at
B. B. & Co's.
1895

If the real Earnest Marshall wishes the instrument returned to him he may communicate with me. Its original value must have been around $60 or $70 at least.

FOR letters we regret we've found no space to publish we express appreciation to:

Ray Clark, Houston, Tex.; J. B. Roerig, Chicago, Ill.; Donald M. Swayne, West Chester, Penna.; K. G. Sublette, Stockton, Cal.; G. H. Wiley, Oakland, Cal.; Edw. S. Deane, San Francisco, Cal.; Douglas A. Philbrook, Newark, N. J.; Arthur MacEwen, Fort Stockton, Tex.; L. M. Rumsey, Jr., St. Louis, Mo.; Lee Howard, Portland, Ore.; Maurice C. Proctor, Boston, Mass.; J. C. McKillip, Charlestown, Ind.; Earl L. Allison, Mount Carmel, Ill.; Toby Knott, Co. "K", 14th Infantry, Fort Davis, C. Z.; C. Houlberg, Istanbul, Turkey; Rupert Harrison, Kohukohu, Hokianga, N. Z.; Edwin R. Albertson, Mount Kisco, N. Y.; J. H. Clark, Birmingham, Ala.; Chambers Kellar, Lead, So. Dakota. Walter A. Noyes, Pedro Miguel, C. Z.; Charles E. Babcock, Vienna, Va.; James R. Forsyth, Portland, Ore.; L. H. Spragle, Cresco, Pa.; Art Simak, Cleveland, O.; E. H. Banta, Cleveland, Texas; Robert G. Cushman, West Redding, Conn.; Arthur B. Cupp, Salinas, Calif.; Geo. E. Cope, Macon, Ill.

IT'S anybody's guess what the state of warfare will be when this issue goes on sale November 10, because we are now writing on October 10, but at the moment more language flies than bullets. The language in the daily press looks like a backlash on a reel. When they taught language to us in school, it seemed a rather simple subject—it ran in a fairly direct way from the tip of the rod to the hook. Now, never able to digest the "war of pacification" in China, we are confronted with "peace offensive." Where once there was a thing called a "war panic," now the market turns pale and shudders at a "peace scare." We don't ever expect to see the day when a diplomat or statesman rises to say, "We're fighting because we're mad and want to fight," and sits down.

A thinking man named Thurman Arnold once pointed out to a student group the inscription over the portals of the New York post office: "Neither rain nor snow, nor heat nor gloom of night, stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

There's language for you—soaring language. It brings a tear to the eye, a lump in the throat—it can make the heart burst with a cheer.

"Exactly all that it means," said Arnold, "is: We deliver the mail even in winter."

But that sentence, "We deliver the mail even in winter," would look like hell up there over the fine columns of the New York post office. In public life, the blunt thing you mean can't be the thing you say, or dignity's suspenders will slip.

All the recent wars have come out wrong. We wanted to see the Chinese lick the Japs, we wanted the Ethiopians to drive out the Italians, we hoped the Loyalists would win in Spain because the Germans and Italians were using them for bombing practice. We wanted the German war machine to bog down in mud, and the Poles to rout the Germans. It has been a baffling and disappointing state of affairs for an editorial staff that uses a pencil when things go sour, and makes the writers end the battles the way they ought to end.

Our favorite real wars are the ones

this country fought on its own land and in its own breeches. They all came out right. They settled things worth fighting for, and the things didn't get unsettled again as soon as our backs were turned. Compared with our history up to the World War, the doings on the other side in the last few centuries call to mind our old mountain feud of the Hatfields and the McCoys, that broke out again every time the baby grew old enough to chew tobacco and tote pap's rifle. We'd like to see some student of international affairs dig into the history of the Hatfields and McCoys and tell us what finally ended the shooting. Did they all get killed or did they all move away? Or did they steal so many brides from each other that eventually the boys were all named Hat McCoy or Mac Hatfield and could no longer line up their teams?

The World War has us puzzled. We had to go into it, and it had to be fought to a finish. All this was clear at the time, and the anger and enthusiasm were there to do it. And yet there's mighty little satisfaction in it as a part of our history. The same war is being fought again, and our only visible results from the more-or-less permanent European scrap, the last time we entered it, seem to have been some veterans' hospitals and the need of paying a series of bonuses.

We had lunch the other day with John W. as we do every three or four months. John grew up on an Ohio farm, went into the World War with an Ohio regiment as a private, came out of it an officer, and is now a major in the reserve. His job is a complex one of routing oil shipments and tankers round the world and his desk is full of telephones, but John has a knack of not letting the city rush and the latest headlines rattle his thinking. He's still as calm as a man working round a corncrib. John has a cabin in the Jersey hills, where he likes to shoot a target with a modern rifle and one with a muzzle-loading squirrel gun.

The highlight of his experience in the war was the first day his regiment went into action. John and a friend from his town were together in a place where the air was very thick with the attention of a machine gun turned their way. They pitched into a shell-hole. The shell-hole had been in use as a German latrine. John and his friend crouched there with the bullets flying overhead and the friend said:

"Gosh, if our girls could see their heroes now!"

John is a Democrat, a steadfast and cussing Democrat. He was in Ohio county politics for a while when he was a school principal, and one day asked the old janitor, a veteran of the Union Army, why he always voted Republican no matter who was on the ticket.

"Republican! Why wouldn't I vote Republican!" shouted the old fellow. "I was in the Union Army four years, and every Reb that took a shot at me was a Democrat!"

"The man I'd like to vote for next," said John, the other day, "will be an American of the hardboiled practical type that built this country, not the far-seeing type to rebuild it.

"Whoever he is, he might not have been too good for us up to now, I admit—he may be the kind to snort at social changes, and we needed some of them to offset the depression. But we're in a bigger crisis now, and in a crisis our history shows there's never been a better covering for the seat of our seat," says John, "that homespun. I hope he'll come of stock that fitted hickory into axes, cleared fields and built two-hole privies and had womenfolk that planted hollyhocks or sunflowers around them. If he does, and he's close enough to his background, he won't worry too much about the international theories of a war in Europe. Before he gets into it, he'll want to sit down and figure what good that is going to do for the deer hunting in his neck of the woods."

But, then, John is a man who, despite twenty years of working in New York, still believes our national drink doesn't come in an imported bottle. It's hard cider.

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

SHOOTING within the law.

Request:—I wish first to thank you for the information you furnished me some time ago. It was most complete, and it helped me out a lot.

At that time I wrote you that I had just purchased a new Magnum .357 with an eight and a quarter inch barrel. I find it a little heavy in front and have been thinking about having a folding stock attached to it.

Now, is it lawful to have such a gun with a folding stock? I have been told that it is not lawful and that it makes it too much like a machine gun.

(Our Chief of Police furnished me with a side-arm permit so that's okay.)

If it is lawful to have a folding stock on my .357 Magnum, could you then advise me what stock would be the best and a good place to have it attached? I would like to have it arranged so I could detach the stock. I have a really good gun here and wish to give it the best of care.

—H. C. Klinge, Reedsport, Ore.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—The application of a stock to a handgun of any sort is illegal, as this makes the weapon into a sawed-off shotgun, according to the Federal measure.

While I cannot agree with the Federal officials in all the provisions of the measure, still it's the law, and must be observed. To tell the truth, I have in past years, while it was still legal, fitted a stock to .22 Colt and Smith & Wesson revolvers, and found I got no better shooting than if I had held the weapon with both hands, with my arms extended.

I believe you will do well to practice two-handed shooting with your .357 Magnum, and that you will find it practically equaling a carbine for ordinary use at medium ranges. I had a postcard from Colonel Douglas B. Wesson, my friend and the genius behind the .357 Magnum, just last week, in which he announced the killing of two big walruses in Bering Sea with the .357. You know he killed a grizzly in B. C. last Fall with the same revolver, just like your own, with one shot at a hundred and twenty paces.

If you really must have a short shoulder gun, I recommend a Winchester Model 1892 carbine, in .32 caliber, with the buttstock bored out a bit to lighten it, and used with the .32-20 HiSpeed loads. And it won't weigh much more than your Magnum, either, although a bit longer.

GETTING into the run.

Request:—I'd be interested in learning who are the sponsors of the marathon and cross-country runs held annually in this country? Who is eligible to enter? What time of the year do these events take place and where are they held?

—Charles Kulhanek, Apple Springs, Tex.

Reply by Mr. Jackson Scholz:—I'm afraid I can't give you a complete list of the cross-country and marathon runs held each year in this country, but I am sure that you can obtain this information from the Amateur Athletic Union, Woolworth Building, New York City.

If you are interested in competing in any of these races, the A.A.U. can tell you when and where they will be held, and how to obtain entry blanks.

FROM the Ohio to the Amazon.

Request:—My wife and I are contemplating a vacation trip next summer on a freighter that will call at several North Brazil ports

and then proceed up the Amazon River to Manaos.

I would like to have some further information relative to this country. Do you believe that a trip at that time of year would be enjoyable? Could you give me any information relative to the heat, rains, mosquitoes, health conditions, tornado season, etc., that might be of value to me?

I am familiar with freighter travel, having been to Porto Rico and the Dominican Republic last summer.

I would appreciate any information and advice that you could give me.

—H. F. S., Cleveland, Ohio

Reply by Dr. Paul V. Shaw:—Yes, June and July would be a good time to go up the Amazon. There is not so much rain then. It is hot during the day but the heat is not unbearable by any means. Health conditions are good but it is safer to drink only bottled water, eat sparingly of fresh meat and use a mosquito net at night. Some friends of ours took a large container of water with them on the Amazon trip, having it filled from time to time. Many people are afraid to eat raw vegetables, such as lettuce and tomatoes, and people who suffer when they cannot get quantities of fruit and vegetables take fruit and canned goods with them on the Amazon trip. Your boat may have good food, though.

Most people enjoy this trip immensely although many prefer to fly one way and go by boat the other. It might get a bit tiresome and monotonous. Naturally a trip like this takes some adaptation on the part of the traveler.

CAN any reader help?

Request:—Can you direct me where to look for information on the following:—

Whistling technique—imitation of birdsong.
Mimicry—imitation of animal voices.
Polyphony—imitation of mechanical sounds.
Fashioning, construction and manipulation of devices for imitating animal voices, bird song, mechanical sounds — also manufacturers of such devices.

I wish to thank you for any information that you may care to give me through this medium.

—Philip van Clespe, Curator
Mission San Antonio, Jolon, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—You have a most fascinating and so far as I know, unique specialty in your search for data about mimicry, polyphony, ventriloquism in nature, and the instruments used therein.

I have seen no books and even no articles devoted to calling animals, yet there are thousands of paragraphs scattered through the literature of sport, nature, travel, exploration.

Probably you have already covered the full scope of any suggestions I could make, but at the risk of telling you what you already know, may I mention these sources:

Museum of Natural History, New York, N. Y.

Bureau of Ethnology, Washington, D. C. (Smithsonian Institute).

Forest & Stream (1874-1900).

Field and Stream.

American Field.

Outing Magazine.

London Field, London, England, has covered in its many years calling feats of many savage peoples, as well as hunters.

A paragraph in *Ashe's Travels in America* contains the best description I ever read of the Upper Ohio Valley woodsmen in mimicry of wild life. Ashe went down the Mississippi about 1804, in a boat—a fine description of the trip. I think you can borrow a copy (it's early American) through a library. The New Orleans library staff is particularly courteous and painstaking for researchers, helpful and friendly.

At one time contests were held, I believe at Corbin, Knox Co., Kentucky, where all the imitators of wildlife songs and cries met to determine the champions of the Frontier. The Historical Society of Kentucky would almost surely have something about these contests. I believe that those who used no instruments, and those who used mechanical assistance were differentiated.

Probably you have found in your researches that descriptions of the sounds, words, paragraphs, sentences, are of help; but writers differ greatly in their ability to get down the phonetics. The best sources of the descriptions of sounds of birds are probably in the birdbooks which appeared during the 'Nineties and early 1900s—Mabel Osgood Wright, Florence Merriam Bailey, Frank M. Chapman, John Burroughs (better at scenes than sounds, I think); and I think that your best authority would be Ernest Thomson Seton. His scope on wildlife has seldom been equaled, if ever. And in his books are many references to sounds.

Calls are, of course, of many types. Wild animals do not come necessarily to sounds they *know*, but to strange sounds. Thus a bell rung at intervals "draws" deer; foxes have curiosity, so have coyotes; I've known a cat to scatter hayseed on snow and then lurk in ambush to catch snowbirds (juncos) that came to the bait; and foxes comes to imitations of the "squeaks" of mice, squirrels. Foxes have been known to toll ducks by

queer antics on the shore. Cougars in the Argentine lie on their back and stick their paws up, first one, then another, till guanaco come in jump-and-catch range. Then there is the beating of pans to drive swarms of bees to rest. "Talking down" an angry cow or bull is a Texas feat of certain cowboys.

The professional wildcrafter magazines carry advertisements of crow, turkey, duck, and other calls. They would know, in Q&A departments, about regional, species and seasonal calls.

I believe that if you addressed the Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., among their scientists, trappers and poisoners are specialists who could give you a great deal of information, as to current practice.

Chief Game Overseer, Toronto, Canada, will put you in touch with moose callers, guides chiefly, (Ontario province), and I believe you would find in the Canadian studies of natural history—reports—some data of interest.

Natural History Magazine, 77th St. Central Park, New York, N. Y.—American Museum of Natural History publication.

Nature Magazine, 1214 16th St., Washington, D. C.—one of the chief sources of scientific lore, because of the long list of scientists.

Wouldn't it pay you to consult Patent Office, Washington, D. C., for list of calls patented?

Scientific American, 24 W. 40th St., New York, N. Y., has had articles within your scope. Also Popular Mechanics, Chicago, Ill., (illustrated).

The Beaver, Winnipeg, Canada—the Hudson's Bay Co., organ, may have materials.

I can give you only suggestions—sources. The only direct reference I can give is from Camp Life and the Tricks of Trapping, by W. H. Gibson, (Harper & Bros.). Which I copy, enclosed.

MAKING the iron hot.

Request:—I own a 1937 Indian "Y" Chief with which I am having a certain amount of trouble.

First of all I might as well tell you I have a pretty good motor. It's just about loose enough now to turn over pretty well. I have no special parts except the heads which I shaved myself on a lathe. I had no face plate so I put each head in a big chuck, spent about 1½ hours trueing it and took off sixty thousandths inches. That snapped it up pretty much but it might stand more off. What do you think?

I grind the valves and put in rings pretty frequently (four sets of rings besides originals in eight months) but still have original pistons with about seventeen or eighteen thousandths clearance. (New pistons cost money). I pack a 24 tooth trans. sprocket with which in a short distance I can wind up to about 95 mph. (stopwatch). I can just barely pack a 25 tooth sprocket with which I can wind up to 100 mph., but it takes about three and a half miles of straightaway to do it.

So you can see there is plenty this iron needs. I have access to a good machine shop in which I do most of my work. I really want acceleration, lugging power, and speed. Maybe a good set of cams might help solve this problem. If you could give me some data on building up and grinding cams for different uses I would appreciate it immensely.

Also I have in mind enlarging and polishing my ports. With that done I may be able to use a larger Venturi in my pot. Where could I get one?

You've most probably heard this one many times before, but I have clutch trouble! The darn thing won't free when the motorcycle is at a standstill, no matter how I cuss and work and adjust it. Also I have trouble shifting while moving. In a T. T. race or Hare and Hound Chase, when it becomes necessary to shift from high to second, I invariably miss second and go into neutral. The gear shift lever and rod are free, but the trouble seems to be in the shifting fork in the transmission cover, or in the transmission itself. Any suggestions on this would be welcomed.

Also I can't get the correct gear ratio for my Chief in stock hill climbs. My Sport Scout was a cinch. It was a 1937 Mag. job, but I didn't like the way it handled on the road. So like a dummy I traded it off for this Chief which feels like a truck. In some climbs they don't allow chains so I gear it as high as possible, but I still can't keep it from spinning the wheel.

Another thing, she handles rather badly on a close, dirt course as in a T. T. The front wheel slides easily in a corner and when I crack it to bring the back wheel around the whole thing slides from under me. With the Sport Scout you can slide both wheels around a corner and pick it up easily without falling. Are there any changes I could make to the frame and forks which would still be within the A.M.A. class C regulations?

As you know the standard Goodyear and Firestone tires haven't a very good tread for traction. Where can I get a tire that would have good traction and yet be okay by A.M.A.?

I have the book "Speed And How to Obtain It." But this has all to do with foreign motors and contains very little information which can be used on American motors, es-

pecially big flat heads. Where can I get a book on tuning our motors?

I spent a lot of time lately making a rig for towing my motor behind a car. This outfit fastens on the back bumper. You take out the front wheel of the cycle, put the end of the forks in this rig, put the axle through and you tow your iron along, if it doesn't fall off. Possibly you've seen something like this. My arrangement isn't so hot, because the cycle doesn't "trail". Maybe you can give me some pointers on making a good tow-hitch.

—Ed Hawtrey, Sacramento, Calif.

Reply by Mr. C. M. Dodge:—Sorry for the slight delay in answering your letter, but you'll have to admit it was quite a large order. It called for a bit of researching and checking with the boys both here and at the factory in order to get all the answers to your questions from experts who are racing and hill climbing themselves, rather than out of text books.

I now have all the necessary information at hand to answer your letter in full however, and will take your questions one at a time in the same order you asked them.

In shaving off the underside of your heads, the 60/1000th's you've taken off is about the limit. On a Sport Scout the limit recommended by the factory is 3/64th's of an inch, and on a Chief no more than 1/16th inches. As a matter of fact if you go over 3/32nds on Chief heads you'll have to use 2 CC's of Benzol with each gallon of gas to keep from burning out the pistons. Also that will have stepped up your compression to the actual danger point. So don't try to pull off any more from your heads.

Another thing: with heads down so close as yours, you'll have to clean carbon quite often. The least film of carbon on top of your pistons will cause a sharp knock of course, and in order not to break them you'll want to remove heads and clean carbon the minute this occurs.

Now as to your pistons: you'll have to get yourself a new set. The reason you have to replace rings so frequently is the enormous clearance you're running between piston and cylinder walls—in fact it's almost unbelievable. No wonder you're burning out rings as fast as you put them in—17 or 18 thousandths clearance is unheard of and absurd. Do you realize that top clearance allowed on this fit is *four thousandths?* It is a mystery you get the speed and pep that you do. All your power is now blowing by with such sloppy fitting pistons, burning out your rings and wasting your speed.

You understand that alloy pistons are not absolutely a perfect circle. The so-called "cam ground" pistons are slightly oval shaped, with the piston or wrist pin running through the longer dimension. The T slot grinding al-

lows for expansion in such a way that, in fitting new pistons to your cylinders, insert a *four thousandths* gauge beside the piston at the edge of the circle away from the pin: that is, do the gauge fitting at a point as far away from the two ends of the wrist pin as possible. Then when the piston is warmed up and expands, a perfect circle is formed, and you have a snug, tight fit though not too tight. Then you'll save a maximum of your power, and not burn out your new rings every time you crack it open.

Incidentally in fitting your rings on this motor with your new pistons, have no more than 15 to 20 thousandths opening at the ring gap, cold fit. Then ring expansion will close it as it should be, and you'll use all the power of the explosion without blowing it by the way you're doing now.

So far as your sprockets are concerned, this is a matter which cannot be decided anywhere but at the foot of the hill you are trying to climb. This is absolutely a cut and try method, as any professional hill climber will tell you. All you can keep in mind before starting to experiment with gears is to *so gear it that you come nearest to not spinning*—and that will be right for that particular hill. Every hill is different, and what may be perfect for one grade will be no good whatever for the next.

There is no doubt a good set of speed cams (or "high lift" cams as they are called) would help you get the speed and lugging power you mention. But let me point out that if you start trying to grind these cams yourself you'll get into more expense and time wasted than it could possibly be worth to you. The factory has, after all, spent a good many years perfecting these cams with all the years of testing and experimentation back of them, and you'll be money in pocket if you send your motor number to the factory and buy a set of high lift cams direct. They sell for around $13.00. First however take care of your new pistons and see what happens.

New pistons cost money as you say—but they don't cause you to keep putting in new rings every few minutes the way you're having to do now; they'll save you money in the end, beside giving you a hell of a lot more speed and pep.

Enlarging and polishing your ports is okay, and while you're about it polish your heads on the inside also. The smoother mirror effect there the better. And you can then use a larger Venturi on your pot, which you can get from the factory.

Your clutch trouble versus transmission is not hard to find and cure. Here's what you do first: drain all the oil out of the transmission, fill it with kerosene, run the motor *slowly* for *about one minute*. Then drain this oil all out, refill with a good grade of SAE 30, and you'll find a great difference.

If this doesn't cure it, then take your clutch down, lay each plate on a piece of plate glass in order to secure a perfectly flat surface, and rough it up with emery cloth. You'll notice on these plates probably a small ridge around the edge: when the plates are compressed tightly the oil can't get inside these ridges, and when you've roughed the plates down and are ready to put them back, take out *three* clutch springs. No more than three, and take these out from the circle in such a way of course that they are spaced around the circle well apart. Then have ¾ inches play on the clutch pedal before she takes hold. Removing these clutch springs will relieve some tension, yet you'll have enough left so there'll be no slippage.

So far as the handling qualities of the Sport Scout against your present Chief goes, you'll simply have to learn to ride the Chief, that's all. No Chief can be made to handle like a Scout, any more than a single would handle like a four: in your TT racing, practice will acquaint you with the best way of making the turns, and practice only.

The tires you need are not stock Goodyear or Firestone such as are used for the road, but are called "studded" tires. They are procurable from any English dealer, or probably from Floyd Climber, 434 West Pico Street, Los Angeles. Write him and mention my name: he'll be glad to tell you what he's got. And these studded large-grip tires are now okayed by the A.M.A. for competition.

The troubles you have with your present towing arrangement are due to the fact that you have your front forks rigid on the rear of the car. The motorcycle is jogging up and down, and with all that leverage the front fork will have to snap eventually at the head.

The answer is simple: just hook up your attachment at the axle where the front hub fastens on so it is flexible, and can bob up and down with road unevenness: then tie a rope from each end of handle bar to the corners of the bumper at the outside, to keep it well erect so it won't tend to wobble. In this way it will ride anywhere over any kind of rough going, and you won't have any trouble with damage to front ends.

I'd suggest you write to *The Motor-Cyclist at 706 Union League Bldg., Los Angeles* and send 75c for their *Uncle Frank's Question and Answer Book.*

Send two bits to the *Indian Motorcycle Company, Springfield, Mass.*, for a complete instruction and maintenance book on your motor, giving them your motor number. Then you'll have something.

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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.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon.)*

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 304 W. Cook Av., Libertyville, Ill.

Coins: *and Medals*—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait; camping outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, (Ozark Ripley), care of *Adventure.*

Fishing: *salt water, bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure.*

Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

Globe-trotting and vagabonding—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

Health Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping, and polo; the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping — MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 174 Lyman Ave., Burlington, Vt.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Av., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs— ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec, Can.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, New York City.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Forestry: *in the United States, national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, 1091 Springdale Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

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Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *anywhere in No. America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 11628¾ Mayfield Ave., West Los Angeles, Calif.

The Merchant Marine. GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3320 Kossuth Ave., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure.*

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

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Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—MAJOR GLEN R. TOWNSEND, care of *Adventure.*

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, 1296 E. Hastings, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, 81 Church St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands — BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure.*

★**New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands** — WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Yatina," 3 Lucknow St., Willoughby, N. S. W.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Hawaii Equal Rights Comm., Honolulu, Hawaii.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 3 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *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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Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, care of *Adventure.*

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia.*—G. I. COLBURN, care of *Adventure.*

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure.*

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Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, Severna Park, Md.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec.*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 24 Plessis St., Quebec, Canada. **2** ★*Height of Land Region, Northern Ontario and Northern Quebec, Southeastern Ungava and Keewatin.*—S. E. SANGSTER, care of *Adventure.* **3** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario.*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate,* Trenton, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks, Camping.*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 1163 Victoria Rd., Walkerville, Ont., Canada. **5** *Lake of Woods Region.*—R. F. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune,* Minneapolis, Minn. **6** *Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta.*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **7** *Northern Saskatchewan, Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 131 9th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure.* **2** *New Mexico (Indians, etc.)*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Wyoming and Colorado, Homesteading, etc.*—E. P. WELLS, Box 203, Prineville, Oregon. **5** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies* — FRED W. EGELSTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **6** *Idaho and environs.*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Peoria, Ill. **7** *Arizona, Utah.*—C. C. ANDERSON, Continental Bldg., Salt Lake City, Utah. **8** *Texas, Oklahoma.*—J. W. WHITAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 1 *Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and border waters; touring, fishing.*—R. P. LINCOLN, care of *The Minneapolis Tribune,* Minneapolis, Minn. **2** *Missouri, Arkansas, Missouri River up to Sioux City, Ozarks, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Mississippi and Lake Michigan.*— JOHN B. THOMPSON, care *Adventure.* **4** *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River.*— GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Pa. **5** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom.*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 40 Chapel St., Woodmont, 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.

LOST TRAILS

(Continued from page 4)

Post of this country-wide organization nearest their respective homes. John G. Foley, Adjutant, Veterans A.E.F. Siberia, Armory Bd., Municipal Bldg., N. Y. City.

Chess Tripp or Swede write William A. West, at Morenci, Arizona. Last heard of in Toole, Utah, in 1929.

Any information wanted as to the whereabouts of Frank Muzyka, last heard of in Victoria, B.C., in 1928; age now 36. Edward Muzyka, Krasne, Sask., Canada.

Ben Davis, last heard from at Watsonville, Calif., about 23 years ago. Word wanted by his sister, Mrs. Hattie Patterson, Box 819, Shafter, Calif.

"Comrades who served in the Medical Detachment, Adrian Barracks Casual Camp, Nevers, France, from July 1918 to February 1919, especially Pvt. Keisman, pharmacist, and Sgt. Truesdale, please communicate with Ex-Sgt. A. B. Knox, Box 1341, Oklahoma City, Okla."

Lee Gordon—You wrote to me while I was in the East, during 1927 to 1933. Where are you now? Frank Cruse—You painted in my studio while I lived back East, then left for the Army, about 1933 or '34. Write to me. Address Joseph M. Portal, Route 3, Box 552, Salem, Oregon.

Monico Colón, a Puerto Rican, living in New York in 1932. Write Florencio Colón Colón, P. O. Box 423, Utuado, P. R.

Wanted—information of one named Robert Dickson Hopkins. Last heard of in Southern Florida. He followed the chemistry line. About 52 years of age. He lived at 2100 Braddock Ave., Swissvale, Penna. Any one knowing his whereabouts please notify the above address or A. L. Lee, 575 Ardmore Blvd., Wilkinsburg, Penna.

Wanted—address of Pearl Halligan West or children, Leo, Charles, George or Iona. Also Jessie or Hugh Cooper. All lived in Omaha, Neb., 1922, formerly of Fort Dodge, Iowa. Write to Blanche Mathis, 715-10th Ave., Seattle, Wash.

Does any reader know the present address, or, if dead, time and place of death, of Mr. Reese, a civil engineer (surveyor) on the Shawmac Railroad from Richburg to Olean and Buffalo, New York, in 1901? He may have been employed later, on other branches of the New York Central Railroad. Arthur J. Bernstein, 147-7th Ave., New York City.

John Hall, formerly of Manning Ave., Toronto. Last heard of in Los Angeles. Have important news to communicate. Old friend would appreciate present address. Chas. A. Cronin, 622 Euclid Ave., Toronto, Ontario.

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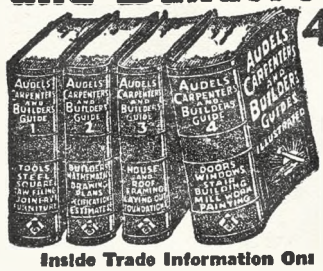

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