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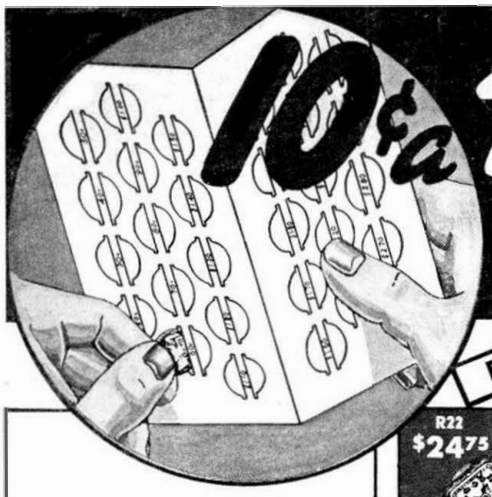

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T67 – Ladies' GRUEN. 15 J. 10K yel. rolled gold plate. $29.75
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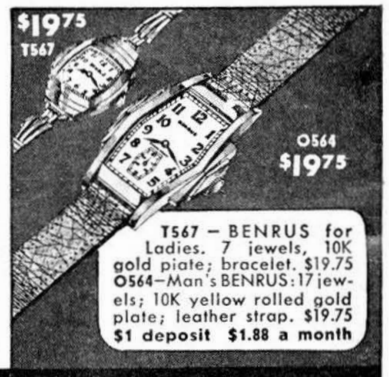

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National Radio Institute
Established 25 Years

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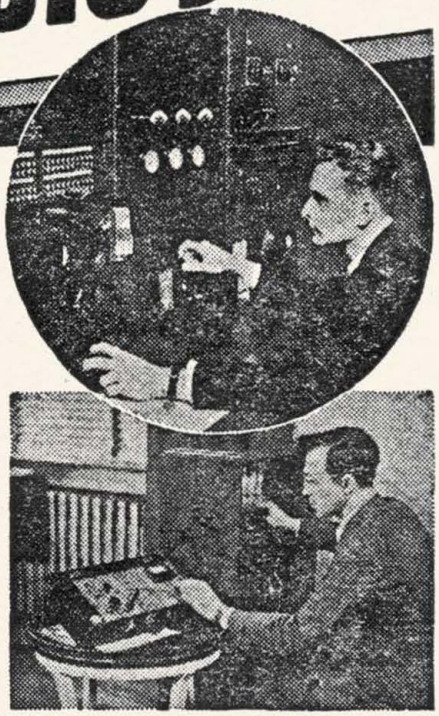
to PROVE I can Train You at Home in Spare Time for

GOOD RADIO JOBS



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JANUARY ISSUE ON SALE DECEMBER 10TH

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 106. No. 2 for December, 1941 Best of New Stories

Cover by Hubert Rogers
Headings by Gordon Grant, Lynn Bogue Hunt, Hamilton Greene, I. B. Hazelton, and Peter Stevens.
Kenneth S. White, Editor

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"I WAS BOUND AND GAGGED AND LEFT TO DIE!"

A true experience of JOSEPH J. KARES, *Charlestown, Boston, Mass.*

"THUGS HELD ME UP one bitterly cold night as I left our docked lumber ship," writes Radio Operator Kares. "After taking what cash I had, they left me bound and gagged in an inky dark alley between great piles of stacked lumber.

"FURIOUS STRUGGLING only tightened my bonds. My arms and legs grew numb with cold. My plight was desperate! Then, remembering my flashlight, I managed to reach it . . . started flashing SOS against the top of the lumber.

"FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR I kept signaling. Half dead with cold . . . about to give up hope . . . I was at last rescued by two officers from my ship. If it hadn't been for those dependable 'Eveready' *fresh* DATED batteries I would have been a goner.

(*Signed*) Joseph J. Kares"

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ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE, obviously, for *Ask Adventure* to retain experts in all fields of activity. A complete corps of authorities to reply to all the queries and requests for information which reach us would necessitate a staff so large that merely listing their names and special knowledge would leave room for nothing else in the magazine. However, when questions come to us and we have no specific expert into whose province they seem to fall, we do the best we can in finding someone to answer them accurately and intelligently. The letters which follow, together with the replies, were all interesting, we felt, and we were delighted that men were available to supply the information sought.

Request:—Can you tell me (1) The equipment of the Chasseurs Alpins around Narvik? Also the number of men and non-coms under a Chasseur lieutenant? (2) The number of men and officers under a captain in the Foreign Legion and their equipment and uniforms in France during '39 and '40? (3) The command in men and guns of a lieutenant in the field artillery? Also the commands in a field artillery division in the French army from a general down? (I read about a 60-gun outfit from Marseilles under a general). (4) The make-up of a Colonial division (Moroccans) in respect to officers, men, uniforms, equipment and habits or superstitions of Moslem troops in the field in respect to religion.

Lavern Tayler,
133 King St.,
Lacrosse, Wisc.

Reply by Georges Surdez:—(1) The equipment of the Chasseurs Alpins who served in Norway was in general the same as that used in mountain operations, in the Alps, the Vosges, etc. A sort of goatskin jacket, green or khaki, was issued to some troops of the Expedition, and according to photographs, the Chasseurs drew some. Naturally, the Chasseurs had their skis and were provided with glasses against the snow-glare.

You probably know that the Chasseurs (both Foot and Alpine) are not divided into regiments, their unit being the battalion. When three battalions are gathered into a single tactical unit, that unit is called a demi-brigade, not a regiment. And in the Chasseurs, the rank insignia is not gold braid, as in the Line Infantry, but silver braid. Many battalions of Chasseurs still wore the dark blue trousers of the Corps, although capote or tunic was khaki as for the balance of the French Army.

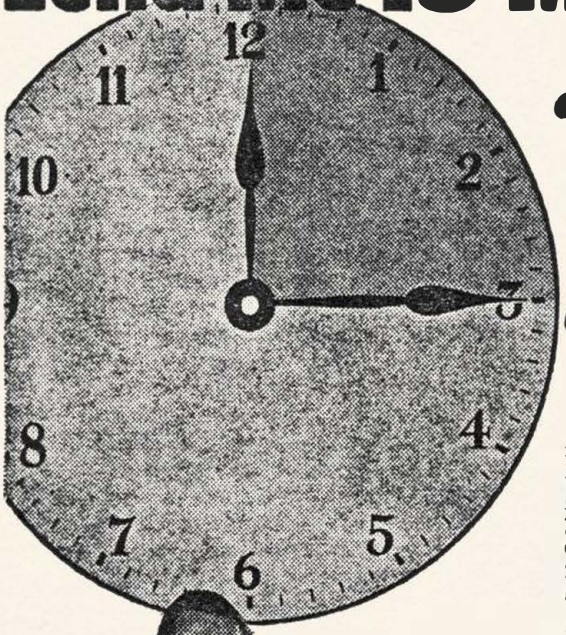
Concerning the number of men commanded by a Lieutenant of Chasseurs, I presume that you mean a lieutenant in an ordinary company, what is called *Compagnie de Fusiliers-Voltigeurs.* Such a company comprises one section of command, usually under a senior non-com *(Adjudant)* and four sections of combat groups, in war time. Each section comprises 1 section-commander, 1 non-com as his aide, 1 corporal of rifle-grenadiers, 1 signalman, 1 observer, and 3 combat groups. Each combat group comprises: 1 sergeant, 1 corporal as his aide, 1 automatic rifle shooter *(tireur)* 3 feeders, guys who tote the ammunition for the automatic *(pourvoyeurs)*, 3 riflemen, with rifle and bayonet *(voltigeurs)*, and 1 rifle grenadier *(Grenadier V. B.)*. Regulations state: "In time of war, three sections are commanded by officers, the fourth by a senior-non-com *(adjudant-chef* or *adjudant)* or by a cadet officer *(aspirant)*.

That means that a lieutenant in action leads four non-coms and thirty men, according to strict rule. But even the Regulations have forseen that—to quote: "In regulations, units are supposed to be complete, that is to have the necessary resources to constitute in each company 4 sections of 3 groups each. In numerous circumstances in time of war, this cannot be." And the regulations go on to indicate the formation of smaller com-

(Continued on page 8)

Lend Me 15 Minutes A Day

..and I'll prove I can make you a NEW MAN



I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them.

I don't care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

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In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that *"Dynamic Tension"* can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you inside, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

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Among all the physical instructors and "conditioners of men" ONLY ONE NAME STANDS OUT. That name is Charles Atlas!

In every part of the country Charles Atlas is recognized as "America's Greatest Builder of Men." Almost two million men have written to him. Thousands upon thousands have put their physical development into his capable hands!

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Actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

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I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

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(Continued from page 6)

panies or larger ones, as required. Also, as the captain, while actively commanding one of the sections commands also the whole, a lieutenant commands over another lieutenant his junior in promotion, over a section piloted by a non-com or a cadet officer.

(2) Concerning the number of men under a captain in the French Foreign Legion in war time: Again, we presume in an ordinary rifle company, under ordinary circumstances. We have therefore four sections of combat groups and the section of command, which divides into 12 signalers etc. and 11 to 14 odd chaps for cooks, barber, tailor, transports, etc., say one hundred and forty men and ten to twelve non-coms. But again, that depends upon circumstances. I have seen companies of Legion two hundred and over in strength, when, for instance, necessity made a section of 'engines' (Stokes Mortar & 37mm cannon etc.) a part of the company.

Save for slight differences in badges and emblems, the equipment and uniforms of the French Foreign Legion in 1940 were those of the Line Infantry.

(3) Concerning the command of a Lieutenant of Field Artillery: The battery of field artillery (75mm) had a captain commanding, one lieutenant, 1 regular sub-lieutenant or reserve lieutenant. As a battery counts four guns, one can figure two guns as one lieutenant's special assignment, which means perhaps fifty men, to which must be added the men indirectly contributing to the detachment of two guns, smiths, saddlers, etc.

While the French Artillery was divided into regiments for administration purposes, the real tactical unit was 'the group' which comprised three batteries of four guns each, or twelve guns. This was commanded by a major or a lieutenant-colonel. Those groups were distributed as to need—a colonel might have charge of two or three groups. Your information about the general commanding a sixty-guns outfit, five groups, is therefore accurate. The ranks in the French Artillery were the same as in the cavalry—General, Colonel, Lt. Col., Major, Captain, Lieutenant, Second-Lieutenant—then the non-coms: *Adjudant-Chef, Adjudant, Marechal des logis-chef, Marechal des logis, brigadier,* which probably can be translated as Battery-Sergeant-Major, Sergeant-Major, Senior-Sergeant, Sergeant, and corporal—or Bombardier, to be British.

(4) A Moroccan Colonial Division operating in Europe would have two brigades of infantry (four regiments of three battalions each) or between ten and twelve thousand—a group or two of artillery, some squadrons of cavalry, and proportionate numbers of other branches. About fifteen thousand men altogether.

It is impossible, except for the infantry, to give absolutely accurate inforfation as the composition of a division. The elements shifted constantly.

There were floating formations, such as the *Groupes de Reconnaissance,* for example, which were made up of detached elements from various units not in the Division at all. To a division might be added for an emergency the Army Corps' Group of Light Armored Combat Cars. A regiment of motorized Dragoons, for instance *(Dragons portes)* might supply detachments to several *Groupes de Reconnaissance.* The system is quite simple, once you get the hang of it, but horribly difficult to make clear.

Again save for details of badges and numerals, the wearing of the turban instead of the kepi as a rest headgear, the uniforms of the Moroccan Infantry were similar to those of the Line Infantry. The immense majority of the officers and the great majority of the non-coms were Frenchmen. The equipment and organization were identical.

As to the peculiar superstitions and peculiar customs of the native Moroccans, a series of huge volumes would be needed. While it is well known to religious leaders of Islam, and deplored by them, that the Moslem in European service is not very religious, the immense majority of the natives observe the ritual of their creed outwardly. They'll drink and they'll gamble, they'll frequent brothels when such establishments are available and aspire to finding them when not, but they'll pray and avoid pork etc. There is no wine issue to the Moroccans, they get an extra ration of sugar (and tea, in some cases) in compensation for the pint of wine.

I believe that the chief peculiarity of the Moroccan soldier is that they do not fight for Morocco, for France, for Democracy, for the Freedom of the Seas, or anything as indefinite as those. They fight for their officers. A captain whom they dislike will have a worthless company. But when they like their chiefs, and most often they do, they are superb warriors.

(Continued on page 119)

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You will be trained on actual equipment and machinery and because of our method of training, you **don't need previous experience or a lot of education.** Many of my successful graduates never even completed Grammar School.

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You can get this training **first** — then **pay for it later in easy monthly payments,** starting **60 days** after your 90 days training period is over — **then you have 12 months** to complete your payments.

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If you need **part time work** to help out with expenses while training in my shops, my employment department will give you their assistance to help you get it. Then after graduation this department will give you valuable **lifetime employment service.**

Send the coupon today for all details. When I get it I'll send you my big free book containing dozens of pictures of students at work in my shops. I'll also tell you about my **"Pay After Graduation" Plan,** extra **4 weeks Radio Course** and how many **earn while learning** and how we help our students **after graduation. Fill in, clip coupon, mail today for your start toward a brighter future.**

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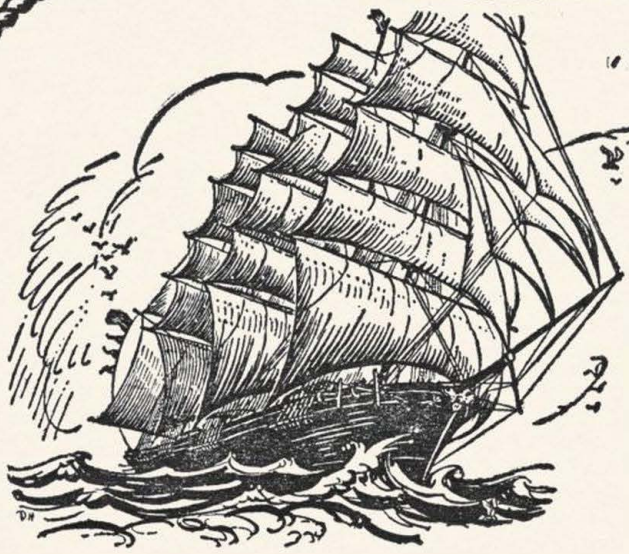

THE "GREAT REPUBLIC"... 4,555 tons...the largest ship in the world in 1853! Captains of ships like this often carried kegs of whiskey on every voyage. They knew the billowing ocean "rocked" whiskey to smoother flavor.

Old Mr. Boston says:

"From Sea-Rocked whiskeys of Old came my inspiration for Rocking Chair!"

BACK HOME IN PORT, these seafaring men still "rocked the keg" under porch rockers. Down Cape Cod way, Mr. Boston heard tales of these grand old "rocked" whiskeys... got the idea for mellow, richer Rocking Chair!

TODAY—YOU'LL DISCOVER in Rocking Chair a smoothness worthy of the finest wave-rocked whiskeys of old! Because Old Mr. Boston recaptures that flavor by *controlled agitation in his special blending process.*

MR. BOSTON

ROCKING CHAIR

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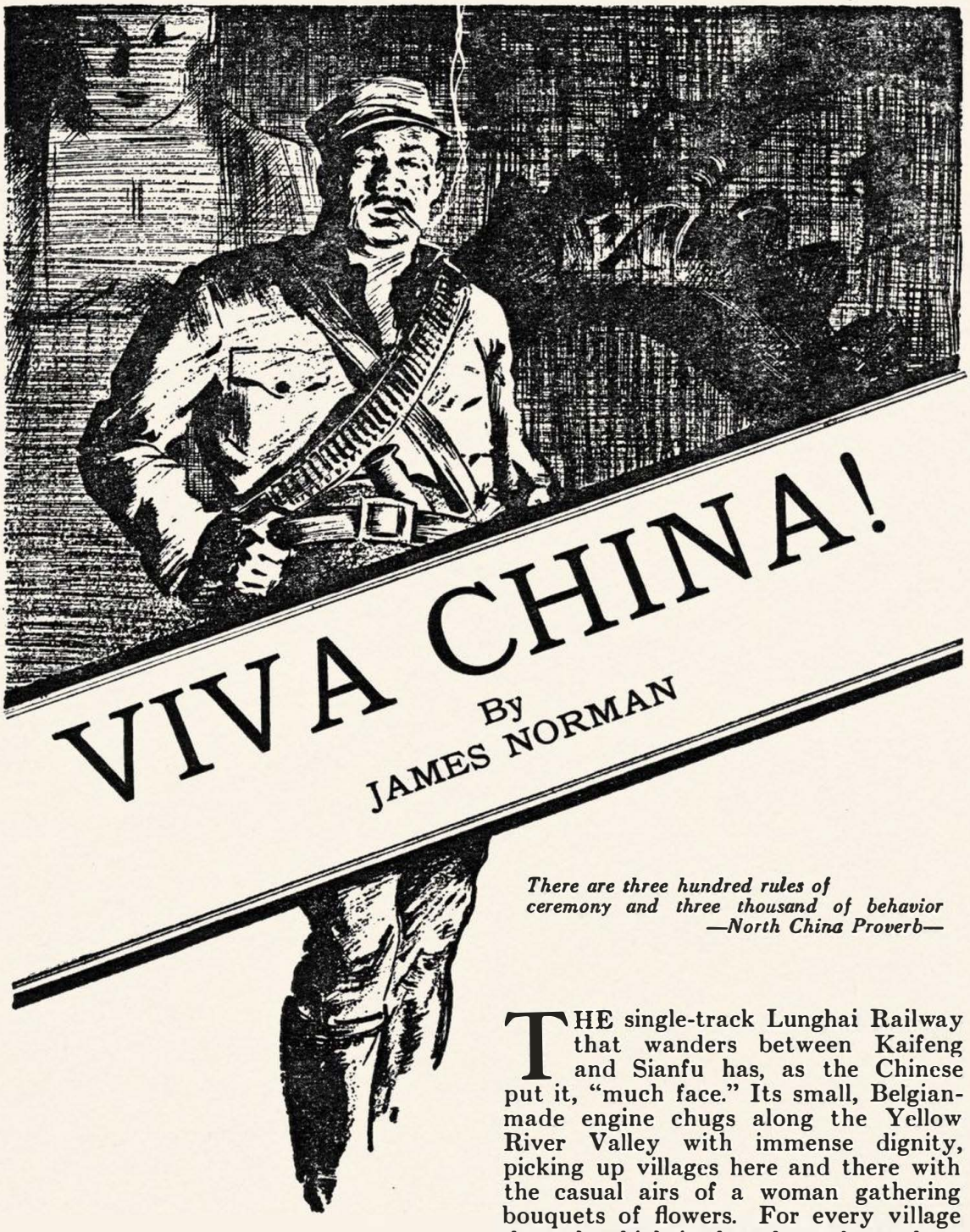


VIVA CHINA!

By JAMES NORMAN

There are three hundred rules of ceremony and three thousand of behavior
—North China Proverb—

THE single-track Lunghai Railway that wanders between Kaifeng and Sianfu has, as the Chinese put it, "much face." Its small, Belgian-made engine chugs along the Yellow River Valley with immense dignity, picking up villages here and there with the casual airs of a woman gathering bouquets of flowers. For every village through which it threads, at least three of equal importance are overlooked and left behind for closer inspection by the Yellow River herself.

At intervals the train meanders along the river's sandstone bluffs, absently coming within range of Japanese cannons near Tung Kwan. The annoyance

Gimiendo Hernandez Quinto—G.H.Q. to his American friends —the best damn* caballero *in all China.

is ignored—comic opera style. Chinese trainmen simply couple a camouflaged car on behind, complacently hoping Nipponese gunners will someday respect the gesture.

To John Tate, sprawled upon the top of the first car, the ride was terrifying. For three days he had clung to the roof of the train, traveling from Hankow to the tune of one catastrophe after another.

Tate just wasn't built for adventure. He was a scholar. At best one would expect to find him puffing up the well-explored steps of the pyramids, his white, badly wrinkled Palm Beach suit bagging at the elbows and knees, his Panama brim fluttering in the wind.

He was a plump little man with a pink face and heavy-lidded albino eyes that darted here and there anxiously. He had been in Pekin, studying Chinese calligraphy, when the war broke out. He had paid no attention to the war. Then Pekin fell and the Chinese were pushed back to Nanking, then to Hankow. With each withdrawal Tate's supply of books diminished. At Hankow there was nothing left for him but to take a job with the government press bureau. For six months he translated communiqués into English and French.

Now, against his better judgment, he found himself riding on the Lunghai Express with a ticket to Lingtung . . . A ticket to troubles already begun.

The train was *full-up,* Chinese fashion, and Tate rode on the roof. At Cheng Chow it had crashed into a cow, throwing him overboard and breaking his right arm which he now carried in a sling with chop stick splints. In the Loess Lands, a bare fantastic region studded with hills shaped like Parker-house rolls, the train ran short of fuel. Four hundred Chinese scurried over the hills searching for wood while the little Belgian engine's fiery insides consumed six books of Master Chang Yen Yüan's ten volume, *Short Essentials of Chinese Calligraphy* which Tate had with him.

As they approached within range of Japanese guns along the Yellow River, Tate sighed meditatively, shifting his position on the top boards of the train. It was too dark to read. He let tired, windburned eyes sweep the length of the Express with a certain vague uneasiness that had nothing to do with the cannons at Tung Kwan.

The wheezing locomotive clattered over uneven rails dragging ten overcrowded cars with lumbering swiftness. By starlight, he could see outlines of the soldiers who had attached themselves to the train's sides and roof with the tenacity of closely packed barnacles. He listened with growing anxiety to the lively betting going on among them as to how many would be swept off in the low tunnels before Tung Kwan.

When the train curved northward toward the river, small mountains scudded by, springing from the darkness in great leaps, falling backward into the dust raised by the camouflaged car. During a comparatively level stretch, Tate hooked his feet in the top boards and, with a great deal of maneuvering and pain in his injured arm, succeeded in leaning sideways over the curving roof to peer down at the lighted compartment window below. The train lurched. He almost lost his balance. Shivering, he pulled himself back without having had more than a glimpse of the window. Still, he wished that the Englishwoman in the compartment had never come to China!

A LADY in tweeds and six Chinese army officers sat in the compartment. The lady was a tow-headed willowy Englishwoman of about thirty years. She had a startling Yorkshire nose and a complexion resembling that of a mildly boiled lobster. Since Cheng Chow she had kibitzed a mah jong game which the officers played in a rapid fire style, calling their shots, the bamboos and winds, like veteran crapshooters.

A satisfied expression brightened the lady's face, for in the three day journey she had gained a number of important military secrets from the six officers. Cleverly, she had said nothing about the present war. The Chinese officers had not minded being politely co-operative, in that they only gave out information concerning the Boxer Rebellion of 1900.

"Perhaps the honorable lady is a historian," one of the officers murmured.

At Pan Tao the Lunghai Express halted for a half hour in the darkness, taking on a few hundred additional passengers. The station platform was a bedlam of strange voices, half-illuminated faces and the glitter of bayonets. There were fat boisterous boys from the South; Annamites carrying rifles, parasols and fans; also taller soldiers, Manchurians from the 105th Regiment.

A black and silver uniformed railroad policeman stopped the Englishwoman and one of the officers as they sauntered along the platform.

"Papers!" he said.

"What's that, really? Oh, my papers," said the woman. "I'm for Lingtung." She handed the guard her passport and a calling card. The policeman immediately returned the passport without glancing at it. In his world calling cards were more important. He could take them home and show his friends the important people he met during the day. He examined the card with some interest.

"English journalist, very good, yes," he observed in passable English.

The lady and her army officer, a major, sauntered on, breathing the heavy odor of the jostling crowd around the train.

In a moment there came a melancholy cry from the Lunghai Express. A bell clanged nearby. Without so much as glancing at the passengers crowded upon the roof of the train, the woman hurried inside, followed by the major. Reaching her compartment door, she stopped short.

An astonishingly beautiful Eurasian girl with shoulder length black hair cut in a pageboy bob had occupied her place. The Eurasian girl looked up, smiling. She had lovely eyes, dark almond shaped, with very long black lashes that swept her cheeks.

"Miss Mildred Woodford?" she asked in polished English.

The Englishwoman conquered her surprise, but she was ruffled. Antagonism showed plainly upon her features. "I'm Woodford," she said flatly.

"I'm Mountain of Virtue." The Eurasian girl spoke with the rounded, pliable intonations of the Soochow accents. "I was sent to meet you. I am so glad you have come."

At the mere mention of the name, Mountain of Virtue, the six Chinese officers crowded around the girl, beaming and mooning. Mountain of Virtue was well known in China, it seemed.

Mildred Woodford sank into an empty seat and proceeded to stare with a frigid British eye. The Eurasian girl was slender. Her skin had a faint golden blush. Although she was dressed with Chinese exactness and taste, she was quite modern. Her duck's egg green skirt, French heeled shoes and bobbed hair gave ample proof.

What Mildred Woodford did not recognize was that Mountain of Virtue was what the Chinese poets call *hsiao-chieh*—a woman born to attract men, then retire, bestowing favors artfully, rarely and elusively. In short, a dangerous woman!

AS THE train moved from the station, John Tate felt a slight tug at his bandaged arm. Turning awkwardly, he stared at a moon-faced boy who grinned at him out of the semi-darkness.

"No cigarettes," he said in annoyance.

The boy-soldier shook his head. He looked most absurd stretched at full length upon the roof boards, the wind whipping his visored army cap up and down like a duck's bill.

He wore the quilted uniform and insignia of the North Army. A Mauser hung at his belt in a great polished wooden case. A worsted red tassel fluttered from the hilt-ring of the two handed long sword strapped over his shoulder. Tate noted the millet bag, the cup and rice bowl dangling from his belt, the pair of ivory chop sticks thrust into his puttees. This, indeed, was no ordinary soldier.

"Mr. Johnny Tate?" The words came in spotless, precise English.

Tate looked disturbed. "Who said I was Tate?" he demanded.

"But you are Mr. Tate, no?" said the grinning soldier. "I know you are. I

Mountain of Virtue

am sure. I know everything. If I do not know everything, then I shall know. You are riding to Lingtung? You will see Quinto there?"

The boyish Chinese face hovered in the darkness with a queer disturbing luminosity. Even the cheerful grin stood out like a Cheshire-cat mask.

"*Ayi!* You fail to recognize me. A sadness. I am Teng Fa. Now you know me?" Teng Fa rummaged in his pocket and brought forth a calling card which he handed to the calligraphist.

Tate didn't bother to look. It was too dark, but on one side of the card he knew the name was written in English, on the other in Chinese characters. Slowly it dawned on him—Teng Fa!

His mouth opened slightly as he peered at the incredible young soldier. Teng Fa was a household word in China. Many natives, the more superstitious, swore that Teng Fa was just a name for a pair of inquisitive ears and sudden justice. But Tate knew better. The Chinese was chief of the *Hsien Ping* or North Army secret police.

Teng Fa glanced toward the rear of the train where flickering bursts of light from compartment windows brushed eerily against the walls of a narrow cutting. Again he turned toward the American.

"So, Mr. Tate. I hoped I'd see you," he said. He shouted against the clatter of the train. Then he jerked his thumb downward, indicating the compartment below and grinned.

Tate knew that in the passageways below, conductors and train boys were racing back and forth turning off lights and drawing window shades. Somewhere ahead the Lunghai Express was due to burst through a tunnel, run across an open ledge along the river and plunge madly toward another tunnel while Japanese cannons fired at it.

"The Englishwoman, you can tell me about her?" Teng Fa shouted.

A nervous tremor ran through Tate's unathletic body. "What about her?" he countered.

"You tell me all about her?" Teng Fa demanded. "Her name is Woodford? You tell me more. What does she want with China?"

"Ah—" Tate hesitated. Then, "She's a journalist."

"A spy, yes?"

"How do I know?"

"Yes, she must be a spy. All lady journalists are spies," Teng Fa observed wisely. "Who will she see in Lingtung?"

He picked up one of Tate's four remaining volumes of Master Chang Yen Yüan. It was too dark to read the faded titles but Tate had the uncomfortable feeling that the young Chinese knew exactly what it was by the weight and feel of it.

Teng Fa leaned forward, saying: "Mr. Tate, you were commissioned in Hankow to follow the British lady, no?"

The train whistle shrieked loudly, snatching the question away. Abruptly, Tate felt himself shoved flat against the train roof. Darkness suddenly swooped down in a hot, rushing sooty mass. It was the first tunnel before Tung Kwan. He felt Teng Fa's strong fingers holding him aboard the pitching train.

Then the engine rushed into the open again blowing its whistle belligerently. Tate gasped as the cars swept around a perilous ledge! It was like running across a stage in the full glare of footlights. Across the river Japanese searchlights riveted white thumbs of light upon the clattering Express. An artillery shell whistled. It burst against the

rocky ledge below the tracks with a reverberating shock. The cars rocked crazily from side to side, hurtling toward the second tunnel.

"Lord! We'll never make it. They're going to kill us!" Tate cried emotionally.

In the bright glare Teng Fa's broad coppery face laughed with all the boyish Chinese delight in fireworks. Tate gritted his teeth. He felt foolish in that instant. This was war.

The second tunnel gaped blackly, a hundred yards ahead. The Japanese still had time to fire another blast. Tate's fingers went white, gripping the top boards. The pain in his broken arm was forgotten.

"Soon they will see the last car, the camouflaged wagon," Teng Fa shouted reassuringly. "Then, perhaps, the invader will cease fire out of respect for our superior military equipment."

BWOOMB! A second shell ripped the bluff behind the train, throwing down an avalanche of loose rock. The little Belgian locomotive whistled insolently at the Japanese across the river and plunged into the safety of the second tunnel.

John Tate sighed heavily and collapsed, his body feeling as if someone had jerked each supporting bone and nerve away. He was still limp when the train rode into the starlight once more and raced cross-country until it reached the Tung Kwan sidings. It was then that he noticed Teng Fa was no longer on the train; nor were his four books of calligraphy anywhere about.

CONDUCTORS and train boys fought their way through the packed compartments, relighting lamps and joking about the bad gunnery of the Japanese. In the Englishwoman's compartment the various passengers had taken the bombardment with flying colors. The army officers were a bit more patriotic. Mildred Woodford was ruddier in complexion, having somehow consumed a half bottle of Scotch in the space of two tunnels.

"Lots of noise. Nobody killed. What kind of a war is this anyway?" she said drily, meanwhile glancing in annoyance at the Eurasian girl.

Teng Fa

Mountain of Virtue smiled—not for the Englishwoman, but for her circle of admiring officers. "The cannons are very annoying this season," she murmured. "They were not half so annoying last year. I will tell Gimiendo Quinto. Gimiendo will stop them!" She glanced through the window as the train slowed and nudged its way onto a dark siding.

At Tung Kwan, the Lunghai Express paused a few minutes as if to think things over. Then, apparently having decided to desert the Yellow River as too dangerous, it chugged directly westward along the Wei Ho Valley.

CHAPTER II

THREE MOUNTAINS OF LINGTUNG

LINGTUNG, China's most popular watering place, is nestled in the Lishan Hills twelve miles southeast of Sianfu. Its hills verge upon the great northwest deserts, whence, over the centuries Tartar and Mongol had swooped over Cathay. Lingtung itself is very hard to avoid, even on a map, because of the oddly shaped sacred Running Wind Mountain that thrusts its molar tooth above the pines just

Doctor Mac

beyond the village and on the south bank of the Wei Ho.

According to conservative historians the peak lost its top and gained fame in the third century B.C. when the overenthusiastic emperor, Ch'in Huang Ti, had a few hundred feet of mountain top lopped off that he might better view the sunrise without being bothered by low flying clouds.

The neat little town at the mountain's base was an afterthought. So were the clean cobbled streets, the several ancient shrines and the magnificent Lingtung Pavilions, a modern garden-type hotel set back a mile from the town upon the pine slopes.

In the spring of 1938, folks in Lingtung boasted that their town had three equally famous mountains—Running Wind Mountain; the beautiful and clever Eurasian girl, Mountain of Virtue; and her constant companion, Gimiendo Hernandez Quinto.

Of the three, Quinto was as visible as Running Wind. He was a huge mild-mannered man whose black eyes and dark military cropped hair further increased the idea of largeness. But all this was deceptive for he could move his two hundred and twenty pounds with a crafty, cat-like grace.

No one in China knew much about his past. G.H.Q., as he was called by American friends, had been around Shanghai, Pekin and Hankow for years. It was said that his blood cousin was no other than the late illustrious Pancho Villa, and that his various grandfathers had fought in innumerable wars for Mexican independence, so it seemed quite natural that he should be in China on such an occasion. The Nationalist government, headquartered in Hankow, evidently thought so for they had put Quinto in charge of the Chinese Northwest Guerrilla Fighters' Training School at Lingtung.

His own exploits in the field threatened the heroic deeds of his own late cousin. A year earlier, Quinto had planned and led the famous raid on the Bubbling Well Cinema in Japanese occupied Shanghai. The theater had been showing an American gangster film complete with sound effects, tommy guns, roaring squad cars and police whistles. When the epic was over and the lights turned on in the theater, six Japanese majors were found dead in their seats. Four generals and one Norwegian admiral had disappeared.

Quinto, of course, was credited with the four generals but the admiral had to be returned in good condition. "It is very sad that I should have fallen into such error," Quinto observed afterward upon being presented the highest military honor of the Republic, the Order of Blue Sky and White Sun.

WHILE the Lunghai Express gathered in the last few miles before reaching Lingtung, this same Gimiendo Quinto added certain touches to his elaborate plan in which the incoming train figured. He called Doctor McKay into his *yamen* or office, the former main pavilion where Chiang Kai-shek had once suffered a bitter experience.

McKay, the volunteer medico for the guerrilla school, was a peaked Scot, about forty years old but looking fifty. He was a parched man with a mouth that was amiably cynical and eyes that darted out from beneath tufted brows.

Quinto, with a cigarette rolling loosely in his mouth, laid out his plans. "Señor Doctor Mac," he said, "I have a very

special assignment today. You and I meet the train in Lingtung at noon. It brings a Señorita Woodford whom we must surround very carefully." He waved a blue telegram from Hankow. "She is undoubtedly a spy and we must see that she talks to no one but the right people while she visits in Lingtung."

McKay pulled on a dry pipe. His eyes lighted with interest although he said nothing.

Quinto continued rapidly: "Hankow has sent a man, John Tate, to watch her. I myself sent Mountain of Virtue to Pan Tao, following Señor Harrow, but Virtue will also pick up this British lady. It is always better to have a clever woman watch a spy than a man, eh? But as for Lingtung, when this Woodford arrives, she must always have Señor Tate, Virtue or you at her side. She must not be alone! You understand?"

"Righto!" The doctor nodded. His keen eyes wandered about the office, absently noting the things they had recorded before. The Cantonese hardwood easy chairs, a mahogany table spread with military maps, a smaller table holding model junks and marble figurines. On the wall there was a reward poster in Spanish offering $10,000 for one Gimiendo Hernandez Quinto dead or alive. On it was the faded picture of a thirteen year old boy loaded down with bandoleers, rifles and pistols. It was dated "1916, Juarez, Mexico." The doctor's gaze came to rest on a row of cognac bottles.

McKay smiled. His main interest in life was to be on hand when the Mexican died, so convinced was he that Quinto, as a result of his brandy consumption, must have kidneys and liver as big as a horse's.

Suddenly the doctor glanced at his watch. It was almost ten o'clock. The train was due at noon. He remembered another job he had to do. "See you at the station," he told Quinto and hurried from the room.

Hidden among the camphors outside the *yamen*, a meticulously dressed, hook-nosed man smiled his satisfaction as McKay left. The hook-nosed one wore the uniform of the Chinese Emergency Ambulance Corps and the three red bars of a captain. In his pocket he had a row of five fountain pens.

Had Quinto known the man was there, watching his every move, he would scarcely have raised his eyebrows. Lurking among trees was a Harrow characteristic. Eight years in China acting as adviser for various petty warlords had made Abe Harrow secretive and sly. The talent had been valuable once when there was a market value on warlords, but Harrow still clung to his old ways. Meanwhile, heeding his practical nature, he had volunteered in the army, getting himself a captaincy. If the fighting on the fronts became tough, Captain Harrow contrived to have Abe Harrow sent to Lingtung for a rest.

Of the six foreigners living at the Lingtung Pavilions, Harrow was Quinto's greatest problem. He had a peculiar ability for gathering all enemies and no friends. People hated his smooth tongue, his hair-line mustache, his flaunting of expensive English zipper boots in the face of a ragged Republican army. In fact, Harrow was scheduled for death—and that was another Quinto problem.

Now, Harrow shrank back among the camphors, watching, while G.H.Q. prepared to leave the *yamen*. His dark quick eyes poked through the window, sweeping the interior, finally settling upon the table covered with military maps.

A moment later the *yamen* door clicked shut. Quinto was gone. Harrow lingered among the trees a few minutes, making sure the Mexican did not return; then, abruptly, he boosted himself to the sill and swung into the room. He stopped and listened. There was no sound.

His eyes again swept toward the map table. He saw the telegram from Hankow, paused and while reading it made a surprised clucking with his tongue. Dropping the telegram, he turned his attention to the maps. They were mostly of territory, railway centers and munition depots behind the Japanese lines.

His attention was caught by a jade fantailed fish weighing down one corner of a map. Quickly he picked it up, examined it with the eye of a collector,

then slipped it into his trouser pocket. His next move was to locate an inking pad, half lost under a pile of papers. He picked up a Chinese chop, or character seal—the insignia of the Guerrilla School—and wetting it on the pad, stamped a blank sheet of paper.

With the blank paper neatly folded in another pocket, Harrow hastily left the room as he had come.

"IT'S late again," Doctor McKay remarked drily. He pulled his pipe from his mouth and spat across the windswept railway tracks before the Lingtung station.

"It is always late," Quinto answered complacently. "Today it's the wind, a remarkably strong one. But always expect the train late. It only starts on time at Cheng Chow, and there, many times they hold it over until the following day to start it at the proper hour. That's the trouble with trains. They are exact about little things, not the big things."

The shrill, belligerent whistle of the Lunghai Express screamed in the distance. A few minutes later it chugged around the base of Running Wind Mountain, clattering into the bomb-pitted station with the restless air of a young stallion in heat.

Soldiers, coolies and refugees seethed around, on top and under the train as it came to a standstill. Women ran alongside, hawking stale rice cakes and quartered chickens. Quinto elbowed his way through the crowd until he saw Mountain of Virtue and a strange, long-nosed woman coming toward him. His face brightened cheerily.

"Ah, Virtue," he murmured.

The Eurasian girl was a dream of loveliness in her bright crepe jacket with its square jade buttons and long old-style embroidered sleeves.

"I did not see Mr. Harrow in Pan Tao," she said hastily, before the Englishwoman came within hearing.

"No. He returned to Lingtung this morning," said Quinto and flashed her a warning glance.

"I say, there, you're Captain Quinto, aren't you?" The Englishwoman brushed forward. She smiled mannishly, extended her hand and gave Quinto's a hearty squeeze. "I'm Woodford. Mildred Woodford. I do say, that was good of you sending the Chinese girl after me. Entirely unnecessary, though."

"Ah, a small service, Señorita," said Quinto. A shudder ran through his huge frame for he detested talkative women.

"I'm terribly glad to meet you," Mildred Woodford went on inanely. "I'm so glad to meet you. I mean, even in England, London, we've heard so much about you. Fabulous stories, really. Is it true you fought with Pancho Villa in Mexico? I say, you don't look that old."

Quinto winced for an instant, then with a sunny smile such as only he could give, he offered her to Doc McKay. "Señor Doctor Mac," he said softly.

With a slight nod to Virtue and the doctor, he slipped away in the crowd surrounding the train, his eyes alert for another visitor. He caught John Tate as the latter maneuvered, one-armed, from the train roof. Upon first seeing the portly American, he thought, "What a ridiculous little man!"

"Señor Tate?" he said. "Quinto."

Tate was dusty and red from the wind. For a moment the exertion in dropping from the train roof caused a loss of breath and he only regained his voice after Quinto had hurried him through the station and into the town. Then he began to look around desperately.

"Look here, where are we going?" he demanded.

"To the communal baths. You need one."

"But I can't." Tate was almost panicky. "I've got to be with Miss Woodford. Those are my instructions."

"She is well surrounded for the moment."

"But—"

"Don't worry." Quinto smiled with magnificent certainty. "We go to the baths."

AS THE two men walked through Lingtung's narrow cobbled streets, shopkeepers and coolies alike paused in their daily tasks to greet Quinto with a steady series of *haos*. It was evident that

the Mexican was very important. Everyone knew him. Everybody respected him. Part of that respect was because he religiously observed the northern custom of bathing.

Each day Quinto repaired to the communal baths: the hot springs at the Lingtung Pavilions being out of order and unattended during the war. In the town baths he was thoroughly steamed, washed by expert muscle-pounding boys, then hurried off to a curtained section where his enormous toes were massaged for a half hour, Shen-si fashion.

"It is not quite as satisfactory as when Mountain of Virtue rubs my toes," Quinto sighed, when he and Tate finally reached that department in the baths. "*La muchacha es magnifico!*"

"Virtue—the Chinese girl?"

"Eurasian. Her father was Chinese. Remarkable. Did you notice her? *Hsiaochieh!*"

Tate blushed slightly at the mere mention of classical China's most discreet, most potent romantic word.

"Where is she from?" he asked.

"Sianfu. But first she came west from Soochow. She arrived in Sianfu with an aviator who somehow got lost in the shuffle. A little thing, that," said Quinto, waving an airy hand. "I played a poker game in Sianfu one night. I won Virtue."

A bath boy with the skin of a salamander rubbed Quinto's feet with a hard cotton towel while Tate watched in silence, privately envying the Mexican's stocky legs and barrel chest. At length, the American looked directly at Quinto's face.

"I suppose you know why I'm here?" he asked.

"Certainly."

"The press bureau in Hankow is suspicious of Miss Woodford. You know that? They sent me to keep track of her. I'm not much of a guard, but—"

A light of utter beatitude irradiated Quinto's features. "You need not be so circumspect," he said. "They sent her here to be shot, naturally? Just like Hankow. They know who does the most professional shooting of spies in all China —Gimiendo Hernandez Quinto, no?"

Tate stiffened. There was a shocked expression in his eyes. "Shot!" he gulped. "No! You can't. There's no proof yet."

Quinto looked mildly disappointed. "So. Perhaps next time." He shrugged.

"She's not a paid agent as far as we know," said Tate. "Woodford is a free-lance journalist but the government suspects her of pro-Japanese leanings. It's said that she was an intimate friend of their Cabinet Minister Mitsu. Since there's no other proof, she is being allowed a visitor's permit in China. My orders are not to let her talk with one man here."

"Abe Harrow?"

Tate looked up surprised. "Yes."

"You know Señor Abe?"

"Vaguely. I met him some years ago, on my second trip to China."

"And Señorita Woodford?"

"No. Mind you, I'm not sure, but I doubt she's ever seen Harrow. Somehow she got his name. Where? That's a mystery. And what she wants of him, I don't know. Anyway, Harrow at present is under a cloud of official suspicion—the old squeeze business."

"Are you sure?"

"No. Why?"

"*Escucha,*" said Quinto. "Three days ago, April *primero,* Señor Harrow asked me for a *salvo,* a military pass to Pan Tao. He was very anxious. So I had Virtue follow him. He succeeded in eluding her and today he returned."

Quinto dismissed the bath boy and began dressing. He looked at Tate, saying: "But perhaps the Englishwoman will never meet Harrow. Lingtung might take care of that."

"You've arrested Harrow?"

"He is not the kind you arrest," Quinto shrugged "That is not for Harrow. Lingtung has other ways. Remember, Chiang Kai-shek was once kidnapped in Lingtung."

CHAPTER III

CHINA TEA PARTY

NEVADA walked toward the pink brick guardhouse at the entrance of the Lingtung Pavilions gardens. A dry scaffolding of a man who seemed to have

grown up only lengthwise, he had come to China, working for the government as a cattle-breeder, then deserting the model farm at Chen-kiang to join the army. He liked the Chinese people and sympathized with them.

At the guardhouse, he paused to greet Sergeant Sun. He couldn't help smiling at Sun for the latter, like most Chinese soldiers, was ragged, looked unmilitary but still maintained an ingenuous smiling front.

Sergeant Sun came from Shantung province where pongee silk is made, women are handsome and 111,000,000 eggs are laid per year. With such a provincial heritage upon his shoulders the young man took his soldiering seriously and out of sheer patriotism stood a permanent guard at the Pavilions' main gate.

"Hello, Sun. Anything new?" Nevada drawled.

The sergeant shook his head vehemently, answering in his private version of pidgin English which he used with a modicum of vanity even on native comrades.

"Captain Queéto he not commee backward. Shoo foreign missy chop chop Doc Meeki Mountain Virtue."

Nevada glanced through the doorway of the guardhouse where Sun operated a miniature farm. The place was crammed with an odd assortment of potted plants, stunted peach trees, tufts of wheat in various stages of cultivation.

"Nice stuff," Nevada remarked absently, thus winning the undying gratitude of the lad.

"Want lookee mold from oak leafs?" Sun asked affably, pointing his captured bolt action Japanese rifle toward a corner of the guardhouse.

Nevada shook his head and wandered on through the walled garden. The scent of fresh jasmine hung heavy along the walls where the wind failed to disturb it. Here and there the roofs of tiny pavilion houses appeared above the greenery like horned new moons with upcurling edges. He halted on the arch of a half-moon bridge spanning a small canal and thoughtfully watched a dozen white ducks run through noisy fleet formations upon the turquoise water below.

"Nevada—"

He looked up and found himself staring at a little Dresden Doll of a girl in a fluttering white dress. He caught his breath as he had a hundred times in the past. This was Mary Wier, a missionary's daughter, born in China. She was a pretty girl but, as Nevada put it, "kind of moody." Nevada was head over heels in love with her but she always managed to change the subject when he tried to tell her so.

"Nevada"—she repeated his name—"what does the army do about people who—ah—people who are suspicious?" She seemed very upset.

Nevada looked at her incredulously. "What do you mean?" he asked slowly.

"Well, what would happen in Lingtung, or here, if there were a spy? Would he be shot? Or would he have a trial?"

"Who?"

"No, Nevada, you don't understand. Just supposing?"

"It depends. Here, Quinto is in charge."

"And there wouldn't be a trial?"

"That depends again. If there's an out and out spy or someone mussing with sabotage, he's just plain ordinary shot."

"Would Captain Quinto have to give the order?"

"Yeah."

Mary looked relieved for a moment.

"You worrying about Clive Firth?" Nevada suddenly asked.

"Yes, I'm afraid."

"I wouldn't worry about it, Mary."

"But this morning I heard Clive and Captain Quinto arguing. Clive threatened that if the army didn't shoot Abe Harrow, he'd do it!"

"What did Quinto say?"

"He just shrugged his shoulders, that's all."

Nevada avoided her eyes. "That's what I figured," he said. "I saw Harrow go up the mountain this morning. Firth wasn't far behind."

Abruptly the small spots of red in each of Mary's cheeks faded. She glanced down at the ducks in the canal, favoring them with a distressed look.

The ducks ignored her and swung into battle line, preparing to engage the enemy, a black swan that carelessly chased a goldfish across the canal.

Then Mary gasped and her hand flew to her throat. Nevada's eyes followed the direction of her gaze, sweeping toward the far side of the bridge. The lines around his mouth tightened at the sight of Clive Firth.

Firth came over the bridge, limping badly. His clothes were torn and his face was scratched and bleeding. He halted for a moment, breathing heavily. "Is Quinto back yet?" he asked.

Nevada shook his head. "He's still in town."

"Clive! What happened?" Mary cried. She was pale as a ghost.

Firth glanced at her and then at his clothes. He smiled wryly. "What a mess! I strayed off the trail and slipped." He brushed his brown disheveled hair from his forehead and fishing a cigarette from his pocket, lit it nervously. Then he stared curiously at both Nevada and Mary. "What's wrong?" he asked.

With a little sob that caught in her throat, Mary turned and ran through the garden toward the small pavilion where she and her father lived. Both Firth and Nevada stared after her, astonished.

"Well—" Nevada finally asked. "Where's Harrow?"

For a man who had set out to kill another man and had returned alone in such condition, Firth looked remarkably composed. He dragged deeply on his cigarette and glanced sharply at the cowboy.

"The last I saw of Harrow, he was going up the mountain," said Firth.

"Alive?"

"Yes, alive."

Nevada shrugged. This wasn't his department. He was a machine-gunner. Firth was a political director. It was Firth who had caught Harrow speculating with Chinese money a week ago. He also had the reports on Harrow stealing valuables from the Pavilions.

Firth tossed his cigarette away. "I'm going to town," he said abruptly. "If I miss Quinto, tell him I want Harrow

arrested the moment he comes in." He limped away.

SERGEANT SUN was earnestly exhibiting his potted farm to a strange woman with a freckled Yorkshire nose when Nevada came to the guardhouse again. Doc McKay was there and Nevada started to tell him something, then changed his mind because of the woman.

"Are you Harrow?" the Englishwoman asked him bluntly.

Nevada caught his breath and glanced questioningly at McKay.

A number of peasants ran ahead, lighting and tossing firecrackers on both sides of the road.

"He's not Harrow," said McKay.

"Oh!" The lady looked disappointed. "I'm sorry. There I go, mucking about to a complete stranger. I mistook you for Harrow, you know. I'm Mildred Woodford. I left Captain Quinto in town and came out ahead with the doctor and Miss Virtue. I do say, she has an amazing name, and all that, don't you agree? Virtue—do you imagine she really is? But I say, when do you expect Harrow back? Isn't he generally about?"

Nevada shook his head.

"Are you a guerrilla fighter?" asked Mildred Woodford. "Oh, fancy that, I didn't get your name?"

"Nevada."

"Spanish?"

"American."

"Lovely garden here, isn't it?" Miss Woodford passed from one subject to another with the ease of a gymnast swinging from trapeze to trapeze.

"Real Chinese garden," McKay inter-

rupted. "It was a hotel before the war. The main pavilion there"—he waved his hand toward a large one story sprawling pavilion with crimson columns—"Quinto's *yamen,* houses the Guerrilla School offices, library, dining rooms, my surgery and the billiard room. In the old days hotel guests used to sleep in the smaller villas scattered through the garden. The Little Garden Theater over on the left used to show opera. It's a barracks now."

"I say, is Mr. Nevada part of the school? And the other foreigners?" Mildred Woodford asked.

"They just came," McKay explained tartly. "Nevada was wounded, weren't you, boy?" He glanced at the cowboy then returned his gaze to the woman's incredible nose. "He's here for a rest. Harrow just invited himself in. And the others simply seeped in. Whenever G. H.Q., that's Quinto, took his fighting laddies into enemy territory for a bit of field training someone moved in at Lingtung. The Wiers came that way. Japs captured their mission. Wang, on the other hand, was here already."

"Wang?"

"The Banker Wang. He owns the big villa across the garden at the foot of the mountain. I'll show it to you later. It's just across the canal that your pavilion is on. . . ."

McKay suddenly stopped talking to stare beyond the garden gate at a strange procession approaching along the Lingtung road.

"Gad! What's that, really? Colorful, eh?" said Miss Woodford.

Ten Chinese peasants from the town surrounded a Sian cart and were vociferously urging a decidedly stubborn Shensi donkey to make haste with the cart. A number of the peasants ran ahead, lighting and tossing little red firecrackers on both sides of the road.

"There's something up," said McKay after a moment. "The blighters are doing their damndest to scare the devils and spirits away from that cart. Sun—"

The young sergeant had already run out to meet the procession. Following a minute or two of parley, he yelled for Nevada. Then he began shouting excitedly.

"Mista Harro—killed dead. He velly dead!"

Nevada quickly climbed up on the cart, looking in over the backboard.

Abe Harrow's body was stretched on a straw pallet. The flesh on his upturned face was fishbelly white and the features were twisted in frozen pain. A trickle of dark dried blood had hardened in the corner of his mouth. His arm was bent back in the straw, oddly.

"Hey, Doc!" Nevada, looked back. Suddenly he saw McKay holding Mildred Woodford's limp body.

"Fainted!" McKay snapped. "What does she think China is—a tea party?"

CHAPTER IV

SKELETON AT THE FEAST

JOHN TATE felt quite mellow and a little unsteady. After leaving the communal bath, he and Quinto had paused at Lingtung's only open-air teahouse where business went on as if there were no war. A score of citizens, mostly tradesmen and artisans, lolled on rattan chairs, sipping cups of weak bitter tea.

"Only animals and savages practice sobriety," Quinto had said to the waiter. "I will start with five or six Shanghai sherries."

"Our sherry is of unspeakable taste," said the waiter.

"Make it seven, then," said Quinto.

Tate had regarded the Mexican with a degree of awe; and the awe doubled as he slowly realized that the latter spoke Chinese as fluently as he did English.

"You drink?" Quinto asked.

Though moderate in his ways, Tate had agreed. Long ago, during his scholarly probings of the Liang Dynasty, approximately 505 A.D., he had unearthed an emperor who, it was said, got high on distilled grain and painted Chinese characters with masterly strokes. It was not for Tate to flaunt prohibition in the face of such a precedent.

So he had matched Quinto's sherry with North China whiskey, a distillation of peanut oil, gasoline and alcohol invented by a Shensi native who had once

"Fainted!" Doc McKay snapped. "What does she think China is—a tea party?"

washed glasses in a Denver, Colorado, speakeasy where prohibition liquor had never been at its best.

A while later, both Tate and Quinto left the bright little village, striking out along the hilly road leading to the Lingtung Pavilions. Quinto hummed a sprightly Mexican air, occasionally bursting into verse as he supported his companion.

"Viva la China Brigada
Rumba-la, rumba-la, rumba-la-la
No tenemos tanques,
Ni aviones,
Ni cañones . . ."

The steady, less blustery wind along the cypress bordered one mile road, combined with the pleasant warmth of the late afternoon sun and Quinto's hale companionship, washed the bitter reflections of the past few days from Tate's memory. Lingtung had become wonderful. Quinto was wonderful. Everything was momentarily magnificent.

Stumbling over the cobbles at each step, from time to time Tate cast admiring glances at his companion's loose fitting, or rather, sagging pea green trousers and cotton shirt. He envied the fancy jade chop sticks in Quinto's breast pocket and he resolved that, upon the first suitable occasion, he'd purchase himself a similar outfit. He might even get the bandoleers of bullets and pistols that the Mexican no doubt carried on certain adventures.

Arriving at the Lingtung Pavilions' gate in such a mood, Tate let out a sigh of utter satisfaction upon sighting the camphor and jasmine scented gardens beyond. Then suddenly he stumbled back in alarm. A smiling soldier in tattered trousers swung out past the gate with a rifle twice his own size. The lad immediately snapped his gun to attention, incidentally knocking off his peaked cap in the operation.

"*Sargento* Sun," Quinto explained.

"Foreign missy commee," said Sun to Quinto. He stared wide-eyed at Tate's rumpled Palm Beach suit. "Missy want find out Cap'n Queeto got one piece wife? Doc Meeki got one piece wife? Everybody got him one piece wife?"

Tate hiccoughed. "Oh, my God—Woodford!" he groaned.

"Missy say sickee. Not visit supper," said Sun.

"The señorita is sick?" asked Quinto.

"Plenty sick. Spend lots time look Mista Harro get sick chop chop."

Tate quickly lost his flush of liquor. "She's started already. She's been trying to contact Harrow," he said.

Sergeant Sun was still bursting with information. He curled his bare toes in the rich earth and looked gleefully at Quinto. "Missy take one look running Mista Harro—he velly dead. Get plenty sickness."

"Harrow?" Quinto snapped.

"Yessum!" His private version of pidgin being insufficient to handle so

delectable a subject as Harrow's death, Sun reverted to his native tongue and rapidly explained the details with appropriate gestures, exactly as he had gotten them from the peasants who had found the body.

HARROW'S battered remains had been discovered jammed among huge rocks halfway up the Wei Ho side of Running Wind Mountain. The American Ambulance Corps captain had fallen over a sheer cliff, a two hundred foot drop. The natives had identified a dozen prominent Mountain Spirits who might have had something to do with it, depending on exactly which ones Mr. Harrow had insulted.

"Fine accident, yessum," Sun reverted to pidgin with iconoclastic glee. The young sergeant believed only in the stock Chinese Wind and Water Spirits, rejecting Mountain Spirits as an upper class superstition.

"A-a-accident, did you say?" Tate put in. Although still hiccoughing in a major key, his mind was fuzzily grasping at some half-formed impression lost in the curtain of his memory. Slowly, he recalled Quinto's conversation at the baths. "Harrow . . . not the kind you arrest."

A horrible thought formed in his mind. A look of suspicion, then clear-cut shock flashed into his albino eyes as he gazed at the Mexican.

"Harrow was murdered?" he gasped.

"Murdered?" said Quinto, almost casually. "Murder is a loose word. Accident, perhaps. Running Wind Mountain is notorious for its dangerous cliffs." He took Tate by the arm, propelling him gently through the gardens to the main pavilion.

"He was thrown off!" Tate gave vent to a whistle.

"An accident," Quinto repeated stoically. "A very fortunate accident. But say nothing about it now. At supper you shall hear more."

"But what's this all about?"

"Save the curiosity, *compañero*. We go in."

Passing through a half-moon arch to the porch of the rambling main pavilion, Tate noticed the scars of bullet holes in the scarlet columns. The doorway of the *yamen* building was blocked by a spirit screen with a dragon design sketched upon it for, unlike human beings, Cathay spirits could move only in straight lines. The screens kept them out of houses. Once past the elaborate screen, Tate found himself in a large room, and face to face with a glass museum case. A pair of carefully polished false teeth grinned at him from a plush pillow under the glass. A bronze tag, engraved in modern characters, read:

His Excellency the Generalissimo's—1936

"Chiang Kai-shek's. I will tell you about them later," Quinto explained.

Two men were playing billiards on a slashed snooker table at the far end of the room, obviously killing time until supper. One was a gaunt Occidental with tufted brows; the other, a handsome, stubbily built Chinese dressed outlandishly in plus fours, orange and blue golf sox and brown, mildewed two-tone oxfords. On the latter's woolen sweater a safety pin held the insignia of an army lieutenant and the red star of the Fourth Army Corps. His head was bandaged.

Quinto introduced them as Doctor McKay and Lieutenant Chi. Tate quickly decided that he liked them both. McKay's eyes were humorous and warm; his accent at times seemed more American than Scotch. And Lieutenant Chi swept aside a full half hour of customary ritual, greetings, exchanges of calling cards and incidental Oriental politeness by extending his hand and shaking Tate's vigorously, almost in the manner of a Y.M.C.A. summer camp director.

Lieutenant Chi spoke excellent English, salted with as many American and British slang expressions as he had been able to pick up from an untold number of foreign movies. He took Tate in tow, showed him the Guerrilla School library off to the right of the billiard room, McKay's surgery adjoining that, the student mess on the opposite side, Quinto's office, Virtue's room and the quarters assigned to Tate himself. The doorway of each of these rooms opened in upon the billiard hall. During the tour,

Chi unwound the bandage on his head, exhibiting a shaved spot where a wound was healing.

"Japanese shrapnel," he said succinctly. "105 millimeter shell. Not quite hard enough. I'm tough, I am. You like to eat? We put on the feed bag?"

"I haven't much appetite, but I'd better, though."

The lieutenant led the way to the international dining table which, with the coming of spring in Lingtung, had been set on the garden terrace beyond the billiard room. The terrace overlooked a small canal that wound through the gardens.

"Like movies—atmosphere," said Chi.

There was indeed atmosphere on the terrace. The sky overhead was dusted with a silvery powder of clouds and stars while a mild breeze swept the heavy odor of jasmine across the canal. A pet cricket, hanging in a cage, chirped noisily. The long dining table was illuminated by oil lamps that shed a yellow light over the setting of knives, forks and bamboo chop sticks. There was a translucent Chinese plum flower in a colored pot in the center of the table.

Tate sat between McKay and Lieutenant Chi, the latter making introductions as they were needed. Quinto took his place at the head of the table beside Mountain of Virtue and pulling his personal jade chop sticks from his pocket, made flourishing gestures toward the food, like a cavalry officer ordering an attack with the sweep of his saber.

IT WAS a curious group, thought Tate. He ran his eyes appraisingly around. The cowboy, Nevada, was an interesting type. A cool one, thought Tate. His gaze went on to Mary Wier and her father. The missionary, Papa Wier, as he was called, was a man approaching gray hair, a man turning bitter. He was thin without showing signs of having been underfed or overworked. Tate knew the type, Old China Hands; they were all alike. They sat in Shanghai or Pekin legations, bars and clubs scrupulously minding the "Don't Commandments" which regulated the lives of well behaved foreigners in China.

The commandments were simple and direct:—Don't mix with natives. Don't try to speak their language or it'll make you queer. Don't be seen with any but the right people. Don't drink anywhere but in the right places. Don't worry too much about wars and revolution and bandits; everything is always upset in China. Don't read anything but the *North China Daily.* And above all, don't marry a Russian girl.

Two newcomers entered the terrace. The first was Mignon Chauvet, a young and rather attractive Frenchwoman. Tate stared at her straight black hair and excitable eyes, wondering why she had come to Northwest China alone!

Mr. Wang, a middle-aged, middle-class Chinese, took his place beside her. He barely nodded at the others. He was a smooth, formal man dressed in black. His eyes flashed an inner mental vigor, perhaps ruthlessness. Lieutenant Chi explained that he was an administrator connected with the Bank of China's Sianfu branch.

Word had already gotten around that Abe Harrow was dead but everyone seemed to make a point of not discussing it. The atmosphere at the table was strained. There were three empty places, one for Miss Woodford who was ill and had taken her supper at her villa; and two places reserved for Harrow and Clive Firth. As supper progressed, the sense of strain increased. Mignon Chauvet was visibly preoccupied; the Wiers ate next to nothing; Mr. Wang gulped his food down wolfishly. From time to time eyes made fitful pauses upon the three empty places.

Finally Quinto, after expressing his appreciation for the food in the Chinese manner by belching noisily, addressed the internationals. "*Compañeros*—" he began.

There was an absolute silence.

"*Compañeros.* Señor Abe Harrow died today. An accident, perhaps. Sometimes men are unfortunate in war. I must ask you to forget the matter once you leave this table. No conversation about Harrow. We have a journalist visiting the Pavilions. Possibly, she does not understand the problems of China and she may imagine Señor Abe was

murdered. "Do you all understand?"

All eyes shifted to the three empty places.

Nevada nodded. "You see Firth this afternoon?" he asked.

"No."

"He went to town, looking for you."

"In a wee bit of a hurry," McKay put in.

Mountain of Virtue raised her head calmly. "It is not unusual for Gimiendo's assistant to be going back and forth hurriedly. He has many important things to do!" she said.

Mary Wier suddenly dropped her fork. Her face was flushed and angry. She stood up and pointed an accusing finger at Mignon Chauvet. "Why don't you say it? You drove him to it. You hated Abe Harrow!" she cried out bitterly.

Mignon turned pale, her eyes flashing hatred as she stared at Mary. Then, without a word, she rose and left the terrace.

"Mary!" Papa Wier's smooth hand drew the girl into her chair.

"It's awful!" Mary's lips trembled emotionally.

John Tate sat there, his nerves shaken. He felt as if he were sitting in on a personal problem. He watched Wang, the banker, leave the table with a curt bow. Then McKay nudged him. There was a saturnine expression on the doctor's face.

"She's trying to say Clive killed Harrow. Of course he did! It was neeessary!"

An icy silence cut through the talk at the table. Not a fork dropped, barely a breath had been taken. In the sudden silence McKay's words stood out, bold and naked. Abruptly, Tate sucked in his breath and stared toward the doorway.

Clive Firth stood there, quietly surveying the terrace. His eyes, as they shot toward the Wiers, then at McKay, revealed an intellectual force that could be felt at once.

"So I killed Harrow!" he said flatly.

Doc McKay coughed harshly. Tate suspected him of enjoying this.

"What is this — a conspiracy?" snapped Firth. "I haven't seen Harrow since this morning. The fact is, I didn't know he was dead until Sun told me, and that after I returned from town!"

GIMIENDO QUINTO looked upset for his authority at the Pavilions had been seriously undermined. He let his eyes rest upon each person at the table for a piercing instant. "*No lo me gusta,* I don't like it," he said. "A dangerous precedent, very dangerous, murder without Gimiendo knowing the arrangements. I am *responsible* here, is that understood?"

There was an uneasy silence. The cricket chirping in its cage sounded like an off key symphony. Quinto waited for a moment, fingers drumming on the table. "Well, who is responsible for . . . ah . . Señor Harrow?" he finally demanded.

"You ought to be relieved that Harrow is dead and forget it," said McKay.

"I saw him start up the mountain this morning," Clive Firth put in, "but I insist I didn't kill him! God knows, there were enough grounds for him facing a firing squad, but I didn't do it!"

Papa Wier looked up from across the table. "Perhaps we're jumping at conclusions," he said in an even tone. "I doubt he was murdered. Mountains are dangerous and it could have been an accident after all."

Lieutenant Chi glanced at the missionary in an odd manner. "Funny accident," he murmured.

"Mountains are damn dangerous. Particularly when there were a couple of people up there besides Harrow who are hoping I shan't mention the fact," Firth said bitingly.

"Others on the mountain?" McKay looked around quizzically. "*Hmm,* sportsmen around here."

Quinto stood up, his hands on the table. "We begin immediately," he said. "I am going to find who killed Harrow by midnight if I have to keep everyone out of bed!"

John Tate had been listening to the developments with avid interest. He turned to McKay, asking: "Do the Lingtung police come in?"

"Quinto *is* the police. This is a war.

He's the commander here and it's his party, though I see no reason for so much fuss over Harrow. And if he throws Firth out, who's he going to suspect? Everyone around here had a motive—no one liked Harrow!"

Mountain of Virtue shook her head tolerantly and favored the doctor with a reproving glance.

"But Doctor McKay," she said, "since everyone knew, or thought Clive Firth would . . . execute . . . Mr. Harrow, why would they bother with such a business? It seems that they might have had some other reason for wanting Mr. Harrow murdered, and they might have wanted quicker action than the Chinese Army might furnish."

"We will discuss this later," Quinto interrupted. "*En el momento,* I have other work before we begin an investigation. Señor Tate, you can do me a favor. . ."

Tate's round face glowed, pleased at being taken into the Mexican's confidence so readily.

"First," Quinto went on, "this whiskey drinking Señorita Woodford is a writer. Writers are not to be trusted. I believe she had better leave Lingtung for a day or so. This for my own peace of mind. Take her to Sianfu. A fast car, no?"

"Sianfu?" Tate looked doubtful.

"It's only twelve miles. You will do it immediately. Virtue will telephone reservations at the Guest House. One of the guerrilleros can drive you. Now, let's see"—Quinto turned to McKay—"did the lady see Harrow's body when it was brought in?"

McKay shook his head. "Hardly. She heard Sun fuss about him being dead and she fainted on the spot."

"Good! Señor Tate, you tell her a mistake was made. It was not Harrow, but one of the guerrilleros who was brought in dead. Let her know that Abe Harrow is in Sianfu at the Guest House. She will go readily. In fact, she will no longer be sick."

Lieutenant Chi was sent with Tate to drive out the Guerrilla School's official car, a Studebaker sedan which had been captured by error from a friendly General Staff on the other side of Sianfu. Meanwhile, Virtue went off to telephone Sianfu. Now Quinto, going with Firth and McKay into the billiard room, suddenly spoke in a lower voice.

"Who were the two on the mountain?" he asked Firth. "Besides Harrow."

"Who? Oh! Well, Papa Wier for one. The other fellow, I've never seen and I didn't get a good look at him. A chap in a yellow trench coat."

"Chinese?"

"That I don't know. They weren't on the top of the mountain really. They were waiting in Chiang's cave, half way up the trail."

"Did you speak with them?"

"No. They didn't see me. I tried spying on them but they just waited there a bit, then came down."

"Yes," said Quinto, thoughtfully. "Waiting, perhaps for Harrow!" He frowned. "Firth, you had better run across the garden to Harrow's villa. See that no one enters until I come."

CHAPTER V

THE MAN WHO DIED THRICE

McKAY and Quinto went through the library adjoining the billiard room into the doctor's surgery. It was a small, bare room fitted out with a table, a bench, a few shelves loaded with medicines. McKay himself lived in a small villa across the garden which he shared with Lieutenant Chi.

"It's a hailsome sight to be looking at a corpse not peppered by a shrapnel, bullets and the like," said the doctor.

Harrow's rigid body rested on the floor of the surgery in a blanket, exactly as it had been left by the peasants who had brought him in. Quinto stooped over it, his fingers feeling through the dead man's pockets.

"No papers," he observed. "That's not right. Señor Harrow always carried official papers." He glanced at McKay questioningly.

"Didn't search him," said McKay. "Only looked to his hurts. There's plenty of them."

"No wounds?"

"Bullet or knife, you mean? Nay. There's not a thing wrong with him, but a broken neck, smashed third vertebra, compound fracture right arm, hard bruises on the body. I think Clive simply gave him a hefty push off that cliff."

"What else?"

"Probably died instantly or a very few minutes after—in very sharp but short pain."

Still kneeling beside the body, Quinto looked at it grimly. Suddenly he brushed Harrow's matted hair back over his brow and straightened the man's necktie. Then, as though not satisfied, he straightened the torn shirt and trousers. This time he stood up, shaking his head.

"You see," he said, "there is something wrong with Harrow. He's not himself. Harrow was always very neat; his boots, his creased trousers, his tie and coat." Quinto stopped. "Yes, where is Harrow's coat?"

McKay didn't answer.

"He wore one, as usual?" said Quinto.

"I suppose so. Harrow never went without a coat."

"So . . . why would anyone want it?"

"It was a good one. The peasants could have kept it."

Quinto's brows knitted together. Outside, in the night, an automobile engine roared. Tate taking the Englishwoman to Sianfu. The sound of the engine faded in the distance and the Mexican sighed, a weight relieved from his mind. He looked at the body again.

"When did he die?"

"Simple," said McKay, pointing at Harrow's arms. There were two watches strapped to his right wrist, one on his left. "The three of them stopped the minute he crashed among the rocks. But you figure it out."

Quinto knelt again, turning Harrow's stiff wrists with difficulty. Rigor mortis had already set in. "*Muy curiosa,*" he murmured at length. "The one watch reads 11:18, this morning naturally. The second says, 11:30 and the third watch contradicts with an 11:50. So—it was very thoughtful of Señor Harrow. He died at three distinct times."

"Well, you've something to work with, man. That is, if you think someone else did it. I'm still in favor of crediting Clive. Give him a medal and let the fool business slide."

Quinto thrust up his shoulders dubiously. "But there were people on the mountain."

"Mountain climbing is a mania in China. Probably find there were a dozen people up there."

Quinto nodded wisely. "We'll check with Sergeant Sun and find who left the gardens this morning. Which reminds me. Where were you before you met me in Lingtung?"

"Me? Hah, right here. Had a case."

"Who? One of my guerrilleros?"

"Yes. Young Liang. He had a bad case of trench lice."

Quinto smiled complacently. "Let's go see Sun."

AS THEY left the *yamen* pavilion they came upon Virtue who was watching a group of the Chinese guerrilleros surround the building, stationing themselves at the various doorways, windows and cracks. The students were preparing to lay a barrage of fireworks to keep evil spirits away from the body in McKay's surgery.

Seeing the girl, Quinto brightened up considerably, a tendency to which most men yielded upon viewing her.

"Mr. Tate and the lady are gone," she said, smiling in amusement. "Miss Woodford insisted upon driving herself. She wouldn't take Lieutenant Chi."

"Where's Firth?"

"You sent him to Harrow's villa."

"Ah, yes. Then let us visit the *Sargento.*"

"I have, already." Virtue smiled again.

"So?"

Virtue prefaced her words with a pretty tilting of her head to the right. "Sun speaks with exactness worthy of China," she said. "Mr. Harrow departed from the gardens at ten thirty this morning wearing his usual uniform, cross belts and a walking stick."

"Swagger stick," said McKay.

"Mr. Harrow was in no haste," she continued. "Shortly before that he was seen speaking with Papa Wier. Later, but before going up the mountain, he lingered beyond the North Gate con-

versing with a stranger in a yellow coat. He spoke with Mr. Yellow Coat for a moment, then they parted."

"Mr. Yellow Coat," said Quinto, "is he Chinese?"

"No. Occidental."

"Where did this Yellow Coat go then?"

"Sun does not know."

Quinto, with Virtue anchored lightly to his arm, and the doctor, walked through the starlit garden, making a small round before returning to the pavilion. Quinto rolled an inevitable cigarette.

"Nevada was at the guardhouse also," said Virtue. "And he climbed Running Wind Mountain this morning!"

Quinto looked at her without surprise. "Did he tell you that?" he asked.

"No. He tried hiding it. It is my deduction."

"So, what have you found?"

"Nevada is hardly eloquent."

"Some deduction," McKay said.

"But I know what Nevada is hiding," Virtue went on calmly. "You know what? He was on the mountain, certainly. He was gathering flowers for Miss Wier. A beautiful tender gesture, isn't it? The handsome, silent American choosing flowers for a mere child of a woman."

"Cap'n G.H.Q.—" A Chinese soldier wearing a red band on his sleeve to indicate that he was the Officer of the Night, appeared out of the garden shadows and saluted Quinto stiffly. "Sianfu telephone," he said.

Quinto smiled at the boy, one of his best guerrilleros. "*Mei yu fa tze,* not now," he said.

The officer insisted. "Won't let go wire."

Quinto looked annoyed but he followed the boy into the *yamen.* He picked up the cradle French phone which had puzzled the Chinese for years and with a nod dismissed the boy. "*Lai,* who is it?" he shouted.

"Quinto?" replied the agitated phone voice.

"Yes, yes, Señor Tate. Oh yes."

Tate's voice returned with a frantic rise. "Hello, Quinto," he said. "We're in Sianfu. But can't we return?"

"Madre! No!" Quinto exploded. "You've hardly been there."

"Well, listen, Quinto, I'm just at my wit's end with what to do with Miss Woodford. I showed her the Chinese opera here. It's the second day and the theater had a beastly stench and you know how the English are about things like that. Have you settled the Harrow trouble so we can return?"

"No. But where are you now?"

"At the Guest House bar. Has anything new come up?"

"All right," said Quinto. "Drink the señorita under a table or take her to a cinema next. There's an American one in Sianfu. But do not return until I call you."

The Mexican dropped the phone on its cradle.

"If she did not have such a ridiculous nose, she could stand the opera," he muttered disgustedly.

LIEUTENANT CHI was a patriot and a billiard player of no mean ability. He came from Hunanese stock, the South-of-the-Lake province where antimony is the chief wealth, people are soft spoken, red pepper is the principal diet, the manufacture of fireworks and enjoyment of revolution are the most common occupations.

Hunan and Hupei are the Balkans of China.

Armed with such a background, plus a year laundrying in Brooklyn, U.S.A., Chi was prepared to re-vamp China in his inimitable modern manner. He introduced Y.M.C.A. exercises in the Fourth Route Army. So great was his admiration for Occidental habits that he scrubbed his teeth ruthlessly, four times a day, wore golf togs when not in uniform and sported fancy automatic pencils for which he had no lead. The tables in his room sagged under the weight of numerous alarm clocks for he admired the western mania of exactitude. . . . A stitch in time saves. . . .

In addition to billiards, Chi was an inveterate Brooklyn Dodger fan but his judgment in this matter wasn't as good as his eye for a balkline shot, particularly the tricky reverse English shot he

had just made on the Pavilions' billiard table.

"You see that?" he called to Quinto. The latter had just stepped from his office to the billiard room and was muttering unintelligible things about telephones and Yorkshire noses.

"Spot you twenty-five, Captain," Chi added eagerly. "Make it easy, straight-rail."

Quinto paused, his dark eyes moving over the warped billiard table. He selected a cue.

"Thirty," he said.

Chi bowed politely. "Twenty-six," he countered.

"Thirty," Quinto answered firmly.

A smile crossed the lieutenant's expressive face. "All right, I'll give you twenty-eight points and beat you anyway," he said, running around blocking the snooker holes at the corners and setting three chipped composition balls on the table.

Quinto made the break and watched the balls wobble over the worn green cloth, bump sidewise over a patched area and settle sluggishly in perfect position for his opponent. He made a mental note that if ever, on one of his raids into Japanese territory, he should run across a billiard table with ivory balls he would bring back the balls.

"Did you dig out anything new on Harrow?" asked Chi, as he addressed the table.

"Little things," replied Quinto. "Nothing important."

"Would my being on the mountain this morning help?"

"You were there too?"

"Right. My exercise."

"It was very interesting, no? Red sunrise, many people to watch?" Quinto's question followed the usual polite pattern of starting from the East and gradually approaching a problem from the Southwest.

The lieutenant was silent. His eyes eagerly followed a run of shots. Finally the run broke and he chalked up nine billiards for himself.

"If all my guerrilleros could only shoot as you play billiards!" Quinto complimented him.

"Did I mention I was on the mountain?" Lieutenant Chi suddenly asked.

"I'm not positive," Quinto murmured. Meanwhile he studied the balls intently and waited for Chi to perform an intricate Chinese mental maneuver, namely, the method of indirect accusation.

"Perhaps someone with a sharp eye whispered that I climb mountains." Chi spoke in a tone suggesting that everything he said was highly hypothetical. "Interesting goings-on on mountains," he continued. "My people revere them. The old emperors built roads to the tops of the best mountains and paid respect to many sunrises. Is it that someone has seen Lieutenant Chi paying such respect?"

"Doubtlessly," Quinto answered patiently.

"Was it Papa Wier or Wang or a stranger in a yellow coat?"

Quinto's cue slipped, gouging a furrow in the green billiard cloth. "Wang?" he asked.

"Oh, yes."

Quinto took a roll of adhesive tape from his pocket and carefully repaired the damage his cue had done to the cloth. "So Wang, Papa Wier and Mr. Yellow Coat were on the mountain. *Hmm,* and Nevada and Firth also. Did you see Nevada and Firth?"

"Firth, yes."

"Who else?"

"Harrow. No, I didn't see Harrow. That's sad, isn't it?"

Quinto deposited his cue upon the museum case containing the generalissimo's teeth and patiently watched the lieutenant nurse the three billiard balls along the rail, then into a corner, carrying the run to where it would pass his own handicap. Suddenly Chi apologized for his high score.

"The balls are crooked," he said. "They come together with an unnatural affinity and I have no power to halt them."

"*Bueno,*" said Quinto, "we'll pause and think about Harrow. When did you see the others on the mountain?"

"Standard time or war time?"

"Standard!"

"Well, then, about noon. Yes, noon exact. I recall having heard the Lunghai Express whistle as it rounded the curve.

The Express was almost on time today."

"Go on."

Chi contemplated the billiard score for a moment. "They were watching each other," he said. "A short time before noon I saw Wang. He passed Chiang's cave and went on up the trail. Then Papa Wier and Mr. Yellow Coat met in the cave at noon. They were apparently waiting for something. Mr. Firth crouched behind a rock watching Wier and the coat. Then, these two returned toward Lingtung and Firth followed at a respectable distance. It was exactly then that Wang returned."

"So, what happened?"

"Wang saw Firth spying on the others so he spied on Firth without Firth knowing it. So I spied on all of them and no one knew it."

Quinto thought this over for a moment.

"And only Wang went up the cliff trail?" he asked.

Chi nodded. "Perhaps he didn't like Harrow and wanted to erase him off. I regret, but I cannot believe in this theory of accident. In China there are only two sources of accident—flood and famine. If one does not die of these he eventually dies of old age or murder. Mr. Harrow hadn't much old age."

Quinto glanced toward the doorway and saw Mountain of Virtue step daintily around the spirit screen.

"Mr. Firth wishes you at Harrow's villa," she said. "He found something very extraordinary. A bank book!"

Quinto raised his brows interestedly. "*Olay,*" he murmured. "Did you see it?"

"Certainly, and it read very well. You will be pleasantly surprised."

CHAPTER VI

THE JADE TIGER

HARROW'S villa lay across the gardens, a hundred yards from the main pavilion. The place gave evidence of having absorbed some of Harrow's elaborate primness. Its two small rooms, a sitting room and sleeping quarters, were neatly arranged and furnished with lightweight rattan tables and chairs. In the bedroom combs were placed just so upon a table. Boots and shoes were lined under the bed-edge like an army prepared to pass inspection.

In the larger sitting room the books, papers and a number of expensive pigskin valises were in greater disorder, mainly as a result of Clive Firth's investigation. Firth had emptied the contents of the cases on the floor, revealing Harrow's antiquarian leanings. There were dozens of silver pencils, cigarette cases, Chinese seal stones, a few excellent specimens of Han bronzes, a bronze kettle of the Chou Dynasty and a wider variety of jade objects.

Quinto suddenly reached down, his fingers closing upon a familiar jade fish. "So," he muttered. "Harrow even collected from me!"

"He was an expert collector," said Virtue and she exhibited a small statuette of a tiger cut in fine white jade sprinkled with green. "This tiger is beautiful. He has just had dinner. It is January and the sun is only beginning to warm the earth. He is not sure whether he smells the artist sculping him or an odor of hyacinth. Do you know what this tiger is, Gimiendo?"

"Look here, Quinto," Firth interrupted. "I made out my report a week ago, Harrow stealing things. This is the proof. But God only knows, for some of this he must have robbed a museum."

"Gimiendo, do you recognize this tiger?" Virtue asked again. "It is cut in what we call the *hua shueh tai tsao* jade, the moss entangled in melting snow. It is very very valuable. A Ming period piece. You will be able to trace it, I am sure."

Quinto took the tiger and wrapping it in a wad of cotton, thrust it into his pocket. "Where is the bank book?" he said. "We'll let the jade stand until Tate returns. He knows such things."

Firth handed him a personal savings book issued by the Banque du Chine Centrale, a private French bank located in the foreign concession at Hankow. Harrow's name was typed upon the cover.

"He should have been shot the day he entered the army," said Firth.

Quinto waved his hand impatiently.

As he flipped the pages of the bank book, his eyes grew larger and a low, amazed whistle escaped between his lips. "Sixty-five thousand francs deposited in the last eight months," he said unbelievingly.

"Harrow didn't make that soldiering, I'll say that for him," Firth put in.

A folded slip of paper fell from the book. Quinto caught it in mid-air and upon opening it, he simmered audibly. It was a military pass giving Captain Abe Harrow full permission to travel to Hankow and back and begging the railway officials to extend full military courtesy. It was written in English and signed by Gimiendo Quinto, in addition it carried the official chop of the Guerrilla School.

"A forgery," said Quinto. "I made no pass for Harrow. Now another mystery. How did he get it. Look! Even the English is not in Harrow's handwriting."

"But it's your handwriting, Gimiendo," said Virtue as she glanced at the pass. "You know, your hand is very distinctive."

"*Por Dios!* Mine. That's right," Quinto said vexedly. "But I didn't write it."

"It is likely," Virtue remarked, "as events complicate themselves, they become clearer. Mr. Harrow had sixty-five thousand francs in the bank. It would not be strange if he had more money to deposit so he secures a pass to Hankow. But whoever helps him forge the pass suspects he has money—and murders him for it. . . ."

Virtue glanced idly at Quinto and Firth. "Did you know Papa Wier once practiced forgery?"

"Wier—a forger. Not the old man?" Clive Firth looked absolutely startled at the information.

"But long ago," said Virtue. "Before New Zealand."

"Where'd you hear it, *chica?*" asked Quinto.

Mountain of Virtue smiled enigmatically and the mere winsome parting of her lips worried Quinto more than the amazing fact that the straight-laced missionary had a background worth investigating.

"Teng Fa told me," said Virtue. Her lids drooped for a second, black lashes sweeping her cheeks with an air of indolent mystery.

QUINTO leaned over and looked at Virtue's tiny watch. It was 10 P. M. "Now it's my move," Quinto spoke with sudden decision. "My dear Virtue, between now and midnight you must see that Wang the Banker has no desire to enter his villa. You begin instantly." He nodded to Firth. "Señor Clive, you come with me to the *yamen.*"

With a new blush of rose on her cheeks and a certain artful smile made famous by Chinese artists for centuries, Mountain of Virtue departed. A moment later Quinto and Firth shut the door of Harrow's villa.

"You're going to search Wier's place too?" Firth asked as they crossed the gardens.

"Later," said Quinto. "Right now, I want what you call alibis. You will check where everyone was this morning between 11:18 and 11:50. Find where they went, why and when. Lieutenant Chi can give you the guerrillero roll call. Sun can also help you."

"Righto."

"I'll come to your villa later tonight for the list. Remain there," said Quinto as they entered the *yamen* where McKay and Nevada were playing billiards.

Quinto nodded at the men and stepped into his office and shut the door. He went to the phone.

"Connect me with Sianfu. Guest House. Suite 31." He waited a long two minutes listening while the Chinese male operator in Lingtung convinced the Sianfu exchange that it was the Guest House and not Military Headquarters that was wanted. Finally there came a responsive click.

"Teng Fa?" said Quinto. "Yes. It is G. H. Q."

There was an appreciative answer in Chinese.

"*Escucha,* Teng," said Quinto. "I want a favor. For China, yes. Please write me a complete biography of three people. Mr. Wang, the banker. James Wier. Yes, Wier, the former Shansi missionary. No, Shansi, not Shensi. Also a biography of Captain Harrow."

Teng Fa repeated the names.

"You might track down a man wearing a yellow trench coat. A raincoat," added Quinto.

"Chinese?" asked Teng Fa.

"No. I don't think so."

"Is that all?"

"Well, drop in at Lingtung Pavilions. How's your end of the war going?"

"Oh, fine."

Quinto set the phone down with a sigh of satisfaction for Teng Fa would not only furnish complete details on Señores Wier, Wang and Harrow, but he would even include family history up to the third generation back.

For the next ten minutes he busied himself shelling peanuts and stowing the empty shells in his pocket along with a small flashlight. Then he left the office and upon coming down the steps of the building to the garden, he found Virtue already at work. She leaned, in the moonlight, against a scarlet column and was surrounded by an admiring crowd consisting of Wang, McKay, Nevada, Lieutenant Chi, Papa Wier, a few guerrilleros and a frail scholarly old Chinese named Mr. Ho.

She had changed her dress and was now wearing a jacket of lake silk gauze with ivory buttons, a pair of teardrop ear-rings and, instead of a skirt, the traditional Chinese trousers of cream silk. Poised in the light of a late rising golden moon, she was like the liquid women portrayed in old silk water colors.

Mr. Ho, the old scholar, looked at her and almost swooned. With delirious roguishness he murmured the untranslatable of untranslatable Chinese words meaning, woman of exquisite beauty:

"*Ayi, chia, jên* . . . . gulp . . . . *yuwan.*"

Virtue barely opened her lips, yet words fell forth like the strumming of lovely and exotic zithers. She recited the *Jade Staircase* of Li Fu:

> "Her jadewhite staircase is cold with dew,
> Her silk soles are moist, she lingered so long—
> Behind her closed casement, why does she wait,
> Watching through crystal panes the autumn moon?"

The men gathered around, sighed and stirred. Chi gazed at her in rapture, thinking of the poor princess waiting on a staircase until the dew descended, yet her loved one failed to come. Nevada stood by, open-mouthed. Wang watched with subtle wolfishness.

With each recited verse, Mountain Virtue changed her pose, always returning between numbers to the favorite pose of the ancient Chinese beauty, Princess Hsishih, who is usually pic-

tured as an exquisite woman suffering from a toothache and showing her tiny but eloquent brows knitted. Such a pose hits even the most insensitive Chinese between the eyes with as much ease as Mother Machree in tenor reduces an Irishman to putty.

Quinto took one satisfied look at the scene and sailed past the group like a majestic battleship. On the gravel walk a dozen yards beyond, he saw Mignon Chauvet pacing up and down, glaring at Virtue and her admiring swains. He halted for a moment.

"You like poetry?" he asked.

"I abhor it," Mignon snapped bitterly.

Quinto walked a few steps with her. "You were very upset at dinner by the missionary, *chica*?" he suddenly asked.

Mignon stopped abruptly and glared at him. "Her," she cried. "I detest the little flirt." There was almost savage fury showing in her dark excitable eyes.

Quinto raised his hand in a gesture of pacification. For a moment he stared around the side of the Pavilion where some four Chinese guerrilleros were setting off firecrackers at regular intervals to keep the spirits from McKay's surgery.

"Were you here around noon?" he finally asked.

"But yes."

"It is all I wish to know."

Quinto bowed informally and excused himself. He hurried around the east wing of the big Pavilion, across a small bridge that spanned the winding canal, past the Little Garden Theater where the guerrilleros were barracked.

WANG'S private villa was built on the same pattern as Harrow's but had four rooms and an inner court. It was well hidden from the rest of the garden by a fence of thick bushes. Quinto scouted about cautiously, making sure Wang's two personal servants who came each day from Lingtung were not within. Then, almost painstakingly, he emptied his pocket, making little mounds of broken peanut shells upon the doorstep before entering.

Ignoring the bedroom and two sitting rooms that were furnished in a flamboyant Pekin style, polished hardwoods and gilded knick-knacks, he went directly to Wang's personal office, a long L-shaped room. He flashed his light around so that it took in the modern steel desk, a steel four-drawer filing cabinet, a table.

Quinto went through the desk, examining the papers efficiently and carefully. They were almost all in Chinese save one weather-stained, typed letter which instantly won the Mexican's undivided and puzzled attention. It was obviously a cipher and completely unintelligible to him.* It went into his pocket. Then he turned to the file cabinet which produced more involved and uninteresting banking papers in the first two drawers and an assortment of shoes in the bottom two.

His searchlight flashed now toward three modern-style ledger books together on the table. They were thin and one was titled, "Wei jên," or "Dwarfmen" meaning Japanese. The second bore the Chinese character for foreigners and the third was untitled. Quinto opened the second book, then as he read the pages he sucked his breath in with a sibilant hiss. There was a page marked for Harrow, another for Wier, another with the name DuPont and perhaps a dozen more pages with unfamiliar foreign names. Under each name there were complicated entries dating back as far as ten months. Quinto studied the Harrow page:

Harrow
February 10. Twelve chits numbered.
February 30. Thirty-one chits numbered.
March 20. Eleven chits numbered.
April 3.

He got no further for loud crackling of peanut shells on the outside door warned him of approaching footsteps. He flicked off his lamp and opening the tissue window shade let himself noiselessly over the sill into the garden.

There he listened, his huge body crouched in the shadows for a minute. From the *yamen* came the sound of exploding firecrackers. The peanut shells crackled again, then he heard a soft

* For those interested in cryptography a copy of this cipher will be found in *Camp-Fire*.

tapping. Moving stealthily, he crept through the brush, keeping out of the moonlight until he was in position to see Wang's doorway.

Suddenly, a perplexed sound formed in his throat. He saw Mary Wier. She wore a black silk scarf over her head, partially hiding her face from the moon's rays, but her doll-like figure was easily recognizable. She raised her hand as though to knock on Wang's door again, then withdrew it and glanced nervously across the gardens toward the *yamen* where the firecrackers were bursting spasmodically. A few seconds passed and finally she hurried off, skirting around the rear of the *yamen* toward the villa she and her father occupied at the far side of the gardens.

"Que pasa?" Quinto murmured to himself. He hesitated a moment, then re-entered Wang's office, took the three ledger books and after a careful last look left. He returned to the main pavilion and entered the back way unobserved.

IN HIS own office Quinto shoved the ledger under the bed and turned again to the phone. "Sianfu. Guest House," he demanded.

Both operators, in Lingtung and Sianfu, were asleep. It took a few minutes to straighten them out. Finally the connection came through.

"Guest House. The room of Mr. Tate. American," said Quinto. "In the bar. Good Give me the bar."

Tate's voice came over the phone: "Hello, Captain Quinto. I'm following orders. I'm drinking her into immobility. It's very difficult. What did you want?"

"Do you know anything about ciphers?" Quinto asked.

"A little," Tate replied. "But I'm a calligraphist. However, I had some cipher experience with the Press Bureau. What is it?"

"I have a cipher for you. Tomorrow return to Lingtung. Do not say anything. If possible, make Señorita remain in Sianfu. Perhaps she'll remain if you introduce her to my friend Ku Chu-tung, the Military Governor of Sianfu. He lives in the Guest House."

"I'll try."

"Don't drink too much. The woman is a dangerous drinker, I can tell."

"All right. I'll see you tomorrow. But I'll have to find someone to drive me back if I don't bring Miss Woodford. My arm, you know."

This time the phone clicked off at the Sianfu end.

Quinto busied himself about the room for a short while. He placed the jade tiger, found in Harrow's villa, along with the bank book in a small iron safe which had once been a prized possession of a neighboring warlord. He changed Wang's ledgers to a new hiding place under his mattress, the safe not being large enough. Then he ran through the personal columns of the *Kiang County Daily News*, better known as the *Hsiang Kiang Erh Pao*, hoping by some chance there might be another cipher there.

At quarter of twelve he set out, again by way of the Pavilion's back door, toward Firth's sleeping pavilion situated at the rear of the gardens near the South Gate which, according to Chinese custom, is only opened on rare occasions, such as to eject an inconstant wife.

He had to cross two small bridges for the canal curved in a horseshoe at this point. To the right of Firth's pavilion was the darkened armory. Approaching his secretary's quarters, he suddenly heard voices and he slowed his step.

Mignon Chauvet's voice came out, sharp and clear. *"Mais oui!* I am not afraid to do it—if I must!"

"Quiet, Mignon! You speak too loud. There are others living in the gardens, you know." The latter voice was Clive Firth's.

Quinto stopped and listened but the voices dwindled to a broken murmur and the firecrackers from the far end of the garden caused an incessant din. Only once again did the voices increase in tone and he caught a single phrase of Mignon's. . . . "We will leave China then. . ."

Without having seen Firth, Quinto returned to the main pavilion, looking for Virtue. He found the girl still

surrounded by ardent admirers and running through parts of the famous Chinese opera, *Liling Pei.* Quinto looked on, annoyed, for *Liling Pei,* at its shortest, was a three day opera.

He yawned and peered at the raw outline of the Running Wind Mountain, its dark mass looming against the carbon blue sky and pinhole stars. He resolved to see what the mountain had to say for itself in the morning. Then he glanced at his watch. It was midnight. Remembering his threat to uncover Harrow's murderer at this hour, he sighed meditatively.

"Tomorrow at midnight then. What is one midnight more or less?"

CHAPTER VII

DOUBLE THE DEAD

A HANDFUL of guerrilleros were shooting firecrackers under the surgery window at 6 A. M. At 6:30 a tinny bugle blew reveille, mostly as a formality, for everyone at the Lingtung Pavilions had been up for more than an hour. Throughout the early morning hours between reveille and sunrise, a steady crackle of rifles and the intermittent stutter of a machine-gun had accompanied the crowing of various sturdy roosters up and down the breadth of the garden-like Wei Ho Valley.

At eight o'clock Nevada and Gimiendo Quinto returned from the rifle range behind the gardens followed by fifty boisterous guerrilleros (the others being on firecracker duty) who had dusted off some thirty sawdust filled Japanese Generals before breakfast. As they entered the *yamen,* Nevada set his light machine-gun, a Russian Dickteroff, upon the billiard table and headed directly for the student dining room.

"How about chow?" he called to Quinto.

"Later. I am expecting a visitor."

The easy-going Mexican entered his office and in confirmation of his very words, there was the visitor—Mr. Wang the Banker. He stood in the exact center of the room, his eyes glaring at Quinto with diamond hardness.

"You came early," remarked Quinto as he shut the door.

Wang stared venomously. His complexion was almost saffron color and his eyes bulged slightly. He was wearing the customary long black gown and the toes of his highly polished, pointed black military boots showed beneath the hem like the heads of diamond rattlers. A Mauser swung from a colored silk cord about his neck.

"My quarters were searched!" He spoke with an abrupt flatness and disregard for polite formalities. A sign that he was very angry.

"So?" Quinto asked blandly.

"Did you order it?" snapped Wang. Quinto rolled his head negatively. "Valuable papers were taken," said Wang. His eyes swept about the room, searching.

"I think you were robbed," Quinto answered cheerfully.

"I've never been robbed!"

Quinto hunched his shoulders and his face took on the bland immobility of the upper class Oriental making a political deal. "It must have been the Japanese," he said. "I'll question *Sargento* Sun whether Japanese were about last night."

"You will return my papers immediately."

Quinto stepped to his map table, taking a bottle of brandy and two cups. He calmly peeled the hard red shell from a pomegranate and broke its glossy fruit seeds into the cups. He then poured in the brandy and mashed the seeds with a spoon.

"Will you take breakfast with me?" he said, waving a hand toward one of the cups.

"No. I breakfast alone," Wang replied.

With his cup, Quinto walked to the window. He looked out across the sunny garden as he spoke.

"I am very curious," he murmured. "I am not at all anxious to ask you why you went to the mountain yesterday. But it would be interesting to know who writes Wang secret messages in cipher? Eh?"

There was a strange silence. Sensing danger, Quinto spun around.

"I wouldn't do that!" he warned.

Wang stood there, his eyes flashing malevolence, the Mauser clutched in his hand, leveled at Quinto.

"The papers!" he snapped.

Suddenly the door opened behind the banker and Mountain of Virtue entered. Her mouth fell open a trifle, but only for an instant. She slipped into the room, shut the door partially and stared at Quinto with a speculative look that held something of a wistful tenderness.

"Good morning," she said, softly.

Quinto sighed for she looked particularly *hsiaochieh* with her creamy lids and their dark fringe of lashes sweeping over her eyes. Wang, on the other hand, shot her a disturbed glance. The malevolent glare in his eyes turned sort of wishy-washy. Thirty centuries of Chinese tradition had conditioned him for women like Virtue.

She merely extended her slim hand and Wang meekly handed her the Mauser. Another glance and she moved toward the door. Wang followed her obediently, gaining only enough composure as he went out to glare at Quinto with impotent hate.

As the door closed, leaving him alone, Quinto pursed his lips in a worried whistle.

"*Mi Padre!*" he murmured aggrievedly.

He was still simmering with a quiet kind of rage when the door opened a moment later and Mignon Chauvet, wearing her hospital uniform, entered. She looked at Quinto, horrified. She was pale and trembling, leaning heavily against the door frame for support.

"Clive—is—dead," she faltered.

THE corpse of Clive Firth sat erect in a heavy reed chair. The chair faced the window diagonally, as though the young man had been looking calmly out toward the South Gate when he died.

Quinto frowned at the body. It was as if he didn't believe it. A suspicion of tears welled in the big man's eyes making them incredibly soft and tender. He had loved Firth as one soldier loves another. Firth had been loyal—loyal to Quinto and to China. The Mexican brushed his hand over his face morosely for he had not felt so deeply about anything for many years; not since the day, long ago, when they murdered Pancho.

"It's too bad, Quinto. But what do you make of it?" McKay asked examining the bullet hole in Firth's chest.

Quinto ran his eyes thoughtfully around. Alertness returned to them. He saw the open window, facing the garden wall. The belongings in the room, a daybed, a table, a file cabinet, a battered typewriter and a wardrobe had been hastily ransacked. Even the ribbon had been pulled out of the typewriter. There were papers scattered on the floor and clothes heaped in a bunch. The mattress had been ripped apart.

He turned to Mignon Chauvet who sat on a stool, her back to the body. Her shoulders trembled emotionally. "You were here with Clive last night," he said.

Mignon shivered. "Yes, but I went shortly after midnight."

"You were angry when you left?"

Mignon hesitated. "*Venga,* señorita," Quinto spoke impatiently. "You argued. I heard you."

The Frenchwoman drew a sharp breath. "But yes, it was nothing, nothing at all," she cried.

"So you left Señor Clive dead?"

The girl's eyes and mouth showed sudden horror. "*Non! Non!*" she cried bitterly. "He was alive when I left him! We had an argument, yes. That is all. I returned this morning because I was sorry for being angry and I found him. . . ."

Quinto's smoky eyes were riveted on a spot beneath the table. He went over and picked up a small capsule made of aluminum. Unscrewing the top, he tipped the object and shook it. A powdery, white crystalline substance fell into his palm. "Heroin. *Muy interesante,*" he murmured, re-filling the capsule and slipping it into his pocket.

He turned again to Mignon who had been watching him. "The argument, what was it?" he asked.

"It wasn't important," replied the girl. "It had nothing to do with this, I swear."

"Then you were angry since he showed an interest in Mary Wier?"

Mignon nodded her head slowly.

"Last night, you said, 'I am not afraid to do it, if I must.' Do what—kill him?" Quinto asked.

The girl's lips froze.

Suddenly, without expecting an answer from her, Quinto turned to McKay. "Are you through yet?"

"Another minute," said the doctor.

Quinto turned his back on Mignon and went to the low tea table standing beside Firth's chair. He sniffed the contents of the two glasses on the table. Both contained whiskey and both were half empty. He stooped rather quickly and wetting his thumb, pressed it to the floor near Firth's left shoe; then he took the corner of a carbon sheet and stamped his thumb against it. A minute bit of loosely woven burnt cloth transferred from the thumb to the carbon paper. Again, he stooped, this time picking up a curved bit of dried reddish clay.

"Someone has been very careless," he observed.

"What's that?" McKay grunted.

"Careless," repeated Quinto. He slipped the clay and bit of carbon in separate envelopes, put them in his pocket.

McKAY stood up and stretched. He took the whiskey glasses from the table and finished both. "Well, the laddie died quick," he said deliberately. "Bullet through the heart." He offered Quinto a dark-stained, twisted bit of lead.

"A .41 short. A very odd size," Quinto identified it.

"It hit him pretty hard," McKay went on professionally. "Smashed the sternum and cut through the pericardial septum and on into the tip of the heart. Then it came out at a ten degree angle. He probably sat just as he is."

Quinto walked to the window again, measuring the angle and distance from the wall outside to Firth's body. "The wall isn't high back here," he said. "The shot could have come from the other side. Were there powder burns?"

"No sign of any."

Quinto took out the envelope with the burned shreds of cloth. "It's like cloth from a loosely woven shirt. A poor-grade one."

"It's not Firth's," said McKay interestedly. "Do you suppose he was shot from inside?"

"What time did you say he died, Señor Mac?"

"I didn't. You can't set a time now. The best I can do is between eleven last night and two or three this morning."

"Twelve, midnight. I heard Clive and Señorita Chauvet myself at that hour. He died afterward."

"Whatever you say, Quinto."

"Where were you last night?"

McKay grinned. "Listening to Virtue. The party didn't break up until one o'clock. Then Chi and I turned in."

Quinto gathered up Firth's papers and paged through them rapidly. At length, he nodded his head with a thoughtful slowness. "Certain points become clear now," he said. "I ordered Firth to make me a list of where everyone was yesterday. It's not here."

He picked up a sheet of carbon paper and scrutinized the type impressions on it. It was impossible to read, for carbon paper in Lingtung during the war was carbonized on both sides and was very cheaply made.

"If Firth had made me the list, he would have made a copy also. But naturally that is gone too. He could have been shot from beyond the wall with a silenced gun. The firecrackers last night would also cut down the sound. The murderer could then come over the wall, search the room, and perhaps take this paper."

"It doesn't make sense," McKay interrupted. "What if Clive did discover that someone was on the mountain you didn't know about. How did the person know Clive was putting it down on a list? He would have had to see it before he murdered Clive."

"So he was searching for something else—but what?" Quinto asked rhetorically.

A knock on the door interrupted them. Sergeant Sun entered, carrying his enor-

mous Japanese rifle. He grinningly saluted the three in the room, then seeing the corpse, sobered. "Velly bad," he said. "Good fighter him."

"What is it, Sun?" Quinto asked the sergeant shortly.

"Mista White Suit and foreign missy back ten minute."

"Woodford."

"Yessum drive whizz bang through gate ten minute."

"All right Sun. Forget the lady. Tell me, what time did the guard make the rounds last night?"

"Each piece hour."

"Who?"

Sun beamed patriotically. "Sun make 'em."

"Did you see anyone outside the walls? Near the South Gate?"

The sergeant thought for a moment, then he nodded his head positively. "Yessum. Eleventy hour see same Mr. Yellow Coat. Go by South Gate I lose him. Wear fine Yellow Coat brass buckles. Look Doc Meeki exact."

Quinto swiveled his eyes toward the doctor and the latter stared at Sun in a funny manner.

"A coat like McKay's?" asked Quinto.

"No. Look like doc but youngerish gotta lot hair on him head black. Gotta big scar him on right face like Turk sword."

"A scar!" It was Mignon Chauvet. "It can't be!" she cried. Her voice was sharp and terrified.

Both Quinto and McKay stared at her.

"Señorita, what are you saying?"

"*Non, non!* It's too impossible—he's dead!" Mignon's voice scaled hysterically.

"Who's dead?" Quinto interrupted, taking her hands firmly in his.

The girl abruptly fought to control herself. Her complexion was ghost white. She stood up stiffly and bit her lip. "I'm all right now," she murmured.

"But who did you say was dead?" Quinto persisted.

Mignon stared at him, then her eyes wandered around the room strangely. Her lips parted and she said: "Clive—"

CHAPTER VIII

RUNNING WIND MOUNTAIN

JOHN TATE felt as if a herd of Szechwan sheep had camped along his extremities. He was dusty. His white Palm Beach was wrinkled and creased in a dozen places. He peered at Quinto with worried bloodshot eyes.

"I never expected she'd drink me right under the table," he said despondently. "After losing her that once when you called me to the phone, where does she appear but in my room, in my bed. She told the Guest House manager to rent her room, she wasn't using it, if you know what I mean!"

Tate paused, looking at the Mexican to see what he would say, then he went on.

"So I sat guard in the corridor. I didn't trust her. She might have gone back to Lingtung if I hadn't. I fell asleep, only to be trampled on by squads of Manchurian officers who kept hurrying in and out of rooms along the corridor as if they took turns sleeping there in half hour shifts. . .

"In the morning, Miss Woodford began drinking all over again"—a despairing note crept into the calligraphist's voice—"I couldn't. Not that much! Then I tried shunting her off to the Military Governor as you advised but before I knew it, we were in the car rocketing back here at a hundred *li* an hour. She drives like a maniac!"

"How much did she drink?" asked Quinto.

Tate brought forth a small notebook. "I kept tab. Mostly for the expense account I shall turn in at Hankow." He calculated from the book. "Last night she drank thirty-two Shanghai Sherries at sixty Hankow *fen* each. Quite expensive. This morning she turned to whiskey. She paid for those."

"Thirty-two sherries!" Quinto was impressed. "Doctor McKay will be most interested."

"Now Quinto, I've about had enough of Miss Woodford. Send her back to Hankow, will you?"

Quinto pursed his lips, disagreeing.

"Send her away again and she'll grow suspicious," he explained. "Then she writes articles charging that foreigners are being murdered in China. You see my logic. Next the British Ambassador, a very dear friend of mine, will have trouble on his hands. His government, though it does not mind Englishmen being killed by the Japanese in the war, frowns upon those same subjects being murdered by Chinese. Señorita Woodford doesn't know Firth was murdered, but no doubt she will. It is better to clear the case than have her go off suspicious."

"Firth murdered?" Tate cried, startled. "Why I saw him at supper last night!"

"It happened after midnight."

"That's really a crime. Do you know?"

Quinto shook his head, explained what had occurred during Tate's absence. Finally he returned to the subject of Mildred Woodford. "She'll remain as long as she cares to, but we'll keep her occupied."

"Mind you, I think it's unwise," Tate objected. "She's a journalist. She'll give China a black eye if you give her too much rope."

"We'll employ military tactics on her," smiled Quinto. "The tactic of strategic diversion."

"On Miss Woodford?"

Quinto patiently rolled himself a cigarette and lit it. He said: "When Chiang Kai-shek once pressed after the great Guerrilla Route Army which is now known as the Eighth Route Army this tactic was used with great success on Chiang's forces. It is rule number one of my own guerrilleros. When pursued, think of your enemy and leave him something to pursue. Thus, the Eighth Route Army enticed Chiang northward with a small rearguard column while the main army went west. Chiang was happy going northward—until he discovered he pursued nothing. The same applies to Señorita Woodford."

Tate looked mildly puzzled for he envisioned the Englishwoman hounding an invisible army across the great Gobi desert. He looked doubtfully at Quinto who was smiling expansively, evidently well pleased with his own strategy.

"Señor Doc McKay has already informed the lady that Nevada is a remarkable hero," said Quinto. "He captured five hundred enemy machine guns single handed. That will please her. By now she is chasing poor Nevada."

"Did he capture that many?"

"No. Only fifteen."

"Well, I hope it works."

"Meanwhile," said Quinto, glancing at the calligraphist through a curling feather of cigarette smoke, "you have an assignment also. You must remain in Lingtung. Clive Firth was my major domo here. He was a secretary and political director and he watched after the internationals. Since you speak many languages, you'll be the cultural director of the school. Your duty is to see that the internationals do not interfere with the routine of my guerrilleros. I'll inform military headquarters in Sianfu. They'll communicate with your superiors in Hankow."

Tate was suddenly blushing. "I hardly think I can handle the position," he said somewhat bewildered.

"I have every confidence," replied Quinto.

Tate reddened even more. His albino eyes wandered toward the various scrolls and mottoes on the walls of Quinto's office. One in particular caught his eye. It was a single fuzzily drawn character in the *ts'ao* or free style. It translated, "Going forward smoothly, step by step." Somehow it reminded him of the Lunghai Express.

"Now," said Quinto. He handed him the cipher note that had been found in Wang's quarters. "See what you can do with it. Take it to your room, lock the door and work quickly. I am going up the mountain. I'll be back at noon or little after."

As Tate departed, Quinto called the Officer of the Day, stationed outside his door. "Call in Mr. Ho and tell Lieutenant Chi to stand by," he said.

MR. HO bowed his way into the office. He was a frail old man with a wisp of a white beard and a bald head poised forward on his long neck with great

natural dignity and grace. He came from the densely populated coastal Kiangsu province where wine is fragrant, women are pretty and men are mostly lawyers or scholars. Mr. Ho was a scholar of the old school. He held such academic degrees as *Kungsheng, Chugen* and *Chinshih* and to make sure people would recognize this fact, he often wore the red tasseled, crystal topped cap and the official navy blue gown of the scholar. His gown was now a little faded in keeping with the decline of old time scholarship in China.

"May I trouble your chariot?" Quinto said, greeting the old man in the most formal of polite Chinese.

"My chariot is untroubled," answered Mr. Ho.

"Your honorable health is good?" asked Quinto.

Mr. Ho shook hands with himself, keeping his delicately tapered fingers well within his long loose sleeves. He glanced questioningly at Quinto. Generally he hated foreigners but he had had a certain respect for this huge Mexican ever since the day Quinto had rescued him from the plight of being a Japanese prisoner and had said that a scholar would add dignity to the Lingtung Gardens.

Quinto bowed. "Pray take an honored chair," he murmured.

Mr. Ho bowed, a shade lower than the Mexican. "I am totally unworthy," he answered.

"The unworthiness is mine," said Quinto.

The old man waited politely until chairs were arranged: one facing the door, the other with its back to the door. Then both men bowed again and sat down. They stared at each other and both were ready now to drop a slight margin of formality and get down to business. Quinto took the tiny heroin capsule from his pocket and, handing it to Mr. Ho, watched his face closely.

"Would it honor you to recognize this miserable object?" he asked.

The old man opened the capsule and looked inside. "The drug—heroin," he said.

"Do you use heroin?" asked Quinto.

"It is not a worthy drug," said Mr. Ho.

"Where were you last night—after listening to Virtue?"

"Sleeping."

"All night?"

"I dreamed part of the night," said Mr. Ho as he bowed again.

"Are you sure you didn't have occasion to leave your pavilion?" Quinto picked up a map of the gardens. Mr. Ho's pavilion was marked as a small one, on the edge of a little lagoon, not far from Firth's. "Your villa is near Señor Clive's," Quinto continued. "Did you hear a gun shot last night?"

"None."

"Are you positive?"

Mr. Ho looked hurt. "Truth can never be proven. It is merely suggested," he said. "I was asleep."

"It depends who suggests it," said Quinto.

Mr. Ho looked about wisely. His slim fingers came through his sleeves, revealing a small leather pocketbook from which he poured a half dozen tarrish pellets into his palm.

"Opium!" grunted Quinto.

"Yes, opium. With opium one sleeps well, and dreams. It is an old truth."

Quinto's heavy brows knitted. "You don't use heroin, then?" he asked.

The old man smiled. "This unworthy person is above heroin," he said. "Heroin is unpatriotic. It is a Japanese import unworthy of a Chinese. The poppy, on the other hand—" Mr. Ho waved his slim hand in an expressive graceful gesture.

"Very good," said Quinto. "You are a patriot and a scholar, Mr. Ho. But one more question. . . . You are aware that two foreigners were murdered yesterday? What is your opinion?"

The scholar fingered his beard gently. "So, so, very happy they are dead," he murmured. "China is not suitable for foreigners, with your exception of course."

The effect of Mr. Ho's decisive opinion was lost at the moment for the office door opened abruptly. Sergeant Sun poked his head in and grinned excitedly.

"Cap'n," he cried, "see Mista Yellow

Coats run up mountain right chop chop."

"IF WE are quick, we may catch our mysterious friend, Señor Yellow Coat," said Quinto as he hurried through the North Gate and along the path which eventually wound up the side of Running Wind Mountain.

Lieutenant Chi had been unable to change to more suitable clothing on such short notice. He tagged alongside Quinto in his golf togs. "Do we arrest or shoot him?" he asked.

"Find him first," answered Quinto.

The two men climbed steadily, thanks to the engineering of a certain Chinese emperor who had seen to it that the grade of the mountain trail was hardly noticeable. The lieutenant, however, had minor difficulties for the rubber in his plus-fours was loose and the pants continually slipped to his ankles.

Thirty minutes brought them to a large cavern midway up the mountain. At its entrance there stood a huge granite rock on which red characters had been painted—the story of how, on December 12, 1936 a certain Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek had been kidnapped from the Lingtung Pavilions; but before being caught, he had fled in the dead of night, wearing only a nightshirt, up this very mountain path to hide in the cave.

Lieutenant Chi halted at the entrance, reverently. "China's history turned here," he said. "It's also the spot where I saw Firth spying on Mr. Yellow Coat and Papa Wier."

Quinto hastily examined the cold and gloomy cavern. Near the entrance there was a scattering of cigarette butts on the floor. "Mr. Yellow Coat's," Quinto observed. "Wier doesn't smoke. The cavern was a meeting place, *seguro.* They were waiting for Harrow, I imagine. But why does Yellow Coat return today?"

"Maybe he's farther up the mountain," suggested Chi.

Quinto took notice of the time on his watch. "We'll go on," he said.

The trail from the cavern to the mountain crest was narrower and steeper. The pines ended and the mountain shrubbery turned to scrub oak and brush. Following a series of hairpin twists, the trail ran along the mountain crest to its northern tip where a magnificent view of the Wei Ho River and the town of Lingtung could be had.

"Well, we've lost Yellow Coat," puffed Chi as they came to the cliff edge where Harrow had died.

Quinto studied the cliff edge. Suddenly he dropped on hands and knees and went crawling along the perilous ledge, paying scant heed to the two hundred foot fall below him. At last he stopped and dug his nails into the reddish clay covering the escarpment top.

"Look, Chi," he called. "Harrow stood here on the edge. These are his foot prints. *Si, hombre,* and here are the other marks I had expected. This clay is the same texture as the bit I found in Señor Clive's room."

He indicated a set of heel prints, cut deeper in the clay than the marks made by Harrow's cordovan boots. The heel pits were narrow and sharply defined.

"The shoe a woman wears for sport, no? *Mira.* It has a higher heel than Harrow's. Now, from the position of Señor Abe's footprints, he was looking down toward the village. Perhaps he didn't hear the second person come up from behind. It was a little windy yesterday. A slight push, even by a woman, could have done it!"

QUINTO pulled out his watch, an old fashioned Ingersoll with hands as enormous and articulate as his own. It was 11:50 A. M., exactly twenty-four hours since Harrow had died for the third time according to the dead man's three watches.

"It takes one hour and a half to walk up here," said Quinto. "Going down it may take fifty minutes at the most. Whoever cannot account for himself between nine o'clock yesterday morning and a half hour after noon may be suspected of murdering Abe Harrow."

"Me too?" said Lieutenant Chi.

"Yes, you." Quinto stood up, brushing the reddish clay from his knees, and glanced down the dizzy distance toward

Lingtung. To the east, toward Hwayin Hsing, the Wei Ho River bent slightly. The lonely whistle of the Lunghai Express could be heard from that direction.

"To reach Lingtung proper it would take longer," Quinto continued. "Therefore Mr. Ho didn't kill Harrow. He was in town at noon. I saw him myself. Doc McKay, Virtue and myself cannot be considered suspects for similar reasons. Virtue was coming in on the Express which arrived at noon or shortly after. McKay was at the station with me.

"Now, let's narrow the time, the moment of suspicion. I am certain Mr. Harrow died at 11:50. His other two

Quinto studied the cliff edge, paying scant heed to the two hundred foot fall below him.

watches were wrong. Do you see how I come to this conclusion, Chi?"

Lieutenant Chi shook his head and listened attentively.

"Señor Abe's watches stopped at 11:18, 11:30 and 11:50," said Quinto. "Obviously the first two are wrong. *Sargento* Sun saw him conversing with Mr. Yellow Coat near the North Gate between ten o'clock and fifteen minutes thereafter. Possibly Harrow did not walk directly to the cliff so he arrived here at best around 11:40 or later. That is a good hour and a half climb. Now, I said it takes fifty minutes to go down. . . ."

Quinto took Chi by the arm and the two men, Chinese and Mexican, hurried back along the down-trail.

"Fifty minutes," remarked Quinto again. "It would be 12:30 before the murderer returned to the Pavilions or passed them."

"Alibis?" questioned Chi.

"We'll have them, but they are not important," mused Quinto. "Somehow, I prefer the ways of your Chinese police who think little of criminal alibis and prefer to study emotions and instincts. They deal with fundamentals rather than superficials, no?"

They passed the cave of Chiang Kai-shek, then after walking another few hundred yards, Quinto suddenly halted. Something crashed through the brush and trees to the right of the trail. The sound increased and a moment later Nevada appeared. He was thoroughly scratched and his lean face was in a sweat from the strenuous off-trail climb.

"*Olay, charro,*" Quinto called.

Nevada leaped over a boulder to the trail. "That damn reporter woman," he growled. "You must have been behind it, Quinto. Been a-pestering me all over the place. Been asking me if I was married. I got riled and come up the mountain for some peace and quiet."

Quinto smiled reprovingly. "She is beautiful and rich, no?"

"Her," said Nevada. "She's a coyote if I ever seen one!"

"Have you been climbing long?"

"A spell."

"Did you see anyone? A man in a Yellow Coat?"

Nevada nodded slowly. "Yeah, I seen him. He was coming down. Kind of funny because he was off the trail."

A glow of keen interest flashed in Quinto's eyes. "Was he American?" he asked.

"French," Nevada drawled. "Maybe he is, I don't know. Used a lot of 'zees' and 'zose' when he talked."

"And he spoke with you?"

"Asked me if Harrow was still around."

CHAPTER IX

AIR RAID

JOHN TATE sat very rigidly despite the mellow sun that clothed the gardens. He stared in curious fascination at Mountain of Virtue who calmly munched lotus seeds, then delicately spat them at the white ducks in the canal below.

"You should eat them as I do," Virtue instructed him. "The seeds are so mild that when eaten raw from the pod you must think of nothing, absolutely nothing, to enjoy their tender fragrance. Now you try it."

Tate smiled timidly. He had always wished, secretly, that he could be the sort of a man to have a woman like Virtue. But now, rather than meet her startling frank gaze, he let his eyes fall to the sheaf of paper on his knees—the solved cipher.

"You should see Gimiendo eat Lotus," Virtue's lilting voice went on. "Sometimes he concentrates so thoroughly on the mildness that his mind is blank for half an hour at a time."

"My mind just isn't in condition for that," Tate murmured.

"Ah, the cipher—it bothers you?"

"I'm excited."

"May I see it?"

Tate looked a little worried. "G. H. Q. ordered me not to let anyone see it until he did," he apologized.

Virtue leaned toward him, her delicate, slender shoulder passing his cheek. The fragrance of her perfume made him strangely dizzy. Then her lids lowered —the *hsiaochieh* look. It did things to him. Little, warm Christmas tree bulbs broke inside his stomach—pop! pop! pop! He began to blush a great deal

and he handed her the solution to the cipher.

As Virtue studied it, her brow knitted. She glanced up at Tate questioningly. "But this is in French."

"The cipher was in French," said Tate, gradually though not completely recovering from his encounter with Virtue's fatal charms. "It was rather a simple one. Now the only trouble is, the thing still doesn't make sense."

Virtue looked up. "You don't make sense of it?" she asked.

"Do you? I can translate the French, but then what? It says that the next delivery of receipts numbered 1,940 to 5,620 will be delivered at the house of Tang in Pan Tao and that payment in full account on the last delivery should be turned over to their agent at the same time. It's signed by Colonel Nohuri. Who is Nohuri? What are the receipts? Why is the cipher in French? Who is Tang? And isn't Pan Tao within our lines?"

Virtue creased her penciled brows prettily. "Gimiendo will know," she said.

"You boarded the Lunghai Express in Pan Tao day before yesterday, didn't you?" Tate asked with sudden suspicion.

Mountain of Virtue smiled without answering. She gazed across the garden to where Quinto approached on his return from the mountain.

"THE house of Tang," said Quinto, "is a tea house. Very good sherry there."

"And Colonel Nohuri?" asked John Tate.

"A Japanese colonel with headquarters across the Yellow River."

Quinto's sunny expression swiftly changed to one of irritation as he mentioned the colonel's name. The cipher meant added complications in an already perplexing situation and anything that took the big man from his work as a guerrillero instructor upset him.

"So this invader colonel has learned to write in French," he growled. "That is the only trouble with culture. It gets into bad hands." He glanced from the cipher translation to Tate's ruddy face. "Señor Tate, you must type out a military order for my guerrilleros with proper passes for crossing and re-entering the lines. Ten guerrilleros will enter Japanese territory near Pan Tao and capture Colonel Nohuri. We'll find why he writes in French and what these receipts are."

Tate nodded, though somewhat dazed by Quinto's unmilitary procedure. One just didn't capture enemy colonels to cross-question them—or did one? Tate realized this was Northwest China and he remembered the Lunghai Express. Anything could happen.

"*Oiga,* Tate, you must also call military headquarters at Pan Tao. Inform them that my men will pass there."

"Gimiendo, the balls, remember!" said Virtue.

"Oh, yes. And Tate, in that order put in a reminder. My guerrilleros should remember to keep an eye out for new billiard balls. Ivory ones."

Quinto smiled gratefully at Virtue. He selected a lotus from the basket at her side, broke the pod expertly. For several minutes his features assumed a beatifically blank expression while he munched a few seeds. John Tate was engrossed for he had never seen a man stand, looking out over a sun-swept garden, beautiful with its winding canal and tile roofed villas, and yet be so distant from it all.

At last, the Mexican spat his seeds into the canal and sat down cross-legged upon the grassy bank. "Where is the Señorita Woodford?" he asked lazily.

"With Doctor McKay," said Tate.

Quinto nodded, satisfied. He spread his broad brown fingers upon his knees, rubbing creaseless cotton trousers. "I'm getting somewhere; slowly, step by step," he murmured. "A bit more light shed on Firth and Harrow may eventually show us who was so very interested in the two men."

"You suspect someone already?" Tate stood by interestedly.

"No. But if I fail to discover who pushed Harrow over the cliff, or who assassinated Señor Clive by means of clues and inquiry, I'll catch the criminal by other means—by dialectics. A good

system, that. I'll take everything apart, searching into the lives of both men and all persons connected with the crimes. Somewhere, sometime, someone's path crossed the lives of these men. Perhaps five years ago, perhaps only yesterday. . . ."

Quinto's eyes narrowed as he paused to roll himself a cigarette.

"The paths begin to cross," he said slowly. "We have Harrow, Papa Wier and Wang meeting secretly in Chiang's cave. The meeting time was noon, yesterday, but Harrow was absent. However, a Mr. Yellow Coat appeared."

"Was it a fact they were to have a meeting?" Tate interrupted curiously.

"No. It's my suspicion. But the threads cross. Didn't we intercept a message in French to Wang? Aren't Harrow and Papa Wier in Wang's system of bookkeeping? It resembles a crossword puzzle, yet one thing stands out clearly."

Quinto lit his cigarette and calmly looked at Virtue and Tate through the billow of smoke he blew out.

"What?" Tate asked hesitantly.

"A piece of red clay was carried from the cliff where Harrow was murdered into Clive Firth's room. The heel that deposited that clay is the size of that on a woman's walking shoe. Did the person who murdered Señor Abe return to murder Clive?"

TATE saw Virtue part her lips as if to gasp, then her slender fingers went to her mouth and she belched delicately. Her gaze swept from man to man with a look of utter innocence in it. Tate's eyes shot toward Quinto, wondering whether he had seen Virtue's action. He hadn't.

"Most interesting at the moment," said Quinto, "is why Mignon Chauvet was shocked by the description of Mr. Yellow Coat. She became evasive. We also know she hated Harrow. Why? And she was very intimate with Clive Firth though this arrangement has dimmed somewhat since Mary Wier and her father came to Lingtung. Señorita Chauvet argued with Firth last night. Was she the last to see him alive?"

Quinto posed his questions and let them stand.

"Naturally, if Miss Chauvet murdered," said Virtue, "she murdered one, not both."

"So?" Quinto looked up questioningly.

"The method," Virtue said softly. "Mignon is a woman. A French woman. When a woman murders, she makes plans only so far as the bare decision to murder. She doesn't plan. She kills in a burst of anger or jealousy with whatever weapon falls into her hand at the moment. I refuse to consider Mignon Chauvet murdering one man by throwing him over a cliff and the other with a gun. She would be too emotionally upset to kill a second man the same day."

"But why did she hate Harrow?" asked Tate.

"Mignon Chauvet is a very confused woman," said Virtue. "She has been jealous, and still is. She's jealous of Mary Wier because the little girl, for the short time she has been here, had much to say about Clive Firth. But . . . she had a stronger reason for hating Mr. Harrow."

Quinto looked up sharply.

"Miss Chauvet," said Virtue, "shot a man in Paris. She left France in great haste. Since then she has lived in Spanish Morocco. When war came to China, she came. She was a doctor. Mr. Harrow knew of this!"

Quinto sat up with a jerk. "How long has this situation existed?" he asked quickly.

"For some time," replied Virtue.

"Blackmail," John Tate gasped. "Harrow blackmailed Miss Chauvet. That explains his bank deposits at Hankow. It's really rotten taking advantage of a woman like that. I shan't blame her in the least if we find that she . . ."

"But what if Mr. Firth knew this also?" suggested Virtue.

"Did he?" asked Quinto.

Virtue pursed her rose-like lips. "Why Gimiendo, how did you think I discovered Mignon had shot a man in Paris and that Harrow also knew this fact?" murmured the girl.

Tate's eyes widened in amazement.

"You're almost saying Firth murdered Harrow to protect the French girl from blackmail," he cried. "Is that true? Then who killed Firth? Not Miss Chauvet?"

"Ah, the puzzles again," Quinto sighed once more as he relaxed upon the bank of the garden canal. "Who killed Señor Clive? Who? Wang . . . Wier . . . McKay . . . Chi . . . Mr. Ho . . . Señorita Chauvet. . . . Instinct tells me not to trust Wang. He spied on Clive Firth yesterday. Why . . ?"

He glanced searchingly at Virtue while a long wisp of cigarette smoke trailed through his lips and up his brown cheeks. "*Chica*," he asked, "where was Wang last night?"

Virtue avoided the question. "I hardly think Wang is guilty," she said.

"Your poetry reciting ended at one o'clock in the night. Were you with him after that?"

"Until two thirty," Virtue answered demurely. "But Wang didn't kill Harraw or Firth. He's a middle class Chinese and no patriot. He does not murder. He hires others to do it."

John Tate watched the two. He was fascinated. This contrast between the huge gentle-mannered adventurer and the lovely Eurasian girl could only happen in China. And he was also shocked for Virtue had a mysterious way of knowing more than her eyes told, and of having gained her knowledge by methods which Tate's Boston forefathers would not have considered bona fide.

Suddenly, from the direction of Lingtung, distant bells began to toll. A second later, a bell in the gardens took up the clanging.

An annoyed expression clouded Quinto's features. "Air raid!" he said.

Tate grew pale. "Here?"

"Perhaps," said Quinto. "It's usually the railway station though sometimes they come here. Go to the *yamen*. See that no one remains in the building. It's dangerous. The *refugio* or shelter is at the end of the garden a bit east of Señor Firth's pavilion."

The deep drone of bombers reverberated in the sky. Three planes rode high, looking like silver minnows flashing against the tile blue sky. The boom of an anti-aircraft cannon echoed from Lingtung. The projectiles cut a hollow, ominous sound above the earth.

Tate leaped to his feet, trembling. He shot a worried glance at Quinto who was stretched on his back the better to watch the planes. Virtue also stared upward while her delicately shaped fingers calmly broke lotus pods.

The drone of the planes, like the hum of angry bees, moved the earth to sudden action. In the gardens the Chinese guerrilleros scurried out of the Little Theater and the *yamen* to watch the sky.

"Under trees!" Quinto's voice suddenly roared.

Tate abruptly curbed his urge to run. He took a grip on himself and walked from tree to tree toward the air raid shelter, praying he'd make it before bombs fell.

DOC McKAY and Mildred Woodford stood in the doorway of a peasant hut just beyond the West Gate of the gardens. Mildred ogled a half dozen cooing doves nesting under the eaves of the hut. An old Chinese woman with stringy black hair and worn features held another dove in her scrawny hand and stroked its head.

"I say, McKay old fruit, ask how much she'll sell them for," said Mildred.

The doctor translated the question for the Chinese woman and got an answer.

"She says she'll begin at five *tael* apiece and bargain down to three *tael*."

"I'll take them," said Mildred.

"No. You've got to bargain a wee bit," McKay answered with a sly twinkle in his eyes. "Otherwise the price stays at five *tael*. That's the custom."

"I say, that is silly."

"What of it. It's still the custom."

"How long will it take, and all that?"

The doctor sucked on his dry pipe. "Perhaps a half hour," he said. "Spend an hour bargaining and you'll get the doves for a *tael* apiece."

"Really now. I do say, do you think they're worth the five *tael*?"

"Well, they're a scrawny lot. Not much meat on them."

"Really. I don't want them for meat," said Mildred. "Do they home?"

McKay looked puzzled, then he broke into a quiet laugh. "Homing pigeons!" he snorted. "Trying to get past the censors? Well, you'll nay get a word out by these birds."

Mildred Woodford's Yorkshire nose crinkled angrily. "Now, no ragging, old fruit," she said harshly. "I'm jolly mad about this business, you know. You're not hiding anything from me, really. I have reason to know a Mr. Harrow was murdered here yesterday under dashed unusual circumstances. What is more, another man was murdered. An Englishman."

"A Scot," said McKay.

"Very well then—a Scot. But mind you, it's a story. You can't keep it from the press. I'll get to the bottom of it. You may tell Captain Quinto, if it pleases you. I mean to say, this is a challenge and all that. I'll find out who murdered those two men before he does. Tell him that, will you!"

"My bet is on G.H.Q.," said McKay.

Bells tolled in Lingtung, then in the Pavilion gardens. McKay managed to take the Englishwoman's arm, propelling her toward the West Gate.

"Come along," he said sharply. "We're going to the shelter. Air raid!"

"I say, let's watch the thing."

"Come along!"

BOMBS dropped upon Lingtung. They made a continuous, relentless sound like the rushing of air through a big funnel and finally banging into a hollow drum. Geysers of yellow smoke shot up in the distance.

Flashing silver in the sunlight, the three bombers made a bowbend toward the Lingtung Pavilions, lacing bombs along the road as they came. The explosions broke closer and the sunlight seemed to rock and reverberate with each blast as if the daylight were made of bricks and windows.

From the pink brick guard house came the sounds of rifle fire and boisterous laughter. Sergeant Sun and two Chinese guerrilleros danced upon the tile roof, firing at the planes with a shotgun, a rifle and a pistol, all the while enjoying themselves as much as at a first-rate duck hunt.

At the first warning of the bombers, Mary Wier and her father ran from their villa, leaving the door open. Papa Wier threw a fearful penetrating look at the sky and though he saw no planes, he raced across the garden, past the little lagoon to the air raid shelter.

Mary hesitated in the path, then she felt strong fingers take her arm, urging her forward. It was Nevada.

"Hurry!" The cowboy spoke in a quick tense voice. "They're going to drop here!"

Mary let him hold her around the waist. It was the first time she had ever done that. "I'm afraid, Nevada," she whimpered.

"It's O. K. kid. I'll take care of you."

In another few seconds they were at the shelter. "O.K., go in, Mary," said Nevada. "I'm staying out to watch."

The girl glanced at the *refugio*. It was a deep horseshoe tunnel with two entrances. It had been cut into rock. Mary shook her head and held Nevada's arm.

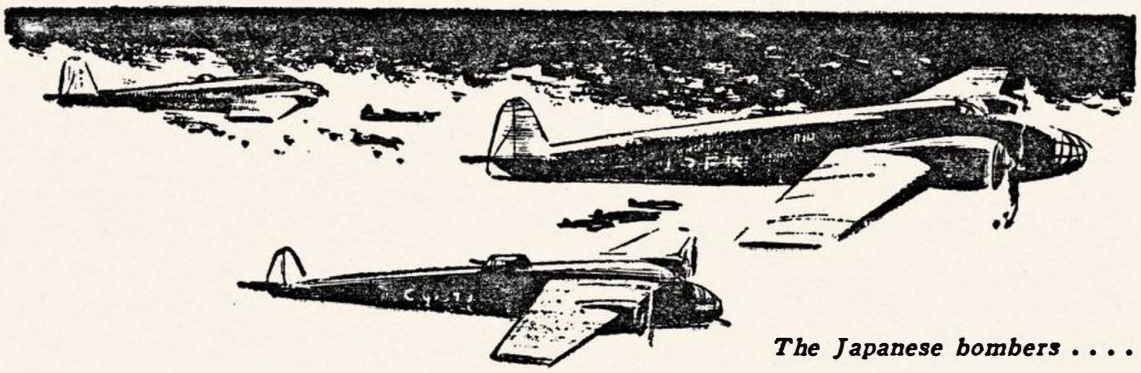
"I'll stay with you," she answered softly.

Mignon Chauvet hurried by and entered the gloomy tunnel. Then John Tate came. Nevada saw Mr. Ho standing a few feet within the second entrance complacently smoking his long clay pipe. Wang and two Chinese servants hurried in as the drone of the plane engines increased.

Nevada's lean face was tilted like a shoe box, his eyes glued to the three planes in the sky. He barely noticed McKay and the Englishwoman as they hurried to the tunnel. The planes let out a queer cackling sound, machine gun signals. Suddenly Nevada pushed Mary to the ground and fell over her, his body a protective shield.

"Here it comes! Hold tight!"

A dozen guerrilleros, standing in the shade of a nearby tree fell flat. The roar of the planes swelled and the earth shook with explosions. A bomb exploded with a burst of red flame. A pine tree rode the top of a dirt geyser. A second bomb followed, fifteen feet behind.



The Japanese bombers . . . .

Nevada saw one of the Chinese students, who was crouching in the open, bounced into the air by the first concussion. The cowboy was on his knees in an instant. Abruptly, he felt a sharp blow against his ribs. The shock spun him around and threw him down.

He saw the bombers skate off across the sky. The dust of explosions hanging over the gardens. Then he saw Mary kneeling at his side, pale and terrified.

"Nevada!" she cried. "You're hurt!"

Doc McKay appeared with Miss Woodford tagging behind him. The doctor lent a helping hand.

"On your feet, laddie," he said. "So the shrapnel caught you. Well, to the surgery. We'll dig it out."

Mary Wier was crying now.

NEVADA sat on a stool in the surgery, his chest bare and his lips clamped together grimly while the doctor probed the wound in his side.

"Hold tight, laddie," murmured McKay. "You're lucky. The fourth rib deflected it. Just a minute now."

"Looks like I don't have to go to the front to get hit," Nevada grinned.

"That was very foolish, standing up in the bombing," said Quinto as he watched the operation.

"I thought one of the kids was hit," drawled Nevada. "Guess he weren't."

"Watch your grammar, laddie," said McKay.

The surgery door opened suddenly. Tate hastened in, red-faced and enthused. He was still at bit shaky from the air raid but his excitement over-rode that.

"Look, Quinto—the gun!"

He dangled a small derringer model pistol by its trigger guard. The gun was of an old design, squat and no more than five inches long.

"Mignon Chauvet found it," said Tate animatedly. "Or she *said* she found it in the air raid shelter when the bombing ended. She stepped on it."

Quinto took the gun, examining it. McKay paused for a moment to stare at it as did Nevada. It was indeed a tiny gun. It had two stubby barrels, over and under type. The bullets could only be fired one at a time, being touched off by a single cap-striker which had to be adjusted separately for each barrel by a simple sliding catch. On its side the maker's name was engraved. . . .

Comblain-Braendlin—1871

Quinto broke the barrels. "Two shots fired," he observed somewhat mystified. "Cartridge cases are still in. *Hmm*, .41 caliber, this is the gun that murdered Señor Clive."

"I tried not to smudge any fingerprints," said Tate. "Miss Chauvet's are on there but . . ."

"I care little for fingerprints," said Quinto. "If we had the laboratory of the Hankow or Shanghai police it might be different."

"Say, Quinto laddie—" There was a curious note in Doc McKay's dry voice. He held up a slippery, dark-crimsoned object, the cause of Nevada's wound. "This isn't shrapnel," he said slowly. "It's a bullet."

Quinto snatched the bullet from his fingers. His face wore a forbidding expression as he wiped blood from the pellet and scrutinized it.

"Again, .41 caliber, and from this gun," he said.

"You mean to say Nevada was shot at? It wasn't the bombs?" Tate gasped.

Quinto nodded impatiently. "Where did you stand when you were hit?" he asked Nevada.

The cowboy thought for a moment and wet his drawn lips. "Near the west entrance of the tunnel," he said. "Me and Mary was there. I was facing Firth's villa just as I was clipped."

"That would put your left side to the tunnel. The side you were struck on," said Quinto.

"Yeah, that's right."

"You were shot by someone in that tunnel," Quinto spoke slowly. He turned toward Tate. "Señor Tate, I want you to make a list of all who were in the *refugio* and who stood near the two entrances. I think something very surprising will come of this."

CHAPTER X

THE LITTLE-SHORT-ATTACK

AN hour after the air raid, Quinto led John Tate into town and then out along the Wei Ho River, following the track bed of the Lunghai railway.

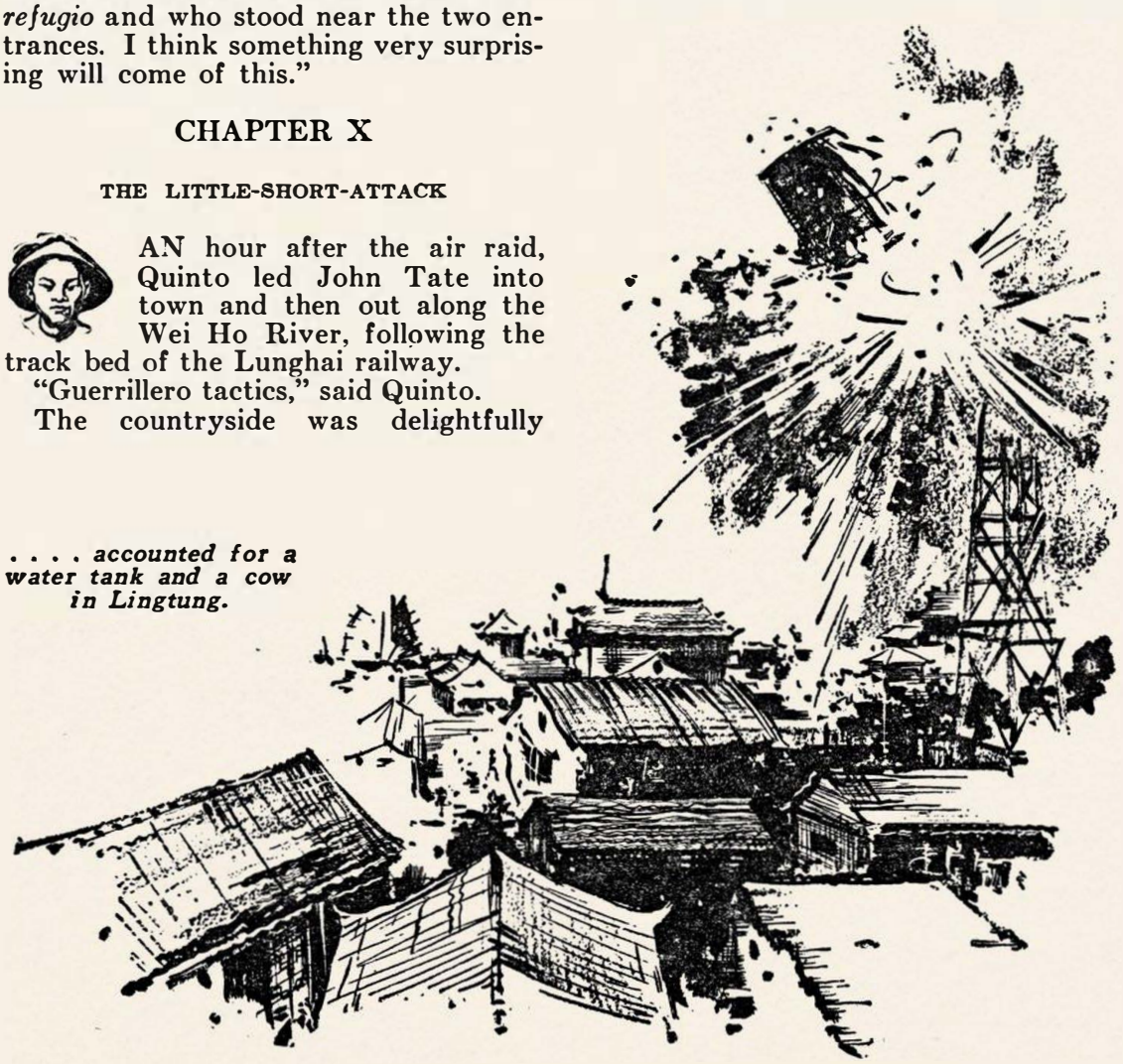
"Guerrillero tactics," said Quinto.

The countryside was delightfully peaceful and sunny. The east and west bound trains had already passed, as well as the Japanese bombers which had accounted for only two important military objectives—a water tank and a cow, both in Lingtung proper.

After the air raid and lunch, Quinto had called out his war-like students (all but the ten who had been dispatched to capture the Japanese Colonel Nohuri) and prepared to deploy them in their daily afternoon lesson.

"Today, our objective is the railroad trestle which spans a small canal emptying into the Wei Ho where it curves by Running Wind Mountain," explained Quinto as he marched along, his clothes fluttering in the breeze. "We'll experiment with the *little-short-attack*."

Tate puffed along, listening interest-



. . . . accounted for a water tank and a cow in Lingtung.

edly, wishing he had taken gym while in college. The floppy brim of his Panama shook before his eyes and his bandaged right arm bounced outward somewhat awkwardly with each step, making it look as though he had one wing and were about to take off.

His Mexican companion was in an expansive mood, particularly concerning partisan warfare.

"My guerrilleros, they are wonderful. The Chinese man is as good as a Mexican for this kind of fighting. If Doroteo Arango Pancho Villa could only see them, he would cry." Quinto threw his arm about Tate's shoulder in good fellowship. "I'll really show you how my men work. We are a special branch of the army, like nothing else. We never operate behind enemy lines in huge divisions as the excellent Eighth and Fourth Route Armies. My men are never more than one company. They are trained to capture trains, munition dumps, enemy generals, blow up roads and paralyze the invader without wishing to hold a position. An old Mexican trick, you will notice."

"The little-short-attack?" asked Tate curiously.

"Ah," Quinto beamed, "the attack is a work of genius. Soldiers appear out of nowhere, attack the Japanese bridge and disappear instantly. They approach singly, disperse as individuals. It makes pursuit impossible. I have many versions of the attack but today we'll use the Chu Teh style."

Tate stared about wonderingly. They had come to the railway trestle, a low wooden structure spanning an irrigation canal. All seemed too unusually peaceful. There were no signs of Quinto's fifty guerrilleros.

Below, on the left, the Wei Ho glistened and rippled in the afternoon sun. A fisherman poled a long, narrow boat through the rice grass along the bank. He fished with a tame cormorant which dove into the water, reappearing with a fish in its beak. A string wound about the bird's neck jerked tightly, a precaution to keep it from swallowing the catch. At the canal head, two peasants worked a water wheel and discussed the war. To the right of the track in a small cultivated area that extended beneath the sheer cliff of Running Wind Mountain, some twenty peasants were noisily weeding and hoeing.

Quinto surveyed the bucolic scene with satisfaction. "Now the attack," he warned Tate.

The two men withdrew about twenty yards from the bridge. Quinto took out his watch and the little derringer pistol which had been found in the air raid shelter. Quinto had loaded the gun with two .38 cartridges, fitting the smaller sized shells into the chambers by winding them with tissue paper—a trick he had learned in Old Mexico where bullets and guns did not always match.

He held the derringer overhead and fired. Tate jumped back in surprise, then astonishment.

The peace and quiet of the little valley suddenly blasted from its foundations. Firecrackers exploded in a dozen places. The peasants in the field dropped their hoes, seized guns and charged the bridge, uttering a wild series of war cries. The cormorant fisherman shoved his boat shoreward and scrambled up the bank. Three additional soldiers appeared out of the boat bottom.

"*Mi guerrilleros,* they disguise themselves well," said Quinto, his face glowing proudly.

"Disguise!" Tate gasped. "My God!"

BEFORE Tate's very eyes, the bridge just vanished. Guerrilleros swarmed all over it like a busy horde of locusts. The tracks were ripped up and hauled to one side. The wooden ties and planking were piled on the opposite bank of the canal. The guerrilleros shouted in unison as they labored—"He, ho, he, ho." With the last "ho" the bridge was no more.

Quinto raised his hand. "The retreat!" he shouted in Chinese.

Before the echo of his voice had died, fifty destructive guerrilleros raced in various directions, crossing paths, dodging like football players through the field. Two of them suddenly remembered something, returned and put red lanterns at each end of where the bridge had been, then vanished with the rest.

Within a minute all was peace and quiet in the Wei Ho Valley.

"It's utterly incredible," Tate murmured.

"Now," said Quinto, thoroughly satisfied, "we return to town. I must remember to have the station master send the track coolies to replace the bridge before the trains come tomorrow. You'll notice, Señor Tate, here it is simple. Track coolies repair the bridge immediately. For the Japanese it is far more difficult; Chinese coolies are unwilling to do repair work for them."

Still too astonished to say anything, Tate trudged along beside the Mexican, wondering what next. A short distance up the track he watched Quinto fasten a bit of paper to a stick and plant it between the ties. Quinto backed away from the paper, counting his steps until he had taken ten. Then he drew the derringer. He aimed carefully, fired point blank and missed.

"I never miss," he said, as if this were a plain statement of fact. To demonstrate, he now twirled forth his own service pistol. There came a thunderous roar as the gun kicked. Tate saw the bit of paper torn to shreds. "You see," he added. "The derringer gun makes a great difference in the murder of Señor Firth. It is inaccurate at a distance as short as twenty feet. Derringers are only for card players, for shooting across a table. Clive Firth was shot by someone inside his villa. Someone holding this gun. To shoot accurately into the heart, where else could one stand?"

"The criminal might have reached through the window," Tate suggested rather dubiously.

"Ah, no. Firth would have heard the sound. He sat almost facing the window. It was some person he knew. A friend who visited in his room. Señor Clive was relaxed in his chair. There were two glasses of liquor on the table. Men only drink with friends. It was someone he knew quite well."

Quinto waited, as if he wanted Tate to advance a possible suspect.

"Miss Chauvet?" The calligraphist hesitated. "The gun is French."

"Ah, it means nothing. China is full of old guns, French, Spanish, German, English and American. When we have a country at war, a blockade against arms, men will use anything to fight with. Yet the gun has one very interesting point."

"Fingerprints?"

"No. The name. Comblain-Braendlin. It's a valuable gun. I believe I can get a good price for it. A collector's price. Perhaps one hundred and thirty dollars, American!"

"It was a very expensive murder—Firth's."

"Did you look into the arrangement of where the people stood in the *refugio* when Nevada was shot?"

Tate took out his notebook. "Yes, here it is," he said. "The tunnel is horse-shoe shaped with two entrances. Mr. Ho, the old scholar, stood near the west entrance. Behind him was Wang, two of Wang's servants and Papa Wier. In the east entrance the order is as follows. Mignon Chauvet, Doctor McKay, Miss Woodford and, I think, one of the Chinese boys. The entrances are so narrow that only the first or second person could have fired the shot at Nevada. Of course, there was so much concussion and dust during the actual bombing a gun shot couldn't be heard."

"And *mucho suerte* or luck for Nevada that the gun was a derringer. So inaccurate," murmured Quinto. He pursed his lips tightly and walked on in thoughtful silence.

THEY came to the road station in town. A number of new windows had been shattered by a bomb which had exploded nearby in the raid. The station water tank had also been hit. Its seams had burst and the water umbrellaed out. A coolie was now busily camouflaging it with some branches and tattered pieces of cloth.

Quinto stepped into the station a moment to inform the master of the damage to his trestle. The railway man took the news complacently for such things were not unusual in China. Why, a few years back, in 1876, the complete trackage of the first Chinese railway had to be torn up and the ties burned. Afterwards, the railway had to be re-routed because the

line had been laid in a way which offended the *fêng shui* or Wind and Water Spirits.

The *fêng shui*, even now in the war, exerted a terrific influence on the Celestial Nation. They guide the Tiger and Dragon currents which run through the earth, hence, through most of life. The Chinese are not religious fanatics but they do respect the supernatural. They practice what they call, "Politeness toward possibilities." It is this polite-

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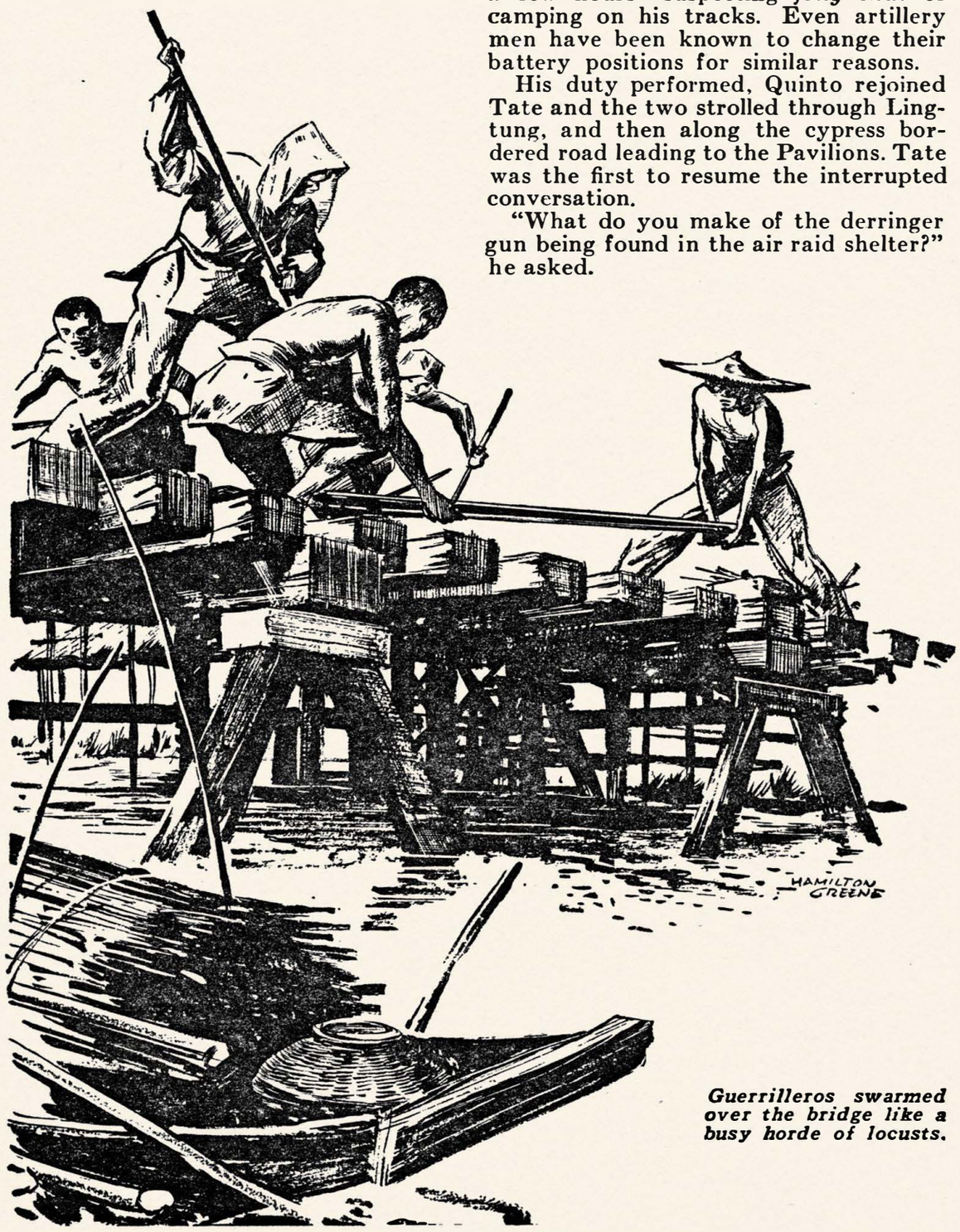
His duty performed, Quinto rejoined Tate and the two strolled through Lingtung, and then along the cypress bordered road leading to the Pavilions. Tate was the first to resume the interrupted conversation.

"What do you make of the derringer gun being found in the air raid shelter?" he asked.



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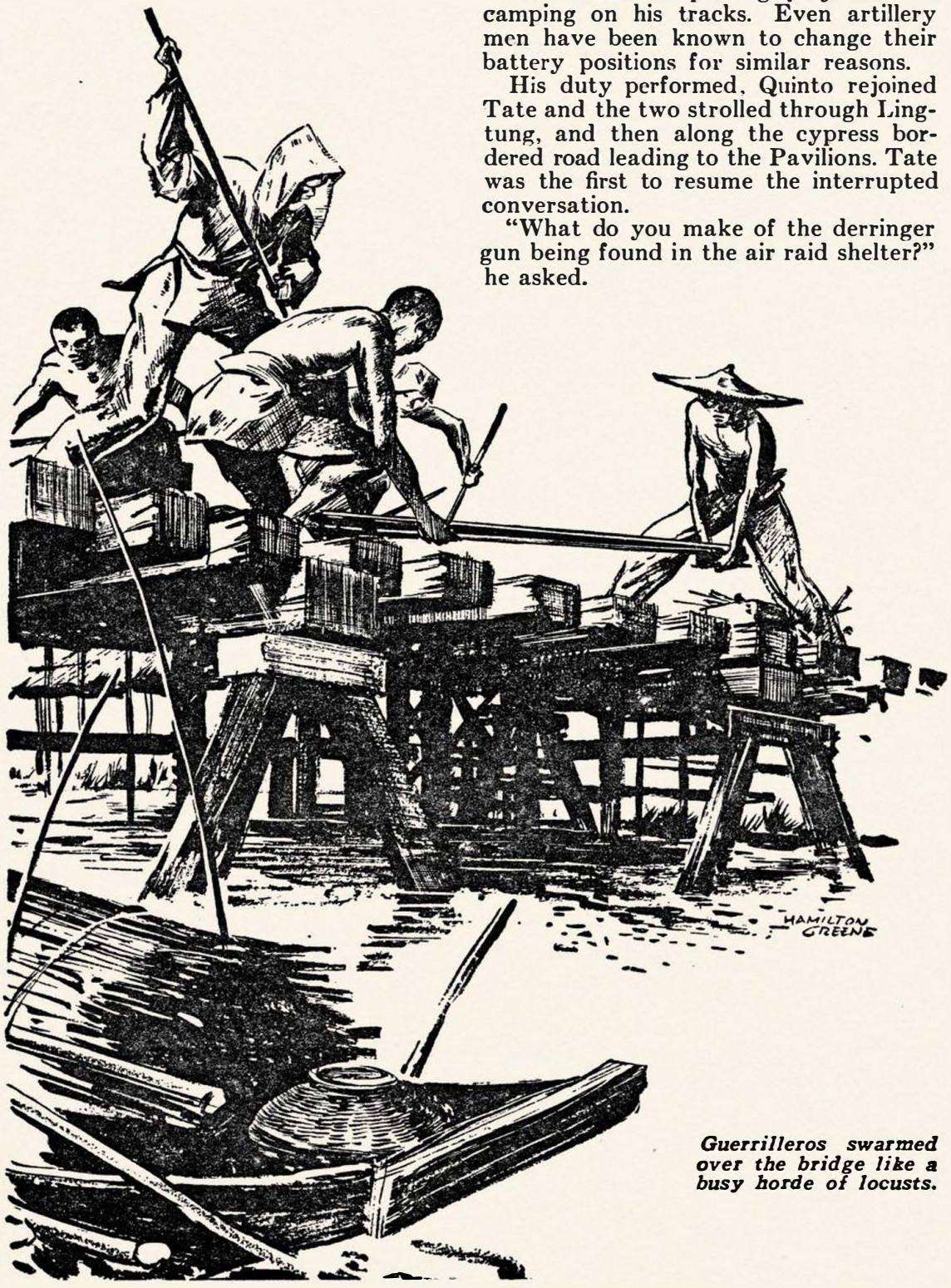


Guerrilleros swarmed over the bridge like a busy horde of locusts.

"I don't know," Quinto murmured. "You?"

"It seems to fit almost too easily, doesn't it? Miss Chauvet found the gun beneath her foot. She *says* she found it. That doesn't mean she found it there or even found it at all. Maybe she had it all along."

"You suspect she fired at Nevada?"

"I don't know. I only thought . . ."

"If the gun was dropped," Quinto cut in, "it was sheer carelessness. A murderer wouldn't carry such incriminating evidence around for a full night and a morning. The gun was dropped in the *refugio* after Señor Clive was killed. The important fact is, the gun proves the murderer was in the room and Clive must have known him well."

"Firth was a cool one?" asked Tate.

"Brave? . . . Yes . . . like all Scots—the bravest soldiers on earth."

"Must have been. I doubt if I could sit by calmly while someone waved a gun at me, even if it were my wife or mother."

"Firth was brave in more ways than you can imagine." Quinto spoke with the suggestion of a catch in his voice. "Señor Clive put aside his good position in England to fight beside the Chinese people."

"Position?" asked Tate. "Did he have a good job?"

Quinto smiled and dug a long, much stamped envelope from his pocket and handed it to Tate. From the numerous changed addresses on it, the missive had probably wandered around China for months. The original post mark was *London, England.* It was addressed to Clive Firth.

Tate opened the letter, then raised his brows curiously. The letter head was that of Simeon Shand, a solicitor located at King's Row, London.

"This is a curious thing to be wandering around China," he muttered.

"But read it," Quinto urged.

Tate read:

Dear Lord Firth:

It is my painful duty to inform you that your father, the late Lord Thomas Firth, died January fifteenth. Naturally you inherit his full title and such properties as are detailed in his last will. As family solicitor I have been designated as executor of the said will which, with the exception of six satisfactory legacies to family servants, places in your hands the entire Firth Estate in Scotland, the Firth Newspaper Enterprises and other assets in bank deposits and bonds valued at 50,000 pounds.

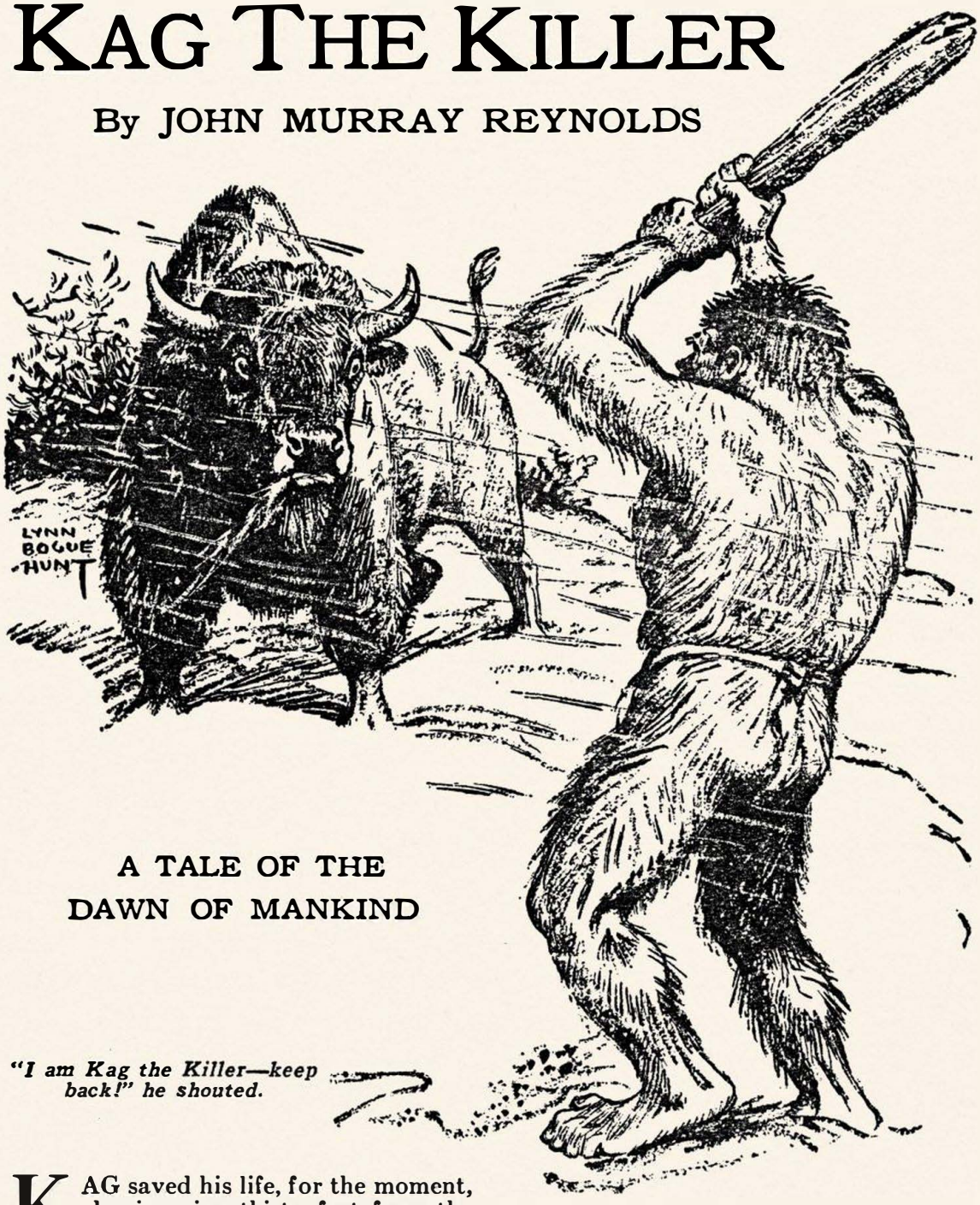
As your solicitor I beg to suggest it is advisable that you leave China and take up your inherited duties as head of the estate.

Sincerely, Simeon B. Shand.

(To be concluded)

KAG THE KILLER

By JOHN MURRAY REYNOLDS



A TALE OF THE DAWN OF MANKIND

"I am Kag the Killer—keep back!" he shouted.

KAG saved his life, for the moment, by jumping thirty feet from the cliff into the river below. The blood from his torn shoulder stained the water as he swam. He looked back once, but Big Monno was merely hurling curses at him from the cliff and was not making any attempt to come down. The new chief of the Tree-folk was satisfied with having driven his deposed predecessor into exile.

When he had climbed the far bank of the river, Kag shook the water from his eyes and then plastered river mud on his wounds to stop the bleeding.

"But Kag still lives!" he said aloud. It was his defiance of whatever dark gods there were that ruled the forest. Kag was shivering and cold as he pushed his way through the trees and underbrush,

all the way across the groves till he came to the very edge of the grassland itself.

At the edge of the prairie, Kag sat down with his back against a tree trunk. First he glanced upward, to make sure that there was a good branch within reach above him, if any of the larger animals came his way. Only by eternal watchfulness could a man survive at all, in those long-ago days of the Youth of the World.

Kag had saved his life for the moment, but he knew that he was not likely to keep it for long. He would starve in this barren countryside that had already been stripped bare of all food by the foraging parties of the Tree-folk, yet he knew that Big Monno would kill him if he ever returned to the groves of the tribe. The recent fight had shown him that. Kag was as strong as the average, and he had still the shrewdness that had first brought him to the leadership of the tribe. but he had no chance against the mighty muscles of the new chief. The next time, Big Monno would kill him. Deposed chiefs were sometimes allowed to live by a new leader who had overthrown them—but not when there was a woman in the case. It was the fact that both men wanted slender-limbed Lalla that had brought on this fight.

"I am still Kag the leader!" he said aloud, but there wasn't much conviction in it. Kag was beaten. He was simply too stubborn to admit it.

With a grunt, Kag heaved to his feet and walked a little way out from the trees onto the open grassland. He was about five feet tall when he stood upright, and his hairy arms hung nearly to his knees. Coarse hair covered his chest and shoulders, but the rest of his body had only his tough and leathery skin. The People of the Trees had long since lost the luxuriant hair that had been the pride of their forgotten ancestors! Above Kag's eyes were heavy bone ridges, over which the skin twitched when he was angry. Only in the eyes themselves was there a change from unrelieved bestiality, and a hint of what future ages might bring. His eyes were keen, and they had a puzzled look when in repose.

As Kag walked along, with his muscular legs slightly bent and his great shoulders swaying, a chill autumn wind came across the plain to rip showers of brown leaves down from the trees. That cold wind always meant the coming of bleak weather, of comfortless days and little food, but this time it meant more than that. The People of the Trees were already close to starvation! This year the warm season had been too short to gather enough supplies against the cold moons. Already men muttered that the whole tribe would die before the winter snows had come and gone again. They said it with a dull resignation that always irritated Kag's inherent stubbornness.

AS HE walked, Kag came to a fallen branch and idly picked it up in passing. This was no mere piece of rotten wood that had fallen from its own weight, but part of a sound branch snapped off in the last wind-storm. It was straight and tough and strong, and when he broke off the smaller end the piece that remained was as long as his arm. It fitted naturally into his hand, and he tried striking the end against the ground.

In this new amusement, Kag had momentarily forgotten that he was out on the open grassland, until he heard a swift rush of padded feet. He spun about to see a lean-flanked wolf charging swiftly toward him! Panic gripped Kag then, the blind and hopeless panic of the tree-dweller caught outside his habitat, but there were no friendly branches above and he knew that it was useless to run with his ungainly legs. He was trapped! At that moment the wolf left its feet in a spring, fangs open and gaping for the throat.

Kag struck out blindly with both hands. His one thought was to protect his throat from those gleaming fangs, and he had forgotten that he still held the broken piece of branch. The end of the improvised club struck the wolf squarely on top of the head.

Legs crouched and muscles tense, his breath a hot blast between his teeth, Kag stood staring. The wolf was dead! Its skull was shattered, slow blood oozing through the crushed bones as it lay there at the ape-man's feet. Kag had no way

of judging the historical significance of the moment; no way of knowing that a long process had this moment begun. *The first weapon had been used!* The first blow had been struck with other than bare hands. For the first time a man had conquered a beast by more than the power of arm and jaw.

Suddenly Kag realized that he was mighty! He stood upright and shouted, and struck his chest. Only very rarely had one of the Tree-folk conquered a wolf single-handed, and then only at the cost of many wounds from the fangs and claws. Kag put his foot on the wolf's body and thumped his chest again. *He* had done this thing!

"I am Kag, the Killer!" he shouted.

Swift exultation had filled Kag's massive chest. Three times he measured the distance to the wolf's already shattered head and struck it smashing blows with the end of his branch, finding that he could control his club as he wanted. Now he could go back to the tribe! Now he could go to face Big Monno, and beat that thick-lipped braggart down into a bloody pulp, and resume his own leadership of the tribe! He could do these things—but he was no longer sure that he cared. Kag turned his back on the forest.

Straight across the grassland to the west the sun was setting behind the long brown line of a scarp, a straight wall of sheer crags. To the north were far-off and snow-capped mountain peaks, jagged against the sky. To the south were alternating stretches of plain and woodland. All were strange; all were regions where the Tree-folk never ventured. Only behind was there familiar territory, the forest that had been his home, and upon that Kag had turned his back. Let Big Monno and the others stay there and starve, as the cold moons dragged their way along and there was no food beneath the snow! He did not care. *He* was going to distant places!

"I am Kag—and I walk alone!" he said.

Somehow those mountains to the northward seemed to call Kag. He did not connect them with the fact that each succeeding summer had been shorter and less pleasant, for as many years as he could remember. He only knew that those distant peaks called to the new restlessness that filled his blood. However—what few journeys the Tree-folk ever took were in the opposite direction. The mountains called, but Kag's habits and instincts urged him southward. That way he would probably find better food. A minute later he had turned south, moving along the edge of the grassland.

Kag did not look back at the forest that had always been his home. Shaggy head thrown forward, his tree-branch club slanting over one shoulder, he plodded steadily to the southward. It was late in the day, and the sky was crimson with the setting sun. A chill wind whistled through the bare branches of the trees.

"I am still Kag," the ape-man repeated doggedly. "I am Kag—and I walk alone."

TWO suns later Kag was still traveling southward, far beyond the regions where any of his people had ever gone before. Time and again he had traversed wide stretches of open prairie that would once have been impassable for any of the Tree-folk. He was always nervous when he crossed these belts of grassland, in spite of the confidence born of his recent performance with his club, but fate was with him. Only once did he have a really narrow escape. That was when a saber-toothed tiger suddenly appeared over the crest of a rise, and Kag fled in stark panic from the threat of those terrible fangs. The shelter of some friendly trees had fortunately lain close at hand.

After the passing of the third sun, Kag realized that he still was not content. He had come far enough to know that his guess had been correct, and that food was more plentiful to the south than in the dying forest where lived his tribe, but he still was not content. The restlessness, the curiosity that had always set him apart from his duller-witted fellows, was stronger than ever. The decision came that evening, when he climbed into the topmost branches of a tree and the countryside was spread out before him like a fallen leaf.

To the south the land was fertile and

pleasant, much better than the home of his tribe. To the north were those same distant and somehow secretive mountains. Remote and calm, they bulked against the sky and lured him more than ever. It was the mountains and their mystery that called him, the secret of what might lie behind those ranges, and Kag suddenly knew that he would never be content until he had reached them.

That night Kag made a full meal of nuts and tender roots, and some bird's eggs he found in a tree. As soon as the first grayness of dawn awakened him, he turned his back on the fertile land and started toward the mountains. He was Kag the Killer, and he went where he wanted! This time he took a more easterly route, for sense of direction was strong and he needed no landmarks.

A few suns later Kag stood on the rim of the long scarp of brown rock. Far below across the grassland he could see the misty forest home of his people. Prairie and woodland alike had already turned brown with the blight of the cold these last few days, only the dark green of the conifers standing unchanged.

Still ahead of Kag were the mountains. From this height they were clearer than he had ever seen them before, and he could make out the lesser shapes of the foothills. They looked like a herd of aurochs, with the great bulls standing guard and the rest lying down! The wind was biting on top of the scarp, and after a minute Kag went part way down the back slope and continued his journey in the lee of the crest. For a while, after that distant glimpse of the place that had been his home, he felt lonely.

"But I am Kag, and I walk alone!" he said stubbornly, and hugged the thought to him for protection against the cold and the loneliness.

A number of suns later Kag was traveling over a vast and rising plain with the mountains now close and clear ahead. The grass was utterly withered here, the trees mere skeletons, and if it had not been for the small animals he killed with his club he would have had no food at all. At least he had found that *he* could live where others of the Tree-folk could not, and the thought filled him with a savage exultation. Fear stalked beside him in spite of his high mood, fear of the bleakness of this cold land and of what might lie ahead beyond the ranges, but he would not turn back. Stubbornly he held to the northward.

AT LAST Kag entered the foothills themselves, climbed their slopes in the midst of a stinging snow flurry that made him keep his eyes half closed. The demons of the north were deliberately trying to turn him back from the tall peaks! Once a great aurochs appeared through the driving snow ahead, and paused to stare with its red eyes. In the old days Kag would have fled at once, but with his new self-reliance he stood his ground.

"I am Kag the Killer—keep back!" he shouted.

The aurochs already knew of what lay beyond the ranges—and was therefore going elsewhere. After a moment the creature snorted and swung aside. With a triumphant grunt, Kag plunged into the forests of the foothills. He swung up into the trees for a while, just to get the familiar feel of the branches in his hands, but he had now been traveling on foot for so long that he found he could make better time.

Life was more livable under the shelter of the evergreens that cloaked the hills. Though the snow flurries had become daily occurrences, the cold did not reach him so badly and there was a fair supply of food. Kag held his way to the north, winding occasionally to follow the valleys but always climbing. As he went, he noticed that such trees as remained alive were ever more stunted, and the ground more rocky. Finally there came a time when he reached the end of even the conifers, and there was nothing beyond but rocks and snow and the barren peaks of the mountains themselves.

The last night Kag could not sleep, but lay in the snow and shivered. At dawn he was up and once more climbing. He walked knee-deep in fine, dry snow and shuffled along as fast as he could in the effort to keep warm. All about him were drifted snow and naked boulders, with the lofty peaks towering up to the cold blue sky.

Occasional animals went past him, or

briefly appeared in the distance. Once a great hairy mammoth with curved tusks went by in a smother of sparkling snow thrown up by its massive fore-legs, but for the most part the animals were strange creatures with which Kag was not familiar. Musk oxen passed him along the slopes, and mountain goats with curved horns appeared and vanished amid the peaks. Once he saw a gigantic white bear in the distance.

It was deathly cold in the pass. A bitter cold, that struck through to Kag's lungs. Then the last drifts thinned out under the drive of a snorting wind, and Kag tramped his final mile over rock that was bare of even lichens. So it was that he came to the crown of the pass—and the secret of the ranges lay spread before him.

It was a world of white that Kag faced there, a frozen world whence came a wind so cold that he took shelter behind a boulder while his teeth chattered like pebbles rolling down a stream bed. Ice was everywhere! Solid ice! A gigantic and all-engulfing frozen mass, that had submerged everything to the north except the tallest peaks.

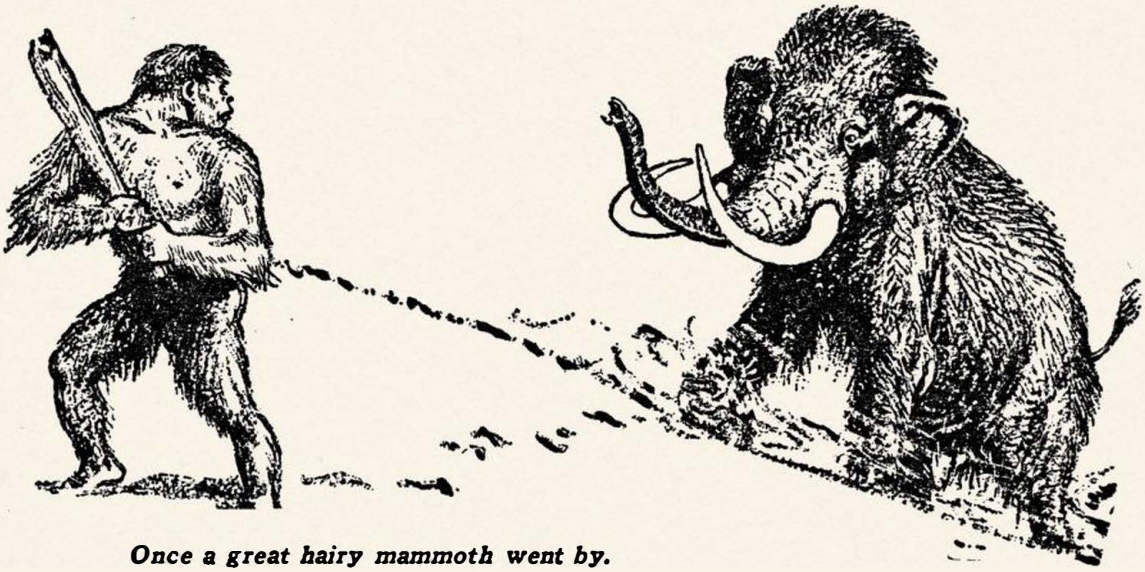
The thing that Kag saw was a continental glacier—the first advance of the Great Ice Age. The vast glacier had smothered everything as it came, and was steadily moving forward to the south.

Kag knew, as he stared, that this frozen peril was inexpressibly vast. Something had gone wrong with the life-giving sun! The same thing must be happening everywhere. Beyond the forest and the fields and the mountains, the same thing must be taking place.

Of the causes of all this, Kag of the Tree-folk knew nothing. He only knew that he was half frozen, and that his quest was ended. He had learned what lay behind the ranges! Without understanding it, Kag sensed the threat in this chill and silent desolation. It was a mighty demon! About to advance beyond the peaks, it menaced the already stricken plains below.

An idea came to Kag then, an idea and a memory. He had seen that there was fertile land to the southward, and he must lead his people thither while there was still time. With a final glance around, and a gesture that was something of a farewell to the silent peaks that no longer lured him since he knew their secret, he turned his face to the south and began to descend the way he had come.

The return went more quickly than the outward trip, for Kag had a set purpose and there were no delays for minor explorations. One evening he stopped to drink at a small stream near the base of the foothills. Kag was stooping down to

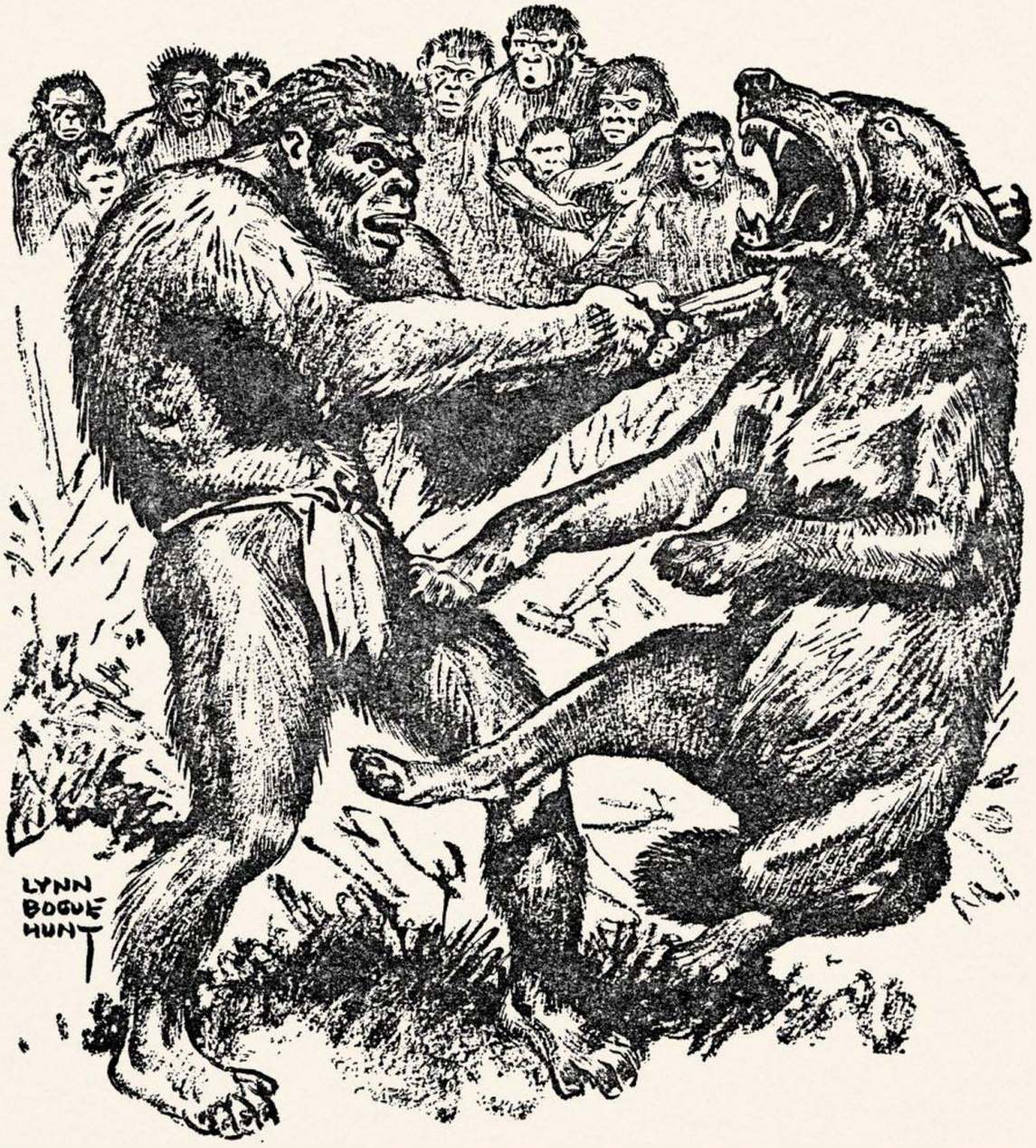


Once a great hairy mammoth went by.

the water when his eye caught the gleam of something bright and yellow lying amid the gravel. He plunged one hand in the icy water and drew it out.

The thing was not exactly a stone. Kag had never seen gold before, nor for that matter any other metal, and he only knew that this thing was bright and attractive and different from the pebbles of the stream bed. The nugget was large, and experimental hammering between two stones pounded it into a long strip. He carried it along with him for a day or so, then had an idea and twisted it around one wrist. The ends overlapped and the metal held its shape. The first bracelet had been invented.

As he traversed the grasslands, Kag



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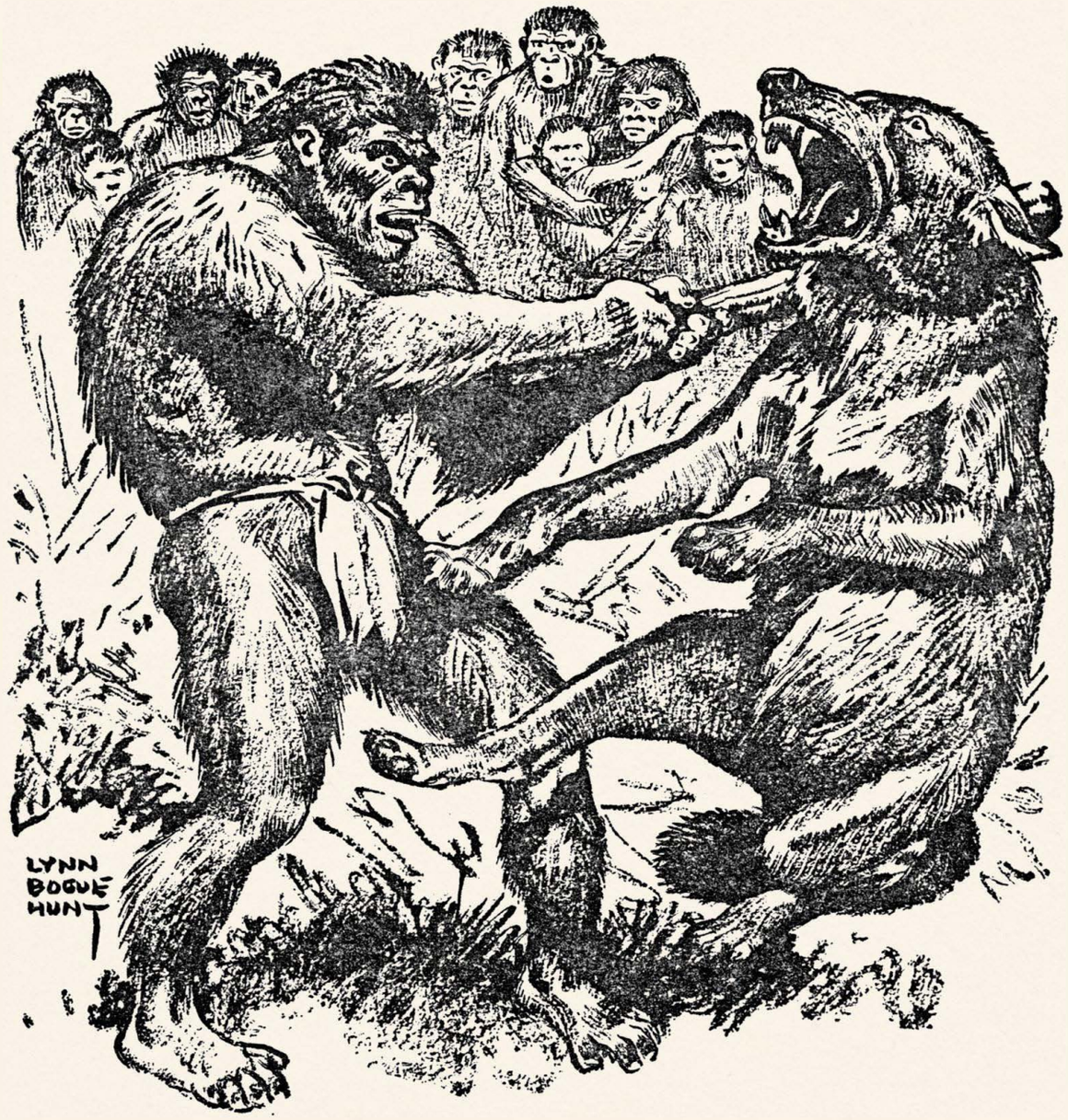


Even as one brute fell, Kag saw the other in mid-spring.

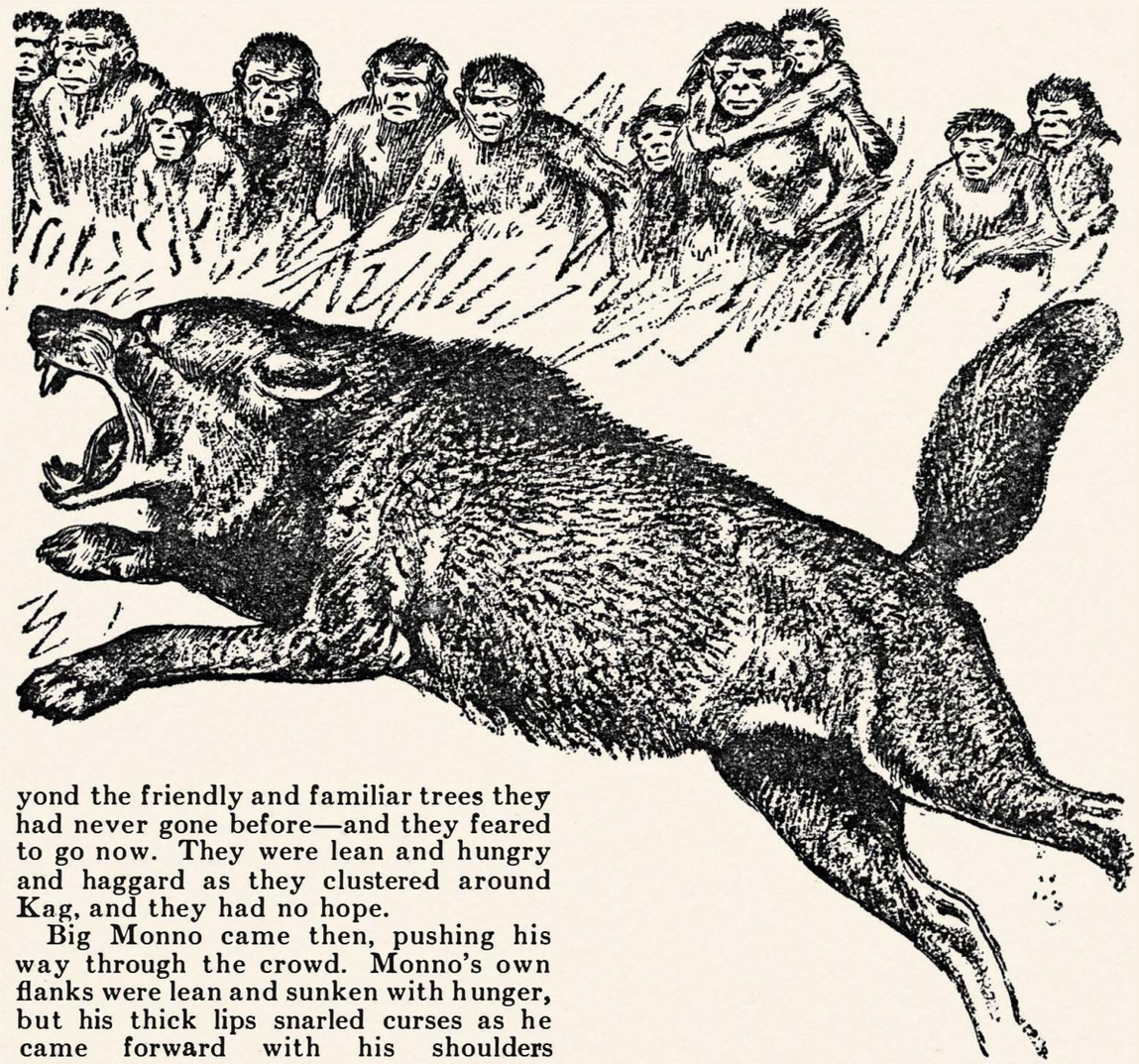
realized that the full cold of winter had come upon them even while he had been away. Drifted snow lay unmelted in the hollows. When he came to the first patches of forest he found the trees bare of leaves and birds alike. The reach of woodland that had been the home of his tribe was now deserted. Kag continued southward.

IN A little over a day he found them, clustered despairingly together at the edge of the last patch of woodland that looked out over the southern plain. The Tree-folk had gone as far as they dared in fleeing from cold and starvation. Beyond the friendly and familiar trees they had never gone before—and they feared to go now. They were lean and hungry and haggard as they clustered around Kag, and they had no hope.

Big Monno came then, pushing his way through the crowd. Monno's own flanks were lean and sunken with hunger, but his thick lips snarled curses as he came forward with his shoulders hunched. The skin over his heavy brow-ridges twitched nervously.

The rest of the tribe scattered swiftly, to be clear of the fight. For an instant Kag saw Lalla in the front of the crowd, staring at him with a puzzled wonder in her eyes. He swung his club back over one shoulder and held it with both hands, waiting with his feet wide apart.

Suddenly Big Monno leaped at him, and the crowd gave tongue in a long-drawn howl of encouragement. Ordinarily there would have followed one of those writhing, biting struggles that resulted when the Tree-folk quarreled—but Kag simply took a step to the side. He swung the heavy club with both



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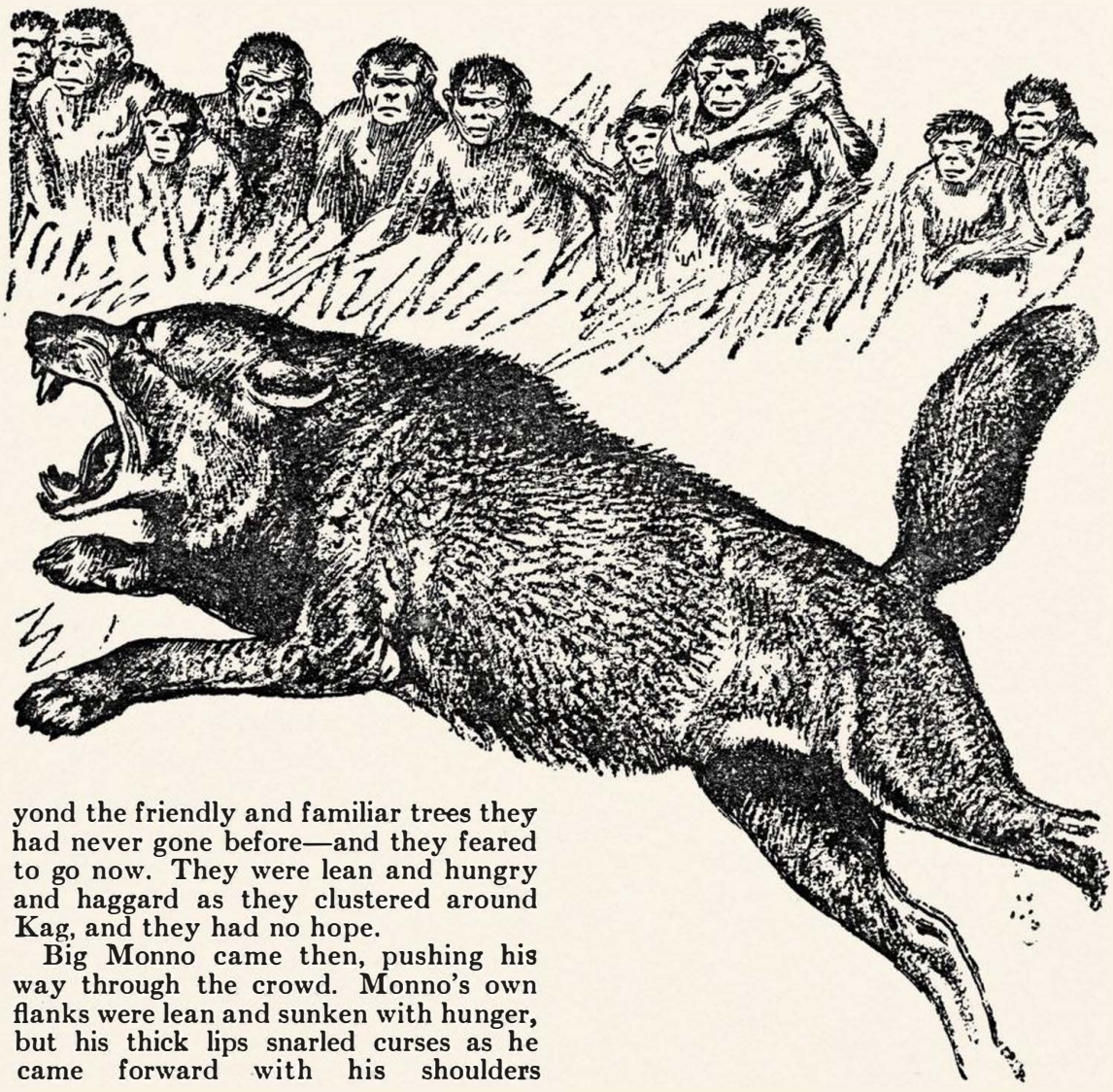


hands. There was a dull crack, a single yelp of amazement from the spectators —and big Monno had dropped in his tracks without a sound!

The others came crowding around Kag then, hailing him as the leader of the Tribe once more, but he was in no mood to waste time. He knew that there was warmth and better feeding across the open planes to the southward, and he tried to tell them as best he could.

The thing was not easy. Most of the others stared at Kag without really understanding. A few of them grasped his meaning, but still they drew back muttering. The People of the Trees had never ventured beyond the edge of their own forest. They dared not! Kag even went a few yards out onto the plain and called, and pointed to the misty blue of distant woodlands, but they would not come. Even when he became angry, and snarled and shouted and swung his club, there was no move to follow. They feared him, since he had killed Big Monno, but their terror of the Unknown was even greater.

An old gray-beard stepped forward. "We dare not go. We fear the Four-footed folk!" he said, and pointed warningly to a pair of wolves that were trotting across the plain. With a grunt of irritation, Kag went forward, gripping his club. There was fear in his own heart, but there was something else more powerful. He must show these timid fools how the thing was done! He shouted to attract the wolves.

THE pair of wolves wheeled and swept forward with a swift patter of feet, saliva dripping from their fangs. Kag waited with upraised club. He was thankful that one wolf was a length in advance of the other! Then the foremost sprang, and the skin above Kag's eyes twitched violently as he took a backward step and swung his club. The heavy weapon fell on the animal's shoulder, to shatter the bones and strike him yelping to the ground.

Even as the brute fell, Kag saw the other wolf in mid-spring and leaped aside. He swerved enough so that the fangs missed his throat, but they fastened in his shoulder, so that the shock and the weight of the wolf threw him from his feet. He shortened his club and hammered viciously at the wolf's head. At last the jaws relaxed, and Kag was able to shake free and stagger to his feet. Blood streamed from his torn shoulder, but there was pride in his eyes as he strode back to the wondering group.

"I am Kag the Killer! Now follow!" he said.

Even then they would not come, though Kag pointed to the two dead wolves and swung his club. The others touched his weapon and muttered. He understood at last, and with a disgusted grunt he swung up into the trees. Branches began to rain down as he broke them off and flung them below. When he had enough to arm the whole tribe he showed them how to break the branches into convenient lengths.

To Kag's more active mind they seemed incredibly stupid as they stared dully at the improvised clubs, or turned them clumsily over in their hands. One or two even cast them heedlessly aside after a brief inspection. Kag scolded and snarled and sometimes struck, but at last all the men were armed and the entire tribe was gathered in a compact knot. With desperation in his heart, Kag again advanced out onto the grassland and pointed southward.

The tribe stood staring stupidly. None moved ahead, and one or two even started to turn back into the barren woods behind. The fate of the whole attempt hung in the balance, but then Lalla ran out and stood by Kag's side.

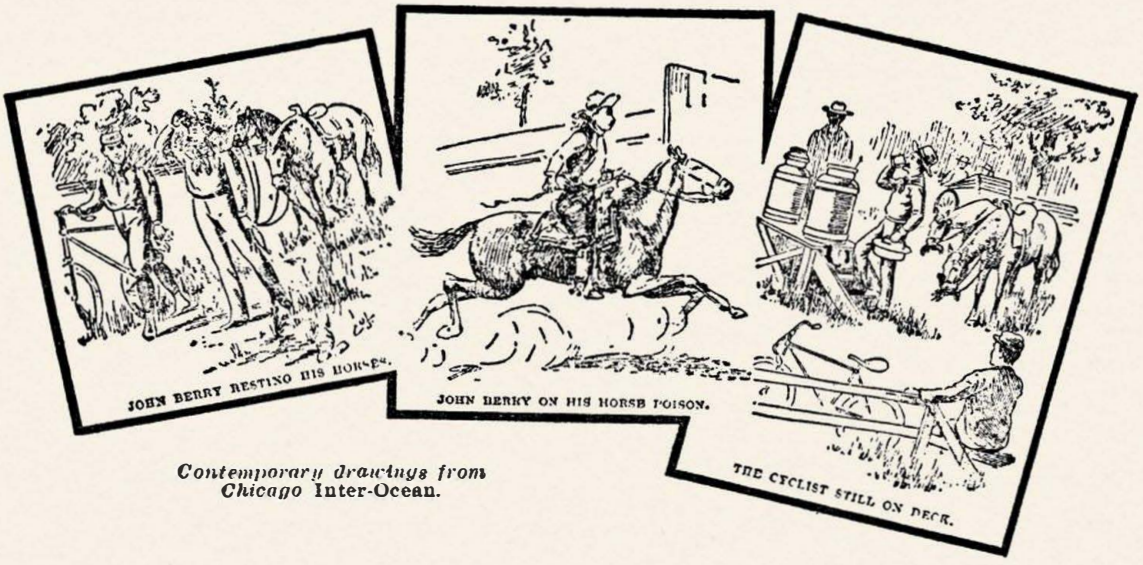
"I follow where you lead!" she said. With a grunt, the gaunt old patriarch heaved to his feet and advanced in turn, his family obediently following.

The inertia had been overcome, and the thing was started. By twos and threes, and then in a straggling mass, the whole tribe emerged onto the unfamiliar grassland. In a compact group for mutual protection, with the women carrying the children and the men on the outside gripping their clubs, the People of the Trees took up the southward trail. The first armed body in all history was afoot! A people was on the march, and the first of the great migrations had begun!

RIDERS EAST

A FACT STORY

By WALTER LIVINGSTON



Contemporary drawings from Chicago Inter-Ocean.

ALMOST a half century has laid its dust upon the memory of the Great Cowboy Race, but those who esteem horses still brush it off to demonstrate the difference between whippets in horsehide and real steeds.

Westerners have always derided Eastern estimates of horseflesh. In 1912, for instance, at Churchill Downs, awe was mingled with wild rejoicing among local horsemen when Sotemia hung up a new record for a four mile run. His time was 7 minutes, 10.8 seconds. In the West they were unimpressed. Men there who knew horses said that the best of their native steeds, if he were given a coyote to chase, could have made better time for the distance and, moreover, would have returned home at a smart gallop.

Compared with the Great Cowboy Race, the West insisted, that four mile ordeal would be the merest sprint. Always they harked back to that Cowboy Race. They still do and offer it as a clincher whenever the prowess of Man O' War, War Admiral, Sea Biscuit or Challedon is mentioned. Good racers, these, they will concede, but not to be compared with horses such as Poison, Sandy, Romeo, Boomerang or even General Grant. Never heard of them? Well. . . .

BACK in 1893 a whimsical editor of an impoverished weekly in the obscure town of Chadron, Nebraska became furious at the Vanderbilts, the Whitneys and the Gebhards who ruled the Eastern turf. They and their claims about superior American horseflesh! It rasped him, too, that the midget jockeys, Tod Sloan, Simms and Taral, should be considered real riders. He contended that the homebreds who ran the ranges were in every equine essential greater than Salvator and Tenny, then the kings of the race world.

An advertisement withdrawn just before press time left him with a half column to fill. He saw a way to vent his spleen and broach a fantastic idea. He proposed a real race. One of a thousand miles or more! That distance, he said, would bring out the mettle in men or horses. His tirade committed to type for the delectation of his small local cir-

culation, he dismissed the whole thing from his mind. But his weak voice in the wilderness echoed throughout the land.

Newspaper wire services picked up his defiance and broadcast it to the whole country. Repercussions registered almost immediately.

Before the editor had begun to set type for his next issue the sheriff of the county stormed into the newspaper office and slapped down a yellow sheet. "Maybe you are satisfied now," he bellowed. "This is what comes of your danged jokes. We are going to be laughed at all over the country."

The editor read the telegram. It was the most important message that had come to Chadron since word was spread to be on the lookout for the Dalton boys. It said:

JIM DAHLMAN
SHERIFF OF DAWES COUNTY
AM DELIGHTED TO HEAR OF THE PROPOSED THOUSAND MILE COWBOY RACE FROM CHADRON TO CHICAGO WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING THE RACE END AT MY WILD WEST SHOW IN THE COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION WILL DONATE FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS TO BE ADDED TO THE PURSE OF THE WINNING RIDER
COLONEL (BUFFALO BILL) CODY

The editor came to his decision. "That settles it, Jim. We can't let Bill Cody down."

"All right, mister. The baby's in your lap from now on."

The sheriff shamefully abandoned the puling infant of an idea for the editor to rear it into a brainchild worthy of Chadron and Dawes County. It was no time to back out because the proposal had excited the whole Western country.

The power of the press was forceful and widespread. It was not long before a committee consented to serve. They gathered up pledges of a purse of a thousand dollars—to be added to Buffalo Bill's promised bonus—and the race was declared officially on. Acceptance of his offer was wired to Colonel Cody. Ever a showman, he spread the word nationwide from Chicago.

The first duty of the committee, after assuring themselves of the purse, was to frame the route. It was necessary to establish points at varying distances where man and beast might be refreshed. The committee foresaw that a check must be maintained on the riders—not that these hardy plainsmen might prove dishonest but that hardship might not tempt them into it. So registration points were fixed: Lone Pine, O'Neill and Wausa in their state; Sioux City, Galva, Fort Dodge, Iowa Falls, Waterloo and Dubuque in Iowa and then, for the final stretch, Freeport and De Kalb in Illinois, with Chicago as the last lap.

The rules were fairly simple. Riders were to use two horses only and these must be Western bred and raised. The contestants were to finish on one of the horses with which they started—no substitutions to be made along the route. Then this—which will dismay those who believe that dwarfs must ride thoroughbreds and that 115 pounds is an outrageous impost—cowboy stock saddles to be used weighing not less than thirty-five pounds; rider and saddle together to be not less than 150 pounds. There was, of course, the requirement that each competitor must register in at the points named.

Men who knew the Western breed reasoned that by hard riding the race might be completed in twenty days, sixteen by severe pressing. Because of the loads it was taken for granted the entrants would use big, strong, goodlegged mounts. The outcome rested upon the selection of horses primarily but as one cowboy expressed it: "The race won't depend so much on the speed of the horses as on the bottom and judgment of the rider."

AT THE outset it was expected the race would attract only men of Chadron and, perhaps, some from the nearby counties. The circulation of the paper which had offered the notion was not far-reaching, but then, it had not been expected that Buffalo Bill would put the force of his publicity back of the race. Hence entries were attracted from far beyond the adjacent counties.

Chadron itself had a good representa-

tion, if not a completely choicy one. Doubt of worthiness lingered in the filing of Doc Middleton. At a time and in a place where men capitalized on being picturesque, Doc topped them all. He was known throughout the whole region as a daredevil and he loved the fear he stirred. He was an outstanding figure of a man—even in that section when many men were of commanding mien. He was long, lean and sinewy. He glorified his impressive lankiness with a flowing black beard. He was forty years old, was the Doc, but he could ride down any man of half his age.

There were strange stories whispered in the bunk-houses about Doc. He was known as a great hand with horses, some said too loose a hand, and it was rumored he had more than a nodding acquaintance with a gang of horse thieves along the Niobrara River. No outright calumny, understand; no one could put a finger on a single misdeed of Middleton's; neither his friends or close acquaintances ever had lost a horse which might have strayed into his corral. Yet, it was regarded as something more than local pride which held him in Chadron. After all, it was conveniently close to the state line. When he entered, it was naturally expected he would be well mounted. In fact, he was favored in the betting above other local contestants. As a mark of confidence or it may have been conciliation, a Chadron harness-maker presented him with a handmade bridle; another donated a wide Stetson sombrero which added the artistic touch to his ensemble and still another contributed a lurid saddle blanket. The Doc was set.

Chadron had another entry who appealed to the fitness of things. This was Joe Gillespie and a fine figure of a man he was, too. Long, rangy and powerfully built, he was known as the finest horseman of the region. He was the oldest of the entrants and the heaviest—his weight, 185, a heavy penalty on any horse. His mounts looked able to bear his burden. They were Billy Mack, a large, rawboned sorrel, tough from working under harness, and Billy Shafer, a gray sired by a running horse who had stood up to the toughest in the wrangling seasons. The Shafer horse enjoyed running down coyotes and his rider had exceptional skill in killing them from the saddle with his quirt.

The third of the townsmen was John Berry. Berry had none of the eye appeal of his rivals. He was a small, wiry, matter-of-fact man; colorless in costume and manner. A heavy, almost walrus-like mustache made him striking but only in a negative way. No call to adventure had brought him into the race. He was married and had the responsibility of a wife and two small children. Reverses had come upon him which could be remedied only by winning the $1500 race money.

Berry was a practical man who had worked hard all his life; he saved his money and then, through no fault of his own, lost it all. The railroads put him out of business. He had run a stage-coach line before the railroads had made their incursions. Gradually they edged him farther westward until he recognized finally they would nudge him into the Pacific if he didn't give up. When the race was suggested he saw in it a means to get himself a ranch holding and provide for his family. The town was none too well sold on his prospects of winning but those who made book on the race—and that meant every gambler in the West—figured he had a look-in because his stage driving days had given him a knowledge of the terrain to be covered.

From out of town came an entry which injected a romantic flavor into the contest. Emma Hutchinson was the name on the entry blank. Emma was practically a neighbor, hailing from a nearby county. The committee received her application with some misgivings. Women were not encouraged to be spectacular—remember this was 1893—but they had not provided for such an unfeminine step in advance. Besides Buffalo Bill had made a precedent in exploiting Little Annie Oakley in his show at Chicago.

Interest piled up in the case of Miss Hutchinson when it contemplated this frail—fragile, perhaps, is the better word—person might take the race away from these rough, tough men of the untamed

West. She added mystery, too, because she insisted on holding aloof from the local excitement. She and her horses—and their exploits, it was rumored, were many—secluded themselves twelve miles out of Chadron. It was announced that she would not reveal herself until the day of the race. Some of the Chadron Peeping Toms sought a preview of this elusive rider but all they could observe was a sun-bonnet and a flutter of skirts as she scurried like a prairie jackrabbit out of sight.

YOUTH was represented in the person of Davy Douglas, a lad still in his teens. Then there was the arrival of Rattlesnake Pete, more prosaically known as James Stephens, from Kansas. His penchant for adorning himself with self-caught snake skins explained his name. From far off Denver came Joe Campbell. He had driven his two horses, Boomerang and Boom-de-aye the intervening four hundred miles as a workout. He came into Chadron two weeks before the race so his horses could rest up.

Emmet Albright, a native Nebraskan, came into town with two of the finest horses ever seen in the state—Outlaw and Joe Bush. The odds mounted in his favor but then as suddenly dropped when his steeds, frightened in their pasture, ran into a barbwire fence. Albright was shocked by this sudden misadventure, but recruited himself two other horses from nearby ranches and remained in the race.

George A. Jones of Whitewood, South Dakota, brought with him Romeo and George. George was just a horse but Romeo was—in the words of a contemporary chronicler— "as dark as hell and as proud as Lucifer."

Thus when the list of entries was completed it held this personnel in men and horses:

Emmet Albright, Outlaw and Joe Bush
James H. Stephens (Rattlesnake Pete), General Grant and Dick
George A. Jones, George and Romeo
Doc Middleton, Geronimo and Jimmy
C. W. Smith, Dynamite and Red Wing
David Douglas, Monte Cristo and Wide Awake
Joseph Gillespie, Billy Mack and Billy Shafer
Joseph Campbell, Boomerang and Boom-de-aye
John Berry, Poison and Sandy.

It will be observed this list is not graced with the name of Miss Hutchinson. A dismaying betrayal is involved. A group of Chadron gallants rode to the sanctuary of the aloof one to escort her into town with proper ceremony. From the edge of a wide sombrero the face of the contestant was hidden by a veil. One of the escort could not restrain his curiosity longer. He dashed by the rider and whipped off the covering.

Emma was unmasked; a desert derelict was revealed—one who didn't have the good manners, even, to shave off a long beard. "Emma" confessed that he had been led to the deception by the boys of another county who wanted to have the laugh on Dawes. They gave the sand rat a minute's head start and chased him to the state line.

Now everything was in the clear. The purse was in hand, the bonus of Buffalo Bill confirmed, the horses up to qualifications, the riders rarin' to go. Then the blow fell! From a wholly unexpected source, too.

From out of effete Minneapolis, the National Humane Society, with headquarters in that city, put the jody on the whole project. The race must not run; it was a disgrace to men and an outrage to horses—so said the Society. This, two weeks before the date set for the beginning of the race. Just enough time for the state societies of Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois to ratify the protest of the parent body.

It seemed a hopeless gesture but the Chadron committee sent a telegram and then a letter to the officials assuring them that the men were nature's noblemen and the horses would be coddled in kindness. Also they assured the humanitarians that any evidence of cruelty or oppression of a horse by a rider would result in instant disqualification from the race.

Come and see for yourselves, the committee urged. They told the Society it could have its guardians at every registry point and gave them the option of dis-

missing any rider from the race instantly when the officials were satisfied that a horse had been driven beyond normal endurance. The protest had come from the secretary of the organization, Paul Fontaine, and to him the committee offered the invitation to ride every step of the way with the riders and keep surveillance over them.

Nothing could be fairer than that! The wily Westerners realized that Fontaine could not possibly accept their generous offer but it was a proof of good faith. The Society conditionally rescinded its veto on the contest. It compromised by having a representative at each checking-in point. All of which added sanction and further prominence to the event.

In addition to this, the interest had been whipped up by Buffalo Bill's publicity force and the World's Fair management so the eyes of the country were all turned in the direction of the little prairie town of Chadron. Numerous other prizes in addition to the purse and the bonus flowed in. The Colts hung up an ivory-handled .44 revolver; Montgomery Ward offered a saddle. The windows of the stores in Chadron bulged with prizes.

Now all was set for the start. Most of the gamblers of the West had poured into the town; the saloons and the dance halls did a boom-time business. The Government was generosity itself, loaning the Ninth Cavalry Band and bringing from a nearby reservation some five hundred of the Sioux, many of whom had scalped other soldiers at the Custer Massacre at Wounded Knee Creek some years earlier. The Sioux—now that old Sitting Bull had gone to the Happy Hunting Ground—were docile although they pretended fierceness when they did their famous Ghost Dance.

THE morning of Tuesday, June 13, 1893, dawned bright and clear. As far as the eye could reach over the flatlands they were hidden under a haze of dust stirred by the thousands of riding horses and rigs which poured toward the race. To make everything official, Paul Fontaine and a fellow associate in the Humane Society, W. V. Tutro, arrived early to review the contestants and inspect the horses.

At noon the crowds flocked to the corral to witness the feeding of the horses. A banquet fit for Bucephalus was set for them but, such was the rivalry, no rider would let a hand other than his own feed his mounts; each warm-hearted son of the plains feared another warm-hearted son of the plains might take occasion to dope his horses.

Finally at five o'clock each of the contestants lined up, mounted on one horse and with the reins of the other tied to his saddle-bow. J. D. Hartzell, the chairman of the committee, ascended to the balcony of the Blaine Hotel. He besought them to conduct themselves like the true gentlemen they were and to uphold the fair name of Chadron, Dawes County, Nebraska and the United States. He fired a gun.

Instantly the air was shattered with noise, the shooting of firearms, the shrieks of the Indians, the cheers of the populace and a bursting blare from the Ninth Cavalry Band. It almost ruined the race right there because the horses, frightened, tore at their leads to get away. They reared and pitched and all but unhorsed their riders. With every cowboy helping they finally were brought under control. The race was started.

Some of the hotspurs, fully aware of the dramatic opportunities of the moment, dashed out of town as if a posse were after them. When they were out of vision they slowed down to a more sedate gait. The shag-trot was the general pace as the nags, clustered together for many miles, finally strung out. Tedium thus early set in before darkness fell.

For the first leg of the trek most of the men stopped at small town hotels, quartering their horses at livery stables; others put up at ranch houses along the route. Old Joe Gillespie, scorning the softness of his rivals, camped in the open and slept with his saddle as a bolster.

Registration Point No. 1, Long Pine, was reached by the leaders on Friday afternoon—three days from the start. The hardy Gillespie and Doc Middleton

were in the van, both Chadron men and, incidentally, the oldest. Close after them was Rattlesnake Pete with Albright not far behind. Not until the next morning did Smith, Jones, Douglas and Berry arrive. The men and the horses were all in remarkably good condition.

With the longer rest Gillespie was first away toward O'Neill. Twenty miles outside this official stop Davy Douglas, the youngest, suffered a violent spell of horse-sickness, which is similar in cause and effect to seasickness. He had to drop out of the race.

O'Neill, named after an old Irish fighter and populated by his Fenian followers, gave them a truly Hibernian welcome. While the horses were resting, the town and the liquid content thereof belonged to the riders. Many of the riders were mellow as they turned toward Wausa.

Gillespie again led the procession with Rattlesnake Pete nosing out Doc Middleton. Doc was experiencing trouble. One of his horses had sprained a tendon and was growing lamer rapidly. The other contestants drifted into town during the night, Berry last of all. The little man seemed no whit discouraged to learn the others had come and gone.

The road from Long Pine to O'Neill and to Wausa had been comparatively easy on the horses. The country was flat and the roads were the kind they had been accustomed to. However, from Wausa the going became difficult. It is hilly country sloping down to the Missouri River; the clay slipping down from the hills gives it its name of Big Muddy.

Gillespie, Rattlesnake Pete and Middleton—despite the delay to the last named from his ailing horse—battled for the lead. They had had an early start out of Wausa and each took a separate road, seeking for short-cuts. Middleton had to abandon his injured nag at Coleridge; he realized that the horse could not pass the test of the humane officers at the nearing registration point.

SIOUX CITY was waiting for the racers. As early as Monday morning they lined the river bank close to the ferry landing. Hour after hour they lingered and then at noon a shout arose. Three men on horseback had been glimpsed on the opposite shore. The old tub, the *Vint Stillings*, shoved off to bring them back. The siren was tied down the whole distance until the three men on horseback were landed on the Iowa shore.

The passengers walked into a demonstration that almost broke their backs. Only when the mayor demanded silence from the cheering throngs, so he might properly greet the intrepid cross-country jockeys, was it discovered the whole thing was a false alarm. These were men of their own city who had gone off on a day's fishing trip.

Not until eight o'clock Tuesday night—just a week since the start—did the first of the cowboy racers arrive. By this time the crowd had become suspicious that the ferry passenger might be just another wayfarer so they did not set off their fireworks until they recognized, beyond a doubt, the handsome Doc Middleton.

Doc on his lone horse was alive to his importance. He played up to it. Erect in his saddle, one hand on hip and the other doffing his handsome new Stetson—a gesture he had borrowed from Buffalo Bill—he jogged through the streets. The cheers still were flinging their echoes when the *Vint Stillings* brought across another passenger, the durable Gillespie. He got a warming-over of the reception accorded Middleton.

Sioux City, having used up its expendable enthusiasm, settled down to routine acceptance of the others—so Rattlesnake Pete, who came in third, got just a perfunctory acclaim. Later that night when Albright and Berry arrived they were just a couple of cowboys passing through town. Berry was in fifth place.

However, Sioux City replenished its goodwill to give the boys a fitting farewell. Doc Middleton, besieged by admirers, permitted them to pluck hairs from his horse's tail. When he turned around after his gracious assent he saw that his steed in a short time wouldn't have enough tail to brush off a lazy fly; so he put spurs to the animal and tore away on the next leg of the trip. Albright sacrificed his gauntlets, his neckerchief and most of his detachable ap-

parel to the souvenir hunters before he could break away.

Berry, the least impressive of the riders, was handed the customary bouquet on departure. He thanked the fair donor phlegmatically and then, safe on the outskirts of the city, threw the flowers away. Poison saw them and after a first nibble gulped them. Thus, Ferdinand the Bull was not the first of the posy-fanciers; Poison, before his time, was just as addicted.

Now the riders were on their way to Galva. During the morning Doc Middleton had been receiving bulletins about his tendon-sprung horse. Now it was reported that Jimmy was definitely disabled. Doc watched the others wistfully as they departed the temporary stop.

"Tough luck, Doc," said one of them. "That puts you out of the running."

"You're loco," Doc protested. "As long as I have one horse and he has four legs I'm in. To the finish! We'll just set awhile but I'll pick up the leaders before they reach the Mississip."

In Galva, Gillespie the indestructible and Rattlesnake Pete the unshakable were in the lead. Berry now had moved up to third place, making pace in his usual methodical way, apparently unconcerned about the gap between him and the others. There were more floral tributes and his horses must have gained energy from this aromatic nourishment because they were able to steal the lead. Gillespie and Pete were after him on hot hoofs. Jones and Smith and afterward Albright trailed in on the afternoon they left. One of Albright's mounts was in distress.

When Jones made his belated entry into Galva he was not in the least dispirited over the advantage of the others. He, too, had been playing a careful race.

His big horse, Romeo, had not carried him any part of the way. Jones had permitted him to trail so he would have his strength for the last pull. It all depended now upon the endurance of George who had been carrying his weight the entire distance. George looked quite jaded in Galva and more than a little sulky over this strange favoritism.

THE race now was headed toward Fort Dodge. Old Joe, on this stretch, developed a system of his own. He realized the burden of his 185 pounds, plus the 35-pound saddle, and he wanted to spare to the utmost the noble Billy Mack and the nobler Billy Shafer. His method was unique. When out of sight of his rivals he would tie the halter of Shafer to the saddle-horn of Mack, head them along the direction of their destination and then with a slap and a yell start them running. As they jumped to a gallop he would grab Mack's tail and follow along. Mile after mile he followed like the tail of a kite. It spared his horses so well he was able to overtake the leading Berry and beat him into Fort Dodge. Rattlesnake Pete also drew up on Berry but he paid the penalty in tired horseflesh.

Between Fort Dodge and Iowa Falls the battle grew tense. Berry once more took over the lead. With time out for a rest they were about neck and neck at this point. They pushed off almost simultaneously. Then they were all menaced.

A storm of hurricane proportions swept down on them outside of Iowa Falls. The rain fell in clouding sheets, driven into hail by a bitter wind. The roads after their first wetting became slippery as grease and the horses had to fight for footing every step of the way. Then the grease turned to gumbo —sticky, clinging mud that almost tore the shoes from the horses.

For two days, out of sight of each other and never sure of their direction, the cowboys labored their horses along, the weary animals sinking to their fetlocks with each uncertain step. The riders shivered in the icy chill. Gillespie, stripped down to minimum weight, did not have even a coat.

Late on the night of June 23rd—the tenth day out—Berry reached Waterloo. He fed and watered his horses and then just before daybreak, to escape the crowds which might impede, he slipped away. But he was not alone long. At the edge of Waterloo he found himself with an unexpected companion, a cyclist who had been sent out of Chicago

by the *Inter-Ocean* to cover the final stretches of the race. He trundled along beside Berry and with every turn of the wheels his admiration grew.

"John Berry," he wrote with journalistic virtuosity, "leading the cowboy racers, is deservedly gaining the admiration and encouragement of the people along the route of the race. If kindness, gentleness, patience and the manly virtues of the horse lover and the humanitarian are the necessary qualifications to win the race, Berry will get there.

"Berry is an intelligent man, 35 years of age, with a pleasant face, a free open manner without affectation. He is always jolly and good-natured, has a heart for his horses and sacrifices everything possible to make it easy for them."

This Boswell of Berry omitted other splendid virtues from his biography. So that his horses, Sandy and Poison, might be spared every extra ounce of weight he had been deliberately starving himself. His diet was only sufficient to keep him awake and strong enough to continue. For all his care, Poison was beginning to suffer. The constant pounding on hard roads was making his feet tender. Poison was Berry's ace in the hole; nothing must happen to him. At Independence he had the stallion re-shod and the loyal horse responded at once. With Berry on Sandy, the trio—and the cyclist—easted out of one end of town as Rattlesnake Pete and Old Joe entered the other. Driving their horses with little interruption they were after him as Berry headed toward Manchester.

Pete came into Manchester with the report that Gillespie was miles back and in trouble. Pete's situation was none too good, either. His prize horse, General Grant—Dick having been abandoned far back—was fading. Then Old Joe came upon the Manchester scene. It was necessary, if he was to pass the humane officers at the next depot, that he rest his mounts. So while they slept Gillespie looked over the town. He saw a circus and spent his brief respite riding the show's bucking mule. Just a cowboy's holiday. Jones came in before Gillespie's horse was refreshed. His Romeo was still unridden but George was drooping and sullen.

Pete's General Grant was in such condition he was warned to let the creature rest for a day. Pete chafed for three hours and then, warning or no warning, followed Berry's tracks. The little man and his cyclist shadow were going steadily along. Berry was into Dubuque first. Old Joe passed Pete again and came in a few hours later. Jones and the untried Romeo were only three hours back of him and Albright was sixty miles away.

PETE was heartsick over the pressure to which he was forcing General Grant because he could feel the good horse failing under him. He devised a change of food for renewal of the animal's strength. In addition to his regular ration of oats and hay he fed him gobs of chipped beef. That seemed to help for a while but the declines became more appreciably frequent. He had another idea. Chipped beef for strength but whiskey for an interest in life! Down the General's parched gullet he poured the strong liquor. Wall-eyed and reeling on his tired legs the General bore Pete into Freeport. There the inevitable crack-up came. Pete tried to stir the General to renewed effort. He broke out another bottle and the rider and the General split the quart. Pete and the General left their race in the bottom of the bottle.

Berry departed Freeport, 130 miles from the World's Fair, early Monday, June 26th. With Gillespie hard after him. Sandy carried Berry because he was saving Poison for the finish. Smith had closed the gap left when Rattlesnake Pete and General Grant bade farewell to fame and glory. The day was hot, the roads dusty and men and horses were just a whiff away from exhaustion.

It was a day of unremitting torture for the riders and the ridden but finally Berry and his horses reached De Kalb, about seventy miles from the end. Stopping only long enough to feed and water his horses, Berry shifted the saddle to Poison's back to begin the ride to Chicago. Just an hour after he was gone Gillespie and Smith came into De Kalb. They were dog-tired but confident they would catch up with Berry before he reached the Chicago exposition grounds.

On Poison, Berry pressed ahead. The race, his prize and his future depended upon the horse's courage and his horsemanship. Of Poison's stamina he had no doubt but he dreaded what the pavements would do to the chestnut's feet.

Bells in Chicago's suburbs were ringing seven when he reached there. Poison's head threatened to fall between his knees so, to keep him awake and alert, Berry set a checkrein from headstall to saddle-horn. He himself was rocking in the saddle as they picked their way along the pavements of Madison street, California Avenue, Jackson Street, Ashland Boulevard, 22nd Street and then slowly down Michigan Boulevard.

The streets were jammed and women tossed flowers in their path. Poison was too exhausted to care. Posy-loving Poison!

At 63rd Street the World's Fair appeared in sight. Poison must have known it was near the end. He tossed his head and carried John Berry through a mob of shouting Bedouins, Cossacks, Indians and the cowboys of the show. The Congress of Rough Riders of the World gave greeting to a great rider and a great horse.

Berry just had enough strength left to grasp Colonel Cody's hand.

"Well done, John," the old Indian scout said. "The race is yours."

The winner would let no hand but his own lead Poison to a stall. He saw him sink to the straw and then sat himself down to a cowboy's breakfast of hot biscuit and fried chicken.

THE race, though, was not yet over for Poison. His condition had to be checked. The humane officers and two veterinaries had to certify him. Cody trembled for the verdict as he led the officers to the stables. Poison was stretched out flat. The president of the Illinois Society, John G. Shortall, had to sign him in and in fair state. The veterinaries with a whoop and a slap awakened the horse.

Poison stumbled to his legs and for the next fifteen minutes devoted himself to trying to kick the solicitude out of the officials. They retreated and attested to his good health, gladly.

At eleven o'clock shouts were again heard from Michigan Boulevard. A tired-looking man appeared at the portals of the fair grounds. He was leading two horses. He was told that to comply with the formalities he had to ride them within the arena. He came back at a brisk gallop and, in approved cowboy style, hauled them to their hind legs before Buffalo Bill. It was, of all persons, Emmet Albright!

"For five nights," he explained to Colonel Cody, "I have not slept except to doze in the saddle. The excitement carried me through. That and nerve."

Then the *Inter-Ocean's* cyclist wheeled in. He had news—real news. Albright, he reported, had put his steeds in a box car just outside De Kalb. The Congress of Rough Riders of the World put spurs to their horses and ran Albright out of town.

Anti-climax had followed upon climax and now drama reasserted itself. Early in the afternoon, just as the matinee was about to start, Old Joe rode in, waving his sombrero and yelling like a Comanche. He and his horses were in prime form, the best of any who had finished. Hardly had the applause died down when Smith rode in on Dynamite.

Thus ended the Great Cowboy Race, a distance race which ended all distance races—a test of courage, endurance and speed which probably never again will be equaled by either horse or rider.

From Chadron to Chicago these horses had covered 1040 miles. In less than fourteen days—Poison's time was thirteen days and sixteen hours—they had run, walked or trailed over the plains, the rubble of hardrock roads, through quagmires of deluged clay, through sand and dust. Yet, in the final day the winning horse, Poison, covered 150 miles and the last eighty miles of this, including the hard pavements of city streets, were ridden in nine and a half hours.

Man O' War? War Admiral? Sea Biscuit? Thoroughbreds?

No wonder Western horsemen say, "I'll take Poison!"

PETTICOAT PILOT

By THOMAS H. RADDALL

"EVERY man to his trade," declared Uncle Hugh MacAra, "as the sailor remarked to the Devil, the time Mother McGinty's boardin' house burnt to the ground. It occurred in the early mornin', and Mother McGinty burnt, and her husband Paddy the Crimp, and Rose o' Tralee and some others that don't matter, in fact there was no survivors but the Devil and the sailor, who sat about waitin' for the ruins to cool so they could fish for their gold watches. There was a bit o' clothes-line layin' about, and they each took an end and begun tyin' knots to while away the time.

'Can ye make a cat's-paw?" says the sailor.

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The sea tore loose his hold on the rags of the main stay-sail.

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there's a cat's-paw as neat as ninepence, all ready for the cargo hook.

'Let's see ye do a bowline on a bight,' says the Devil.

"So the sailor makes a bowline on a bight.

'You're slow,' says the Devil, 'but ye get there.'

'Ha!' says the sailor. 'Let's see ye make a Turk's Head.'

"The Devil chuckles, and takes his line, and gives it a hitch here and a twist there with his long artful fingers, and gives it a couple o' twirls, and pulls an end through and through, and there's a Turk's Head pretty as ye please.

'You're a clever Devil,' the sailor says.

'It's no game for amateurs,' says the Devil, pleased with himself. 'Let's see ye do a Matthew Walker.'

"So the sailor makes a Matthew Walker, goin' careful, for it's some time since he made one; and the Devil says, 'Matt Walker could a' lived and died, sailor, whilst you was makin' that. All thumbs, you are, that's a fact.'

'Thumbs, is it?' says the sailor. 'Tell ye what I'll do I'll bet my watch agin yours I can tie more granny knots than you, while ye count ten.'

'Done!' says the Devil, 'but it's a shame to take ye.' And he begun makin' grannies in his rope as quick as a wink, and countin' up to ten. When he got to eight, he looked to see how the sailor was comin', and the sailor was just makin' half-hitches and gatherin' 'em into his left fist; and the Devil laughed. 'Ten!' says the Devil, 'and I've won, for here I am with a dozen grannies on my line, and there's you with nothin' but a handful o' half-hitches. Half-hitches don't count. Half-hitches ain't knots,' says the Devil.

'No?' says the sailor, and passes an end through the handful o' half-hitches and gives it a yank. Out comes a string o' grannies like beads on a necklace, seventeen in a row. 'How's them for grannies?' says the sailor.

'You win,' says the Devil, full of admiration. 'That's a pretty clever trick, and I'll thank ye to show me how it's done. It ain't everybody can show the Devil a trick.'

'It's a professional secret,' says the sailor.

'There's seven souls in them ashes that belongs to me, and a seventeen jewel, eighteen carat, hunter case, stem-winder. I'll give ye the lot,' says the Devil.

'Every man to his trade,' says the sailor, chuckin' his rope away. 'I go to sea, and you go to—'

"Well," said my Uncle MacAra, "the rest ain't important. It's just one o' them sailors' whimsies. But it puts me in mind o' the old *Linda M. Smardon*, brigantine, out o' this very town. Back in the eighties and nineties there was quite a few brigantines sailin' out o' home in the West Indy and South American trade; two hundred tonners, mostly, just a handy size for the out-ports o' the islands and such places where the big barques and ships didn't go. This was a ship-buildin' town, and when Ned Smardon got money enough to buy a vessel for himself, 'twas on'y natural to get her built at home. Ned was a good rough-and-ready sailor, but one o' them easy-goin' fellers that needs a woman with a sharp tongue at their helm, and Amanda Smardon was just the woman for it. She went to sea with him, like many a captain's wife in them times, and ran the vessel the way she ran her Ned.

"Amanda kept personal charge o' the medicine chest, so the men had to come to her with their symptoms, and the way she'd look 'em up in the doctor book and feed 'em pills was a caution. She wrote all the cap'n's letter, and did most o' the talkin' with agents and charterers, for she'd a crackajack head for figgers and Ned couldn't add two twos and make four. For the same reason she worked up his noon reckonin's for him; and more'n once I've seen her out with Ned's sextant takin' the sun, and checkin' with the mate. Oh, she was a terror, I'll tell ye, a li'l plump bright-eyed terror with a smile as sweet as sugar.

"They had one child, a girl named Linda, born somewheres in the Doldrums aboard the barquentine *Pandora*, and when the new brigantine was finished in Thompson's yard—over there where the undertaker's parlor is now—Amanda Smardon smacked a bottle o' limejuice over the bow (blue ribbon, Amanda was)

and named her the *Linda M. Smardon.* Young Linda was nine then, a li'l carrot-topped thing, all brown eyes and legs and long red pigtails.

"The old sailors and dockside loafers puckered up their lips when they seen the limejuice, and said the vessel would prove as sour. She begun sour enough. When they'd split out the keel blocks and sawed through the launchin' plank, she rushed out into the river, with the launchin' ways and packin' spewin' out from under her like straws, run her stern smack on the packet-steamer wharf and bust her rudder. Then she swung with the outgoin' tide and the river current and shoved her bowsprit into Johnny Durfee's sail loft.

"That's the way she begun. They got her rigged and went off to Demerara with a load o' deals, with Cap'n Ned and Amanda and little Linda in the cabin aft. Thompson always said he'd never build another vessel for the Smardons. I guess it begun with the plans; Amanda shovin' her oar in, wantin' this changed, and that. She'd been goin' to sea with Ned ever since she was a young bride, and knew more about a ship than he did, or thought so anyway. After the plans, she interfered in the buildin', time and again, till she had Thompson and his carpenters half crazy.

"I come to know about what sort o' vessel Amanda Smardon had concocted, for I shipped in the *Linda M. Smardon* afore the mast, along about 1879. She was full about the bows, and had a poor run—a great lump o' wood under each quarter, so when she was goin' about six knots the water boiled up under her stern with a sound like the Ridge Brook in a spring thaw; and she made a wake as broad as a street. With any breeze it took two men to the wheel, and they had a job to hold her within four points o' the course. She had a nasty trick o' sneakin' up into the wind and catchin' her foreyards aback; you had to watch her like a hawk, for no matter how you trimmed her canvas you had to be usin' the wheel the whole time, comin' up and fallin' off, comin' up and fallin' off. But she was a good sea-boat, I'll say that for her; in a gale she'd lie-to nicely with just a rag on her. And she carried a good cargo for her size, and proved a money-maker, like them awkward vessels often did. But sailors called her 'The Workhouse' on account of her tricks.

"Young Linda was a favorite with all hands. There was no fear in her. She'd run about the riggin' like a monkey, wearin' a li'l pair o' duck trousers and a shirt, and her feet bare. When she was fourteen they put her ashore with her Aunt Jane, for to get her schoolin', and grow into a lady. And the years went by. Cap'n Ned was a good sailor, and Amanda was chock full o' business; they begun buyin' fish and lumber, takin' it south, and made money hand over fist. I don't know why I stayed so long in that brigantine. I guess 'twas because the *Linda M.* was like home. Amanda had fixed up the after cabin with hooked rugs, pine-needles in the settee cushions, God Bless Our Home in crewel work on one o' the birds-eye maple panels, and The Highlanders at The Alma on another, and a little American organ in a corner. Sunday evenin's at sea we'd get round that organ and sing hymns and songs like we was back home in the parlor after church. The grub was good, too, for them times. And in a home vessel you was pretty sure o' seein' the old place once or twice a year at the least. Anyhow, I stayed by the *Linda M.* and got to be second mate.

"THEN—it must a' been the spring o' '91—Linda Smardon come aboard, in New York. We'd been a long time in the southern trade out o' New York, and Linda had finished her education and grown into a young woman long ago. Ned and Amanda was hungry for a sight o' her. So Linda was a kind o' surprise when she walked aboard in the East River docks. I can see her now, wearin' a green rig that went well with that chestnut hair, and a fore-and-aft hat, and a parasol. New York was full o' pretty women, those times; but they weren't a patch on Linda.

"We'd shipped a new mate in Trinidad the trip before, young Bob Laurie, lookin' for a passage home to Nova Scotia. He'd been owner-skipper of a li'l old

tern schooner in the salt fish trade, and lost her somewheres on the Main in a norther, with everything he had. Bob was one o' them black haired, blue eyed fellers from Pictou way, an able breed, and too good a man to be shippin' mate in a li'l old timber-drogher at fifty dollars a month. A qualified shipmaster, I mean. He'd shipped north with us, and Ned and Amanda was tryin' to persuade him to stay. Truth was, they figgered to go home for good, pretty soon, and build a couple more ships, and go into the southern trade the way they knew how, and they wanted a captain with a business head on him to leave in charge o' the *Linda M.* Bob wasn't interested. He was still pretty down in the mouth, and figgered to pay off afore the brigantine sailed south agin.

"I was standin' by him on the half deck when Linda stepped aboard, and he give a kind o' gasp. 'Who's that?' he says.

'The skipper's daughter,' I says. 'Twenty-three and fancy free.'

"Linda was tall as Bob, and taut and springy like a new topmast just set up, but molded very nice. She had one o' them complexions you only find in our part o' the world, barrin' the Isles o' Scotland, and when she smiled her skin seemed to glow. She had her father's eyes, big and brown and laughin'.

"Bob Laurie was bowled end for end. He give up his cabin without any askin', for her to use, and took the spare bunk in my cabin; and he signed for another six months so eager that his hand shook in the shippin' office. Well, boys, there was all the makin's of a very fine romance; for Bob Laurie was as fine a man as ever walked a deck, and Linda was—well, Linda.

"It didn't take Linda long to get back into ship-board ways agin. 'Course, she didn't go shinnin' up the riggin' any more. But she was on deck in all kinds o' weather—'specially if 'twas the mate's watch—and she'd walk up and down with him, talkin' about the sea, and the brigantine, and that kind o' thing. She'd sit on the main hatch, fine warm evenin's in the trades, and get the darkie cook, who was our shanteyman, singin' ballad-songs; and sometimes she'd sing herself, with Ned and Amanda sittin' in their rattan chairs on the half deck, and the watch below comin' quiet out o' the fo'c'sle to listen, and Bob Laurie leanin' agin the spoke-railin' with a seegar, never takin' his eyes off her face. Oh, she had him on his beam ends, I tell ye, and she knew it and he knew it. 'Twas good as a play to watch 'em. I don't know how long it took Cap'n Ned to catch on, but Amanda knew, right off. I'd see her watchin' 'em with them bright li'l gray eyes o' hers behind the spectacles.

"We got into San Fernando, Trinidad, which is a kind o' sheltered bay. Ye run your vessel in till she takes ground in the soft mud off-shore, get your anchors over, and discharge into the water, makin' the lumber into rafts for the black men to warp ashore. As the cargo comes out, your vessel rises free o' the mud and rides to her anchors. 'Twas a busy time for the mate, for Cap'n Ned left the dischargin' to him. Every now and agin the darkies would think they could pole a raft ashore, and there'd come a bit o' wind, and they'd be in trouble. I don't know how many times Bob put off in a boat with a warp and kedge, and then helped the black fellers heave her in. Bob was a strong feller, not afraid to put his hand to the work in a pinch, and he'd a good quick eye that could see trouble a mile off. I noticed Amanda sizin' him up and noddin' to herself and to Ned, now and agin.

"After that we went up the coast a ways to load molasses, in puncheons, that come off shore in lighters. There was nothin' ashore but a few plantation houses and a sugar mill, but Amanda insisted on Linda and Bob goin' ashore each afternoon and evenin' for to see the country. 'A bit o' holiday won't do ye any harm,' she says to Bob, and smiles at him the way I've seen her smile at a bill o' ladin' when she'd fixed a good charter. So Bob and Linda went ashore; the planters gave 'em a good time, a carriage to drive about in, just the two of 'em, with a darkie on the box, and music and dancin' in the evenin's. On board, they couldn't hide it from anybody any more, the way they'd be lookin' in each other's eyes, on deck, at the table, everywhere, and Cap'n Ned winkin' to me,

and Amanda smilin' her fat li'l smile.

"One starlight night on the voyage home, in the warm weather, I come on deck in my bare feet, and there was Linda and Bob in the shadow of the mainsail, where the helmsman couldn't see—Linda in Bob's arms, and their mouths fast together. Her arms was round his neck, and Bob was holdin' her the way you'd grab a t'gallantmast, goin' aloft in a gale o' wind. I wanted to yell, 'Look out, man, you're hurtin' her!' for Bob Laurie never knew his own stren'th. But Linda didn't seem to mind. She was encouragin' him, if anythin'. Then I saw Amanda, soft-footed in the ol' carpet slippers she always wore at sea, sneakin' away from the cabin skylight where she'd been sittin', and smilin' that satisfied smile.

"WHEN we got home, Cap'n Ned and Amanda give the town a sensation, announcin' they was comin' ashore to live, and announcin' further that Bob Laurie was to be skipper o' both Lindas, with his chest stowed in the captain's cabin, and a fine weddin' in the Methodist church come Tuesday. The whole town turned out for that weddin'. A regular old-fashioned splice, it was, with the bridegroom lookin' worried to death, and the rest o' the men grinnin'; the bride lookin' sunny as a May mornin', and the rest o' the women weepin'; and people chuckin' rice and ol' shoes.

"Men and girls didn't go trapesin' about the province on a honeymoon, them times. Bob and Linda spent their honeymoon takin' the brigantine to Madeira with a load o' pine boards. I was promoted mate, and Charlie Stockwell brought his chest aft to be second mate, so all round we was a happy ship. We had a fine passage out, and Madeira's a right nice place for a young man to show his bride around. We chucked the lumber overboard, and the Portugees swum it in through the surf, a sight to watch. Then we took in beach gravel ballast, out o' lighters, and made sail for the West Indies. We come down the trades to Barbados, twenty-one days without clewin' so much as a royal, a sea-goin' picnic. Linda sat in a cane chair they'd bought in Funchal, under the awnin' on the half deck, watchin' Bob with that warm glow in her eyes. And Bob was in a sailor's heaven—a ship to command, a girl to love, and always fair weather. 'Twas a treat to look at them two.

"Just after we made the land, Linda calls out, off-hand like, 'Isn't it time you got a range of chain over the windlass and your anchors overside?'

'Plenty of time,' Bob said, busy with his telescope.

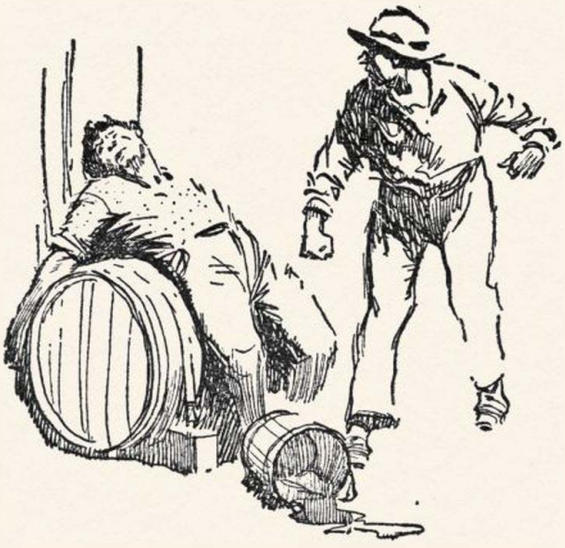
'There's never plenty o' that,' says Linda, and sung out to me, for'ard. 'Mister MacAra, don't you think you'd better get the anchors ready to let go?' I looked over to Bob, instinctive-like, but he didn't say a word. She'd put that to me the way Amanda used to put her orders—'Mister, hadn't you better do so-and-so?' I called up a couple o' hands and got the anchors ready. And that was that.

"At Barbados we got orders for Gonaives in the island o' Haiti, to load log-wood. Linda come on deck one mornin' and threw a glance aloft, like the born sailor she was. 'Charlie,' she says to the second mate, 'I think your tops'l yard's braced up a bit too sharp, don't you?'

"Bob was comin' up the companion behind her. He stuck his head out. 'I don't think so, Linda.'

'Oh, but it is, Bob. Look! Charlie, do slack up your lee tops'l brace and check in the weather brace a bit.' Charlie looked at Bob. There was a little flush on Bob's face, but he said nothin'. Charlie checked the braces like she wanted.

"That was the way it begun, just a li'l order now and again. Nobody minded—Linda could have wiped her shoes on any man aboard, from Bob Laurie down; but in the back o' my mind was an uneasy feelin' that Linda was goin' to be her mother all over again if this went on. Well, it went on. I s'pose Linda was kind o' bored with just sittin' around. Anyway, she begun takin' more and more of a hand in the workin' o' the vessel—all in a very nice way, y' understand. At Gonaives we lay off-shore once agin, with the log-wood comin' off in lighters. Linda put in an order, here and there, and even went after the loadin' agent.



So I let him have it.

"The wood come down the mountain, junked in short len'ths, aboard donkeys loaded so ye couldn't see anythin' but their heads and tails. Linda had quite a wrangle with the agent, tellin' him it was tough on the donkeys, and how he could do it cheaper. Comin' north to Boston, 'twas the same; hardly a watch that Linda wasn't suggestin' somethin', and over-ridin' Bob's objections with that lovely warm smile of hers, and tellin' the men to go ahead and do what she said. 'Twas gettin' on Bob's nerves, and sometimes he'd object when he knew she was right, and o' course that made her all the more sure he needed her advice. After all, she was the owner's daughter, wasn't she? And she'd sailed in the brigantine afore Bob Laurie ever laid eyes on either of 'em.

"There was a li'l rat, name o' Lumley, in the fo'c'sle that we'd picked off the beach at Berbice a trip or two afore. One mornin' Linda sent him aloft to put some new rovin's on the t'gallants'l, which had been slattin' a bit in the night and busted some o' the old rovin's. He come for'ard to get some spunyarn, swearin'. I happened to be standin' by the fore hatch, and I asked him what was the trouble.

'I ain't used to pettycoat rule,' he says.

'Bob Laurie's the master o' this vessel,' I says.

'He's on'y the captain's mate,' says Lumley, with his li'l ratty grin.

"I swiveled my weather eye towards the half deck where Linda was, but the foreyard was pretty near square and she couldn't see us for the sail. So I let him have it. I could hit pretty hard, those times, bein' what the books call nowadays a bucko Bluenose mate, and he didn't come to for an hour, with lame Sammy sloshin' buckets o' water over him. Linda seen Sammy busy bailin' the Gulf Stream with his rope and bucket, and she come for'ard to see what was up. She took it in with one look. Up went her head, and the gold specks in her brown eyes burnin' like sparks. 'Mister MacAra,' she says, and you'd a swore 'twas Amanda talkin. 'Mister MacAra, there's never been need of bruising aboard this vessel, and there's none now. Kindly keep your hands to yourself.' What could I do but swaller me quid and me feelin's—and keep me hands to meself?

"WE discharged our log-wood in Boston and made sail for home, with all hands busy paintin' and polishin' to get the *Linda M.* lookin' smart for the owner's eye. We got into the river late of a Saturday afternoon, and Cap'n Bob took the crew up to the li'l old shippin' office, in the corner o' Murphy's bake-house, and paid 'em off. Him and Linda went ashore after supper and spent the night with Ned and Amanda in their new house back o' the tannery on the Argyle road. And o' course, Sunday mornin' they all went to church, and had a big old-fashioned dinner afterwards to celebrate their first voyage and the homecomin'.

"Now in them times people didn't go tearin' round the roads of a Sunday afternoon. Lots o' people had buggies, and some o' the ship-owners and merchants had fine horses and spankin' turn-outs in the surrey and carriage line; but once ye reached the town limits the roads run off into the woods and was tarnation rough. So there was on'y one thing to do of a fine Sunday afternoon, and that was to stroll along the waterfront, lookin' at the vessels.

"Well, boys, that Sunday afternoon was fine as silk, and there was a big crowd along the docks. All the carpenters and caulkers were there from the ship-yards, with their wives and families, and the lawyer and the ministers, and merchants and clerks and Tom, Dick and Harry. Such a flock o' bustles and parasols, and hard hats and watch chains, as ye never saw in your lives. Along about three o'clock, down comes the Smardons and Bob and Linda—Linda in a fine new get-up she'd bought in Boston. There was a reg'lar mob on the wharf by the brigantine, and the Smardons and Lauries was proud fit to bust, knowin' how smart the *Linda M.* was kept. Then they noticed the people laughin', and nudgin' each other, and lookin' aloft to the brigantine's main topmast. And there, plain for the whole town to see, was a red flannel petticoat flyin' from the mast-head.

'Whose work is that?' says Bob, quiet and dangerous. Not a word out o' anybody. Truth was, nobody knew; though everybody knew what it meant. Truth was, Lumley had borrowed it off one o' the girls at Shanahan's, and shinned up the mast in the night to hang it there for Sunday. There was no sign o' Lumley, o' course. He'd lit out.

'Some o' those young devils o' boys,' snaps old Ned.

'You'd better get it down, Robert,' says Amanda.

"But the crew'd been paid off and there was nobody aboard but Sammy the black cook, who had a club foot and couldn't a' got higher'n the topmast crosstrees. Bob was itchin' to tear it down; but he wouldn't give the crowd the pleasure o' seein' him do it, and the Smardons and Lauries marched off up the wharf with their heads in the air, and the petticoat still flyin'. I come down to the vessel in the evenin' and seen it there, and whipped aloft in a hurry and let it drop in the river.

"Well, we loaded white pine boards for Martinique. Ned Smardon had bought 'em from a mill up the river. On deck we stowed an extra special lot; one hundred thousand feet o' clear white pine such as ye couldn't find today if ye searched the dominion. Pretty stuff, I tell ye, and Ned come down and watched every stick aboard. 'Twas a sample lot, see? And Ned Smardon and Amanda had hopes o' some good business in Martinique on the stren'th of it.

"We got the stores aboard, shipped a crew, and begun to fasten the deck-load secure for sea. The way we always fastened a lumber deck-load was this: we laid what's called lashin'-planks acrost the deck-load from side to side. The ends o' these planks was cleated to hold the lashin's in place. The lashin's was three-inch hemp, rove through eyebolts in the rail, and around the ends o' the lashin'-planks, and the whole thing frapped to set it up tight. We done it with dry rope, o' course, and the first rain, or the first sea over the side, set it up tighter'n ever.

"Linda come along the wharf with her father, just as we was gettin' started with the lashin'-planks. 'Hold on a minute, Hugh,' she says. 'I don't like those old-fashioned fastenings, do you? They were all right before wire was invented.'

'What's your idea?' asks Cap'n Bob, pleasant.

'Use wire,' says Linda, quick and eager—just like her mother. 'One to each eyebolt. Bring the ends together on top of the deck-load and set them up tight with a lanyard.'

'There's quite a weight to hold, in a seaway,' objects Bob.

'But wire cable?' she says. 'Oh come, Bob; you men are too set in your ways. No sea could break a good wire cable.'

'She's right,' chirps old Ned. pleased as punch with his daughter's brains. 'No sea could bother a stout wire cable.'

"Bob looked like he wanted to say somethin' else; but Linda called out to me to go up to the riggin' loft and get some good stout wire cable and some eyes. So that was that. We lashed the deck-load with Linda's cable and set 'em up tight with lanyards, like she said. And we sailed, with Ned and Amanda down to the wharf to see us off, and bawlin' instructions after Bob as far as their tongues could reach.

"WE had a soldier's passage till we was well south o' Bermuda. Then we run into a storm, and had to lay twelve hours hove-to under a storm trysail and

a small main staysail. Finally the wind shifted, and there was a big cross sea. The vessel shipped a couple o' green ones, just afore dark, and Cap'n Bob called me on deck. He didn't say a word. He just pointed to them deck-load lashin's. I stared at 'em a minute while the vessel rolled, and my eyes begun to pop. Wire cable couldn't break, maybe; but it could bend. Linda's patent lashin' was givin' to leeward and takin' up the slack from windward; the whole deck load was creepin' down to leeward inch by inch, and there wasn't a dog-gone thing we could do about it. The further it went, the more the *Linda M.* listed, and the further she listed, the more purchase the wind got on her windward side. The sensible thing was to cut loose the lashin's and let Ned's fancy lumber go. But just then Linda come on deck in oilskins, the way she liked to do in heavy weather, and I could read Bob's mind like a book. Linda's notions had got us into the mess, and it was up to Linda to give the word.

"But she didn't notice the lashin's. I guess she thought 'twas the wind that pressed the vessel over so. She stood near the wheel, which was lashed, with a helmsman standin' by. I was at the for'ard end o' the half deck, and Bob was on the deck cargo near the foremast. I heard Linda and the helmsman sing out together, 'Look out!' and I crouched down and grabbed a ring-bolt just as a big sea come over the whole len'th of her. Bob jumped for the weather riggin' of the foremast, and begun to run up the under side o' the ratlines; but that sea was higher than he could climb in the time he had. The sea pitched him off the riggin', flung him slap through the main staysail, and took him overboard on the lee side in one tremenjus rush o' water.

"I'll never forget Linda's scream. Ye could hear it above the noise o' the water, and the wind. I come to me feet, yellin' 'Man overboard!' The deck-load was slanted like the pitch of a roof. I slid down to leeward. I could see Bob swimmin' hard in the smother sixty or seventy yards off the port quarter. I knew he couldn't keep it up long—his sea boots on, and the oilskins. All the lee runnin' riggin' was covered on its pins by the deck cargo, which had slid down hard agin the standin' riggin'; so there wasn't a rope-end to throw. But the sea had staggered the brigantine and took her way off; she was driftin' to leeward the same as Bob. Then I noticed the rags o' the main staysail—the one Bob went through—blowin' out to leeward like streamers. Me and the helmsman caught hold of 'em and let 'em down so Bob could catch hold. He got a good grip on 'em, and we pretty nigh had him where we could reach him with our hands, when we heard Linda scream agin, and saw another big green wall comin' over the starboard side.

"The helmsman and me hung on to the fore t'gallant and fore royal backstays while the sea went over and past us. It pretty nigh took our arms out o' the sockets, and it knocked the breath out of us, but we hung on. The sea tore Bob loose of his hold on the rags o' the sail, and we seen him to leeward agin, but not so far off, and swimmin' like a good 'un. Once agin we worked the strips o' canvas down to him, and worked him alongside. We got on the fore chains, and each slipped a hand under his armpits and swung him aboard. And like a flash there was Linda, flingin' her arms about him, laughin' and cryin', and sayin' 'Darling darling darling.' I'd a job to get 'em out o' harm's way aft.

"Soon as he got his breath, Bob says, 'We've got to put the old hooker before it, somehow.' All our storm canvas was gone. The men was comin' out o' the fo'c'sle now like wet rats. Bob sent a couple to goose-wing the lower topsail. That squared her off before the wind, and the *Linda M.* begun to move agin, all hunched over to port. Then come a lull. The wind died, flat, and the brigantine rolled and pitched in the big greasy seas. 'Twas hot. We was all gaspin' for air that didn't seem to be there. The glass had dropped like a stone. Then it come to me what was on Bob's mind, back home, when Linda sprung her notion about the lashin's. 'Twas the hurricane season. We'd walked into a West Indy buster. There wasn't time now to sling them deck-load boards overside, one by one. There was other things to do. We got another storm trysail bent

and stowed on the boom. We put the helm down hard and lashed it there. We battened the fo'c'sle hatch with boards and canvas, and all hands come aft.

"It seemed a long time comin', but then it come in a rush, first a hard squall, then the wind. What went before was nothin'. This was the real thing. The sound it made would frighten ye out o' your boots. It beat that big lumpy sea down flat—flat as a floor—in fifteen minutes, tearin' off the tops and whippin' the water along in spray. 'Twas like a nor'east blizzard back home, on'y blowin' three times as hard, and spray flyin' 'stead o' snow. Ye couldn't see for'ard from aft. The brigantine lay over to it, further and further, till the fore yardarms was in the water, and we thought 'twas all up with us. Bob yelled in my ear, 'Get axes. We'll cut the deck load away.'

"Ye couldn't stand up in that wind without a support, and ye couldn't swing an axe, for the wind would a' taken it out o' your hands. We had to crawl, hangin' on the best way we could, till we got to the rope lanyards that bound the wire ends together. We begun amidships; Bob was to cut for'ard and I was to cut aft. That would give us a chance to jump clear afore the boards begun to go. It took a long time, sawin' the axe blades back and forth acrost the lanyards till they let go. When my last lashin' was cut, I jumped for the life-line on the half deck, and seen Bob crouchin' agin the fo'c'sle, watchin' the boards go. 'Twas a strange sight. The wind lifted 'em in tiers o' ten or twelve, the way ye'd flip a few cards off a pack, and they went sailin' over the lee fore-braces, high in air, and vanished in the spume to leeward. In less'n fifteen minutes not a board was left on deck o' that hundred thousand o' clear pine lumber for Martinique. The *Linda M.* righted herself as far as she could, with that wind blowin', and we set the storm try-sail and rode out the hurricane handsome.

"When we got to Martinique, the place was rim-racked, all the palm trees down, and the red clay huts o' the black people blown into the gullies o' that big hillside. But the queerest sight was a barque, dismasted and capsized, high and dry on the beach with her keel to the sky. To a seafarin' man there was somethin' awful about that.

"WELL, we sailed for home with rum and molasses, and had a good passage north. Bob made a fine landfall, Black Point, thirty mile from home.

" 'Twas a Saturday evenin', and all hands pleased to be gettin' in for Sunday; but it come a little thick in the night, and Bob held her off the river mouth till mornin'. Him and Linda come on deck together as we squared away for the river bar. He seen us all grinnin', and looked aloft. There was a pair o' his own white duck trousers flyin' from the main top. They was nailed there. Bob jumped round on us, fightin' mad, liftin' them big fists o' his.

'Who did that?' he snaps.

'I did,' Linda says. 'Last night. I still know how to climb rigging.'

'What's the idea?' snorts Bob.

'A number of things,' says Linda, pretty pink, and lookin' past his shoulder somewheres. 'For one thing, I want to give those sniggering dockside loafers something to open their eyes. For another thing, I'm going ashore to have a baby.'

'What!' he yells, pleased, and then all white and worried, the way young husbands go when it strikes 'em that babies ain't found in a cabbage patch.

'What's more,' Linda says, still dodgin' his eyes, 'it means I'm going to live ashore after this, and make a home for you and the boys.'

'Boys?' he says, puzzled.

'Boys,' she says, and gives him a look. 'There's to be no more seafaring women in this family. Just you keep that in mind, Bob Laurie.' And away she runs below, afore he can catch and kiss her.

'Shall I send a hand aloft to tear them things down?' I says, solemn.

"Bob looked aloft; then I seen him look over towards the town, towards the Smardon house on the Argyle road, and his eyes narrowed a bit. 'No,' he says, slow. 'Leave 'em stay, till they rot and blow away.' And he grins at me. 'It ain't a bad house-flag, that, for a family o' boys.' "

He caught Shorty with a left uppercut that knocked him clear off the porch.

THREE ROADS HOME

By JACK BYRNE

TEX rubbed the swollen knuckles that had knocked Shorty down, and his half-closed eyes could see the way that things were bound to be. He could see the coming morning and Cottonwoods town still dozing in the early sun.

He could see the six-eight ponies at the racks and the wagons waiting to load. There'd be men who quit the sidewalks at sight of him, flattening against the nearest building or mounting some handy porch. There'd be watchers at the windows all along the street, from the Stockmen's Corral to the Mercantile, like wry-neck buzzards hovering the kill.

And he saw himself with shoulders squared and arms swinging slow. Left, right, left, right—his bootheels puffing up the dust, and his squint searching every alley, every doorway. His holster

would flap against his thigh and he'd smear sweat from the palms of his hands.

Then Shorty would pop out from somewhere—likely from the Elk Saloon—and come striding on towards him. The worst of it would be over then. Fiddle-string nerves would handle the draw-and-shoot, and Lady Luck would call the showdown.

One good thing, it wouldn't take long.

Tex drew the skinned knuckles across his lips and replaced the cup beside the water bucket. Within the shack Jim Starret still snored. It would be full dawn in twenty minutes. . . .

They'd all been drinking last evening, of course, but the things said and done couldn't be charged off to John Barleycorn. Some squabbles and arguments, even knockdown brawls, can be eased over next day when horse-sense cuts the whiskey-fog. But nobody there on the K-Cross porch was drunk. The whole affair—no, this one was different.

There were probably twenty more who could recall the details as sharp and clear as Tex could.

"You're two behind," was all he said. "Drink up there, half-pint! I aim to see you act full-grown when I take you out in society."

Feeling good, that's all, with a couple under his belt. Meaning no harm at all.

"Lay off!" Shorty said.

"You gettin' high-toned?" Tex hoorawed. "You think because you're duded up you're too good for cowfolks' company?"

"I drink what I please and when I please," Shorty said, "and no scrub-grass Texican owns the say-so."

It was the look on his face and how he said it. It was the fact that Tex was his partner, and that he slapped the bald words out before some who were strangers.

Tex recalled the tightening of muscles, the tingle of wrath that lurched him forward. He could see Shorty swinging a roundhouse right. And he could feel again the jolt of his fist against Shorty's mouth, as he beat him to the punch, the shock of impact vibrating up his arm. You'd never think one blow could have the power, though, to straighten Shorty and knock him clear back off the porch. . . .

TEX rolled a steady cigarette. He eyed the wad of currency and abstractly counted it again—sixty-eight dollars. He buttoned it into a breast pocket with the makings.

The top bunk in the dim shack creaked as Jim Starret tossed, muttering in his sleep. Tex waited in the doorway. He did not want to talk now. The desire to be undisturbed in his loneliness became an emotion, a sharp necessity. Silent in stockinged feet he gathered his hat and boots, his gunbelt. He saw Jim Starret's bedroll propped in a corner beside a rifle there.

The thing to do, he decided, was ride out yonder a piece. Two-three hours before he was due in Cottonwoods.

Sharp words passed, a swift blow struck, and now it was kill or be killed between him and Shorty. That was how it had to be. Shorty had been set and primed to shoot it out right there at the K-Cross.

He'd come staggering back, blood on his face, fighting off hands that tried to hold him. He threw a punch at old Tom King when Tom blocked his path and grappled him.

"Stop it, boy!" the fat rancher said. "I do all the fightin' at my own birthday parties."

Shorty was sobbing. When Shorty was riled he cried sometimes, and that riled him more than ever. "By God, Tom," he said, "there's no border scum can knock me down and walk away whole from it!"

"Easy son," said old Tom. "This is my home. You're under my roof—"

"There's a road outside," said Shorty, "and his gun's hung there in the hall with mine. If he's any part of a halfway man—"

"Damn you," old Tom roared, "there's ladies inside! You think you're down at Grace Clay's cat-house?" He pushed Shorty back and his big fists doubled.

Shorty straightened and drew a breath. "I beg your pardon, Mr. King. I'm sorry I forgot myself." His eyes

sought Tex through the lantern glow. "I'll make no rumpus here tonight, but I'm servin' notice I'll be in Cottonwoods tomorrow morning. I'll be heeled and ready and I won't be hard to find."

There were women listening beyond the open windows. Forty people heard the challenge. Before the night was done the news would spread. . . .

Tex looked out at the horizon's pale rim and breathed the freshening air. He slid his .38 from the holster. He broke the gun, and his thumb tested the play of the hammer. He felt across the cartridge heads and fitted a sixth shell into the empty chamber. When the belt was buckled and the holster hanging right he practiced the swing of his draw.

His arm was loose, his fingers strong and free.

He had left the K-Cross early. It had been a strain to endure, for even an hour, the whispers and glances that followed him. He had been thankful for Starret's invitation.

Sitting there in the shack with Jim last night, finishing the bottle, his anger had been slow to die. He'd been sure of his rightness, certain of just what he'd do. But when Jim was snoring and his thoughts roamed the dark alone—

Well, what can a man be sure of?

He was as fast on the draw as Shorty, or almost. Shorty might beat him out of the holster but Tex was the steadier of the two. Even admit, for argument, that Shorty triggered the opening shot. The pressure would be hard on Shorty to make that first shot good, knowing how seldom Tex fired a miss.

Maybe Shorty was thinking of that, worrying about it now.

And another thing Tex thought of was the old Bill Hickok trick. You dropped belly-flat the very instant the other man started his move. You made him shift his aim in a wink, gave him no target at all, while you steadied your own elbow for the bull's-eye.

TEX felt the stubble on his chin and lifted his saddle. His lineback dun was a frisky morning horse, and slapping the gear on him without a rumpus wasn't in nature. The name Shorty had pinned on him fitted mighty well: Ol' Fuss an' Feathers was exactly how he was.

"Soooo, boy," Tex soothed. "Steady, Fuss."

He was thinking: Any way you figure I got the edge. I got him shaded every way but one. He's got his bloody mouth to damn me with. He's got a reason and I got none.

Scrub-grass Texican. Border scum. Not the choicest names to brand a man in public, no, but where was the mortal stain in them that needed washing out in blood?

Tex went back to the shack. Jim Starret had done most of last night's drinking and he still slept noisily. It was people like Jim Starret, Tex thought, who would line the street in Cottonwoods. They would be judge and jury both between him and Shorty. But how much would it matter, when the smoke cleared, what a hundred Jim Starrets might think or say?

Tex carried the bedroll and rifle outside. He ripped a page from his tally book and wet the pencil stub. His mouth twisted as he wrote: I O U—*1 set soogans, 1 Winchester, 1 box cartriges— J. S. Rogers.*

He read the note over, then crossed out the signature and wrote *Tex.*

The sky behind the blue-gray hills was changing copper red to gold when he turned his back to the sunrise and headed the dun down a brushy slope. There was still plenty time. The important thing was to steer shy of people hereabouts, to avoid the need of explanations no one would understand.

The flare-up between him and Shorty —bad blood, most everybody would say. That little place out in the hills, they'd say, just got too cramped to hold the pair of them.

But that wasn't quite it. For two years him and Shorty had worked their double-section, building up a little herd and getting on middling fair. They never saw nose-to-nose on all things—men ain't built that way—but they hit it off as good as most. The trouble was this hard-luck streak that hit them this winter past.

That one big blizzard had cost them

critters they couldn't spare. A landslide wrecked the canyon feeding-pen, and the wolves turned extra bad. The beef market had hit a slump—well, it only meant they'd tighten their belts and hold the stock another year.

Easy to say, but a business like that is a burning-glass that starts a smolder in the twigs. A little remark about rancid bacon takes on a sharp edge. If a man buys a pair of fancy boots, like Shorty did, his partner is bound to say some word about forty dollars and new fencing.

One spark ignites another as the fire kindles. It only needs a blow of wind to puff it into flame.

Tex kept the dun in an easy canter, cutting down an arroyo to join the main road beyond. When he had mounted a long slope and rounded a cutbank he would hit a three-way branch. The north trail, bordering Solo Creek, led out towards the foothills and the little spread that had seemed so big to him and Shorty yesterday. The south branch wandered into Cottonwoods where he had a date with Shorty today. The middle road, wide and traveled, was a highway to far ranges and the towns of strangers, the path to—well, a man never knew.

Tex had seen those branching roads plainly in the sleepless dark of Starret's shack. He had known for hours which one he would choose.

HE wasn't afraid. If he'd thought for even a minute some streak of yellow was showing, natural pride would have spurred him into Cottonwoods to roll 'er out with Colonel Colt's blue dice. It was only because he wasn't a coward that he could afford to back down.

Tex Rogers had no roots here. What would it matter, with him long gone, what local people thought of him? He had no real stake in Cottonwoods County. They'd forget his name in a week.

With Shorty it was different. Shorty was born and raised here, and a town somewhere south was called for his folks. Shorty had uncles and cousins and schoolday friends, and that girl of Tom King's he was calling on. He had named his play in front of people like these, and he had no choice but to shoot it out.

Another thing, Shorty always admitted Tex was the wiser head. He depended on Tex, when a tight came up, to scheme out the sensible plan for them both. And that's what Tex had done. He was older than Shorty by three-four years, and he rated a better all-around hand. It wouldn't be no problem for him to make a new start and a decent living somewhere.

The grubstake in his pocket would last him along the road. He'd settle with Shorty, through the bank, on a fair price for his share of the property. The homestead was a one-man layout anyway, as it stood. There wasn't hardly elbow room for two, as had been proved.

He walked the dun in the roadside grass up the last hundred yards of slope. He'd stop for one last look-see, he thought, and then be ambling on. It wasn't easy, riding out like this, thinking of the plans they'd had and the wasted years.

The dun cocked an ear and stretched his neck as they reached the cutbank corner, but Tex hardly noticed. He was thinking of the branching roads beyond. They had rounded it full before the dun's warning snort jerked his hand on the reins. His free hand dropped to his hip in a practiced move.

The second horseman was wheeling to face him. In one swift appraisal Tex saw the booted rifle, the duffle bag, the gear a man needed to travel fast and light along the middle road.

"Hi," said Tex, and his awkward grin widened, stinging the corners of his mouth.

"Hidee, pardner," Shorty said.

MURDER IN MARTINIQUE

IT SEEMED to Nick Trevain, master of the schooner *Sorceress*, that his mate's tongue was getting a lot too large for his mouth. Jake Frye kept pushing it out and licking his lips.

Finally Jake ascended the companionway and peered across the moonlit water of Fort de France Bay toward the small island freighter tied up at the steamship dock. Without appreciation he sniffed the pungency of that sprawling city of tropical slums.

"Rivot's a long time, sir," Jake said uneasily to Nick Trevain. "If it was any other Frenchman I'd say he'd changed his mind about putting out that cognac."

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MURDER IN MARTINIQUE

A NOVELETTE

By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

IT SEEMED to Nick Trevain, master of the schooner *Sorceress,* that his mate's tongue was getting a lot too large for his mouth. Jake Frye kept pushing it out and licking his lips.

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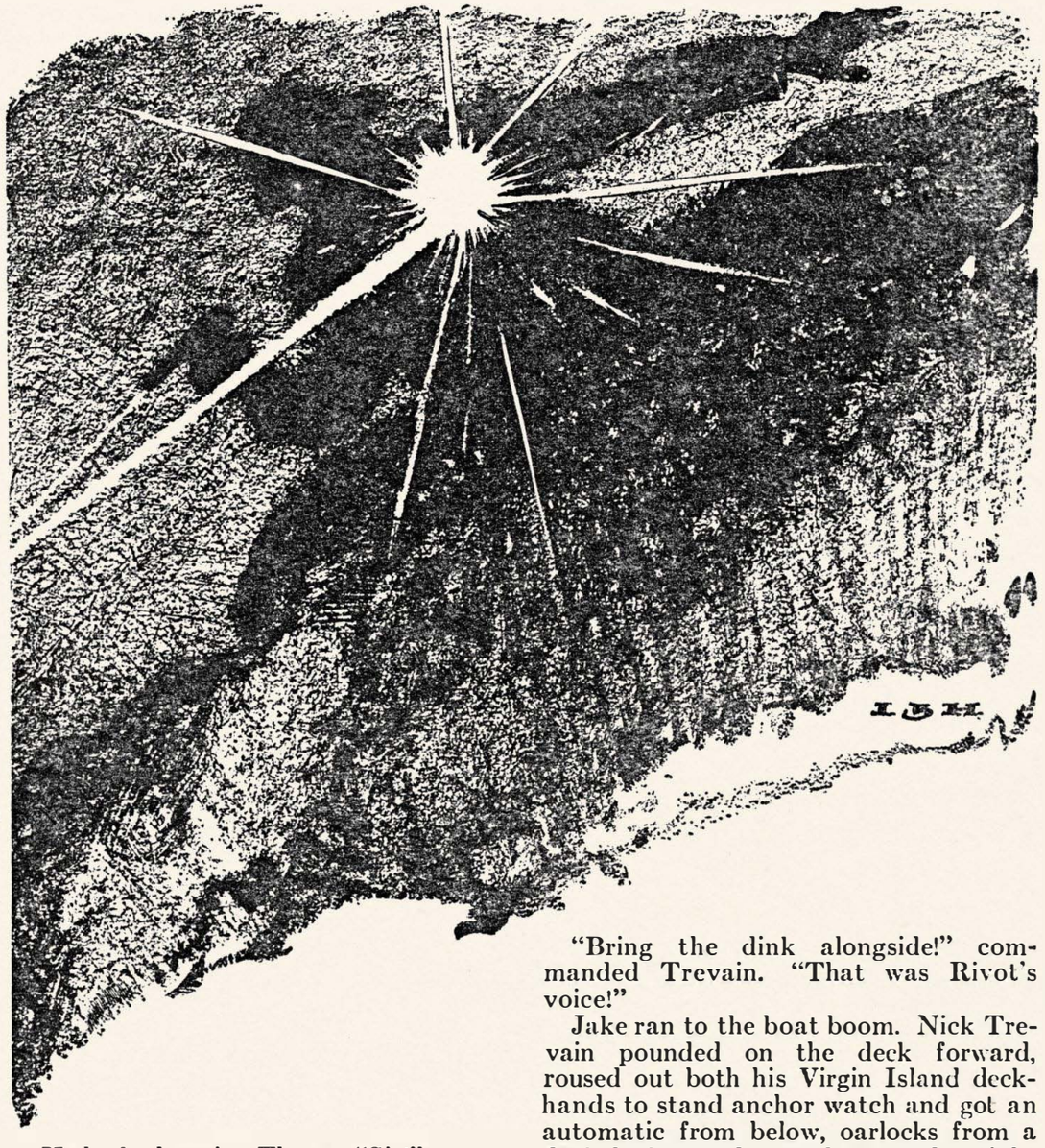

He looked again. Then— "Sir!"

The urgency in Jake Frye's voice sent Nick Trevain leaping to the companion ladder. Anything could happen in Martinique these unhappy days since France's collapse.

In the cockpit of the tall-masted schooner they listened intently. Something noisy and rough was happening on Captain Rivot's steamer. A man's voice called out, high, hard-pressed.

"Bring the dink alongside!" commanded Trevain. "That was Rivot's voice!"

Jake ran to the boat boom. Nick Trevain pounded on the deck forward, roused out both his Virgin Island deckhands to stand anchor watch and got an automatic from below, oarlocks from a deck locker and oars from under tight lashings on deck. A man had to protect his possessions in this armistice stricken island.

A moment later Jake Frye was making the dinghy leap across the water. Tight-lipped, Nick Trevain darted a look astern at his schooner. A refugee from the routine of freightship bridge watches, he had snatched her from a reef at the risk of his life and maintained her in the

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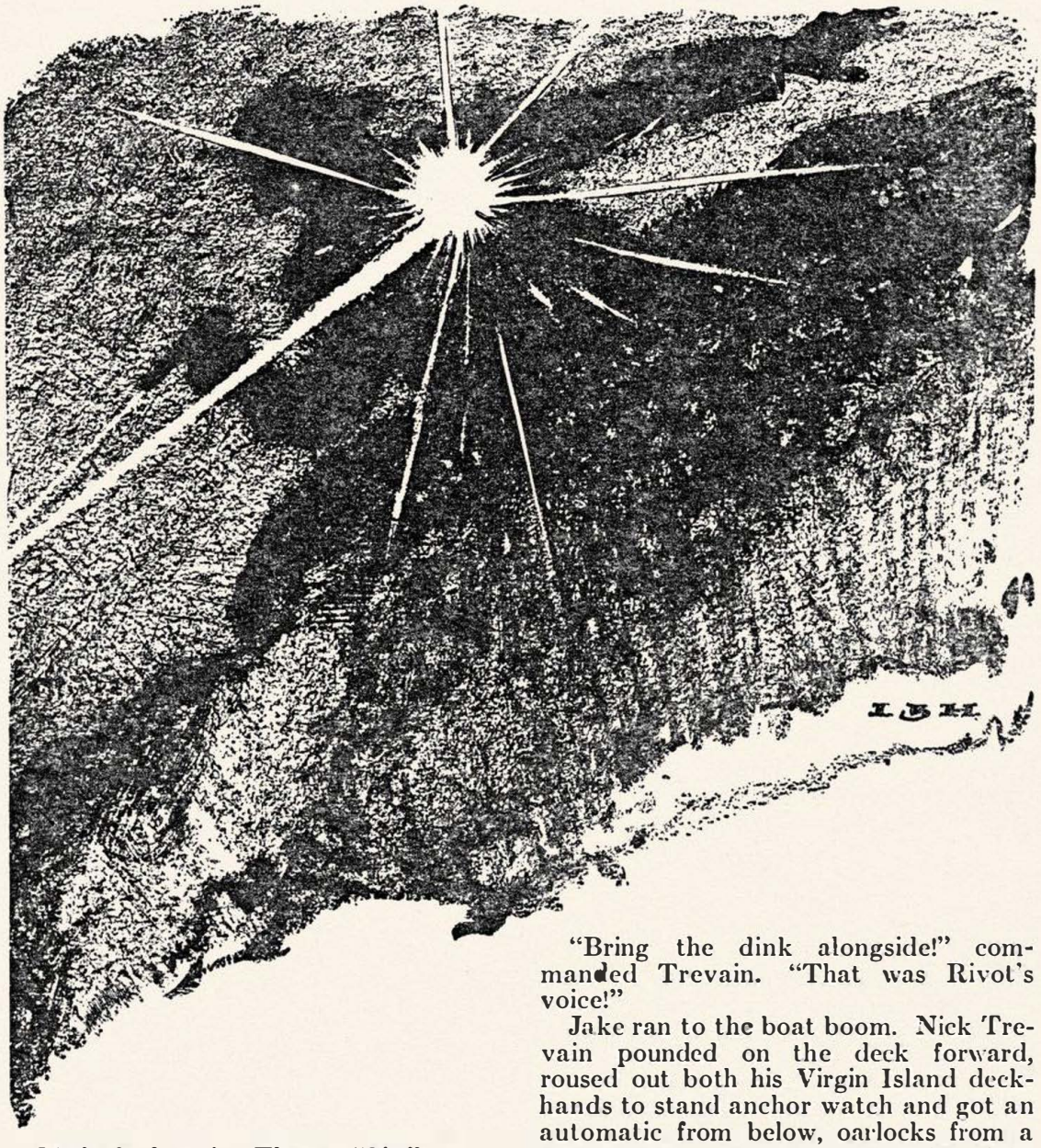

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Caribbean by his sweat, wits and daring.

"If Rivot's not in a jam we'll get back to her fast, Jake," he said. "I wouldn't trust anyone in this blasted island not to make a play for her."

Jake Frye, rowing hard, cocked a furry eyebrow at the schooner and grunted assent.

THAT small ship was truly a *Sorceress* who held Nick Trevain and his hardcase mate with charms that only a seaman could understand. And Nick Trevain had been twice as solicitous about her since trouble for the U. S. A. loomed up over the sea and the time approached for men to shut their mouths and fists and close ranks for action. It might be only a rolling freighthouse that would reclaim Nick Trevain but he was hoping for something livelier—destroyer duty, perhaps.

The noise in Captain Rivot's *Jeanne* had ceased before Jake could bring the dinghy alongside the pier. They leaped aboard the ship.

A coffee-colored Martinican deckhand motioned to them in eloquent distress from the diminutive radio shack on the boat deck of the little freighter. A light burned within the shack, strangely yellow after the fierce white light of the moon. It showed them Captain Rivot prostrate on the deck amidst the wreckage of the radio transmitter.

"M'sieu, I had gone only to the statue of Josephine in the *savane* to meet my sister," the deckhand said, in the patois of the island. "Some enemy—"

He talked on till Nick Trevain raised a hand. Captain Rivot was dead, with his skull crushed in and his knuckles bleeding. The evidence was plain to read. The captain, returning unexpectedly in his boat to get that friendly bottle of cognac, had surprised some intruder wrecking his small ship's radio room.

"He was a good little guy and a fighter, too," said Jake Frye.

The destruction in the radio room was methodical. It was impossible that such ruin could have been caused in the short, fierce fight that had followed Rivot's return in his rowboat.

Nick Trevain sent the deckhand for agents of the military police. Martinique was, in fact, governed by French officers in command of dying ships. Nick looked curiously at the fragments of radio tubes which had been jerked from their sockets and smashed on the floor.

"Queer," he said.

Jake Frye got it, too. "That's so," he said. "He could ha' smacked them in the sockets, without draggin' 'em out."

Other pieces of apparatus were missing but a clear trail of wreckage leading to the rail indicated destruction and disposal overboard rather than theft. Nick Trevain looked again at the radio tubes. He counted the sockets and the splintered tubes on the floor.

Light steps hurried on the deck outside. André Rivot, nephew of the captain and radio operator in the *Jeanne,* pushed in a white and apprehensive face. Blusterous old Rivot had been a casual father to young André and with much good-natured grumbling had assented to the boy's installation of a radio transmitter on the freighter. It had helped greatly in locating and snapping up cargoes among the islands from Puerto Rico to Trinidad.

André had heard the news from the deckhand. But the actual sight of Captain Rivot on the floor hit him like a heavy fist. Trevain and Jake Frye got him outside the radio room as quickly as they could.

"Some partisan of Vichy has done this!" André raged.

Nick Trevain nodded grimly. Every Frenchman on that island had many enemies, for the island was divided between supporters of the men of Vichy and of the Free French. Before he could ask André a question that had been bothering him, another man came up from the pier.

"Who's this?" he asked André Rivot, more to get the boy's mind off his uncle than for information.

André lifted his thin, sallow face. "Henri Berg—the proprietor of the islet of Le Boulet Ramé," he said. "He is sailing with—we were to carry him to his island to-morrow."

"That's that Alsatian guy that's trying to get bromium and stuff out of sea

water with a plant over on Chainshot Island," Jake Frye whispered.

HENRI BERG, a big man, broad of chest and of stomach, approached and stopped with exaggerated abruptness.

"I do not wish to be troublesome," he said, in English, speaking as if with special effort. "There iss something wrong here?"

Trevain told him briefly.

"I will go to my cabin," Berg said. "I am deeply moved." He hesitated. "I regret to intrude my own difficulties at such a time but I must know. My men need badly the supplies I bring. Iss it likely that the ship will sail tomorrow?"

André Rivot flung up his hands. "How can she sail—without her master? And the inquiry—no, m'sieu, I regret!"

"I understand," Henri Berg said as André entered the shack. "I will find passage elsewhere." Again he hesitated and looked at Nick Trevain. "You, m'sieu, would you charter your schooner for a mere day's run to the island of Le Boulet Ramé? I have hungry men awaiting me."

Nick Trevain had been looking down, as if sunk in thought, to the deck where a broad square of light from the radio shack fell slanting across their legs. He answered immediately.

"We'll take you, Mr. Berg, if it can be arranged with the authorities here."

"I am deeply obliged," Berg said. "I will go ashore at once and make sure there iss no official objection."

He started away briskly. Nick Trevain watched his broad figure, moving with a slight limp, off the boat deck.

"Huh!" said Jake Frye. "Alsatians must go big with these Vichy admirals ashore. He's good if he gets away that fast."

Nick Trevain tapped his nose. "Alsatian," he repeated. "He speaks French like a Frenchman, all right, but his English is Teutonic."

"He's been on that island since before the Nazis muscled in on Poland," Jake Frye said.

Trevain glanced at the body of their jovial friend Rivot on the deck in the shack. "You know, Jake," he said, softly, lifting his eyes to the moonlight into which Henri Berg had disappeared, "a man could have a lamed knee and a jaw so bruised that it interfered with his utterance without being involved in Rivot's killing."

"What?" Jake said.

"But when he also has fragments of fine, curved glass like that of radio tubes glittering in the cuff of his trousers, I begin to wonder."

Jake Frye grunted as if he had been poked in the stomach. "We're off!" he said. "I wondered why you were so willing to let *Sorceress* carry freight for that Alsatian bromium hound."

"If Berg *is* an Alsatian," Trevain said. "When a man takes considerable risks to steal three transmitter tubes out of a radio set, conceals the theft under the guise of senseless sabotage and kills when he is interrupted—well, it keeps me wondering to what nationality he really belongs."

Jake squinted sharply at the master of *Sorceress*. Then, without a word he stuck his head in the door and looked at the mess of smashed apparatus and tubes on the floor and counted the sockets from which the tubes came.

"Transmitter tubes, huh?" he muttered softly. "Harder to get than regular tubes."

"Very hard to get on Martinique and impossible to get without embarrassing gossip," Nick Trevain said. "You can hardly ask even a Vichy naval officer to lend you some transmitter tubes off his ship."

It was then that a wave of officials swept over the little steamer and enveloped them. Nick Trevain answered all questions put to him but put forward no deductions. The evidence was still there to be read, even to the tiny slivers of glass in Henri Berg's trouser cuff.

"How about just telling these guys who did it?" Jake Frye urged softly.

"Don't be naive, Jake," Nick Trevain said. "It isn't proper for an American to step in between Vichy Frenchmen and suspected Nazis."

"What you're going to do to Berg direct may not be so cussed proper, either," Jake predicted.

But in spite of that prophecy Jake was

a bit uneasy. For Nick Trevain, usually confident enough, was to Jake's experienced and understanding eye a most perplexed man.

"It's them ethics that's got him," Jake told himself morosely. "All we got to do is chuck Berg overboard in twelve hundred fathom with that no-good fifty pound navy-style anchor wired to his feet an' report a wave washed him off the fore deck. But that ain't fancy enough for Captain Nicholas Trevain."

HE was wrong. It was more than the disposal of Henri Berg that worried Nick Trevain all the rest of that night. And there was no definite answer in his head next morning when a small lighter brought out Henri Berg's supplies and person to the schooner *Sorceress*. "All settled," he said brusquely when Nick Trevain mentioned the authorities. "You will see when you go ashore."

"Who killed Rivot?" Nick Trevain asked.

Henri Berg waved a hand. "I do not mean that the assailant has been caught," he said. "I have convinced them I know nothing and you know nothing. Apparently Rivot wass—wass not a man of importance in Martinique."

With his shoulder Trevain nearly knocked Jake Frye overboard as he turned clumsily. Jake scowled and shut his mouth. But Jake, overseeing the loading of the stuff in the yacht's main cabin, her only sizable space for cargo, did a little detective work himself. He seized one of Henri Berg's two personal leather kitbags and thumped it down on the schooner's deck with a jar calculated to do hidden transmitter tubes no great good. His eyes, under his furry eyebrows, roamed upward to Berg's broad face.

"Let me help you," Henri Berg said with great good humor and carried the other kitbag across the schooner's rail himself. Then he took them both below and boxed them in securely on the port transom bunk with other packages of supplies for Chainshot Island.

"Inconclusive," Nick Trevain told his mate dryly. "Try anything more like that and I'll leave you on the beach."

With no official objection they were under way at eleven o'clock. Though the trade winds blew flukily under the barrier of the island Nick Trevain took *Sorceress* out of Fort de France Bay under sail alone. She left the aircraft carrier *Bearn* and the cruiser *Emile Bertin* sulking at their moorings, as morosely enigmatic in their huge chains under the flaming Caribbean sun as their masters.

The northeast breeze strengthened and steadied once they were out from under the island's lee. Chainshot, as Anglo-Saxon voyagers called the island, lay to southward of Martinique, not too far south of Cabrit Islet.

On that swift run to southward along the rugged shore *Sorceress* raised a U. S. destroyer of the neutrality patrol. She steamed along, discreetly off to the westward so as not to offend French sensibilities. But she did not move too far off to fail to see the *Bearn* and the *Bertin* if they should try to make a run for it under orders which might come via Vichy from sources politely unknown. Since hard-worked British naval units had surrendered this job to the American squadron, Martinique had never been left without an unobtrusive watcher off to leeward.

Henri Berg, sitting in the cockpit within eyeshot of his bags, remained entirely unaware of that gray ship to westward. In repose his manner emphasized his suave confidence in himself.

Jake Frye stared at the tough little ship in exasperation.

"I'm not thinkin' of the cognac I missed," he said softly. "But Cap'n Rivot was a good guy. Say, wouldn't it be nice if that destroyer could move in an' say, 'What goes on here?' "

"Maybe she will one day, but we'll have to take a good many more kicks in the face than the torpedoing of the Robin Moor before she does," Trevain answered and went below.

Down in the single stateroom forward, Trevain devoted himself to the chart showing the largest detail of Chainshot. When Jake, still on the prance, descended to look at him the master of the *Sorceress* was thinking hard and, if frowns meant anything,

thinking unsuccessfully. Nobody but Jake was permitted to see Nick Trevain worried.

"We going to be peaceful about this Nazi getting away with murder?" Jake Frye asked. "An' I mean murder. What are we—Rumanians or Bulgarians?"

"Both, so far," said Nick Trevain. He dropped his eyes to the chart. "Go up on deck and make a few remarks to M'sieu Berg about navigational dangers in approaching Chainshot."

Jake put a finger like a club on the chart. "O' course north an' northeast is hell," he said. "No can do. More rocks than there's beans in a can. But it's good deep water to southward an' we come into the lagoon through that—"

"You have an order," said Trevain and Jake moved.

CHAPTER II

CHAINSHOT ISLAND

IT wasn't until late that afternoon, as the schooner approached Berg's island, that Jake Frye caught on. So worried was Captain Trevain about pilotage that he had himself hoisted in the bosun's chair to the upper spreader of *Sorceress's* towering Marconi mainmast. Up there a man could get a perfect, detailed view of the island and everything on it.

"You got to be careful, see?" Jake said to the unperturbed Berg. "I mean we got to be careful," he added.

"No doubt," said Henri Berg.

Jake took the wheel himself as Trevain conned her in to the anchorage. In shape the place was somewhat like a coral atoll. Long, narrow, curving islets ringed a central expanse of placid waters. Nick had told Jake that Chainshot was the rim of the crater of an ancient submerged volcano. The beaches, of seaground volcanic rock, were almost black in color.

"Sweet place for a picnic," Jake muttered.

The rim of the crater tilted higher to the northeast. Here there was a high, serrated comb of rock. Its curving crest fell away on each hand so that the ring on its southwestern side was only a flat beach a few feet above water with a low backbone of rock. There were several openings on this side into the central lagoon.

It was on the northeastern, higher side, that Jake made out a few buildings. They were mostly mere sheds, wooden, white painted, somehow desolate. The shacks ran from the lower, less precipitous slopes of the ridge down to the lagoon. Even in late afternoon the sun was hitting the buildings, rocks and sand with rays as hard as hot steel rods.

Once within the lagoon Nick Trevain descended from his high perch. Jake, with the wind around to the east, was holding her close hauled for a pier near the cluster of sheds.

"You must come ashore and see my little place," Henri Berg said to Trevain. There was well concealed in his voice a certain irony. He had not overlooked Trevain's scrutiny of land as well as water.

"Perhaps tomorrow," Nick Trevain said. "We have a job on board." He nodded to the mainmast. "Jake, we've got too much of a bend in that stick. This is a good sheltered spot to straighten it out. Round her up!"

Trevain's casual dismissal of the invitation to go ashore made Henri Berg more insistent.

"You must see the plant—all of it," he said. "It iss not what it iss now but what it will be. It iss experimental, you understand. That minerals—gold, bromium—many minerals—exist in sea water iss well known, but the problem of economically concentrating sea water to extract these minerals iss as yet unsolved. By a combination of evaporation by the sun and of boiling by means of oil furnaces—"

"Oil furnaces!" said Nick Trevain. "Oil burning furnaces?"

"As on a ship—yah!" said Henri Berg. "But now—who can get oil? Not even enough for our little plant." He raised a finger. "Experimental—on a small scale—as yet. For evaporation by the sun much more space than iss available here iss necessary."

But *Sorceress,* with sails aflutter, was losing way and her master was busy.

Jib, staysail and fore came down; the anchor rattled its chain through the hawsehole and *Sorceress* came to rest in five fathoms.

Minutes later, while the schooner's crew made up the sails, Henri Berg, clutched that same kitbag that Jake Frye had so roughly handled. All smiles, he descended into a shore boat that met him. The boat was handled by two white men; three others were visible on the dock and one man watched from the deck of a small motor cruiser, less than half *Sorceress's* length, anchored near the pier. This motorboat, Henri Berg had said, had dropped off its propeller and despite much writing to the United States no substitute had yet been received.

All of the white men who boarded the schooner spoke voluble French. None ventured a word of English, not even when Jake tried to make them talk.

Before *Sorceress* had discharged the last of Berg's supplies the sun had plunged into the sea with the headlong speed of a pelican pouching a fish.

Jake was happier when the last of Chainshot's men left.

"Not a black, not even a saddle-colored Martinican in the bunch," he pointed out to Trevain. "Could that be because a Caribbean breed would gossip if you shoved him in a sixteen-inch gun?"

Trevain, a hand on a shroud, looking through the dropping night, did not answer.

"All blonder than Hitler," Jake muttered. "Say, that fat thug was sort of pressing in his invitation. Why didn't you go ashore with him and take a look?"

"We'll go ashore together—after midnight," Nick Trevain said. "Night's a poor time to see things but we might see more than we could in daylight with Berg as a guide."

Jake Frye nodded. The prospect of action cured momentarily his natural garrulity. Then he thought of something.

"*Sorceress* goin' to be safe with both of us nosin' around ashore?"

"If I'm right her safety isn't important," Trevain said shortly. "We're playing marbles for keeps."

Jake whistled. "I was just askin'," he said.

THAT night they lingered on deck. From shore came the thump and hum of a Diesel motor; the brightness of the lights in the houses indicated that Chainshot possessed an electric plant. One by one these lights went out.

Nick Trevain nodded toward the motor boat.

"Night glasses," he said.

Jake Frye peered intently at Berg's disabled boat. "You must ha' been eatin' carrots," he said. "It's all I can do to make out the lug, let alone his glasses."

He meditated with his head sagging down on his thick chest. Forward, an occasional snore from the forecastle indicated that the two Virgin Islanders were enjoying their full night in. Ashore the last light went out.

"I can't get my teeth into this," Jake said.

"We may find something to bite on tonight," Trevain said. "While I was aloft, Jake, I saw something peculiar about those black sand beaches I looked down on."

Jake straightened up.

"Shoot!" he said.

"On the sand well above high water I made out vaguely about ten oblong patches," Trevain said. "The color of these spots was different—even darker—than that of the surrounding sand."

Rapidly he gave Jake the bearings for reaching one of the patches that lay just south of a pinnacle rock on the south side of the passage by which they had entered the lagoon.

"I want you to swim ashore with something to scoop up sand," he said. "Even a tin tray will help."

He nodded toward the motorboat. "While the lad in that boat is watching *Sorceress* I'm going to have a close-up of his craft. I'll join you later if things stay quiet. If you hear any row start back here at once."

Jake Frye stripped. To his broad chest he fastened a tin tray which could be bent into a makeshift scoop. On the side opposite Berg's watcher, he gripped

a line and lowered one foot into the lukewarm water.

"I wouldn't bet a barracuda would get me," he muttered. "If I did it would be just my luck that a shark would hit the jackpot."

Noiselessly the black water enveloped his white body. He took his bearings from the lights ashore and swam away.

Nick waited on deck, watching the watcher, until it was apparent that Jake was beyond likely discovery. Then he, too, slid over side.

The rising moon was soon going to turn silver and make close-up reconnaissance work exceedingly dangerous.

He kept his arms under water and his head low above the surface. He swam against the gentle current, ahead of *Sorceress's* bow. Gradually he worked over until he was several hundred feet up current from Berg's motorboat. He shook out of his head the grisly thought of sharks and forced his muscles to relax. Floating motionless, he let himself drift down on the boat.

The watcher in the wheelhouse was still facing the schooner. From the after cabin of the boat came softly the music of a dance orchestra playing somewhere in the world.

Not until Trevain had drifted to the stern of the boat on the side opposite *Sorceress* did he check himself. He groped under water until he touched the motorboat's flat iron rudder. Gripping this, he thrust his feet under the bottom of the boat. The sole of one foot touched metal.

Trevain made sure. But there was no doubt about it. This boat's propeller was right where it should be at the end of the tailshaft. It hadn't been lost. Berg had lied.

He swam back against the current. The boarding ladder was on this, the starboard side of the boat. Unless the watcher crossed the wheelhouse Trevain reckoned he could reach the deck unseen.

It was too tempting. He pulled himself slowly up onto the ladder. It seemed to him that he had to wait hours for the water to run silently off his naked body. At last he raised his head to the level of the deck.

He wasn't quite sure what he was looking for. But he was convinced that a motorboat which wasn't used to carry supplies from Fort de France must have some secret.

IN the after cabin the dance music stopped. A man began speaking endlessly in Spanish. The watcher stood it for a while then stirred. Nick ducked low on the ladder.

Berg's man descended into the after cabin. Nick Trevain raised his head. A light had been turned on below. Through a slit in the curtains of the narrow window letting in air from the deck he was able to see.

The after end of that small cabin was filled with radio apparatus. There was a transmitter of sizable proportions and undoubted range. There was also a receiver whose dials the watcher was turning. A transmitter! This, then, was the apparatus for which radio tubes were needed so urgently that Berg had murdered when discovered stealing them.

Trevain had seen enough. He climbed down into the water and swam toward the nearest point on the shore, to the south of the pier. There was nobody on that pier but Trevain gave it a good berth. He was glad to feel his feet touch bottom. He waded out onto the sand. The highest ridge of the dead crater's rim cut off the betraying light of the rising moon. He made his way rapidly southward along the curve of the shore.

Jake Frye, like a sudden ghost, rose up in his path as he neared the pass into the lagoon.

"Cap'n!" Jake said in a hoarse whisper. "Come an' take a feel o' what I found here under the sand."

He led Trevain a few feet up the beach and stepped down into an excavation little more than two feet deep.

"Feel!" he said, bending.

Nick Trevain felt. It was what he had expected, the smooth cold surface of a metal tank. With a piece of shell he tapped it hard. There was no reverberation.

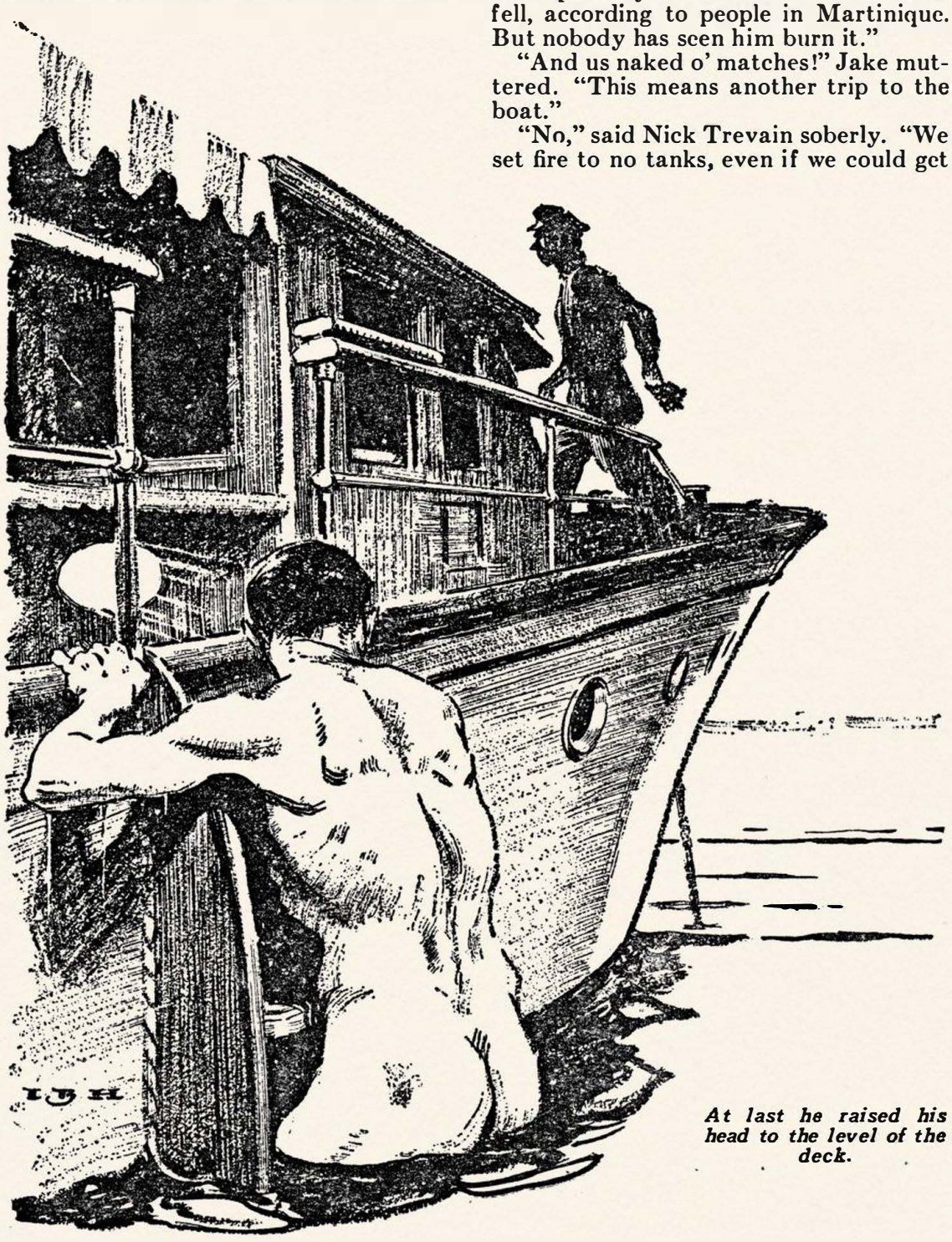
"Full!" said Jake Frye. "Full o' oil, I'm betting. Those square patches you

seen from aloft were where they'd disturbed the top sand burying these tanks that're now full o' thousands of gallons of stuff. Easy, fast digging! A sub, a school of 'em or a flock of seaplanes could make themselves at home here in this lagoon. Do you figure that's it?"

"You forget that Berg needs much oil for his expensive oil burning furnaces for the evaporation of sea water," Nick Trevain said dryly. "He's been importing it in quantity for months before France fell, according to people in Martinique. But nobody has seen him burn it."

"And us naked o' matches!" Jake muttered. "This means another trip to the boat."

"No," said Nick Trevain soberly. "We set fire to no tanks, even if we could get



At last he raised his head to the level of the deck.

away with it. He has a legal right to bury tanks on his own beach."

"But—" Jake was appalled. "What do we do? If Vichy wouldn't dare arrest Berg for killing Rivot for fear of annoying the Nazis they ain't busting up any Nazi oil cache for subs."

"Right," said Trevain.

"I get it," said Jake. "We tip off our navy?"

"Wrong," said Trevain. "The U. S. Navy can't move in on any island belonging to France without screams from the Vichy gang which may convince decent Frenchmen we have imperialistic aims against Martinique. And there'd be more screams about war-mongering from pro-Nazis at home whose game is to split the people of the U. S. A. wide open."

"Well, what do we do?" Jake Frye demanded. "Just cover it up?"

"Yes," said Nick Trevain. "Just cover it up. But not yet."

He inspected Jake's discovery with keen interest, scraping away with the tray at one end of the tank. He failed to find the filler cap or any vent but did locate a couple of wires.

"What are those for?" Jake asked.

"It's probably wired for sound," Trevain answered shortly. "Cover up the tank and smooth over the sand."

Talking to himself Jake Frye obeyed.

In silence they walked up the shore and, undetected, swam back to the schooner.

"Not even sharks hang out in this hole," Jake said when he got his legs out of the water. "How do we know Berg ain't refueling subs already?"

"There haven't been any ship sinkings in the Caribbean."

"How do we know this depot ain't here to back an attack on our warships coming through the Canal from the Pacific?"

"We don't know," said Nick Trevain. "We don't know, Jake."

SHE walked *Sorceress's* deck that night until quick dawn dimmed the moon. With the first light he went below and roused up Jake.

"On deck!" he said cheerfully. "We're going back to Fort de France after we fool with that mast. There's always an answer to everything, Jake, even a Nazi's child-like faith that only he is exempt from the rules of the game."

"Meaning what?" Jake Frye demanded.

"Meaning that contemplation of the Nazi character is worth a night's sleep," Nick Trevain answered. "We've got a chance, Jake, just a chance provided we don't do anything that will rouse Berg's killing-for-caution impulses."

Jake was uneasy. "We haven't even located the radio station that Berg stole those transmitter tubes for," he complained.

"It's concealed in Berg's motorboat," Trevain answered. "A secret fixed radio station is out. It's too easy these days for our neutrality patrol ships, for example, to get cross radio bearings on a transmitting station and locate it definitely. When Berg wants to short-wave a message to Germany his motorboat runs north or south a few miles on a dark night, sends the message and returns. Nobody can draw a bead on Chainshot. An unknown boat or a mobile station in Martinique is suspected."

"And still the French government an' the U. S. Navy can't do anything to that bird?"

"No," said Trevain. "And neither can we."

"What're you so happy about, then?" Jake Frye complained.

"The Nazi psychology," said *Sorceress's* master. "It's wonderful. Break out the bosun's chair. I'm going aloft."

That closed the conversation.

He was hoisted to the top of the mainmast and stayed there, frankly looking this way and that about the island till Jake Frye got restless. Nobody on shore appeared to be watching Trevain. That was a bad sign. When a man goes aloft on such a high stick as *Sorceress's* mainmast, Jake knew, he always draws a crowd of spectators.

"Unless they been ordered not to look," Jake amended. He himself tried to make Trevain's stay aloft seem reasonable by fussing with the turnbuckles, tightening and loosening the schooner's shrouds and even her headstay. But he

was wet with sweat when at last Trevain sang out to the Virgin Islanders to lower away.

"Listen, sir!" he said severely to Trevain when the master's feet at last touched the deck. "Even a flock of Nazi motorboaters know you don't take the bend out of a Marconi-rigged stick by swingin' around the masthead."

"True," said Nick Trevain agreeably. He gestured toward the pier. "It looks as if Henri Berg and some of his blond boy friends are coming aboard, perhaps to ask about that."

Jake Frye looked at the four men about to climb down into a boat and moaned. "They're suspicious as blazes, I'll bet," he said. "They got coats on, too. That could mean they're totin' guns in shoulder holsters."

With a certain agility in his movements Nick Trevain ducked below and came up with a megaphone.

"M'sieu Berg!" he hailed. "M'sieu!"

On the pier Berg stopped and waved a hand.

"May my mate and I visit your plant this afternoon?" Trevain called.

Again Berg waved a hand, a most welcoming gesture. "Delighted, Captain," his heavy voice replied faintly. He halted the movements of his men toward the boat.

Jake Frye grunted in relief. "Now where are we?" he asked.

"Keeping 'em guessing more feverishly than we are," Trevain answered. "They could jump us easier ashore than on board. And I wouldn't say they'd attack unless Berg was sure we knew what this place was. Now he thinks we're merely a bit suspicious."

He glanced aloft. "My ruse was, as you noticed, a bit naive. Until it's absolutely necessary Berg will not want to finish us and spin a thin yarn in Fort de France about *Sorceress* hitting a rock and sinking with all hands."

Jake Frye nodded, not convinced.

"It's part of the Nazi doctrine to count on the reluctance of democracies and people to act on mere suspicion," Trevain said.

"I wish we were out of here," Jake said.

"We're going to be out within an hour," Nick Trevain said. "I'm using the Nazi principle right back at 'em. In twenty minutes or so go forward with Ben and get up the anchor. Take your time about it. Make a noise. Rest a while."

Jake's eyes bulged incredulously.

"It will work," Trevain promised. "Remember they don't know we're on to the buried tanks. I'm going out in the dinghy. It isn't my fault of they think I'm merely figuring on shifting her berth."

"O. K., sir," said Jake Frye. "And once we break out that anchor we give her the motor for all she's got an' you come alongside?"

"No," said Trevain. "No motor. Put the jib on and head her for the pass. Take your time. I'll handle Berg."

HALF an hour later he routed out his camera in a locker below and in the dinghy rowed casually away from the schooner. As the anchor windlass clanked and ground in chain under the leisurely efforts of Ben he took a picture. Not even surreptitiously did he glance ashore.

When the anchor came out of the ground and the windlass responded more readily to Ben's winding he rowed back to the schooner. He was on board before the schooner had gathered way after slowly paying off under the gentle urging of the jib. Only then did he look toward the pier.

Henri Berg was back again with his three companions. Their gaze seemed divided between *Sorceress* and the motorboat that was not disabled and was undoubtedly faster than the schooner.

Lazily Trevain reached for the megaphone.

"Mr. Berg!" he hailed. "Just received a bad weather report. I'm getting out of here before I'm windbound. I'll call next time I'm in this neighborhood."

He threw up a languid hand in farewell.

There was a moment of rigidity on the pier. Then Henri Berg raised a thick arm in a cordial wave. He spoke to his three companions. In unison they raised their hands and moved them stiffly.

"Rather wooden," said Nick Trevain softly.

But Jake Frye was not amused. A sudden uneasiness began gnawing at his mind as he viewed this cordial farewell. "Say," he said, "are you sure, sir, you got this guy Berg right? Maybe he didn't kill Rivot. Maybe them tanks are for some cockeyed scientific experiment."

Nick Trevain smiled. His features shaped themselves in rather ironic lines.

"You see," he said, "if I can't convince you what chance would I have with the U. S. Navy? And how long would it take 'em to prove it to Washington? And how long after that would it be before they decided to violate French neutrality? From here on it gets harder."

"What'll you do, sir?" asked Jake.

"Handle it myself—if I can," said Nick Trevain.

Unchallenged, with Henri Berg waving steadily, *Sorceress* toward the pass while her crew grave her staysail and foresail. She passed out of the lagoon and, heeling to the pressure of the full mainsail, headed northwestward.

On that run *Sorceress's* master let her slide off somewhat to leeward. His course brought him close to a U. S. destroyer patrolling the seas off the island's famous harbor.

"Doing a dull job doggedly," said Nick Trevain.

"She ain't ding nothing but using up oil," Jake retorted. He pointed back toward Chainshot. "Germany's saving her oil."

Nick Trevain shrugged his shoulders at his uncertain mate's about-face. "A democracy can't defend itself till it's been kicked in the face three times," he said.

"You ain't telling 'em, sir?"

"Not a word," said Nick Trevain.

CHAPTER III

REPRISAL RAID

BACK in Fort de France Bay Nick Trevain found that the island freighter *Jeanne* had pulled away from the pier to an anchorage. In the shack on the boat deck young André Rivot was sadly packing up the wrecked radio appartus.

"She is to be sold in Guadeloupe," he told Nick Trevain. "We lack a master."

"I need a radio operator and a transmitter in *Sorceress* for one confidential voyage," Nick Trevain said. "My need is not unconnected with the murder of my good friend, your uncle. Will you come?"

André Rivot stood up. His sallow face showed a little color under the skin.

"You know that I will come," he said. "Now?"

"We sail as soon as the transmitter is installed and working," Nick Trevain answered.

"That will not take many hours," André Rivot promised. "There are restrictions on radio in Martinique but you undertsand that one may happen to have a few spare parts, including transmitter tubes, in one's house."

The transfer of the equipment to *Sorceress* took place unostentatiously in the harbor after dark. Jake Frye viewed the transformation of Captain Trevain's cabin into a radio room with distinct discontent.

"How about a rubber plant?" he suggested sourly.

"I'd ship that, too, if it would help this gamble," Trevain answered tautly.

Again *Sorceress* presented her counter to the rusting ships of France early next morning. Trevain, taking her out himself, was grim.

Once out of reach of Vichy officialdom the blue schooner jogged along to southward under reduced sail while André Rivot worked on with tense determination to assemble his scattered and damaged equipment. It was a long job.

Young Rivot had forgotten nothing. His feelings about the death of his amiable uncle permitted no inattention to his work.

Up aloft Jake Frye rigged an aerial between fore and mainmast.

Trevain was just as busy as André Rivot. Down in the main cabin he was transferring from a chart to his head all details of the dangerous waters to the northeast of Chainshot. With protractor and dividers he plotted the courses that would take her through the wilderness of pinnacle rocks, foul channels, ledges, currents, islets, coves of sand and—if you could find it—through deep water.

It was a volcanic nightmare of pilotage. Trevain had once been through it. That increased his respect for that waiting graveyard.

Toward this unholy battleground of sea and land Nick Trevain's brusque orders sent his cherished schooner. Jake Frye's temper grew worse as every sea mile dropped astern. His feeling for *Sorceress* was as strong as Trevain's own.

"I'd take a chance on fooling around northeast of Chainshot by day but the way we're logging miles you'll hit the worst of it about twilight," Jake called down the companionway. "An' how much twilight d'you get this close to the equator? The sun goes out like a light."

Trevain did not look up. "South-southeast one and a half miles," he said and ruled it off on the chart.

Jake Frye spoke harshly to himself and gave it up. But as dusk was dropping fast that day he took the wheel in his own thick hands and steered her into the mess of rocks northeast of Chainshot. She ran in under sail alone, showing no running lights. Forward, the Virgin Islander Ben stood by with a sounding lead. He was enough of a seaman to be gray of face.

Though he needed daylight badly, Trevain made sure, before closing with those dangerous ledges, that there was not enough light. He could not reveal the schooner to watching eyes on the high rim of Chainshot.

HE piloted her in through the turbulence of swift tidal currents and seas made violent by underlying barriers of stone. Through twisting channels, past isolated rocks, he conned the schooner.

He sailed her boldly, for speed and speed alone gave him control of her against the rush of the wayward water. Speed alone eked out the swift twilight. That audacity gave him enough light to show him a conical rock that marked one point of a crescent islet close to the rising bulk of Chainshot's northeastern heights.

He rounded her to in the cove made by the curving ledge that broke the seas. Jake, running forward, saw to it that

the Virgin Islanders got over the anchor smartly and paid out plenty of manila. No chain in this anchoring, for even above the crash of breaking water chain roars through the hawse pipe like a bull defied. They had need of silence here with Henri Berg's experimental station just across a narrow strait and over a narrow cliff.

Jake Frye came aft wiping the sweat off his forehead. He looked with great distrust at the dimly visible rim of rock lifting so close to them on the southwest. The darkness had come down on them like a black squall.

"Now what, sir?" he asked.

"You and I go ashore—if we can make a landing," Nick Trevain said. Jake Frye, lowering the dinghy in the davits, saw that Trevain went below to speak to André Rivot. When Jake looked down the companionway to report the boat ready he saw, by the one dim, screened light, that Nick Trevain was pocketing a pistol. Trevain came up at once.

"The current will take charge as soon as we get out of this cove," he said as they dropped into the boat.

He was right about that. Not even Jake Frye's bull strength could have kept them from drifting northwest around Chainshot. But once past the most northerly point Jake was able easily enough to pull down the sandy leeward shore and enter Berg's lagoon through the first opening.

"Toward Berg's motor cruiser," Trevain commanded. "And be careful to make enough noise with those rowlocks. I want these trained Alsatians to think it's one of their own boats."

"Supposin'—"

"Let's not," said Trevain.

Jake grunted and rowed boldly on toward where the motor cruiser had lain anchored near the landing pier. It was very dark. The moon wouldn't show till much later. He kept up a steady, unhurried stroke that sent the light dinghy jumping along in that smooth water. Back in the lagoon he was convinced once more of Berg's murderous disposition. They were sticking their heads out now—two men against that bunch of young thugs.

Nick Trevain's vigilant scrutiny showed him only the usual lights ashore among the houses of the plant.

Berg's motor cruiser, unlighted, loomed up ahead on the dark water. If anyone was in her he made no sound, turned on no lights. Still unchallenged, they ran alongside.

Trevain leaped aboard. Jake, with the dinghy's painter in his teeth and both hands ready, scrambled after him.

The boat was deserted. Ten seconds' search told them that.

"Tear the wires off the distributor head," Trevain said. "Muss up the engine. I'll make hash out of this radio."

"I hate to slap wrists," Jake Frye snarled. "Berg killed when he busted up a set. Can't we sink—"

"No! Orders!"

TREVAIN got busy. He did a fast job, not too quietly. Jake Frye came jumping up from the engine room below the deck house. Nick Trevain motioned him into the dink. He paused to put the butt of his pistol through the wind screen. The glass broke and fell with a terrific clatter. Trevain glanced at a small searchlight thoughtfully, and brought down his gun butt again. Then he jumped down into the boat.

From shore came a sudden loud challenge in French.

"Keep that motorboat between us and the pier," Nick Trevain said softly, as Jake started rowing. "They may have guns and lights handy."

Jake headed out into the lagoon. He made the dinghy walk. More challenges, then commands in Henri Berg's thick voice and the sound of oars, came from the shore, but no shots.

"Berg won't have anything that will row as fast as you're making this one move," Nick Trevain said to Jake. "Head for the southern pass."

"What's that love pat for?" Jake Frye growled, jerking his head in the direction of the disabled motorboat.

"Just to stir 'em up a bit," Nick Trevain said. "There's more coming. The war of nerves, Jake. Land me before you go through the pass."

"Land—yes, sir!" said Jake hastily.

His master wasn't welcoming protests. Jake grounded the boat. Nick Trevain leaped out.

"Row around the island and back to *Sorceress,*" he instructed Jake. "Tell André to get off this message at once—an SOS. 'Yacht *Sorceress* aground northeast of Chainshot. High seas. May break up. Require immediate assistance. Get it?"

Slowly Jake repeated it.

"That's it," said Nick Trevain. "There's only one vessel in these waters that can handle a situation like that. Our destroyer on neutrality patrol."

"Yuh, but—"

Trevain cocked his head. The beat of oars in several boats came across the waters of the lagoon. Flashlights gleamed. One boat was getting close.

"Send it!" Trevain commanded. "When you get a signal—five blinks from my flashlight—from the rim of Chainshot opposite the schooner, come for me. I'll swim out toward the boat."

"You haven't lost that pistol?"

"Get under way."

Trevain shoved the dinghy's bow violently off the shore. He turned and walked briskly away across the dry sand. Only one low growl of protest came from bewildered Jake Frye. Then he got going.

Halfway around the curving beach in the direction of the high lands of Chainshot, Nick Trevain stopped and dropped flat on the sand. Somebody went thudding by. He was traveling on the wet sand by the water's edge where the going was easy. The flashlight the searcher flicked around was too weak to pick up Nick Trevain's white-clad figure higher up the beach.

With no difficulty save the hard going in the dark, Trevain gained the volcanic rocks that rose steadily higher as he approached the northeastern side of the island. By the lights in Berg's buildings Trevain found his way to a point well above them. He looked up over the edge of the ridge to the northeast, over the harassed water. *Sorceress* lay out there. But she was to well blacked out to be visible, and her blue hull reflected no light. Nobody else on this island would be apt to think of looking in the direction of that sea of stones for a boat.

Trevain settled down to wait. He smiled somewhat doubtfully in the darkness.

"Unless that destroyer commander and Henri Berg both react according to national characteristics they'll make a monkey out of me and a frost out of this expedition," he warned himself.

CHAPTER IV

SOS!—SORCERESS

TIME passed slowly. The activity down on the lagoon died down. But men were still searching the island. At least one boat continued to patrol. Lights showed now on the motorboat.

Once two men came scrambling up a path from the houses below, cursing when their breath allowed. Trevain, crouching behind a spur of rock, was safe enough. Their object was observation of the sea roundabout rather than search of the ridge. Berg was thorough. His men descended without having noted the tall sticks of *Sorceress*, faint lines on the star-specked sky to the notheast.

Nick Trevain grew restless. The night was passing. Well before dawn the moon would be along. He kept staring out over the sea to westward now. But his observation, too, remained negative in result. The men below were still astir. Gradually he sank into a sort of daydream.

From this he roused abruptly. To seaward a sudden fierce white light lit up a long cone of the speckled sky. It was a reaching searchlight. It swung from right to left across the zenith as if waving encouragement to the yacht whose SOS had been intercepted. A searchlight in these seas around Martinique, deserted since the collapse of France, could only be from the American destroyer.

"Come on, Navy!" Nick Trevain muttered.

The destroyer was coming. She came up over the ocean rim fast, making knots.

From below came vague sounds, voices, men running, the miscellanea of excitement. That searchlight had not been missed by the reputed Alsatians,

already perplexed and stirred up by the inexplicable raid on the motorboat.

The man on the bridge of the destroyer knew his stuff. He knew Chainshot, too. He had the lights of Berg's plant to give him a bearing. He headed straight for the southwestern side of the island, where there was plenty of water and shelter from the broad seas in which to get boats overside. No ship of destroyer size could venture into the rock-studded water to the northeast of Chainshot.

"Come on, Navy!" Nick Trevain whispered again. "Come on, Berg!"

Abruptly every light in the buildings below was extinguished. The blackout was complete. Henri Berg had pulled a master switch.

Half pleased, half anxious, Nick Trevain stared at the destroyer. Her running lights were becoming brighter every moment. The blackout would make navigation more difficult. But it also showed Henri Berg's state of mind.

The searchlight picked up the island. Minutes later it focused on the wide opening to the south. That point fixed the destroyer's position as certainly as a street sign. She came on less precipitately now, as the water shoaled. Lights on deck revealed men busy getting ready to lower the boats.

Nick Trevain carefully climbed down the outer face of the rim of rock a few feet. His feet, feeling their way down the cliff, came to rest on a broad ledge. Here, screened from the houses below by the barrier of rock he pulled out his pistol. Jake Frye would not have approved of that pistol. It was not the sort that shoots lead or steel-jacketed lead. It was a Very pistol, a signal gun.

Nick Trevain pressed the trigger. A red star of fire went rocketing high into the air. Again and again he threw a ball of red light soaring up over the lagoon and over Berg's plant from behind the curtain of rock. Then, hastily, he climbed to the ridge once more.

His pyrotechnics seemed to have spurred the men of the destroyer on to even faster activity. The ship sent her anchor roaring down just outside the pass into the lagoon. Men swarmed on deck, quick-moving men who knew what they were doing. Two boats hit the water almost simultaneously. They pushed off from the destroyer.

FURIOUS though the activity was aboard the ship, it did not wholly command Nick Trevain's eyes. His gaze fell to the island, to Henri Berg's plant close beneath him.

The island had gone silent now. Up from those small buildings scattered on the slope below came no more sounds of confusion. They were still dark. No men's voices rose from them. Even Henri Berg's thick accents were stilled. A brooding calm had fallen on Chainshot as the destroyer launched her boats.

Trevain stared. His grip on the Very pistol tightened. With an effort of will he loosened his clutch lest his tensing trigger finger dispatch an unwanted star of red fire. He shoved the gun into his pocket. All his attention focused on the white blurs of the buildings below. In one of these was Henri Berg. And it was Berg's move.

"He is there, if I've figured him right," Nick Trevain whispered to himself. "I could be wrong."

All that he had done and planned had led up to this moment.

Had he been wrong? No! A stupendous No! answered his doubts. The beach across the lagoon to the northwest of a sudden exploded and spouted leaping red flame. A volcano of flame appeared, an eruption like the red belching of subterranean fire from Chainshot in those ancient days when the crater was alive with lava and gas. The red fire thrust skyward and covered sea and sky, ship and island, with lurid blood.

Another spot on the red sand erupted as abruptly as the first. Another column of flame fountained up into the air as from the first came a shattering roar that flung blazing oil in a great circle around its core.

"Wired for sound," Nick Trevain whispered. "Wired for destruction—every tank!"

Farther along another tank went up, and another. It was as if everywhere the interior fire of the earth was breaking out, burning its way through the thin

crust to air and towering, majestic red extinction.

Nick Trevain counted. Ten—twelve—fourteen tanks along that black sand beach broke into flame, mostly burning, with fewer explosions.

"Heavy oil—Diesel oil," he said. He swung his head to northward. "More! Another batch of 'em."

He wiped sweat off his face and let his breath go. Then, in a silence of great relief, he watched the enemy below scuttling his secret stores.

An American destroyer bearing down on Chainshot with boats ready for business meant only attack to one of the Nazi school of thought. And always the Nazi answer when defeat loomed was the same—self-destruction.

He remembered another naval incident on this side of the world. The Graf Spee had taken no enemy down with her into the sea. Out-gunned, she had been scuttled. It was the Nazi code.

The men on the destroyer had not long been stunned by this flaming of the island. Her siren had already sounded a recall to the boats. They'd be manning her guns to answer any possible attack from this island of flame.

By now, too, André Rivot on *Sorceress* would be clicking out to the ship the cool message Nick Trevain had left with him for use in this expected denouement: *Cancel SOS. We got her off the beach. Many thanks. What's all that red fire over there?*

Nick Trevain smiled. He could see that message going to the still startled officers on the bridge of the destroyer. They could read it by the lurid light from Chainshot.

Scuttled! The Nazi could be counted on to scuttle.

A head rose up close below Nick Trevain's left shoulder. A hand thrust out the muzzle of an automatic.

Henri Berg was behind that pistol.

TREVAIN had forgotten that those leaping fires would reveal him, there on the ridge, to eyes that looked upward, seeking the source of those red star signals. He had erred. Something told him he was not likely to live to correct his error.

"So!" said Henri Berg calmly. His gun was steady in his hand. "It iss you who are to die with me. You directed this ship to the attack. I thought so."

Nick Trevain struggled out of his surprise. Berg had climbed fast. There was a dead weight of finality, of the end of things, about him. All was over but one last act. He had left the resolution to take an enemy with him.

"Attack?" Trevain repeated.

Henri Berg's calm was shaken momentarily. "This completely lawless violation of neutrality!" he said.

It was plain that Berg was outraged. Genuinely outraged. To establish a Nazi submarine base on a French West Indian island seemed blameless to him; the guilt lay with an American destroyer that ventured to approach it.

That was how they thought, Nick Trevain told himself. There was no hokum about it; that was how they thought. They were right; all else was wrong. More than anything else, this abysmal stupidity, this moral imbecility, churned up anger in Nick Trevain's tightening chest. They thought they could dominate the world—with guns.

Trevain laughed. This righteous gentleman was due to learn what he had done to his own base.

"The destroyer came in answer to an SOS from *Sorceress* after I had destroyed your radio receiver," he said. "That ship entered French waters only on an errand of mercy, unaware Chainshot was an oil depot for subs. I knew I could count on you to figure her errand along your own lines of action. I knew you'd fire your oil for me."

"So!" said Henri Berg slowly. In the red light Trevain saw a little sinew twitch and tauten in the wrist of the hand that leveled the pistol.

"Too much action and not enough brains," Nick Trevain said. He whipped the words out with increasing speed and strove to hold Berg's eyes. "You need not have killed Captain Rivot to steal a few transmitter tubes."

Henri Berg's heavy jaw dropped. "You knew that!" he said.

Trevain lifted a scornful finger. "You need not have destroyed your oil," he said. "You—"

He leaped backward, over the edge of the narrow rim of rock on which they stood. It was a perilous gamble, only less perilous than standing up longer to Berg's gun. A narrow ledge lay somewhere below. If he had judged right—

His feet hit the ledge and he fell in a heap, half over the edge of the sloping shelf. He clawed at the smooth stone. Below was a steep incline of rock, almost sheer. His legs dangled. He saved himself, crawling on his belly.

Silhouetted above him against the lurid sky was Berg. He was peering over the edge. That projecting backbone of rock divided the world, half flaming red, half Stygian black. Berg's dazzled eyes needed an instant's adjustment to make out Trevain's white shirt and trousers.

Trevain used that moment's respite to wrench at the Very pistol in his pocket. As Berg bent forward and aimed his automatic he seemed to fill the red sky over Trevain like a black thundercloud. Any instant now lightning—steel-jacketed lightning—would spurt down at him from that overhanging shadow.

Trevain flipped up his signal pistol. He pressed the trigger even as he saw flame dart down at him from Berg's gun. The *spat* of Berg's bullet on the ledge by his head was followed instantly by a burst of splintered rock fragments that pelted his face and made his eyelids snap shut. But before instinct closed his eyes he saw his red star hit Berg's shoulder and knock him sideways.

Next moment Berg landed on him. The force of it flattened him out on his chest.

WINDED, half blinded, he heaved himself up on hands and knees, striving to throw Berg off him over the cliff. But Berg had fastened on him with arms and legs. Trevain felt him prodding methodically with the gun—

There was only one answer to this—only one faint chance of life. With Berg clinging to his shoulders he rose up on his knees, onto his feet. He flung himself backward over the steep incline of rock. Berg screamed in his ear.

Trevain had sprung as far out as he could, with some vague thought of landing in the water. But a man cannot spring far with another man on his back. He knew he was falling head first.

Together the locked men struck glancingly some projecting bastion of rock. Trevain felt as if his spinning body had hit the naked stone, so crushing was the impact. But he realized dizzily that Berg's body had taken the full force of the blow. Berg's gun roared, as if the shock had detonated it. From the man himself came no sound.

No fingers clutched Trevain now. He was alone, sliding on, face now turned to the incline, hands and feet scraping, too groggy to be more than faintly conscious of motion. His feet hit a ledge, his knees doubled up and momentum flipped him backward away from the face of the cliff. It was a free fall now.

His head, his whole body smashed into water. He went deep under and his right shoulder thudded into barnacle crusted stone. But he was moving, thrusting out arms and legs.

A seaman's instinct led him to claw his way feebly through the seas away from the wall of rock against which the waves were breaking. He was barely conscious, exhausted, hardly able to keep his nose above water.

He wouldn't last long now, he knew with impassive regret. But his arms and legs kept thrusting and kicking until some slight purpose came back to him.

A man who had come through a fall down that cliff couldn't drown at the base of it. He swam more strongly and turned his head in the blackness. A low moon in the east gave a little light but it showed him no hope.

He thought of *Sorceress*, safely anchored out there in the darkness. But even if the rocks did not mash him up the current that was running here would give him no chance to reach her. He looked toward the cliff.

He saw a glint of white light. There was a dinghy in there close to the cliff—a dinghy with a man leaning over the side. He seemed to be holding something in the water. He had a flashlight going. The current was taking the boat along as it was taking Trevain's body.

"Jake!" he gasped. "Jake! Jake!"

He swam that way, still calling.

The man in the dighy straightened up and turned. At once he released his hold on the thing in the water and grabbed his oars. Next moment he had stroked the dinghy alongside Trevain. His powerful arms heaved Trevain in.

Jake was panting steadily but not too far gone to talk.

"I been here buckin' this tide since them red stars let go," he said. "I thought maybe you'd lost your flashlight. Hell's a-burnin' over there, huh?"

Trevain nodded. "What was that—in the water—you were looking at?"

Jake Frye had the boat crabbing across the current. "That? That was Berg," he said.

"Was he—alive?"

"Not unless he was gettin' by with half a head," Jake Frye said. "He must ha' hit something. His body drifted right against my boat as I was keeping her up agin this blasted current. He won't stop no more guys goin' after a friendly bottle o' cognac. What you been doin'?"

"Shooting stars," said Trevain. "Berg's been doing the rest. He hasn't left enough oil and gas on Chainshot to refuel an outboard."

SORCERESS, reaching demurely to westward with the sea of rocks and current safely astern of her, was intercepted next morning by a U.S. Navy launch. André Rivot had been busy on the radio most of the night and the U.S. had a complete report of *Sorceress's* grounding and refloating.

The destroyer had stood by off Chainshot all that night, ready to take off Berg's surviving "Alsatians," if fire threatened their lives. But, as *Sorceress* learned by radio from the destroyer, none had desired to come. They had their motorboat and could reach Martinique. It was unfortunate, they said, that M. Berg's oil supply for the evaporation of sea water had accidentally caught fire and that M. Berg had apparently fallen off the cliff into the sea. Most unfortunate. But they had no desire to be taken anywhere on a U.S. destroyer.

Jake Frye, a dyed-in-the-wool merchant seaman and with some ancient sins on his conscience, viewed the approach of the naval launch uneasily.

"We ain't done anything," he said. "Not a thing! Those gold-laced guys can't prove we didn't run aground an' jerk a little lightning for a rescue because we were scared. What's the idea of chasing us like we were a submarine or something?"

However, Trevain hove to and prepared to receive a boarding party. But the launch merely ran alongside. The coxswain handed over a package. The neutrality patrol had no time to waste.

"With the compliments of the commander, sir," he said and sheered away.

Nick Trevain opened the package and stared at the contents. "Well, that is a coincidence," he said soberly.

Jake Frye, looking over his captain's shoulder, shook his head. It seemed to Nick Trevain that Jake's tongue was getting a lot too large for his mouth.

"That's not a coincidence," said Jake. "That's a bottle of cognac."

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet

JAMES NORMAN, whose yarn of the Sino-Japanese War gets under way on page eleven, has a background as colorful and adventurous as any of his fictional characters. There just isn't room here to tell everything he's done but we'll spot the highlights for you. To wit—

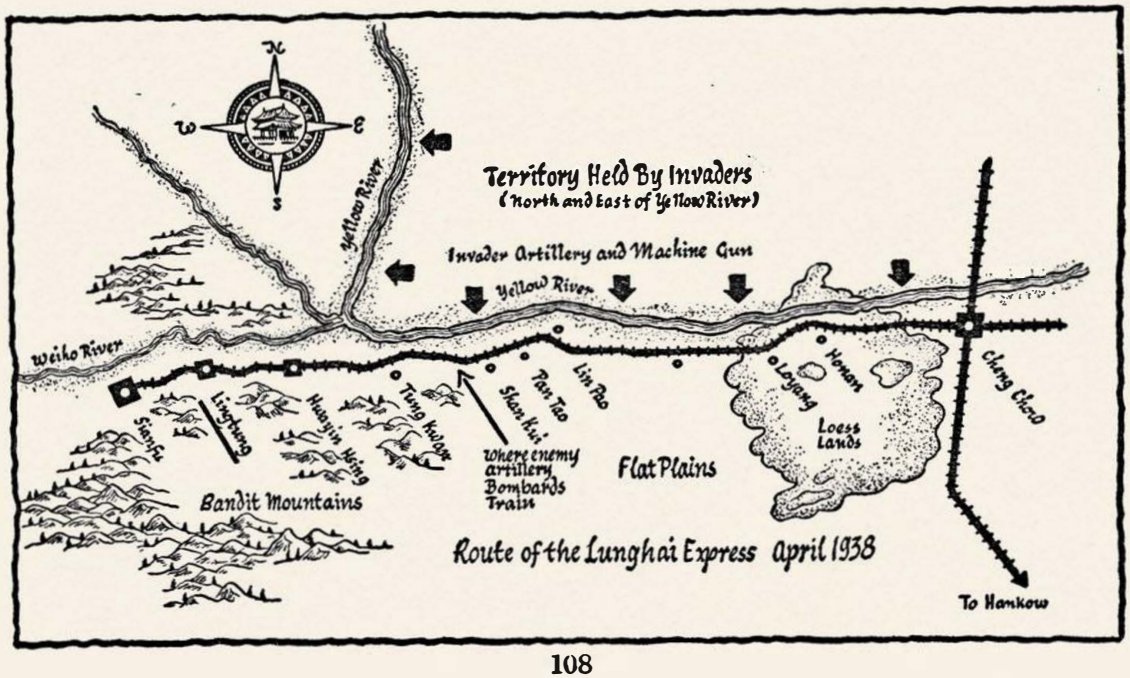
Born in Chicago, half French, half German stock. Schooled sixteen years by Jesuits, ending with Loyola University. Traveled extensively through U. S., Mexico and the Pacific. Won a lot of medals for swimming.

1933, Europe. Became trainer for Charles Zimmy, the legless Channel swimmer. Tried three swims from Dover to Gris Nez and failed on each. During the last swim we were blown out to the North Sea by a storm and lost for three days. Net-fished with the Calais-North Sea fleet for a few months.

Retired to Paris and worked through a winter as a circus barker at Luna Parc there. Began studying sculpture at the Beaux Arts when I picked up work with the Paris branch of the Chicago *Tribune.* Later, worked with the *Pari-Trib* (a weekly). Between '33 and '35 spent most of my time in North Africa, Spain, France, Italy, Austria and Germany. Was in on the 1934 blowup in Barcelona for the *Pari-Trib.* Covered the assassination of Dolfuss and innumerable other items.

Returned to U. S. A. in '36 for a year. Worked for a short while with *UP* in Chicago, then held two jobs—ran a gambling concession on La Salle St., did

(Continued on page 110)



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Notary Public

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(Continued from page 108)

ice carving on the side for a catering company.

Again returned to France. Then, after the Spanish War had gone on a year, I found myself there growing up to be an officer with a French anti-aircraft in the Loyalist Army. Put in nine months at the front, four in a hospital. When the volunteers were withdrawn I got myself a civilian job turning foreign news into Spanish for the local press bureau and taking charge of news broadcasts from Station EAQ, Aranjuez-Madrid. We, that is an Englishman and myself, broadcast four times a day, wrote six thousand words of broadcast each day, seven days a week in addition to taking down and translating Roosevelt, Hull, etc., for the Spanish press.

Was in Madrid during its last weeks of life under the Republic. When Franco came in, went down to Valencia and joined the boys from New York *Times* and *UP*. Got out a few days before Franco stepped in.

Returned to America the summer of 1939. Turned to sports and did baseball reporting until fall when I was taken up by Compton's Encyclopedia to edit a war edition (my title was military editor).

It was then I began writing fiction. After a few months, I went into it full time. Not much of interest has happened since then. I've settled in a house with plenty of land and garden. During all this time, I was married. Still am.

The map on page 108, showing the route of the Lunghai Express enroute to Lingtung, is reproduced by courtesy of Morrow & Co., who will publish Mr. Norman's story as a book next winter.

Amateur cryptographers and cipher fans who read "Viva China!" may have been irked or disappointed to find the code message Quinto stole from Wang's desk, and gave to Tate to translate, so glibly passed over in the text. For anyone who cares to match his wits with Tate's, here's what G. H. Q.'s calligraphist-in-waiting had to decipher—

3-15-38
SURFK DLQUH PLVHU HFHWW HVQXP HURVH 1940D 5602V
HUD28 PDUVP DLVRQ WDQJS DQWDR SDLHP HQWSR XUVRO
GHGHW RXWFR PSWHV XUGHU QLHUS DTXHW GRLWH WUHUH
QGXQR WUHDJ HQWPH PHWHP SFROQ RKXUL XVYXH YVXHY

"It was rather a simple one," Tate said when he blushingly handed the solution over to Mountain of Virtue. We'll

(Continued on page 112)

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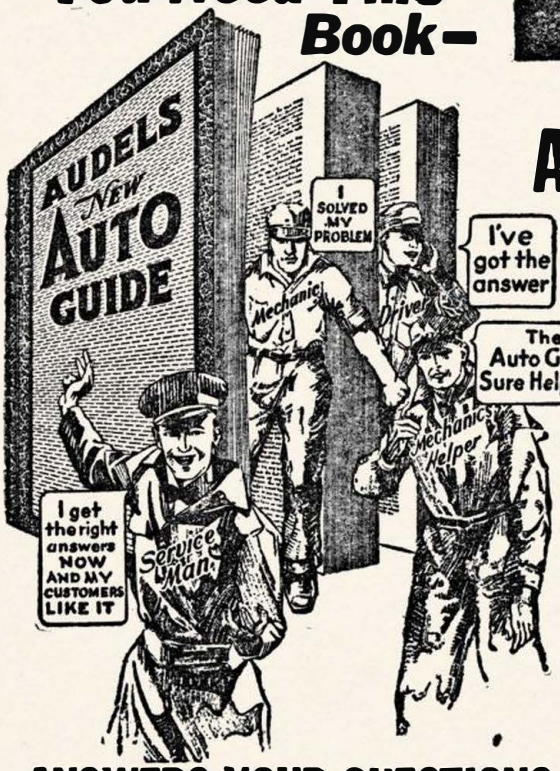

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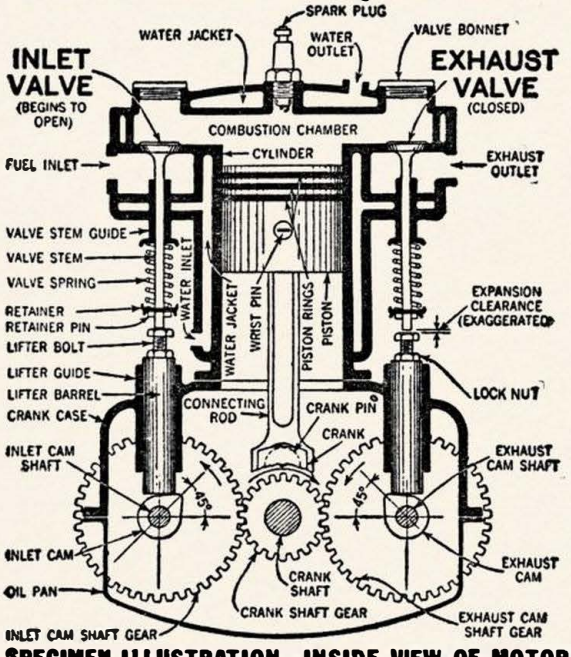

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Please send me postpaid AUDELS NEW AUTOMOBILE GUIDE ($4) for free examination. If I decide to keep it, I will send you $1 within 7 days; then remit $1 monthly until purchase price of $4 is paid. Otherwise, I will return it to you promptly.

Name_____

Address_____

Occupation_____

Reference_____ PEB

(Continued from page 110)

print the break-down here next month—and in the meantime, see what luck you have with it!

THOMAS H. RADDALL makes his first appearance in our magazine with "Petticoat Pilot" and in accordance with *Camp-Fire* custom rises to introduce himself. He says—

I was born in a British Army school of musketry, and made my first tottering steps in a barrack square. Had an interesting childhood on both sides of the Atlantic, ended abruptly in Halifax, N. S. during the First German War, when my home was blown inside out in the great explosion of '17. My dad, a fighting Canadian colonel (8th Battalion, C. E. F.), was killed in battle in France a few months later. I left high school to enlist. The army told me to go back to school. I added three years to my age and found the naval service more appreciative. My first attempt at fiction was thus a complete success. Became a wireless operator (at fifteen) and thereafter pounded brass up and down the North Atlantic, in and out of troubled waters, aboard everything from a Royal Naval transport to a 1500-ton tramp. This extended into several post-war years. Between ships I served in five radio stations scattered along the Canadian east coast, including Sable Island (the Graveyard of the Atlantic, well named) where I spent my eighteenth birthday. When I'd had enough of the sea I resigned my post and took a job bookkeeping in a little pulp mill here in Nova Scotia. The mill was in the woods two miles from salt water. I moved down the river two miles. Am still there, writing words now instead of figures. After all it's a good smell, the sea. In spite of this I spend much time in the bush, sometimes afoot, sometimes in a canoe, and cherish a large acquaintance of lumberjacks and other interesting people of the hinterland. I fish and hunt, but prefer to see game on the hoof. I have curious hobbies, like digging old Indian kitch-middens for arrowheads etc., and once wrote a book to prove beyond all doubt that Nova Scotia was the Markland of the Norse sagas; and long ago under a famous master I learned how to call up a bull moose and get a note of passion into it. Began to write about 1928, played at it for several

(Continued on page 114)

(Continued from page 112)

years; three years ago decided to make a whole time job of it.

JOHN MURRAY REYNOLDS adds the following footnote to "Kag the Killer"—

The men and the events that have had the greatest influence on the progress of Mankind have not always been featured in the pages of History. The first ape-man to use a club, for example, was far greater than Napoleon. The invention of the wheel was an event infinitely more important than the fall of Troy. Most of the real Pilots of Destiny have been humble and forgotten men who wrought far greater than they knew.

As to when and where Kag lived, that is open to some debate. The most generally accepted view is that the cradle of human evolution was on the great Iranian Plateau of Central Asia. It seems to have been a focal point for the various waves of migration that spread outward. Even today, winter brings a biting cold to that upland country.

The date was approximately 500,000 B. C., just at the start of the great Quaternary glaciation. I won't quarrel with you over a few thousand years, one way or the other.

What Kag saw when he looked across the peaks was, of course, a continental glacier—one of the vast masses of ice that were spreading over much of the world. In the United States, the main body of the glacier was to creep as far south as New Jersey, while musk oxen roamed the dead forests of Arkansas. There were four episodes of advancing ice in that Quaternary glaciation, separated by interludes of warmer climate between, and the generally accepted view is that Man was evolved just prior to the start of this Ice Age. Difficulty has always been a spur to development, and it is believed that the increasing cold of the Ice Age jolted our primitive ancestors out of their tree-living complacency and started the long process that we summarize as civilization.

The saga of Kag, incidentally, is the first story in a contemplated series about primitive adventurers. Mr. Reynolds' second tale in the "Dawn of Man" se-

(Continued on page 116)

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quence will be along shortly. It's called "Fire-Bringer" and introduces the first man to get his fingers burned.

WALTER LIVINGSTON worked on the editorial staffs of *Cosmopolitan* and *This Week* for eight years, and in the movie business in New York and Hollywood for three. He says, "I backed into writing thiswise: in the early days on *Cosmo* I was the reader who got all the XYZ-class manuscripts to sift through. After reading a few thousand piles of these I rashly decided I couldn't do any worse. So I wrote one myself." (We know something about those XYZ piles, too. And once made the same rash decision Mr. Livingston did. Only difference was we could and did do worse—much worse! *Ed.*) The story sold and he's been at it ever since. His articles and fiction have appeared in many magazines including the two where he used to sit at an editorial desk. "Riders East" is his first contribution to *Adventure*. We asked him how he happened to write it and for some additional material on this question of speed versus stamina and the controversy between Eastern and Western horsemen. Here's what he writes—

> Dr. John Preece, Irving Anderson (the jockey) and I had come back to New York from Belmont Park. They are both from a small town in Nebraska. The conversation swung, quite naturally, to horses. I asked was a horse a horse any more and remarked that most of them didn't seem to be able to run six furlongs without tiring. They agreed and then Preece said: "Once there was a horse race that *was* a horse race; our parents have told us about it. A thousand miles, from Chadron to Chicago, going all-out all the way." Anderson nodded: "And those men were riders, every one of them." A thousand-mile horse race! I made them tell me the whole thing, of course. The result—"Riders East."
>
> Some months ago the John Bullman Handicap at Washington Park in Chicago ended on a note better suited to an animated cartoon or musical comedy skit than to the "Sport of Kings." Five horses had entered for a three and three-eighths mile race. All of them, though

reeling, completed the triple circuit of the oval but, as the jockeys pulled up their mounts to return to the judges' stand for the customary salute, two of them—so help us!—slid out of their saddles and towed their horses back. Their steeds were heaving and gasping for breath. Real horsemen tore their hair and prayed for earthly deliverance.

These were only selling platers, it is true, but they were listed in the stud books as thoroughbreds. Yet, bangtails such as these, for all their sorry performance, may be the agents of a revolution in American breeding, training and development. The controversy which has split breeders and owners into two camps has broken out afresh.

To begin with, the ludicrous spectacle of blooded stock being so tenderly spared after such exertion gave vindication to the policy of Alfred Gywnne Vanderbilt. He has felt all along in his career as a stable owner that the horse was being raced out of thoroughbreds. Quite a bit before this farcical climax he had imposed a toll upon the strength of running blue bloods. To press his point he had carded three events for the Eastern tracks: The New York Handicap over a course of two miles and a quarter; the Jockey Club Gold Cup, a two mile contest and the Manhattan Handicap which matched the Derby distance of a mile and a half.

The wing which contends it is unjustifiable punishment to push a thoroughbred beyond a mile and a half stresses that the great kings of the turf have been developed in the shorter races. A truck horse, they say, can stand to distance but it is ruinous to the highly geared mechanisms of the turf. Such strain as long distance races impose would rob these aristocrats of the speed which has been refined into them.

The other group, in which Vanderbilt now is the outstanding proponent, protests that in establishing a peerage they have drawn all the characteristics of nobility out of horses. They admit a streamlined perfection in looks and fleetness has been attained but at the sacrifice of the creatures' distinguishing and distinguished qualities. They contend the thoroughbred has become a brittle and temperamental quadruped who labors to reach a mile-and-a-third pole. They deplore that the patience, the willingness, the intelligence and, most of all, the courage have been sieved out of horses to achieve bluebloodedness.

It isn't at all new, this argument on

speed versus stamina, but until Vanderbilt threw in with the distance men, the advocates of endurance had been almost all from the West. In the East, horsemen began the practice of clipping races to as little as five and a half furlongs.

We wonder what Francois Xavier Aubry would have to say about it all. He was a Westerner and galloped eight hundred and thirty miles in five days and sixteen hours. Remember the article about him—"The World's Fastest Horseman"—which we published back in the June issue? It's about time *Camp-Fire* had a good hot controversy to feed the blaze. We have a sneaking suspicion "Riders East" may prove just the fuel needed for the fire. Eastern and Western horsemen take your respective corners. Did we hear a bell ring? O. K.—GO!

JACK BYRNE, another new recruit to our Writers' Brigade this month, also backed into authorship from an editorial desk. He has managed magazines for various publishers—Munsey, Fiction House and others—besides cramming a lot of additional activity into his life. He says—

> I've traveled this country of ours, up and down and across, and except for the Pacific Northwest I've seen my share of it. I've been a glass-worker, a paper-miller, I've loaded in the mines. I ran a gambling room one time, dealt poker and blackjack and chalked the racing board, and I was jailed as a murder witness during a six-months trick as night dispatcher for a booze-running, red-light taxi fleet. Small-town reporter, sports publicity, a newspaper job with the old New York *Herald* while I night-coursed journalism at Columbia. I was the worst professional baseballer I've ever seen, enjoying a career that lasted three games and earned me thirty dollars worth of curses. West Virginia Wesleyan may recall me as the most elusive 130-pound quarterback who ever fumbled a tray of empties while skirting the football training-table. Now I live in Florida and split my time between writing stories and surf-casting.

A busy guy, the author of "Three Roads Home." We've almost reached the conclusion he must be a couple of other fellows.—K. S. W.

(Continued from page 8)

Even in the great catastrophe of the Campaign of France in 1940, the Moroccans did not lose prestige as fighting men. When the whole business becomes history, the defense of a suburb of Lille, Canteleu, by a Moroccan Division, will be admitted something of an exploit. For four days, the Moroccans fought in the streets, against armored divisions, artillery, mortars, aviation, flames. When their ammunition was gone, their chiefs told them to stop. They obeyed orders, and marched by the Germans with the honors of war, rifles on shoulders—and no cartridges in their pouches. What was left of them, for most remained dead in the ruins.

Several times, I refer to the French Army in the past tense. Yes, I feel as if someone very dear had died. The French Army was a fine weapon, but no sword is better than the eye that guides it. Mistakes had been made, by the French, by France, by others. The Army paid for them with blood—in some six weeks, it lost more than one hundred thousand killed, more than one hundred thousand severely wounded, and hordes of prisoners. What can a man do when his gun is empty, when no ammunition comes up? Attack tanks with cold steel? That was done, and several times by Moroccan *Spahis*. Sixty-five percent of the professional officers were killed, wounded or taken. Nine French generals did not die in bed, but in action. Outnumbered five to one, the French Aviation brought down three planes for each machine it lost.

Politics prepared defeat for the French Army. That army fought with obsolete or obsolescent equipment against a tremendous machine. It fought hard, it fought heroically—but in the end, it was licked, thoroughly licked. One's mind spins around and around, to return to that hard fact. And it's the winner who's paid off. But the winner is not known as yet. As General de Gaulle said: France has lost a battle, but has not lost the war.

THE TILT 'o your kilt.

Request:—How is a kilt constructed? Is it pleated all the way around or just in the back? Also, how do the pleats run—from a box pleat in the center or from side to side? How wide are the pleats and do you hold the kilts up by a belt or are they on an undershirt?

I am asking these questions because I wish to make a kilt. I cannot afford a ready-made one at $30 but can get the tartan pretty reasonably and if I could find out how to construct a kilt, could save considerable.

I got some bagpipes from John Adamson in Boston and learned to play them through tutors and phone records and now I need some kilts to go with them. If you can help me out in this matter I sure will appreciate it.

—R. F. McQuay,
c/o C. G. Momson & Co.
Artesia, N. Mex.

Reply by Gordon MacCreagh:—Damn if I don't think you establish a record. Adventure Experts have been asked a long list of the weirdest things; but, how to make a kilt, I think, tops them all.

I'm no tailor—though probably the best button sewer with copper wire in the Western Hemisphere. And, if I were a tailor, any kilt maker would snort and say that no tailor knows how to make a kilt. He must be a kilt maker, an artist.

But if you've learned to blaw th' auld whustles out of a tutor hook, I guess you're artist enough to attempt a kilt.

First, about pleats. Depending upon the clan, pleats may be box or overlap, and the overlap may run right to left or left to right. I just plumb don't know which way a McQuay would dress. If the spelling is a Mexican corruption of MacKay you would be one of the Bratach Bhan, the White Banners, and at that I don't know whether you dress left to right or right to left, though you do overlap. My guess would be left to right.

Width of overlap would be one inch to the weather and the under turn three quarter inch. Which explains why a kilt takes *seven yards* of cloth and costs $30.

As to how a kilt hangs. On a belt or an undershirt, you ask. Man, don't be irreleegious!

The kilt material itself is worked into a wide girdle; that is to say, the pleats are sewn together and much of the overlap material is cut out so as to avoid an intolerable thickness. The art of a kilt comes at the crucial line of the girdle, for it must be so cut that the pleats will properly bulge over the buttocks and hips and thence hang straight.

Note that the girdling begins at a point about three inches *below* the nor-

mal belt line and continues quite high up, about three inches *above* the belt line. Total width of girdle will be from six to eight inches, depending upon your individual height.

Pleats do *not* go all the way round. They cover the rear and come to a point about two inches forward of your normal pants seam; thence is "apron"; and, note, double. That is to say, left side comes around and fastens at right waist and right side *covers* it and fastens at left.

Note fastenings. At right edge are two leather straps that attach to buckles on the left hip. Similarly at left edge are two straps that must pass through two holes in the overlapping right hip and fasten to buckles there.

Now look. You say you can buy tartan cheap some place. Which, incidentally, if you can, lemme know quick in a hurry. Unless you can steal it—which I'd come and help—seven yards of good woolen goods is going to cost up into the fifteen bucks. So why not take a try at this? Write some of the New York theatrical costumers. They always have piles of kilts left over from some show or other. They sell these at around ten dollars, depending on how much the moths have eaten. I don't know right here any addresses; but Ask Adventure Editors will send you a post card with some costumers' addresses in New York. (We did! *Ed.*)

Another good bet would be Hollywood. I don't know any address there either; but why not try the Wardrobe Mistress of almost any big producing company—and dinna be Scots, like with me. Send a stamped envelope for reply.

And when you're through with all that, write and ask me how to make the "trews." The under panties, you know; or haven't you thought of them? You'll need them, kiltie man. 'Cause there's a mad and uncontrollable impulse amongst certain of the girls in any crowd to lift a kilt and see how a man manages with that short a skirt. And that's no yarn.

There's the merry jape, you know, about the drunken Scot who had boughten himself a length of fine tartan goods cheap—like you can get—to make the trews; and so proud was he of his skill, as well as of his bargain, that he lifted his kilt, perfectly decently, to show the good panties to the barmaid, and bibulously he bragged that he had four more yards o' the same at hame.—And, losh man, he'd forgotten tae pit them on! Go to it, and I wish you luck. I mean, with your tailoring.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to Lost Trails will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or for any other reason in the judgment of the editorial staff. No charge is made for publication of notices.

George Henry Johnston, last heard of at Ewart, Man., Canada, in 1919. Age about 67, born in Renfrew, Ont. Any information as to his whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by his son, George Thomas Johnston, Box 95, Dunnville, Ont., Canada.

Will Charles Haft, born in 1885, in Green Township, Pa., please write to his sister. He was last heard of ten years ago; believed to be in New York City. Mrs. Theresa Haft Dougan, Harborcreek, R. No. 1, Pa.

I would like to hear from my good friend, Donald Butts, whom I haven't heard from in eight years. I last saw him in Wiggins, Miss., and have since heard that he went to a job in Texas. J. W. (Jim) Bryars, 2006 St. Stephens Rd., Mobile, Ala.

I would like to establish contact with two of my best friends of a few years back. Since I joined the army and came to Panama I have lost track of them. They both lived in Harlan County, Kentucky. One of them is Bradley Cox, about 20 years old. The other is Hiram Thomas, nicknamed "Sappo." Hiram, if you or Brad read this, be sure and write me. Pvt. Victor R. Hubbard, 2nd F.A., Btry. "C," Fort Clayton, Canal Zone.

Guy L. Curley, formerly of Hickory, N. C.: I was in Asheville, Morgantown, N. C. and Danville, Va., with you about 1924. You were going to West Virginia. Write your friend, S. T. Bryant, 205 W. Grace St., Richmond, Va.

David Armstrong, son of a physician, was a Corporal in the U. S. Army, Signal Corps, Corozal, Panama, with me during 1930-33. He stayed in the Army a year longer than I. Last seen in Philadelphia, Pa., believed to have married, and now living in San Francisco. If you see this, Dave, please get in touch with your old friend. Louis M. Headley, 1204 No. W. 29th Ter., Miami, Fla.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Amos Leslie Ingersoll who was last heard of in Minnesota about 1917, please get in touch with Ellard L. Long, Newell, S. Dak.

My brother, William Ray Harvey, 52 years old. Was a private in Battery E, 348th Field Artillery, 91st Division, A.E.F. Reported dead in France in 1918. Was supposed to have been seen alive at Mountain View, Wyoming, March, 1940. Also, want information of William Harvey. Private in Co. G., 314th Infantry, 78th Division, A.E.F., 1918. Any information about these men will be greatly appreciated by George E. Harvey, 304—9th Avenue North, Nampa, Idaho.

Would like very much to get in touch with my mother and father, whereabouts unknown. I have received the following information from Sparta State School: My name was Frankie Carpenter, born March 12, 19[illegible] in Kansas City, Mo. My mother's name was Annie Woodmase at that time. I was adopted by a Silas Brown, whereabouts unknown. A Mrs. Hill, who was then Alice Carpenter, took care of me for Mr. Brown, and when I was about five years old, she adopted me, in Kansas City, Mo. They tell me my mother married a Gould Bailey, and at last reports, which was some time ago, lived in Chicastra or Chickasha, Okla. If anyone knows them, I would like to contact them. Francis Henry De Voe, Box 21-636, Represa, Cal.

Editor
ADVENTURE
Dear Sir:

When I last wrote you in February, 1941, I had little hope of ever hearing anything in regard to my mother and father, as I have tried every way to locate them. Thanks to Adventure, I have found them.

On September 10th, I received a letter from a distant cousin, through the generosity and kindness of your wonderful magazine in giving space to such appeals.

Again I thank you. May your good work continue.

Francis Henry DeVoe,
Represa, Cal.
Box 21-636

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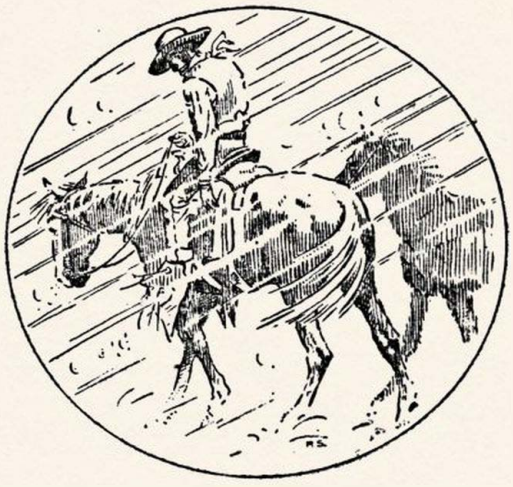

Young Hardesty gazed approvingly at the desert rolling past. He was tired of trains and it was swell to be back in Arizona where he would soon be able to fork a cow pony again. He stretched—and that was swell, too. In Chicago he hadn't dared take his hands out of his pockets long enough to stretch. The train gave a lurch and suddenly stopped. "Must be a cow on the track," said Joe. "I doubt it," said the little man beside him, "but it might be a horse." Before Joe could ask what he meant the sudden crackle of gunfire came from up ahead and another great novelette of Joe and Bedrock, partners in the Mebbyso Mine is under way. It's—

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By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

Pigs can become pretty tough customers when they go native on a South Sea island. So can dogs. The rabbits some fool released on Phoenix are best left alone. And the goats which swarm over Juan Fernandez. On Moncks-ton "It Happened to Be Cats" and that's the title of the unusual yarn by Donald Barr Chidsey in our next. What the felines did to the two airlines technicians marooned there makes as eerily exciting a yarn as we've read in many moons. . . . Georges Surdez gives us a stirring tale of the recent Syrian campaign where Legionnaire fought Legionnaire. . . . Victor Shaw in "With No Acclaim" tells of a little known incident in polar exploration. Peary is the hero of the piece and the author, who was a member of the Peary Relief Expedition of '99, got the story from the Admiral himself. . . . Then there's a stirring story of our Navy today, "Maine Man" by Burroughs-Mitchell; "The Guns of the Keokuk" by Helen von Kolnitz Hyer; and last but far from least, the payoff of "Viva China!" in which the characters below shuffle themselves into order under the watchful eye of G.H.Q.

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A "Penny From Heaven" dropped into the hands of J. D. Martin of Virginia, who found an old copper cent, for which Max Mehl, the Texas Money King, paid him $200.00.

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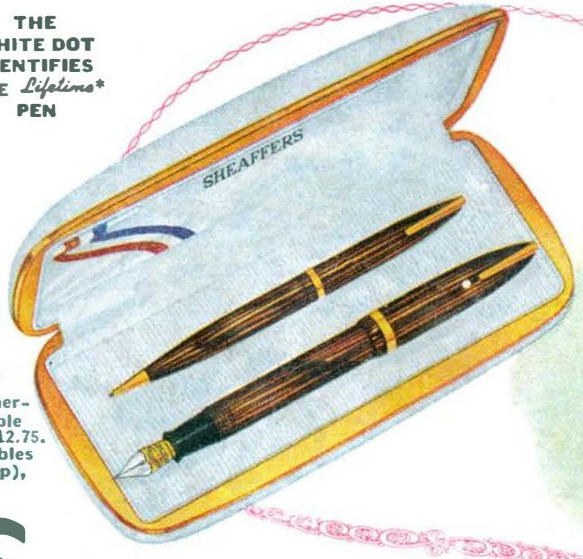

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