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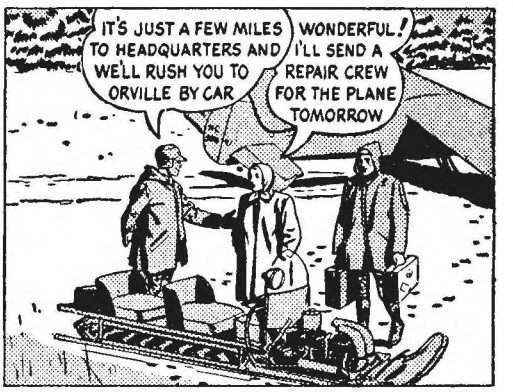

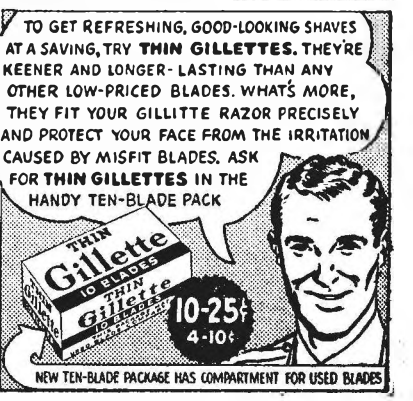

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The CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

ONE thing we like about Bill Ratigan's McCargo yarns—along with an exciting story, he gives you a generous and highly palatable helping of history. Take "Captain McCargo's Iron Money" in this issue for instance. Ratigan comes up with a mighty tricky plot in his latest epic of the early days on the Great Lakes—wherein the redoubtable McCargo emerges triumphant from one of the damndest spots a man ever got himself into—but there's a basis of historical fact behind the yarn that McCargo's acid-tongued sidekick, Sparhawk, spins . . . Here's the lowdown—

For all his windjammering, old Cap Sparhawk always steers to the truth—according to his binnacle lights. He might juggle history a bit, that's all. At one time, Copper Dollars and Iron Money were the only form of exchange in Michigan's Northern Peninsula. Indentured labor and Company Towns went hand in hand. Company scrip was a device used to keep workers on the job. To exchange it for hard money meant crossing miles of wilderness in unholy weather, so the Cornish and Irish moles spent their wages on the home diggings.

The trial conducted by Judge Burt is no stretch of Sparhawk's imagination. A Negaunee police official pulled the same stunt as McCargo, was tracked down by a Pinkerton from Chicago, and pleaded an almost identical defense. The Court set him free. Attracted by the trial's publicity, an aroused Treasury Department represented by Special Agent Colonel William Gavett demanded the retroactive tax on all company scrip issued. Payment would have bankrupted the Marquette Range and reduced Iron Barons to paupers. The fabulous Peter White had to make a fast trip to Washington where he contacted the right parties, and Congress hastily did away with the tax on scrip. Not for nothing is the region around Marquette known as "Peter White's Country."

Black Pompey's weight-lifting record is unofficial, and we'll have to take Sparhawk's word for it. The official record was set by a seven-foot, three-hundred-pound ore-breaker; and the small mountain he lifted—known to old-timers as the Big Dan Donovan Boulder—weighed 420 pounds.

Saloonkeeper Swick had his counterpart on the Marquette Range, a rapscallion named Mudge who also chained wolves inside his stockade as a sort of advertising "spectacular."

As Sparhawk testifies, there were men who could whistle up rats on the Marquette Range. Perhaps the most famous of these experts was Perry Bergen who worked the old Burt Mine and could out-pipe the original Pied Piper. Youngsters around Ishpeming used to do a good business in rats, selling them for ten cents apiece to the miners as good-luck charms.

HISTORY has tarred the name of Aaron Burr with the traitor's brush, but according to Louis A. Sigaud, author of "The Big Deeds of Little Burr" there's another side to the story and he presents it most convincingly. Of course the article itself concerns only Burr's earlier adventures—in fact, Mr. Sigaud states that if you find in it a single reference to Hamilton, Jefferson or the Clintons, he'll not only devour this entire issue of *Adventure* figuratively—he'll do it literally! But this is what he has to say about Burr—

Our earlier historians profess Burr wantonly killed Hamilton, connived with Federalists in attempting to steal the Presidency from Jefferson in 1801, and in 1806 committed treason. I plan to vindicate Burr on all counts in a forthcoming book. To condense my evidence effectively in a few paragraphs is impossible. Still, much can be said briefly.

As to the Hamilton-Burr duel, this national calamity might well have been a greater one had Burr fallen instead of Hamilton, for the great Hamilton was then only a private citizen while Aaron Burr was Vice-President and had caused Jefferson's triumph over Adams in 1800. The duel occurred because Burr could no longer tolerate Hamilton's slanders. Actually, Hamilton ruined Burr politically and brought death upon himself when in 1801 he made Jefferson believe Burr had aided a Federalist

plan to select Burr instead of Jefferson when the House of Representatives met to settle the Jefferson-Burr Electoral College tie. Proof of Burr's integrity, Hamilton's unprincipled intrigue and Jefferson's unwarranted credulity is given by me in "The Tie that Severed" in *Tyler's Quarterly Historical and Genealogical Magazine* for July 1949.

But was Burr a traitor? Modern historians doubt it. There was far more to Burr's prosecution for treason than his trial in Richmond. The first move was in Kentucky where the Federal District Attorney proceeded irregularly, was rebuked by the Court and then sought an indictment. When he failed to call his witnesses, the grand jury summoned them and they testified that their charges published in the *Western World* were baseless and they had no evidence. The grand jury, including many prominent Kentuckians like James Madison's first cousin George, later Governor, refused to indict and declared they had seen no evidence criminating Burr or showing he contemplated anything improper.

Next, when Burr and his men descended the Mississippi, he was stopped in Mississippi Territory and an indictment sought. Here the grand jury, with approval of the Territorial Attorney General, refused to indict and then condemned the Federal Government's violation of the Constitution and the illegal activities of General Wilkinson, Burr's accuser, in New Orleans, which it charged Jefferson condoned. In the East, when Bollman and Swartwout, Burr's agents, were committed for treason and secured a hearing via habeas corpus writ, Chief Justice Marshall discharged them and severely condemned the Federal prosecution.

Next came Burr's trial at Richmond on the treason charge. Stripped of technicalities, the decision was that the Government had to prove not only the overt act of war charged but also Burr's presence and that, as his absence was conceded, the alleged act could not be held against him. As to the assemblage of men constituting the alleged act, had Burr been present, it would have been necessary to prove the assemblage had an *intent* to commit an overt act of war against the United States. The record shows that every member of the assemblage who testified, including all Burr's commanders, swore that he neither had such intent nor had been given reason to believe anyone, including Burr, had such intent. One cannot levy war or commit treason against the United States unknowingly. How then could Burr alone intend treason with reputable men pledged only to an honorable venture?

Burr was next tried on a misdemeanor charge that his expedition was against *Mexico*. The result was substantially as before. The Government then sought his commitment for trial for treason elsewhere. In a broad inquiry in which all evidence, relevant or not, was purposely allowed, Marshall ruled against commitment, finding the testimony showed the expedition's object to be Mexico and that nothing in Burr's assemblages anywhere along the Mississippi showed an intent hostile to the United States to make them acts of war. The Government now moved to commit Burr for trial elsewhere on the misdemeanor charge. Marshall ruled that if Burr's expedition against Mexico depended on our going to war with Spain, there was no misdemeanor but felt a trial jury should decide that fact. So Burr was required to stand trial in Ohio for misdemeanor, but, suspecting this was persecution, as Andrew Jackson was proclaiming, he went to Europe to the relief of Jefferson and his legal bloodhounds.

Confidentially, Burr's Mexican expedition took place successfully. Burr's associate, President Jackson, used Sam Houston to put it over. And a Houston intimate was Sam Swartwout who had carried to Wilkinson at New Orleans Burr's code message that all was ready. Unfortunately, Wilkinson, a Spanish agent, betrayed Burr to Jefferson and asked the Mexican Viceroy to reward him for thwarting Burr.

A rather good case is made out for Burr by Dr. Walter F. McCaleb in the 1936 edition of the "Aaron Burr Conspiracy" and a decidedly impressive advocate is invoked on page 310 where he recalls that one day Woodrow Wilson and he stood reverently at Burr's grave in Princeton. The former President of Princeton University said of the distinguished son of one of his predecessors at Old Nassau, "How misunderstood —how maligned!"

ITEM from Down Under: James Preston takes a bow on his first appearance in *Adventure* ("Green Timber"—the logging story on page 56) and introduces himself to you briefly—

My early life was spent in the goldfield district of Ballarat, Victoria. That period was singularly uneventful, until, just before the war, I took over a 90-acre farm in North Queensland. Twenty-odd years of scouting also gave me a good knowledge of the Australian bush and the people who live there. During the depression of the 30's I worked at almost everything from quarry worker to prison warder. During the war I served as a sergeant in the R.A.A.F. in New Guinea and the Islands.

It was just before the war that I began to write, and have since had encouraging success as an amateur, having about 200 stories and articles in Australian magazines.

At 36 I am now doing Public Relations work with a Commonwealth Government Department, dividing my time between my family, story writing and the duties of President of the Quill Club, Melbourne—an enthusiastic body of young writers.

(Continued on page 126)

MEDAL OF HONOR

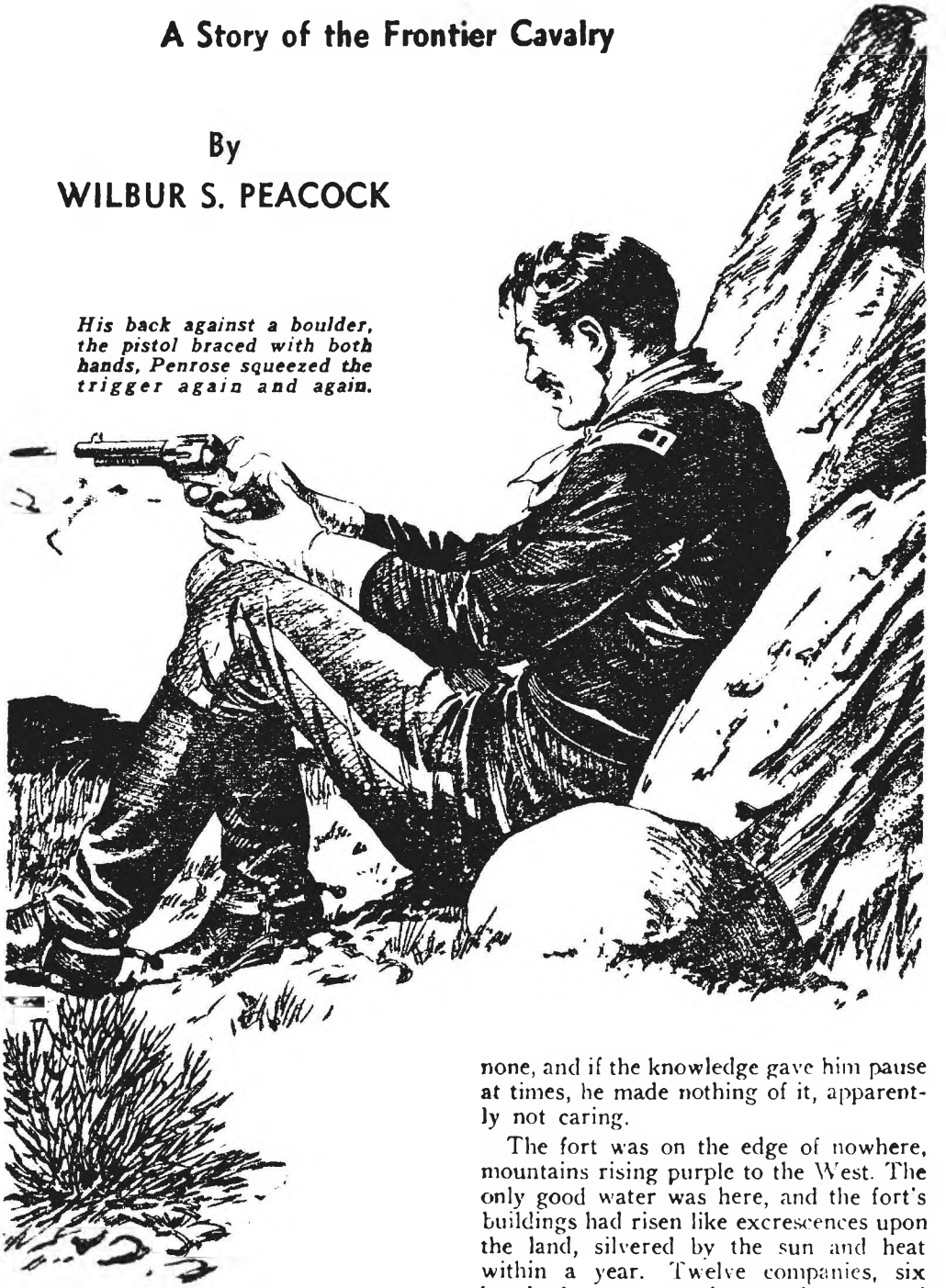
THE desert measures a man and searches him out, and when it is through, he breaks or bends, ungiving, and the desert passes on to the next, ever hard, ever searching, its appetite an unsated hunger. Season passes season, and snow follows heat, cacti bloom yellow and red and purple, but the land is flint-hard; and it dries a man even deeper than his flesh, fighting him, sullenly and relentlessly, waiting for the moment when his defenses crack infinitesimally.

But in Lieutenant Penrose, somehow, the desert met its match. He neither broke nor bent; he was aloof from it, alien, a stranger in a strange country. He was tall and Indian dark, a mustache striping his lip, his gray eyes contemptuous and hate-filled of everything and everybody. He rode his men, as he rode his mounts, never relaxing, reins tight in his fist. He commanded, for that was his duty. His voice cracked orders, and troopers moved. He was hard in the way the desert was hard; but unlike it, he held no soft spots,

A Story of the Frontier Cavalry

By

WILBUR S. PEACOCK



His back against a boulder, the pistol braced with both hands, Penrose squeezed the trigger again and again.

ILLUSTRATED BY
MONROE EISENBERG

none, and if the knowledge gave him pause at times, he made nothing of it, apparently not caring.

The fort was on the edge of nowhere, mountains rising purple to the West. The only good water was here, and the fort's buildings had risen like excrescences upon the land, silvered by the sun and heat within a year. Twelve companies, six hundred men, were the complement, and most were the flotsam of war, washed back in the tides of peace, while the North and the South licked grievous wounds, and the States, united at least in name, began their growth from semi-savagery into semi-civilization.

This was Major Brekhard's command, and he too had been measured by the desert and had learned to bend but never break. Gray streaked his hair and beard, yet he was still young enough to understand the men with whom he rode. He was seasoned now; and if his command had been a gesture of contempt because he had thought to play politics after the war, he had forgotten that now, and his pride in the fort and the men was a tangible force which all could feel.

He had accepted Lieutenant Penrose as an officer and a gentleman; and if he held doubts about the man, he kept them to himself. The lieutenant's record was locked in the Headquarters safe, and whatever secrets it held were inviolate. That it spoke of a massacre and Penrose's part in it; that it told of a senseless duel and its aftermath; that it spoke of Penrose's demotion to the rank of lieutenant —all were secrets not to be told to anyone.

Major Brekhard ranked the lieutenant slowly. He knew the man to be a soldier; for whatever his derelictions, his duty had come first. That he was hard was bad, but not strange, for the past war had chilled many men into steely hardness. He briefed him on his new duties, and he watched his work; and sometimes it was difficult to hold his tongue, when he saw the manner in which Lieutenant Penrose carried out orders. But hold his tongue he did, biding his time and knowing the day would come when definite measures would have to be taken one way or another.

He liked the man, and that was strange, for Lieutenant Penrose was not one who sought for friendship. Penrose went his way, taking and executing orders, but always there was a reserve, a shell about him, against which laughter and friendliness rebounded and could not pierce. He did not smoke with the other officers, and his room in Officers' Row was a sanctum where none but the Indian cleaning woman could enter. He did not read, and there was no correspondence, and it seemed that his only amusement was to ride at night to the top of a small butte, there to sit and stare at the purple mountains as though they represented a horizon he would never touch. He was an enigma; and after a time, those about him accepted him, neither liking nor disliking, conscious only that, in a minor way, he was an irritant to the life of the fort.

HIS first clash was with Captain Jurgens, when maps were spread upon the major's table and the officers were huddled over them, eyes intent upon the markings.

"They are concentrating here," the major said shortly, and his finger traced the map from Stinking Wells to Eagle Rock. "They're moving north."

Captain Mueller fingered his swooping mustache, lips grim. "I figure it to be Eagle Rock, from what the guides say," he said. "The terrain's perfect for their purposes."

Lieutenant Campbell shifted impatiently from foot to foot, wanting to break in. Youth lay in him, and impatience; but caution had come, too, in the past years, and so he held his counsel, waiting for everyone to speak.

"And hell for ours," Captain Jurgens said then. "We'll be in the open, while they'll have the mountains at their back. We'll have to carry water, and if the campaign hangs on, we'll find none about except by cutting through them into the mountains." He sucked on his cold pipe. "I tell you this Hawk is damned good at strategy."

Captain Jurgens fingered a match alight and drew the flame into his pipe. He was heavy and stolid, a warm vein of humor running through his mind. Fourteen years he had been in the army, eight on the desert, and he knew the Apaches and their ways and their manner of twisted thinking.

"Black Hawk isn't doing the strategy," he said thoughtfully. "There's army somewhere. I've a hunch Claytrill and his men have moved in."

"Claytrill?" Major Brekhard tugged thoughtfully at his beard with lean fingers. "He's a Missouri man."

"Yes, sir," Jurgens answered. "But the guides have brought in rumors about whites being seen with the Indians. It's my guess Claytrill is stirring up trouble to keep us busy, while he plans something else."

"What?" Lieutenant Penrose said then,

and contempt for the other's reasoning was in his voice.

Captain Jurgens ran a placid gaze over the younger man. "There's a big concentration of gold here," his finger touched the map, "fed by the mines farther east. I think Claytrill wants to keep us so busy we will draw troops from that territory."

Lieutenant Penrose chuckled. "We've six hundred men here, and there are two hundred there," he said scornfully. "Even Claytrill wouldn't be so stupid as to think a few stinking Indians could pull all of us into battle."

"Few!" Captain Jurgens smiled without humor. "Black Hawk can muster four hundred braves within ten days."

"Four hundred against eight!" Lieutenant Penrose shrugged. "They wouldn't have a chance." His eyes flicked from officer to officer. "Give me four companies and I'll cut those Apaches to pieces."

Captain Mueller scratched his nose, his eyes dark with hidden amusement, while Lieutenant Campbell coughed suddenly. Major Brekhard fumbled a cigar from his pocket, content for the moment to let the discussion run its course.

Lieutenant Penrose sensed the amusement his words had brought, and a flush tided upward from his collar. Anger began to sparkle in his gray eyes, and unconsciously his hands fisted on the table top.

"Four companies," he repeated, arguing. "I'll run those savages into the ground."

Captain Jurgens blew smoke carefully into a ring. "Penrose," he said carefully, "without meaning any offense, you don't know what you're talking about. One Indian in the mountains is worth five troopers. The Apache is perhaps the best mountain fighter in the world. He strikes out of nowhere and is gone before a trooper can squeeze off a shot. He blends with the ground, and courage is more than a word with him."

Lieutenant Penrose stiffened. "You doubt my courage?" he snapped.

Even Major Brekhard was caught and held by Penrose's tone then. It was ugly and naked with feeling, and the man rocked a bit on his feet, as though the tides of rage were at full flood.

"I didn't say that," Captain Jurgens said, and now a flush was on his face. "I merely stated what all of us know, since we've fought the Indians before."

"You think I couldn't face them!"

"I—" Captain Jurgens hesitated, at a loss for words, for somehow the conversation had gotten away from him. Now it was on a personal plane, and he did not fully understand.

Lieutenant Penrose whirled to the major. "Sir," he said, "give me the men I want. I'll stop Black Hawk in his tracks. I'll blow the trouble higher than a kite. I'll—"

"Lieutenant," Major Brekhard broke in, "the policies of this fort and my command will be set by me. I will ask counsel when I think it needed, but further than that, I shall make the decisions."

"But—"

"That will be all, Lieutenant."

"Yes, sir!" Lieutenant Penrose said then. He shivered as though with fever at the reprimand, and his eyes flamed as they flickered back to Captain Jurgens.

Captain Jurgens smiled, tension gone now. "Penrose," he said evenly, "all army men make the same mistake, when first stationed here. We've all thought the way you do, until we've learned our thinking was wrong. Get one campaign under your belt, and you'll know what I mean."

"Yes, sir," Lieutenant Penrose said, but there was no understanding in his tone.

Major Brekhard folded the maps, clearing them away. "That will be all, gentlemen," he said. "Our scouts should bring more news in by morning, and then a final decision will be made."

He took the salutes, then leaned back in his chair, watching, as the men filed through the door. He chewed his underlip, watching Lieutenant Penrose leave, for it had suddenly come to him in all of its force that this man was not for the desert nor a part of his command. This country was murderous, at best, and those who lived on it existed only in friendship and cooperation. Lieutenant Penrose did not fit into the scheme of things, and so he must go.

And yet he did not want such a thing to happen. True, there were things in the man's record which needed explanation, yet they could wait. After all, Pen-

rose was new to the land. He did not like it, nor understand it, as all newcomers neither liked nor understood. Still, there was hope for him; and if his hardness could ever be controlled, he would be a fine officer for the fort.

And then, because the lieutenant was but one of a dozen problems, he thrust the thought of him to one side. He unfolded the maps again, remembering Captain Jurgens' words. Minute by slow minute passed, and gradually a plan emerged, based on little more than guess and hope.

IN HIS quarters, Lieutenant Penrose stripped away his blouse and threw himself upon his bed. Anger still swirled in him. Late sunlight streamed through the single window and lay across his body, and he moved his hand in it, fisting the fingers, wishing he could have wiped the smugness from Jurgens' face.

He remembered Captain Mueller's amusement, and memory of the laughter in Lieutenant Campbell's eyes rocked his hard body in a spasm of rage. Even the tolerant understanding of Major Brekhard stung him; and he knew now what he had always known, that this fort and these men were not for him.

He came from the bed and dragged his foot locker from beneath. His key rattled in the lock, then threw it open, and he lifted the lid and burrowed into the clothes and found the small leather-bound book marked *Diary* on the cover.

He sat at his desk and lit the lamp, replacing the chimney carefully, suddenly, strangely reluctant to do again that which had become a rite with him each night.

He fingered the diary, shaking now, for here was his life, his hopes, words which could exalt or condemn him. Here were his unspoken thoughts, his deeds, the history of the past five years. Here were the words he had put down so carefully, and which he no longer had the will or courage to destroy.

He opened the diary aimlessly, and a single sentence caught his attention: *"March 5, 1864. Took command today. Major Thompkins dead of cannon fire. Received rank of major. Now can prove—*

Perspiration slid down his face and he licked his lips. That far-off day was close in his memory; it clung despite his efforts to throw it away, running turgid and ugly in his mind. It mingled with others, and for the moment he was living in the past.

"Congratulations, Bob," Captain Edmonds had said. "The army couldn't have picked a better man."

They'd grinned at each other across the narrow width of the tent. Outside, men talked and made the noise all armies make in settling for the night. A mule had brayed, and a sutler had sworn companionably. The smell of woodsmoke was in the air, and the sound of battle was gone for the moment.

He'd been younger then, and his blood had been hot and eager. He'd risen the hard way, from the field, and now a command was his. The men were dirty and tired, but they were tough and whangleather strong, and they'd fought as gallantly as any army could, their pride in themselves a tangible thing.

"We'll give them hell now," he'd said then. "None of this pussyfooting. The orders are to attack, and by God, that's exactly what we're going to do!"

He'd said that and a lot more, like a man talking from corn liquor, intoxicated with brief unexpected importance. He'd killed the last of a bottle of whiskey, and then he'd sat up most of the night, planning the battle.

And now, remembering, Lieutenant Penrose's belly muscles tightened, and he could hear the rasp of his breathing in the room. It was as though Edmonds sat wraithlike in the corner and watched him from dead eerie eyes. It was as though he could hear the faintest whisper of his friend's voice whirling to him from death's empire.

"Murdered them, killed your friends, those who believed!" the voice whispered. "And where were you, Bob, where were you?"

"Stop!" He cried the single word, and he whirled to face the corner, face contorted—but the corner was just a juncture of adobe, rough clay cement, where a spider crawled lazily along a lacy web.

He sagged then against the chair back, and the room was still. A shiver touched his spine. He'd come far in the past months, but not far enough. Memories

had trailed him, ugly distorted memories, and he knew that he could never escape from them.

He swung to the table again, and his hand found the pen and dipped it in ink. He turned pages in the diary, finding the current day, and his thoughts came out as words written in an unsteady angular hand.

"Jurgens knows," he wrote. *"Maybe the others guess. I've got to make them know that I'm no coward, or else—"*

He finished the entry, then replaced the book in the locker and closed the lock tightly in the hasp. After that, he lit a cigar and lay upon his bed, sweat sliding from his shoulders and soaking the thin rough sheet. He watched the smoke running straight upward in the still air, and his thoughts were a maelstrom in his mind.

He heard the notes of mess call whirl across the fort. Voices sounded outside, and light was dimming at the window. Minutes passed, and then the sweet thin notes of a bugle lifted. The bugler and color-sergeant were retreating the flag. The bugle was the only ceremony; and yet he felt a certain wonder at the solemnity he felt because of this one action at an outpost at the edge of nowhere.

The cigar went out, and the window grew black with night. The moon would not rise for an hour yet, and until then the world was a place of nothingness, shadows pushing against the few lights of the fort. Outside, anything could happen; but in the fort, events followed custom, guards changing, troopers washing tin plates at huge tubs of steaming water. A woman called outside, and children answered. Somewhere, the regimental band was practicing, and the music was strange and alien to the night. The day was over, and it would be hours before the red sun lifted again.

He lay awake for hours, until the moonlight was slanted in a steep bar toward the floor. He didn't move, and the fort was silent, except for the hourly calling of the sentries. He watched a wedge of sky through the window, and the stars were no colder than his thoughts. When he slept at last, his body did not move, and the only difference was in that his eyes were closed.

CHAPTER II

THE PATROL

HE WOKE at dawn, sweat-soaked and as weary as if he had ridden all night. He stirred, then sat, blinking. The room was still dim, and the sounds of the waking fort came dully. He washed and shaved and dressed again in yesterday's clothes. Resolve grew in his mind; and at last he sat at the table and wrote swiftly and concisely on a fresh sheet of paper. Satisfied, he folded it, then left the room and strode across the ground toward Headquarters.

Troopers moved at the wash benches, and their voices rose, friendly and careless, and he felt utterly alone. He wondered if he could learn to laugh and smile again, taking gibes and giving them. Then he forced the thought away.

Horses were racked before Headquarters, dusty tired horses, and he recognized them as belonging to Ramirez and Red Bull, the main scouts. Almost idly, he wondered what their news had been; then, not really caring, he strode up the four steps to Headquarters and returned the sentry's salute.

"Is the major in?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the sentry answered.

He pushed by the trooper, lifting the catch on the door and swinging it open. Despite the morning, a lamp burned on the major's table, and he glanced up at Penrose's entrance.

"Good morning, Lieutenant," he said cordially; and if he remembered the night before, the memory did not appear in his words or face.

"Good morning, sir."

Lieutenant Penrose closed the door, his gaze wandering about the room, searching. The major caught the gaze and interpreted it, and he shook his head.

"They're eating," he said. "They put in a couple of days of tough riding to get here."

"Yes, sir." Penrose felt the slight tremble of his hand, and he stiffened, waiting out the moment.

Major Brekhard found a cigar on the table and neatly clipped its tip with a desk knife. His eyes stared briefly at

the lieutenant, then dropped to the cigar. Almost too deliberately, he cut the cigar and found a match and lit it. When the tobacco drew well, he spun the match aside.

"What is it, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"This, sir." Lieutenant Penrose took a step forward and laid the folded sheet of paper on the table.

The major did not move, except to twist the cigar in his lips with steady fingers. His gray hair was almost white in the light, and his eyes were cold and searching.

"Resignation or transfer?" he asked finally.

"Request for transfer, sir," Lieutenant Penrose said heavily.

Major Brekhard stirred the paper with his forefinger. "On what basis, Lieutenant?"

"Incompatibility with this land, sir," Lieutenant Penrose answered, and felt a flush surging upward from his throat.

He wished now that he had waited. He did not know why he wished that; it was only that it was so. He sensed no sympathy in the older man; he sensed nothing other than a quiet calm appraisal.

"And if the request is denied?" Major Brekhard asked.

Penrose drew a deep breath. "Then, sir," he said, "I shall tender my resignation, which according to the regulations under which I signed, must be accepted."

"Like that, Lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir."

Major Brekhard toyed with the cigar, his gaze lifting to a silver-mounted carbine hanging on the wall. The years had given him patience and experience and a knowledge of men. He was an officer, and this was an officer's problem. He didn't want to face it now, and yet he could see no way of postponing it.

"Sit down, Lieutenant," he said evenly.

Lieutenant Penrose sat slowly, nervousness gone now, the old arrogance creeping into the set of his head. He held his cap upon his lap, and now his gaze did not wander from the major's.

"Lieutenant," Major Brekhard said slowly, "somehow, this does not come as a surprise to me—why, I do not truthfully know. But I must say I do not like it." He knocked ashes to the floor. "You are a good soldier, a bit too much of a spit and polish officer, it's true, but nevertheless a good trooper. You say that you are incompatible with this land, and that may be true, yet I do not believe it is the honest reason for your request."

"It is enough, sir," Penrose answered, and now anger was tightening his mouth.

"Maybe," the major admitted, "and maybe not. As I said, you're a good soldier. Your war record, except for a few minor points, was excellent. You rose from the ranks and served with dignity. Your first command was wiped out, unfortunately, but you commanded a second with distinction. You were assigned to the fort at your own request, after the war; and while you haven't been outstanding here, you have done your duties in a very capable manner."

Lieutenant Penrose stiffened. "My request, sir, is it approved?" he broke in.

MAJOR BREKHARD fingered the cigar, ignoring the question. His eyes held steady on the younger man, and it was as though he tried to read the other's secret thoughts.

"Lieutenant," he said finally, "I have no authority to probe into your personal life, other than as it affects this command. I have no intention of doing so. But if you would care to confide in me, to tell me what is troubling you, perhaps I can help. Two minds are better than one, particularly when the second is impersonal in its evaluations." His tone softened, became more personal. "I like you, Lieutenant, and believe in you, and so I would help."

Lieutenant Penrose's shoulders squared even more. Temptation was before him, and for the moment his will almost broke. Then he remembered, and a cold sweat oozed on his spine, and he knew the other would never understand. Major Brekhard was an army man; he had served twenty years in a uniform, and he could never understand.

"Sorry, sir," the lieutenant said harshly.

"Very well," Major Brekhard replied. "Your request for transfer is denied at this time."

Lieutenant Penrose flushed. "Then my resignation is tendered."

Major Brekhard smiled thinly, and his nerveless hand flicked ashes into the cuspidor.

"Your resignation is not accepted," he said flatly.

"But, sir—"

"Lieutenant," the major said evenly, "as commander of this fort, I have certain powers, not the least of which is declaring a state of emergency to exist. Such a declaration is in effect, and while in effect, no transfers or resignations shall be made or accepted."

The lieutenant surged to his feet. "Major," he said, "I do not know what you hope to gain by keeping me—"

Major Brekhard bent forward, and now his face was bony with power, the first fleeting light of anger in his eyes.

"Sit down, Lieutenant," he snapped. "That is an order."

He watched grimly as Penrose seated himself again. The cigar was forgotten now, and with his free hand he pushed papers clear of a map on the table.

"Understand this, Lieutenant," he said thinly, "other than losing what might be a valuable officer, I care nothing about your transfer. I tried to accept you upon a personal basis, and you have made that impossible. But I have declared a state of emergency, and until that declaration is rescinded, you will remain as a member of my staff."

"Emergency, sir?" Penrose asked, and only habit kept the insolence from his tone.

"Emergency," the major echoed, and twisted the map about. "Ramirez and Red Bull report that Indians are gathering at Eagle Rock, ostensibly for religious purposes. Whatever the reason, I do not like it. This country has been quiet for a long time, and I want it to stay that way. But if, as Captain Jorgens says, Wade Claytrill and his men from Missouri are stirring up trouble, I want to know it. A bold stroke might scatter or cow the Apache, and then Claytrill could be taken care of. Frankly, I'm not certain what is going on. If Black Hawk intends to start another up-

rising for his own reasons, there will be hell to pay and a long, drawn-out campaign. If Claytrill is master-minding a minor uprising to draw troops from that cache of gold at Bitter Creek, I want to know that, too. One way or another, as an officer, I need your help, along with the others', and so neither a transfer nor a resignation can be permitted at this time."

"Yes, sir," Lieutenant Penrose said, and faint laughter stirred in his mind. Always had it been this way; somewhere the three old fates spun and wove and clipped the thread of his life, and his desires held no powers over them.

"Now," Major Brekhard said, and pointed a long finger at the map, "I want you to take a squad of eight men and ride as close to the vicinity of Eagle Rock as you can without being seen. I want at least one Indian prisoner brought back." Grimness touched his tone. "I do not like the method, but a bit of extra-legal questioning may bring forth a few pertinent answers. You will leave immediately after breakfast, make your scout, and return as quickly as your mission is accomplished, but with a time limit of thirty-six hours at the most. Is that clear?"

"Yes, sir." Lieutenant Penrose stood, and for a moment it was as though he was about to speak.

Then bleakness came to his face, and he saluted and turned to the door. He went through, conscious of the major's gaze on his back. Then the door was shut, and he stood in the hot morning sunlight, a sense of defeat and futility slumping the tight line of his shoulders.

He strode across the parade grounds to the mess hall. A slow breeze stirred the flag on its staff, and chickens scratched desultorily in the dust. Heat devils were already stirring on the flats, and the copper sun was already lifting in heated majesty.

He swore tightly in his throat, knowing the day could not come too soon when he would leave this desolate earth-born hell. This was not a land, but rather a prison, where nothing grew but death and cacti. This was a frontier, but not one which would bloom some day; and for a moment he wondered at the folly of men who would battle over its flinty surface.

Then he sighed and pushed open the door of the troopers' mess hall. The clatter of voices slammed at him. Laughter was here, and surliness; but through it all was a sense of comradeship, a feeling of man belonging to men, and somehow he was momentarily envious.

He went through the tables and stopped at a soldier's side. The trooper pushed a coffee mug aside and stood, dark eyes questioning, gray hair as stubbly as a curry brush.

"Sir?" Sergeant Atkins said.

"Scouting patrol, Sergeant," Lieutenant Penrose said. "Six men and Red Bull. Carbines and pistols. Fifty rounds of ammunition. Field rations for thirty-six hours. One hour assembly."

"Yes, sir," the sergeant acknowledged the orders woodenly.

"Good!" Lieutenant Penrose turned away.

MEN watched him go, and some eyes were unfriendly, some curious, others indifferent. He was an officer, set apart from the ranks; yet even he sensed that the feeling about him went a bit further than a commission. Almost arrogantly, his chin lifted, and his eyes were contemptuous as they went over the troopers. He paced, full-weighted, to the door which led to the officers' mess, and despite himself, he was glad when the men were gone and he was standing with the door closed at his back.

" 'Morning, Penrose." Lieutenant Campbell paused long enough at an outer door to give the greeting. "Looks like another scorcher."

"It always does," Penrose said, and sat at the single table.

Campbell shrugged in youthful good humor and left the room. Captain Jurgens, left alone, grinned at Penrose over his cup.

"Glad you came in," he said. "Seems like we had a bit of a misunderstanding last night, and if I said anything wrong, I wanted to apologize."

Penrose flushed in embarrassment. Long past was the day when he either gave or received apologies; and now,

with Jurgens watching, he felt a sense of shame and wished he could recapture again the time when such things were a normal part of his life.

"Forget it," he said harshly. "There was no misunderstanding."

"I'm glad," Captain Jurgens said. "This post is tough enough, without petty feuding to make things more difficult." He pushed the coffee pot forward. "Wonder what the major has figured out?" he finished.

Penrose poured coffee, drinking it black and steaming hot. Some of the tension was leaving him now, and he relaxed in his chair.

"I'm taking a thirty-six hour patrol out," he said. "Orders are to bring back one or more prisoners for a bit of questioning."

Captain Jurgens whistled softly. "The major's no fool," he said. "Not if he's willing to go that far. Something's up, or so he thinks."

Lieutenant Penrose shrugged.

"I wouldn't know, Captain," he said carefully.

He set his empty cup aside and rose from the table. The captain watched him move toward the outer door, and for a moment he was about to speak. But he remained silent, shaking his head slightly, some of the habitual humor gone from his eyes.

Lieutenant Penrose went through the doorway, closing the panel behind him, then strode along Officers' Row toward his quarters. The sergeant-major's wife nodded a friendly good morning, and her twins whooped at the corral where troopers were already bringing in horses to break for remount. Smoke plumed bluely from the farrier's forge, and the ring of his sledge on steel was bright and melodious.

Regret touched Penrose for a moment. He had asked for service here. He had come, thinking the loneliness of frontier service would clear his mind. In a way, he had found peace. But not enough. And so now, looking about, he wondered wherein he had failed, and could not find the true answer.

He entered his quarters and changed into his third-best uniform. His orderly had not appeared as yet, and so he gathered scout equipment and bundled it carefully.

He checked his pistol and carbine and laid them aside. Satisfied, he sat on his bed, leaning against the wall, and lit a cigar. He tried to relax, forming a minor plan in his mind as to the general scout he and the patrol would make.

Sunlight touched the yellow stripes on his breeches, making them burnished gold. A fly hovered over his knee, then whirled away.

Outside, the fort was coming to life. Already a corporal was drilling the recruits, his voice harsh and ugly with authority and the contempt seasoned troopers feel for all new men. The children made youthful noises from the corral, and a bronc squealed in sheer defiance.

Sympathy curled Penrose's lips in a half-smile. The horse would learn. It would learn a hundred things, and not the least of which would be that men were its master. It would learn or go rogue, and the rogue's ending came in a swift burst of revolver fire.

Minutes dragged by, and the cigar was finished. Knuckles tapped on the door, and he left the room with his equipment, pacing at the sergeant's side to the parade ground where men and mounts were waiting, drawn up in a short straight line.

Lieutenant Penrose slipped his carbine into its boot and thonged his personal effects into place behind the cantle of the McClellan saddle. He checked the girths and rubbed his hand along Lady's neck. He liked horses, and this mare was his pride.

"Patrol ready, sir," Sergeant Atkins said at his side, and he made a brief inspection.

He went from man to man, identifying each in his mind. These were men he could trust, each more experienced than himself on the desert. The sergeant had chosen well, and Lieutenant Penrose was duly grateful.

He passed Red Bull, and the 'breed stared from beady black eyes, his wrinkled face emotionless. Red Bull was part Mex, part Apache, and his age was an indeterminate thing. Short, his hair a greasy black and tied with a strip of red bandana at the nape of his neck, he was a

master tracker, even on the salt plains where horses' hooves struck sparks from the flinty ground.

Penrose inspected the two pack horses, then nodded in approval. Horses were less sturdy, but faster, than mules. They would serve better on a patrol.

He turned to Lady and mounted. "Very well, Sergeant," he said.

"Mount," the sergeant ordered, and the troopers swung into saddles like a drill team.

"Move out," Lieutenant Penrose ordered brusquely, and reined his horse into the lead.

The patrol quartered in behind, saddles creaking. Campaign hats were jammed tightly, and yellow kerchiefs were bright against dark blouses. Carbines were backslung, and the men rode with soft-muscle ease which saved strength.

This was a patrol. Troopers called goodbyes and made rude comments. Two women watched from before the doors of their quarters. The post dog followed to the fort's gates, then sank, panting, into friendly shade. Other than that, there was no farewell. This was routine, a patrol, no danger and no dramatics.

Lieutenant Penrose looked back at the fort. Heat waves shimmered about it, and now the flag clung slackly to the staff. Smoke lifted in a thin spiral from the mess shack, and a sentry paced stolidly at the gates. Then Penrose settled his kepi and faced forward. Doubt was stirring in him again, and he clenched his free hand as though in sudden, sharp pain.

"Sergeant?" he called, and when the trooper sped up and reined in at Lady's side, he said, "We go west and north, and come in just far enough south of Eagle Rock to avoid any watchers." He licked lips already dry from the growing desert heat. "Now, this is what I have in mind."

He talked, and the patrol moved out. The fort grew smaller and then disappeared beyond a rise. A Joshua tree lifted spiney arms in futile prayer, and a horse blew its lips suddenly. A trooper eased his carbine sling. Lieutenant Penrose finished speaking, and after that there was but the steady pound of hooves upon the ground.

CHAPTER III

NIGHT RIDE

THE MOUNTAINS were close now, lifting against the sky like blunted shadows. The day and night had been long in passing, and now a new sun was rising, mirroring the sky with red and gold and purple. A horse nickered sleepily at the rope line, and troopers ate a cold breakfast while huddled together.

A single sentry stood at the top of the arroyo, pacing and scanning, watching for the three troopers who had gone with Red Bull the night before. They were an hour late, and the remaining men were growing impatient.

Lieutenant Penrose smoked a cigar, his back against a rough boulder. He swallowed tepid water from his canteen, grateful for its wetness. Without it, a man could not survive here, for poisonous water was the rule and not the exception in this part of the country.

He heard the soft challenge of the sentry, and then men were sliding into the arroyo. He counted them, relief coming when he discovered none were missing. Excitement boiled in him when he saw the single Indian who preceded Sergeant Atkins.

"Reporting, sir," the sergeant said formally. "Red Bull scouted up three Indians, but this was the only one we could take without a fight. He won't talk, but maybe you can convince him he should."

"Very good, Sergeant," Lieutenant Penrose said, and studied the Apache in the growing morning light.

The man was tall, even for an Apache. Arrogance lay in him, a contempt for lesser men. His nose was thin, his lips firm, and he was as cleanly muscled and graceful as any animal. A single feather was in his hair, and a totem necklace of claws and beads were about his throat. He wore only moccasins and trousers of stained goatskin.

He showed no fear, matching the lieutenant's stare, ignoring the troopers who watched curiously.

"Tell your men to eat and rest up," Penrose ordered the sergeant. "We'll

ride as soon as they are through." His gaze flicked to the sentry at the top of the arroyo. The trooper's carbine was ready for any move.

Red Bull moved to the lieutenant's side, waiting, quiescent. He had done this before. And if he hated the Apache, he gave no sign, acting exactly the same as he did with whites. He was neither one nor the other, but a 'breed, and his thoughts were too secret for either.

"Ask him his name and where he's from," Penrose said.

Red Bull gave the questions, the guttural phrases rolling harshly from his mouth. The prisoner ignored the scout, his gaze running past the lieutenant's shoulder and into infinity.

"Ask him how many are in Black Hawk's camp?" A muscle ticked in Lieutenant Penrose's cheek.

The Apache ignored the second question as he had the first. Lieutenant Penrose scowled, rubbing his chin with his thumb.

"He is Apache?" he asked.

Red Bull nodded. "Him Apach'," he said.

Lieutenant Penrose hesitated. His authority ended at this point. His orders were definite—bring in a prisoner. After that was done, responsibility for further action lay with the major. Yet impatience burned in him, and the Indian's studied insolence and lack of fear lashed at him.

He knew the men were watching. His authority was being questioned by the Indian, and the men knew it, and he wondered what were their thoughts. Sergeant Atkins was at one side, face devoid of expression; but now a sparkle of amusement had come to Red Bull's dark eyes.

"Ask him if white men are with Black Hawk? Ask him if the leader is named Claytrill?"

He caught the sudden flicker of the Indian's gaze at the sound of Claytrill's name, and a sudden exultation welled in him. The Apache recognized the name; and if he could gain more information, he might hold the solution to the Apache problem in his hand.

Red Bull asked his questions, but the Indian was mute.

Lieutenant Penrose shivered in a sudden gust of anger. He had expected fear, even a whining, a cringing, from any prisoner taken. And yet this red man, this savage, did nothing but stand in utter contempt of his questioners.

"Tell him to talk now or there will be trouble."

The Indian did not understand the words, but the threat lay in Penrose's voice, and he recognized it. Instinctively, he straightened and took a single half-step forward.

Lieutenant Penrose caught himself. He, too, had moved, a full step backward, and a flush suddenly heated his face. He read the laughter in the Apache's eyes, and he clenched his hands. He knew now why the man held no fear; the Apache had read him aright, and knew that he was the better man.

Shaking, Lieutenant Penrose heard Red Bull's voice make the threat, and he saw the quick lift of the redman's chin. He saw the half-smile grow on a trooper's face, and he marked the man for future punishment. He knew that carrying this questioning further would gain nothing, and yet some impulse carried him forward.

"One last chance," he said to Red Bull. "Tell him to answer my questions, or I shall shave his head and paint his buttocks yellow and deliver him to his people dressed in a squaw's skirt."

No greater threat could be made to an Indian. To humble him in battle, to best him in a match of wits, even to slay him, all were as nothing to the shame which the lieutenant proposed.

"Sir," Sergeant Atkins said then, "this man is no ordinary—"

"That will be all, Sergeant," Penrose snapped. "Get on with it, Red Bull."

The wizened scout swallowed, then swung to the Apache. He rolled the words with his tongue, syllable by syllable; and as he spoke a change came to the Apache. Muscles lifted suddenly in his neck, and anger flared in his eyes. He spat a stream of words which needed no interpretation.

"Tell him he is a woman, a bull without belly," Lieutenant Penrose said harshly. "Tell him no squaw will bed with him when I am done."

Red Bull translated, and now true proud

anger came to the Indian. He moved with lightning speed, closing in, strong hands reaching out to gather in the lieutenant.

IT HAPPENED then—how, Lieutenant Penrose could never after remember. He did not feel his hand drop and then come up with his pistol. He knew only that black holes jumped into being on the Indian's chest, holes which suddenly flooded crimson. The echoes of the shots roared and echoed in the arroyo; and then the Apache was blasted to one side, crumpling, and the surprise on his face lingered but the shadow of an instant before death erased all expression.

And after that there was silence. . . .

"You killed your men, murdered them," Edmonds was saying. "You turned yellow and hid yourself away after sending them into battle. You found a hole and climbed into it, and your men, good brave men, died. You spouted brave

talk, and then when the chips were down you welched. You're a bad officer and a worse man. You're yellow, and I'm sorry that I called you my friend. You're big and tough when the odds favor you. You think you can prove yourself better by using your fists and guns on lesser men. But when the going really gets tough, you're a quitter."

"For God's sake, give me a chance!" Penrose had said then. "I didn't know what I was doing. Other men have done the same—"

The perspiration had slid along his face like drops of rain. The terror still lay in him, cankerous and foul, and he shook in remembrance. He could see Captain Edmonds' face, and now there was the bitterness of disillusionment in it, hard and naked and ugly.

"And you had them shot!" Captain Edmonds said.

Lieutenant Penrose looked at the Apache on the ground, where dark blood ran now in spreading rivulets. He shook in reaction, and his lifting gaze caught

The Indian moved with lightning speed, closing in, strong hands reaching out to gather in the lieutenant.

the expressions of horror still mirrored on every face.

Sergeant Atkins bent over the body, then straightened. There was no condemnation in his voice, only a cold stating of facts.

"He's dead, sir, shot squarely through the heart."

Lieutenant Penrose holstered the pistol. The move was automatic, yet it gave him time to think. He swallowed, hard, and thoughts were a wild turmoil in his mind.

"He attacked me, all of you saw that," he said, and was shocked at the whisper which was his voice.

"Yes, sir, we saw it," Sergeant Atkins said woodenly.

Red Bull shook his head. "This is bad, *muy malo*," he said. "Apach' no like to have brave killed."

"I said I was attacked; by God, you saw it yourself!" Penrose's voice lifted and almost broke.

Then his will was there again, and his control was back, and he straightened, and his voice cracked echoes from the walls.

"Bury the man," he said. "Bury him and clear away all traces of his death. Fast, damn it!"

He whirled and paced away, knowing men stared at his wide back. His hands were clenched, and he could feel them tremble. He went the length of the arroyo and climbed its side and stood on the rim in the sunlight. Behind, a spade began to cut at hard earth, and he could hear the sounds which were the whispers of his men. He breathed deeply, staring at the mountains, then turned to face the sun. He cursed the wheeling impulse which had carried his questioning and threats so far. He damned the thing within him which had made him shoot without thinking, shoot, he admitted now, through fear. He faced the sun, and a thought ran through his head about the pistol and how it could be used again.

And then the old arrogance rose in him, and he knew he could face this out, too. It was his word against the troopers', and even they admitted the Indian had attacked first.

He was safe, he knew, and slowly the sweat dried on his face. There was no time now to try for another prisoner, and that was bad. But there were only hours enough left to bring the patrol back to the fort. After that, after his report had been made, responsibility would be up to Major Brekhard.

He sat and lit a fresh cigar, biting away the end and spitting it between his boots. Minutes dragged by, and he waited; and when Sergeant Atkins reported, he was calm again, sure of himself and his story.

"He's buried, sir," Sergeant Atkins said briefly. "Further orders, sir?"

"Mount the men, Sergeant," Lieutenant Penrose said, rising. "We start back for the post now."

He didn't look back at the spot where a brave man had died. He rode ahead, reloaded gun at his thigh, and behind, the troopers were even more silent than usual, none speaking, none complaining, only riding in the silence of hidden thoughts.

MAJOR BREKHARD paced the lamplit room of Headquarters, and the anger in him was even more deadly because it was controlled. Captain Jurgens watched from where he leaned against the rough-stone mantel, pipe gripped in his teeth, his eyes disclosing none of his thoughts. Lieutenant Campbell was at the table, sympathy in his face as he stared at Lieutenant Penrose.

"Lieutenant," Major Brekhard said at last, coming to a halt, "your action has placed this post in a damnable position. You've shot an Apache out of hand, and God knows the Indians can get stirred up enough over just minor events."

"Sir," Penrose said evenly, "he attacked me. I only—"

"Attacked!" Major Brekhard snorted in disgust. "One Indian against nine armed men, and you say he attacked. Bah!" He wheeled and began his pacing again, throwing his words like stones. "I heard the stories of the men, reluctant as they were to give damaging evidence. Technically, you were attacked, but only because you overstepped your orders and authority. You goaded the poor devil into coming at you, and then you lost your head and shot him down."

Lieutenant Penrose shrugged, feeling

the fear building ever higher in his mind.

"A dirty savage!" he said disparagingly.

"Maybe!" Major Brekhard sat on the table edge. "I am in no mood to discuss ethics with you. All I know is that an Apache has been killed, wantonly, and that you are responsible."

Lieutenant Penrose fought to keep a tone of respect. "Sir," he said, "I did not want the mission. It was forced upon me, after I had tendered my resignation. I will so testify at any Court of Inquiry."

Major Brekhard scrubbed his hand through gray-white hair, worry still tightening his face. He swung to Captain Jurgens.

"What do you think, Captain," he asked, "will there be retaliatory measures?"

Captain Jurgens nodded. "Those Indians are devils at tracking," he said. "They may have found the grave by now. If they have, then trouble can be expected."

"Lieutenant?"

Lieutenant Campbell also nodded. "They'll find the grave, sooner or later," he said.

Major Brekhard stared at Penrose. "There's the answer, Lieutenant," he said gravely.

"Sir, I was attacked—" Lieutenant Penrose said.

"So I've heard," the major replied briefly, then ignored Penrose. "Any suggestions, Captain?" he finished to Jurgens.

"One," Captain Jurgens replied. "It's ticklish, but it might work. Take troops out, just enough to give a display of force, yet not enough to inflame the Apaches. Break up the concentration, if possible. That way any retaliation cannot be on a concerted scale." He fingered his pipe. "If Claytrill is back of the Indians, this will stop him until we can take his measure another way."

Major Brekhard nodded. "Expediency is demanded," he said, as though to himself, then looked up. "Captain, you will take two companies and proceed to Eagle Rock by way of Stinking Wells. There, your judgment will serve as to the best way of handling the situation. You will make no engagement without provocation, and you will keep me informed by messenger as to any extraordinary delay."

"Yes, sir," Captain Jurgens said, and glanced at the Boston clock at his side on the mantel. "We'll move out at sunup."

The major scratched his chin. "On second thought, I'll take command," he said. He swung to Lieutenant Penrose. "Lieutenant," he finished, "you are relieved of all duties and will confine yourself to quarters under arrest. I shall review your position upon my return from the field."

"Sir—" Penrose began, and the major cut him short.

"You are dismissed, Lieutenant."

Lieutenant Penrose stared for a silent moment, and now the old hatred of everything was back. Then he saluted and wheeled from the room, the door closing hard behind him.

He stood in the night a moment, conscious of the sentry at his side, then paced across the grounds toward Officers' Row. Anger hammered at his mind, and the injustices of his position was gall-bitter to his heart. He heard the sounds of men settling for the night, but he gave no heed. And at his room, he slammed the door and threw himself upon his bed, not bothering to light the lamp.

He had expected this, yet now that it had come, he felt the shock of surprise. Instinctively, he had known his luck could hold only so long; but it had held, and to have it fail was like receiving a physical blow. He swore with harsh strident words at the ceiling, and his clenched hand tightened until tendons ached intolerably.

He knew now that he had reached the end of a life trail; he had come the hard way, and there had been no turning back. He had chosen his manner of life, and his arrogance and strength had bought him more than he should have had. He knew now why he had killed the Indian, and the knowledge was vicious and terrifying. He had shot because the other was the better man, because the Apache had known it. He had goaded the man, and then had cut him down, as though to disprove the very deed he was consummating.

"Dear God!" he whispered, and the words were a question, not a prayer.

An hour passed, and a second, and still he lay on the hot bed. Taps came, incredibly sweet and melancholy, and it was a part of his life he could never forget. Thoughts and memories ran in a circle, and always ended at the blank wall of despair. He knew, now, as he had never understood before, that his career was at an end. Major Brekhard would send him back, along with a full report, and no officer could afford to be broken twice. And again, if investigation went deep enough, he might even be sentenced to a federal prison.

The thought terrified him, and he rolled to a sitting position, decision crystallizing in his mind. He knew now what he must do, and it must be done at once.

He gathered personal belongings, bundling them swiftly. He took only what he absolutely needed, including rifle and pistol. Grimly, he was grateful that he had not been confined to the guardhouse, for escaping from it would have been perhaps too great for accomplishment.

Bundle under his arm, he paused at the door, then snapped his fingers in remembrance. The foot locker made dry scraping sounds; and then he straightened, tucking the diary into his blouse. Satisfied, he slipped from his room and into the shadows of the fort.

He went about the buildings, sneaking now with catlike caution. The moon was up, and he could see the sentries at their post. He wondered if knowledge of his arrest was common knowledge, then shook his head. Officers were a shut-mouth breed; they would keep the secret until formal charges were made.

He came to the stables, and horses shied nervously as he paced behind the stalls. He came to Lady's stall and dropped his bundle into a corner. A wrangler came sleepily through the stable, investigating, then grinned in recognition.

"Another ride, sir?" he said, and Lieutenant Penrose nodded shortly, nerves strangely tight.

"Any place is cooler than the post," he said, striving for indifference.

The trooper nodded, "Any place," he agreed, and turned and went back to his straw bed.

Lieutenant Penrose sighed softly, then saddled with quick competent hands. Lady danced nervously, then quieted, and he cinched the saddle tight. He shoved the rifle home in its scabbard and checked his pistol. Then, strapping the small bundle of belongings behind the saddle, he caught the reins and led the horse out into the night.

Cold sweat was on him now. Any officer, seeing him, would recognize his plans. One cry of alarm, and sentries would cover him with carbines. He forced himself to pace slowly and evenly to the main gate.

"Halt!" the challenge was brisk.

"Lieutenant Penrose," he answered, watching the swinging rifle. "Oh, it's you, Kramer." He forced a short laugh. "Just thought I'd take another night ride. Be back shortly."

The rifle swung up, and the sentry reached for the draw-bar. "Yes, sir," he said woodenly, and Penrose was suddenly glad he had set the pattern of action for this night by his rides of the weeks before.

"Be careful, sir," the sentry said.

"I'll do that," Penrose agreed and swung onto his horse.

And then the gate was open and he was riding through. He went slowly, nerves crawling spiderlike along his spine. One minute, two, and then the gate was closing, and he was free.

He lifted the horse into a light gallop, wanting to crowd the mare, but afraid to test her strength. Many miles lay ahead, and to be afoot on the desert without a mount was to ask for death.

He rode and he did not look back, and the sense of loss in him was suddenly greater than his bitterness. Now indeed had he cut the last tie with his old existence. Now he was a deserter and all men his enemies.

CHAPTER IV

BUSHWHACKER'S BULLET

THE SUN was rising fast, and the fort lay miles behind, and the tension was easing now. This was the broken land, gutted and twisted by the throes of the earth in birth, and Lady picked her way more slowly, shards of razor-sharp

rock clattering underneath her hooves.

Penrose licked his lips, feeling the first barbing shafts of sunlight on his back. Instinctively, his hand touched the two canteens at the saddle; they were the difference between life and death.

He shifted in the saddle, knowing he must rest the horse soon. He hadn't pressed her, yet he could feel the first tiredness coming to her body. Best to rest the mare from time to time, for she might have to run her heart out later. Penrose had no illusions; Major Brekhard would send out a squad, the moment he discovered Penrose had escaped.

His memory tricked him, and almost could he hear the fort's bugler sounding in the morning air. Troopers would be ready now, mounts saddled, waiting for inspection. Order would be coming out of disorder, as two hundred men prepared to march in a show of force to Stinking Wells and then north to Eagle Rock.

Major Brekhard, kepi at his neck, his eyes flint hard, would be pacing the inspection. Men would be ramrod straight, campaign hats the only things not military, and they bent and crushed to each trooper's satisfaction.

The regimental band would be playing "Garryowen," and the scouts would be waiting impatiently. Inspection over, the major would mount, his gaze swinging the line.

"Mount!" the bugle sent its cry, and one hundred men lifted and sat as one.

"Move out!" this was the battle cry, two single words which heralded action in the future.

Lieutenant Penrose swore and fumbled for tobacco and his pipe. Let the army ride out, let it play at hare and hounds with a bunch of dirty stinking savages. That was not his life now; he was apart from it, and never would he return. He wanted none of it; he had chosen his path, and to hell with the strutting and parades and nasty jobs which were the life of every army man.

He lit his pipe and went ahead. To the south lay the *malpais*, the twisted convoluted land where lava had flowed in past aeons. That was his way. Past that lay freedom. Past that was anonymity and a chance to begin again. Yet knowing it was there, and remembering the stories about it, he shivered in the morning heat. Men had died there, alone and unknown, died of thirst and hunger or from gangrene where a rock wound had festered in the fantastic heat. Yet that was his way, and with luck he would make it, for he had water, and Lady was a horse bred to this land.

He blew smoke, then twisted in the saddle, looking back. Nothing moved. He had circled like a coyote, hoping to throw his pursuers. The flinty ground had held little spoor of his passing, and even the dour Red Bull or effervescent Ramirez could do little tracking until daylight showed the way.

He relaxed again, reining the horse into a long shallow arroyo. Smoke was good on his tongue, and he relished it. The sun was fully up, and he winced at its heat. The chill of the night was gone, and hours would pass, infinite heat-swelled hours, until it came again.

"Easy, Lady," he said, as the horse

stumbled, and he reined her into balance again.

The bullet caught him then, hammering at his chest and whipping about the carapace of his ribs and blasting a hole through the heavy muscles below his arm as it emerged. He heard no sound for a second, then echoes waved in. His teeth broke the pipe stem, and he bent sideways, grunting with shock. Then the ground was rushing up, and Lady was dancing away, and the first tide of agony washed over him.

A second shot hammered in, and Lady broke and ran, hooves clattering as she wheeled and sped from the arroyo. The drumming of her hooves was a faint sound to Penrose as he lay on the ground, and then giddiness whirled in his mind, and he fought against the blackness.

He tried to move, and his muscles were jellied with shock. He lay on his side, eyes staring blankly, and rich red blood ran along his arm and dripped from his fingers and puddled momentarily on the sand. Slow air moved in the arroyo, growing hotter.

He wondered how the army had found him. Hazily, his estimation of the army scouts arose. They'd outridden him, circling, and he had ridden squarely into their trap. Strangely, a hint of anger was in his mind that there had been no challenge, no warning.

And then he saw the gunman coming along the far end of the arroyo. He blinked past darkness and pain, focussing his eyes. The man was tall, a white man, and he walked easily, rifle alert in his hand, his horse pacing along behind.

Penrose swallowed. This was no trooper or scout; this was but one of the outriders of the land. His face was bearded, and he walked with the caution of an animal, eyes wary as a wolf's.

The agony was lessening now, dulling in shock, and strength was returning. Penrose drew deep of the hot air, eyes half-shut, watching the ambusher. He didn't know the man, had never seen him before, and yet he recognized him. He was like a thousand in this land, a renegade, the flotsam of a killing way. He shot first and questioned later, and every man was fair game.

He was closer now, dropping the reins and lifting the rifle. He could throw another shot instantly, and would at the slightest provocation. Penrose watched him move in, and now he could feel power seeping back into his muscles.

The ambusher hesitated, as though debating a third shot. Then he came on, and Penrose made his bid for survival.

He gathered his strength, bunched it, and then exploded into action. He screamed at the pain of his wounded side, and the killer's bullet echoed the cry in a banshee wail. Then Penrose had whirled and sat, back against a boulder, and his pistol was at his knees, braced with both hands. He squeezed the trigger again and again, and each shot kicked torture into his wounded side.

The killer tried to fire again; but now bullets walked across his chest and belly, lifting small pouts of dust into the air, driving him back step by step. He cried out, and crimson slid between his lips; and then he was crumpling, rifle clattering aside. He went down slowly, bending and twisting, and his right hand beat a moment at the rocks before it stilled.

PENROSE forced himself to his feet, gun dangling in his hand. He staggered forward, shaking clearness into his head. He stumbled as he moved, and he almost fell as he crouched over the man.

The ambusher was dying; Penrose had seen other men die, and he knew. He made a movement as though to aid the other, and then knew nothing could be done. The man moaned brokenly. Penrose felt a surge of sympathy, even though the other had been an enemy. Despite the beard, the other was but little older than he. And the beard, now that he was close enough to notice, was an attempt to hide the great disfiguring scar left on the outlaw's right cheek, a twisting scar left by a bullet which had ripped his face from mouth to ear.

The man groaned again, opening his eyes and staring unseeingly at Penrose still bending over him.

"Army man!" he said. *"Must be expecting me—gotta get through!"*

"Easy, man," Penrose said, and his gun fell unnoticed as his hand reached up to stifle the bleeding of his own wound.

The man's voice went on, heedlessly, rambling, disjointed, only a few words coming through.

"He'll warn them—Eagle Rock's a trap—Biggest plan, can't fail now . . . Gotta get him!"

The outlaw was dead then, his words fading into nothingness, slackness stilling his hard body.

Penrose still squatted, senses dulled for the moment. He licked dry lips, wondering what had happened. Thoughts came slow and hard. Then sense returned, and he retrieved his revolver and holstered it and slowly came erect.

Pain struck. He whirled, searching for Lady; but the mare was gone. He swore in a slow hard rhythm. Then he saw the outlaw's horse, and he stumbled toward it, stalking, knowing it was the balance between life and death for him.

It shied at the smell of blood; but the reins were ground-hitched, and he caught it at last, hanging onto the saddle and breathing in great shuddering gulps. Faintness ebbed and surged; and then at last strength returned, and he straightened in the hot sunlight.

He tied the reins to his belt, then stripped away his blouse and examined his bullet wound. It throbbed with growing fever, and he made a crude bandage with his yellow bandanna and tied it in place with knotted strips from the tail of his blouse. Blood was clotting and the bandage would help. Yet he knew that, without treatment by a surgeon, he might die from blood poisoning.

He replaced his blouse and stood beside the horse, examining the canteen and small pack. The canteen was almost full and jerky was in the pack, that and a handful of parched corn. He could make out.

He climbed into the saddle, feeling the heated leather on his thighs. The gunman lay where he had fallen; he'd lie there for all eternity or until the coyotes or buzzards discovered him.

Penrose turned the horse, going slowly, not wanting to open his wound again. The black moved slowly, and he could sense its tiredness. They went along the arroyo floor and then up the shelf and onto the level. Turning, Penrose could see Lady now, still running. He'd never catch her, even if he had the time to spare.

He sent the horse ahead, biting his lip against the jolting pain in his side and back. His free hand was at the pommel, and his knuckles were white. Dimly, he wondered how long he would last.

To the south lay freedom; he knew that, and yet he could not turn the horse that way. Miles of hellish country lay there, waiting, a trap for him. A well man would have a tough time getting through, and he was far from well, the first waves of growing fever washing into his mind.

To the west lay the mountains, purple in the sunlight, an unknown quantity. He had watched them for days, and yet he knew nothing of what lay among them. Indians were there, and water and game; yet he turned his head away, for no medical aid was there, and that was what he needed.

He could go back; he could return the way he had come, but fear held him. To the northwest was Stinking Wells and Major Brekhard, and somehow surrendering to the major was not as terrible to his mind as to ride ignominiously back to the fort.

He tried to estimate and evaluate the situation, and panic beat at his mind. Death was to the south and west, and he was afraid of death. He could feel the burning pain of his side, and he knew he could not fight the desert for long. It was better to return and surrender to the major, or take his chances with a court-martial than to die alone in the desert.

He laughed aloud in mockery and despair. He had run like a whipped dog, had sneaked away into the night. He had thought to reach Mexico and start again. And now a bushwhacker's bullet had changed all of his plans. In any other place, in any other land, he could have ridden on, knowing he might have a chance. But here, at the end of nowhere, his only chance at survival lay in giving himself up as a prisoner to the man who had condemned him.

He swung the horse about and sent it ahead. He followed the line of mountains, going to the northwest and Stinking Wells and a rendezvous with prison.

He felt no shame, no passion, nothing. It was life or death, and he chose life. This way, he had a chance. He might beat any charges placed against him, for they would be made by men and he had beaten men before. But to fight the desert in his condition was unthinkable. And so he made his decision and rode back to the life he had forsworn a scant ten hours before.

THE ride had a beginning. He knew that; and yet when his mind tried to reach out and grasp memory, all remembrance pulsed away in a haze of nothingness. He remembered the rolling movement of the black and the *plock-plockety plock* of its hooves on the ground. His side ached abominably, and his body sweated and dried and sweated some more, until he could feel the marrow frying out of his bones.

Heat burgeoned, growing by the hour. The land was a bowl concentrating all heat within its cup, and he was at the center. Cholla, spiney and alien, lifted from earth cracks, and once a Joshua tree came out of nowhere, menacing and terrible, warning him back with scabrous arms.

The mountains came close, then rushed away, and he rode in a cocoon of emptiness where there was only heat and no sound. Fever grew, burning, and he fought against it, swearing terribly and reaching for the canteen.

He lost all sense of time and direction, yet when the horse tried to turn its head, he fought the reins with cold fury. Songs came to his throat, melodies he had not heard in years. He was a boy again and fiddles were playing, and the music swelled in his head until he thought it would burst.

He cried out against the fever and the pain, and everything was a rushing torrent of sound, without meaning, without direction. He saw a girl, and he turned away, why, he could not say; it was only that he did.

And there were the mountains, cool and dim and shadowed. Water leaped down a stony trough, and he caught fish with bare hands, iciness lapping about his ankles, his belly lean with hunger, a shock of heavy hair dangling in his eyes.

He was a boy again, and a youth, and a man. He went backward through life and then forward again, searching for something. It was like a shadow of movement always at the corner of his eyes; yet when he whirled, hands outstretched to grasp, there was nothing.

He was on the ground, and he could not remember falling. He pawed to his feet, and the reins were tied to his wrist so that the black could not run away. His hand pulled his body into the saddle again, and the ride went on, interminably, without cease.

Somewhere, sometime, the canteen went dry, and he sucked at its hot mouth with dry lips and found only air. Swearing, he dropped it, and it swung from the pommel on its cord, dangling and clattering dully.

After that the world was a hell of torment and longing and desire.

Fever burned. He could not sweat now, and his body seemed to shrink within itself like a sun-seared apple. The horse staggered and he beat it into motion with his pistol. It squealed in pain, but the strength and will to fight were gone. It went onward, head dropping.

Water appeared, cool and lapping and utterly blue. He kicked the horse, urging it toward the lake. But the horse could not see the mirage, and so it limped along, barely moving now. He cursed and swore and then sobbed, as the water vanished into restless yellow sand where only heat waves shimmered in mockery.

He kept the mountains on his left, instinctively, for his mind could not hold a thought for long. His arm was useless now, for the swelling of his side had locked the shoulder joint. Fever raged, but, mercifully, the pain was almost gone now.

He searched for cactus, barrel cactus, thinking to chew the water from its pulp, but now there was only sand and barrenness. Nothing stirred, not even a breeze. He remembered stories of mummies found in the desert, mummies which had been men and animals until the heat had baked and dried and left them as mockeries to the men who found them. The thought terrified, yet even terror had lost its cutting edge.

The sun crawled upward in the sky,

bruising the land with its heat. It was copper and white-hot, and there was no shade. There was no water, and he could find no saliva to soften the jerky, and anyway the meat was too salty for his mouth. He tried to suck a cartridge for relief, and his tongue was swollen so that he could not hold the shell in his mouth without pain.

The hours passed, and he lost track of them. His identity was gone, and he rode without knowing, making animal sounds against the fever. He fell from the saddle again, and white blisters rose on his palms where he touched rocks to prop himself erect.

The horse sagged beneath his weight, but he kicked it into motion again. The minutes ran one into another in a blaze of heat. Fever ran into his neck, and his lips cracked, and the cracks cracked, and dryness and dust coated the red of the flesh.

He knew he was dying, in a lucid moment, and strangely he did not care. No man could take more than he had and still want to live. He was lost in a barren wasteland, and there was no horizon of hope anywhere.

The sun moved down, and now the horse was finished. It dropped, eyes glazing, neck outstretched, belly heaving. He struggled to his feet beside it and tore the reins from his wrist by jerking backward. Dim pity moved him, and he emptied the last of his bullets into the beast's head.

Then he staggered on, mountains still to his left. His boots slipped in the sand, and he fell time and again, but always he staggered up and took another step.

NIGHT came. One moment the sunlight was there, and the next there was darkness. He went on, no blinder now than before. Sun blisters were on his face and neck, and he had lost his hat. His boots chafed, and the stiffness of his side threw him off balance.

He thought he saw riders in the night, and his throat made croaking noises heard only by himself. Moonlight tricked him into believing he saw campfires, and he broke into a shambling run.

He fell at last, and he lay without moving, too exhausted to stand again. His eyes stared blankly at the rising moon, and he wondered why death had not sought him out.

"Why should it, Bob?" Captain Edmonds said then. He was squatting at one side, his shadow face without expression, moonlight passing through his body and marking the rock behind. "Why should you die fast, Bob, when some of your men died so slowly?"

"Dear God, no, not now, not here!" Penrose's mind whispered.

"Why not now, and why not here?" Captain Edmonds asked quietly, mockingly. "Why should you be afraid to talk to me? You weren't afraid of me when we were friends."

"No, no, no!" Penrose screamed, and the sound was a whisper.

"We were friends, weren't we, Bob? That is until the night you shot me to death. Remember, Bob, we were talking, and I swore I'd charge you with cowardice. You shot me to death then, shot me as I sat facing you. Was it because you were afraid?"

"Not like that, Edmonds, not like that. Dear God, not like that! You were reaching for your gun when I fired."

Captain Edmonds lit a shadow pipe with a shadow match that held a shadow flame. He shrugged.

"All right, then you were justified, in a way. I won't argue with you, for that isn't necessary. I'm dead and you're dying. I went fast and you're dying slowly. But it's your expiation, Bob, it's the price you pay for what you did." The figure was dimming now. "Die slowly, Bob, for you've a long time ahead in which to make your full payment."

Captain Edmonds was gone then, and the desert was still, and Penrose was alone. He watched the spot where Edmonds had sat, but now the moonlight was there, and the only shadows were from the jumble of rocks protruding from the sand.

He wanted to cry out, to explain again, to talk, to share his terror with the shade. But he was alone, and the first chill of night was coming, and he rolled to his back and stared, unseeing, at the stars in the sky.

Sleep came, the utter collapse of exhaustion. He lay without movement, but the muttering of delirium was on his parched lips. Cold followed the slight chill, as heat dissipated for the night.

Hours ran by, the moon wheeling overhead in its arc. It was round and full, and the man on its face smiled at the earth from shadowy eyes. The moon began its downward trip, seeking the mountain tops, and false dawn came slowly.

Penrose woke, and he lay unthinking for a moment. His eyes stared at the sky, and he tried to swallow with a swollen throat. Then memory flooded back, and he sat, wincing at the pain in his body.

Strangely, he felt a coolness, and it did not come from the night. Wonderingly, he touched his side with stiff fingers, and the flesh was normal now, the fever having run its course. Pain was still there, and would be for some time, but the agony of fever was gone.

He staggered to his feet, conscious of weakness. Thirst was in him, dull and aching and endless. He shook at the thought of water. Then another thought intruded, and he began his trek again.

He ran, falling and rising and plunging forward, in one last desperate effort to reach the column.

Major Brekhard and the army were ahead. They would have water and food and medical attention. He laughed at the thought, until the ache was too great for his throat. He would beat the desert yet; he would win. He had lost his gamble for freedom, but he would win his throw with death.

He chuckled and went ahead.

There was no speed in him now; there was only the will and the urge and the horrible nagging thirst against which he could not fight. His boots made drag-marks in the sand like those left by a gila monster's tail. His strength was false, and he fell and lay supinely for minutes before staggering erect again.

He plunged forward, and the new sun came completely out, driving away the last of the night's chill. He could smell the water by now, the decayed-egg odor of the water at Stinking Wells. For centuries it had oozed slowly through the rock and sand to run for a hundred yards, puddling, before disappearing forever into the earth again. It lay close to the base of the mountains, and he had been there before; but then, he had always been on horseback, his canteens full, and he could ignore the stinking water, knowing it for what it was.

But now, rotten as the odor was, it thrilled him, exciting his senses, and he broke into a shambling run. A slight breeze had risen, and dust lifted and eddied where his boots spurned the sand. Ahead was Major Brekhard and the army and new life.

He topped the ridge, gasping, unconscious, of the pain of his swollen face, peering through slitted eyes at the encampment. This was the place, the rendezvous, and as he topped the dune, he croaked a cry which he hoped some trooper would hear.

And a sob broke in his dry throat. Sand was there, churned by the milling of hundreds of boots and hooves. Charred dead embers marked the places where fires had been laid. Far ahead, rising in the air, was the dust of the vanishing column.

Penrose screamed, and the sound was a frog's croak. Faintness stirred in him, and blind panic ate at his sanity. He ran, falling and rising and plunging forward, in one last desperate effort to reach the column. Then even the dust was dissipating, and he knew he could never catch the blue-clad men who rode ahead to Eagle Rock.

HE STUMBLED and fell and lay against the hot sand, dry sobs racking his body. Sand flies settled, and he twisted beneath the torment of their acid bites. He rolled to a sitting position, and he knew now that he had lost.

The army was gone, and he could never hope to catch it, not without water in his belly and in a canteen. And even then it would be a gamble. He even needed water just to reach the cool mountains.

He swore against his destiny and scrambled on hands and knees, circling a dead fire, searching. A prayer moved in him, the first he could remember, and his hand turned a stone, and the stone was a worn canteen dropped and forgotten by some careless trooper.

He gasped and gagged and fumbled at the stopper; and when it came free, he sucked at the hot stale water. A cupfull there was, no more, and some ran down his chin and dripped on his chest. He drank past his swollen tongue, making animal sounds, and his blistered face cooled, and sanity came to his eyes. And when the water was gone, he sat back, and his breathing was ragged.

This was salvation; this was a reprieve. He might make it yet to the mountains with their food and water and a chance at living. But he must hurry; he must make his bid for life, before the desert sprang its final effort and trapped him forever.

He savored the thought, half-caught in madness, and laughter bubbled to his throat.

And then all laughter stilled.

He was remembering, and the memories caught at his mind. *"Army . . . Expecting us . . . Gotta get through."*

Somebody had said that.

Captain Edmonds? No, he spoke of other things, terrible things.

"He'll warn— Eagle Rock's a trap . . . I'll—"

Somebody had said that, too.

Who? Dear God, who had said those words?

They echoed in his mind, reverberating, and he shook his head dazedly. Army and Eagle Rock and trap! They came together and coalesced, and an answer emerged, hideous and terrifying, and he tried not to believe.

But he had to believe. The water had melted the dam across his thoughts; and with it gone, he could think rationally for a moment. He knew what the words meant, and he knew he was the only one who could give the warning.

Eagle Rock was a trap. Claytrill and Black Hawk had planned it that way. Hawk's men were there, and perhaps those of Claytrill's band, and the troops were riding into something too big for them to handle.

Penrose laughed, and now he was on his feet, canteen dangling unnoticed from his hand. He limped past the camp site, and now he faced the mountians and safety.

A trap. By the Gods, this was a gargantuan jest which only he could appreciate. Major Brekhard and the troops would die, for the Apache were utterly ruthless in victory. They would die and he would be safe, for a dead major could not prefer charges.

Major Brekhard would be gone, and Captain Jurgens and Lieutenant Campbell and a hundred others. This would be a massacre, a disaster, and if any escaped, it would be a miracle.

Penrose laughed, and the sound moved toward the brazen sun. He could warn them; he held their lives in his hands. He could race after them and tell them what was planned. He might be wrong, but he knew he was not; and satanic amusement moved in him.

This was irony at its most horrible peak. That he, an escaped prisoner, due for a court-martial, should be the only one who could save the troops, was a thing far beyond belief.

He rocked in indecision. Ahead were the mountains, so close he could, it seemed, reach out and touch them with his fingertips. Ahead lay life and safety and a new existence.

He turned, and there was the desert, still waiting patiently. He had defeated it; he had won against its murderous appetite; and the thought of returning to it was frightening.

His gaze lifted, and now he could see the tag end of a column going north. Miles away, it was, but there was a chance he might find it in time.

He fought his battle, fought it well. He lived and died a thousand times in a brief flash of eternity. Then he laughed aloud, and he scrambled down the heated rocks, stumbling toward the cool water. He fell on his belly, and his hands splashed water over his head and shoulders. His mouth made sucking noises, and he strangled on the water and for a time was violently sick.

He lay and drank, and strength came back. He rolled into the water, and it seemed his body drew in liquid coolness like a sponge. He gorged himself on water, and relief came. Bubbles whirled upward from his hand-sunken canteen, and he laughed. He rested five minutes, no more, then drank until his belly was tight against his belt. He splashed water, then came onto the dry land.

His decision was made, and he followed it, and to hell with all which had gone before.

The water stank and he from it, but he would live now—for a time. His boots made tracks on the rocks, and his clothes were soggy to his body. But he was cool, and his belly and canteen were full, and he could perhaps last the miles ahead. His eyes laughed in his blistered swollen face, and he went past the sign the army had placed at the wells, sunfaded now, but still legible to men who ventured across the desert and found its coolness.

He climbed the ridge and stood for a moment in the sunlight. Then, because he knew his strength and time might run out before he did what must be done, he went ahead, walking steadily, a sense of peace stilling the restlessness in his soul.

CHAPTER V

THE PATIENT LAND

THE army knows no individual. It is a body composed of a thousand parts, and each is an entity only to itself, for to the whole it is but an arm, an extension, which must be used in a proper way. Men are not men as such, but figures upon

a battle map, pawns to be moved in a chess game where the loser wins in death.

Major Brekhard knew that, as he had learned many things. Fighting was his business, his trade, and he was a craftsman forged of cannons' bellowing and rifles' cracking roars. His hair was almost white, but his body was young, and sometimes he sat by himself and wondered at the stupidity and cruelty of man to man. Not that he received an answer; but at least he thought, and some men are born and live and die without bothering to think, letting others do that.

And now the major sat in his tent, and Eagle Rock was only a few miles away. Indians were there, and white men, five hundred of them in all, and he had but one hundred troops.

Runners had gone back, asking for reinforcements, and they would come, and then a decision would be made. And in the major, then, knowledge grew that only one decision could arise. There would be no battle, perhaps not even a skirmish.

He had thought to strike at night, for Indians do not like night fighting. He had camped, and the men had eaten a cold supper, rifles stacked neatly close at hand. The officers had gathered in the major's tent, huddling over a map, while he told them of his plans.

"Encirclement, using the threat of a crossfire," he had said. "We don't want trouble, and maybe we can make a threat stick. Anyway—"

The cry had come then from a sentry, and the major and his men had stepped into the waning sunlight to see what had caused the disturbance. They had seen, and they had not believed for a moment.

Penrose was a scarecrow, more of an animal than a man. His right boot was a flopping piece of leather, and blood marked every step. His blouse was gone, and his skin was burned crimson, blistered thumb-high everywhere. He had come across the sand, and his voice was a croaking whisper which carried neither words nor sense.

Troopers had rushed to his aid, but in his sun-madness he had brushed them aside. His face was so swollen he could barely see, yet he came as straight as he could to the major, and his puffed right hand lifted in a salute which ended at his chest.

"Water, get water," the major snapped.

They gave Penrose water, and the surgeon tried to ease him. He stood the pain and let the water trickle into him, and slowly sense came to his mouth. He told of the trap, of what he knew. It was little, but it was enough, and seconds later more scouts moved out to confirm what conditions really were. They found the hidden Apaches and whites, found them waiting several miles away.

Penrose talked, lying on a pallet thrown together in the major's tent. And when he was through, he asked to be alone with the major, and Brekhard sent the others out.

Remembering now, the major shivered. Penrose had said his few words in his cracked voice, and his hand had fumbled a battered water-stained book from beneath his belt. His voice had failed him then, but his eyes had sent their plea to the officer.

The diary lay now before Major Brekhard, and he moved it with his finger. Outside, the moon was full-risen and the camp was settling for the night. This was stalemate in a way, for neither the army nor the Apache could move against the other without orders. But Major Brekhard could afford to wait, and Claytrill was gone for the time.

He lifted the battered diary and pages flipped in the lamplight. He looked, without reading, then glanced up as an orderly came to the tent flap.

"Sir," the orderly said, "Captain Jurgens sends his compliments and wishes you to know that two scouts captured an Indian. The Apache says that Claytrill is expected any time, that he is riding up from Mexico where he has been recruiting more whites for his gang."

Major Brekhard nodded as though to himself. "And did the captain obtain a description of Claytrill?"

"Yes, sir. The Apache says Claytrill has grown a beard to hide his face, a full black beard."

"Beard?"

"Yes, sir. Claytrill was shot in the face about a year ago, and his right cheek is puckered."

Major Brekhard pursed hard lips.

"That should simplify it," he said. "My compliments to Captain Jurgens and tell him to send out three squads to intercept Claytrill."

His gaze went to the diary again, then came up as the orderly waited.

"Well?" he said impatiently.

"Captain Jurgens wishes to know when burial is to be for Lieutenant Penrose?"

"Sunup," Major Brekhard snapped.

"Yes, sir!" The orderly disappeared.

ALONE again, the major turned the diary in heavy fingers, then opened it and, holding it by the back-bent covers, lifted it over the lamp. Flames caught, and the paper rustled and curled and turned black and was destroyed. Answers were here, many answers, and yet the major could not read them. He had given a silent oath to a dying man, and his word was a thing without dimensions.

He held the diary by its covers until the flames had almost reached his hand. Then he dropped it to the ground and watched the last of Penrose's secret thoughts and hopes and fears and ambitions flare away. Reaching, he caught up a battered canteen and emptied its contents over the last of the flames and blackened ash. Steam hissed, and the smell of sulphur water was in the tent, smelling like the rottenest of eggs.

Major Brekhard shivered, then laid the canteen aside. It was the one carried by Penrose, and it had served its purpose, for it had brought the man across miles of sun-white desert.

Then the major caught up his quill and inked it and began his entry in his field journal.

"Recommended for the Medal of Honor of the Congress of the United States," he wrote. "Lieutenant Robert William Penrose, for valor above and beyond—"

He stopped to light a cigar, and his eyes saw the ruined diary and the water spot on the ground. A shiver touched him, and he wondered what it must be like to reach such a decision as Penrose had made.

For the water was poisonous, of course, like most water on the desert. It would sustain life for a time, not a great length of time; but in the end it was always fatal. And yet Penrose had drunk it, sating himself, gathering strength so that he might make a final run with his message for the army.

"Peace!" Major Brekhard whispered, and was glad he had ordered the grave to be dug facing the purple mountains to the west.

He wished that Penrose hadn't lost his mind at the last, not recognizing him. It was a terrible thing that the young man should stare into infinity and smile and reach out as though to shake hands with a ghost.

And his words! *"Sure, Edmonds, sure, I'll take your hand now,"* he'd said. And then he had died, still smiling, still talking to someone who wasn't there.

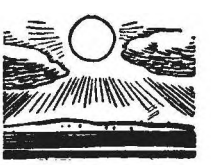
Major Brekhard sighed and dipped his quill again. The quill squeaked and words came and Lieutenant Penrose lived in death with the immortals.

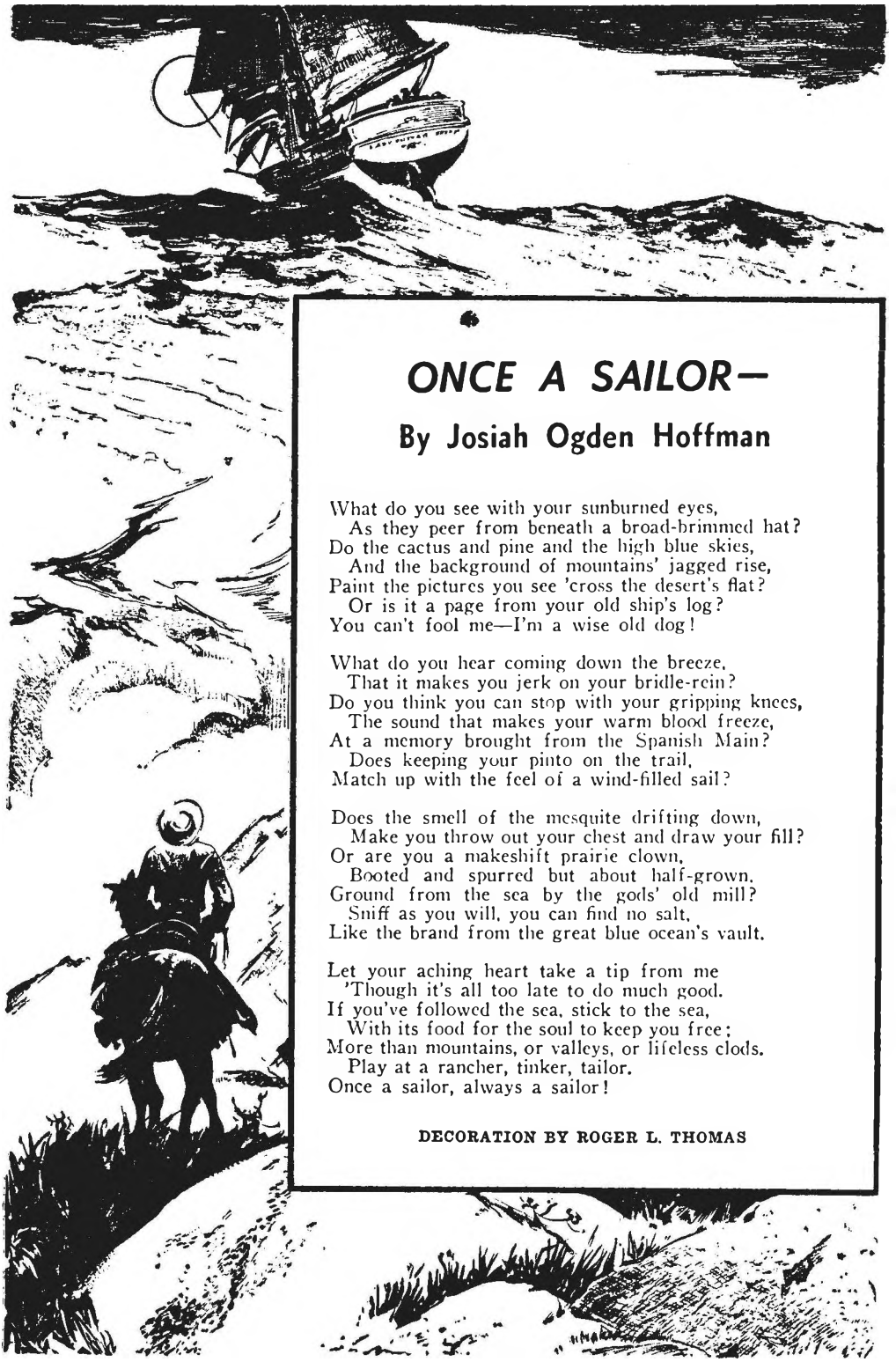
And outside, the desert waited. It was patient. It misjudged some, but it would find others. Some would measure up to a code which was steel-hard and enduring, and others would fall and pass and the world would neither know nor care.

Taps came, sweet and melancholy, and fires grew dim and vanished. Sentries paced their posts, and silence came. A faint breeze sprang up, and the night's chill slowly replaced the heat of day.

The desert had won and lost this day; but it would wait, as it had throughout eternity. It would wait and men would grow and their dreams would spread; and some day there would be a time when dreams would become reality.

And toward that day Lieutenant Penrose and Captain Edmonds and countless millions of others would march. And on that day their feet would stop and peace would come for all.





ONCE A SAILOR—

By Josiah Ogden Hoffman

What do you see with your sunburned eyes,
  As they peer from beneath a broad-brimmed hat?
Do the cactus and pine and the high blue skies,
  And the background of mountains' jagged rise,
Paint the pictures you see 'cross the desert's flat?
  Or is it a page from your old ship's log?
You can't fool me—I'm a wise old dog!

What do you hear coming down the breeze,
  That it makes you jerk on your bridle-rein?
Do you think you can stop with your gripping knees,
  The sound that makes your warm blood freeze,
At a memory brought from the Spanish Main?
  Does keeping your pinto on the trail,
Match up with the feel of a wind-filled sail?

Does the smell of the mesquite drifting down,
  Make you throw out your chest and draw your fill?
Or are you a makeshift prairie clown,
  Booted and spurred but about half-grown,
Ground from the sea by the gods' old mill?
  Sniff as you will, you can find no salt,
Like the brand from the great blue ocean's vault.

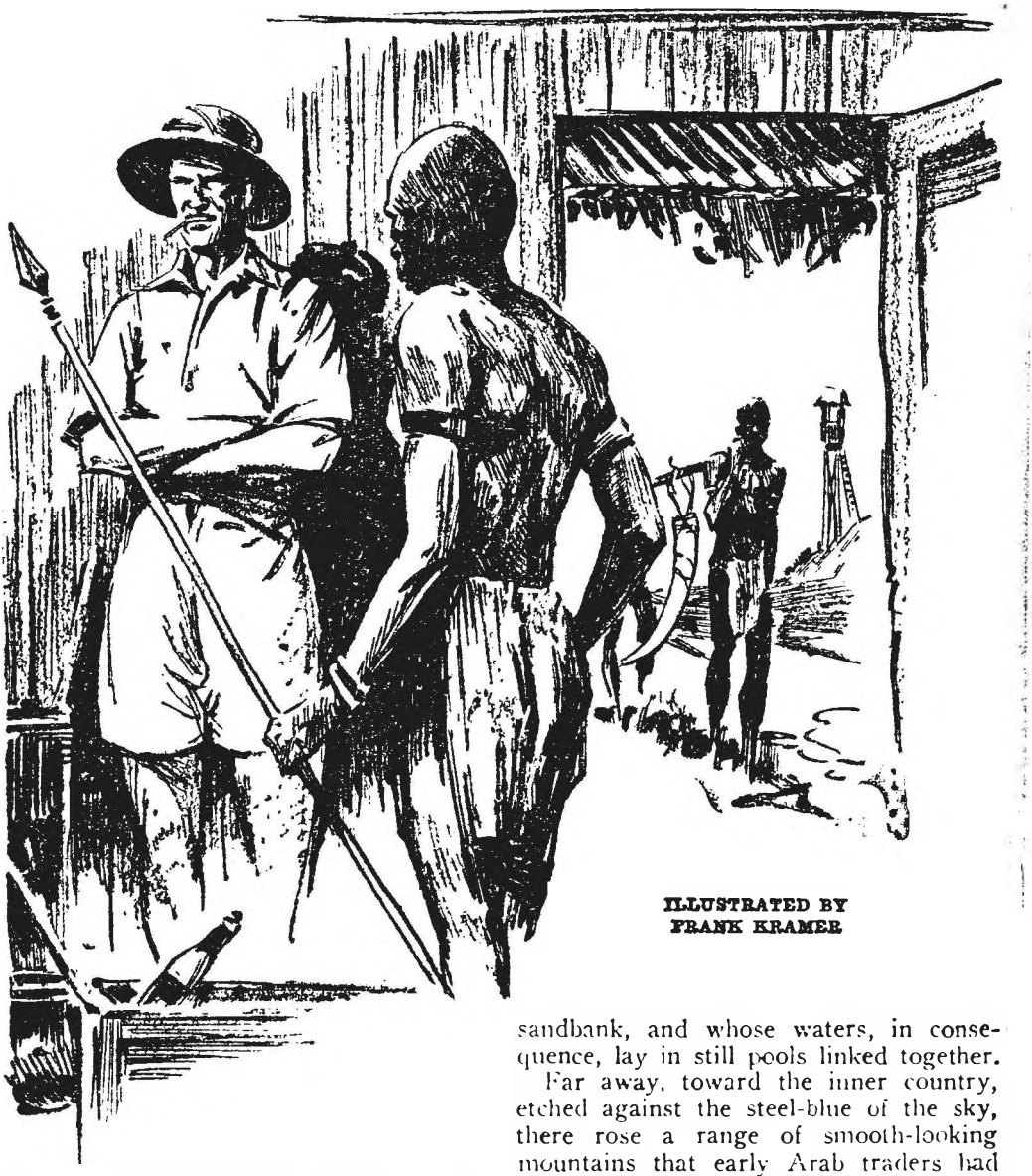
Let your aching heart take a tip from me
  'Though it's all too late to do much good.
If you've followed the sea, stick to the sea,
  With its food for the soul to keep you free;
More than mountains, or valleys, or lifeless clods.
  Play at a rancher, tinker, tailor.
Once a sailor, always a sailor!

DECORATION BY ROGER L. THOMAS

By ALEXANDER WALLACE

Kabenga was no man's fool, and much rum and half the day were spent before old Duncan could fix the rate of barter.

DEAD MAN'S TRADE



ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK KRAMER

OLD DUNCAN'S factory, or trading station, occupied a flat-topped cape on the southeast coast of Africa. The point was a prominence visible far out to sea, and from it the shore-line fell away in great, curved, sandy beaches fringed with heavy surf and backed by a vast, grassy plain.

There was not another house in view, nor any other sign of man, for the scattered native villages were hidden in the long grass, or further inland in the great forests. Through the plain there stretched a river whose mouth was closed by a sandbank, and whose waters, in consequence, lay in still pools linked together.

Far away, toward the inner country, etched against the steel-blue of the sky, there rose a range of smooth-looking mountains that early Arab traders had called *El Mulattam*, The Lashed, or The Beaten, and beyond which few Europeans had penetrated.

As yet, only on the sea coast and in the mouths of rivers were his factories placed, few between and solitary.

The low-roofed bungalow of the factory, the watchtower with its slender flagstaff, and the Krooboys' bee-hive huts faced the sea; and a strong stockade, reaching from cliff to cliff, protected all from the depredations of man and beast.

The strong sun of late afternoon poured down on the bare top of the point and on

the exposed bungalow, on the veranda of which the two white traders lounged.

The one was a tall, stooping, loose-shouldered man of perhaps fifty-five. His big, angular frame was squeezed by years of poor living. His beard, at one time fair, was streaked with gray. He had the ugliness and charm of a bull-dog. His clear, blue eyes looked straight out of his face and held an expression of kindness, even softness of heart.

The other man was not more than thirty. He lay far back on a canvas chair with his chin on his chest and his hands clasped behind his head. He gazed sulkily at the veranda floor while the other lurched to and fro along it. Presently, the younger man lifted his face and shifted his gaze to the ocean. There was cunning shown in his keen eyes and cruelty in his square chin and thin lips. Yet it was a good-looking face with its dark, regular features, and Hugh Weston's manner was such that he could usually win confidence with it when he chose.

He had won the old man's confidence, and Duncan was the shrewdest and most successful independent trader on the coast. He liked the lad, as he called him. He was much taken by Weston's education and ability, which was real and showed on the surface. Moreover, the old man, though he had been so long on the coast, and had become so accustomed to his life that he could not have lived comfortably elsewhere, had grown weary of his solitude and had sent home for an assistant—more out of the need for the company of his own kind than out of need for help in the management of his factory.

"THIS is the most God-forsaken country that ever was!" Weston said with sudden vehemence. "A man might as well be drowned in that sea out there!"

Wise in the ways of exile, old Duncan paid no attention to the outburst. For a time he continued to swing himself along the veranda, then paused to say kindly, "You'll get used to it, lad. Don't growl. Look at me, I've lived for ten years, all alone with these natives."

"It's not for me!" Weston sprang to his feet. "I believe I'd have shot myself. Did you *never* tire of it?"

"Yes, and I sent home for someone to come out and help me. By good luck they sent me you, lad."

"I'd have sent for a woman," said Weston with an audible sigh.

"A woman? Marry her—a wife?"

Weston's smile was faintly contemptuous. Secretly he despised the old man. And how such a man, honest, almost illiterate, had amassed a small fortune was quite beyond his understanding.

"Hum—yes," he said. "In your case, I suppose it would be marriage."

"Well, I did once think of it," dropped slowly from the old man's lips.

Weston looked at him surprised, and old Duncan's face broke into a shy grin.

"Why, lad, I'm not that old! I've thought of it. I've dreamed of it, but I've never seen how I could put it into shape. First, because of the place here; second, because I haven't seen a white woman in ten years. It's true," he muttered, dropping his voice. "Ten years!"

"Shy of 'em, eh?" said Weston with a dry chuckle. "Well, why don't you go home, get used to 'em, then choose a girl? I could name a dozen that would jump at the chance."

"And leave her in England? No. But I'll tell you something, lad. I've had it in mind to go home and leave you in charge here. You're quick and clever. You've picked up more Swahili in three months than I have in ten years. The natives don't like you as well as they might, but they can't cheat you. Nothing is settled yet, mind that. I don't know that I want to see the old country again. Maybe I'm too old to want any company but yours, my lad."

So saying, he resumed his walk along the veranda.

Weston looked after him, disturbed by what he had said. It was pleasant to think that he might have a free hand before long. It was an opportunity that most young men would have grasped firmly. But he felt that he was wasting his time here with nothing but the sea, the land and the bright sky around him. The restlessness of his temperament was upon him, he yearned for the excitement of the great cities with money in his pocket.

Old Duncan stopped suddenly in his walk as he caught sight of a Negro, the

Swahili headman of the factory, striding across the compound. As he came near the headman gave a shout and, running up to the veranda, salaamed vigorously with clasped hands. His black face was full of excitement.

"Well, Juma Saleh, what is it?" asked old Duncan as the Negro fetched his breath.

"Oh, master, Big Master, safari live for come! Plenty teeth—big teeth!" He stretched out his arms to indicate the size of the tusks. "Kabenga live for come!"

"Kabenga—that old devil, at last!" exclaimed old Duncan, his trader's instinct alive. "And big teeth, hey? You make no mistake, Juma?"

"Drum talk, no mistake, Big Master. Oh, plenty teeth live for come—two, three days. I say Kabenga!" He shouted the name in his excitement.

"Good, good!" said old Duncan and, beckoning the headman on the veranda, patted him on the velvet-like skin of his well-fleshed shoulder. "Ho, boy!" he shouted. "Bring Juma a *matabicho.*"

"I come quickly with good words, master," murmured Juma as he caught sight of a native boy coming out of the bungalow with a bottle of gin and a small tumbler in his tawny hands. The house-boy poured out a brimmer for Juma, who drained it at once and gave a gasp and a sigh of satisfaction as the liquor gurgled down his throat. Then, knowing that his presence was no longer desired, he gathered his loose robe of flimsy, cotton-print, threw the end of it over his shoulder and went away.

"What's all the fuss? Who's this Kabenga?" asked Weston.

"Oh, he's king of the Luanza back of the mountains there. Haven't heard from him for years—maybe three. Ha, we'll have cargo for the *Cabo Delgado* this trip, my lad! And a word of warning, lad. Kabenga's got a bad name. He's Zulu stock, and you can't treat him like a coast native. Keep that in mind."

BY THIS time the sun had set, and the shadow of the mountains was creeping across the veldt. The two white men went into their dinner, which consisted of the inevitable palm-oil chop, enlivened by the cognac that old Duncan always took with his coffee. When the meal was over the day was at an end.

Hollow murmurs rose from the wide stretch of open bay. The glimmering waves showed themselves as they flashed out of the darkness and broke over the bar. For a time the lights of the factory, solitary specks on that long stretch of coast, twinkled high up on the cliff and then went out.

The following day was Sunday, and the two traders were spending their time as each pleased. Old Duncan lay in a hammock slung from the roof of the veranda, his face shaded by his broad-brimmed hat. He appeared to be sleeping, hushed by the ceaseless sound of the surf. But he was awake, and his thoughts were not of the safari, not of the many tusks of ivory, but of that of which Weston had spoken.

He had been dreaming, the old man, and he had yet at the back of his mind the hazy recollection of the face of a woman —or maybe it was an ideal face. He wasn't

sure. He only knew that he'd seen it in his dreams of the night before. It was pleasant to him, and he lay still in the hope that the vision might come again.

Weston sat in the darkened main room of the bungalow into which the outer doorway directly opened. Before him was his open sea-chest, the contents of which he was turning out to the air. He shook out a heavy coat which he had not worn since he had come to the coast and, thinking that he might trade it for something on his own account, he started to turn out the pockets. With a whistle of surprise he drew out the large-sized photograph of a woman. As often as he'd unpacked the chest before, he had never come across it, and he guessed that it had been put into the pocket with the design for him to find it there. It was just the sort of thing she'd do, always so damnably possessive. With a contemptuous smile he tossed the photograph onto the heap of clothes without a second glance at the face depicted on it.

Yet it was a face to hold a man's eye—a calendar sort of face with large eyes wistfully smiling. The half-figure of the girl was neatly and plainly dressed in black, and the little head with its cluster of curls showed daintly against the background of the photograph which, not having been exposed, retained its freshness.

Weston re-packed his chest. He was about to throw the photograph in when he was startled by a large hand falling on his shoulder. Looking up, he saw old Duncan standing behind him.

"Let me see that," said the old man quickly.

Weston handed it to him with a slight frown. Old Duncan took it between both palms, and there was infinite surprise and wonder in his look. He couldn't believe what his eyes showed him. It was the face he'd dreamed of. It *was* it! He strove to recall every detail of the face, and his memory confirmed the resemblance. Yet he couldn't tell when or where he'd seen a face like it. But then, the days when he'd seen white women were far off and shadowy.

"What's the matter?" asked Weston, and at the sound of his voice the old man started.

"Who is she?" he demanded.

For a space Weston did not reply. He was anything but pleased with himself for allowing the old man to see the photograph.

At last he said slowly, "It's my sister," and held out his hand.

But old Duncan did not relinquish the photograph. Instead he moved around in front of Weston where he could have a good look at his face, and bade him hold his head up. This was more than Weston had bargained for, and faint color came to his cheeks. Old Duncan took a steady look at him and said, "I wouldn't have known you for brother and sister."

"No, we were never considered alike. Freda was a beauty."

"Was!" exclaimed the old man. *"Is!* She is very young," he went on, studying the photograph. "But her face is sad. Has she known trouble?"

"Hm-m-m, yes."

"She ought not to have known any."

"Ah, but can we help that?" Weston held out his hand for the photograph. Old Duncan drew it away.

"I hope you are good to her," he said.

Weston was startled. "Oh, I—I do my best. But I've not been lucky, you know."

"She deserves better than to be thrown among your old rags, my lad," old Duncan returned. "You'd better let me keep it." Without waiting for an answer he coolly took the photograph away with him into his bedroom. Weston's eyes followed him with a look of perplexed wonderment, but he said nothing.

DURING THE rest of that Sunday old Duncan was strangely silent. The safari of ivory, which at one time would have occupied his talk, he hardly spoke about. Once, when passing through the bungalow, Weston saw the old man, through the half-open door of his room, gazing earnestly at the photograph. Could it be that the old fool was taking a fancy to Freda's likeness? At the thought a scowl came over Weston's face.

Early on the following morning old Duncan came to him on the veranda, and spoke his mind.

"Look here, Weston, your sister—is she married?"

"No," Weston answered carefully. "She is not married."

A look of unmistakable relief came over the old man's face. "D'you think," he said, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "d'you think she'd marry me? You said she's known trouble," he went on quickly. "You say you've been unlucky—unable to do right by her. I take it she's not so comfortable that she'd not think of coming out here. What d'you think, lad? What d'you think?"

It took Weston a moment to recover from the shock of it. He got to his feet slowly and turned to face the other. The old man's eyes looked straight into his, and he knew that he was in earnest. The matter was becoming complicated, and Weston struggled to collect his wits.

"How can I tell?" he asked. "What do you mean, Duncan? I—I did say she'd had trouble, but I didn't say through me."

"Who, then?"

"Her husband."

"But, lad—damn it! You just said—"

"She's a widow," Weston countered quickly.

"Ah-h!" A long sigh of satisfaction came from the old man. He comprehended at once that the girl's widowhood was a point in his favor.

"She won't think it so strange of me," he muttered to himself.

There was a long pause, then old Duncan asked again, "Well, what d'you think?"

"I've nothing to do with it," muttered Weston.

"Yes, yes, you can do much for me," said old Duncan softly. "As her brother you can put what I want before her. You can say that Africa's not such a bad place, that I'm not so damned ugly—it's just a matter of fancy, isn't it? I'll give her anything she wants. She can go home to England every year, I'll promise her that. And I'll do well by you, lad. You tell her that. Now, will you write to her?"

"No!" gasped Weston. Then, after a moment of hesitation "She lost her husband lately, just before I came out."

"Did she love him?"

A curious light came into Weston's eyes. "I—I suppose she did," he said.

"But you'll write to her, nevertheless, lad. Now—let's see, where could I marry her? I could meet her at—"

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Weston. "Take it easy, old man! You're going too fast. Perhaps she won't come out to you. Who can say?"

"Ah, no one but herself! But you will write to her? Promise me that."

"You must give me time to think about it."

"Yes, you think of putting that letter into shape. Make a good job of it and you won't regret it, my lad," said old Duncan and turned away.

Duncan did not speak of the girl again that day. But he framed her photograph with coral-crusted seaweed—pink, white and purple sprays, which he had picked up on the beach—and hung it on the bare white wall of his room above the mahogany medicine chest.

The interval gave Weston time to think of the awkward situation the old man's infatuation had created for him. First, the girl of the photograph was not his sister, but his own wife. He had had to deny her because he had deserted her, and had come out to Africa and into old Duncan's employ under an assumed name and with forged credentials. His real name was Edward Thorn.

While he was thinking of all this, an idea flashed into his ready mind. *No fool like an old fool.* Old Duncan had it bad, and he might be persuaded to send money home to fetch out his prospective bride. He had said his sister was a widow. The order could be made out to Mrs. Edward Thorn without arousing the old man's suspicions. And Freda? She would accept it, if he wrote and told her to keep it as a nest-egg from the husband who was about to return to her, a penitent and resurrected man. By heaven, it was just the sort of thing she'd fall for! She was the clinging-vine type, and she'd be damned glad to hear from him.

A quiver of excitement quickened his pulse. Now, what might be the largest sum old Duncan could be induced to send her? Five hundred pounds, perhaps a thousand, to pay her passage and to fit her out—and she would never leave England! He chuckled—the old fool might send more, he was so in love with the photograph.

BUT WHAT if old Duncan wrote to her himself? He might do that—a love letter. Well, it was to be his job to board the steamer when she called at the point, and he could destroy any letter old Duncan wrote. But how to get away himself after that? On this God-forsaken coast the steamer was the only way. The nearest cable station, thank heaven, was a hundred miles away with wild impassable country between. Let him get the money order away and he'd work out the rest, catch the next steamer perhaps.

The more he considered the scheme the more feasible it looked. Again he speculated upon the amount old Duncan might be willing to—

"Ola! Ola!" The watchman's shout came from the tower. Weston sprang to his feet and looked seaward, shading his face with his hands. He made out the funnels and masts of a large steamer, which was coming up the coast, though still a long way off. He waved his hand to the watchman to show that he had seen the vessel. It was the first he'd seen in weeks, and he watched her in silence until old Duncan came running out onto the veranda, his old, leather-bound telescope in hand.

"Why didn't you call me, lad?" he cried. "It's the English mail!" He lifted the glass, but his hand shook so that he could not steady it and he handed it to Weston.

"Is she standing in?" he asked, opening the box on the veranda in which the signal flags were kept and, hauling them out, stood in the midst of a heap of colored bunting.

"I don't think so, sir," Weston answered with studied courtesy. "No, she's standing on."

"Clear away the signal halliards!" old Duncan roared at Juma who stood beside the flagstaff. He ran down the steps with the flags bundled in his arms. He bent on his house flag and a signal that he had cargo to ship, and Juma sent them aloft. When the steamer came abeam of the point, up went her answering pennant and a string of flags. Old Duncan thumbed through the canvas-covered code book and read them.

No mail. I will pick up cargo on return, she said, and without slackening speed stood on for Mombasa, whence she would return on her homeward-bound voyage.

Old Duncan slammed the code book shut with a round oath, and went back to the bungalow disappointed. Weston waited for him on the veranda.

"Write that letter to your sister now, lad," said old Duncan. "I'll not rest till it's done."

"Is that why you tried to stop the steamer?" asked Weston.

"Yes, I thought we might get it aboard her, the northern route's shorter by a couple of weeks. But she'll be back in a week, and we won't see another for three months. So, get that letter done."

Three months! Weston went for pen and paper, his eyes clouded with thought. But did he have to drag out another three months with these stinking natives and a love-sick old man? Why not go home *with* old Duncan's letter? There was enough cash at hand in the bungalow to pay his passage. Just before the steamer was due he could spike the signal-gun and destroy the flags. Without means of communicating with the ship, old Duncan could do nothing to stop him, absolutely nothing! Sickness, business, anything could explain his departure to the ship's captain. By heaven, it could be done! Yes, he could just sail away and leave the old fool to whistle for his money and his bride! There were risks, but on the instant he made up his mind.

"Well," he said, as he came slowly back into the room, "there's not much point in writing for Freda to come out here—I mean, when she hasn't got the money to come out with."

"If she'll accept it, I'll give her an order on my agents in Liverpool," said old Duncan simply. "You know best. What shall I send her?"

"It's not just the passage money," said Weston with a dubious shake of his head. "I'm afraid you're in for a bit of a shock, sir. You see, she and her husband went into a little business with insufficient funds. They were forced to sell out, and there's a considerable sum of money still owing. Of course, I do what I can to help and she's working her fingers off to pay up. I don't think she'd care to

leave England—in fact I know she won't without—"

"How much?" Old Duncan had lost his head completely, and he was acting as he had never acted before.

"Two thousand pounds!" said Weston, with a wry smile. He had pitched the figure as high as he dared, but, watching the old man's face narrowly for the reaction, he at once wished he had made it greater.

"Then there's the passage money and an outfit, I suppose," he added sharply.

"Make out an order for three thousand pounds even," said old Duncan calmly.

"You are very generous, sir!"

Old Duncan flushed. He had a meaner thought—that the gift might influence the girl's decision in his favor. He said, "Get on with the letter, lad."

Weston moistened dry lips, went to work and wrote the letter. Then he carefully made out an order for three thousand pounds, payable to Mrs. Edward Thorn. He handed both to the old man.

OLD DUNCAN read and reread every word of the letter, for he could only read slowly. It seemed good to him, very good, and certainly it was high-flown.

"You are clever, lad," he approved. "You've said more for me than I'd have dared say for myself. I hope she won't be disappointed." His seriousness was almost comical.

"Not she. Not when she sees you, sir."

Old Duncan took the pen in a hand that shook, and wrote his name in big, black letters below where Weston had written neatly, *Your lover*. He signed the order, slid both into the addressed envelope and slipped it into his pocket.

"And there's no danger in her coming," he said. "The salt wind blows off the fever. If I'd not known that—if I'd thought there was danger—"

"If *I'd* thought there was danger, d'you suppose I'd let her come?" interrupted Weston virtuously. "No, not to marry the best man on the coast, and that's you, sir!"

Then old Duncan, his shyness seemingly gone with the writing of the letter, put question after question to Weston regarding his supposititious sister. He got answer for answer, invented at the moment. And no court ambassador ever promoted a royal marriage with better address, or sang a princess' charms with more subtle provocation than did Edward Thorn, alias Hugh Weston.

That night on his bed Weston concocted the story he would tell his wife. The money would be his share of a very successful venture into the interior of Africa, of course. The order in her name, because he wanted to prove to her that he was a changed man, eager to make a fresh start. She would weep over that, and she would cash the order. And once he had his hands on the money he would disappear again. He chuckled over it. It was all so damned clever, not a flaw! At last, turning over, he dismissed every thought from his mind, as he had a knack of doing, and went smoothly to sleep.

He awoke with the throbbing of distant drums in his ears. Jumping out of bed he went out onto the veranda in his pajamas.

Juma Saleh, crossing the compound, saw him standing in the doorway and hauled up to shout, "Kabenga live for come, Little Master. Big Master look see." He pointed up at the watchtower. Weston put on slippers and, running across the compound, climbed the ladder to join old Duncan in the tower, whence they could see all around them.

The gray light of early morning was hastening fast into broad daylight. Both white men gazed over the plain on which a mist lay white and heavy. As the sun rose and dried it up, they made out the narrow path that led from the further bank of the river to the nearest native village.

Suddenly, at a point on it, the sun's rays glinted on the spear-heads of the leading men of the safari. As they drew near a line of heavy tusks appeared above the tall grass like black, linked dots. Each tusk was lashed to a stout bamboo rod and carried on the shoulders of two men. When the safari came in full view of the factory, the warriors guarding it shouted and shook their spears. Horns blared and the rumble of drums rolled across the veldt.

Old Duncan counted the number of tusks as they came swinging along the

path, and found it to be fifty in all. Grunting his satisfaction he led the way down, and then ordered Juma to open the doors of the cargo-shed, but to keep the gates of the compound closed. Then the Krooboys were put to work, to knock hoops from bales of cloth, to open cases of muskets and to roll forward puncheons of rum.

By the time this was done the leading files of the safari were clamoring for admittance at the gates of the compound. Only Kabenga and his headmen were allowed in. The remainder, perhaps to the number of two hundred, pitched camp out on the plain. Kabenga was conducted to the cargo-shed, where old Duncan received him with much panegyric.

His Majesty—a middle-sized, not overclean man—wore a pair of dilapidated pantaloons and, over his fat shoulders, the cast-off coat of some rich man's lackey, for it was of flaming red with gilt embroidery all over it. He sat on the chair which had been placed for him in the center of the room with his headmen grouped around him. He was no man's fool, and much rum and half the day were spent before old Duncan could fix the rate of barter, and with what goods his tusks were to be bought.

Then a *matabicho* was poured out for every man present. And His Majesty, well satisfied with his bargain, got royally drunk, and finally was carried out to his women.

The hunters were then admitted. As tusk after tusk was passed in they crowded into the cargo-shed and took part, whether by right or not, in a scene of apparent confusion. They shouted and stamped their feet, with muttered threats of dissatisfaction, with arms waved in the air and the butt-ends of weapons brought down hard on the wooden floor. But on the whole good humor prevailed and, every now and then at some joke of old Duncan's, the Negroes' hoarse laughter circled the room.

And it was in heat that was stifling, in air foul with the stench of sweat and rancid grease that the two white men labored for three days, each at his desk and balance. Old Duncan worked with a thought of the girl fluttering now and then through his head; and Weston, smart and active, his loathing for it all hidden behind the wish to keep the old man pleased and unsuspicious.

ON THE fourth day Kabenga departed amid a great ostentation of horns and drums. The factory quickly settled down to its smooth routine, and Weston lounged on the veranda again with the roar of the surf in his ears. Lamplight streamed through the jalousies of the window at his elbow, and within he could see old Duncan laboriously writing at his desk. He guessed what the old man was writing, and to whom.

"Old fool!" he muttered, and smiled smugly. By old Duncan's reckoning the steamer would be off the point shortly before noon tomorrow, and tonight it would be safe to destroy the flags and spike the signal-gun.

Accordingly, that night when the factory was deep in slumber he stole softly out of the bungalow. He spiked the gun with a six-inch nail, made a neat bundle of all the flags, weighted it with lead shot and hurled it over the cliff into the sea. Then he crept back to the bungalow and into his bed.

A few hours later old Duncan was astir. When Weston came out into the main room it was to see the old man wrapping his letters in an oilskin cloth.

"What's that for?" he asked with a frown.

"The surf's making up," the other answered. "I don't want to get 'em wet when I take 'em off."

"You—*you're* going to take them off?" Weston bit his lip to check an oath. "But I thought that was to be my job."

"It is, lad. But there's all that ivory to be shipped." Then, noticing the look on Weston's face: "It's not that I don't think you can do it, lad. It's not that. I—I have written to her, and I couldn't let anyone else take it. It would be unlucky," he finished with a sheepish grin.

Weston's eyes sparkled with anger. You fool, you blundering, love-sick old fool! he thought. He said, "But it's dangerous, sir! Something might happen to you. You must think of that *now*. Give me the letters, let me do my job, sir!"

"Thanks, lad. But who's been doing it all these years? Don't worry. I won't

take any harm," and slipping the package into his pocket he turned away.

Weston's gaze fastened on his back, and it was the look of a man that meant murder. At the door old Duncan turned to him and said, "Better finish stamping them tusks, lad. I'm going down to the beach to look over the boats."

A few minutes later, from the door of the cargo-shed, Weston caught a glimpse of the old man standing on the sea-edge of the cliff. He straightened up, rubber stamp in hand, his eyes narrowing to slits. Somehow he had to prevent the old man from boarding the steamer. Nothing was going to stop him now, not even—what? Yes, even murder.

What if he took the old fool unawares and threw him over the edge? No, that wouldn't do, the oilskin package would go with him. Besides he might be seen, and there was a better way. He left the cargo-shed and strode across the compound to the bungalow, his plan already decided.

The houseboy was in the kitchen preparing their breakfast. The door to old Duncan's room stood open. He went in, closing the door behind him softly. He turned in the direction of the medicine chest and, as he did so, his eyes came to rest on the photograph of his wife, wistfully smiling from the frame of coral. He hesitated only for a moment, then threw open the lid of the chest. His eye ran along the rows of bottles and stopped at a square one labeled *Morphia*, and stamped with a skull and crossed bones. He pulled it out and slipped it into his pocket, then closed the chest and went out into the main room.

He was just in time. He saw old Duncan coming across the sand to the bungalow.

"The ivory's all ready, sir," Weston told him as he came in. "But we'd better eat before we start the boys lugging it down to the beach."

"Yes, but I'll just take a mug of coffee," said old Duncan. "I've not much appetite—your sister, maybe." He laughed happily and went into his room.

Weston clapped damp hands, and the houseboy came in with the coffee and mugs. Weston signed him to put it on the table and to clear out. Throwing a quick glance over his shoulder, he saw old Duncan bending over his desk. He poured out a half-mug of black coffee then, quick as a flash, dashed a wineglass-full of the morphia into it, then added to the coffee a glass of cognac from the decanter which stood on the table.

HE WAS pouring his own coffee when old Duncan came out and took his place at the table. In spite of his self-command Weston's hand shook. To hide his agitation he dropped his spoon, and ducked under the table. He pretended to grope for it until he heard the old man swallow his coffee.

"Well," said old Duncan, as Weston came erect, "my letters'll soon be on their way. If I get her I'll owe it all to you, and I won't forget it, lad."

It seemed to Weston that the old man was looking at him with peculiar intentness. Perspiration gathered on his forehead in great drops, and suddenly he could stand no more. He gulped his coffee and, muttering unintelligible words, left the room quickly.

He was down on the beach when he heard Juma shouting down at him from the cliff-top.

"Oh, Little Master! Little Master, come one time! Big Master sick—oh, *Ngonjwa, sana, sana!*"

Weston waved an arm to show that he understood, and started to run up the path. But as soon as Juma was lost to sight he slackened his pace to a slow walk—he wanted it to be all over by the time he got there.

Juma had lifted old Duncan onto his bed, and the men of the factory had pressed into the room. They stood staring down at the still form, whispering among themselves. They couldn't understand it. There was no wound, no blood. The Big Master breathed, but strange he could not be made to hear or speak. As Weston came in they fell silent, and there was no sound save for the chink of many brass-wire bangles and anklets as they made way for him.

Weston motioned to Juma, and the headman quickly cleared them out. Weston then went to the old man's door and, without a glance at his victim, closed the

door. Then he poured out a half-tumbler of cognac and gulped it down. The raw spirit drove the chill from the pit of his stomach. He felt like a new man, and set about making the final preparations for his departure.

Every now and then he went out onto the veranda to look for the steamer and, as often as he did so, he took another tot of cognac. He was only vaguely aware of the beating of drums above the sound of the sea.

Suddenly there was a loud knocking at the outer door. He opened it and Juma Saleh stood before him, his eyes big with fear.

"Oh, Little Master!" he gasped out. "Kabenga live for come!"

"Kabenga—what the devil?" Weston muttered thickly, and stared at the headman stupidly.

Seeing what was wrong with the Little Master, Juma caught his arm, shook it and burst into a flood of Swahili.

The meaning of his words sank slowly into Weston's befuddled brain, and the shock of them sobered him. He shook off Juma's hand, lurched to a chair and, shaking his head to clear it, forced himself to think.

So, the Krooboys thought old Duncan was dead of witchcraft and, frightened, they'd run away back to their villages. And Kabenga, having picked up the gossip of the drums, saw his opportunity and was coming back to raid the factory.

What did this mean for him? Well, certainly, Kabenga could not make it back to the factory before daylight. By that time he'd be far out at sea. By heaven, this was sheer luck! Let the Krooboys scatter, let Kabenga come, the looting of the factory would cover his crime. Weeks, perhaps months, would elapse before the news of the raid filtered through to the Portuguese authorities. There wouldn't be much left of old Duncan then, and no man could tell how he had died. Nothing better could have happened, and—

"Tuta kwenda, Bwana?" Juma's voice, queerly urgent, broke in on his thoughts. Faithful Juma had done his duty like a man, but he wanted to be miles away from the factory when Kabenga's warriors broke in.

"Nita ka hapa," Weston answered, getting to his feet. "I will remain here. You go, Juma."

"Oh, you come one time, Little Master!" gasped Juma. "Kabenga is bad. He will kill, kill!"

A swift flame of anger lighted Weston's eyes. "Get out!" he shouted at the astonished headman. "Clear out, damn you! Get moving!" and he pushed Juma back through the door.

Half an hour later the factory was deserted but for Weston, who stood on the veranda gazing seaward. The roar of the surf sounded louder and he saw a line of breakers whitening across the bar, but no plume of smoke against the blue sky.

An hour passed, and an unnatural hush came upon the factory. The waiting was beginning to sap Weston's self-control.

FAR OUT across the veldt, beyond the foothills, the drums were clamoring in many-tongued panic. Weston guessed that they spoke of Kabenga's near approach, and he felt a premonitory quiver of his nerves, the first dim stirring of fear.

Suppose something delayed the steamer? He'd be hemmed in between the sea and Kabenga's spears. No, barring a serious accident, that wasn't likely. Old Duncan had never known the steamer to be more than an hour or so late. What about the old man? Was he dead yet?

He went in and took another stiff tot of cognac. Then he crossed the floor to the bedroom, opened the door and looked in. The old man had been violently sick. After a moment of hesitation Weston went in and bent over him. There was a fluttering pulse beat, and Weston straightened up frowning.

What if he drove a knife—such a knife as they sold to the natives—into the old man's heart? No, better leave well enough alone. Kabenga would finish the job. He had nothing to worry about.

Just then the boom of a signal-gun rattled the windows of the bungalow. With a shout of joy and relief Weston let the old man's limp arm fall and rushed out onto the veranda.

There she was, to the hour, rounding the headland, close in. Flags fluttered from her halliards, and Weston raced to

the tower for the code book. With a hand that shook he leafed through the pages and read the flags: *I have a full cargo. I am proceeding to Port Natal. I will request agents to arrange—*

The printed words blurred, and panic struck at Weston's stomach like fangs.

"No! Oh, God—no!" burst from his lips in a scream.

He couldn't tell them—the flags, he had destroyed them. He couldn't stop her—he was a dead man!

No! He wasn't finished yet—not him! The boats—there was a chance! They might see him coming off and stop. And in the next moment he was running down the steep path to the beach.

There was only a lazy swell within the bar, but beyond the sea was rising. He chose the smallest of the boats, shoved off and pulled strongly for the bar.

The steamer was halfway across the bay when the first breaker hit and drenched him. Panic-driven and with the strength of desperation he managed to keep the boat's head straight. Then another comber came roaring at him. The boat lifted to it and swerved. Frantically he strove to bring her head around to it, but she slid down it sideways. The next comber hit her broadside, and rolled her over in a smother of foam.

For a time Weston struggled for his life, but it was soon over. The great, hissing waves sucked him out and hurled him back, and finally tossed his broken body across the bar.

From the bridge of the steamer keen eyes had spotted the boat, and had watched her brief struggle with the surf. A rocket arched skyward from her deck and, when she got no answer to that, she came about and edged into the bay, as close to the point as her master dared to bring her.

Presently one of her lifeboats came scudding through a breach in the surf. As the boat grounded a dozen men leaped ashore, and two white-clad officers, one carrying a black bag, led them up to the bungalow.

Old Duncan was still alive when the ship's doctor found him.

Later the young officer who had brought the boat through the surf came into the room, worried-looking and profane.

"There's something damned queer been going on here," he said. "That headman, Juma, has just come in. I can't make much of his talk, but it sounds like we've scared off a bunch of Luanzas with a rocket. And now the Old Man's out there, flying signals and tooting his blasted whistle, but there's not a shred of ruddy bunting in that box to answer him with!"

"Better see what you can do with the sun and a shaving mirror," advised the doctor. "We're going to be here for some time."

"The old chap coming out of it?"

"Yes, I think so. He's got a heart as sound as the bells of St. Paul's . . ."

When old Duncan was able to grasp what had happened all he said was, "Thank God she's got none of *his* blood in her veins!"

Yes, he sent off his letter, and in due time it reached Mrs. Thorn. And surely, the angels must have very special orders with regard to honest old men and their dreams—for, today, there's an English rose garden up on that desolate point, and such roses you'll never see in England.

ILLUSTRATED BY
NICK EGGENHOFER

"Take him," Blake snapped to Jed. "I've got him covered."

THE TOWN TAMER

By LLOID JONES

THE chuffing ten-wheeler heaved the drag of ore cars over the hump into the yards at Divide, and stopped. This was the end of the C. M.'s line until more construction could be laid.

Young Jed Cramer had been lounging in the mountain sunshine under the ornate eaves of the spang-new frame depot. Now Jed coupled up his big, loose-knit frame to amble slowly the length of the train. The bums would be piling out of the empty cars, making for the camp ground down by the creek. By rights Jed ought to arrest the lot of them for stealing the ride up from the Springs.

By rights. But he knew that all he'd do was stroll among them with his railroad special agent's shield showing, pass a josh or two, tell them it was sixteen miles to Cripple Creek. There would be no trouble.

Only today there were no bums. Jed walked along in growing puzzlement. Almost uneasiness. Why, there wasn't a day— Then Jed saw the man with the gun. The only person to get off the train, but if there'd been a thousand, you'd have noticed this one.

Not just the smooth-handled revolver in its cutaway, tied-down holster. The cowboy boots and hat, the business man or professional gambler's dark coat and gray pants. Mainly the man himself, the bulk and power, the even, rhythmic stride, the frosty watchfulness of blue eyes.

He came straight at Jed. "I suppose you're Cramer. I'm Blake, just appointed chief special agent for the C. M."

Jed gulped. "Fanner Blake!" He added awkwardly, "Excuse me, Marshal. I lived in Colby when I was a kid, and I guess I about worshipped you. You

might say I become an officer on account of you."

Blake said, "Colby was never the town Dodge was. Pretty tame, a good deal of the time."

They turned to walk together towards the depot, questions rushing through Jed's mind.

What was Frank Blake doing on this two-bit job? It didn't seem right. There'd been Bat Masterson, and Wyatt Earp, and a few others. Men who stalked the wild, raw, roaring towns of twenty years ago with the law in their holsters, wearing their lives like a chip on the shoulder. Fanner Blake was one of that select few.

"This a pretty rough burg?" asked Blake. Almost, it seemed to Jed, hopefully.

"Why, no," Jed answered. "I've not had much trouble."

"I know railhead towns," Blake stated. "Dynamite."

Jed looked at the sprawl of tents and log houses and frame shacks in the gulch. He couldn't see any dynamite.

Beside the team track they stopped to watch men scooping the unimportant-looking rock from the ore wagons into the gondola cars. The Golden Cycle Mill at the Springs was not yet completed, but it was far enough along to handle the refining of what ore could be got out of the Cripple Creek district by this roundabout process. By the time gandy dancers got track laid into Cripple Creek, the Mill would be ready to go full blast.

"Good chance for high-graders," Blake observed. "We'll cover this operation every half-hour when on duty."

"We've not been bothered," Jed told him. "A man don't carry much of this stuff over the mountain in a gunny sack."

"We'll take no chances," Blake said with finality.

WHILE they'd talked the gandy dancers had come down the grade from the new construction towards Cripple Creek. Set off their hand cars. Headed for the commissary and beer. Jed and Blake took the same direction through the after-sundown glow. A band of silver light outlined the rim of mountains on their left.

Behind the long tent-house commissary there was shouting. Two men, stripped to the waist, fought in the middle of a ring of jubilant spectators. Jed shouldered through

"Quit now, Callahan," he said. "That fella won't be able to swing a spike maul tomorrow if you keep on."

The big one laughed at Jed, bringing the sound from deep in his great, hairy chest. "Foosh, young law-and-order! Ye have no proper festive—"

He stopped hard, and the snapping black eyes went wide. Jed turned to follow his look, and his mouth dropped open. Crouched above drawn gun stood Blake.

"Take him," Blake snapped. "I've got him covered."

Jed mumbled, "*Take* him?" He stood bewildered.

"Take him," repeated Blake. "Arrest. You don't need to be afraid. I'll drill him at the first false move."

Jed looked from Blake to the big Irishman. "Callahan," he said uncertainly.

"I'll come," grunted Callahan. "Can I pick up me shirt?"

The three moved out from the astounded gandy dancers. As they got in the clear, Blake spoke again. "My name's Blake. Chief special agent for the C. M. now. I want it clear there's to be no more disturbances. Here or elsewhere along the C. M.'s right-of-way. You understand that?"

For thirty seconds of amazed silence he waited. Then he turned his back contemptuously on them and marched Callahan away down the rutted clearing that was Divide's street. Jed strode after them, his mind churning.

"What you plan to do, Mr. Blake?" he demanded.

"Let him cool off in jail till morning."

Callahan began to laugh.

Jed explained, "There's no jail here."

"No jail! What the hell?"

Callahan said, "The young punk has made do without it. But we may need one now. A man lookin' for trouble will find it."

"I won't have to look far," Blake clipped. "I know railhead towns. I was tamin' 'em when this kid was in short pants."

"Ah," said Callahan, and his brogue

was never more rich. "I mind you now. The fabled Marshal Blake. Law in the great, savage frontier towns of yesteryear. Now it's little that's left of the savage and less of the frontier. Yet still you are Frank the Fanner. Like to an actor with no stage. God save us, with no audience, even! A pity. A sad pity." Callahan shook his great head.

Jed stepped back a pace, seeing the taut white blaze come over Blake's face.

"Get the hell on your way!" Blake burst out, his voice a grinding rasp in his throat. "And I warn you to stay clear of me!"

Callahan turned back up the hill. Blake and Jed walked on, stifled silence between them. They came to the frame shack, set at the base of a slope of magnificent pines, where Jed lived.

Jed, feeling awkward, said, "I was hopin' you'd stay with me."

They went in, and Blake took off his sombrero. Jed was startled to see how heavily the brown of his hair was dusted with silver.

"Snug place." Blake smiled, and for a moment Jed forgot about the hard lines of his face.

"The gandy dancers helped me throw it together," Jed remarked. He built a fire and set coffee to boil while Blake tilted one of the rough chairs against the wall.

"That Callahan is right about one thing," Blake mused. "Towns are not what they used to be."

"Callahan is all hot breeze." Jed started slicing bacon.

"Not all," said Blake. "For instance, I suppose you don't even get trail crews in with cattle here."

"Some," answered Jed. "There's ranches out in South Park. Forty, fifty miles away, some of 'em."

"Trail crews can make it tough. Best thing is to spot the ring leader and call his hand. Beat him to the draw, and there's no trouble then for a while."

Jed busied himself stirring up bread.

"We used to get trail crews in Cimarron from a thousand miles," Blake went on. "Orey-eyed and spoilin' for excitement to the last man. I could tell you some things—God! But now such places are full of little businessmen with pot-bellies buildin' brick houses and electin' councilmen."

Jed added wood to the fire and opened a can of tomatoes. "I suppose things are bound to change," he suggested. "And it was law and order you wanted to bring about, all the time."

"They wanted law and order in those days," said Blake. "Now all they want is somebody to help old ladies across the street and be kind to animals. It don't leave much for a man with red blood in his veins. Even out here, in one of the few railhead towns left, the name of marshal is too strong for their delicate natures. So let 'em call me a railway dick. I still know my job."

Well, Jed thought, maybe he did. Maybe the railroad wanted this place handled tougher. That might be why they'd sent Blake out as Jed's boss. He wondered if he was about to lose his job.

AFTER supper they stepped outside to smoke. Blake said instantly, "What's those fires down by the crick?"

"Drifters," Jed told him. "They bum in on the empty ore cars from the Springs and stop over here to ready themselves for the hike up the road to Cripple Crick. New batch on every train, until today. I don't know what—"

"I kept 'em off at the Springs." Blake started down the slope towards the fires. "Against the law to carry bums on the trains."

"They're not exactly bums," Jed protested. "Mostly men that lost their jobs in the silver bust and panic last year. Wives and kids at home. You know how it is all over. They figure they may get work in Cripple Crick. Only place in the state with a boom."

"Work!" scoffed Blake. "That's not what they're lookin' for. Stragglers out of Coxey's Army, First Regiment, too worthless even to march on Washington and ask for their handout."

The two came into a clearing. Men were washing socks and strapping up back packs, and on one of the fires a kettle of stew was steaming. At sight of the officers everybody came to stony-faced attention, eyes wary with bleak memories of the law.

"We want this town cleared of vags by noon tomorrow," Blake rasped. "Wherever you're goin', get started. Is that clear?"

Presently a bearded man in his fifties said, "We didn't figure we was doin' no harm, mister."

"No good either." Blake retorted brutally. "We're buildin' a railroad and haulin' gold ore here. Anybody not occupied with either has got no excuse to be here. Unless he's got some shady business in mind. Be gone by tomorrow noon."

He turned on his heel and climbed the hill, breathing easily in spite of the slope and the altitude. He stopped at the foot of the town's street.

"I'll take the night shift," he said. "Relieve me at sunup."

He started up the street, moving slowly and watchfully. Jed turned towards his shack without trying to tell him there was no need of a night shift. Maybe there was. Jed was beginning to doubt himself. He was young and his values had not yet been tested by time.

Jed woke at dawn feeling curiously unrested. He realized he'd slept light, half expecting to hear the roar of that forty-four during the night. He met Blake in front of the commissary.

"Nothing doing," Blake reported. "This town goes to bed early." There was near contempt in his tone.

"No women and mighty little liquor this side o' Cripple Crick," Jed explained.

"Keep up the patrol," Blake said. "When the train pulls out, ride it down to the Springs and back. See that nobody rides without a ticket. The C. M. is not a charity. I'll come on again when I hear the train leave."

"When will you sleep?" Jed asked.

"After we get things under control."

Jed turned and started along the street, feeling the rebuke in the words. So that soon he found himself moving slow-paced and wary-eyed, in unconscious imitation of Blake.

At seven o'clock the gandy dancers came up the street from their bunk tents and ganged around the hand cars. As Jed walked past they burst into a chorus of guffaws.

"Do you gobble as well as you strut, young turkey cock?" bellowed Callahan.

Jed tried to grin, but felt himself flushing. "Did you ask the same question of Blake?" he retorted.

Callahan sobered. "I did not, but I'm likely to," he said heavily.

The men climbed silently aboard the hand cars and started pumping their way up the grade of the new-laid track.

Jed moved on, among the carpenters finishing out the stock yards on the north side of the track. Back past the ore wagons and the men endlessly shovelling. Through the train crew making up the drag for the Springs. Nobody had time to talk today. When Jed approached, they became very busy.

Not quite, Jed thought, a fair return for the protection they were getting from him and Blake now.

Jed had the cupola of the caboose to himself on the ride down to the Springs. The trip was uneventful, except that Jed saw many men tramping beside the tracks up towards the Divide. More than one of those shook a bitter fist at the train. It came to Jed that they were the floaters Blake had kept off the train yesterday.

Still he was not prepared for what happened at the Springs. Every gondola the crew shunted into the train was occupied by five or ten men. Lean, discouraged miners from Leadville and Creede and Silver Cliff. Bleak-faced laborers from Denver and Pueblo and Kansas City. The down-and-out of half a nation in hard times, drifting towards the magic magnet of gold and Cripple Creek.

Jed boarded and emptied every car, conscientiously. Knowing he could not face Blake if a single man rode the rods into Divide. In less than an hour he had a crowd of a hundred and fifty milling angrily beside the train. One of them stepped out close to Jed to speak.

"I don't like askin' for special favors, bub," he said. "But I got a wife and two kids to home, and there's another baby about due. If I have to walk to Cripple Crick, what I send may not be in time to help."

"Sorry, mister." Jed meant it. "It's my orders."

"The cars is goin' back empty," shouted one from the crowd.

Jed shook his head. "I can't let some on and keep some off."

"That's all right," the voice called again. "The rest of us has got nothin' but time on our hands. Let him go, and we'll hoof it."

Jed thought of meeting Blake at Divide, and was racked between sympathy and—something else. Perhaps fear. The train started up at that minute, and he growled again, "I can't let anybody ride."

The man in front of him began to sob. The sight and sound of it sickened Jed. As the caboose rolled past him he swung on without turning his back to the crowd. As he watched, they began to slog their way doggedly along the track in the train's wake.

AT EVERY stop up the long pull Jed had the same battle to fight again. Men Blake had kept off the train yesterday trying to slip aboard. Jed clambered from car to car, ordering them off. He had to back up his orders with drawn gun. At Woodland Park he had to boost two of them bodily over the side.

As the train started, he raised up to look over the train. A rock whizzed by his ear.

When they pulled into Divide Jed dropped off while they were still moving. Walked straight to the shack and lay down on his bunk, staring absently at the crude ceiling above him.

Presently Blake came in and started rattling the stove lids. He looked speculatively at Jed.

"Sick?" he inquired.

Jed shook his head. "Yes, I am, too," he corrected. "Sick of my job. If bein' an officer of the law means maulin' people around, kickin' a man when he's down, I quit."

Blake said, "Whose side are you on?"

"What do you mean?"

"A law officer cannot shilly-shally with lawlessness and disorder. Maybe an ordinary citizen can. I've known some that did. Called me a killer for cuttin' down some desperado that would've murdered or robbed him or misused his women. I have been fired from jobs and run out of towns, but I have not played loose with the safety of honest, decent, stupid people."

Jed lit the lamp against early darkness brought on by an abrupt mountain storm that was boiling over the ridge. In the light he could see the fine-drawn tension of Blake's features. There was something almost religious in the expression.

They sat down to eat in silence. Jed had the complete picture now. Blake subduing a town with law at the ready muzzle of his gun. Till hate and fear drove him out. Seeking more lawlessness and more wildness. Ending up here, and despising it, and himself. A sorry end for a man who'd made history. If only he could change.

It came on to rain, violently. Through the uproar of the storm on the roof, Jed asked, "Can't an officer make a difference between criminals and people who are only down on their luck?"

Blake said, "Not an officer. That's for the judges and such to decide. When you can, you stop people from breakin' the law. When you can't, you arrest 'em. If you can't arrest 'em, you or they die tryin'."

By the time they had finished eating, the rain had stopped. Trees were dripping as they stepped out, and the sky was hidden by a twisting fog. Fires were burning at the camp ground along the creek.

"I run what was left of the vags out of there at noon," Blake said. "Check your gun and come on."

"These are the ones we kept off the train," Jed guessed. "They've walked in. Can't we let 'em stop overnight?"

"No," answered Blake.

"It takes whiskey to make trouble," Jed almost pleaded, "and there's not the price of a quart in this whole outfit. They're just broke and hungry and tryin' to get to Cripple Crick to—"

"Broke and hungry, and so—desperate," Blake retorted. "A desperate man is a criminal as soon as chance offers. And a man broke might as well be broke in the Springs as in Cripple Crick."

Blake moved into the camp with his hand swinging stiffly just above his holster. Jed stared at him, at the blur of brown, grimy, tired, hard faces turned towards him.

Blake hardly raised his voice, but it cut. "This is no hang-out for vags. Move on, and do it now."

A big figure shouldered through, and Callahan stood spread-legged in the firelight. "These are not vags, me bucko," Callahan boomed. "And you needn't swell up like a frog eatin' buckshot. I'm invitin' these friends o' mine to spend the night, as me guests."

"I see, Callahan," Blake clipped, "you are too big a man for this town. Take your guests and get out!"

"The divil I—"

Jed cried desperately, "Let it go, Callahan!"

"Let it go, is it?" shouted Callahan. "Be damned—"

"I said get out of town." Blake let his words drop like chips of ice. "I'll give you half an hour. Then if I find you I'll shoot your guts full of holes."

He turned to climb the hill. Jed hesitated for a second and then he rushed after him.

"See here, sir," Jed panted. He wondered momentarily at his own deference for this man. "You can't duel Callahan. He brawls with his fists a little, but he don't know one end of a gun—"

"Then go tell him to get out of town," suggested Blake. "Report back here—" he consulted his watch—"in twenty-seven minutes. I don't like waiting."

Jed tried again. "Callahan—"

"You understand English?" asked Blake.

Jed turned and ran stumbling back towards the camp, unsure of his footing in the damp dark. Halfway there he came to a slow walk. What would he say to Callahan?

That the best thing is to call the ringleader's hand, beat him to the draw, and so end trouble for a while? That here was a great man who deserved respect for what he had been? Ask Callahan to leave town for his own safety?

It was no problem. Callahan was gone. The camp was empty. Jed let his breath go in a gust of relief. Until he saw men's gear lying scattered on the ground. They hadn't left, then.

"Callahan!" Jed shouted. "Callahan!" There was no answer except the burbling of the creek. Once, out of the dark, the fragment of a mocking laugh. Cut short. Or that, too, might have been the burbling of the creek.

JED STARTED up through the town, searching. On the higher ground trailing wisps of fog blocked his view. At the commissary he remembered the time and struck a match to look at his watch. Just four and a half minutes. In his mind he heard that gouging voice, "I don't like waiting." He turned down the street.

Blake stood, smoking. "You're two minutes late," he said, and spat out the cigarette.

"They've disappeared," Jed told him, "but their stuff is still there. I can't find Callahan."

"Then I must let Callahan find me."

"Hadn't we better let it go?" urged Jed. "We could be ambushed on a night like this."

"If they get the best of you once," Blake said, "you might as well leave town. See that you've got six loads in your gun and come on."

"I don't think Callahan—" Jed began.

"Why must I give every order twice?" The chisel edge was in Blake's voice. "Walk ten paces behind me and cover my rear."

Jed moved along behind him, gun drawn. As they came to the firelight, Blake slowed, walking stiffly, gun in holster, swinging hand just brushing gun butt. Jed could feel the ghosts of a score of gun duels in a dozen wild towns swirling like the gray fog just above their heads.

Blake said with scorn, "They've run out. Heave this trash in the fires."

He stooped to reach a tattered bed roll. Straightened and tossed it on a fire.

A sodden *chock!* Blake stumbled and went to his hands and knees. Jed leaped for him. Glimpsing the rock that had caught him between the shoulders. Seeing the queer, triggerless gun come from its holster smoothly. The left hand flick across the hammer in the unusual fanning motion that had given Blake his name.

Something crashed in Jed's ribs. Staggered him. He tried to turn. Saw weaving men swinging clubs and heaving rocks. Callahan shouting and wielding a pick handle. Jed's brain shattered in a burst of light, and he sank easily into blackness . . .

Dimly Jed heard curses. He sat up

stiffly, pain beating cruelly across his head, his shoulders. Blake was on his knees, pawing blindly for his gun. It lay open and empty in the mud before him. Blake's cartridge belt was gone.

Jed came to his feet, reaching for his own gun. It was in his holster. He broke it open. It was full. He closed it again.

Blake was fumbling in his pocket, came out with a handful of shells. "Always carry a few extra shells," he snarled through puffy lips. "I may not get many, but—"

Jed felt his youth drain suddenly out of him, leaving his mind sharp and clear. He said bleakly, "Don't do that!"

Blake stared. "What the hell you mean?"

"Once they get the best of you, you might as well leave town," Jed stated. "You leave now." He eased the hammer back. Slowly, not speaking, Blake closed the gun, empty, and stuck it in his pocket.

Jed went on brutally, "You should have died a hero in some wild town where history would have treated you kind. I wish to God you had. I wish I could have that to remember. But here we need no killing, and you've learned no other trade. I'll see you started."

They walked up to the railroad yards, Blake in the lead, Jed following with level gun. There Blake hesitated a second. Then he turned down the track. He'd need the pay coming to him in the Springs, Jed reckoned. Blake moved off, his stride rhythmic, powerful. Walking steadily down the hill. Disappearing in a gray curtain of blown fog.

That was the way Jed saw him last.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

In the clearing, Bruce and Londos stood facing each other. "So they sent me a yeller belly," Londos said.

GREEN TIMBER

By
JAMES PRESTON

WE WERE camped out in the hills behind Walgarra when Tommy Downs slipped from the log he was jockeying and was taken to the hospital with a broken leg.

We were a mixed crew, but all good axemen or drivers. You had to be good to topple those towering hardwoods and snig the logs out behind thundering tractors and trucks. With a schedule to work to, we knew that a new man would not be long in arriving. It gave us something to talk about. "Ya," Olaf grunted. "By tam, this man better be good, eh?"

"Who is he?" someone asked.

We all looked at old Charlie Sayers. Charlie had been with this crew for a long time and we usually turned to him for such information. He had a way of getting it.

But he shrugged, took his pipe from his mouth and spat indifferently into the dust at his feet.

"Don't ask me," he said.

"What?" I chided. "Don't tell me you haven't heard."

Charlie looked at me, and because of that, I suppose, I saw deeper into his pale blue eyes than the others did. And what I saw puzzled me.

He wiped his limp gray mustache with the back of his hand and smiled, and that intangible expression was gone from his eyes.

"Can't say I have, son," he said.

"Well, I hope for his sake he's got what it takes."

"Green timber's got to grow," Charlie said softly.

Jack Londos laughed deep in his chest. The muscles rippled under his thin singlet as he slapped his leg and said, "There's one way to find out."

THE new man arrived the following day, just as I was about to make another trip in.

"G'day," he said.

I acknowledged his greeting and waited while he threw his gear in the hut. "Where are you working?" I asked, as he came back.

"Number four."

"I'm going up there. Hop in."

I'd started the motor and had to shout. I waited till he had climbed up beside me then let in the clutch.

"My name's Jackson—Bill," I told him as we hit the rutted track. "Taking Tommy's place, are you?"

"Yes." He saw me looking at him, and added, "Just call me Bruce, will you?"

"O.K.," I said, and we shook hands as best we could.

I liked the look of Bruce; liked the way his steady eyes squinted from his tanned face and the way he moved his shoulders when he walked. All right from the outside, I thought.

But I've seen trees that looked strong and reliable from the outside but were soft and often hollow inside. Such trees are dangerous to the men who work among them. I caught myself remembering old Charlie's words—green timber.

"Been at the game long?" I asked casually.

He looked out of the cabin window so I couldn't see his face as he answered softly, "Not long."

Jack Londos and Charlie Sayers were working at number three. They must have heard the truck coming because they were standing at the junction of the tracks when I drove up.

"Meet the new man," I said, leaning from the window. "Call him Bruce."

I knew Jack Londos and his ways and watched him expectantly as he walked across to shake hands. That's why I caught only a glimpse of old Charlie's face as he nodded to Bruce. They didn't shake hands, which surprised me a little, knowing Charlie as I did.

"Stoppin' here?" Jack asked, nodding towards the bush.

"No. Number four."

Charlie finished packing his pipe and put the stem in his mouth. "See you later," he said, and turned back to the bush.

As we drove on I studied Bruce, endeavoring to find out what Charlie had discovered. I saw only a well-shaped profile against the moving outline of the bush. Green? But Charlie was seldom wrong; he knew timber, and he knew men.

At number four I passed my passenger over to Bob and we ran the three logs on to the truck. I watched Bruce as we worked. He seemed to know his job.

The rest of the week passed without incident. We were kept busy, and it was good, after a scrub in the cold water of the creek, to crawl between rough blankets and let tired muscles relax.

Then came Saturday and the weekly visit to the Walgarra pub. The beer was warm, but it was pleasant to lean on the bar with the glass at your elbow and swap yarns. The talk, naturally, was about logs and the men who cut them.

We had been drinking for some time when I noticed the talk bearing towards Bruce. I put my glass down and listened.

"An' I say a man's got to have guts or he's no good," Londos said.

Of course he did. We all agreed. But

that wasn't what Londos wanted. I moved closer to him.

"Listen, Jack," I said. "Leave him alone for a while; he's green."

"You get to hell out of it," he snarled. "I'll say what I like."

I shrugged. Londos was in a belligerent mood. Now it was up to Bruce to prove what he was like inside. Londos swung towards him.

"You," he shouted, so that everyone in the bar turned to watch. "What have you got to say, eh?"

Bruce eased his weight from the bar. "I don't know that I want to say anything," he said softly.

"No. Because you haven't got the guts," Londos persisted.

I moved over beside old Charlie. "He'll kill him," I said.

Charlie's hand gripped the bar tightly. "Who's goin' to stop it?"

I was watching the boy. His face slowly drained of all color. He looked around at the expectant men, seemed about to say something, then walked stiffly from the bar.

For almost a minute no one moved. I found myself cursing softly. So Charlie had been right. Why the devil hadn't Bruce done something—anything—except walk out?

Old Charlie was hunched over the bar, his shaggy gray eyebrows drawn down in a frown. "Green timber's got to grow," he growled, as though inviting contradiction.

Bob said, "That's funny. He didn't squib it when a log rolled yesterday."

"What log?" Charlie asked sharply.

"Snig chain broke and it swung. He jumped in with a bar. Might have hurt himself, you know."

"Bah," Londos sneered over my shoulder. "Excuses don't help. He's got no guts."

"Never mind," I said to Bob. "He'll probably pull out in a week."

Bob reached for his glass. "I don't think he will, somehow."

BOB was right. Bruce didn't pull out. Grim-faced and silent he worked on, offering no explanation for his behavior. Came Saturday again and he didn't go in to Walgarra. I noticed old Charlie drank a lot that day. Felt sorry for the boy, I concluded.

On Tuesday it was, that Charlie came to me after breakfast and said, "Been a change, son. I'm goin' up to number four."

"O.K.," I said. "Who's goin' to three?"

"Bruce."

"Bruce! With Londos?" I swallowed something hard.

"Yes, son; with Londos."

"But, look, Charlie, we can't . . ." I began.

"Can't nothin," Charlie growled. "We're goin' to drop him off at number three and God help him."

Bruce didn't say a word when Charlie told him. Simply looked at the older man, shrugged, and climbed onto the truck. We dropped him at number three and he set off up the track, his axe over his shoulder.

Sweat stood out on the backs of my hands as I gripped the wheel hard and started again. I felt queer inside. I kept thinking of that boy walking up to meet Londos.

"Pull in here," Charlie said suddenly.

Surprised, I pulled in to the side and stopped.

"What's up?"

"Let's go," he said tersely. "If we cut through here, we'll just about be in time."

Our eyes met and I knew what he was thinking. I climbed out quickly and we plunged into the bracken beside the road.

When we reached number three there were two men standing in the clearing where the trucks turned. Jack Londos stood with his legs wide apart, his big hands on his hips and his rough shirt open down the front. Facing him, his axe still on his shoulder, was Bruce. He must have arrived an instant before we did.

"So they sent me a yeller belly," Londos said.

"That's where you're wrong." Bruce's voice was even. "They sent you up a man whose ribs are almost better."

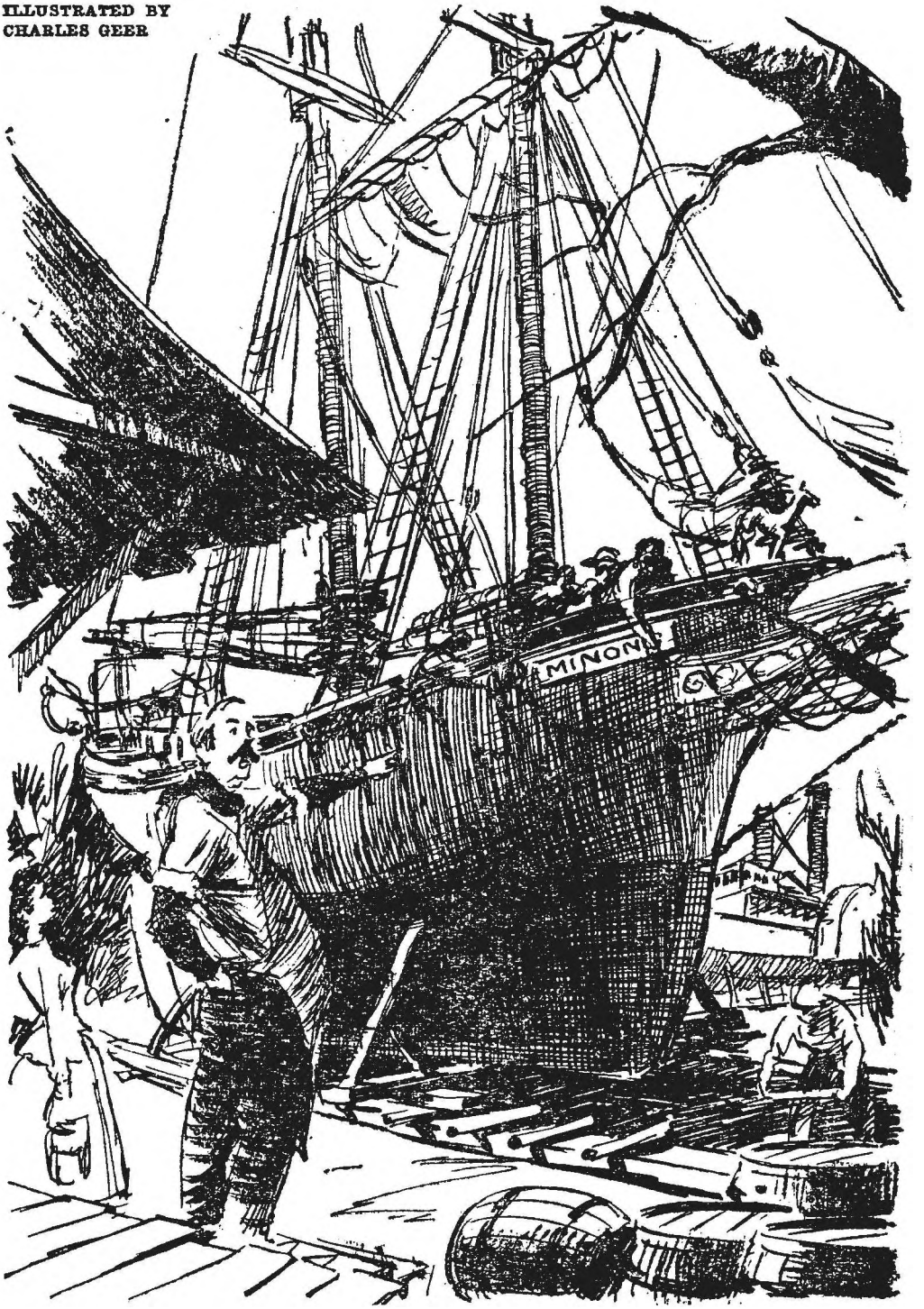
Londos laughed. "A damn likely story that."

I half rose among the ferns. God, this would be murder. Charlie's hand gripped my arm savagely and forced me back.

"I'll break your blasted neck if you do," he hissed.

(Continued on page 125)

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES GEER



They hauled the Minong *out of water below the Soo Rapids, and started the schooner on the drag up Portage Avenue with skids, rollers and capstans.*

Captain McCARGO'S IRON MONEY

WHEN old Cap Sparhawk blew in, stirred his stumps toward the deacon seat of Detroit's Steamboat Hotel, and cleared his throat of dirty weather with a pint of hot buttered rum, chairs scraped across the lobby as the crowd hitched forward to hear the greatest yarn-spinner on the Sweetwater Seas, bar none. "Speaking of wooden ships and iron men—which nobody was," he allowed in his Downeaster twang, "I'll thank you to name me the most important discovery since Columbus sailed dead wrong to the right spot."

By WILLIAM RATIGAN

Although given this leeway, the crowd wisely held tongue while the testy skipper of the *Prairie Dew* bit off a chunk of Peerless Plug and salivated the cherry-red target of the pot-bellied stove. His listeners, from bruised experience, knew that Sparhawk never thanked anyone for telling him anything, and they were cautious about venturing an opinion which might run afoul of his own.

"The discovery of the iron ranges in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, you dolts." *Sp-urt!* "Marquette, Menominee, Gogebic." *Sp-lash!* "California's Gold Rush got the publicity, but Sutter's Mill wasn't worth a tinker's toot next to one measly shaft house at Negaunee or Ishpeming."

His eyes, blustery-blue as Saginaw Bay, challenged the lobby for opposing sentiments, before he continued. "Becuz why? Becuz gold is easy-living stuff and iron is hard-working metal. The '49ers turned soft and swapped their yellow nuggets from the High Sierras for Nob Hill Palaces and Barbary Coast brothels. But the men who gouged red ore out of the Algonquin Glacier turned hard as iron nails, hard as iron rails, hard as the nails and rails we needed to build towns and cinder tracks from Hell's Kitchen to the Golden Gate."

Thoughtfully he irrigated a remote cuspidor. "This country's got iron in her blood. George Washington's Daddy peddled iron ore from Mount Vernon, and when Ethan Allen took Ticonderoga in the name of the Great Jehovah and the Almighty Continental Congress, iron puddlers from his thunder-gust forge were along to back up the play.

"Iron was our motto." *Sp-urt!* "Our passport to freedom." *Sp-lash!*

"We nicknamed our fightingest ship *Old Ironsides,* called Baldwin's first locomotive an Iron Horse, and then, with the nation running wild on rails and land-office-business carpenters hollering for more nails, we got word from back East that the iron mines were beginning to peter out."

Jaws working on Peerless Plug, Sparhawk paused a moment and a deepwater gleam came into his eye. "Ever noticed how, when this country needs something tougher to git than low taxes, some rugged customers who never heard of impossible gin'rally slope off into the wilderness toting a keg of Monongahela and sashay back, roaring drunk, with just what civilization ordered?"

A finger, formidable as a marlinespike, warned his listeners not to jump to conclusions. "I'm not saying old Bill Burt was half-seas-over when he pushed his survey line up Jackson Mountain. Not by a jugfull! But he must have thought he was when the needle of his magnetic compass started switching port and starboard like the stern sheets of a polka-dancing fat lady."

Chuckling the way a buzzsaw eats into white pine, Sparhawk tilted his stovepipe hat and slid deeper into the deacon seat. "Bill Burt's discovery of the Marquette Range minds me of what happened a few years later on the identical spot when McCargo lost his title of Captain and ended up facing a twenty-year jail sentence, all because he wanted to round out the *Minong's* quartet with the North Country's spit-and-image of the Pied Piper of Hamlin who was cracked on the subject of uranium and rats."

And so, with another pint of hot buttered rum to take him out of drydock, Uncle Ben Sparhawk steamed and sidewheeled into another McCargo yarn that quickly became part of the folklore of the Inland Waterways from Lachine Rapids through Tahquamenon Swamp to the Apostle Isles. We'll have to sit on the safety-valve to hold down some of the old gent's language, but here's the course he charted . . .

CAPTAIN THUNDER BAY McCARGO always borrowed trouble to buy into a fight. This particular trouble belonged to an undersized, middle-aged man who had been straight-armed off the board sidewalk into the spring mud of Water Street by a burly behemoth lurching from a grog shop. With the light of battle in his smoky eyes and a ring of pirate gold hornpiping from his ear, McCargo sprang forward.

The master of the *Minong* moved with bear-greased lightning speed, but sheer distance prevented him from sparing further hurt and humiliation to the small stranger who struggled from the mud,

spectacles smeared and finery wilted, to sputter, "Sir, I'm former Congressman Trimble from Massachusetts, and I demand an explanation of this outrage. I do indeed, sir!"

His face ugly and cruel as the devil-mask of a Pottowatomie medicine-man, the behemoth blew laughter from his lips like an unhealed tomahawk-slash. "Sir," he mocked, "I'm present Saloonkeeper Swick from the Marquette Range, and you got in my way. I resent that, I do indeed, sir!" His leg swung wickedly and a boot the size of a canal barge tumbled the small man once again into Water Street.

A grappling-hook hand swung Swick around. "Sir," McCargo said in a voice that carried the sound of buckshot in a tin pail, "I never introduce myself to scoundrels, but I'm in your way now. Do you resent me, sir?"

Swick's eyes, scorched raisins in an obscene pudding, measured his man with caution at first, then with contempt. True, McCargo stood two axe-handles tall, the frontier's gauge for a giant, but the tailored rainbow of his courting costume with the foam of Mechlin lace at throat and sleeve-tip deceived crude glances to the rawhide-on-whalebone frame beneath.

"Did you dress up for the party, pretty boy?" Swick bellowed. "Here's mud on those Sunday-go-to-meeting duds!" He launched a blow calculated to knock McCargo clear across the Ste. Mary's Rapids to the Canadian side of the Soo, but went jolting back on his heels to splinter the clapboard front of the grog shop as a rapier left-jab smashed into his nose with cartilage-crunching force.

"Tom Cribb, Champion of England, taught me never to lead with my right," advised McCargo, waiting for Swick to wipe away blood for the next lesson. This time the pain-maddened saloonkeeper from the Marquette Range made a bull-moose rush and McCargo, tansy-footed as a Seville toreador, danced aside, hand-chopped him across the back of the neck, and wide-grinned as Swick hurtled from the plank sidewalk into Water Street muck.

Slubbering on hands and knees, more mud than man, Swick crawled back and called quits. "I'm beat," he whimpered. "Help me out of this swamp and I'll apologize to the runty gent from Congress."

Hoisting his sleeve from harm's way, because he wanted no smidgen of mud-stain to blemish his afternoon outing with persnickety Bostonian Barbara, McCargo extended a hand. Swift as a striking copperhead Swick grabbed hold and, with one heave of his hawser-muscled shoulders, keelhauled the Lakeman into Water Street.

The fight that followed lasted two splattered hours and forged the first link in an iron chain of death-laden destiny that stretched to the Angry Home of the Thunder God on Jackson Mountain. McCargo's training in Parisian Sabot, his Prince-of-Wales command performances with mufflers and maulies among the Pick of Britain's Fancy, went for nothing in what Sparhawk later dubbed "the Battle of Buffalo Wallow." Marquis of Queensberry rules yielded to the gouged-eye ethics of Erie Canawlers and the chawed-ear etiquette of Mississippi Alligatormen. With both combatants mired to the boot-tops in mud, only brute strength counted —and the broad-beamed saloonkeeper from the Marquette Range pressed his advantage. Grog-shop odds rose ten to one in favor of Swick and no takers until an Indian carved from a lodgepole pine and a Negro who dwarfed Scheherazade's djinns came up to cover all bets while an Irish Wolfhound larger than Baron Munchausen's imagination rumble-sounded his approval.

As news of the conflict spread, Chippewas whitefishing in the Rapids dip-thrust their birchbarks to shore; soldiers at Fort Brady deserted the parade grounds; factors and clerks slipped away from their baled pelts at the American Fur Trading Company; Coureurs de Bois stole in from the woods; and a tall girl with cool eyes twirled a disdainful parasol and looked down her nose at the berserk mud.

In a scene stolen from the dawn of time, like two dinosaurs struggling in a prehistoric tar-pit, Captain McCargo and Saloonkeeper Swick savaged the centuries to one side and reverted to the days when the North Country was steaming jungle and Tyrannosaurus Rex used sabre-toothed tigers for parlor kittens.

IT WAS a great year on the Great Lakes. The old paddle-and-portage routes of fur traders and whiskey runners, of black-robed Jesuits and gay-clad *voyageurs*, now throbbed with the beat of sidewheelers and propellers, now bloomed with a thousand spreading sails. This was moving day in the nation, and the wooden ships and the iron men had contracted to deliver enough settlers and supplies to house a continent.

Moving day in the nation, and a tide of buckskin and broadcloth and homespun certain to double the next census, spilled over Lake Ontario, ripplekicked along Clinton's Big Ditch to Erie, surged up Huron, rounded the Straits of Mackinac, and tumbled down Lake Michigan in restless, fiddlefooted flood. Moving day, bub. Destination: North Star and Setting Sun. Seventeen states still to be born and no time to waste.

But, on top of the world, back of beyond, the giant of all lakes, the Great Cold Sea with the Iron Collar and the Copper Crown, cast a glacier-blue eye at the march of progress and challenged all comers. "I hold the keys to the continent," Lake Superior stormed. "I've let you loot my hills, but try to get away with the plunder!" And she laughed as she plunged over the Falls at Sault Ste. Marie because here was a barrier that no ship bound up from the lower lakes could pass, and the red iron ore and the copper slabs piled up at Marquette and at Keweenaw Point while brash young Cleveland and sunless old Pittsburgh waited in vain for metal to make nails and rails, and wires for the invention Sam Morse had figured out between the portraits he painted.

Cap Sparhawk and young Captain McCargo never refused a dare. At Close of Navigation the previous year Red Massasauga and Black Pompey helped them haul the *Prairie Dew* and the *Minong* out of water below the Soo Rapids, and they started the sidewheeler and the schooner on the drag up Portage Avenue with skids, rollers, and captans.

When the mate calls up all hands
To man the capstan, walk 'er round!
We'll heave 'er up, lads, with a will,
For we are homeward bound!

Rolling home, rolling home,
Rolling home across the sea;
Rolling home to green McCargo Cove,
Rolling home, Isle Royale, to thee!

The revamped ocean foc'sle song provided steady rhythm as they worked, and bug-eyed disbelievers came country miles to watch Cormac tower up on his Irish Wolfhound legs and walk the capstan round as well as any sailor, but the ships made only two lengths a day with three quarters of a mile to go, and McCargo blamed the snail's pace on Sparhawk's whiskey tenor.

Then the white silence swept down from Hudson's Bay, and the ships moved faster across the snow on sleds. Toward the end of March when the ice-locked lakes broke loose with an early roar, the *Prairie Dew* chug-churned into three-shirt weather full-speed ahead and the mermaid on the *Minong's* bow played a game of tag with icebergs on the danger-tack of Eagle River.

There were narrow squeaks on those first runs to the ore ports while other ships huddled in harbor. Lake Superior, with ninety-mile gales that piled up forty-foot waves, threw her full fury against the two upstarts. Once, a quick freeze on the heels of a thaw stiffened the *Minong's* canvas to lead until her sails would not haul down, but she made wharfage instead of the rocks because McCargo, carrying a consignment of live beef to the Cliff Mine, harnessed the steers, dumped them over the bow, and, with Cormac nipping their flanks, rode out his bawling tow to safety. Once, the *Prairie Dew* hit drift ice and sprang a leak, and a frightened engineer pounded on Sparhawk's cabin to report that the water was sloshing deep.

"Hell's jangled bells!" roared out a sleepy voice. "Every time I take forty-winks on this tub some piston-parsnip tells me he's got a puddle in the boiler room. Pump, blast your hides! And don't bother me again until it gets up past your mouth. Then yell for help." *Sp-urt!* "And drown yourself." *Sp-lash!*

They ran risks but they won the gamble with the Queen of Lakes. Rival captains, scenting profits in the iron and copper hauls, sent their ships up Portage Ave-

nue or laid new keels above the Falls. By mid-May a whole fleet serviced the boom towns on the Bonanza Ranges, and Cleveland forges and Pittsburgh mills no longer went hungry. The iron nails and the iron rails, the copper wires and conductors, needed to span a continent with steel and string it with communication were ready for Baltimore Clippers, Prairie Schooners, and Baldwin's locomotives. Moving day in the Nation. All aboard!

Captain Thunder Bay McCargo had no thought of his contribution to history when the *Minong* nuzzled the wharf above the Soo on that fateful morning in May. Bound down from Marquette he had puzzled over persistent waterside rumors about a fabulous singer who wandered the Iron Hills like a Will-o'-the-Wisp but, having decided to ship Hulda up from Detroit for the First Grand Callithumpian Songfest on Independence Day at Copper Harbor, he pushed aside the hunch that told him to track down the phantom man or woman known from Chocolate River to Fond du Lac as the Negaunee Nightingale. With the Valkyrian Norsky to round out the *Minong's* Quartet and insure winning of the Championship Trophy, why comb the woods for talent?

McCargo winked at his shaving mirror as he pictured the mining judges' reaction to Brunhilde-Hulda who stood six-foot-sonsy in her black peasant shoon and boasted breastworks that not even a flowered Hardanger corselet could confine. Out on deck he could hear Red Massasauga and Black Pompey spark dock-wallopers shifting red ore to the cars of Sheldon McKnight's Tramway, a two-horse outfit that carried all freight around the Falls to the lower-lake ships waiting below the Rapids.

Inside the cabin, McCargo dressed with foppish care, bathing his face in Micheaux's Freckle Wash and gentling his orange hair and sideburns with Balm of Columbia. When he tipped his fourteen-inch-tall Beaver to the *Minong's* mermaid and strolled toward Fort Brady, he was a shine-and-show for bandaged eyes in a silver-buttoned mulberry satin coat and topaz-yellow breeches.

Under his breath he sang, "I've a foot like a feather, a fist like a hammer, and a heart just bursting with love—" and, deep-breathing the balmy air, he felt confident that even a proper young lady from Boston could no longer resist his advances. Barbara Cabot might be the daughter of an Army officer, but there must be limits to her defensive tactics. Once she saw him resplendent in his tailored imports, the very Glass of Fashion, her heart would sue for surrender. Then he'd follow old Cap Sparhawk's advice: "Hold a bottle by the neck and a woman by the waist." *Sp-urt!* "And let Nature take its course." *Sp-lash!*

While McCargo day-dreamed in this style, his Wellington boots, sizes small to fit his pride, walked him straight into the trouble he borrowed from Mr. Trimble to buy a fight with Swick.

CHAPTER II

BAD MEDICINE

NOW, almost two hours later, clothes wrecked beyond a rag-picker's nightmare, boots squishing in the quagmire of Water Street, McCargo found second

McCargo found second wind and slogged his fists into the smashed pudding of Swick's face.

wind and slogged his fists into the smashed pudding of Swick's face. The saloonkeeper from the Marquette Range began to topple under the pile-driving blows, and the crowd loosed a full-throated roar. He fell forward, one arm doubled beneath his body, the other outstretched toward McCargo, and his breath bubbled in mud.

Wearily McCargo turned away, but there was no need for Cormac's bark nor the shouted warnings of Black Pompey and Red Massasauga as Swick's outstretched hand clawed at McCargo's belt and the hand beneath his body flashed into murderous action with a black-hafted knife. Swick had played possum once be-

fore, and this time McCargo, never fooled twice by the same trickster, caught the saloonkeeper's muddy wrist in a deathlock.

Even so, Swick's strength managed to plunge the blade until its point pricked blood from the Lakeman's chest. Then McCargo, straining every ounce of muscle, forced the wrist slowly back. Swick, eyes bulging, rooted his other hand in orange hair and yanked. McCargo concentrated on the knife.

He would never forget that Scotch Sgian, the black-haft chased with silver and set with a yellow cairngorm stone at the hilt, the bloodthirsty blade saw-toothed on one side and sharp as vengeance on the other. Losh mish! What right had a mongrel named Swick to bear a heather-honored weapon?

With renewed fury McCargo bent back the wrist until the saloonkeeper's arm was twisted behind his back and his pulped lips begged for mercy, but he made the mistake of trying to stab once more as McCargo relaxed his grip, and he paid full price for that error. The crowd heard a noise like a dry stick breaking before Swick screamed at the agony of his fractured arm and fainted.

Wide berth was given McCargo as he staggered onto the board walk and stared dully at the muddy ruin of his clothes. Barbara Cabot switched contemptuous skirts and rested an immaculate gloved hand on the arm of a callow lieutenant. Her cool eyes looked through McCargo as if he were not there, but the words she spoke to her escort were intended for his ears.

"How utterly disgusting." Her nose wrinkled. "The spectacle of two supposedly civilized creatures rooting like hogs in a pigsty." She sniffed. "I suppose it's the frontier influence, but imagine what the people of Boston would say."

McCargo's hopes piled up on a lee-shore, but he fired one broadside. "Mary, Queen of Scots, had an answer to clacking tongues," he observed with a mud-caked bow. *"They say. What they say? Let them say!"*

"Barbarian!" said the girl from Boston. "Shall we stroll, Mr. Oglethorpe?"

The lieutenant thought it a charming suggestion. They strolled. A doctor navigated Water Street to attend Swick's injuries. Mr. Trimble, the former Congressman from Massachusetts, presented his thanks to McCargo along with a personal card announcing that, since his health required a change of climate, the Soo now boasted a resident Counselor-at-Law. "Sir, I should consider it an honor to do anything in my humble power to repay your kindness."

McCargo's bleak eyes followed a haughty parasol and a scornful bustle down the street. "Sir, there's naught St. Patrick himself could do," he replied glumly. "I've wasted three months on a petticoated icicle." Then he returned to the *Minong,* his first love, his true love, his sweetheart of the Lakes.

At pink dawn he hoisted sail for Copper Harbor, tossing a handful of coins over the stern to insure a profitable voyage. Milwaukee cheeses, Cincinnati pork, and Sandusky wines in her hold, the *Minong* laughed through Whitefish Bay, tossed her pert bonnets at the Pictured Rocks, and stretched her swan's neck toward Keweenaw Point. She made music across the water, the wind fluting high in her rigging and striking deep chords from the canvas at her foremast, but it was her raffee topsail—tri-cornered birthmark of the Lakes—that carried the harp once sounded through Tara's Halls.

In tune with the melody she sang, McCargo rehearsed his crew in a pumping chantey for the Grand Callithumpian Songfest. Red Massasauga spliced a Davy-Jones-Locker bass to Black Pompey's timberline tenor as McCargo took the baritone lead: "The rats have left her one by one—they tightroped to the shore—and if we stay long on the *Prairie Dew,* we'll see our friends no more!"

Chuckling over the insult to the paddle-wheeled apple of Sparhawk's eye, McCargo steadied his helm on the port tack to Keweenaw and, as an orange moon dripped from Lake Superior, pictured his quartet already peacocking toward the judges' stand to receive the Championship Trophy. With Hulda's help, how could they lose?

But a Celtic shiver of foreboding struck him at sight of the grim hulk of the old *John Jacob Astor* on the rock-ribbed shore. Here, still haunting the coast,

bleached the bones of the first American-built vessel to sail these waters—a warning to all men of the death that must come and the dreams that must fade while the Great Upper Lake tossed her immortal waves toward the eternal stars.

THE *Minong* whispered into Copper Harbor and McCargo shivered again at the twin stacks and architectural furbelows of the *Prairie Dew*. With Sparhawk in port, wise men stayed at sea. The old gent never borrowed trouble; he carried plenty to spare, for himself and friends. Bad news clung to him, the way killer-sharks slide their white bellies in the wake of a plague-ship.

McCargo gave unloading instructions to his crew and strode into the town that called itself First City of the Upper Peninsula and thumbed its craggy nose at Marquette and the Soo. Capital of the Copper Country, with the second largest newspaper and second largest hotel in Michigan, Copper Harbor boasted of surpassing Detroit someday soon. Horace Greeley had honored the place with his presence, struck it richer peddling subscriptions to his *New York Tribune* than prospecting the greenrock hills, and returned home to advise younger men to go West. But the boom town on Keweenaw's tip took more pride in the fact that its boarding-house beds were never made because the miners slept in three shifts and there was no time to change sheets. With saloons roaring around the clock, that spelled Progress!

Pushing into the Cluster of Grapes Tavern, where the Grand Callithumpian Trophy towered on display from the huge fireplace mantel, McCargo ducked for a corner table as he heard a Downeaster twang and saw the seagull-spotted stovepipe above the patched Prince Albert coat and the nicotine-splashed shirt ruffles. He wanted no part of Sparhawk while his eyes dreamed on the mantelpiece.

"All hands hit the deck and promenade to the bar!"

Three sheets to the wind and rolling to heavy seas with a list to starboard, Sparhawk slapped down cash for the crowd. "Ain't aiming to be the richest man in the graveyard," he announced. "Drink hearty, gents, it's Forty-Rod and guaranteed to pulverize any tenderfoot at said distance with one bunghole whiff." He drained his glass and reached for the jug. "Here's to God's country." *Sp-urt!* "The Devil got froze out." *Sp-lash!* "Ten months winter and two months poor sleddin'."

His fierce blue eyes sought out a greenhorn. "Ever hear of Keweenaw Eagles, bub? That's what we call our mosquitoes. Had a blizzard on Fourth of July once, and those poor varmints were caught with their mackinaws off. Froze in mid-air and didn't come down until a forest fire thawed things out in November, so we turned a tidy profit by cleaning the carcasses and selling them down to Day-troit as Thanksgiving turkeys. That's a fact, bub." *Sp-urt!* "Some folks will swallow anything." *Sp-lash!* "Espeshly at bargain prices."

While Sparhawk treated the house to more Forty-Rod and tall-taled his way into the Battles of New Orleans and Lake Erie where he gave a dab of credit here to Andy Jackson and a dab of credit there to Oliver Perry for helping him win the War of 1812 by land and sea, Captain McCargo paid court to the Grand Callithumpian Trophy. Artistic triumph of the Upper Peninsula mines, the Trophy's base had been fashioned from the first two-foot bar of iron bloom from Graveraet's Marquette forge, and the figures of the four singers that crowned the masterpiece were sculptured from the "historic pebble," the Ontonagan Boulder, the mighty nugget, the solid chunk of pure copper hurled into a river bed by some forgotten god to furnish souvenir pieces for the Kings of Europe until the wonder of the New World had been hacked down small enough to find its two-ton resting place in the Smithsonian Institution. No wonder McCargo yearned for a share in that international curiosity already famous when the Pilgrims sighted Plymouth Rock.

Suddenly, eyes narrowed, his orange head swiveled toward the bar where Sparhawk seemed to have reached the crying-jag stages of his Forty-Rod excursion. The old gent dashed a tear from his stubbled cheek and muttered mournfully, "It's a shad world, my friends, and a shin and a shame—what those mining owners have done to keep McCargo's Quartet from winning the champeenship."

The crowd took one startled look and gave wide berth to McCargo as he stormed to the bar and demanded an explanation from Sparhawk who clung to him in sympathy, and for support. "Give me a chance, son." *Sp-urt!* "And I'll spit it out." *Sp-lash* "They've rigged the rules on you, to give landlubbers the prize. You was fixing to sing Hulda?"

"Everyone knows that," said McCargo impatiently.

"Including the Copper Moguls," Sparhawk agreed. "So they've passed a new rule that says, no she-males allowed." He thrust a handbill at McCargo. "But that ain't all, son. They've cooked your goose and lapped up the gravy. Read the fine print and weep."

McCargo studied the handbill, his face darkening as he memorized the new rules directed against the *Minong's* quartet. The no-woman clause scuttled Hulda, but the final paragraph caught the whole crew between wind and water:

> All contestants in the First Grand Callithumpian Songfest on July 4th at Copper Harbor must be bona fide representatives of the Upper Peninsula Ore Country. As a concession to newcomers it is hereby stipulated that all males who have served a minimum of one month in the metal fields are eligible for entry.

"By Saint Brendan the Sailor," vowed McCargo, "we'll beat them at their own game! There's more than a month to go, and we'll go and get ourselves jobs in the mines!"

"Seamen scrounging around in the earth's belly?" Sparhawk's voice crawled with horror, then scratched even that dismal chance off the list. "Nope, son, they figured you'd do something desperate, so every mine on Keweenaw's got you blackballed and boycotted. You're up Salt Creek." *Sp-urt!* "With a broken paddle." *Sp-lash!*

Flames of temper licked through the haze of McCargo's smoky eyes. His fist smashed the bar in a futile gesture of rage. Misery in his heart, he stared long minutes at the Grand Callithumpian Trophy. Then a corner of his mind trapped an idea, and, lips shaped with firm resolve, he started from the tavern.

"Throw me a line, son," Sparhawk bellowed, staggering in his wake. "I need a tow." He steamed up, puffing questions. "Where ya bound? What ya aim to do?" And, when McCargo told him, he jammed his stovepipe over his ears and muttered, "Well, the *Prairie Dew's* got a busted boiler, you're crazy, and I'm just drunk enough to tag along. Shape a course, Mister, but watch out for squalls!"

SO, WITH dawn still hull-down over the horizon, the *Minong* flipped her taffrail at Copper Harbor and stitched a ribbon of lace across the lake toward Marquette. McCargo, half-dozing at the helm, put polish on his plan. It was simple enough. He figured to take advantage of a loophole in the contest rules by getting himself and crew a job in the iron mines for a month, but there were further inducements and considerations which he had not mentioned to Sparhawk.

When the sun pried open the bloodshot eyes of the *Prairie Dew's* skipper, he rolled out on deck with a head like a fire balloon and a mouth to match a bilge pump. "You're minus buttons and buckles," he growled at McCargo. "Grin, you gargoyle! You'd lose a month's profit of cash-and-carry with the *Minong* to win a skimpery songfest. That makes sense like a two-headed calf! Even if the Copper Kings haven't boycotted and blackballed you on the Iron Collar, how you going to round out your quartet? Dress Hulda up in pants?"

"That's an idea," said McCargo, "but I've another in mind. I intend to locate the Negaunee Nightingale."

"Negaunee Nightingale?" Shocked at this news, Sparhawk spat to windward like any landlubber and the return spray flecked nicotine on his ruffles. "Been heard but never seen for five years. There's no setch thing, you ninny! Nothing but a tall tale, a prospector's fable!"

"What is a fable," said McCargo softly, "but an Irish truth?"

Sparhawk threw up his hands. He addressed the Lord in language that was not a prayer, reminding Him that a certain moist-behind-the-ears whelp had suicidal notions of invading the den of a polecat named Swick who ruled the roost of the Marquette Range from his Deadfall Saloon.

McCargo paid small heed to Sparhawk's sulphur-and-brimstone outburst. Since fighting Swick, he had patched together odd bits of waterside gossip and rumor until it formed a pattern that told him the saloonkeeper held no monopoly on evil but worked hand in glove with Superintendent Leach of the Wolverine King Mining Company. Somehow their partnership had resulted in the forced labor of two hundred Cornish miners. Details of the white-slave setup were still obscure, but McCargo's voice carried a crusading ring as it outlined his thoughts during a lull in Sparhawk's profanity. "We might kill several birds with one stone," he ended.

"Not with my slingshot." *Sp-urt!* "I'm no galloping Galahad." *Sp-lash!* "Let those Cousinjacks rescue themselves." Sparhawk glowered. "I must've been tipsier than forty fiddlers at a Frenchy shivaree last night, but I'm church-sober now and soon's we hit shore I'm taking the first boat straight back to Copper Harbor!"

Listening, the *Minong* chuckled across the water, dimpled the bosom of Iron Bay, and whispered her joke to the grouchy old pilings as she tickled the ribs of Peter White's wharf. McCargo hailed a young backwoodsman bossing the stevedores and ore trimmers as red iron moved into ships bound down for the Soo.

"Peter," he said, "I'll be gone for a month with my crew. May I leave the *Minong* in your care?"

"Forever, and for one day more," said Peter White who had felled the first tree for the founding of Marquette, snowshoed the first mail from Green Bay to the miners, and trail-blazed his name into the future.

With the *Minong* in safe hands, McCargo stepped ashore into the hurly-burly of the Iron Port. His shoulders and Cormac's bark cleared a path through diamond-stickpinned hawkers of gilt-edged stock certificates. "Get in on the ground floor, Mister! We're diggin' to China and buildin' to the sky!"

"Diggin's for undertakers." *Sp-urt!* "Talking ain't building." *Sp-lash!*

McCargo pretended surprise as he turned to find Sparhawk following him along with Red Massasauga and Black Pompey. "Are you still with us, Uncle Ben? I thought you were taking the first boat out."

"None of your lip." *Sp-urt!* "Somebody's got to look after lunatics." *Sp-lash!* Sparhawk lurched around a corner and halted suddenly at sight of a man about sixty sunning himself on a hotel veranda. "Hey, son, look who's in town!"

"I'm looking," said McCargo. "Who is it?"

Sparhawk gave him a pitying glance. "Oh, nobody much. Just the man who discovered the whole Marquette Range, that's all! Ahoy, Bill!" he yelled. "Bill Burt, you old son of a seacock!"

McCargo blinked as Sparhawk pawed, backslapped, and cursed the Honorable William Austin Burt, formerly of the Macomb Circuit Court Bench, one-time member of the Michigan Territorial Legislature, past Postmaster of Mount Vernon, self-taught engineer and geologist, United States Deputy Surveyor, father of the typewriter, inventor of the solar compass and the equatorial sextant, guest of kings on his recent trip to Europe—in short, a personage not to be offered a chaw of Peerless Plug. But, as McCargo sprang forward to prevent Sparhawk's *faux pas*, the man who already had a mountain of iron and a lake of sapphire named in his honor took a healthy bite of the rank tobacco and stuck out a woodsman's fist to the master of the *Minong*. "I've heard about you, McCargo. Any friend of Ben's is my friend."

"This is like shaking hands with history, Judge Burt," McCargo said in sincere homage. On closer view he sized up a big-boned pioneer with a strong, compact frame fit to fight the wilderness. A mat of iron-gray hair sat the massive head like a wig. The face showed the mapped contours of a surveyed township. Notched thought plowed passage between wide-spaced eyes that carried the glint of remote horizons. A bold explorer's nose broadened at the base in nostrils flaring toward a long, thin, uncompromising mouth turned down grimly at the corners above a jaw chiseled from a slab of Galway stone.

Before excusing himself to keep a luncheon engagement, Judge Burt gave both Lakemen a parting word of advice. "I've

been asked to sit the Marquette Bench this summer to clear up a clutter of cases. Don't count on lenient treatment if you overstep the law in this County on one of your typical escapades. When I preside as Judge, I recognize no friends."

With that warning in their ears, McCargo's party started up into the shaggy hills that climbed to the Iron Range thirteen miles above Marquette. They walked the plank road of the Strap-iron railway snaking down from the mines of Negaunee, Ishpeming, and Company City. About halfway up as they were rounding a bend that teetered on a precipice called Purgatory Point, they heard a rumble and a roar from above and McCargo yelled, "Squeeze the safe side of the mountain! It's a runaway train!"

Flattened against the shoulder of rock, they watched sudden death. Swaying down the wicked grade came an ore train of three cars, or chariots, piled high with red iron. Two Kentucky Jacks, heehawing with terror, strained into the harness and skimmed flying hooves on the plank road. A Canuck driver in checkered mackinaw, fringed sash, and bright toque screamed like a frightened bluejay in panicky patois. Gaining momentum, with a life and speed of their own, the heavy cars lunged at the heels of the mules that were supposed to haul them.

"No handbrakes." *Sp-urt!* "That peasouper's helpless." *Sp-lash!*

"Jump!" shouted McCargo to the Canuck. "We'll break your fall!"

The man's eyes rolled wildly, then he froze on his perch as metal gone mad piled up in a juggernaut swoop from behind. Kentucky Jacks screamed as the red iron crushed them, then wheels left rails and the whole train catapulted over the edge of Purgatory Point to the studded ore outcroppings far below. Still gripping the reins as if they were his last hold on life, the Canuck driver seemed to turn over slowly in mid-air before the ore buried his body for all time. A crash reverberated across the hills, and Cormac lifted his nose in the death howl.

Sobered at what they were to learn was almost a daily occurrence on Jackson Mountain, the would-be miners trudged up the slopes. Red Massasauga clutched the amulet on his bearclaw necklace and muttered, "Home of Thunder God. Bad medicine," while Black Pompey's eyes showed porcelain white.

CHAPTER III

FAIR WARNING

LATE that afternoon McCargo led them into Company City, home of the Wolverine King Mining Company and Swick's Deadfall Saloon. The town, like Negaunee and Ishpeming, lay sprawled on the height of land from which the Carp River flowed into Lake Superior and the trout-pooled Escanaba meandered into Lake Michigan.

Unlike its sister boom-towns, Company City was owned, operated, and controlled by the one mine. From the central shaft house, rows of shacks staggered across the clearing. A three-story log building enclosed by sharp-pointed palisades ten feet high commanded the whole camp. That would be Swick's saloon, McCargo decided, as three off-shift Cornish miners tugged at its sliding gate of solid ironwood to gain entrance. They were greeted by a rattle of chains and the howling of four timber wolves, Swick's way of advertising.

Cornish women, stringing out clothes that could never be washed free of the red-dust stain, turned faces blank as the hills to McCargo as he strode toward an office leaned-to against the shaft house. Sparhawk stopped in his tracks and pointed palsied fingers at a scarecrow in loud-patched castoffs who was trundling a wheelbarrow toward them. "When a man starts seeing things, it's time to take the pledge, son," he announced sadly. "I could swear that pilgrim's got a rat on each shoulder and another one follering him like a pet poodle."

The scarecrow approached them, and Sparhawk backed away from the blank childish face and the vacant grin. "Happen tha has a nibble o' summat for ma beasties?" A high-pitched musical whistle sent the ground rat scurrying up the scarecrow's trousers to be fondled. "Ma name is Wully Sumple," said the Pied Piper of the Marquette Range in Cornish dialect, "but Ah'm gormless as Maave

Monday, so they call me Simple Wully."

"Bats in the belfry." *Sp-urt!* "And rats in the attic." *Sp-lash!* Sparhawk hollered for gangway and fled to McCargo who had been blocked from entering Superintendent Leach's office by a square-headed tub of tallow whose teeth were as broken as his English. "No jops!" he repeated. "No vurk gifs here! How many times I got to tell you, *schweisshund?*"

McCargo's Heidelberg duelling scar flamed like a hot wire on his cheek. He knew German and resented the insult. His hand shot out, grabbed the squarehead by the scruff of the shirt, and pitchpoled him into a rain barrel. Then, crew at back, he walked into the office and straight toward the muzzle of an ugly pistol held in the sausage-fingers of a jelly-bellied, purple-snouted character who giggled insanely and said, "No jobs, gentlemen. I import my labor from Cornwall." Another giggle threatened to strangle him. "It's cheaper, believe me."

"I believe you," said McCargo. "Your name is Leach and you could suck blood from a boulder, so you'll listen to my proposition." Ignoring the pistol, he took a hundred dollars from his wallet and held the bills under Leach's nose. "My friends and I lost an election bet, and the penalty was to work in your mine for a month," he explained. "We ask no wages and we'll pay you to sign us up to a work contract for that length of time so we can prove that we fulfilled our obligation."

The smell of money was too much for Leach. Suspicion faded from his face and greed alone gleamed moistly in eyes that resembled canned oysters. "Hired," he giggled, and signed them up.

When McCargo pocketed his copy of the contract, he considered it the first seven-league stride toward overcoming Copper Harbor's rules and winning the Grand Callithumpian Trophy, but Sparhawk was in a mood to sour crabapples.

"Working is bad enough but working in a mine is worse and working for no wages is teetotal tomfoolery. Grin, you gargoyle! Now all you got to do is find the Negaunee Nightingale." *Sp-urt!* "Which don't exist." *Sp-lash!*

But it was Leach who had the real laugh on McCargo. "You've lost your title, Mister," he giggled, his belly flopping like a netted fish. "According to miners' custom, you're reduced to the ranks and you'll salute the Mine Captain, the boss of the works, the king-pin of the Cousinjacks, Captain Redruth Lostwithiel, the only recognized Captain in Company City. Report to him for equipment and shift assignments at Shack Sixteen, tip your hat when you meet him, address him with respect or the camp will run you ragged."

The day shift came bucketing up from the shaft as McCargo's crew left the office. Some of the miners trudged toward the shacks, but most of them headed for the Deadfall Saloon. Sparhawk clucked amazement at the parade of rats that followed the Cornishmen from the mine, but he stood stark-still in awe when Sumple Wully, whistling a lilting tune from a tree-stump throne, piped the rodents to him in ear-cocked brigades and whisker-combing battalions.

"Like the drum said about the drumstick." *Sp-urt!* "Beats me hollow." *Sp-lash!* "Why do miners keep rats as pets?"

McCargo shrugged his puzzlement, then sent Black Pompey and Red Massasauga to report to Captain Redruth Lostwithiel while he and Sparhawk turned into the stockade of the Deadfall Saloon where Cornishmen were watching Swick, one arm in a sling, toss chunks of bloody venison to four wolves lunging at their chains. Cormac's hackles bristled into porcupine quills, and Swick turned at the growl.

"Pleasant country," Sparhawk observed. "Populated with rats and wolves." *Sp-urt!* "Both human and natural." *Sp-lash!*

The burnt raisin eyes in Swick's smashed-pudding face were punctuation marks in a death warrant as he included Sparhawk in the murderous look he shot McCargo. Then he stared open-mouthed as McCargo, with cold courtesy, pleaded for a thirty-day truce in their war. "Agreed," he snarled. "My wing'll have a chance to heal and next time you won't be so lucky."

"First time I ever saw you eat humble-pie, son," Sparhawk grouched. "A truce with his kind is the same as a peace treaty with a tarantula."

"We're taking a risk," agreed McCargo,

"but I think Swick will wait until his arm knits. He likes to hang his own meat."

THEY entered the Deadfall Saloon, an acre of sawdust with faro and chuckaluck games going full blast and the longest bar in the North Country. A professor pounded out what passed for music at the only piano west of the Soo, and Swick's bouncers, identified by orange armbands that irritated McCargo's Ulster-hating heart, patrolled the premises brandishing axe handles.

A trull in full warpaint raised raucous voice from behind the bar. "What'll you have, gents? Sin's on tap and Hell's to pay!"

Sparhawk ordered Sarpint's Rye. "They soak a rattlesnake's head in the cask," he told McCargo, and quoted solemnly: "According to medical authorities the snake's venom causes a precipitation which removes impurities." His eyes took second helpings of the trull. "Anytime Annie!" he bellowed. "Thought you was working for the Duchess of Mackinac Island?"

"Got fired," she said shortly. "Wasn't fancy-mannered enough for her!"

"The Duchess does run a genteel establishment," muttered Sparhawk, paying due respect to the lady who loved him. Then a rumble shook the earth, the ground swayed underfoot, bottles and glasses danced on the bar, and he dived under a table yelling, "Earthquake, son! Hunt shelter!"

No one else paid attention to the tremors. "Crawl out from there, you old fossil," laughed Anytime Annie. "Just blasting in the mine, that's all."

Sheepish, Sparhawk brushed off sawdust and ordered more Sarpint's Rye.

"Boys," she chortled, "here's a greenhorn fresh off a windjammer wants to know how he can git to be the Mine Captain!"

"You know so much," he growled. "Tell us why miners keep rats as pets."

"Same reason sailors think rats abandon a bad-luck ship," said Anytime Annie. "No rat on this Range ever got caught in a cave-in or was drowned in a flooded mine or had his whiskers singed in a shaft fire. Rats smell trouble coming and scoot. These Cousinjacks count on their pets to warn them."

McCargo paid for the drinks with a large greenback and stared curiously at the bills handed him in change. The size of regular currency, they were gold-engraved with a shaft house on one side and a forge on the other. The inscription said: *IRON MONEY—Issued by Wolverine King Mining Company—GOOD AS GOLD.*

"We ought to buy stock." *Sp-urt!* "This camp coins money." *Sp-lash!*

Frowning thoughtfully, McCargo stuffed the bills in his wallet. "Ever hear of the Negaunee Nightingale?"

"Sure, and I've heard of ghosts, but ain't never seen one yet." Anytime Annie poured Sparhawk a shot on the house. "There's a voice up in the hills all right, but ask me and it's either a coyote or a bobcat."

McCargo posed another question: "How does a man get to be Mine Captain?"

The trull leaped on the bar and stamped red heels to attract attention. "Boys," she chortled, "here's a greenhorn fresh off a windjammer wants to know how he can git to be the Mine Captain! How do you like that?"

The Cornish miners loved it. They hooted and whistled and stomped their boots. They nudged one another, made circles with fingers to temples, and pointed at McCargo in glee. The whole saloon rocked with guffaws.

Anytime Annie still held the stage and called for silence with her clicking red heels. "It's simple," she told McCargo and the rest of the world. "All you got to do is fight your way up through all the shift-bosses and then take on Captain Redruth Lostwithiel for dessert!" She addressed the miners. "He won't have no trouble at all, will he, boys?"

The Cornishmen gave answer, in mirth that shook the rafters. McCargo said thank-you and, on a gale of laughter, set sail for Shack Sixteen with Sparhawk plucking at his sleeve.

"Just becuz you've lost your master's ticket." *Sp-urt!* "Ain't no reason to lose your head." *Sp-lash!*

"This is more than a matter of pride," McCargo said, rapping the door of the shack. "I want the Cousinjacks to recognize me as their leader when the proper time comes."

A stout motherly woman answered the door and ushered them into the presence of Captain Redruth Lostwithiel, a formidable presence in the prime of life with honest ruddy cheeks and steady brown eyes. Nature had sacrificed height to give him a body that bulked like a sawed-off Alp. His handshake drove to bone.

"Ye'll bunk and board wi' me and ma maid," he said, nodding toward his wife. "Ah've shacked thy crew wi' Wully Sumple," he told McCargo, "and they'll work night-shift in the bal." He turned to Sparhawk. "Does tha ken how to run a donkey-engine, man? Brave and true. We start at dawn."

Next morning they breakfasted on porridge and baked apples with Cornish scalded cream, and Mrs. Lostwithiel gave them oven-hot pasties, Cornwall's portable beef stew, to warm their pockets and fill their stomachs at nooning in the mine. McCargo began his new life in thigh-boots, rough garments, and a hat that trademarked his profession, for it had a piece of stout leather stitched in front for the sharp iron pin that held the Cornish sconce, or candlestick. Captain Lostwithiel handed him four candles as they joined the stream of miners bound for the shaft house. "When the last candle goes out, lad, tha knows thy ten-hour shift is done."

Sparhawk prodded the gizzards of the donkey-engine, hoisted the windlass, and the first crew of miners clambered into the big bucket that lowered them below, singing, "Nearer, My God, To Thee."

"That's no song to sing." *Sp-urt!* "Not going *down!*" *Sp-lash!*

When the bucket came up, Captain Redruth Lostwithiel motioned McCargo into it alongside himself. They got off at the first level and lighted their candles. Hot wax dripped on McCargo's nose as he

followed the Mine Captain into a drift that staggered upward through black magnetic rock to where two Cornishmen hammered a drill held by a third. Surprised, they lifted guilty faces.

"Ya great noggerheads!" Captain Lostwithiel cuffed them as a she-bear boxes her cubs. "Ah don't like to fratch and nag, but Ah've warned ye against drilling this wheel. Happen another blast might put ye in yon cellar to lap oop all the beer in Company City, eigh?" His boots thudded them down-drift. "Happen ya want beer, lads, drill deep enough from the last level and ye'll come oot t'other side world in Johannesburg for a sup o' Dutch brew in the diamond mines." His good-humored laugh echoed along the timbered corridors.

FOR a week Captain Lostwithiel worked side-by-shoulder with McCargo. He taught the Lakeman how to hold and turn and hammer a drill, how to pour the black powder into the hole and tamp it just so and bite the cap firmly to the fuse with his jaws, how to beware the deadly white-damp that sometimes followed a blast and to heed the warning of a candle growing dimmer as the gas spread and to escape with the scurrying rats. He taught McCargo how to shore and roof and stope until finally, one noon while they warmed pasties and black tea over the Cornish stove of a shovel held above candles, he opened his heart.

"Tha'll do to strike the keenly lodes, lad. Tha'll follow the vein and show no flaw. Thy stride and stroke is brave and true." His voice trailed off into gloom, and he heaved a sudden sign. "Ah wish Ah could say same for masen."

"No man is an island," said McCargo softly. "I'll share your troubles as I've shared your bread."

"Thankee, lad. Ah'll touch a pipe and tell ma plod." Captain Lostwithiel smoked and told his story, old as the iron hills, new as the boom-towns. Behind the words McCargo saw the bleak faces of the Cornishmaids stringing their red-dust-stained clothes, felt the lack-lustre spirit that doomed this Cousinjack camp. The Celt in him reached out to touch the Welsh in Lostwithiel.

It was a tale of shattered pride for, above all, the Cornish were a proud tribe and they boasted a heritage of freedom that stretched back to the Bronze Age when, as the original mole-men, they worked the tin mines of Carn Brea and Dolcoath near Camborne. Masters of their own destiny, they hailed from windswept moorlands and angry sea-cliffs, from the bold names of the Scilly Isles, Dartmoor in Devon, Lizard Point, Hensbarrow Beacon, Carn Menellis Boss, Rough Tor.

A proud tribe from the bold names, and the derring-do of Cornwall sang down the centuries from Tintagel Castle to Penzance in Arthurian legend, but pride went begging in these Cousinjacks and Cousinjennies descended from Lancelot and Guenevere, from Tristan and Ysolt, for they had turned their eyes toward the New World and listened to the glib tongue of Leach, and they had signed indenture papers in return for passage money from the cliffs of Cornwall to the Iron Collar of the Marquette Range. One year in the Land of Promise, Leach had told them, and they could work their way out of debt and own farms besides.

"Five years, lad," finished Captain Redruth Lostwithiel heavily. "Five long years gone Ah led ma lads and ma maids into bondage." His fist lashed out at a shelf of rock, but he paid no heed to bleeding knuckles. "Ah blame masen."

McCargo stared into the dark reaches of the drift. Leach owned a town of slaves, owned them body and soul, from breakfast to bed. The Wolverine King Mining Company controlled shack-rentals, rigged food prices sky-high, and doled out a remnant of Iron Money wages that slid across the Deadfall's bar for a glass of forgetfulness and the cot of a tuppeny trollop. It was a crying shame and strictly legal business. Like all clever crooks Swick and Leach operated within the letter of the law, but there were vague stirrings in McCargo as his Celtic mind probed for a chink in their armor. "How much do the men still owe for their passage from Cornwall?"

"Aboot same as masen, lad. Happen two hundred dollars the man."

There were one hundred and seventy Cousinjacks on Leach's payroll. McCargo figured swiftly. "That's thirty-four thousand dollars," he whistled.

"Aye," Captain Lostwithiel breathed deeply. "A king's ransom."

"A king is worth no more than any man," said McCargo, and the next morning he posted a challenge on the shaft house in the shape of a formal statement that declared his present aims but gave no hint of his future goal. Hilarious Cousinjacks spelled out the message with mocking mouths:

The shift-bosses of this camp are hereby served notice that McCargo intends to fight his way through the ranks to the position of Mine Captain. *Chlanna nan on thighibh a so's gheibh sibh feoil!*

Sparhawk poked his whiskers from the gizzard of the donkey-engine. "Which last remark is a Gaelic clan-call, you bustards." *Sp-urt!* "Meaning, the Kilkenny Cats have arrived at the Donnybrook Fair." *Sp-lash!*

Up to McCargo came a Cousinjack nudging seven feet in height and half as wide at the shoulders. "Ah'm boss o' Number One," he announced. "Tha'll start and end wi' ma shift! Eigh, lads," he yelled, "watch ma fisties!"

The lads watched. They saw an orange-thatched hurricane wheel into action. They heard the spit-spat-spang of maulies that jolted like the hammer-heads of a stamp mill.

They groaned as the Cousinjack measured the turf, but they cheered the winner and called for another shift-boss to try his mettle.

"No more now, lads. Down to the bal!" Captain Lostwithiel flung a beamish arm around McCargo. "Brave and keenly fought, lad, and Ah wish thee well until tha reaches my level." While speaking, he seized a long drill and, twisting the iron like taffy in his hands, bent it into a figure-eight. "Fair warning, lad!"

CHAPTER IV

BATTLE ROYAL

AT THE end of his second week in the mines, McCargo had tucked the scalps of five shift-bosses under his belt, and three more would give him the right to meet Captain Redruth Lostwithiel, but his search for the Negaunee Nightingale seemed doomed to failure. Red Massasauga and Black Pompey, along with other miners on the graveyard shift, reported hearing the phantom voice during the star-witched watches of the night, but McCargo never tracked down a clue. Every off-shift hour of daylight found him combing Jackson Mountain for the singer to round out his quartet; every evening found him in the Deadfall Saloon trying out candidates while the professor pounded Swick's piano and Sparhawk toasted the Duchess of Mackinac in Sarpint's Rye.

"Don't be so pick-and-choosy, son. Any Cousinjack heaves a pair of bellows fit to roar ballads till Kingdom Come. They got lungs to bounce off the hills, dig down ten levels, and be heard from fifteen miles away with one ear by a deef corpse."

"All basses and baritones," McCargo complained. "I need a voice higher than the Northern Lights and sweeter than a mattock of Michipicoten maple sugar."

"Next you'll be giving Sumple Wully a try-out." *Sp-urt!* "And whistlin' up rats." *Sp-lash!*

The days crowded toward July. Leach doled out Iron Money. Swick stored up vengeance. McCargo trained his fists on Cornish shift-bosses and brooded on the problem of how to release the Cousinjacks from bondage. He flinched from the only solution his mind could offer. It was a fifty-thousand-to-one chance, worse than the odds against locating the Negaunee Nightingale—and failure meant a graver penalty than sudden death.

One afternoon a false alarm started a chain of reaction that ultimately exploded. Sumple Wully stampeded the camp as miners came off shift. No rats rode his shoulders this time, and his blue eyes showed flames of green like a salt-sprinkled fire.

"Ah've struck it," he told Captain Lostwithiel excitedly. "Ah've struck it rich and true at last!"

Picks and shovels flashing in the sun, the miners trooped after the Pied Piper of the Marquette Range. He led them across broken country and through brush to a new-dug pit on the edge of nowhere, and Captain Lostwithiel growled, "Ye gormless booby, happen this be another wild-goose chase and ma hand's off to slip and cuff thy ear."

Sumple Wully scrambled into the pit. He had trouble climbing up the steep sides, and he carried the ore sample as if he held the Jewels of Ophir. Sparhawk and McCargo narrow-eyed the velvet-black mineral. The Cornish miners sighed, "Ahh, Sumple Wully!" and trudged for home. "Ye blind oof!" roared Captain Lostwithiel. "Tis nobbut pitchblende wi' streaks o' uranium to color clay pots yellow! How many times must Ah tell thee 'tis worthless?"

Back into the pit slid Sumple Wully and his face gleamed with strange light as he hefted more rock in his fists. "Gives off heat, warms ma hands the wee bit," he said defiantly, and prophesied, "Some day men will mine it for more than the color to paint their pots."

Captain Lostwithiel turned in disgust. "Mayhap on Doomsday!" he snorted.

Sumple Wully's worthless uranium strike led to the finding of the Negaunee Nightingale. When Black Pompey and Red Massasauga went off the graveyard shift, they discovered their shack-mate's bed unslept-in and his rats unfed. Worried, they reported Sumple Wully's disappearance to McCargo and Sparhawk. So, in the eerie spell of first daybreak, the four of them searched across the hills, and every pressed blade of grass and broken twig and dislodged pebble told stories to the breech-clouted Ojibway as he paced the trail.

"Red could track an eagle through the clouds and a trout through the sea." *Sp-urt!* "By the fuzz off a feather and the shine off a scale." *Sp-lash!*

But there was no further need for the skill of Pontiac's grandson once a high-tuned, sweet-tongued voice sang to the oyster-shelled dawn across the slopes. "Negaunee Nightingale!" cried McCargo, and sprinted toward the sound.

Enchanting as the Lorelei and her Rhinemaidens, as the siren that lured Ulysses and his shipmates, as the Mermaids of Merlin, the Negaunee Nightingale beckoned them across broken country and through tangled underbrush to the edge of nowhere with a song that told of an all-night fast and a Cousinjack's recipe to cure hunger.

"Ah dearly loves a pasty—A 'ot leaky one—With mayt, turmit and taty—H'onyon and parsley in 'un—The crus' be made with suet—Shaped like a 'alf moon—Crinkly h'edges, freshly baked— 'E es always gone too soon!"

"I told you to give him a tryout, son!" Sparhawk cackled, squinting over the rim of the pitchblende pit at Sumple Wully who sang as he nursed the wrenched ankle that prevented him from climbing the steep sides. "Ma singing is ma secret," he explained with his childish smile as Black Pompey's arms cradled him back to Company City. "Don't tell ma rats. Happen they like ma whistlin' better."

McCARGO'S discovery that the Pied Piper of the Marquette Range and the Negaunee Nightingale were one and the same, solved all his quartet worries. That evening, with Sumple Wully carrying the melody, a Scotch-Irish baritone, an Ojibway bass, and a Savannah tenor barbershopped the Deadfall Saloon with a song dedicated to the strange pets of the miners.

"R-r-r-r-r-r-rats! They fought the dogs and killed the cats, and bit the babies in the cradles, and ate the cheeses out of the vats, and licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles, split open the kegs of salted sprats, made nests inside men's Sunday hats, and even spoiled the women's chats by drowning their speaking with shrieking and squeaking in fifty different sharps and flats!"

Outside, Swick's quartet of gaunt wolves rattled their chains and lifted noses to the moon in hill-haunting howls. At the bar Sparhawk crooked a finger at Anytime Annie and called for more Sarpint's Rye. "Rats and wolves and jackasses and sheep for the shearing." *Sp-urt!* "Barnum oughta buy this zoo." *Sp-lash!*

The next day McCargo fought his way through the last of the shift-bosses and trained his sights on Captain Redruth Lostwithiel. "Eigh, lad, tha's earned the right," said the Mine Captain, "but Ah scorn the fisties. Happen tha wants a lesson in Cornish wrestling, Ah'll meet thee come St. Piran's Festival a-Sunday."

When Sparhawk heard that McCargo had agreed to Cornish-wrestle the champion, he hit the roof and came down choking on Peerless Plug. "You pinebox

idjet!" he sputtered. "What do you know about Cornish wrestling?"

"Do they have different rules?" asked McCargo, not much interested, his mind still puzzling the problem of the enslaved Cousinjacks. "Wrestling is wrestling."

Sparhawk gave him a pitying look. "Son, you're due for a leetle surprise." *Sp-urt!* "And headed for a fall." *Sp-lash!*

McCargo shrugged off the warning and sought out Sumple Wully. "I'll buy your indenture paper from Leach and tear it up if you'll sing with the *Minong's* quartet on Independence Day at Copper Harbor," he said. "You'll be a free man."

"Ah thank thee for thy offer." The Pied Piper of the Marquette Range slowly shook his head in refusal. "No man is free whose mates are slaves," said Sumple Wully. "Ah'm daft and gormless, but Ah know that much."

The answer troubled McCargo, but he saluted the knight-in-shining-armor spirit of the tatterdemalion scarecrow, and fingered a wallet that contained too little Iron Money. "Suppose your mates were set free?"

"Happen Ah'd sing ma heart out," promised Sumple Wully.

St. Piran's Festival honored the patron saint of Cornish Miners, a missionary sent to Cornwall by St. Patrick in the dawn of Christianity, so the Irish always helped celebrate the occasion. They whoop-de-hollered over the slopes from Ishpeming and Negaunee and, as beer flowed by the barrel, they capped the Cornish toast of "Fish, tin, copper!" with their own Celtic *"Slainthe!"*

On this Sunday that marked the end of McCargo's month in the mines, the sun beamed down on Cousinjacks and Micks putting their brawny skill to the test in the drilling contest that led up to the grand-final Cornish-wrestling match. Every boulder on the festival grounds shivered under the attack of three-men teams hammer-slogging at steel drills.

Black Pompey and Red Massasauga formed one of the teams, with Sumple Wully holding the drill as they crashed the hammers. The crowd roared with laughter as they lagged far behind the regular teams. Suddenly the Negro pushed his comrades away and bent down, gripping the boulder with his hands. Herculean thews quivering, he lifted the mighty mass overhead and almost bounced a chariot off the rails as he heaved his burden into an ore train.

The tarred Samson's teeth flashed at the crowd. "White folks," he drawled, "that little ole pebble's just not worth messin' with!"

It took four men to sit the boulder on an honest pair of scales. The beam tipped at five hundred and twenty pounds, an all-time record on the Iron Collar.

When the winning drill team from Ishpeming crowded around their prize barrel of beer, Sparhawk pushed McCargo toward the staked square lashed with ropes. "Our turn, son." He helped the *Minong's* master into a short canvas jacket fringed with stout rope, then cackled as he explained the contest. "The stickler—that's the referee, you ninny—enforces mighty strict rules. It's agin the law to grab a man except by the piping on his jacket. Git a holt on those rope edges and pull and wrench and twist and trip until you've got three points of his body to the ground or tossed him out of the ring."

"You mean I can't use my hands except on the fringe of his jacket?"

"Should of asked me before, son." *Sp-urt!* "Pride cometh before a fall." *Sp-lash!* "Get out there and take your medicine!"

IN AN ordinary match of catch-as-catch-can, gouge-and-chew, and no-holds-barred, McCargo could have tied Captain Redruth Lostwithiel into knots. Now, with the stickler cautioning him against fouls, his hands moved cl msily to grip the piping on the squat giant's canvas jacket. During the first half-hour the Mine Captain made the Lake Captain look like a clown in the ring.

As the crowd roared its delight, McCargo learned Cornish wrestling through trial and error, through thumping falls and cat-quick recoveries. His head began to swim, his sweating fingers lost holds time and again, and the canvas jacket cramped his laboring lungs.

Down he went again with Captain Lostwithiel grunting on top, and the stickler hunkered to see if three points of

his body were touching. He twisted desperately, struggled up, and through the red haze of his eyes saw Swick and Leach, the lard-pail scoundrels, taunting him from ringside, waving sheafs of Iron Money that branded his chances nil.

One other sight worked wonders within McCargo: the spectacle of the *Prairie Dew's* trigger-tempered skipper full-steaming toward that Iron Money with a matching wad of greenbacks. "Go get 'im, son." *Sp-urt!* "I'm banking on ya." *Sp-lash!*

As if in a daze McCargo backed toward the ropes. He slumped his shoulders and swayed on his feet. Fooled into overconfidence, Captain Lostwithiel rushed into the trap. McCargo's hands caught the lower fringes of a canvas jacket and almost tore it off the Cornishman as he catapulted him overhead, partly on his own momentum, out of the ring and into a stunned crowd.

The stickler raised McCargo's arm as the winner, and that proved signal enough for Cousinjacks and Micks to wind up St. Piran's Festival in customary style—with a battle royal of free-for-all fists. Scenting opportunity to settle a month-old score under cover of the brawl, Swick motioned three orange-arm-banded bruisers against McCargo who interpreted the gesture too late and went down in a welter of bodies. A knife grazed his ribs while another thirsted for his jugular vein and, fighting for survival with his crew and Cormac swallowed in the milling crowd, he had no hope of help.

No hope in McCargo until a sawed-off Alp from Cornwall came roaring in to seize one of Swick's men by the ankles and use him for a hammer to sledge the others. Bone splintered on bone as Captain Redruth Lostwithiel won a drilling contest with human flesh and stood over the broken bodies like the Red Knight at a joust in Camelot while Swick uttered a scalding curse and stormed toward the Deadfall Saloon.

"Eigh, 'tis more frolic nor Cornish wrestling, lad!" cried the King-pin of all Cousinjacks. Then, remembering his manners, he added, "I mean, Captain McCargo."

"Never knuckle your forehead to me!" McCargo sharpened his voice to hide emotion. "So long as you live, you'll be the real Mine Captain!"

That night he camped out under the stars with Sparhawk for he could not trust the flimsy walls of a company shack to hold the secret of his plan. The spark-and-tinder skipper listened and shook his grizzled head. "I'd be with you against an army, son, but we can't buck Uncle Sam."

The Big Dipper wheeled as McCargo wrestled with his thoughts and came to no decision. It took dawn and the wailing of women and the stark tragedy of Captain Redruth Lostwithiel sprawled lifeless with seven knife stabs in his back to shape the Lakeman's mind.

"Ah found 'im," sniffled Sumple Wully, and he and the other shuffle-footed miners spoke the old superstition of the Range; that the last person buried in a cemetery must carry water for all the other dead until the next corpse arrives.

"Captain Lostwithiel won't carry water long," said McCargo grimly. His heart wept tears and the shadow of a gallows swept his eyes as he bent them toward Swick's Deadfall Saloon and the office of Superintendent Leach. Leaning down he gently placed a curtain of Iron Money over the Mine Captain's sightless eyes, and then turned to Sparhawk. "Take care of him. I'll be back in a few days."

"Count on me, son." *Sp-urt!* "From Hell to breakfast." *Sp-lash!*

McCargo rode an ore train down Jackson Mountain, with Red Massasauga and Black Pompey perched on red iron, and Cormac growled at the Kentucky jacks as they brayed at the dizzy death that hairpinned Purgatory Point. In Marquette, McCargo debated consulting Judge Burt but recalled the relentless grooves on that uncompromising face, and so he boarded the *Minong* for a record sailing run to the Soo where he docked her above the Rapids with his crew, and then took shore-leave to hunt up a shingle that advertised: Counselor-at-Law.

"Come in, my friend," said little Mr. Trimble, the former Congressman from Massachusetts. "What can I do for you?" His hands formed a shaky steeple as he listened to McCargo's scheme. "As a lawyer I must advise you against any such rash action, but as a humanitarian I ap-

plaud your motives." His eyes glowed behind thick lenses. "See me on your return from Chicago. Perhaps we can pull a legal rabbit out of the law books."

The *Minong* could have waltzed to Indiana Harbor in a whisper above thirty hours, but it took the *Huron Belle* almost two full days before McCargo could vault

Swick fumed filth and fury, while Leach wheezed and waddled toward the safe.

ashore at Chicago, push passage through minnow-eyed immigrants and hungry-jawed landsharks, and locate the dingy office of a rising young detective.

"Sir," said McCargo, "you gained your start in business by rounding up a gang of counterfeiters." He took stock of the gimlet eyes and razor mouth, but put his

faith in the Glasgow accent of the man across the desk. "I want the address of a counterfeiter who is not in jail."

"An unusual request, sir." Allan Pinkerton stared hard at the money offered him. "Most unusual, but—" His quill spluttered hen's tracks across a paper-slip that quickly nested in McCargo's pocket. "I assume you're a penny-a-liner interviewing reformed criminals for the edification of your readers." He scowled in sudden threat. "But if there's rascal-work afoot, God gi' ye wings, mon, because *The* Pinkerton will bounty-hunt and bloodhound you to Creation's Jump-off!"

In the Champagne Room of the Shanghai Rooster, McCargo found Paul the Pen, a slippery genius, dapper graduate of several prisons, the Rembrandt of his trade. "They call me the Counterfeit Count," he explained. "I don't know

about this deal of yours, Guv'nor. I've a tidy sum salted away, and—"

"You mean you don't think you can duplicate this Iron Money?" asked McCargo.

Wounded vanity replied. "You push the queer, Guv'nor. I'll create it." Paul the Pen drew himself up with dignity. "I'm an Artist!"

CHAPTER V

A POINT OF LAW

TOWARD the tag-end of June, McCargo returned to the Soo with an Illinois carpetbag holding fifty thousand dollars in Iron Money, and Mr. Trimble's bulging eyes matched its sides. "We have two points of law to pin our case on," he said, his peaceful chin declaring war. "I insist upon accompanying you to Marquette to prepare a defense for your trial."

McCargo tarried in Marquette just long enough to purchase one share of stock in the Wolverine King Mining Company. At high noon on the birth of July, he surprised Swick and Leach in the latter's office while Sparhawk guarded the door toting a bell-mouthed blunderbuss that spit rusty spikes and jagged glass.

"I'm here to buy the Cousinjacks from bondage," declared McCargo, and he counted out thirty-four thousand dollars in Iron Money, letting them see that he still had sixteen thousand in the bale of bills he stuffed back into his belt. "Hand over those indenture papers."

Their jaws came unhinged and their mouths were traps to catch flies. Leach giggled like a pitchforked fiend. "Counterfeit cash! There's not that much Iron Money in *my* safe!"

"Made for this special occasion by an artist who claims they are even better than the original," McCargo admitted. "The indenture papers, man!"

Swick fumed filth and fury, while Leach wheezed and waddled toward the safe. He opened it and wheeled, metal gleaming in his fist. A pug-nosed derringer slid barking from McCargo's sleeve, and the bite of a bullet drew blood from Leach's hand as his pistol clattered to the floor.

"Getting soft, son." *Sp-urt!* "Should of killed 'im." *Sp-lash!*

Sparhawk trained his blunderbuss on saloonkeeper and superintendent while McCargo hauled indenture papers from the safe and made a bonfire. Leaving nothing but the ashes of slavery behind, they escaped camp two jumps ahead of Swick's aroused minions and rode an ore train around Purgatory Point to Marquette.

There, on Mr. Trimble's advice, McCargo surrendered to the authorities and, as Cornishmen celebrated their new-found independence on Jackson Mountain, their liberator stood behind iron bars, a jailbird for Swick and Leach to mock as they preferred charges on counterfeiting and greased the wheels of justice.

"You'll get twenty years, McCargo!" giggled Leach.

"There's a pettifogging shyster to defend him," growled Swick. "I don't trust the law!"

"I do," giggled Leach. "I got the County Prosecutor in my pocket!"

When Sparhawk waved a court writ under the sheriff's nose that evening, he released McCargo with a grumble of keys. "You're out on bail, son." *Sp-urt!* "The *Prairie Dew* and the *Minong* went your bond." *Sp-lash!*

Judge Burt set trial for the next day because duty called him to the Soo where he had instructions to begin the preliminary survey to by-pass the bottleneck of Ste. Mary's Falls and Rapids. Not far distant loomed the time when Superior would marry Huron in a mating of ships across Michigan's Miracle Mile.

But Mr. Trimble and Sparhawk and McCargo had other matters in mind as they burned spermacetti far into the night, planning a defense. Groggy for sleep, McCargo finally staggered across the hotel hall into his room and awoke at the crack of doom—the roar of Sparhawk's blunderbuss.

The night-capped skipper stood bandy-legged in Mr. Trimble's room, and the remains of a Swick-hireling splattered the floor and walls. "I heard his yell for help too late, son," Sparhawk said in a shipwrecked voice. "We've lost our only hope."

McCargo stared at the bed. Looking

smaller than ever in death, little Mr. Trimble lay in a struggle-tangle of sheets, and the black haft of a sgian set with a yellow cairngorm stone at the hilt reared an ugly growth from his breast.

"Swick trusts no law but his own," said McCargo in a cyclone-cellar voice, "and he'll be paid, like Leach, in his own coin."

The whole North Country tried to jam its way into court that morning, and Judge Burt sat the bench with a Bible for his left bower and a horse pistol for his right. A gavel pounded for order as Peter White, acting clerk, swore in McCargo who answered the guilty-or-not-guilty formula with a classic reply: "No guiltier than my accusers, and not one fraction as villainous!"

As crowd roared and gavel thundered, the County Prosecutor sprang from a hurried huddle with Swick and Leach. A ball of butterfat with an oily tongue, he addressed the Court.

"Your Honor, this trial is a travesty. The defendant is a self-confessed counterfeiter. He intends to work on the Court's sympathy and direct sentiment against my client. So that he may not becloud the issue, we freely admit that Superintendent Leach of the Wolverine King Mining Company has worked indentured labor, installed a Company Town, and issued Iron Money. In all these actions he has operated within his legal rights. I call the Court's attention to the fact that indentured labor is the rule rather than the exception in mining camps, that Company Towns are common in the Upper Peninsula, and that Copper Dollars are issued on Keweenaw." The Prosecutor turned to sneer at McCargo. "Not for reprehensible reasons, but due to the shortage of regular currency."

"That's why I had some of my own Iron Money made," said McCargo with a low bow to the Prosecutor. "Due to a shortage of natural currency in my wallet!"

LAUGHTER convulsed the crowd and Judge Burt splintered his desk with the gavel. No hint of mirth touched the uncompromising lines of chain-surveyed face. "Have you anything sensible to say in your own defense?"

"I have, Your Honor," said McCargo, and he echoed Mr. Trimble as he spoke, and the Court heard the defense plea of a dead man. "So far as I know, the United States Government and only the United States Government has a right to issue paper money or any sort of currency." He showed the Court his one share of stock in the Wolverine King Mining Company. "This certifies me as an owner and, if Superintendent Leach is entitled to issue Iron Money, so am I. If you prosecute me, you must ask for an indictment against him and his company and against all mining companies and officials guilty of counterfeiting under the laws of this nation!"

Pandemonium swept the court. Judge Burt frowned and crashed his gavel. The County Prosecutor bounced up and screamed, "That's anarchy! Unless this criminal is convicted, the entire financial structure of the North Country will topple!"

McCargo ignored him and addressed Judge Burt. "I have another point of law to discuss," he announced, "and, for reasons intimated by the County Prosecutor, it might be wiser for Your Honor to hear it within chambers."

"This Court recessed for ten minutes," called Judge Burt, and swept McCargo and Leach before him into an anteroom where the notch grew deeper between his horizon-hunting eyes as he listened to Mr. Trimble's legal rabbit.

McCargo told how the late Congressman from Massachusetts had remembered an obscure law passed during his term of office. The law declared that the United States Treasury Department had the right to collect a retroactive tax of ten percent on each piece of scrip for each time it had been paid out.

Superintendent Leach's face went white to the bone. That retroactive tax of ten percent applied across five years of Iron Money. Collection would bankrupt the Wolverine King Mining Company.

"There is no question of Mr. Trimble's word," Judge Burt decreed. "But this law, unheard of here, would panic the copper and iron mines."

"I'm not forcing the issue," said McCargo. "I'll hold my tongue."

"Under the circumstances," Judge Burt

told Leach, "I would advise you to take your loss, forget this whole matter, and dismiss counterfeiting charges against Captain McCargo."

Leach took his loss, the ghosts of fifty thousand dollars in Iron Money swimming in his canned-oyster eyes. Swick heard the case dismissed and bolted Court with his henchmen. Sparhawk hallelujahed to the nearest bar and called for Sarpint's Rye. "My sidekick just made sixteen thousand Iron Men," he chortled to the barkeep, "and the money's burning a hole in my throat!"

"That goes for expenses," said McCargo, "and to the family of Mr. Trimble and the widow of Captain Redruth Lostwithiel."

But Swick and Leach had other plans. Down Jackson Mountain came Anytime Annie, and handed to the Lakeman a note that read: "We got Sumple Wully at the Deadfall. Sixteen thousand buys him back."

"It's a trap." *Sp-urt!* "Let's spring it." *Sp-lash!*

Moonlight silvered the Marquette Range when McCargo's party began their siege of the Deadfall Saloon. They caught the glint of rifles poked through lookholes, and Cormac bristled toward the scent of the four wolves Swick had unchained to prowl-guard within the stockade.

Off-shift Cousinjacks volunteered their services to McCargo, and a small army took shelter behind boulders to await commands that were long in coming. Grumbling at delay, Sparhawk reared up and let go a blast from his blunderbuss that ripped and tore at the log walls of the saloon. An answering volley from the loopholes blistered the landscape with chipped rock.

"Down!" yelled McCargo. "We want no bloodshed on this side. They carry too much fire power for us to risk a frontal attack."

"What happens, son? Do we sit here and grow barnacles on our butts?"

The earth shook as miners below set off a charge of black powder that bit deep into hematite. The graveyard shift was working the Wolverine King. A clap of memory rang McCargo's ears. He whispered instructions to Black Pompey and Red Massasauga. Hugging shadows, they started belly-walking down Jackson Mountain.

"Where you sending 'em, son?" Sparhawk's tone was heavily sarcastic. "For the sheriff?"

"When things start popping," McCargo told him, "rush the gate and let Cormac at those wolves." He left half the Cousinjacks with the *Prairie Dew's* skipper, and, dodging behind boulders all the way, led the other half to the shafthouse where they rode the bucket down to the first level of the mine.

Wax dripped on noses, candles lighted up marble halls, as they went deep into the drift. Here—it seemed ages ago—Captain Redruth Lostwithiel had roared, "Happen another blast might put ye in yon cellar to lap oop all the beer in Company City, eigh?"

McCargo poured black powder into the hole drilled that distant day, tamped it down, and bit the cap firmly to the fuse. "Stand back!" he warned, and set the fuse sputtering.

BOOM! Before rocks had stopped falling and smoke had time to settle, McCargo and the Cousinjacks leaped through the yawning hole into the Deadfall Saloon's cellar, charged up the stairs, burst open the trapdoor, and caught the astonished defenders of the fort with all their weapons turned the wrong way.

From outside came Sparhawk's gravel-voiced call to the colors as Cormac snarled into the wolfpack and a frontal assault of more Cousinjacks came larruping across the stockade to catch the Swick-Leach crowd between two fires.

RIFLES WERE clumsy weapons in the skirmish. Shovels and picks and hammer-headed fists won the day. When Leach and Swick, barricaded behind the bar, hoisted a slop-rag on an axe handle and surrendered, McCargo counted heads and found none of his men seriously injured, but three dead rascals with orange armbands littered the sawdust.

"Where's Sumple Wully?"

The answer came piping from upstairs. "Here Ah am, safe with nobbut maids to harm masen," sang the Negaunee Nightingale.

"Eigh, laddies!" sighed a brawny Cousinjack with envy. "Yon Wully's none so simple as Ah recked!"

But the general mood of the crowd was ugly. The Cornishmen wanted revenge for Captain Redruth Lostwithiel and for their five years of slavery. They menaced Swick and Leach. "Hang 'em!" they roared, "Hang the bloody barstids from yon rafters and let their toes dance in the air!"

"I'm Mine Captain until the night is over," said McCargo sharply, and he herded Swick and Leach and the rest of the orange armbands outside to a waiting ore train. Sullenly Cousinjacks helped hitch Kentucky jacks to the chariots and, thunder-muttering under their breaths, heard McCargo say, "You're leaving this country for good, one way or another. You've the choice of a quick hanging right here, or a head-start down Jackson Mountain."

Leach drove and Swick lashed the team. Orange armbands sat on red iron ore. The train gathered momentum and roar as it swept downgrade and around S-curves. Cornishmen accused McCargo with their eyes and Sparhawk had a grindstone for a mouth. Then Black Pompey and Red Massasauga slipped in from the shadows, and the Negro wore a grin like a wedge of watermelon as he nodded to his Captain.

"We ripped the rails, boss. At Purgatory Point."

The crash and rumble and death-rattle came on the heels of his words as the red iron ore that Swick and Leach had fattened on, caught up with them at last and hurled them into the empty space where lost souls fall forever.

"Captain Redruth Lostwithiel won't be hauling water any more," said McCargo to the Cousinjacks. "He'll rest easy from now on."

"Good work, son." *Sp-urt!* "Too bad about them mules." *Sp-lash!*

That evening, free men from Cornwall ruled the Deadfall Saloon, and the Negaunee Nightingale joined McCargo's Quartet.

"I hear the far-off voyager's horn, I see the Yankee's trail—His foot on every mountain pass, on every stream his sail. He's whistling round St. Mary's Falls upon his loaded train—He's leaving on the Pictured Rocks his fresh tobacco stain. I hear the tread of pioneers of nations yet to be—The first low wash of waves where soon shall roll a human sea."

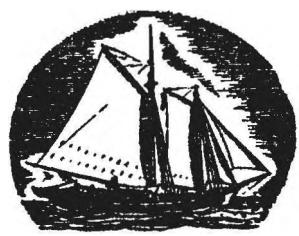
It was a song dedicated to Judge Burt and Peter White and every trail-blazer of the wilderness. It spoke of wooden ships and iron men and the chain of lakes that pulled them toward Manifest Destiny. But, above all, it told McCargo that the *Minong's* Quartet would win the Grand Callithumpian, come Independence Day, and he counted all of his past troubles well spent.

* * *

"Well, sir, Hulda came to Copper Harbor holding Olaf on her quarter-section lap, likewise the LeFevre twins pretty as Beaubien Street peach blossoms, and even that broad-A, Back Bay baked-bean-in-a-bustle from brrr-Boston was on deck to see McCargo's Quartet walk off with all honors.

"They would have, too—except for one happenstance. Spang in the middle of the dee-ciding song, a rat snuck out of nowhere and cocked his whiskers at Sumple Wully. Soooo, the Pied Piper of the Marquette Range stopped singin' and started doin' just what he had always done for his pets.

"And them mining judges disqualified McCargo's Quartet. They rung in a new rule, right then and there." *Sp-urt!* "No whistlin'." *Sp-lash!*



ILLUSTRATED BY EARL EUGENE MAYAN

DESERT TRAP

A Tale of the French Foreign Legion

GATTEAU circled his kepi with a finger. *"Cafard,"* he told the sergeant. "The sun got him."

The two of them stood on the sandy slope above the parked jeep, staring through the flickering heat at the half-naked form in the distance. They had come this far on wheels, off the known trail; but they had had to hike up the slope.

Old Sergeant Boury raised his binoculars in ham-sized hands and focused them on the body. Gatteau, whose real name was Klausner, watched Boury's jaw muscles twitch, watched his lips quiver. Inwardly, deep down in him, he

By GEORGE C. APPELL

Boury fired and saw sand flash high and slap flat . . . The running man thumped to his face, hands clawed forward.

smiled, though it did not show on his dark face. It was a long face, with a mouth that dragged at the corners. It was a mouth that wouldn't say anything directly, frontwardly.

Through his side teeth, Gatteau murmured, "Too bad."

Boury lowered the binoculars, closed them, and slung the case behind his left hip. "With me, now." He strode off the slope toward the body, thick thighs swinging and thrusting evenly, arms charging and retreating to help balance his squat frame as he propelled it across the sands.

The morning was only two hours old, but already it was noon-hot and brittle yellow and showed nothing but empty leagues of endless desert and a powder-blue sky and, northeast between desert and sky, the ice rim of the Atlas ranges.

Gatteau marched rather than walked, twenty years of discipline holding him rigid in the spine, battling a climate that generally melted muscles and left men hung slightly, in the middle. What's the old hound so upset for? he thought. He's seen dead men before, lots of them.

Boury reached the body in a rush and bent to it, fingers flying over the rumpled shirt, the chest, the face. It was a young face, lined only by weather but not by years. It was green-dead and waxen, and the soft lips were rimmed with black. The shirt was torn and the buttons were gone, very un-Legion-like.

Gatteau whispered, "He must have died hard."

"Yes," Boury breathed, and pried a bone button from a still-clenched fist. The sergeant was breathing hard now, and his eyes were blinking fast. He searched the tan uniform and found a wallet, a paper packet containing one cigarette, and a lace handkerchief that smelled of a perfume sold in the Casablanca bazaars. He flipped open the wallet, keeping his eyes down to it. A girl's picture was in a cellophane flap.

"The one in Ksar-es-Madi," Gatteau remarked. His French tripped and stumbled whenever he spoke, but it now was harsh and cold.

Boury's up-glance was swift and sharp. His eyes were dry where they had been damp, and his voice was under control. "Is it so unusual, for a soldier to carry his girl's picture?"

"No, Sergeant." Gatteau was standing at attention, not looking at the body. But he was still smiling inside. "They will bury the body immediately, of course?"

Boury heaved himself to his feet. "You are rather sweet on her, no?"

"On the girl?" He lifted his shoulders and let them fall in imitation of a Latin shrug. "Another girl, another town, another leave. I know her but slightly."

"An enemy, Gatteau. A woman can be man's worst enemy." He stabbed a finger downward. "This soldier died, because he chose to visit her when he should not have left the post."

Gatteau shook his head an inch. "There is man's worst enemy—up there." He raised his face to the flaring sun. "Not women, nor Berbers, nor Riffs." He started to roll his sleeves down, conscious of the furnace-like pressure on his forearms. He had rolled them up, before dawn and with Boury's permission, to catch some of the night coolness on his skin. A tattooed design of four small squares formed in a square disappeared under his left sleeve, and Boury knew it for what it had been—a swastika, with horns joined straight across to eliminate the likeness. The North African tattoo artists had been doing a good business, these last few years.

"The sun?" Boury asked. He was on his knees again, beside the body. "The sun, sometimes, can be man's best friend . . . See now, help me lift him. We will place him in the jeep and take him to the post."

Khamsa, they called it. Number Five, in the Arab tongue. Fifth of a chain of posts just like it, stretching three hundred miles from Marrakech to the Wadi Draa separating Morocco from the Spanish Sahara. A heat-riven stone square with a watch tower rising whitely from one corner. The tri-color drooping from its staff. Barracks, mess, dispensary, officers' quarters, and—these days—a garage.

Captain Dax stood in his ten-by-twelve office waiting for Sergeant Boury and Legionnaire Gatteau to report. He stood

impatiently, taking his weight from his left leg to knock his boot against his right heel, putting his weight on his left leg to boot it with his right heel. His boot-knocks kept irregular time with the clucking of the clock on the mantel behind him. There was no fireplace, but Dax had insisted upon a mantel. It held his trophies, ranked on each side of the clock. He'd been something of a hunter, before a shred of iron had whined through a misty dawn north of Dunkerque and torn into his stomach.

Himself like iron, this Dax, and with the glint of new blades in his eyes. Lean in the hip and graceful-quick of hand. Gray hair cropped short, a concession to the climate. Gray eyes seeing many things, and telling few.

He looked at his wrist-watch, checking it with the clock on the mantel, and stopped knocking his heels together. Is it so important, that a soldier disappears in the desert? Yes, for he is but a recruit, and therefore a lamb in this huge, horizonless, slaughterhouse. But is it so important to me, Jean Gabrielle Michel Dax, that he disappears? No, not to me myself, except in the official sense. But to old Boury, perhaps, extremely important. Then stop banging your boots; let Boury bang his . . .

Dax would reach through a front rank on morning inspection and clout the jaws of a man in the rear rank, if the man happened to be grinning, turning his head, or attempting to talk. Dax would shoot a man between the shoulder blades for faltering on patrol . . . and then write a personal letter to next-of-kin. Dax, too, would dress a man's blisters, if the man's hands were too grimy with gun-grease to apply a bandage to his feet properly.

A lieutenant-colonel of Chasseurs, once, until extended hospitalization and a shrunken post-war military establishment had resulted in lesser duty with the *Légion d'Etrangères*. Lesser rank, more truly. You must know many things about many men to carry a commission in that corps.

Knuckles struck the door.

Dax took a paper from his blotter, turned it face-downward, and said "Enter."

Boury reported listlessly, after the fashion of a non-com old in service.

Gatteau was a taut wire, thumbs to seams, eyes level and hard and unseeing.

"At ease, both of you." Dax locked his hands behind him and, without looking up from the blotter, commanded the sergeant to speak.

"We departed the post at 3:55 this morning, when—" he swallowed creakily —"deceased failed to report for third relief at 3:45, the guard tour which mounted at 4 o'clock."

Dax interrupted with, "You knew he was not on the post?"

"I assumed he was not, *mon Capitaine.* He was not present at 11 o'clock. We searched, we found nothing. The duty officer granted permission to circulate in the jeep, and with Gatteau, here, a friend" —he looked swiftly at Gatteau—"of the deceased's, we drove directly to Ksar-es-Madi."

"Why there, directly?"

Boury swallowed again, this time more easily. "Gatteau avers that deceased maintained company with a girl of that town, which as the captain knows, is fourteen kilometres distant. She is the daughter of the notary, and her father swore to her story."

"Which is?"

"That deceased arrived at nine o'clock, with the desire to offer marriage."

Dax looked up. "I would not have approved it."

Boury slid his arms and shoulders into a Gallic gesture that surpasses all military custom and meaning. "She is soft, this girl, *M'sieu Le Commandant.* Her hair is like autumn sunlight, her eyes—" he had to shrug again—"blue, and so deep."

"Sergeant Boury, please continue with your report." Dax had seen them like this before, in the desert. It was usually the old ones who went into the greatest detail.

"He over-stayed, he napped on the couch, alone. He said he would return to the post for Reveille, forgetting his guard tour. When they awoke at 6, he was gone."

"And?" Dax drilled his eyes into Boury's eyes.

They remained a moment that way, staring at each other across the years that lay between them.

And Boury took a breath, half-released

it, and said, "We found him not five kilometres from here, as we were coming back." The sergeant lowered his face and bit hard on his teeth. "He had almost made it, Captain."

"The sun, you think?" Dax's voice was gentle.

"One can but assume . . . *le cafard* stings many."

Dax considered what he had heard, and he judged what he knew. "Why is it, Sergeant, that you did not find him until you were returning? Why would you not have found him on the way down to Ksar-es-Madi? The darkness, perhaps?"

"No, Captain. He was not on the route. He was beyond a slope, east of the trail. We—I—saw his footprints in the sand." Boury's throat wriggled. "Going down, we saw not the prints leaving the route. Coming back, after dawn . . ." He brought his seamy face up.

"You think he planned to—ah—absent himself from the Legion?"

Boury flushed; denial sprang across his tired eyes—furious denial. "I am certain, Captain, that he became lost in the dark, and . . . and . . . there was no water in his canteen when we found him."

Dax asked, quietly, "Was he not aware of standing orders explicitly forbidding any military personnel to travel alone after dark? Did he not know, though only a recruit, that Berbers come from the hills at night and kill in order to get weapons?"

Boury said nothing.

The clock saved the tight silence from becoming taut tension. It click-clucked . . . click-clucked . . . giving the pace to the parade of minutes.

"Pretty, eh?" Dax sighed. "It is strange, what a man will do for a woman."

A strange glint raced across Gatteau's eyes, and Dax did not miss it. Gatteau could not know of the relationship involved; if he had known, perhaps he would not have taken the risk. But in this new Legion, few men bear their rightful names for reasons they hug to their consciences, and Gatteau nor anyone else could not have known what only Boury and Dax knew.

Dax nodded quickly. "Gatteau, dismiss!"

The tall German cracked heels, saluted, wheeled smoothly and marched out.

WHEN the smack of the door had echoed to silence with the fall of Gatteau's boots, Dax picked up the paper and turned it right side up. He seemed to relax, to permit the free-masonry of years of common service to dissolve impersonal military ritual.

"I am sorry, *mon vieux.*"

Boury had been braced against the thing for so long that he couldn't let it overcome him now. All he could do was jerk his chin up and down. "He was a good boy."

"Your only one?"

"Yes, my only one. I had hoped . . . I had prayed, that he would live and rise and—" he smiled at Dax's gold threadings—"perhaps win a commission."

"Of course." Dax pretended to read the paper, though he knew it by heart. "Is there someone I can write to? A relative other than yourself?"

"There is no one else." He sniffed. "Even his name was new, to start him off . . ."

Dax took a hand from the paper, turned it palm up, and thrust it out. They shook, and the captain pulled his hand back quickly. Confusion was tipping his brain this way and that, and confusion leads to a show of emotion. He must cover up. "The deceased will draw no pay for the time he was absent without leave, of course. Accrued pay will revert to the Republic, unless claimed by an authorized person."

Boury spoke through his teeth. "I bear no grudge against her. She loved him, I think." He drew a lace handkerchief from his tunic. "Such pay as my son has due him, I will spend on more of these, with perfume to match. She would like that, and so would he."

Dax tried to smile. "I will do you the favor of concealing your proposed action from the men."

"*M'sieu Le Commandant* has my thanks."

Dax frowned at the paper, upper lip caught in lower teeth. He hefted the paper a few times, as if it had an ascertainable weight.

"See here, Boury. We have soldiered together a long time."

"Thirty-two years. Since the day fat

Joffre got caught in that dugout entrance."

"And you pushed, and I pulled."

"While the shells were bursting from the Boche guns."

They both smiled. Dax raised a fist to his mouth, and coughed. "See here, *mon vieux.*"

Boury's voice was tired. "The captain possesses the medical report."

"The sergeant will not like it."

Boury's legs stiffened. "The sergeant has endured many things that he had no liking for."

"Of course . . . Boury, your son was poisoned."

The clock was loud in the office, loud and monotonous and sharp-clear. It was evenly-spaced pebbles striking a metal plate.

". . . Poisoned, you say?" Boury's voice was a hesitant rasp.

"Strychnine. It works immediately." Dax needed to clear his throat once more, and did. "Your son was not in pain, Boury—except for a moment or less."

"Ah . . . a moment when his lips burned black and he tore his shirt apart!"

Dax strengthened his voice, speaking slowly. "A moment, Boury. Remember that. Commit it to your reasoning. A moment." The captain extended his hand and snapped his fingers. "Like that!"

"But who—"

"Not who did—but who did not!" Dax placed the paper on the blotter carefully. "Who did not, Boury? Not the girl, most assuredly. Not her father. Not anyone in that house." Dax arched his brows. "A tiny vial, in a canteen."

Boury tilted his head, eyelashes fuzzing together. One heat-rutted cheek swelled to the push of his tongue. "Strychnine, so?"

Dax's shrug was elaborate. "What wanderers of the world are most likely to possess strychnine, Boury?" The clock was not so loud now; outside sounds were evident, re-linking these two with the life which had become their crucible. They heard the slap-crush slap-crush of drilling feet. They heard the whimper of leather and the grated threats of a drill-master and, from beyond barracks, the snort-cough of an engine being tested. Dax blew out his breath and turned away from the desk. He faced the mantel, a-glitter with silver cups. "My hunting days are over, I'm afraid. But I suggest that you try your hand at it, and your heart. You have my permission to depart the post. Relax, flush some game, if there is any." He faced around. "Are you any good at beating game your way? It's half the hunt, really."

"Tomorrow is Sunday. I could leave before dawn . . . and find a water hole."

"Be back before dark, Boury. It isn't safe, out there alone, after dark."

Boury straightened. "The captain may assure himself. And if I may ask the hour of the funeral?"

"Four o'clock. Entire strength. Full honors." Dax came away from the mantel and looked straight at Boury and said, "*Le cafard* stings so many of us."

GATTEAU was fixing up. He paid scarce attention to the bubbling chatter in the barracks, to the thoughts and opinions of men whose minds had been released to articulation by the somberness of the funeral rites.

Gatteau had been placed on wine detail, and he would leave in the morning for Ksar-es-Madi and fill the cans and maybe loiter a bit, and perhaps visit at the notary's house, knowing that the good notary would be slumbering away the afternoon. It would be pleasant, idling away some hours with Marielle, hours which would be uninterrupted by the presence of a person now safely dead, and whose death must be withheld from Marielle. For the time being, at least. Deep blue eyes! Autumn-light hair! A poet, the old fool is.

. . . Soft skin, and perfume that softened the air!

Gatteau was blitzing his brass and blanco-ing his webbing and laying out his best khaki.

"Regard Gatteau! A comrade is committed to his grave, and Gatteau commences to shine up!"

"He is the porter of wines tomorrow. The rest of us stay here and sweat, with pay a week off."

"Dax must be his brother-in-law."

"Gatteau has no relatives. He happened, during a sand storm."

"He happened to impress Boury, the old dray horse, into putting him on wine-carry."

"Don't forget where Khamsa is, Gatteau."

Gatteau ignored all this. He smiled at it, and let it pass over him, but he did not respond. Already he was anticipating the morrow, and especially the afternoon of the morrow, and what it might bring him. Unmolested, undetected, the perfect planner!

"Ha! There passes old Boury now! He goes to the rifle range?"

"Why does a sergeant carry a gun? That is for *les miserables.*"

"Ha! The best food in all Africa is to be found in the Legion, and he prepares to hunt for game that is not there."

Boury was carrying the gun from his curtained-off quarters to the cleaning racks. It was not an issue piece, but his own personal property, an item which he had possessed for more than twenty years, and one close to his heart. It was a Mas '26, a five-shot repeater firing a 7.50 MM bullet far and fast.

He removed the stock, released the bolt, pried out the trigger assembly and braced the barrel across the rack. Although the post cemetery was in view of the racks, Sergeant Boury was smiling as he inserted a patched rod and jerked it back and forth. He was humming an old cafe tune as he heard a Russian named Boulanger rib Gatteau about the girl in Ksar-es-Madi, and the comrade who had cut him out.

It was 3:45 by Boury's American-made watch when he started the jeep, backed it from the garage and turned toward the gates. He sent a mock salute to the Sergeant of the Guard, busy aligning the third relief; and then he was through the gates and out on the plum-blue desert, following the trace of the Ksar-es-Madi road around the lonely sand hills. Soft-stepping Berbers there might be, but he had no fear of them, no more than he had feared *les Boches,* Annamese, Riffs or Russians. Behold! Here passed a man mounted on a swift metal pony, a man well-armed and alert. A hunter now, and one who already had started some game his way, and who now must prepare an ambush. It would logically be by the water-well known as Bistro Montmartre, seven kilometres south, and shaded by the only three palms in the region. Boury drove through purple dawn into pink daylight and, at the well, turned left, east off the trail, so the sun would be at his back. Not far from his turning was the spot where his son had staggered off the road, groping dryly for a marker that would show him the way, and finally using the canteen he had not had to use all evening.

Boury rolled below the crest of a rise and dismounted. He lifted the Mas rifle from its leather boot and leaned it against a fender. Then he soaked a rag in cool canteen water and placed it under his kepi. He carefully adjusted the kepi low over his ears, took the rifle and climbed up to the crest and lay down behind it. The rise fell away gradually to the desert floor and the water-well, distant three hundred metres from his position. The last of the dawn breezes were fanning sand in little throws and tosses that changed the shape of small objects, but never moved the desert. Sand sifted into Boury's jeep tracks, filtered lazily over them, and stayed that way.

Morning was an immense blue bowl containing, on its eastern rim, the sergeant's best friend that day. The sun was easing higher, and already the heat-packed horizons were wriggling and shimmering, like the thin gowns of the dancing girls.

Sergeant Boury, old soldier, used his time to make himself comfortable. He dug feet, knees, belly and elbows into supporting position. He fashioned a rifle rest from his folded bandoleer. Twice, he changed the wet rag in his kepi; the effect of it was not physical, but psychological. The sergeant, knowing men, also knew himself.

His man came fast—too fast, for that climate. He came around a loop in the trail riding high to the wheel of M'sieu Garcon, as the wine-jeep was called. He was sitting forward slightly, bouncing to the motion, driving fast. Sand whirled away behind him and settled to the desert and was gone.

"What the prospects of a town can do to a man's senses!" Boury told himself. "What if Garcon should overheat?"

Gatteau braked as he approached Bistro Montmartre; the jeep skidded a bit and

slowed down. He would not pause here, for he had sufficient water. But on the return, perhaps . . .

Boury had already guessed that; but the reason for his position was that it over-looked the only place where Gatteau would not be speeding.

One, however, does not shoot one's comrade-in-arms in cold blood, even when murder and the memory of a soft girl stand between. There are so many other ways . . . What is the verse the Dordognes sing?

If a man steal your calf,
Then steal back not his horse, but his calf.
And if a man steal your wife,
Steal back not his grandmother, but his wife . . .

Boury cocked the piece, sighted ahead of Gatteau's kepi, took a steady breath and fired.

The kepi spun off and flew past the jeep and flopped into the sand.

Gatteau lay to the wheel and slammed on speed and twisted off the trail and stopped suddenly, aware that he couldn't continue bare-headed.

He sprang from the seat and crouched behind the jeep.

BOURY listened to the shot's echo rattle across the hills and die. Then he considered terrain, from habit thinking of a battlefield in terms of a diagram. One hundred metres south of Bistro Montmartre was Gatteau, still not moving. Fifty metres northeast of the Bistro was his kepi, also inert. The kepi, therefore, was two hundred and fifty metres from the muzzle of the Mas '26, and Gatteau was four hundred metres from it.

What think you, Gatteau? That a straight-shooting Berber tried to blow your head apart, and missed?

He will dash for the well, of course, because he will observe the logic of its protection. But that conclusion will blind him to the fact of his becoming overheated due to the dash, so I will permit him to do it, and cause him to assume I have retreated. Berbers do not have bullets to waste.

If they miss, they pick up their heels and gallop. Nor can they know that this is the Sunday before payday, and that therefore no possible reinforcement can be roaming the roads to town.

Gatteau's shadow edged outward from the jeep as he prepared to sprint. Then he leapt away from it, running low, kicking sand, and reached the circular gray stump that was the well. His shadow became lost in the lean shadows of the three palms.

Boury swung his sights north, right, slightly, and rested them on a point between the well and the crumpled kepi.

Is it not so, Gatteau, that the desert does strange things to a man's values? That while yesterday, he would kill for a chance at another's girl, today he must die himself unless he regains . . . his hat.

A tanned hand and a khaki sleeve thrust slowly from behind the well, seemed to grip the sand a moment, and became a running man.

Boury fired and saw sand flash high and slap flat.

The running man thumped to his face, hands clawed forward. Twenty metres from his kepi.

Boury inhaled, and the sweet-sharp stench of burnt powder was sweet to him.

He saw something that he had not noticed before, so intently had he kept his eyes on the quarry. He saw a carbine sticking from a boot that was strapped to the side of the jeep.

"Just in case, *Docteur* Strychnine." He lay his front sight blade on its brown bulge and fired. The bullet punched leather and a light *clang!* drifted to silence. He put his sights back to Gatteau. "Never leave your mount without taking your gun."

The man's long face was turned toward him, mouth dragging at the corners still, but tight-clenched. Like a narrow black trap, Boury thought. A trap that had kept tiny vials under false caps in its molars.

The sergeant risked looking at his watch. It was the hour of nine, and the sun was yet young.

Gatteau was bringing his knees forward an inch. Two inches. His boot toes crushed sand, and Boury took a deep, lung-cracking breath. He placed his sights on the kepi.

Then the quarry lunged forward, thighs and shins pumping, hands grasping.

Boury's bullet sent the kepi skittering out of reach. One shell left in the chamber, and Legionnaire Gatteau was back on his face.

Cautiously, the sergeant tugged four more cartridges from the bandoleer and prepared for a quick re-load. Re-loading the full five in a hurry was something he couldn't do; he could not place them on his palm and shove them into the chamber because his thumb was too short to get behind five and propel them. But four, he could handle.

He did not believe that he would need all five, in this heat.

Gatteau was coming together again, was dragging elbows to chest, was spreading knees outward. Boury could see the tan uniform go black with sweat, could see sweat smearing armpits, shoulders, crotch. He could see sweat plaster the man's cropped hair together in bunches. Sweat snaked from his skull-thatch down to his cheek bones and leaked into his collar. In a few minutes, that was black too.

"La bête noire," Boury told the bolt handle.

Gatteau crabbed in a quick circle and heaved himself off his knees and plunged back toward the well.

Boury's fifth shot speared sand and sent Gatteau flat on his chest again. The sergeant re-loaded with a thumb-sweep, and waited. He estimated that the quarry was thirty metres from Bistro Montmartre. Idly, without taking his eyes from Gatteau, he policed-up his brass and put it in a pocket. Loose shell casings are a mark of sloppiness.

Gatteau was sloppy, now. Sloppy in the uniform and sloppy in the head. His head was trembling up and down, quivering from side to side. It slumped into the sand once, then rose. He was lying toward the well, and Boury couldn't see his face, but it must have itched from sand clinging to sweat.

Boury guessed as much, for the quarry began scratching it on his forearms.

As a concession to marksmanship, the sergeant sent a bullet past Gatteau's ear and made him go stiff, not scratching any longer.

It didn't make any difference to the bullet, most assuredly. And it didn't make any difference to the rifle. It didn't make any difference to the sun, either. The sun was one-third of its way up the sky, a flaming bronze plate.

Gatteau gasped. It came like sandpaper on stone, brief and crisp. He gasped, and his head sank to his arms.

Properly, Gatteau, I should have poisoned you, in the words of the Dordogne song. A calf for a calf and a wife for a wife. But I do not do things that way. My son, I know, would not like it so.

Gatteau was mouthing. It was choked-guttural and loud. He stopped, then, and started coming together once more. Sand poured over the toes of his boots as he pulled them up; his elbows left little trenches behind them.

Boury had seen many men die, lots of them; and he realized that this man was dying. There is no time-measure for it, no chapter in a medical book that clocks it precisely. The sun, source of all energy, is also a source of death. Some can resist it longer than others; Nordics usually go fast, once they start.

Gatteau was ceasing his gathering of leverage; his heels sagged outward and hung that way, angling at a soldierly forty-five degrees. His head was below the hump of his shoulders, swaying now and then. His arms twitched.

Boury considered placing a bullet through the canteen that was hooked to a polished belt on the windshield post of the jeep. He considered it, and rejected it. Property of the Republic, really. And besides, its present possessor would never reach it.

He would die where he lay, white hot wires of pain lashing his brain, cracking the cartilage of his neck. Drying up the words that were screaming in his scorched lungs, coming out in erratic bleats and blurps and sobs. His arms were no longer twitching, and his head had stopped swaying.

The sun glared balefully down upon him as it floated away from the Atlas ranges, snarling in hot silence at the man who would dare to defy it.

Boury changed the rag in his kepi for a cooler one. He was re-corking his canteen when he saw Gatteau start thrashing his limbs, start arching backward as if his

spine was made of rope. Gatteau's arms and legs made a fine sandstorm all around him, and the effect of a high wind was his broken throat emitting the last of its air, shrieking and cawing like a rickety whistle proclaiming the train to Hades . . .

CAPTAIN DAX was smoking a cigarette in the coolness of his quarters when he heard the gates clump open. The pop-sputter of a tired engine came to his ears, and he put on his hat, crushed out the cigarette, and strode through the door. He had to show surprise, for the benefit of the corporal and men at the gates. It is unusual to have one jeep towing another into a post, with a dead man lying green-faced and quiet, slumped down in the towed jeep.

Sergeant Boury called, "The dispensary, *Mon Commandant!*"

"Then report!"

Dax was waiting in front of the mantel when Boury came in.

"The hunt?" He pegged a return salute. "At ease."

"Beating the game my way was half of it, Captain."

Dax pursed his lips. "An accident, I observe."

"*Le cafard*, if I may suggest." A shrug surpassing all military meaning lifted his shoulders. "I was returning from the eastern hills when I found him near Bistro Montmartre."

"Too bad. So close to water."

They regarded each other across the space of years, soldier to soldier, soul to soul.

"A Berber dismounted him, perhaps. Then fled at fear of reinforcements arriving." The sergeant presented the ripped kepi. "His."

"I see." Dax turned it over in his hands. "Good shooting, for a Berber. Knocked his hat off, then pursued him. Hmm . . . we must dispatch another man for wine ration."

"If I may volunteer? I have a small handkerchief . . ."

Dax studied his sergeant calmly. "She will have others, too. The accrued pay of —your son—will take care of it." He returned the kepi abruptly. "Funeral at four. Entire strength. Full honors. Incidentally, *mon vieux*, inform the personnel clerk to ascertain if Gatteau has a known family—something we can trace. I must write them a personal letter."

Boury banged his boots together, saluted swiftly, wheeled on his heels and strode out.

Dax faced the mantel slowly, not hearing the clock, his eyes on the ranked trophies. He looked at them for a long time, as if he'd never seen them there before.

THE MAN THEY

A FACT STORY

JOHN LEE stood waiting to be hanged. From the scaffold he could see the grim setting before him: the witnesses grouped near the tower, the expressionless newsmen by the wall—all gathered in the yard of England's Exeter Prison to watch a murderer die. It was the morning of the 23rd of February, 1885.

With Lee on the scaffold were Sheriff H. M. James, the chaplain, the warders, and, of course, the hangman—one James Berry. On the ground near the foot of the thirteen steps stood a figure in prison gray, the carpenter-trusty who had built the scaffold. The color of his uniform was well suited for such a morning—gray and damp it was, as only an English morning can be.

Then, while the tolling of a bell from the tower pulsated like the beating of a heart, they placed the black hood over Lee's head. Sheriff James gave the signal. The hangman drew the bolt. And time stood still. For John Lee had not moved. Legally he should have been jerking at the end of the rope. Instead he was standing motionless on the trapdoor. The sheriff's face reddened.

"For God's sake," he hissed across the platform, "pull the bloody bolt!"

"So help me," the hangman whispered back. "I did!" He jiggled the bolt handle back and forth. The noise told the people in the yard that something was wrong.

"Take him back to his cell," the sheriff snapped. His voice was strangely hoarse.

Then, with Lee in his cell, sheriff and hangman examined the trapdoor. They found nothing wrong. Everytime the bolt was drawn the door fell. The sheriff stood watching, clenching his fists. Suddenly he thundered at one of the smaller warders.

"You! Come up here and hang yourself!"

The man paled. "What, sir? Hang meself?"

"Yes, confound it! Hang on to the rope and we'll see if you fall through!"

Well, the man hung on and down he fell. There was nothing wrong with the mechanism.

Once again they led John Lee past the now not so expressionless reporters. By this time the great bell had stopped its clanging. All was silent as those in the courtyard awaited the signal. Then the bolt was drawn with a click that echoed across the court. And John Lee, the man who had murdered elderly Miss Keyse of Babbacombe for her property, stood unhangable!

Eyes popping, Sheriff James watched Lee standing there. The sheriff's order to take Lee back to his cell was barely heard.

This time they really looked that door over. They greased the bolt. And the small warder hanged himself again. Also someone planed down the edges, making sure that there was no possible friction from rain-swollen wood. Then, while the group of reporters edged closer, they brought Lee back.

For the third time they stood him on the gallows. And for the third time Lee stood unhangable! The door would not budge.

Even before the sheriff muttered, "Take him away!" the reporters had stampeded out. They had the scoop of the century—The Man Who Could Not Be Hanged!

By special post the sheriff immediately contacted the Governor of Prisons who, in turn, contacted the Home Secretary. There was something sinister about all this that seemed to warrant a delay. Besides, as hangman Berry stated, "I don't think we should try again, since God himself has intervened!"

Days dragged into weeks while they actually debated the matter in the House of Commons. There, while Lee waited in his cell, one member shouted angrily, "Are we to let a mere superstition save a murderer from the gallows? I say hang him!"

But they didn't. Because of the mental torture he had already suffered, Lee's

COULDN'T HANG

By ED DIECKMANN, JR.

sentence was commuted to a natural life term—at that time—23 years. His reprieve was signed by the House Secretary, Sir William Harcourt.

Shortly after this, Berry, the hangman, resigned to enter the ministry. It is said that he made a very good preacher.

For all those years, John Lee occupied a cell in Exeter. Then he flared into publicity again in December 1907, when he was finally released. *Lloyd's Weekly News*, a London paper of January 5, 1908, gave him the biggest spread.

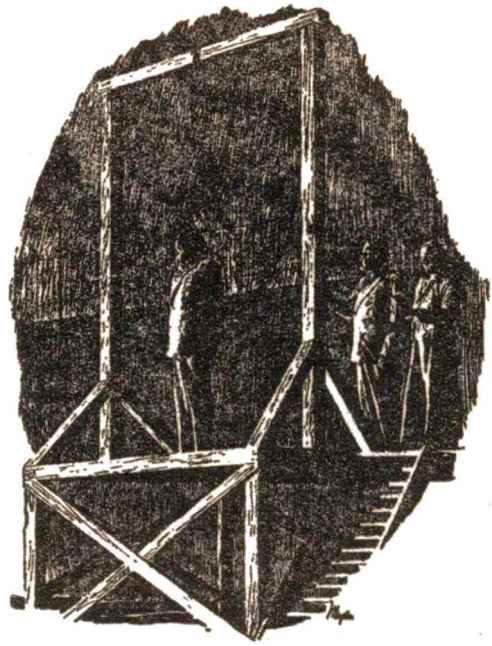
Shortly afterwards he returned to his native Babbacombe, where he married and settled down. Though he was approached many times to appear at music halls and carnivals, he always refused. Seven years later he passed on—in bed.

Now, for many years the case of John Lee had been hushed and all but forgotten. There was something ominous and uninvited about it that caused the British press to let it slip back into the limbo from which such things come. Only in the newspapers of February and March, 1885, in the annals of Exeter Prison, in the Proceedings of the House for March of that year, and finally in the issue of *Lloyd's Weekly* mentioned above, will you find the story in complete form. And always, except in the *Lloyd's* account, it ends on a note of interrogation.

For only after Lee had served a number of years in prison did they find the answer to the mystery.

You see, the man who had built that scaffold was the figure in gray—the prison trusty. Unknown to the authorities of Exeter, this man was a good friend of John Lee's—had known him in the town of Babbacombe where the murder had occurred.

Perhaps this man, his name only a question mark in the records of today, simply could not hold his story in any longer. Subtle questioning by the prison Governor, who did not believe God would save a confessed killer from punishment, might have



helped. However it was, here is the carpenter's testimony:

"Well, sir, I didn't want old John to 'ang. So when they tell me to build the scaffold, I got to thinkin'. Now when they stood John on the door, I'm under the platform. Checkin', sir, just like they told me to. Well, I reaches up and puts a wooden wedge between the door and the frame. Just enough to keep it up, it was.

"Well, sir, when John doesn't fall, I acts real busy and inspects things. And I tykes the wedge out. Then I put it in again, they try to stretch John's neck again, and I tykes it out again. The third time I pockets the wedge. Just a bit of wood it was, but old John don't 'ang!"

There it is. The answer to a riddle that baffled even those who saw it happen. Yet if that prisoner had not confessed, had sealed his lips, the mystery would have gone on. And no one, sheriff, hangman, or member of Parliament would have ever known how one man could defy the noose three times in one half hour. Because of the faith of a friend and a piece of wood, John Lee is known to this day as the man they couldn't hang!

Johnny Beatenbow's Long Shot

The pipe was not steady and neither was Yance Bedford —Johnny lowered the gun.

By STEVE FRAZEE

IN THE end of the Spanish Forks store that held the post office Granny Stoker sorted mail rapidly, her little black eyes flicking over all there was to read on the envelopes. Between times she darted worried glances at Johnny Beatenbow, the storekeeper, who was standing glumly beside a sack of flour he had just brought from the storeroom.

The marks of a month in Spanish Forks lay bleakly on Johnny's face. Granny Stoker started to speak, and then she paused, tapping her chin with a letter as her wise old eyes watched Johnny lift the sack from the floor to his shoulder.

"You make a nice lift—easy-like," Granny said.

Little Milo Farnsworth, the clerk, nodded briskly. Figures, quick nodding—Milo excelled at both.

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF

With the flour on his shoulder Johnny started toward the door. "Always trying to build up what the rest tear down, aren't you?"

"You're letting that talk get under your hide," the old woman said sharply. "No man can compete with Big Bill Beatenbow's records in these parts, so forget it! You're not bad looking, for the light-haired type, and for a man who weighs only two hundred you're fairly strong and active; and I must say—now that I'm a little older—that I think you've got a much better head on your shoulders than your show-off grandfather ever had."

"Thanks," Johnny said, and went out on the porch, his mind half made up to start a campaign that he'd sworn he would not attempt.

Granny Stoker began to whisk envelopes into cubby holes without bothering to read return addresses. "Spanish Forks!" she said. "Living and thinking just like fifty years ago. Around here it matters plenty who your grandfather was, especially if it happened to be Big Bill. Mark my words, Milo, Johnny is about ready to do something foolish!"

Milo took four cans of tomatoes from a shelf and nodded vigorously.

Granny speared a letter into the "U-V" cubby hole. "Big Bill wasn't so much," she said tartly.

Milo reached for canned corn and nodded.

"He was just an overgrown, red-whiskered, woman-chasing, whiskey-drinking —" Granny began to tap her chin with a letter. "All he did was hunt and fish and show off before the men."

Milo nodded.

"He never was much for working," Granny said.

Still nodding, Milo began to add a column of figures.

Granny sighed. "But he was a wonderful man."

Milo continued with four or five brisk nods, and then he jerked his head up and stared.

GRANNY was completely right about one item: Johnny Beatenbow was about ready to do something foolish. The resolve began to harden as he carried his ninety-eight pound sack of flour past Beefbone Watters and five other loafers on the porch. Their looks lay heavily on his back, whereas one month ago he'd never given a thought to what people had in their minds when his back was turned.

But that had been before the tight, isolated community of Spanish Forks, in the heart of Big Bill's old stomping grounds, had weighed Johnny Beatenbow carefully and found him disappointingly light in many respects.

"I mind the time Big Bill carried six sacks of flour from the river to—" some one on the porch said.

"Seven!" Beefbone corrected. "I was just a button at the time but I remember it well. It started like this. . . ."

Going through hot sunlight toward Mrs. Martin's dusty pickup truck, Johnny remembered his first few days in Spanish Forks right after buying the store, when folks considered him somewhat of a celebrity. "Well, well!" they said. "So you're Big Bill Beatenbow's grandson. Well, well! How *is* Bill these days?"

Johnny said his grandfather was very well for a man of eighty, and was doing fine raising onion seed over on the distant Western Slope.

"In a way, you look like him . . ." people said dubiously. The consensus was that Johnny was all right for an ordinary man, maybe even large enough—but not for a grandson of fiery-bearded, raw-boned Big Bill, who had weighed two seventy-five in his prime, standing six feet eight in his very nimble stockinged feet.

Maybe, as Beefbone Watters had pointed out, folks might have forgiven Johnny his puny frame, if in any other way he had showed the least resemblance to Big Bill. But no, all Johnny wanted to do was run the store. Why, little Milo had done that for old man Witcher for years, and Milo didn't weigh a hundred pounds dripping wet with a saddle in each hand.

No, Johnny Beatenbow was a terrible let-down from the legendary figure of Large William Beatenbow, and Spanish Forks was not going to allow Johnny to forget the fact.

And so, as he went toward the pickup Johnny wondered what his first move

ought to be. He'd given up hope that Spanish Forks was going to accept him in any other way than as the grandson of Big Bill. That's the way it was, and he was going to have to meet the problem by showing that he was Big Bill's grandson. But he wasn't going to kill himself trying to carry any seven hundred pounds of flour at a whack.

Maybe he could carry four hundred. Maybe not. That was the trouble; just about everything Big Bill had done was impossible.

Mike Stacey's shiny new station wagon rattled the running plates on the Black River bridge and shot off the road to stop with a flourish before the store. Barbara Standish leaped out before the driver could get from under the wheel.

She waved at Johnny and ran up the steps, her brown hair bouncing. Dungarees didn't hurt her figure a bit, Johnny thought; and an instant later he thought that, while he had started off well with Barbara, this Big Bill business had got under his skin to the point where he was losing out to Mike Stacey, Stacey Lettuce Sheds, Inc.

Stacey got out of the station wagon and smoothed the front of his white shirt inside his belt as he grinned at Johnny. "Only one sack, Johnny?" Stacey's grin was wide and pleasant. "I hear Big Bill carried five at a time."

"Seven!" Beefbone yelled from the porch.

Johnny stopped by the end gate of the pickup, eyeing the metal for a treacherous snag of jagged metal before dumping his burden. "Times change," he said.

"Times and men," someone on the porch said.

It might have happened to anyone. Johnny turned his head to see how Barbara was reacting to the remark just as he started to hunch the flour off his shoulder. The sack didn't catch enough of the rolled top of the end gate. It began to drop. Johnny got one hand on the bottom and hoisted.

He made a good lift, but he had overlooked a mud-caked metal snag that ripped the sack from stem to gudgeon. He put the sack in the truck bed all right, but there was little flour in it. The rest was on the ground.

Beefbone shook his head sadly. A lean oldster beside him said, "I'll say times have changed."

Granny Stoker jangled a cowbell to signal that the mail was ready for distribution and the porch was cleared. Just before she went through the doorway Barbara glanced back, but Johnny was so hot with rage at himself that he couldn't have read her expression if he had been looking.

Mike Stacey came forward, his wide face sympathetic. He was a burly man who in a few years was going to be fat. Just the week before two boomers at the lettuce sheds had made the mistake of thinking him fat already. On top of that they hadn't known that Stacey had been an Army judo instructor for four years. They found out their first mistake when they got heavy, and the second when they were being patched up.

"I looked good on that," Johnny said.

Stacey shook his head. "Lousy luck, Johnny."

"Stupid. Clumsy." Johnny straightened from brushing his pants legs. He didn't want sympathy, particularly not from Mike Stacey, but the man looked sincere.

Stacey grinned. "I know how you feel. The price of being Big Bill's grandson comes pretty high in Spanish Forks, but don't let them get to you." Stacey shrugged. "As an outsider with a mere five years' standing in this community, I know how they can turn on the heat."

"Yeah." Johnny began to bang one foot against a tire to knock loose white dust.

"Stay with 'em!" Stacey said. He walked toward the store.

People were gathering for their mail. They stared curiously at Johnny standing by the spilled flour. Barbara's father, D. H. Standish, rode up on a blue roan mare and swung off near Johnny. His saddle slouch disappeared with the movement, leaving him a sun-wrinkled, erect, lean man with quick-moving brown eyes. He glanced at the flour, looked keenly at Johnny.

"How's things, son?"

"Fine," Johnny said.

Standish studied the station wagon. "There's a dance at the schoolhouse next week."

"Yeah," Johnny said. He'd almost forgotten.

Standish watched the ground-hitched mare blow through her nostrils at the flour. "One thing about Big Bill—he never woulda let no lettuce man beat his time with a gal." Standish left it there and walked away, glancing critically at the wine-colored upholstery of the station wagon as he passed.

NO ONE paid the least attention when Johnny went around to the storeroom and carried without mishap another sack of flour to Mrs. Martin's pick-up. He brushed his clothes with his hands and went inside.

Granny Stoker was handing out mail and advice. Milo was waiting on customers, mainly cold drinks and tobacco. Barbara and Stacey were sitting beside each other on the counter, drinking pop. Two customers removed from Stacey a huge, leathery-skinned old man with a salt and pepper beard was leaning away from the counter to glare at Stacey.

It was apparent that the old character was looking for trouble, asking Stacey to say something, daring him to leave an opening. Johnny saw that Stacey was ignoring the old man, and doing a good job of it, but that Stacey's eyes were tight and aware.

The old man probably was some hardened boomer who had been fired at the lettuce sheds, Johnny thought. He started toward Barbara.

All at once there was a forest of salt and pepper whiskers before Johnny's face, and he was staring into a pair of bloodshot eyes. A tremendous paw came toward him.

"I'da recognized you a mile away!" The old man's voice thundered in the room and stilled everybody but Granny Stoker. "Bedford's the name—Yance Bedford. First time I had a chance to get down and see you. Many's the time your grandpa and me—"

"Glad to know you," Johnny said.

Bedford had a grip like a freight car coupling, and the calluses felt as hard as a plaster of halved marbles.

"When you coming up to Red Mountain to go hunting?" Bedford asked.

"Maybe when deer season comes—"

"Deer season? Hell's fire, son—pardon me ladies—the season is when you *want* to go hunting. You and me can get started in an hour. You'll have to stay a month the first time to get the hang of the country and so's you can tell me all about Bill, and so's—"

"I can't go right now," Johnny said. "Haven't time."

Bedford's grip relaxed and his bloodshot eyes stared. "Haven't time to go *hunting?* I ain't got the wrong man, have I? You're Big Bill Beatenbow's grandson, ain't you?"

Johnny said he was, but when he glanced around the room the expressions he read said he was in name only.

Bedford's handclasp tightened again, catching Johnny with a slack hand. "You ain't feeling well, kid. What you need is a few drinks. You come along with me over—"

"I don't drink," Johnny said.

"Don't drink!" Bedford stared at Johnny and then rolled his eyes at the crowd. Plainly, there must be a mistake somewhere. But the faces around him said no. He dropped Johnny's hand and backed away, and the awful truth smote so hard he forgot to ask the ladies' pardon. "By hell, by holy old hell!"

Yance Bedford was a confused man. He rumpled his salt and pepper beard aimlessly. He stared at Johnny, and then he stomped out, closing the screen door carefully, as if there were a body inside.

"No time for hunting, don't drink, runs the damn store. What a hell of a grandson for Big Bill Beatenbow. What a hell of—" he almost ran down Mrs. Martin on her way up the steps "—pardon me, ladies—what a hell of a shame!"

Running off to the hills for a month of hunting was not Johnny's idea of a way to show he was Big Bill's grandson. No, it would have to be something a little more public and spectacular than that.

A tiny silence hung in the room before normal conversation resumed.

Then Stacey said loudly, "Crazy old coot. He's so far behind the times he's still making whiskey up there on Red Mountain."

There was, Johnny thought, a great deal more vindictiveness in the words than the

subject matter warranted, and he remembered how Bedford had been glaring at Stacey a short time before.

At the end of the counter someone began a story. "I mind the time Big Bill and Tom Horn shot the pipes out of each other's mouths from across the river. This is how it came about . . ."

From force of habit Johnny tried to ignore the story. Unconsciously he brushed at his shirt as he walked toward Barbara. He tried to keep his voice low enough to be covered by the talk in the room. "Maybe it's a little late, but I just remembered about the dance next week—"

The narrator lowered his voice just as Tom Horn was taking aim at Big Bill's pipe. Everybody else in the room quit talking entirely, and Johnny was painfully aware that all ears were tuned for his next words. He had a little trouble framing them.

"Yes?" Barbara asked. And when he stalled on dead center she tried to help him out. "Ask a little sooner next time, Johnny, will you?"

There was just a trace of smirk in Stacey's expression, but it vanished when Johnny looked at him.

"Did you ever hear about the time Big Bill took four gals to a dance?" Beefbone asked the room at large. "It was when they first built the schoolhouse on Brush Creek—"

"Shut up!" the first narrator said. "I was talking. So Horn, he took an offhand shot at Bill's pipe. You could barely see the bowl for Bill's red whiskers, but Horn hit it. 'Bout two hundred and fifty feet, it was. Then Bill, he laughed and said, 'I'm a-going to shoot the stem, just an inch from Tom's lips!' I can still see that old Sharps stock against Bill's red beard as he threw it up to aim."

Johnny had enough, and he also had his solution pointed out. "Anybody could make a shot like that," he said. "Anybody could hit a pipe stem when he was smack against it."

HE couldn't have achieved deader silence if he had insulted the Republican party, motherhood, marriage, free enterprise, and the quality of sunsets in Spanish Forks.

Beefbone rallied first, a limping sort of recovery in which his jaw worked a while before speech emerged. "Smack against it!" he cried. "Two hundred and fifty feet!"

"One hundred and sixty-three feet and a few inches," Milo Farnsworth said suddenly. "Not three years ago D. H. Standish and I measured the distance at the exact place where the shots were made."

Standish gave Johnny an odd look. "That's right."

Stacey laughed. "I always suspected those Big Bill yarns were stretched plenty."

Johnny looked Spanish Forks smack in the eye and issued his challenge. "I'll duplicate any shot Big Bill ever made."

Beefbone squinted shrewdly. "Of course, these new high-powered rifles, smokeless powder, telescopic sights and—"

Mike Stacey spoke confidently, "I'll back Johnny to do the job with equipment approximately the same as his grandfather used. I've got a collection of those old rifles, and I'll start with a hundred bucks that says Johnny can take one and break the pipe stem in a man's mouth at the exact distance Bill did the job."

"It ain't a matter of money," someone muttered. "Big Bill didn't perform for money."

Indeed it wasn't a matter of money, Johnny thought. It was his future in Spanish Forks, a chance to get out from under the shadow cast by his grandfather, if for only a time. Sure as the world this wouldn't be the only feat he would have to perform if he stayed in the Forks, but it would be something to hold them for a while.

That is, if he could do it. Big Bill had taught him to shoot, but he hadn't done much of it lately, and this business about using an old rifle didn't sound any too good either.

Stacey had been mighty quick to bring that up.

"Who's going to hold the pipe in his mouth?" Beefbone asked.

Spanish Forks looked at each other.

"Yance Bedford is about the only man to do it," Stacey said.

That was quite satisfactory with everybody present.

"To make this event absolutely square,"

Johnny announced, "I'll send for the same gun Big Bill used."

Old Beefbone began to regard Johnny Beatenbow as somewhat of a human being after all. "I got the old paper-patched bullets and cases and black powder to load it!" he said.

On his way out Standish stopped briefly beside Johnny. His voice drowned by the gabble about the coming exhibition, Standish said, "Get some practice, son—and watch that lettuce man."

Granny Stoker said almost the same thing when the store was clear except for herself, Milo and Johnny. "I hope you know what you're doing, Johnny—and I hope you have common sense enough to keep an eye on that Stacey. I don't trust no newcomers, and in this case not him especially. Before you showed up he was in a fair way to marry Barbara Standish, mainly because he was about the only young man around."

"What's there between Yance and Stacey?" Johnny asked.

"A dirty deal," Milo said. "Stacey pays different prices for lettuce at the sheds. Yance used to make his winter's expenses raising head lettuce back there around Red Mountain, but when Stacey figured Yance as about half crazy and tried to cut prices in half, thinking that Yance wouldn't know the difference, the old man knocked him off the platform in front of everybody.

"He did it so quick Stacey didn't see it coming. Mike started back with murder in his eye and would have wiped up the place with Yance if three, four fellows hadn't stopped him." Milo paused. "Although I was thinking the same thing when Stacey mentioned that Yance was the only one who would be crazy—have guts enough for the pipe shooting stunt, I'm wondering now if Stacey figures you're a bum shot. Shooting a pipe stem close to a man's mouth at a hundred and sixty-three feet and some inches is tricky."

Milo kept bobbing his head. "Suppose you make a little bobble? Then Stacey is even with Yance and you're out of the field—it would be no less than manslaughter, you know."

"Don't unnerve me," Johnny said, grinning. He went out.

Granny Stoker sighed. "He looked a whole lot like Large William just then."

ACROSS the river in a saloon that had never ceased operating, prohibition or not, Johnny found Yance. When the old man heard Johnny's request he pounded the mahogany jubilantly and bellowed, "I knowed you was Big Bill's kin all the time! I been standing here telling myself you was hoorawing me all the time, there in the store."

He let out an ear-splitting whoop. "Let's get right at it! Instead of a pipe we'll shoot the cup. We'll hold 'em between our knees and shoot 'em at a hundred paces."

Johnny had heard of the custom, an exhibition whereby two marksmen prove their enduring friendship for each other by shooting tin cups off the head or in the manner Yance had mentioned.

He had a little trouble in cooling Yance's zeal for immediate action, explaining that the exhibition had been set for ten days from now, to give Johnny time to receive Big Bill's old Sharps and get the hang of it, but at last Yance consented to the delay. "Don't need no practice myself," he said. "So I'll take the first shot. That always sort of steadies the other man."

Johnny felt his throat muscles contract. "The first shot?"

"Sure! This is a two-way deal, ain't it?" Yance's blood-shot eyes began to brim up with belligerence.

"Why, sure it is," Johnny said, and gulped a little.

The word spread. Men who hadn't felt it necessary to visit Spanish Forks in a long time came out of the mountains to see the event. Milo was delighted. He collected a great many overdue accounts, some dating back six years. And after witnessing Johnny's warm-up shooting Milo opened up and bet a substantial part of his life's savings on his employer.

"There's only one bad point," he said. "Letting Yance have the first shot. He used to be deadeye with a rifle, but he's old now and don't realize it."

Johnny found out that Milo had made his wagers with a protecting reservation: if Johnny wasn't alive or able to shoot after Yance made his try all bets were off.

Such practical coldbloodedness didn't

help Johnny's peace of mind any, but he had enough to worry about as it was. As he told Mike Stacey one day when they met on the bridge, "Bill's gun shoots a hair to the right, and I've had only fourteen shots with it. Beefbone said he had a whole pile of those old cases somewhere around his shack, but after I used up the first batch practicing he hasn't been able to find any more. He says he's got them around someplace, though."

"That's bad, all right," Stacey said sympathetically. "Maybe you'd better switch to one of my rifles."

Johnny said he thought he'd let the deal ride another day to see if Beefbone could produce, which is just what Beefbone did do the next day. "Found just one more case," he told Johnny. "I haven't had time to load 'er yet, but I'll have it ready for the big day."

As official ammunition loader for the event Beefbone had been obliged to spend a great deal of his time in the saloon, where he had an audience to listen to him and buy him free drinks. He made quite a ceremony of presenting the cartridge an hour before the shooting was scheduled to take place.

Yance Bedford hadn't arrived yet, but everybody else was there, on one side of the river or the other, near red flags that marked the exact spots from which Big Bill and Tom Horn had shot. Barbara and her father were sitting in the rocks directly behind the flag from which Johnny was to shoot.

They had stopped briefly beside him before taking their positions. "Did you watch that lettuce man?" Standish asked.

Johnny nodded. "I think so."

Barbara looked quickly from one to the other. "That goes past me," she said. "But I think this whole affair is a silly, dangerous thing."

"Maybe," Johnny Beatenbow said, "but it's something I have to do to keep enough self-respect to stay in Spanish Forks." He paused. "You want me to stay here, don't you?"

Barbara looked him squarely in the eyes and nodded.

"Where's Yance Bedford?" someone howled.

"Poisoned on his own whiskey!" another yelled, and the crowd laughed.

Johnny stood with the sixteen-pound rifle in his arms, looking at the crowd massed around the red flag across the Black River. Heat waves off the rocks and sunshine glinting up from the stream didn't lend to accurate shooting, but there was nothing he could do about that. So he just stood, wondering where Yance Bedford was.

THEY heard Yance singing before he rode into sight around the last turn of the road coming out of Hardscrabble Gulch. He had his rifle across his knees and a jug of whiskey in his right hand. He spurned the bridge and swam his horse across the river. And when he reached the shore he fell, rather than dismounted.

"Pardon me all to hell, ladies!" he roared, and waved the jug.

Milo Farnsworth began to circulate quietly, reminding certain individuals of the special clause in his bets.

Wet to the waist, Yance staggered up from the river, flourishing the jug and holding his rifle aloft, the latter a long-barreled breechloader older than the one Johnny held. The stock had been bound with copper wire, the gun was rusty, and the front sight looked loose.

"He's in no condition to shoot!" Barbara called from the rocks.

"The hell I ain't—pardon me, ladies!" Yance thrust the jug toward Johnny. "Finish her off and we'll get down to business!"

Johnny shook his head.

"I remember now—don't drink." Yance gave a long demonstration to prove he did, if evidence were needed. Then he swiped a flannel sleeve across his beard and said, "I'll take the first shot." He saw Stacey standing near Johnny. "And you better stand clear, in case I'm tempted!"

Still holding the rifle and jug, Yance made two tries to mount his horse. He couldn't make it. He thrust his rifle at the nearest man. "Bring 'er over to me!" Then he plunged into the river and began to swim.

He had one drink on the far bank, and another while waiting at the red flag for the man to bring his rifle. The crowd on Johnny's side fell back a more than respectable distance from the red flag. Bar-

bara and her father moved thirty feet to one side of the line of fire.

Johnny stood alone, the Sharps in his arms, looking through the heat waves at the sun flashing on a jug across the river, listening to Yance roaring with laughter. He hoped the swim in cold water had helped some. He knew it hadn't been entirely bravado.

He pulled the flag out of the crack in the rocks and took his stance, putting a brand-new, short-stemmed briar in his mouth.

The crowd fell silent. From across the river Yance bellowed, "Ready?"

"Ready!" Johnny said. From the corners of his eyes he could see part of the crowd across the Black, but he couldn't see Yance.

He didn't have long to wait. The pipe clamped between his front teeth jerked sidewise and out of his mouth. He heard the deep, black powder cough of Yance's gun, and loud shouting from the crowd. And then he was bending over to pick up the pipe.

The bowl was shattered. A piece of thin, bright metal from the filter stem shone in the sunlight as Johnny held the briar over his head.

Milo was hopping up and down, nodding. The crowd was yelling. Mike Stacey grinned. "Beautiful!" he said. Johnny looked up at Barbara. Her face was white, but she smiled.

And then the crowd on both sides of the river was silent once more, and Johnny was raising Big Bill's rifle. The tiny click of the set trigger sounded. The heavy barrel steadied. Heat waves rose from the rocks. Light danced off the river's surface. One hundred and sixty-three feet and some inches away a small black pipe extended from Yance Bedford's mouth, the bowl barely two inches beyond his salt and pepper whiskers.

But the pipe was not steady, and neither was Yance. He was swaying gently. Johnny lowered the gun and closed his eyes. Yance took the pipe from his teeth and yelled angrily, "Hurry up! I can't stand like a rock all day!"

He put the pipe back in his teeth and took his stance. He was still swaying.

Johny raised the rifle. Well, all he could do was miss—and he'd make sure the miss came, if it did, when Yance was on the back-sway.

Mike Stacey licked his lips. His eyes were hard and tight. Up in the rocks Barbara sat with her eyes closed.

The Sharps belched. Johnny's shoulder swung back, and a cloud of black smoke obscured his vision. The crowd gasped and there was no shouting on Johnny's side of the river. But across the river they were yelling loudly. Johnny leaped clear of the smoke and looked.

Yance Bedford was lying face down on the rocks. Beside him, a tall man was jumping up and down, waving his right hand in the air. He turned his head to yell angrily at those near him, and a moment later his words came ringing across the Black.

"You—got—the—stem—just—an—inch—from—his—teeth!"

JOHNNY let the rifle butt drop to the ground, and felt as if a weight equal to the Sharps had gone from his stomach. Old Yance had collapsed from his overload of whiskey, not lead; and if Johnny had shot just a tick of time later than he had . . .

He handed the rifle to someone in the crowd and reached into his pocket. He'd been might lucky so far, but there was hard work ahead. Those around him were shouting now, beating him on the shoulders, yelling that nothing like this had been seen since the days of Big Bill Beatenbow.

Johnny took a paper-patched cartridge from his pocket and held it toward Beefbone Watters. "You loaded this?"

"Sure!" Beefbone said. Then he blinked. "Hey! You said you were plumb out of shells!"

Johnny looked at Stacey, whose face had gone dark and savage. "I told *you* I was out too, but I wasn't. I'd saved one cartridge from the fourteen Beefbone loaded. I just now used it." He looked at Stacey and tossed the cartridge in his palm. "This one happens to be loaded with *smokeless* powder. No telling where the bullet might have landed. What with the gun shooting a little to the right anyway . . ."

"I didn't put no smokeless powder in that shell!" Beefbone yelled.

"I know you didn't," Johnny said. "Stacey did. He did it after you loaded the shell and left it in your house."

Stacey pushed with both hands and shoved those nearest his sides out of the way. "You're crazy, Beatenbow. You're asking for a heating."

"I saw you do it, Stacey," Milo Farnsworth said. "Beefbone lit out for the saloon five minutes after he loaded that shell with black powder, and five minutes after that you were in the house changing the powder, because I was looking right through the window watching."

"On top of that," Johnny said, "you ransacked Beefbone's house after he loaded the first fourteen cases and threw away all the other ones he had—except one. I saw you do that myself."

There was no one near Stacey now, and no one near Johnny. Stacey said, "What are you going to do about it?"

Afterward, Beefbone, who managed to emerge a principal of the whole affair, and according to him, the hero, said that judo might be all right—if somebody wasn't knocking all your teeth out while you were getting ready to apply it.

Mike Stacey may have thought the same thing. Of course there were about seven minutes when he was lying cold on the banks of the Black and unable to think at all. People said that for a big man Johnny Beatenbow was pretty fast with his mitts, maybe not quite as fast as Big Bill—but pretty good.

Johnny told Barbara Standish that he didn't think Stacey would care to go to the dance next week—even if he were still in the country by then, which he wasn't. Somebody began a story about how Big Bill had licked two three hundred pound toughs at the same time, but on the whole everybody was satisfied with Johnny's achievements for the day. He knew that from now on he'd never be able to rest on his laurels around Spanish Forks, but he accepted that knowledge without flinching.

Yance Bedford made a sort of staggering recovery and arrived, using the bridge this trip, in time to see Stacey resting on his backsides. Yance was eminently satisfied, although he complained a little that Johnny had made him stand like a rock for ten minutes before shooting.

"When you coming up hunting?" Yance demanded.

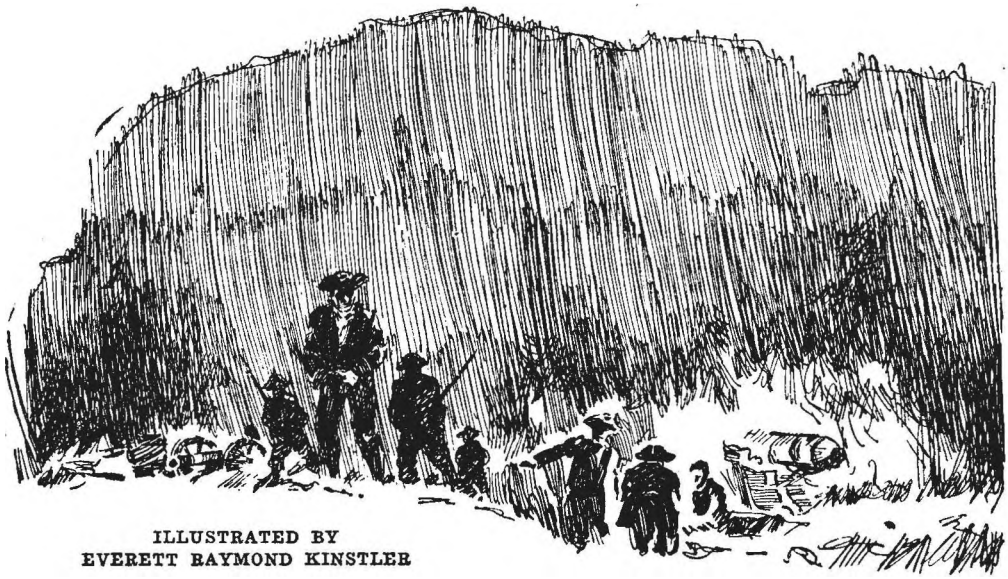
"Well, I might make it sooner than I thought," Johnny said. "I reckon Milo can run the store."

Milo nodded vigorously. He was busy collecting bets.

Granny Stoker sighed and said to Mrs. Martin, whose sack of flour might be considered the final straw that proved too heavy, "He even *acts* like Big Bill—now. If I was only fifty years younger I'd show that Barbara a thing or two."

THE BIG DEEDS

A FACT STORY



ILLUSTRATED BY
EVERETT RAYMOND KINSTLER

AARON BURR was a rebel from birth. Though the Revolution was then only nineteen years away, he had no intention of waiting that long to begin his resistance to tyrannical authority. At the age of thirteen months, his harassed mother found him very resolute and exceedingly difficult to manage. Even then he was more a filibuster than a child, and his earliest infantile forays were singularly prophetic.

Aaron's first notable venture, when four years old, took him from home for several days. Taking precocious offense when tutor Tappan Reeve reproved him, he toddled from his uncle Timothy Edward's house in Elizabeth, New Jersey, to seek more latitude. Presumably he levied abundant supplies off the country for when retrieved against his will he was well and happy but neither repentant nor conciliatory.

Four years later, he had progressed appreciably in application of military tactics, offensive and defensive. Safely ensconced in a cherry tree, with much of its fruit ready to hand, he subjected a prim and highly moralistic lady he greatly disliked to a severe and highly accurate semblance of musket fire. Later, having heedlessly abandoned his defensive position, he was summoned to the study. Uncle Timothy first lectured him endlessly in typical, humorless puritanical fashion, then prayed over him interminably, and, at last, as the Vice-President loved to relate nostalgically in after years, "he licked me like a sack!"

But at ten Aaron proved more than a match for his uncle, for he had learned that the fruits of a hard-won battle are often lost in a later inept negotiation with an astute and vindictive enemy. On this occasion, he had run away to sea. One day, busy on deck as a cabin boy, he noted the stealthy approach of a clerical-looking gentleman along the wharf. It was Uncle Timothy, piously intent on recapture of his truant nephew and infliction of inevitible retribution. But when the uncle boarded the ship, the nephew, was no longer on deck. He had nimbly climbed the rigging and reached the masthead. A stern avuncular command to des-

OF "LITTLE BURR"

By LOUIS A. SIGAUD

Ignoring pursuit only forty paces away, Burr stooped by the dead general and lifted the body to his shoulders.

cend forthwith fell on deaf ears. Safe at the mast-head, and aware that his uncle could hardly follow him, the wily ten year old waited patiently until his exasperated relative became humble enough to ask and accept his terms. They were simply that he was to descend with honors of war, go back home to neglected books, and that nothing—nothing disagreeable, be it specifically understood—should befall him. So ended the incident, and thereafter Uncle Timothy devoted himself exclusively to the salvation of others more malleable and less ingenious.

AARON was ready for the Revolution. When it came, it found a youth who loved the art of war above all else and had perfected himself in military qualities. He had read and mastered all he could find on the conduct of war, he could endure prolonged privation and exertion, there was authority in his mein and bearing, his supple mind was fertile in creation of expedients for swift and effective use of combat troops, and he was absolutely fearless. An excellent horseman, he had learned to handle small boats in all weather in the treacherous deep and shoal waters about Staten Island, could fence tolerably well, and was already a deadly shot. Standing five feet, six inches, and hence to be called "Little Burr" disparingly by those seeking vainly to overlook him and affectionately by those who loved him, his form was slender but sinewy, his carriage errect, and his brilliant jet black eyes were so piercing and searching that few men could withstand his gaze. So equipped, this most ambitious stripling was indeed ready for the Revolution. Fortunately, it was also ready for and had great need of him.

When, at Litchfield, Connecticut, Burr heard of the Battle of Lexington, he wrote urgently to his comrade Matt Ogden to come to him so they could join the American forces right away. Then came news of Bunker Hill. Too impatient to wait, Burr rode in hot haste to Elizabeth, snatched up Matt, and reached the American camp near Boston in July 1775, a few days after General Washington took command. Here they heard rumors that the Dark Eagle "Benedict Arnold" was to lead a thousand volunteers through the woods and streams of Maine to attack Quebec. On September 20, when Arnold's twelve hundred embarked at Newburyport for the mouth of the Kennebec, Burr and Ogden were with them.

On Colonel Arnold's memorable expedition, bateau after bateau was lost descending the dangerous Chaudiere River. When one was swept over a twenty-foot fall, all supplies aboard were lost, one man drowned, and Burr and the Virginian rifleman Dan Morgan almost perished. Twelve hundred had left Newburyport. Reaching Canada, Arnold had five hundred survivors. How one had conducted himself, their commander related tersely. Sending Burr with a verbal message to General Montgomery, the Dark Eagle also gave him a letter which related of the messenger, "He is a young gentleman of much life and activity, and has acted with great spirit and resolution on our fatiguing march. His conduct, I make no doubt, will be sufficient recommendation to your favor."

Arnold was right, for Montgomery, impressed by Burr, made the youthful volunteer a captain and aide-de-camp. Shortly thereafter Montgomery marched to join Arnold under the heights of Quebec. There a council of war was held, which Captain Burr attended, and plans were made for a night attack. Long before dawn on December 31, 1775, four American parties started out, the foremost led by Montgomery in person. At five, with heavy snow falling, the signal to attack was given and Montgomery's party moved ahead and swept aside two rows of pickets. Then pushed eagerly up a narrow gorge toward a blockhouse where two twelve-pounders loaded with grape commanded the only approach.

Reaching the end of a sheltering rocky cliff beyond which waited almost certain death, Montgomery turned to his men, called out, "Push on, brave boys! Quebec is ours!" and sprang forward. As the eleven men with him at the head of his column dashed into the open, a twelve-pounder roared out. Hit in the head and thighs, General Montgomery fell forward and died. Ten of the others also fell and of them nine were dead or dying, including two of Montgomery's aides. Burr alone remained uninjured and upright a few feet from his general, and at the

terrible sight confronting them the American troops advancing behind him halted and wavered. Captain Burr sought to re-animate the command and lead the men on. Vehement almost to the point of mutiny, he tried to go on to enter the lower town, and, as the British had hurriedly withdrawn from the blockhouse, might well have taken Quebec. But Montgomery's successor peremptorily ordered retreat, and with the utmost reluctance Burr turned his back on the enemy. But not on his fallen general.

Ignoring pursuit only forty paces away, Burr stooped by the dead general, lifted the body to his shoulders and proceeded at a staggering run down the gorge, up to his knees in snow and under enemy fire. Stubbornly, he reeled along until the enemy was at his very heels, and then, in fury and despair, abandoned his burden to prevent his capture with it. Fifty years later, venerable Sam Spring, a classmate of Burr's at Princeton and chaplain of Arnold's expeditionary force, regained contact with Burr by this moving plea: "My son, I must see Burr before I leave the city. I went through the woods with him under Arnold. I stood by his side on the plains of Abraham, and have not seen him since the morning on which Montgomery fell. It was a heavy snowstorm. Montgomery had fallen. The British troops were advancing towards the dead body; and little Burr was hastening from the fire of the enemy, up to his knees in snow, with Montgomery's body on his shoulders! Do you wonder I wish to see him?"

IN THE SPRING of '76, Arnold, now commanding our forces in Canada, had made Burr a brigade-major. But Burr had come to dislike and distrust the Dark Eagle as much as he had worshipped Montgomery. The two ardent and combative temperaments clashed frequently. Characteristically, when Burr decided to seek more active service nearer home, he asked no permission but simply announced his intention. Arnold, already in bad humor, objected vigorously. Suavely, Burr replied, "Sir, I have a boat in readiness; I have employed four discharged soldiers to row me, and I start from * * * at six o'clock tomorrow morning."

Arnold, incensed, and unwilling to lose an efficient brigade-major who relieved him of all details, curtly forbade him to leave. Burr, cooler and blander as Arnold became more heated, and standing on his status as a volunteer whose original obligation had been discharged, flatly insisted he would go.

The next morning at six, as Burr was about to step into his boat, Arnold came up.

"Why, Major Burr, you are not going?"

"I am, sir," came the uncompromising reply.

"But," said the disconcerted Dark Eagle, "you know it is against my orders!"

"I know," answered Burr with ominous calm, "that you have the *power* to stop me, but nothing short of force shall do it."

Upon this, Arnold as Burr's uncle Timothy had so often had to do, changed his tone and sought to persuade his brigade-major to remain. But Burr, adamant and coldly deferential, wished the general good fortune, bade him good-bye, boarded his boat and was rowed away.

Meanwhile, Matt Ogden, at Philadelphia with dispatches after the assault on Quebec, had informed Congress, General Washington and others of Burr's intrepid conduct. Offered a vacancy on General Washington's staff, Matt preferred field service but eagerly sought the honor for his comrade in arms. Shortly he wrote Aaron, "General Washington desires me to inform you that he will provide for you, and that he expects you will come to him immediately and stay in his (official) family." At Albany, Burr learned through others of Washington's invitation and proceeded with alacrity to New York to report.

But six months of clerical duty as an aide disgusted a twenty-year old who had tasted action and wanted more. John Hancock, alarmed by a hint that he might withdraw from the service, procured him the more active role of aide to General Putnam, then fortifying New York against imminent attack. Rescued from the pen and restored to the sword, the youthful major was soon styling his tough-minded and leather-necked superior "My good Old General."

With Putnam in command during the disastrous days upon Long Island, Burr, to his delight, was in the thick of things. When the army crossed the East River to withdraw through Manhattan, he was active throughout the night on the Brooklyn side and his coolness and efficiency impressed Major General McDougal, supervising the embarkation, who mentally tagged the young officer as a man he wanted. The next day, September, 20, Major Burr, riding at the American rear with several dragoons to hurry on stragglers, came upon most of Silliman's brigade taking refuge in a miserable sod-fort.

Riding up to the fort, Burr asked who was in command. General Knox emerged, and the youthful major, the stern voice of higher authority, demanded brusquely, "What do you do here? Why do you not retreat?"

Knox replied that the British were stretched across the width of Manhattan north of him, that he could not get through, and so meant to defend this position until overwhelmed. Impatiently, Burr waved this declaration aside as ridiculous. How defend a place not bomb-proof and lacking water and provisions? Why, the British with but one mortar or howitzer would take it in less than four hours!

When Knox refused to budge, Putnam's aide addressed the brigade officers. Better, he insisted, for half their force to fall cutting their way through enemy lines than for all to be prisoners before night and he penned aboard the notorious British prison-ships. He knew the roads perfectly, and could take them through safely. Let them follow him.

Two miles out, firing was heard on the right. Burr and his dragoons, finding it came from a small British advance-guard which withdrew at sight of the Americans, charged after them and killed several. Guiding Silliman's men swiftly through woods to avoid other encounters, he regained the main body with a loss in stragglers of but thirty men.

In July 1777, Burr, now twenty-one, was notified by General Washington of promotion to a lieutenant-colonelcy and assignment to Colonel Malcom's regiment in the Ramapos. With Malcom absent, Burr was regimental commander and in two months welded his unit into a well disciplined and offensive-minded force. When, in September, a British body, two thousand strong, moved north from New York City to ravage the country, Burr was ready.

In one hour he had his regiment under way, leaving a small detail in camp. By sunset he and three hundred men were at Paramus, sixteen miles nearer the enemy. En route an express from Putnam had caught up with him. The general suggested the regiment retreat with public stores to the mountains. Burr's comment was, in effect, "How can I run from an enemy I have not seen? I'll be answerable for the public stores and my troops. Let's get on!"

At Paramus, he added to his force leaderless and floundering militia, encamped in a strong position, and, picking seventeen men, went on a night scout to see if there was really anything to run from. Three miles north of Hackensack, he learned the most advanced British picket was a mile distant. Concealing his men, who had marched thirty miles already, in a nearby wood, he went on alone and circling the picket, made sure that it was out of hearing of the main body.

An hour before daybreak, he and his scouts attached with fixed bayonets. Taken by surprise, the entire picket, thirty in number, was captured. The sole casualty was one British soldier who died of bayonet wounds.

By an express, Burr summoned the troops at Paramus to join him. Other expresses he sent to rally the countryside. Magnified by rumors, news of his feat spread rapidly. Before nightfall Colonel Burr, heading a really imposing if mixed force, was intimidating the enemy so by feints that they withdrew and abandoned the cattle they had collected. Throughout the night, Burr prepared to pursue, but in the morning peremtory orders arrived to join the main American force in Pennsylvania. Obeying, he learned that while he had driven the British back west of the Hudson, on the east their advance had impelled an American major-general in command of two thousand men to withdraw and abandon Peekskill, which the enemy then burned.

LATE IN 1777, Burr's regiment entered winter quarters at Valley Forge. Ten miles away, at a pass called The Gulf, a militia unit was posted to watch the enemy. Instead it reported numerous false alarms which caused the main body to be called to arms needlessly. When it appeared that these alarms resulted from improper organization and lax discipline, General McDougal, who recalled Burr, recommended to Washington that he be put in command at The Gulf. The new commander imposed severe daily drills and most rigorous discipline. Resentful and rebellious, the men decided to rid themselves of their new leader at the next review. Burr, forewarned, took certain precautions and proceeded to review the men. Striding along the line of the detachment, he watched sharply for the first sign of action. It came when a man stepped from the ranks, leveled his musket at Burr, and shouted "Now is your time, my boys!"

Promptly and coolly, Colonel Burr raised his sword and struck the man's out-stretched arm with such force that the bone was broken and his limb remained hanging by little more than skin.

"Take your place in the line, sir!" ordered Burr, quietly but sternly. The man reeled back, Burr calmly dismissed the formation, and the camp surgeon amputated the arm. There were no more false alarms at Valley Forge that winter.

In June 1778. Burr led a brigade in Lord Stirling's division during the battle of Monmouth. His second in command slain, his own horse killed while his rider was in the saddle, the twenty-two year old brigade commander was, for once completely exhausted. Without sleep for forty-eight hours, he flung himself to the ground late at night and fell into a prolonged sleep. The next day he could hardly walk and worse symptoms rapidly developed. Thereafter he suffered much from chronic dysentery and it took more than five years to repair the harm caused by over-exertion at Monmouth.

But only a week later he was just outside New York City on an intelligence mission for Washington, and on July 4 Lord Stirling was writing him, "On showing it (Burr's report) to General Washington, he approves of the progress of your inquiries and desires they may be continued. But he particularly desires me to send off this express to you to request * * *: What are the preparations of shipping for embarkation of foot or horse? What expeditions on hand? Whether up the North River, Canada or West Indies? * * * "

That winter, at West Point, Burr was for a time the senior officer there. Now almost twenty-three years old, his youthful appearance and important command often occasioned amusing misunderstandings. Because of one, he became known fondly to his men as "Colonel Burr's son." This happened when a farmer asked for Colonel Burr. Conducted to him by an orderly sergeant, the vexed countryman stared at the youthful officer and explained, "But, sir, it is Colonel Burr I wish to see, for I have something to say to him."

"You may proceed," the young man replied pleasantly. "I am Colonel Burr."

The incredulous farmer hesitated, and then, as the delighted sentinel at the door overheard and gleefully relayed about the post, expostulated, "Surely, sir, you are Colonel Burr's *son*!"

By January of 1779, General McDougal had obtained the services of the officer he had admired on the retreat from Long Island three years earlier. Promptly he placed him in command of the "lines," a no-man's land stretching fifteen miles through Westchester County between the British at Kingsbridge and the Americans north of them. Before Burr's time this had been the scene of constant lawless violence by irregulars on both sides. Through it British agents and spies passed unmolested and got behind our troops. McDougal's orders were explicit. This must be stopped fully and at once. It was. Taking station at White Plains, Burr organized a most effective system of videttes, patrols and signals. Not another house was plundered, no family even alarmed, not a spy got through. Assuming the aggressive, Burr destroyed a blockhouse the British built north of Kingsbridge and took many prisoners. And soon, as at Paramus, he was hot after the British who emerged from New York two thousand strong under Gov-

ernor Tryon. Again, as at Paramus, they could not cope with the mobility and daring of Burr's smaller force and made for New York City, once more leaving their plunder of cattle behind them.

After more than two months of this, Burr's physical condition was such that he had to resign the service to recover his health. General Washington reluctantly accepted his resignation and regretted "the loss of a good officer." The British quickly gave the American commander-in-chief added reason to mourn Burr's loss. Attacking his successor at White Plains, they took him prisoner, killed or captured all his men but thirty, and caused withdrawal of the American line twenty miles northward. The following year, another successor was attacked and killed, as were his second in command and many of his men.

TAKING leave at Newburgh of General McDougal, whose paternal custom it was to sign official communications to him "Affectionately," Burr undertook one last mission. McDougal had been trying to inform General Washington of enemy movements but all his messengers were intercepted in the mountain passes. Would Burr go? He started out bravely on horseback. But, unable to secure a suitable remount at the iron works in Orange County, he accepted Peter Townsend's laughing offer of a half-broken mule aptly named "Independence" and had to ride the vexed creature up and down a high charcoal chute full tilt before the stubborn beast would concede that there was indeed a Burr in the saddle. Then the strangely assorted pair proceeded more amiably to the river where the following urgent note secured prompt passage: "Colonel Burr, being on urgent public business, must be put across the ferry at Fishkill Landing without a moment's delay. Arthur St. Clair, Major-General."

Once across the Hudson, Burr delivered his message, proceeded to New Haven, and took to his bed. Other than a later skirmish with Governor Tryon, this ended his military career. Two of the many eloquet testimonials to his valor and ability merit resurrection.

One, written in 1814 by Colonel Richard Platt, McDougal's aide-de-camp, almost forty years after numerous contacts with Burr throughout the Revolution, is a stirring eulogy of Burr as a soldier. Platt ends by saying he will soon add further reasons why Burr is the only American of military ability fit to be a lieutenant-general and far superior to President Madison's candidate for that high rank in the War of 1812.

The other, a letter to Burr, reached him about January 1, 1779 when about to take over the Westchester "lines," and brought back vividly a morning on the Plains of Abraham and the memory of a dead man whose body he lifted from the snow. Writing on another matter, Mrs. Montgomery added feelingly, "* * * Besides, having this opportunity, I would wish to assure Colonel Burr of the very great respect I have for those gentlemen whom General Montgomery professed to esteem; among whom, sir, I am told you were not the least. To be by him distinguished argues a superior merit, and will ensure you a most sincere welcome at Rhinebeck should it be in your way."

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

CONNIE MACK of Philadelphia.

Query:—I hope you will be able to give me some information about Connie Mack. I would like to know his history, when and where he was born, how he became connected with baseball and any other facts you may have available.

—Gary Miner,
Waterbury, Conn.

He was born Cornelius McGillicuddy, second of a family of seven children, at East Brookfield, Mass., Dec. 23, 1862. His father, a wheelwright, was serving in the Civil War with a Mass. regiment at the time. Connie learned trade of shoemaker in one of town's shoe factories, and was assistant foreman when he turned to baseball, first signing with Meriden of Conn. State League in 1884. In 1886, he was with Hartford of Eastern League, and late in season was purchased by Washington Nat'l League club. Played 10 games with Senators that fall, hitting .361, best he ever hit.

Remained in Washington in 1887-8-9, jumped to Buffalo of the Players' League in 1890, and returned to National League with Pittsburgh in 1891, remaining until 1896 season. Replaced Al Buckenberger as manager of Pirates, Sept. 3, 1894, and has been a manager ever since. Released at end of 1896 season, he signed as manager and part owner of Milwaukee club in old Western League.

Western League was expanded into present American League in 1900, and when it moved East in 1901, Mack was given Philadelphia franchise, along with Ben Shibe. He has been manager and part owner ever since, now is majority owner. He won pennants in 1902, 1905, 1910-11, 1913-14; 1929-30-31, and won World Series in 1910, 1911, 1913, 1929, 1930. He also has finished last 16 times.

Developed such great players as Rube Waddell, Danny Murphy, Chief Bender, Jack Coombs, Jack Barry, Eddie Collins, Frank Baker, Stuffy McInnis, Lefty Grove, Jimmy Foxx, George Earnshaw, Mickey Cochrane, Al Simmons, Jimmy Dykes, Bing Miller, Lou Brissie.

Was awarded the Bok award in 1929, a valued prize in Philadelphia (usually given to scientists and men of letters) for having contributed most to Phila. in that year. He has been honored all over the East, especially in your native Connecticut, at Meriden, Hartford, etc., and last season was given a wonderful day in New York.

THE "Million-Dollar Show-off."

Query:—Could you find out the following for me:

1. It is claimed that Dan Patch is the world's greatest money-winning horse. There is a discrepancy in the amount which this horse is stated to have won. In a copy of the *Reader's Digest* it is stated that he was, I quote: "Million-Dollar Show-Off." Another quotation: "In the early 1900's a crooked-legged mahogany bay harness horse —a pacer—grossed an estimated million dollars in seven years of exhibition races, plus another million or so in indirect returns."

(A) What is the official stake winnings as is stated in official records of "The United States Trotting Association?"

(B) What is the amount of his winnings in exhibition races which is not shown in the records of the U.S.T.A.?

2. Theodore E. Buell, the executive secretary of the "American Horse Shows Association" states that Sir Clifford Sifton of Toronto, Canada, is supposed to hold the world's record for a high jump with his horse, Confidence, ridden by Jack Hambleton of the Sifton Stables. Confidence jumped 8'6" with trial poles at Ottowa in 1912.

(A) Was the height of 8'6" measured vertically from the top of the jump to the ground or was the jump at a slant to the vertical and, if it was slanting and not vertical, what was the angle of inclination to the vertical?

(B) What is the meaning of, I quote: "With trial poles"?

3. Can you let me know about any further high-and-broad-jump records?

—S. C. van Aardt, Port Elizabeth
Cape Province, Union of South Africa

Reply by John Richard Young:—I do not think anyone knows exactly how much money Dan Patch won, although it could easily have been over a million dollars, especially when that figure of a million dollars is "estimated," and when you take into account the "indirect returns." The people who "operated" Dan Patch at the height of his glory were strictly showmen with a very good sense of business, and such are not given to quoting exact figures, particularly when dickering with promoters for future engagements. M. W. Savage, who bought the horse for $60,000 from M. E. Sturgis, was a stock food manufacturer; in Dan Patch he found his best advertising medium and did not miss any opportunities. He even sold his great pacer's castoff shoes at a dollar each; screwball souvenir hunters gladly paid for them. In exhibiting the pacer, Savage customarily signed for a percentage of the gate or for all money taken in over a specified figure. I doubt if even the U. S. T. A. can give you exact figures; but if you care to try, write to the secretary, Goshen, N. Y.

If Confidence or any other horse ever jumped 8'6" it's news to me. Confidence's best "official" record that I know of was 8'½" made in Chicago in 1912 with Jack Hambleton up. Maybe Mr. Buell is correct, but the best highjumping record I know of is 8'5", held jointly by two Australian horses, Rukin Lass and Peninsula. Both performed the tremendous feat in Cairns, Queensland, Rukin Lass doing it in 1941 and Peninsula in, I believe, 1946 or '47. All such jumps are always measured vertically from the ground—otherwise, the figures would be quite pointless. "Trial poles" are simply top poles very loosely affixed so that if the horse merely touches them they will fall, a safety measure.

I don't know of any official broadjump record; I rather doubt if there is one. To jump high a horse must jump broad. For instance, in 1904 the bay jumper Heatherbloom, training to break the world's highjump record at Chicago (which attempt he was unable to carry out because of pneumonia), was photographed by *Harper's Weekly* clearing 8'2" and 8'3". The breadth of his leaps when clearing these heights measured 37 feet from takeoff to landing. Plenty of jumpers have cleared more than this distance, but seldom has anyone bothered to measure it. I have heard of an English *hunter*, when actually out hunting, clearing 42 feet. At Madison Square Garden in 1913 an international broadjump competition was held. A seven-eighth Arabian mare, Halcyon, won over a field of 32 horses; but I do not know the exact distance she jumped.

CRIME does not pay—unless you're a criminologist.

Query—I am interested in criminology and investigation, and I would like information on where I can obtain training, such as a police academy, or school of criminology without carrying a regular college course.

—Marshall A. Jacobs
Salem, Oregon

Reply by Francis Bent:—There are a number of schools that specialize in courses of criminology by correspondence. Several of the universitic carry resident courses in criminology that do not require full college subjects. Northwestern University and the University of California both have such schools.

The Institute of Scientific Criminology, 614 12th Avenue North, Seattle, Washington, conducts a resident course requiring three years to complete. They also offer extension courses (correspondence) in special subjects. In applying for information it is necessary to give full information as to age, citizenship, present and past work experience, educational attainments and schools attended, and the names of at least three reliable persons as references.

Two other correspondence schools are:

International Criminologist School, 5424 57th Ave., South, P. O. Box 343, Seattle, Washington.

Institute of Applied Science, 1920 Sunnyside Ave., Chicago, Ill.

For a list of approved home study schools of criminology you might write to the National Home Study Council, 839 Seventeenth St., N.W., Washington, D. C. Tell them the type of study in which you are interested.

MUCH more than mere muscle.

Query:—Would you tell me the requirements for being a lumberjack. I would like to have a job in the Maine woods for the summer months. How old do you have to be and where could I apply for such a job?

—Henry Edwards
Memphis, Tennessee

Reply by Arthur H. Carhart:—This business of being a lumberjack isn't merely having a set of muscles. It may look just like work with not much skull work and experience, but actually a qualified man knows a lot of occupational lore. So jumping right into a full-fledged lumberjack job isn't done easily.

Also, most of the actual woods work in northern sections, Maine for example, as you are interested in that, is done in the winter and isn't a summer job with a high peak of activity.

Since you raise the question of how old one has to be to get such a job, you may be on the younger side of twenty-five and looking for a vacation spot. Off hand, without experience and know-how, I'd say you'd have no great chance of getting a genuine lumberjack place.

However, I'd suggest this. There are jobs open for summer work in national and state forests. For young fellows as well as more experienced. Write the State Forester at Augusta, Me. and ask for suggestions as to what might be open on trail crews, fire patrols and such. You might also write the Maine Development Commission, Information Division, at Augusta, asking what opportunities may be open for woods work—even getting a job around a resort as handyman. Sorry I can't be of more help, but this is the best guidance I can give you on just what you asked.

SIX men for every job—in the Merchant Marine today.

Query:—What are the physical and educational requirements for joining the Merchant Marine? Do you have to sign up for a certain length of time, or just for each trip?

—I. B. Trowbridge
Mt. Vernon, Ill.

Reply by Kermit Salyer:—At present I am advising all men seeking beginning jobs in the merchant marine to stay ashore until the shipping situation improves. Our merchant marine is in a hard way right now and there are at least half a dozen experience and trained men on the beach waiting for every job that opens up.

There are no educational requirements for a beginner at sea, and the physical requirements are not strict. In the merchant marine you do not sign on for any length of time, but for each voyage, seldom exceeding twelve months.

REPORT on South America by a former "Typical Tropical Tramp."

Query:—I propose going to South America next fall and would appreciate some advice.

What I would like to find out, if possible, are (1) a place where I can support myself and live cheaply for a time while getting acquainted with the country and (2) a chance for adventure and profit, presumably in prospecting of some sort.

Factors I would like to know about are rate of exchange, living expenses, possibility of technical employment (especially in radio) wages, etc. Also, mineral deposits or natural resources such as timber, which could be exploited without too large an initial investment.

Is such exploratory work being done, either for scientific reasons or commercially? I have read about a few people who make a business of exploration, combining diamond mining with trade with the natives for such things as isalata gum and various medical herbs. Is this practical and what are the chances of getting in on such a deal? I will have a little capital to invest—$1000-$2000.

I am 21, in good health, have three years' engineering at Queen's University and a good knowledge of radio work. I am studying Spanish.

—Raymond Hitchcock
Kingston, Ontario

Reply by Edgar Young:—As a general plan the best way to get wise to some section of South America is to take any sort of job with a U.S. or Canadian company down there, and while working for wages and living in company quarters look about the surrounding country and decide on what to do independently. The way most of us saw South America was to hop from job to job (and some of the hops were quite long) and with the stake earned at each place to do some additional visiting and try other things we felt like. The English outfits are not so hot for us here and in Canada for they bring out home boys on contract, but the Canadian and U.S. companies will hire a drifter who blows in and who will take whatever is open, be it acting as cookee or running the job as superintendent. We were called TTT's (Typical Tropical Tramps) in the old days and I am an old, original member of that organization. The idea is to take any job no matter how unfamiliar and then to hold it or die. It takes some cheek but a guy who lacks cheek better stay home to begin with, for the strong, silent, and dumb fellow will starve out as an adventurer. I was just reading an article in a February 1949 *National Geographic Magazine* written by John D. Schultz (son of Dutch Shultz, Major in the U.S. Air Corps who was killed in China during the late fracas). He hitch-hiked out of Quito, hoofed it across the Andes to the Napo where he bought a dugout and drifted down to Iquitos where he overhauled a truck to get a few pesos to get a larger canoe and he lit out for Florida down the Amazon and after considerable ordeal finally arrived in Miami. The guy has what it takes and he has my vote to join the Typical Tropical Tramps as a journeyman member.

Hopping from job to job in South America requires knowing in a general way where these companies are operating. There is no damn use hitting them at this end in New York or Toronto where they have headquarters and hire men under contract and ship them down. The trick is to be down there when something is open and to take it and hold it down until your feet get itchy and then hit the grit for the next place. In Venezuela there are several U.S. and Canadian oil outfits in the country around Lake Maracaibo and here and there upcountry. In Colombia one of the largest oil outfits has Toronto headquarters, but they have wells at Barranca Bermeha up the Magdalena a ways, pipe lines, and various other things and usually they can use the guy who blows in and wants to work.

When they hire a man this way they save steamer fare, and the truth is that most of the fellows who drift in are really competent (from having tried similar jobs elsewhere). In Ecuador there is just the G&Q RR from Guayaquil up to Quito and while it used to be good for a job the chances are not so hot now for they employ much native help. There are two going gold mines up country and these have a rule to hire a drifter and let him work out a stake so he can move on. In Peru there are two large U.S. copper mines and smelters, and there are smaller outfits in Lima and other places. Bolivia has lots of tin mines and these have commissaries and other places where a guy can work if he doesn't like the mines.

In Northern Chile there are numerous nitrate plants run by various foreign companies. Due to various reasons there are not so good for a job as they once were but there is still a chance. There are a scattering of U.S. businesses in Valparaiso and Santiago and I found the big importers of U.S. machinery my best bet and my pardner caught on with the Braden Copper Company at Rancagua which is upcountry a ways. On down at Punta Arenas there isn't much of a chance and about the only chance would be to work for some Scotch sheep raiser or in the meat packing plants in the city. I liked the country fine which reminds me of Labrador although not quite so cold and I had me some fun prospecting and catboarding down through the Islands below the Straights. There is gold to be found on the beaches after a heavy storm which indicates there is a rich ledge somewhere under the sea not too far out.

Over on the Atlantic side we have Brazil which is larger than continental U.S. and which offers a duplicate of any climate found on the earth and a few unique ones of its own. I worked in Rio de Janeiro as an accountant for the Light and Power Company which is one of the largest Canadian outfits in the world. They own the telephones, cinema circuits, sea cables, street cars, electric lighting facilities, and quite a few other things on the side. They could possibly use a radio man if he knew his stuff and the pay is quite high. I happen to be a telephone and radio engineer but I learned that after I was in South America. A good radio repairman could make out in Rio okay if he could work somewhere until he had stake enough to start his own business.

There are lots of Englishmen in Argentine, most of whom come over from the old sod on contract, and salaries for this reason are inclined to be rather low in comparison to Brazil and other countries down there. I worked for an importer of U.S. farm machinery, first as a stenographer and later as a threshing-machine expert. At the time all threshing was done by U.S. and Canadian boys who came down to work a few weeks and they made enough in wages and bonus to clear considerable. I guess foreigners and natives are doing this sort of work now. Anyhow, Buenos Aires is a big city and there are chances if a fellow looks about. I came overland from Rio to Montevideo, then across by boat; and I can tell the world it's a long ways.

The rate of exchange in all these countries is in our favor. In the old days a Peruvian sol was worth a U.S. dollar but now it is only worth about 12c and the same holds true with all countries with the possibly exception of Uruguay where it usta take a dollar and ten cents to get one of their dollars. As a rule one or our dollars is worth from five to ten of the local pesos so it is a good game if we are paid on U.S. or Canadian basis; and of course if we land with some money we have the advantage.

Colombia has always been the big gold country and still is and most of it is recovered by sluicing and dredging. I once owned a part interest in fourteen square miles of good gravel but couldn't get capital to handle it and had to turn loose. The people who got it have cleared millions. Colombia is also the leading producer of real emeralds in the world (Russia next) but these are handled under government monopoly. There are a few small diamonds in British Guiana up the Essequibo and recently some have been mined in Venezuela, but Brazil is the big diamond country of S. A. and Brazilian diamonds are of better water than those from Africa.

Brazil has some extensive iron operations in the state of Minas Geraes. They have some lignite but no coal and if a prospector could find some real coal in Brazil he would be set for life. There is oil being exploited in Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Argentine, and other countries in addition to the huge operations in Colombia and Venezuela. Before the war we got our vanadium from Peru and/or Chile and there is possibly plenty of uranium in the Andes somewhere if it could be located. Oil explorers have been almost everywhere.

If you got a trading post going in the right place it would pay off. Most of such places are remotely located and the ideal thing would be to have a helicopter or some sort of plane to go and come in, especially for those spots on the eastern side of the Andes on the headwaters of some tributary of the Amazon.

With your training and age, plus the capital you intend to take, there is little reason for failure on your part if you play the cards close to your belly until you get wised up. If you had an old car or motorcycle you could get as far as the Canal Zone over the Pan American Highway, where the equipment could be sold for more than it cost; and it is just a short sea jump to Venezuela oil fields or those of Columbia, and the same down the Pacific side.

Portuguese is the lingo in Brazil but if

(Continued on page 122)

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PRIEST, c/o *Adventure.*

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Auto Racing—WALT WOESTMAN, 2310 Midlothian Drive, Altadena, Calif.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—JACK DENTON SCOTT, R.F.D., Roxbury, Conn.

Fencing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure.*

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Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure.*

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 3325 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 2, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U.S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure.*

Horology: *The science of time and timekeepers*—JOHN W. MCGRATH, 434 W. 120th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o *Adventure*.

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure*.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure*.

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure*.

United States Navy—FRANK HEROLD, 1647 Charon Rd., Jacksonville, Fla.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure*.

Military Aviation—C. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure*.

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure*.

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 242 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 85 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o *Adventure*. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure*.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **2** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **3** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **4** ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

★**The British Isles**—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o *Adventure*. **2** *Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o *Adventure*.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

★**Newfoundland**—CAPT. LEO C. MURPHY, J.P., Great War Veterans' Office, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche, Quintana Roo and Yucatan*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Central Sanalona, S. A., Costa Rica, Sinaloa, Mexico.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **2** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **3** ★*Georgia Bay and Southern Ontario; National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 103 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian Life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Western Arctic*—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F.R.G.S., 531A 15th St. South, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o *Adventure*.

Western U. S., Part 1—*Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, c/o *Adventure*. **2** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1412 West Fruit, Albuquerque, New Mexico. **3** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 287, Elko, Nev. **4** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **5** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, 616 N. 3rd St., Phoenix, Ariz. **6** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S.—*Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 1117 Myrtle Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure*. **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Jake Crawford had the sweetest racket in Tangier . . . All the denizens of that Moroccan hotspot where Africa meets Europe envied him—the smugglers and gun-runners; the I.D.B.'s and snow merchants; the plain thieves and pickpockets and procurers; the hooked-knife assassins and the blackmail brokers. For Jake ran the unheard-of racket of honesty. He was the only honest man in the Tangier underworld. But honesty could be a dangerous game to play in the shadow of that bloody, bejeweled symbol of terror and Holy War—

THE SWORD OF MULAI ISMAIL

A Novelette of Intrigue in Morocco

By ROBERT L. TRIMNELL

In the Same Issue:

THE MAN THE BABOONS KNEW

A Strange Tale of South Africa

By PAUL ANNIXTER

FATAL GOLD

The True Story of a Fabulous Lost Mine

By PHILIP H. GODSELL

THE TEMPER OF JOHNNY MULDOON

A Man with the Guts to Play the Role of Coward

By CADDO CAMERON

WESTERN WEAPONS—I: THE SHORT GUN

The First of Three Fascinating Articles

By W. H. GRIFFEY

Plus many other exciting yarns, features and departments—which all adds up to a great March issue of—

ON SALE FEBRUARY 10th

(Continued from page 118)

you already know Spanish it is dead easy to shift over. The southern portion is temperate, good soil, great forests, and one of the damndest finest places in the whole world— and very few people living there. In the other countries and in Brazil also up near the equator it is a case of locating far enough up the mountains to escape insects, reptiles, and tropical ailments—but southern Brazil is about the latitude of North Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, and with similar climate. If I were settling in South America I would spend a long time at southern Brazil before going elsewhere. I was lumbering and saw-milling down in there and when I left I had enough money to load a pack-mule.

FIELD-STRIPPING

Query:—I have recently acquired a Walther P-38 pistol. It is still packed in cosmoline and in order to be cleaned it has to be disassembled. Can you give me instructions as to field-stripping the gun.

—Charles Palmer
Sioux City, Iowa

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—Set the safety catch in the "Safety" position, and pull the slide back over the empty magazine so that the inside catch on the slide stop will be forced up by the magazine follower and hold the slide open. Then remove the magazine.

At the front of the frame is a lever-type locking pin, below the receiver. Turn this down and as far around as it will go.

Hold the slide under control with the left hand, and with the right thumb, push down the slide stop. Now press the trigger, and pull the barrel and slide stop directly forward in their runners on the receiver, sliding them out of their guides.

Now, turn barrel and slide upside down. A small locking plunger will be seen at the rear of the barrel assembly. Push the plunger and spring out the white metal locking cam block.

Now slide barrel directly ahead out of slide. Lock will come forward with barrel.

Push forward and up on locking cam block and lift it out of its recess. This completes field-stripping. Then remove the cosmic with gasoline, secure some 9 MM Luger ammo, and try your pistol for accuracy; say, about twenty-five yards at first.

But remember one thing always; THE SAFETY ON THE P-38 SOMETIMES BREAKS AND DOES NOT FUNCTION: THE PISTOL THEN BECOMES A DEATH TRAP. You may think it safely locked when it isn't.

I trust the above will be the desired information; I had to learn to strip and reassemble the P-38 with NO instructions, but it wasn't such a chore, even so.

ONE round in the chamber.

Query:—In Automatic Pistols, Rifles and Shotguns can you put one more cartridge in the barrel after the magazine is filled with cartridges? For instance, in a .45 Colt the magazine holds seven cartridges. Can you put one more cartridge in the barrel and make it eight-shot safely? And are all other Automatic Pistols the same? Can you put another cartridge in the barrel after the magazine is loaded and can this be done safely?

I own an Automatic Rifle with a ten-cartridge magazine—can you put another cartridge in the barrel and make it an 11-shot? In an Automatic Shotgun with a five-cartridge barrel, can you put another cartridge in the barrel and make it a six-shot automatic—and can this be done safely?—or wouldn't you recommend this?

—P. H. Healy
Kansas City, Missouri

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—In loading the automatic pistol, rifle, or shotgun, it is the generally accepted practice to have a round in the chamber of the barrel, and the magazine loaded to its full capacity. Thus, the Service pistol holds seven rounds in the magazine, and with the one in the chamber, it is an eight-shot weapon.

However, I recall that in World War I, we were told to carry five rounds in our pistol magazines, and the chamber empty; later on, the automatics were called in, and to our great delight, were replaced with .45 caliber revolvers, Model 1917, using two semi-circular steel clips, each holding three rounds of .45 automatic cartridges. Both Smith & Wesson and Colt furnished these revolvers, which we preferred to the automatic pistol.

Yes, I favor carrying the automatic pistol with magazine filled, and the chamber loaded, with the safety device on. I sometimes carry a .22 automatic pistol when hiking, an awfully accurate little arm, and always have the chamber loaded and the safety engaged. The automatic shotgun I do not own, nor do I use either High Power Standard rifle or my .22 automatic rifle, but did I do so, I'd surely have the chamber loaded, with safety on. As far as I am aware, all so-called automatic arms can be so carried.

BUT BE SURE THE SAFETY IS ENGAGED WHEN SO DOING, is my earnest advice.

GLOBE-TROTTING and photography.

Query:—Living in San Francisco all my life, I guess I have inherited some of the adventurous blood of my ancestors. I am now almost ready to enter college. Ever

since I was in the fourth grade a friend and I have always planned to be explorers and globe trotters when we were older. We have stuck together ever since and more than ever we still want to follow that line. We have come across these problems of the utmost importance. We have heard that some people go to strange lands and photograph them (both in stills and movies). My main problem is "can an adventurer make a living out of doing this and to whom can he sell the pictures?" Where can he acquire the necessary knowledge to take pictures in strange places? What books to read, and can you tell me any other adventurers who have lived like this. Lastly—are you able to tell me of any other means of obtaining funds for a vagabond? Do you know of any places in the West Indies or South America that have never been photographed? Would any museums or magazines be interested in hiring men like us? What outfitting would we need for this work?

—Ted Killeen
San Francisco, Calif.

Reply by Paul L. Anderson:—I am sorry to be discouraging, but as you outline the matter to me, you haven't, at present, the slightest chance of carrying out your ambition, for the following reasons.

1. You would have to be an expert photographer, in both still and movies, in black and white, and in color. And I mean *expert*, and no fooling.

2. You would need an investment of from $5000 to $50,000, depending on what kind of work you planned to do.

3. There is not one square inch of the habitable globe which is of any interest at all, which has not been thoroughly photographed by experts working for the big movie companies.

Your best plan would be to go ahead with your college course, and pick up both experience and a bit of cash by photographing campus activities. If you can get a Ph.D. in geology, biology, anthropology, or some allied subject, by all means do so; it is not imperative, but it will help when you try for a job with some museum expedition. Then get a job with some big movie concern, for about three years of practical experience, and then try for a job with a museum expedition, or with some such magazine as *Holiday*, or *National Geographic*, or as a cameraman for the movies.

It is perhaps too bad to upset your fond dream of adventure, with its waving palm fronds, and dusky maidens, and tinkling temple bells, and all that, but you will do well to remember what one of *Adventure's* experts said about it, some years ago. I can't give you his precise words, but his remark was to this effect: "Adventure is fine and glamorous and romantic to read about in books and in stories, but when you're actually living it, in real life, it's just simply hard, dirty, dangerous *work*."

THE END

(Continued from page 59)

"Well, I'm ready to prove it," Bruce was saying.

"With an axe on your shoulder?"

Bruce placed the axe carefully to one side and slipped his coat off. He looked fit and brown.

"Now we're even," he said.

Londos grinned and stepped in. Bruce jabbed him hard with his left and swung a right to the head. Londos stepped back, hurt and surprised. He moved in again, and he wasn't smiling now.

Bruce staggered as a big fist hit him between the eyes. Londos went after him but ran into Bruce's elbow. He grunted and came on.

Old Charlie's hand was still on my arm and I felt it tighten even more as he watched the boy being beaten to his knees, only to come up again and again. Thudding fists and strained breathing mingled with the drag of heavy boots across the rough earth.

In thirty seconds Bruce had wiped off the stain that had been his. He was solid all right; solid to the backbone. I shuddered at the blood which covered his face and shut my eyes as he went down.

When I opened them again, Charlie was up and running towards the limp body. He went down on his knees and cradled the bloody head in his arms. He looked up when he heard me and his eyes were shining.

"Green timber," he said. "But solid right through, eh?"

"Right through," I said.

"He had a broken rib," Charlie said defensively.

"A broken rib can be pretty crook," I said.

"I knew he'd do it," Charlie went on. "He wanted it this way." He looked up. "You didn't know he was my son, eh?"

Londos paused in the act of filling a pannikin from his waterbag. He glanced over his shoulder.

"Your son?" he asked.

Charlie nodded. "He wanted to make his own way. What about it, Jack?"

Londos finished pouring the water into the pannikin and handed it to Charlie.

"He'll do me for a mate," he said, and spat the blood from his lips.

THE END

(Continued from page 7)

JUST wanted to make sure that "The Man They Couldn't Hang"—Ed Dieckmann, Jr.'s interesting little fact story in this issue was the real McCoy and not half-fact and half-fancy. When queried, the author replied as follows—

That's right, "The Man They Couldn't Hang" is a factual piece. It's one of those true yarns that crop up every now and then—each time carrying a different solution. It is very well known in England, but very little known in the U. S.

Now even to this day there are those who believe that John Lee was saved by the intervention of God because he was innocent. And many are certain that the 'rain swollen wood' theory is the answer. But the vast majority of those who have either written or read about the Babbacombe Killer are satisfied with mystery. In fact, after exhaustive delving, I have NEVER found any solution but the unexplainable. Somehow all journalistic accounts, including one by Charles Fort, always end in mystery. This despite the fact that the actual solution to the miracle had been discovered & published for years.

This real explanation, the wooden wedge put in by the carpenter-trusty, is practically unknown. Though it's inconceivable that every writer could have ignored it, you won't find it in any of the yarns of the last 67 years. Perhaps such a simple thing as a small piece of mere wood was to disillusioning, too cut & dried. People like to gape at the wonder of the magician's tricks; they get an awful let-down if you show them the gimmick!

To sum this monologue up: my reference for the only TRUE & LOGICAL solution, the only solution not tainted with the supernatural, is the following book, English, of course. "A History of Capital Punishment by John Lawrence. On pages 123-125, Lawrence recounts the John Lee story. As his bulwark to the wedge solution, he quotes an extremely rare work, "In the Light of the Law," by one Bowen-Rowlands. It is this Rowlands who states that "an old lag" inserted the wedge, etc. He covers the subject rather completely. Poor Berry, the hangman, really took a beating! Suffered a nervous breakdown!

So far as my knowledge of old English-prison talk goes, "old lag" means "old jailbird."

SOME very readable reminiscence on the part of Lloid Jones, author of "The Town Tamer"—the story of Fanner Blake, the fearless frontier marshal who outlived his time:

I was born in Pueblo, which is a city in Colorado, where my sire was a locomotive

inspector for the D. & R. G., and missed being a city kid only because of an accident. One afternoon Dad lost an argument with a 2-6-0 mogul, and some time later we moved to a dry-land-prairie homestead for his health. There I learned that homesteading is one of the slower means of starvation and that the outdoor West is delightful.

A heritage of every railroad man's child is an abiding interest in railroads. One of my earliest nightmares was a train going off a stupendously high trestle. This began at age seven, after a trip to see Grandma which involved riding on the Midland Terminal Railway, locally known as the Colorado Middlin', which operated between Colorado Springs and Cripple Creek.

Recently I had a farewell look at the old Middlin', and darned if those trestles didn't seem pretty near as improbable now as they did thirty-three years ago. Farewell look is right, for the Interstate Commerce Commission has spoken, and the old Middlin' is to go the way the Golden Cycle Mill has already gone. Both are victims of a new refining process since which, instead of the long trains of ore cars, carrying a week's gold production out of the Cripple Creek District requires a container no bigger than the bag that holds your kid sister's bathing suit.

Progress, that is, and good. Think of all the nightmares my three kids—the youngest now seven himself—won't have from riding the Middlin' train. Yet, in a sense, "The Town Tamer" is a tribute to an intrepid old railroad and the lusty days of its youth.

My first self-propelled sashay into the wide open spaces was made at the ripe age of fifteen by means of a laborer's job in a lumber camp. Since then I've done hitches as a carpenter, printer's apprentice, machine operator, warehouseman, ranch hand, real estate salesman, clerk, newspaper reporter, and maybe a few other things I don't remember offhand. Winters my folks kept me in school, so I acquired a couple of college degrees and learned how to find adventure through research techniques in the excellent Western division of Denver's public library.

However, the old swivel chair hasn't altogether got me yet, whereby hangs another tale. The mother of those three young ones I spoke of also has the writing hobby. Our first collaboration job—exclusive of the progeny—was a Western novel called "Holiday Mountain" published in April of '49 by the Literature for Youth division of Westminster Press, Philadelphia. Since that book was well enough received to be sent back for a second printing, we decided to launch another.

So here I go again, this time in company with milady. We have been working with government hunters, among the more dashing of the picturesque characters that still

populate the West. We have been in pursuit of the coyote, the bobcat, the mountain lion, and the bear. I even have a number three Oneida trap cunningly (?) concealed beneath a certain *piñon* tree a piece this side of North Rattlesnake Butte. And a good new friend has promised to send me the pelt of whatever that trap catches. I look, any mail now, to get a big brown envelope full of porcupine quills.

WHEN most of us think of boxing and boxers, several names come to mind at once—Joe Louis, of course, and Dempsey and Tunney, and maybe some of the oldtimers, such as Ketchel and the great John L. Sullivan. But boxing has been a popular sport since the days of ancient Greece and it has a fascinating history as we have learned from reading Colonel John V. Grombach's recently published book, "The Saga of Sock." Colonel Grombach, who has served for twenty-five years as our boxing expert—incidentally, he is a former Intercollegiate Heavyweight Boxing champion and member of the 1924 U. S. Olympic Boxing Team—has done a swell job of bringing together in one volume all the color and drama of the Manly Art over a period of 2500 years—since the days when the World's Heavyweight Champion was Theagenes of Thasos. Beside Theagenes' amazing record, those of all modern pugilists pale into insignificance. Theagenes fought 2102 bouts without a loss! "The Saga of Sock" is profusely illustrated with photographs of all the great fighters and famous fights of modern times. It's published by A. S. Barnes & Co. and all in all, it's quite a book . . . Speaking of books for sportsmen, here are a couple of others we've seen lately which you might want called to your attention: "North American Fresh Water Sport Fish," by Lou S. Caine (also A. S. Barnes & Co.—one of their fine "Sportsman's Library" series) and L. A. Anderson's "Hunting the American Game Field" (pub. by Ziff-Davis), both of which cover their subjects authoritatively and interestingly. One more item on our personal hit parade this month—saw a movie the other evening we got a bang out of and want to recommend it to you—United Artists' "The Big Wheel" starring Mickey Rooney. We all love a fighter, for what other attribute is so universally admired as courage? Well, this is the story of a guy

with guts—a reckless daredevil of a racing driver who gets every tough break a man can run into and comes back for more. The photography in the racing shots is exceptionally fine.

APOLOGIES to a keen-eyed reader—Dr. Max Isenberg—who caught an odd error in the November issue—a reference to a then non-existent Times Square, in Hal Preece's fact story, "St. Ann's Big Boy." Author Preece—like Dr. Isenberg—is a New Yorker, and we presume he knew better than to mention Times Square in a story which took place back in the middle of the last century. But—as the doctor generously suggests—he probably meant "Union Square" instead.—K.W.G.

This announcement of the death of Georges Surdez will come as sad news indeed to all of those readers who have shared our admiration for an adventure writer of the very highest rank. His unique position as the final literary authority on an ever-fascinating subject, the French Foreign Legion (of which he was an honorary sergeant), was unchallenged. His many stories and novels of the Legion are masterpieces in their field, full of the dramatic conviction that results from a deep understanding of human nature and the forces that work upon it. In person, Georges Surdez was a big man of rare charm and vitality, a great story-teller with tongue as with pen, for he drew upon the experiences of an adventurous career for the colorful yarns he loved to spin. He came to the United States in 1912. During World War I he worked for the French Powder Commission here and in 1919 he went to West Africa, returning to the U. S. in 1921, when he began his writing career. He traveled again in Africa from 1928 to 1930. He had served for many years as this magazine's "Ask Adventure" expert on the Foreign Legion. In addition to the dozens of fine stories he contributed to *Adventure*, since the first one back in October 1922, Georges Surdez' work appeared in *Collier's, The Saturday Evening Post, Esquire, Coronet* and numerous other publications.

He will be remembered, with affection, for a long time to come.

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 concerning 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 that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I am trying to find my father, Noble H. McGinnis. When last heard of he was operating a funeral home somewhere in Okla. Pvt. Wm. H. McGinnis, RA 26964691, 111th Engr. Supply Co. Apo 942 c/o PM, Seattle, Washington.

Will anyone knowing George W. Spiegelberg, please ask him to get in touch with me? I think his home is in New York City. Carlos M. Diaz, M. Calle 29th, No. 1809, Chihuahua, Chih, Mexico.

Veterans who served at Dutch Harbor are planning a reunion in Chicago in 1950. We are eager to hear from Naval and Marine personnel who served at N.O.B., N.A.S., and N.A.F. from 1941 to the fall of 1945. I am particularly anxious to contact Don Wayne Henry (Ship's Service) for his address list. Please communicate with J. Matthews, 5321 North Ashland, Chicago 40, Illinois.

Would appreciate hearing from anyone knowing the whereabouts of Walter Coppinger, stationed in Panama around the time of the first World War. He was discharged from the Army at Fort Benning, Ga. Please notify James Corrigan, 1225 Bloomfield St., Hoboken, N. J.

Sister and nephew of Melvin P. Verschneider would like to hear from anyone knowing his present address. He has not been heard from in five years. He is 53 years old, an expert auto mechanic and his last known address was 21 Evergreen St., Cortland, N. Y. Send information to nephew, Harry Farrar, c/o D. Pitale, 32 So. Conn. Ave., Atlantic City, N. J.

Would like information of Army buddies' whereabouts: John Kowal, Hamtramck, Mich.; Harry Gottfried, Chicago; John Tyson, N. Y. C. All of the 31st MRU (ETO) last seen in Chantilly. Also Emil de Roseby, 29th Inf. Div., last seen near Frankfurt A/M. Write to John F. Laughlin, 4719 N. Cicero Ave., Chicago 30, Ill.

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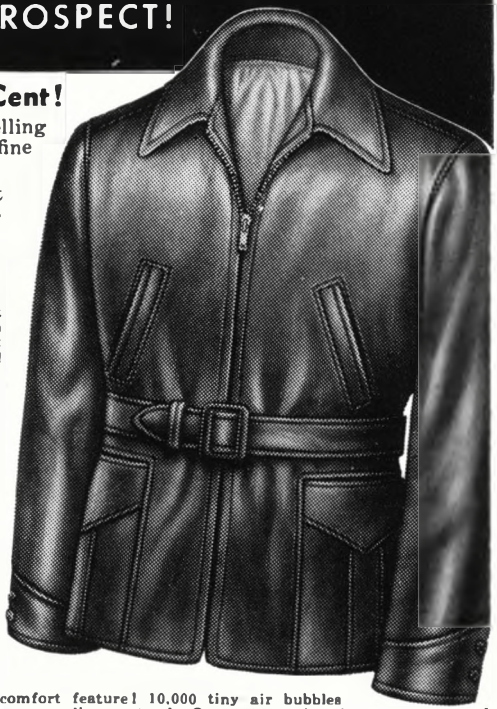

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PRIDE'S CASTLE, by Frank Yerby—One woman sacrificed honor to win Pride Dawson; the other only PRETENDED goodness to become his wife. By author of "The Foxes of Harrow" and "The Vixens."

A CALF FOR VENUS, by Nora Lofts—Young, innocent Letty was headed for a fate worse than death—but the handsome young doctor risked his future in a gamble to save her!

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