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25¢

Adventure

JULY

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by WALTER HAVIGHURST

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10K Yellow Gold

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True-Love and Friendship RING

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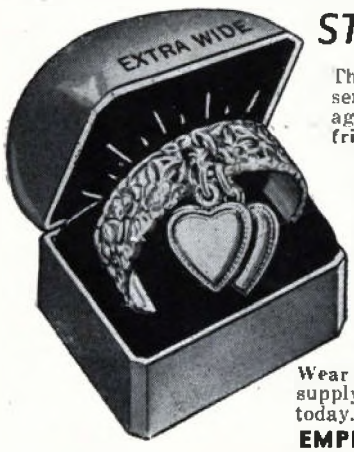

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◆ ◆ ◆ THE AUGUST ISSUE

Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

Vol. 111, No. 3 for Best of New Stories

July, 1944

NOVELETTES

SHORT STORIES

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WILL BE OUT ON JULY 10TH ◆ ◆ ◆

THE SERIAL

THE FACT STORY

DEPARTMENTS

Cover painted for Adventure by Ralph DeSoto

Kenneth S. White, Editor

IF YOUR COPY OF THIS MAGAZINE IS LATE—

We regret that, due to the difficulties of wartime transportation, your *Adventure* may sometimes be a little late in reaching you. If this should happen, your patience will be appreciated. Please do not write complaining of the delay. It occurs after the magazine leaves our offices and is caused by conditions beyond our control.

—The Publishers.

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

ONLY one recruit to the ranks of our Writers' Brigade this month. Burt Sims, whose "Wing Man" appears on page 47, writes us from "somewhere-in-England" where, we strongly suspect, he's finding plenty else to do currently besides writing fiction. Lieutenant Sims hails—

Dear Camp-Fire Stoker:

Herewith a few pine-knots for your blaze. I can't reminisce about the Old West, the way my erstwhile newspaper comrade, Allan R. Bosworth can. Bos, incidentally, had a great deal to do with pushing my foot into the literary door. We used to cultivate callouses together around the copy-desk of the *Examiner* in Los Angeles.

Yep—I'm a Californian, too—although the family always gives me a rather quizzical expression when the subject is mentioned. (The folks are from Georgia and South Carolina.)

I'm 25 years old, currently serving as an intelligence officer in a fighter squadron. Entered the Army two years ago as a private, strictly buck.

Just prior to the war I finally got off—after several false starts—as a writer who had sold a few yarns. The Nips, however, blasted what I loftily had regarded as a career. I hope to have a hand in personally writing a rejection slip on Tojo's manuscript for a new world order.

The thing started when I was fifteen—a senior in high school in Los Angeles and working part-time in the sports department of the *Examiner*. There followed a brief sojourn at college in Georgia, a session of pear-picking in California, working in a parking lot, delivering papers, office-boy in an advertising agency, and, in the background all of this time, a bit of newspaper work. Finally settled down to paper-and-ink and did hitches at reporting, rewrite, general assignment, feature writing, copy desk, drama reviews—stretched over seven years. The last three years of that period were spent as picture editor of the *Examiner*, and winter sports columnist. Also edited a ski magazine.

"Wing Man" is the first yarn I've attempted since entering the Army. Just been too damned busy. There's a lot of war to be punched out, and it seems to take a great deal of effort.

IN SEVERAL stories we've read lately with an Australian background "Afghan traders" and "camel drovers" have cropped up as characters. We kept asking ourselves what Afghans were doing in the backbush of the land down under—to say nothing of camels, which we had always thought were indigenous only to Asia and Africa. When H. Fredric Young's "Bush Hideaway" came to us—Afghans, camels and all—we decided it was time to find out just what was what and asked the author to explain. He says—

First, camels are not commonly used in all parts of 'Stralia. A camel in the streets of Melbourne or Sydney would create as much excitement as an Alaskan reindeer on B'dway in your city. It was in 1866 that camels were first imported to Australia from India. A herd of more than 600 arrived with their "*Afghan*" masters in 1884 after the initial arrival of the few in 1866 proved a happy experience. (Thus your question regarding the 'Afghan traders' is partially answered, but I'll try and elaborate on that angle in a later paragraph.) It is probable that by now some 15,000 camels are used for labor in the Commonwealth, though this is in the faraway backbush. The Australian camel is immensely serviceable in his limited sphere. A healthy bull will carry a load of 800 lbs. on long marches, actually thriving where a horse would perish. There is one story that a train of Aussie-bred camels went on a twenty-four day march without water, so you can readily understand why, in certain parts of that country, they become nearly indispensible as beasts of burden. They serve the prospectors, explorers, the mounted police, and remote settlers.

The Afghan camel-man who first came across with the camels lost his importance as soon as the Aussie learned how to breed, raise and work the camel; thus the Afghan drifted into other walks of life. The 'Afghan trader' as used now, mostly, I believe, refers to the trading they do in horses.

WE ASKED R. E. Emberg what he could do about authenticating those polar pancakes that came aboard the *Malmuth* in "Ice" this month and all he'd say was—

—Well, maybe not as big as real big frying-pans, but damned near. I know it sounds impossible, and like my hero—that is, after knowing what trouble he got into by telling of it—I'd sooner steer clear of controversy. But I *have* seen solid ice (frozen spindrift), some of it in pretty big hunks, come over the side.

(Continued on page 8)

"Give me just 10 minutes a day— I'll PROVE I can make YOU COMMANDO-TOUGH! in HALF the ordinary time or I Don't Want Your Money!"

Men! How I know what you want! From head to heels a body to be proud of! Big, steel-spring muscles on your arms and legs! A back of power! Broad military shoulders! A high, deep barrel chest! Health! Stamina! Speed! Endurance! Vitality Supreme! You want to be COMMANDO TOUGH!—to be able to take it or dish it out with the best of them! You want the steady nerves of an air-pilot! Of course you want these he-man qualities. Let me PROVE I can give them to you in double-quick time, as I have to thousands. I want every man in America to be fit to lick a truckload of Japs or Nazis!

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☐ Ship C.O.D. I will pay postman $1.00 plus a few cents postage. (No order less than $1 shipped C.O.D.)

NAME ..... AGE.....

ADDRESS .....

CITY ..... STATE.....
Please Print

(Continued from page 6)

We're not quite sure if that's passing the buck or not. Anyway, we'd like to hear from other mariners—fresh or saltwater—about this. Not that we're from Missouri—but—

MR. JOHN WILSTACH of Rhinebeck, N. Y. writes us to point out an anachronism in William Du Bois' last Captain Carter story which we printed in our February issue. He says—

> As a sometime student and historian of show and circus annals, I was indeed enthralled, if not enlightened, by "Something Rotten In The Floridas" by William Du Bois. It is true that wall paper goes back to the time of the American Revolution and antique patterns, now peeled off old walls, are very valuable. How wonderful if, from some old wall, could be peeled "a twenty-four sheet" of 1838. However, neither in dramatic nor circus records of twenty-four sheets has such advertising been known until after our own Civil War. Early outdoor advertising was not even pasted on, but the crude woodcuts, with lettering underneath, were hooked on posts and walls, then picked up and used over again. There often was a herald on horseback, who left notices and little paid announcements with local newspapers, and even blew a bugle and gave a speech in the center of towns.
>
> Neither was lighting quite as poor as Mr. Du Bois pictures. Rows of lamps, burning whale oil, stood in long tiers, with metal reflectors, and provided not inadequate footlights.
>
> Perhaps a correction may be interesting.

The author (his "Indian Key," a sequel to the story mentioned above, appears this month) replies—

> Dear Mr. Wilstach:
>
> This will, I hope, answer your interesting letter chiding me for the kind of outdoor advertising used by my barnstorming troupe (headed by the great Melville Keane) in their tour of Territorial Florida in the late 1830s.
>
> The scenery-chewing Mr. Keane, of course, is a direct descendant of Booth the Elder, Edwin Forrest, Lester Wallack, the Tyrone Power of that generation, et al. The language of the poster advertising his "Hamlet" is based on similar extravaganza recorded in Odell's "Annals of the New York Stage" (Volume IV, which covers the 1834-43 era). Mr. Keane, and company, came to St. Augustine via the Charleston packet; and Mr. Keane was the sort of fellow who would have brought the best theatrical advertising then available, woodcut or otherwise.
>
> Of course, the "modern" poster did not come into its own until lithography hit its stride; but the purple language of the '30s and '40s is certainly a match for anything circus or "advance men" could produce later. I quite agree with you that a theatrical poster of 24-sheet dimension would be a rarity for that time, to put it mildly! However, Mr. Keane's ego was something of a rarity too, even among actors. I know he would have insisted on the biggest lettering available—and then, urged his printer to go beyond.
>
> Regarding the stage lighting used in the presentation I described, may I point out that this particular "Hamlet" was performed in an army barracks, on a makeshift stage, and that both drapes and foots were improvised for the occasion?
>
> Sincerely yours,
>
> WILLIAM DU BOIS

Our library of theatrical lore is limited, but dipping into Hornblow's "A History of the American Theatre" and the few other references that were handy we find that Thespians still cavorted by candlelight as recently as the mid '40s when hanging them on the rafters in such bondocks as the Floridian hinterland. We give Mr. Wilstach 50% on his 24-sheets; Mr. Du Bois an equal sum for his primitive kleigs—and tote the honors up as even.

AND speaking of lighting, E. Hoffman Price, anticipating parallel criticism of "Quisling for Breakfast" writes—

> Someone may wonder about Kane heaving a kerosene lamp, and be inclined to ask why the governor's house didn't have electric lights. The answer is, there wasn't any power plant, not unless Cotabato installed one in recent years; and then, with the prevailing fuel shortage, due to Japanese looting, Cotabato's power plant, if there were one, probably wouldn't be working.
>
> As for Doña Pilar and her "kitchen bolo"—whether governor's lady or *tao's* woman, the Filipina is hot-headed, determined, and courageous. With a Jap to be whittled down, and a bolo handy, I believe that any Filipina, regardless of social status, could be depended on to work swiftly and effectively. For further documentation, ask some of the old timers; while the average Filipina is a tiny handful, she's all dynamite.
>
> No irreverence was intended by Bishop Jackson when he discussed various Biblical characters with respect to their qualities as guerrillas. Although the Black Bishop's theology is often sketchy and home-made, he is dead right in this case. The Book of Joshua and the Book of Judges are, believe it or not, a pretty good basic course in the principles of guerrilla warfare and civilian resistance. As I see it, the Bishop totes his bulky Bible for reasons not entirely nor exclusively devotional.

MR. R. Y. ATWATER of Evanston, Wyoming has some comment and criticism to make on the Botsford article we printed back in the April issue. He writes—

(Continued on page 137)

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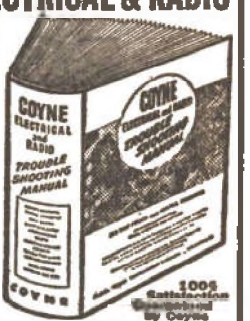

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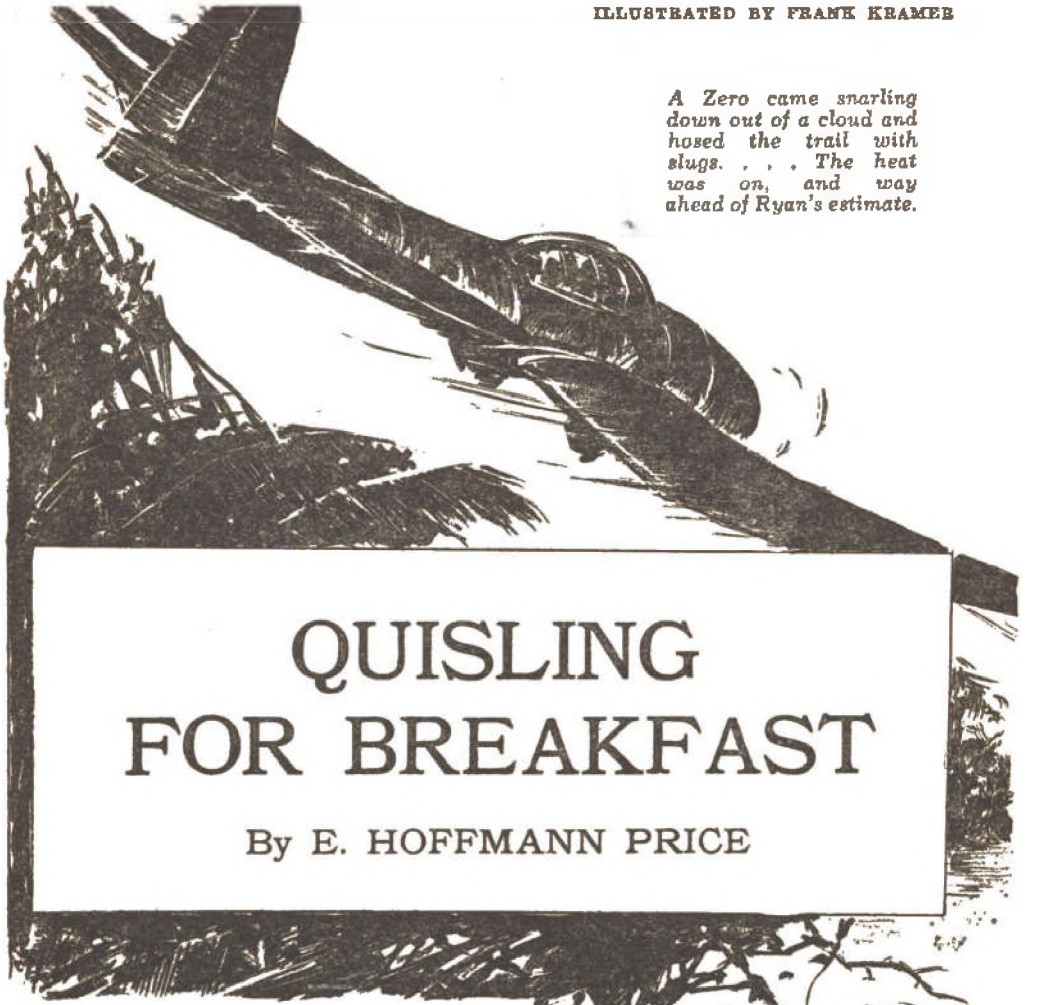


A Zero came snarling down out of a cloud and hosed the trail with slugs. . . . The heat was on, and way ahead of Ryan's estimate.

QUISLING FOR BREAKFAST

By E. HOFFMANN PRICE

A BROWN hand reached through the fumes of the smudge which kept some of the mosquitoes away, and tickled Kane's cheek with a blade of cogon grass. The onetime cadastral surveyor did not immediately stir, for he was unwilling to have them know that he had not slept a wink. He had to face it like a man.

Another delicate scratch. "The moon rises, Mr. Kane."

Kane did his best to imitate an aroused sleeper's mutter and slowly growing comprehension. The whole thing was fantastic. Executions were at sunrise, not at moonrise.

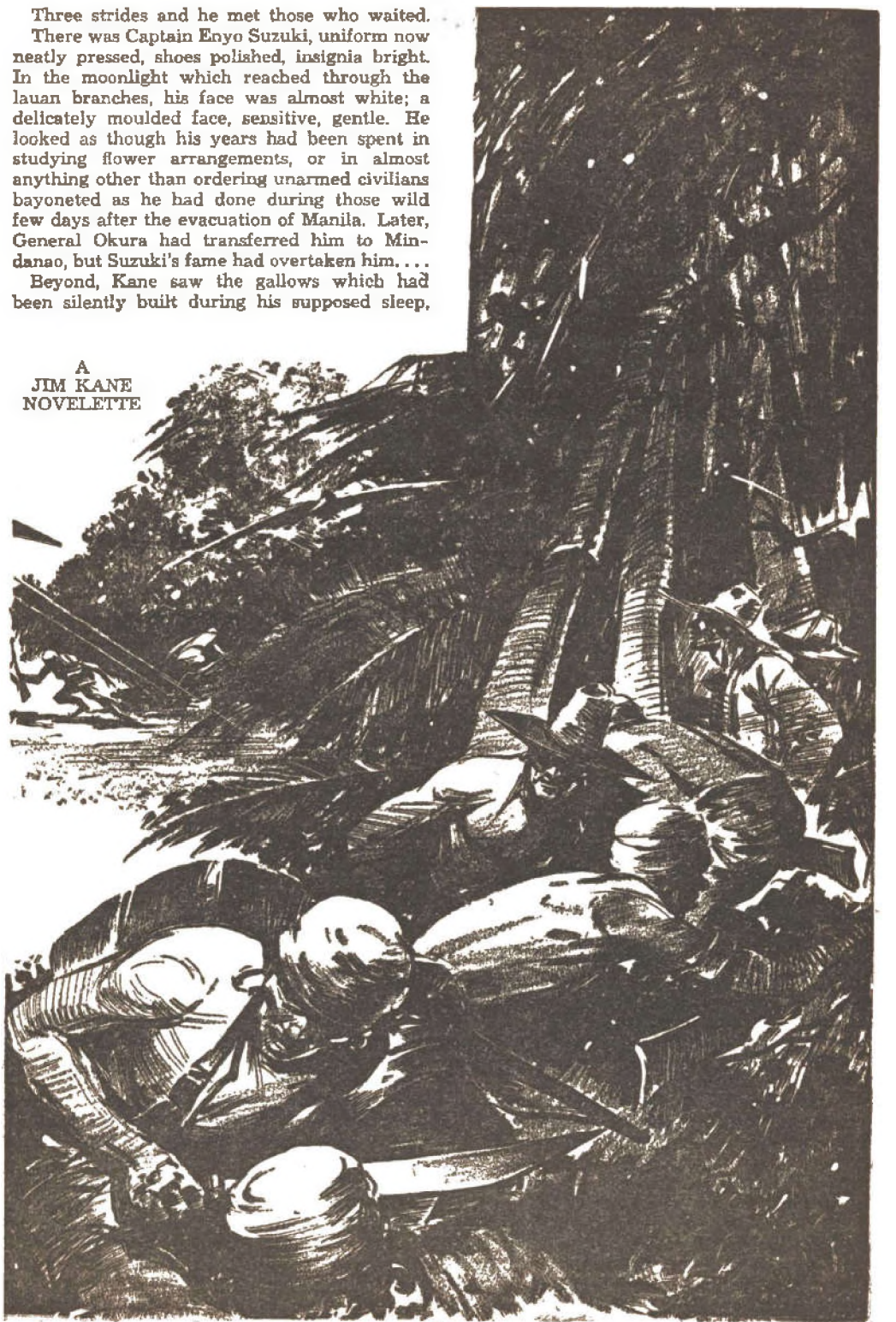
He arose from the woven grass mat and found himself steady enough on his feet. He was tall and lean. His bony face shed the feigned relaxation of sleep and tightened into angles. The little men, heads scarcely reaching to his shoulders, diffidently touched his arms but said nothing. He knew where to go.

Three strides and he met those who waited.

There was Captain Enyo Suzuki, uniform now neatly pressed, shoes polished, insignia bright. In the moonlight which reached through the lauan branches, his face was almost white; a delicately moulded face, sensitive, gentle. He looked as though his years had been spent in studying flower arrangements, or in almost anything other than ordering unarmed civilians bayoneted as he had done during those wild few days after the evacuation of Manila. Later, General Okura had transferred him to Mindanao, but Suzuki's fame had overtaken him. . . .

Beyond, Kane saw the gallows which had been silently built during his supposed sleep,

A
JIM KANE
NOVELETTE



the bamboo uprights and cross-pieces, three inches in diameter, lashed together with rattan. The ground fell off at a steep angle, so that while the near edge of the platform was even with the shoulder, the trap, secured by a cord of rattan, would open to a ten-foot drop.

The Jap stared into the growing light, blank and unmoved. Then for the first time, Jim Kane spoke.

"Is everything ready?"

A Negro well over six feet high stepped from the shadows. The light silvered his kinky gray hair. He wore a robe which all but concealed his O.D. shirt and khaki breeches. Bishop Jackson of the Mindanao Evangelical Church of the Pagan Tribes had laid aside his single-action Colt .45 and his long-bladed *kampilan* to put on clerical vestments and collar. A good-sized Bible was lost in his prodigious hand.

The answer to Kane's question came from Haji Maulana, a Moro with a face wrinkled like a prune. He wore a red skullcap, an embroidered silk jacket and green silk jodhpurs. From his sash projected a silver-mounted *barong* whose leaf-shaped blade could shear a man from shoulder to hip, and had done so many a time.

"*Sí, Señor General.* And he is also ready."

Kane fumbled for a sheaf of paper, then decided against a formal reading of the sentence, that final detail of Datu Ryan's diabolical whimsy. He was heartily sick of the entire business and he would have balked but for the bad effect that would have had on the guerrilla force.

A rope swayed slowly in the breeze. Knotty-legged Moros marched the Jap to the platform, bound his ankles with rattan, offered him a cigarette and adjusted the noose.

Haji Maulana drew his *barong* and presented it to Kane.

The Jap had nothing to say: *Bushido*, his code of honor and dignity, commanded silence. He was taking it better than Kane was.

Then Bishop Jackson opened his Bible and began to read. His voice had the deepness of far-off surf, the thunder of war drums, the resonance of temple bells. "Mister Jim," he had said, "they's heathens and I know the Good Book don't mean nothin' to 'em, but I ain't never officiated at a formal execution, and General Ryan likes ceremony."

Kane raised the blade, flicked it down. The rattan cord twanged like a bowstring. The trap thumped open.

THE criminal twitched and jerked, but he wasn't strangling. A good drop and a clean job. Then Kane slid down the steep bank and pinned on the chest of the Jap a copy of the findings and the sentence imposed by the court martial General Datu Ryan had convened.

Specification: In that Captain Enyo Suzuki did, on or about the twenty-seventh day of December, 1941, willfully, maliciously, and feloniously bayonet and cause to be bayoneted, in violation of the laws of war, twelve Filipino civilians . . .

Below, Kane could just distinguish the lights of Malaybalay. There was no blackout. The Skibbies could afford to show their contempt for American bombers.

Kane assembled his men. "Get going."

The Bishop removed his vestments, buckled on his side arms and mounted his vicious little native stallion, a shaggy creature scarcely larger than a burro, named Daniel-Come-to-Judgment. On his discharge from a Negro regiment forty years ago, Jackson had set out to convert the pagans. While his Colt .45 without doubt had contributed to his durability, the real secret was expressed by his creed: "Well, suh, it's this way. Them that want religion, they get it, and them that don't want none, they don't get none."

As they tramped along the trail, Kane tried to picture Japanese reaction when they spotted the clearly displayed scaffold. They'd have to venture into the jungle to regain lost "face"; *bushido* would drive them.

The towns were heavily guarded. It was almost as in the old days, when the *kris*-armed Moros couldn't take a fortified place protected by cannon, and the garrisons didn't dare venture more than a hundred yards beyond the walls. And this was Ryan's answer: snaring, trying and executing Japs guilty of atrocities.

The trail wound through jungle whose moist exhalation chilled him. Kane was weary, groggy and burned out as he had never been after a raid.

Monkeys began to chatter as the smell of dawn came into the air, and parrots screeched. A little mist, and then the earth steamed and hell blazed into the jungle. There were no halts for food; just brief rests to pick the sausage-sized leeches from one's legs. The guerrillas, when they did eat, chewed parched rice and dried fish as they tramped along.

Then Kane heard the planes.

The heat was on, and way ahead of Ryan's estimate. Kane's guess was that some night patrol had stumbled across the well-decorated gallows and had sent word to town by walkie-talkie. A Zero came snarling down out of a cloud and hosed the trail with slugs. But for the Bishop's warning, the guerrillas would have been riddled.

Though Kane's detachment, plunging through *julat-anay* and for once not cursing the savage thorns, was out of sight before the Skibbie could make a second pass, in sheer fury he searched the jungle, first right, then left, needling the dense green roof with bursts. His blind rage brought him nearly as close to the mark as had his first pass. Slugs whacked and zinged

through the branches, showering the guerrillas with leaves and twigs.

Kane blundered into a small clearing. Looking up for a glimpse of the now silent pilot, he saw, high overhead and very nearly over the spot first raked by fire, a smoke bomb parachuting slowly down.

"Marker for ground pursuit," Kane gasped, "and we've left a trail like a carabao on a rampage!"

In a few moments, there was another plane; the first must have exhausted his ammunition. Nearer, nearer, then diving so fast that the gun blasts "jammed up," their pitch increasing with that of the engine's wail. A parakeet, torn by a burst, hit Kane, a soggy lump of green and red.

Kane demanded, "How'd that Skibby mark us so close?"

"The parrot, *señor*," Haji Maulana explained. "We move with sound effects, it annoys the birds, and the low-flying son of many pigs sees them rise!"

They slid down an embankment to the rocky bottom of a shallow stream. With no further crashing through brush and bamboo, neither parrots nor wild pigeons were disturbed.

Some hours after nightfall, the guerrillas reached headquarters. The only light was the dull red of embers shielded from overhead observation, yet it was strong enough for Kane to pick out the tall, wiry frame of Datu Eric Ryan, complete with parasol-bearer, riding crop and sabre, burnished cordovan boots, and the four silver stars on each shoulder.

Nothing was lacking except Ryan's smile, and Ryan's four wives who always wore red kid slippers, formal evening gowns and junk-jewelry tiaras.

RYAN moved with a springy gait which contradicted his drawn face and red eyes. "Jim, I've been worried about you. Hell must have boiled over from every direction within the same quarter hour—planes from Davao, from Zambo, from everywhere but Australia. We asked for it, and are we getting it!"

He rolled a tobacco-leaf about some lime and a chunk of betel nut and slipped the chew under his tongue. Kane shook his head when Ryan offered him the silver box.

"I've been living on Haji's. Now I want some grub for a change. Make contact with Captain Morrow's outfit?"

Morrow, one of General Sharp's officers, had not chosen to surrender. His band consisted of escaped internees, soldiers, sunshiners, planters, Chinese traders, a handful reputed to be almost out of ammunition and too small to buck the ever-tightening lines of the Japs. However, these men could be a valuable addition to Ryan's force.

The *datu* answered, "By monkey telegraph. They're in tough shape, but we'll lift their morale. Morrow's a damn good officer. Probably his only handicap is that he doesn't know the country and hasn't the Moro connections we have."

"But can they pack their own weight? Can we afford to divvy up with them? And maybe carry them?"

Ryan spat. "Just keeping them from surrender is plenty. The more guerrillas throw in the sponge, the more it makes outlaws of those still in the field. What do you think turned up while you were executing that sentence?"

The iron in Ryan's voice made Kane say, "Nothing good."

"Worse than that. Down Cotabato, they've recruited a lot of constabulary. Collaborationists boot-licking the Skibbies. The provincial governor, Ortega, he's the guy we should've strung up instead of that Jap!"

Kane had had his fill of rope tricks. He demanded sourly, "Shall we kidnap the governor now, or shall we settle the punitive expedition that's on our tail and nab Ortega later on?"

Ryan missed the irony. "Hold him in abeyance, though I'd any day prefer stringing up a lousy quisling to beefing a Jap."

His eyes matched the cold ferocity of his voice. For all his eccentricities, Ryan's wild streak never upset his judgment.

And he was entitled to his satanic humor. Being cashiered for striking a superior officer who had tried to dissuade him, none too tactfully, from marrying a lovely *mestiza* had been bad enough; but the surtax came when the lady's kinfolk, deciding against having a disgraced ex-officer in the family, forbade the match. So, defying both the United States Army and the best families of Manila, Ryan turned Moslem and married not merely one, but four native girls, each the daughter of a *datu*. And then came the stars of a self-made general and a gilt-fringed yellow parasol, the Malay symbol of royalty, appropriate to the son-in-law of four Malay princes.

All this flickered through Kane's mind as he waited for the *datu's* fury to burn itself out; but Ryan's rage was only beginning to boil. "I'd rather hang one God-blasted quisling than twenty Jap criminals! As soon as we've whittled down the monkeys we've got on our trail, we'll kidnap Ortega, we'll hang the dirty scum, we'll make collaborationists lose face. Do you get it?

"Make 'em lose face! Show the town people how funny a Jap-stooge looks at the end of a rope. We can't capture garrisoned towns, but we can blow them apart that way."

Kane, however, didn't like any of it, least of all the notion of nabbing Ortega or any other quisling. He had never bucked Ryan's plans, for the crackbrained *datu* was a superlative leader. Yet this was the time to call a halt.

But the Bishop's warning glance checked the argument. The easygoing Negro had survived

THE REVEREND AMOS TEALE

forty years in dangerous Mindanao, and mainly because he never hurried to meet an issue.

Ryan caught the exchange of glances and laughed harshly.

"O.K., Jim, you read somewhere that the electrician at Sing Sing takes a day off and registers proper remorse and decently human regret every time he gives some no-good son of a bitch a course of applied electricity and pockets his hundred and fifty bucks, so I guess you have to have the conventional emotions." He dug into his pocket, pulled out a roll of Philippine banknotes, which were no longer legal tender, and peeled off three hundred pesos. "This makes it strictly GI."

Kane chopped down with the edge of his hand, knocking the money to the ground. Ryan chuckled amiably. "Bad, socking your C.O., Jim. I tried it once." He stooped, picked up the notes, smoothed them out. "This and everybody else's money will be good when MacArthur comes back."

But Kane knew that unless a miracle happened, Ryan would have a quisling for breakfast.

CHAPTER II

RECRUITING IN REVERSE

THE guerrillas they met were not inspiring. Captain Morrow had died of fever and hardship, leaving a band of survivors who looked like zombies. There was a tall, craggy-faced man among them, almost as ragged and as haggard as they. He was the Reverend Amos Teale, a missionary from Manila, via Cebu, with papers to prove it.

Kane said to the living dead, "Before you listen to Mr. Teale, follow the Bishop down the trail to the main body and get some chow under your belts."

"How you fixed for quinine?" one of the group questioned.

Kane chuckled, gestured airily, and said, "Heck, man! Even the Skibbies are shy of that luxury. We just shiver and call it setting-up exercises!"

He got away with it, too. Faces which looked like parchment drawn over skulls puckered in grins. But a few protested, "Buddy, we're ready to fold. We've held as long as we can. The town people aren't for us the way they used to be. It's broken their damn hearts, this waiting for help from the States. And that 'independence' the Japs dished out knocks the legs from under us."

Kane lied gallantly, "Sure there are collaborationists—it's compulsory for officials and *politicos*—but the rank and file are all for you! Come on and meet my crowd, stuff your guts, and then meet General Ryan."

Teale's deep-set eyes glowed with a fanatic light as he raised his hand and got in a word. "Brethren, I honor this man's valor and his patriotism. But there is no more good to be won from continued resistance."

Amos Teale had a voice. Haji Maulana ceased fingering the grip of his *barong* and decided to listen.

"Lay down your arms. You won't be punished. You'll get the food and shelter and care you need. You Filipinos will rejoin your families. You Americans will be interned, but conditions are infinitely better than what you have now.

"It is not disgraceful, it is not unsoldierly to surrender after such a gallant struggle."

They were wavering. Just as Kane's presence had for the moment won them from surrender, now Teale was reversing the trend.

"Some of you called me a Jap-lover," he went on, "but you are wrong. I come to avert vain bloodshed, useless starvation and illness."

"Reverend, you've actually seen Americans in internment and talked to them?"

"I have! Up in Luzon. My credentials prove it. I am not a collaborationist. I myself was interned and, as I told you before, I was not released until I had given the invaders reason to believe that from humanitarian motives, I wished to go out and save men whose heroic spirit deserved better than futile hardship. I did not once deny that I prayed for the arrival of the United States Army and Navy."

Several got up and took from their bamboo shelters their tattered packs and the remaining rations. One, however, hesitated. "Reverend, I'm hanging back account of Captain Morrow.

There was a soldier, and even us civilians knew he was one!"

Kane turned to the Bishop and whispered, "That fellow can sell carpet tacks to a starving man! High-tail for camp and bring up some chow. Shake it up, or we are sunk."

"Yes, suh, but these here reinforcements are a powerful disappointment. General Ryan's going to be riled."

And as the Bishop wheeled Daniel-Come-to-Judgment, Kane heard Mr. Teale's answer. "You do well to honor your late captain. But consider General Wainwright. No one has ever questioned his courage, yet he ordered his men to surrender when they had reached the end of their endurance!"

There was beef from the Fortich ranch. The Japs, unskilled in handling cattle, had missed almost as many as they had rounded up after General Sharp's surrender, and these animals had contributed to Ryan's commissary. There was not much meat, but he had saved it as bait for Morrow's party.

The bait, however, failed, because they recognized it as such and because they knew that guerrillas on the march would only at intervals get a chance to beef what few strays remained in the central plateau. And finally, there was the all-out pursuit which Ryan had precipitated.

Nearly all the American civilians, at least half the soldiers, and a like proportion of Filipino civilians went down the trail to Cotabato to surrender. All they had to do was present the safe-conduct Teale had written out to secure them preferred treatment.

THE missionary remained to carry on with his mission.

Kane said, "Reverend, I admit I don't like your face—"

"Since we rather resemble each other, I can appreciate that," the missionary cut in, affably.

"Oh, all right! You have guts to spare, sticking around here. Do you know there's an even chance of Datu Ryan hoisting you to the handiest tree? After all, this is recruiting in reverse, and you know what that means to the military mind?"

Teale put his fingertips together, precisely and deliberately. Only a slight grimace twisted his horse-face. "My work is averting *needless* bloodshed. You, and all those other men, face just as much danger for your principles, I believe."

"Ryan and I would get a hearty welcome and nice treatment if we turned in?"

"Honesty compels me to say no. Regardless of persuasion or promises by handbills or radio, I have every reason to believe that summary execution is all that you two could expect. My appeal is only to your men."

"Will you get out of here while you are able?" Kane snapped.

Teale chuckled. "We resemble each other not only in stature and appearance, but in stubborn temperament."

That night, Ryan came up from the main body. He walked up to Teale, waved aside the credentials and said, "I've heard about you. And I've changed my mind about hanging you."

"I appreciate your tolerant attitude."

"It's not mine! Bishop Jackson was quoting Scripture. About Gideon and the weak-kneed recruits. He let 'em go home because they'd've been a hazard to his guerrilla operations against the Philistines. Any of my men you can sell the idea of surrender, go to it, and good riddance."

"Thank you, sir."

Ryan's bitter blue eyes gleamed satanically. "I hope you'll enjoy your visit. The way things stand now, you have no choice left."

"Indeed, General?"

"You'll have to stick with us. Not because I distrust you for having a Japanese travel permit, but because I can't risk having them grab you and sweat you for information. Up to the last minute, you'll be under guard and with your hands tied. How you like?"

"I have no complaint."

And Kane, narrowly watching the man's face, had to believe that Teale meant precisely what he said.

The Japs were acting on a rumor so long repeated and so logical that it had finally taken on the solidity of fact: to wit, that there was a *cota* in the unexplored territory east of Highway Three, a fortress in which, following Moro tradition, the guerrillas would make their last stand if they were hemmed in.

And three punitive expeditions had set out to arrange the envelopment: one coming from Malaybalay in the north, one from Davao in the southeast, and finally, Major Okumi's battalion, marching from Cotabato by way of Fort Pikit.

They were absolutely right in their reasoning; the only catch was that even if Datu Ryan were hemmed in, he'd not be making his last stand in that *cota*, mainly because it was a dummy, impressive only from the air. The cunning Japs, though spotting it, had not bombed it. They first wanted a concentration of guerrillas in it, tightly invested by ground troops.

But for all this bit of practical joking, Datu Ryan did not face a pushover, and he knew it. He was listening to the Hong brothers, who looked like identical triplets. They talked Americanese and didn't believe in "all that Confucius stuff," and being lousy marksmen, they preferred shingling hatchets for what they termed service calls.

Before the invasion, they had been radio dealers and service experts, over in Iloilo; and by means of Chinese tricks with spare parts which had escaped the general looting by the Japs, they had improvised a radio which was

now justifying their claims and upsetting Ryan's skepticism.

"Get a load of this," Hong Li said. "Pilot to ground forces: Enemy detachments retreating toward strong point."

There was a crackle of static. Hong Tien and Hong Kua jiggled the receiver, twisted some dials, cursed in Cantonese and English, and finally got some more Jap talk. Hong Li translated the Skibby opinion of Ryan's position and strength. When the enemy transmitters finally left the air, he summed up, "The bastards are all set for a rabbit drive, Australian style."

Then he unlimbered his hatchet and began honing the blade.

Later, scouts came down from the trees which had concealed them all day long, and wormed their way to camp to report on Major Okumi's battalion.

RYAN'S assault leaders squatted about him. The only light was the phosphorescence of some decayed wood and the bluish glow of prismatic compasses and of the three surviving watches.

"Let's go. When you're in position, keep your shirts on," Ryan said, "and wait for the signal rocket. Get going!"

"Where's the missionary?" Kane asked.

"Worried about him?"

"Mmm . . . well—"

"Give you my word, he won't be *krissed*. I've told our crowd he's nutty as an almond bar."

Thus, in the event of a reverse, Teale would not be cut down by some peevish Moro, for madmen, being considered especial favorites of Allah, were exempt from vengeance. But Kane demanded, "When the show starts, untie him, just in case. So he won't drown in a swamp or be eaten by ants."

The mosquitoes were merciless, now that the smudges had for some hours been extinguished, but Teale, though bound and thus far deprived of even a chance to slap and scratch, was not merely stoical but actually cheerful. Kane, joining his detachment, felt that a first-chop soldier had gone to waste when Teale decided to be a pacifist.

The jungle muttered and murmured and whispered. Night birds twittered. Monkeys, scenting tree snakes, chattered in alarm. And once, as Kane crept down a game trail, he saw the unwinking glow of eyes a few yards above the ground: A python, after having taken a half-hitch about a branch, was waiting for the undersized deer when they came to water at dawn.

The guerrillas wormed their way past the flank guards, the slowest and most difficult task of all. If one outpost fired a single shot, the entire battalion, in bivouac on the distant highway, would be on the alert.

Then, for a while, progress was faster. There was now a sandwich, so to speak: a line of Jap outposts, then a line of creeping raiders, and then the main force.

Where it had been difficult to spot the outposts, who betrayed their positions only by the most trifling disturbances such as the stirring of a sleeper or rustle of foliage as a squatting sentry changed position, the main body and advance guard were comparatively easy to locate by the smudges, and the bulk and odor of motor vehicles.

A ravine, steep and rocky, was spanned by a highway bridge. Though Major Okumi had slipped in permitting his choice of camp areas to divide his command, his error was natural enough, for there was no danger of air attack, the enemy was miles off the highway and the bridge was guarded. He knew that it had not been mined, for he had inspected it carefully.

When the raiders could hear the footfalls of the sentries posted on both lips of the ravine, some distance east of camp, the guide halted, reached back, found and touched Kane's rifle.

After surrendering the weapon, Kane took the lead, bear-crawling until, very near the sentry, he shifted to the belly crawl, which, though even more fatiguing, was utterly soundless.

Five yards . . . four . . . three. . . .

He kept his mind a blank. The Moros had assured him that to think intently of one's intended victim will make the man sense that he is being stalked. Maybe this was superstition, maybe it was fact. Old Haji, however, knew his business, so Kane, remembering his lessons, directed both thought and body as though his only aim in life was the perfect performance of a feat of skill and endurance as an end in itself.

Maybe Haji's argument was logical, because such drawing into oneself gave the ultimate polish to a difficult performance. When Kane finally unlimbered his silent killer, he had hypnotized himself. The big thing was perfection, the Jap was merely a tackling dummy.

It was an odd weapon: two wooden handles joined by a yard of piano wire. Kane rose from a crouch, just as the enemy passed him. He crossed his wrists, so that the wire made a loop. He flicked it down over the Skibby's head and at the same time planted a knee in the small of the man's back.

There was no sound. A determined boy weighing ninety pounds could exert more than enough force to settle a big man in this manner. The fine wire bit in, a paralyzing garrote which cut off the breath and severed the jugular veins. With his height and weight, Kane was able to control both corpse and rifle, so that neither dropped to make a sound.

The pat on his shoulder did not startle him.

His file had followed, ready to strip the Jap, put on the uniform and walk the beat, so that there would be no alarming silence, nor any

chance that an inspecting officer would wonder why no one was on post.

And elsewhere, other sentries were being taken out.

CHAPTER III

SLAUGHTER AT SUNRISE

THE taste of dawn was in the air. Swamp mists moistened the cool breeze. Shadows, perceptibly thinning, still concealed the turbaned Moros who filtered from the jungle's edge, their advance now made easier by the presence of guerrillas in Jap uniform on each of the key posts. It was smooth and deadly and silent, a perfect performance, yet any instant could bring an upset, such as a surprise inspection by the officer of the day.

Moments dragged interminably now that Kane had all too much time to picture possibilities. Things were just too right. Along the ravine which divided the Japs, Moro riflemen were ready to riddle whatever troops might come up to reinforce the surprised detachment.

Then, high into the thinning blackness, a rocket traced a red curve. Bamboo tube and jungle-made powder had scarcely reached their ceiling when from the opposite side of the highway an answering signal flared.

For a moment there was no sound except the rustle of grass as men bounded from cover. Blackened blades slashed tent ropes. Canvas plopped flat to envelope sleeping officers and sleeping men. The silence ended in muffled yells, and the impact of *kampilanes* hewing at each struggling heap.

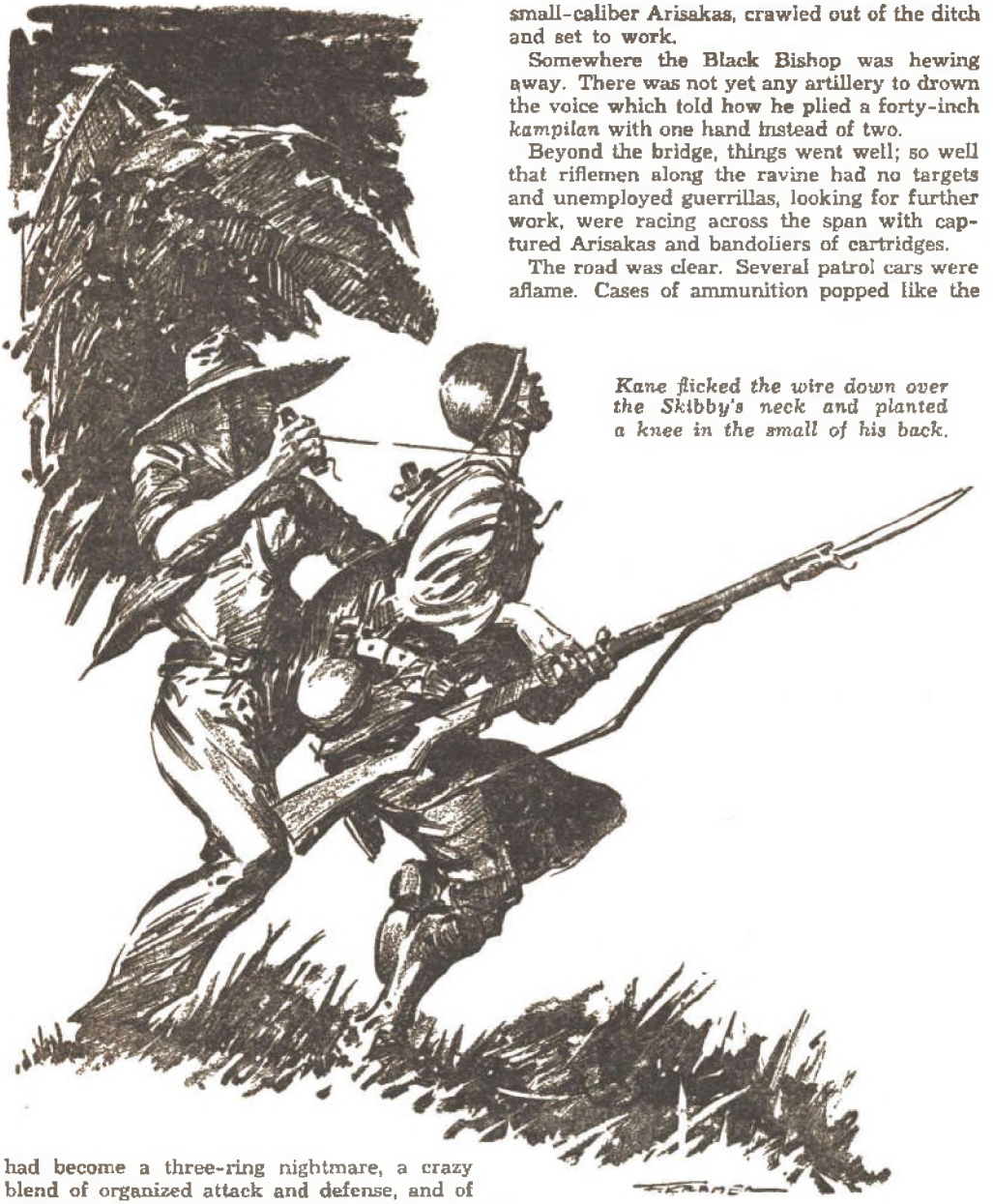
Men in open bivouac began to blaze away. Men and officers whose shelters had not been razed piled into the treacherous early gray, sleep-groggy and panic-shaken.

But for discipline, and good discipline on the part of the Japs, it would have been straight meat-cutting, a clean sweep by Moros darting in to ply *kris* and *barong*. In the growing light, Kane saw the cogon grass ripple and billow as confused soldiers faced whirling blades whose soot-blackening had been washed away.

Noncoms rallied squads and sections. Officers formed combat groups of soldiers, back to back, presenting bayonets to fend off the slash of yard-long *kampilanes;* and from the centers of these surrounded clusters, men lobbed grenades.

No one had bungled. No one had slipped. The timing had been perfect, but inevitably the first guerrilla wave had missed a number of shelters, tents, and groups in bivouac. Some of these, untouched by the mill of blades, were taking cover and supporting each other.

As far as Kane could see by the rapidly growing light, the road and the jungle's fringe



Kane flicked the wire down over the Skibby's neck and planted a knee in the small of his back.

had become a three-ring nightmare, a crazy blend of organized attack and defense, and of whirlpools of hand-to-hand slash and thrust. The thin, snapping report of 6.5 mm. Arisakas, the *brrrrang* of Springfields, the boom of muzzle-loaders, the clash and whack of blade against bayonet and rifle barrel combined in a Mindanao symphony.

A grenade, missing its mark, hissed and sputtered and smoked as it bounced toward Kane. He scooped it up, heaved it back, and saw a momentarily victorious clump of Japs jerk apart like rag dolls and lie kicking and clawing. And then two Moros, too tough to be stopped by small-caliber Arisakas, crawled out of the ditch and set to work.

Somewhere the Black Bishop was hewing away. There was not yet any artillery to drown the voice which told how he plied a forty-inch *kampilan* with one hand instead of two.

Beyond the bridge, things went well; so well that riflemen along the ravine had no targets and unemployed guerrillas, looking for further work, were racing across the span with captured Arisakas and bandoliers of cartridges.

The road was clear. Several patrol cars were aflame. Cases of ammunition popped like the firecrackers of a Chinese New Year celebration.

Then Datu Ryan appeared from the north. He was grinning and thoroughly pleased with everything.

Kane asked, "How come a mortar cutting loose?"

"Ximenes nailed it and he's having fun using it."

The Reverend Amos Teale, now unbound, was making the rounds, unarmed and calm. Wild slugs, popping and zinging from the jungle

on both sides of the highway, did not worry him. Kane shouted, "Keep your head down, you'll get it nicked!"

The missionary waved his hand, knelt beside a wounded Moro who was trying to regain his feet. Teale scooped up the guerrilla and asked, "Which way is to the rear? I can bandage this man nicely enough."

Kane answered, "This is as close to the rear as you can get for a while. Duck below the shoulder and give yourself a chance. *Watch out behind you!*"

A wounded Jap, playing possum, had wormed his way into reaching distance of a rifle. The weapon whacked, just as Ryan's pistol blazed. It was a long shot, but good. The Jap jerked, slumped, rolled and did not even kick, for he'd taken a .45 between the eyes. But he had first put in one final lick for the Son of Heaven: Teale had been drilled in the back.

And then Ryan yelled, "Look! Constabulary! Talk about collaboration!"

The line of Moros holding the ravine opened up with Springfields.

The constabulary got their cars to the roadside and deployed; but once they sized up the situation, they'd rush the bridge.

There was not enough left of Major Okumi's battalion to salvage, and chasing Ryan's guerrillas through the jungle was too big a job for any company; yet their arrival was the supreme disaster. Filipino would be fighting Filipino; Moslem Moro would be facing Christian townsman. And two years of guerrilla fighting would be wasted if this contact developed into a battle.

Ryan got to the point of the situation. "Don't hold the bridge. Let 'em come over, then pour it to 'em!" He turned to his runners and gave them orders for the various group leaders. The line of guerrillas at the ravine was to fall back to draw the Constabulary into a trap.

THERE was no doubt that they would cross. Regardless of how high the percentage of recruits in the company, they had a fighting tradition. More than that, they could do a lot of damage before being shot up, for they were well armed, organized, and for the moment, fully appreciative of the situation. Though outnumbered, they had a temporary advantage which was just promising enough to tempt them.

"The lousy bastards!" Ryan growled. "See why I want a quisling for breakfast?"

Kane ignored that quip. He turned his back on the skirmish and dashed up the road. Let Ryan yell his head off!

The comparatively light fire of the guerrillas gave the constabulary the information they required. As they saw it, the best chance of success would come from closing in quickly, before the mopping-up parties in the jungle could dispose of isolated groups of Japs and form a line on the northern lip of the ravine. Once such a line was formed, all advance would be blocked.

Kane's objective was the nearest of the trucks which had escaped destruction. There was no key. He emptied the tool chest and found some bits of wire. Jumping the ignition, ordinarily a simple job, became an interminable task and one which would have been worse had the vehicle not been a familiar American model. He fumbled because he was racing against time, the short time in which the seeds of civil war could be planted.

Swamp mists had shorted the plugs. He wiped them with a gas-soaked rag. Finally, he got the engine turning over. The reek of fuel made it clear that stray shots had riddled the tank.

He wheeled her about and barreled down the highway, heading for the bridge.

And now, instead of stray bullets, he got aimed fire. A tommy-gun chewed out half the windshield. A tire let go. The riddled radiator gushed water, which the fan blew back over the block and up through the holes in the hood. Backfiring, bucking, engine dying and then catching again, she rolled along. Shattered bullet jackets cut and slashed Kane; flakes of paint and corroded metal half blinded him. Then the engine went dead, beyond being goosed or wheedled back to life.

He kicked out the clutch, wedged himself as far into the corner as he could, and coasted. The grade favored him. The Moros, not getting the point of the play, howled and fired faster. They seemed to think he was going to charge and that he expected them to follow.

Somewhat beyond the center of the bridge, Kane slewed the truck nearly crosswise. Then he darted to the rear and touched off the leaking tank.

Flame enveloped the vehicle. Spilled fuel set the asphalt decking ablaze. For some minutes, there'd be no charge of constabulary across that bridge. "Nice work," Ryan yelled above the crackle of rifles and the roar of the fire. "That'll give us time—we've just about mopped up—"

Half a dozen men were dragging a captured mortar from the jungle. They had several cases of shells. Kane took command of the salvage party.

"Where the hell you going with that?" Ryan demanded.

"I got an idea! Clear the men well away from the abutments."

"No use shelling the highway! Use it to blast out combat groups in the jungle."

Ryan still missed Kane's point, simply because the idea was beyond Ryan's imagining.

"Let me try. If it doesn't work, stop me!"

They got the mortar under cover. Kane sighted it by guess, dropped in a 60-millimeter shell and jerked his hand back. He expected

DOÑA PILAR ORTEGA

the flimsy tube to burst from the impelling charge, but it did not. The shell kicked up a geyser of earth several hundred yards beyond the bridge.

Meanwhile, more and more of the guerrillas were getting set to face the constabulary. Kane had them all fooled, Ryan included.

Then Lieutenant Ximenes, beetle-browed and grinning, came out of the jungle.

"*Ay, chinga'o!* You're way off! Let me sight it, *señor*."

The wiry aviator flattened out behind the mortar, took a quadrant reading. Kane confessed, "I want to settle that bridge before the fire goes out. I don't want to tangle with the constabulary. Damn it, they're Filipinos!"

"And *cabrones* of Filipinos!" Ximenes growled. "Helping those monkeys! *Puta'ng na mo!*"

"If we blast the pants off them," Kane contended, "the town folks will believe we really are outlaws. Get it?"

Ximenes' face twisted in a frown. "O.K., *señor*. I do it. But I hate it like hell."

And he did it: three shells, nose to tail. The triple blast rolled and rumbled and stretched. The light bridge began to sag and twist. Several members had been cut or uncoupled by the blast, so that the structure's own weight, together with that of the blazing truck, finished the job. Ximenes lobbed two more shells, the final nudge which dropped span and truck into the deep ravine.

Ryan came racing up. "You damn blockheads! Now they can't get across!"

"We don't want 'em to," Kane contended and went into his dance.

Ximenes seconded him.

Ryan threw up his hands. "Mutiny, but I'm outnumbered."

So the bugler sounded Recall. By the time the constabulary could bridge the ravine, or follow it to a point where they could improvise a span of rattan cables, pursuit would be hopeless.

Meanwhile, it was time to get out. Amos Teale, carried in a bamboo litter, went with the guerrillas on their march northwest into the no-man's land not far from the headwaters of the Malitabug River.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

SOME days after the coup at Kabakan, the last of the widely scattered squads of guerrillas assembled on a wooded plateau three thousand feet above the sea. The nights were cooler than in the lowlands, and by day there was far less humidity. Miles to the east, Rangang's volcanic peak rose from the table-land, and nearby were lava beds and lower cones whose very existence had not even been noted in the sketchy surveys.

The Hong boys—Tien, Kua, and Li—divided their time between reconditioning the jerry-built radio, honing their hatchets, and proving that the "subtle Oriental" is a myth—that the Anglo-Saxon is the world's riddle when it comes to cockeyed psychology. Having been born in the States, they were a blend of Rotary Club and Confucius—considerably pepped up—which overwhelmed GI logic.

"You and Teale," Hong Li told Kane, "are dizzy as waltzing mice. Datu Ryan's on the beam. Snatching quislings and giving them a formal court martial and a first-class hanging is just what we need to keep the *taos* from being sold on their phony Jap-model independence."

Hong Kua chimed in, "We get news from Australia, yeah, but do we disseminate enough of same to do any good? A thousand radios sealed on Tokyo beam shout us down."

There was scarcely a break as Hong Tien carried on, "Confucius said a picture is worth a thousand words. O. K., one quisling dangling by the neck at the city limits is worth two billion words. Q. E. D., Hang the sons of bitches!"

They had the time-tried logic of the Society of Heaven and Earth, which won its first fame in sabotaging the Manchus who conquered China: For eloquence, there's nothing like a neatly arranged corpse. Leave flower arrangements to the Japs.

Ryan sat by, silent and thinking, which made Kane uneasy. The man looked like Satan wearing four stars.

And Kane was worried about the Reverend Amos Teale. The missionary refused to have porters carry him to Lake Lanao, where Moro tribesmen would take over to get him to Dansalan.

"There is no use," he objected. "That bullet in the back. I do not see how I have lasted as long as I have. I prefer to stay here, to make the most of my time. You are receptive." He smiled whimsically. "I shall gain immediate immortality if you wear only a scrap of my mantle."

He told Kane of his experiences in Luzon and in the Visayas, and how he had landed at Cagayan, quickly making contact with the late Captain Morrow.

Kane went on reconnaissance with Ryan. They explored the lava beds. They studied the possibilities of the tangle of ravines which dipped sharply down from the shoulder of the volcanic plateau. Finally they found an unmapped road of poor quality—a road to nowhere. Near its end, there was a fork which after some ten kilometers stopped in a crazy jumble of lava.

"Some político got a lot of votes for building this," Ryan observed. "The Bishop says it reaches all the way to Parang."

AFTER forty years in Mindanao, Bishop Jackson had no reason for going on reconnaissance. Also, the country was too rough for Daniel-Come-to-Judgment. "I'm getting too old to carry that hoss over this here lava. It cuts his hoofs an' then, I been neglecting my Scriptures. You can't be a good guerrilla without reading yo' Bible. Look at Gideon, Mister Jim. Look at Samson—he was the grandpappy of all guerrillas."

"Heck, you're skipping Joshua."

"No, he was mighty good, only you got to be careful when you study Joshua. The Lawd performed miracles and helped him, an' when a guerrilla gets miracles on the brain, he's going to get into trouble. Now, Gideon, he's like General Ryan—he had guts and a strong head. Samson, he's like me—he had guts and a strong back."

That Datu Ryan had quit howling for the head of a quisling did not reassure Kane. Neither did it help when scouts brought reports on the arrival in Cotabato of the late Captain Morrow's band. They were interned not far from the headquarters of Artemisio Ortega, the governor in whose province constabulary companies were being recruited to combat the "rising wave of lawlessness."

For a few days, the Reverend Amos Teale seemed to be improving. Then he had a relapse, and Kane recognized the payoff.

"When I'm gone," Teale said, "use your eyes, be honest and see that you're fostering useless bloodshed. You are on the road to nowhere, Jim. Or do you still think I am a renegade?"

Kane shook his head. "You're one kind of fanatic, we're another kind."

"You didn't want to fight the constabulary, but you had to in self-defense." Teale spoke with an effort which bordered on desperation. "After all these years, Christian and Moslem, Visayan and Moro finally came to tolerate each other, even to understand and respect each other, or at least, try to. And now that skirmish at Kabakan."

"Defenders of the Islands, against Jap-loving renegades."

"But it will finally settle into Moslem Filipino against Christian Filipino. You can't limit such a clash."

Teale propped himself up, clawed at Kane's arm as though he feared that his audience would leave him. "If you knew—more about—town conditions—you'd understand those poor devils—and why they collaborate—"

He straightened and fumbled at his shirt front, finally bringing out his identification papers and travel permits.

"Go see— You can do it—with these—"

He toppled over. He had used up his borrowed time.

Once more, Kane examined the photo and the descriptive details. Allowing for the effect of jungle hardships, he could easily impersonate Teale, who had been in only one town of Mindanao: Cagayan, a hundred and fifty air miles from Cotabato. And Kane had a plan for getting Ryan's mind off quislings.

"It's this way, *Datu*," he explained. "I'll impersonate Teale. The story is, I escaped from your outfit. I'll not only get plenty of information but I'll tell the Jap commandant, Colonel Yasuda, that I headed for Cotabato instead of Dansalan because I wanted to see what was happening to the men I advised to surrender. And then I'll go back to tell your men the facts. Teale's record makes all that ring true."

Ryan's eyes gleamed. "That's beautiful. And you're figuring that Yasuda will pretend he's not going to take advantage of your knowing where we are, but actually, the yellow-belly will doublecross a trusting drip like you and slip up on the truce party, maybe nail the whole outfit."

"That's the play! And I'll come up our road to nowhere. I'll come up the blind fork—and you'll make a coffin of it."

Ryan slapped him on the shoulder. "Sounds

holeproof. If Napoleon had known about the sunken road, Waterloo would have been something else." Then he laughed. "You're foxy, Jim. You've got vision."

"Heck, it's just plain guerrilla figuring."

"That's not what I mean. You're foxy, cooking this up to get my interest away from jerked quisling, jungle style. But go ahead—a good idea is a good idea."

FOR the first time in nearly two years, Kane enjoyed the comforts of civilization; the dead missionary's credentials had won him the hospitality of Artemisio Ortega, governor of Cotabato Province.

Had the windows of his large room been glazed instead of fitted with panes of translucent shell, he could have looked down on the roofs of Cotabato Town, some of corrugated iron, some of nipa thatch, and at the river which flowed through the swamps and into Ilana Bay.

The governor's house and provincial headquarters shared a prime location: the crest of Constabulary Hill, the only elevation for miles around. Altogether, Kane had a juicy assignment; in fact, his imposture had succeeded so well that he had his uncomfortable moments as a hero who had escaped from the camp of Datu Ryan.

The governor's son, Ricardo, had been among the few constabulary killed during the first exchange of shots at Kabakan. Kane occupied what had been young Ortega's room. Ricardo's picture hung on the wall: a handsome boy, strongly resembling his father, and plainly proud of the uniform he wore. By any standard, he had a good face. There was neither beetle-brow nor the exaggerated nostril flare, neither the stolidness nor the grim ferocity seen in so many Malay faces.

"Good kid," Kane said to himself. "Why the hell did he have to be the goat, and why do I have to be in this house?"

Nor did the boy's mother, Doña Pilar, contribute to Kane's ease. She was too solicitous, and she could not deny herself the morbid luxury of making him repeat, over and over, the details of the skirmish in which her son had been killed. All this hampered Kane in his efforts to find out what made a quisling tick.

"Just my Ricardo, and Jesús Valles and Pacífico Guevara! An entire company to be hit, and they had to pick him."

She was a trim, sharp-faced little lady, somber in her rustling black silk dress and black mantilla. In her day, she must have been lovely, but all that remained of beauty was concentrated in her splendid eyes, which alternately gleamed with tears and blazed with Malay rage.

"*Señora*, I could not see," Kane would repeat. "I was at the rear. The jungle was alive with guerrillas, but they blew up the bridge and ran instead of staying to fight their outnumbered brothers."

"*Brothers!* Those heathens, those bandits, those infidels!"

"Filipinos, Doña Pilar."

"Filipinos? Is there such a thing! With a Japanese teacher in the school, soon we won't even have a language." She checked herself, flicked her fan. "But it is hard for old people to learn new ways. Be pleased to forget my chatter."

She hurried out, lest she voice something bordering on what the Japs called "dangerous thoughts."

As for Kane, he could not get rid of the feeling that for all his arguments, he had failed to shake Ryan's determination to hang a quisling. He felt that the *datu* would send other guerrilla spies to Cotabato, and under such circumstances Kane would have to choose between helping kidnap his host and running the risk of betraying his comrades. Ryan would not be content with merely baiting the Japs into sending a punitive expedition up the road to nowhere.

After allowing Kane several days in which to recuperate from his flight from captivity, Don Artemisio said to his guest, "*Señor*, the guerrillas of Captain Morrow's band are interned at Parang. Colonel Yasuda, the commandant, wants to see you and he also wishes you to see for yourself how well the internees are being treated."

Baiting Yasuda was Kane's mission and he was prepared for it, but facing the men who had followed Amos Teale's advice was a ticklish matter. While he was sure that none would inadvertently betray him, nevertheless he did not relish a meeting. Nor could he think of a reasonable pretext for avoiding it. There was nothing to do but settle back against the red leather cushions of the governor's Packard and head for Parang, some twenty-five miles north of Cotabato and like the provincial capital, sprawled on the shore of Ilana Bay.

THE chauffeur, like all his kind, drove at a racetrack clip, weaving in and out among carabao carts, dodging cyclists, scattering pedestrians with blasts of the triple-toned horn. If anything, this was wilder than the normal Filipino driving; there was more of savage intentness than of Malay exuberance.

Kane, resigned and fatalistic, relaxed and hoped that the squealing tires could take it as they raced along the paved road which reached through jungle and swamp. Oddly enough, Don Artemisio sat up rigidly; his face was tense.

"Too fast for you?"

"By no means, *señor*." His smile was almost convincing. "You do not mind, I hope? Miguel is not really reckless."

"Not at all, not at all," Kane lied.

The Nituan River was just ahead; on the right was Lone Hill, rising from the swamps. Also, there was a traffic jam. A carabao cart, well overloaded, had been losing bags of copra for the past hundred yards. The chauffeur tramped on the brakes, coming to a straight-line stop which pitched the passengers against the robe rail. Then came the quickest gear and throttle work Kane had ever seen. The engine roared, the car took off, swerved, gouged the shoulder, leaped back to the paving and darted in and out among the scattered cargo.

Despite the noise, Kane caught a sound all too familiar to a jungle-fighter: A bullet had smacked the red upholstery. From somewhere on Lone Hill, a rifle whacked. But now the chauffeur had cleared the cart, and was burning up the road. Horn trumpeting, the open car flashed across the span and through the *barrio*. It was not clear to Kane how the man avoided tangling with pigs, dogs, or pedestrians, but he did.

Don Artemisio said nothing about the shot, nor did Kane. Although it was possible that the governor had heard neither the smack of the bullet nor the far-off report, for there had been noise and confusion enough, Kane was certain that Don Artemisio had missed nothing. Beyond any doubt, he expected sniping when he left his hilltop in Cotabato. If this kept up, a bullet, rather than Kane's arguments, would change Ryan's plans.

Ludlow Barracks, though jammed with Japs and constabulary, had room enough for the internees. They were quartered in the southeast corner of the company parade-ground, in a barrack and stockade which faced the gray masonry bulk of Fort Reina Christina, which was now Colonel Yasuda's headquarters.

The commandant was a scholarly-looking little man, pleasant and cordial. He extended his hand and said, "Mr. Teale, let me congratulate you on your daring escape. I have been impatiently awaiting that you recuperate to give me a firsthand account; I did not want premature interrupting of Don Artemisio's hospitality."

"Thank you, sir. I was half dead from fatigue and I wandered into Cotabato, instead of coming to your headquarters."

"Formality waived." He readjusted his rimless glasses. "Please sit down. When the late Captain Morrow's men told me of your humanitarian efforts, I had not hoped for the pleasure of meeting." He giggled, made a slicing gesture. "I did not believe when they said that the outlaw would not hurt you."

So Kane recited his "experiences" with guerrillas in Luzon, in Cebu, in Negros. Fortunately, Amos Teale's enthusiasm and love of oratory had moved him to give Kane a good stock of the details which this imposture required.

At the conclusion of the story, Yasuda insisted on showing Kane how well the internees were treated. Instead of delegating the job to his adjutant or to Captain Takahashi, the permanent officer of the day, he himself went with his visitors.

DON ARTEMISIO ORTEGA

"Barbed wire enclosure, yes, but education in Right Thought is not yet complete, Mr. Teale."

"Where are the Filipinos?"

"With the bosom of their families, plying their crafts and trades. After formal surrender, each going his appointed way, loyal adherent to New Order."

"I am happy to hear that no punishment was necessary."

"MR. TEALE, we preach gospel of fraternity, Elder Brother to Younger Brother. Sometimes stern, yes. But kindly meant, just, benevolent.

"Much unkind rumor afflicts us. We hear your national radio. Your people are obtusely unsympathetic. But see for yourself, contented Filipinos learning New Way."

"Er—mind if—ah—I speak to some reformed guerrillas?"

"Affording pleasure! Mingle with populace in Parang Barrio, in Bacolod Barrio—" He gestured to indicate the nipa thatch villages which flanked the post, one to the east, on the Nituan, the other overlooking Ilana Bay. "A few of pardoned rebels live here, a few in Cotabato."

Then he ushered Don Artemisio and Kane into the mess hall.

"See, Mr. Teale! Men redeemed from hunger,

exposure, treated like honorable enemy. Nutritious ration, exactly like Imperial Japanese Army. Not luxurious, but sustaining."

The men ceased eating and sat at attention. Though in rags, they were at least in clean rags. Where they had been virtually barefooted, they now wore straw slippers. Some were clean shaven. Yet if Kane had not seen them at their worst, those faces would have shocked him. Then, as the eyes of the fifty-odd internees nailed him, he raised his voice. "Yes, indeed, Colonel Yasuda, they look much better than they did when I begged them to surrender."

The nutritious ration was rice and tea and salt fish which had the odor of an anatomical specimen not sufficiently pickled for preservation, yet somehow staying short of outright putrefaction.

"Eating resumed!" Yasuda commanded. "Rest!"

The colonel understood book English, and thus the jargon of prisoners, all talking at once, was a hopeless confusion to him. Kane, however, got all too much.

" . . . There's the son of a bitch that sold us this!" . . . "If this ain't the same as starving—" "That pulpit-pounding—" "They're all liars!" "Hey, you horse-faced *buga'o*, is this the good grub you meant?"

Poisoned arrows, whisking out of a jungle of sound; worst of all, he could feel the fury, the sense of betrayal. And from one of those faces a pair of bitter clear eyes probed him. He recognized the man who had almost joined Ryan's forces and then changed his mind.

Malaria and dysentery, untreated and unchecked, were doing their work; it was plain from those weary, bloodshot, lustreless eyes that most of these men had endured so much that they might never again, regardless of bodily comfort, become wholly human. There were all grades of dullness, vacancy, half-madness; and then there was that one man whose vision was unclouded—that one man who knew beyond any doubt that this was not Amos Teale.

Kane asked, "May I eat some of the ration? I see a vacant place."

"Ha! Very fine moral effect, eating food of enlisted men. Napoleon, Caesar, I also, do thus. But only in the field."

Kane snatched the tin plate and spoon, looped the head of the table and wedged himself next to Crawford, the guerrilla with the disturbing glance.

"Have some turkey. And don't make any cracks about this being the same kind of chow that the Jap army marches to victory on, or someone'll knock your damn head off, *Reverend.*"

Kane's fish nearly choked him.

"Name's Crawford, maybe you forgot. You sure pulled a boner, coming in here looking like you'd been eating at the Ritz."

Guerrillas on either side hitched about on the wooden bench to look and listen. Kane said, "I'll persuade the governor to send some meat and vegetables and fruit. Hang on. For heaven's sake, do not risk a demonstration!"

Crawfords knees nudged him, one-two. "O.K., parson, but we think you done us dirt. Finish your swill and get out!"

It did not take Kane long to clear his plate. He was dripping with a fresh rush of sweat when he unwedged himself from the jammed bench. Crawford, and perhaps a few others, knew that he was not the Reverend Amos Teale. And that knowledge was dynamite. Desperate, disappointed, assuming that his presence meant a rescue raid, they might get cocky and start trouble. And then, questioned to exhaustion, they'd babble.

CHAPTER V

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COP

COLONEL YASUDA was proud of his generous treatment of the internees. "Fully as good as in Manila, do you not agree?"

"As to sanitary facilities, yes; as to rations, perhaps not. But it is clear that you do your best."

"So you can now sincerely advise further surrenders?"

Kane frowned a little. "I am in a difficult position, sir."

Yasuda did his best to conceal impatience. "Guerrillas are misguided, making sacrifices for civilians they call oppressed people. They do not understand the Independence just declared. They think only of unavoidable strictness at beginning of New Order."

"My position," Kane repeated, "is difficult. In Luzon, fellow Americans considered me a traitor. One guerrilla band stopped just short of violence, and warned me never to return."

"But now, Independence! See the contented people of Cotabato. Go about, making conversations. Talk with working classes. Let me write a permit to talk."

He dictated to a clerk. Then he picked up the phone and jabbered in Japanese. In a moment, an officer reported. Yasuda said, "This is Captain Takahashi, of distinguished service in China and Singapore. Permanently in charge of guard detachment of Cotabato-Parang municipalities and *barrios.*"

During the speech, Kane sized up the man whose job could roughly be summed up as "permanent officer of the day." Takahashi, bullet-headed and pockmarked, was a burly fellow with a gross face and truculent eyes. If he had carried chips instead of insignia on his shoulders, it would have been more appropriate; and as they eyed each other, Kane sensed that the dislike was mutual.

Yasuda opened up with some Japanese.

Takahashi's pie-face spread in a mechanical smile. He bowed, hissed politely, and in his native jargon addressed Kane. Yasuda translated, "Captain Takahasi not speaking English, begs to offer compliments and assures his men to offer courtesies."

Kane bowed his appreciation. The captain saluted his superior and stamped out, fairly bristling with military precision. Without actually doing so, he gave the impression of perpetual goose-stepping: and then Kane understood the intensely personal dislike he had felt almost at first glance. While an enemy was someone you wanted to hew down as a matter of principle, Takahashi's Prussian manner would make one peculiarly relish the opportunity.

For a Jap to be a barbarian was natural enough; the entire race had had scarcely ninety years in which to emerge from ancient isolation. It was inevitable that a veneer of civilization so hastily acquired would be flimsy. The Nazi, on the other hand, was a renegade, a traitor to his own race and his own background, and thus in Kane's eyes, more degraded than the lowest Skibby.

And this was the root of his aversion to Takahashi: A Jap who had so successfully aped the German officers who had instructed him in the art of war became almost as revolting as the renegades who had coached him.

Back in Cotabato, right after siesta, Kane went down the slope and into the steaming town. Already his fame had spread. Natives bowed as though to a Japanese soldier. The tawny-skinned girls in the nipa-thatched market-booths stopped laughing and chattering when he paused to look at the wicker baskets of fruit and vegetables spread out on the ground. They became painfully formal and respectful, these *guapas* who normally would jest and flirt with any male customer.

The fish-market was little more than smells. "What's the matter, *tia*?" he asked an old woman. "Sold out already?"

She sniffed. "Is it otherwise in the places you have been, *señor*? We sell what the inspectors do not accept for—for national defense."

Carabao carts, loaded with pockets of rice, creaked down the muddy street toward the pier. Although the *palay* fields along the coastal fringe of the province had been hard put to supply the local demand, their crops now were being exported.

Finally, getting nowhere with the Filipinos, Kane headed for the several Chinese *tiendas*. Already, he had noted a dozen or more Cantonese plodding along, each carrying two baskets, hung fore and aft on a *pinga*-pole which was balanced on the porter's shoulder.

"Too many of 'em to intern," Kane reflected. "And they've been here so long they're the same as natives. . . ."

He was about to cross the street to enter Ch'an Luk's *tienda* when a dapper little Oriental in whites accosted him.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Teare. I am Thought Po-rice." He giggled, presented his credentials. "Name are Yenjo Naru. Rearn Engrish in Manira. Prease answer questions."

"With pleasure, Mr. Naru."

"What you thinking, Mr. Teare?"

Kane mopped his forehead. "Humidity is terrible."

"What thinking about Co-Prosperity?"

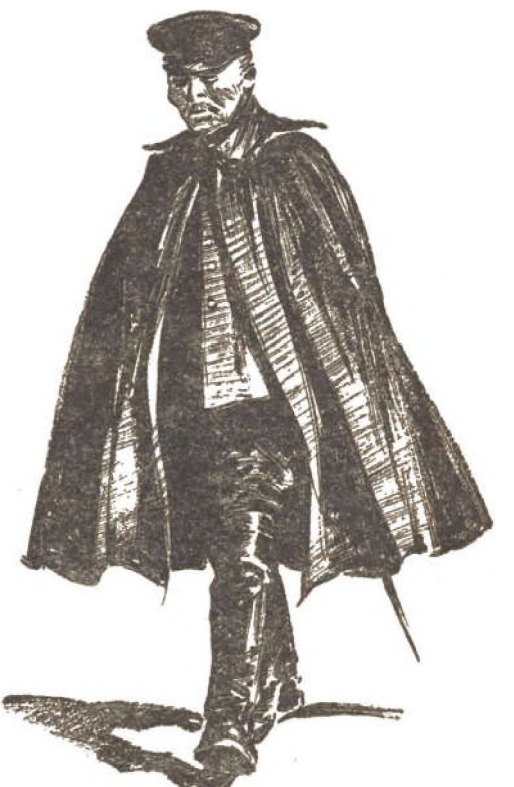
"It's grand."

THE entire business was so ridiculous that Kane could hardly keep a straight face as he watched the Thought Policeman laboriously pencil the answers into his little black notebook.

"What thinking on New Order?"

"Mmmm . . . it's quite new."

Naru, after eyeing him for a moment, was satisfied by the customer's solemn face. But Kane's sense of humor got a jolt when, looking over the psychological cop's shoulder, he saw



If Captain Takahashi had carried chips on his shoulders instead of insignia, it would have been more appropriate.

There stood Hong Tien, grinning broadly at Kane from behind the psycological cop.

Hong Tien lounging against the palm-trunk pillar of a *tienda*, grinning broadly as he divided his attention between Naru's back, Kane's face, and the Golden Bat cigarette he was fitting into a paper cone which served as tip, or as holder, whichever way you cared to consider this Japanese nuisance.

Hong Tien looked just enough like himself to alarm Kane, and just enough like a Jap to be puzzling.

He wore glasses, for which he had no earthly need. His Buntal hat was blocked in Japanese style. Just what had happened to the pie-face, Kane could not say, yet it had a difference expression. The mouth was strange. While Hong did not have the buck-toothed grin of a cartoon Jap, his teeth were more prominent than normal.

Kane broke out in a sweat which had no relation to Cotabato's humidity. There was no guessing whether Hong had come to town strictly on his own, to make "service calls" with his shingling hatchet, or whether he was here to get Chinese cooperation in the kidnapping of Don Artemisio.

"What thought about guerrirras?" Naru demanded.

The silliness of the question worried Kane. More than that, Hong's Chinese humor might get out of control. He was making a move as though scratching prickly heat around his arm pit. However, he might be unlimbering his hatchet. And he was grinning, not in vacuous Jap style, but with Chinese animation. The phony glasses did not distort his slanted eyes; they were alive and vibrant.

One flick of the hatchet, then a dart down the reeking alley and into the jungle, leaving Kane with the late Mr. Naru, kicking face down in the mud: Hong's idea of humor.

Kane gulped and licked his lips. Mr. Naru repeated sharply, "Prease answer. What sentiment about guerrirras?"

"Er—um—misguided persons. I try to reform them."

Despite the horrible fascination of that smiling Chinese, Kane cocked his head to see what Naru was writing. His height made it easy. He relaxed when he saw that the Thought Policeman entered only the verbatim statement without any comment as to the subject's hesitation.

When Kane looked up again, Hong Tien was gone.

"Prease, one more. What missionary fraternized with when in Manira?"

"Reverend Clark Stanley Freeman, Baptist."

"Other association of crergyman species?"

"Reverend Jonas Peter Hale, D.D., Methodist Episcopal."

"Why these crergyman not corrabborate?"

"They said they were loyal Americans."

"Ha! That mean, you not royar American?"

"Um—ah—not at all."

Naru wrote, looked up beaming. He showed all his rotting teeth and, fortunately, sucked in his breath. "Sank you. No other inquiry now." He extended his hand. "Preasure tarking Engrish, sir. Good night."

The gaping *tienderas* set frantically to work rearranging their heaps of bananas and mangos, maize and *camotes*. It was not until Mr. Naru headed for the waterfront that they were again at ease.

One little lady said, very distinctly, *"Putang-na-mo!"*

If she was referring to Mr. Naru's mother, she was not far off the beam.

Mr. Naru should have been strictly musical comedy, but he wasn't, not any more than the Jap army or navy. A man could trip himself answering idiotic questions, whereas he could lie convincingly in reply to a rational quiz. The worst, however, was Hong's presence in town and his pantomime. To have jitters while being interviewed by a Thought Policeman was bad.

KANE went into Ch'an Luk's *tienda,* and relished the odor of smoked pork and ginger and *ng ka pay;* those Chinese smells combated the waterfront reek and the stench of fish.

The shop-front was open, except for waist-high paneling at either side of the narrow door. A wrinkled Chinese wearing a gray tunic and black silk pants sat on a kerosene crate and smoked a long-stemmed pipe whose full charge of tobacco would be little larger than a grape.

On one skinny hand, Ch'an Luk wore a ring in the shape of two twined serpents. Each held in its jaws a spherical moonstone. The gems caught and caged all the light in the odorous dusk. They glowed and pulsed, though the clawed hand was as immobile as the old man himself.

Puff . . . puff. . . . Thin, bluish jets of smoke curled from the flaring nostrils. But for that evidence of life, one would have said that he had "mounted the dragon." Then, abruptly, he came to life.

"How-do? Watch-ee want?"

He was neither amiable nor not-amiable. Of the eight Chinese "tones," which are beyond the sensitivity of any Caucasian tongue or ear, he had used one which, though devoid of inflection, nevertheless voiced a query. The voice implied, "I am not interested; you might as well not be."

"Candied kumquats?"

"No got."

"Preserved ginger?"

"My no savee."

As a matter of fact, half a dozen semi-glazed earthenware jars, bluish-green against white, stood within arm's reach. Though Ch'an Luk saw that Kane had spotted the ginger, neither face nor eyes changed.

Kane pointed. "There's some."

"Him b'long fiend."

Kane wondered how the Thought Police would fare with Ch'an Luk. No doubt the old chap could think, and not half as confusedly as his interviewers. But instead of leaving, and waiting to get an O.K. from Hong Tien, Kane remembered and put into play one of his lessons on the Society of Heaven and Earth.

"*Where are you from?*" A casual query, yet double-edged.

"My no savvee."

Yet the cryptic eyes came to life with an effect uncannily like the living glow of the twin moonstones. Ch'an Luk countered, "*Where were you born?*" He was playing safe, instead of giving the mystic answer, "*Out of the east.*"

Kane replied, "*Under a peach tree.*"

Hong Tien had coached him in certain signs and phrases of that secret order which for centuries had whittled down the oppressors of China. Of the ritual, he knew nothing. He could not possibly pass temple guards, for he had learned only secular matters, and nothing at all of the sacred and secret aspects of the hidden brotherhood to which countless thousands of Chinese belonged. But thus far he had done well, for at the mention of peach tree, Ch'an Luk took a pack of Isabelas and carefully drew two cigarettes halfway from the container.

"Wanchee smoke?"

Kane took the pack, pressed the cigarettes flush with the others, using the backs of index and middle finger; the fourth and fifth fingers were curled until their tips touched the base of the thumb. That done, he plucked out a smoke well away from the two which Ch'an Luk had picked for him.

Then Kane drew three cigarettes halfway from the pack and offered them to the old man. Ch'an Luk took the middle smoke.

"Very good, *Mr. Kane.* Now you buy something, and ask damn fool questions like missionaries."

Kane haggled for the half-dozen jars of ginger. Ch'an Luk went back to pidgin English of the most unintelligible sort. He could not send the delicacies directly to the internment camp; the best he could do was to have the lot delivered at the governor's house. Maybe the governor's servants could carry on from there.

And then he suggested that Kane would do well to go to Ah Kim's place to make some purchases.

AT Ah Kim's, Kane found canned green apricots in syrup, a delicacy which might or might not be of great help to internees perishing from a diet of rice and fish. He was hustled into the back room, where to the tune of high-pitched Cantonese and the screech of nails as the top of a crate was torn away, he heard a familiar voice say in Americanese, "Sorry I scared you, but you looked so damn funny when that Skibby asked you your sentiments on guerrillas! Honest, Jim, no matter how much I wanted to service the little stinker, I wouldn't do it in daylight."

"If I ever get you in a corner—"

"O.K. Now here's the job cut out for us. We're snatching the governor. We've already tried him and everything. Ryan never imagined you'd land in a soft spot like you did. It's a cinch now."

"*We are which?*"

"Snatching Ortega. Ryan figured they wouldn't bite if you offered to go back and preach some more. But this way, they'll have to turn out a rescue party."

"That's crazy! We can't do that!" Kane protested.

"We're going to. It's orders. Well, be seeing you."

Hong Tien ducked into the shadows. A panel slid home. The argument was over. The mis-

sion had been briefed. Ryan, crafty as ever, had maneuvered his lieutenant into a corner. For Kane to refuse duty here, in the face of the enemy, so to speak, would be the equivalent of mutiny, of selling out his comrades.

"Send—it—to—house—*casa*—*de*—the governor—*el gobernador*—you savvee?" he shouted.

Ah Kim was enjoying the show. He chuckled, jabbered, all in high spirits, and did his best to convince Kane by tone and pantomime that the governor was no good anyway. It struck him as nothing short of comical that a hard-bitten guerrilla should have any qualms about betraying his hosts; after all, the Skibbies had done their onetime hosts plenty of dirt.

And Kane, heading for Constabulary Hill, had to admit that Chinese logic was faultless. Your enemy's friend is certainly your enemy. To be sporting in the Anglo-Saxon sense was not being noble, it was just plain idiocy.

As Hong Tien had explained it, weeks before, "Americans and British are clucks about some things. You call us guys subtle Orientals, but we're simple and direct. You're the subtle Joes—jeez, we been trying for years to figure out how you people get that way. A guy is out to knife you, your neck's in danger as long as he's alive, and then like chumps you make a kind of game, giving him all the chance he wants for knocking you off first. If that's what you really wanted, you coulda stood still and got it quick and easy in the first place."

"Uh—um—well, it's just our way of being honorable."

Hong Tien had chuckled, tolerantly. "Hell, I'm as much American as you are, but I'm still not a chump. Look here, you sneak up and cool a sentry and don't give him a chance. But when a highbinder slips up with his hatchet and works from the rear, you holler and call that treacherous. *You're* the mysterious guys. Nobody can figure out how you tick, not even yourselves."

Hong Tien was right. Only Kane couldn't gulp the arguments. To save a quisling from his executioners-to-be was a fantastic occupation for Datu Ryan's lieutenant, but that was just what Kane resolved to do. But before he could split his skull against the question of how to solve the problem, he saw that Mr. Naru was on the job again.

The Thought Policeman had Hong Tien cornered. The dialogue was in Japanese.

Kane paused near a market-booth. The *tiendera* ignored him, for she, too, was listening to the metallic jangle of Japanese.

Hong looked and sounded so much like a Skibby that his best friends would have had an impulse to kick his teeth down his throat and then boot his pants till he coughed his molars up again. Nevertheless, the state of Hong's thoughts must have been unusual.

More bowing and hissing.

As though in response to a command, Hong cocked one leg and, standing stork-fashion, took off one shoe and sock. Mr. Naru squatted, scrutinized the foot, squinted gravely and intently. Then he stood up and Hong replaced the footgear. Spy and Thought Policeman parted with expressions of mutual esteem.

Ignoring Kane, Hong Tien strolled on toward the waterfront.

CHAPTER VI

SHOTS IN THE DARK

YASUDA'S eagerness to make the most of "Mr. Teale's" presence before the missionary went back to the guerrillas to preach, gave Kane and his host what might have been called a stay of execution. There were so many inspections and ceremonies, with constabulary and municipal police and soldiers to lend the impressive formal touch, that nothing short of a Chinese route army could have snatched Don Artemisio. But Kane doubted that the thinking which he did in the time gained could offset the workings of the local chapter of the Society of Heaven and Earth.

Hong Tien popped up wherever a crowd gathered. Whatever had been decided by the foot-inspection, it must have been final. Kane, sitting on a reviewing stand, looked out into the crowd and said to himself, "Any damn minute, he'll start asking Mr. Naru some questions—Chinese for man bites dog."

Then Kane got his cue when Don Artemisio nudged him. It was time to step to the mike and broadcast to Zamboanga for relaying.

"I have seen with my own eyes. I have spoken to Filipino guerrillas who are now happy with their families. I have eaten with American guerrillas who, though in custody, are comfortable and well treated. Of a band which surrendered after heeding my advice, every man is well and alive, receiving the treatment prescribed by the Geneva Conference—"

This was true, for the prisoners did get the Japanese soldier's ration.

There were parades of the Junior Kalibapi, the Japanese version of Hitler's youth movement, which lured Filipino kids with badges, games and music, to make them receptive to propaganda.

Then Don Artemisio was awarded the Second Order of the Sacred Treasure for his cooperation with Co-Prosperity. The governor's speech was something to remember. " . . . Already as Free Filipinos, dating our Independence from 1943, rather than from the fabled liberation of 1946, we benefit. . . . Already with our Japanese comrades-at-arms, we are suppressing the banditry, the outlawry which threatened our homes, our crops, our industries.

"The honor which is accorded me today is neither private nor personal. It is rather that

the Second Order of the Sacred Treasure is for me to hold in trust: a decoration conferred on an entire province and on all its right-thinking people!"

Newsreel and electrical transcription recorded it.

That night, some hours after dinner, Kane sat with Don Artemisio on the veranda, smoking Pigtails whose splendid Cagayan leaf won added bouquet from a glass humidor in whose bottom was a vanilla pod and some brandy. The governor finally removed his decoration and let the moonlight shine on it.

"*Señor*," he asked, after a long silence, "has your strength returned?"

"Thanks to your hospitality, yes."

"You must have the good will of that madman, Ryan, or he would have finished you at once. Can you risk returning to reason with him?"

"He knows no safe-conduct in the world would save him."

"You do not trust Colonel Yasuda and the Japanese pledge?"

"War is war. Ryan is beyond any pardon," Kane countered.

"But you could prove to him, as one American to another, that by disbanding his rebels, he will do every Filipino a service."

"His rebels killed your son. Can you forgive that?"

"I am beyond hating or not hating. This independence is not independence, but it is better than direct military rule, is it not? You were in Manila during the first weeks of the occupation; is this not better?"

Kane was silent.

"And even before the New Order, we had constabulary to suppress outlaws. Consider, *señor*, in your own home city—if you had no police, no F.B.I., might there not be an outbreak of crime so vicious and violent that the order compelled by a foreign army would be better than the disorder of your own criminal element?

"So we collaborate. We are at least as lawless and hot-headed as you Americans. My son was a sacrifice to law and order. I speak as governor, elected by these people. My private grief is not in this."

"You would not demand vengeance against members of that band?"

"I swear I would not. You advised guerrillas to surrender. You collaborated. Did you love your country any less than I do mine?"

DON ARTEMISIO rang true; Kane realized he was sincere according to his own lights. More and more, Kane had to accept the fact that Don Artemisio was not a quisling in the true sense of the world. It was a misguided attempt to help his people, not treachery for his own ends, that had led him into the role of collaborationist.

And now he was sure of one thing: Ryan's plans for a kidnaping and a court martial and an execution would do far more harm than good. Nor could he see how Don Artemisio deserved his sentence.

"It crept up on us, bit by bit. It had been promised," the governor went on, "that Tagalog would be the official language. Now Japanese schools are opening in every town. There'd be food for everyone—and we learned later that only those who 'thought correctly' would be given rations."

That was when Kane saw his chance to get

the governor out of Cotabato before Hong Tien and the Society of Heaven and Earth were ready to strike. "Suppose we both go, with a flag of truce, and talk to Ryan? Let him hear your side of things."

Don Artemisio snapped to his feet. "If you can guide me to his camp, yes! I'll ask him, for the good of the people, to disband his guerrillas. I'll go as hostage to guarantee that whatever of his men surrender will be treated well."

That would block Ryan. For all the man's diabolical whims, he would not refuse to honor a flag of truce. And if, following the governor, a force of Japs ran into an ambush, the *datu* would be less exacting in his dealings.

Don Artemisio went on, "And you can find your way back?"

Kane could not pull a dead-end road out of a silk hat. He frowned and said, "I might have some difficulty, though Maguindanao Moros could guide us through the final stretch. Still—Have you a map? A large scale map?"

"In my office. Will you be kind enough, at this hour?"

And Kane followed Don Artemisio to provincial headquarters.

Once in the office, Kane studied the Mindanao sheet, on which no highway nor even a wagon trail was indicated in the entire region between Highway One and Mt. Rangang. This accorded with the oil company road map he had seized in an early raid. The next exhibit showed Cotabato Province on a large scale. Here the second class road, which on the first sheet branched northeast from Parang and came to a dead-end midway to Gadungan Barrio, actually extended to the central plateau.

Just why that road to nowhere, the road whose upper end he and Ryan had reconnoitered, had ever been built, was beyond any explanation. Kane feigned astonishment. "If I'd only known about that highway! I started from a lava field not far from the headwaters of the Malitabug River"—he pointed—"about here. We could plainly see a volcano which the guerrillas called Rangang." He sighed. "What hardship I'd have saved myself, following a road instead of beating downstream!"

"But where, in that wilderness?" the governor demanded eagerly.

Kane went through a convincing show of guess, estimate, calculation. "They said that Rangang was four days' march. . . . Let's draw a circle—Now I remember, we were only a day's march beyond the Malitabug. . . ."

He chalked another circle, its radius based on the last distance named, then said, "Somewhere in their intersection—"

"*Bueno! Señor*, you have the mind of an engineer!"

"Mmm . . . well, I used to be competent at mathematics," Kane admitted, and hoped he had not stepped out of character.

Then he noted, in the legend which gave the scale and the date of the survey, that Artemisio Ortega had done the work.

"You, *señor*, were formerly District Engineer?"

"Yes, indeed. And actually a civil engineer before I was appointed to that office."

"Then you know that road as no one else could."

KANE did not make any quips about a road to nowhere. The Filipino *político* knows at least as much about pork barrels as his American counterpart. While there were no voters along that right of way, there nevertheless were angles aplenty. A contractor, *muy simpático* and needing some business in a hurry, had known someone who could dish out highway funds; and there were other guesses to account for a road which served no need.

But there was one detail not shown on the map, an error too gross even for master politicians to explain away: Well toward the end of the highway was a fork some eight kilometers long, the death trap which he and Ryan had discovered. Bungled office work, a bungled survey, and a road crew plugging along without any supervision until the engineer, finally inspecting the job, learned that the crew had headed up the wrong canyon. In that network, such a slip was not too difficult to make.

Artemisio, of course, knew of the unmapped stretch, but when the time came, that knowledge would not affect the issue. If Japs followed, they'd be taken care of.

"Shall we go now, *señor*? Another cigar?"

"With pleasure."

The governor gestured toward the door, bowed, and stood aside. Kane, mindful of compounded Malay and Spanish courtesy, drew back with a gesture meaning, "After you, *señor*."

As governor, Don Artemisio was entitled to precedence, but as a *caballero*, he could hardly accept his due without some form of declining. And then, at the front door, another exchange was in order. This time, since Kane was a guest and also *muy simpático*, the governor insisted on his taking precedence.

So, after a polite show of declining, Kane took the lead in stepping to the veranda; and this was logical, since Don Artemisio had to lock the door.

There was a stirring in the gloom, soundless, evidenced only by a shape barely perceptible in the shadows. It ducked back and out of sight. No one but a cat-footing guerrilla would have noted the slight movement.

Don Artemisio was turning to close the door when the figure which had wavered popped up and into view. There was a brief glint of blue metal.

The man who had expected to nail the governor, normally the first to cross the threshold,

Kane stopped one slug, then another. A third raked his ribs. . . . The gunner, recovering from his fall, stretched his legs and ran.

had hesitated, then resumed his purpose, all in a matter of split seconds.

Kane yelled, *"Cuida'o!"*

Then the pistol was crackling and Kane was making a dive for the gunner who had waited to smoke out a quisling.

He knocked the man flat. Don Artemisio was in the clear. Kane, however, lost his footing and instead of seizing and disarming the man, missed and lurched against the wall.

This disconcerted the would-be assassin. He fired wildly. Though the shock of landing kept

him from using his legs, his trigger finger was in fine shape.

Kane stopped a slug. And a second. The third raked his ribs. The bullets from a small-caliber and fourth-rate automatic are utterly useless unless they drill a man in a vital spot. Kane kicked as he rolled, trying to lay the man out. Instead, he booted the weapon to the ground. The gunner, having recovered from his fall, stretched his legs and ran.

Don Artemisio, startled rather than frightened, bounded toward Kane, who was now sitting up and trying not to curse. He was not sure but what he had said things not commonly listed in missionary vocabularies. "Thanks—I'm all right—" He accepted the governor's hand and scrambled upright. "My foot—got one along the ribs—one through the arm . . ."

"Nowhere else?"

Kane repeated the reassurance.

By then, cops came racing up the hill. The lid blew off when they learned that the governor had been in the fracas. Don Artemisio said, "Be pleased to help Señor Teale. . . . The assassin? He went that way."

"Toward the church?"

"But of course, is the church not that way? Hurry, hurry! I'll get a doctor to my house."

But "that way" was just opposite to the direction which the bungler had actually taken, and while waiting for the medico, Kane remarked on the error.

The governor smiled. "*Señor*, I misdirected them purposely. I did not want one of my people to face a firing squad. Knowing you to be a man of religion, I knew you would not contradict me because of your wounds. Those shots were for me. And so was that bullet which landed between us the day we drove to Parang."

CHAPTER VII

"GET OUT QUICK!"

IN the morning, Kane asked the *muchacho* who brought in breakfast, "*Pedro, a donde está el patrón?*"

"Is gone early, *señor*."

That was odd. Don Artemisio did not believe in getting to the office before ten. Kane gulped his chocolate and told Pedro to see if Doña Pilar would be kind enough to see him at once. To speed things up, he reached for the governor's gold-headed stick and hobbled into the spacious *sala*. His foot ached like billy-be-damned, but he managed to navigate. As long as a man can walk or crawl, he isn't really hurt.

Doña Pilar, black dress rustling, jet ear pendants tinkling, appeared in a few minutes. "Señor Teale, this is terrible, on your feet! Do sit down! At once."

She hustled him to a chair.

"Where's Don Artemisio? I'm worried about him."

She shrugged, making her magnolia-blossom sleeves flutter. "He is safe. Constabulary were on guard all night. Did it not sound so empty and foolish, I would tell you how grateful I am to you."

"It was nothing, *señora*."

"First my son, now my husband—that is what I would be saying had it not been for you."

"Thank you. But you have not answered me."

His brusqueness made her brows rise, then flatten. "You have reasons for insisting. Tell me."

"A premonition. Where is he?"

Her eyes became biting. He began to wonder how far into him and his past this sharp-witted little person could bore. Finally she nodded. "You are a gentleman. *Muy valiente*. I have no right to tell you, but I do. He has gone alone to appeal to Datu Ryan, to beg for understanding."

"*What?*"

"It is as I said. Since you cannot go, he goes alone. Since his own people have been shooting at him, it makes no difference what Datu Ryan does."

"Did he take an escort? Constabulary, soldiers?"

"I do not know."

Beyond any doubt, she did know, and precisely, but there was no arguing with her. "Thank you, *señora*. I shall pray for him."

And he meant that last.

Cotabato was boiling with Thought Police and constabulary looking for clues as to the governor's assailant. Mr. Naru questioned Kane for several hours.

Mr. Naru, on the lookout for "dangerous thoughts," was a nuisance, rather than a menace; the real danger was the Society of Heaven and Earth, whose members would suspect Kane of having warned the governor. While Don Artemisio would not be driven to cover by ordinary assassins, it was logical enough for him to leave town to upset a well-organized plan such as the avengers had made. And once Kane was classed as a meddler, the Society of Heaven and Earth would take action. He had to find Hong Tien in a hurry and induce his fellow guerrilla to straighten things out.

A *caromata* took him down the hill to the market. The trip, however, was wasted, for Ch'an Luk had put up his shutters, and so had the other Chinese *tienderos*. Even the tailor's shop was locked. Yet there was hidden activity: The air reeked of joss sticks, a few strings of firecrackers were let go, a *samyin* wailed and quavered as some slant-eyed musician plied his bow. The *cochero* said, "Is no trade today, the Chinos make fiesta. For the spirits and devils, you comprehend?"

This wasn't reassuring. "Very well, take me back."

But Mr. Naru popped out of a doorway as the *cochero* made a U-turn.

"Prease, Mr. Teare, why go out when wounded?"

"To show I am not afraid. The Lord protects me."

Such nonsense was eminently sensible to a Jap who clearly understood how one gained face by strutting around, regardless of a few misplaced bullets.

"You rike Chinese so-called music?"

Kane grimaced. "It is loathesome."

"Sank you. Good night."

And as he headed home, Kane wondered whether he was dealing with a moron or with a patient, cunning Jap who used a psychological version of the water torture, drip-drip-drip until the victim at last blew his top and told all.

An hour after he was back in his room, Pedro knocked and announced, "*Señor*, another Thought Police asks for you."

"Tell the little son—" Kane checked himself; missionaries simply didn't use such language. "Tell him I'll be down at once."

Pedro hurried out, only to return in a moment. "Señor Oguchi not wishing to inconvenience, he begs that you receive him in your room."

OGUCHI came in, bowing, grinning, sucking in his breath. It was not until the man straightened up that Kane recognized Hong Tien.

"Prease, Reverend Teare, I am Thought Po-rice, assistant with Mr. Naru. Sit by window for comfort."

"You God-blasted fool!" Kane muttered.

"Jeez, a spy who don't have another spy checking up on him'd commit hara-kiri, he'd figure the neglect meant he didn't amount to much. I'd be asking Naru some silly question if I stayed here a couple more days, and he'd like it."

"Mean you're leaving?" Kane sighed and relaxed. "Let us pray."

"I bet you told *him* to get out quick."

"So what? I'm fed up on this crap of Ryan's. The governor is a good man in a tough spot. I was going with him."

"To go to bat for him? And now he's gone alone, you being bunged up."

Kane nodded. "And Yasuda is sure as hell going to sneak troops after him, to bushwhack the conference."

"Heck, that's according to plan. What you belly-aching about?" the puzzled Chinese demanded. "He'll cut 'em down in jig-time, buddy, it'll be beautiful."

"And the governor'll be about the first one to be *krissed*. See how it stacks up, with me not being there? Lord, I couldn't give him any warning, not even if I'd known he'd go alone."

"O.K., so the little rat's *krissed* by mistake, that's no worse'n being killed on purpose, is it? You're in the clear. You kept me and the boys from snatching him. That makes you the gentleman guest. And the Heaven and Earth crowd aren't sore, so don't moan about *that*."

Kane sighed. "Thank God for that."

"What I really came to say," Hong went on, "is we got a substitute. A fishing boat made contact with a junk that slipped out of Canton with some—uh—confidential papers."

"Carry on."

"Well, that Captain Takahashi, we had our eye on him, account of his China Campaign badge. And the news we just got is that he made a name for himself in the Nanking rape, murder, and arson fiesta."

"That music this P.M.—Heaven and Earth conclave?"

"Uh-huh. Tried and convicted him. But I had a hell of a time making the brethren agree to hanging him."

Kane gaped. "You mean the Society of Heaven and Earth objected to hanging Takahashi? For the first time in my life, I'd enjoy a job like that. If that doesn't make you fellows mysterious Orientals, nothing does!"

"Mysterious, hell! They were holding out for the death of a thousand cuts. I told 'em that was cruel and unusual, and now they think all Americans are nuts."

"How'll you snatch him?"

"Being permanent officer of the day, he's got a regular routine for inspecting sentries. Side car with orderly."

"You're dizzy. Double sentries, and everything."

Hong grinned. "Double sentries is just what makes it easy. Wang Lin—he's the tailor—is making us some Skibby uniforms. We take the monkeys out of action, and no time lost changing clothes. When Takahashi inspects, he won't know the difference until it is too late. Neither will the orderly."

"But the governor! Man to man, you owe me that much, he's going to sure death unless someone is there to go to bat for him! Can't you postpone that Takahashi business?"

"No soap. That's the prod that's going to make Yasuda so wild he'll have to throw in everything he's got to settle Ryan."

Kane stood up. He walked without the gold-headed stick. Sweat dotted his forehead. Hong Tien said, "You couldn't get to Ryan in time. Forget it."

"I'm whipped." And when he sat down, he looked it. Then, "Say—why'd that Naru make you take off a shoe?"

Hong Tien grinned. "To see if I was really Jap. Well, I got to move. Buck up, chum, you did your best, and that's that."

KANE, trying to think it out, realized that he had bungled everything. Fortunately, he had not put Ryan's command in danger, for, having made allowance for slips and leaks, the *datu* would be watching every angle. There was nothing to do but get out and let the Chinese handle things in Cotabato, since he could not help them and neither could he keep up with them in their swift retreat.

Don Artemisio had a fairly fast power-boat. Kane knew where to find the ignition key, which was in the boathouse. Although the sound of the engine would attract the attention of nearby sentries, it would be easy to run the gauntlet, as their fire would be erratic at night.

Sunset at six; darkness, thirty minutes later; curfew, nine P.M. The best move was to get a *caromata* at dusk, drive to the river front, and stop at the Filipino tailor's shop to be measured for some shirts. After half an hour of stalling, send the tailor to the waiting *caromata* on some pretext, and then dive for the rear entrance and hobble down the alley to the boat.

Kane's uncertainty was gone. A thing done has an end. Get out, get a new assignment, do it right.

Zero hour. He picked up the stick and headed down the hall to the *sala*. Though he tried not to think of the misery ahead, his bullet-pierced foot told him that regardless of the execution which Hong Tien planned, he, Kane, wounded in defense of the governor, could not be an object of suspicion. Nevertheless, something shouted at him, drove him, urged him to get out while he still could. That he was unable to trace his hunch right to its source did not lessen its ever-increasing impact. "To hell with your foot, let it kill you if it has to, but get out, get out, get out!"

Then Kane tightened up with a jerk. He must not leave, for the disturbance following his departure would handicap Hong Tien. Somewhere between Parang and Cotabato, the Chinese avengers would be lurking, perhaps out of contact with everything but their mission. Thus they could be caught flat-footed, working on the assumption that their quarry would not have been made suspicious by a missionary's inexplicable flight.

He had to wait. Since he had robbed the Society of Heaven and Earth of one victim, he owed them their chance at Captain Takahashi.

That night, after dinner, one of the servants came in and said to Kane, "*Señor*, all the things you bought for the Americanos at Parang, I saw that they got it."

"Thank you, José."

The *muchacho* fidgeted, glanced about him. "I paid the *chingados* five pesos to let me see with my own eyes that all, every bit went to the Americanos, after the captain inspected the baskets."

Kane dug up some banknotes to reimburse him and added a peso for good will.

"Thank you, *señor*. Now this note, from a prisoner, Craw-ford. Very important, he says. By the Grace of God and the Holy Saints, I rode back in a Japanese truck, letting my wife drive home with the cart. I beg of you, do not ever say I did this."

Kane read, *Sky Pilot—two blew their tops, they're in hospital now, they been talking to themselves a couple days already you're on the spot get out quick.*

Hasty scrawl, no punctuation, no signature; yet it beat any fireside chat for dynamic eloquence. Kane could almost hear delirious internees babbling their heads off. He could see a Jap hospital orderly either understanding a little English or hurrying to call Mr. Naru to listen in and find out whether madmen had "dangerous thoughts." Ironically, Colonel Yasuda's coddling, designed to lure other guerrillas into surrender, would pay him an extra dividend.

Kane's first thought was to let Hong Tien know that at almost any moment there might be an all-around tightening up of Japanese vigilance.

"Call me a *caromata*. And is there a bicycle? Can you ride one?"

"*Sí, señor.*"

"One of the Americanos needs medicine, badly. Will you ride back to Parang with it if I can find it in some *tienda?*"

Patent medicines, canned goods, notions, groceries: no telling what you might or might

not find in one of those two-by-four shops.

"I go at once, *señor*. I'll get a driver, *espera poco!*"

THE door slammed. While José had knowingly violated the law in smuggling a note from the stockade, he might have considered this a minor sin; he might still be as much a collaborationist as his master. Therefore Kane had cooked up a yarn which would cover his actual purpose of getting in touch with Ch'an Luk or Hong Tien.

He was alone in the big room. He had eaten alone. He did not know whether Doña Pilar was at home or visiting others of the provincial official set. Kane struck a match, and watched the damning bit of paper flame up in an ashtray. He pulverized the charred bits and then, but for his foot, he would have paced the floor.

When he heard footsteps on the veranda, he thought that José had returned to tell him that a *cochero* was waiting; but the servant re-entered with visitors. And when Kane saw them, he was glad that he had burned the note. Likewise, whether José had doublecrossed him or whether the lid had blown off in Parang, things looked bad.

The first to enter was Captain Takahashi; then came Romero, a constabulary lieutenant. Two constables, following as far as the threshold, waited on the veranda.

The Jap grinned and bowed. Romero said, "*Señor*, I must ask you to come with me to headquarters."

"Is it necessary, *Señor Teniente*? I have already exerted myself more than I should. My wounds, you understand."

It was plain from Romero's face that he did not like his job. "I regret, but it is necessary."

"I fear that you are taking advantage of the governor's absence," Kane countered. "If you must question me about last night's outrage, it surely can be done here."

The lieutenant's face tightened. "Let me be frank with you. There is some doubts about your identity, *señor*. My orders come from military headquarters at Parang, although the civil authorities are to handle this case."

The Japs were running true to form. As a matter of propaganda, to convince the Filipino that his independence was the real article, the constabulary was going to handle the case. This would give collaborating officials more face and convince doubting *taos* that the puppet government was real. The military gangsters missed no chance to make their tricks seem legal.

"Isn't it rather late to be doubting my identity? Who and what am I supposed to be?"

"We have reason to believe that you are Kane, Datu Ryan's lieutenant, and that the actual Amos Teale is a prisoner. If we are mistaken, we shall be in the embarrassing position of having affronted the governor's guest, the man to whom the governor owes his life. But I am compelled to risk that."

While Romero's regrets rang true, he would nevertheless use whatever force was needed. Colonel Yasuda's watchdog stood by to see that there were no slips. Kane had no choice but to submit and try to explain why delirious internees believed that Ryan's righthand man had come to rescue them from their life of luxury.

He glanced at his watch. "Let me go to my room for a moment. There is some medicine which the doctor prescribed."

"With pleasure, *señor*."

Romero and Takahashi followed him down the hall. That they would take no chances with a man who walked with considerable difficulty was ominous.

Once in his room, he touched a match to the lamp and found the box of pills which the medico had given him. Takahashi exclaimed, caught his wrist. Kane let him snatch the box and said to Romero, "He thinks it's poison."

Not a Chinaman's chance of diving through the window and winning a race to the river. Escape was impossible, yet no more so than maintaining his false identity in the face of the evidence which the Japs must have. And being cornered by impossibilities, Kane gambled.

He picked up the lamp and stepped toward the dresser, which was quite near the window. Romero stood fast. Takahashi trailed along to be sure that Kane had no weapon planted among the toilet articles. This was clearly reflected in the mirror.

Kane gathered himself, twisted sharply and straight-armed the lamp, smacking it against Takahashi's forehead. The shade shattered but the bowl glanced, to break against the hardwood floor. Blood from his forehead trickled into his eyes. The Jap staggered, but groggy as he was, he retained enough control to grope for his pistol.

Nightmare in slow motion. Kane lunged clumsily for the window. Romero yelled, "Halt! I fire!"

An ear-lashing scream drowned his warning. "Put out that fire, you fool!" a woman's voice cried. "You're burning my house down!"

CHAPTER VIII

SAMSON—1943

IT was Doña Pilar who objected to arson and she pointed her argument with a household *bolo*, a heavy-bladed chopper used for beheading chickens, trimming nipa leaves for thatch, cutting bamboo, mincing meat. It was as versatile as an Eagle Scout's jackknife and, whether *tao's* woman or governor's lady, the Filipina's first move in a crisis is to grab her kitchen *bolo*.

The infuriated lady blocked Romero's line of fire. Her screamed protest blotted out his challenge. Straw matting, kerosene drenched, flared up and smoke billowed through the room.

Kane, almost at the window, slipped on the polished floor and landed asprawl.

By now, Takahashi had his pistol unlimbered. The Jap, however, was so intent on stopping the wounded fugitive that he was not aware of the danger behind him. Doña Pilar bounded at him and chopped at the nape of the neck. Takahashi lurched to his face.

"Put that gun away," the enraged lady cried, as Romero raced toward Kane.

"But, *señora*—have the goodness—" Romero stuttered. "I am arresting this man. He is a spy—*Zus-maria-y-'zef!* You have chopped the captain's head off!"

"Not quite, but wait!"

She took another slash, then straightened up and challenged, "Now, Señor Teniente Romero, you will arrest me?"

That was precisely what he had to do. The entire business was so crazy that Kane, stunned and fascinated, crouched there instead of making a dive for the window, as he could now have done, for Romero was paralyzed by the shock of seeing the first lady of Cotabato Province flick the dripping *bolo* and hearing her demand what he was going to make of it.

"*Señora*—this is bad—Holy Saints—"

"You goggle-eyed fool, you're worried about your job, is it not so? As for me, I have only lost my son! Get me and this Americano out of here, or take me to face a firing squad. Or shoot us as we escape! Come, Señor Kane, quick, quick, smash that window, get out. I'll help you."

Romero took a deep breath. He spat on the prostrate Jap, bowed and said, "*Señora*, I am at your service. I go with you both! But the fire—your house—"

"Satan take the house!"

"This way!" Romero said. "By the front. My men, they are for me."

A constabulary car was out in front. Romero had not overestimated his men. Without a word or question, they piled in as the lieutenant and Doña Pilar gave Kane a boost to the back seat. Romero commanded, "Libungan! *Siggi, hombre!*"

The sentry at the bridge, instead of challenging, presented arms. He recognized the vehicle and he knew that Captain Takahashi had come into Cotabato a few minutes previous. Why question his hasty return to Parang?

As they raced toward the fork whose right branch led to Libungan, Kane looked back and saw the flames which rose from Constabulary Hill. Cotabato must already be in an uproar.

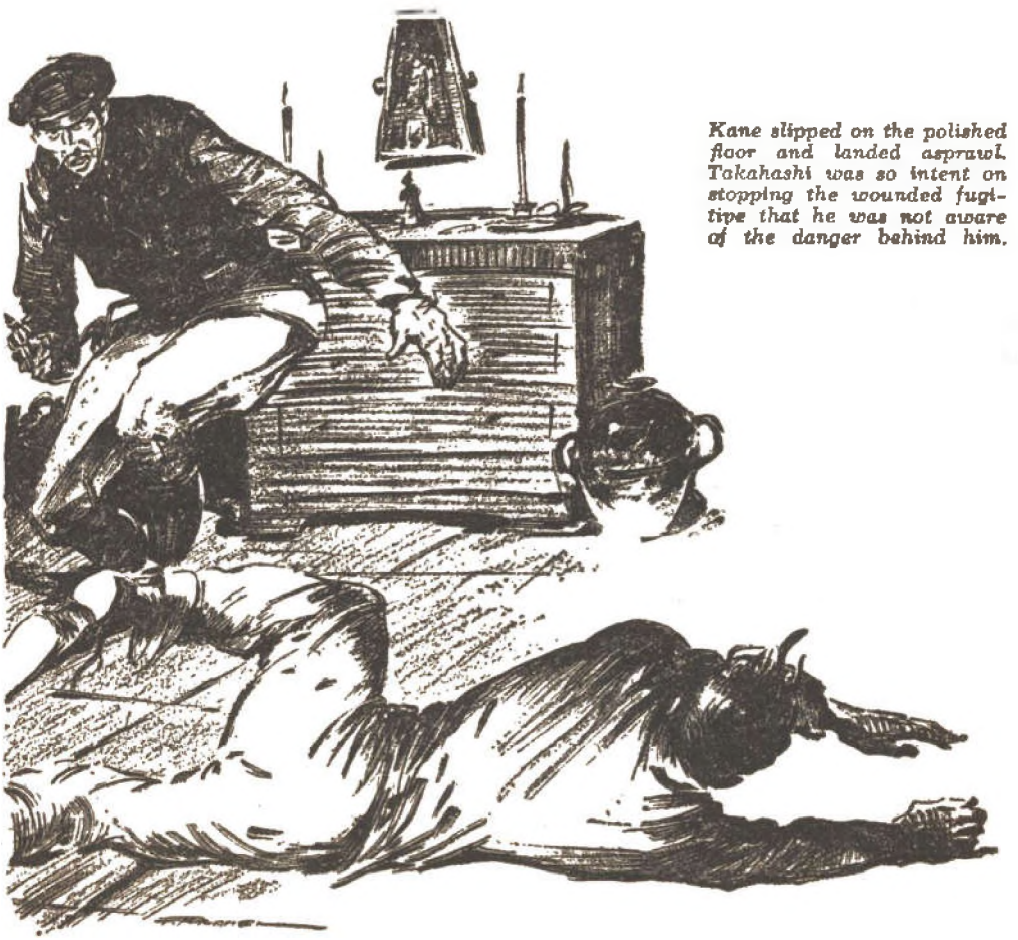
"Fortunate fire. It will be some time," Doña Pilar said, "before they find out what really did happen."

"As for me," Kane retorted, "I still do not know what has happened. *Señora*, you called me by a strange name."

Doña Pilar's laugh was reckless, almost hysterical. "José showed me the note before he gave it to you. I do not read much English, but I understand 'on the spot,' from the cinema, you comprehend. This made me worry. So I was watching and listening. When they came to arrest you, what could I do except get the *bolo*? We are all outlaws now."

"But your husband, *señora*?"

"I did it for him, most of all. He went to lead



Kane slipped on the polished floor and landed asprawl. Takahashi was so intent on stopping the wounded fugitive that he was not aware of the danger behind him.

the soldiers into ambush on the road to nowhere. They would trust him because our son died fighting Datu Ryan's guerrillas."

"You mean, Don Artemisio knew all the time that I was not a missionary?"

"No, but he saw how your knowledge of Datu Ryan's camp could help him in his revenge, not against guerrillas, but against those who made Filipinos become outlaws. You understand now?"

HE nodded. "I'm as dumb as the Japs. I never figured you'd look at it that way. But do you realize that Don Artemisio is in danger unless I can reach Datu Ryan's camp in time?"

"He knew that and it makes no difference. Once his own people began shooting at him, he knew that he had been wrong from the start, governing for the Japs. He meant well, he believed that he could help his people, protect them from military law, but you saw—everything. What broke his heart was when he had to accept the Second Order of the Sacred Treasure."

Then Romero said, "Señor Kane, honesty makes me tell you that I came to arrest you as a spy. It was my duty to preserve law and order. As an officer of constabulary, I had no choice."

"But arresting Señora Ortega, that was too much?"

"That is right. The New Order, it is only words. Independence, that also is only a word. An oath, finally, is only words—and as between words and our governor's family, is it not simple? You soldiers took oath to obey General Wainwright, that *muy valiente!* But when he ordered you to surrender, you disobeyed. Was that dishonorable?"

Despite the pitching and bouncing of the car as it raced crazily up the highway, Kane relaxed, and said in a voice half cracked, half choked, "Romero, I'm damn happy your conscience isn't bothering you! Tell me, did the colonel send troops to follow Don Artemisio?"

Romero's fingers closed warningly on Kane's arm. Then came the answer, loud and deliberate. "He sent many. He sent word to Dansalan to attack the guerrillas from the rear. But who can trap Datu Ryan?"

Romero was holding out on Doña Pilar's account; of that, Kane was certain. But even after they rolled the car into a swamp near Libungan and headed upstream in a small *prahu*, there was no questioning the constabulary officer. He froze and became evasive, and so did his men.

When rapids made canoe travel impossible, knotty-legged Moro porters carried Kane. Others, plying their blades, went ahead, slashing and hacking lianas which blocked the way. Doña Pilar, her ragged dress pieced out with garments given her by Moro women, hurried along. The frenzied pace worried Kane. Whatever was to have happened must already have happened, for Colonel Yasuda's troops, whether leaving Parang afoot or in trucks, would already have reached their goal.

Kane kept telling himself, "Ryan'll hold the quisling for a formal trial. He's waiting for me to testify, he's waiting for Hong Tien to report."

And so he argued with himself to keep from going mad with impatience.

Then, shortly after outcroppings of lava indicated that the fugitives were near the shoulder of the plateau, Kane heard the far-off whack and pop of musketry. Machine guns came into play. Mortar shells added their rumble.

"To hell with making camp! Cut me loose!" he yelled.

Red rays were slanting across the trail. Less than half an hour of daylight remained. And as the wind shifted, the fugitives knew that battle was nearer than they had realized; nearer, and

on a larger scale than any jungle skirmish in which Kane had ever taken part.

They released him from the litter and gave him a bamboo staff. The constabulary checked their pistols. Doña Pilar hefted the *bolo* she had brought all the way from her onetime home.

"Get going, I can keep up!"

Though Kane's legs were wobbly, his wounded foot was no longer the serious handicap it had been. The growing roar of battle was an anaesthetic. He took long, lurching strides. Doña Pilar gave him a hand and fairly boosted him along, helping him up whenever he fell.

They plunged on through the murky dusk, guided by Moros who moved by instinct, and they raced through thickening gloom. *Lantakas* coughed, home-made grenades boomed. The air was a nitrous reek. It was heavy with the smoke of burning oil and gasoline. Finally, the crackle of musketry tapered off and the mortars ceased firing. The Moro yell rang clear and high. Fire and steel were at work.

IT was all over when Kane and his companions stumbled to the rim of the red hell in which howling guerillas plied their blades by the glare of blazing reconnaissance cars. The Jap column had taken the blind branch of the road to nowhere, and at the end of the ten-kilometer pocket, Ryan had hit them with everything he had. Great blocks of lava, rolled from the rim of the ravine; bales of cogon grass, oil soaked and set afire; the blasts of *lantakas* and bamboo cannon, loaded with chunks of lava and bits of scrap iron; and all this punctuated by rifles and the mortars salvaged from the skirmish at Kabakan.

The enemy had barged into an impassable dead end, instead of emerging on the open plateau they had expected; and total surprise had finished them.

All this Kane learned when, after scrambling down the steep wall, he found Datu Ryan, the Bishop, Haji Maulana and Ximenes supervising the salvage.

"Where's the governor? Where's the truce party?"

"There wasn't any."

"You didn't see my husband, General Ryan?" Doña Pilar inquired softly.

There were explanations. Ryan's face changed as he listened.

"God Almighty!" He turned to his lieutenants. "Find him, look for him!" Then, to Doña Pilar, "There was no truce, no attempt to parley. Whatever happened to him—"

"Whatever happened, *Señor General*," that grim little woman cut in, "was what he expected. Do you think it was an accident which led these soldiers into this trap? Do you think any of your men would have had a chance to get at Don Artemisio?"

They finally found the governor. He was wearing the uniform of a Japanese officer and the Second Order of the Sacred Treasure. He had a holstered pistol. It was not loaded and it had not been fired. A shot in the back of the head had finished him.

"They knew, at the last minute," the widow said, "that he had trapped them. Those *cabrones*, they knew what vengeance my husband had taken for the death of our son!"

Then the constabulary lieutenant came up and said, "She knows, so I can tell you. They did not let Don Artemisio go ahead with a flag of truce. Whether they suspected him or thought that Señor Kane had given him dangerous information, no one can know, but when I was in Parang, to act with Captain Takahashi, I heard how Don Artemisio had offered to wear Japanese uniform, maybe to prove sincerity, maybe to show how heartily he loved the New Order."

(Continued on page 145)

A LESSON IN KNOTS

By WALTER HAVIGHURST

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES DYE

Two swift wires laced up across the bomber's path. The pilot skirted one but not the other. "It was your wire, son," said Chips.

CAPTAIN McBain kept both hands on the rails as he climbed the ladder. He stood for a minute on the bridge before going into the wheelhouse. He didn't see the wide, gray Nova Scotian harbor with the ships all swung halfway around by the tide; he was feeling that stab in his side, high up, and he was panting softly. When he opened the door the pain thrust deeper. In the chartroom the mate was bent over the table.

"Mr. Satterfield— Ask the engineer for steam on the windlass—We'll weigh—"

The mate reached him before he fell. For a minute he stared down at the Old Man's face, the glazing eyes, the jutting frosty brows, the slack mouth panting. He had to drag him a step to reach the phone on the bulkhead.

"Mr. Corning, come up to the wheelhouse. Right away."

Together they carried him down the ladder and along the main deck and again down the steep accommodation to the bobbing boat. While the motor churned away, Mr. Corning, second mate, watched from the ship's rail. The dour little third mate joined him there.

"Some guys have all the luck," Mr. Corning said in his mild, patient voice.

Mr. Berry was watching the launch cross the harbor. "He's an old man and he's got a bad heart. He's got a right to be ashore."

"I don't mean him. I mean Tom Satterfield. He'll be the Old Man now—at his age! The convoy's got sailing orders and there's not a licensed man ashore on the whole coast. So it'll be Captain Satterfield when he gets back."

"He can have it," Mr. Berry said enthusiastically.

"Only it's too bad he won't have time to get the new stripe on his sleeve. He'd like that." There was no malice in the second mate's voice. He was a dozen years older than Tom Satterfield, but he was not an ambitious man. In the course of three strenuous, wartime voyages he had observed the younger man who had come to the *Itasca* a rank ahead of him. A bit remote, inclined to be formal, but a sound and thorough seaman. He got along aboard ship, and what was more important he impressed men ashore, could talk their language, too. He had good reason to expect to command the big liners some day. "But he'll like it anyway," Mr. Corning added. "Living on the topside, giving the orders."

The third mate frowned across the harbor. "Tough initiation for a captain—what we've got to get through. I wouldn't want to begin with torpedoes coming all directions."

Mr. Corning smiled thinly. "Well, Bill, we're not sunk yet."

Mr. Berry didn't smile. "I knew a captain that had lost his first command. Sailed with him in the *Portland Rose*—he was back to mate in her. They said he lost his head, or his nerve, or something. Guess he wasn't ready for the job he had to do."

"Not his fault," Mr. Corning said. "Times like these."

"It was his ship, though. His cabin was alongside mine, in the *Rose*. I heard him at night. Every night."

Mr. Corning flipped his cigarette over the rail. "Well, Tom don't look like a sleep-talker."

"We'll find out," Mr. Berry said.

In an hour the launch came back. There was a new briskness in the mate's step and a new note in his voice as he told the steward to move his gear into the captain's quarters.

Mr. Corning stalked down the companionway to the third mate's cabin. "Well," he said, "that's the way it happened. He's moving up, and it's watch and watch for us."

Mr. Berry didn't change expression. "There's no sleep on this run anyway."

THEY got their orders and moved into line, following a big two-stacker out through the mine channel at the harbor entrance. Then they took their place at the extreme corner of the formation, the last of the outboard line of ships, in the starboard column. From that station the whole convoy was in a single, quarter-circle view—sixty-five ships facing the long pull toward the shores of Europe.

On the flank of the convoy the destroyers charged up and down like sheep dogs. From her position, front and center, the flagship broke out a signal hoist. Captain Satterfield strode in from the bridge wing, a wind-whipped color in his handsome, youthful face.

"On the way," he said with satisfaction.

The bell jangled as he pulled the telegraph lever to Full Speed Ahead. When he was on the wing again the rhythm had picked up and the wake was whitening astern. He was a confident young captain, under way with his first command.

In the wheelhouse Mr. Berry muttered, "He feels like the commodore."

Mr. Corning nodded. "One thing," he said, "we won't have somebody crowding us astern."

"Not if they keep formation," Mr. Berry said, without assurance.

From the bridge wing Captain Satterfield looked down on the foredeck where the planes were nested over the hatches and the big boxed trucks were lashed along the rails. At the foremast a couple of sailors were unreaving cargo gear, trussing up the heavy blocks and coiling down the lines. Then the captain's eyes narrowed. At the break of the deck a boy with long wrists dangling out of a dungaree jacket was making a snarl of the gear on the kingposts.

The wheelhouse door opened and old Chips slouched out with his sounding line coiled and the blue chalk-dust on his fingers.

"Chips"—the captain pointed—"get that boy off the gear down there before he makes a rat's nest of it."

As the carpenter leaned over the rail the lines twinkled around his unfaded blue eyes. "Lad from the farm, sir. From Iowa. The boys in the foc'sle call him 'Pitchfork.' He's got cow-dung on his shoes." There was something incredulous and delighted in his voice. "Cow-dung," he repeated.

Captain Satterfield remembered that Chips had two "Torpedoed" ribbons from the War Shipping Administration stuffed in a jacket pocket in his locker. It was a long time since he had been out of sight or smell of salt water.

"Well—teach him a little rope work. We can't have this ship full of barnyard knots."

"Aye, Captain."

When Captain Satterfield looked over, the ordinary seaman was staring up at him from the tangle of cargo gear. He was a reedy youth with a shock of sandy hair pushing out of his snug jersey cap. He had clear gray eyes, a pink and beardless face, and a mouth that could curl up in a quick, good-natured grin. But he wasn't grinning now. As he stared up at the bridge, a fall rope dangling in his hands, his face was guilty—guilty of youth and confusion, bewilderment and inexperience.

When he went back into the wheelhouse, Captain Satterfield had lost his briskness. He was troubled in an unreasoning and unreasonable way. He tried to dismiss it, but long after the gear was all in order and the men were gone from the foredeck, he continued to see the youthful, reedy figure standing in confusion amid the cargo bound for the battle-lines of Europe.

Green hands in the foc'sle, he thought sharply, *and a man short on the bridge, and the ship going where we've got to go.* The big steady convoy spread over a whole quarter of the sea with the escort vessels fanned out in a bristling arc of cover. And still there was that gnawing in his mind.

The routine made the days alike: watch and watch, the engines pounding out their rhythm, the ship creaking as she rolled; spells of fog and squalls of snow, then the gray waters widening again and the convoy closing up its ragged ranks and plodding on. For variety there were the practice turns, the whole formation swinging forty-five degrees and then swinging back on course again; and another sound to go with the engines' throbbing was the angry stutter of practice fire from the Browning fifties mounted topside on the wireless shack and on the poop. On the monkey island above the wheelhouse, P.A.C. rocket guns had been installed last trip, in Glasgow. The carpenter was the only man aboard who believed in them—on the sinking *Cumberland* he had seen a roaring Heinkel III wrenched out of its swooping dive by that suspended cable and spun like a mangled bird into the sea. Now the P.A.C.'s on the topside were his babies, and he chose a mate to man them with him.

He chose the boy from Iowa. They sent up a few wires, watched them parachute down to the sea and laboriously hauled them in, rewinding them around the projectile.

"Like reeling up a wire fence," the ordinary seaman said. "We've got some electric fence around our pasture. We move it every year."

Chips' blue eyes went distant over the water. "I heard about that, and I couldn't hardly believe it. I'd like to see that some day." He bent over the gun barrel and the release mechanism. "Now look here, son, how we aim it. Always ahead of the target. Right in his path."

THEY were seven days out, nearing the crucial zone, when the thick fog came down. That was good and it was bad. It brought a smother of protection and it brought an endless nagging worry. They steered blindly, at half speed, listening to the groan of the whistles, trying to keep their place. When a blurred shape rose up they spun the wheel and cried down to the engineer to slack his engines. When the whistles faded, they tentatively put the wheel over and called for a few more revolutions.

In the night, with the blackness pressed around them, the whistles were disembodied, indeterminate in that swirl of vapor that played tricks with sound. Captain Satterfield stood blindly on the bridge wing, listening till he heard the pulse-beat in his ears. The whistles swelled, faded, seemed to grow remote. Then a great blur of sound roared up.

"Right wheel!" he called. "Spin it!"

He went into the dark wheelhouse, his oilskins slowly dripping. He looked over the wheelsman's shoulder at the hooded compass with only a narrow slit showing the soft light of the turning card. He kept her wide off for a full minute and then his signal blew. They didn't hear the convoy after that.

When the watch changed at midnight, Mr. Corning gave the course to Mr. Berry. "We've lost the convoy," he added. "Maybe you can pick them up."

Mr. Berry shrugged his narrow shoulders and initialed the log. He didn't pick them up, and Mr. Corning returning for the morning watch didn't pick them up. When gray daylight came the fog was around them like a hueless curtain. Captain Satterfield went down for a bite of breakfast and then turned in for an hour, but he could not sleep. He went up to the bridge, a silent, worried man with an edge in his voice and a line gathering between his eyes. All morning they plodded on. Over the decks the men moved, misshapen in their life-jackets. The sea slurred and muttered along the hull and surged up sluggishly at the bow. The wheelsman kept his spokes turning. She didn't steer too well with only half speed on her.

After noon the fog thinned. Captain Satterfield rang his engines up and then he was back on the bridge wing with his glasses. The widening water lay around him, a patched and heaving sea. He searched it—all around the circle—ahead and astern and even on the impossible starboard beam. The sea was empty. The *Itasca* stood up alone in all that empty circle, a black drift pouring from her funnel.

He said to the mate, "Tell the engineer to trim his fires. They can see that smoke in Berlin."

It was the lookout in the crow's nest who first saw the lifeboat drifting. In a heaving sea, itself the color of the leaden waves, it didn't show till they were fairly near. Mr. Berry took the phone when the buzzer sounded. He turned to Captain Satterfield. "Lookout reports something in the water ahead, sir. Says it looks like a boat, or a raft."

The captain found it with his glasses. "A lifeboat," he said. "Some men in it."

The captain met the mate's eyes and looked away. "Might be a Nazi trick," he said uncertainly. "They're known to do it—hide a periscope behind a decoy."

Mr. Berry stared out the windows. "They wouldn't need to trick us. Just let one fly."

It wasn't a trick. It was a remnant of disaster. From the bridge wing Captain Satterfield could see plainly as they drew above it—the bullet-splintered gunwale, the gray water washing over a tangle of feet on the floor boards, the oil-soaked bodies huddled across the thwarts.

On the main deck the crew was staring from the rail.

"Poor beggars," someone said.

"They—they don't move!" It was a boy's voice, a thin, sharp, lifted voice, struggling with realization. It brought to Captain Satterfield a swift fear. His mind went back to the Belgian freighter that had come into Boston with half her crew gone and a lifeboat missing—and not a bullet hole or the mark of battle on the ship. It was panic which had been the cause of that.

"They must be—"

"Silence!" The captain's voice sounded shrill in his own ears. The boy looked up with a startled, burning face.

Then Captain Satterfield saw the tall, blue-coated man among them. "Mr. Corning, haven't you got work for the men in this ship?"

The mate gave him a brief, uncomprehending look. He turned to the men. But he didn't need to speak.

Old Chips slouched across the deck. "Come along, son," he said. "I need a hand with that canvas."

The men scattered, moving awkwardly in the bulk of their life-jackets.

When the captain turned around, Mr. Berry was standing in the wheelhouse door. "Shall I ring the engines down, sir?"

"What for?"

"Go alongside—pick them up."

"They're dead," Captain Satterfield said in a toneless voice.

"Might be—"

"Take the glasses, Mister."

That satisfied him. "Bullet holes," he said. "Maybe they didn't freeze to death. Maybe it came quicker."

"Yes," the captain said.

Mr. Berry continued to stare down. "Might have been a pigboat shelled them after their ship was gone. Might have been a bomber dropped down to finish them off."

"All right, Mister!"

When Captain Satterfield went down to his office the line was drawn deeper between his eyes. It wasn't his first voyage through infested waters, yet he felt inexperienced, untried, uncertain. He leaned over the desk and his eye fell on the ship's register with his name, Thomas Satterfield, inked in above the canceled typing. Now he stared at it in a new realization: *He had always had someone to lean on.*

WHILE he sat there with the ache of fatigue and the strain of sleeplessness in him, he pictured Captain McBain, a tired, lined man, his voice quiet, giving the orders while the bombers thundered over. Before that, it had been other captains in other ships. And ashore—his eyes found the gold-framed picture on the desk shelf—Ruth, with grinning Tommy and curly-headed Ann at her side. It was Ruth who had carried the load when little Ann lay so terrifyingly ill, babbling in her fever. It was Ruth who had bathed the flushed, tormented face, keeping her voice and her hands steady, making the child hold on; and then turning with a fierceness in her eyes to say, "We'll pull her through, Tom. We have to!"

It was Ruth again when they had carried Tommy in from the street where the tire-marks were seared across the asphalt. She had said steadily, "Yes, we'll have the operation."

Standing there in his uniform, just back from the long voyage to Capetown, he had looked fearfully at her. "Do we dare, Ruth?"

Her eyes met his. "Yes. We dare." . . . Always he had had someone.

He dipped his pipe into a can of tobacco on the desk and tamped it slowly. The line deepened between his eyes.

It was hot in that small office with the double radiator that had been installed for Captain McBain. He got up and opened the porthole. Then he saw the gangling ordinary seaman overhauling equipment in the swung-out lifeboat. Something in him tightened. A farm boy checking the liquid compass and the water-breaker. Couldn't the mate find a seaman even for a job like that? He was reaching for the phone when a voice sounded.

"What's the trouble, lad? You're looking green around the gills."

"Chips—there were only four men in that boat. Where were the rest of them?"

"They prob'ly didn't make it, son."

"Does a ship—go down—that fast?"

"Well, maybe she was carrying explosives. They wouldn't have much chance, see?"

"Like—" Captain Satterfield could picture the boy's eyes going to the cargo decks. "Like—"

"Hold on," the carpenter said. "Don't tie a calf knot in that painter. You might lose it. It might not hold fast when the time came. And it might grab too tight, it might jam. Look here, now, here's the knot. Hold onto the rope with both hands, up, like this. Lay the end over the bight, above the left hand. Then turn your wrist and you've made a gooseneck. See? Now carry the end back around the standing part and down through the gooseneck. There it is. A bowline. It won't jam, it won't grab. It takes the strain. The harder the pressure the surer it holds, see? It's a knot a man can learn from—it won't ever let go. Now let's see you cast one."

In the captain's office, with a line creased across his forehead and a cold pipe in his teeth, Tom Satterfield stared down at his hands. He was tying imaginary bowlines in the air.

All day under a low sky they steamed over an empty, somber ocean. They worked northward and then east again. In a sudden fit of indecision, Captain Satterfield searched the horizon to the south. His voice was thin and in his pockets he felt his fingers working. Hour by hour that tension was spreading through the ship. They all knew what could happen to a straggler, a ship lost from convoy, an unprotected target. Toward evening the wind freshened and there was the cushioned thud of seas against the hull. He stared off again, his eyes sweeping futilely over the restless ridges, the endless, leaden motion.

It was relief to have night fall. Then there was nothing to stare at, no waste of slate-hued sea to search for a thin fin breaking the water in a hair of white. But the tension didn't go. Nerves were tight as guy wires on the bridge, in the mess rooms, in the black companionways where men groped as if lost.

The sky began to clear during the middle watch and vague moonlight shone through a haze of cloud. A few stars hung in scattered gulfs of sky. Then the moon broke through a rack of cloud. Egg-shaped and silver, a little past the full, it rained a cold light, etching the ship in shadows, picking out every strand of rigging, every outline of the superstructure.

Captain Satterfield stepped into the wheelhouse. "Post a double lookout, Mr. Corning."

The night dragged on. At eight bells the watch changed—the muttered course, the men shouldering past each other in the darkness. The captain pictured them silent in their bunkrooms, avoiding each other's eyes—as he avoided the mate's eyes when clear daylight finally rimmed the empty horizon.

Aft, a sleepless sailor was pacing the poop; he wore one lifebelt strapped around him and carried another in his hands. Soon the second cook climbed the ladder with a smoking pot of coffee. They poured it silently and drained the cups. Then Mr. Berry went out to the bridge wing where the lookouts stood in their padded coats, their faces bleak with waiting and cold.

"Coffee inside," he said.

In the wheelhouse the gangling boy from Iowa pulled off his mittens and held the thick mug in his hands. A sound came, a single distant booming that froze every movement.

"Gunfire," Mr. Corning muttered.

"Or bombing," the captain said. "They've found the convoy."

They listened, their eyes held northward over the empty sea. In the silence the engines throbbed like a man's heart beating. Again the thunder boomed. With a crash the mug went to pieces at the boy's feet. A brown swill of coffee ran across the deck.

The crash jerked Captain Satterfield around as though a hand had swung him. "Get outside!" he said.

When they were alone he saw the mate staring at him. The thunder rolled again.

"Alter course, sir?"

Captain Satterfield held the glasses to his eyes. He was a long time looking. At last his hands came down.

"Continue course, Mr. Corning."

"Yes, sir."

A FLUSH of sunrise ran over the eastern sea rim and paled along the north. Against that light a pillar of smoke grew darkly. Again came the deep booming, and the confused volley of deck pieces. Two more smoke columns grew up in the amber light.

It didn't last long. While they strained their eyes on the horizon the firing ceased and there was only a distant droning in the sky. Through his glasses Captain Satterfield caught the bombers flying straight into the sunrise.

"Attack's over," he said. "They're flying off."

They followed that faint diminishing drone. While they listened it took a new shape, another volume. As the lookout called, they saw the single bomber, high up and distant, winging head on toward the *Itasca*.

"General Alarm, sir?" Mr. Corning asked. He was hammering the bell before the captain had answered.

For a moment the clangor drowned all other sound. Then, while the men tumbled out of the companionways and hurried to their stations, the sky was filled with a throbbing roar. He was fast, that Fritzie, and he was certain. He was swooping down in a swift, firm arc.

The bow crew let go a burst from the Browning guns. The bomber hurled on, unswerving. Out of its belly came the missile. It dropped swiftly. A tower of foam leaped up from the sea. The ship lurched and staggered. A cloud of watery dust rained down. Past them swept the roar of motors and the racket of machine guns. The bullets stitched the wheelhouse windows and thudded through the bulkheads.

The din faded quickly. With a numb surprise Captain Satterfield saw a red stain spreading down his shoulder.

"He's coming back," Mr. Corning said in his patient voice. "He'll try again."

The bomber was small now, wheeling across the sky. He made a full wide circle. He took his time. He got the bright sunrise behind him. Then his silhouette narrowed and focused.

Through the shattered wheelhouse glass a voice came from the monkey island.

"What was it, son, you called those horses?"

"Why"—the boy's voice was thin as glass—"we've got two teams. The young team are Duke and Dolly. They're chestnuts."

"How 'bout the others?"

"Rock and Gray. They're getting old now. But they can still pull a grain wagon up that steep hill into Bluffton. Sometimes we match up Gray and Dolly. She's nervous and old Gray calms her down. They work good together."

"Sure they do. Now look, son, here he comes. He's straightening out. We got to be just right this time. Not too anxious. Not too soon. And not too late either."

In the wheelhouse Mr. Corning saw the blood on the captain's sleeve. "Your arm, sir—"

Captain Satterfield did not hear him. His eyes were fixed on the bomber swooping down.

"Left wheel," he said quietly. "Check her."

The bomber swerved to keep the ship in line.

"Right wheel," he said. "Steady."

The bomber tilted in the sunlight.

Captain Satterfield's eyes were narrow but his voice was suddenly quick and quiet. "Left wheel!" he said. "Hard over!"

"Hard over!" the wheelsman repeated, his hands already thumping on the spokes.

"Mr. Corning," the captain called.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell the men to watch their gunsights. We'll swing to port."

Up on the monkey island Chips was grunting, "Remember, just keep ahead of him."

The boy was crouched beside his gun mount while the bomber thundered down. The wings flickered with spurting fire.

"Let go, son."

"Let go," the boy repeated.

Two swift lines of wire laced up across the bomber's path. The pilot banked steeply. He skirted one but not the other. His port wing struck, and the plane spun halfway around with its motors roaring. The Browning guns threw bursts of bullets into the tilted underside.

"We got him, Chips! We got him!"

"It was your wire, son."

Their eyes were on the bomber lurching into the sea astern. So it was a surprise to see the destroyer flaring up in a wedge of foam. A signal hoist broke out on its halyards. "Well done."

Over the loud-hailer system a voice called, "Hello, *Itasca!* Your number, please."

From his place at the shattered windows, Captain Satterfield said, "Give them the number, Mr. Corning."

The mate raised the megaphone. "Fifty-seven!"

"Very good," the loud-hailer called. "Rejoin convoy."

"Left wheel," the captain ordered.

Mr. Corning came in from the wing. "That shoulder, sir. It needs looking at. I'll go down with you."

"Your watch," said the captain.

"You'll need help, sir."

"I'll call the steward."

When he was gone Mr. Corning looked down at the dark stain where the captain had been standing. Then he saw the cord hanging across the splintered bulkhead.

"Look here," he said, when Mr. Berry came in. "The Old Man's been doing rope work."

Mr. Berry stared at the red-stained cord. "Bowline," he said.

Pete squeezed off another burst at the Messerschmitt. Black smoke billowed from the enemy plane and large pieces of wing began to fly back past Pete's canopy.

WING MAN

By BURT SIMS

ILLUSTRATED BY HAMILTON GREENE

WITH his gloved left hand Pete Whitaker, Number Two man in "B" flight, slid the cockpit canopy heavily into place and tested the lock. He then settled into his Sutton harness and looked at the sister Thunderbolt, piloted by Tip Williams, to his left and slightly ahead of him. The little voice that always reported in about this time whispered, "Well, here we go again."

Almost before that squat, beautifully ugly plane on his left had started to roll, Pete sensed its intent, and his hand pushed his own throttle

knob forward as though it were controlled by Tip Williams himself. He felt the husky power swarming through his ship and the little jolt as he crossed the intersection of the runways. Tip's plane did not fall back nor draw ahead, and the two kicked the ground from beneath them and began their climbing turn to the left, holding their spacing like twin dragonflies pinned to a rod.

The planes which had taken off before them were wheeling in a wide orbit above the green of the field, sunlight dashing particles of glare from the canopies like drops of bright rain. Behind them more fat fighters leaped away from the earth's jealous grasp and joined the tightening circle which would bring the three squadrons into climbing formation.

Tip's plane cocked a wing up in a tight turn to take up position behind "A" flight, and Pete turned with him in that same twinned action of their take-off. It was the smooth, companionable flying of a duet that had sung the same song many times—flying together, eating together, drinking together, living together; element leader and wing man. Twins. "Yeah," said the little voice, "twins. Only one is the leader and one is the guy who tags along. One is destined to lead the way; the other destined only to follow."

THIS was nothing new, this little voice. Neither were the thoughts it seemed to speak—no newer than the unchanging pattern of leader and wing man, and Pete had been a wing man since he smiled down at the wings bright on his chest under a Florida sun. "Ol' Hot Rock," they had called each other. "Ol' Buzz Boy. The hottest goddamned fighter pilots in the business!"

The little voice, which had waited impatiently while Pete set his throttle for the climb, echoed, "Hot Rock? Fighter pilot? You mean chaperon, don't you, bub? You, my friend, are the guy who holds the ball while the other guy kicks the winning point.

"You an' Tip Williams have flown thirty-eight missions together. In thirty-eight missions Tip has knocked down two 190s and an ME 110 which was a clay pigeon but which made his third victory, anyway. You? You covered him, watching his tail with all of the intense interest of a guy waiting for a jackpot to fall out of a slot machine. Sure, you shot at a 109—once. But he was way out of range an' it was more to see what the hell it was like than to do any damage. You aren't supposed to chase 109s, bub; not unless Tip says so—an' then you go after 'em together. Tip, of course," the little voice added loftily, "goin' first."

They were to cross the enemy coast at 26,000 feet, and the group had settled into the steady, climbing pace which would put them there just before the gasoline in their auxiliary belly tanks was exhausted. The colonel's ship nosed around until it found a big hole in the broken, fair-weather cumulus that drooped in cottony patches at 5000 feet, and the group followed him through toward the beckoning, bright blue heaven. Pete's compass needle was resting on an east heading and his engine was beating a muffled but steady, confident thunder.

His eyes swung in an old pattern from instrument panel to Tip's plane to the sky and back through the route. The secret of flying in good formation, someone had told Pete once, is to have two heads, four hands, four feet—and a positive and complete knowledge at all times of what your element leader is about to do. Pete had asked just how in hell could one man do all of that. The cadet upperclassman had frowned at him sternly and snapped, "Improvise, Mister, improvise!"

"Speakin' of improvise," the little voice took over, "why don't you improvise a way to cut yourself a hunk of German? You gonna play follow-the-leader forever? Like I said, here we go again. Ol' Horse Whitaker, pounding down the stretch in second place, as usual. An' it ain't just in your flyin'; how about that Vicky, that choice deal in London? Huh? How about that?"

Pete shook his head savagely and the little voice retreated to a safe distance, but the recollection of Vicky became a very fresh one. They had taken a forty-eight-hour pass together, he and Tip. They always took them together. They were standing at a bar in London and listening to a phonograph which was playing a recording of *Stormy Weather* when Tip had nudged him and said, "Oh, brother! Do you see it, too, or am I dreaming?"

He looked around and he saw her, too, and she was the smoothest girl he had seen in England. Long, jet-black hair that framed her face perfectly, a nose just slightly turned up for pertness, wide, smiling lips, and a carefully-tailored suit that was not too severe. Tip said in his ear, "I wonder if that gravel agitator is with her?"

The gravel-agitator, who was a balding captain of Engineers, took her arm at that moment and led her to a small table and Tip said, "Pete, we got to operate. That is much too much."

The preliminary phase of operations was simple. The Engineers appreciated the Air Corps buying a round of drinks. The Engineers insisted that the Air Corps have a round, then, on the Engineers, and this is Vicky Shannon, gentlemen; I don't know your names.

The second phase was fast, too. Pete started to talk to her and she was quite receptive, but Tip touched his arm and gave him a nod, and they said, "Pardon us, please. Just for a moment."

In the washroom Tip detailed his plan, a very simple one. "It's an old gag, but it ought

to work. Phone call. You know. You hold him on the wire for a little while, talk fast, and then you decide he's the wrong captain. Leave the rest to me. An' I'll see you later."

The little voice broke in. "So what happened? You wanted to date her yourself, didn't you? But you're so used to playing second fiddle for this guy that you wouldn't know how to make up your own orchestration. It came out just like he planned it," the little voice prodded, "an' you spent most of the night, obligingly, trying to convince the captain that you were mad at Tip and couldn't understand how he possibly could have done such a dastardly deed. And you and the captain got drunk and Tip got Vicky and it never occurred to him that you might have wanted to fly her wing for a while. How long you gonna keep this up?"

THE clouds at the middle levels were strung across The Ditch like dirty snowdrifts. Infrequently a patch of slate would show through and that was the cold North Sea. The group continued its smooth, floating climb through sunlight that grew in intensity but dwindled in warmth. Like pillars of weird, prehistoric design, more clouds rose out of the middle levels to tower at 20,000 feet. The world below was shut out now, except for occasional crevasses. Through one of these Pete briefly saw a strip of earth, and as he did so the colonel's lazy voice cut through the hum of Pete's headset. "Big Dog here. One minute to go."

The flights spread wide, one from the other, so that the tanks would not strike trailing planes, and a minute later the colonel came in again. "Big Dog here. Let's drop them."

Pete pulled the release lever and watched the gray teardrop fall from the underside of Tip's plane, ahead and to the left. Almost opposite was Korky Fortier, leading "B" flight's second element of two, and beyond Fortier, staggered rearward, was his wingman, Jeeter Vincent.

Something held Pete's gaze on Jeeter Vincent's plane for a moment and now he realized that it was the belly tank which the plane still carried clutched to its chest, like a fat man clinging to a torpedo. At this moment Vincent's voice came through the headset with an overtone of irritation in its calmness. "Stovepipe Red Four to Stovepipe leader. My release lever is stuck. Leaving."

The plane's wings waggled a quick farewell and then the nose came up sharply, the plane rolled over on its back and Vincent pulled back on the stick to split-ess. As Pete gave him a fleeting glance he observed Bud Williamson, one of the spares who accompanied them for just such emergencies, jockeying into the Number Four spot, behind Korky Fortier. Jeeter Vincent was diving back toward England.

"Big Dog here," the colonel recited. "Battle formation. Spares go home."

"B" flight spread itself wider and Pete reached up with his left hand and flicked the gun switch to "On." As though that had been a signal, the little voice said, "That's almost a waste of energy, isn't it, chum? Tip Williams just did the same thing—but when that guy does it you can bet he means somethin'. You? You turn that gun switch on, but it's nothing but a habit. Tip's gonna do all the shootin'. All you have to do is sit back here an' just by being around you'll scare off any Jerries that might want to push a few pills at your flight leader. Guns? Chum, you'd do just as well with a butterfly net."

Pete growled to himself. The uncomfortable dislike for his fate was strong and although he knew he was magnifying its harshness, he could not shake the growing discontent. It would not be so bad if Tip would demonstrate now and then that he realized they were a team, that they were two hands, that the success of one depended upon the other. But Tip did not seem to give that aspect of their job a great deal of thought; he just wore his easy grin and an air of nonchalant confidence and appeared to take his wing man as a likable, Government Issue product, standard equipment for all element leaders.

"Stovepipe Red Three," came Korky Fortier's unhurried voice. "Bogey at nine o'clock, low."

Pete's head swiveled to his left and far away, almost undiscernible, he saw a plane in a shallow dive toward the middle level of clouds. Korky had called the plane a bogey because he couldn't identify it, at that great distance, as either friend or foe.

A few minutes later Pete's sky-searching gaze caught two specks flying in the opposite direction to "B" flight, slightly to the right and below. "Stovepipe Red Two," Pete said, pressing the transmitter button on the stick. "Two bogies at one o'clock, below."

"O.K., Pete," said Tip Williams. And then, a moment later, "They're P47s."

In a few minutes now they would be at the rendezvous point to relieve another fighter group which had escorted the bombers away from their target. The little voice began mimickingly, "Big Hero Whitaker. Thirty-eight, going on thirty-nine, missions. How many Germans did you shoot down, Daddy?" The little voice paused significantly. "You mean, not *any*? You only fired your guns once? Well—I know I don't know all about it, Daddy—but just what *did* you do in the war?"

Pete swore to himself bitterly.

"Network Green Leader," said someone in another squadron. "Big friends at ten o'clock, our level."

"O.K.," the colonel answered lazily. "Big Dog here. Orbit left and take up escort."

The three squadrons had been stepped down

toward the right, the direction from which the sun was shining, to enable the high squadron to cover the lower ones in the event that they were jumped from out of the sun. Now Pete's squadron began a climbing turn to the left and for a few moments he was very busy, jockeying his throttle and playing the turn to hold his spacing in the flight, trying to keep Tip in sight and searching the sky around him. It was a very tight turn, and to stick within recognizable distance of their flight leader Korky Fortier and Bud Williamson had to swing below and pass under Tip and Pete. For an instant this put the latter two strictly on their own. Pete's sixth sense, suddenly pinched alive, kept his squinting eyes aimed at the nebulous glare that was the sun. He spoke almost before he saw them, those two slashing streaks diving toward Tip's tail from his left. There was no time to use the radio call procedure. "*Tip*"—he spat the word hard so there could be no misunderstanding—"*break left!*"

THE left wing of Tip's plane dipped suddenly and the nose went down. Pete was hanging with him, as though the space between them were a lock, the pressure on his shoulders squashing him into the cockpit. Abruptly Tip's plane nosed up. Pete hauled back on the stick, crouching far forward to keep from blacking out, and at that moment he saw a Messerschmitt 109 flash down so close to him that he felt he could have reached out with his left hand and scraped the black cross from its dirty brown fuselage.

As though it were a shadow of the first, the second 109 shot over his head, boring toward Berlin. Automatically, Pete's cockpit reactions sent him following Tip into the fastest wingover he had ever experienced. The earth, somewhere far below the furrowed fields of clouds, swung back to its normal position and the two 109s were ahead of them now, diving.

Pete's job was to cover his leader, first; engage the enemy, second. He jammed full throttle forward to stay with Tip and they closed fast on the Messerschmitts. Steeper and steeper the angle became, and it suddenly was clear to Pete that the enemy planes were trying to outdive them, afraid that they might be outmaneuvered. They now were well within range, but the two 109s did not split up to divert the Thunderbolts behind them. They stayed together despite the terrific speed of the dive, and there was a German wing man, Pete thought distantly, who knew where he belonged.

Tip said calmly, "Take the one on the right, Pete."

Smoke began to stream back over Tip's wing and Pete knew that he was firing. He squinted through his gunsight, lined up on the 109 on the right, giving him a lead, and gently squeezed the gun button on the stick. There was a faraway rattle. He stopped firing for an instant, then squeezed off another burst, and this time a puff of white smoke blossomed from the left side of the enemy wing. Pete eased his plane a fraction to the right and saw the 109 growing steadily in his gunsight. He chopped back on his throttle to keep from overrunning his target and fired again. The white smoke turned black and billowed back, and large pieces began to fly past Pete's canopy. He swung out to the right as flames enveloped the nose of the 109. An indistinct figure detached itself from the ship and fell, and Pete saw a parachute mushrooming.

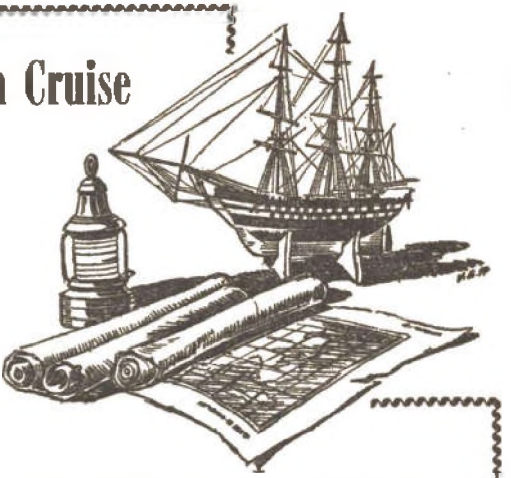
He turned his head quickly, looking for Tip, but before he saw him he found another burning plane plummeting toward the ground. In that split-second an icy finger whipped down Pete's spine. Could that be Tip? Was that the man he was supposed to protect? Tip! The unspoken word rose clamoring in his mind.

"Pete, break left!" came Tip's urgent voice, and as though he had pulled the wing down Pete's plane cut sharply away. Pete's quick, wondering glance to his right took in a Thunderbolt screaming toward him—and the black-crossed plane toward which it raced. The enemy plane snapped to the right and downward as Tip Williams zoomed above it, and Pete had only a momentary glimpse of its headlong flight toward home.

He set a course that would bring him alongside Tip as the latter turned toward England, and together they drifted in and out of the middle level of clouds, keeping one eye on their fuel gauges and the other on the sky. They were over The Ditch before their radio silence was broken. Startled briefly, Pete heard Tip say in his ear, "Pete. All I want to know is, who is who's wing man?" And a chuckle that was like a warm handshake.

Pete looked across the space between them and he thought he could see the grin on Tip's face. He grinned back and waved. Then he settled himself as comfortably as possible and the little voice began humming softly, and offkey, the melody of *Me and My Shadow*.

Your Wartime Vacation Cruise



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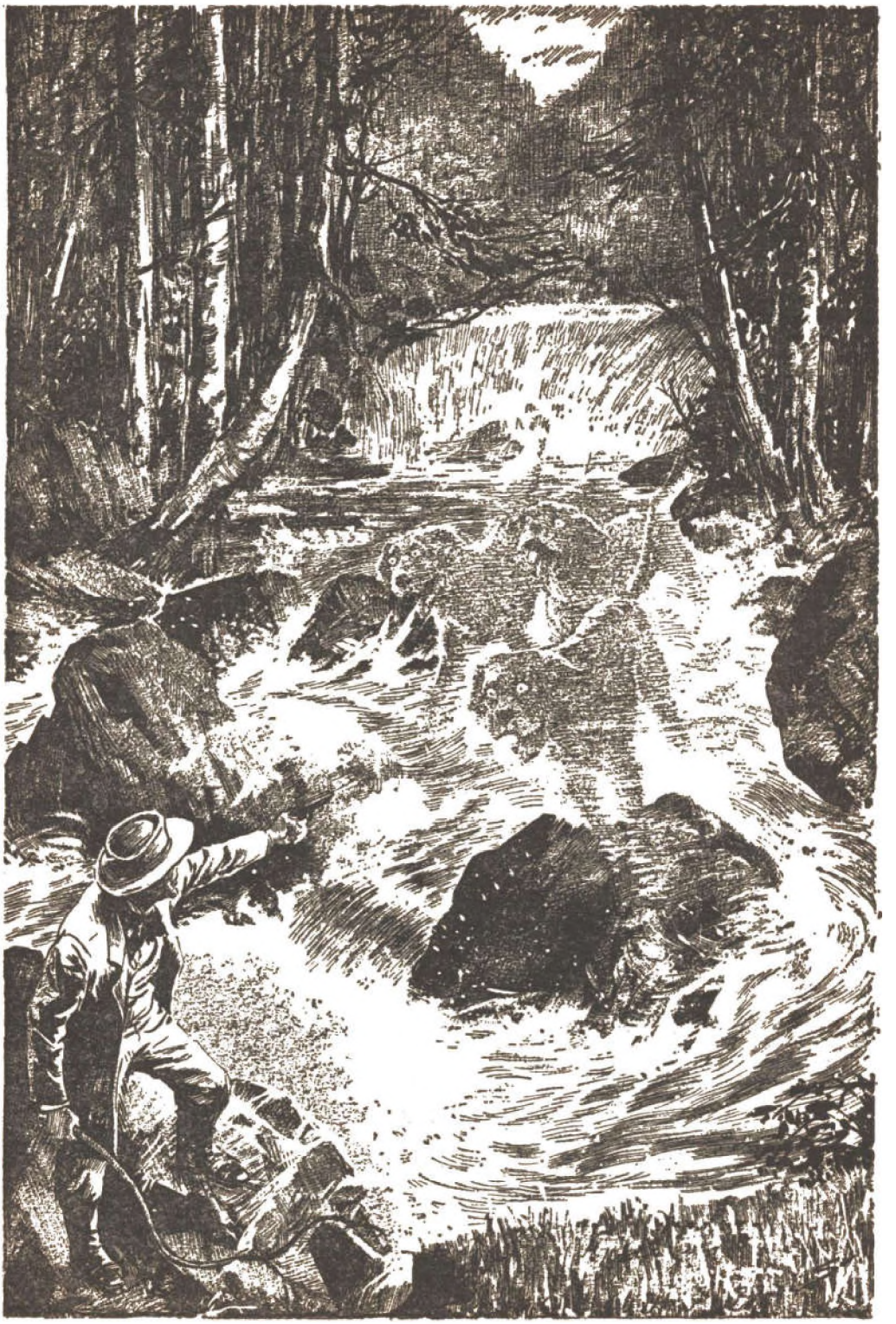


BELLS OF BREAKBONE

By JAMES VALE DOWNIE

AN OFF-THE-TRAIL STORY

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

WHEN the stream is in freshet or when the moon rolls like a copper oil tank in a cleft of the barren hills, the dogs of Breakbone raise a horrible din up and down the ten-mile gorge.

Whether there are three thousand starveling hounds or only three it is impossible to determine. It is probable the hollow rumble of their deep-throated denunciation is in part attributable to certain acoustic phenomena of

"Don't shoot!" cried the marshal . . . and then he saw the three misty shapes in the yellow spume of Breakbone.

the valley. Doubtless the yelping of a brace of gaunt animals in the barnyard of a poverty-stricken farm clinging to a knoll above the half-forested cliffs at one end of the gorge would sound like a pack in cry at the other. How this banshee hubbub came to be regarded by the superstitious hill-dwellers as a warning of impending death or disaster is not hard to understand. Stormy weather excites dogs as well as humans and it is in time of high water that most of the drownings occur along the river.

The Black Bottle above McEwen's Mill gets two or three picnickers or campers every season. The old Breakbone is treacherous, turbulent and deadly. The black boulders that clog its course through the mile-deep canyon, grotesquely carved and pitted by the floods of post-glacial ages, seem to infuriate the stream to the point of madness. Its yellow whorls crash upon the black rocks, shivering into golden spume, which leaps high among the hemlocks, beeches and white oaks that clothe its banks.

The other current explanation is that old Dave McEwen—the first McEwen, who got a thousand acres of Depreciation Land from the state after the Revolutionary War and built the first McEwen mill, in 1790—had three brindle dogs that he was fond of. They were given to him by a starving Indian who came to the mill one day to beg for food. They were pups then, but they grew up and became quite large—large and legendary.

They still gallop up and down the Breakbone—on the water—and howl, when danger threatens any of the McEwens. They gave plenty of warning before the Baxter Bridge went out, with a horse and buggy and two people, whose bodies were never recovered. That was in time of freshet. But they also howled for three nights before the Battle of Gettysburg, where Laurence McEwen was killed, and that was in July—in time of low water.

It was before that, while Larry McEwen was still a boy—fishing, in summer, from the weir wall, or swimming secretly in the treacherous pool of the Black Bottle a quarter of a mile upstream—several years before the Civil War, in fact, that the two men from Maryland came to the mill.

They were looking for a runaway slave named Jubab.

Grandfather McEwen ran a station on the Underground Railway. Uncle Larry was a boy of twelve at the time. He was in the house, which was a stone building set back against the hill, at the foot of the crooked descent, about a hundred yards from the mill door.

It was Uncle Larry who had first spotted Jubab swimming across the dark green surface of the Bottle, a few weeks before the men came, on one of the last warm days in October. Jubab's shirt was in rags and the boy was impressed by the welts across the swimmer's shoulders. There were many brightly colored leaves floating in the dark water—yellow leaves from the copper beeches and maples, dark red from the oak. Some of them stuck to Jubab's back. The color pattern was striking and rather pleasing.

The weather turned cold in November. Ice formed on the slack water. Spray froze on the frame of the overshot wheel and the stone abutments of the covered bridge below the spillway.

The men from Maryland came late in November.

ONE day they pulled up at the brim of the dark valley. Winter skies brooded over an upland region of barren, brush-grown farms, now patched with gray-white rags of melting snow.

They had traveled many miles in pursuit of Jubab and had gone to an extraordinary amount of trouble, even allowing for the fact that the Negro was an experienced millwright and was, of course, a valuable bit of property. The two men in the wagon were actuated by powerful motives. Captain Keswick was a United States marshal and a man of inflexible devotion to duty. The other man was Cephas Selcombe, owner of Jubab, whom he intended to kill as soon as he got him back to his plantation in the South. The buck had a market value of nine hundred dollars, but Selcombe was prepared to pay twice that for the gratification he had promised himself; for Jubab had escaped three times and caused him a great deal of trouble.

Selcombe was a dark, smooth-shaven man with a small goatee and a drawl that might have deceived a casual acquaintance as to his nature. He wore three curious rings on his right hand—gold bands with brass knuckles concealed in his palm. He carried a multi-barreled pistol, or "revolver," in his breast pocket and there was a bullwhip coiled at his feet. He was driving two powerful black horses, which stood trembling at the entrance of the rock-walled alley which led to the long and dangerous descent.

A man on horseback, with a knitted muffler and wrinkled black boots, reined in his mount beside the wagon. His name was Davin. He was sheriff of the county.

"It's about a mile down to the mill," he said. "I guess there's no use in me getting mixed up in this. I've brung you this far—whoa, Jess! There's quite a bit of feeling in this county. As I say, I've heard stories about Old Man McEwen—but you go down and talk to him yourself. I'd ruther keep out of it."

"Quite so, Sheriff. I understand," said the marshal. "We can go on from here without your help—What's all that howling? Do you

have any wolves hereabouts in the valley?"

"No. It's the Bells—the Bells of Breakbone."

At this the three bloodhounds in the wagon stood up, whimpering and rattling their chains. From the depths of the dark valley came faintly, but insistently and unceasingly, the crash and rumble of the torrent. It formed a weird obligato to the *howff-howff-howff-howe-e-e-e* of "the Bells."

The sheriff tightened rein, laid his hand reassuringly on his horse's neck.

"Just dogs?" conjectured the marshal.

"It's a sort of superstition," explained the sheriff uncomfortably. "The story is that this McEwen's grandfather got the dogs when they were puppies from an Indian. The Indian and his band were starving and the miller gave them two sacks of corn meal and a side of pork. The Indian said they were river dogs and they would help him keep the river under control.

"The McEwens have been fighting the old Breakbone for generations. The old creek goes on a hell of a rampage about once a year. She's kicked out two dams. But the McEwens are tough. When one dam goes out they just go down a little closer to the mill and build another. The farmers around here say that the Bells always howl for death or danger."

"Banshee idea," suggested the marshal.

"Sort of, I guess."

"You don't take any stock in it, of course, Sheriff."

"No, I can't say I do. Just the same, they howled before old Doc Sanders was drowned at Ken's Crossing."

"When was that?" asked the federal officer.

"Early spring. The creek was up."

"It sounds as though the water was running high right now."

"Yep. There's been a heavy rain up country, I expect. Them cracks like somebody pulling a string on a bull fiddle are hemlocks tumbling down among the rocks. It's a noisy hole—When you git down to the crossing you won't be able to hear the mill even if it is running. All you'll hear will be the water going over the dam and—the Bells."

"All right, Sheriff," said Selcombe curtly, picking up his lines. "I guess we won't need you any further."

"Wait a minute," said the marshal. "What do these dogs look like, Sheriff?"

"Why, they're yallah," the local officer replied. "About the size of a young colt."

"Ever see them yourself?"

"No, I can't say I have—I don't go down in the gorge very often. To tell the truth, the place gives me a kind of a scunner. But there are people who say they have seen the three of them, chasing each other up and down the creek."

"Thanks, Sheriff."

The officer turned to his companion, smiling faintly.

Selcombe's jaw hardened and his eyes smouldered with a consuming desire for vengeance.

"Git up, nags," ordered the driver briskly, cracking his whip.

THE wagon plunged downward, its steel tires rasping on the worn, rocky ledges of the perilous descent. The big hooves of the two black horses clattered on the stone, striking sparks as though from a blacksmith's anvil into the green tops of the hemlocks that grew below the cartway.

Selcombe's jaw hardened and his eyes smouldered with the fire of a consuming desire for vindication and vengeance.

"Better take this slower, Selcombe," warned the marshal, "or we may get to the bottom sooner than we calculate to. This road is the crookedest trail I've seen for some time to be used as a wagon road. What we'll do if we meet a rig coming up I don't quite see."

"We're not likely to meet anybody," insisted the man from Maryland. "If we do, he can hang in the tree-tops until we get by. I'm in a hurry, Marshal. I'm out to nab this slippery buck and get back to my plantation. I don't like the feel of this gulch any more than you do. My idea is to get down there as quick as I can, transact my business with this miller in his demon-haunted cavern and get out again."

"Amen to that," sighed Keswick. "There's no black in the whole South worth breaking our two necks over, Selcombe, to say nothing of ruining two good horses and a wagon."

Selcombe was compelled to draw rein on his quivering horses. It was that or go plunging to destruction on the rock-strewn, forested

hillside below. A sheer wall of dripping rock, festooned with moss and dangling vines of poisonous appearance, rose upon the left of the cartway, which shelved over a dizzy abyss at the right. The driver cast a glance downward into the nest of a chicken hawk in the top of a tall pine tree. The difficulty and slowness of the descent seemed to make their progress interminable.

"Surely we must be near the mill," fumed the Maryland man. "The sheriff said it was a mile down to the mill, didn't he?"

"These rustics have elastic ideas of distance," replied the marshal. "Or he may have meant the plummet line distance from the brim level to the creek."

"He wouldn't have any idea about that," objected the driver. "He meant road distance. He said a mile. We've come three miles already if we've come a foot."

"Hardly that."

"Do you hear a rumbling sound—like the grinding of the stones of a mill?"

"I can't hear anything but those dogs," replied the federal officer. "The gulch seems to be full of them. They're beginning to get your hounds worked up, Selcombe. Better be sure your leash chains are secure."

"Mountain whites are all alike, north or south," opined the Maryland man. "They may be poor as Job's turkey but they must keep a kennel o' dogs."

The hubbub in the bottom of Breakbone Gorge was largely, but not entirely, the voice of the stream—the crash and roar and rattle of the water tumbling over the high dam to foam among the demonic black boulders below. Under the roar of the torrent the strangers heard and felt the rumble of the revolving stones of the mill. Selcombe put his left foot up on the high sill of the mill door. He could feel the vibration of the building and he looked down at the square toe of his polished boot, which was visibly trembling. It worried him, subconsciously, for he had begun to feel a curious clamminess of the skin and tingling of the scalp and he could not be sure how much of the shaking of his toe was because of the vibration of the mill and how much was due to an unaccustomed nervousness.

Over and through the roar of the water and the rumble of the mill sounded the belligerent barking of the Bells; and it was that which most disturbed the hounds in the wagon and set them pacing about the wagon bed and tangling their heavy chains.

"How do, McEwen," drawled Selcombe. "I am looking for a black boy named Jubab who escaped from my plantation in Maryland about a week ago. He was seen by three persons near the Ohio Crossing and he was headed north at the time. This buck was a millwright and he'd naturally stop and ask for work at every flouring mill he came to. My companion in the wagon is Captain Keswick, a United States marshal, who has full authority to search all premises in order to recover my property."

At this moment a white figure appeared momentarily far back in the dim interior of the mill. McEwen's assistant was so covered with flour as to make it impossible to tell whether his skin, under its snowy encrustation, was white or black. Nevertheless, the dogs became greatly excited and leaped against their collars, adding their voices to the general din.

McEWEN stood in the doorway with his left arm braced firmly against the opposite door frame. His clothes were covered with flour and there was flour in his black hair and bushy mustache. His eyebrows were frosted with it. The flour gave him a sort of benevolent, Christmasy appearance, and this effect was heightened by the mild, almost submissive expression in the miller's brown eyes.

"I'm sorry, mister, that I cannot hear what you say very clearly. The creek is kicking up such a rumpus and, along with that, I'm hard of hearing."

"I say, *have you seen a black boy hereabouts?*" shouted Selcombe.

"No. . . . I can't say I have."

"Who's that back there in the mill?"

"My helper."

"What's his name?"

"I call him Sandy. . . . Sandy, he belongs to the mill and the mill belongs to Sandy."

The miller smiled wanly. There was a gray pallor over his face. The McEwens didn't get much sunshine.

"Is that his real name?"

"Yes. . . . I guess you might say it is. He likes it."

"Tell him to come out here. I want to see him."

"Heh?"

"I say, *bring him out. Let's have a look at him.*"

"Can't very well. He's running fifty bushels of buckwheat through the north stones."

Selcombe turned to Keswick. The captain shouted, "We have full authority to search your place, McEwen. Call your man."

McEwen seemed at a loss to know what to do. He looked backward over his shoulder, but did not lower the flannel-sleeved arm that barred the entrance. He spoke and there was a suavity and hesitation in his tone which was completely at variance with the rocklike solidity of the arm.

"I don't har'ly see how I can."

"Are you a railroader, Mr. McEwen?" demanded Selcombe sharply.

"Heh?"

The marshal shouted a warning.

"Better not accuse him of breaking the law."

The truth was that Grandfather McEwen's

pallor was not wholly the result of his life in the sunless bottom of Breakbone Gorge.

Glancing over the southern man's head he had a good view of the front of the stone house which had been the home of the McEwens for half a century. He saw a second-story window open slowly to a height of six inches. The small-paned sash was propped on a sheepskin-bound book which he recognized as a copy of the *Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism* that was kept on a shelf in his own bedroom.

Through the aperture now protruded the barrel of a rifle.

That would be Larry, his son, who was fond of Jubab.

LARRY was twelve years old. He had a shock of unkempt yellow hair—almost the color of the Breakbone in time of freshet. His eyes were blue and steady. His chin was sharp—the McEwens did not run to flesh—and it also was very steady. The McEwens never had a lot to say.

Young Larry could put a bullet in a squirrel's eye at that distance, as Grandfather realized with a terrible sinking and churning sensation in his stomach.

He knew exactly what was going on in that bedroom, although he could see nothing but the rifle barrel.

Larry would be seated on a bedside hassock which was covered with rag carpet.

His ten-year-old brother, Tom, would be on the floor beside him with powder and shot for quick reloading.

It seemed quite possible that Larry would shoot the southern man—and if he did, he would shoot to kill. An even worse possibility was that he would aim at the marshal, whom he would almost surely not recognize as an officer of the federal government. In any case, Larry would hardly understand the enormity of resisting a federal officer.

He might, of course, shoot one of the dogs. Grandfather prayed fervently that the boy would choose one of the bloodhounds as a target.

There was no way that he could give the foolish lad a signal without being observed by the marshal and Selcombe.

He could not yield to Selcombe's demand that Jubab be called or that he be permitted to enter the mill, for any such move on the part of the visitor would be certain to bring a shot from the bedroom window—a bullet which Grandfather was aware would be fatal to somebody.

Selcombe turned to the wagon. He was trembling with anger. He reached under the seat for a bundle tied in black oilcloth and unrolled a pair of soiled blue cotton pantaloons. This garment he threw into the wagon bed. The hounds sniffed and howled ferociously.

"I'll find out where that buck is, by the Lord! If he's in the mill, we'll know it."

"I wouldn't loose the dogs here, Selcombe," said the marshal. "They might injure the miller and that would be bad. There's a great deal of—ah, abolitionist sentiment in this end of Pennsylvania."

"Sentiment be damned! I don't want anything but my own property."

"Of course not. But your dogs might take a bite out of the miller's leg."

"It would teach the old fool a lesson," Selcombe snapped.

The marshal became a little nervous. He moved uneasily on the driver's seat.

"Here, you hold the horses," he said, "while I talk to him. The nags are getting jumpy as jackrabbits."

KESWICK handed the lines to Selcombe and stepped over the wheel. As he approached the miller his back was toward the wagon. Selcombe in a fit of rage reached over the wagon side and unhooked the snaffle of one of the bloodhounds. The animal immediately bounded into the roadway, followed by the other dogs as quickly as Selcombe was able to release them.

"You idiot, Selcombe! Why did you do that?" protested the officer. His hand went to the pistol which he carried in his belt and he threw himself in front of the indomitable McEwen.

"Go get him, boys," cried Selcombe, hauling a whip from beneath the wagon seat. "*Go get him!*"

The dogs coursed swiftly about the stony space between the cartway and the mill door, yelping excitedly.

At this the distant barking of the Bells seemed to increase in volume. It echoed through the valley with ringing defiance and threat.

Suddenly the three bloodhounds bounded into the old cartway which ran along the weir and the backwater upstream from the mill and the covered bridge. They passed the house and a watering trough, turning into the brushy covert of an abandoned roadway.

In a moment they had disappeared from sight, but their deep angry voices could be heard reverberating through the valley as they sought an enemy more worthy of their fangs than poor shivering Jubab.

The man from Maryland shouted after them, "Blast you, where are you going? Come back, you varmints! *Here, boys. . . . Hiyah. . . . Hiyah. . . . Come back.*"

"If they catch him what will they do?" asked the marshal. "They seem pretty much worked up."

"They are. They'll chew him to pieces if they catch him. But I thought he was in the mill."

"You shouldn't have taken them off the leash. You thought they'd enter the mill and drag the darky out, I suppose. Well, I'm afraid you've made a mess of it. Evidently your buck is not in the mill. He must be up the river somewhere."

"I don't know," grumbled Selcombe. "They're acting strange. It strikes me they're looking for battle, not for Jubab."

"I doubt they've gone to find the Bells," said McEwen mildly. "If they do they'll not be back soon."

"Damn the Bells," howled Selcombe, flourishing his long whip. "And damn you!"

"Heh?"

"I wouldn't do that, Selcombe," warned the marshal. "You won't get any forwarder cursing the miller. Luckily, I don't think he heard you."

"I hope he did. He's obstructing justice."

Selcombe released the chain leashes from their anchorage in the wagon and looped them over his left arm.

"I'll go and bring them back," he said. "You stay with the horses."

"All right," the marshal replied. "But no violence, Selcombe—no gunplay, remember. And go easy with that bullwhip!"

AFTER an interminable wait, during which the black horses became almost unmanageable and a dew of perspiration appeared on the miller's cheeks, the marshal looked at his watch, frowning. Then he led the horses across the road to the hitching-shed provided for patrons of the mill. Once their bridles were securely fastened to the rail at the back of the shed, they became quieter.

Captain Keswick recrossed the road with hardly a glance toward the mill and took the rocky trail upstream past the watering trough and the stone house.

He found himself instantly in a weed-grown alley, walled and covered with a dense growth of white oak, beech and hemlock, interspersed with thickets of sassafras, hazel and sumac, the latter still festooned like the oaks above them with a few scarlet leaves. The tumbled, ancient rocks on his right were matted with moss—the slow accretion of ages—and curiously garnished with clumps of maidenhair fern, still green, trembling on wire-thin stalks even at so slight a disturbance of the dank atmosphere as that occasioned by the marshal's stumbling progress. The narrow pathway rose and fell steeply over sandstone ledges; it circled cathedral shapes of stone, moss-draped and spired with hemlock and cucumber; and it plunged between narrow walls like the sally port of a Norman castle. The marshal's black boots now rang upon bare rock and now sank ankle-deep in thick moss or knee-deep in the sedgy muck of an unsuspected hillside spring.

Through the screen of forest growth on his left he had an occasional glimpse of the raging, leaping yellow flood, swollen by recent autumnal rains. On his brow and in his nostrils were the spume and smells of the river, and in his ears its perpetual terrifying voice. . . .

Keswick stumbled and lurched over glacial boulders, smooth and treacherous as glass. Twice he fell, struggled to his feet, staggered on in the semi-darkness. The pungency of the pine foliage, mingled with the odor of decaying vegetation, stung his throat. The valley was a charnel place of fallen timber.

At the end of a quarter of an hour of painful progress he found himself upon a patch of turf free of trees, which marked, perhaps, the course of the old weir.

He looked, forgot his weariness; shuddered, stared, shouted, "*Selcombe!*"

Painfully inhaling the raw, moist air, Keswick gazed upon the savage final scene of the long pursuit in which he had reluctantly participated.

Protruding ledges of black rock, like blunt inverted chisels, and glacial boulders, sinister as shapes from an Arabian fantasy, formed a sort of causeway against which the Breakbone hurled itself with stupefying force and through which the current sank swirling into the deep pool below.

These stark, rocky remnants of the first dam guarded, after a fashion, the bottomless sump which had been excavated in the riverbed by the old spillway; and it was this seething kettle which was known as the Black Bottle, an allusion to the normal color of the pool and not to its present saffron turbulence.

Selcombe stood on the "chisel." He had reached it by a leap of fifteen feet from the higher river bank and had, miraculously, been able to keep his footing. In his right hand he held the bullwhip, which circled above his bare head and writhed over the yellow water. In his left he carried a five-chambered pistol, or "revolver."

While Keswick watched, Selcombe aimed and fired. The marshal saw a puff of blue smoke, but the report was almost smothered in the noise of the waters. He could not see Selcombe's target. He could only, for the moment, guess what the man from Maryland was shooting at.

Then Keswick, peering through the spume, saw something like a black leech as large as the body of a man clinging against the upstream side of one of the boulders. Smooth and slippery as Hell's own chute, the rock afforded no purchase for claws or fingers. The black man—if the black, motionless body, dimly visible through the mist was that of Jubah—was welded against the round surface of the boulder and held there solely by the pressure of the water. Its contours were hard to determine. The body was as black as the boulder.

CAPTAIN KESWICK shuddered with the horrible conviction that Selcombe had overtaken his "property." Cornered at the Bottle, Jubab must have attempted in desperation to cross the stream.

"Don't shoot!" the marshal called. "Can't you see the poor devil is doomed?"

If the man from Maryland heard this, he gave it no heed. He fired again, aiming high.

Then Keswick saw them— Three misty shapes among the rocks!

They were a composite of the yellow Breakbone spume and of the maelstrom's crash and rumble. But the spume became tawny pelt, glittering jaws, black throat and tongue, gigantic haunch and shoulder—and the Bottle barked!

"Water—just a lot of wild, yellow water," Keswick told himself, with a shudder.

He did not believe the thing he said.

Selcombe was not aiming at the doomed creature on the boulder, but at one of these yellow shapes. Again the pistol cracked.

Keswick called, shrieked, "Don't, Selcombe! Don't shoot at that thing! You're mad!"

The man from Maryland did not turn. Perhaps he did not hear. Instead, he made the bullwhip circle over his head and writhe across the yellow water.

Something caught the whip—and held it! A submerged tree trunk, plunging by like a fast freight train? Perhaps. Selcombe was jerked instantly into the torrent.

Keswick now saw clearly that the black shape clinging to the boulder was not that of Jubab. It was one of the bloodhounds. It slid yelping from the rock. Master and hound were sucked into the vortex and were gone.

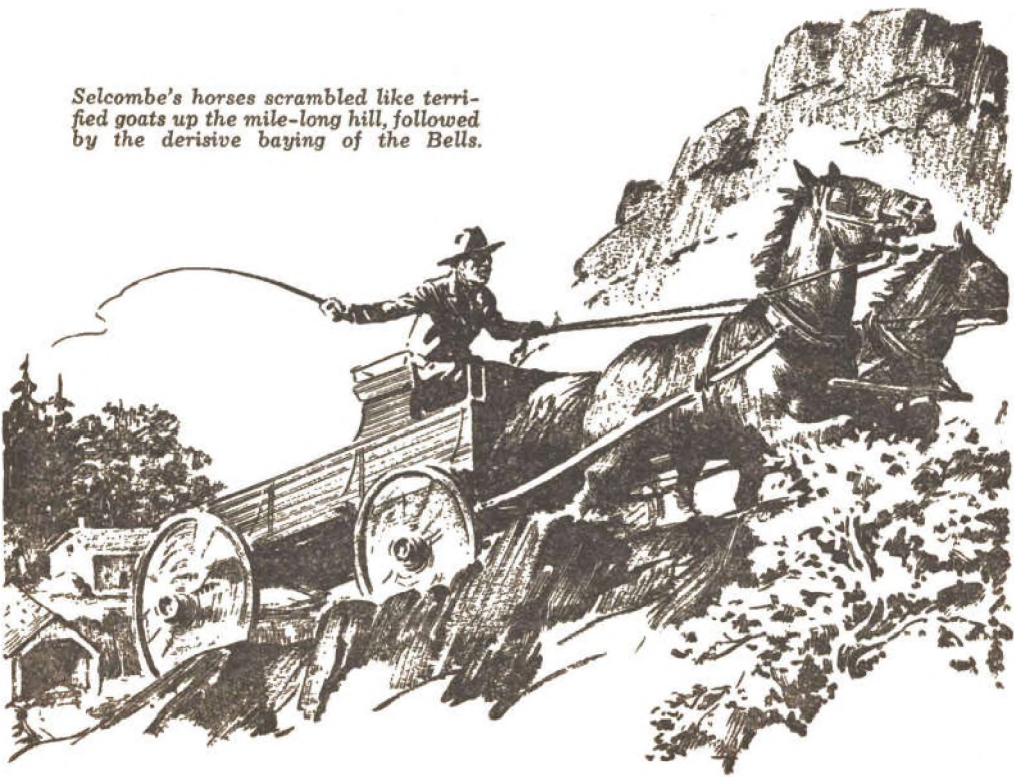
Again the Bottle emitted its unearthly shout. Its derisive trumpeting appalled the marshal.

The bullwhip floated for a few minutes on the pool below the rocks. It swam hideously, snake-fashion. Then it rose in gyring loops and sizzled from sight.

Captain Keswick staggered down the rocky path toward the mill. He unhitched the trembling horses and leaped into the wagon.

McEwen stood, pale, floury, motionless, his flanneled arm braced like a bridge girder across the doorway of the mill.

Soon thereafter Selcombe's horses, lashed onward by the lone driver, scrambled like terrified goats up the mile-long hill, their iron shoes striking sandstone gleeds from the highway, to hang glowing like Christmas tapers in the twilight green of the giant hemlocks that grew below the road, while down the valley behind them came the triumphant and derisive baying of the Bells.



Selcombe's horses scrambled like terrified goats up the mile-long hill, followed by the derisive baying of the Bells.

TAKE CARE OF

By FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE

There were no marching thousands—only five men, but they comprised all of Glacier Cove's able-bodied men of military age.

IT WASN'T much of a parade compared with those you see in large cities. There were no hundred-piece bands—only Johnny Alder, a hunchback breed boy, playing *Onward, Christian Soldiers* on his battered violin.

There were no massed and smartly guarded colors—just Billy Thomas, whose lungs were bad, carrying a weather-stained American flag, flanked by Old Man Hallock and his thirty-thirty rifle.

There were no marching thousands—only five men, but they comprised all of Glacier Cove's able-bodied men of military age. There was Jim Converse who had taught native and breed children in government schools at Glacier Cove and other Alaskan settlements. Then Jock MacLean who owned the trading post. There were the Longshot twins, full-blooded Indians. Last, but certainly not least, was Johnny Alder's brother, Denny, who spent his summers fishing for salmon and the winters drinking, gambling, fighting and chasing the native girls.

Glacier Cove's Broadway was a short street beginning at the cannery wharf and ending ab-

THINGS, JOHNNY

ILLUSTRATED BY MONTE CREWS

ruptly as if fearing to penetrate the rain-drenched spruce forests pressing in on the town. Beyond the forest stood the sheer mountains with their lofty snowfields and hanging glaciers. Their rugged crests seem to shred the rain clouds tumbling in from the Pacific. The white shreds lay lightly on the bright green of the forest crown.

The mountains, then, were Glacier Cove's skyscrapers. Wildflowers gathered from sunny spots on their lower slopes had been spread on the muddy street. That was Johnny Alder's idea.

At first glance this trickle of men marching past a thin line of spectators standing on sodden plank walks in a remote Alaskan village might have brought a faint, rather pitying smile.

Then you'd suddenly realize that American might is made up of such trickles. Johnny Alder, the color guard and five marching men made you think of the famous "Spirit of '76" painting.

It was America marching to war and you were proud of the sudden lump in your throat and the moisture in your eyes.

AS THE parade halted near the steamer's gangplank there was a salute of artillery. Pure coincidence, of course, but that is the way a glacier discharging a thousand-ton block of ice sounds.

Johnny Alder watched the block plunge deep into the blue water, lift slowly, shaking torrents of water aside, then begin drifting toward the Inland Passage a few miles beyond.

Johnny hated and feared the glacier for a personal reason. When he was a few days old an ice mass had fallen, and the resulting wave had thrown the gasboat Johnny was in, on its beam ends. He had been hurled across the cabin and an injury to his spine had caused the hump on his back.

"Why," he had asked Jim Converse years later, "did the ice wait until I was close? It could have fallen any other time. But it waited until our boat was trapped between the glacier and the cannery steamer coming up the inlet."

"Vibration might be the answer," Jim Converse had answered.

"What's vibration?"

Before the big sympathetic school teacher had come to Glacier Cove, Johnny had been acutely conscious of his affliction. Sometimes the other children had laughed at him. Superstitious fishermen often touched his back because they believed it brought them good luck. Such things had turned Johnny into an introvert.

"Why should I be like this?" he had asked, when Jim had won his confidence.

"Suppose, Johnny, you cling to the belief that there is a reason behind all things. A purpose. We may not recognize the reason, the why of it, but it's there. I have two suits of good clothes. One shrunk in the rain. It doesn't fit well. But when I wear it, I'm the same man inside."

"I understand," Johnny had answered gravely, "I got a suit of clothes that didn't fit."

"That's it. It changed your life. You didn't want to be around others, but you had to have an outlet for your emotions and you turned to music—the violin."

When Johnny had asked about vibrations, Jim had again used the violin as an example. "The vibrations in your heart, Johnny, the sympathetic, warm, human emotions, flow through your fingers to the violin strings. The string vibrations reach our ears as sweet and true and pure as when they leave your heart. And so, for the first time, we know what is there. You are an artist, Johnny. Some day you'll be famous."

Because Johnny possessed a great inferiority complex, he couldn't believe Jim Converse's words even though he wanted to. That made it harder for Jim because Johnny was inclined to doubt other things the teacher insisted were true.

He didn't believe an organ vibration could bring down the walls of a building, or that a certain vibration might break up a steel bridge.

Two years ago, when Johnny was sixteen, a great violinist had been aboard a tourist steamer that had stopped to load salmon. He had played for Johnny in the social hall, and Johnny, forgetting the smartly dressed people, had played for the artist. When Johnny had finished his number the applause was so long in coming that he thought they didn't like his music; then he saw that many were crying and that they could only applaud when they had shaken off the spell.

After that he believed everything that Jim Converse told him. That was why Johnny Alder's music had reached true greatness today as he led the parade. Jim Converse was going to war. He was going to fight the Japs, and Johnny, being an Alaskan and closer to Japan than most Americans, knew the breed of creature his teacher would combat. He might not come back and the thought of it tore Johnny's heart apart.

When the war started there was talk of quotas in the village and Jock MacLean had said to Jim, "We'll be in this thing, sure as hell." Johnny had gone down to Juneau to enlist. "You take me," he had said, "and leave Jim Converse. He's needed at home to doctor sick people, teach the children, and run the cannery when the salmon come. Besides, if men must die, why not the misfits like me—the guys who drew a bum suit of clothes?"

The sergeant was a tough guy, but that got him. He blew his nose, swore loudly, wiped his eyes and accused the stove of smoking. "For my dough, Alder," he said, "you're man-sized and your clothes fit like Adolph Menjou's. But I don't make the rules."

AND now Jim Converse was going to war and Johnny Alder was staying at home. Jim was smiling as he came over and said, "S'long! Take care of things, Johnny."

"What can I take care of in a war?" Johnny asked. "They wouldn't let me fight. They wouldn't give me a chance to help pay back all the things Uncle Sam has done for me." Jim had never seen bitterness on Johnny's face until now.

"Johnny, have I ever kidded you?"

"No, you haven't, but this once, you have no answer to my problem. I want to take my place beside the men of my country. I want to fight. I don't want to go because it will make me feel good inside, because it will prove to me I'm the same as other men. It's the thing called duty that makes me want to go. I like the feeling. But they won't take me. My—clothes don't fit. There's no other reason. Damn that glacier. Damn it, I say!" Johnny was choking with rage.

"Now, Johnny, I've never kidded you and I'm not kidding you now," Jim Converse said. "This war's different. Bombers fly over the front lines and get at the soldiers—notice I said *soldiers*, Johnny—fighting on the home front. The soldiers building ships, planes, guns; the soldiers tilling the soil; and those mining the metals and pumping the oil.

"The Army, Navy and Marines can't fight on empty bellies," Jim continued. "Alaska must produce its greatest salmon pack this year. You've helped me fire the boiler and repair the cannery machinery, Johnny. That's one job. Another is to keep alert and guard that machinery. It is sound strategy to destroy food. The Japs might sneak in some time and burn the cannery. Undoubtedly they know the location and capacity of every cannery in Alaska."

Jim Converse knew Johnny's faith in his teacher was prevailing over the bitterness in his heart. He could see bitterness draining from Johnny's eyes, and a pathetic hunger to be convinced taking its place.

"We'd be cold meat for the Japs," Johnny said. "There're no weapons here except a few shotguns and rifles."

"Don't forget this, Johnny: Imagination has won many a fight. We Americans haven't been regimented. That's where we have it on the enemy. We're trained to improvise and be resourceful when the chips are down. It is a heritage from our pioneer ancestors. When they ran out of powder, they pulled something from their bag of tricks," Jim concluded.

"Such as?"

"Charging the enemy with empty guns. Or drawing on something from their experience," Jim answered. "Perhaps they cashed in on their knowledge of the country. A brush fire and favorable wind saved one wagon train—But you get the point, Johnny. S'long."

They shook hands, then Johnny said, "You've forgotten one thing. Put your hand on my back and keep it there a long time. I want you to have all the luck in the world."

"That's fine of you, Johnny," Jim Converse said. "I'm going to need plenty of luck. And . . . you've given it to me." Then he raced up the gangplank and the sailors pulled it aboard. Slowly the ship backed from the wharf. Johnny tucked his violin under his chin and began playing. Those lining the rail said they had never heard *Aloha* played as beautifully, but Johnny Alder hardly knew what he was playing. He was dealing in vibrations—vibrations from his heart, transmitted to others through the medium of his violin.

He felt sober, sad and proud. He forgot that his clothes didn't fit. He forgot, for a few seconds, to hate the glacier.

That evening he realized the others in the settlement had turned to him for leadership. Doubt gripped him and he asked, "Why me? Why not Old Man Hallock?"

Someone answered, "When Jim Converse went to war he said, 'Johnny Alder will take care of things. He's plenty smart. He's got a head on his shoulders.'"

It's funny, Johnny thought to himself, whenever Jim Converse said I could do something, I could do it. I can run the cannery but can I fool the Japs if they come? No, that's the wrong approach, as Jim would say. I should say it like this: "When the Japs come, I'll take care of things."

Now, Johnny Alder felt better.

The Japs came a month later. A fisherman reported a piling, weighted down at one end by barnacles, drifting in the Inland Passage. Johnny studied the object through binoculars and noticed that it was going against the current. "Periscope," Johnny said. "They're after the troopships going north. But they might come in and burn the cannery. Jim Converse said so."

Well, the chips were down, and Johnny had to take care of things. He went home and began playing his violin. It had always helped him in his problems. Old Man Hallock, carrying his rifle in the crook of his arm, came in. "If we had a radio, we could send out a warning," he said. "If we had enough dynamite, we might rig up a depth bomb." Old Man Hallock was a hard rock man and he could do amazing things with explosives. "But we ain't got radio or powder. I was thinkin', though, you'd better let me front for you."

"Front? What do you mean?"

"If the Japs come and figger you're boss, they might sorta cramp your style, Johnny. If they figger I'm boss, you're likely to have a free hand," Old Man Hallock argued. He was depressed. "Lord, if I only had some powder, or a cannon and a few rounds of ammunition!"

THAT was Old Man Hallock all over—always moaning over the lack of things, but not having the ability to make the most of what he had. Johnny Alder remembered some of Jim Converse's improvisations—the cannery, for example.

Glacier Cove had needed a payroll. There were plenty of salmon, but no cannery. Nor would private money back a group of poor Indians, breeds and a few white men who had nothing more than an idea. Jim Converse had organized a stock company, then salvaged a boiler from a wrecked steamer. They had brought along the deep-throated whistle, pumps, pipes and a generator or two.

They had dammed a stream and piped water to the settlement. They had cut lumber with a portable sawmill, and piling and planking for a wharf. Then Jim Converse had brought in a banker. "We've done this much ourselves," he had said. "Now we need money for cannery machinery."

The banker had looked at the dam, the salvaged machinery and stacks of lumber. That had supplied part of the security for the loan, but most of the security lay in the men who were making a lot out of a little.

Now, while Old Man Hallock tried to solve their problem with his unimaginative mind, Johnny Alder played softly. A frothing stream near his cabin, and the wash of waves, blending with the sound of a breeze in the spruces supplied the accompaniment.

Johnny broke off presently and said, "Like Jim Converse always said, the weapons are at hand if we just look for them. The problem is—to make them work. Let's go down to the cannery. If they come, we must be ready."

The Japs came when the ceiling was treetop level and every patrol plane within two hundred miles was grounded. It was the largest submarine Johnny had ever seen—big enough to carry a float plane. Some of the crew manned a four- or five-inch deck gun and others were ready with heavy-caliber machine guns. She came smoothly alongside the wharf and men with sub-machine guns leaped ashore.

A squad went swiftly up the street, tossing grenades through windows, then an officer called loudly for everyone to come out.

They came, old men and women, young women and children. They watched the Japs through dark, alert eyes, acutely conscious of their helplessness.

"I am Commander Nakamura. I want Jim Converse," the Jap said with icy insolence. In his hands he held an accurate sketch of the whole settlement. Johnny Alder recalled the Jap cannery hand who sketched pictures two years ago.

"Jim Converse has gone to war," Old Man Hallock said. "There are only the very old and very young here."

"Who is in charge?"

"I am," Old Man Hallock answered.

Nakamura wanted to make sure none would even think of resisting. He shot Old Man Hallock whose hands were half raised in surrender. As Hallock fell, Johnny Alder fought down an impulse to hurl himself at Nakamura. He thought, *Old Man Hallock always talked big, but he was as big as his talk when the showdown came.*

Nakamura's eyes shifted from face to face. He seemed satisfied now. His men took up commanding positions and the real purpose of the visit was disclosed: refueling. *When they left Japan,* Johnny thought, *they counted on refueling here.*

It made possible a protracted cruise in the North Pacific, stalking the troopships bound for Alaskan and Aleutian defense areas. Burning the cannery would be incidental.

He watched the thirsty submarine suck dry tank after tank. Then the Japs scattered. They looted the trading post and set it on fire, then splashed gasoline on houses and cabins and tossed lighted matches into the fumes.

Johnny Alder forgot that he was in command as his cabin blazed. He raced through the smoke and came out with his violin. A Jap sailor knocked Johnny sprawling, picked up the violin, grinned and tossed it into the flames. Johnny looked beaten as he crawled to his feet; it was well that the Japs couldn't guess his inward emotions.

THE cannery was blazing now and Johnny thought, *This is war. It is happening all over the world. Everywhere people look as stunned and bewildered as we.*

The Japs withdrew to the submarine and cast off the lines, the men remaining at their gun stations. She rode low with full fuel tanks. As one, the villagers began fighting the flames, but Johnny yelled for all to flatten themselves on the ground and a moment later the bullets came. "Don't move," he ordered, then crawling a few yards, he suddenly ran to the boiler. The building and stack had fallen, and steam had been generated to the bursting point and the boiler was gaunt and naked.

A wire hung limply from the deep-throated whistle. There was a loop at the end. Johnny dropped a heavy plank into the embers, drenched himself with water, caught up a length of wire, ran in and made it fast to the loop. His clothes were steaming and he was faint and gasping as he stumbled to a safe spot.

Johnny got to his knees and looked at the submarine. It was a half mile down the inlet, swinging toward the glacier to clear a berg stranded by the outgoing tide. A man in the bow was taking soundings. Johnny's eyes were narrowed, calculating.

He waited a minute or two, then pulled the whistle wire. Scalding water, then wet steam gushed from the whistle, then a plume of white vapor fluttered in the air. Deep tones vibrated down the inlet, echoing and re-echoing. Johnny stopped, then began whistling again—short, sharp blasts, then a sustained vibration.

Fragments of ice began falling from the glacier into the deep water below, then with a roar like artillery fire, a mass as large as a ten-story building tumbled. It plunged from sight, then heaved into view, throwing a solid sheet of water at the submarine. Nakamura sacrificed his gun crews and partly closed the hatch. Then the wave struck, rolled the submarine onto her beam ends, and left her to drift sluggishly, waterlogged.

The wave struck the opposite wall, rebounded and drove the craft toward the glacier. A mile away, Johnny Alder blasted the whistle again and a hundred tons of ice fell seventy feet and hit the stern. The bow shot upward and Johnny thought of a child's toy boat in a bathtub. He held the binoculars tightly to his

eyes, saw the boat vanish and the water take on an oil coating.

"It worked," Johnny said in the awful silence that followed. "It worked."

"What worked?" an Eskimo woman asked.

"The trick Jim Converse told me Americans usually find in the bag when the chips are down," Johnny answered. "I thought of it when the submarine passed the glacier to make the raid, but I was afraid that the Japs might be on guard. But either they didn't know or else they had forgotten that for years Alaskan skippers have entertained tourists by blowing the whistle and making the ice fall. Jim Converse said it's the vibrations that shake the ice, as violin music shakes the heart."

"You'd better let me fix your burns, Johnny," the woman said. "You're a hero now—you sunk a submarine!"

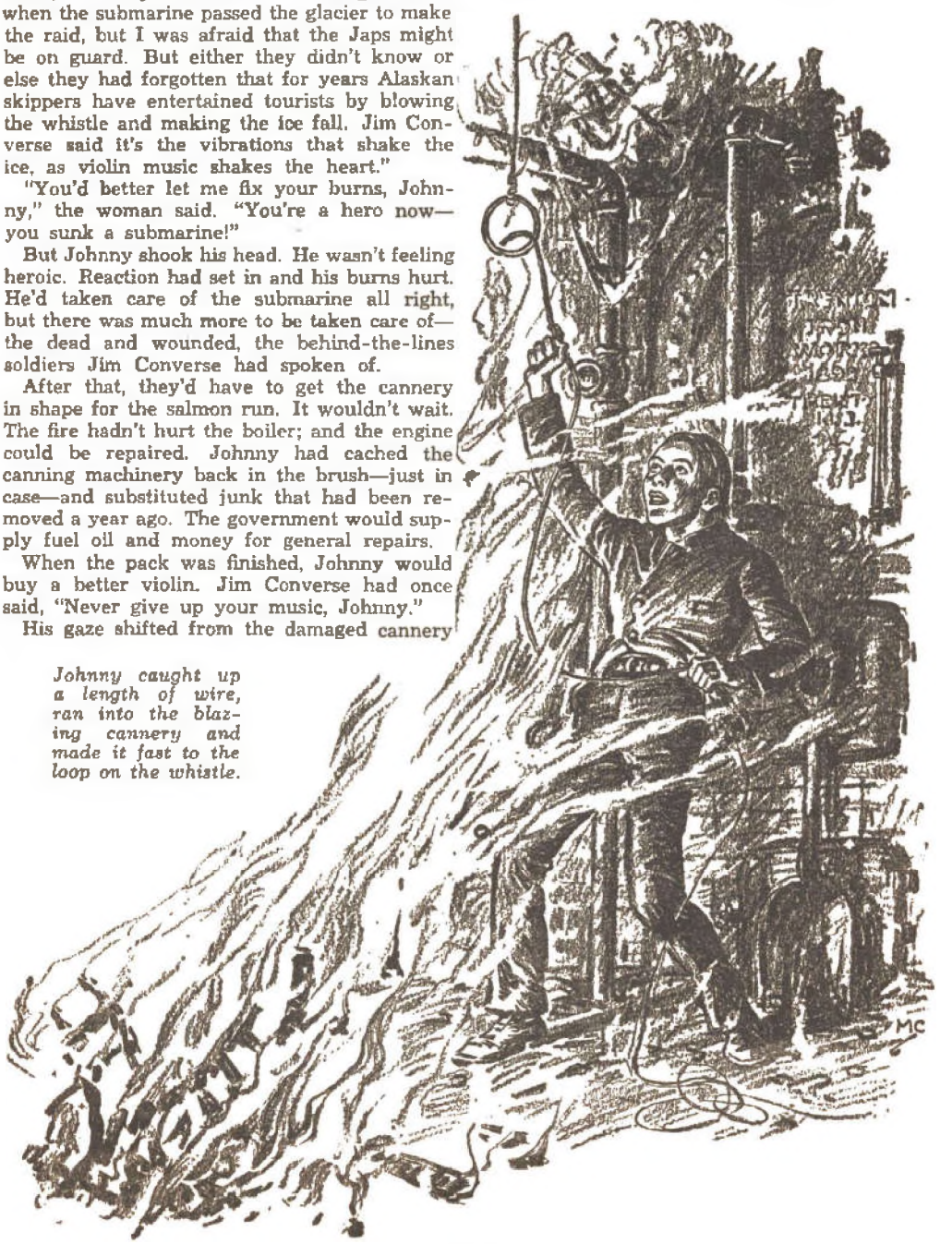
But Johnny shook his head. He wasn't feeling heroic. Reaction had set in and his burns hurt. He'd taken care of the submarine all right, but there was much more to be taken care of—the dead and wounded, the behind-the-lines soldiers Jim Converse had spoken of.

After that, they'd have to get the cannery in shape for the salmon run. It wouldn't wait. The fire hadn't hurt the boiler; and the engine could be repaired. Johnny had cached the canning machinery back in the brush—just in case—and substituted junk that had been removed a year ago. The government would supply fuel oil and money for general repairs.

When the pack was finished, Johnny would buy a better violin. Jim Converse had once said, "Never give up your music, Johnny."

His gaze shifted from the damaged cannery to the glacier. And for the first time there was neither bitterness nor hate in his eyes. It was a beautiful thing with its solid white masses and its varying tints of blues and greens.

"As beautiful as violin music," Johnny Alder said. He looked at it with something akin to affection—the affection a soldier has for a weapon that was faithful in enemy combat.



Johnny caught up a length of wire, ran into the blazing cannery and made it fast to the loop on the whistle.

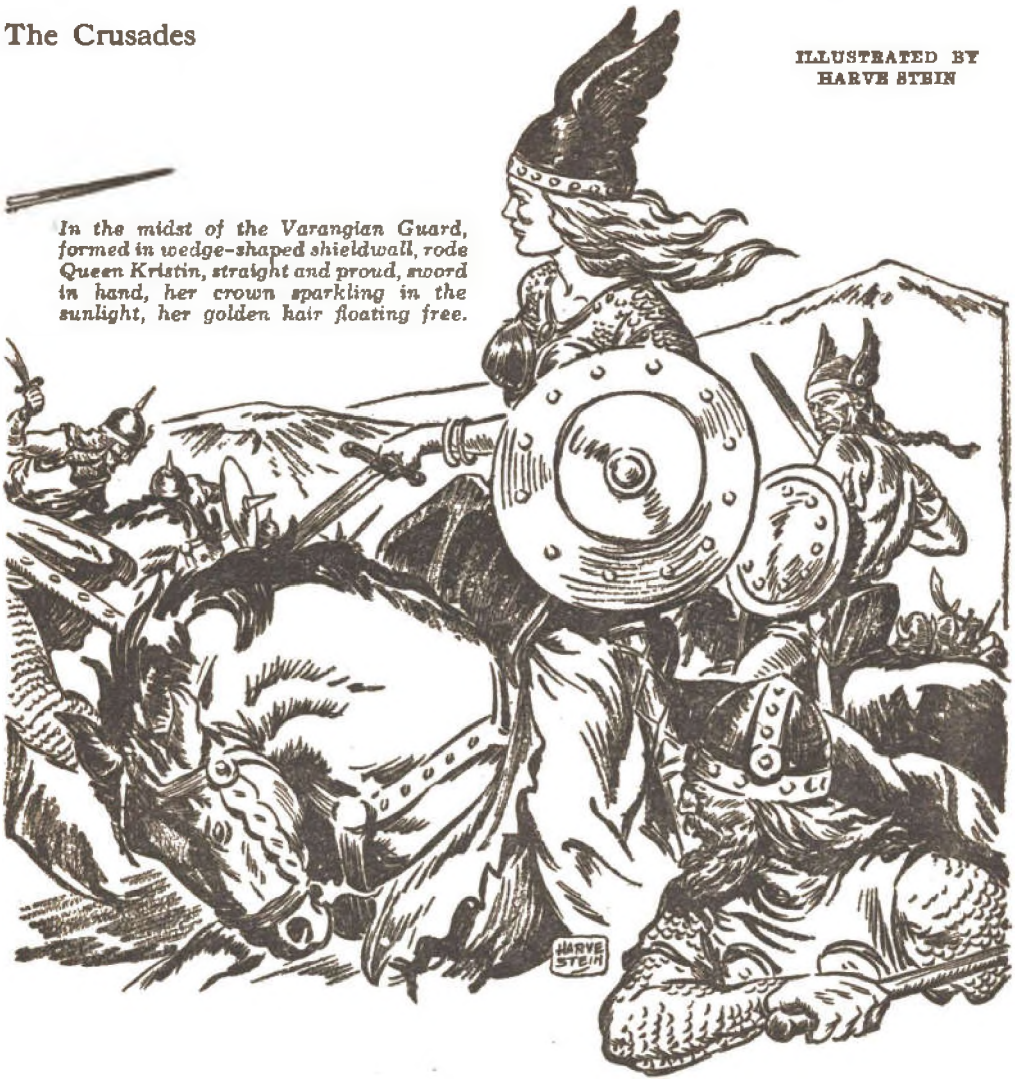
A Tale Of

SWAIN'S LANDFARING

By

ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY
HARVE STEIN



In the midst of the Varangian Guard, formed in wedge-shaped shieldwall, rode Queen Kristin, straight and proud, sword in hand, her crown sparkling in the sunlight, her golden hair floating free.

THE STORY THUS FAR:

SWAIN ASLIEF the Orkneyman, swashbuckling 12th-century sea-rover, sails his longboats to Constantinople, where he becomes a favorite of the EMPEROR MANUEL, whose empire is threatened by his brother, CAESAR ANDRONICUS. While Manuel is away defending his northern frontier, the Orkneyman, wielding his famous sword, Skullbiter, defeats an attempt by Andronicus to kidnap and marry Swain's ward, QUEEN KRISTIN, exiled from Norway by her former husband and married now to GRIM GUSLI, a Norse nobleman and officer of the Emperor's Varangian Guard.

Swain is on his way to join the forces defending Jerusalem, or Jorsalaheim as it is called by the Norsemen, but the Emperor prevails upon him to try to capture Andronicus, who is ravaging the Euxine coast and is planning to set himself up, with the aid of MASSOUD, the Seljuk Sultan of Iconium, as a menace to Christendom. He also commissions Swain to see QUEEN THEODORA, widow of King Baldwin, when he arrives in Jerusalem, and report back to him on whether she would make a suitable bride for the Emperor.

The Orkneyman sets out with his men in three longboats and three of the Emperor's dromonds, accompanied by JOHN PALAEOLOGOS, one of the Emperor's best seamen; ERIC BITLING, his own forecastle man; and LOGE THE LAPP, his expert archer.

They overtake Andronicus' ships and discover that he has joined up with OLVIR ROSTA, "the Roysterer," Norse outlaw who is Swain's mortal enemy since he killed the Orkneyman's mother. After a bitter but inconclusive sea battle, the forces of Andronicus and Rosta take to the land, where they are reinforced by the paynim hosts of Sultan Massoud of Iconium.

Landing at Trebizond, imperial outpost city, Swain rallies the frontier guards and pursues his quarry overland toward Jerusalem. Once he traps the forces of Rosta and Andronicus, but just at the turn of the battle, reinforcements from the Sultan arrive to cover their retreat. Following in their wake, Swain and his company arrive at the gates of Jerusalem. Though some among them still put their faith in the old Norse gods, all follow Swain's example and kneel in homage when Christendom's most sacred city lies before them.

"Mount, carles," Swain shouted. "And remember there is no virtue in the Hammer in the White Christ's city. He, Himself, was not a sword-wearer, but His Sign is the sign of the hilt. And He was not afraid of the death the tormentors gave Him. When we fight here we fight under His Sign. There should be a magic in it here."

"White magic or black magic, what matters it if the broth spoils?" scoffed Loge.

But Norsefolk and Greeks alike closed ranks, let be grumbling for the furbelows and smithy work they had been denied in Jaffa, and clanked down the hill with the zest of men who hear sword-music dinning ghostly on the wind.

And so Swain Asleif's son rode into Jerusalem.

PART II

INSIDE the city gate there was a broad open space where the pilgrims collected to gossip and seek out brethren from their distant lands. Midway of this space an old man sat his tall warhorse. He wore mail from neck to toe under the habit of the Hospitalers. His white beard brushed his saddle-bow, and silver locks covered his shoulders; but there was no hint of age in his gaunt frame or hawk-beaked face or in the resonant voice he raised.

"Greetings, Swain," he said, "if you come in peace—as all men should who enter the Holy City."

Swain stared at him in astonishment, not having expected so soon to be hailed by name. Behind the old knight were two mounted squires, after the fashion of the Franks, one of whom carried his helm, the second his shield and lance. Behind the squires were four sergeants-at-arms of the Hospital.

"Greetings, father," Swain responded with instinctive respect. "You are Norse?"

"As Norse as yourself," the old man replied, his lips twitching humorously. "I am Olvard Thorbiorn's son, sub-Prior of the Hospital of St. John, sent by King Amalric to make you welcome."

A light of memory kindled in Swain's mind. He had heard both King Sigurd and Jarl Rognvald speak of Olvard Thorbiorn's son. Few names were as famous in the North. As a youth in Iceland he had slain a rival for a maiden's hand, and in penance therefor had been sent on pilgrimage to Jorsalaheim. Here he had bided for well nigh the span of two common men's lifetimes, foremost in battle, honored in counsel by king after king.

"Ho, Olvard," exclaimed Swain, "it has been many years since I thought of myself as a youth, but only youth can excuse a Norseman for not knowing you from the tales the skalds sing."

He rode forward to offer his hand. Sir Olvard ignored it.

"I may not handfast you until you have accepted the King's rule," the old man said sternly. "We have expected you, Swain. Olvir Rosta is here, lodged with the Templars. He has handfasted his word that he and his men will not draw steel in private quarrel or brawl so long as they remain. The King requires the same of you."

Swain's beard bristled. "That thieving, murdering outlaw! His word is as good as a paynim's."

"If it is not good, his body will be punished sufficiently, and his soul condemned to everlasting hell," Sir Olvard replied implacably. "This is the Holy City of the White Christ, Swain. Well, what say you? If you accept the King's rule, I am to escort you and your men to our Hospital where you shall be lodged as we lodge all pilgrims who come to us from oversea. If you will not"—his wide shoulders lifted effortlessly beneath their burden of mail —"forth you must go, and all the power of the King and the Orders will make sure that you do."

Swain looked around at his men. Eric's face was averted; Loge cowered in saddle. An uneasy stir in the ranks gave out a jingling of steel. Palaeologos alone met his eye squarely; the Greek's chin seemed to drop in a gesture of assent. Twice Swain swallowed his spittle. He was confronting a power he had never encountered before in all his tumultuous years. And he had not yet acquitted himself of the Emperor's mission. At the least, he must give warning to this King of the Caesar's plots.

"I am inlaw, not outlaw, as is Olvir," he said stiffly.

"In Jerusalem, so long as he abides the King's rule, Olvir is a pilgrim to the Holy

Sepulcher, even as you, Swain," Sir Olvard retorted.

Resolutely, Swain checked the rising fury in his breast.

"This is not the welcome I expected, who come as messenger from the Emperor Manuel," he answered with dignity. "So be it, I will handfast you on my word, Sir Olvard, that Swain and Swain's carles, Norse and Greek, will not draw steel in Jorsalaheim save it be in defense of life. And on *my* word you may rely."

Sir Olvard's grip was quick and firm.

"Of that I have no doubt, Swain," he said. "Now, if it pleases you, bid your men forward, and we will ride to the Hospital. I doubt not you are weary and athirst."

They made a strange pair, these two—Swain on his jaded horse, in hacked mail and stained and tattered cloak, rent shield slung to his back, beard dusty and uncombed; Sir Olvard, correct at every point, astride his great charger, which lifted its hoofs daintily from the offal of the gutter. Swain's eyes peered right and left, mapping the streets and buildings. Sir Olvard answered his questions readily, complimenting him courteously upon his exploit in having penetrated the land of Rum. "They are stout enemies, the Seljuks; we think well of them. But then so are all the paynims. The battle we fight is one which never ends, Swain."

Up the Street of Zion they rode, past the Street of David, which led on their right hand to the slope of Mount Moriah and the massive buildings capping it. From the Street of Zion they entered the Street of St. Stephen, crossed the Street of the Holy Sepulcher, with the church which was the center of Christendom on their left, its innumerable domes and half-domes floating above their heads in the sunset haze.

The chanting of priests beat upon their ears, softly insistent, and men doffed their helms and crossed themselves, murmuring tags of prayers almost forgotten. Loge cursed to himself, but he made the White Christ's Sign when he came opposite the pillared narthex, albeit shamefacedly and glancing aside to be certain Eric had not caught him at it. Loge was too shrewd a man to offend any god unnecessarily, the more if he happened to be overclose to the god's temple.

Beyond the church lay an immense group of buildings and courtyards, stables, kitchens and dormitories, a city in itself.

"The House of our Order, Swain," said Sir Olvard. "I make you all welcome to it in the name of our brethren. Our servants will care for your horses. Bid your men lay off their mail, and rest. No, no thanks are required. It is to serve pilgrims we exist—and to keep the land safe for Mother Church."

CHAPTER V

OF STONE WALLS AND MEN OF STEEL

STRIDING beside Sir Olvard through the King's anterooms, Swain was conscious of the same unease which had irked him in the Emperor's palaces. Here was the same luxury, the same softness of living, the same languor in the bearing of the men and women who lounged about in cushioned chairs. Even Sir Olvard wore a furred gown of Eastern velvet against the cool desert wind which rustled the silken hangings on the open windows. Swain's leather jerkin and tattered cloak were conspicuous by contrast with the richly-embroidered garments of the knights and nobles, whose only weapons were belted table-daggers.

"I had thought of Jorsalaheim as an armed city, an outpost in the midst of the paynims," he said a shade scornfully, "yet it seems your folk are loath to bear steel."

The old knight smiled, then sighed quickly. "This hot land thins our Northern blood," he answered, "but in truth, Swain, every man here has born his share of fighting on the desert march or in the mountains. The castles of the marches are our real defense. It would go ill with us if Jorsalaheim stood alone."

"It is not stone walls, but men who can use steel, who keep a land," said Swain. "You remember our Norseland, father."

"I do." Sir Olvard's fingers lightly touched Swain's arm. "We have need of such as you. I pray you be patient with the King. He is—"

Ahead of them sounded the twang of strings, the lilt of men's voices, gay and carefree—and then a foolish jingling of bells, and a yelp of mocking laughter. Two men-at-arms in livery swept aside the curtains at a doorway. Before them opened a long room, bright with lamps, hung with tapestries, spread with soft-piled rugs. Hounds lolled in front of a blazing fireplace; a hooded hawk crouched on a stand. At the far end of the room was a dais where crotched seats were grouped around two chairs of state. On one of these sat King Amalric, a tall man of goodly presence, his brown curls bound by a golden circlet. His features gave an impression of good nature and stubbornness—he had a long face and laughing eyes, but his wide mouth quirked down at the corners. He was laughing when Swain first saw him, leaning aside to speak to Andronicus, whose giant figure crowded the chair next to him.

Two of the men on the dais were fingering lutes, singing right lustily and with exaggerated emphasis. Swain's glance passed over them, without interest, to focus upon the most extraordinary figure in the group, a lanky lance-stave of a man, whose body was clad in a tight-fitting costume, one half black, the other

particolored in checkered crimson and yellow. On his head he wore a peaked crimson cap, topped with silver bells, and in his hand he carried a wand similarly equipped. As the musicians finished their song, he reared half-erect and tapped each with his wand, emitting again a burst of shrill, mocking laughter.

"Well played, Bertrand," he cried. "And seeing my brother Amalric will never commit himself to judgment, I give you the guerdon over William."

He spoke in the *Lingua Franca*, which Swain could follow after adventuring for years in the Middle Sea.

"Is it the King's habit to divert his dignity with such demented folk?" Swain rumbled contemptuously.

"Who? Goulbain—the jester?" Sir Olvard looked surprised. "Such entertainers are a custom at the Frankish courts. But indeed, Goulbain is one of the wisest men in Jerusalem. And some say, one of the most powerful."

Goulbain saw the two Norsemen at that moment, and turned to wave his bauble at the King.

"Hither strides Sir Staunch and Rugged, brother," he proclaimed. "And one who matches him in stature and gravity, if not in wit. Say, shall we cast their reverences from the revels?"

The King, who had regarded Swain's stern face with some misgiving, laughed heartily again, as did Andronicus, eyeing Swain with frank amusement. Swain, bowing to Amalric, and ignoring the Caesar, checked the rebuke upon his tongue's tip as he caught a secret gleam in Goulbain's eye, realizing with instant perception that in the man in motley he had found a friend.

"Ho, Messer Fool," he said, "I pray you not to beat me forth with that great staff you wield." He lifted Skullbiter. "As you see, I am but poorly armed."

Goulbain tapped him on the shoulder while laughter echoed from the mullioned roof.

"Be not afraid, my timorous giant," squeaked the jester's falsetto. "Not even my brother Amalric shall do you hurt. At need, I'll take you in my service. What, shall the fool not have a fool to serve him?"

"Now, that shall not be," the King spoke up. "Swain, we have heard much of you. We hope you will stop with us, and crack helms for the Holy Sepulcher."

He offered his hand without rising, but Swain affected not to notice it until he stood, a shadow of embarrassment in his manner. Swain stepped immediately to the dais, and handfasted him as one warrior does another.

"I thank you, King," Swain answered, albeit stumblingly. "We will talk of that another time." He extended his left hand to show the Emperors's signet. "But first I must discharge the errand Emperor Manuel sent me upon from Constantinople. This ring is my warrant. I have been overlong upon the errand, and by your leave—"

"You know the Caesar, his brother, our other guest?" Amalric interrupted, with the eagerness of a man who wishes to postpone a disagreeable subject.

SWAIN'S eyes flicked across Andronicus' handsome features. He waited for the Caesar to speak.

"Well do I know Swain Asleif's son," Andronicus said lazily. "As who does not who has drunk with the Varangians over the bragging-cup? Alas, we have had the sorrow of a slight misunderstanding—I trust forgotten, Swain. You are a bad enemy. I would prefer to call you friend."

"I feel safer for knowing you as you are, Caesar." Swain's tone was dry. "But my errand is not with you, save to accept custody of your body on the Emperor's behalf, and render due account of you in Constantinople."

He addressed the King directly.

"It may have come to your ears, King Amalric," he continued, "that the Caesar, in the Emperor's absence on the Danube, was pleased to kidnap my ward, Queen Kristin, King's daughter and King's mother of Norway, who was pledged in marriage to my friend, Grim Gusli, Strategos of the Varangian Guard."

"A most beauteous lady," murmured Andronicus. "I hope she has found happiness. For myself—my heart yet aches."

Swain glared at him.

"Something of this affair our cousin Andronicus has told," the King said, smiling. "He was ever known for an over-ardent suitor."

"He plotted rape," Swain roared, and in the abrupt silence which smote the room a hound howled uneasily. "It would have been rape of a dead woman," he added grimly. "But this was not all. With Kristin an unwilling bride, he plotted to make himself Emperor in his brother's stead, blind Manuel and march with his friends, the Seljuks, against Armenia and the Holy Land."

Amalric frowned. "In this we think you err, Swain," he answered. "Our cousin's enemies have misrepresented him. We fear the Emperor—whom we esteem—has been jealous of the Caesar's prowess."

"He sought shelter with the Seljuks," Swain retorted. "I know. I would have slain or taken him—for either course I had the Emperor's permission—had not the Sultan Massoud come to his aid."

Amalric's frown deepened.

"The Caesar has explained this to us," he asserted haughtily. "His intent was to compose the differences of our lands with the Sultan for the sake of winning a reprieve of peace, which

we sorely need. No prince has more prestige with the paynim than Andronicus. It is our judgment that he had the good of Byzantium and Jerusalem at heart. You are fresh come hither. You do not know how sorely we are pressed. Even as you rode from Jaffa, our cousin has been discussing with us the terms the Sultan offers, terms to advantage our merchants and to lighten the tasks of our knights and men-at-arms."

Swain drew a deep breath.

"By virtue of the signet of the Emperor Manuel," he said, "I demand of you, King Amalric, the body or the head of the Caesar Andronicus."

"By our Lady," swore the King, his face darkening, "you have a rough tongue, Norseman. The disposition of a prince of the Caesar's rank is not to be arranged in one meeting. We have knowledge of royal brothers' jealousies. We know the troubles which can be stirred by others' jealousies. We cannot so lightly dispose of our cousin's person. No"—as Swain would have spoken again—"we will not speak of it further. We shall communicate with the Emperor, advising him you and the Caesar both are honored guests. Afterwards—"

Swain interrupted coldly with a force not to be denied. "The Caesar has with him, too, a Norseman who is my enemy, an outlaw in all Byzantium and the Christian West. I demand—"

"You may not demand aught of us, who are Guardian of the Sepulcher." The King's expression was harsh, but his voice was gentle. "For the Caesar's bodyguard, and their leader, they are in Jerusalem as pilgrims. Sir Olvard has told you our will in this matter. If you remain, it must be on the terms he stated. Your men and Olvir Rosta's are guests of the Holy City, so long as you remain in peace."

Swain felt the old knight's shoulder nudging his, caught a warning glint in Goulbain's cavernous eyes, a taunting light in the Caesar's.

"I am the Emperor's messenger," he said quietly. "If I am not welcome—"

Amalric dismissed the suggestion with a courtly wave.

"Here in Jerusalem you are both welcome and honored, Swain. But it is our wish to compose the differences between the Emperor and the Caesar. We who guard the limits of paynimry cannot afford to quarrel. So, we pray you, do not be disturbed for our good intent. We shall talk again, and word of this shall go to Constantinople by our fastest galley. Doubt not, all shall yet be well, and you have our pledge you shall not lose honor with the Emperor."

His mouth quirked in the loose smile which Swain thought indicated weakness no less than good humor. A ruler, this, who dreaded enemies as he did decisions.

"I am not concerned for the Emperor's favor," Swain said with an answering show of teeth in his beard. "And if my tongue has seemed rough, I have used it so to our Norse kings, aye, and to the Emperor."

"That he has," Andronicus yawned. "I cry you peace, Swain. This is a pleasant land. If we would shed blood, there are always paynims to kill."

He broke off, peering over Swain's shoulder. "Ah, but the royal sister comes. Have we not debated enough of what you shall surely dismiss with my brother's composition, royal cousin? Surely, a Norse hero like Swain will find pleasure in the lovely ladies of your court."

It was Goulbain who took the hint. He leaped from the dais, and pranced forward, spidery legs weaving in a dance step.

"Way," he cried, brandishing his bauble, "way for the most lovely dame, the Queen Theodora!"

SWAIN wheeled with interest. Here was the second object of his mission. The shapely dame who glided up the room with the swaying gait of these half-Eastern folk, attended by her train of ladies, knights and pages, was the widow of Amalric's brother Baldwin, the third of that name. She was youthful for a widowed queen, youthful as Kristin, Swain thought, but despite her pallid beauty, by no reckoning so beautiful. He stared at her curiously, seeking a suggestion of her character that he might report to Manuel. Her face was a mask, her full mouth set in a blank smile, her blue eyes empty as a rock pool; but when Andronicus thrust his bulk past Swain and stalked to meet her, she came alight like a kindled lamp.

Swain's interest tightened. They made a noticeable couple, she looking up at him in mute admiration of his splendid manhood, he bending from his great height to murmur in her ear.

"Would it please you," Swain said to Sir Olvard, "to present me to the Queen?"

Sir Olvard plucked his beard, and blinked. "You a squire of dames, Swain! I know they call you King's bane. Would you be Queen's bane, too?"

"I would judge how she compares with the Emperor's women," Swain answered bluntly. "Or Kristin."

"The Jorsalafarer's daughter? Hah, there you have a bird of another feather." The old knight sighed in the half-melancholy way he had. "These folk are not like ours. The paynim's touch is on the land, albeit we have banished the false Mahound. Which puts me in mind, my son, that you spoke the King like a true Norseman, but remember he is not of the mould of our kings, who will debate with common men." His shrewd eyes probed Swain's. "You have

a reason for all you do and say, I see. Come!"

Queen Theodora suffered herself to be diverted from the Caesar's compliments with a pettishness which melted under the impact of Swain's rugged strength, as he bowed over her hand—and it was of a piece with all he did that he could not move awkwardly.

"Another giant," she exclaimed. "My ladies must envy me who have three in attendance at the one time. But indeed, I have seen many like you, Sir Swain, amongst the Varangians at the Emperor's court."

"Oh, Swain is no mere Varangian," Andronicus chided maliciously. "He is the greatest man in the North, greater than kings."

"The Caesar jests," Swain said, unmoved. "To say truth, one of my errands in Jerusalem is to tell the Queen that the Emperor ever has her in mind, and bids her recall she is thrice welcome in Constantinople."

Theodora's pale cheeks flushed. "Ah, did he so?" she cried. "I shall keep his bidding in mind, for many times I have a longing to walk in the woods of Daphné and drink in the air off the Propontis or watch the chariots in the Hippodrome, and stake my nomismas on Red or Green. We are quiet and very holy in Jerusalem, Sir Swain."

Swain did not miss the scowl on the Caesar's brow as he withdrew, nor did Sir Olvard.

"Ho, Swain," the old knight murmured, "that rough tongue of yours has a cutting edge."

Another had not missed the scene. After Swain had paid his respects to King Amalric on plea of duties with his men, Goulbain pranced up and flung a bony arm around him.

"I'll see our Norseman by the guards," the jester told Sir Olvard. He prattled on until they were out of the royal presence, then turned serious. "I marked your play, Swain. 'Twas well played. Our King is a good king, but over-easy. Who gains his ear gains all. Betimes a fool named Goulbain has it—and all goes right. Betimes one such as Andronicus sings a new song—and all goes wrong. Andronicus means ill to the land. But Andronicus, like the King, has his weakness. You have seen it, you have set it alight, even as he has set alight a flame in our foolish Queen. Let us keep these flames alight, you and I." He paused. "You trust me?" he challenged.

"I have never looked in a man's eyes without knowing whether I could trust him or no," Swain answered simply.

"Hah, so! Then trust me to do what I can by carrying love messages, and mouthing distortions of gossiped bits, aye, and those white lies which lovers love. The Queen is a scant five feet of vanity, but the Caesar has seven—and moreover, a conscience mailed in steel of proof."

Swain gripped the hand of the lean man in motley.

"I had need of a friend at this moment," he said. "I shall not forget."

As he wound his way in his cloak through the narrow Street of the Templars descending Mount Moriah, he chuckled to himself, which was not his wont.

"It is good to know a man's appetite," he thought. "Now, Loge would call this black magic, and preen himself like a snow goose in mating season."

SWAIN sat in his quarters, honing a keener edge to Skullbiter. Eric and Loge, drinking wine across the hearth, moved restlessly.

"It is to be seen that your wits are working, Swain," said the forecastleman, "for this task is your habit at such times."

"You had best set your wits to tasks for our carles," put in Loge. "They are become ripe for a strand hewing. We may not loose them in the street with Olvir's folk." And when Swain did not answer, he added: "Who is the long, dark man who waits upon you nights? He has the look of a wizard."

"He is the King's wizard," Swain rejoined, thumbing his blade.

Loge started jealously. "If you have need of spells—"

"This is not your land, dwarf. Your spells would never work in the shadow of the Sepulcher." Swain sheathed Skullbiter. "As for our carles, and Olvir's, here is Sir Olvard come to tell us what we shall do about them."

The old knight entered the low doorway.

"The King agrees," he said. "Your men are to ride to Kerak, the Castle of the Desert, beyond the Dead Sea, whence they can wet their blades in plundering the paynims' caravans between Damascus and Cairo. Olvir's shall go to the northern marches, many days distant." He smiled with relief. "This is a load off my shoulders, Swain. There can be no brawling in the city, and the marches will be safer."

"Aye," said Swain. "Olvir's men may taste, now, the steel of their Seljuk tentmates."

"Doubt not they will fight the better," Sir Olvard replied stoutly. "The Caesar remains here as hostage for them, in effect. And to say truth, Swain, such scrapings of the North care not whom they fight, so be the plunder is in plenty."

"That is to be seen," Swain said. "Eric, do you go with Sir Olvard, and make certain our carles are ready for landfaring. What, does it not please you, Bitling, to be ahorse after wearing out your legs in tramping to the Holy Places?"

Eric, who had risen instantly, wagged his head.

"The Emperor ever has her in mind and bids her recall she is thrice welcome in Constantinople," said Swain, and Theodora's pale cheeks flushed.

"This is not like you, Swain," he said almost reproachfully. "But if I must serve as the hawk's lure, so be it."

Loge glowered at Swain after Sir Olvard and Eric had gone. But before he could speak John Palaeologos entered.

"What is this I hear?" exclaimed the drungarios. "Your Norsemen leave for the eastward, and Olvir's for the north?"

"To keep them from each other's throats," Swain answered placidly.

"But my Greeks have scores to settle!"

"They are not at feud. We'll find work for them, John. What of the letters for the Emperor?"

"They sailed from Jaffa two days since." The Greek grinned. "I could write the Emperor's answers here, Swain. There is a small matter of a subsidy in gold pieces Amalric could ill do without. The palace was gay on them tonight." He sobered. "And in truth, that is not to the King's credit. The Emperor's gold is granted for the protection of the marches, not for jongleurs and hawking parties and feasts. I hear gossip in the City that the Patriarch has protested to the King the spending of the Holy Land's revenues upon the entertainment of a known infidel like Andronicus."

"What else do you hear?" Swain questioned.

"That the people mislike the intimacy between Queen Theodora and Andronicus. The Patriarch spoke of that, too. It has been marked." Palaeologos grinned again. "A Greek of my connection had thought of you as suitor, Swain. He said: 'Better a Norse viking than a profligate Comnenos.'"

"The Caesar is nigh a foot better than I," Swain answered solemnly.

Loge crouched forward eagerly. "What of a love potion, Swain? And spells! I have small skill, perhaps, but such spells could not offend the Sepulcher."

Swain seemed to consider. "Why, there is a task set for you, dwarf," he said. And to the drungarios, "It would not be amiss if you let it be heard I had a Lapp wizard working for me to raise my height."

"Aye, so?" Palaeologos regarded him, puzzled. "I took this in jest."

"It would do the land no good to have Andronicus as heir to Amalric," Swain answered, stony-faced. "See to your Greeks, John. I cannot say more, but we are moving toward an issue. There may be weapon-work for them to do."

"Yet you send your vikings hence?" Palaeologos protested.

"Sleep with an ear to windward, John," Swain responded. "I know not of your Bodyless Ones, but I seem to hear the shuttles of the Norns aweaving."

A light of understanding dawned in the Greek's face.

"Hah, I begin to see! You plan a strong push for the Queen. It might be, it might be, Swain! But move warily. If the King hears of what you—"

"It will not be I who move," Swain said. "Loge, be off about your hell's-brew—and do you speak warily, John, not too little, not too much, as Rolf Ganger said when he cut the carle's throat."

When he was alone he unsheathed Skullbiter again, and fell to honing it. Presently there was a scratch on the door, and a lean, cloaked figure glided into the room.

"Welcome, Goulbain," Swain greeted the jester as he revealed his glittering costume, innocent of cap and bells. "You see I made a sharp edge, it may be, for a lofty throat."

"You shall have need of it," replied the man in motley. He raised his arms overhead in a gesture as if he discarded one character for another. His dark features quivered; his deep-set eyes glowed. "Twice these past days disguised messengers from Massoud have penetrated to Andronicus. And today there came a trader of Tripoli, but I knew his hot eyes and the deadness of his skin for a hasheesh-eater's. He was an Assassin from Sinan, the Lord of Death, and he did not carry dagger or neck-string for I searched him while he slept awaiting the Caesar's answer."

Goulbain drew up a stool, and advanced his head close to Swain's.

"I think it will happen thus, and the Greeks must be—"

His voice sank to a whisper, and Swain nodded from time to time, the slow tinkling of steel on stone rising and falling in the silence of the room.

Skullbiter glowed red in the flickering lamplight.

CHAPTER VI

SWAIN'S MAGIC

IN afteryears Swain's habit was to remark of the songs the skalds sang of his deeds in Jorsalaheim that they reminded him of Og Maddad's son, who bought six sheep—but two of them lambed on the road. Of all the folk in the Holy City, Goulbain alone knew fully the tale of the wiles he brought against Andronicus to thwart the Caesar's plot, the two of them laboring with cunning skill to trap the Caesar in a web self-woven of his own vices.

"Ho, Bitling," he would chuckle to Eric, "you should have seen what a bower-viking I became! There was never a tavern-wench who could make greater moon-eyes or lap flattery's broth like that Queen."

"And had I been there," Eric would retort, "it would have been my thought you were lost

amongst the skerries, and I would have cast a cable to tow you forth with all oars bending."

"For that reason did I send you to Kerak," Swain would boom back at him. "A simple man lacks wits to match such guile as the Caesar's."

There was much talk about the court and in the city of Swain's devotion to Theodora, but in all he said and the rumors he spread he made plain that he attended her as the Emperor's emissary. He made friends with the Patriarch by assuring His Beatitude of the flourishing state of the Iceland and Greenland bishoprics, and telling tales of the vast land beyond, the richest land in the world, its limitless forests inhabited only by tawny heathen, who should be ripe fruit for Holy Church. And then he would speak casually of the need for a closer tie between Jerusalem and Constantinople.

Shamelessly, he devised imaginary discussions he had heard in the Imperial Court of Theodora's charms, tales which caused the Queen's vague eyes to brighten and set her to preening before the courtiers, as one who says, "Poor widow that I am, the mightiest of monarchs would have me for his consort." And when Andronicus was by, he would hint of Manuel's interest in her so bluntly as to make the Caesar mottle with rage. There was a further message he had for the King's ear, he said, glancing so straight at Theodora that she blushed, but that must wait for the Emperor's response to their messages as to his first errand —and his eye shifted to Andronicus, who stamped out of the room in fury.

He came to stand so well with Amalric that Sir Olvard paid him unusual praise.

"I had thought you a brawling viking, who knew naught but the runes the sword sings. But it is in my mind that your tongue has other words at beck, Swain."

Loge, watching him ride forth with the royal hawking parties, Andronicus jealous of every attention Theodora showed him, the King beside him, would strut back to the Hospital and pass amongst Palaeologos' Greeks, slant eyes glimmering mysteriously, tossing them veiled suggestions of the hidden powers possessed by so potent a wizard as himself. He throve like an Oslo trader.

"How went it, Swain?" he would ask at eventide. "Hah, she favors you! That is easily seen. And the Caesar! An envy as hungry as Fenris-Wolf gnaws his vitals. You see, these Christian shrines have no power against love magics!"

"So you give me no credit for myself, dwarf?" Swain would banter him, never revealing that after smelling once, and tasting, the Lapp's brew—which was sweet and savory enough—he had dumped it in a brazier.

There was a restlessness in the Holy City these days. Sir Olvard spoke of it, and Palaeologos and Goulbain. The King and the Patriarch felt it, the Greek and Italian traders, and the lightminded nobles of the court. Eric's Norsemen had wrecked a Cairo caravan; Olvir's outlaws were raiding paynim villages toward Damascus. But there was no retaliation. The very air was tight and sultry, as if an earthquake impended, Sir Olvard said. The traders were hastening frenziedly to dispose of the plunder the Norse raiders had sent in to the city, Palaeologos reported. Goulbain was more explicit.

"Common men and women do not know; they feel," he explained on one of his late visits to Swain. "I know of the messengers from Massoud, who come to Andronicus by stealth and in disguise. None other knows, save you. The Assassin has gone, and none of his brethren have followed him. That, too, I know, for it is my task to see that the King is safe from their attacks. But none other knows, save you. And I may not tell even the King I watch. He is still charmed by Andronicus, by the legends the jongleurs compose about the giant warrior who has challenged his brother for the dominion of the Eastern world. Yet even the King senses an unease. He gives no attention to the kingdom. All he thinks of is diversion. I could tell you— But what use? The time has come to move the Greeks."

The next morning Swain sent most of Palaeologos' men into camp on the Jordan, explaining to Sir Olvard that they had become irked by the confinement of the Hospital. To Palaeologos he said more.

"I may not tell you what I look for, John. Be close of mouth. Keep your folk under arms. You shall hear from me soon."

"So it be soon, I care not," replied the Greek. "But it is true, what the traders say, Swain?"

"What?"

"You—and Theodora?"

"I wed a queen on any terms?" jeered Swain. "Use your wits, John. And trust me."

"That will I," answered Palaeologos. "You bemuse me, Swain. But however you throw the knucklebones, my wager is on your cast."

Yet when the Caesar launched his stroke it was as unexpected as an arrow from a thicket.

THE court rode forth as usual, a long train of nobles, knights and ladies, richly clad, the men armed only with hunting-swords and spears, after them a tangle of pages leading spare horses, hawkers and prickers, with coupled hounds vigilant to flush the fleet desert gazelles. And behind all, the customary escort of armored men and horse-archers, for, no matter how eased the moment, not even the Court of Jerusalem slighted the mishaps of paynim warfare.

The wind was off the distant mountains of Lebanon, with a frosty edge to it Swain savored as a faint memory of his own Orkney gales. He was the less ready to cry caution when they ventured farther and farther afield across the Jordan, following a constant stream of fowl, with the hawkers' exultant cries ceaselessly rising above the pounding of hoofs. "Ha, lass! Off jess—and away! Take him, take him!"

They had come opposite a darkling wood to the eastward when suddenly there was a flutter of white in the greenery and a horde of paynims rode out at them. Amalric, unmailed, rallied with the pride of his crusading ancestry. But Swain's first thought was to shout to Palaeologos, at his heels: "Back to your men, John! Come to us fast."

Then he tore Skullbiter from its sheath, crying, "To us, Olvard! To us, old staunch heart!"

He galloped in front of the King, who was charging the paynims, hunting-sword in hand. He glanced aside once to see that Andronicus had snatched at Theodora's bridle-rein, and was leading her away—and chuckled to himself.

Hoofs thudded around him. He was in the midst of a maelstrom of charging Seljuk riders, wielding Skullbiter as a steel thunderbolt to guard the King's naked head. Then old Olvard and the escort thundered up, and Swain could look around him again. Andronicus and Theodora were disappearing into the wood—and into the maw of a second wave of heathen horsemen. One of her arms was flung up in a frantic gesture of appeal.

"Heh," he said to himself. "If there was a serf in the Orkneys would take you, Jarl Harald would buy his stead from him. But we may save you yet for spite of what you are." He chuckled again. "And at that, it is my rede you will have a liking for the ill carle."

The Seljuks began to give ground as soon as Andronicus and his prey were out of sight. They gave ground faster when Palaeologos galloped up to strengthen Sir Olvard with his Greeks, who had followed according to Swain's plan at a discreet distance.

King Amalric was frantic. "After him, Swain," he screamed. "He had betrayed us, the false swine! Do you realize she is my brother's widow, next to me heir to the kingdom? After them! You may have anything of me—but after them! He has kidnaped her like any village wench, without bell, book or candle. And the paynims aided him with his consent!"

Swain wiped Skullbiter carefully on his horse's mane.

"You had warning, King," he said. "The carle kidnaped my ward, who was twice a queen. Why should he not kidnap a lesser woman, who was but once a queen? But if it pleases you, and for the reason that it pleases me, also, I will pursue him as far as I may."

KING AMALRIC'S hall of audience was empty and very quiet. Only Goulbain sat on the edge of the dais, studying his bauble. Amalric looked up from a cupped hand, dreary-eyed, as Swain entered, dusty and bloodspattered.

"By your leave, King," Swain said, and wiggled himself out of a mailcoat. "I had this of a dead heathen. They would seem to be men of scant girth."

"Theodora?" the King asked in a tired voice.

"It is my grief to say that I left her with the Caesar, and without benefit of clergy, in Sinan's country."

"The Assassins?" the King exclaimed, startled.

"There are no evil cupmates with whom Andronicus will not consort," answered Swain. "You would not heed me."

"I was wrong," the King said.

Goulbain's bauble smote the dais with a jingle of bells. "Spoken like a king, brother," he exclaimed. "By the eternal verities of truth, you shall justify me!"

"You would have said that of Swain before," the King answered bitterly.

"I would," said Goulbain. "For what a king must learn, brother, is that he is but a common man who has an uncommon man's opportunities."

The King roused himself.

"Goulbain, my brother," he said, "you have been the one man I might truly call so. Perhaps I shall have another. Swain, I must tell you I have heard from the Emperor. All that you have said he has justified, which was unnecessary. He had ordered the Opsikian, the Optimatum, the Bucellarian and the Anatolic thema to march. He is bringing over troops from Europe, including the Varangians and the Tagmata of the Imperial Guard. There are a hundred thousand troops on the marches of Iconium this day. The Imperial fleet is at Jaffa, and with it Queen Kristin of Norway and her husband, your friends. They are to aid us in Massoud's ruin. And all this I owe to you. Otherwise, I do not know what harm Andronicus must have wrought on this feeble kingdom."

He paused.

"Tell me, Swain, will you stay to help save the Holy Land again?"

"Yes," said Swain.

"Why?"

Swain rubbed his head. "To say truth, I am not sure, except there is a feeling here that warriors are needed. I think this White Christ might have been a stout carle. Thangbrand Willibald's son thought so, and he was a good man in shieldwall until he became Christian. I have thought"—Swain hesitated—"I am not sure, King, but I think this White Christ and

I might understand each other. And if He was a true man we could come together. Also," Swain added, as one who thinks afterward, "it is to be remembered that I have two enemies to destroy. Olvir means nothing to you, King. He means as much to me as Andronicus does to you. I would destroy both. And both I shall."

Goulbain jingled his bells on the edge of the dais.

"We have heard good talk, brother," he said.

CHAPTER VII

FOR THE TRUE CROSS!

SWAIN sat his horse again on the Hill of the Pilgrims, but this time his back was turned to the Gate of David and the shimmering glory of Jerusalem. On his left was King Amalric; on his right the Patriarch, resplendant in embroidered robes over a warrior's mail, supported proudly in its golden, jeweled sheath the glittering menace of the True Cross, the very symbol of Christ's martyrdom, which was carried from the altar of the Holy Sepulcher only to lead the hosts of Christendom in battle.

Goulbain was behind the King, a sober cloak covering his gaudy jester's raiment. Eric and Loge sat by Swain with John Palaeologos, and all their people, Norse and Greeks. There, too, were the Commanders of the Temple and the Hospital, old Sir Olvard and the lesser officers of the Orders, and a great array of the nobles and knights of the Kingdom.

Suddenly, the King raised his arm. "See," he cried. "Is that not she?"

Swain nodded, his eyes never leaving the approaching column of dust on the Pilgrim's Road.

"It is Kristin's self," he answered.

The ordered ranks stirred, men standing in their stirrups for a better view. Swain's harsh features relaxed as he considered the Queen, bestriding her horse as capably as any of her following, her gracious form outlined by its corselet of scale armor, the westering sun twinkling on the golden crown encircling her winged helm, her matchless golden hair floating behind her like a victor's wake above the folds of her red cloak.

"Aye, Kristin's self," he repeated, more to himself than to the King. "Kristin, King's daughter and King's mother. A queen she has been, and a queen she is. And by the Hammer, a living Valkyr of the Gods!"

The King spurred his horse.

"Forward," he called. "Her Mightiness is the first Northern queen to honor us. Shall we be lacking in honor to her?"

The horsemen of the Kingdom flowed right and left under the brow of the hill to make way for her. Her column halted at a blare of trumpets, and she rode on with only her husband, Grim, beside her.

"Ho, Swain," she hailed merrily, and using Greek, so that all might understand, "How many has Skullbiter bitten?"

The Norsefolk yelled appreciative laughter, and Swain's face lighted in one of his rare smiles.

"The Biter has gnawed his bit, Sigurd's daughter," he answered. "It is good to see that you have ploughed his keel-furrow, for this is a fair land, which the holy men have not belied. Also, its need is great. But now I must bid you dismount, even as we do, for it is not fitting that man or woman should otherwise look first on the City of the White Christ." His smile broadened. "The skalli folk at home may chuckle over the hearthfires, but that was how Swain Asleif's son felt when he stood here."

"What Asleif's son has done, so must Sigurd's daughter," she retorted.

Grim was at her stirrup before Swain and Amalric had dismounted, but she waved him away and vaulted lightly to the ground. She stepped forward to meet the King, Grim at her left hand, since he was habited to the ways of courts, his blue eyes gay in his blunt, clean-shaven Irish face.

But her first greeting was to her foster father. She came spontaneously into Swain's embrace, and gave him her lips, in the ancient Norse fashion.

"You have made me happy, fostri," she said. "But for you, indeed, I might never have come to the White Christ's city. Truly, you have aided me to make oar-music in my father's keel-furrow."

Swain handfasted Grim Gusli, with a warm: "And give credit to this carle, for it does not need a raven's eye to see he has wrought his stint."

"I have done what I might," grinned Grim, and bowed to the King, who had stood by in patient admiration.

Swain turned to Amalric, speaking with the rude dignity and authority which had gained him place wherever he fared.

"Guardian of the Holy Sepulcher and King of Jerusalem, I make known to you the most valiant lady of the Northlands, Kristin, who writes herself Queen of Norway, and King's daughter and King's mother, she who was fathered by Sigurd the Jorsalafarer, who was your father's friend. Kristin, this Knight of the White Christ, champion and warrior, who has ridden with me against the paynims, is written the Most Mighty Amalric, Guardian of the Holy Sepulcher and King of Jerusalem."

"Welcome to the Holy City, Kristin," Amalric exclaimed gallantly. "You would be welcome, if you came alone or with but this knight, your husband, for company." He gave his hand to

Grim, who accepted it in the Norse fashion, without bended head. "But you are thrice welcome, coming hither with this puissant host my cousin Manuel has intrusted to you. As Swain has said, our need is great. The paynims have been driven once from our marches by dint of Swain's wit and valor, and now they muster for a second attack."

He gestured towards the Patriarch, who was riding down hill to join them.

"You see, we have been constrained to bring forth the True Cross, Itself, so that all Christians must feel that they fight in defense of that living fabric upon which died the Saviour whom they serve. It is our Standard. It leads us into battle for the Faith. This has been the custom since our ancestors unearthed It at the siege of Acre. And always It has led us to triumph." He shook his head sadly. "But the Christians of the West are not so faithful in aid as in other days, and here in the Holy Land we have let our feet be led into idle paths. For perceiving which I owe much to Swain," he concluded, forcing himself to smile.

Kristin had sobered under his words, and at sight of the gorgeous Reliquary, before which all heads were bowed, her lips trembled and a look of awe tinged her lovely face. She dropped to her knees, and crossed herself.

"So my father taught me," she said. "His lips had touched Its mystic presence. But that I—Ah, King Amalric, I never dreamed—"

"Who could be more worthy?" Amalric responded, and knelt beside her. "Ho, Your Beatitude," he summoned the Patriarch, "Queen Kristin craves your blessing, and would pledge her homage to the Cross."

All around them nobles and knights unhelmed, the footmen kneeling. Only Loge hesitated, waiting to snatch off his headgear until Swain doffed.

"Do you think It's real?" he muttered to Eric. "By my reckoning, that would mean more than a hand of centuries, and I never saw the tree yet—"

"Quiet, you Lapp sorcerer," whispered Eric. "Would you bring the death curse on us—let alone Swain's hand?"

Loge grumbled into silence.

THE Patriarch halted beside Kristin, lifted the butt of the Reliquary from his stirrup-boot and extended It to her lips, the while his sonorous voice intoned a cadenced Latin blessing. King Amalric assisted her to her feet, flushed rosy with exaltation. Next Grim must be presented to Patriarch and Relic, his soldierly form all but shrinking humbly from contact with the most sacred object in Christendom. As he stood back, the Patriarch raised the massive Reliquary at arm's height above the heads of the column crowding the Pilgrim's Road below; and his voice boomed out in a benediction, which was echoed by a mighty murmur, like the rustling of a forest. Then he reined his white steed in a demi-volte, as if to prove himself warrior as much as priest, and paced slowly up the hillside, the Cross slanted forward in his grasp in sign that It should always lead the van of the soldiers of Christ.

A great cry swelled upward in response, a cry in many tongues—"Forward, in Christ's name!" "For the White Christ, Varangs!" "Kyrie, Kyrie Eleison!" "The Cross calls! Follow, follow!" And over all, and again and again, the reiterated chorus: "Forward, forward, for Christ and Holy Land!"

Swain tugged resentfully at his ruddy beard.

"A pity, King," he growled. "This would have been the moment to press home a charge."

"They will not forget," responded Amalric. "But first we must make Queen Kristin familiar with our Court. It would not be becoming for her to ride into Jerusalem with strangers."

He beckoned to the great officers of the Kingdom, the Seneschal, the Constable, the Masters of the Hospital and the Temple, and the principal feudal lords, who, Swain knew, were ill servants, slow to serve. The Prince of Antioch and the Count of Tripoli had been forgiven attendance at the muster because their northern levies would have been compelled to a useless double journey; but here were nobles such as the Lords of Belgarde, Sidon, Tyre, Acre, Beirout, Tourtosa and many another, together with the priors and sub-priors of the Orders, who held the castles of the marches.

They pressed forward eagerly, drawn as much by Kristin's beauty and the novelty of meeting a stranger queen as by any sense of feudal devotion. But Amalric, moved by one of his capricious shifts of humor, checked them as abruptly as he had invited them.

"Swift as jess-hawks to a lure," he said wryly. "Not so fast, my lords. Our heralds would be put to it to straighten the order of precedence did you all seek to come first. Here are two closer by. With permission, Your Mightiness—Sir Olvard Thorvald's son, your countryman, your father's friend, the oldest, as he is the stoutest, of my knights. And this is Goulbain, the King's jester, than whom he has no trustier counselor."

Sir Olvard leaped from saddle as featly, in his armor, as a fledgling knight, his face alight with pride and joy as he strode to embrace Kristin. Goulbain was less demonstrative. His creased and wrinkled features lost their customary saturnine expression; his sad eyes, in their hollow sockets, were warm and kind. But as he passed the King he shook his bauble in a gesture of reproof, which none marked but Swain.

"Aye, so! Why must Amalric play the fool

instead?" Swain muttered in his beard. Now, more than ever since his coming to the Holy Land, he distrusted its decadent nobility, their sturdy Frankish blood sapped and thinned by wanton luxuries and dissipations, their onetime loyalty to King and Faith entangled in subtle Asiatic intrigues. Yet he would not have had Amalric unnecessarily offend them. Sir Olvard and Goulbain were not men to be hurt in vanity by giving place to others. Disgusted, he turned his back upon the pageantry on the hilltop, and sought out Eric and Loge, who were eyeing intently the Emperor's column of reinforcements, resuming their advance up the Pilgrim's Road.

"Ho, carles," he greeted them. "Has Manuel sent us better than the scourings of the Golden Horn brothels?"

"They might be better, they might be worse," offered Loge, spitting in the dust.

"Your tongue must be bitter from this Jerusalem wine, Lapp," Eric rebuked him goodnaturedly. "Why, you misbegotten sorcerer, what more would you ask, and a goodly fleet to attend them on the coast? No, Swain, the Emperor has done well by us. What they lack in numbers they replenish in quality. Look you"—as the column approached, marching with the firm discipline of the Byzantine armies, every officer and man in place, weapons burnished, boots whole, uniforms neat, baggage and siege trains keeping position, the deputates, or surgeons, riding the flanks to make certain none was so footsore or sick as to merit transfer to the ambulance carts—"that is what I call a good weapon-showing."

Swain's keen glance swept the column. The end was not in sight, but he could identify sufficient units to sample the promise it held.

"A full bandon of the Varangians—good!" he commented. "An ala of the Hunnish archers—they were good comrades, eh, carles? A turma of cataphracti—let us watch how they challenge these Frankish knights. Beyond there, I see a body of Cretan slingers—Manuel boasts they can outfight bowmen at the proper range. And those folk coming after should be Macedonian and Thracian heavy-armed footmen—they stand well in shieldwall, albeit more loosely-disposed than is our wont. Aye, carles, I doubt not we shall contrive with them, if the ale holds out, as Ingri Thord's son said when forty sat down to one sheep."

"Enough dull wits at the point of the horn for Loge to practice his arts on," suggested Eric.

"This is a poor land for a sorcerer," the Lapp complained. "Over-many priests, over-much holiness—and they keep their women within doors nights. If I—"

"What was that?" Swain interrupted him.

The clank and rattle of marching men, the thud of hoofs and the shrill neighs of horses, the clamor of voices that had overlain the Hill of the Pilgrims—these sounds were suddenly pierced by a woman's scream, a scream of surprise and indignation, not of fear. And on the heels of the scream came Goulbain's voice, ringing out above the turmoil like a chime of tenor bells.

"Swain, ho, Swain!"

SWAIN whirled. Men were running right and left, tripping over one another in confusion. Horses were prancing and plunging, kicking and squealing, throwing their riders. Lances tossed in air; swords were brandished in futile anger. But this was not what caught Swain's attention. Kristin was on her knees, struggling to escape the attack of a slender, agile man in black, who clutched her long hair in one hand the while he stabbed at her neck, seeking an opening betwixt cuirass and helm. King Amalric was down on his back, another man in black slashing at his face and throat. A third man in black was battling, dagger to dagger, with the jester. A fourth lay dead.

All this Swain saw in the winking of an eye. He was running toward Kristin before he had grasped the significance of the scene, wrenching Skullbiter from scabbard. Eric said afterward that Loge must have cast a swift spell, and pinned wings to his feet; but all Loge would say was that Swain was a fair chieftain and deserved what luck he had. However the issue befell—whether it came of one of Loge's spells, or by the favor of the White Christ in return for the services Swain had wrought, or because the Old Gods remembered his custom to swear by the Hammer, or belike, was no more than the outfall of Swain's luck—before the man in black could slay Kristin, Skullbiter had slashed him neatly in the waist, so that his legs jumped one way and his head and trunk the opposite.

Swain caught her to him.

"Are you hurt?" he rasped.

She laughed, tugging at her sword. "Not I! In another breath—But the King, Swain!"

As it chanced, Grim Gusli was before them. The Irishman had disentangled himself from a tussle of frantic horses, saw that Kristin was safe and ran to the King's rescue. One sweep of his blade, and the head of the third man in black parted company with his body.

"There is still Goulbain," exclaimed Swain.

"Leave him to me," bade Kristin.

Swain chuckled as he ran beside her.

"It is to be seen that Grim has not tamed you," he said. "Yet a fostri has some rights, the lawmen say, so I will second you in case you lack weaponskill."

"No man but you could say that to Sigurd's daughter," she flashed. "Stand clear, fostri!"

Startled, the man in black looked over his

shoulder, recognized Kristin, and as if an unseen troll guided his movements, spun about and flung himself at her, heedless of the jester at his back. Swain marked then, for the first time, the man's dead, emotionless, putty-white face.

"Take heed for the Queen," cried Goulbain. "'Tis one of Sinan's brood!"

Swain sprang sideways, three feet in air, that he might have room for swordplay without harming Kristin. But he had his trouble for his pains.

Quick as he was, she closed with her attacker, hewed off his dagger-hand at the wrist, and with her backstroke cut him down from collar-bone to chest. She was scarce panting when Swain clapped a congratulatory hand on her shoulder.

"Ho, Grim, Bitling, Loge!" And as an afterthought, "Hither, King! Let us lesson you how we Norsefolk honor a warrior Queen."

"Let us of Jerusalem have a share," replied Amalric, wiping a streak of blood from his face. "For by the Cross and Our Lady's grace, and not passing by Queen Kristin's courage, you and Messer Grim wrought your part. And forget not Goulbain, who slew the first of these vile spawn of Masrouf."

"Say you so?" exclaimed Swain. His huge hand closed around the jester's sinewy fingers. "I counsel you to shift him from motley to armor."

"He could have had it long years past," the King said simply. "Now, how may we honor the Queen?"

"First, a warrior's shield."

"Will this serve?" Old Sir Olvard thrust through the gathering throng. He proffered his Hospitaler's shield. "It has known honorable service, Swain. I would I had not been apart, marshaling the folk."

"What shield more honorable in all the land?" Swain answered, with unusual courtesy. "To me, carles. We'll shield her to her horse. Up, Kristin! Ho, if Sigurd had lived to see this day at Jerusalem's gate!"

Swain, Grim, Eric and Loge poised the shield on their broad shoulders. Sir Olvard gave the laughing Queen a hand, and she sat upon the raised shield as upon a throne, one hand on Swain's helm, one on Grim's. King Amalric, Goulbain and the old Hospitaler walked before to make a path.

And so Queen Kristin, King's daughter and King's mother, was carried over the brow of the Hill of the Pilgrims, while all the folk along the way, even as far as the Gate of David, tossed their hats and cheered.

Ahead of them, in the distance, the gleaming Reliquary of the True Cross was a beam of light, seeming to urge them on as the great procession began to move onward into the city of the White Christ.

CHAPTER VIII

THE KING'S JESTER

KRISTIN sat in the throne of Amalric's dead queen. Grim had a chair of state on his left hand. Goulbain kept his usual seat on the steps of the dais. The occasional jingle of bells, as he toyed contemplatively with his bauble, was the only sound in the dimly lit hall of audience, save for the muffled footfalls of Swain, who was striding restlessly from dais to entrance, where he paused once to peer through the curtains to make certain the King's guards were vigilant. None of the five had spoken since the last of the courtiers and barons had departed.

"Must we be downcast because an enemy has struck?" he exclaimed abruptly, fierce eyes wandering from face to face. "On sea or shore, it is my experience that once an enemy has struck the way is open to strike back, if a carle, but discovers the chink in his armor."

"How strike at Sinan?" Amalric answered, with a trace of weariness. "As easily push back the waves of your sea, Swain. The Old Man of the Mountain—and none knows how old he is—may have a bodily presence, but it is not to be reached or touched. He sits in Masrouf like the foul spirit he is. No man I know has ever seen him. No man has entered to him, and returned."

"He is man, not spirit," Goulbain exclaimed, with an impatient tinkling of bells. "A dagger would make vent in him as in another. And if you would have his alliance, and the service of his minions, all you need do is pay him more than Massoud of Iconium."

"I would not, if I could," the King retorted. "I, the King of Jerusalem, traffic with the Evil One? The Patriach would curse me on my throne."

"Then why not vent him sword or dagger," suggested Grim, "as Goulbain well has said? The Greeks tell us there was never castle they could not breach, given time and means.

"There again am I arrested, in spite of my own power," the King rejoined. He hesitated. "Goulbain knows of this. I have not spoken of it to another. The truth is, the Templars have mysterious traffic with him. Their Master has asserted to me it is for the well-being of the Kingdom. An ill word for me to hear. And doubtful to my ears. But this, at least, is so: Sinan's Assassins walk wide of all who wear the Templars' cross."

"Who is this Master that you cannot bring him to heel?" flouted Swain.

"One of the four masters of the Kingdom," Amalric retorted. "I deceive myself no more than did my ancestors. From the blessed Godfrey's time no king has ruled alone in Jeru-

salem. Always he must consult his policies with the two Orders and the Patriarch. If I flouted the Templars, I should risk rebellion and disaster. And should I—in such a time as this?"

"The headsman's axe is a potent argument," remarked Grim.

Amalric smiled.

"You are new come to this strange land of contradictions," he said. "The Masters of the Orders are as bodyless as Sinan's self. Slay one, and another is put forward to support the beliefs for which the first one died. No, how the Templars consort it with their consciences I cannot say; but consort it they do. Sinan they tolerate, and Sinan tolerates them—doubtless for treasures wrung from the pinched purses of the faithful."

Kristin spoke for the first time, smiting her clenched fist upon the arm of her throne. All turned to her, Goulbain with a light of admiration in his warm brown eyes, which matched Grim's.

"But to suffer this is not to be King in act and deed, Your Mightiness," she cried. "If the Templars favor evil, they flout the White Christ, Himself. Sure, there is a Pope in Rome should have word of it, aye, and every ruler in Christendom."

"I should not be believed," returned the King. "Nor, in very fact, could I give proof of what I have said. Remember, Queen Kristin, the Templars spread across our world. They are a kingdom in themselves."

Goulbain's bells jingled again.

"I can tell you the first counter-charge they'd belch from their throats, my beautiful one," he said. "They would tell this little, mad, hard-won world of ours that Goulbain—the King's fool—who came no man knows whence, is himself an emissary and tool of Sinan. In which they would not be far wrong, for I have made it my concern to know certain of his out-agents, ordering so that I might protect my good brother."

He looked up at Amalric, twisting his features into a grotesque mask of derision.

"Who, to say truth," he added, "is not too apt at caring for his carcass."

Kristin laughed.

"Yet what he says *is* truth," Amalric confirmed. "I have known of Goulbain's dealings. I should have been a fool—and not a wise fool like *my* good brother—had I stayed him. More than once, he has saved me by foreknowledge. It chanced that this time his agents were overbribed. What say you, Goulbain?"

The jester bowed his head. His bauble drooped on the lower step.

"I failed," he said.

Swain and Amalric spoke together, Swain's gruff voice beating down the King's.

"Failed? Who has wrought more for man and friend than you?" asked Swain.

"My brother, you have never failed me!" Amalric insisted.

"Aye," spoke up Kristin, "and I'll swear you have never failed yourself, which you must have done had you not done all you might."

"From what I saw, friend Goulbain," added Grim, "you are a man I'd choose to keep my back in any weapon fray. Aye, by St. Olaf, that I'd swear today or for the past or future."

Goulbain looked up, misty-eyed. "I thank you, friends." A crooked smile lighted his pliant features. "To have been a true fool, mayhap, is better than to boast a false wit."

He sprang to his feet, bells jangling gayly.

"Let's ring away this bickering of the past. What's past is done. But I'll accept my friend Grim's acceptance of the future. It is the future we must reckon with. Sinan is our enemy, as we have known—Sinan, Massoud, Andronicus and Olvir Rosta, all four will strive together to bear us down, and with us the Kingdom, and after, it may be, the Emperor in Constantinople. What would follow that, no man can say. But I'll venture every wight in Christendom would tremble if he knew what we must do with slender, faulty means."

The King settled back on his throne. His hand moved in one of those gestures of futility, exhaustion, which Swain dreaded as signs of the weak streak running like a scarlet thread through the tough fiber of his character.

"The heralds have coursed the land," he said. "We have summoned ban and arrière ban. Every man, who can bear arms or be spared from the march castles, is here. We ride hence in two days' time. What more can we do?"

Kristin, womanly generous, cried out, "Aye, so, what more?"

"Why this," Swain answered fiercely. "We must steel ourselves to any means to win this onfall. The Templars? By the Hammer, I'll hew down this Master if he but dares to stay my hand! And I'll do as much, at need, to certain puling, women-served lordlings I marked here tonight."

The King interrupted him.

"Speak as pleases you, Swain, but remember how they bore themselves when the paynims assailed us by surprise with Olvir."

"I have not forgotten that," Swain retorted. "Nor have I forgotten that the cause of the confusion, in this not too Holy Land, is the evil companionship of my ancient enemy, the Roysterer, and him who has chosen but lately to challenge me—I mean the Caesar. Nor have I forgotten, King, that they flouted you by stealing your sister, your father's daughter, Theodora! Phaugh! I say to you, my friend—for I credit you with friendship."

"That to eternity, Swain," the King exclaimed with sudden firmness.

"Then you will bear with me, if I say that she is not worth the blood of one of my house-

carles. But she and these two sons of Fenris-Wolf, children of the Outer Darkness that you of this South world know not, these three have betrayed your dignity and your father's memory! Aye, and *my* dignity! And for that I'll slay them, soon or late.

"No man shall stay my hand! What? Andronicus, who would have blinded his brother, who laid his foul hands on Kristin here? Olvir, who murdered my mother, the enemy I have pursued to the world's end? No man, I say, shall stay me in my vengeance! I'll follow them into Masrouf, if I must. I'll pluck this Sinan by his beard, and try if his craft can resist the edge of Skullbiter"—the great blade leaped from its sheath and swung in air, glinting ruddy in the lamplight—"at his throat!"

"Skoal!" cried Kristin. And Grim echoed her, "Skoal!" Goulbain's bauble tinkled softly; his eyes glowed in the mask of his face. But Amalric wagged his head forebodingly.

"You are my friend, Swain," he persisted. "I owe you more than life can pay. It is likely I shall owe you yet more. But I must think first, not of you, not of myself, my honor, my father's memory, but of this Kingdom, which is my trust. Without the Templars, the land could not be held, as well they know, the churls!"

GOULBAIN rose lithely to his feet, snapping erect like a sapling bowed in the wind. His voice took on the silvery quality of his bells.

"Bethink you, brother," he counseled, "put by for a breath from your mind the Templars and their plots. Myself, I think they ride apace towards the pit of Evil. But let that be. What your trust forbids that you do, Swain can do, if he will. It is my thought that Sinan's power is a cloud blown up of people's fears. Blow back upon it hardily, and it will be torn to shreds."

"Well spoken," exclaimed Kristin. And Grim affirmed, "What terrors can this Sinan wield more dread than the malice of the sea—and that is an old rune to us Norsemen?"

Swain nodded approval, tugging at the red thatch of his beard, Skullbiter still naked in his hand.

"Aye, leave him to us, brother," Goulbain continued, "if reason claims that we must take the measure of his grave. He has no more terrors for us than have the Templars. They may rant at Swain and Grim. They may call Goulbain your evil genius. But they cannot stay us, do you but stand aside."

"That shall I not," Amalric protested, a hint of petulance in his tone. "Nor would I have you credit me with fear of Sinan or the Templars. But we speak of the future, which is veiled to all of us. Why borrow trouble? Let us bide and see. For the moment, we have Massoud to reckon with. Andronicus and Olvir lack the power to save themselves without his hordes."

"And Sinan's hashish-eaters," prompted the jester. "While his power threatens, no man in the Kingdom is safe—least of all, you, brother. I have staked my head on your life, and sadly will I forfeit it, if needs I must; but I'll rest easier for both of us, once we have pinned down this snake, and drawn its fangs." He grimaced humorously. "It would be a sorry end for a man of laughter to make a jest for the market folk, wagering how far his head would roll from the block."

He winced as Swain gripped his arm.

"Swain would be close by," the Orkneyman boomed in that voice which set the window curtains fluttering, "and Skullbiter would be singing other men's death-songs, aye, and hewing his share of Templars. But we have talked the moon to sleep. Enough, by your leave, King. I hope this White Christ of yours knows how we labor for Him. We are like to have occasion for His aid in days to come." He glanced slyly at Kristin. "The Old Gods', too, it may be. For myself, I could never see harm in more than one god's protection. They must be busy folk, if they work as we do."

He kissed Kristin, handfasted the King and Grim, and stalked from the chamber, Goulbain gliding shadowlike beside him.

The odd pair passed in silence—a silence broken weirdly by the tinkle of Goulbain's bells—through the empty halls of the palace, for there was a prescience between them which did not require words. On the porch they tarried to look out from the height of Mount Moriah across the dark mass of the Holy City, humming drowsily with unseen life. Beyond the Gate of Jehosphat glimmered the campfires of the Emperor Manuel's host.

"A splendid host for this poor land," the jester said. "How think you, Swain? Will it serve?"

"With you and me to lead?" Swain laughed shortly. "Aye, it will serve—short of an Assassin's lucky thrust. But it is my reckoning that all the gods, old and new, deny favor to such niddering folk."

"Belittle them not," begged Goulbain. "I have had the city searched, but who can be sure when it is so thronged with men-at-arms and pilgrims? I pray you, walk warily."

They parted, and Swain set off on the familiar way down the Street of David, and right into the Street of Zion, across the Street of the Holy Sepulcher and all the alleys, byways and lanes in between, to the Hospital of St. John.

At the Hospital gate the guards clashed shields in salute. Swain's folk were all asleep, Eric by custom on a pallet at the door of his cell. Swain stepped over the little forecastle-

man without waking him. A torch flared smokily in a cresset on the wall, its scanty light reflected from an object in Swain's rough couch of furs. It was a dagger, the hilt topped by a leering skull, the blade buried deep enough to have pierced the heart which might have beaten there. Swain drew it forth deliberately, holding it under the torch for closer scrutiny. Poisoned, he perceived. It was a threat, mayhap, a warning, own brother of the weapons which had struck at Kristin and Amalric.

He started to waken Eric, then thought better of the idea.

"The man does not live could have passed Bitling as I did," he muttered to himself. "But here is proof we were right, Goulbain and I. Heh, this Sinan is worth lessoning."

CHAPTER IX

THE RAVEN SCREAMS

IT WAS summer in the Holy Land. The olive groves were blobs of dusty-green, chequering the ripening fields of grain. Fruit orchards and melon patches made vivid displays of color. In the hillside vineyards the grapes hung in huge, succulent, purple bunches.

Swain viewed the scene with the eye of a farmer, his thoughts harking back across the broad seas to his sparse acres on Ronaldshay, of the Orkneys, where his sons would be busied harvesting crops less abundant and nourishing. Afterwards, of course, they would make what they could of the herring run, and if the weather was right, launch a longship or two for a plundering raid to the southward.

"It is a rich land," he confided to Eric. "Give the folk justice and protection, and it would blossom like Franceland or Britain."

"How boots it what a land yield, if the folk be not safe in their beds?" Eric answered gloomily. The little man had been low in his mind since hearing of the dagger in Swain's bed. "There will be more blood than water in those furrows, saving we reap a better ravens' harvest."

Swain laughed at him.

"What, Bitling? With your axe and Loge's bow? Let me but have my way and say, and we'll hew Massoud to fish-bait—aye, and the Caesar and Olvir, too."

It was odd, he thought suddenly, that none of them gave thought to Theodora, who was the immediate cause of this muster of the Kingdom. So much for the cursed wench. She was an excuse for a weapon-showing, but not a reason for it.

Swain, to say truth, for once was reasonably satisfied with the ordering of the host—which was not strange seeing that he had planned it. The Christians moved in three parallel columns: Kristin and Grim, with the Byzantines, marched on the coast road, flanked by the Imperial fleet, ready to cover their advance with its catapults and arbalests from the sea; the King led the center, with the True Cross, the contingents of the Orders and the feudal levies; Swain and his Norsemen, Palaeologos' Greeks and a covering body of Turcopuli were the right wing, which was much weaker than the other two columns—another link in his plan of battle.

SWAIN THE ORKNEYMAN

He would have been more than satisfied had it not been for the presence of so many of the wives and minions of the barons and their knights, together with attendant grooms, pages, huntsmen, prickers and hawkers, and a huge train of camp-followers, male and female, whose carts and sumpter mules cluttered the rear. He was no less incensed by the habit of the Christians to withdraw from the center column, whenever the fancy took them to course the game flushed by the commotion of thousands of folk advancing across the countryside.

"Has Amalric lost his wits?" he fumed to Sir Olvard. "He has seen once, to my knowledge, what comes of marching behind a screen of hawks and hounds and lightminded folk, who doff armor that they may ride the faster. And can you see in your mind Olaf the Glorious, or Halfdan the Black, cramming their dragons with women or burdening their shield-walls with defense of puny varlets?"

"It is their custom," the old Knight responded. "The laws of chivalry demand that a lady attended her knight to battle."

"If they could be of use, I'd keep tongue behind teeth," rasped Swain; "but these soft-handed wenches cannot even buckle on armor or salve a wound."

He protested finally to Amalric, after the host was joined by the forces of the Prince of Antioch and the Count of Tripoli, chief feudatories and marcher lords of the Kingdom. There was a council of barons and chieftains in the King's pavilion, another luxury which Swain thought went ill with serious purpose. The Prince was a little man, dark-visaged, vain, lisping in his speech. He had a chair of state next Kristin, whom he favored in preference to his wife, a circumstance which did not seem to annoy the latter as she preened herself in the outspoken admiration of a group of foppish knights. There was something about her willowy figure and full-lipped, vacant face, which stirred a vague memory in Swain. But he gave it scant heed, holding himself in resentfully until he could snatch a moment alone with Amalric.

"It is our custom up to the moment of battle," the King answered in Sir Olvard's words, adding, "Also, Swain, the women make much of it that Kristin rides with us. I should expose her to enmity did I heed you."

"Kristin is as stout a warrior as any man," Swain retorted. "She leads men to battle, not to bower. And I would call you to mind, too, that this swarm of do-nothings who attend us are a fit cover for spies."

"Goulbain takes heed to that," the King replied patiently. "But you should remember, my friend, that I do not sit on an easy throne. There are few here would not cast me down, if they but dared. Yon jackanapes—" he nodded toward the Prince—"for one, is more jealous than faithful. I must walk warily, not for my own sake, but for the land's."

Swain retired to seek out Goulbain, who listened to him sympathetically.

"But there is naught to be done," he replied sadly. "Amalric has the right of it. These folk are like pretty birds in a garden, yet they will fight, as you have seen. As for the women, and the trash who follow us, they will scatter at the first arrow-flight, and pelt for shelter in Antioch."

"That last I can credit," Swain said grimly. "But no good will come of it. Tell me, who is the Prince's woman he makes so little of?"

The jester laughed.

"Did you not know? She's Theodora's sister."

"And the King's?" Swain's jaw tautened. "I might have seen the resemblance. Aye, they are as like as two eggs out of the same salmon. As great a troublemaker, Goulbain?"

The jester tossed his bauble in air, and caught it deftly.

"It may be," he conceded. "But what woman could be content with such a vain spindling as Raymond? Doubt not she cuckolds him."

"I'd give her a bow-string," Swain snapped. "She's not worthy of steel."

"She beckons me to fetch you to her," Goulbain answered, smiling. "Take heed to her, Swain. For all her vanity, she's subtle as a Genoese merchant."

Swain followed him, unsmiling, to the dais, bent first to buss Kristin's cheek; then turned, blank-faced, to the lady of Antioch, who leaned invitingly towards him.

"A knightly gesture, Messer Swain," she exclaimed. "You must so school our lordlings."

"It is a custom of my country with those we have fathered or fostered," Swain replied sternly.

She pouted.

"And you will not foster so poor Melisande?" she asked.

Swain eyed her from her elaborate headdress to the hem of her green silken robe.

"Your lord sits beside you, Princess," he said. "I have fought many a man, but not for women's favors."

She sank back in her chair, her strange, blank green eyes regarding him like chips of ice.

"It is to be seen that you are come from a cold land," she answered. "If you bide with us, Messer Swain, you would do well to master our code of chivalry. It is the custom of *our* country."

The little man beside her spoke up mincingly.

"Rather, it is to be seen Messer Swain has been well schooled in vagrant princesses, my love. Your cheek is not for every knight, however valiant. Heh-heh-heh! What says Queen Kristin? Heh-heh-heh! What says our beauteous Northern Queen?"

Kristin smiled at him remotely, ignoring Melisande.

"I say, ask King Amalric," she replied in her stumbling Greek. "He will tell you Swain Fostri is better schooled in slaying and making kings, aye, and saving queens, than in bussing princesses. Swain kisses and fights where he will."

Melisande's green eyes were hot, now, with rage.

"Ah, you must know him best, fair Kristin," she said softly.

It was Amalric who answered her.

"My friend, Swain Asleif's son, knows well—and best—all men and women who consider rightly the joyous things of life," he said bleakly. "You will do well to be lessoned by his example, sister. If he lacks the accolade, yet do I hold him the best knight in this sore-stricken Holy Land."

He rose. "The council is ended, Queen Kristin, my lords and ladies."

Swain bent his head to the Princess' furious mask.

"I will school you in one lesson, Princess," he said. "In days to come, you will be happier in your bower than where hoofs pound and steel flickers."

He strode from the pavilion without giving her time to answer. At the entrance Goulbain stayed him.

"Ah, Swain, what a mess of hatred you have brewed," murmured the jester. "I see plainly I must guard you folk against more than the Assassins' poisoned daggers."

IT FELL out as Goulbain predicted. That night a fellow was seized by the jester's men, seeking to enter the tent Kristin shared with Grim. All he could tell the tormentors was that a stranger had given him dagger and phial, together with a fat purse and a warning that death would be his portion if he did not do as bidden.

It fell out, also, as Swain had predicted. Three days later, the King's column penetrated the mountainous country on the far side of the marches. Not a trace of the Seljuks was to be seen. Signs of game were plentiful, and the restless courtiers could not be deterred from cantering on ahead, attended only by the women and servants of their train. Swain heard of it by a messenger from Goulbain, whose one word of cheer was that the King had heeded the jester's advice and remained with the ponderous mass of the main body. "But for that," growled the Orkneyman, "it would be of the same piece as Amalric's witless foray over Jordan."

The instinct which prompted him when a lee shore lurked behind a fog-bank did not fail him in this emergency, as he surveyed the hazy-blue peaks ribbing the skyline on every side.

His slender force was well-mounted and war-hardened, compact and in hand. His Turcopuli were familiar with the country. With them as guides, he flung his men into a ravine eastward of the wider gut the King's column was to traverse. They had ridden scarce as long as was necessary to rouse his Norsemen to grumbling for food when they stumbled on a troop of whitecloaked horsemen, passing out of a side gulley leading from right to left. Norsemen, Greeks and Syrians raised a lusty cheer, and gave chase. The fleeing Seljuks were joined by a second body and a third. And the combined groups stood in close array to receive the Christians' onset.

"Massoud cast a wide net for the fools we must save," Swain said. "Be sure, these folk are but the counter-weights to draw shut the seine he's spread about them."

His Norsemen and Greeks smashed into the Seljuks at a gallop, the Turcopuli loosing sheafs of arrows over their heads. The enemy could not stand so heavy a thrust, and fled westward, the Turcopuli harrying them on while Swain reformed his own carles and the Greeks into close column. He caught up with the Seljuks where they had rallied to hold the narrow exit of the gulley into the broad belly of the central pass; but again Swain hammered them so powerfully that the whitecloaks were burst asunder, and the Christians rode clear of them out upon the level surface of a meadow rimmed by mountain ridges.

Two bowshots distant, a torrent of Seljuks swirled around a clump of gaudy figures, pinned fluidly like a fragment of wreckage in a whirlpool. The wind carried a shrill tumult of voices, trumpet-blasts, the reedy notes of hunting-horns. Swain saw at a glance that he was outnumbered, but he shouted his men to the charge, heedless of the scattered enemy riders in his rear. He was eager to discover if Olvir or Andronicus was in the opposing ranks. Neither of them showed to him, and the Seljuks must have thought his handful the advance guard of the whole Christian host, for they dispersed in a dozen directions, content to keep him under observation from the safety of the nearer ridges.

Raymond of Antioch and the Princess Melisande were amongst the first of the hunting party to ride forward to greet Swain.

"By'r Lady," lisped the Prince, "a saint's miracle you came to us in time, Messer Swain! It was a fair bicker, but even such men as we could not have played the paynims overlong. Heh-heh-heh! Stout knaves they are."

Swain looked about him at the huddled corpses within a windrow of whitecloaks.

"It was my wits, and Goulbain's, fetched me hither," he answered dourly. "I did not find the paynims stout to withstand. But I see a dozen knights here, who might have been armored and ready for service the morrow."

The little Prince scowled fretfully.

"Oh, they took their toll for the pass," he returned. "We may well say we won it for the host with our spears and hunting swords."

Swain wondered if he heard Eric's snicker, but at that moment there came a great roar of voices from the lower end of the pass, and the True Cross caught the glint of the sunlight in the van of the King's column.

"Brother Amalric must hear of this," Raymond exclaimed. "We marcher lords, we ever lead the way. My cousin of Tripoli will be sore-spirited he did not come."

Swain was so torn betwixt wrath and amusement that Melisande must repeat her question to him.

"Do you not hear, Messer Swain?" she asked. "You have been a very paladin this day." Her eyes were almost warm as he yielded her a curt glance. "I do not wonder Amalric called you the first knight of Jerusalem. But tell me, I

"Sinan never leaves Masrouf. . . . No, Swain, that evil place is out of God's world."

pray you"—she spurred her horse closer—"who is that marvelous giant of a man who tarries with the heathen on the ridge?"

He followed her lifted arm. She was pointing at Andronicus, robed in Imperial purple—and a pace from him, Olvir's black bush of beard stood forth startlingly against a crimson cloak. They must have been there, under shelter, all this time, emerging now to count the Christian host. He cursed, and felt a hand pinching his leg. Loge was peering up at him questioningly, arrow notched, bow half-drawn.

"What say you?" appealed the Lapp. "A fair shot—and we have missed many chances."

"Not Olvir," Swain answered hoarsely. "Not for your head! But the Caesar, yes. Try not to slay him."

Loge grinned contentedly, and drew his arrow to the barb. But as he would have loosed, the Princess kneed her horse against his arm, and the arrow sped wild.

"Woman, what do you think to do?" Swain rumbled.

"I would not have the big one harmed," she retorted carelessly, and rode off.

Olvir waved mockingly to them, as he and Andronicus disappeared behind a boulder.

Loge stamped resentfully, and shot an overbold whitecloak close by where the pair had been.

"To show I have not boasted, Swain," he said. "And I could put an arrow into her, eh?"

"Let be," groaned Swain. "Her brother is my friend. But call down any curse you can upon her."

"My spells should work better in a heathen land," Loge reflected, "saving she was sired by Fenris-Wolf—which well might be."

SWAIN grumbled, but he was not sorry for the ambushing of the hunting party. It advantaged him in two ways, since it inspired the King to forbid such ventures for the future, and it furthered his master plan in that it had acquainted the Seljuks with the weakness of the right wing of the Christian host. Nor was he deceived by the timidity of the paynims' resistence when the advance was resumed.

"Massoud is no simpleton," he told Amalric and Goulbain that night. "He lures us on to strike when he is ready, but you will see that he will strike as I have planned he should."

"You take much upon yourself, Swain," the King protested. "We cannot afford to lose you."

The Orkneyman never paused in his honing of Skullbiter's gray blade.

"You will not," he said confidently. "I shall not find my doom before I have given Olvir his—and I think the Caesar's."

The next day he was furiously attacked, but held his own, and the weight of the other columns on his left stood him in good stead. Toward evening the host emerged from the mountain barrier upon a spacious level upland where the paynims were deployed, with an effect of countless numbers, tens and tens of thousands, horse and foot. The clashing of their cymbals, the thumping of their drums, their frenzied appeals to Mahound, their false prophet, were reechoed by a second range at their backs. And off to the eastward still other ranges lifted, loftier and more obscure, crowned by a peak Swain recognized as the site of Masrouf.

"It would seem we are never far from Sinan and his Assassins," he said to Goulbain. "Belike the Old Man is with the Seljuks."

"Not so," the jester denied. "Sinan never leaves Masrouf. Nor does any soul who enters it, save as one of his hashish-eating slaves. Men say it is an earthly paradise, but if it be so, how can men know? The soulless ones never speak, even under torture. No, Swain, that evil place is out of God's world."

Grim had moved inland from the seacoast, and closed his column on the King's center. That night the two hosts lay within view of each other, yet keeping a tacit truce, as so

often happens before a battle. The campfires on the upland made it seem like a field of stars. Men could not tell, when they heard a burst of music or a horse neighing, whether it came from the Christian or the paynim camp. In the Christian camp the priests did a prodigious task in shriving sinners, but Loge went off by himself into the woods at the mountains' foot to cast spells for folk who had burdened his wallet with gold and silver. And so doing, he stumbled upon a secret Swain had kept from all his carles.

He came running through the darkness to where the Orkneyman slept in his cloak.

"Swain, Swain," he babbled. "What is this? Of a sudden, the wood was full of folk, and there were Kristin and the Varangians, and the Cretans, and I know not how many more of the Greeks. And Kristin bade me tell you all was done as you directed, and she but bided your word."

Swain sat up, as alert as when his senses detected a strange footfall outside the skalli door.

"I would you were as good a sorcerer as a pryer into what concerns you not, dwarf," he said sternly. "If any other tells me as much, I shall know you have leaked like Jon Roald's son's snekke, the morning it foundered off Stormsness—and you shall have a slit in your tongue. Sleep!"

The Christians were awake with the dawn. Swain, buckling on Skullbiter, watched the sun climb out of the eastward desert and top the intervening mountains. As its level rays hit Sinan's peak, it seemed to him that it revealed a faint outline of snow-white towers and turrets. He scowled, irked, as always, by the suggestion that any place, known or unknown to man, could be inaccessible to him. But he put the reflection from his thoughts when his eyes swept the paynims opposite. Blocks and columns of horsemen and foot were shifting and weaving to and fro, from right to left, from front to rear. And watching closer, he was convinced that the intricate pattern followed a set plan. Gradually, the whitecloaked array was thickening on the enemy's left. He grinned happily, once more content with life.

A blare of trumpets came from the King's position. The Templars, who formed the right of the feudal levies, were mounting cumberously, each knight becoming the focal point for a knot of squires and men-at-arms. Beyond the Templars was a band of armored footmen, then the knights of the Household and their followings; men near Swain knelt and crossed themselves as the shining fabric of the True Cross was carried forward by the mailed Patriarch. A second band of armored footmen separated the Household from the knights of this first line, the barons and knights of the Hospital, who held the King's left. Behind, men-at-arms of the Kingdom's fiefs were flanked by wedges of archers and lightarmed foot.

So distant that the one figure he could distinguish personally was Grim's, sitting erect, truncheon on thigh, were the Byzantines. On the far left, too, the cataphracti held the center, flanked by horse archers and supported by armored spearmen. Swain had come to know the Greeks well enough to respect their military ability, despite what he thought of them as individuals. But the King's array excited him to critical scrutiny. It was Eric, horsed beside him, who noticed the calculating look in his eye.

"You mislike them, Swain?" asked the little forecastleman. "It will go hard with us, if you be not—"

"No," Swain cut him off deliberately, "they are well ordered. Do you see, Bitling, the armored folk have a clear field of charge, and may retire behind the foot at need? It is my reading that they can move as featly so as a fleet of longships. It has the look of a good battle. Yet can we be sure until we see how the folk bear themselves? These knights, with their mail off, put me in mind of a jarl's bower pages; but steel does more than prayer for a man. Let us bide their conduct in the arrow storm."

A din of cymbals and frantic voices burst from the heathen host. Men with green turbans wrapped around their spiked helmets galloped to the front. The whole vast arc of horsemen surged forward in a tidal wave of controlled power. So far as the middle of the field the Seljuks kept their front unbroken. Then, without warning, the left wing, a full third of their strength, broke clear, and hurled itself directly upon Swain's meager band. He grunted his satisfaction.

"They take the bait," he cried. "At them, carles!"

The bass cheers of his Norsemen mingled with the tenor voices of the Greeks and the wolfish howls of the Turcopuli. Their horses, fresh, eager and excited, took the gallop unurged. The little column pierced the disordered ranks of the Seljuks like the clean thrust of a lance.

But Swain had no inclination to tarry in the open, where his men would be an easy target for the masses of foot bowmen following the Seljuk horse. Still partially covered by his enemy, he veered to the right, and pounded back to his original position, reaping a generous harvest on the way. Yet the battle had only begun, as he well knew; the paynims had been checked, not defeated. They flowed around his flanks, and interposed a barrier betwixt him and the King; the Turcopuli were hard stressed to guard the rear.

"What of the folk in the wood?" panted Loge, wiping the blood from an arrow scratch.

"What of Olvir and the Caesar?" countered Swain.

"They have not shown."

"We'll bide for them to drive in for the kill," Swain said. "What, dwarf? Have you no faith in your spells?"

"Aye, but for that Cross," fussed the Lapp.

Swain laughed with the boyish gayety which possessed him in battle.

"Do you hear the ravens screaming, carles?" he shouted. "At them again!"

He made pretense to strike to the right, then shifted direction and charged deep into the paynims' left, reversed his men in their ranks and returned as he had come, leaving a carpet of corpses behind him. The Seljuks, battered and weary, drew off to reform behind their archers, who loosed a stinging hail of arrows. Swain sensed a change in the enemy's purpose. So, too, did Palaeologos, who trotted up, a worried look in his rugged seafarer's face.

"We are losing men over-fast, Swain," the Greek said uncomplainingly. "At this pace, we'll soon be spent."

"We have been the bait in the trap," Swain answered. "Have you seen how the King fares?"

He gestured to where Amalric's serried center was pushing back the Seljuks as steadily as a battering-ram rends stones.

"And Grim holds his own, also," he added.

"But what will it avail them after the heathen have smothered us, and take them in rear?"

"The heathen will not," Swain retorted, gathering his bridle in fist. "We have bided for what befalls."

He pointed again to the giant bulk of Andronicus, gorgeous in golden mail, Olvir squat and swart beside him. The pair had just ridden out in front of the Seljuks' lines, a bowshot distant.

"Now, Swain, now, but say the word," Loge pleaded.

"Not yet, sorcerer," Swain retorted. "Put up your bow, and hie you to Kristin. Bid her make her onfall so soon as the heathen have encompassed us."

Loge scuttled off with the first grin he had worn that day.

CHAPTER X

BAIT FOR A PAYNIM TRAP

FRESH hordes were swarming forward to join the thousands menacing Swain. The air was awhistle with arrows—they clinked on mail, phutted into naked flesh, played a sinister accompaniment to the groans of stricken men and the screams of horses in the death throes. But whenever a man went down, another moved into his place. The Christian column presented a solid front as Andronicus gave the word for the heathen to charge.

"Shields up, carles!" Swain's voice carried over the tumult. "Ho, Bitling, throw a double line behind the Turcopuli to ward the rear. Let them stay by their bows in our midst while they can."

The Seljuks broke in waves on the mounted shieldwall he had devised. The arrows of the Turcopuli piled up heaps of dead men and horses to balk those who came after. But there was a limit to human strength. Andronicus and Olvir led lapping sweeps to right and left, encircling the dwindling island of steel-clad men and horses. Gradually, their circle contracted. Swain's folk had scant armroom for weaponplay. Men died fast in those few moments—as the saying goes, few enough for the shearing of a sheep. None could face the height and reach of Andronicus. Olvir's axe never fell without dealing a man his bane.

Swain raged savagely around the fronts of his shrunken square, but his enemies evaded him.

"We save you for the last, Swain," called Olvir.

"Aye, you must feast with us this night," Andronicus hailed him.

"You shall have a horn of your own blood to drain—after we carve the bloodeagle on your back," Olvir derided him.

But Andronicus cried out in stark amazement as Olvir spoke, staying his sword in stroke. The air was filled with a crisp, purring music, rising and falling, never ceasing. Armor clanged on a clear, bell-like note; all through the paynim ranks, men were throwing up their arms and toppling from their horses.

"'Ware bowmen," Olvir exclaimed. But men looked about—and there were no bowmen outside Swain's square. Then there was an abrupt yowl of panic fear. Out of the woods on the flank of the heathen came the bandon of Cretan slingers, marching in their peculiar, widely-dispersed formation, which gave each man ample space to whirl his sling. The heathen halted in their tracks, watching these new adversaries as if fascinated. Three paces forward, halt, the slings would whirl at arm's length, discharging their leaden pellets, and the Cretans' advance would be resumed in the same order.

Andronicus, alone of those in the Seljuk host, understood the danger of this deceptively slow attack. The Cretans, slinging at pointblank range, with the deadly accuracy for which they had been famous for centuries, could not miss their targets in the close-packed heathen ranks. Often two or three pellets struck the same man, but if they did that man was dead. Andronicus, himself, was all but pitched from his horse by a ringing blow on his golden helm. He shook his head, regained his stirrups and rallied the startled whitecloaked horsemen to a charge.

He knew the one way to check the Cretans was to ride them down.

"But what of Swain?" protested Olvir.

"We will take Swain after we have destroyed these bird-slayers," the Caesar returned curtly.

But as the Seljuks, their confidence restored by his example, thundered closer, the Cretans shifted missile-pouches and slings. Instead of leaden pellets, they cast stones the size of a man's fist, which could knock a horse off his hoofs—and it was at the horses they aimed. The Seljuks slowed their pace. They were bewildered. Yet they followed the Caesar with the valor of their race. The Cretans began to retire, pausing only to whirl their slings. The Seljuks were encouraged. Here was victory in their grasp. They resumed their headlong charge, heedless of losses. In their excitement, they did not see the Hunnish horse bowmen issuing from the wood. Their first knowledge that they were taken again in flank came when a flight of stubby, broadheaded arrows drove into their ranks with the terrific force of the Huns' short horn bows.

To Swain, watching from his battered shield-wall, it was as if a mighty wave had crashed against a submerged, invisible reef. The paynim charge stopped in full career. Open ground separated the heathen from their enemies. But they could not override the mansped barrier of stones and arrows. They seemed to topple forward as the following ranks, unable to rein in, uncertain what had happened, reared their horses and stamped down to bloody pulp their brothers who had been checked by the whispering missiles which filled the air. Some few, like the crest of a thwarted wave, leaped their horses over the reef of mangled bodies, only to be smashed by the invisible barrier. A few more, leaders of the charge—Andronicus and Olvir amongst them—escaped both barriers, and galloped back out of the missile storm.

"Mark how they flee, the niddering pair," exclaimed Eric.

"They do not flee, Bitling," Swain answered. "Not yet, albeit they would if they knew—Ho, here is Kristin!"

The Varanglan Guard was just emerging from the wood, the tall, stalwart wanderers of the North. They marched on foot, after their habit, formed in a wedge-shaped shieldwall, the biggest men at the point of the wedge, shields nudged to chins, axes on their shoulders. In their midst rode Kristin, very straight and proud, her crown sparkling in the sunlight, her golden hair floating free, her sword in hand.

"I would Sigurd and Jarl Rognvald might see her so," Swain murmured.

His scarred vikingfarers straightened in their saddles. Some carle began to clash sword on shield very softly. Others took it up. It spread, very softly at first, then louder, louder, louder. The Greeks and Turcopuli joined in the salute until the song of steel on steel mastered the roaring bedlam of the battle, rang out above the yelling and shouting, the groans of the wounded, the sighs of the dying, the pounding of hoofs as the Seljuks loosed bridles in retreat from this last attack.

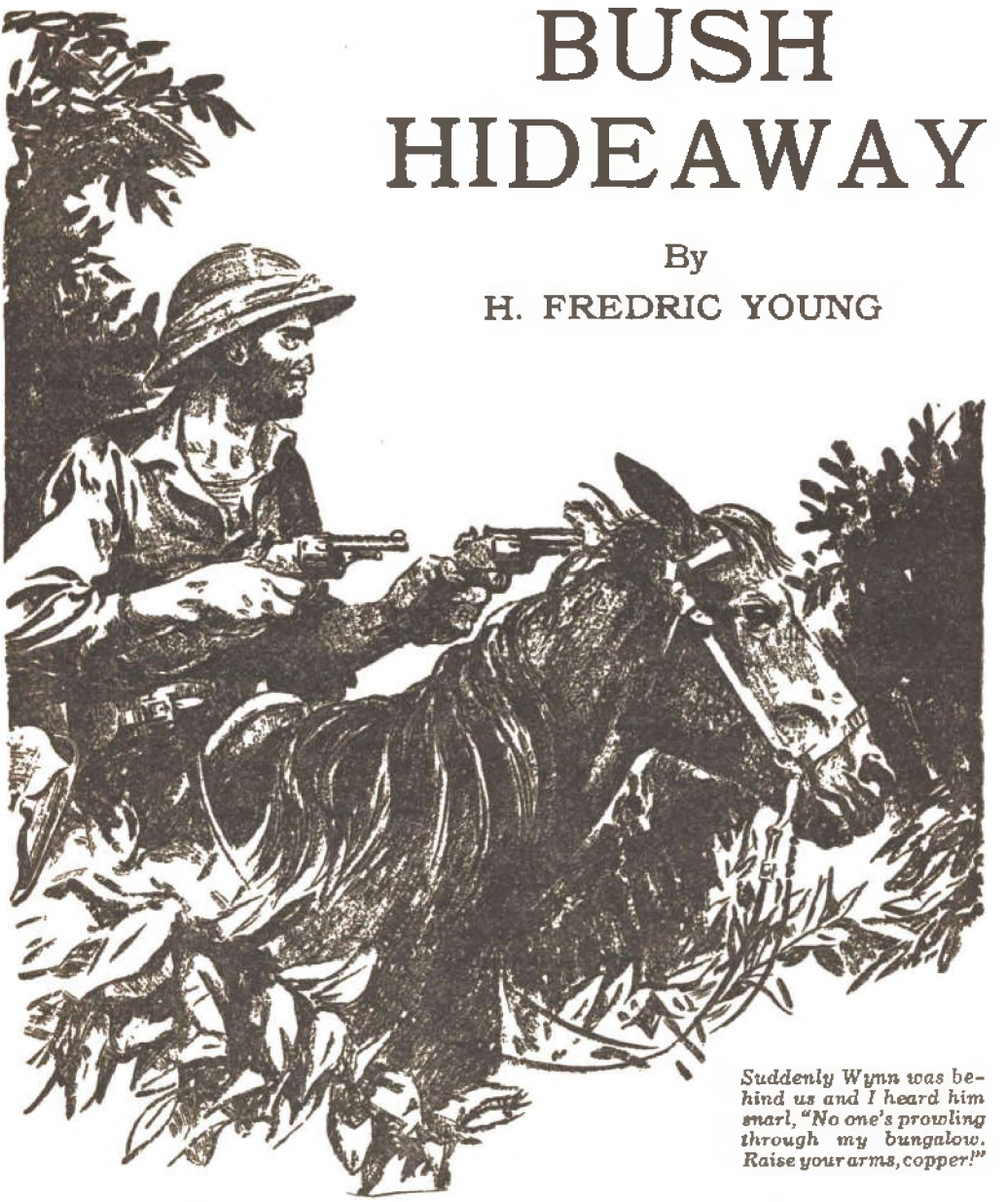
"The trap is sprung," said Swain. "But we have yet to cut the wolves' throats. Forward, Swain's carles! You were the bait. Now, you are the huntsmen."

(To be concluded)

BUSH HIDEAWAY

By

H. FREDRIC YOUNG



Suddenly Wynn was behind us and I heard him snarl, "No one's prowling through my bungalow. Raise your arms, copper!"

I WANT to explain Doc's crime. The fact that it is my job to arrest Doc Carse does not mean that I am going to bend the facts my way any more than it means I am making an apology for Doc. He killed Drumright. The book tells me to bring him in, by force if necessary, and I have served with the North Australia Mounted Police too many years to get sentimental about unwritten laws or technical innocence, or whatever you want to call the fact that Drumright got what he might've deserved.

Drumright was a nasty-tempered jackaroo. There are many like him in the deep outback —too many. Their occupations vary—they may be station owners, ranchers, gold prospectors, opal miners digging in their cramped shafts, or pearlers up Broome way—but all are thirsty for gin and all are filled with the preposterous belief that whatsoever falls under their hand is owned by right of desire alone; and to attribute human emotions of these jackaroos is as incongruous as it would be to attribute human feelings to a crocodile in a jungle swamp.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDD ASHE

The fact that Doc Carse has no remorse because he rammed the surgeon's knife into Drumright's heart should be discarded when judging innocence or guilt. It is the "why" of the act that tends to bring the scales back into patent balance. Probably the consensus of everyone, and especially the natives—excluding the rule book, of course—is that Doc Carse should be a free man instead of a hunted one. Unfortunately for Doc, there is little that can be done in that respect.

It was early evening when the lubra came screaming out of the bush. She ran straight for Doc's corrugated tin hut on the edge of town. She was a young girl—not ripe, as the natives said. And when she babbled out the story of how Drumright had held her at his bungalow all day, subjecting her to constant abuse, Doc Carse started drinking down a square bottle of gin and five minutes later it was empty. Then he went through the battered little black

case he was never without, selected his longest and sharpest instrument, and before we knew what was up he had vanished along some darkening trail in the bush. After I got the story from the girl with long and patient cajoling, I saddled and hurried to Drumright's bungalow, but Carse had been there and was gone.

And to Doc's credit I might add that, as always when he had an instrument in his hand, he had done a professional job.

It is pretty well known by now how Carse slipped through my fingers a few weeks later when he stopped running long enough to deliver Mrs. Burke's baby. Well, as I explained to Lornsen, the superintendent, I couldn't leave Mrs. Burke alone in the bush without a nurse, and her boy was riding to town on their horse and Doc had taken mine when my back was turned.

But don't get romantic notions about the Australia Mounted Police; we get our man eventually.

DOC CARSE was again heading into deep bush, and I had Claypan Johnny along to sniff out the trail. What mainly troubled my peace of mind was the fact that Carse had returned to Barrow's Creek for no apparent reason or purpose. I felt almost certain there was more behind it than mere loss of memory, or the fact that Doc might've gone bush—which means crazy.

Stranger yet was the fact that Sammy Curled Head, a gnarled old chieftain long since retired from the job of tracker with the Service, had brought in the news of Doc's appearance in the area. Strange, because if Doc had not killed Drumright, some native would have done the job—and in a much nastier way. It made me suspicious, because it is not in the aboriginal's code to turn jackaroo on a friend.

So I called Sammy Curled Head a liar, and repeated, "Sammy, you tellum cooked-up lie for sure."

The old man screwed his face into what was meant for a hurt expression. He wore the tattered remnants of a khaki drill service shirt one of the boys had given him, and a dirty loin cloth. A scarred pipe with an overripe scent hung from his thick lips. He sucked on the pipe and became irritated because it was dead, so I tossed him a match. Very slowly he scraped it along the calloused sole of one bare foot, and held it to his pipe. When smoke began boiling from his wide nostrils he squatted down, removed the pipe and considered.

"Him fella Doc Carse come back for sure." He paused and I said nothing, because a native cannot be hurried.

"When?" I asked finally. Old Sammy shrugged and I cursed softly, knowing I had drained him of all available facts. He was shrewd and was not going to get snared by questioning. After a moment, the old fellow rose and left the patrol room, softly clucking to himself.

I turned to Sergeant Coombs. "What do you make of that, Sarge?" I asked.

"Too right, Ketterly. It doesn't make much sense," Coombs said. He glanced away. "But it means you've got to investigate."

"Hell!" I moaned. "You know I'm slated to join the Matarranka Patrol tomorrow to run down the rumors of those parachutes over by Wallaroo Station."

Coombs sighed wearily. "Too bad, Ketterly, but this case of Doc Carse is still on your hands, y'know. Old Man Lornsen said—"

"That Doc was my case until he was brought to trial," I grumbled. And then I pleaded, "Suppose it was Japs come down in those chutes, Coombs. You want me to miss that show?"

Coombs smiled and blew cigarette smoke down his nostrils, squinting through the haze. His long, melancholy face grew longer and he stabbed out with a horny finger. "Y'want me to get Lornsen's letter?" he drawled cheerfully.

I gave up. "I've read that bawling-out from Old Man Lornsen a thousand times," I croaked. "All right, I'm off. . . . Where the hell is Claypan Johnny?"

"Me fella ready." It was Claypan Johnny standing at attention in the doorway. I could read on his black face that he'd been standing outside the door waiting for me to say, "Where the hell is Claypan Johnny?" He was a capable fellow, and proud that we called him the head tracker of Barrow's Creek.

"All right," I said. "Throw the outfit together. Tucker and water for at least four weeks."

It was a couple of hours before sunset when Johnny had tucker and water bags and necessary utensils and equipment secured on a pack camel, and we left Barrow's Creek fighting the hordes of tiny flies that become abundant in the thin, late sun rays.

It soon became very dark, but starry, and a cold wind rose and whimpered across the salt bush and parched grass. From far off came the eternal howl of dingoes, while on the trail ahead there was the constant thumping of alarmed wallabies fleeing ahead of the patrol. Every once in a while a boobook owl would knife along the bushtops, drop, and sink its talons into a squealing bush rat.

I shivered in the coolness, and watched Claypan Johnny, wishing I knew all that was going on inside his head. A head tracker is not supposed to have emotions about the tracks he follows, but in the case of Doc Carse. . . .

I was not kidding myself about that matter because, as things stood—Doc having killed Drumright to avenge an outraged lubra—Carse stood on an unearthly high pedestal with the natives. I had my hands full and knew it.

"You make um tracks?" I called softly.

FOR a moment Claypan Johnny did not seem to hear. He was casting about like a bloodhound, a short, lean, wiry little fellow, proud in the possession of a ragged khaki shirt, a discarded police sombrero and the symbol of authority vested in the rifle he carried in the crook of his arm. A full-blooded native, Claypan Johnny had been mission raised and won over to the white man. The tracker finally padded back toward me.

"Me find um," he declared, "me find um." But he seemed to be thinking.

"You savvy white fella Doc Carse in this fella country?" I snapped.

He almost nodded, and then the black lids dropped across his eyes and he reiterated, "Me find um."

He scratched his mop of fuzzy hair with his rifle muzzle. I nodded and he whirled away into the dusk.

We crossed a low ridge of hills and the wind was coming across miles of wasteland in lazy whuffs, swirling night dust across my face. I was glad to feel the dust because it meant there would be little if any dew to kill the scent of tracks. I'd pit Johnny with the best American bloodhound when it came to the matter of scenting trail.

The little tracker was lost in the darkness, and after a while I stiffened in the saddle because there came the long wailing *coo-ee* of the bush.

"He's got it!" I muttered.

I found him squatting between clumps of mulga scrub, a toy black figure in the shadows of the night.

"Fella track walkum here," he said matter-of-factly—which wasn't like Johnny at all.

"All right, Johnny. But it looks too damned easy to me. Why fella Carse come this way, you savvy?"

I saw him shrug. "This fella tracker can not name why."

I let it go at that. The little tracker got to his feet and stared as if doubting his judgment, raised his eyes toward the star-studded cup of blackness, sighed, shook his head and trotted away. I rounded up the pack camel and followed.

The reddish mist of morning was hanging across the mulga and blue bush before we paused and the sun, rising higher and beginning to show heat, was fast drying a few patches of dew-damp bush. A flock of white cockatoos swept overhead with hoarse screams, and peering above a patch of tall grass, several kangaroos stood upright and watched motionless, the old man boomer 'roo alert to give alarm. There was no other sign of life.

I made a billican of tea, and we supped it as we munched cold tucker. There was something melancholy about Claypan Johnny that I did not like. Maybe it was this state of mind that caused him to drop caution—if that is what it was—because we had not proceeded a half mile farther before I noticed that he was laying a straight path without much trouble. To me that meant but one thing: Claypan Johnny knew where he was going! Indeed, before we had gone another five miles it was a clincher that we were headed for the Wallaroo Station.

"What name this place we go?" I asked suddenly.

Claypan Johnny checked himself on the spot, and slowly turned around.

"This fella tracker no savvy whereum go," he said, complainingly. "Me smellum track all alonga."

"You lie like a fair cow, Johnny," I said, but smiled to temper the words. "This fella—" I clamped my lips shut and stared as I saw a rider emerge from a gum grove, half a mile ahead.

I fumbled in my saddle bag for my field glasses, adjusted them for range, and studied the man. It was Red Wynn, who owned the Wallaroo Station.

Claypan Johnny stiffened and stared uneasily around. There was no understanding some of the ways of the aborigines. Most of them heartily disliked Red Wynn and, I had heard, more than once a tribal witch doctor or some superstitious native had cursed him with the ritual of the pointing bone. Usually victims of this ritual simply folded up and died, which was no more incomprehensible than the mysterious bush telegraph which brought word of happenings far away without visible means of communication.

But Red Wynn proved to be an exception, and this probably accounted for the fact that natives grew restless and uneasy when he was around.

Claypan Johnny began clucking to himself. He plucked a cigarette butt from his mop of hair, lighted it and began sucking noisily.

WYNN lifted a hand in greeting from a distance. He rode to a halt a few feet away. He was a large man, fat-shouldered and thick-jowled beneath a stubble of red beard. He was dressed in soiled trousers, a ragged shirt, riding boots and a faded sun helmet, with his rifle in a saddle-scabbard under one leg and twin gun belts buckled around his waist. He was cloudy-faced, almost scowling, his eyes deep sunk beneath thorny brows.

"Hallo, copper," he grunted, not pleasantly.

Red Wynn had reasons to dislike the Service. Twenty years ago we had arrested him for armed robbery and manslaughter of some traveling Afghan trader, but before the trial went before the judge the native tracker who was the main witness vanished in the outback—killed, no doubt, and buried in some lonely spot. Wynn went free. And there always

seemed to be in his eyes the sneering remembrance of once having beaten the Service.

"Hello, Wynn," I said, and on a sudden inspiration added, "We're riding by your house to freshen up our water."

His face grayed a little beneath the dirt. His eyes shifted toward our waterbags and back, firing to a faint vein-streaked red. "Your bloomin' bags look fresh enough to me," he snapped. "You coulda freshened them back at Two-Hill spring." He glanced at them again. "And I ain't so sure you didn't."

I looked straight at Wynn. "We're not here after an argument, Wynn. But we've a perfect right to water."

He glanced back across his shoulder. "I don't like coppers monkeying around my bungalow," he grumbled. "But come ahead. I can't stop you."

He reined his horse around and headed back for the gum grove. We were supposed to follow and did. We had traveled a few yards into the trees when, without seeing how it happened, I suddenly realized Wynn was behind us. I heard him snarl, "No one's prowling through my bungalow! Raise your arms, copper!" His voice was thick.

The turn of events was quick, and conclusions flooded my mind. Doc Carse had led the patrol into a trap. . . . Claypan Johnny was in on it.

"You'll go to jail for this, Wynn," I warned him.

"Tell that black of yours to drop his rifle," he purred.

Claypan Johnny was already weaving catlike to one side, and the glimpse I had of his dark face made me feel relieved. There was utter surprise in his eyes.

"Drop the rifle, nigger!" Wynn choked out, and he began brandishing both revolvers at the little tracker.

"Me drop um," Johnny sang out.

"Keep your hands high, copper!" Wynn yelled. He was getting excited. The prod of his gun muzzle sank in my back.

I saw Claypan Johnny move to toss aside his rifle. Then, with the quick movement he might use in heaving a long-range war boomerang, he sent the gun arching out straight toward the legs of Wynn's horse.

Wynn yelled. There was the thud of steel striking hide and I saw Wynn's horse bolt past, Wynn clawing desperately for leather. Then the gum grove bush was a yammering crescendo of movement as a small horde of little bow-legged men with rifles in hand leaped into sight.

"Stand very still!" a shrill voice screamed.

I shook my head, too stunned to say anything. Japs in Australia!

Out of the corner of my eye I saw the little tracker bunching his muscles for a leap at his rifle.

"Stand damn still, fella," I said quietly. "I think they're up to nasty business."

In about five minutes the Japs had torn the pack loose from the camel, and the animal galloped away to freedom. My supplies went from hand to hand and my precious supply of cigarettes vanished.

One of the Japs stepped forward. He was probably an officer, though he wore no official insignia on his cheap cotton uniform. He was short, scrawny, and peered cranelike through heavy tortoise-rimmed spectacles.

"I am in command," he said in perfect English. His teeth showed between his sneering lips. "You will obey orders."

"Sure," I agreed.

By that time Red Wynn had his horse under control and rode back.

"I oughta kill that damned black of yours," he snarled. "But we got other use for him."

"I guess the natives had you figured right all along, Wynn," I said. "You're a confounded jackaroo to the core."

He laughed. "You can have your damned say," he snarled. "But your patrol is through. Through!" He laughed half-crazily, stopped, and mopped beads of sweat from his face.

I stuck a cigarette in my lips and chewed on it. "A patrol is never through, Wynn," I said dryly. "You only delay things a bit—"

"Silence!" commanded the Jap in charge. He turned to Wynn. "We go back to house."

"Right, Mikado," leered Wynn. "But lemme get this copper's guns first. You can't be too cautious with these damned troopers, y'know."

Wynn took my two revolvers and jammed them down inside his belt. "Travel, copper," he snarled.

BUSH history was in the making. The chutes dropping at night in the vicinity of Wallaroo Station had not been just bush gossip, I realized. Why they were here could only be guessed. But scattered through the outback, a couple of dozen Japs could play havoc—doctoring waterholes with arsenic, say.

I touched spurs to my horse and threw a cautious glance of warning toward my tracker. We headed toward Wallaroo Station, which I judged to be four or five miles away.

After a while, Wynn said, "We'll take your water map, copper."

Arsenic was right, I thought. And every day thousands of cattle and sheep sifting in from the trackless desert to slake their thirst.

There was no sense denying I had the latest water map along, because Wynn knew a patrol was never without a map showing the waterholes which for some mysterious reason had dried up over night, and the others which had sprung afresh with crystal water.

"Sure," I said carelessly. "Shall I give it to you now?" I did not want to start fumbling in my pockets with the nervous fingers of twenty or so Japs hooked around triggers.

The squat Jap officer said, "You will deliver map to me when ordered."

I chuckled inside, seeing how Wynn flinched and grew red. But the rancher said nothing, and even forced an amiable smile.

"Poisoning waterholes is nasty business," I observed.

Wynn laughed and glanced back. "Not nasty if you get on the right side of the fence, copper."

Caravans of soldiers and herds of cattle and sheep, even the wild animals moving across the Australia wastelands north toward Broome and toward the Torres Straits, depended greatly on the waterholes that spotted the gibber plains. I gazed away into the gum trees and cast a sidewise glance toward Claypan Johnny. The little tracker was plodding along with his head down—concentrating, I knew.

We had gone a couple of miles, moving slowly, of course, as the Japs were afoot, and the way was getting dusky in the gum grove. Suddenly I heard a kind of murmuring whicker and someone yelped.

"Damn!" I heard Wynn curse out.

Without a word everyone was staring at one of the Japs, writhing on the ground with one side of his head bashed completely in. The huge hooked shape of a war boomerang glimmered in the grass.

Wynn had his revolvers trained on Johnny and me, and the Jap officer was yammering a stream of words in his native lingo. The Jap soldiers scattered into the bush.

"Sit damned tight!" Wynn ordered. "Looks like you got some help. But the Japs'll take care of them damned blacks with their boomerangs."

We waited, and from the bush came sound of some rifle shots. Someone yelped again, and when the Japs returned they were shy another man.

A taut silence overhung the grove.

"We have exterminate the enemy," boasted the squat Jap officer. "We go now to house."

A *whick!* came through the gum trees. The Jap officer yelped frenziedly and waved his arms energetically. The Jap soldiers ran into the bush, firing haphazardly at—at nothing, so far as eye could see.

An aborigine can fade from sight literally beneath your eyes. They are the limb of a tree, its trunk, a bush, a rotten log half submerged in water. You cannot tell if it is a shadow out there, or a man. But there was one more Jap lying at my feet with the side of his head neatly carved away.

The Japs scattered and their guns popped at irregularly spaced intervals. I could hear whicking slashes as the boomerangs swirled through gum leaves and dried bush.

Wynn glared around uneasily and I watched his big hooked fingers trembling on the revolver triggers.

The Japs began drifting in from the bush, and on their faces were pastry expressions of fascinated apprehension. I could well imagine their sensations out there in the bush, trying to kill a fleeting shadow of death.

The Jap officer was now surrounded by a greatly diminished force. This seemed only to prompt him to new swaggering boasts.

"We kill the enemy!" he announced in his squeaky voice.

Whick! and he was revolving on the ground like a bird with a chopped-off head. His blood gushed out fast. Wynn brushed faint sweat from his forehead. He looked at the silent, dark distance, then he looked at me. I knew he was thinking of all the hopes he had held of a fat pay-off from his Jap friends. His smile had not faded, but it grew fixed.

I glanced quickly around at the Jap soldiers, and saw sudden realization strike them like an axe bit. Without their leader, they streaked screaming for the bush.

The sting of spears penetrating human flesh filled the air with a grisly sound, but the noise faded fast into nothingness.

WYNN was drenched with sweat and clenching his revolvers. He was going to shoot. "Your damned natives!" he snarled.

Claypan Johnny screamed a mad yelp to attract his attention while I jabbed my spurs, driving my horse into a collision with Wynn's.

The big red-bearded man lurched violently and toppled from his seat. I leaped to the ground and swung at his jaw. He woke up in a few minutes, rubbing his face and glaring hard at the steel cuffs I had snapped on his wrists.

"You only delay a patrol," I reminded Wynn. I turned to Claypan Johnny. "You good fella tracker," I said softly.

"Best fella tracker," he agreed happily. "Best fella tracker in all Australia. By George!" He swiftly kicked Wynn in the seat of the pants and swelled with honest pride.

"We find um fella Doc Carse track now," I said, glancing away.

The tracker clucked mournfully to himself, squatted on his hams, and lighted a cigarette butt he found tucked in his hair. He puffed and considered. Presently he straightened his thin legs, rising and puffing out his bony chest, which he tapped with his fingers. "Me best damn tracker in all Australia!" he said haughtily. "We find um fella track. By George!"

Wynn was on his feet muttering curses and I told him to keep ahead of me.

Johnny was padding in among the gum trees, a gliding ebon shadow into which self-assurance was flowing, and he snorted disgustedly at every dead Jap he encountered. It was hard to believe that I'd doubted him.

It was not long before I heard the soft, wailing *coo-ee-e!*

"He's got it!" I laughed, and prodded Wynn forward at a grumbling trot.

"Him fella Carse track all about like um hell on fast stick," he said when I rode into view.

"Been around this gum grove pleaty and lately," I said.

Johnny nodded vigorously. "Him plenty wild black fella track also," said Johnny. He was picturing something, or maybe trying to picture something for me to understand.

"Meaning what?" I wondered. And then the whole thing unfolded like clear daylight.

Carse in his wandering about the bush had accidentally discovered Japs filtering in by air to the Wallaroo Station. And he had backtracked to Barrow's Creek. . . . Why? Obviously, he could have sent the message by one of the natives, via bush telegraph, to warn us.

I watched Claypan Johnny, and the little tracker was literally plowing up roots with his nose. The scent was strong and he was moving fast.

Carse obviously had spread his trail to bring a patrol out to Wallaroo Station, holding out his own freedom in the hollow of his slender, shaky hand. Hell, he needn't have run the chance of capture and trial—but even an outcast in the bush might want to turn a trick with his own hand to help win the war.

"Catch um fast trail now, Johnny," I said sharply. "Kick um pants off if you lose um!"

He glanced around. "Me no lose um now."

The bungalow of the Wallaroo Station hove into view. Wynn stumbled along cursing and complaining bitterly.

When he stepped inside his bungalow he flopped down into a cowhide chair and muttered dejectedly, "I'm all done in."

Johnny's eyes were feverishly bright. "Track plenty strong in here," he half whispered, and his eyes darted toward a door leading to the back of the place.

"Hold tight, Johnny," I said. "Take a rest for a moment."

I SAT in a chair watching Wynn, who held his head in his hands and cursed into his palms. The faint sound of a clinking arose from the back of the house, beyond the door. It might have been the noise of a knife and fork clattering against a plate.

Claypan Johnny glanced toward the door. I stepped over to a wall cupboard, got a bottle of rum and poured a drink. I sat sipping it and gave Wynn the rest of the bottle. Finally I rose and stretched wearily. Claypan Johnny glanced nervously toward the door.

"We go now?" he asked, and I nodded.

We stepped into the back room. Upon a kitchen table were the lately chewed remnants of a meal consisting of slabs of mutton and cold rice and tea. The window above the table was open. I blinked at Johnny. His mouth widened into a melon-slice smile.

"Humph!" he observed. "No fella here."

"Damn it, Johnny!" I said sharply. "We've missed Carse by the closest margin. He's a difficult fella to catch."

"Him belly full now," observed Johnny slyly. "Him go very fast." He waved an arm. "Very dark all over now—trackum very hard fella to find."

"Too right," I grumbled. "But there is hell yet to pay off."

The payoff was the filing of reports to Superintendent Lornsen, at headquarters. Two weeks later at the Barrow's Creek patrol room, I was gnawing the end of my pen and cursing.

"What's the matter now?" demanded Sergeant Coombs.

"Reports," I grumbled.

"An easy matter," Coombs purred.

"Sure. I frustrated a Jap plot, there are twenty Jap dead to report, not to mention Red Wynn in irons. But I let one man escape. How'll I explain that?"

"That should be easy," Coombs chuckled. "Four pages in triplicate—"

"A requisition for a good bawling out!"

Which is what I got. Lornson never changes.

Pipeline Deadline

By HARRY BOTSFORD

PIT HOLE CITY didn't rightly need any more drama and excitement. It suffered, as a matter of fact, from a surplus. First of all the boom oil towns, it sprawled untidily along the side hill west of brawling Pit Hole Creek. It consisted largely of a long row of wooden buildings which were flanked by broad plank sidewalks that stopped abruptly at the edge of a river of mud called Holmden Street, a thoroughfare churned constantly night and day by a steady stream of traffic.

It was a robust, wicked and spectacular little city, arrogant and proud. Wasn't it now the third largest city in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania? Two years before, hadn't it been

On the sixth night the war broke out in full fury. The teamsters, under cover of darkness, overwhelmed the guards.

A FACT STORY

just a cluster of backwoods farms, until the magic of oil had transformed it into a hectic, lusty city, famous wherever newspapers were published or read?

Up on the rim of the hill a Methodist church, a square, uncompromising structure, frowned down on the assorted wickedness below, the sinfulness that flourished and prospered seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day.

It was May of 1862. Two men lounged in the cool shade of the church and talked with animation. One of the men was Worthington Addler, a Pit Hole oil operator and one of the lucky pioneers. He was a squat individual with a red face and a thick, sweeping black mustache. His boots were made of fine leather, but splashed with mud and oil. His eyes were a deep, serene blue and his voice was surprisingly low.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Hutchins, you don't understand this queer country or what you are up against," he warned his companion quietly. "Frankly, I am fearful about what may happen."

Hutchins stood, feet apart, smoking a long, thin cigar and smiling with confidence. His broadcloth suit was perfectly tailored and immaculate. He smoked with short, nervous puffs, obviously a man of energy.

"Are you trying to frighten me, my friend?" he asked.

For a long minute Addler didn't answer. When he spoke, his voice was raised a little.

"Your plan for a pipeline to carry thousands of barrels of the oil we are producing from here to the railroad has a special attraction to me," he said slowly and precisely. "I want to save money, naturally. But your plan may be impractical. And even if it proved to be practical, I'm afraid it couldn't be successful."

Hutchins lighted a fresh cigar. He was suddenly calm, almost deliberate.

"Why not?" he questioned. "Let's not be so mysterious. Tell me frankly what is on your mind."

Addler leaned back comfortably against the church wall.

"Look around, as far as you can see, and tell me what impresses you the most," he invited abruptly, almost in the manner of an adult addressing a child.

Hutchins, surprised and a trifle puzzled, looked as he was directed. At the fringes of the city, stretching away into the distance he could see an almost solid vista of blackened oil derricks etched against the blue of the sky. Steam and blue smoke from hundreds of boilers swelled lazily into the warm air. He could hear the coughing exhaust of many steam engines, the sullen roar of spinning bull wheels, the creaking complaint of hundreds of nodding walking beams. At each drilled well there was the black bulk of stock storage tanks for the crude oil. Clustered around these tanks were batteries of barrels. At most of the wells wagons were being loaded with barrels filled with oil. Along every road, for as far the eye could see, was a two-way procession of creaking wagons wallowing hub-deep through a yellow river of mud. It was a big job, hauling the oil from the wells to the nearest railroad which would transport it to the refineries.

Worthington Addler reached in his pocket, brought out a plug of tobacco, worried off a large juicy bite, chewed it into submission with the skill that comes of long practice. He spat—and five feet away a fat bumblebee felt the impact and gave up the ghost. Addler grinned in faint satisfaction and returned to the more serious subject.

"You see those teamsters, Hutchins, but you don't realize what a stranglehold they have on this oil business. There are about sixteen thousand in this area and, man, they have us by the throat!" he exclaimed with considerable heat.

"They determine whether or not I can make a profit on the oil I produce. They decide whether any oil man can survive. They set the hauling charges and they make 'em stiff, believe me. It takes a lot of horses and man-muscle to haul from five to seven barrels of oil from here to Miller Farm and the railroad. I'll grant that. But these scoundrels have been charging us from three to five dollars a barrel to haul that oil. It's too damned much!"

"And that," Hutchins reminded Addler, "is just what my proposed pipeline will prevent. Why, I can pipe that oil for as little as a dollar a barrel. I can save this industry thousands of dollars a day—and still make money."

Addler shook his head moodily. "You still don't understand what you will be up against," he warned. "Only six months ago a friend of mine who is an oil producer decided that he could buy teams and wagons and haul his own oil for less than half what the teamsters were charging.

"It didn't work. It didn't have time to work! The very first day his teamsters were hauled off their wagons and whipped with blacksnake whips. Ever see a man punished that way, Hutchins? It isn't pretty! Probably they don't fight that way down in New Jersey. These men were pretty near dead when they were released and they had no appetite to carry on. The horses were shot and the oil on the wagons was set on fire. That night three of my friend's stock tanks were fired. He now uses the old line teamsters and he is being forced to pay a premium of fifty cents a barrel over the regular prices. He took a prime beating, Mr. Hutchins."

"But, that's against the law!" Hutchins protested.

"Yep, it is against the law," Addler acknowledged wryly. "But, my friend, we don't have any law in these oil-fields—just the bare shadow of law, that's all. Down there is Pit Hole City and thirty thousand odd people most of whom are trying to make money fast and are not too concerned about the methods they use. Every other building is a saloon, a gambling house or worse. Ever hear of Ben Hogan? Rates himself as the wickedest man in the world—probably a rank understatement. He advertises himself as such, owns the worst dives in the place. Dozens of men have met mysterious and violent deaths since the city was started. No one has ever been apprehended or punished. Oil producers, otherwise honest and pious people, don't hesitate to steal a boiler or an engine from a friend or a competitor. It's sort of a game. We are in such a hell of a hurry to make fortunes! What do you think these teamsters would do if your pipeline project were a success? Think it over!"

A more timid man would have been frightened off; Hutchins was made of sterner stuff. He believed in his newly invented rotary pump and his idea for a pipeline. He carelessly dismissed the thought of the possibly violent opposition of thousands of teamsters.

Oil producers were frankly and openly skeptical of the proposed pipeline—not that they didn't believe that it would be possible under normal circumstances, but they knew the temper of the teamsters. After all, these men were doing something that was almost a transportation miracle, hauling thousands of barrels of oil each day a distance of more than five miles over roads that were nearly impassable. Nothing like it had ever been seen outside of an army on the march. The teamsters were making big money. Many of them were netting as much as thirty dollars a day, and men do not readily relinquish such earnings.

IT WAS impossible to raise capital in the oil-fields. Men with money to invest wanted only to invest it in more oil territory, to gamble with blue chips for higher stakes. Hutchins decided to risk his own capital. He installed his rotary pump and he built two miles of pipeline, two inches in diameter. Up to and including the day of the trial there had been no outward demonstration on the part of the teamsters.

The boiler at the pumphouse was fired up and the steam-gauge slowly and reluctantly showed enough steam. Hutchins, still serene and faultlessly dressed, placed a gloved hand on the throttle of the engine. The engine puffed sturdily and the rotary pump chugged encouragingly. Time passed and there had been no signal from the opposite end of the pipeline informing them that the oil was coming through. Hutchins became intensely nervous, almost frantic. At last a man came puffing and panting up the right-of-way, excitedly waving his arms.

"Hell, mister, she just don't work!" he yelled. "Oil is runnin' all over the place and your pipe is leakin' worser'n a fifty-cent umbrella!"

Hutchins and the spectators investigated and found that the man's statement had been on the conservative side. The pipe had been poorly made and when exposed to pressure it had split and broken apart. Not a single drop of oil had reached its destination!

Hutchins was bowed down under the disaster. He singled Worthington Addler out of the crowd.

"At least, Mr. Addler, it was poor pipe that ruined this project and not the teamsters," he said sourly.

Addler smiled and slapped Hutchins on the back. "Don't try to take out your spite on me, Hutchins," he said good-naturedly. "I'm as sorry as you are at what has happened. What I predicted was that there'd be trouble if the line worked—and it didn't."

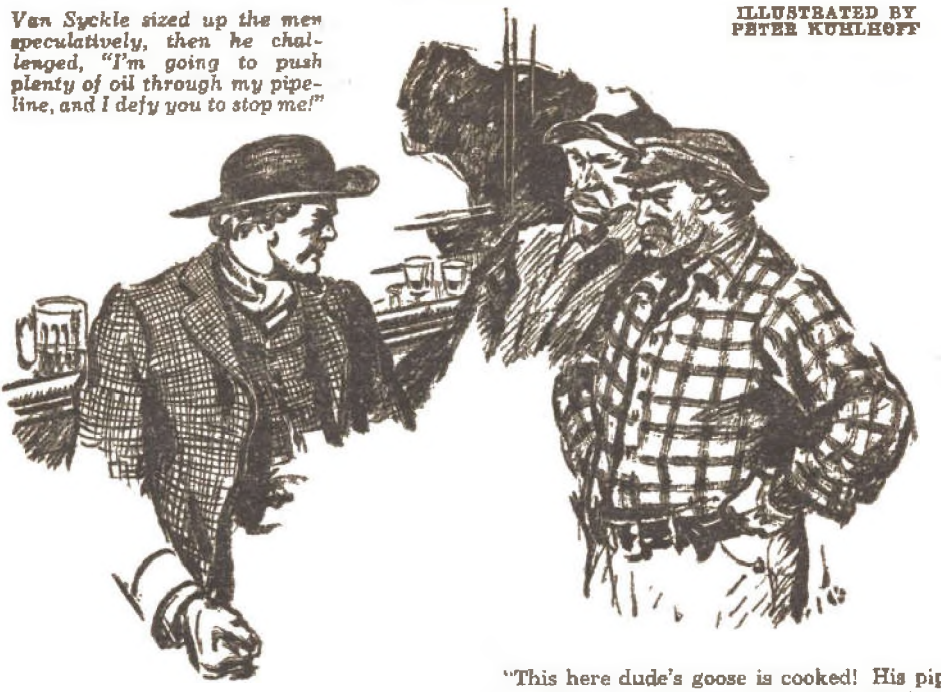
Hutchins was no quitter. He returned to New Jersey, persuaded friends to contribute capital to enable him to take another crack at the idea. The next year he was ready again. This time he was using cast-iron pipe with leaded joints. Again, and with the same sublime confidence, J. L. Hutchins opened the valve of the engine—and again disaster smote him fore and aft. The pipe didn't split or fracture, but the jarring of the pump caused heavy leakage at the joints. Fully three-quarters of the oil was lost.

But a part of the oil did reach its destination, an event the teamsters considered deeply. That night, while Hutchins sat in the bar of the Danforth House in Pit Hole City and gloomily consumed brandy, the teamsters took the situation into their own greasy and capable hands. Two miles of the pipeline was dug up, teams were hitched to sections of it and it was hauled far, far away. Hutchins hunted up his friend Addler before he left, acknowledged that there might have been something in Addler's warning.

"I'm broke," he confessed. "What the teamsters do can't hurt me now. But, mark my words, the idea of transporting oil by pipeline isn't dead. Some day a man with more capital and more luck will come along and make the darned thing work."

"I hope you're right," Addler said, shaking Hutchins' hand warmly. "Today all of the oil producers in this section are paying through the nose for your experiment. This morning, out of a clear sky, the price for hauling a barrel of oil from here to Miller Farm jumped fifty cents a barrel. These men are dangerous,

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER KUHLHOFF



Van Syckle sized up the men speculatively, then he challenged, "I'm going to push plenty of oil through my pipeline, and I defy you to stop me!"

Hutchins. They have organization and they are not afraid of hell or high water. It will take a real man and a hell of a lot of luck to beat 'em."

A real man did come along. He, too, had trouble, but trouble was his dish. He was Samuel Van Syckle who came from Titusville, Pennsylvania, birthplace of the oil industry. He wasn't a practical oil man, but he was a competent engineer and he was blessed with plenty of capital and courage. He needed most of his resources before he was through.

In 1865 he announced that he was going to build a pipeline from Pit Hole City to Miller Farm. It was going to work, too, he informed a group of interested oil producers in his rooms at the Danforth House. Oil men instinctively liked young Van Syckle. He was tall, broad-shouldered and aggressive. He gave one the impression that he believed in beating the other man to the punch. He was a trifle careless about his clothes but he wore them with an air, a rather arrogant air, it was noted.

When the producers tried to warn him of opposition, he grinned cheerfully and told them that he wasn't looking for sympathy or capital or even encouragement.

ONE night he stood at the bar of the Danforth House sipping a modest glass of beer. Beside him two bulky teamsters in greasy, mud-stained working clothes were drinking heavily and boisterously.

"This here dude's goose is cooked! His pipeline will never carry a drop of oil, that's decided, Pete," one of them boasted loudly. The other man, a short, powerfully built individual with the prehensile arms of an ape, nodded cheerfully and stroked his dirty beard.

"It's all nicely planned, me boy," he answered with alcoholic solemnity. "His clock will be fixed, and well we know it!"

Van Syckle leaned over very politely. His frank brown eyes sized up the men speculatively. He grinned and there was a devil in his eyes.

"I'll bet you ten to one you're wrong!" he challenged. "I'm Sam Van Syckle and I'm going to push plenty of oil through my pipeline. I defy you and your friends to stop me. You have run this industry long enough. From now on, the industry is going to run you!"

The big man glared, swore and spat on his hands as he looked at Van Syckle. He could see that here was a slim individual, but he was to find that slimness deceitful.

The teamster swung a mighty fist at Van Syckle, who never moved his feet but jerked his head swiftly to one side, neatly dodging the potentially lethal blow. With studied, smiling insolence he lifted his half-filled glass and tossed the contents squarely in the big fellow's ugly face.

The man roared with anger and was echoed by his squat and vicious companion. They made a concerted rush at Van Syckle, who stood waiting with a thin smile on his face. He had been an amateur boxer in college, knew just what to do. He sidestepped, lashed out a tricky

left that caught the smaller of his two assailants behind the ear and dropped him motionless to the floor. Then, methodically and almost brutally, Van Syckle set to work on the big man. Slowly but surely, he punished the man, hurting him with swift jabs to the nose, jarring him with short-arm punches in the belly, making him bellow with right crosses that smashed his lips into a bloody pulp. As he went about the work, he talked and smiled.

"I don't know who is the boss of the teamsters," he said in almost a conversational tone, "but here's one for him. When I get through with you, hunt him up, tell him you've met me. What I am giving you is just a sample—next time it will be the real thing. Convince your brethren that I'm a bad man to play rough with, will you?"

It was over in fifteen minutes. The big man, reeling and sullen, dragged his still unconscious companion out of the door and into the night. Van Syckle wasn't even sweating.

Worthington Addler hunted him up the next morning.

"You are going to be a marked man, Van," he predicted. "Better carry a pistol and a guard or two around you. You don't know the temper of these men. I'm afraid you have done a silly thing, something that will invite much trouble."

Van Syckle chuckled. He reminded Addler that he had served under General Sheridan and that he had learned when to be afraid and when to be bold. He scouted at the idea of carrying a gun.

"This is the first time these chaps have run up against someone who has carried the war to them," he said soberly. "I think it has their wind up, as our British friends would say. They may not like me, but by the Eternal, they do respect me! I think I have won the first round and I'll try to win the rest of them.

"I have a sort of a vision, Friend Addler. I think this oil industry is going to grow and grow. God only knows where the frontiers will be. It is giving the world something it has needed—a lubricant for our machinery and mills and railroads, and an illuminant that will banish darkness. The world is hungry for these petroleum products and that hunger won't be satisfied if the cost is too great. This industry can't grow while it is governed by ruffians like these teamsters, men who are gouging a dishonest profit from honest oil producers. They are leeches. I'm fighting them to the finish."

Addler was deeply moved. He hadn't believed this tall, self-possessed man had so much vision, so much courage.

"I've been wrong," he admitted. "You see farther and more clearly than I do. We can't have this industry bossed by these teamsters. I'm with you and I'm willing to let the world know it! Do you need any money? I'll back you to the limit."

Van Syckle reached out a hand. "Thanks," he said, a little gruffly. "No, I don't need money. I have plenty of it. It's going to be win or lose, as far as I am concerned. Let me play the string out myself."

VAN SYCKLE was shrewd and cautious. He guarded his machinery and his pipelines. His workmen carried clubs and were told to use them against interference. The teamsters were sullen, watchful. Night after night they held indignation meetings deep in the woods or at some secluded house. They, too, had their plans.

Van Syckle's pipeline was buried two feet deep. He personally checked every joint in the pipe, every valve in the pumps. On the day of the trial, oil producers gathered at both ends of the line to see if this time the project would work or fail. A little steam engine huffed and puffed and coughed clouds of white steam into the air. The pump pistons drove back and forth, back and forth.

After a few minutes the watchers at the Pit Hole City end of the line heard a gunshot, loud and clear.

Van Syckle grinned, tossed his oil-smeared hat high in the air.

"Gentlemen, she works!" he exulted. "That signal tells me that the oil is shooting out the full size of the line at the Miller Farm terminal. This pipe line is a success and it's going to stay that way! I promised to pump your oil at the rate of a dollar a barrel and the offer still stands."

The oil producers were jubilant. Many of them, however, feared what the sixteen thousand teamsters in the area would do about this threatened competition.

They did plenty—or rather, they tried to do plenty. Van Syckle's cudgel-carrying guards watched every foot of the pipeline. At first there were a few sporadic skirmishes, from which both sides nursed sore heads. Van Syckle was out every night, seeing that the morale of men was kept at a high level.

On the sixth night after the first successful experiment, the fight which the oil industry still refers to as "The Teamsters' War" broke out in full fury. The teamsters, under cover of darkness and storm, overwhelmed the guards, destroyed two sections of the line and departed singing drunkenly and gleefully.

Van Syckle immediately started to repair the damage. Emergency crews had been waiting for the call and he had trained them to do magnificent teamwork. Before dawn the line had been repaired and oil was again streaming into the big tanks at Miller Farm.

(Continued on page 143)

ICE

By
R. A. EMBERG

"I'M TELLING you I saw it with my own eyes! Hunks as big around as a frying-pan over the foc'sle head! Through the weather-cloth like grapeshot!" Newt Steele, first mate of the steamer *Malmuth*, gulped his steaming toddy and stared belligerently at the doubting Thomases in the bar of the Nor'easter on Milwaukee's Water Street.

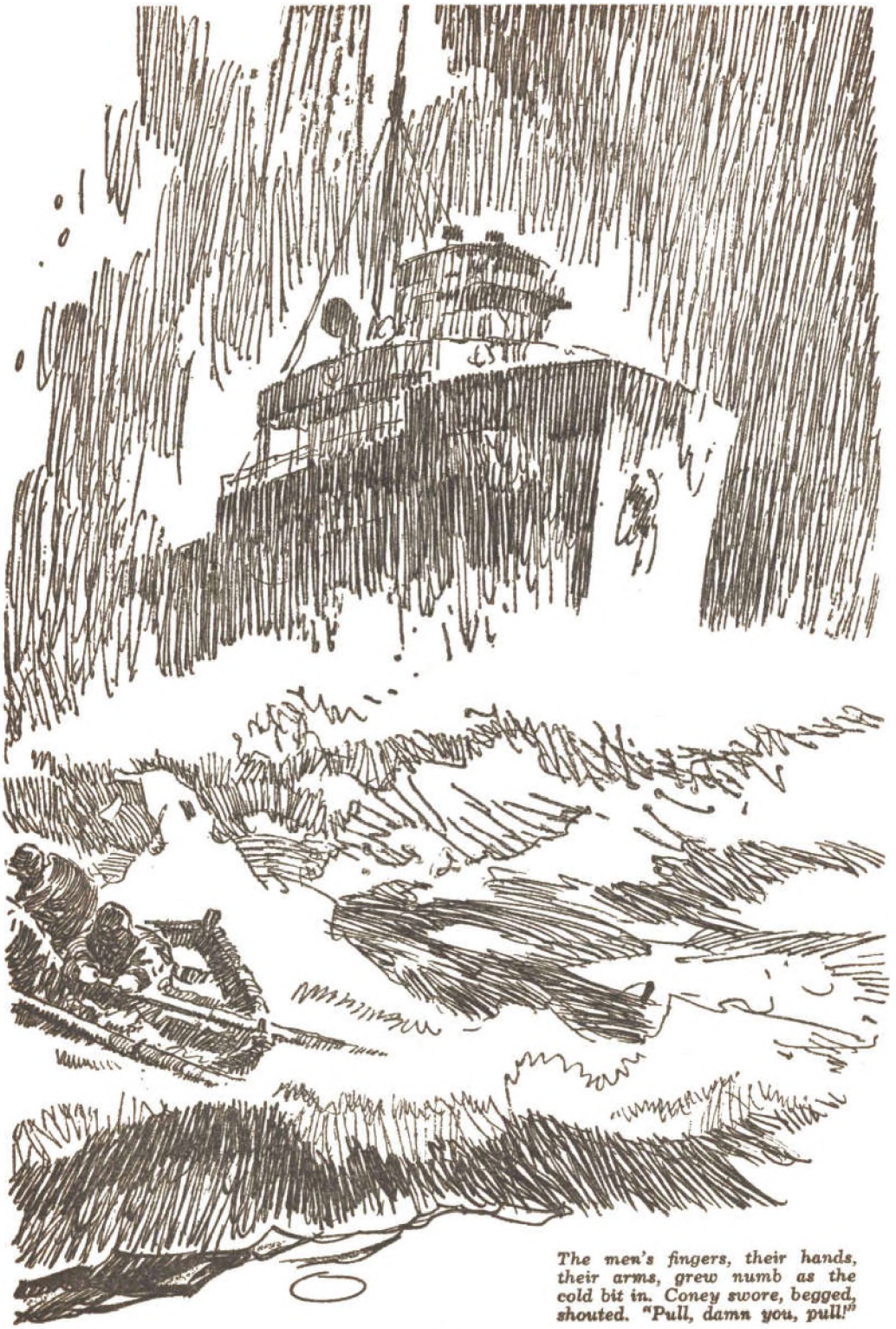
"Bejabbers, Newt, 'tis not the lie I'm givin' ye," Tom Coney, first officer of the packet *Nordic*, said with a shake of his flaming red thatch, "but 'tain't reasonable. I've seen a lot o' ice in me day, ice in gobs, in packs, in sheets, but never in all me sailorin' from Father's Point to Duluth, never in all me years on the lakes, have I seen it ripped off the top of white water and thrown on me bridge in hunks. I was froze up once in Beaver Bay with it sixty below, which is cold in any man's language, and the white surf breakin' out beyond the bar, but never a bit of ice from the combers, though 'twas six feet thick inside. I'll leave it to any man in the place." He turned to the dozen or so ship-captains, mates and engineers. "Have any of ye ever had ice in hunks tossed aboard your decks? Naw, I don't mean pack-ice. I mean, have ye ever seen the top of a comber freeze and bust on your bridge?"

And much as they liked Newt Steele, not a man would admit to such an experience. Some of them had been on the lakes thirty, forty, fifty years. They knew the things ice could and did do at times, but nobody believed the story Steele had just related.

"What did I tell ye?" Coney began triumphantly. "It ain't reasonable—"

"Damn you for a dumb mick, Coney," Steele retorted hotly. "And that goes for the rest of you, too. I saw it with my own eyes. It was about the middle of my watch. We're wallowing

ILLUSTRATED BY
GORDON GRANT



The men's fingers, their hands, their arms, grew numb as the cold bit in. Coney swore, begged, shouted. "Pull, damn you, pull!"

in a heavy sea ten miles off Whitefish Point. I'd just ordered a change in course when a big one curls up off the port bow. And so help me Hannah, the crest flies off and comes sailing over the side. It ain't water when it hits. Nosiree! It's ice! Hunks big enough to knock a man out. Don't take my word for it. Go down to the Pere Marquette dock and ask any man in my for'ard crew. Take a look at the holes in the weather-cloth—"

"Jammed up with an ore-chute in Duluth when you wasn't lookin'," Coney grinned with an exasperating air of disbelief. "I'm tellin' ye, Newt—"

"You mean I'm a liar?" Steele interrupted, and his voice was as hard as his name.

Coney realized that for once he had gone too far, but Coney was an Irishman, and stubborn.

"Well"—he threw back his shoulders—"if it's what ye want, yes! 'Tain't reasonable—"

Smack! Steele's knuckles, hard-bunched, cracked on Coney's chin. Tom staggered to his knees and clutched at the bar. He shook his head to clear it of clinging cobwebs. Tensed, the men in the bar waited. So did Newt Steele. Now that he'd done it, now that he'd allowed his temper to get the upper hand, Steele was half sorry. Tom Coney was a good guy. He simply loved to argue. But the lie was something Newt Steele had never taken.

Coney stood erect. Knotted muscles in his forearms bulged as he eyed Steele. "And ye'd settle an argymint that way," he said softly, "it's yer own choice, laddie-buck, and I'm comin' for ye!"

WITH arms swinging like an angry ape's, he stalked up to the mate of the *Malmuth*. The bartender, apprehensive because these brawls were hard on barroom furnishings, took a hand. He was big enough to take the risk.

"Sorry, boys," he said coming between them, "you can't fight here. You'll have to go somewhere else—"

Other voices chimed in. Three men grabbed Coney, another trio did likewise with Steele, and what had promised to go down in the annals of the Milwaukee waterfront as the battle of the century turned out to be a complete fiasco. But only so far as the Nor'easter bar was concerned.

"Take your hands off me," Coney snarled. "Ye've me word, Harry," he told the barkeep, "I won't muss up yer joint, but I wanna speak to this lad in private."

The barkeep nodded. The men released Coney.

The Irishman nodded at a corner of the room. "This way, me handy-fisted lad."

Steele followed him. "I'll be off watch at six," Coney gritted, "and at six-thirty I'll be waitin' fer ye in the scrapyard of the old Union Iron Works—alone! If ye're half the man I think ye are, ye'll gimme a chance to even up for this." He rubbed his chin.

"I'll be there," Steele promised.

Both men were at the rendezvous at the appointed time and without audience. One hour later they were still there, winded, bleeding and battered pulps. Though their spirits were still very willing, the flesh could not be driven further, and after a wild swing by Coney, a swing that Steele avoided only by clumsy chance, the Irishman lost his balance and collapsed in a heap. Steele sighed, hung over his opponent a second, then he too went limply to the ground. Side by side they lay and hurled wheezy challenges at each other to get up and fight like a man, but neither had strength enough left even to bat an eyelash.

That fight was the beginning. Others followed. In Duluth, in South Chicago, in Milwaukee, in Buffalo, whenever their ships happened to be in port together, Tom Coney and Newt Steele, if they met, and they usually did meet, battered each other to hamburger in indecisive battles.

Never again did Steele try to prove his story, the yarn about the ice, nor did Coney ever try to check its plausibility. The only thing each man knew was a venomous hatred for the other. And they always fought alone, never to the cheers of spectators. On an isolated pier, the deck of a derelict in some boneyard, or in a vacant sandlot, knuckles cracked as hard fists gouged into tissue and bone. And where at first the combatants had been somewhat chivalrous, with the passing of time they violated every ethic of clean fighting.

It was November and approaching the end of navigation on the lakes. The *Malmuth* was unloading ore at Cleveland's Central Furnace when the *Nordic*, in tow of a tug, berthed a few hundred yards down the river. Mournfully, Captain Peter Ryder of the *Malmuth* leaned on his taffrail and watched the *Nordic's* lines going ashore.

"Take a look at the first aid kit," he told the steward, "and don't forget the court-plaster. We'll be needing it before we're unloaded. See there." He jabbed a thumb at the *Nordic*.

Ryder knew what he was talking about. Long before the clamshells had taken their last bite of ore from the *Malmuth's* belly, the skipper had administered first aid to a badly bunged-up first mate.

"Damme, Mister," he growled as he finished the job, "I'm gittin' me a new first next season. I'm plumb sick of it. Your record in the line is good and you got a lot of seniority. A ship'll be comin' your way before long and you risk it with this blasted tomfoolery. You can't lick the mick any more'n he can you. If you'll take my advice, you'll cut it out."

"Nuts," Steele wheezed.

"What's that?" the skipper asked sharply.

"Nothing," Steele told him. "At least, there'll be no more of it this season."

Steele's knuckles cracked on Coney's chin and Coney staggered to his knees. The men at the bar tensed.

"Or next, either," Ryder snorted. "My Gawd, Mister, I've stood enough!"

At the same time in a tall building in Cleveland's Marine Block, Tom Coney was under fire.

"Now lookee here, Tom," the commodore of the North Lake Line, the *Nordic's* owners, said to him. "We're giving the *Saturn* to you because you're entitled to a command. You'll make a damned good master, but you gotta cut out this monkey-business, this feud with some mate or other. You're a mess! Hell of a condition for a ship's captain to be in! What'll the crew think, what'd some of our shippers think? You got one eye closed tighter'n a battened hatch —and that nose! It ain't a nose at all! It's an anchor-fluke! Godamighty, mister, you're a sight! We ain't standing for any master in this line keeping up an affair like that. No more nonsense, y'understand?"

Now that he was a master, Coney knew he'd have to forget Newt Steele somehow. Ship-captains couldn't go about brawling with ordinary mates. Well, it was the last of navigation and he'd have several winter months to plan how to avoid Steele in the future. In the meanwhile he'd agree not to fight Newt again, with mental reservations of course.

"I'll be thankin' ye, Commodore," he said, "and ye have me word not to raise me mitts to the lubber again"—sotto voce—"this winter."

"Good!" The commodore held out a hand, "you'll take over immediately. The *Saturn's* at the Lehigh docks. Get aboard at once. I don't know yet what the orders will be, but I'm thinking it's coal to Two Harbors and maybe a layup for the winter there."

ON THE way back to the *Nordic* to get his things, Coney met Steele for the second time that day. The men glared at each other.

"There's a nice cinder patch at the end of the dock," Steele growled. "How about a round or two?"

Coney was tempted; then he remembered. "Out o' me way, ye common deckhand," he

retorted. "'Tis not proper for masters to brawl with inferiors. 'Tis the new skipper o' the steamer *Saturn* ye're lookin' at, laddie-buck."

Steele eyed him sourly. "Some owners don't care who they give ships to," he returned, "but it's a captain I am, too. Yes, you goggle-eyed mick, the *Malmuth* was turned over to me twenty minutes ago. Ryder's taking out the *Portola*. Seeing that I'm still your equal, how about that cinder patch?"

Again Coney was sorely tempted. Again he remembered the commodore's injunction. "Much as I'd like to accommodate ye, Captain," he growled, "I haven't got time."

"Guess you had enough this morning, you blasted coward!"

"Now be the saints, no man—" Coney caught himself sharply. "I'll be seein' ye some day when I ain't so busy." He averted his eyes and stamped away. He heard Steele's triumphant laughter as he climbed aboard the *Nordic*. And again the words, "Blasted coward." His blood boiled to a new high. "For two bits," he frothed, "I'd tell 'em to shove their ship—"

A stubby tug pulled the *Malmuth* down-river toward Lake Erie. Captain Newt Steele was on his own bridge. A trim four-hundred-foot steamer moored to the Lehigh dock caught his eye. The name on her bow in large white letters was *Saturn*. On her port bridge-wing stood a big man with a megaphone in his hand: Tom Coney.

The *Malmuth* crept by. Forgetting his new dignity, Newt Steele cupped his hands and shouted. "Ahoy, *Saturn*, watch that mick captain of yours or he'll drown all of you. He's no skipper. He's a —— —— slob!"

Coney shook his fist. "I'll be payin' ye, Newt Steele, ye slab-footed misfit, if it takes a hundred years," he yowled. "Sorry the day, ye blasted—"

There were footsteps on the bridge ladder and the commodore of the line puffed onto the bridge. This visit was entirely unexpected and Coney stopped short so far as speech went, but unconsciously he continued to wave the megaphone in the general direction of Newt Steele.

"Sorry I had to butt in, Tom," the commodore announced. "No skipper likes an office man puttering about on his first voyage of command, and I wouldn't have done it, but I have to go up-lakes to look over some dock space at Duluth. Sudden decision of the board. I hope you don't mind me as a passenger?"

Coney choked back his anger. "Glad to have ye, Commodore," he lied. "Ye can have me cabin."

"The salutations you were just exchanging?" the commodore asked, his eyes twinkling. "Your friend, the mate, I presume?"

"Yes," Coney exploded, and let go with a blast of his colorful profanity.

"Tsk, tsk, tsk, what language!" said the commodore enviously. He, too, had been a shipmaster at one time, but he had never been the master of such a vocabulary.

The *Malmuth* docked in Superior, disgorged her cargo of black diamonds and moved to the Northern Elevator for wheat to Buffalo. It would be her last voyage for that season.

Grain chutes creaked into her open hatches and poured the richness of the Minnesota Red River Valley into her deep hold. Cargo trimmers plied wooden scoops in clouds of smoking dust and, little by little, the big ship settled to her marks.

With her belly filled, hatch covers and tarps went on and life-lines were rigged between the superstructures. In the late autumn, navigation on the Great Lakes is hazardous and no ship sticks a nose outside until it is snugged down as tight as a drum.

Newt Steele, who had been in the elevator office, came aboard with his clearance papers in his hand, orders were bellowed to the alert crew, the lines were singled up and the *Malmuth* headed down-harbor for the open water of Lake Superior. The weather was mild, suspiciously mild for November, and it was with an ill-defined apprehension that Newt paced his bridge.

"Ought to be a little wind and snow," he told the second mate. "It's too damned quiet. Take a look at that sky." He pointed to a hazy northeast. "Something's building up."

"Yeah," the second agreed, "but we ought to hit the Soo before she comes."

AT midnight the *Malmuth* pitched uneasily to a long quartering swell. Steele was still on the bridge. There was very little wind, but the cloud-mussed sky was a deep indigo through which lurid streaks of copper light from a partly hidden full moon darted out from time to time. Hurricane weather somewhere up toward Hudson Bay. Then it came.

Roaring out of the northwest, pushing a twenty-foot sea before it, came a windy zero and swirling gritty snow. Steele and his lookout made for the pilot house. Inside he watched the thermometer. Steam-heated though the chartroom was, the temperature dropped twenty degrees in fifteen minutes. It dropped ten more in the next ten. The *Malmuth* bucked madly. The rigging sang and the deck whipsawed with strain. The elusive coppery light of the moon was blotted out completely and a purple-black void took its place. And with the dropping temperature, ice began building up on the bow. Already the charthouse windows were thick with rime.

Two hours passed. The chief engineer with an oiler and two stokers had three steam hoses through bow ports trying to keep the ice down with live steam. But despite the steam the ice gained. The chief went aft for reinforcements.

A big sea ran under the ship. Up—up—up

went the bow. The sea ran aft. The midship lifted, the deck flexed like a convexed bow. The stern came up; the propeller out of water raced crazily, its vibrations threatening to tear out or break the tail-shaft.

The telephone in the charthouse jangled. Steele answered it. "Lord," came the first assistant's anxious voice, "you'd better watch for those big ones and let us know so we can keep her from racing. We'll lose our screw with a couple more like that last one!"

"We'll try," Steele yelled, "but it's so damned thick I can't even see the bow, let alone the seas. Stand by and feel for 'em."

The night passed and with the coming of what should have been daylight, there was only a slight graying. Wind, wind and still more wind, laden with gritty snow. The rivet heads in the charthouse walls were covered with frost. And ever and ever the seas rose higher. They came aboard in thousands of tons of icy water to cascade aft and pour torrents down the ventilators. They carried away one life boat and smashed another. A life-raft on the forepeak tore loose and went over the side.

"I've been sailin' these lakes forty years," muttered the helmsman, "and I never saw anything like it. Not even the big blow in '13."

A huge sea ran under. Up went the bow, up went the midship, up went the stern while the bow nose-dived into a tremendous chasm. The screw raced then stopped as steam was shut off. Its vibrations did not resume. The ship rolled, losing steerageway. Something had happened. Tensed, the men in the wheelhouse waited.

The engine-room telephone jangled frantically. Steele snatched it. "Godamighty," came the panicky voice of the first assistant, "we've lost our screw!"

With many tons of ice sheathing her hull and superstructures, the steamer *Saturn* plowed westward. Tom Coney and the commodore were in the wheelhouse. Both men were anxiously scanning the tumbling waste of water ahead.

"Worst blow I have ever seen," said the commodore.

"She's a ripper," Coney agreed, "but so long as your hatches are tight, your steerin' gear O.K. and yer buckets turnin', there's nothin' to worry about. I wouldn't want to lose me screw, though, or have me rudder unshipped in this. 'Twould be Davy Jones fer them that did."

An object loomed faintly in the haze ahead. Coney grabbed a pair of glasses from a rack and held them to his eyes. "Howly Mother!" he ejaculated. "It's a ship, and—yes—she's disabled! And enough ice on her to—"

He snapped an order to the helmsman and the man gave the wheel a few spokes. The *Saturn* bore toward the other craft. As she approached, the strange ship's siren blasted mournfully and a rocket flared from her forward deck.

The *Saturn* drew nearer. A sea pooped her, lifted her, and from the height Coney got a better look at the disabled vessel. Another rocket flared.

"God! It's the *Malmuth!*" Coney muttered. "Here, take a look." He gave the glasses to the commodore.

Coney paced the width of the charthouse with jerky troubled strides. Suddenly he grabbed the telephone. "Tell the chief engineer I want to see him," he barked. "Immejut!"

"What are you going to do?" asked the commodore.

"What would ye do if ye were in me place, Commodore?" He blew his nose. "I'm takin' 'em off, or I'm tryin' to."

"You can't," the commodore protested. "The *Saturn* has no gun and you can't shoot a line. You can't carry a line with a small boat. Look!" He waved a hand at the sea. "How long do you think a boat would last out there?"

"Bejabbers, we'll soon find out," Coney growled.

"I won't let you," said the commodore. "Our own crew comes first. We'll stand by, but no boat goes over the side."

"Stand by, hell!" Coney's Irish was up. "That wagon'll sink inside an hour. Hell of a lotta good standin' by'll do!"

"No boat—" began the commodore.

"Run your office and your line, Commodore, but right now I'm skipper here and I will be till we drop our lines. After that, fire me and be damned to ye. It's me orders that go now. No man will ever be able to say Tom Coney ran away and left a sinking vessel because he was too white-livered to risk his own hulk!"

BEFORE the commodore could frame a reply, the chief engineer burst in. Coney pointed to the *Malmuth* and told the chief what he was going to do and what he wanted him, the chief, to do. "Don't forget the oil slick," he added. "Mayhap it won't do a hell of a lotta good, but it won't do any harm. Now git the hell back to your engines."

The chief's face went white and he shook his head. But when he looked into Coney's blazing eyes, he left unsaid the words in his throat and went back to his engines. Inside two minutes the telegraph jangled.

Coney brushed the wheelsman aside and put the wheel over. The ship yawed, buried her nose, then her quarter. A sea crawled along her side. She floundered in the trough, dipping her lee rail under. Coney prayed that his cargo would stay put. A shift and no man of that crew would live to tell the tale.

Slowly she came up, evened out, swung eastward facing the wind and the disabled *Malmuth*.

The commodore watched and waited with open mouth and admiring eyes. He'd done his

duty as line captain, which was to protect the lives and property of his own company, hoping at the same time that Coney would disobey. In Coney's place he would have done the same thing. "Yes," he thought to himself, "it's the way of men who command ships."

Driving to windward of the *Malmuth*, Coney gauged the drift of that craft. He growled incisive orders to the mates and then relinquished the wheel to the first. Then aft over ice-clad decks to the boat deck on the afterhouse where the second mate had assembled the crew.

Coney was no orator. "I been sailin' these lakes fifteen years, deckhand, bosun, mate and skipper," he told the men. "I ain't never asked a man to do anything I wouldn't do meself. I'm now callin' for volunteers to man a boat and take a line yonder. One chance in a million. Who'll go with me?"

Every man on the spar deck stepped forward. Coney grinned. He counted off a boat's crew. "All right, lads"—he flung an arm at an ice-bound boat—"git it over."

Axes smashed the ice in the cradle. The canvas cover, stiff as sheet-iron with ice, was ripped off, the davits were unleashed and swung over. The second engineer and two oilers hoisted a waste-filled barrel dripping oil to the taffrail. Coney and the men took places in the boat.

"Lower away now. Easy, and wait for the downward roll—"

The tackle, icy-stiff, jammed in the blocks. A seaman smashed at the block with an axe. One end of the boat dropped, threatening for an instant to spill the crew. Coney cursed the man for a murdering lubber. Then at last the boat rested on oil slick in the *Saturn's* lee.

"Pay out steady," Coney yelled at the second mate who stood on the spar deck with a coil of light line. "All right, men, give way."

Once out of the lee and with a thinning oil slick, the men began a terrific struggle to keep from being swamped. But Coney kept the bow pointed at the *Malmuth*. Again and again they were pooped by icy seas. One man, two men, three men, bailed frantically. The water that wasn't bailed almost immediately turned to ice. The boat became loggy.

The men's fingers, their hands, their arms, grew numb as the cold bit in. "Give way, pull, damn you, pull," Coney shouted. He swore, he begged. 'Pull, ye tarriers, pull!"

Now they could see the crew of the *Malmuth* watching them. Coney waved a mittened hand.

It may have been a half hour, but to those who watched from both vessels it seemed years before a line was tossed from the low-lying *Malmuth* and the boat crew climbed the side. And the cheers from both crews were drowned out by wind.

The boat crew was spent, frozen; the *Malmuth's* crew would have to complete the job of hauling in the line and the heavier one for the breeches-buoy. Bundled into the *Malmuth's* galley, Coney's men were dosed with hot coffee and rum. Coney himself headed for the bridge.

Newt Steele met him on the ladder with outstretched hand. There was moisture in Steele's eyes and not from the cold either.

Coney ignored the hand. "Your still p'isen to me, Newt Steele. It wasn't ye I was thinkin' of, but your crew—"

A sea smashed the quarter. The *Malmuth* shuddered. Over the rail came an avalanche of water—and something else. *Smash, crash!* A shower of hard, white, crystalline objects, some of them as big around as a frying-pan, skittered along the deck. One rested at Coney's feet. He eyed it curiously. He bent over and touched it, picked it up. It was ice from the frozen crest of a wave.

He looked at Steele sheepishly.

"It's fifty below," Steele said, making it easy for him.

"I was wrong then," Coney bellowed. "I beg your pardon right humbly, laddie-buck." He thrust out a mitten. "It ain't reasonable nohow, but bejabers, I saw it with me own eyes! Git that breeches aboard and let's git off this tub—"

The *Malmuth's* crew was aboard the *Saturn*, which was thumping toward Duluth. In the skipper's cabin, Coney, the commodore and Newt Steele sat at a table. Glasses and a bottle were before them.

"'Tain't reasonable, nohow," Coney said, shaking his red thatch, "but bejabers, I saw it with me own eyes. Hunks as big around as a fryin'-pan. All of which goes to show there's a lot of things—well, ye git me meanin', Newt?"

Newt Steele nodded.

A sea smashed at the *Saturn*. A spittoon on the floor bounced and the bottle toppled over. The commodore righted the bottle. He filled the glasses and looked inquiringly at the two skippers. What was all this talk about frying-pans and something Coney had seen with his own eyes?

But neither captain enlightened him. For them it was a closed chapter.

BUFFALOED TO BROOKLYN

"Carmichael!" Sergeant Jones bellowed without formality. "What did you do with those buffaloes?"

ILLUSTRATED BY J. CAMPBELL FARREN

By MAL SHUMARD

THERE are some very peculiar individuals in the world and quite naturally, some of them are in the Army. Private Carmichael was such an individual. Offhand he did not impress you as the type who would steal sixteen head of buffalo, but then on the other hand he was not the type whose mental process is thoroughly understood by the masses.

The initial volley in the case was fired one evening when Private Carmichael returned from a particularly adventuresome tour of duty with a survey party on the west game preserve. As a result of certain contributions to the day's activities, that worthy found himself standing stiffly at attention before his battery commander upon his return to camp in the evening. The B.C. was disturbed.

"Private Carmichael," he began "it appears that you have strayed from the beam. Your job in today's operations was to run a directional

traverse. In lieu of that you seem to have followed a herd of buffalo around all day. You were observed, however, up until the time Sergeant Jones lost sight of you, to have your instrument set up occasionally, although I understand that the map and figures you produced are unlike any that have yet come out of this war. Why anyone would want to follow a number of buffalo around for any length of time is a thing that escapes me, but I have the feeling that you may have combined business with pleasure by plotting your course wherever the buffalo went.

"However," the B. C. continued, with a note of impending doom for Private Carmichael in his voice, "before I allow my already congealing opinion in the matter to jell, I will clear the record step by step, lest some injustice be done. Either you do not know what you were supposed to do or you have been indifferent to orders. We will open negotiations by having you explain to me exactly what a directional traverse is."

PRIVATE CARMICHAEL hesitated briefly. He was a dreamy sort of citizen-soldier, very artful in some respects and quite artless in others. His root stock was laid deep in the heart of Brooklyn, which he considered the most hallowed of all soil, but even to his associates from New York, that was still no explanation for his extraordinary qualities. When it came to mathematics, he was the type who added up the total tonnage figures on freight cars as they whizzed by and he carried such elementary things as survey figures in his head. Exactly opposed to these precise qualities was his lackadaisical outlook on life, which appeared to his comrades to be entirely devoid of reason—in which surmise, however, they frequently found themselves wrong.

At any rate, Private Carmichael now prepared himself for the witness chair and launched into the subject at hand, calling frequently on his native Empire City for analogy.

"A directional traverse," he stated with a sleepy stare off into the wall, "is a crooked line connecting two points. You find the direction of north before you start. It is like going from Penn Station straight ahead on Thirty-fourth Street, left on Fifth Avenue, and right on Forty-second to Grand Central."

"Continue," sighed the B.C. when Carmichael paused for breath.

"It is crooked because you have to go around things, and you measure those angles with your transit so you can figure your change of direction when you get to Grand Central." Private Carmichael stopped, indicating that he rested his case.

"That," commented the B.C. icily, "is not the definition as given in Training Memo Number 6-1. It does indicate to me, however, that you knew what you were supposed to do. Therefore you will wash windows in the battery area each evening for the next week and perform a few other small details which I am sure will arise from time to time. Do I make myself clear?"

Private Carmichael saluted stiffly and sadly, acknowledging that the situation was all too clear, and made his way from the judgment room. Outside the door he was stopped briefly by Sergeant Jones. The latter, because of the whole affair, was an hour late for an important engagement at the White Dove Beer Tavern and seemed rather perturbed over it.

"In addition, Carmichael," he stated, "your furlough, which was to be effective at the end of next week, is hereby canceled. Survey men cannot get furloughs unless I am able to recommend their work as satisfactory, which under the circumstances I do not think would be possible in your case. Is that clear, too?"

For the first time Private Carmichael showed visible signs of unhappiness. His countenance fell so quickly that he was almost forced to scoop it up from the walk, but he pulled himself together and disappeared with his burdens into the gathering dusk.

Serenity came once more to the battery area. It is safe to say that had it not been for a sudden urgent ringing of the telephone on the B.C's. desk, the whole affair might have been filed away forever in the archives of time. But the telephone changed all that. The B.C., in the act of departing, tarried to take the call.

The sounds coming through the receiver resembled at first a confused roar, but finally abated to an intelligible barking. "Did you," the colonel on the other end of the line demanded, "send your survey party out onto the west game preserve today?"

"Yes, sir, I did," the B.C. replied, then added with a faint trace of commendatory efficiency in his voice, "exactly according to schedule."

"And did any of your men, by chance, see a herd of buffalo?"

"It just happens that some of my men did, sir."

"Well, it just happens also"—the voice again took on the semblance of a roar—"that the buffalo are gone."

"Sir, I can't see how that possibly concerns me," the B.C. stated after considering the matter for a few tight seconds.

"Captain, I will explain. There is a large gate leading into the west game preserve. For purposes of training, the Army has the privilege of opening this gate and proceeding onto the reservation. No one, however, has the right to leave it open. The buffalo are apt to stray. As a result of your efforts the buffalo are now gone. The range patrol cannot find them any-

where. They have disappeared. Your duty is obvious. Find them!"

THE B. C. returned the phone to its receiver and pondered the matter somberly. The more he pondered, the more somber he became, eventually giving vent to a clarion call for Sergeant Jones. That gentleman was about to make his escape to the White Dove, but the call brought him back posthaste.

"Sergeant Jones, go find out what Carmichael did with those buffalo!"

"Yes, sir," Sergeant Jones replied, and made a hasty exit in search of the erring pioneer from Brooklyn. The latter he found in the act of shaving—a duty which, because of advancing age, he was having to perform weekly.

"Carmichael!" Sergeant Jones bellowed without formality, "What did you do with those buffaloes?"

Private Carmichael was shocked almost to the point of removing a large section of jaw, but he recovered to face the issue. "I did not do anything with them, Sergeant," he replied.

"Don't lie to me! The range patrol says they are gone, and you were the last man seen with them. Where are they?"

"I don't know."

The sergeant's countenance took on an apoplectic appearance. "Carmichael, for the last time, what did you do with those buffaloes?"

"Sergeant, I do not have the buffalo." Private Carmichael's dreamy expression had returned, rather purposefully. "I did not have them in the truck when we came back from the game preserve. You may recall that I did not have them sticking out of my pockets, either. As for right now, I am innocent and you may look in my footlocker if you think I am hiding anything."

"Private!" Sergeant Jones towered over his victim, while nearby recruits moved hastily aside and observed the situation curiously. Sergeant Jones was near detonation and his general appearance gave one the peculiar feeling that this was exactly what took place inside a thunder cloud immediately before the lightning began to knock over trees and things. "Private! What happens if you lose your canteen through carelessness?"

"I pay for it," Carmichael stated simply.

"Exactly. You sign a statement of charges. And what is one of the things that happens if you intentionally wreck an Army vehicle?"

"The same."

"Well, if you haven't decided in ten minutes where those buffalos are, you will pay for them—and if you want a real jolt, just try to imagine what a statement of charges will look like for sixteen head of buffaloes." Sergeant Jones turned abruptly on his heels and, checking his watch to give emphasis to the warning, departed in the direction of the orderly room.

"I wish I had asked him," Private Carmichael mused to a neighbor, "what sixteen head of buffalo cost."

"I wouldn't do that, buddy," the neighbor advised. "It looks to me like the Old Man is bothered about those buffaloes."

"And so am I," replied Private Carmichael. "They have caused me to lose my furlough and I would rather see New York right now than all the buffalo on the west game preserve. In fact, I would rather see New York anytime."

Private Carmichael packed his shaving equipment away and returned to quarters, where he puttered around among his belongings for a while, then relaxed on his bunk with a sensational brochure entitled *Amazing Facts*.

BACK in the orderly room the phone rang again. The game patrol was becoming frantic. The B. C. glowered at everyone who came in, and recoiled sharply each time he glanced at the phone. Sergeant Jones checked his watch and shortly thereafter stood over the reclining private.

"Well?" he asked ominously.

Private Carmichael turned a perplexed countenance to him. "Sergeant Jones, I've just discovered that those things weren't buffalo at all. They were bison."

"Is that all you have to say?" The words hissed through Sergeant Jones' teeth.

"No, it isn't. I wanted to ask you why it made so much difference what became of them."

Sergeant Jones controlled himself with an effort. "There are not many buffaloes left in the world," he gritted. "There was a time when we had more buffaloes than we had tanks and planes and privates, but that time is passed. Right now there is a shortage of buffaloes. If they get off the reservation, they run into trouble. They don't have enough to eat, wolves get the calves, and a lot of other things happen to them. Does that answer your question?"

"Yes," replied Carmichael, thoughtfully.

"Then"—Sergeant Jones' calm passed and his voice rose to a bellow that shook the building—"*where are they?*"

"I don't know," said Private Carmichael. "Every time I try to think about it, my mind switches over to Brooklyn."

Sergeant Jones turned from red to purple and then to an ashy white. For long seconds he appeared to be counting or praying. Then he regained control of himself. He walked a little unsteadily from the quarters and back to the orderly room.

"Carmichael," a friend whispered, "If you

don't watch out, you'll have your Purple Heart before you ever get to combat."

"Sergeant Jones is just a bundle of nerves," said Private Carmichael, and resumed his study of bison.

While the course of events lagged temporarily in the case of the missing buffalo, Private Carmichael continued his reading and allowed a few small plans to crystallize in his imagination. Sergeant Jones, however, had no rest. Immediately after leaving the quarters he took a brisk run around the drill field to ease the tenseness in him, and then stood for several minutes outside in the darkness. During this interlude he clenched and unclenched his fists methodically, eventually arriving at what, for the moment, was almost a state of calm. He managed to open his eyes a trifle from the thin venomous slits they had been previously, and when this was accomplished he set his mouth in a fixed grin that gave his appearance more of the qualities of a death's-head than a smile. He was satisfied with it, however, and strode lightly back into the quarters. The first few minutes he spent in checking police of barracks and ventilation, meanwhile bandying about a few good humored remarks, which drew heavy laughter, more from a feeling of relief than from hilarity. Twice he passed the reclining Carmichael but each time ignored him. Apparently the buffalo were forgotten. Finally, by some mere whim, he noticed the criminal.

"Hiyah, Carmichael." Sergeant Jones laughed with the greeting, a little harshly perhaps, but it had the ring of friendship. "Oh, by the way, ever recall anything about the buffaloes?"

"No," said Private Carmichael.

"Don't happen to have your sketch of the traverse, by any chance?"

"Yes," said Private Carmichael.

"Let's see it," said Sergeant Jones, and seated himself hurriedly on the bunk as though something definite had been accomplished at last.

"It's around here somewhere, but I can't find it," said Private Carmichael.

Sergeant Jones buried his head in his hands while a spasm of some emotion, which he managed to conceal, passed through him.

"Why—can't—you"—the words were spaced carefully as though their sane utterance demanded the greatest of effort—"find—it, Carmichael?"

"I keep thinking of Brooklyn. Just when I almost remember where I put it, I see Brooklyn. I am confused about the whole thing.

SERGEANT JONES' features had imperceptibly set as though they were moulded in granite, but he recalled his purpose and spread a glaring grin once more over his face. He got up and set about a further checking of the ventilation, eventually arriving at the door, where he made his exit. Back at the orderly room he heard the phone ringing inside and did an abrupt about-face. Deciding between the lesser of two evils he returned once more to quarters and made his way straight to Private Carmichael. He opened the final round in a fraternal manner.

"Carmichael," he began, "I guess all of us fellows in the Army would like to be at home, wouldn't we?"

Private Carmichael indicated that in his case there was some truth in the statement.

"But then again, when you think of the war and all those poor people in Europe and our boys over there too, it makes a lump sort of come to your throat and you want to get in there and fight, don't you?" he challenged Carmichael, and the latter admitted the point.

"But those of us who aren't over there yet have to do our best in whatever way we can. In our little everyday duties like—like—"

"Like what?" asked Private Carmichael.

"Like finding those buffaloes."

"I keep thinking of Brooklyn," said Private Carmichael sadly.

Sergeant Jones heaved a sigh of weary resignation, muttering under his breath, "'It is a far greater thing I do than I have ever done.'"

"Private Carmichael," he began, "do you think now—well, just suppose—well, I mean, do you think that if you got your furlough—What I mean is, do you think that would help you remember where you put the traverse and where those buffaloes are?"

"I think it would," Carmichael stated.

"Then bring it over to the orderly room as soon as you can find it." Sergeant Jones jumped up and made a hasty departure.

When he had gone, Private Carmichael came briskly to life. He spread out a sheet of paper and from some hidden recess of his locker brought out a small slide rule. For some minutes he drew lines and placed figures on his sketch. When all was done he slipped into his uniform, made a hasty pass at his shoeshine and soon was standing in the orderly room.

He came immediately to the point. "The buffalo," he stated, "are at coordinates 742.100-1396.450."

"What was that?" demanded the excited Sergeant Jones.

"Your map of the west game preserve—" began Private Carmichael.

"Yes, yes," cried Sergeant Jones, becoming more hopeful each moment as thoughts of the hitherto forgotten White Dove Beer Tavern again flashed through his mind. "Here's the map. Let's see, coordinates, hmm, hmm—Why, you'd have had to carry distance to figure those coordinates."

"I always step off the distance," said Private Carmichael. "It's fairly accurate."

Sergeant Jones seemed to be puzzled over another aspect of the situation.

"The map we are looking at," he said as though hope and the will to live had both fallen anew to unfathomed depths, "is a map of the game preserve. When the gate was left open, the buffaloes went out. We do not have a map of the balance of the state."

"Why," Private Carmichael mused with the weary air of one who understood but could not alleviate the world's sufferings, "does everyone presume that because the gate was left open, the buffalo went out? The buffalo never went near the gate. They are still on the game preserve. They never were off of it."

"CARMICHAEL," Sergeant Jones began, and then stopped with a shudder as he saw himself almost hurled again into the same vicious endless circle in which he had spent most of the evening. He turned to a mechanical study of the map. "How did the buffaloes get in there?" he asked. "According to the contour lines on the map, that's a canyon."

"They walked around all day and late in the evening they went down to a little creek and followed it up the valley until it narrowed into a canyon. When it got dark they lay down and went to sleep."

"Did they go to sleep while you were there?"

"No, they wanted to keep going, but it was late so I left. After I climbed out the side of the canyon I could look down and see them. They were lying down and I think they had gone to sleep."

"The game patrol says they won't go into canyons. That's why they didn't check there. That is, unless they were worried off their regular feeding grounds."

"Maybe they worry sometimes," Private Carmichael said, "like people do."

"Maybe they do," said Sergeant Jones, "but what you mean is that you followed them around so close they couldn't get away from you. These buffaloes are tame from being kept inside a fence and you bothered them so much they left their feeding area to try to hide in the canyon."

Sergeant Jones felt a quick return of the same murderous instincts that had driven him all evening, but he scooped up the papers and grabbed the phone. After a hurried conversation he turned to Private Carmichael. "They'll know in a few minutes," he said. "They are going to drive over in a truck to check up."

During the ensuing pause Private Carmichael checked and rechecked his figures and continued with his rapid manipulation of the slide rule. "That's right," he announced finally. "That's where they are."

The phone rang. In suspense Sergeant Jones took down the receiver. Then an expression of bland relief spread over his face. When he set the receiver down all was well. The buffalo were found.

Sergeant Jones communicated the glad tidings to the B.C. and returned with his face wreathed in smiles.

"Private Carmichael," Sergeant Jones stated, as a happy conclusion to the ghastly affair. "I will keep my word. Your furlough will go through with my recommendation but"—Sergeant Jones' face revealed for a moment faint traces of the bitterness that he had known at the hands of fate and a few head of buffalo—"but those windows. They will shine like the lens of a transit before you're through with them. Ah, those windows!"

"I understand, Sergeant," said Private Carmichael.

He stepped outside and for a few minutes was alone in the darkness. In his mind's eye the glittering stars above him shone like the lights of Old Broadway and the Brooklyn Bridge. "The windows, yes," he murmured to himself. "but, ah. Brooklyn."

John Stockton knew better than to move, even from his strained position. It was a big snake, all coiled and ready to strike.

ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EGGENHOFER

THEIR attack broke against the picket-fence around the cemetery, and at first they thought the town would fall. A better commander would have sent in the reserves and pressed the attack home, but their general ordered a retreat. The Union men drew back to positions outside the town and brought up guns. Now it would be a siege. Before long, starvation would come to their aid. Starvation would put on the blue uniform.

Stoneham was the name of the place, and it was in Virginia. John Stockton, who took an interest in peaceful things, saw that it was good country, not very different from his native Illinois. A tall, slow-spoken man, John Stockton had fought for nearly two years without losing the habit of mind that belonged to peace, the easy times before the war. But his comrades in the company called him a cracking good shot.

The company had a quiet part of the line, with nothing to do but to hold it while their general sought to reduce the beleaguered town. He went at it cautiously, and Captain Henry Lewis, from Springfield, told the Illinois men to make themselves comfortable. The captain was like that—thoughtful of his men—and so were Lieutenant Sievert and Lieutenant Ross. There hadn't been much rest for John Stockton in this war, but now he settled back and healed the blister on his foot that came from a new pair of boots.

Stoneham was small and the open country came up to its backdoors. John Stockton's part of the line faced a cornfield that made him think of the one he used to brag about to Sally, his wife. The shelling had left it pretty much as it was; the Confederates had no field-pieces, and the Union guns fired over the corn. Stockton, with nothing else to occupy his mind, watched it grow a couple of inches. The corn kept his thoughts off Stoneham.

It was queer, but while they were moving around he hadn't felt far from Sally and the farm. The waiting in front of Stoneham was another thing, a more pitiless kind of warfare. Except for that blunder in ordering the retreat, their general had done well. The Confederates had been withdrawing when they reached Stoneham, and they were short of supplies. The Union men gave them no chance at all to forage.

The town was surrounded and the investing lines strongly held. John Stockton didn't like to think of people starving not more than a long rifle-shot away, but that was what the Rebs were doing, and in sight of plenty. Their own supply-trains crawled peacefully in, and there were sutlers hawking peach and apple pies about the Union lines. John Stockton bought a couple, but they didn't taste just right to him.

Once, the Rebs tried a daylight raid on a supply-train. The Illinois men had a good view of the skirmish. The armed escort took cover behind the wagons, and the rattle and banging of rifle-fire began. Confederate saddles emptied

THE SNAKE

By

WILLIAM ARTHUR BREYFOGLE

quickly, and the rest of the raiders wheeled their horses and made off. The talk in the Union lines put their losses as high as forty men.

They must have been hard-pressed to have tried the raid at all.

It was queer that the thought of his enemies starving should so exasperate John Stockton against them. He couldn't remember ever really hating a Reb until he had to sit back, well-fed himself, and know that they were eating rats and that it was partly his doing. They got reports from inside Stoneham from prisoners and deserters.

Stockton got so he didn't sleep well for thinking about them.

Once the Rebels sent out a flag of truce, but it was only to get permission to take a funeral through the Union lines. One of their officers had been killed, and they wanted to bury him in his nearby family plot. The general gave his permission, and the Illinois men watched the funeral go by, their caps in their hands. The gaunt men in gray made a gallant attempt to swagger as they passed. John Stockton hated them for that, and for knowing that they would keep their word to the general and not eat a mouthful while they were outside their own lines.

THEY had been lying in front of Stoneham for more than two weeks when Lieutenant Ross sent for John Stockton. He was a pretty good lieutenant, quick to notice the moods of his men.

"We need a sharpshooter," he told Stockton. "And you'll do. You'll find good cover in that cornfield; you can get pretty close to the Confederate lines. I'll leave the rest of it to you, to go and come as you please. Is there anything you want?"

Stockton wanted a cavalry carbine. "A musket's too long, Lieutenant, when you've got to crawl on your belly. Get close enough and a carbine shoots just as straight. When do I start?"

"Start now. I'll get you that carbine."

Directly he had something to do, John Stockton began to feel better. Being a sharpshooter was a relief from inactivity and cankering thoughts, a whole lot better than just hanging back and watching the Confederates starve.

He took to the cornfield, from the first. He had played amid tall corn as a boy, and the knack of wriggling along between the rows came back to him almost at once. And in among the straight green stalks, he could pretty well forget that there was a war. Corn was a peaceful thing, its green increase far removed from the marches and cannonading and hard fights of the last two years. There were times when John Stockton rolled over on his back and lay staring up at the blue of the Virginia sky through the patterns the tassels traced against it. At those times, he didn't think about Stoneham. He didn't properly think at all, but just lay with the earth pressing against his shoulders as it never did in a rifle-pit. In war, the very earth seemed hostile, as if it resented being furrowed for this monstrous crop. That made a man like John Stockton uncomfortable. He didn't feel at home.

But Stoneham was still there, and presently he took account of it. In the early morning he crawled up to where he could look out through the last rows into the edge of the

town. He wasn't far from the Rebel line and he could smell parched corn. Surprisingly near, a voice drawled, "Terence, be neighborly and go ask the Yanks over to breakfast! It ain't fitten they should ruin their stomachs on coffee and new bread and sidemeat and all. They're a-shortenin' their natural lives, that's what it is!"

"Well, they done what they could to shorten ours!"

"Sho', Terence, it's only their little ways! Run over and ask 'em now, do! There's plenty of victuals to go 'round."

There were not enough victuals to go around, as John Stockton could see. The Confederates had parched corn to eat and water to drink. But a sort of reckless humor looked out from their eyes. Their faces were gaunt and determined. Stoneham wasn't captured yet, not by a long sight. It wasn't the bravery of the men in gray that John Stockton held against them, but their unwavering acceptance of hunger. The war was imposed upon both sides equally; not many men in the ranks understood much about it. But starvation was something the Union men forced upon the Confederates, an inhuman advantage. It was double-edged, this weapon; by and large, the Confederates bore it better than the men in blue. Stockton didn't have just the words he wanted, but there was the difference between a gnawing at your belly and a trouble deep in your mind.

For a few hours he had it his own way. He had fired a dozen shots into the Rebel lines, through the windows of the nearest houses and once at a tall man just biting off a chew of tobacco. But then he ventured too close and the smoke of a shot betrayed him. He heard a storm of curses from the Confederate lines and flung himself flat as the musketballs whistled just over his head. They sounded even madder than the cusswords, and that set John Stockton chuckling. As soon as the fire slackened, he backed away, rump-first, like a craw-dad. He'd let them cool off. They'd be watching for him now.

That was what John Stockton wanted them to do. That made it fair; he was taking as big a chance as the Rebs. He'd given them notice that the cornfield was his. Now if they had any objections, they could state them.

They did state them, and for the next week John Stockton was kept busy. The Rebels put a sharpshooter of their own in the cornfield and Stockton hunted him for a long two days. He accounted for that man, and for another they sent in his place. But the third Rebel was a whole lot harder to get. He didn't pay much mind to John Stockton but went gunning for the men in the Union lines and dropped three of them. Lieutenant Ross was pretty mad.

"If we hadn't started it, the Rebels wouldn't have thought to put a man there," he told Stockton. "I'm going to take you out and we'll get the artillery to cut that corn for us with grapeshot. I can't have men shot down in our own lines like this."

John Stockton's pride was touched, but he didn't let it show. "The corn makes good cover for this part of the line. I think I can keep that sharpshooter from pestering the men any more."

The lieutenant doubted it. "He's probably shot quail all his life and this is child's play for him."

"If the corn goes down, they can make it hot for us here, though. They're uphill from us—they'd command our line."

Lieutenant Ross scratched his head. "Well, that's true enough. I'll give you one more day. If you can keep him from shooting any more of the men, he's yours. Now light out after him!"

He knew the cornfield pretty well by then—the deeper furrows, the breaks in the rows, the quickest ways forward and back and across. Once, watching at a likely spot, he got a shot at the Rebel, but he had to aim too quickly and he missed. The man got away and the involved game of hide-and-seek began again. It wasn't conclusive, but it kept them both fully occupied. No more men were shot in the lines, on either side. Lieutenant Ross spoke of that, the next time he saw Stockton.

"You're crowding him, I take it," said the lieutenant, and he grinned. "What's the news from the cornfield campaign?"

Dog-tired, Stockton had nothing to report. "I'd judge he was little and quick, Lieutenant. But I'm going to run him out of that cornpatch if it's the last I see of the war!"

"Take your time. There's no sign of Stoneham's surrendering. I think they're eating the cannonballs we send over! We may be here till the war ends."

THERE was impatience in the way Lieutenant Ross spoke. He had a new trick of hitching at his sword-belt that was pure nerves. So John Stockton wasn't the only one! The siege told heavily upon them all. They were used to fighting in the field, not to waiting for a parcel of skeletons to give up a hopeless effort at resistance. Stockton lay by a fire and cleaned his carbine, feeling tremors of weariness run up and down his arms. Not even the work he had to do could keep him from thinking of the cruel, weary length of the siege. He saw it reflected in the faces of his comrades, moody and ill-tempered. He recognized it again in the slow hatred beginning to fill his own mind. John Stockton, as any decent man would, resented his part in what they had to do at Stoneham. Never very articulate, he concentrated his exasperation upon the Rebel sharpshooter, the symbol of all that stood be-

tween the Union men and release. At night, he cleaned the carbine very carefully.

He had the mercilessness of a kindly man driven too far and the persistence of a man naturally single-minded. He didn't think of picking off the Confederates in their own lines anymore. The only one he wanted to account for was the Rebel who was both his quarry and his pursuer. You could tell that the Rebel felt the same way about John Stockton. The Illinois men weren't disturbed again. They lolled by their fires and made bets about the outcome of Stockton's long, elaborate duel. They even got up a sweepstakes, betting on how many days it would take for one of them to get the other.

Stockton didn't pay much heed to that. He had only one preoccupation now. The disenchantment of the first two weeks at Stoneham was gone, and his lean face had an intent look. This was a personal matter, a private war. Now and then he wondered whether the Rebel felt the same way about it as he did. He wondered, that was, whether the Rebel had made up his mind that, for him, the only thing that mattered was to account for John Stockton, to have the cornpatch to himself.

At night, he came back to the line. You couldn't get a shot at night. But his days were given up to a stealthy and careful stalking. Some of the furrows got worn down until they were like shallow trenches. A day of rain meant a soaking, but he stayed out in it. Sometimes he heard a faint rustle that meant the Rebel was on the move, not far away. But the Rebel could hear him, too, and he wasn't taking any chances. Their fight was getting to be a stalemate, and John Stockton didn't see any way to break it. It wasn't like the siege of Stoneham, where you could count on starvation to help you out, if you could bear the waiting.

But that gave him an idea, and he should have thought of it sooner. The Rebel would be hungry, like all his comrades. Stockton recoiled from the horror of the plan that suggested, but not for long. They couldn't go on the way they were. He'd gotten so he hated that Rebel more than he'd ever hated man or woman in his life before, and this was a way to be done with him. He didn't tell anyone his plan, though. He carried it out all by himself.

In the middle of one of the furrows where he was tolerably sure the Rebel would pass before the day was out, Stockton dropped a piece of cooked beef and a couple of army biscuits. He let them lie as if they had fallen from his food-pouch just by accident. But it was no accident; the beef and hardtack were bait in a trap John Stockton was setting. His fingers trembled, arranging them. Then he backed away and lay on his belly where he could watch. He had the carbine ready. It ought to work, he thought.

It ought to work, because a starving man loses his caution when you show him food. John Stockton counted on that, but he tried to keep from thinking of the thing he was doing. He could have poisoned the food, but he hadn't done that, had he? In a small way, this was just the same as the strategy the generals used —the art of getting your enemy into a position where you could get the better of him. At least, that was what Stockton tried to tell himself.

He lay there until mid-morning. Nothing happened, except that his own nerves grew ragged. He didn't hear or see anything. But, just in time, it came to him that the Rebel

might be stalking *him* while he lay in wait. The Rebel might be smart enough for that. Stockton had a queer feeling—it might have been the ghost of sound, the shadow of sight—that made him fling himself to one side. The ball took his cap off, and the sudden uproar of the shot nearly deafened him. When he got his wits together again, the Rebel had grabbed up the food and made off with it. Likely he thought Stockton was dead, though he didn't crawl up for a look. But John Stockton, otherwise unhurt, was weak and shaken, as much with hatred as with fright.

Back in his own lines, he lived through it again in nightmares all night. There wasn't any question of giving up now. Now he just had to kill the Rebel!

Two days later, at high noon, he nearly put his hand on the rattlesnake.

He knew better than to move, even from his strained position. It was a big snake, all coiled and ready. It could reach him, easy, and you couldn't tell when it might take that notion into its flat head. The head was like an arrowhead for shape, or a diamond. He remembered being told that the bulges on each side of the jaws were poison-sacs. John Stockton swallowed, and the noise of his swallowing scared him, until he recalled that snakes were deaf. He did nothing else to startle the varmint. He didn't stir or try to edge his carbine up. The snake was too close for that, and it watched him with yellow, unwinking eyes, swaying ever so little.

John Stockton got a smart chance for thinking now, and it was more high-flown thinking than was common with him. He had never been in a tighter fix, in peace or in war. In war, when there was fighting, you got scared, surely. But that was a human fear—clean, so to say. This was something different—the same sort of fear as in nightmare, a fear as old as the race, as cold and evil as sudden death in warm daylight. Here, staring John Stockton in the face, was the symbol of all that cut men off in their prime, snatched them away from a wife like Sally, from the tall corn and the good earth, whether of Virginia or of Illinois. It was a death stripped of all but horror and suddenness, stripped of bugle-calls, fife-and-drum music, flags and jokes in the ranks just before you went into battle. There was no question of bravery in facing it. In this form, death was nothing but cold and sluggish evil.

HE had had his left hand thrust out when he stopped moving. His weight came on that arm and shoulder, with a pain he was slow to notice. He didn't notice much of anything but the snake. Its dark-red, forked tongue flickered in and out while Stockton stared, fascinated. What was going to happen to him was being decided in the cold little brain there under the flattened, evil skull. There wasn't anything he could do. Sweat broke out in beads on his forehead. You went off to war and found out what fear and evil and hatred were. And then one day they rose up in your path and stopped you. They let you have a good long look at them, and then—

A part of his brain supposed that it couldn't hurt so very much, not just at first, anyhow. But the waiting was torture of the worst kind. His eyes began to bulge out with the effort to keep from screaming like a child. He couldn't stand it much longer. He'd have to make a move of some sort or go out of his mind. The snake wasn't going to move away, that was sure. You could tell that this situation suited the snake.

It was four long minutes since John Stockton had first frozen into the position he had held ever since. Nothing moved but the snake's rapid tongue. There wasn't any firing that day and the cornfield was quiet enough to have been back in Illinois, a long way from the war. When a low sound did come, Stockton didn't hear it at first. It wasn't until the sound came a second time, nearer at hand, that he knew what it was. He had made it often enough himself, brushing against the cornstalks with his shoulders. What he thought of now, right away, was that he would have to try to call out without moving his lips much. He could chance the snake's deafness, but it had the sharpest of sharp eyes.

So his voice was hoarse and muffled as he said, "Hey, Reb!"

The snake didn't stir, so that was all right. The other sound John Stockton had heard died away into silence. He lay there with a new fear possessing him. What if the Rebel came up, while he dared not move, and shot him? Stockton had given himself away. But, still waiting, he had something even worse to worry about. The Rebel might think it was a new kind of trap and fight shy of it until it was too late.

He took a slow breath, which hurt him, and called again, "Hey, Reb!"

That time, he got an answer. A voice with a drawl in it came from a little in front and to one side of him. "What ails yuh, Yank? Got a misery?"

"Rattler!" said Stockton, watching the snake. "I don't dare move!"

The words were a cry for help, but he wouldn't make it more explicit. He had his pride, even now. The Rebel kept him waiting. Finally he said, "Might be so, I reckon. Then again, might be like that hunk of beef yuh set out. Might be, yuh want another shot at me!"

Tensely, Stockton said, "No!"

"It's got so a body can't trust the neighbors no more in this here cornpatch!" the Rebel mourned. "What proof yuh got, Yank?"

"Come and see! But come slow. I'm in reach of his fangs."

There was a rustle in the corn. "'Come and see!' I been expectin' that! Come and see, and get shot?"

His voice broke off on a note of laughter uncompleted. All at once, a new sound filled the cornpatch, and John Stockton was close to crying out. He could see the blur where the snake's tail had been, and the sharp, peremptory noise of the rattles pierced into his brain. He forgot about the Rebel. That had been a faint chance, and it hadn't worked. The Rebel must be backing away, convinced that it was nothing but a trick. Stockton began counting. When he got to ten, he aimed to chance it, throw himself to one side and pray for the impossible—that he could move faster than the snake's head. Anyway, even if it bit him, he'd account for the rattler. Then if he got back to the lines quick enough and got a skinful of whiskey, maybe he'd pull through. Some people did, they said. But this was a pretty big snake.

The brittle song of the rattles went on. John Stockton had got to eight in his counting and was tensing his sore muscles for what he had to do. The muscles stayed tense, but he didn't use them. All at once his ears were ringing, and in spite of himself he shut his eyes. It was gunpowder he smelled. When he looked again, the death facing him had melted into threshing, blood-spattered coils. The snake's head was gone, in what must have been the cleanest shot of the whole war.

The drawling voice said, "Pleased to oblige, Yank! And mighty sorry I hung back, palaverin'!"

The face, nut-brown and gaunt, looked out from between two cornstalks. A wisp of smoke went up from the mouth of his rifle, and he had not had time to reload.

Stockton dropped his own carbine. "Shake hands!" he managed to say.

The Rebel offered a grimy hand, grinning. "Big one, warn't he? Where yuh from, Yank, and what's your name? Yuh look pretty near like folks! I made sure yuh wasn't much better than a rattler yourself, the way I've had to keep wigglin' away from yuh lately!"

Stockton hadn't let go of the hard hand. "You won't have to anymore! Look, if you'll surrender, the boys in the company will elect you President! Wait till I tell them!"

The Rebel laughed. "I druther a heap have a chew o' plug tobacco! Yuh got some?"

Stockton gave him a new plug. "If you won't surrender, come back here tomorrow and there'll be a dozen of those. It's the last you'll see of me, too. I'm quitting this cornpatch. Or, if I stay, I won't fire at you."

"I guess it ain't your fault that yuh did before." He put the plug of tobacco in his pocket. "Well, I reckon I'll go back. Good-by, Yank. That your company, other side o' this cornpatch? I thought I'd let them be. No use savin' a man from a rattler and then takin' a chance of shootin' him. Well, good-by. Leggo my hand!"

Stockton did. He said. "Good-by, and—" But the Rebel was gone.

Crawling back to his own lines, John Stockton's thin face worked queerly and he was very close to tears. Not because of the snake, and his own remembered peril, not because of them at all.

But some day Stoneham would surrender. Some day the war would end.

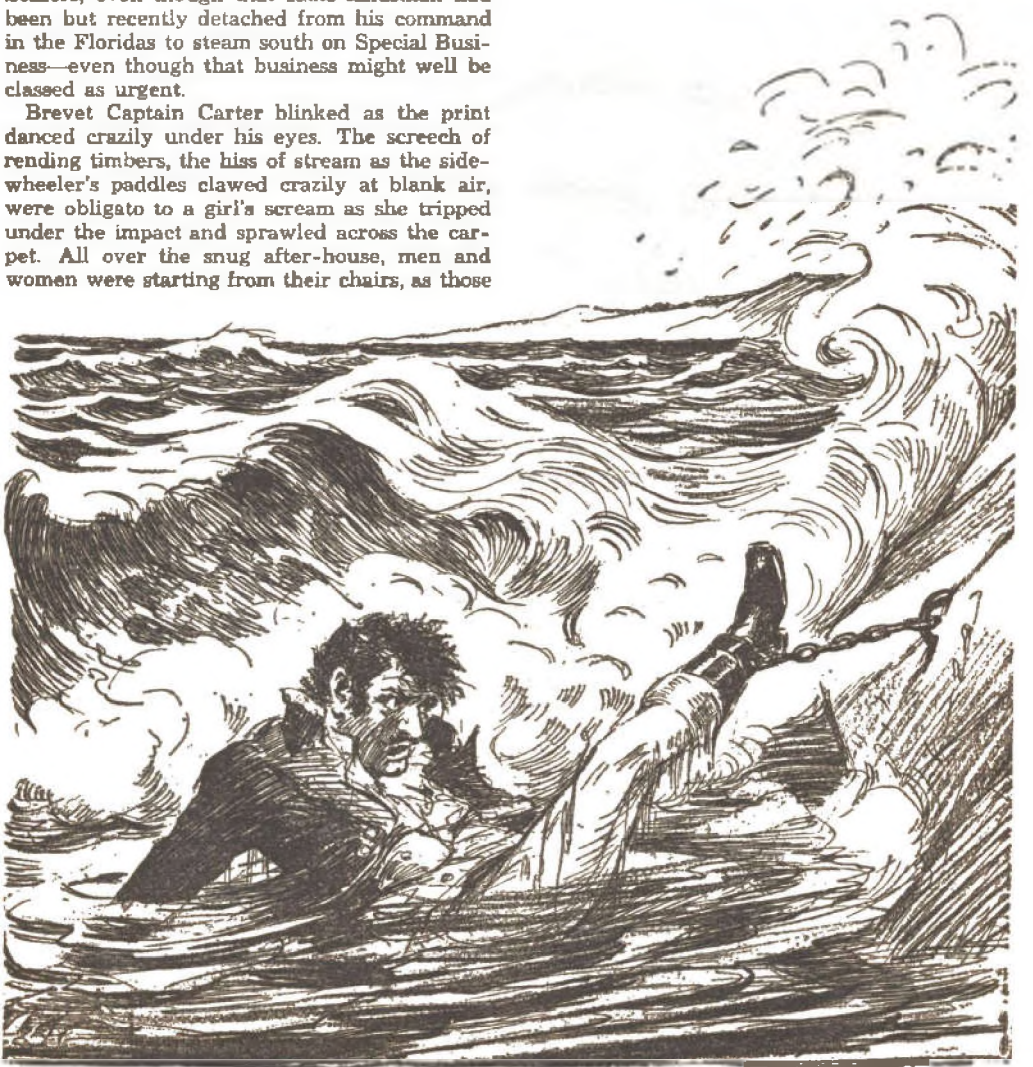
INDIAN KEY

By WILLIAM DU BOIS

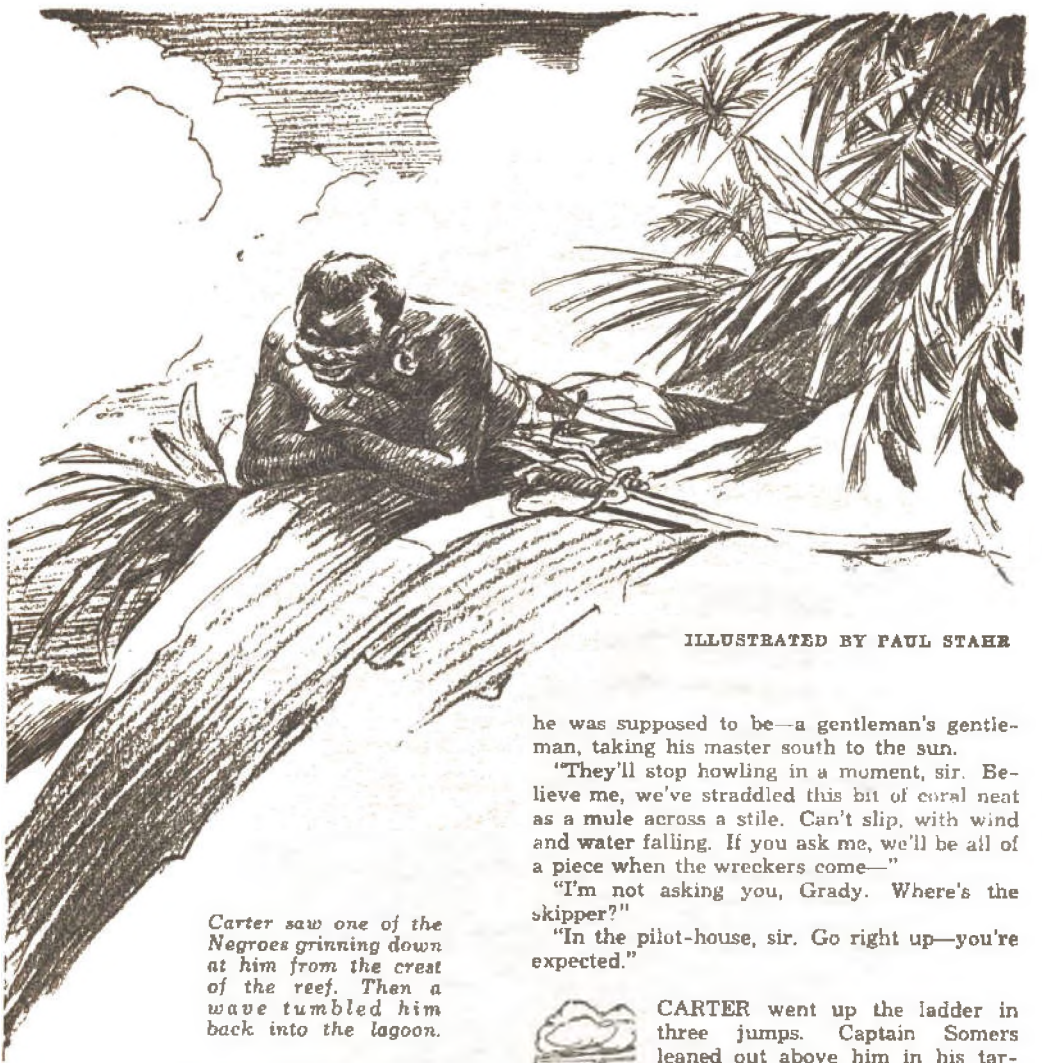
CARTER was in the after-house when the crash came. He was deep in a volume of Ney's *Memoires* and it took him a good ten seconds to realize that the *Creole Belle* had been stopped dead, there in the midst of a wind-lashed sea. After all, a man could afford to relax a little, now that the sturdy side-wheeler had cleared the last reef, to bear down on Key West harbor with the wind spinning south at last. It was hardly a landsman's place to doubt the skill of Captain Somers, even though that same landsman had been but recently detached from his command in the Floridas to steam south on Special Business—even though that business might well be classed as urgent.

Brevet Captain Carter blinked as the print danced crazily under his eyes. The screech of rending timbers, the hiss of stream as the side-wheeler's paddles clawed crazily at blank air, were obligato to a girl's scream as she tripped under the impact and sprawled across the carpet. All over the snug after-house, men and women were starting from their chairs, as those same chairs began a drunken glide of their own. The floor had angled sharply in that same moment and Carter was forced to scramble on hands and knees to reach the door, which already banged wildly under the keen of the wind.

The *Creole Belle* was grounded on coral, hooked neatly by her bow, with a half-acre of white water creaming in whitecaps beyond. This much Carter verified before he fumbled his way to the bridge. Grady was waiting at the



A Captain Carter Novelette



ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL STAHR

Carter saw one of the Negroes grinning down at him from the crest of the reef. Then a wave tumbled him back into the lagoon.

ladder to give him a hand up—a staff sergeant still, despite his civilian disguise. Even in that wind-racked starlight, Carter saw that his sergeant's calm was unruffled. Once again, he reminded himself that Grady thrived on trouble, in any element.

"Easy does it, sir."

But Carter only glared. "Put your shoulder to that cabin door. At least three lady passengers are having hysterics. Can't have them jumping overboard."

The bulky sergeant moved easily to obey the order. The frock coat and skin-tight trousers should have been ridiculous on his square-rigged frame; so, for that matter, should the tall, too-sleek beaver, jammed tight on his head to cheat the wind. But somehow Grady fitted the masquerade perfectly. He looked like what he was supposed to be—a gentleman's gentleman, taking his master south to the sun.

"They'll stop howling in a moment, sir. Believe me, we've straddled this bit of coral neat as a mule across a stile. Can't slip, with wind and water falling. If you ask me, we'll be all of a piece when the wreckers come—"

"I'm not asking you, Grady. Where's the skipper?"

"In the pilot-house, sir. Go right up—you're expected."

CARTER went up the ladder in three jumps. Captain Somers leaned out above him in his tarpaulin shelter, bawling a last order through a speaking-trumpet. As the rain-scud let the starlight through again, Carter saw that the two mates were already overside with the watch, waist-deep in the boiling surf, steadying a jury-anchor. Already, the *Creole Belle* had righted herself as her ballast settled. The squall that had dogged their progress all afternoon still lashed crazily at the sea to the southwest—but Grady was right again. The side-wheeler had settled into this impromptu coral berth as easily as a tuna on a hook. A sitting target for the wreckers, thought Carter.

A whiskered troglodyte with a New England beak to shame a Roman, the side-wheeler's skipper was still a reluctant disciple of this new-fangled steam. Carter could not decide

whether Somers was glad or sorry now. Obviously, he would have steered a warier course had he dared to beat into Key West under sail.

"Want me to tell you how it happened, mister?"

Carter said evenly, "Keep your voice down, Somers. Just because you're a party to my masquerade—"

"The deck's all ours, Captain," said Somers. "Take my word for it, those lubbers in the cabin will stay below. Serves 'em right for visiting the Keys in a paddle-boat—out of Jacksonville, at that. Should have come direct from Charleston, by packet. *They've* got an understanding with the boys ashore. . . ."

He squinted angrily into the murk ahead. Carter blinked as he followed the skipper's look—watching the beacon wink in the dark a scant half-mile ahead and dead on the starboard bow.

"Bonita Light," said Somers easily. "Funny it wasn't there ten minutes ago. I'd have sworn it was a point to port—wouldn't you, mister?"

Carter nodded mutely, and then the irony of the moment struck him full force. He laughed aloud and felt better at once, for no reason he could name. Laughter was rare on the lips of this young Army captain, who did not look his age after seven years of Indian war in the Floridas.

"So I'm learning about Key West, even before we go ashore—"

A long halloo answered him out of the dark. Carter swallowed the rest of his remark, absurdly convinced that unseen eyes were piercing a disguise that still galled him a little. For a flash, he remembered his protests a month ago. That was at headquarters in St. Augustine. The general had been insistent on this holiday in the Keys: a fortnight's vacation from an Indian war—with a sergeant for valet, and two thousand gold dollars in the pockets of his portmanteau.

"But, General—"

"You've been on my staff for three years now, Jack. Don't you know an order yet?"

"I'll make a poor spy, sir—"

"You're a rat-hunter, boy, not a spy. I'm asking you to corner a long-toothed varmint who's fattened in Key West since British times—"

"Suppose he won't come out of his hole, sir?"

"Damn it all, he's bound to come out if you trail the right bait."

"If I act my part, you mean?"

"You've a house waiting, and an Indian servant. Escobar's seen to that. Leave the acting to Grady if it sticks in your craw. . . . Though I must say you made a first-rate Romeo at Ten-Mile Hammock—"

Brevet Captain John Carter came back to the present as the wrecker's blunt bow nosed out of the dark, a wide-beamed yawl, coasting easily with the dying wind. Carter watched, bemused, while the yawl spilled her seaway. Four alert Negro hands whipped forward to furl the mainsail; the *Creole Belle* steadied, hooked with a dozen grapples—a simple maneuver, executed with the ease born of long practice. She might be riding in dry dock now, thought Carter bitterly. He kept the thought to himself, and studied Somers covertly. The side-wheeler's captain had not stirred from his tarpaulin shelter. Now, he shrugged wearily and dropped down to his main deck to meet the yawl's skipper, already bouncing overside with a rolled parchment under his arm.

"Ready to sign her over, Somers?"

Somers studied the man dispassionately. "I knew I'd seen you before, MacGregor."

"This makes your third salvage, I believe," said MacGregor easily. "You shouldn't try to remember these shoals after dark. . . . Remember, mine was the first hook overside. That makes you mine by law." He flipped a hand at the sea beyond. Staring into the faint starlight, Carter saw another sail loom out of the dark. Even as he watched, a third hull luffed like an awkward vulture, took the wind on the quarter, and circled restlessly, just outside the white line of coral.

MacGregor said patiently, "We'll split cargo, Captain, and ten dollars a head for passengers. Believe me, that's a cheap ride to town—"

But Somers had already jerked a thumb toward his cabin. The two skippers went in without another word. Carter turned to follow, remembered his civilian status just in time, and charged down the ladder in search of Grady. After all, a frustrated traveler had every right to curse his valet at a time like this.

THE house on Angela Street, which Jaime Escobar, the insurance agent, had engaged for the winter at the behest of one John Carter, was all that a gentleman could ask. Twenty hours later, pacing the *sala* and waiting impatiently for his first interview, that same gentleman shook a fist at its appropriateness. The gesture included all of Key West, especially the wind still lashing the date-palm just outside the tell latticed jalousies. A Spanish émigré had lived here once: beyond the windows, beyond the metallic dance of the date-palms, a small, hot garden brooded behind its coquina walls. The room retained that same air—elegant, aloof and faintly sinister; an aristocrat's drawing-room, for all its bare puncheon floor and whitewashed walls. Over the mantle (the stones had come from Oporto in ballast), a ruffed hidalgo frowned down on this Yankee visitor. The Yankee returned the frown, with interest.

Twenty hours is a long time to wait to begin a chess-game with the devil, but John Carter had lived long enough in the South to know the fatal quality of bustle—especially when you were a gentleman, come to the Keys for a

winter's fishing. Carter could have borne the long wait better if Grady had not enjoyed Key West—and his valet's role—so thoroughly. The captain could see his sergeant now, swathed in a linen duster, his burgeoning sideburns shaded by a planter's hat, marching sedately to market; arranging the hibiscus blooms in the *comedor* before pouring his master a pre-prandial glass of dark Cuban rum; brushing that same master's coats with a flourish worthy of London. The general in St. Augustine was right. Ever since Grady had played Ophelia to Carter's Romeo in that mad scramble of Shakespeare at Ten-Mile Hammock, the sergeant had taken to masquerade like a pig to clover.

Carter reached the jalousie in one long-legged stride and pushed out into the garden. Grady broke his bustle about the table under the date-palm, where a punch-bowl already awaited the expected guests, to give his master a deeply servile bow.

"Where's Pablo?"

The valet held a strictly modern lucifer to his master's cigar, and indicated a corner of the dusk-dimmed portico in the same flourish. The match struck green fire from a pair of eyeballs in the gloom. Carter hung over the flame as he inhaled, shielding himself from the reproach in Grady's eyes. An old Indian fighter should know better, those eyes said, even if *this* Indian is our friend—even if he has worked for us here, ever since the Annexation.

The Indian moved easily into the garden and began to sweep the walk in the dying daylight. Carter followed shortly, pausing under the last date-palm to examine a pendulous cluster of fruit. Pablo had already warned him of conversation too near a wall—even if they *were* the only tenants here.

"We'll have visitors in a moment," said Carter. "Shall I talk backward, to make sure I understand?"

"Whatever you wish." The accent was faintly English. Once again, Carter reminded himself that this Indian had been the ward of a British governor in Nassau; that he had learned his manners—as well as his trade as a spy—in the shadow of Whitehall. Once again he asked himself if Washington—and, by extension, the Army—did well to trust this copper polyglot so completely. Still, the general had been emphatic on that point. *Take orders from Pablo,* he had said. *He knows all the moves. And he knows Key West. If he can't name our man for us, no one can.*

Now, in that shadowed garden, the "Spanish Indian" seemed a bit larger than life—a copper silhouette with all the purity of a statue. One of the vanished race, the aborigines of the Keys, who had somehow retained their dignity. . . . Well, espionage made strange partners. Carter spoke levelly, obscurely glad that he had crossed this private Rubicon.

"In five more minutes, Pablo, I'm playing host to Key West. Also, I'm playing the fool, as best I can—No remarks, Grady, or I'll have your stripes."

Grady managed another of those bows, decorum in person, to the last wiry end of his sideburns. "A good servant never makes remarks, sir. I read *that* in Godey's Ladies' Book."

Pablo had not smiled at the exchange. *That's natural, too,* thought Carter. *After all, he's played his part here for a long time.* Aloud, he said, "My sergeant is enjoying his job. Unfortunately, I don't feel at ease out of uniform. As you know, I'm here under orders to make an extremely unofficial arrest. You're sure you can't name the man?"

"Would you be here if I could, Captain?"

"But if you can't name our man for us—" It was good to echo the general's words, there in the hildalgo's garden; to stride to the latticed gate, and glare down the rutted sandy street. . . . After all, his next few moves were simple enough. Somers had seen to that, last night, at the *bodega.*

Pablo put the thought in words. "Last night, over his rum, Somers told half of Key West that you were an Army captain disguised as an invalid winter visitor. Naturally, Key West will be more than curious when Escobar introduces you—"

"Aren't *you* curious too, Pablo?"

The Indian's mask was intact. "I work for Washington, Captain. I take their orders—and yours."

"Surely you must wonder why an Army man should come this far to smoke out a wrecker?"

"Perhaps I already know, Captain."

The shadows had deepened in the garden; in the half-light, the Indian's face glowed like dim copper. "If the Captain succeeds where I have failed," said Pablo, "who am I to complain?"

Carter caught Grady's grin and turned sharply. "So you've told him everything?"

"General's orders, sir. He knows the ropes here."

PABLO kept his eyes averted. "Both of you are here as human bait to lure this rat into the open. That is why you let Somers talk. That is why you show yourself to society tonight." He paused for a moment, went to the gate and stared into the dark, watching an ox-cart pass on groaning wheels. "Perhaps it will work, Captain. Perhaps you are too clever. It is not for me to say."

Grady lit a cigar without rebuke. After all, thought Carter, it's time he dropped that bogus British manner.

"Do *you* think we're being too clever, Sergeant?"

"No—for three reasons." The sergeant spat accurately. "First off, we won't uncover our man by snooping. Pablo here would've done *that*

years ago, if he'd left a loophole. Second, we're in a position to scare him bad, just by being natural. Third, we know his hideout, even if we don't know his name."

Pablo's lips framed the words, in the barest whisper. "Indian Key."

Carter remembered the map in St. Augustine, poured over for endless hours, until every kink of coastline, every contour of wave-sculptured dune, was locked permanently in his memory.

Indian Key was a speck of coral-crusted land within sight of the Cuban coast, a good day's sail from a Key West wharf. Yet they had recently learned—and Pablo had confirmed this information—that the man they sought had made Indian Key his lair, as well as his *entrepôt*, his storehouse for booty extracted by his wrecking-crews. A ghoul's castle, piled high with the salvage from a hundred wrecked ships, from Key West to Key Largo.

British Floridians had taken out squatter rights on Indian Key when the War for Independence ended. Hurricanes had blown those same Britishers into the sea; their fields were jungle now, their plantation-houses weather-beaten ruins.

Once more, he heard the general's words, at headquarters.

"You'll find no one there today, Jack. Only a few dozen runaway slaves. All of 'em take orders from the man we're after. To them, he's half-god, half-king."

"Suppose they misunderstand our visit?" Carter had asked.

"That's another chance you must take. My guess is they'd do no worse than lock you up for a while."

"Until our man appears?"

"Exactly. You've got your orders. From there on—"

Carter came back to the present. He found he was pacing the garden walk, declaiming in a taut whisper, "This wrecking must stop. We must break these pirates by breaking their chief. The whole world knows we'll be going into Texas in a year or so, and Florida must be made safe first—from the St. Mary's to the Keys. We must be able to believe the markers when we take our transports through the Florida channel—" He paused. Eloquence was not in his line.

Grady took over smoothly. "Let's bring this down to earth, sir. We know our man operates out of Key West, with native talent. By the same token, we know not one of 'em will talk. Wrecking's been the principal industry in these parts for a long time, now. Our cue is to play dumb, and scare our man, too. 'Course, the Army's wanted him for some time, for every crime from murder to blackbirding, but he didn't think they'd reach out this far to bring him in."

Carter turned sharply as the gate creaked, and Grady jumped to his feet. There was a perfect servile whine in his tone as he asked, "Shall I pour now, sir?"

The sergeant paused, and inhaled his cigar smoke as only a sergeant can. For a second, his eyes flicked Pablo's, impassive as ever in the dusk.

"He knows in his heart that his game's about up here. His brand of piracy is going out. Give him a year more, and he'd probably be fading away on his own. Our job is to jolt him—bad enough to make him follow us when we go to explore Indian Key"—once again, Grady dragged on his cigar—"when Captain Carter and I accidentally shipwreck ourselves there, on purpose."

Pablo did not stir. "Let us hope you aren't too clever, Sergeant."

"Funny, isn't it, that you couldn't uncover our man's name?"

"You have given the reason. Key West is a clannish town. It stands by its own—even its pirates."

"It's still funny," said Grady. "We know he paid out a fortune in Havana last year to keep Spanish fingers out of his storehouse. We know he goes and comes at will on Indian Key. We even know that he burned one of those black boys alive last month. No reason; he just wanted to hear the poor devil scream." Grady threw his cigar at the fountain; once again, his aim was unerring. "That's why I don't particularly relish sailing into his bailiwick. Do *you*, Captain?"

Carter's shoulders squared in his civilian linen. "Are you questioning an order, Grady?"

"Not me, sir. Just cursing a little, under my breath. Privilege of sergeants and marines, sir—" Abruptly, Grady jumped to his feet, snapping to attention of another sort. There was a perfect servile whine to his tone as he moved toward the punch-bowl.

"Shall I pour now, sir?"

Carter turned sharply as the gate creaked. A vast, heaving shape in a mantilla swept in on Jaime Escobar's arm—a slender dandy, Escobar, offering his lady to the visitor's inspection with the air of a connoisseur revealing a rose.

He was followed by others of Key West's finest: ship-owners, experts in barratry, an officer or two from the fort by the harbor come to check on the crazy rumor that a West Pointer was in town on a mission. Grady had already gone behind the punch-bowl, the impassive valet now, a perfect droop to his shoulderblades. Carter smiled at Jaime Escobar, and minced forward to kiss his *dona's* hand. A high tide of Castilian swept over him, making the transition easy.

When he turned to check again on Pablo, he saw that the Indian had vanished.

CHAPTER II

THE CASTAWAYS

THE catboat bounced crazily in the ground-swell, then steadied a bit as Grady leaned hard on the tiller. Carter ran down the foredeck at his sergeant's nod to chop away the last of their jury rig from the stump of a bowsprit. High water creamed the reef just ahead. For an instant, the boat's hull bobbed in the back-suck, then it ran forward, sweet as a witch released from a self-induced spell. Flat on his face above the splintered bowsprit, Carter hugged the deck, hearing their keel scrape coral as they lunged across the reef. It was a hazard he had sweated over for an hour now, lying dazed by the sun in their water-logged cockpit, watching Indian Key grow out of the blaze of afternoon as they drifted nearer in the wash of the Stream.

"Easy does it, sir," said Grady. "Never guess this little lady was the pride of Key West two days ago, would you, now? Just shows what *will* happen when landlubbers go out for tuna on their own."

Carter tried hard to force a grin through salt-caked lips. After all, the masquerade was on schedule, right down to the catboat's battered hull, the *Inez III*, a dancing girl of a craft, property of one Enrique Corbett, Minorcan ship-chandler of Front Street, Key West. Carter still remembered the man's oily smile when he had bought her—for twice her value—against the combined advice of Escobar, Don Esteben de Vega y Torres, the Havana lawyer, and a brace of Gloucester skippers who had somehow turned up at his housewarming in the small hours. All of them had stood by, clucking with disapproval, as he had helped Grady load in their stores. All of them had stood on the basin wharf to wish him God-speed when he had laid the *Inez III* on her ear in a drunken tack and eased past the channel-markers to the open sea.

All of them knew—from a chance remark dropped while he was deep in rum—that he would set a course for Indian Key, as his chosen fishing ground.

The die was cast in earnest now.

They had sailed due south, under full canvas, all of the first day—while Grady swept the seas astern with his glass, to mark the pursuit that had not come with the sunset. All that first night, they had battled a sudden squall that robbed them of canvas. . . . Well, it was another good augury that the wind died with morning, leaving them with a splintered mast and a stay-sail: They had limped toward Cuba that morning, a genuine wreck. Now, they were approaching their objective, castaways in fact as well in name. Detail was of the essence now, if eyes were watching them from the shore. And Carter was sure that some sort of welcoming party must await them; their coming had been so thoroughly advertised.

He scrambled over the small forward cabin and sat beside Grady in the stern-sheets. It was sheer luxury to forget for a moment the chess game, to abandon conscious planning. The catboat had gathered way again, in the funnel of inshore breeze. Across the shimmer of the lagoon, the island was only a dark pencil-smudge on the water, marked by the white hump of a dune or two. The bulk of Cuba, closing the southern horizon beyond, was far more real—a wall of purple jungle, solid as time against the blue blaze of sky. *Help would come from the south, if it came at all.*

Carter shook his head, feeling the wheels turn again in spite of his will. He heard his voice croak, in a taut whisper, "Suppose I'm right, Grady? Suppose it's really Pablo we're after?"

"If you really thought that, sir," Grady said tranquilly, "you might have told me sooner."

"How can we know he's on our side, and not theirs?"

"We can't, sir. That's what keeps you on your toes when you make this kind of trip. I'll say this for Pablo: If he's sucked us into this to murder us, he'll be the first Indian to get behind me."

Carter stirred impatiently and glared at the slowly forming shoreline ahead. The *Inez III* dipped in the ground-swell as it urged them shoreward. Cuba vanished abruptly under the bulk of a dune on Indian Key.

"What made you trust him, Grady?"

"Pablo, sir?" The sergeant came back cheerfully from a world of his own. "Several things. His eyes, for one. The way he shook hands. The fact he's sharpened his brain in our best schools. Indians can learn as fast as you and me, if you give 'em the chance. Don't let the Indian-killers tell you different. Trouble is, most of 'em are too proud—"

"Suppose this one had the wrong teachers?"

"The Spaniards, you mean? I still won't believe he's out for blood. Look at those history books you're so fond of, sir. Indians fight best as lone wolves. The man who bosses these wreckers is an *organizer*, call him any other names you like. How many Indians could organize white men to work for 'em, except as slaves? Look at Pontiac—and Tecumseh. For that matter, look at our friends the Seminoles, eating their hearts out at Moultrie today." Grady leaned easily on the tiller and spoke in a normal tone again. "Or look at Indian Key, sir, if you're over your seasickness. Maybe we should've foundered last night, after all. Maybe we'd've been better off."

Carter blinked nervously across the narrowing strip of water. The land was a solid mass now, a wall of wind-harried jungle, bordered by a ribbon of beach which was broken by

Three grisly silhouettes swayed just under the pitch of the roof—the rotting remains of what once were men.

alternate sweeps of mangrove and burnt-over savannah. The air around them was clamorous with gulls. Did that mean hogs were being butchered somewhere in the island's heart? Had a lookout already marked their arrival in the lagoon and rushed to spread the word?

The grate of their cutwater in sand was almost an anticlimax.

"Three twisted mangroves," said Grady, "and a hump-backed dune. How's that for map-reading, sir—and close sailing?"

CARTER nodded dumbly. He, too, had followed the chart printed so painfully on his mind's eye; he knew that the path to the ruined plantation should lie just to the left of that great mound of sand. He swung his pistol on its lanyard and stepped overside, knee-deep in the lazy curdle of the ground-swell.

For a moment, his eyes swept back to the reef, which was beginning to spout with surf

now, as the tide lessened. Opposite the pathway, there was evidently a break in the coral; even at this distance, he could hear the suck of the outgoing tide, and mark the glass-green break in the surf. Slaves' hands had planted gunpowder there years ago, blasting out seaway at a master's bidding. Slaves' muscles had strained through sweating midnights, unloading cargo where that dim path snaked away into jungle.

He might have ordered Grady to coast through that opening in the coral, but it was part of their plan to blunder on openings, not to spot them in advance. The sergeant had already leaned a bulky shoulder against the catboat's stern. Carter floundered toward him to help drive their bowsprit into the encroaching scrub. Natural action, so far—if eyes were really watching them. Just as natural to turn left along the beach, to climb that humpbacked dune.

Beyond the dunes, the scrub gave way abruptly to a dry savannah. Carter remembered land like this from his campaigns in the fetid skirts of the Everglades. This island might well have been a splinter of the Floridian landmass, broken free in the spin of the Gulf Stream and stranded here in the very shadow of Cuba. Green fingers of palmettos clawed at the edges of this sun-baked swamp; on the higher ground to the southwest, cabbage-palms etched sharp shadows against the declining sun. Ahead, where a decaying wood-road marched across the savannah, a manor-house stood on a little rise. At this distance, it seemed to merge with the green fist of jungle that had closed about it decades ago.

It seemed only natural that wild grape should festoon the porch and twine, in strangling folds, among the pillars of the balcony; that the bushy head of a palm should split a corner of the high-pitched roof. Certain Britishers had fumbled dimly at colonization here in the last century—1783, to be exact, when the Floridas had returned to Spain. On Cuban land-grants, experiments had been made in indigo and sea-island cotton—until the slaves had revolted, and high wind, rum, and boredom had driven the last would-be scientist back to London. Freebooters had moved in on the cay—gentlemen of the coast, who spoke Spanish and English with equal fluency; wreckers who needed a depot for their spoils near a land where custom-inspectors could be bribed. Some time in the last few years, those same wreckers had organized under a leader who was still nameless.

Such was the history of Indian Key, over a half-century. Carter stepped up to the rotting portico, and pushed the vines aside—and was not at all surprised to find a brand-new door behind them.

"If you don't mind, sir—" said Grady.

Despite his bulk, the sergeant could be quick as a cat when he chose. Carter sucked in his breath as the door swung open under the persuasion of Grady's shoulder. For a long moment, they stood together on the threshold, waiting for the shot that did not come. So far, the silence had been absolute. Carter drew in his breath again and pushed Grady aside.

"After *me*, sergeant."

THE hallway seemed almost cold after the baking hush outside. Above, a stairway spiraled toward pale sunlight; to the right, an archway gave on the ruin of a Georgian drawing-room. Carter stepped through the arch, with a lucifer sputtering in his left hand; his right hugged the barrel of his pistol hard against his hip, as though he could lean upon its weight. A second lucifer limned the symmetry of a mantle, and over it a bare space where a painting had hung. Dim pyramids loomed about them in the dark. Bales and boxes were neatly stacked on every wall, or thrust in geometric pattern into the big, bare room itself.

"Speaking of storerooms—" said Grady.

He had already gone toward a French window, to kick aside the bar. The tropic daylight answered all their questions. Here was tangible evidence of man's oldest sin, the greed that has plagued humanity since Eden. Here, too, was the evidence they had come so far to seek. Carter found himself moving down the rows of loot, noting items with a pencil stub. Bar silver, nested casually in straw; rich fabrics, carefully sewn in burlap; hogsheads of rum, making a tipsy pattern of their own; enough hand-carved furniture for a viceroy's palace, enough marble to gladden the heart of a *nouveau riche* New Yorker.

Carter crumpled the list and tossed it aside. He saw, with a wry grin, that Grady had already found a pannikin and knelt to tap a keg—Grady, the eternal realist! Why should they note down plunder legally obtained (for the most part, at least), according to American salvage laws? How could they protest, now that it had been transferred to Spanish waters with or without the fine hand of piracy? And if the pirate leader chose to leave his treasure unguarded, while he played cat and mouse with two castaways, how could the castaways complain?

"Dark Jamaica," said Grady. "Help yourself, Captain."

Carter tossed off the cup without a word, feeling the rum clear his head in one fiery blast. He stepped into the outer sunlight again with his mind made up. The sergeant shambled easily after him, wiping his mouth on the back of his hand.

"Stay here on the porch, Grady, and keep your eyes open. I'm going upstairs."

"But, Captain—"

"No arguments, please. Remember, we're playing this game *their* way."

"Let *me* try the stair, Captain. God knows what you'll find up there."

Carter fixed his sergeant with a look and marched into the hall again. For a second, he paused in the shadow of the doorway, wondering if he should let Grady return to that keg of fabulous Jamaica. Then he marched resolutely on. If the trap was not yet sprung, he must walk into it blindly. If he was playing mouse to an invisible and indolent cat, he must tempt the cat to show his claws.

THE hall felt just as cold to his sweating skin when he strode into it a second time. He ignored the drawing-room to follow a pale arrow of sun toward the curve of a balustrade. The spindly stairway climbed steeply toward a latticed skylight. On the first landing, dust and spiders were king; no need to check on the rotting floor-boards, the bole of the palm-tree thrust lustily toward the roof, to know that it had been untenanted for years. On the second landing, the picture was the same. Carter shielded his face with spread palms as a mother hawk whirred from her nest, circled angrily for a moment, and rocketed into the blue through a gaping hole in the wall. He went on resolutely, stumbling a little in the half-dark, choking in the stir of dust beneath his groping feet.

The attic floor was fresh-built, and reassuringly solid underfoot. Carter moved cautiously toward the latticed skylight. A brand-new ladder led up to the roof-tree. He set foot upon it tentatively—and pulled back with a cry choked off in his throat. Three grisly silhouettes swayed above him, just under the pitch of the room—the rotting remains of what once were men, each with a stout hempen collar, each moving in his own *danse macabre* as Carter's hand joggled the ladder against the roof-tree.

With all his resolution, he could not bring himself to look again. Climbing toward the skylight, he kept his grim face averted, concentrating on the square of blue above, the clean smell of fresh air. But he was conscious of the red ants, in endless file, intent on ghoulish work along the crossbeam that had served as impromptu gibbet, and of an acrid, mummified stench that choked his breathing, until he flung the lattice wide and burst into daylight again.

He was standing atop the ruined plantation-house at last, on a widow's walk built solidly across the roof-tree. Breathing the hot tranquil air in gulps, he fought to put down the horror of the nightmare underfoot. Perhaps he had dreamed those three bodies out of the shadows. He almost nerved himself to peer through the lattice again, then stifled the impulse firmly and strode to the rail to study the panorama at his feet.

From this height, Indian Key seemed to float in the purple wash of the Gulf Stream—a blunt-nosed arrow of an island, fallen just short of the heart of Cuba; a smoke-gray island where the scrub grew, a sickly green morass where swamp merged with sea. In the blaze of late afternoon, it looked oddly unreal, like an illustration in a boy's geography. Carter could close his eyes and dream his way back to his grandfather's house in New England. He had stood for hours, as a boy, on *that* widow's walk, with the clean wind of Salem in his hair, watching the China clippers warp into their berths in the harbor below. There had been skeletons in *that* attic, too—clean Puritan skeletons, with their hands folded piously on their secrets.

There was a throbbing in his skull, and he opened his eyes to still the clamor. The landscape was real as original sin, now, and twice as menacing. So was the throbbing, which came from the outside, after all—a jungle drum, softly insistent, like a cat's tread in the dark. It was a tom-tom, talking lazily to itself, somewhere behind that smoke-gray wall of bay-grape and palmetto.

A flight of pelicans, gaunt caricatures of birds against the hard cobalt light, rose in grotesque slow-motion—too easily to have been *startled* by the sound, though it was obvious that the drum-beat had jogged them out of their siesta. Carter watched them thoughtfully, as they winged into the lagoon in ragged formation. For a moment he could wish fervently for wings, even for such undignified power of flight.

A second drum had begun to talk to the first, from the green depth of the marsh. A third picked up the threnody, nearer this time, though he could not localize the sound.

Here, at least, was life, no matter how sinister. How should a castaway react? Obviously, he was in plain view to those eyes peering up out of the encroaching jungle. Any hesitation would be fatal—that was even more obvious. Any indication that he feared the challenge of mumbo-jumbo. . . . He forced his feet to take him down the ladder to the attic again. This time, he stared boldly back at the three pendant cadavers. Black men, all of them, naked but for brief breech clouts, twisted in the final agony.

The drums throbbed on, insistent even with the muffling walls. He had an insane notion that the three bodies were swaying in tom-tom rhythm, and raced for the stairway to put the thought behind him.

Was the muffled thunder of those drums closing in on the house, from three sides? He suspected as much when he gained the lower hallway without pausing for breath. He was sure of it when he touched the knob of that copper-studded door and found it was barred—on the outside.

The sergeant had vanished. Only his grotesque planter's hat remained —pinned to a pillar by a machete.

CHAPTER III

THE KING OF INDIAN KEY

THE tom-toms built to crescendo in the heat-drugged afternoon. Or was it only the throb of blood at his temples, as his heart pumped in panic? Carter turned toward the dusty cave of the drawing-room to watch the sunlight blotted out, inch by cautious inch. The French window was closing, too, under the pressure of an invisible hand.

His brain ordered him to investigate, but his feet obeyed a logic of their own. The stair, at least, was still free. So was the joist-rotted first landing, and the wilderness of caved-in upper hall. He walked here on tiptoe, leaping from joist to joist, fumbling his way toward the gap where the palm-bole thrust skyward. At least he would be able to see their faces now, he thought, peering eagerly below.

"Grady!"

But the sergeant had vanished from the portico below him. Only that grotesque planter's hat remained—pinned to a pillar by a machete.

The festoons of wild grape framed a desolation as empty as the face of the moon. Savannah and scrub brooded in sinister peace, waiting for evening. The threnody of the drums was part of the picture now, a natural obligato. It didn't seem in the least odd that the drummers should be invisible. Perhaps, if he went higher, he could probe the mystery. Back to the clean air of the roof-tree again.

The shadow waited for him on the landing, like Nemesis come true—a vast black shadow, immovable as time in the dusty reaches of stairway. He caught the glint of eyeballs in the half-dark, and the more compelling gleam of a half-raised machete. It seemed better to descend the stair again without forcing that shadow into life, better to bolt toward the door and rattle the knob in desperation.

It was only a part of that crazy afternoon that the door should swing wide this time. He sensed, rather than heard, the quick pad of footsteps on the porch as he burst into the sunlight. In that moment, the scrub had grown a half-hundred heads. Black shoulders heaved in unison, bringing as many naked torsos into insolent view. Ex-slaves all, with the marks of the barracoon still visible on more than one upthrust arm. A machete gleamed in each fist. At a guttural order, the blades flashed skyward, and down again, until the points threatened Carter's chest—too distant yet to draw blood, though the wielders were converging on the porch in a slow shuffle. Beyond, in the deep guinea-grass, the tom-toms throbbed on, the wild bodies moving in response to their urging.

Surely, he thought, this was a nightmare from which he must awaken. The whir of a machete dispelled that notion. He ducked sharply behind the door-jamb again, hearing the wood splinter just outside. The slam of the door stirred the patina of dust to life in the lower hall. For a second, he stood there choking, as bare feet slapped the porch outside. The shadow on the landing was cat-soft. Carter scarcely heard the long, thin snake whisper down the stairwell. The rope settled about his neck and shoulders gently, almost painlessly. But the tug that swept him clear of the floor was far from painless.

Someone was hauling him skyward now, toward that latticed skylight, toward the gibbet just below. When had the black horde swept into the hall? For a sickening moment he hung in space above the machetes, fighting for breath. Hemp sawed without mercy at his chest. . . . His pistol dangled on its lanyard just out of reach of his pinioned hands. As if in a dream, he saw a razor-sharp blade slash it free.

But I won't die, he told himself. *Not just now. They missed my neck on purpose with*

that lasso. They mean to kill me their way, slowly, much more slowly. . . .

Carter jerked his head down to his right hand. Solemnly, he cocked a snooks at the milling faces below him.

The crowd parted as he swayed there. A half-remembered voice shouted orders on the portico in a Castilian that he could understand. The rope slackened, then gave. He was on his feet again and, with no particular surprise, returning the bow of the white man in the doorway. Jaime Escobar, the Key West insurance agent; Escobar, the Florida citizen, who had acted in a dozen ways to assist the Army in matters outside the realm of diplomacy.

For a moment, Carter stared incredulously. His bow had been mechanical, a part of the old-world courtesy he had learned so painfully in St. Augustine. The reaction of discovery came later, as the little agent moved into the room, alert as a wasp on the toes of his polished boots, a wispy dandy who might have just stepped out of his office above his Front Street wharf. Carter blinked a second time, and pinned his mind to reality again. After all, the evil in this world is seldom poured into an heroic mold.

Escobar said, with perfect aplomb, "Don't look so surprised, Captain. Did you expect something more—formidable?"

Carter did not trust himself to speak at once. Already he knew that he had blundered. He should have returned Escobar's slow smile and rushed toward him with both hands held out. Well, it wasn't too late for play-acting. Perhaps this stunned hesitation was even more convincing.

"Where is my valet?"

"Your sergeant, you mean?"

"Have it your way, *señor.*"

"*Anda!*" shouted Escobar.

The men retreated before that voice like well-trained monkeys, scrambling for door and windows in their haste to leave the white man's house— All but one black Hercules who stood impassive on the stair, his arms folded on the flat blade of his machete.

"Don't mind Dingo," said Escobar. "He considers himself my bodyguard." Once again, the Spaniard's voice had taken on the affected lisp that Carter remembered from Key West. "He is *still* afraid you could harm me—do not ask me why."

"*Where is Grady?*" An impulse beyond Carter's control had wrenched that cry from his throat.

The Spaniard bowed toward an open window. Carter took a lunging step toward the sunlight. The jungle broke away from the portico on this side, giving him a glimpse of a great silk-cotton tree. At first, he did not quite recognize the figure spread-eagled against the trunk. The crude gag across the mouth made an adequate disguise, even without the mud through which Sergeant Grady had wallowed. On either side, a black guard squatted immobile, hands folded on their cane-knives—a primitive decoration in a set-piece without meaning.

ODDLY enough, it was Escobar's voice that brought Carter back to sanity. "Don't trouble yourself, Captain—he is very much alive. Somehow, it seemed easier to subdue his bellowing at the same time—"

"But why?"

"Part of my mouse-trap, I assure you. From St. Augustine I have heard of your devotion to one another. Naturally, it will amuse me to deal with you separately."

The Spaniard spread a bandana on a packing-case and sat down gingerly. Dingo took a step forward as Carter returned to the room.

"Must I explain further, Captain? Very shortly now, you will begin to die, slowly—not too painfully. That is my concession to blundering youth. It is my pleasure that your sergeant remain as you see him now, that he hear your last living cry—before we start on *him.*"

"What do you mean?" Again, Carter sucked in his breath. *As though you didn't know, now. As though you weren't tempting him, with your eyes open wide to the consequences.*

"Must I explain that I'm king here, Captain? That I take my authority seriously?" He waved a hand at Dingo. "Naturally, it is to my advantage to see that Indian Key is untouched—and unexplored. For that reason, I *bought* it—years ago in Havana, under another name, of course." He let his fingers brush black Hercules' arm. "My paladin has just one job: to *keep* my dominion wild."

Carter kept his voice steady as he gestured toward the loot. "And all of this is yours?"

"All of it, Captain. Too bad, is it not, that you should understand—how shall I say—too late?"

But Carter had already groped his way to a packing case, to rest his head in the cradle of his arms. *Play it his way, now. If it's melodrama he wants, play it to the hilt.* "And you leave this unguarded?"

"A proof of my discipline, *no es verdad?*" Escobar's cheeks had taken on a faint glow. "Now and again, one of my slaves attempts to reach the mainland with a bit of this plunder. You know how Dingo punishes them, if you got as far as the attic."

"And your wreckers?"

"Believe me, I've had no need to discipline them. Mostly, they've been too glad to take my orders—and my advice." Escobar dropped his voice a peg, as though he were sharing a secret. "Of course, it has upset me of late to see law and order move into my corner of the world with your Army. To observe the strange, blundering way you chose to uncover my secret. Of course, you would have left Key West alive had you not decided to put your own neck in the noose—"

Carter did raise his head. He hoped his laughter had the right note of hysteria. "So you *followed me?*"

"Naturally. My slaves are crude when they kill. Besides, killing on Indian Key is another privilege of the kin. . . . Tell me one thing before we proceed. Just what did you hope to accomplish by playing the castaway on my island?"

"I wanted to see this plunder with my own eyes. From then on, I relied on my wits. For all I knew, they'd believe my story." Carter sounded weary now, as he raised his head to nod at the impassive Dingo. "I even hoped they'd help me repair my boat—I'd get to our consul in Havana. . . ." His voice died as the Spaniard's eyes turned ice-cold. *It's coming now,* he thought. *Pray God I can stand up to it until dark. . . .*

Escobar spoke gently, despite the cold fire in his look. "Shall I tell you what I've paid out in Havana to keep this island untouched?"

"I can guess."

The spark died in Escobar's eyes. He seemed almost calm now, a businessman, describing his success to a competitor. "Most of the goods you see here were brought in by wreckers. Some of the valuable pieces were, shall we say, borrowed—from other ships en route. Nothing here can be touched without a permit from Havana. You see, I thought it wiser to base my stores in Spanish territory." The Spaniard's smile was dazzling now. "Sooner or later, someone was bound to unmask my confederates in Key West. As an American citizen, I would go on trial with them— Enrique, the manager at my wharf, for example; Captain Somers, the not-too-honest Yankee—"

Carter kept his own voice steady. "May I ask one more question, before you—erase my memory?"

"All you like, my friend. My time is yours, now."

"Just how did you expect this business to end?"

Escobar spread his long, thin hands. "It is ended now, Captain. Others will come to Key West after you, to root out the wreckers. The golden age will end, as Key West becomes firmly American. I shall go back to Spain while I have the time—and a whole skin. Somers, Enrique and the small fry may quarrel for the spoils." He gestured toward the storeroom. "Within the next few months, I shall sell everything here to friends, from New Spain to Valparaiso—"

"And turn honest?"

"And buy a castle in Spain, *amigo.* A real castle."

"I hope your servants won't betray your secret."

"*Perdone?*"

"Surely you won't give up your vice when you retire?"

Escobar smiled thinly. "Continue, Captain."

"Shall I call it the religion of death, or is torture a more honest word?"

"Go on, Captain. After all, it is your swan song, no?"

Once again, Carter stood eye-to-eye with Escobar, careless now of the hovering black overseer. "Admit you hanged those three poor devils in the attic deliberately, just so you could enjoy their dying. Just as you set the trap for me here, so you could watch me run in circles." Carter drew in another sobbing breath—real, this time. "How have you planned to finish me off, Escobar? How long will it be? Will you sit nearby, and watch and listen to my dying?"

Escobar's hand came up to stop the tirade, in a stinging slap that sent Carter reeling. Teetering on one knee, Carter set his punch from the floor, and threw it with the surge of his rising body. The Spaniard stopped his fist with his chin, with almost comical neatness. Carter heard the pad of bare feet behind him, as Escobar crumpled, but he was riding a rage that transcended instinct now. One more hammer-blow to the heart sent Escobar sprawling, just as the Negro's hand closed on Carter's shoulder. Something crashed just behind his ear, to send him spinning down into darkness.

CHAPTER IV

MURDER BY RITUAL

HE opened his eyes to the throb of surf, a sound more insistent than the cracked bells still ringing in his brain. Lukewarm salt water slapped at his face as he tried to rise. For a moment he lay quiet, watching a wave run across the reef in a luminous ripple of phosphorus, to lose itself in the dark lagoon. His mind groped back to reality. Somehow, he had been brought to the reef—just before sunset, to judge by the afterglow behind the fading palms along the shore.

What caprice of Escobar's had placed him here? He struggled to hands and knees, still too

For a sickening moment, Carter hung in space above the machetes, his pistol dangling just out of reach of his pinioned hands.

groggy for extended thought, and he felt a sharp tug at his ankle. The light was fading fast, but there was enough to show the chain that hobbled his leg to the coral.

His exploring fingers traveled down the links, to find the ring sunk deep in the reef at waterline. The chain was hardly more than a foot in length. Struggle as he might, he could not rise above his knees. It was then that he saw the grinning face of one of Escobar's Negroes peering down at him from the crest of the reef. At that moment, a new wave, sucked shoreward by the rising tide, all but tumbled him into the lagoon as it hissed over the coral. A spine-prickling howl, not quite human, shocked his mind awake at last. He scrambled to a sitting posture, with his manacled leg dangling into the lagoon, and rocked his head between his hands—knowing that the howl had issued from his own throat.

How long had he been writhing here in the wash of the tide? It was a question he dared not answer; after all, his pride was at stake. He looked up at the top of the reef where the Negro's face had been and saw that it had disappeared. He was alone. How much longer could he stand up against the mounting force of the waves? With a great effort, he choked a gasp in his throat as the next comber came over. Remembering the glass-green swell above the coral that morning, he came up as the wave subsided, tugging frantically at his chain. That morning, at the peak of the last high tide, there had been ten feet of water above the coral, at the waves' height. For a while, he could go with the wash, scramble to safety in the boiling back-suck—until his skull banged coral, and he forgot to breathe.

Of course, it was an easy way to die. Escobar must have considered that, too. Obviously, other methods of torture must have suggested themselves: Sir Henry Morgan's method—sewing the victim into rawhide and letting the sun crack his bones as the skin contracted; the tarantula-torture, beloved in Haiti; the old Moorish trick of fastening a rat over one's diaphragm in an iron pot and letting the obliging rodent eat its way out. . . . Yes, Escobar had been lenient where he was concerned. Undoubtedly, he was saving a more refined method to dispose of Grady.

Well, he had followed orders, played the general's game to the hilt. If he failed now, there was no one to blame but fate—and the insanity of trusting an Indian. Pablo, thought Carter, would have given a sign long ago if he meant to appear at all. There was no reproach in that reflection. He was too tired for reproaches now.

For all that, he tugged again at the chain—and felt his head swim when it gave a little. Was his mind failing, along with his nerve? Had he imagined that a link had just strained apart? The chain, as a whole, still held firm. Carter banged the links on coral—and, for good measure, let out a banshee wail. If Escobar were listening, it would help the show.

Besides, he needed sound to cover the faint but insistent rasp of a file in the dark—the gnaw of nutmeg steel on iron, as a brown fist rose and fell out of the dead water.

Another wave slapped the picture from view. But the fist and the file were still busy when Carter looked again. Once again, he let out a despairing howl—and spoke, before the echo died among the dunes.

"Pablo?"

"Yes, Captain."

It was a ghost of a whisper, but real enough. The file rasped on above it. Carter felt the breath choke in his throat, from relief, a gratitude that went beyond words, from shame that he could have doubted those busy hands.

"How long have you—"

"Since before the sunset, Captain." The file worked busily. "It was not quite dark when they brought you here in a black man's dugout. I swam—almost in the dugout's wake." White teeth flashed in the wet copper mask.

"What about Grady?" Carter had to force the question a little.

"The sergeant still waits, under the silk-cotton tree, to hear your howls. Cry out once more, Captain. The devil is listening, too, from his portico."

Carter sent the frightened echoes rolling among the dunes. Thank God for the formal Spanish mind, he thought. If he didn't make a ritual of his murders— Aloud, he said, "You think of everything, don't you, Pablo? Even that file."

"When I last saw this cay, Captain, they had chained another man to coral. Barracuda had left nothing but his bones."

The last strand parted. Carter felt the urgency in that final defiant snap of rusted metal.

PABLO said, "Howl once again, please. Wait. Do not rise too high with the next wave. If there are watchers on the shore, they will see you against the sky. They will know you are free."

Carter let his bellow ride with the surge. The Indian had already vanished in the black lagoon. Forgetting that he was no longer anchored, Carter tumbled after him as the wave crashed over. He swam laboriously back to coral. The chain tugged cruelly at one ankle.

Pablo's whisper reached him out of the velvet dark. "If they are watching the reef, I will make a path for you. Follow me when I signal, Captain, not before."

Carter braced in the dying ground-swell and clung painfully to the reef, a trembling silhouette against the starlight. Pablo had gone without a sound; the night was really empty now. . . . *Never trust an Indian.* War in the

Floridas had been built on that cardinal principle. Yet he had dared to make Pablo the keystone of his plan—and Pablo had stood firm in crisis. Pablo had stayed under cover in that catboat. He had vanished into the scrub like a wraith after they had beached her; spied on the house as the black horde closed in. Knowing Escobar's moods, he had been wise enough to wait. . . . Yes, he had done well to trust Pablo with this part of the job.

Pablo's bird-call across the dark water stabbed him to motion. The chain was a hideous weight as he swam in darkness, but he could ignore it now. A blacksmith would attend to that fetter in time—if he lived to visit the world of blacksmiths.

Had the bleeding stopped? He remembered all too vividly that a fleck of blood in salt water could tickle the snout of a cruising barracuda—assuming, of course, that barracuda possessed a sense of smell. Perhaps they selected their prey by instinct, like Jaime Escobar. He cursed Escobar in an adequate whisper, as a wave lifted him in mid-lagoon, high enough to glimpse the roof-tree of the manor-house. Indian Key held no sinister overtone for him now; he could thank Pablo for that much. In fact, it oddly resembled a stage setting—waiting for Captain John Carter to stalk into his big scene.

The chain grated on damp sand. Carter staggered out of the surf with a hand under his arm. Pablo's whisper came out of the dark.

"Keep left, Captain."

"Can we find the path in this light?"

Pablo tugged him forward without a reply.

"Was there a lookout?"

"One only, Captain. At the foot of the dune. The devil is careless tonight."

SIDE by side, Indian and white man scrambled to the top of the dune. From this vantage-point Carter saw that the windows of the house glowed red, reflecting the glare of a bonfire far down the savannah. He had a confused glimpse of naked black bodies—oil-smeared, phrenetic—in a wild caper around the flames.

"They have danced since dark," said Pablo. "Escobar opened his rum-kegs to them after he put you in chains."

Carter nodded mutely. He could understand that impulse of Escobar's. Given the man's nature, it was quite in character. He had wanted to sit alone and hear Carter die, before he started on Grady.

They crossed the corduroy road in silence and ghosted into the palmettos as the moon climbed above the dunes. Until he saw the red eye of a cigar shining in the dark, Carter thought the portico of the house was deserted after all. Then he saw the dim blur of Escobar's linen, heard the creak of his rocker. The captain could afford to smile now in the dark. He could not have pictured a more bizarre tableau in that setting. Yet it was natural for Escobar to sit in comfort while he gratified his vice.

Pablo released his arm as they crept to the edge of the ragged lawn. The silk-cotton tree made a vast, spider-shaped shadow in the growing moonlight. Sergeant Grady was only an extension of that shadow, and almost as immobile—a patient statue, lashed tight to the great bole. The guards had gone, probably to caper about that fire far down the swamp-bed. Carter saw why, when his eyes moved on to Escobar seated perhaps fifteen feet beyond. Even as he watched, the Spaniard flicked his wrist lazily, sending the long coils of the bull-whip into a nightmare parabola. The last kink of the whip straightened like a striking black-snake, just short of Grady's eyes, and recoiled at Escobar's feet before it struck again.

The white shadow in the rocker took his time, as the spark of his cigar glowed and died in the moonlight. Carter swept the veranda with his eyes, noted that the darker shape between two pillars was Dingo—his master's only concession to caution as his sport built to its climax. Carter had had enough of games for quite a while. Careless of concealment now, he rose to his full height and walked out to the moonlit lawn with the chain clanking in his wake.

Escobar started to his feet, with the whip still tight in one fist. Yes, it was worth the risk, to watch the change in the Spaniard's face.

Carter spoke easily. In this business, *señor*, you must have seen ghosts before."

"*Madre de Dios!*" shrieked Escobar.

Dingo charged forward, just before the bow-string twanged in the dark. He went down with a feathered shaft quivering in his throat, clawed at the rotting veranda floor, and then lay still. Carter did not even turn when Pablo stepped boldly out of the scrub, a second arrow already fitted to his bow-string. He knew that Pablo would free Grady now. He raised one palm in a well-rehearsed signal.

"Too bad I'm such a lively ghost, Escobar."

THE scrub around the veranda had begun to blossom heads—but close-cropped Yankee heads, this time, smeared to the hairline with lamp-black. The regulars moved in unison up to the veranda, where they wheeled smartly to face the dark, shotguns and carbines at the ready. Carter walked up to Escobar and snatched the bull-whip from the inert hand. He gave Grady a backhand slap as the sergeant joined him on the veranda. Nothing else was needed. Captain and sergeant had skirted death too often for that. Besides, Carter needed what eloquence he could muster for Jaime Escobar.

"Sound maneuvering, isn't it, *señor*? Or would you call it pure melodrama? You asked for both this afternoon—with *your* performance."

The Spaniard found his voice, but again it was only a babble of cursing. "*Sangre de Cristo! Caraba contigo!*"

"English, please," said Carter patiently. "Or, if you prefer, don't talk at all. You talked enough this afternoon, when you thought I'd never live to remember—"

Pablo spoke in a whisper. "We're holding the boat on the south shore, Captain. She won't clear coral when the tide's out."

But it was still Carter's moment. He could hardly surrender it without a summary.

"Look hard at Pablo, *senor*. For months now, he's been on your Key West wharf, learning what he could. Odd, isn't it, that you should suggest him as my house servant?" He took a step closer, until he was eye-to-eye with Escobar. "Twice he crossed from Cuba to make maps of this cay. Unfortunately, you stayed close to your ledgers; he could never learn who was master here. Only that some self-elected god was giving orders. Now d'you see why I came to Key West on the *Creole Belle*? Why I walked into all your traps so tamely?"

He turned, as Grady took a quick step into the dark. Escobar's Negroes had left their rum and their fire to clot in dark masses about the wings of the ruined veranda. Watching. Would they do more than watch? The silence beyond his half-circle of rifles answered Carter's last doubt. But he spoke now in Spanish to be sure.

"Don't think your slaves will rescue you. Half of them would die before they could cross the grass. Most of them would rather see *you* die. Sorry we can't oblige them—"

He stood aside, letting Escobar stagger to the veranda's edge. He knocked the arrow from Pablo's bow-string, while the Spaniard screamed his orders. The black mass stirred in the moonlight, surged forward, then paused at the edge of the ragged lawn. Pausing, it dissolved in barbaric bellowing—animal whoops of joy, much older than human laughter.

"Freedom," said Carter, "and a king's loot to divide. Too bad we can't take it with us. You see, *you're* much more valuable—"

"How did you—" the Spaniard croaked.

Carter answered with his weary patience intact. "We're Indian fighters, Escobar, all of us. D'you think they could save you from us?" He made an inclusive gesture. "Picked men, all of them, fresh from the Florida wars. They've been hiding in Cuba for a week now, waiting for Pablo's signal. Tonight, they reached the marsh on your south shore and came through the dunes to wait for me. Obviously, you might have killed me first, but that hardly mattered, once we had you in the open. A court-martial would hang you just the same—"

Escobar lunged in the dark, but Carter did not permit himself the luxury of a brawl. Instead, he gave Grady a small, grateful nod and stood aside to let the sergeant tap the Spaniard's ear, just once, with a gravel-freighted sock. Nor did he pause to watch Grady sling his trophy over both shoulders.

The Negroes still writhed with helpless laughter as the little group marched through. Pablo touched Carter's elbow gently to steer the column south, into the mangrove swamp, into the waiting long-boat. . . . Seven hours to dawn, the captain told himself doggedly. Seven hours to clear Spanish waters, and dodge Spanish diplomacy. The Navy will wait for us that long at the Boca.

The chain still galled his ankle as he walked, but he could almost relish the pain. After all, he was on his way to a blacksmith now.

(Continued from page 8)

Although a reader of *Adventure* for a good many years, this is my first "gripe."

Mr. Harry Botsford's fact story in the April issue, "The Most Dangerous Job in the World," does not altogether live up to the "fact" part.

No. 1 gripe—I've never seen nitro in a gallon can—generally 3 or 6 quart—but could be.

No. 2 —His "go-devil" is a squib. (Nowadays two sticks of dynamite, two caps and fuse). A go-devil is used to slide down over wire when a suspended shot is used.

No. 3 —His friend catching a five-inch shell with a hundred quarts blown from a twelve-inch hole is really something. The shell would be about twenty-five feet long and would weigh in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty pounds. Incidentally, there are no wells completed in the Bradford district with a twelve-inch hole. Most of them six-inch. I've heard this same story in every field I've worked in (and that's plenty), and I believe it to be true. However, wasn't it a twenty-quart shell caught by a shooter named Woods in Oklahoma in the early twenties? (Somebody answer).

No. 4 —The blow-up near Custer City, Pa. happened in the summer of 1941. A car with three men on their way to a producers' meeting in Warren, Pa., was blown up when *passing* (not a mile behind) the glycerine truck. Of the four men involved only one survived. (See Bradford papers).

No. 5 —I object to Mr. Botsford's statements, i.e. "bartenders report drinking shooters; shooters are considered yellow when they quit; they are funny guys." They are just average men working for a living and usually make more money than those working in shipyards, etc.

For all of this *Adventure* is a grand magazine. If we weren't snowed in and unable to get to our rig to keep drilling, I wouldn't have time to write this kind of letter.

Just a driller,
R. M. ATWATER

The author, whose "Pipeline Deadline" appears this month, answers—

Nomenclature in the oil fields differs with each field. While I was born and raised in the Pennsylvania oil fields, I have also spent considerable time in Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Kansas, New Mexico and elsewhere. This, I suspect, accounts for the different terms, go-devil and squib.

In many places in the East, nitro is carried in gallon cans. Joe Besselman, Titusville, Pennsylvania, made such containers for many years.

Two hundred and fifty pounds of weight never stumped a Pennsylvania oil-field worker. Bill Wege, of blessed memory, could lift one end of a standard stem, seemingly without effort.

I agree that no wells in the Bradford area are completed with a 12-inch hole. But the practice has often been to unscrew the top joint or nipple of casing when the well is to be shot, leaving the full twelve inches of drive pipe protruding.

The individual mentioned in the Bradford incident was an off-side relative of mine, one Elmer Bryner, especially well known in and around Custer City and Degolia where he had large holdings, some of which he owned personally and some of which he jointly owned with the Emery interests.

The man who was killed *behind* a nitro truck was a good friend of mine, Clifford Martin, Secretary of the Bradford Oil Producers Assn., and a director of Associated Petroleum Industries of Pennsylvania by which I was employed for a matter of five years. I have had accounts of the accident in many ways, including an account from the survivor, an oil producer in that area. It has never varied in essence from the story related in *Adventure*. If the Bradford *Era* made an error, the fault is not mine.

I can't withdraw my statement that drinking shooters are reported by bartenders. It is a common and a good practice. I have known many shooters . . . and liked and admired them. I tried to spin an honest and accurate story of their work as I know it.

Your comments have been appreciated, just the same! Come again!

Sincerely,
HARRY BOTSFORD

WE HAVE exhausted our supply of the pamphlet reprints of "Riley Grannan's Last Adventure" and can fill no more orders now. In fact some remittances already in our hands will have to be returned with apologies and thanks, for because of the paper shortage we are not planning to reissue until after the war. We do plan, however, to print the famous piece once again in the magazine and will announce in advance just when it will appear, so anyone who has missed out on the pamphlet can acquire it in that form.—K.S.W.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

DON'T play with dynamite—unless you know the rules of the game.

Query:—I wonder if you can tell me how safe it is to handle dynamite. I have looked up dynamite in some encyclopedias and other books, but can find no mention of that phase. Among the experts listed in *Ask Adventure*, you seem to be the most likely person to be able to supply the information.

I have been told, by one who thinks he knows, that there is no likelihood of dynamite exploding by dropping it or stepping on it, or by a horse running over it if buried in gravel. He says it has to be exploded by a fuse or spark. But the general impression appears to be that careless handling of dynamite or dropping it is very likely to result in explosion. In the movie, "Hit the Road," for instance, one of the boys causes a panic that nearly wrecks the car in which he is riding by carelessly flourishing a stick of dynamite. I will appreciate it very much if you can tell me how safe it is.

—Lewis R. Thompson
Helvetia, Pa.

Reply by Victor Shaw:—You have come to the right place for information, as I've handled this type of explosive since 1898; and, while actively mining, in carload lots. And I'll say at the outset that the informant you mention is absolutely correct provided the dynamite is in the *frozen* state, for this explosive is only dangerous to handle when thawed, or—note this carefully—WHEN IT HAS LAIN IN ONE POSITION *TOO LONG!!*

The above needs explaining to make it clear to you, as follows: 1—Commercial dynamite comes in 8-inch "sticks" of variable diameter, according to use; e.g., for hand-drilled holes 1 inch—for machine holes about 1½ inches. And in this most common form the nitroglycerine is distributed throughout various types of "carriers" such as certain clays (Kieselguhr), sawdust, powdered resin, etc. in various percentages. The type used for metal mines chiefly is 40%, and 60%; for stump blasting, 15% or 20%; coal mining uses a gelatine dynamite whenever admissable, but most mines use black powder, of low flame temperature and slow action to avoid making slack and dust. 2—Now the straight nitro dynamites for metal mining, of 40% and 60%, are quite safe for ordinary handling, or even with quite rough usage, because the nitroglycerine is difficult to explode when "frozen." This freezing is chemical crystallization and occurs at comparatively high temperature of about 55.8°F. That is, for this *stable* commercial form, it is in a solid state *below* the temperature given. You can see thus that in a cool place even in summer, such as a cellar, a stone powder house, inside a mine tunnel, or in a rock cave, it will remain solid. But placing it out in a hot sunlight for an hour or less, will "thaw" it, as miners say. It is then in a more unstable form and highly explosive BY DETONATION; flame *plus* shock.

In its stable solid state it can be dropped from great heights, kicked around, crushed to bits by an unshod horse, or even shot through by a rifle or revolver bullet with impunity. It is possible even to do all these things also to thawed dynamite, but is undeniably more dangerous for the fact that while shock alone has little or no effect, should such handling cause the faintest *spark* at the instant of shock it will explode.

For example: you can burn dynamite like a candle, although it will sputter rather savagely, but should a stick become dislodged while burning the shock of fall together with the flame will explode it. You see, heat alone (ordinary temperatures), or shock alone, will not explode this stable type, because it is manufactured this way for safety, and can thus be shipped under the usual safety transportation regulations.

For the above reasons, the miner has to thaw his dynamite before loading drill holes for blasting; but—he has to use a detonator, or "dynamite cap" thrust into one stick in each hole to explode each charge. That is, even thawed dynamite must combine flame with shock to explode properly.

These dynamite caps, as you may know, are loaded either with fulminate of mercury, or azil lead, usually the former; and you should take even more care handling these than dynamite, as they're more dangerous because more unstable and need only heat, or shock, to explode.

Now dynamite left in one position too long may often reach a thawing temperature, only to freeze again. This alternate action causes the nitroglycerine to ooze down through the carrier material and accumulate on the under side of each stick in *pure* form as crystals. If left thus for a number of years, all the pure nitroglycerine in the 50-lb. box will have accumulated on the bottom layer and the box itself. This pure stuff is most unstable and will explode if dropped. Even brushing it might do it. For this reason, dynamite in stock, or even in transit, is regularly turned over in upside-down position at least once a week. Laymen, knowing nothing of these facts, may know or have heard of explosions occurring by moving, or dropping "old dynamite," left too long in one position. From this may have arisen the many curious, often ridiculous fears of this explosive.

THE ASK ADVENTURE SERVICE is free, provided self-addressed envelope and FULL POSTAGE for reply are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries must enclose International Reply Coupons, which are exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.

Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, financial backing or employment.

★*(Enclose addressed envelope with International Reply Coupon)*

Notice: Many of our *Ask Adventure* experts are now engaged in government service of one kind or another. Some are on active duty in the Army or Navy, others serving in an executive or advisory capacity on various of the boards and offices that have been set up to hasten the nation's war effort. Almost without exception these men have consented to remain on our staff, carry on their work for the magazine if humanly possible, but with the understanding that for the duration such work is of secondary importance to their official duties. This is as it should be, so when you don't receive answers to queries as promptly as you have in the past, please be patient. And remember that foreign mails are slow and uncertain these days, many curtailed drastically. Bear with us and we'll continue to try to serve you as speedily as possible.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

SPORTS AND HOBBIES

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure*.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Matawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure*.

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing: *Paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 1325 So. Main St., Princeton, Ill.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, care of *Adventure*.

Fencing—COL. JOHN V. GROMBACH, care of *Adventure*.

First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Fishing: *Fresh water; fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 920 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, care of *Adventure*.

Fly and Bait Casting, Tournament—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Globe-trotting and Vagabonding — ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

Health-Building Activities, Hiking — DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, care of *Adventure*.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT WHITE, 913 W. 7th St., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, care of *Adventure*.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *Foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns, American and Foreign: Wing Shooting and Field Trails—ROY S. TINNEY, care of *Adventure*.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Swords, Spears, Pole Arms and Armor—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, care of *Adventure*.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MUREL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 6720 Jeffery Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Aviation: *Airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

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, 1091 Springfield Rd., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure*.

Marine Architecture: *Ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, care of *Adventure*.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America. Outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Ornithology: *Birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 5 Minerva Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, care of *Adventure*.

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HARSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*.

Sunken Treasure: *Treasure ships; deep-sea diving; salvage operations and equipment*—LIEUTENANT HARRY E. RIESENBERG, care of *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 156 Joralemon St., Belleville, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

The Merchant Marine—GORDON MACALLISTER, care of *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—ALEC CAVADAS, King Edward High School, Vancouver, B. C.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure*.

U. S. Navy—LIEUTENANT DURAND KIEFER, care of *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Conner Field, Quartzsite, Ariz.

★**New Guinea**—L. P. B. ARMIT, care of *Adventure*.

★**New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa**—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★**Australia and Tasmania**—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★**South Sea Islands**—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Ingle Nook," 30 Cornelia St., Wiley Park, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii—JOHN SNELL, Deputy Administrator, Defense Savings Staff, 1055 Bishop St., Honolulu, T. H.

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

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, 2231 W. Harbor Drive, St. Petersburg, Florida. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure*. **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet; Southern, Eastern and Central China*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure*. **4** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure*. **5** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany, Scandinavia*—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Central America—ROBERT SPIERS BENJAMIN, care of *Adventure*.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure*.

★**West Indies**—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Iceland—G. I. COLBRON, care of *Adventure*.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, care of *Adventure*.

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, care of *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan Campeche*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Park, Md.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **3** ★*Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, *The Courier Advocate*, Trenton Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario, National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 1261 Ouelette Ave., Windsor, Ont., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta*—C. PLOWDEN, Plowden Bay, Howe Sound, B. C. **6** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501—10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask.

Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 952 No. Hudson Ave., Hollywood, Calif.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, care of *Adventure*. **3** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1211 W. Roma Ave., Albuquerque, N. M. **4** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGGLESTON, Elks' Home, Elko, Nev. **5** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **6** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, care of *Adventure*. **7** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S., Part 2 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River*—GEO. A. ZERR, Vine and Hill Sts., Crafton, P. O., Ingram, Penna. **3** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S., Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, 40 Chapel St., Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif. **4** *New Jersey*—F. H. BENT, care of *Adventure*. **5** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure*. **6** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and for women are declined, as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

M. Smith of 968 Neilson St., Albany 6, California wants to get in touch with Rube and Bill Smith of the Alta Rooms in Walla Walla, Washington some years ago.

Ben H. Byrd, telegrapher, working for the Union Pacific R.R. about 1927 or '28. Would like to contact, or learn of present residence. Frank L. Alden, 462 N. Ave. 52, Los Angeles, Calif.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Jesse Leroy Jemison, known as Roy Jemison or Roy Williams, plasterer by trade, formerly of the middle west, please notify Jesse L. Travis 765-15th St.; Apt. 1, Oakland, Calif.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Robert Limbach, the best pal I ever had, last heard from in the Merchant Marine, please write me. Robert Wallish, 3522 W. 12th Place, Chicago, 23, Ill.

Earl Chew, formerly of Troop "B" 4th U. S. Cavalry, last heard of was a motorman on streetcars in Indianapolis, Ind. Get in touch with your old pal "Chink," otherwise Horace M. Henninger, 905 Irving St., N. E., 17 Washington, D. C.

George Kullrich, electrician by trade, home in State of Washington, whom I met in 1913 in Miles City, Mont., and corresponded with later at Verdi and Reno, Nev. Any information will be appreciated by Fin. Write me c/o *Adventure*.

Will anyone knowing the whereabouts of Robert Lipp, last known to be headed for Seattle, Wash., about July 4, 1942, please communicate with Larry Richmond, C-2 2nd Airdrome Bn. FMF, Fleet P. O., San Francisco, Calif.

(Continued from page 101)

The baffled and angry teamsters now turned their fury on the oil producers. Tanks were set on fire, derricks destroyed. Then suddenly they again hurled an offensive against Van Syckle's pipeline. This time they were met by determined opposition, for the crafty Van Syckle had reinforced his guards. One guard was killed in the fracas before the teamsters were routed.

Van Syckle at once sent a check for a thousand dollars to the widow and offered a reward of twice that amount for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible for the man's death.

Almost overnight oil-field sentiment crystallized and swung to Van Syckle. Volunteer guards appeared and helped to patrol the five miles of pipeline. Others guarded the oil-wells, armed with shotguns. The teamsters were aghast at what had happened. Tough as they were, they had but little stomach for a sustained fight. They made one more futile attempt, found themselves surrounded and twenty of their ringleaders arrested and sent to jail.

With the removal of the leaders, "The Teamsters' War" was over.

Samuel Van Syckle was a popular leader in the oil industry for many years and accumulated a nice fortune while saving the industry large sums. His dream came true: he removed gang rule from the industry, his great and lasting contribution made possible the vast expansion of the oil industry.

Years later, when pipeline transportation of oil and its products became moderately efficient, it was decided to lay a pipeline from the oil-fields to the Atlantic seaboard. Railroads, fearing the competition, resorted to both legal and physical opposition, but the economy and the utility of the pipelines and the courage of the pipeliners won out.

It's a far cry from Van Syckle's two-inch pipeline, five miles in length and capable of transporting only 800 barrels of crude oil a day, to the recently completed "Big Inch," a twenty-four-inch line, 1,370 miles long and capable of carrying 325,000 barrels of oil or petroleum products a day.

In this global war we are winning, oil and gasoline are playing most important roles. Over 44,000 miles of underground transportation facilities—relatively bomb-proof, mind you—form a strategic network here in the United States, from oil-wells and refineries to the coasts of this country, guaranteeing a steady and an adequate supply of petroleum and its products to our fighting fronts, wherever they may be.

For all this, we owe a debt to Samuel Van Syckle, the man who did the pioneering.

THE END

THE TRAIL AHEAD

All canvas set we sail next month out of Gloucester for the Grand Banks aboard the *Golden Hind*—last survivor of that fabulous topsail-schooner fleet that used to number in the hundreds—as she wages her gallant death battle against the powered trawlers that infest the fishing grounds today, leaving only starvation pickings in those fog-shrouded salt depths where once swam fortunes to spare for all. . . . In every paragraph of—

"Captains Don't Cry"

By EDMUND GILLIGAN

—you'll catch the whiff of salt spume, hear the whistle of the wind in the rigging, feel the toss and roll of the deck beneath your feet and know what it is to fight the sea. Not since his best-selling Literary Guild novel, "The Gaunt Woman," has Mr. Gilligan written a finer tale. Steeped in the lore and tradition of those "captains courageous" who wrest their living from the Banks he has become their foremost chronicler and for this, his latest yarn, Gordon Grant, our most distinguished marine illustrator, teams up with him. *Adventure* is proud to be able to announce this glorious new serial which will run in five instalments.

Georges Surdez in a long novelette—"The Wise Pick Their Dead"—takes us to Syria, then on to Oran, following the fortunes of a young French lieutenant in the British Army fighting to rid Africa of the Vichy taint. Forced by circumstances to pit his wits in both the prison cell and on the firing line against his own compatriots, Jean Lorrain's struggle to remain true to himself as well as France gives us as fine a story of this war as we have read in many months. . . . Sidney Herschel Small returns with Davies, the counterfeit Ainu, in another gripping yarn—"Flight Without Wings"—set in fear-ridden, blacked-out Tokio . . . Mody C. Boatright, who introduced us to Pecos Bill via his tall Texas tales a few years ago, gives us Gib Morgan, the oil-fields counterpart of Bill, Paul Bunyan, John Henry and the rest of that fabulous breed, in the first of a group of uproarious anecdotes concerning the greatest liar of them all. . . . Plus another hilarious episode in the confused railroading career of Crazy McIntosh and his "world's worst brakeman" by Keith Edgar. . . . Additional short stories by Murray Morgan, A. B. Shiffrin and others. . . . An unusual fact story by Royal Ornan Shreve about a crackpot "expedition to the center of the earth." . . . And of course, the wind-up of Arthur D. Howden Smith's colorful Swain serial, as well as an extra-lavish assortment of verse, fact features and informative departments.

ON SALE JULY 2nd

(Continued from page 39)

Whatever the details, Kane was able to make reasonable guesses. The one time District Engineer must have been set thinking by servant gossip until he began to suspect that his guest was no missionary. From his knowledge of the country, he had seen how guiding the soldiers into the dead-end canyon would finish the let; or, if he miscalculated, the delay of countermarching and getting back on the right road would give Ryan's outposts time enough to carry word to the guerrillas so that they could arrange an ambush.

Kane said, "*Datu*, I had a report on quislings. I had a lot of arguments against snatching and hanging collaborationists. But now it looks as if I have nothing to report. The governor has given you the real McCoy."

Ryan raised his bullet-riddled stetson. "I've learned something. Doña Pilar, you know what plans I had for your husband?"

Doña Pilar looked levelly at Ryan.

"I can guess, and I forgive you. This which happened came of his own free will. There was nothing else for him, nor for any Filipino who made the mistake of collaborating. So I came to join Don Artemisio."

"Your pardon, Doña Pilar, but the Bishop has a new name for your husband."

Bishop Jackson stepped into the circle. He was wearing his vestments. "*Señora*, before we all pray, let me tell you his new name. It is Samson."

"Samson. . . Samson. . ." Then the widow smiled. "Yes, that is good. I remember now. He pulled death down upon himself so that he could take with him a thousand of his enemies. And it was good, and he did it gladly."

THE END

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