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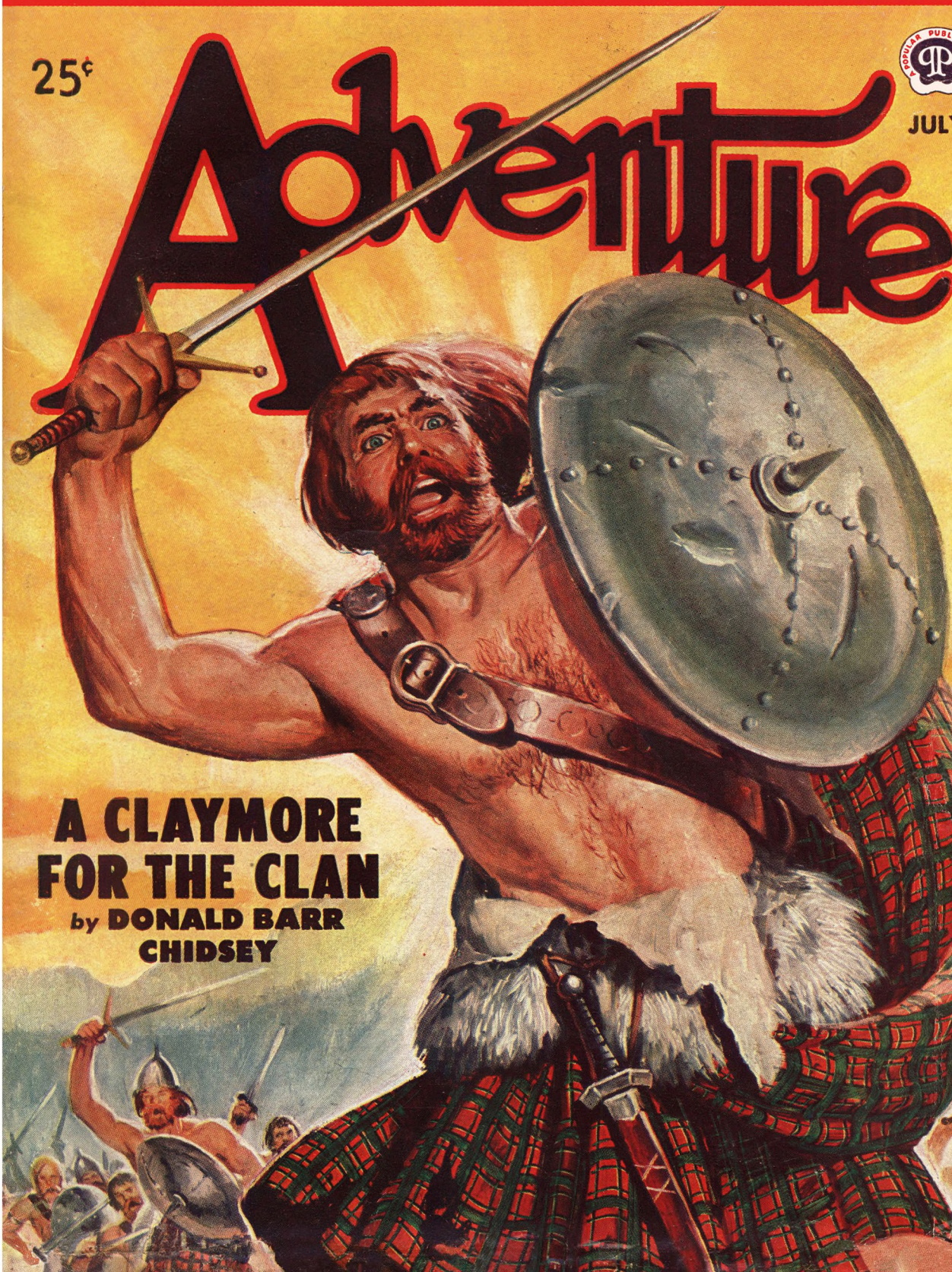

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by DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

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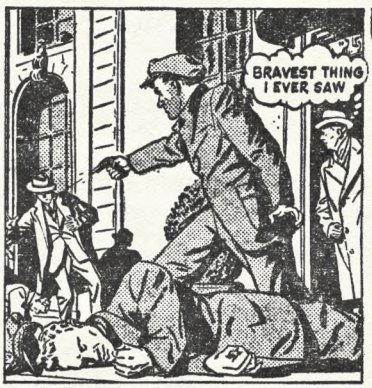

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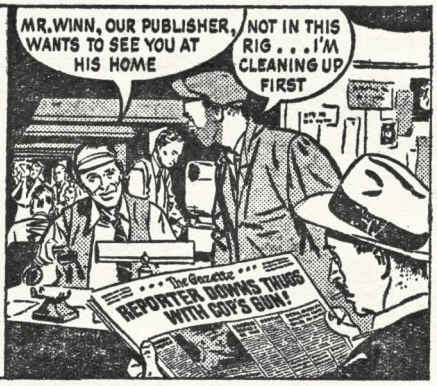

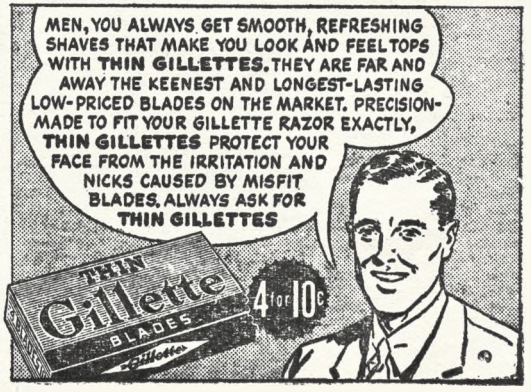

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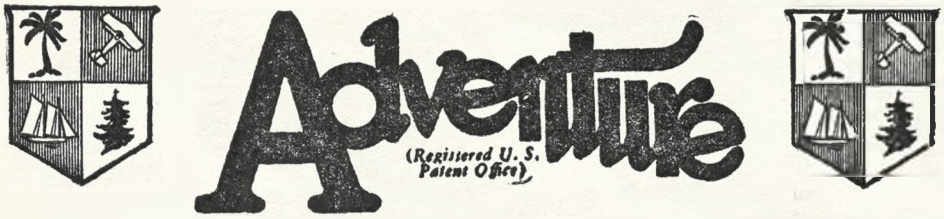

Vol. 119, No. 3 for Best of New Stories

July, 1948

THE NOVELETTE

Log Rafts South! ..... STEVE HAIL 46

Any sailor expects to gamble his life against the perils of the sea each time he leaves port and Captain Barney Fallon was no exception. But he hated the idea of having to buck loaded dice along with the normal hazards of wind and storm and tricky tides off an unfriendly coast—or swallowing a gargle of soft-soap-*cum*-salt-water mixed by a ship-owner whose only worrying had been done behind an office desk.

SHORT STORIES

A Claymore for the Clan ..... DONALD BARR CHIDSEY 34

'Twas bitter weather and the wind had daggers in it. A bra night for the Macdonalds of Sleat to make a silent crossing of the Sound for a bloody raid on Craigellachie. Young Callum Mor shivered as he hunkered in the shadow of the parapet and imagined their wild cry: *Bàs! Bàs! To Uisdein!* Then, suddenly, the skirling of the *Pibroch of Dhromhnuill Dhu*—fighting music of Donald the Black of Sleat—rang clear above the wind-moan.

Island Fever ..... LESLIE GORDON BARNARD 43

The Trader had scoffed at the idea of a lending-library on an uninhabited Pacific atoll. Books, hell! He'd given the three men he'd marooned there something to work for, to dig for, to live for—until the ship returned. Now the islet looked like a mad agriculturist had been let loose on it—and only one of the trio stared out to sea, gripping his rifle instead of a shovel in grim anticipation.

The Witched Well ..... EVERETT M. WEBBER 84

Andy Jackson was about to get his fool self killed in a duel unless Reverent Daniel Davis intervened and kept his last promise to the Lord. Dan'l didn't mind staying away from cockfights, or the corn-liquor jug on Saturday nights—but taking a wife to have underfoot for the rest of his life seemed like an awful big service to do, even for a friend like Old Hickory.

Published monthly by Popular Publications, Inc., at 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, 16, Illinois. Editorial and Executive Offices, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. Henry Steeger, President and Secretary, Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice-President and Treasurer. Entered as second-class matter October 2, 1935, at the Post Office, at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Title registered in U. S. and Canadian Patent Offices. Single copy 25 cents. Annual subscription for U. S. A., its possessions and Canada, $2.50; other countries, 75c additional. Send subscriptions to 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, N. Y. For advertising rates, address Sam J. Perry, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. When submitting manuscripts, enclose stamped, self-addressed envelope for their return, if found unavailable. The publishers will exercise care in the handling of unsolicited manuscripts, but assume no responsibility for their return. Any resemblance between any character appearing in fictional matter, and any person, living or dead, is entirely coincidental and unintentional. Printed in the U. S. A.

BE OUT ON JULY 9TH ◆ ◆ ◆

Escort to Namtok ..... HAL G. EVARTS 92

In the hostile barrenlands of Eastern Tibet two rifles are hardly sufficient firepower to ward off trouble. For when a roving band of Lolos decides to raid a missionary caravan, the textbook variety of jungle or trench combat means nothing. Theirs is a brand of piracy-on-horseback neither a pair of prayerwheels nor M1s can stop. It was lucky Lieutenant Gil Lawson had a core of toughness all his own to supplement those feeble mechanized weapons.

SERIALS

The Devil's Left Tusk (1st of 4 parts) ..... ROBINSON MacLEAN 10

All the world knew Matt Murphy's broadcast—*From Here On Out.* But now that famous voice was stilled forever. And as I stood in the rain-swept Gullaly Cemetery in Addis Ababa to tell Matt goodbye for the last time, I knew there was a job that had to be done. A job for Malcolm Murphy—Matt's brother—me! Somewhere in that godforsaken Land of the Conquering Lion of Judah I had to find the answer to the riddle of Matt's death. And the only clue I had to go on was the casual remark of that cryptic Ethiopian, Ato Gubru David—"It's all a matter of *nafs.* Or, in plain American—*bloodshed!*"

The Saint in the Saddle (conclusion) ..... DEE LINFORD 100

Shot down in cold blood by the enigmatic Elder Boggs, Lieutenant Tyler Teacum comes out of his coma to find himself a helpless prisoner of a grim band of Mormon Saints headed for the Land of the Locked Door. And realizing to the full the failure of his mission as agent for Colonel Johnston, commander of the Utah Expedition, he plots to turn the tables on the renegade who wears the uniform of a U. S. Army major even while he leads an insurrection against the country he has sworn to defend.

FACT STORIES

Camel Patrol ..... ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN 78

When Mr. Thomas Austin arrived in Australia on the clipper ship *Lightning* in 1859 with a batch of 24 wild rabbits, the settlers of the continent Down Under welcomed him—and his bunnies—as harbingers of a new and profitable industry. But in six short years—according to the immutable laws of rabbits—thousands of these "underground mutton" were bankrupting the colony. Today their progeny has multiplied by millions and only The Fence and the camel-drovers who patrol it constantly for more than a thousand miles from sea to sea prevent the entire continent from becoming one vast rabbit warren.

Death of a Matador ..... BARNABY CONRAD 130

They say in Spain that the only people who live well are royalty and bullfighters. Manuel Rodriguez y Sanchez—the incomparable "Manolete"—lived like a king, for he was the greatest matador of them all, the toast of *aficionados* all the world over. Then, one day last August at Linares, he took one chance too many against a little Miura bull. . . .

DEPARTMENTS

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Lost Trails ..... Where old paths cross 143
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Cover painted for Adventure *by Rafael De Soto*
Kenneth S. White, Editor

THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

ROBINSON MacLEAN, whose "The Devil's Left Tusk" gets under way on page 10 this month, sends along the following footnote to accompany the first chapters of his novel. He says—

I've been interested in Ethiopia since I stepped off the train in Addis Ababa in August, 1935, but up to date I have only met three people who could claim to be real experts on the country: Haile Sclassie; his razor-keen little personal representative, Lorenzo Taezaz; and Sirak Herouy of the Ethiopian Foreign Office. If any of these three should question the authenticity of my background facts, let's apologize quickly. Otherwise let's stand our ground. There is, for example, a big-selling and widely-autographing author kicking around who managed to commit 268 separate misstatements of fact in the course of a single chapter about the country. I'd call that par for the course.

The trouble with writing about Ethiopia is that it's 268 countries rolled up into one. Up in the hills you can get sunstroke and pneumonia the same day. Down in the deserts you look for a village shown in big type on the map and they'll tell you it's been moved thirty miles away, twenty years ago, and they changed the name anyway.

When you buy a mule you have to find out what language it was raised on. If it was brought up on Galla, you tell it "lucky-lucky-lucky" when you kick it in the ribs. If it is a genuine Amhara you tell it "match."

I know that Lawrence of Arabia did a brilliant short piece to point out that there were a dozen different ways of trying to set Arabic sounds into English—but Ethiopian makes his problem almost puny.

To begin with, you have to find out whether you're speaking Amharic, Geez, Galla, Tigrinya, Falasha, Adal, Danikili, Somali, Gourage or Shankalla. Then you have to allow for the provincial accents. And after you have that all ironed out, and smoothed over the grammar of the particular tongue, you'll find you can spell the words almost any way you please in either one of the Ethiopic alphabets—or in English.

Take the word "tinish," meaning "little," It only requires three letters to write, in Amharic, but there are 64 separate ways of writing those three letters, and all of them are correct! In English you're on your own. There are 270-odd letters in their alphabet, and 35 of them are explosives—not just little guttural clicks like the Scotch or German, but real, violent, tonsil-rattling explosions. Then there's the question of grammar. The verbs weave around like a snake on a pitchfork, depending on how many people you're talking to, how important they are, their sex, and the time since the last rain.

For instance, the question, "Did he come with you?" if you're talking to one woman you don't think amounts to much, can be "Abra mattatch?" But if you're asking two men, who happen to be bigshots, you'd be safer with "Abrowatchuw mattu?" On the other hand, if you want to ask two respectable women if they came with two others, also respectable, you say "Abrachchewyuhat mattachchew?"

Then you have to remember that all the "b's" and all the "t's" in the whole thing explode like firecrackers—and, if you like, you can trade in the exploding "b's" for the same number of "v's" throughout.

As a result the Imperial Ethiopian Telegraph operators haven't made any attempt to invent a Morse of their own. They just send it all by numbers, and keep their fingers crossed.

In spite of all this profusion of syllables, the Ethiopian languages are the poorest in swear-words of any I have ever encountered. There are only two, and only a rich man can afford both of them. You can get away with "Min abbati? ("Who is your father?"), but if you happen to shorten it up to "Dikala!" ("Bastard!"), the law provides that the other party to the argument can collect three silver thalers, or $1.20 U. S., in judgment fees, and a penalty ranging from ten to fifty thalers more. As a result there isn't much swearing in Ethiopia. It's cheaper to save

(Continued on page 8)

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(Continued from page 6)

up until you're really annoyed, and kill the other guy, because the chances are you can settle it for 300 to 1,000 thalers "guma," or blood-money, to the relatives.

But as I said in the first place the whole result inclines to some confusion. The Ethiopian word for cow is "lamb" and the word for lamb is "bag" and the word for bag is "karatit." That's in the Amharic.

Next month, if you can spare a few inches in *Camp-Fire*, I'd like to tell you how I once owned the mineral rights to a third of all Ethiopia—which is where this yarn started.

Mr. MacLean, who covered Mussolini's conquest of Ethiopia as a war correspondent back in the thirties, gives a factual account of his experiences in the country and of his friendship with Haile Selassie in his book published some ten years ago, "John Hoy of Ethiopia." If you can locate a copy on the shelves of your public library it'll make fine supplementary reading as his novel moves along.

And we certainly intend to spare those "few inches" in this department next month for the additional material the author promises!

STEVE HAIL, whose "Log Rafts South!" appears on page 46 this issue, confesses—

I have never been hitched to a log raft, though in the course of a varied seagoing career I have done a fair share of coastwise towing. Also I have been shipmates with several hardy souls who have engaged in the trade. I by-passed the rafting end of it myself for two reasons. First, the last of the big rafts, to my knowledge, started south in 1941. It caught fire and was badly damaged. This, along with the imminence of war, ended the commerce. During the period prior to this, my own coastwise sailing was confined to freighters, a much more comfortable mode of seagoing.

Second reason, if a man *has* to go offshore I can think of no more disagreeable way of doing it than towing. That goes for rafts or any other impedimenta strung astern. True, the rafting was confined to the summer months when you were supposed to have the prevailing nor'westers behind you, but unfortunately weather is not as predictable as some things I could mention. As I tried to bring out in the yarn, southerly gales along the west coast, though not common at that season, can and do occur. They are nasty. There is a psychological angle, too, that makes the whole thing pretty depressing. That is the sense of futility you get from seeing a thousand horsepower engine hooked up and giving its all, only to find the vessel itself getting nowhere fast. In bad weather, sometimes the best you can do is keep everything pointed south while the whole lash-up actually makes sternway. After a few days or even weeks of this, you develop a chronic case of what-the-hell's-the-use-of-living-itis.

As to the history of the industry (I'm speaking now of the long-haul, offshore side of it) it is recorded that some intrepid soul back in 1888 made up a raft in Maine and started off for points unknown. It was not a rousing success. But more of that later.

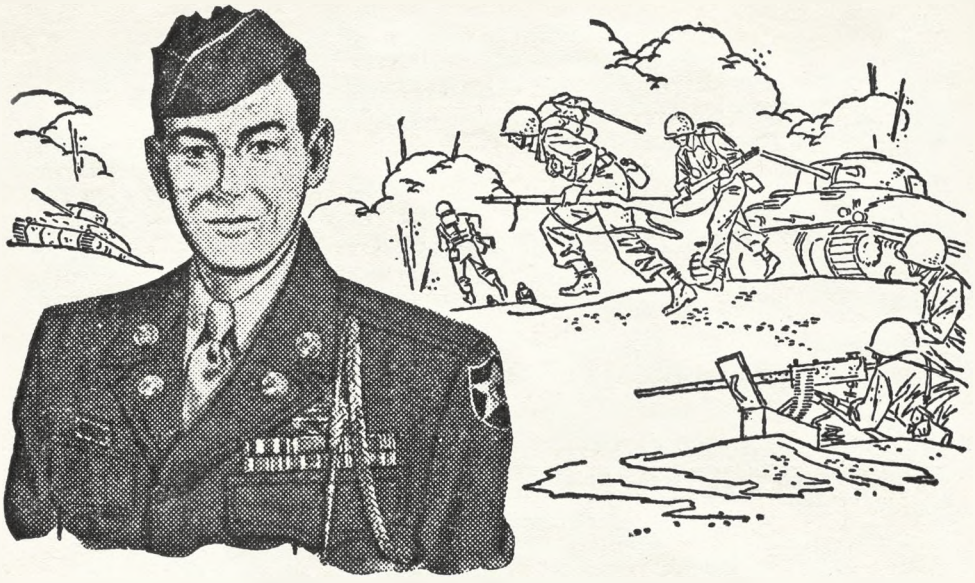
The commerce came into its own on the west coast in 1892 when a raft started from Fort Bragg, California to San Francisco. After considerable difficulty, not to be detailed here, they made port with what was left of it. It wasn't much.

The first of the huge rafts (as long as a trans-Pacific liner and a damn sight less maneuverable) out of the Columbia for Benson's mill in San Diego, headed south in the summer of 1906. It, too, had its troubles, none of them little ones, but the haul was finally completed more or less successfully. Gradually through the years, with the substitution of wire towing cables for manila, heavier chains and construction knowledge learned the hard way, the commerce became feasible and profitable.

During the following years there were occasional break-ups, which brought forth the understandable ire of steamship operators and the Coast Guard. An oceanful of floating hazards to navigation, partly submerged as they became waterlogged, was a thing to be reckoned with. However, the projects continued till along in 1940. Then a rash of fires and break-ups began plaguing the operators. Anybody's guess is good as to the cause. It's still something of a mystery. But, too, it is obvious, as I brought out in the yarn, that the whole business was looked upon with disfavor by the steamship men and the maritime unions. There is even the possibility, and this is not too farfetched—remember, the time was 1940-'41—of sabotage. The reason set forth in the story is, of course, purely fiction. At any rate, that ended the trade. But wait a minute! Just a couple of months ago in the San Francisco papers I ran across a small paragraph telling of a log raft starting south from British Columbia. The news value of the item became apparent in the last line. The raft had broken up off the Oregon coast!

Oh, yes, about that first pioneer, name not recorded, back on the east coast. With his raft completed, he stepped masts into it and rigged it as a four-masted bark. History is vague as to his destination, but rumor has it that he was bound for Europe across the North Atlantic. Neither he nor the raft were heard of again. There, sirs, was an adventurer! It is ventures like that that remind one of Bolitho's sage remark regarding adventure. It was, as I recall, something

(Continued on page 141)



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It takes real men to measure up to the standards of a great fighting outfit like this. They've got to be hard, alert, skilled in the use of many weapons. For the ground combat soldier is the most important man in America's defense. He is the keen cutting edge of the military machine.

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THE DEVIL'S LEFT TUSK

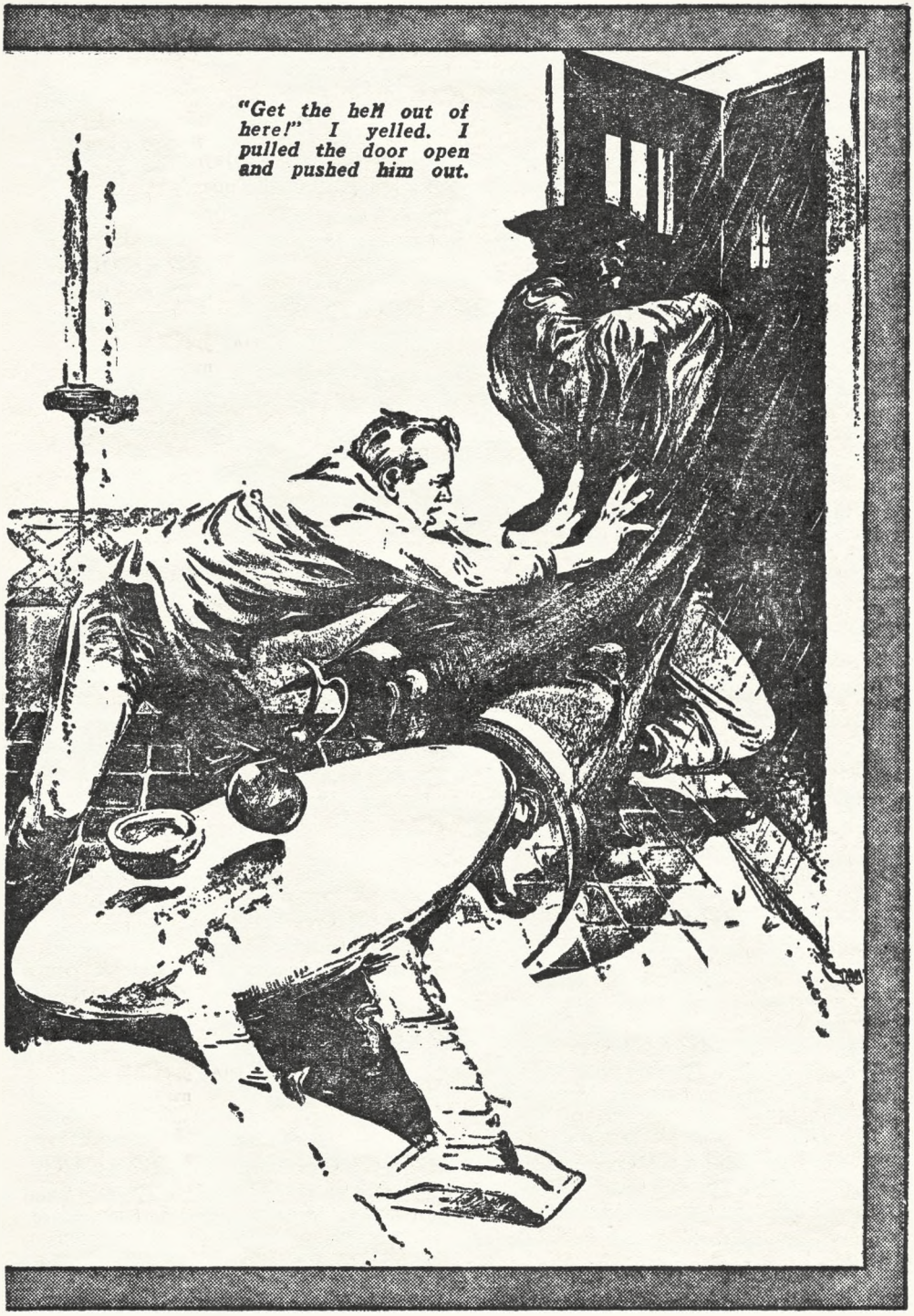
By ROBINSON MacLEAN

ILLUSTRATED BY ROGER L. THOMAS

I TALKED TO Matty for a little while, but he didn't hear.

The rain was walking across the red clay, cutting ridges into it, and smashing them down again, and washing the bits away.

Somebody'd planted a little bush. The rain would splatter it red, then wash it clean again. There was a little bunch of flowers, sort of yellow daisies, tied together with grass, like a cross. The rain cut the clay out from under it, and the


"Get the hell out of here!" I yelled. I pulled the door open and pushed him out.

flowers drifted off along a rivulet. I was wet through, and shivering, but Matty wasn't cold.

Matty had never been cold all his life, I guess. And now he was dead.

For five years we'd been writing each other. We were going to get together again, when I could get a vacation and he had a couple of transcribed broadcasts to keep the network happy. We weren't going to do anything—hunting, or anything like that. Just a few drinks, and talk. Five days ago it was all set. He sent me the plane ticket, and told me to meet him in Djibouti. He left word in Djibouti for me to come on up to Addis Ababa on the train, and we'd stage our reunion there. That took two days. Two days too long. The morning the little train rattled out of the Djibouti station, toward the hills, Matt was dead. Dead and buried.

I had to keep telling myself that. It was going to be hard to remember, when Wednesday night came around, and you turned on the radio to hear Matty.

There'd be the little, friendly, whistling theme music, and the colorless, correct voice of the announcer, and then Matty. From some forgotten corner of the world, reaching out to you, and taking you with him. That was his magic. That's why everybody in America knew Matthew Murphy, and his broadcast, "From Here On Out." But I'd known it longer than anybody.

Even after Mom died, and we were living with Aunt Josie, Matty could make life exciting. He'd wait until we were in bed, and the light was out, then he'd whisper, with that magic he had. It was just the people he met and the things he saw, but he had a special way of seeing, like he had of talking. And I'd feel warm again.

And it wasn't just the rain that made my cheeks wet as I stood beside that wet, impersonal square of red clay, in the Gullaly Cemetery in Addis Ababa, and said goodbye to Matty. It wasn't Matty I was sorry for. He'd be making friends —From Here On Out, like the name of his broadcast—and the person I was sorry for was Malcolm Murphy. His brother. Me.

I dug in my watch pocket for the good-luck penny Matty gave me once. I made a hole in the clay, and poked it in, and let the rain fill it up. Then I said "Goodbye, kid," and went back to the taxi.

THE driver had sense enough not to say anything. He just took me back to the hotel. I paid him and went through the lobby and back to the sort of round annex where my room was. I didn't want a drink, but I knew I wasn't going to be sober long. I took off my slicker under the overhang of the thatch and pushed the door open. I was wondering if I had time to pack and get on the morning train, after I'd cleared up the tag ends of business that were left.

It wasn't until I'd hung up the slicker and turned to get the bottle out of my suitcase that I saw I wasn't alone. There was a guy sitting on the bed, smoking a cigarette in a long amber holder, watching me.

He wasn't what you'd pick for roommate.

He had black hair, that hung down in front of a pair of big ears, with sharp corners, and tired black eyes hung in pouches you could have used for saddlebags. He had a long, thin nose, and from the corners of his mouth you knew he'd seen more than was good for anybody, and didn't expect the scenery to improve.

"I don't know what language you want it in," I told him. "But get out."

The rain was loud on the thatch. He didn't say anything.

"Scram," I said, jerking my thumb at the door. "*Allez.* Beat it."

He took a slow puff on his cigarette holder, and blew the smoke thoughtfully out one nostril.

"You're younger than I thought," he said.

"Never mind sticking around until I get older."

"I'm Phileas Lubin."

"If it doesn't suit you, write a letter to the management. Now get out of here before I lose my temper."

He laughed, then. It wasn't a pretty laugh. And he opened my suitcase, beside him on the bed, and got out my bottle. Then he got up and sluiced two tumblers half-full of my liquor. You could tell he'd been pouring by ear for

a long time. There wouldn't have been a drop's difference between the two drinks if you'd counted them.

"I'll join you in a drink," he said. "Now get out of those wet clothes and stop pouting at me. When you get calmed down we can talk."

What the hell. You can only get so mad, then it gets funny. I changed into dry pants and a clean shirt. Then I raised my drink, and we killed them.

I poured the next. He lit two cigarettes and handed me one.

"If it's money," I told him, "the answer is no."

He shook his head, and screwed his lighted cigarette into the holder.

"It's not money," he told me. "I'm damned if I know quite what it is. I suppose sentiment's as good a name for it as anything. Except a picture of me getting sentimental is a little hard to take."

I didn't say anything. Conversation's not much use unless you know what you're talking about.

"Your brother talked to me about twenty minutes one night, the night after he got into Addis, it was. Your brother was a nice guy."

He looked up at me, and the black eyes were hard and challenging. Then he laughed. It was the same laugh as before, hard and bitter as a prostitute's diary.

"Matt was always a nice guy," I told him. "He liked everybody and everybody liked him. I guess the two go together."

"You don't know about me, do you?" Lubin asked.

I shook my head.

"Your brother did. I heard Douras, the hotel manager, telling him. But he talked to me anyway."

I said if all he wanted to do was sit around making himself out a stinker I was going to finish my packing.

"I don't think you're going to go—not for a while," Lubin said. "I got something to tell you. But I've got to tell it my own way."

It was a toss-up whether to bounce him, this Lubin, and get ready for the train, or to get drunk and listen. I told him to help himself to another drink and I'd get another bottle. I put my slicker on again and crossed the courtyard back to the main part of the hotel. The rain was still marching across the ground in thick slices, regular as a West Point inspection parade.

Douras, the manager, was behind the bar. "Have you got any bourbon?" I asked him.

He reached under the counter, pulled out a fifth of good American whiskey and set it on the bar. Then he dug the tabs out of the cigar-box by the cash register and marked me down for the price. What he marked down was $25.

"That's a hell of a price for whiskey," I told him.

"That's Maria Theresa dollars twenty-five," he said. "By today's exchange, American money, it's ten-eleven dollars. You crazy to drink bourbon, here. Costs twice more as good whiskey, good Scotch."

"All Americans are crazy," I told him. "Ask anybody. Listen, George, do you know anybody named Lubin—Phileas Lubin?"

"My name is Cyril. And never mind that Lubin. You won't meet him. I throw him out of the hotel ever' time he come back. What the hell you care about a bum like that Lubin? Forget it."

I told him I'd try, and went back to my room in the annex. Addis Ababa looked like a nice, friendly kind of place. The only thing wetter than the rain was the society.

"I just ran into Cyril Douras, the manager," I told Lubin. "He says you're a bum."

"Occasionally, he tells the truth," Lubin told me. "But remember that in Addis Ababa, everybody's a bum. Something's wrong with all of us, or we wouldn't be here. We're a pretty picture, the European colony of Addis Ababa. The Society of Cripples. The Association of People Who Couldn't Quite Make the Grade."

"You talk pretty good American, Phileas."

"I talk excellent American. I talk excellently thirteen languages, with their associated dialects. It's the only thing in my life I have ever done well."

I bit the seal off the bottle and filled the tumblers again. Full, this time.

"You got the ball," I told him. "I'll wait while you try for yards."

He sipped his drink, and set it on the bamboo table at the end of the bed.

"How old are you?" he asked me.

"Twenty-seven. Does it matter?"

"I don't know. It's only that I find myself remarkably embarrassed in embarking upon a course of simple virtue."

I looked at the guy again, close. He wasn't kidding.

"You could make it simpler for me," he said, finally, "by telling me what you know about your brother's death."

I TOLD him that was easy. The American Consulate had the records. Matt got into Addis Ababa from Djibouti on July 24. He spent five days in the city and made a broadcast. Next morning he got permission to travel into the northeast provinces, and six days later he came back. He got a broadcast approved by Haile Selassie, and a little after midnight he got into a taxi to go out to the radio station, fifteen miles out of town. He had to broadcast early in the morning to connect with his schedule for the night before. Four o'clock in the morning in Addis Ababa is the same as eight o'clock, the night before, in New York. But when the taxi driver opened the door in front of the radio station, Matt was dead.

"They said it was his heart," I told Lubin. "They said the altitude here was too much for him. What is it? Seven, eight thousand feet?"

Lubin held up the tumbler, almost full. When he set it down it was empty.

"Eight thousand and twenty," he told me. "It wasn't his heart."

"You better have another drink and go home," I told him. "Matt wasn't the kind of guy somebody'd kill without any reason in a place like this."

"Did I say he was killed?"

"You implied it."

"Then I'll say it. Your brother, Matthew Murphy, was killed. I can't prove it in a court of law, and I can't say who did it. But he was a nice guy. He was one of the few nice guys I've met in ten or twelve years that I've been in Africa. If you don't want to do anything about it, fine. I'll just shut my big mouth and go home. If you do—I'll tell you what I know. But no more arguments."

I filled his glass again.

"You know what you're talking about?" I asked him.

"You mean have I drunk more than I can hold? The answer is no. Unfortunately it's been a considerable time since I was able to plead lack of responsibility because of alcohol. There comes a time when you can pour it in until it's running out your ears, and you still can't avoid the unpleasant knowledge that you are what you made yourself."

I didn't say anything, and he went on.

"There was a time, in Marseille twenty years ago, when I had hopes for Phileas Lubin. He was a brilliant young medical student and a remarkable linguist. His wife was young, beautiful, blonde and wealthy."

"Do we have to run through the whole family album?" I asked him. I took another drink myself.

He said he'd cut it short. The wife had an unavoidable penchant for other men. He killed one of them. They chopped off his medical licenses but left him free. Then he started sliding from drink to drunk, and from drunk to morphine.

"Where's your wife now?" I asked.

He laughed.

"The last address was 719, Rue des Chapeliers, Marseille," he said. "*Troisième étage.*"

"Does that mean anything?"

"It means your brother's a little better off. They're both dead, but he doesn't have to keep dragging a body around."

He was still sitting straight up on my bed, and the liquor had warmed up his eyes until they were hot black holes in the dead-looking skin. I don't know whether I believed him or not. I was suddenly tired of him, sick-tired, and I told him to get out. He didn't make any fuss. He was wearing a black raincape that hung from his stooped shoulders down to the floor, with a peaked hood hanging from the back of the collar. When he stood up, and the cape covered all but the tired, cynical face, he looked like the Devil. Not the little devils who run errands, but old Satan himself.

He held out a hand. I shook it.

"You are, of course, perfectly correct," he said.

"I don't know, Lubin. All I know is your story doesn't seem to make much

sense, and even if it did it wouldn't bring Matt back, and I'm tired—tired as hell. I wish you'd just go home and forget it."

His eyes hung onto me like they had hooks. The lips twisted over a grin.

"I'll leave," he said. "But when you get older you'll understand that I can't take full advantage of your invitation. There comes a time when a man would trade his soul to have a home—and the ability to forget. But when that time comes there is no one willing to take his soul in trade."

He crossed over to the door, and pulled it open. The rain that'd been a steady drumming on the thatch, whined in through the open door so I could hardly hear him.

"Have you a good memory?" he asked me. I nodded.

"When you want me, tell the boy to take you to *Hakim Seytan-beyt, Akaki Mangod.*"

I repeated the address and he nodded.

"The house of Doctor-the-Devil, on the road to the radio station," he translated. "I'll be there when you come. It'll be sometime tomorrow afternoon. You'll spend the rest of tonight, and tomorrow morning, proving to yourself that I'm just a talkative busybody, of bad reputation. And tomorrow afternoon you'll begin to ask questions about your brother's death that nobody else can answer. Just walk in, when you come."

He went out, with the skirts of the black cape swinging around him, and the door closed. I finished the bottle off, and started to pack things for shipping.

Matt's typewriter was up on top of the old-fashioned wooden wardrobe, and I lifted it down and opened it to make sure it was all set to travel. There was a piece of paper rolled in under the keys. Matt had been writing something. It looked like a note to himself, to remind him about some things he wanted to do. There were three sentences:

1. Check up on Granerus, Saldanha.
2. What does S.M.H.S. know about *Gera-Kond-Zaytan?*
3. Check the dates again.

I started to tear it up, and then I knew that Lubin had been right. All I wanted was to leave Matt where luck ran out on him, and go back to New Jersey and the job and try to forget it.

But I couldn't.

CHAPTER II

A MATTER OF BLOODSHED

I DIDN'T know where to start, or how to start, or where it might end. All I knew was there was something funny about the way Matt died, and if it took the rest of my life I had to find out. I sat down on the bed and listened to the rain rolling across the thatch, like empty barrels in a warehouse. It was a lousy country. A dog started growling out in the compound, and then began to bark in a whining soprano. Even the dogs didn't sound the same.

I opened the door to see if there were still lights on in the lobby. Across the wet clay of the compound I could make out two watery squares, where the lobby windows showed through the sheets of rain. There was a sheep on the porch, huddled up against the whitewashed wall. It was soaking wet and miserable.

I went back to get my slicker to go up to the lobby for another drink before I turned in. The sheep edged up and cringed against the doorsill, spattering water across the sill. It stank. The whole thing stank.

I was pulling on my slicker when somebody spoke. I couldn't see who it was.

"You are M'sieu Murphy?" the voice asked.

I asked who the hell wanted to know.

At first I thought it was Lubin come back. It was somebody in another one of those long black raincapes with the pointed hoods. But this wasn't a white man.

"May I enter for a moment?" he asked.

"For a minute," I told him. "But I've got work to do and I don't want to buy anything."

He slid into the room and closed the door behind him. The sheep blatted once, and the dogs started to screech again.

He must have been six feet two or three. He was so black he looked purple,

the way cheap ink dries after it's been spilled. But his features weren't Negroid. He had a thin nose and thin lips. He didn't take off his cape.

"I am Ato Gubru David," he said. He held out his hand and I shook it.

"You have buried your brother. You will leave our country, now?"

"Don't push me. My passport says I can stay as long as I please."

"You misunderstand. I don't wish you to depart. I have come to ask you to stay."

I asked him if he was working for the local Chamber of Commerce, or was this just an old Ethiopian custom.

"It's a matter of *nafs*," he said. "A matter of bloodshed."

"You mean my brother?" I asked him.

"In part, your brother," he said. "It is also the matter of my father."

"Look," I told him, "this is getting all mixed up."

He nodded. "I came to seek your help in untangling it."

"Well, sit down. I don't know how your father fits in, but if there's any way I can find out what happened to my brother I want to start. Sit down and tell me what you know."

He watched me for a minute, then shook his head. He crossed back to the door. It was the first time I noticed he had bare feet, making no noise on the wet boards. He jerked the door open. A wizened old dwarf, with one cock eye, wrapped in a wet black woolen poncho, was sitting on the step with a rifle between his knees.

"Min tadargalla?" the tall one snapped.

"Zabanya, geta," the dwarf whined. *"Yikir yibalullin."*

"He says he is the *zabanya*—the watchman," my tall visitor said, over his shoulder.

"He could be, I don't know," I said.

"Hit!" the tall one said. The dwarf slunk off into the rain.

"What do I call you?" I asked the guy.

"David," he said. He started to close the door. Then he swung it open again. Down at the bottom of the panel, in scratchy white chalk, were some funny-looking marks. The David guy didn't seem to like them.

"How long have these words been here?" he asked me.

I wouldn't know, I told him. I wouldn't even know they were words. It looked like some kind of idiot Chinese.

"What is it—'Please do not disturb the occupant'?" I said. "That's all I ever saw on hotel doors."

David shook his head.

"It wasn't written for you," he told me. "It was written for me. It says: 'The second resting-place.' "

"I can think of an easy answer," I told him. "Probably the regular night watchman is off duty, and he was marking up a spot for the relief man to sit out between his rounds. This would be a pretty good spot for it. Old Douras, the manager, never gets down this way, and he could steal a snooze without getting reported."

David looked at me, as if to see whether I was joking, then he laughed. His teeth were very white.

"That's an ingenious thought," he said. "There are only four things wrong with it."

"Yeah?"

"In the first place, anybody who could write would get a better job than *zabanya*," he said. "In the second place, if it was written for that man to read it would have been written in Galla, or Amhara. But this is Geez. None of these Gourages could read it. It's the court language, the church language, and the language of Tigre province."

"That's two objections," I said. "You had four on the list."

"When I translated it for you I said it meant the second resting-place," he said. "But in our country the word for 'resting-place'—*'masarrafia'*—has only a single meaning, and a very special one. It is used only to refer to the seven times that a corpse is rested in the funeral procession to the grave."

"Why did you say it was written for you? Nobody knew you were coming here tonight, did they?"

"I didn't think so. But I've seen this writing before. The last time was day before yesterday when I went to the radio station at Akaki to talk to your brother. I was waiting at the station when his car came. But I was too late. He was dead when he arrived. And on the door of the car was marked: 'This is the first resting place.' "

"You think somebody is writing these words down for a warning—trying to make out you are on your way to the grave?"

David nodded.

"It's not a matter of thinking," he said. "It's a matter of knowing. I am from Tigre, as my father before me. There are not so many of us that these words were written in Tigre-language by accident."

I thought for a few seconds, but nothing connected with anything. "What do you want to do about it?" I asked.

HE SHUT the door, and the roar of the rain was a little fainter. He beckoned me to the middle of the room.

"Please listen most carefully. There are many anxious to overhear us. It is impossible to talk here, and at the same time I do not wish the others to know that we have met, after now."

I nodded. The guy looked strained, but honest.

"It will be better for us to part in anger, now. After I have finished what I wish to tell you, I shall speak loudly and angrily. Do you then curse me, in English, and open the door, pushing me out. You may strike me if you wish."

I nodded again. This was getting to be a one-track, one-way conversation.

"After I am gone, go to the lobby. Order a drink, and tell Douras that you have decided to take the morning train. Ask him to send a boy to pack your bags and have them ready at the station. You will go downtown, then, to Ras Makonnen Street to find divertissement for the remainder of the night. There is a bar, a cabaret, named the Goritza for the little black-and-white monkey of the hills. Stay there until it closes. By then I shall have arranged where we can meet and where we can work."

"You're going to meet me when I come out of this bar? Is that the idea?"

He shook his head.

"I shall send a mule," he said. "You will find no trouble in recognizing my boy. He will have his burnoose turned inside out, so that the Arab leather shows."

I told him I didn't get it.

"All boys wear burnooses—like ponchos of black felt," he said. "The inside edges are lined with a band of red leather—*bahr arab,* we call it. My boy will wear his burnoose inside out, so the band of leather shows along the sides."

I told him for a guy staging an inconspicuous rendezvous, he was sure making his code obvious.

"It will not be a matter of attention," he said. "The burnoose is always worn, with the leather showing, after a death. The boy's name is Zelucca. His face is deeply marked with pocks, and he has six toes on each foot."

"I don't see anything could go wrong with that identification," I said. "But you're not going to go and make the guy grow extra toes just so I can find him."

He didn't think I was funny.

"Now," he whispered, "we must disagree." He raised his voice, suddenly, and the guy could yell.

"I told you before I knew nothing about your brother. I refuse to talk to a drunken man."

"Then get the hell out of here," I yelled back.

I pulled the door open and pushed him out. The old dwarf with the rifle just had time to get his ear out of the keyhole and duck along the outside of the building.

"I shall report this to the *Witch-Kidine,* and your consul will hear of it," David snarled.

"Report and be damned," I said. "Now leave me alone if you can't do what I asked you."

He spat on the ground and shook his hands at me, with the forefingers hooked together. I slammed the door. I waited a few minutes, then I shut my suitcase and stuck it alongside the bags and the typewriter that Matt had left. The whole damn thing seemed to be nonsense—but there didn't seem to be anything else to do. I cut off the lights and slammed the door behind me, running across the wet clay under the hammer of the rain. The bar was almost empty.

There was just a couple of Armenians running a set of square pool balls over the tired felt of the off-level table, in the corner, and Cyril Douras, the manager, sucking Turk coffee and reading a Greek paper behind the bar. Then all of a sudden the room was crowded.

"I'm Mari Tornquist," the blonde girl said. "I was hoping I'd meet you."

She came in through the compound door behind me, and she was taking off a raincoat and cape of transparent oiled silk. She had hair the color of thick cream—some place in between yellow and white, but her eyes weren't washed out like they are on most of those double-pale blondes. They were dark, a sort of blue-gray, and big without being pop-eyed. She was wearing a silk dress, and its closely clinging fit did nothing to hide the fact that she had a pair of long-waisted legs with the right lines and more on her chest than ribs.

And all the time she was watching me.

I said, "Excuse me," and crossed over to the bar. Douras got up, poured me a bourbon and opened one of those exploding bottles of Addis Ababa soda water. Then he set another glass beside it, put a shot of bourbon in that, and edged back to the corner of the bar.

"Do you mind if I drink with you?" she said, slipping on to the stool beside me. She picked up the other glass and held it out. I split the soda between us.

"I guess I was staring at you," I said. "I'm Malcolm Murphy. They call me Mickey."

"Very few girls mind being stared at," she said. "Although under ordinary circumstances we are required to frown on it. I'm Mari Tornquist. I was hoping I'd meet you."

I was going to start with one of my more rehearsed openings and start to work toward a date, and I remembered. For the book, I was supposed to be checking out. After tonight.

"I'm going out on the morning train," I said. "Why couldn't you have managed to get a rain-check out of heaven a few days ago, so we could have had a date for me to remember?"

"There's tonight," she said. "And in Ethiopia they count the hours of the nights and days separately. It's not even four o'clock of the night, by their reckoning."

"Hey, Cyril," I yelled. "I'm going to be checking out in the morning. Get one of your slaves to take my baggage down to the station. They can pack it now. And give me the bill. Miss Tornquist is going to show me the town."

Douras stuck out a lower lip and glowered at her. "M'selle Tornquist, you goin' out with this fella?" he asked.

"Why not, Mr. Douras?" she asked. They faced each other for a few seconds. Then Douras shrugged and pulled my bill out from under the counter. He kept them made up, to the minute, in case he got heart-failure and forgot something on an account. Then he pried the wall safe open and dumped my bag of silver thalers on the counter.

He looked down at the paper slip, sealed in the tie-string.

"Seven hundred sixty?" he asked me.

I nodded. He broke the string and counted me out forty. "The reckoning is seven hundred six," he said. "I take fourteen to give the boys for taking to the station."

I told him O.K., and to bring us two more bourbons. Mari was watching.

"Where shall we go, honey?" I asked her.

She grinned. It was a kind of little-girl grin, in spite of the way she'd jet-assisted the introduction.

"I want to dress," she said. I nodded. Once in a dozen years you bump into somebody you don't have to keep talking at. We just looked at each other and smiled, and it was swell.

SHE LEFT her drink on the bar and threw her raincoat over her shoulders. Everybody in the room was watching her when the door to the compound closed behind her. There wasn't anything else worth looking at.

I started to pick the forty thalers up off the bar, and I realized you couldn't carry forty and still walk. They were bigger than silver dollars, and thicker. They'd run about five to the pound.

I asked Douras if he had any pints.

"Not bourbon," he said. "Ron only."

I asked him if he meant rum, and he said that's what he said.

I pushed the stack of silver coins across the bar. He got two pints of rum out of the cabinet at the end of the back bar. It looked like good rum. Black as New Orleans coffee, and thick as rubber cement. I put one in each hip pocket, and watched to see what Douras would do to the thalers.

He didn't say anything. Just opened the till and cut the stack of silver money with the edge of his hand. Half of it fell over into the drawer.

I picked up the twenty left. You could carry it without falling over.

"I give you a little present, on the house," Douras said. He picked two ten-ounce tumblers, and ran them a third full of green crème de menthe. Then he filled them with soda and handed me one.

"That's a hell of a thing for a man to drink," I said.

"You say so tonight," he said. "Tomorrow you stomach be happy. You drink around them bars, tonight. You finish off with a couple sips ron, you mouth taste like a wulture nest by morning. This maybe help take off some of that taste."

"What do you drink it for?" I asked him. "You don't get drunk around the bars every night, do you?"

"I just get drunk," he said. "After the safe is locked. How the hell you think I stand this place, twenty years?"

We drank.

A native came in, carrying a rifle by the muzzle like you'd hold a golf club. The barrel was bent, I saw, so it probably didn't matter how he held it.

Douras yelled at him.

"*Taxi [illegible],*" he hollered, pointing at me with his thumb. "*Lucky lucky lucky!*"

"I get the taxi part," I said. "But who's lucky?"

"That's mean hurry up," he said. "That's Galla language."

"How can you tell which ones are Galla?"

"Doesn't matter. Everybody speaks a little everything. You talk Galla it means you're boss—you're *geta*. Amhara's too polite."

Then the door swung open again and Mari came in. She kept her raincoat on this time, but I could see a red dress through it. She was smiling as she came over. I felt like the kid on Santa Claus's knee at a party in an orphanage.

I couldn't tell what was wrong with Douras, but he sulked back into the corner. He was reading his Greek paper when the boy came puffing into the lobby.

"*Taxi na,*" he said. I fished out a thaler and held it out. He cupped both his hands and bowed down like he was going to pick it out of them with his teeth.

We went out and there was a 1941 Dodge sedan in front of the door. There were about eight boys trying to hold the door open at the same time.

Mari fished in her purse and gave me a handful of pennies.

"Throw them," she said. "On the ground."

That broke up the interference. I closed the door myself. The driver just sat there.

"Goritza," Mari said. He said "*Aow*" and started in high.

"How many languages do you need to get by in this town?" I asked her.

"I never thought of that," she said. "French, of course. You can use a little German, or English, or Italian, but you don't really need them. Quite a few of the Somalis and Hindus can understand

Arabic, but if you have a little Galla and some Amharic you can get along quite nicely."

"And what do you speak?" I said.

She looked surprised. "I'm Swedish, of course," she said. "I always heard that any Englishman, or American, could tell a Swedish accent."

"You haven't said 'ban' once," I told her.

"Tonight," she said, "there's no ban on anything. Only promise me one thing. Before you get too drunk, I want to have a talk with you. A serious talk."

"That's easy," I told her. "I had something like that in mind, myself."

The Dodge stopped. The Goritza looked like the kind of second-rate stube you'd hit on a highway between two towns, except it was shuttered up more, and the lights were dim.

"Do I keep the cab?" I asked Mari.

She shook her head. She said something to the driver and he started off the minute I slammed the door.

"Hey, you didn't pay him," I objected.

"He's my regular driver," she said. "I get a bill at the end of the month. Don't bother about it. Let's try to have fun."

CHAPTER III

NIGHTMARE IN EBONY

INSIDE, the dump was lighted with low-power bulbs, covered with dark blue celluloid, the sort of effect that high-school kids try to get away with for the big party, before the teachers complain.

You couldn't see much of the clientele. The walls were dripping with fur—black, with white crescents, like somebody'd hung up a thousand sets of false whiskers against a black background. Mari saw me looking.

"Monkey furs," she said. "This is the only country in the world that monkey is plentiful."

"But I guess there's monkey business all over," another voice said. "Good night, folks. I hope you enjoy yourselves."

"This is Anastasia Lasta," Mari said. "She runs the Goritza."

I said I was glad to meet her. She was a big woman, with red hair and full arms. She had a narrow waist, but the rest of her was Turkish Delight. The dress didn't hide anything you'd want to point out to a biology class.

"Dance or drink?" Anastasia asked.

"Drink," Mari told her, and we followed her through the shadows and around the giggles that said what was going on in them.

The place was bigger than it had looked from the outside. There was a four-piece band, near the middle, and we prowled down a corridor behind it. The booth we got had curtains on the front, and a candle stuck in a bottle on the table.

"Bohemian as hell, ain't it?" Anastasia said. "You want it in a bottle or a glass?"

I asked what difference it made.

"In the bottles it's all liquor," she said. "God knows what them cut-throats are putting in the glasses."

"You're honest," I said.

"Makes no difference to me. What them punks squeeze out of the bar bottles never goes in the till, anyway. I'll send in a bourbon, and you can go to work."

She let the curtains fall behind her. I took one of Mari's hands. After all, David had said to see the town before he sent for me. It didn't look like enjoying myself tonight would hurt any.

"Kiss?" I asked her. She nodded and reached an arm behind me. And a lean tan character, in a long white nightgown with a red sash, pushed through the curtain with a bottle and a couple of glasses. He had a siphon of soda, but no ice.

"Do you want ice, Mari?" I said. My voice was a little thick. She shook her head. "In Addis Ababa never drink water that isn't bottled—even ice is dangerous."

I said, "O.K., that's all," to the boy. He just stood there.

Mari looked up at him. She looked a little frightened.

"Wogid!" she said. *"Sammah? Wogid!"*

He bowed, and said *"Ishi, geta,"* looking at me. Then he backed out. I thought I must have just imagined anything funny about the way he acted.

I poured two drinks, and squirted in the soda. I handed one to Mari, and started to slide one arm around her to get back to the business on hand. But her

eyes were still frightened, and she was sitting very straight.

I reached out and got the drink back from her. I set the two glasses on the table again and filled them level with straight whisky. There must have been about four drinks in each glass. I pushed Mari's glass back to her.

"Let your hair down, kid," I said. "It isn't worth the trouble."

She picked up the drink. "I guess I wasn't very good at it, was I?"

"Too good. It was only the waiter and your eyes when you watched him. Look, kid, what the hell is this all about?"

She looked around, but there wasn't anything to see. Then she slid over next to me again and put her arm behind me. This time I kissed her. If you could call it a kiss. I could feel her breathing fast, and her lips were tight against her teeth. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the folds of the curtain draw aside, pause, and fall back again.

"O.K.," I told her. "That ought to do for the matinee. Let's get on with our drinking."

She nodded, without saying anything. For a minute I thought of telling her—about Lubin, and David. But the pitch was wrong. It was so wrong that even a straight thought was likely to bounce back from someplace you didn't expect.

Somehow there were a lot of people tied up in something—something connected with Matt's death. And all of them were building spite fences and throwing bricks at each other over my dumb frame.

I wouldn't have asked for more woman than Mari Tornquist if they gave me the specifications to check before they ran up the pilot model, but Matt came first. There'd be time for other things later.

I filled her glass again. I took a stiff one for myself.

"I'm going to get drunk now," I said. "I guess that talk has been postponed."

"Would you believe me if I told you I wanted you to leave Addis Ababa as quickly as you can—and that there's a good reason for asking?"

"Did you believe me when I told you I was taking the morning train?"

She shook her head. Then she put her face down in her hands on the table and started to cry. I patted her, but she didn't stop. She didn't make any noise, crying.

"Let me take you back to the hotel," I said. She shook her head, but she didn't lift her face.

I LEANED back and pulled out a pack of cigarettes I'd got from Douras at the hotel. They were in a tan paper package, about the color of butcher paper, but they had a red-white-and-blue label wrapped around them. They were called "Nationales." They tasted terrible.

I had five choices now, and any one of them could be right. Maybe I ought to get out of the damn country, and let the rain wash it down into the Nile, or wherever it'd go. Maybe I ought to save it till morning, and dig the American consul out of bed, and ask him what Uncle Sam's little orphan ought to do next. He didn't look like the kind of guy you'd want to borrow a handkerchief from, for crying, but he probably could start something stirring. Only if some Ethiopian had killed Matt, I wouldn't want to wait for the United Nations to get around to deciding he ought to suffer.

The other three were people. Mari. Lubin. David. They acted like they were dodging each other, and any one of them could be the winner. But this David guy, the Ethiopian, seemed to be the only one with a big enough head of personal steam to get anything accomplished. Lubin was washed out like a boiled beefsteak. Mari was just a stooge.

I looked at my watch and it was nearly one. I didn't know when the joint would close, but I didn't want to hang around and listen to Mari cry holes in my heart.

She was still crying.

"Can you get home all right?" I said. "I got to see a man about a mule."

She nodded, but she didn't lift her face. I patted her on the shoulder and weighed anchor. My eyes were getting used to the light but I still couldn't make much out of the customers in the booths. The band was playing a waltz, but it didn't sound like they were too sure which one. There were three couples on the floor with their necks hung over each other's shoulders. The ground rules were pretty lax.

Anastasia drifted out from behind a shadow like a hot marshmallow sliding down the stick at a bonfire.

"You're an awful trusting guy, leaving a girl like that alone in a dump like this," she said. I fished into my pocket and got out a couple of pounds of silver money.

"See she gets home all right, will you, Toots?" I asked her. She snapped her fingers, and the tan monkey that had brought us the bottle slid up to her elbow. He had a black canvas sack and she tossed the money in it. It rattled like a broken crankshaft.

I went out onto the sidewalk. I didn't see anything, at first, except the rain so solid it made four walls of water around the square of the awning. I slid into my slicker and ducked under it. There was a car bumping along the street, and as it passed the lights showed me a couple of mules about fifteen feet ahead of me. I cursed myself for forgetting my flash, and felt ahead. The mules were standing still, but nobody answered when I spoke. I ran my hands along the reins, and they went down to the ground. There was a fist holding them. But it was cold.

I ran my hand down along the body, and I touched a knife. There was a paper on it. The knife pinned it to the body. I took the paper off and felt down along the legs. In the dark I counted toes. There were six, on each foot. Then I got out.

I didn't go back to the Goritza. I just kept moving. There was a little light ahead, showing through the front of a store. It was just a night light, but I'd be able to read the paper.

But I couldn't of course. It was that crazy hentrack they call writing, in Ethiopia.

And I knew I didn't have to read it, anyway. I knew what it would say: "This is the third resting-place." And behind me, through the drum of the rain, I heard the slither of feet along the wet pavement. Bare feet. I got my back to the plaster wall of the store, and waited. The sound had stopped.

Then it started again and I got ready

to hang one on anything I saw. But it wasn't a man. It was a hyena. And off to me left someplace I heard another hyena laugh. I guess I spoke out loud.

"No wonder nobody likes this god-forsaken country," I said. Out of the wetness, near me, somebody answered. It was more a purr than a voice.

"That isn't what Mussolini said, in 1935." There was a pause. "Turn to your left, and walk as quietly as possible. At the first corner, turn left again. The only danger would be if you should make any noise."

I looked, but there was nothing around me but blackness and rain.

I went. What else could you do?

IT was a nightmare, carved out of ebony.

There were a few stray beams of light from a window, across the street and nearly a block away, but the pounding curtain of rain smashed at them and broke them up and washed the pieces away in little gleams along the black street. I turned the corner as I'd been told, and half a dozen steps brought me against a wall of rough wet wool. There were two, perhaps three, Ethiopians, in the thick felt capes they wear. I could smell rancid butter from their hair, and feel their fingers probing my pockets. The muzzle of a pistol, rested lightly on a spot just over my kidneys, took the advantages out of argument.

There was amusement in the voice that broke the silence.

"I think it's been suggested that you would be wise to leave Addis Ababa," it said.

"I'm getting tired of people planning my life. If this is going to keep up I'm going to get stubborn."

The voice laughed. "I'm afraid you'll find it an unrewarding occupation," he said. "This is one of those places where neither Mr. Hoyle nor the Marquis of Queensberry have many adherents. Don't you think you'd be wise to reconsider, and leave on the morning train?"

I told him he could go to hell.

"I have no doubt I shall," he said. "But I don't expect it to occur at once. In the meantime I have no doubt that you will scamper to your American consul and report that you have been waylaid on a dark street."

"That'll do for a start," I said. "But I think maybe I'll handle the rest of it myself. I don't know what you look like, but I remember voices."

One of the Ethiopians muttered something, and the hands were taken away.

"I had planned to return your train ticket, and even a little money," the voice continued. "But it will undoubtedly be more amusing to keep them, and let you try to locate me by my voice. I have an idea that the time will come when you'll get down on your hands and knees and pray for an opportunity of leaving the country."

I took a chance on a quick twist, to clear the pistol, and a wide swing into the dark behind me. But I didn't connect. I was pushed off-balance onto the wet cobbles, and when I got back to my feet there was just the fading sound of running feet. You couldn't even say which way they'd gone. I was cold, and wet, and stiff, and hostile. I felt through my pockets but there wasn't anything left. My letter of credit was gone, with the money-belt I'd kept it in. And my passport—and everything else.

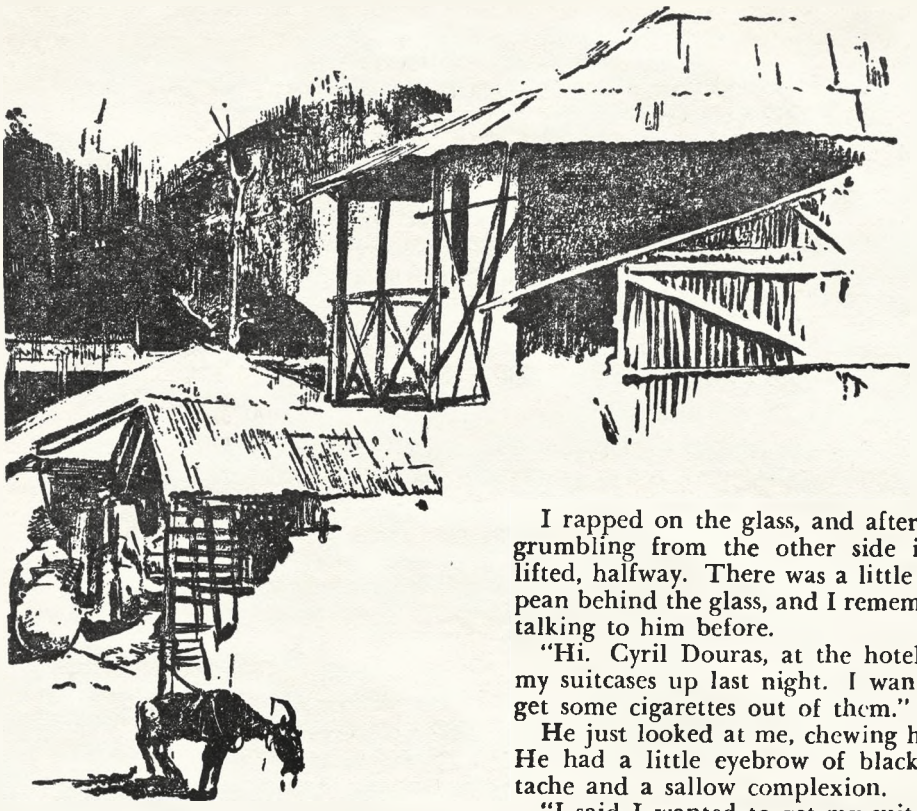
I sat down, under the shelter of a store awning; and tried to clear enough of a hole in the murder that was cramming my brain to plan something sensible.

And I was still trying when the rain softened a little, and a sick green light, the color of chewed grass, showed along the edges of the skyline. I didn't even have a cigarette. It looked like I'd have to walk out to the consulate and see what could be done about getting money, and papers, and chance to push that voice back through its teeth.

It was a walk of about five miles, as I remembered it, and I set out along the slick pavement of Ras Makonnen street with the water squishing between my toes and a gray-green dawn showing the rooftops between the gray clouds that sheeted in the sky and the gray mist that steamed up from the earth. I was looking for the place the road cuts off to the Legation, but I missed it.

There wasn't much traffic. A coffee-colored kid, maybe eight years old, trotting along the pavement with a loop of cow's intestines coiled over his shoulder

I was pushed off-balance onto the wet cobbles, and there was just the fading sound of running feet.



like a garden hose. He was nibbling one end of the coil. Five hump-backed cattle, with bad tempers, butting each other back and forth across the sides of the street with two skinny black herders in wet white wrappers hammering at them with long sticks. And a fat Hindu, in a yellow slicker, riding a donkey toward me.

"Where is the road to the American Legation?" I yelled at him. He just shrugged and kicked the donkey into a quicker walk. My heels, in low shoes, were rubbed raw when I got to the end of the pavement. It was the railway station.

It was nearly two hours too early for train-time, but there were a few passengers sleeping on the benches, and the lights were on in the ticket office although the frosted-glass shutter was still closed. I remembered I had part of a carton of cigarettes in my suitcase, and I thought I'd get them before I headed back to find the consul.

I rapped on the glass, and after some grumbling from the other side it was lifted, halfway. There was a little European behind the glass, and I remembered talking to him before.

"Hi. Cyril Douras, at the hotel, sent my suitcases up last night. I wanted to get some cigarettes out of them."

He just looked at me, chewing his lip. He had a little eyebrow of black mustache and a sallow complexion.

"I said I wanted to get my suitcases."

"I heard you. What's the name, please?"

"Murphy. Malcom Murphy. But you remember. We were talking the night I got here."

"You must be mistaken. I haven't seen you before, and I have no suitcases here for Murphy."

There wasn't any doubt he was lying. He showed more signs than a bankrupt sale.

"Let me talk to the stationmaster," I said. "And I'd like to get your name."

"I'm John Bobolini. Stationmaster."

"Look, Bobolini, fun's fun, but I got held up in an alley this morning and they stripped me cleaner than a boiled scalpel. I've got to get my suitcase and dig out some cigarettes and some papers."

He rubbed the mustache with one finger. Then he poked a package of Nationales and a pair of kitchen matches out under the wicket.

"You must be a little excited," he said. "Here's a smoke. Go and cool off and try

to remember what you did do with your suitcases."

The glass, slamming down behind the wicket, cut off my answer.

I LIT the smoke and looked around. Everyone else was asleep. The rain had started in heavy again. I began to think Bobolini might be right—I had gone a little nuts, or got a sour dream mixed up with a sweet mess.

Through the rain I tried to make out the road I should have taken to get to the Legation. A string of tall, mangy yellow camels plodded along a path that crossed the tracks, with wet Somalis hanging on their bridle-ropes and tails, running with them. They were heavy-loaded but you couldn't tell what was in the shapeless leather packs. The mist cleared a little and off to the left I saw the Stars and Stripes climbing a flagpole in a grove of eucalyptus. It was about three miles off. I buckled my slicker tight around my throat and went out into the rain. The words of that louse with the pistol began to hammer back at me, timed to the squelch of wet boots on wet clay. The road was paved but the camels had littered it with balls and streaks of mud, and it stuck to me like a glue poultice.

"Time will come . . ." my footsteps said. "Hands and knees . . . pray to leave . . . leave this country."

I got to the place the road forked, and went off onto the clay, toward the flag. It was past seven, I guessed, but not eight yet. I wondered when the consular staff got to work. And I wondered why anybody that didn't have a blood-feud would stay in this god-forsaken mud-puddle any longer than the next train.

I passed a beggar, beside the road, and I turned my eyes away, quick. He was holding out his hands for alms, but he didn't have any hands. Just the arm bones, sticking sharp out of the withered gray flesh like a chicken drumstick that has been boiled too long and the meat pulls away from the sharp, bare bone.

You read about lepers, but when you see one nothing you've ever read prepares you for it. Living must be awful sweet. Even when there's only a bitter shank of it left, people hang on.

There was a native store at a corner, with a handful of mules tethered to a stump and a couple of kids, three or four years old, playing under the shelter of their bellies. A turn in the road and I saw the Legation. The iron gates were closed, in the gray stone walls, and there was a tall native perched in a stone gate-sentry-box. When I got a little closer I saw he was wearing Army fatigue clothes and an issue belt with a Colt .45 in an American-made holster.

"Are you open for business?" I said.

"Not by a damsight, boss," he said. "This is the State Department, not the Army. We start work around ten."

It was the first time I'd heard a real Southern accent for weeks.

"You look like an Ethiopian, but you sure sound like Alabama," I told him.

He threw a flash of white teeth at me.

"You can't tell by the looks," he said. "I'm from the Virgin Islands but that don't necessarily imply what it sounds like."

I asked him how the devil he got hung up here.

"Same thing got Adam squoze out the gate of the Garden," he said. "Wimmin-trouble. I come up here off a submarine, time of the Italian fracas, and met up with my dream-boat. She's still here, and so am I."

I asked him what a submarine sailor was doing at eight thousand feet elevation.

"Legation needed a radio, back in '35," he said. "So they flagged a passing pig-boat and she put in to Djibouti and they hauled out her wireless and her radio crew. It's still working."

"Don't you ever want to go back?"

He shook his head. "She's still my dream-boat," he said. "I don't necessarily mean to imply she ain't got a little broad in the beam, but her hull is sound and she's still handy in rough weather" He laughed again "Only thing I miss most is pork chops," he said "These local natives got a hate against a hog."

"Look, Alabama," I said, "I don't want to seem unsociable, but what're the chances of rooting out some of the brain-trust and getting somebody to listen to a citizen's troubles?"

"Sure enough, Mr. Murphy," he said. "I'll nose around the tukuls and see if

I can stir somebody up. You gotta stay outside until I get an O.K. to pass you in, though."

I told him I couldn't get any wetter, but how'd he know I was Murphy?

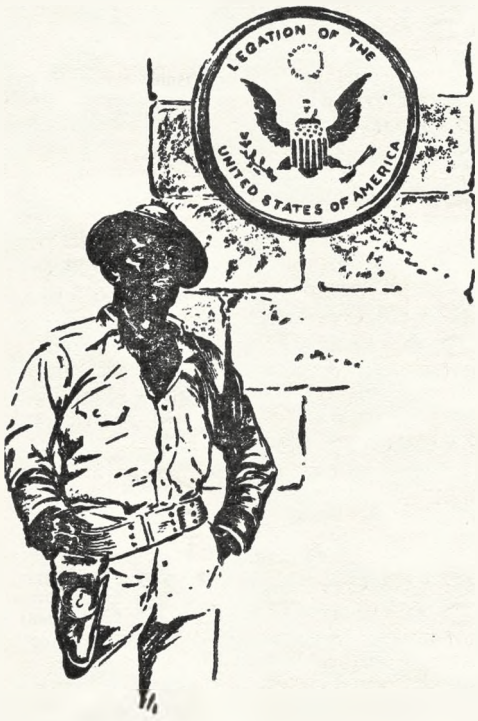
He gave me another grin.

"There's kind of a shortage of good small-talk on the local market," he said. "These Ethiopians, like my wife, have been sitting up in these mountains something like seven thousand years. I been here eleven years myself. It's only natural any time we get a new immigrant we all sort of swap facts and opinion. Wait a minute, I'll see anybody might be dressed yet."

I waited, and Alabama peered into three or four of the offices bordering a walk to the left. Then he cut across the court into the main building. He came back ahead of a lanky gray-haired man in a cape.

"Mr. Simmons'll take care of your wants, Mr. Murphy," he said. "Come in on United States soil."

"Come along, Murphy," Simmons said.



The sentry was wearing Army fatigue clothes and an issue belt with a Colt .45.

"Van Buren, dig up some coffee and bring it to my office."

"Yes, sir, Mr. Simmons," Van Buren said. He locked the gate and trotted back to the main building. Simmons led me to the middle office in the long row of doors in the annex.

CHAPTER IV

A JOB FOR THE EMPEROR

WE took off our coats and sat down. Simmons opened a brass jar and filled a pipe. "Care for a fill?" he asked. "It's rather good. An English mixture I ran across in Nairobi."

I was a cigarette man, I told him. I got out the Nationales that Bobolini had shoved at me in the station. He didn't offer me anything better, just worked to get his pipe lighted and drawing right. There was something wrong about the guy. He was handsome, and he looked efficient, but there was something left out of him. There was a faint crust of mock-English in his voice. He put the lid back on the tobacco, set it back in exactly the same spot from which he had taken it, moved a paper-knife a half-inch to the right and cleared his throat.

"Something we can do, Mr. Murphy?" he said.

"I hope so. I stumbled across something here—something unpleasant. And since then everybody in town has been breathing down my neck."

He blew a smoke ring and waited.

"I have good reason to believe that my brother, Matthew Murphy, was murdered."

"That's a grave accusation, Mr. Murphy."

"It wasn't an accusation. It was a statement."

"By whom?"

"In so many words—by Phileas Lubin. But since he visited me there have been a lot of other people acting oddly. Mari Tornquist, for one. Cyril Douras, at the hotel. Anastasia Lasta, at the Goritza. An Ethiopian named Gubru David. And a little before four o'clock this morning somebody with an English accent and an Ethiopian bodyguard caught me in an alley outside the Goritza and took my

money, my letter of credit, my passport and ticket home."

"Have you been to the police?"

I didn't say the words that came first into my mouth. I swallowed, then said, "Mr. Simmons, exactly what is the American Legation supposed to do for visiting Americans?"

He shrugged. "Offer them the facilities of the consular service, and represent them in the courts in relation to nationals of other countries. Do you want us to complain to the Ethiopian police that you have been robbed?"

"What the hell good is that going to do?"

"Exactly. To be frank, Mr. Murphy, your story is shade too exotic to be probable. I assume that you have picked up some exaggerated ideas of what might have happened to your brother, in the course of an evening's drinking with the —ah—persons you have mentioned. I expect that's it. I have no reason to doubt your account of the alleged robbery, but surely you can see that if you have nothing better than a 'man with an English accent and a bodyguard' to go on, even Scotland Yard would have difficulty in getting started toward recovery of your effects. The police here, I regret to say, are hardly of that caliber."

He fished in his pocket, then, and brought out a big bill, printed in brown and purple. It said "twenty thalers." He laid it on the desk, between us.

"I have three suggestions," he said. "If you have already used your letter of credit, and shown it to the bank here, it would be wise to notify them to cancel it and to cable for a revised letter from the issuing bank. I shall take it upon myself to talk to the minister and arrange a new passport for you. If you drop by tomorrow the papers will be ready to sign. I can spare twenty thalers as a personal loan, and I shall be happy to let you bunk with me, if you have no other place to sleep."

I pushed the bill back at him.

"Put it away, Joe," I said. "I wouldn't want you to strain your expense account. And I don't want to take favors here because I'm going to start turning the heat on. You guys have just been sitting on your fat duffs while my brother got killed. I want to know why. I want to know how. And I'm going to keep asking those questions until I get the answers."

He moved the paper knife back to where it started. "Are you through?" he said.

I told him I hadn't even started.

"I talked to somebody else when I came here first," I said. "A short fellow, light brown hair."

"Parkinson," he said. "He's gone down to Djibouti with the pouch."

"When Matt arranged to travel north and east out of Addis, where'd he go?"

Simmons shrugged.

"Didn't you have to make the arrangements here? I thought anybody had to get travel in the country cleared with their consulate before the Ethiopians would O.K. their passport out of the capital."

"That happens to be correct. Your brother had permission to go to Debra Markos in Gojjam Province. We assume he went there."

"Don't you have any files? Or do you just make this up as it goes along?"

He got up.

"I think we've had about enough of your bad manners," he said. "Until you arrange with the State Department, I shall continue to assume that we don't take instructions on how to do our work from stray tourists. When Van Buren returns you can follow him to the gate."

My FINGERS were as mad as the rest of me, and I had trouble buckling my slicker. I went out, and the big Negro was bearing down on the door with a tray of coffee. Simmons spoke from behind me.

"Show Mr. Murphy to the gate," he said. "He doesn't wish to stop for coffee. He's in a hurry to write his congressman."

Van Buren set the tray on the cement walk and looked back and forth between us for a second, then shrugged and went ahead. I followed him. When we were out of earshot, Van Buren spoke back to me without turning his head.

"We had good ones here, and bad ones," he said. "But that Simmons is a plain, unnatural so-and-so."

"I guess most of it was my fault." I

said. "I got off on the wrong foot. Maybe, in the long run, it saves time. If I'm not going to get any help here it's just as well to find it out right away."

We were at the gate, and Van Buren fiddled with the lock, taking his time.

"Might be I could help some," he said. "There must be somebody, somewhere, knows where Matt went, on his trip," I said. "Who'd be most likely to know?"

"Desta Masal," he told me. "He's a little fellow does special jobs for the Emperor. I'll get you a taxi and you dig him up."

I told him to skip it. "It's going to take me a little time to get some money again," I said. "I got held up last night."

"Don't bother your head," Van Buren told me. "This driver's my wife's cousin. He'll put it on the cuff."

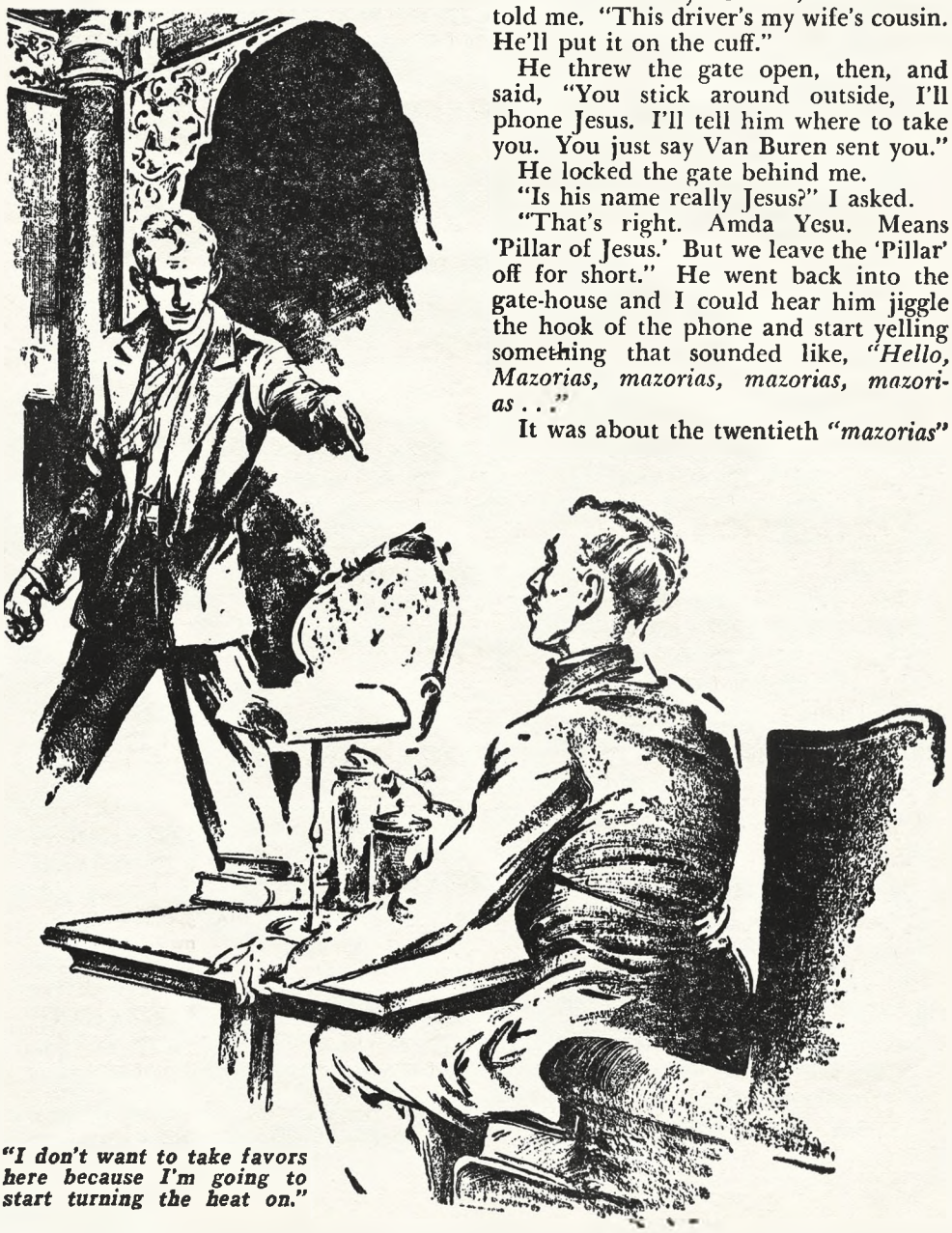
He threw the gate open, then, and said, "You stick around outside, I'll phone Jesus. I'll tell him where to take you. You just say Van Buren sent you."

He locked the gate behind me.

"Is his name really Jesus?" I asked.

"That's right. Amda Yesu. Means 'Pillar of Jesus.' But we leave the 'Pillar' off for short." He went back into the gate-house and I could hear him jiggle the hook of the phone and start yelling something that sounded like, *"Hello, Mazorias, mazorias, mazorias, mazorias . . ."*

It was about the twentieth *"mazorias"*



"I don't want to take favors here because I'm going to start turning the heat on."

that he got action and his voice drifted off into a jumble of Amharic. The rain was steady, but waves of heavier rain swelled and faded through the steady downpour. It was as though the thick gray clouds overhead kept raining steadily, and other clouds, above them, rained through them in spells. I was under a eucalyptus tree, but I realized that it wasn't doing any good. I swung my arms to keep warm. And the nose of a Dodge sedan poked out of the ground-mist under my elbow.

The driver was thin, black and twisted like a penny licorice whip. He opened the back door and I got in. He didn't start, and didn't say anything.

"Van Buren," I said.

"Aow. Ato Van Buren," he agreed and started in second, whipping the rear wheels two or three times across the road-top before he found the ruts and picked up traction. After about a block he saw mules ahead on the road and started to yell. He was still yelling four or five miles later, on the other side of Addis Ababa, with the curses of hundreds of drivers of stampeding mules and donkeys swelling and ebbing behind us like the wake of a destroyer in a heavy swell.

He cut into a curved driveway and skidded to a stop by a long, low stone stairway. Then he opened the door and said, *"Witch-Kidine."*

The next five minutes were like trying to knock a hole in a Sherman tank with a wet lambskin. The building was full of Ethiopians with their white cotton cloaks hitched down around their chests. I told the first one "Desta Masal" and he said *"Ishi"* and passed me along to another. It was about the fifteenth that showed me a golden oak chair in a small office. There was nobody there, but he seemed to expect me to sit down and wait. Three others passed through and I asked them if they were Desta Masal and they just nodded and said *"Ishi"* and went out again.

The fourth one stayed.

He was a light saddle-color, with a sharp nose and a mouth that reminded me some of Will Rogers. He had brown eyes and a close-cropped head of straight black hair. Toss in a Navajo blanket, and he could have passed for an Indian. But he was wearing striped pants and a short black coat with braid on the lapels.

He started out in French, and must have gotten twenty sentences deep into something or other before he saw I was shaking my head.

"I beg pardon. I was thinking in French," he said. "What brings you to the Foreign Ministry?"

"My name is Murphy. My brother, Matthew, died in a car outside the radio station last week. I think he was murdered and I want to find out who did it, and why."

He cocked his head on one side and looked at me like a woodpecker prospecting a new branch.

"You may be right. There have been scattered murmurs in the market-places. I've started to look into it, myself. If you have any accurate information I'd be pleased to hear you."

I TOLD him what I knew. It sounded like a kid telling his mother that all the other boys in the block were picking on him. He sat down and opened his desk drawer. He pulled three pieces of paper out of it. One was a little folder of stiff yellow cardboard. There was nothing outside. Inside, it was printed in black Ethiopian letters, with parts filled in in ink. Down at the bottom right corner, where you'd expect a signature, there was a big letter U. The second piece of paper was a check, made out to "M. Malcolm Murphy." It was for $1,000, Ethiopian. The third was a blank sheet of typewriter paper.

He was grinning when I looked up at him.

"All right," I said. "I suppose it's what I need. But how did you know I needed it?"

He pulled out a battered silver cigarette case and offered me one. They were Greek, with silk tips.

"It's my business to hear things," he said. "As a matter of fact I've had damn little sleep the last two nights for listening to the hourly reports on what you were up to."

"You mean you've had people watching me?"

He shook his head.

"That isn't hard," he said. "People always watch. The trick is to get them to report what they see—accurately. We learned how to do a pretty good job of it while the Italians were here."

"Then you'll be able to tell me something about Matt's death."

He nodded. "Not as much as I'd like—but something," he said. "But before I say anything I'd like to have some assurance that you'll help me to clear it up."

Anything, I told him. Anything at all.

He stuck a slim brown finger on the blank sheet of paper.

"There's an ink pad at your elbow," he said. "Put your thumbprint on the paper."

I did.

"Checking with the FBI?" I cracked.

"Just a contract," he said. "We use the thumbprint here, rather than the signature. Many of our people can't write. Many of those that can, aren't above using other people's names. And nearly half the total population is named either Gubru, Haile or Ali."

"But what's the contract? What have I just agreed to do?"

"I don't know," he said, blandly. "You're on the Imperial Civil Service staff, but I haven't figured out the exact post. You may turn out to be a mapmaker for the Department of the Interior. Or an elephant-shooter on His Majesty's personal staff. Or, perhaps, a consultant for the Department of Education. Those are the jobs I think of, offhand. I may dream up something else."

"I can't see that it makes any difference," I told him. "I wouldn't be any use at any of them."

"You don't have to be. The problem is largely budgetary. We have a most efficient Scottish auditor, a Mr. Macgregor, going over the government accounts. He's been complaining about the way the Department of Justice expenses were administered, so I'll have to wait until he finishes some of the other branches and squeeze you in the most suitable budget."

"If I haven't got a job—have I got a boss?" I said. "And where do I find him?"

"Here," he said. "I happen to have some sort of official post in a good many of the government bureaus. Your work will be to clear up your brother's death. The yellow card is important. It's a passport for travel inside the country, and a guarantee of authority. Don't abuse it. The signature, like the letter U, is Haile Selassie's signature. You'll need the money for expenses."

"Don't think I don't appreciate this," I told Masal. "But what do you know? That's what I need."

"I can make it very definite," he said. "But I can't prove much of it. That's your job. Your brother was poisoned. Euphorbine, probably. It's a poison from the milk juice of the euphorbia plant. It's used here to poison fish, and there are persons who would poison for money.

"The reason for his death, you have guessed, I should imagine. He knew something. Something he intended to broadcast. Late last night a runner came in to the Palace from Debra Markos, where your brother had authorization to visit. He said that the police there saw Matthew Murphy leave, with mules, for the West. He crossed the Blue Nile into the swamp country of the Dadessa River Basin. Two days later he returned."

He waited, and I asked him, "What did he find out? And who was afraid of the broadcast?"

"The first question I can't answer. For the second, I can only give you four names. Dr. Valter Granerus, of Helsinki. Joam Saldanha, of Lisbon, Romeo Falconi and Arthur Finch-West, of Addis Ababa."

"Do you have anything on these people? Or are we just guessing?"

"A little of both. Each of these people has applied, within the past two weeks, for permission to take a caravan into Wallega Province. No such permissions had been requested for two years before that. I can only assume that there is something of great value there, beyond the Chomen Marshes. Something that one of those people valued more than your brother's life."

"It fits in," I told him. "Matt had written the names Granerus and Saldanha on a memo, in his typewriter. He had a couple of other names, too, but they weren't the ones you mention. One was initials. S.M.H.S. and the other was Ethiopian, I guess. *Gera-Kond-Zaytan,* something like that."

Masal sat up straighter.

"Gera-Kond-Zaytan?" he said. He clicked the consonants like a cue-ball breaking into fresh game. "That's odd. Very odd. Of course S.M.H.S. is merely Haile Selassie—*Sa Majesté,* Haile Selassie, as the French use it—but the other is interesting. It's more of a legend than anything else. It's a mountain, someplace along the escarpment of the Western border. It means "The Left Tusk of The Devil," and it is reputed to be the place where elephants go to die. Under the Emperor Menelik half a dozen adventurers claimed to have found it, and returned with heavy caravans of dead ivory. But it's been missing for nearly fifty years."

"That may be it. I guess it's up to me to find out. How do I get out to this Debra Markos? Is there a road?"

"Not for cars," he said. "It'll have to be mules. If I were you I'd take a taxi out to Addis Alam, fifty kilometers west. Dr. Granerus is there, staying with a Swedish officer attached to the Military School. Tell him you've been attached to his caravan by the Ethiopian Government. Tell him I said so. Desta Masal."

"I'll do that," I told him. "If the whole four are all going to the same place, it doesn't matter which one I travel with. But suppose I find that one of these people killed Matt. What can I do?"

"Do you want me to answer that question? Suppose I merely tell you that there was, in ancient times, an Ethiopian custom which permitted blood relatives to execute a murderer."

I got up then, and shook hands with the little guy.

He lifted the muzzle of the gun and loosed a single burst, maybe fifteen or sixteen shots. It was waist-high and it cut Van Buren across the belly.

"You know, you're the first white man I've met in Ethiopia," I told him.

"There's no need to be insulting," he said. Then he laughed. "I don't mean it quite that way," he said. "We don't get the cream of the Caucasians here. And too many of them provide more difficulties than national benefit. I'm sorry I have to go now. The Special Tribunal opens at nine, and it's my week to preside. I don't think I need to give you any advice. Cook your meat, boil your water, and stay out of the valleys unless you've taken your quinine."

He clapped his hands sharply, and two clerks, wrapped up in white cotton cloaks, bowed in and led me to the front door. Jesus was still waiting. I got in the back, and discovered I wasn't alone. Alabama was there. Van Buren, the Virgin Islander from the American Legation.

"I taken myself a vacation, Mr. Murphy," he said. "You wouldn't want a good boy for two weeks?"

WE WENT out the Gullaly road. The rain cleared away for almost an hour, and nature knocked itself out, piling up pink and orange and purple clouds in triple scoops like a première at an ice-cream stand. We were past the cemetery, and skidding along the slow curves of the flat and empty plain when I remembered I hadn't cashed the check that Masal gave me. I told Van Buren.

"Don't fret your mind," he said. "Jesus will cash it." He spoke to him, and the driver stopped the car. I signed the check and he pulled up the front seat. There were four green canvas bags under it. He muscled two of them up and over into the back seat.

"Shiboor," he told me.

"He says, a thousand thalers," Van Buren interposed.

I tucked my fat bags of silver down on the back seat beside me and leaned back. Business was picking up. I had money again, and a sort of a lead that might bring me to Matt's murderer. I had the papers to travel, and Van Buren for company.

"One thing," I told him. "There's no traffic jam on these roads."

"That don't necessarily mean there won't be trouble," he said. "We ain't passed a mule since we left the cemetery."

That was all the better, I suggested. He shook his head.

"There's always mules on the roads," he said. "Only when there's trouble brewin'. Then they hit cross-country."

I was asking him what kind of trouble he was expecting, when we rounded a little bluff and ran into it. Two sedans, parked crosswise on the hogback road, blocked it from shoulder to shoulder. There were three Ethiopians, a woman and two white men. One of the men had a rapid-fire rifle, like a Bren, held in the crook of his elbow

Jesus did the smart thing.

"Shifta!" he yelled, and he opened his door and lit out across country, leaving the car in second. We smacked into the front sedan and wobbled, sliding to the ditch. The taxi wasn't hurt, but it was stuck plenty. The left-hand doors were pushed against the cutbank. Van Buren got the top door open and pulled me out. When he let it go the door slammed, shattering the window.

The man with the gun was a little brown butter-ball, with short thick brown hair on a round skull. He looked like a muskrat.

"I was expecting you, Mr. Murphy," he said. "Since your driver has gone, perhaps you'd prefer to ride with us."

I figured the chances for a break, but they weren't good. The Ethiopian straightened out the cars, and the muskrat nudged me toward the back one with a wave of the muzzle.

"I don't like this a bit," Van Buren said.

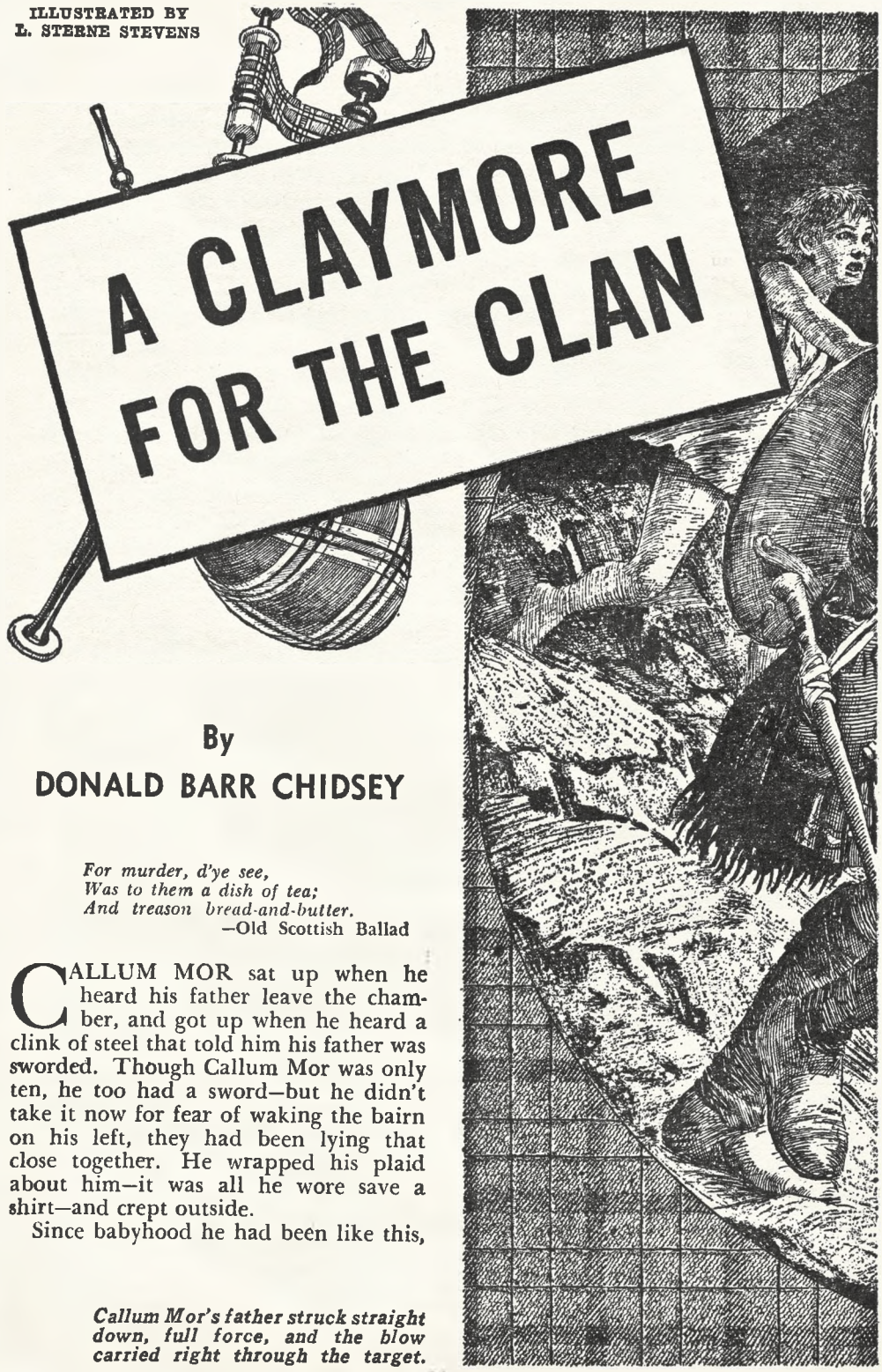
"I didn't ask you to," the muskrat cut in. He didn't change expression. He lifted the muzzle of the gun and loosed a single burst, maybe fifteen or sixteen shots. It was waist-high and it cut Van Buren across the belly so he broke when he fell, bending into two pieces before the blood came.

I didn't even think. I ran at the bastard across the slippery clay, and one of them swung on me from behind. I didn't even remember plowing my face into the road.

(End of Part I)

ILLUSTRATED BY
L. STERNE STEVENS

A CLAYMORE FOR THE CLAN



By

DONALD BARR CHIDSEY

For murder, d'ye see,
Was to them a dish of tea;
And treason bread-and-butter.
—Old Scottish Ballad

CALLUM MOR sat up when he heard his father leave the chamber, and got up when he heard a clink of steel that told him his father was sworded. Though Callum Mor was only ten, he too had a sword—but he didn't take it now for fear of waking the bairn on his left, they had been lying that close together. He wrapped his plaid about him—it was all he wore save a shirt—and crept outside.

Since babyhood he had been like this,

Callum Mor's father struck straight down, full force, and the blow carried right through the target.

like a dog, about his father. He couldn't let the man go anywhere without trailing him.

On such a night with the wind moaning up the glen from off the unseen sea and raving softly among the pines, Callum Mor might have stayed on the floor—if he had supposed only that his father was stepping outside for a natural purpose. But if it was a natural impulse, why the sword? He knew that his father did not command the night guard. Alistair Mor of Fhionnlaigh in charge of the defense of his own Chief—the Chief who would not sufficiently honor and trust Fhionnlaigh, Callum Mor's father, to make him a gallowglass and so grant him the use of a second eagle's feather in his bonnet? Nay, not that one!

Indeed it might be, Callum Mor reflected as he made his stealthy way along the wall—being careful not to touch any sleeper—it might well be that his father was going out not to protect the Chief but to kill him. That would be no more than fair, after the Chief had refused him a feather.

THIS belief was boosted by the conviction that the man who had so quietly roused his father and then glided outside again was his great-uncle Angus Gorm Og of Balcrombie, a man Callum Mor distrusted, a fierce man, a great fighter for all his years, but at the same time canny, a schemer. Callum Mor could not be sure of this, for he never really had seen that man in the pale drizzle of moonlight who entered the chamber momentarily when the man moved the arras to go out; but he thought he pretty well knew Balcrombie's odor, and this was it.

If it was Balcrombie, prowling at such an hour, that meant trouble. And if there was going to be trouble, with his father involved, Callum Mor, the Young Fhionnlaigh, meant to be there at all costs.

Maybe the island Macdonalds? It was precisely the sort of night they liked for a silent crossing of the Sound and a quick bloody noisy raid. And it was known of course by everybody that they hated the Chief.

But if the Macdonalds from Sleat had been sighted or even if their approach had been no more than suspected, there would be an alarm.

The castle was utterly still.

This was not much of a castle, a mere fortalice truly, and in a bad state of repair. The Chief kept his main seat at the sea end of the glen in good condition—it was large, it was strong—this petty place designed originally to protect the eastern end of the glen, but for many years after this was proved futile left unused, had only recently been in part refurnished and refitted for use as a hunting box. The deer, here, were numerous; and these clansmen were famous deerstalkers, all of them. Of Callum Mor's great-uncle, for example, it was said that he could all but come upon a deer in person and strangle it with his bare hands.

Yes, but the Macdonalds from Sleat, Uisdein's clansmen, were celebrated stalkers too. To cross the Sound; to land unseen near Craigellachie, the Chief's seat; to travel in one night the whole length of the glen and attack with all their old wild impetuosity just before dawn, scattering after the swift slaughter and disappearing as they had come— like a whirlwind—this was not impossible for them. They could do it and would do it, too, if they thought of it.

They'd never get the Chief's person at Craigellachie unless he came out. But they might get to him here, in this remote half-ruin.

As soon as he slipped past the arras Callum Mor learned that he was right. It was his great-uncle Balcrombie with his father. They didn't see him when he found a place in the shadow of the parapet beside which they stood. True they talked in low whispers, but then Callum Mor had sharp ears. Also, he had taken care to crouch downwind of the two men.

"You'll be fearing Macdonalds?"

"Alistair, when have I ever felt a fear of those across the water? Still . . . They could come."

"Aye, it's a night for them," agreed Mor's father.

It was bitter cold, and the wind, though it didn't move fast and didn't moan high, had daggers in it. There were no stars. The moon glowed faint

and filmy sometimes, but a moment later it would be gone.

Angus Gorm Og, the laird of Balcrombie, spat thoughtfully over the parapet. He was a thin man, not tall either, with features that seemed drawn tight like a too-small mask. He was a cruel man and very proud—proud of his fine nieces, all married now, the favorite to Alistair Mor of Fhionnlaigh.

"Aye, they could come, Uisdein's clansmen . . . Aye. You mind this tartan, Alistair?"

"It's Uisdein's! It's Sleat's!"

"You found it here?"

Callum Mor's father was tense, his hand on the hilt of his claymore, his eyes darting back and forth, and the breath whistled a low note in his nose. Callum Mor himself had stiffened. From where he was he couldn't see well the small triangle of dyed plaid his great-uncle held, but he could see even in that wan light that it was the bright brave red, square-crossed by green, of Sleat.

"Nay, Alistair. Quiet yourself. I've had this for months. I took it from a Macdonald who dared to land on my coast, y'ken. 'Twas all I did get from them—they were three, Alistair—this, and a few ripe slices on my arm that have long since scar-tissued white."

He looked musingly at the scrap of plaid, smiled a little, and replaced it in his sporran. Angus Gorm Og, by the way, was not only sworded but fully attired, as Callum Mor's father was—shirt, plaid, kilt, hose, brogues, even bonnet.

As though thinking along these lines, and wishing to change the subject, he glanced at Fhionnlaigh's bonnet.

"Ye've yet but a single feather there, Alistair."

"He turned me down this very day! You know that, Balcrombie!"

"Aye. Aye, I knew it."

The older man was less impulsive than Callum Mor's father, but he was proud and the Chief's decision had infuriated him. He thought, like almost every other man in the clan, that Alistair Mor of Fhionnlaigh was entitled to that second feather. It meant a great deal to him, as it did to Callum Mor's father, to Callum Mor himself, and in fact to all of them.

In a wheedling voice, "When he dies, Alistair, Donald'll be Chief. Hardly more than a bairn. We could handle Donald, you and I, Alistair."

Callum Mor's father was ever a blunt man.

"What are you proposing to do?" he asked.

"Nothing. Is it for me? I only thought that the husband of Catherine would know what to do."

CALLUM MOR'S father flushed, and his eyes got very dark and hot, as the son who watched him saw. Angus Gorm Og too watched him, and his eyes, too, glittered, but they glittered like those of a snake.

"If I could meet him with my sword in my hand and his sword in his, I'd know well enough what to do!"

"Oh. It wouldn't take long then, Alistair?"

"It would no' take long!" But Callum Mor's father sighed, as though dismissing a lovely dream, and he tapped his claymore's hilt with the heel of his left hand. "Ah, well. He's got his cousins close around him."

"Not tonight, Allistair. There's but two in the sleeping chamber with him, and they're both drunk. And no helots either."

Callum Mor's father looked swiftly at him, but Balcrombie shook his head.

"Nay, I did no' give them the usquebaugh, Alistair. They found that for themselves. I only remembered it after I had stepped outside to stretch my legs and saw that there was no watch up here. And look ye down, Alistair, down there to where ye can see the gate. The guards are asleep, both of them."

"But I can't kill my own chief!"

Softly, "Why not, Alistair?"

Callum Mor watched his father's face. Back of the thick beard, below the mighty mustaches, the lips worked. The great eyebrows twiched. The nostrils were still, squeezed so near to shut that it seemed as though breath could never pass them. The feet moved a little, soundlessly.

"The flat of our blades for the two cousins, and they'd never remember who had come. The rest you could do alone, Alistair."

Nevertheless Callum Mor's father shook his head.

"They'd hack me to pieces. They'd chase me to the ends of the world. Aye, Catherine's dead, but the bairn is only a wee one. . . "

Callum Mor wanted to cry out that his father should not worry about him—he could take care of himself—he'd go *with* his father, no matter how far that was! But he stayed lock-lipped. He'd get a monumental whipping if he was caught hidden there.

Angus Gorm Og leaned close.

"Ye've no' seen through it, Alistair. There's no' a need for them to ken it was you. Three-four Macdonalds with two-three boar spears could scale yon gate without waking the guards. And they'd be shouting their war cry when they broke into the Chief's chamber. *Bàs, bàs! To Uisdein!*" Angus of Balcrombie fairly squeaked like a mouse the words that in battle were so hideously screamed. "It's a cry you ken as well as I do, Alistair, eh?"

"I've heard it," shortly. "But afterward—"

"Afterward there'd be a deal of running up one stair and down another, ye ken, and shouting and yelling and bumping and asking, everybody with his blade and only half-awake, Alistair. And who's to learn? The guards'll say they were beat down, they won't admit they were asleep. The Chief's cousins will remember no faces, only that they heard the war cry of the island Macdonalds just before they were swatted. And the Chief himself, Alistair, he'll be dead there with his claymore in one hand—and this in the other."

He plucked the snippet of Sleat-tartaned plaid from his sporran.

"So who's to learn, Alistair? And you yourself said it'd no' take long."

It seemed to the boy, whose bare feet felt like twin stumps of ice on which he was hunkered there in the shadow of the parapet, who trembled as much from excitement as from cold and maybe more, it seemed to him a noteworthy plan, simple, direct, and sound. He watched his father eagerly and was pleased to see that the laird of Fhionnlaigh fancied it too—at first.

But then suddenly a cloud fell across Callum Mor's father's eyes. His brow wrinkled. He shook his head.

And Callum Mor remembered.

"You forget the old man," said Callum Mor's father. "You forget Treason's Bell."

Callum Mor himself had forgotten them for the moment. They constituted one of the fixtures of the fortalice, restoring a custom of the Chief who had built the place in the smoky-dim days of the past. When the present Chief undertook reconstruction and proposed to use the fortalice as a hunting quarters, the old man had presented himself and stubbornly insisted upon his right to sit by Treason's Bell each night the Chief slept there. He had produced proof, through other old men and some old women too, that he was the great grandson or it could have been the great-great grandson of the original guardian of Treason's Bell who was traditionally paid half the skin of a red deer each month for his services. Smiling, the present Chief had agreed that surely this fine old custom must not be permitted to die.

It was not a difficult task—all the old man had to do was squat each night behind a huge bell at the foot of the stair leading to the Chief's chamber—the Chief didn't sleep here more than six or seven nights out of the year— but it was a lonely one, and cold. The stair, which led only to the Chief's chamber and was winding to prevent the carrying-up of a ram, was very narrow. It opened below on the courtyard of the fortalice, for such as this was: it was in truth no more than a sort of open foyer, guarded by a ten-foot, barred, spiked gate outside of which two sentries were habitually stationed when the Chief was in residence.

THE OLD MAN was an ornament, really, a survival, a quaint institution; but he was serious about his job. Each night after the Chief retired, Callum Mor and his father had been told, the old man would bring out Treason's Bell—it was part of his duty to be custodian of this and keep it polished—and place it before him at the foot of the stair, just off the courtyard, where he'd squat and wait shivering for the dawn.

The visitors indeed had seen him ceremoniously taking over his post that very evening, their first here. He was one of the sights. Even the old retainers, chuckling, liked to watch him. He ignored them, as he ignored everybody else. They said that when once he'd taken his position he would not stir by so much as the width of a hair, not even to shift the striker from one hand to the other, until relieved by the coming of day.

He was a very old man, rickety and spare, who looked as if a good wind would blow him apart; yet he sat throughout the night in a notably windy place and somehow he always rose at dawn.

He spent most of the day, they said, polishing Treason's Bell.

The Bell was a big brass one, two feet or more across at the base, almost as wide as the stair itself. A tall, agile and cat-footed man might conceivably have stepped over it without ringing it, and the same man might have stepped over the guardian (assuming he was asleep, as of course he was supposed never to be) without waking him. But to have stepped over *both,* without waking the one or ringing the other, was an obvious impossibility.

"You forget the Bell" said Callum Mor's father. "You forget the old man."

"Nay, I've no' forgotten him, Alistair. You leave him to me."

He snicked out of its sheath tucked into his right stocking a long bright *skene dhu,* the Highland poniard. He held it under Callum Mor's father's nose.

"You take care of the one upstairs, Alistair—after I've cleared the way."

But Callum Mor's father shook his head The boy himself shrugged as best he could for stiffness and started to get up, losing interest now, for he knew what his father's reply would be. He leaned against the parapet, meaning it just for a moment, in order to stamp his feet and get feeling back into them.

Though he no longer made any attempt at concealment, being disgusted, it happened that they didn't see him; for

his father was turning away, sadly but obstinately shaking his head, while Angus Gorm Og, waving hands, followed him, pleading in small, eager, sibilant whispers.

He might as well have pleaded with an oak tree.

"Nay. I'll kill any man who fights, Balcrombie, but I'll no' have to do with backstabbing."

"It wouldn't be in the back, Alistair! It would—"

"A cripple and asleep. A warrior at his post."

"A warrior? He's naught but a helot, ye ken! If we—"

"Nay."

Callum Mor straightened, swaying a little, shivering more than ever. He pulled his plaid tighter around him. He was about to turn back into the sleeping chamber when his eye was caught by something below.

He didn't at first know what it was. He didn't even know why he stopped stock-still and continued to stare at that spot.

His father must have paused for a look-around before going inside, for it was at this very moment that he spied and spoke sharply to Callum Mor.

"Och, bairn, what d'ye do out here? Get back to your mat!"

But now Callum Mor had seen it again. The moon was hidden, this was the darkest hour of all, but Callum Mor's eye caught a glint of something that moved swiftly from the shadow of one tree to that of another.

He saw it only for the time of the blinking of an eye.

It was not a deer, though it seemed hardly larger. Deer don't go accoutered in steel.

Then he saw another one flit between those same two trees.

"Callum, will ye no' be listening to your father when—"

The boy pointed over the parapet.

"It's them! They're massing down there to charge!'

Highlanders sleep lightly. Like an echo to his cry as soon as that, came a mumble of voices from the chamber behind the arras, a click of scabbards against the stone floor, sleep-thick but urgent questions.

But he had been heard the other side of the parapet too, down in that wood which a little earlier had appeared to sleep so peacefully. And the men there waited for nothing more. They'd been seen, the alarm would be raised. They must have been almost prepared for the charge uphill anyway. So now they emerged, targets unslung, claymores held high, helmets shiny, and they screamed as they ran.

Bàs, bàs! MacUisdein! Buaidh no bàs! Uisdein!"

Alistair Mor, Callum Mor's father, never paused to ask a question, never doubted the sight his son had seen or the words his own ears were hearing. Called to fight, he was not one to hem and haw or to hesitate. He placed a hand on the parapet, and shouting at the top of his lungs, shouting for his own men, *"Fhionnlaigh! To me! Fhionnlaigh!"* he vaulted over.

Angus Gorm Og was as quick, but he was an older man, brittler of bone, and such a jump was not for him. He was drawing his claymore as he rushed for the stair, and he too was shouting for his men.

Callum Mor followed his father.

It was a sickening drop, straight down for part of the way. The boy had jumped feet-first, but something tripped him, something projecting from the wall, and spun him around so that when he struck the earth it was largely with left shoulder, left elbow, and left hip. The earth, frozen, was rock-hard.

He didn't come to rest then. He couldn't have stopped if he wanted to, for the hill was very steep, banked almost like a part of the wall it shored up, and devoid of restraining trees or plants. Callum Mor tumbled and tumbled, he never did know how many times over, banging and bumping, bloodying himself. His plaid had slipped off, and he was naked except for the shirt which reached nearly to his middle.

He did not have a weapon to fight with, but he didn't stop to think about that. He didn't stop to think about anything. He just followed his father.

"Fhionnlaigh! To Fhionnlaigh!"

When he did manage to get to his feet he started running down the hill so fast that he all but pitched forward on

his face. He was immediately behind his father, whose claymore was out.

THEY met the first of the Macdonalds about halfway down. These were two shaggy helmeted giants, each with claymore and target, and a piper. The swordsmen were yelling. The piper already was playing. He played the Pibroch of Dhromhnuill Dhu, the rallying song that is, of Donald the Black, some of whose blood, as a matter of fact, flowed also in the veins of Callum Mor's father and therefore in those of Callum himself.

It was fine fighting music.

Callum Mor's father's claymore was a two-handed one. Most men couldn't have so much as lifted it. *He* whisked it like a riding crop. His leather target swung from his neck by thongs, but he seldom touched this in battle unless the crowding was such that he had to drop his claymore and fight with his dirk. Now he raised the claymore.

The first Macdonald came in low, crouching, his target held so high you couldn't see his face. Callum Mor's father struck straight down, full force, and that was the only blow. It carried right through the target, through a good part of the shoulder beyond it too. The Macdonald dropped.

The force of this blow was such that Callum Mor's father himself was thrown to his knees. Before he could rise the second Macdonald, yowling, started for him.

Callum Mor threw himself at the legs of the second Macdonald.

They fell, the islander on top, knocking the breath out of Callum Mor. The islander too was breathless, but it was from fear and amazement. He had not seen Callum Mor and didn't know what hit him. Nor was he to find out. Before he could get to his feet Callum Mor's father's long blade had cut his head open. The boy wriggled out from under, and the piper stumbled over him and fell. For only a moment the pipes were silent. Then the man scrambled up and ran on toward the gate, piping again.

The piper is always the most dangerous man in any battle.

Callum Mor's father already was running down the slope again. He had not seen Callum Mor, didn't know he was there.

Callum Mor tried to wrest the sword from the hand of the man he'd tackled, but it was too big for him. However, he did get the man's *skene dhu* out, and with this gripped in his fist he ran after his father.

Afterward he told the tale many times, and in detail, but the fact is he made most of it up; for he was never able to remember much about the fighting that night.

As they met the second wave of Macdonalds his father caught sight of him and roared in disapproval, ordering him back to the castle. Callum Mor pretended not to hear. Head down, he threw himself upon the nearest islander; and it was at this point that things got too confused to be memorable. He heard the castle gate opened, he heard his great-uncle's shouts, always he heard pipes and the war cries, but he wasn't sure of what he did or what was done to him.

He grabbed at legs, grabbed at ankles and knees and feet, sometimes with his hands alone, sometimes with both arms. He hacked with the poniard at anything he could reach. Part of the while he was standing or running this way and that looking for his father, but much of the while he was on his knees.

He was kicked a great deal, and as he later learned, cut no less than five times, mostly around the shoulders, but he did not feel any of the wounds when he got them, only the kicks.

After everything else had moved so rapidly, the end came with agonizing slowness. Or thus it seemed to this boy. He was on the ground, he knew that. He wasn't kneeling but lying down, and he couldn't get up. He knew *that*. He thought he was as good as dead. Not caring much, he lay still. There wasn't any pain except in his head, for the noises all around and above him were terrific and they were merciless. The shouts, the screams, the wild skirling of pipes, the panting and groaning, and the clang and clack of sword on sword, of sword on target, had previously exhilarated: now they only hurt bangingly, like hammer blows at the temples, and he

wished that at least he could die quietly.

The noises swelled and swam together; and it was almost more than he could stand.

Then everything was silent—everything, that is, except his father—who was kneeling beside him, tenderly lifting his head.

"Are ye all right, Callum? Bless God, are ye alive?"

"Where—where'd they—"

He tried to get up. They told him afterward that all sweaty and bleeding as he was, and most of body bare, he clung to the looted *shene dhu* and still looked around for more of the Macdonalds.

They had to restrain him, they said. He would have run on down the hill.

But the Macdonalds were gone. It was the way of those islanders—they'd strike suddenly, amid a great clangor—and then they would vanish.

It would be suicide to chase them through the wood and down the glen. Nobody even dreamt of that.

Four did not return with the raiding party but lay motionless on the slope, their faces covered with their plaids; and one of these was the piper. They didn't look dead. They only looked drunk, as if they'd stumbled and fallen there, stupidly, blindly.

One from the castle lay among them. Angus Gorm Og, the first through the gate, had fought a good fight to the end. He too had been decently covered with his plaid.

"No bairns?" the Chief asked afterward, gently. "I'll see his widow does no' want."

This was in the courtyard. The Chief was a very large man, a slow mover, deliberate. He was handsome, Callum Mor was obliged to admit. He had fine light blue eyes, set wide apart, and huge fluffy blond mustaches, and when he spoke the words rolled out deep and portentous, like kegs rolled over a cellar floor. Now he turned to Callum Mor's father.

" 'Twas grandly done, Fhionnlaigh. It could be I owe you my life. Sure I owe you all gratitude. 'Twas a deed worthy of my gallowglass. though you were not that then—as I make you now."

He took one of the eagle feathers from his very own bonnet and with ceremony pinned it to Callum Mor's bonnet, making two there. Callum Mor's father almost wept. He placed both hands on the Chief's shoulder and bussed the Chief on both cheeks while he pledged eternal allegiance.

This pledge the Chief accepted with becoming gravity.

"And your bairn, Fhionnlaigh? Och, a bairn I call him, one who can fight like that! Nay, a full gentleman of the clan. Come to me, laddie."

Shivering, weak, Callum Mor went. His wounds were stinging now, and his head ached. He had a plaid around him and wore a bonnet, but still he shivered and shook.

The Chief took another feather, and with a cairngorm clasp from his own shirt he fastened this to Callum Mor's bonnet.

"A gentleman of the clan," he repeated. "We welcome you, Young Fhionnlaigh."

The Chief looked around the crowded courtyard, where every man was under arms.

"We are proud of our clansmen," he said. "We are happy that only one was lost."

"Two," said a voice near the stair. "You have forgotten the old man. You've forgotten Treason's Bell."

It was true. Squatting on the lowest step, the striker still in his hand, was the custodian. All untouched before him was the bell he had polished and guarded so long.

Fright? No. When they examined him they found him full stiff. He had been dead for hours. He must have died soon after taking up his lonely post for the night.

He could never have struck the Bell, no matter what happened.

"Och, he passed as he would have wanted to, doing his duty," the Chief said. "And we could say that too of Angus Gorm Og of Balcrombie. Doing their duties, protecting their Chief."

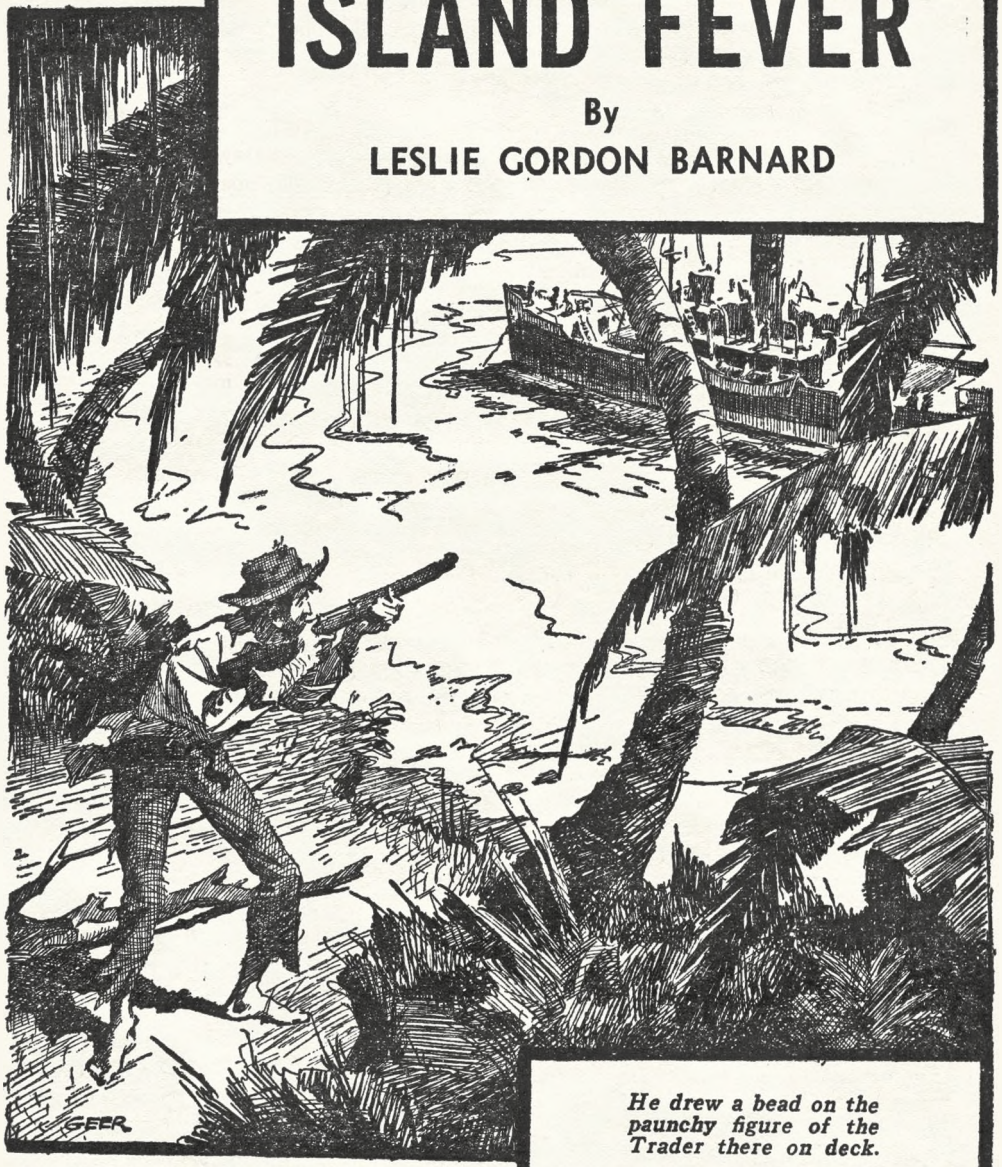
As he turned from the corpse he shivered a little.

"We are up betimes, gentlemen, and the warming work's finished. Jamie! Fetch the jacks! I think we should have a drink."

ISLAND FEVER

By

LESLIE GORDON BARNARD



He drew a bead on the paunchy figure of the Trader there on deck.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GEER

IT WAS as yet only a minor flaw on the immense floor of the sea. A cloud or a smudge of smoke would have commanded more attention. Turning rather contemptuously out of her course the steamer nosed towards this dubious goal. The ocean itself was apathetic, contributing to the movement of the vessel only an occasional oily lurch.

For the benefit of Miss Boggs, the only woman on board and one of the two passengers—the second was a trader mellowly drunk most of the voyage—the Mate was explaining, "We're running in to pick up three fellows we

left there months ago. Stowaways. Wanted to get to America and hid in one of the boats under the canvas lashings. The Old Man threatened to put them overboard but he compromised." The Mate grinned. "So he put 'em ashore on this atoll and said he'd call for them sometime when he felt like it. Left enough food for them to make out with along with what they'd find, and there's plenty of fresh water on the island. Damned dreary, though."

The Trader was at this moment heard to laugh. He lay sprawling in a deck chair under the awning aft. "I wonder if they found it," he drawled.

Miss Boggs glanced at him rather sharply. She was the least censorious of women, but she could forgive in him an evident determination to drink himself slowly to death more than she could his attitudes towards life.

"Found what?" she inquired.

"What I told 'em they would."

Miss Boggs shrugged and turned to gaze again at the smudge or flaw on the horizon. The two men exchanged glances and the Mate said, "The Chief had an idea. He wanted to give them books. Speaking of angels, here he comes now. I was just telling Miss Boggs what's waiting on yonder atoll."

The Engineer growled, "Aye, and what is?" He was a grizzled but still sandy-haired Scot.

"You and your books," the Trader scoffed, not ungenially.

"I could have spared them a few," the Chief nodded. "Had 'em all set out but I was laughed down. Laughed down, would you! So I said to hell with it. Sorry, Miss Boggs."

Miss Boggs smiled. "Don't mind me," she begged. "May I ask what books?"

The Engineer looked askance at the Trader as if to ward off offensive merriment. *"Moby Dick,"* he said, ticking them off on his blunt fingers, *"The Hound of Heaven, The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Good-bye, Mr. Chips*—aye, that's four—oh, yes, *Aesop's Fables,* and the Bible."

"My God," said the Mate.

"It seems a pity," Miss Boggs said thoughtfully. "How many months did you say? They could have read them all."

"Those tough mugs?" The Mate cocked a brow at her.

"They could all read," the Chief said brusquely. "They weren't illiterate."

"We're getting nearer," announced the Mate, and from the bridge came orders to make ready a boat. At this even the Trader eased himself up and brought his flabby corpulence to the rail.

"I'd like to lay a little bet," he offered. "I'd like to lay a bet they've made good use of their time—even if it was my own idea."

Nobody took him up. Nobody pressed the point as to what his idea had been. They were all busy staring ahead at the atoll which now seemed swiftly to grow in their path . . .

FROM the atoll a man stared also at the steamer. For a long time he had watched its approach. He was a queer, unkempt specimen whose clothes seemed to have been assembled from several wardrobes; the trousers too small so that his bony shanks showed beneath, his shirt too large so that it flapped when he raised his hands like the lifting of wings on a bird of prey. The improvised helmet was his own and from under it a face of indeterminate age was not improved by a ragged beard through which a transverse scar showed uglily. It could not be said that he was undernourished; but his eyes had the look of a haunted man. When he moved swiftly, as he had at first sight of a distant hint of smoke, up to higher ground, he had the agility and something of the likeness of a wild animal. When more slowly he descended again, he took cover furtively, then shook from him with a savage contempt this now unnecessary habit.

He went on down until he reached a shelter not badly constructed but now falling into disrepair. A hole in the thatch let in a green translucence, spotlighting with odd appropriateness four articles on which the man's eyes fell. Three spades and a rifle of sorts stood by the wall. On the handle of each spade initials had been cut or burned, marking out private property. One spade—his own—stood at a small distance from the others as if unwilling to

rub shoulders. All had seen hard usage. On one were stains, faded now, that might have been rust—or blood.

The gun had no such markings; it alone was bright and polished, and as the man picked it up now it looked singularly lethal. He fell to polishing it again with his ragged sleeve; then set it down and went out to note the progress of the vessel.

She was still well out and, after a moment of hesitation, he climbed again the slope back of the shelter; from this vantage point he could see also the narrow limits of the land. Something had happened to it—as if mad agriculturists or demented contractors had been let loose on it. The scars of spadework were everywhere, speaking at once of a reckless disorder and haste, and of an almost appalling industry. Where excavations had been made they lay abandoned, not filled in—except two.

Those were the two that haunted him.

For the first he was not responsible: there had been a quarrel for possession of the gun, because a gun means power. For the second he accepted responsibility, but with reservations. You cannot forever go in fear of your life nor endure another's armed superiority. His only covering had been the tropical darkness; his only strategy stealth; his only weapon—a spade. The man glanced down at his hands; they were calloused to the point where horns of flesh seemed embossed upon them. He spread them out before him, palms up, empty—and laughed, and the sound of that laughter set bright wings in motion away from where he stood.

Now, once more, he stared out to sea; and after a time nodded a confirmation of the ship's identity. There was no mistaking it now. Returning to the shelter his haunted eyes searched the place. He saw bunks built in for three men. He saw food still cached for three men. He saw three spades—and one gun. The spades he left; the gun he took with him to where behind a light screen of foliage he waited and watched. Breathing heavily, he watched this ship that had left him here with two others. At first he saw only the vessel; then he could make out details. He could see three figures standing by the rail. One was a woman. Of the two men he could soon recognize the paunchy figure of the Trader.

Presently, a boat would be launched, and come ashore. But they would not take him; he had a bullet in reserve for such a contingency. First there was another matter to be settled.

The ship was nearer now. He could see the white churn at her wake. Then he could hear the harsh authority of her anchor chains. The anger and frustration in him focused increasingly on one object. He drew a bead on the paunchy figure of the Trader there on deck, but withheld his hand. He must not be premature. He had to be sure and the distance was too great. Time would cure that . . .

AT THE steamer's rail Miss Boggs, the Trader and the Mate watched the distance lessen. The Chief had gone below to observe the functioning of his engines.

"I'd like to come along," the Trader hinted. He nodded towards the boat ready for launching.

Miss Boggs indicated she would stay with the ship.

"I'll bet they've dug up pretty near the whole damned island by now," the Trader chuckled. "Tools and a gun, that's what they needed. I got the Old Man to see daylight about that. A gun to shoot wildfowl and things with and three good spades. They've got me to thank for those—as well as an idea to keep 'em interested and on their toes."

The Mate now indicated to the Trader that he had better secure a place in the boat if he wished to go ashore.

"But just what was the idea?" Miss Boggs wished to know.

"Gold," said the Trader. "I sold them the idea there was buried treasure on the damned island. Gave them an interest in life. Good healthy work—digging. Books—hell!"

"I still think," Miss Boggs said with the obstinacy of her kind, "that the books might have been the better idea."

"Well," the Mate commented sensibly, "we'll know as soon as we get to the island."

LOG RAFTS SOUTH!

By STEVE HAIL

"You're making the trip," Fallon said. "Get aboard."

A WALL of gray rain, hard and blinding as a swung curtain of crystal beads, was slanting in before the premature darkness when Fallon rounded in for his mooring at the Astoria dock. That was why he didn't notice the big deep-water tug groaning against the fender pilings farther up the line. Or the waiting figure huddled in the doubtful lee of the pier-shed just beyond.

He throttled down the old one-lunged Hicks, wrenched briefly at the reversing lever and winced inwardly at the result-

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK KRAMER

ing clatter of worn gears. He let the troll boat carry its way into the wharf, then wormed his way out of the tiny pilothouse and looped a bight of the headline over a bollard. He started aft for a sternline. That's when he saw the stocky figure, dressed in canvas weatherproofs, picking his way toward him across the broken planking of the pier.

"You Captain Fallon?" The voice was muffled by the wind and the fold of a bath towel tucked into the neckband of his tin suit, but Fallon heard it. Especially the "Captain." It had been a year since he had heard that title affixed to his name. No, not a year, he thought bitterly. Eleven months, but a long eleven months. An obscure fisherman on a shabby Columbia River double-ender wasn't often addressed as respectfully as that. He nodded. "Barney Fallon," he said.

The man knuckled a tear from his dripping nose. "Johnson is down from Vancouver," he said. "He sent me out here to wait for you. He's staying at the Ward Hotel." He said it as if Johnson might be a five-star admiral.

Fallon wondered if he was supposed to jump. He didn't. He cleated the line and kicked a couple of fenders overside and hauled himself up onto the dock.

The dim light reflecting off the pooled water of the pier showed a big-boned frame, spare from long, hard hours in the weather. His hair, tufting out below his battered cap at the temples, was naturally dark, but stained a glistening black now with rain. Fine wrinkles at the corners of brown, reckless eyes indicated a quickness to smile that contrasted strangely with the soberness of his straight mouth. The eyes weren't smiling now. He said, "The woods are full of Johnsons."

"Knute Johnson," the man said. "He knows you."

FALLON stiffened, remembering. He took a cigarette from the pocket of his peacoat and turned his back to the wind and rain and lighted it. He stood there, smoking and staring out into the blackness where the seas were thundering over South Jetty, and suddenly he was seeing it all again.

It wasn't surf exploding on the breakwater now. It was logs from the Johnson rigged coastwise raft, broken adrift in the making sou'wester and bludgeoning the steam tug *Trinidad* in a merciless tattoo. He heard again the hoarse voices of frightened men, pitched high against the howling of the gale, huddled together and mouthing their frail hopes of deliverance.

He saw the thousand foot whale-back that had been built to withstand anything the coast could offer, unexplainably falling apart like a child's tinkertoy when a door is slammed. He remembered the naked disbelief in his own mind and his futile efforts to circle the raft and hook on to the other end, risking his own life and those of vessel and crew in the desperate gamble to save what remained of the tow.

It had been a good try, but not good enough. He felt again the wracking shudder run through the stricken *Trinidad* as her screw sucked in a drifting log. It had been unseen and unavoidable in the black fury of the night, but that hadn't lessened the damage. That had been the finish. The finish, that is, except the helpless waiting for the little vessel to be hammered apart under their feet. Of course, there had been the hopeless gesture of launching the lifeboat into that sea of tumbling logs. But it had been a gesture and that was all.

Afterwards there had been the interminable hours in the deadening cold of the water, with only the inborn will to live giving strength to numbed fingers as they clung to the tossing, twisting timbers that meant survival. There had been rescue, too, at last—for a few of them.

But in the sick bay of the Coast Guard cutter, looking out the porthole at the maned graybeards charging down on them like avenging centaurs, Fallon knew that it would have been better if he had taken the old way, the never-come-back way, and perished with the *Trinidad*. For though the board of inquiry had been as puzzled as himself as to the cause, it had been definite in its blame. That had been Captain Barney Fallon's last offshore command.

He sucked in a deep lungful of smoke and shook the picture from his mind

and flicked the cigarette in a long, glowing arc out into the darkness.

"The hell with Johnson," he told the other, and turned away and started down the dock.

Then in the guttering glow of a street lamp at the far end of the pier, he saw the *Aragon*. He stopped, remembering her as one of the Army's hundred and forty footers that had made history wherever the water was blue and deep. Now, her bright peacetime trim of black topsides and white upperworks accentuated, if anything, the long, low rugged lines of her hull. The thin exhaust smoke pulsing aloft from her twin diesels was the quiet breathing of thirteen hundred sleeping horses. A lot of power and a lot of boat. She . . .

He started then, involuntarily, as his eyes came to rest on the symbol painted below the lip of the squat stack. It was the Blue Crown insignia of Johnson Tug & Barge, the same that had graced the rust-thinned funnel of the ancient *Trinidad*. Knute Johnson, Fallon thought, was doing all right for a man who claimed to have lost his shirt when five million board feet of timber had been splintered into matchwood by the fanged rocks of the Oregon coast.

Fallon felt his hands knotting into fists in the pockets of his coat. He turned to the silent figure standing at his elbow. "I've changed my mind," he said. "I'll see your Mr. Johnson."

The man's mouth corners wrinkled in what could have been a grin. "He told me you would." He vaulted the guard rail of the *Aragon*. The deep shadows of the boat deck overhang swallowed him.

Fallon leaned into the chill wind knifing up the dock, turned at the corner of the pier shed and walked the three blocks to the Ward Hotel. The lobby was empty except for one man slouched in a leather chair. His face was hidden behind a newspaper. He was wearing a plaid mackinaw.

"Fallon," Barney told the night clerk. "Mr. Johnson's expecting me."

The clerk looked at him. He said, "Room 211."

Fallon climbed the stairs to the second floor room. He knocked and a voice said, "Come!"

KNUTE JOHNSON sat near the window, his heavy, almost fat body tilted back perilously in the flimsy hotel chair. His blond, balding head rested against the wall and his bulging blue eyes above a thick, hooked nose regarded his visitor as if they had just parted the day before.

"You're looking good, Barney," he said. He started to his feet.

Fallon slapped water from his visored cap. "Don't get up," he said. "I'm not staying long." He ignored the proffered hand. "Your messenger boy said you wanted to see me."

Johnson chuckled. "That was Nils Fogarty, mate of the *Aragon*. How'd you like a job?"

"I've got a job," Fallon said.

Johnson said, "Why kid yourself? You're picking with the chickens with that worm-eaten kettle of yours. I'll pay you a thousand a month. Skipper's wages on the *Aragon*."

Fallon's voice was cold. "Maybe you forgot. The Coast Guard's holding my ticket."

"A year's suspension, wasn't it? That's nearly up. And this job won't call for any coastwise work for a month or so anyway." He waved a hand at a bottle on the table. "Sit down and cool off."

"I don't want your liquor—or your job," Fallon said. "I'll settle for some information." His thumbs hooked into his belt and he said flatly, "For a man who claims he had to pawn the gold in his back molars to pay his next month's rent after the *Trinidad* went down, you're doing pretty well. Twin screw diesel jobs don't sell for buttons."

Johnson wasn't smiling now. "I had insurance. And the *Aragon* is Army surplus. I got it reasonably enough."

Fallon nodded. "You had insurance. A few lousy bucks. But your story was that the premiums were out of line for offshore work. You couldn't insure for full value and still make a profit on the haul. That sinking broke you—you said."

Johnson sighed. "Don't be so damned cynical. I got some backing. I'm in business again. On credit, but—"

"Always the promoter," Fallon said. "What is it this time? That barging job at Vancouver?"

Johnson got heavily to his feet and the

chair legs squealed on the bare boards. In the silence he said, "Timber. I'm running another log raft south. For Pape & Bailey this time. With lumber at present prices there's a fortune in it. The Abram's mill in San Diego will take everything this Pape outfit can float down there. I've got the towing contract."

Fallon felt the muscles hardening along the line of his jaw. After a long time he said, "I would have thought you'd had enough." His eyes held Johnson's. "But then it was the owners of the raft that took the big loss, wasn't it? Then, too, you did *your* worrying behind an office desk instead of the working end of a tow-line."

Knute Johnson flushed. "Perils of the sea," he said. "It's a chance a sailor has to take. You were paid for it. You could always go to stump ranching if you didn't like it."

Fallon said, "I've thought of that. The stump ranching, I mean." His eyes tightened at the corners. "But forget that perils of the sea stuff. We've been over that before—with the Coast Guard. It wasn't weather broke that raft apart. We both know that. I like at least an even break when I go to sea, not loaded dice." He shook his head. "No, Johnson, I'll stick to fishing."

Johnson said, "You still think that raft was rigged to fall apart?"

"I know it, but I can't prove it." He pushed a cigarette between his pursed lips. "If I could, I'd sleep better nights."

"Why didn't you speak up at the investigation?"

Fallon's mouth corners curled bitterly around the cigarette. "I had other things on my mind along about that time. Things you wouldn't understand. Like how a man looks when he's washed up on a beach after a week or so in the water. There were five of them, Johnson. Five."

He flung the unlighted cigarette into the wash basin and sat down on the edge of the bed and went on. "Since then I've had time to wonder about it. A lot of time. Like when you're lying awake nights waiting for sleep to come."

His eyes were on the blank wall across the room. "There were plenty of people would have liked to see that tow break up," he said slowly. "The mill owners, for one. The little outfits, I mean. They'd figure it was taking business south that rightfully belonged to them. Or the trucking outfits, the fly-by-nighters that are springing up and fighting for every long haul contract they can finagle."

He paused and his eyebrows drew together. "Then there's the steam-schooners. The one and two boat shoestringers who'd figure that a raft was cutting into their trade. Hell, they can't handle a fraction of the footage that can be towed. Or as cheaply. Why, they'd do 'most anything to cripple competition. And how about your sailors' unions? There always a few Commies amongst 'em, some crackpot who feels it's his life mission to make more jobs for his fellow travelers. A tug only takes a crew of a dozen or so. A coastwise steamer needs three times that number."

He stopped finally and shrugged. "You call it, Johnson. I can't."

Johnson poured himself a drink and swirled the liquor in the glass. "That," he said, "is why I'm paying a thousand a month to the man who can take this raft through to the end of the line. Think it over."

Fallon got up. "Little ships and big seas are a combination I've learned to take or leave alone." He started for the door, then halted halfway there, remembering another thing, almost forgotten. "How about the Coast Guard?" he said. "They were pretty unhappy, too, about having menaces to navigation floating all over the North Pacific. The last I heard, they were trying to have rafts outlawed by Washington."

"They couldn't make it stick," Johnson said. "As long as the tow passes a seaworthy inspection, they can't stop it. At least up till now they couldn't. Another break-up might change the picture. That's why Pape & Bailey are holding this one down to six hundred feet. Smaller than the others. It can't miss, Fallon. Why, with the summer nor'wester behind you, it'll all be downhill. Fair winds and following seas. What more could you want?"

"A leisurely old age," Fallon said. "Find yourself another sucker." He opened the door, then kicked it shut behind him and went down to the lobby.

The clerk was talking to the man in

the plaid mackinaw. The man's face was shadowed by his turned down hat brim, but his profile showed a nose flattened from an old break.

The clerk said, "You hire on with Knute Johnson, Mr. Fallon?"

Fallon stopped to light a cigarette and looked at the clerk over the cupped match. "You and Winchell ought to team up," he said and went out into the street.

Fallon rolled as the knife swept downward, and made a wild grab for the man's wrist.

CHAPTER II

A SUCKER FOR TROUBLE

IT was still raining, with a gusting wind blowing in from the southeast. Fallon felt the need of a drink and remembering that the state liquor store would be closed, he cut through an alley toward a near-by club where he held a membership card. He was halfway through the dimly lit short-cut when a voice behind him said, "C'n you tell me where's the bus station?"

Fallon turned and something hard and heavy struck him above the ear. He bounced once against the wall of a building and went down. Faint light funneling into the alley glinted on steel. Fallon rolled as the knife swept downward. He made a wild grab for the arcing wrist and his fingers closed on tensed tendons. The man kicked viciously at his ribs. Fallon grunted but hung on and sunk his fingernails into the wrist. He heard the knife clatter to the pavement.

He was up on his knees then and swinging a rounding blow at the dim face. His knuckles found bone and the man sagged, spitting curses. Fallon swung again and grabbed the other's coat as he staggered. He clutched the lapels with both hands and bounced the man's head against the curbstone, twice. It was enough. Fallon swayed to his feet. The rough bricks of the wall helped. He looked down at the limp figure in the gutter. In the darkness he couldn't see too much of the face. Just a once-broken nose, smashed again now, and oozing blood onto a plaid mackinaw.

Fallon picked up his cap. He winced as he tried to pull it onto his head. He rubbed absently at the rising lump above his ear, then started back the way he'd come.

The lobby of the hotel was really empty this time. Fallon went upstairs and entered 211 without knocking. Johnson was still there.

"I'll take that drink," Fallon said. "And the job."

Johnson filled the water tumbler from the wash stand a third full. "What about that stump ranch and the leisurely old age?" he asked.

Fallon said, "The way things look, I'll probably live longer at sea. When do I start?"

Johnson's lips pursed. "I won't have the raft hung together for another month. I've got the cradles set up and I'm starting in tomorrow with the derrick barge up at Cathlamet Bay. You can start getting acquainted with the *Aragon* whenever you're ready. Look her over and order what you need. You may as well fit out where she's laying now."

Fallon downed the whiskey. It tasted of tooth paste, but he felt better. "I'll do my fitting out at Cathlamet Bay," he said. "And I'll start in the morning. I want to see this one put together."

He set down the glass and turned toward the door. "You know a guy who wears a plaid mackinaw?" he asked.

Johnson said, "There's a million guys who wear plaid mackinaws."

"I was just asking," Fallon said. He went out into the hall and down the stairs. The clerk was there this time, bent over the switchboard. He didn't look up. Fallon stopped and said, "I hired on with Knute Johnson. Want to make something of it?"

The clerk didn't say anything.

"The guy who slipped you a couple of bucks for information is out in the alley," Fallon said. "If he's looking for the bus station, tell him where it's at. I didn't get a chance."

He went out into the street again. This time he looked both ways before he started back down to the pier. He walked on by the *Aragon* till he came to his own boat. He coaxed the asthmatic Hicks into life, cast off the lines and backed out into the stream. A mile upriver he swung over into the shoals near the bank and dropped anchor. It was still raining with a persistent, soothing clatter on the overhead when he finally dropped off to sleep on the wheelhouse settee.

THE next morning, early, he got the anchor up and motored back to the dock and tied the launch up ahead of the *Aragon*. Fogarty, he saw, was already up and prowling around the foredeck of the tug. In the daylight, Fallon noticed that the mate was even blockier

than he had appeared the night before. He was built like a steer, with sloping shoulders and a red, square face that nearly hid small eyes set deep above fleshy cheeks. He didn't have a broken nose.

"Mornin', Cap," Fogarty greeted him casually.

For a small town it didn't take long for news to get around, Fallon thought. He said, "Have we got a crew? I want to get underway as soon as possible."

"Stand-by gang is all," the mate said. "We've ordered a regular crew from Portland. They'll be in by bus about noon."

Fallon breakfasted and spent the rest of the morning looking over the tug and checking the gear. The *Aragon,* he found, was equipped with an automatic towing engine. That was something. It was an electrically powered drum that, once the desired length of wire was run out, could be set to take up slack when the strain eased or spool it out when a sudden load came on the line. It was a device that would spare a lot of strain on wire, boat, tow and the skipper's nerves.

The engineer, a wizened Irishman named O'Reilly, was warming the engines when the crew came aboard. But if the burble of the powerful, smooth-running diesels was heartening to Fallon, the appearance of the deck gang was not. They were as scummy a lot as he had ever seen. The hiring hall dispatcher in Portland must have combed Skid Row to fill Johnson's order.

Even at that, Fallon thought, he must have had a time corralling them. He knew that a coastwise tow was considered anything but a lush berth by the average foc'sle hand. It meant three weeks, maybe more, of cramped quarters, skimpy food and monotony—if the weather was good. If they ran into a blow it meant wet, toiling misery. A blue water tug with a sizable tow dragging astern didn't have a chance of riding the seas like an ordinary vessel. Its only choice was to try to club the combers down to its size. It was usually touch and go as to which would win, but in any case the crew was always the loser. All in all a man had to be pretty broke, or drunk, to ship on a coastwise tow. Judging by their appearance, Fallon

thought that this bunch was probably both.

He looked them over, searching for any interesting details of appearance. Like a broken nose, for instance. There was one. A thin-legged man with top-heavy shoulders and coarse black hair was wearing a broad strip of adhesive tape across the bridge of his nose.

"Looks like someone busted you on the beak," Fallon said.

The man, who looked to be part Hawaiian, said, "Caught in a swinging door, Skipper. You hiring sailors, or running a body beautiful contest?"

"Sailors," Fallon said, "but ones who can keep their tongues behind their teeth."

The man's jaw pushed forward. "I'm the union delegate for this gang, Skipper. Name's Molina. You're hiring this bunch as is. You got no cause for not—till you prove incompetence or somethin'."

Fallon gave up. It was an old beef. You couldn't win. His face became a mental shrug and he singled out a tall, rangy man with a hard, weathered face and forearms like a gorilla. Under the hair, both of them were tattooed. He looked like he'd spit on a lot of salt water in his time.

"You the bosun?" Fallon asked.

The man said shortly, "Yup. I'm Lundstrom."

"We're through warming up. I want to get started. You can single up on the lines. Hold the spring till I tell you."

Molina took a forward step. "Just a minute, Skipper. We'll eat first."

Fallon looked at his watch. It was 11:30. "Chow's at noon," he said. "You can eat on the way upriver. We'll be there in less than an hour. The mate'll check your papers then and you can stow your gear."

Molinda said, "I know our rights. We get time to wash up first. It's in the agreement."

Fallon's lips pressed tight. "You get dirty on the bus ride?"

"Maybe. Do we wash up or do we catch the next bus that goes back to Portland?"

Fallon sighed. "Foc'sle's forward," he said. "Sorry there's no scented soap." He turned away.

AT one o'clock only half the crew were aboard. The rest of them were drinking their lunch at the nearest beer joint. Fallon sent the mate down the dock to round them up. Fogarty was lucky. They were all at the same bar. He came back in a few minutes with the drunks stumbling in his wake. With him was a middle-aged man wearing a rumpled business suit and a two-day stubble of graying beard. He was stooped and looked tired.

"Mr. Scanlon, Cap," Fogarty said. "Second mate. He came in on the bus, too."

Fallon was beginning to develop a neurosis about busses, but he said, "Glad to know you, Scanlon." He wondered if his luck would ever turn. Scanlon didn't look like a deep-water mate. He looked like a shoe clerk. Not a very good shoe clerk at that.

Fallon had half a notion to send him back to the hiring hall, but he knew it wouldn't do any good. The union said the guy was a second mate. Therefore, the guy was a second mate. He sighed. Some days you couldn't make a dime.

He spoke to Fogarty. "You can let go aft, Mate." He climbed the outside ladder to the wheelhouse and put the telegraphs on Stand-By. With the lines aboard he backed down on both engines. O'Reilly's diesels leaped to life with a liquid purring that was music to Fallon's ears. Clear the dock, he cuffed the telegraphs to Full Ahead. The *Aragon* took off like a Gold Cup contestant over a measured mile. They made the five miles to Cathlamet Bay in a little less than half an hour. The *Aragon* just squatted down and pushed the river astern. She was a sweetheart. Fallon was glad that at least one thing about his new job was working out right.

Knute Johnson was on the ball. Fallon became aware of that as soon as the *Aragon* rounded Tongue Point. Already the cigar-shaped cradle of planks and timbers, looking like the bleached ribs of some prehistoric monster, was being filled with logs by a chuffing derrick barge.

Fallon drifted in and tied up to the stern of the floating crane. After he'd rung the engines off he laid out a work

list for the mate that left Fogarty mumbling to himself as he went in search of the bosun. Scanlon, the second mate, he put to work correcting coastal charts in the wheelhouse. He hoped Scanlon knew what charts were.

With everybody out from under his feet, Fallon watched the construction operation for an hour or so from his vantage point on the boat deck. Then he climbed over the bulwarks and made his way across to where the boom of the derrick was picking 'em up and laying 'em down. It looked like a giant game of jackstraws, only in reverse.

Knute Johnson was standing at the edge of the barge nearest the cradle, talking to the foreman. "You didn't lose any time," he said as Fallon came up.

Fallon said, "Lucky I didn't. I'll want more full length stuff going in there than you're using now. I want plenty of lap and backbone in this job."

The foreman bristled and glanced at Johnson. "Keep your long nose outa it, mister," he told Fallon. "Who's buildin' this raft, me or you?"

"You," Fallon said mildly, "but you're going to build it the way I want it, and with my long nose stuck right into it. I've seen you jokers work before. When the job's done you just stand on the dock and wave a friendly good-bye—with a stiff middle finger—then head for the nearest gin mill to spend your wages. But I take it to sea. And if it comes apart maybe I don't live to collect my wages, much less spend them." He faced Johnson. "Let's get this straight from the start. Do I get it made up the way I want it, or do you get another skipper?"

Johnson's eyes went brittle, but he managed a smile—a small one. "You get it your way," he said. He turned to the foreman. "Bring up that load of tree-length stuff, Seven."

Fallon went back aboard. O'Reilly was waiting for him. The engineer said, "I drew a first assistant by the name o' Petrovsk. He's a Finn. I got nothin' against Finns, but this guy I don't like. And what he knows about diesels you could put in your eye. He might be all right on cement mixers."

"Chief, I've been told already today that you can't fire a man for the way he parts his hair. You'll have to learn to like him."

"No," O'Reilly said, "you're wrong. I don't gotta like him. Maybe I can't fire him, but I can watch him." He jerked his quilted cap down over his eyes and headed back to the engine room.

Fallon went up to his room and closed the door. He took a pint bottle out of the bottom drawer, uncapped it and had a long drink. He put it back in the drawer and lit a cigarette and stared at the door. It looked like it was going to be a lovely trip.

CHAPTER III

STORM WARNINGS

THINGS went smoothly for the next few weeks. Without any further interference from Fallon, Johnson and his foreman put in full days of painstaking work. They did a good job. By the end of the third week the cradles were half filled, the bottom timbers of the raft sinking to a depth of ten or twelve feet with the increasing weight. At this point the chains were rigged under Fallon's watchful supervision. A length of old ship's anchor cable was run the entire length to form the backbone. To this were shackled a number of herring-bone chains which in turn would later be attached to half a dozen circle chains at either end. Now, the upper half of the cigar-shaped affair was begun.

Another three weeks found the main structure of the raft completed and the deck load of smaller stuff chained on top of it. X frames were secured in an upright position at both ends to support the riding lights. Johnson had decided on electric lights instead of the usual oil or acetylene lamps. Current was to be supplied by hot-shot batteries in weatherproof containers secured to the deckload.

As Johnson explained, it would save sending a man astern in the workboat every day or so to trim lamps. The batteries should keep the lights burning for three or four days at the least. Fallon, thinking of the days when bad weather would keep the work boat from being launched at all, agreed that it was a good idea. He had a momentary pricking of

curiosity as he watched the batteries being put in place. From their size it looked as if Johnson was planning an Australia passage instead of a three weeks' trek down the coast. He shrugged. After all, Johnson was paying for them.

As the sixth week drew to a close Fallon announced that he was satisfied. The cradles were cut loose and pulled clear. The turnbuckles were set up on the chain lashings and the big wooden leviathan was moored to brow pilings, awaiting favorable conditions over the bar at the mouth of the river. Considering everything, it looked good to Captain Barney Fallon.

Good, that is, except for an incident that occurred the day before their scheduled departure. With its work at an end, Fallon had towed the derrick barge back down to Astoria. There, the Coast Guard inspector had signed the seaworthy certificate and handed over Fallon's suspended license.

"Take care of this, Captain," the inspector warned him. "Another suspension will mean more than a year. The district commander is up to his neck with this log raft business." He coughed. "In my opinion this one is right. The rest is up to you." He shook hands and spared a smile. "Fair winds and good luck."

Fallon didn't say anything. He folded the ticket and put it in his pocket. Johnson was waiting for him in the wheelhouse when he went back aboard. The tug owner had a paper in his hand, too. A yellow one, with printed letters. It was clear and to the point. It seemed to be a day for papers, Fallon thought.

"Telegram from San Diego," Johnson explained. "Abrams will have to shut down if this stuff isn't tied up to his mill by the twentieth. That's twenty-one days. He's offered a nice bonus if it's there on time. You'll get a cut of it if you can deliver."

Fallon thought about the *Aragon's* thirteen hundred horses. "I'll lay on the whip," he promised. He looked at Johnson. "I'll have that bonus business in writing."

Johnson colored. "You're a suspicious character!"

"It's the company I keep," Fallon said. He handed the other a pen.

With the agreement signed and in his possession he watched Johnson out of sight up the dock, then continued staring at the empty pier for a long time. After awhile he rang Stand-By, and with the lines gone, pointed the *Aragon's* eager snout upstream again. He wanted one last look at the raft while Johnson wasn't around.

Darkness was settling over the river by the time they returned to Cathlamet. Fallon rounded into the tide and eased the boat gently alongside the readied tow. He saw the vessel safely tied up by Fogarty and was assured of O'Reilly's readiness for a morning departure. Then he went to his room and got a flashlight and vaulted over onto the raft. He hadn't taken a dozen steps when the spot of light playing over the rough footing, focused suddenly on a pair of calked boots. They belonged to a spraddle-legged figure standing near the X frame at the fore end of the raft.

Fallon shifted the light upward to the man's face. He recognized him as one of the loggers employed by Johnson during the past weeks. The man's fist was curled purposefully around a sawed-off peavey. He said, "Far enough. Scram back aboard."

"I'm the skipper of this tourist's trailer," Fallon said. "I want a look around."

The other didn't seem impressed. "I don't care if you're God, mister. I got orders not to let nobody come snooping around."

"The hell with your orders," Fallon said and started forward.

The man sighed. "Cap, I'm gettin' time an' a half for this here guard duty. Two-sixty an hour. That's good pay. I'll earn it if I have to." The calloused fingers tightened on the hickory handle.

FALLON stopped, thinking that maybe the man was right at that. The peavey made things look pretty reasonable. He went back aboard and exchanged his flashlight for the .380 automatic that he kept in the drawer alongside the pint bottle. It was smaller than the peavey, but it had more range. It ought to do. He started back to the raft. Halfway there, thinking about it, he changed his mind. After all, it didn't matter too

much—now. He was satisfied that the whole lash-up was a job that would hold together in anything short of a West Indian hurricane—and the California-Oregon coast wasn't the Caribbean.

Anyway, he had a better idea and it would wait till morning.

He went back to his room and pulled off his shoes. It was while he was staring at the deck between his feet that he heard the guard challenging another prowler. Fallon fumbled for his shoes in the darkness. By the time he got them on and reached the door, everything was quiet on the raft. But down the alleyway leading to the foc'sle he heard the faint scuffling of leather on steel deck plates, then the creak of springs on a pipe berth. There were fourteen bunks in the foc'sle. By the time he got there, Fallon knew, all fourteen of them would hold a snoring, sleeping figure. Anyway, snoring.

He went back to his bunk and lay down fully clothed. He didn't go to sleep for a long time. The last thing he heard before he dropped off was the pacing of Johnson's strong boy on the raft outside the porthole. Fallon hoped he'd get frostbite.

An hour before daylight Fallon roused out the crew. In order to save time,

The man's fist was curled around a sawed-off peavey. He said, "Far enough. Scram back aboard."

Johnson had arranged to pick up the bar pilot and drive him up to John Day Point, a mile and a half up the bay, and meet the *Aragon* there. Fallon was doubly glad of the arrangement when he went out on deck. Fog, as thick as quilted muslin, was hanging over the river. They were nearly an hour making the short run.

Fallon tied up, rang the engines off, and walked down the rickety wharf to a pay telephone. He called the Ward Hotel. The night clerk was still on duty. He sounded irritable and drowsy. Fallon did most of the talking. The clerk didn't sound sleepy any more.

Fallon hung up and went back aboard. In his room he addressed an envelope, enclosing two twenty dollar bills. He licked the flap closed, pocketed the envelope and went below for coffee, and to wait for Johnson and the pilot.

A little after eight o'clock a taxi drew up to the stringer piece alongside the tug. Johnson and a tall, angular man got out. "Captain Jennings," Johnson introduced the pilot.

Fallon shook hands and said, "Might as well have a bite of breakfast, Cap. We'll be a few minutes getting ready. Messroom's forward under the bridge deck."

When Jennings had disappeared, Fallon nodded at the taxi driver and then turned back to Johnson. His voice was as hard as the shine in his eyes. "Get aboard," he said.

Johnson looked startled. "I've had breakfast," he said uneasily.

"You're making the trip," Fallon said. "A big towboat operator like you ought to get a slant at the business from the hired help's viewpoint now and then."

Johnson ran a loose tongue across looser lips. "You're crazy, Fallon."

Fallon nodded. "Yep," he agreed. "You gotta be to towboat for a living. Move!"

Johnson looked around wildly. The crew was still eating. Only the cabbie was in sight and he kept busy with the bags wedged into the luggage compartment. Everything else within a hundred yards was shrouded in fog.

The driver dropped the bags onto the pier. They had gold initials on them, *K. J.* Johnson looked at them and his face purpled. He took a deep breath and pulled himself upright, but his stomach still hung over his belt. Fallon sunk the nose of the .380 into it.

Johnson grunted, but changed his mind about saying anything. Nobody said anything. The only sound was the soft chuffing of the *Aragon's* auxiliaries and the distant moan of a diaphone out on the main river. Johnson moved.

The deck stores locker on the main deck was open. Johnson stumbled as Fallon nudged him over the weatherboard. Fallon tumbled the luggage in after him, then dogged down the door and snapped the padlock. He gave the cab driver ten dollars and the sealed envelope. It was addressed to the night clerk at the Ward Hotel. Fallon went up to the wheelhouse and rang a Stand-By to O'Reilly.

An hour later, with the heightening sun blotting up the fog, they were hooked up to the raft. A launch crew, hired for the purpose, cut the lines adrift and took Johnson's night guard aboard. Fallon got the all clear signal from the launch operator and went ahead slow on both engines. The *Aragon* picked up the slack in the short-coupled wire and gathered grudging way.

They circled Tongue Point into the Columbia proper and Fallon shoved the telegraphs ahead to Full. The *Aragon* didn't act like a power yacht now, but she moved ahead. That was something.

"She's all yours, Cap," Fallon told the pilot, and settled back to watch the shoreline creep past the windows.

EIGHT miles downbay they overhauled a steam-schooner anchored in the stream off Pt. Adams. She was a little wooden tub, built somewhere around the turn of the century and looking every year of her age. She was loaded to the guards and then some. A deckload of pilings chained to her well decks all but shut off the visibility from her wheelhouse. She looked as if she was ready to break in the middle under the load.

They had a tight squeeze getting by her.

"A hell of a place to drop the hook," Fallon said.

Jennings grunted. "That's the *Elston,*" he said. "Northland Steam. A two-ship outfit. They own another one just as bad. She's been there since yesterday with steering gear trouble of some sort. She ought to be drydocked for a survey, but the owners won't have it. Probably scared they'd find the rudder post eaten away or something and have to spend a dollar."

Fallon said, "From the looks of her she could use a dollar's worth of work. Maybe even two."

"Northland operates mostly on nerve and borrowed money," the pilot said scornfully. "They figure that what prayer won't fix, baling wire will." He spat through the open door, dismissing her. He looked at his watch. "Call the chief and see if he can spare a few more turns. We're getting nowhere."

It was mid-afternoon and the beginning of the flood tide before they made the river entrance. The bar was smooth, with a light breeze from the northwest pushing a long, easy-rolling swell before it. A mile short of the lightship Fallon stopped the engines and saw the pilot over the side. Jennings circled a thumb and forefinger from his place in the tender. Fallon grinned and waved and set the *Aragon's* jackstaff on a heading that would take them five miles off Tillamook Rock.

He turned the watch over to Scanlon, then went aft for a look at the raft tailing out astern. Fogarty and the bosun at the towing engine paid out thirteen hundred feet and secured the wire. Fallon sent word down to O'Reilly to gradually build up his speed to maximum. He watched the *Aragon* settle back on her haunches for the long pull southward, then he descended to the main deck and opened the deck store's locker.

Johnson looked very unhappy. He was sitting on an upturned bucket with another one cradled between his knees. It held what remained of his breakfast. The blood purpling in his neck didn't go well with the gray around his gills. He swayed to his feet. "You'll never get away with this, Fallon," he choked.

Fallon said, "I'm not a gambling man, but one'll get you five I do. As far as anybody knows, you checked out of your hotel this morning to make the trip south with us. Nobody knows that your gear was packed for you while you were out eating breakfast. Nobody, that is, except the night clerk."

He chucked sympathetically. "A weak character, that clerk, but probably just a victim of circumstances. They're underpaid. Makes 'em anxious to turn an honest dollar now and then. Well, anyway, a dollar. Which brings us to the point. What's the phoney business going

on here, and where do you come in? And what's more important, where do I fit in?"

Johnson caught at the door jamb as the *Aragon* rolled, weaved crazily and brought up with a sickening jerk on the tow line. He swallowed something fighting upward in his throat.

Fallon lit a cigarette and waited.

Johnson said, "You're crazy. You . . ."

"We've been over that before," Fallon said. "Are you going to talk?" He blew smoke into the narrow confines of the locker. Johnson coughed and sank to his knees, moaning and clutching at the bucket. When he was through he looked up at Fallon. He didn't say anything. He didn't have to.

Fallon sighed. "All right. It'll wait. This isn't a week-end excursion. There's a spare room in the boat deck quarters. You can stay there. I'll keep the key. Let's go."

THE gentle northwesterly held and they made good time for the next few watches. Close to four knots. Two days out of Columbia, Fallon had Cape Blanco a point on the bow when he turned the watch over to Scanlon at noon. When he was called for supper he looked out the porthole to see the cape almost on four points. He grunted in satisfaction. He dressed, ate and went up to the wheelhouse for a look around while there was still some daylight left.

He saw that what little breeze they'd had that morning had died. The sea was smooth, with a suggestion of a swell rolling in long and lazy from the south.

Fogarty looked up from the logbook and angled his blunt jaw at the swell. "Somethin' making up to the south'ard looks like."

Fallon started a second cigarette and said, "Could be. We can't expect to keep it on our tail all the way. You better go eat. I'll watch her."

The mate snapped shut the logbook. "I just had the glasses on the raft. Stern light's petered out. After I eat, I'll take a couple of hands in the boat and hook up another battery."

"No need for you to go," Fallon said. "Send the bosun and the watch on deck."

Fogarty looked at him quickly. "I like to see to them things myself, Cap." He patted his midsection. "Anyway, I could use the exercise."

Fallon had never thought of the mate as a man who would take to physical exertion of his own volition. But he shrugged and said. "O.K., mister. Let me know when you're ready to start."

While the mate was eating, Fallon checked over the day's entries in the log. The barometer, he saw, had dropped .04 during his six hours below. He went over to the glass and tapped it gently with a hopeful knuckle. The needle jerked and stopped, down another .01. Forgarty was right. They were going to get some weather, and anything from the south would slow them down to a crawl.

He was staring at the dial, trying to wish the pointer back up, when the radio operator came into the wheelhouse. There was a typed message in his hand. "Frisco weather," he said.

Fallon read:

LOW PRESSURE AREA OF MODERATE INTENSITY MOVING IN ON THE CALIFORNIA-OREGON COAST. SOUTHERLY WINDS, MODERATE TO STRONG, EXPECTED WITHIN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS. SMALL CRAFT WARNINGS POSTED BETWEEN POINT ARENA AND CAPE BLANCO.

"That's nice," Fallon said. "That's just peachy."

He was still looking at the message when the telegraph jangled at his side and the port engine stopped. Fallon swore softly. He waited for an explanation to come up the speaking tube. Instead, a few minutes later, O'Reilly himself clattered up the stairs. The engineer's hands were kneading a ball of cotton waste aimlessly and his wizened face was lined with concern. He looked at the helmsman, then beckoned Fallon to the far corner of the wheelhouse.

"Lube oil line let go," he said. "We'll be shut down for awhile on the one engine."

Fallon frowned. "Serious?"

"I don't know yet," O'Reilly said. "I think I caught it in time. But it isn't that. I was in the messroom whin I heard her poundin' and I sensed she was run-

nin' hot. Petrovsk, the first assistant, was on watch. I got below quick. Another few seconds and she'd've burned out for certain. A shipyard job."

"I thought there was a warning Klaxon on the lubricating system," Fallon said.

O'Reilly wiped one hand, then the other on his soiled boiler suit. "That's just it, Cap. The wires to the Klaxon was cut." His eyes held Fallon's. "So was the lube oil line. There's funny business o' some sort down below."

Fallon was silent for a long time, staring aft toward the raft. "Chief," he said at last, "there's somebody on this hooker who doesn't want to see San Diego in a hurry—if at all. I know who it is, but I don't know why, or how or who's working with him. I—"

He stopped as Scanlon came up the stairs. The second mate was brushing crumbs from his sweater. The skin on both hands, between thumb and forefinger, was stained with diesel oil.

Fallon's voice was tight. "You helping out the black gang these days?"

Scanlon grinned weakly. "I'm something of a basement mechanic," he said. "I was tuning the galley range."

Fallon said, "I think it's time that the crew of this kettle start keeping their noses out of other people's departments and pay a little more attention to their own. And that goes for me." He faced O'Reilly. "All right, Chief, see what you can do with the port engine. Meanwhile, drop the starboard one down to slow. Just enough to keep the slack out of the wire. I'm taking a little jaunt in the work-boat. And you'll find a gun in my desk drawer. Use it on the first man to go near those engines without authority from you."

He turned to Scanlon. "Keep her heading the way she is till I get back." He went out onto the boat deck.

CHAPTER IV

DYNAMITE DODGER

FOGARTY already had the boat cleared away and part of the deck gang standing by the falls when Fallon got there. Lundstrom and the Hawaiian, Molina, both standing the four to eight watch were working on a rope fender in the lee of the potato locker.

The mate beckoned to them as Fallon came up. "You two," he said. "You look like you could pull an oar."

It sounded casual. Fallon wondered if it was. The bosum sheathed the knife with which he had been working and started for the boat. Molina laid his big hardwood fid on the deck, then seemed to think better of it. He stuck it in his belt.

"You can stay aboard, Mister Mate," Fallon told Fogarty. "I'll take over your chore."

Fogarty's adam's apple rose and fell. "That won't be necessary, Cap," he said. "It's just a routine job."

"That's me," Fallon said pleasantly. "Routine Rollo. You'll stay here."

Fogarty hesitated, his eyes measuring Fallon carefully. Then whatever he had in mind, passed, and he shot a look at the two men he had appointed for the rowing detail. Fallon wondered what that look meant. Well, there was no better way of finding out. He climbed over the gunwale and settled himself in the sternsheets. The crew lowered the boat away. He fended off from the *Aragon's* side as the bosun and Molina took up the oars.

With the strain eased on the wire, the raft had crept up to little more than two hundred yards away and they were alongside in less than ten minutes. Already it was growing dark and the *Aragon* was distinguishable only by her deck lights up ahead. Fallon jumped onto the raft and picked his way across the slippery footing toward the X frame at the stern. The two seamen made the boat painter fast to a chain lashing and followed.

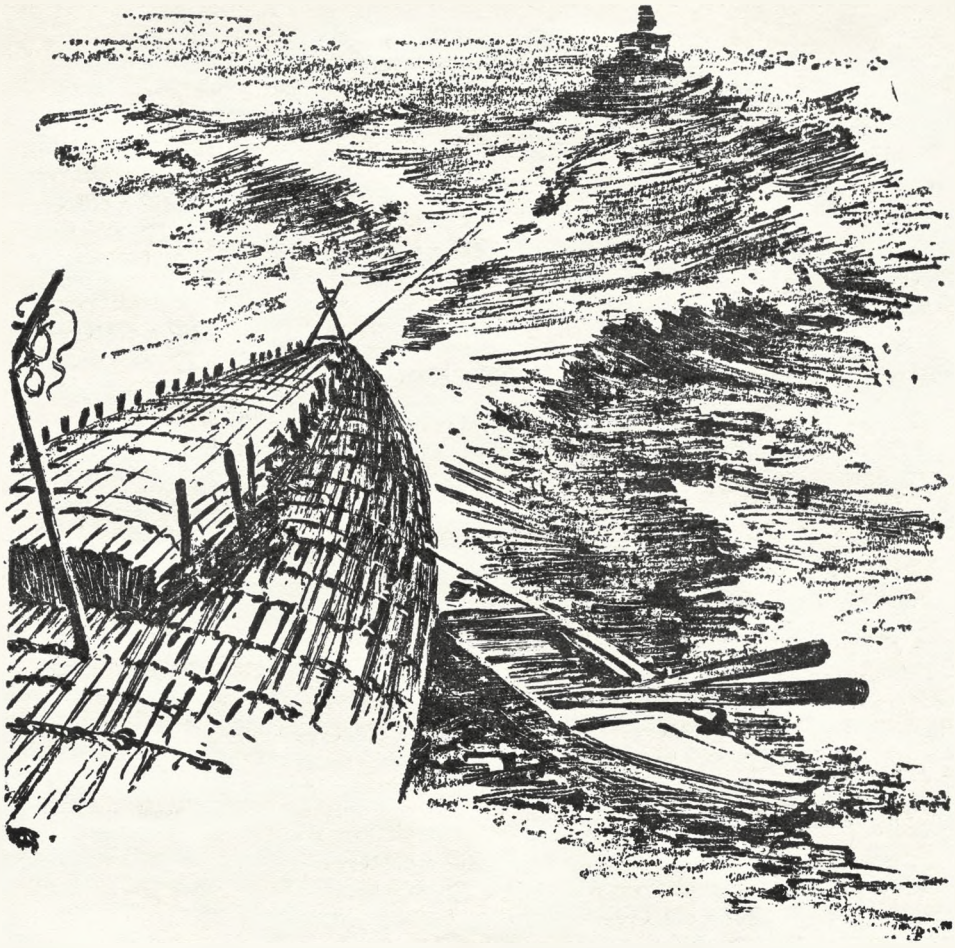
Fallon disconnected the wires from the dead battery and was ripping the protecting tape from the replacement when his flashlight spotted something else concealed below the top layer of timbers. It was a small box-like space, maybe three feet square, left in the deckload and cross-braced with short butts to keep it from working in the seaway. Filling the space was a package, waterproofed like the batteries, but twice again as big. There were two wires protruding from the top. Fallon had a pretty good idea what it was.

"There's a peavey in the boat," he told Molina. "Get it. I want a look at this." He bent over for a closer inspection. The movement saved his life.

He didn't even see the bosun go into action, but he heard the half stifled grunt as the man put his whole weight behind a lunging blow. He felt, too, the sheath knife rip through the heavy cloth of his pea-coat and slice along the flesh of his upper arm. He was down then with the weight of the other on top of him. He tried to roll clear and get to his feet. It was no good. He twisted part way around and brought his elbow up in a short, vicious arc and felt the cartilage in Lundstrom's nose smash to a pulp as the sharp bone hit home.

The bosun howled, but his knees still dug into Fallon's back, and one of his gorilla hands locked into Fallon's hair while the other poised again with the knife glinting lethally in the half light. Fallon knew that this was the end. He jerked his chin instinctively into his chest, trying to protect his throat from

There was the ringing crack of wood on bone and Lundstrom collapsed like a water-soaked fender on Fallon's body.



the descending blade. Then there was the ringing crack of wood on bone and Lundstrom, his eyes suddenly gone blank and staring, collapsed like a water-soaked fender on Fallon's body. The knife flew upward in a looping half circle and splashed into the water beyond the raft.

Somebody hooked fingers into Lundstrom's collar and peeled him off of Fallon. Fallon sat up. Molina stood there, his thin legs spread wide and his heavy shoulders hunched. His fist was curled around the ironwood fid, his eyes fixed on a thin trickle of blood spreading outward from the bosun's temple.

Fallon staggered to his feet. "Thanks," he said.

Molina said, "Don't thank me. I don't know why I did it. I should have let him kill you."

Fallon looked at him. "What did you do with your plaid mackinaw?" he asked.

The Hawaiian grinned. "You tore the collar off it. It wasn't much good after that."

"Go on," Fallon said.

Molina shrugged. "I was out to get you. I had a kid brother on the *Trinidad*. He didn't come back. I was on the China run, a freighter, when I heard about it. It took me awhile to find you."

"Well, what's holding you back?"

The Hawaiian shook his head. "That's over. It wasn't your fault. I don't know how I know it, except there's something *poopoole,* plenty screwy, about this whole set-up. I've heard Lundstrom talking a little. It looks like the same deal as the *Trinidad*. It's a frame. You're to be the sackholder again."

"I know," Fallon said. "Who's in this thing?"

"I don't know for sure." He spat at the limp figure of the bosun. "The boxhead here, for one. Fogarty's probably head man. The rest is a guess. They knew I was after you, so they figured me in for the strongarm work. They didn't tell me anything else." His eyes met Fallon's. "What's next?" You can figure on me for the home team. The deck gang, too. I'll see to that."

"Thanks," Fallon said again, and meant it. It was beginning to look like he could use some help. "First we'll take care of Lundstrom. He won't stay out forever. Then we'll have a look at this battery rig."

THEY rolled the bosun over. His nose was a red pulp and the scalp over his ear was laid open to the bone. Fallon found himself thinking that this was turning out to be a trip for broken noses.

Between them they carried Lundstrom to the work-boat and tied his hands and feet with marline and rolled him onto one of the thwarts. Molina bound up the gash in Fallon's arm with gear from the first-aid kit. Then Fallon got another flashlight from the life-saving equipment, and the Hawaiian picked up the peavey. They went back to the raft. By slacking off the turnbuckles on a couple of the chain lashings they got enough slack to enable them to lever the covering logs apart. Fallon reached down and brought up the box. It was heavy and well protected, but his pocket knife soon had the covering off.

It was a complicated rig, but evidently manufactured by someone who knew his business. Four sticks of dynamite were hooked up to a clockwork mechanism. There were insulated wires ready to be connected to one of the dry batteries. Fallon had never had any experience with explosives, but he imagined it was plenty to blast the circle chains off the end of the raft. After that, most any kind of a sea would do the rest.

He said, "I thought this kind of gizmo went out of fashion with bearded Bolsheviks and the Black Hand." He picked it up and was about to heave it out into the darkness when reason stopped him. If they were lucky enough to end up alongside a dock somewhere, instead of the rocks someplace off Cape Blanco, the dynamite would serve as Exhibit A. He removed the detonators from the sticks and lowered the box back into the hole.

"C'mon," he told Molina. "There'll be another like this at the forward end."

They set up on the turnbuckles again and lit the lamp and rowed back down the side of the raft. Fallon was right. They found a duplicate box there. Fallon jerked out the wires and they began the pull back to the *Aragon*. A rising breeze and mounting swell coming in from dead ahead made the going tough, especially with the dull pain throbbing in Fallon's arm. It was close to half an hour before they rounded in to the *Aragon's* rail.

The crew was waiting for them. So was Fogarty. And Knute Johnson. Fogarty seemed a little surprised to see Fallon, but not too surprised. He held a .45 Colt in his meaty hand. It was pointed right at Fallon's belly.

The mate looked at the still unconscious bosun, then at Molina. "I thought you were tougher than that," he told the Hawaiian. "Or maybe suddenly you got religion. We'll talk about that later." He waved at the deck locker with the barrel of the .45.

Molina's eyes went from Fogarty to Fallon to the gun. It wasn't even a hard decision. He walked into the locker. Johnson followed him and snapped the padlock and pocketed the key.

The mate had the crew lift Lundstrom out of the boat and carry him into the foc'sle. Then he said to Fallon, "We'll go up to my room, Cap, for a little talk. O.K.? O.K. Put your hands behind your neck and keep 'em there. I'm put out as hell about this."

Fallon led the way up the inside companionway to the boat deck quarters just abaft the bridge. The wheelhouse door was open, There was a man at the wheel, not paying too much attention to his steering, and Scanlon, with his unshaven jaw making him look more than ever like a work-wearied bookkeeper. He was leaning against a forward window as the three-man parade came up the stairs. Fallon saw him turn, his eyes going round and wide in the

dim glow of the binnacle lamp as he saw the gun. It looked as if his lower lip was going to start quivering at any moment. Fallon wondered about that. He'd have thought Knute Johnson would have picked a second mate with a little more guts for a job like this.

He shrugged mentally and entered Fogarty's room. It was too late now to start going in for character analysis. Behind him he heard the mate tell Scanlon, "If O'Reilly's ready, you can hook her up."

"Only the starboard engine, sir," Scanlon said. "He's still working on the other."

Fallon heard the jingle of the telegraphs and the increasing vibration of the one diesel picking up revolutions. Then the door closed and he and Fogarty and Johnson were alone. Johnson moved across to the bunk and sat down. He still hadn't said anything. Maybe he wasn't going to, Fallon thought, and felt his stomach drawing up into a knot. Maybe this had all been worked out while he was on the raft. When the racket of the engine got noisy enough there'd be one shot and . . . He felt the sweat starting on his upper lip.

He watched Fogarty fumble a cigarette out of a pack with his left hand, still holding the gun with his right. Fallon weighed the long chance. A .45 slug made a hell of a big hole in a man's body, but—

Then he saw the door at the mate's back open slowly and noiselessly. A gun muzzle appeared in the crack and jammed itself into Fogarty's kidney, hard. It was a snub-nosed revolver, but it was big enough. The hand that held it belonged to Scanlon. The second mate said, "Drop it, mister," and he didn't sound tired any longer. His voice was crisp and cold and businesslike.

Fogarty stiffened, his eyes shifting slowly to Johnson. Johnson let out his breath noisily. "It's a gun, Nils."

The mate let the .45 drop to the deck.

FALLON leaned over and picked it up. He found himself breathing again. He said, "Thanks," and grinned. He was overworking that word lately. "I don't now where you fit into this picture, Scanlon," he went on. "You don't look like a seagoing man to me. But whatever you are, you're a pretty fair actor. Maybe you . . . " He let the rest of it hang there, waiting for Scanlon to finish it.

The second mate's lips moved in a fragile smile. "Sorry I can't reach for a card. I'm claim agent for Great Western Indemnities. We carried the insurance on the *Trinidad* and that log raft a year ago." The smile faded. "We weren't satisfied with the story on that one, and we didn't want any part of this one. The Coast Guard persuaded us to take it on. They saw to it that I got the second's berth on here. I spent a few years at sea when I was younger and didn't know any better. Things are happening too fast for me to follow, but whatever it is I'm not backing any mutiny. So until I'm persuaded differently, you're still in command of this vessel. I'd like to see it stay that way till a court can straighten it out. What goes?"

"History repeating itself," Fallon said, "but there's a few loose ends. If you'll take care of Fogarty, I'd like a little session with Johnson, alone. There's a linen locker across the alleyway. You can lock it and keep an eye on it from the wheelhouse. Somebody'd better be up there to keep this towboat pointed south. And send someone below to release Molina."

Scanlon nodded. He twisted the gun in Fogarty's back and shoved the mate out into the alleyway. Fogarty's face was livid and it looked for a moment as if he was going to make a break. He didn't. He snarled something, and then Fallon heard Scanlon turn the key in the lock.

Fallon shut the door of the room and faced Johnson. The tug owner's mouth was a tight, bloodless line. There was moisture starting along the line of his receding hair. He was scared, but it looked like he was determined not to talk. Fallon glanced at the .45 in his hand, then sighed and shoved it into a desk drawer. Johnson, dead, wouldn't solve anything. He rolled up his sleeves.

"Now," he said, "let's start at the beginning. I found the dynamite. That's probably the way the *Trinidad* raft broke up. It's just that nobody heard the explosion because of the wind and sea. Right?"

The tip of Johnson's tongue passed across his lips. Otherwise they remained closed. Fallon took a quick step forward and grabbed him by the shirt front and pulled him to his feet. He smashed a fist across the pale mouth. Johnson fell onto the bunk, groaning, and Fallon stepped back. That was a mistake.

He had figured Johnson as ruthless enough. Anyone who would send a dozen men to, as he thought, certain death to satisfy some hidden motive of his own, couldn't be considered as anything else. But Fallon had never thought of him as one to stand up to physical violence. He had counted on that, but he knew now that he was wrong, for Johnson's legs bunched under him and he came up off the bunk in a wild rush, cursing and with both fists swinging.

The attack caught Fallon flat-footed. He stopped one of the blows with his cheek and felt the flesh split over the bone. The second one landed under his ear and he went down. He dropped on his shoulder and twisted aside, scrambling to get his feet under him again. He was on one knee when Johnson's foot hooked into his body just under the ribs. You don't take two like that and come up. Fallon didn't. He crumpled again, feeling a great stabbing pain above the point of his hip.

He managed to roll somehow, tangling Johnson's feet as he aimed another kick. Maybe it was that, or the rolling of the vessel as she gathered way into the mounting swell, but Johnson stumbled, fought for balance and nearly fell. It gave Fallon time to weave to his feet. When Johnson came in again he was ready. He ducked a rounding left hand and hit the big man with a quick jab, then a countering right, putting everything he had behind it. It knocked Johnson backward and his head bounced off the mirror over the wash basin with a splintering crash. He didn't get up.

Fallon drew deep sobbing breaths into his lungs, wincing at the pain behind his ribs where Johnson's boot had landed. He shook his head trying to clear away the roaring in his ears and swiped absently at the blood welling down his cheek.

He went over to the wash basin and cupped his hands under the cold water and splashed it over his face. That helped. He looked down at Johnson. There was a bruise coloring the underside of his jaw where Fallon's blow had struck. There were half a dozen cuts on his head. None of them looked serious.

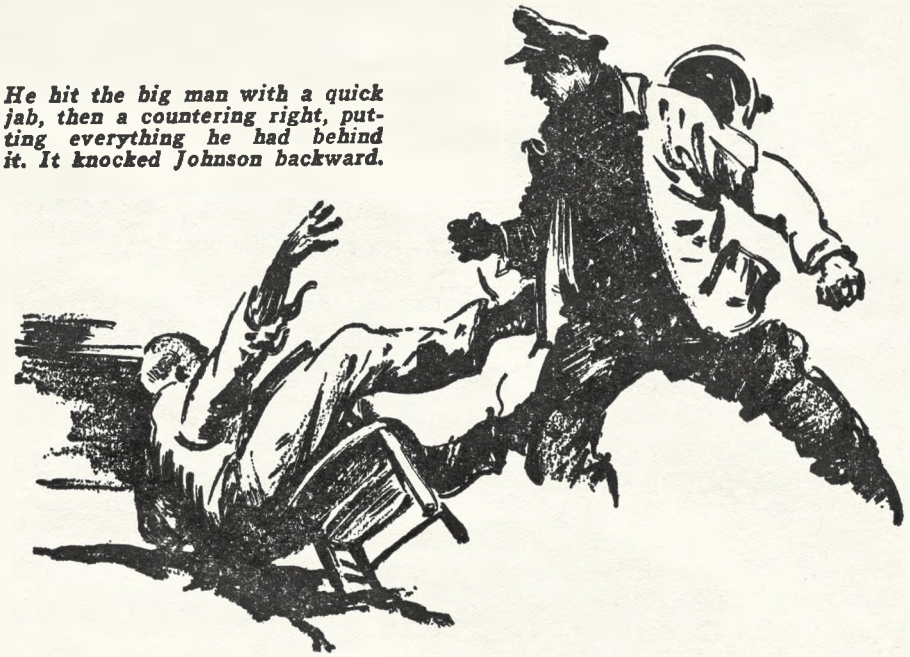
Fallon cupped his hands under the faucet again and threw water into the other's face. The third handful did it. Johnson groaned and sat up. Fallon pulled him to his feet and sat him down on a chair propped against the bulkhead.

"Now," Fallon said, "about the *Trinidad*. Dynamite?"

CHAPTER V

ONE SHIP FOR DAVY JONES

JOHNSON passed a hand across the back of his head. It came away sticky and red. He looked like he was going to be sick. "Dynamite," he said.



He hit the big man with a quick jab, then a countering right, putting everything he had behind it. It knocked Johnson backward.

"Why? What was in it for you?"

Johnson's shoulders stiffened. "You're no federal dick. You can't get away with this. You can't make me talk."

"That's where you're wrong," Fallon said. "I'm no copper, but I'm number one man on this pot. That's good enough for me. My word'll be as good as yours, if not better, if this ever gets to court." His fingers bunched into fists. "I mean the raw meat that's going to be your face when I get through with you. It'll have been from a fall down a ladder when the *Aragon* rolled in the seaway." He stepped forward, his fists cocked.

Suddenly Johnson's head trembled uncontrollably and his shoulders sagged. "All right," he said. "I got ten thousand dollars for it."

Fallon's hands relaxed and his thumbs hooked into his belt. He nodded. "O.K. You got ten thousand and I took the blame. Nice work. Who paid off?"

Johnson didn't look at him. "Northland Steam."

So that was it. Fallon saw it all now, or at least the biggest part of it. He recalled the pilot's opinion of Northland Steam Navigation Company. A haywire outfit with a high-sounding name and nothing but red ink on the books.

Fallon's eyes were half closed as he stood there looking down at Johnson. He spoke slowly, piecing it together in his mind, letting the words keep pace with his thoughts. "So, that's it? Northland talked Abrams in San Diego into a contract. Then when Abrams found out, too late, that they couldn't keep his mill supplied, he dickered with various timber operators up here for a raft load of logs to keep him going. It was a pool that time, wasn't it? Half a dozen outfits together. And you wangled the towing contract out of them, though God only knows how with that pint-sized *Trinidad* of yours. Then the old double-cross. Northland offered twice what you were getting for the job if you'd wreck the raft."

He nodded to himself and went on thoughtfully, "That put an end to coastwise rafting for awhile, which was exactly what Northland wanted. But it couldn't last. It was too good a thing. It's a logical and profitable way of shipping rough timber—providing it goes through. That's why Pape & Bailey were ready to gamble on another one this time. So Northland got busy again. If rafting ever really got established they were through. They hired you again, probably at a better price than before, because you needed help this time. That's where

Fogarty and Lundstrom come in. But you needed a fall guy, too. A sucker to take the rap. That's me."

"You're pretty smart," Johnson snarled.

"No. Just simple. Old 'Simple Barney Fallon.' That's what made it good. This time would really wrap it up. The Coast Guard would clamp down for sure. With another break-up within a year of the first they'd push through some fast federal legislation that'd stop rafting for keeps. And naturally, after the *Trinidad* affair they wouldn't listen to my suspicions. I'd be just another skipper trying to save his own skin with accusations. And they'd salt my license away for the next ten years. It'd be Farmer Fallon after that, for a long time."

His lips pursed, thinking of another angle. "Providing, that is, I was allowed to live. I doubt it, considering the salary and the bonus you were paying me. Of course that was just bait, and you'd never want me around to collect it. Come to think of it, you wouldn't want any survivors except your own hired hands. This time someone might hear and see the explosion. And now, of course, since you've showed your hand to the crew it's more important than ever that no one comes back. The *Aragon* will have to go down. Just like the *Trinidad,* only a more thorough job. You bungled that, Johnson. I guess that's why somebody is trying to get to the engines. Yep, this time there wouldn't be any witnesses, except Lundstrom and Fogarty. And they're paid off, of course. Anyway, they'd be afraid to talk. You've got too much on them. It's all pretty cute, all right."

Fallon stopped, running puzzled fingers across his chin. "There's one thing missing, though. How were Fogarty and Lundstrom—and now you—going to get away? You had to have weather to complete the break-up, and make it look legitimate, but you wouldn't get far in the work-boat in a storm. What's the answer to that one?"

Johnson shifted in his chair. "You're the smart guy," he said. "Figure it out for yourself."

Fallon had to make himself think of the five men in the *Trinidad's* crew who had been washed ashore finally, battered and unrecognizable, before he could bring himself to what he had to do. After that it wasn't hard.

HE HOOKED his fingers into Johnson's shirt and jerked him to his feet and smashed both fists into the sullen mouth. He felt teeth break under his knuckles and blood spatter into his own face from Johnson's broken lips. Then as the other tried to cover up with his arms, Fallon hit him again, knocking him over the chair and into the corner by the bunk. Johnson lay there in a heap, whimpering.

"Let's have it," Fallon said. "How were you going to get clear?"

Johnson's eyes stayed closed, but bloody froth showed at his lips and he moaned, "The *Elston*. She was to leave a day behind us with a load for San Diego. She's to follow us and stay in the same area till we blow the raft, then pick up the work-boat. Fogarty was to set the time charge to coincide with any bad weather we might get. He was to show a flare from the boat deck an hour before the dynamite was set to go off. Petrovsk, the first assistant, was to have both engines crippled and open the sea cocks so you couldn't beach her. I . . . "

Fallon felt the nausea of disgust rocking in his stomach. He turned away and got Fogarty's .45 from the drawer. That was the trouble with guns, he thought. They were a temptation. He ought to kill Johnson where he lay and have it over. Then reason took hold and he knew it wouldn't solve anything. It never did. He could wait. A sentence of twenty or thirty years at McNeil's Island would help, though. And Johnson would draw that at least.

He glanced once more at the groveling heap in the corner, shrugged and pocketed the gun. He went out into the alleyway, locking the door behind him, and climbed the three steps to the pilothouse.

Scanlon was still there, braced against the chart desk as the *Aragon* lifted and rolled to the rising sea. Fallon could hear the muted whisper of the wind sounding over and above the contented burbling of the starboard engine. Already, he saw, dollops of green water

were scooping through the bow chocks and flooding aft along the main deck.

The second mate turned and his mouth puckered soundlessly at the sight of Fallon's bloody face.

Fallon grinned wryly. It hurt, but he said, "I lost the first round."

"What'd you find out?" Scanlon asked.

Fallon said, "Plenty. Enough to put Johnson away for a lot of years. But we've got other troubles. Get the chief on the phone. Find out if Petrovsk is down there and—"

He stopped. Footsteps clanged hollowly on the steel ladder leading up from the fore'n aft alleyway. They were deliberate, purposeful steps. Fallon gripped the gun in his pocket. Then the light glinted on a wrinkled forehead as the man's head rose above the top step. It was O'Reilly. He still looked worried and he was white around the eyes, but there was a grim satisfaction curling the corners of his mouth.

"That first assistant of yours," Fallon snapped. "Is he in the engine room?"

"He is," O'Reilly said.

Fallon started for the ladder in great leaping strides. "Good God, man. If he—"

The engineer stopped him. "He won't, Cap. He's dead. I caught him tampering with the jets on the starb'd engine. He came after me with a Stillson. I shot him." His thin lips trembled. "I—I niver killed a man before."

Fallon said, "I never did either. But the trip's just started. How about that port engine?"

O'Reilly shook his head. "Not good. Number 3 and 4 bearings'll need shimming up. The Finn did it up right. It's a three or four day job."

Fallon felt the cold retching of defeat in his bowels. He had waited too long. Given a break in the weather they might have done all right, even on one engine. They'd have never made the passage within the stipulated time, but they would get there eventually. Six hundred fifty horses were still a lot of power. But he knew what they were in for now. These sou'westers hauled clockwise as they gathered force and expended themselves. Within twenty-four hours, he knew, wind, sea and swell would be from the west. That, together with the onshore set prevalent along this coast, would have them piling in on a lee shore within a matter of hours. One engine would never be enough with which to gain sea room in a westerly gale. It looked like Northland Steam was going to win out after all, even if Johnson didn't.

There was only one way out, Fallon knew. That was to cast the raft loose and let it drift into shore, dynamite evidence and all. He laughed bitterly. If the steam-schooner's owners could have predicted the weather they could have saved themselves money and trouble. One man to sabotage the engines would have served the purpose.

Thinking about it, Fallon found himself wondering about the *Elston*. This was the night Johnson had planned for the wreck, yet no one had seen anything of the schooner. If she was to be within the limit of visibility of Fogarty's signal flare she couldn't be too far distant.

Fallon frowned. After a moment he

got the night glasses from the drawer of the chart desk and went out onto the wing and searched the wide saucer of ocean surrounding them. There was nothing. Even if the steamer's lights were dimmed, the dark loom of her bulk should show above the horizon. Funny, that.

HE WAS still puzzling over it when the radio operator came through the wheelhouse door, a message blank fluttering in his fist. More weather, Fallon thought, but he was wrong.

The operator said, "It's a steam-schooner, Cap. The *Elston,* out of the Columbia. Lost her rudder. She's calling the Astoria Coast Guard for help." He laughed. "That bucket! It's a wonder it wasn't her bottom that fell out!"

Fallon didn't laugh. This was one for the books. The *Elston,* long overdue for trouble, had picked this voyage to have it catch up with her. It was a case of the betrayer betrayed. Just like in the dime novels of his kid days, where the villain always got his! The *Elston,* unable to steer now, would fall prey to the same onshore set and weather that they here on the *Aragon* were up against. The difference, of course, was that the *Aragon* could cut her tow adrift and save herself. The *Elston* could no nothing except wait for the Coast Guard and hope that help would arrive in time. Then Fallon had another thought. He said, "What's her position, Sparks?"

The operator said, "That's your department, Cap. I just send 'em and receive 'em."

Fallon snatched the message and went inside and snapped on the light over the chart desk. He plotted the *Elston's* reported position, then laid down their own. His eyebrows drew together. The steam-schooner was a bare ten miles astern and maybe a mile inside of them. About four miles off the land, Fallon judged. He tapped the chart reflectively with his pencil. That explained it then. From the low bridge deck of the *Aragon* they could only see about five miles. The *Elston* was hull down, just over the hill of the horizon.

Fallon picked up the dividers and stepped off the distance from the disabled schooner to Astoria. It came to a little over two hundred miles. He didn't know the speed of the rescue cutter. They were fast. He gave her twenty knots. That would mean a good ten hours before she could reach the steamer. More, if the wind and sea increased. Allowing half a mile an hour for drift, the *Elston* would fetch the beach in eight hours. She didn't have a chance of rigging a jury rudder in that length of time, Fallon knew. A sea anchor of some kind would slow her drift somewhat, but not much. She was a dead duck, anyway you looked at it. Unless . . .

He turned to the radioman. "Anybody else within range, Sparks?"

The operator shook his head. "A tanker northbound off Mendocino. One of the old ones. Nine knots, maybe. There's nothing else within a hundred miles."

That, Fallon thought, was tough. The best thing for the crew of the steamer to do was take to the boats and let the old worm-eaten hooker go to hell. It would be good riddance. But Fallon knew he was kidding himself. The boats, even like the *Elston* herself, could never hold their own against combined wind, sea and current. They'd be swept in on the shore in spite of all their efforts.

And the Oregon shoreline was not the broad, gentle sloping beaches of the southern coast. It was outlying reefs, and rocks honed razor sharp by centuries of wave action. It was pencil-line beaches below perpendicular cliffs, pounded by a thundering surf. Fallon knew that well enough.

But he knew, too, that it was not his problem. He had a tow to look after, to hold on to as long as possible. And again, he was responsible for the safety of the *Aragon* and her crew, his own command, before everything else. Lastly, he had a crippled vessel under his feet, half-powered and none too maneuverable with only the one screw. He knew that any board of inquiry in the country would uphold his decision to put his own command first. The hell with the *Elston.* It was the fault of their own greedy owners. They'd have to take their chances.

The *Aragon* dipped into a sea bigger than the others. She fought for buoyancy

and failed to rise in time. The crest caught her full on the bow and exploded in a smother of spray that rattled along the weather windows like flung shot. A thin trickle found a crevice in the mushroom ventilator on the wheelhouse overhead and splashed downward on Fallon's hand. The water was cold. But it was colder, Fallon remembered, when you were struggling in it, fighting for breath and praying for help—or later, for the strength of will to take a deep lungful of it and end the agony.

He sighed and reached for a scratch pad and wrote rapidly. "Tell the Coast Guard to forget it," he said to Sparks. "They'd never make it in time. Then call the *Elston* and have 'em clear away their boats. We'll pick them up. Tell them we're on our way." He motioned the man at the wheel to put the helm down.

CHAPTER VI

MARINE MANEUVERS

FALLON watched the *Aragon* fight her way around in a wide half circle. On the one engine and with the raft dragging astern like an outsized sea anchor it was a struggle, but he wanted wind and sea behind them when he let go the tow. He wanted the least strain possible on the towing wire when it came time to reel it in as far as the connecting shackle.

At last, with the seas on their quarter and the *Aragon* rolling her bulwarks under in her labor, he sent Scanlon below to break out Molina and the rest of the deck gang.

Ten minutes later he had the tug pointed north on the opposite heading. North 10° East should fetch the *Elston*. Then he called the engine room for power on the towing winch. He went aft along the boat deck, ducking the solid curtains of spray smoking over the weather rail. He looked down on the seamen standing shin deep in the water cascading through the freeing ports on the after deck. They were sullen and looked anything but happy, but they were there and that was something. Molina had seen to that. The Hawaiian glanced up at Fallon and one eye closed in a solemn wink. The other eye, Fallon saw, was bruised and swelling. The crew had evidently taken some persuading.

Fallon moved his hand in a circular motion. "Heave away when you're ready," he said. He put the starboard engine on slow and the big towing winch came to life, groaning under the weight of the two-inch wire.

Slowly, grudgingly, but steadily, the cable spooled in.

Scanlon came up the ladder from the main deck and stood beside him. The second mate stared out at the winking lights of the raft nearly invisible now in the wet darkness astern. He said, "Kind of tough to let it go, after the time you've had herding it this far."

"No," Fallon said, "it isn't tough. I tried to save a raft once before. Remember? The price isn't right. It took the lives of five men that time. Maybe this will even things up a little."

"This time it'll cost your life," Scanlon said. "Professionally, I mean. This will be the last log raft south—if I know insurance companies and the Coast Guard."

Fallon tried to keep the bitterness from his voice. "So what? There's always fishing—or a stump ranch. I'll get along." But he knew he was wrong. It wasn't a matter of getting along. It went deeper than that. This was a way of life that he had been born to, more than a mere existence. And now to have it all taken from him, and by the very forces he had set out to lick. Well, Scanlon was right. It was tough. He—

A warning shout broke from the knot of men working on the fantail and everyone dove for shelter. Fallon looked down in time to see the wire cable, singing with strain, raking across the deck, chest high. It jumped the guide pin on the rail and brought up short against the towing bitts with a jar that all but tore the winch off its holding down bolts. Fallon swore softly. He saw the riding lights of the raft off their quarter, almost abeam, nearly overtaking them.

He growled, "Stand clear!" to the men below him, and cuffed the telegraph ahead to Half and put the auxiliary wheel hard over, trying to bring the tow back into line. The *Aragon* answered logily, barely swinging under the inade-

quate action of her one screw on the centerline rudder.

Fallon cursed again, fervently this time. If they only had both engines, they . . . But that was a laugh. He might as well wish that the Elston had two rudders! Why—

He had it then in a sudden flash of understanding that sent the blood coursing swift and warm through his body. The *Aragon* had only one engine, but full rudder power. The *Elston,* on the other hand, had her engine, probably a thousand horse or better, but she had no rudder. That was the answer—if he could make it work.

He stood there, legs spread wide against the motion of the deck, staring unseeing into the darkness and letting the plan take form, figuring the elements of chance, calling back all the half-forgotten bits of sea knowledge that had been accumulating in his subconscious since the time when he had first shipped to sea.

Finally, he straightened out and said to Scanlon, "Get back to the wheelhouse and keep a sharp lookout for the *Elston.* Tell O'Reilly to give you everything he can squeeze out of that jewelry of his wtihout pounding it apart. With a lot of work and a little luck, we're going to San Diego. All of us."

When Scanlon had gone, Fallon told Molina what he wanted done. Put two men on the towing winch. Whenever the raft slid down the sidehill of a sea, reel in all the slack they could get. When they were shortened up with the shackle over the roller between the pins, set the brakes and stand by. The rest of the crew were to flake down a coil of eight-inch and three-inch manila along the port side bulwarks. Bend them together and secure them with rope yarns to prevent them from going adrift. Lash a dozen or so life jackets together for a buoy and make it fast to the end of the three-inch messenger. Have some Crosby clamps ready for use. Inch and five-eighths to fit the *Elston's* insurance wire.

HE WENT back up to the wheelhouse and consulted the chart again. With their maneuvering they must have gained a mile to leeward. That was good. Now, with wind and sea behind them and with O'Reilly giving his all below decks, they ought to make close to three knots. That should put them alongside the *Elston* in three hours. Three and a half at the outside. It would be close, but they ought to make it. He snapped off the light and went down the alleyway to the radio shack.

The operator swiveled in his chair as Fallon opened the door. "The skipper of the *Elston*—his name's Bjorlund—keeps askin' where the hell we are."

Fallon said, "Tell him to secure his boats. We're going to tow him. Have him hang off one of his anchors and get the end of the chain on deck. Be ready to shackle it into our wire."

He let it go at that. No use telling Bjorlund what he had in mind. That could wait. Also, everybody up and down the coast would be listening in, including the Coast Guard. He didn't want everyone in the North Pacific thinking he was crazy. Not yet, anyway.

He went up to the bridge again, stopping by the mate's room and the linen locker opposite, putting an ear to each door. Johnson and Fogarty were both quiet. Fallon smiled, imagining their reactions when they found out what was happening.

They picked up the *Elston* two hours later. It was blowing now, half a gale, and big white-veined combers were charging past them, roaring down on the defenseless schooner. She was wallowing in the troughs, her masthead lights rolling wildly, twenty-five or thirty degrees. Through the glasses, Fallon saw that her deckload was gone, her main deck swept clean. He shook his head. They'd have played hell trying to launch boats in this.

Fifty minutes later they were within hailing distance. As they crept down under the *Elston's* lee on a dead slow bell Fallon could make out a cluster of men on the foc'slehead, crouched in the shelter of the anchor windlass. The port anchor, he saw, was unshipped and the end of the chain led upward over the bulwarks. His eyes searched the jagged washboard of water beyond the steamer. He judged that visibility was better than a mile, but there was no sign of the coastline. He grunted in satisfaction, then

picked up the loud hailer and pointed it at a yellow-slickered figure wrapped around a stanchion on the bridge wing.

He tried to make his voice sound matter-of-fact. "I've got a rudder for you, Cap! Crude, but it ought to work. A log raft. Pass me your insurance cable through a stern chock. I'll want the bitter end. You can just drop the eye-end over your bitts when you trail it aft."

Fallon couldn't make out details in the darkness, but Bjorlund's mouth must have dropped open, because he didn't say anything for a long time. Then he cupped his hands and bellowed, "You're crazy, man! Who's doing the towing here, me or you?"

Fallon was beginning to be a little sensitive about that word "crazy," but he let it go. He said, "We both are, Cap. You're going to tow the raft, I'm going to tow you. It's as simple as that. You probably can't steer with it, but once you get way on your vessel it'll drag straight astern and keep you from yawing all over the Pacific. It'll keep you headed into this stuff. I'll hook on up ahead and do the steering for us both."

The master of the *Elston* was silent again. Fallon knew that he must be thinking there was something amiss besides his own steering apparatus. Bjorlund's next words confirmed it. His voice was heavy with suspicion. "Where's Fogarty, the mate?" he roared.

Fallon had an answer for that one, but he didn't have to use it, for in a sudden lull between gusts there was a new sound, audible to them both. It was like far-off thunder, muted by wind and distance, but clearly recognizable. It was the cannon fire of surf exploding on an unseen beach. It was answer enough.

There was an edge of panic in Bjorlund's voice when he cried, "Get going, man! You're wasting time!"

FALLON let the *Aragon* fall down under the *Elston's* counter, then he put the rudder over, letting the raft drift past them and astern. He jockeyed there with the engine, ahead and astern, while Molina stopped off the chain cable from the raft and unshackled their wire. A heaving line from the *Elston* fell to their foredeck and was followed by a six-inch manila messenger. This in turn carried the steam-schooner's plow steel insurance cable. They dragged it aft with the mooring capstan, fashioned an eye in the end with Crosby clamps and shackled it into the raft's bridle. It was grueling work and dangerous, but in the end it was done.

When the men were clear, Fallon put the helm hard over and signaled for Full Ahead. Unfettered now, the *Aragon* leaped ahead and to port like a thoroughbred clearing a barrier. Her fantail swung out and under the wire, missing the raft and the *Elston's* overhang by inches.

As they headed for the bow of the schooner, Fallon saw the *Elston's* crew already running forward toward the foc'slehead. Half the job was done. He made a tight circle, coming up to weather of the steamer, then trailed the buoyed manila messenger over their stern. In the beam of their searchlight he saw the line drift down across the schooner's flanks,

and the waiting men snare it with grapnels and haul it aboard. After that it was up to the *Elston*. Fallon knew it must have been punishing work handling heavy gear up there on that salt-slick, rolling deck. But half an hour saw the hawser disappear over the bow, and the *Aragon's* wire shackled into the schooner's anchor chain. The mate of the steamer slacked out fifteen fathoms and secured the windlass. The chain would act as a cushion against the shock of sudden strain.

On the *Elston's* bridge Bjorlund blew a short, sharp blast. Secured. Go ahead. Fallon paid out a thousand feet of wire, took up the slack, and signaled O'Reilly for Full Ahead. The searchlight spearing astern showed the *Elston's* screw churning frenziedly at capacity revolutions.

It showed, too, the raft dragging out straight astern from the steamer's fantail. It looked good to Fallon. Then beyond the raft, close, he saw the geysering foam of breakers reflected back in the leveled rays of the light. A sudden chill walked up his spine and he switched off the light and went forward to the wheelhouse. He pointed the *Aragon's* blunt snout into the wind and sea and told the man at the wheel to keep it there.

It got no better as the night wore on. Once, when Scanlon came up to relieve him, he went down to the galley for coffee. He looked at the messroom clock, thinking it must be near daylight. It was midnight. It was almost unbelievable that so much could have happened in the course of a few short hours. He shook his head. He would have sworn on oath that he had been aboard the *Aragon* for six months. Well, at the rate they were making headway he might reach that goal yet. They were certainly going no place fast.

The long hour of the false dawn was the worst. They couldn't see the limitless parade of mountain ridges roaring down on them like live things, and perhaps it was just as well. There was only a void of blackness as the bows dipped, then a towering, ghostly crest, seemingly insurmountable, hanging over them. And afterwards, the staggering effort as the *Aragon* tried to rise, but held down by the weight behind her, punching her way into the solid wall of water instead. There was the awful impact as the little vessel slammed into it, and the racking shudder running through her as the sea curled, fell and struck.

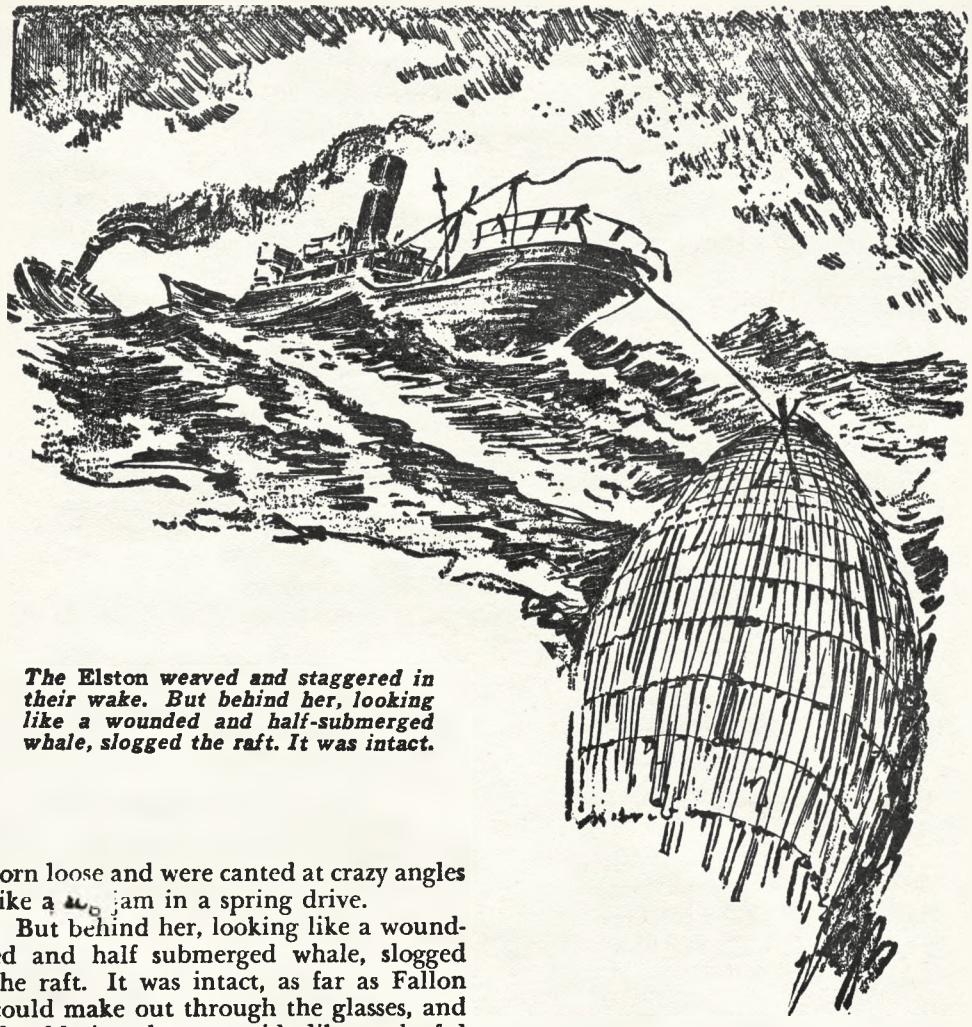
There were agonizing minutes when, with headway killed, she fought to free herself of the tons of water burying her decks. And always there was the wind, a savage, tearing thing ripping at every exposed part of the vessel. Above it all, worse if possible than the rest, was the singing strain of the tow line as they slid down the slope of a sea and the *Elston* rose on another. Every nerve in Fallon's body was in tune with that bow-taut wire. He fought against the impulse to throttle down the hammering diesel, to angle the vessel across the seas, anything to help the *Aragon* in her struggle. But the knowledge of the hungry surf lying close aboard won out. They needed sea room and this was the only way of getting it. He held course and speed, and prayed a little that everything would hang together.

CHAPTER VII

SAFE HARBOR

THE DAWN was a band of steel lightening the tatters of low cloud racing in from the west. Fallon sucked breath into his weary lungs and realized that the night had been a blessing. Now, for the first time he really saw what lay ahead of them. The seas were hill high, running long and steep, with spume smoking off their crests in ragged banners of defiance. The *Aragon* plunged into them, sank back on her squat haunches and came up like a groggy fighter to meet the next. And they were endless. The foredeck had been wiped clean, only the anchor windlass standing out lone and indestructible in the emptiness.

Fallon forced his eyes astern, over and past the battered boat deck where everything movable had gone adrift, to where the *Elston* weaved and staggered in their wake. She was something to see. One wing of her bridge was a splintered mass of wreckage, the windows in her wheelhouse blank and staring out of glassless frames. The booms on her foredeck had



The Elston weaved and staggered in their wake. But behind her, looking like a wounded and half-submerged whale, slogged the raft. It was intact.

torn loose and were canted at crazy angles like a [illegible]am in a spring drive.

But behind her, looking like a wounded and half submerged whale, slogged the raft. It was intact, as far as Fallon could make out through the glasses, and shouldering the seas aside like a playful seal. He found a smile from somewhere. The weeks of work in Cathlamet Bay were paying off.

He saw that the coastline was still there, but blurred and nearly indistinguishable by flying spray and distance. That was the thing, distance. He judged that they had gained a good three miles of offing in the night. Then as he looked to the south, searching for the loom of Blanco along the rim of water, he saw what he had been praying for. The lowering gray of the cloud mass had broken for an instant, showing a patch of blue sky as heartwarming as a fireside on a winter night. He groped his way over to the chart desk and looked at the barometer hanging above it, then brushed a hand across his red-veined eyes to make sure. It was true. The needle was up .02. Another eight hours ought to see the worst of it over.

It broke before that. By noon the wind had definitely moderated. The seas were still running high, but their sharpness was rounding off. There were longer intervals between the crests and their bludgeoning force was subsiding along with the wind that drove them.

At one o'clock Fallon decided to try the turn and put the *Aragon* on the south'ard track for San Diego. The night had proven that the three way hook-up was more than practical. It was downright efficient. Given a break in the

weather now, they should make good time. Any trouble from here on in would come from other sources. Bjorlund, for instance. He made himself forget about that, and called down to O'Reilly to ease the laboring engine a notch or two.

Scanlon came into the wheelhouse from his hundredth trip aft to inspect the towing gear. His face was gray and lined with exhaustion, but he managed a crooked smile. He said, "I hope my next assignment is investigating farm equipment failure. The state of Kansas would do."

Fallon grinned. "They have wind there, too, mister. How's it look back aft?"

"Everything's holding together," Scanlon said. "Though God knows how. The wire's showing some chafe. We'd better heave in a fathom or two when you get squared away."

The radioman opened the door of his room and beckoned. "The *Elston,*" he said.

"It would be," Fallon said. He turned to Scanlon. "Watch her for awhile."

On the way aft to the radio shack he stopped and unlocked the door to the mate's room. Johnson was lying face down on the bunk. He rolled over as Fallon came in. He had been sick again and he looked pretty much like death warmed over.

Fallon said, "Bjorlund wants to talk to me. He knows now he isn't going to drown. He'll probably want to talk business. You're still owner of this vessel—for awhile. What do you figure is a fair salvage claim—for myself and for the crew?"

Johnson's face was blond thunder. He tried to speak but couldn't.

Fallon nodded. "Well, sweet dreams," he said and went out, locking the door behind him.

The radioman shoved a pad across to Fallon. "Bjorlund says thanks. We can let go now."

Fallon said, "Let go? Where does he think he's going? He still hasn't got a rudder that'll let him make any kind of a course."

"He's been calling the Coast Guard for a tow to the nearest port," Sparks said disgustedly.

FALLON frowned. The C. W. loudspeaker cut in with a loud chatter. The radioman listened, his face breaking into a slow grin. When the code finished, he said, "That was the Coast Guard. They asked the *Elston* if they were in danger. Bjorlund said, no, he was under tow. The Coast Guard told him that was fine, they weren't running competition to commercial outfits."

Fallon had never cared much for gold braid and brass buttons before. He thought, now, that maybe he could learn to like them. He was quiet for a moment, thinking, then he said to Sparks, "Ask Bjorlund if he's got a cutting torch aboard."

The operator stared at him, puzzled, but his fingers went to work quickly on the bug.

The answer came back quickly. "No. Are you crazy?"

"That word again," Fallon said. "Tell him we're going to San Diego—whether he likes it or not. We'll let a salvage court settle the claim."

The operator bent over the instrument again, then waited for the answer. There wasn't any. Fallon said, "You'd better get some sleep. It's a long voyage south." He went back up to the wheelhouse.

"What luck did you have?" Scanlon asked him.

"Enough," Fallon said. "Bjorlund knows something's wrong, but there's nothing he can do about it."

Scanlon had the glasses to his eyes and was staring out an after window. There was abrupt concern in his voice.

"You could be wrong," he said and pointed.

Fallon took the glasses. As the *Elston* dipped and yawed in the seaway he could make out several men on the poop. They were hacking at the raft's tow line with axes.

Falon chuckled. "They'll get tired of that. I've been towboating quite awhile and I've never seen an ax yet that could cut a plow steel towing wire. It takes a cutting torch. They haven't got any. That's why I had Bjorlund keep the eye end of the wire. It's looped over a mooring bitt. As long as there's strain on it he won't be able to let it go this side of hell. Or San Diego."

He looked out through a forward window. The weather was getting steadily better. The *Aragon* wasn't slamming into it any more. She was just reeling a little drunkenly, stubbing an occasional toe like a tipsy charwoman after half a dozen beers. Overhead the clouds were breaking, leaving irregular patterns of blue all across the sky. The wind still had weight behind it, but it was hauling around. Another few hours would find it on their quarter, boosting them along. Fallon bent over the chart, laying off a course that would clear Blanco by five miles. 180° True should do it. He motioned the helmsman to come left.

Scanlon had been silent. Now, he said, "I've been thinking. Bjorlund doesn't have to help us along. He can stop his engine, or even reverse it if he wants to. That'd play hell."

Fallon shook his head. "He's seen what this little sweetheart can do on one engine. O'Reilly'll have the other one running in a day or two, and then . . ." He laughed. "Why, with him in the middle and a dead weight astern, we'd pull the bow right off that rotten apple box of his. No, he'll come along."

Scanlon said quietly, "You like this towboat, don't you?"

"She's a sailor's dream," Fallon said and stopped, embarrassed. He finished the rest of it in his mind. Why, with Johnson behind bars, the *Aragon* would undoubtedly go on the auction block again. He couldn't see any reason, what with the sale of his troll boat, salary due, and bonus, plus whatever salvage money was allowed him, why he couldn't . . . He had a disquieting thought. "You're an insurance man, Scanlon," he said. "What would you think of me as a risk?"

"As a stump rancher?" Scanlon said.

Fallon grinned. "As a towboat man. Coastwise trade. Log rafts, mainly."

"Good," Scanlon said. "The best."

The helmsman steadied down on the new course. "One eighty, sir," he said. "Due South."

"That's fine," Fallon said. "That's the course for San Diego." His eyes looked forward. It was clearing up there, with a promise of fair winds ahead.

CAMEL PATROL

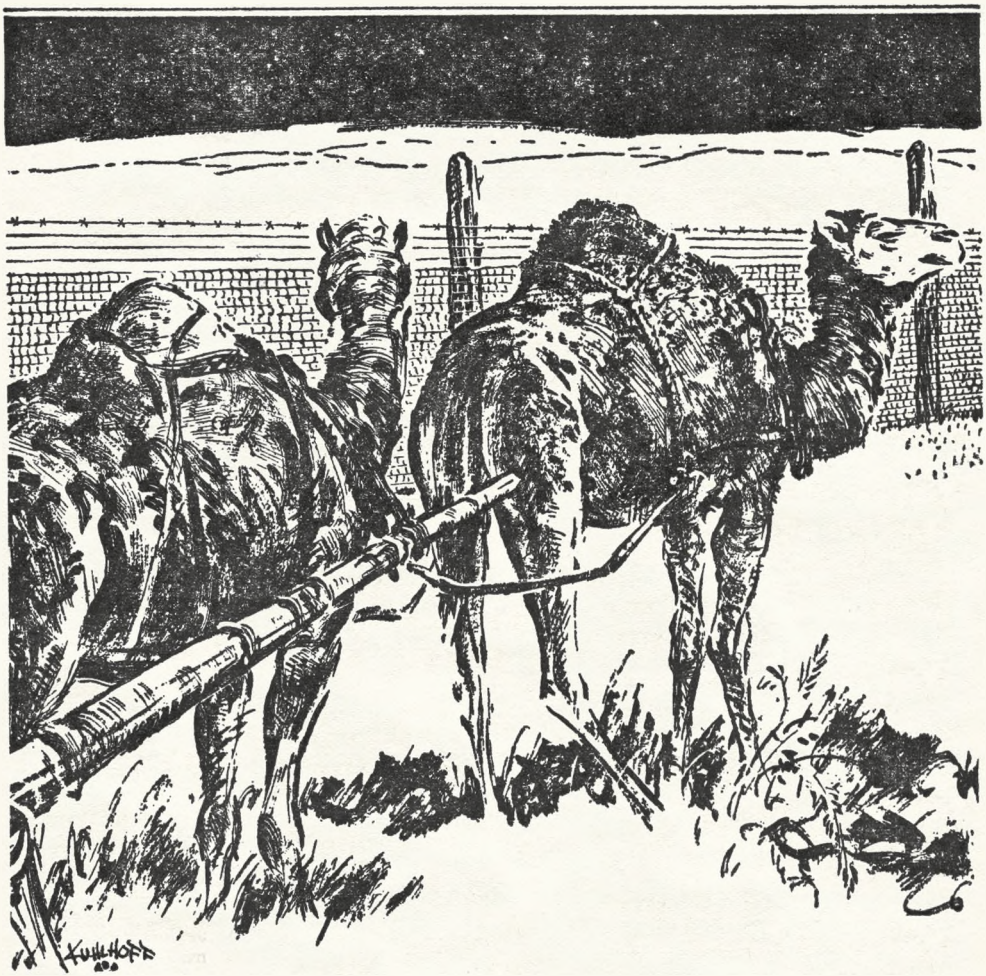
ILLUSTRATED BY
PETER KUHLOFF

Every section of the 1,139-mile Fence is patroled and inspected at least once a month.

A FACT STORY

By

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN



ONCE every month at dawn, a cumbersome huge-wheeled dray leaves Dromedary Hill Station near the little settlement of Hopetoun on the northern coast of Australia. It is drawn by two camels, harnessed in tandem, and the driver is a bush-scarred veteran of the outback who will be strictly on his own until he has traveled a hundred and sixty miles south and then made the return journey back. He does not look very important, squinting ahead down the dusty main road, dressed in a washed-out blue shirt, patched corduroy trousers, old riding boots and a battered sombrero, but he is very important in-

deed. He is the Government Camel Patrol of The Fence.

It is very properly called The Fence because it is not just any fence. The stout posts stand twelve feet apart, with strong, meshed wire stretched between. Above this are three breast-high strands of plain wire, topped again by a single strand of barbed wire. So far as is humanly possible, The Fence runs dead straight beside the road, reaching over hills and through valleys, running for 1,139 miles to be exact, from sea to sea, knifing right across the country. It is probably the longest fence in the world, the dingo and rabbit proof fence that separates all Western Australia from the rest of the continent.

As with the one hundred and sixty mile northern section out of Dromedary Hill, every section of The Fence is patroled and inspected at least once a month, the whole of it by camel dray. The drivers carry all wire and equipment necessary for making any repairs, and since they are never quite sure how long they will be out they also carry provisions for thirty days. They have the authority to kill any animal, even Federal protected ones, who might be attempting to break through The Fence, from the continental side, and they can arrest any human who might be endangering or harming The Fence. Along each section, which is mostly uninhabited desert country, the Camel Patrol is the Government.

It is a lonely and even monotonous life for the drivers. The camels complain and trudge slowly along while every inch of The Fence is scanned, with occasional stops to fix weak-looking spots. At night the dray is halted and two strong legs on the back are let down to keep the thing on an even keel. Then the camels are released and close-hobbled so they will not stray too far in feeding, and the driver boils his tea, has his supper and crawls under the dray for the night. By dawn next morning the patrol is under way again. And all this because of rabbits.

The fast breeding pests almost ruined the rest of the continent and Western Australia intends to have no part of them—which is why The Fence rates top priority for attention.

THE COMMON name for rabbit in Australia, with some unprintable words added, is "underground mutton" and no self-respecting Australian in the outback will eat a rabbit unless he is starving to death. Even in the great cities like Melbourne and Sydney rabbit is an article of diet mainly for immigrants, tourists and other folks with queer tastes. The rabbit all but bankrupted most of the Australian states and so is generally detested although, at the moment, it is a source of some revenue as its fur has a ready sale abroad and is used for a wide variety of purposes from making hats to fashioning imitation ermine coats. Some of the meat is also canned for foreign trade but most of it is simply wasted.

The whole rabbit trouble, so far as Australia was concerned, is that there are few natural foes in the country to keep the pest down. In America there are innumerable meat-eating animals that take care of any great excess of rabbits or deer and so forth, but the Australian fauna is overwhelmingly grass-eating. Outside of the far north with its alligators and rock pythons, Australia has only the wild dog (the dingo), a few owls and other birds, and probably by now a few domestic cats gone wild who might be interested in rabbits. The dingo itself prefers easier and larger game like young kangaroo or wallaby. A few species of rats prefer emu eggs or the extreme young of other rats, and so the rabbit is left pretty much on its own.

The first rabbits, numbering five, were brought in by an early Governor and his officers some 158 years ago. They, the rabbits that is, seem to have died soon afterwards. Then in 1791 several more were imported from South Africa to Tasmania, a large island lying south of Australia proper, and some others were also set ashore on other outlying islands to breed "for the benefit of unfortunate voyagers who might be grown hungry in this locality," just as goats were often left on islands by the old whaling crews to provide emergency fresh meat.

Finally it seems that settlers crossed from Tasmania to the mainland and established themselves in what is now the

State of Victoria, bringing along their rabbits. There is on record an old account where a man named Fawkner had a judical committee approve of his claim against a man name Batman, made where the City of Melbourne now stands; and had Mr. Batman fined 55 shillings because Batman's aboriginal servant had killed several of Fawkner's rabbits. The claim and fine were all very proper but as one writer aptly puts it: "The descendents of these early settlers would gladly remit Batman's 55 shillings and give him and his servant illuminated addresses!"

It seems, however, that these early first rabbits were not the ancestors of Australia's present day pest. The continent is indebted for this gift to a gentleman named Thomas Austin who arrived on the clipper ship Lightning in 1859 with a batch of 24 wild rabbits with the intention of raising them for meat and game. Mr. Austin tended them very solicitously until he realized they did not need his help and he was wasting his time. In six years he had killed and sold 20,000 rabbits and found he had 10,000 left.

But even then the settlers did not realize what a menace the animals could be, and the newspapers talked at great lengths about the future of rabbit breeding as a novel and profitable industry. This, however, was before a few pairs had gotten away and set up housekeeping on the great pasture lands. By 1878, about twenty years after Mr. Austin had started in business, rabbits had spread into New South Wales, South Australia, and as far north as Queensland and were fast chewing up the grass. The South Australian government alone had spent $75,000 in building a supposedly rabbit-proof fence, but the rabbits had crossed the border first. The situation then became a race to build fences before the rabbits moved further west, and the fences usually lost out due to political bickering and delay.

All the country to the east, along the rich coast line, was badly worried. The New South Wales press openly admitted that from Melbourne to Brisbane, say 1500 miles, there was nothing but a vast rabbit warren, and what to do about it was a major problem. People had ceased estimating the rabbit population by the thousands or even the millions. The figures obviously were by now astronomical.

Some curious angles begin to enter in about this time. One very interesting, but somewhat dubious authority, states that many pastoralists (as Australian farmers and ranchers call themselves) imported ferrets or weasels to try and check the epidemic. It is well known that a ferret not only kills for food but is saturated with the blood-lust and once inside a rabbit warren will slaughter everything in sight. This authority states, however, that to the great surprise of everybody the ferrets, after an initial blood bath, began to mate with the rabbit does instead of killing them. Possibly they mated first and then ate them; and there is no statement forthcoming as to what happened to the progeny, if any. In any case it seems ferrets were unable to stem the tide.

More to the point, the desperate State governments began to offer bounties for dead rabbits, with at first what seemed to be good results. Unfortunately, however, it seems that a worker in this field of endeavor was only required to produce the tail as evidence of a kill to collect his bounty, with the result that thousands of tail-less rabbits were left running loose to breed again and produce more tails. The hunters were no fools.

The profits from all this were enormous. The only ones who really profited from the bounty were the rabbits (minus tails but with their lives) and the trappers and hunters. The hunters became rich. They wore silver rabbit charms on their watch chains to let the ladies know they were in the money. They drove about in four-in-hands, in circumstances of great pomp. They enjoyed the best hotels, the best and prettiest girls, and one trapper, after a particularly good haul of tails, rented the biggest hotel suites in Sydney, filled the bath-tub full of champagne and had it ladled out to his guests by a reclining and dressless lady in the best Earl Carroll style. This party apparently climaxed the golden age of rabbit trapping. At least from then on trapping and hunting as a big business declined and the panic-stricken pastoralists and State governments tried other methods to combat the ever growing pest.

TO appreciate fully why the pastoralists and the State governments were panic-stricken it is only necessary to understand that, considering its weight, a rabbit eats more than a sheep. What is worse it eats everything. It destroys pastures utterly. When there is no more pasture it eats the heart out of shrubs, out of anything green and growing. When a wave of rabbits has passed over a field or a paddock it is stripped cleaner and more thoroughly if possible than if a horde of locusts had gone by. If there are trees they will be ring-marked and gnawed and so doomed to perish. A few million rabbits on the move can block roads and tie up traffic, stop trains and knock down fences as well, and in Australia you have to take your rabbits en masse, hopping, crawling swarms that cover acres at a time.

With locusts or grasshoppers you can at least count on their not appearing again for several years, but with the rabbit breeding is continuous and carries on with compound interest. Even today and in districts where things are fairly well under control the pastoralists usually retain a special man to keep the rabbits and dingoes down, and of the two the rabbit pest is the more serious. This is doubly so for after a rabbit wave had gone over a pasture it is not only cleaned out but is useless and will grow nothing for years as it seems rabbit excreta contains some poison that inhibits all growth. At least 90% of Australia's central dust-bowl can be traced directly as due to the rabbit.

Some of the schemes to combat the menace have been as unique as the one dealing with the ferrets who became too friendly with the does. One genius suggested that bonuses should only be paid on male rabbits, and whole pelts at that, on the somewhat curious theory that if the males were thinned down the females would be unable to breed and so would finally become barren. Why any official should become fascinated with this idea is fascinating in itself, but it was actually tried for a while. The error in this theory of the does becoming barren seems to be that a jack-rabbit gets around and even if only one is left it can apparently take care of all lonely females, so all this scheme did was give the survivors bigger harems and more territory to cover.

In any event there was no appreciable lessening of the rabbit population.

As previously mentioned an early resort were the fences, but these were ineffectual because, as one old dingo-and-rabbit trapper observed, "Hell, and Almighty. By the time the government gets around to building a fence the rabbit've already taken over the territory!" The actual cost of trying to combat the pest was running to over $20,000,000 a year by the turn of the century, not counting what individual pastoralists paid out for their own trappers and poison bait. You can add to that as an added cost and loss the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of sheep the raisers had to get rid of, either by selling at ruinous prices or by killing, as they simply hadn't the pasture left to feed them. They tried more poison and new sorts of traps. They tried gassing the burrows, but this left countless rabbit corpses to produce blow-flies and blow-flies are as much a menace to the sheepman as drought. They worry the sheep to a degree where they lose pounds of meat weight, and the blow-flies' worm-like offspring ruin the wool as well.

Western Australia thought it was comparatively safe. The rabbit was in the east, some two thousand miles away, and between east and west Australia there stretches the Nullabor Plain, a thousand odd mile stretch of barren lava. Little or nothing grows there. Water is rarer than gold. A few species of lizards and spiders exist, along with caves full of bats. If ever there was a barrier that seemed a natural the Nullabor Plain did. Yet in spite of rigid inspections of all trains, boats and what few cars negotiated the barren route, the rabbit got in. Not many, and not in any "pest" quantities, but enough so the Western Australians had nightmares, and the panic was on, with visions of their own pastures being wiped out.

For once a government acted in time. Western Australia all but bankrupted itself building The Fence, eleven hundred miles of it. To make sure they built another fence parallel to the first and 75 miles inside it. Then to make doubly

sure they built lateral fences leading from the main ones and cutting sideways across the country to the coast. But the first fence, The Fence, is the main line of defense and runs unbroken, save for special rabbit-proof gates and crossings, and it does a very complete job of forestalling any overwhelming invasion by ever hungry rabbit swarms.

The Fence serves a secondary purpose in keeping out dingoes and emu, for the former kills stock and poultry and the latter is, like the kangeroo, another pasture destroyer. But the rabbit menace is the worst and is still a major problem, particularly in the fertile east. Australian scientists have even tried spreading through the warrens a virus known to be deadly to rabbits, but in 1948, after years of experiment and effort, they were forced to admit this virus only worked under certain conditions and with certain rabbits. The pests continued to flourish. By sheer force of breeding they appeared able to defeat man's best efforts and the pastoralists went back to the old fashioned methods of poison supplemented by frequent rabbit drives where the animals are routed from their burrows for trained dogs to slaughter by the thousand.

It does not seem to do much good as in a few months thousands more have taken their place.

As before mentioned the pests are not without some commercial value. Millions of skins are shipped every year to New York and London and some of the meat is canned for export. But all this hardly makes a dent in the rabbit population.

It has been estimated that were it not for the rabbit eating its grass, New South Wales alone could raise 20,000,000 more sheep, but until the problem is licked that is just a dream. The latest suggestion is to use a form of cyanide gas, to be pumped into the burrows, then have the burrows sealed to prevent the blowflies moving in.

The cost of this, however, would be prohibitive and so far all bets still seem to favor the rabbit.

The biggest strike against him so far is The Fence, the one that was put up in time. It has saved Western Australia and it explains why the camel drays leaves their various section stations once a month for the long patrol; all because Thomas Austin, Esp. sailed into Hobson's Bay on the clipper ship *Lightning* in 1859 with the firm intention of starting a rabbit industry.

He certainly did.

Australians are very fond of raising monuments to their pioneers, but Thomas Austin, Esq. is one pioneer they would like to lynch!

By

EVERETT M. WEBBER

IT WAS a hot day but my great-great-grandfather, Daniel Davis, had too much on his mind to be drowsy as he and his game rooster, old Sam, drove to High Lonesome in their buckboard. They were going to see if they could keep General Andrew Jackson—he was the one who gave the rooster to Daniel—from getting his fool self killed in a duel with Ambrose Colter tomorrow at the political speaking which would follow the circuit court session. The candidates always went around with the court as it traveled from town to town and in each one they clambered on the nearest stump and spouted off.

ILLUSTRATED BY
JOSEPH A. FARREN

Daniel caught Ambrose solidly under the jaw and he sagged back head-first into the tub of tar.

The general was not a candidate, of course. He had merely got out of a sick bed to stump for Colonel Carstairs who was opposing Ambrose Colter for Congress. Soon as he got to Congress, Carstairs aimed to have an investigation of the little matter of the Colter-Sevier land frauds, by which they had established claim to about a fifth of Tennessee. A month ago Colter had crowded the nearly-blind old colonel into challenging him and then had selected pistols and shot him down.

The same thing could happen to Jackson—only this time Colter would probably select cavalry sabers in the enfeebled but sharp-eyed general's case. High Lonesome was Colter's home town and Daniel reckoned the general had saved up some choice blasts for the occasion. Not only that, public opinion would be with Colter here because many of the people had bought land from him and they feared that if Congress quashed his claims they would lose what they had bought. That wasn't true, of course, but you couldn't make them see it.

Daniel had been up all night wrestling with the Lord about the case, but the Lord had given him no satisfaction and Daniel feared the worst. He reckoned he could guess that the trouble was that he couldn't get through to the Lord these days. He had made the Lord three promises when he got the call to preach a year ago, down the road here at High Lonesome creek. He had kept two of them and he knew something terrible was going to happen if he didn't keep the third.

He sighed, idly stroking old Sam there on the seat by him. Aloud he said, "So be it, Lord, though I hate to think of having a woman underfoot the rest of my life."

THAT was what he had said that day, too, that he was called. He had been a traveling man in those days, going around teaching singing classes and selling snake oil and hair grower, and witching wells for folks—with a peach limb—and holding a term of school now and then. But what he wanted was to be a preacher. He had been driving along, sort of drowsy—for it was a warm day, as now—and pestering the Lord to give him the call, but the Lord said, "Well, Dan'l, I tried and tried all last year, and you just hardened your heart. Every Saturday night you'd get into that jug of corn liquor you keep under the seat."

Daniel was crossing the creek just then, so he reached down and got the jug and threw it in and said, "I'll never touch it again, Lord."

But the Lord didn't seem too impressed. He said, "And you go to rooster fights."

"Well," Daniel said, "seems like it'd be a good thing to keep that up. Lots of sin at a rooster fight—gambling and such—and if a preacher was there it might help to keep it down."

Driving along now, he could hear the Lord's voice as clearly as on that day a year ago. "I don't see it that way," the Lord told him. "And another thing—a preacher needs a wife in this country to help him minister unto his flock. And what do you do? Spark one girl after another, that's what you do."

"I know it," Daniel admitted humbly. "I'm just trying to find the right one. Nobody has a better eye for a pretty ankle than me, but to get roped in for keeps—"

Abruptly he sat up with a terrific jerk, half aware that he was on his way to help General Jackson, and half aware that he had been asleep. His horse had stopped in the road, right nose to nose with a chestnut horse hitched to a buggy. A girl was looking at him from under the stylish red straw bonnet perched on her dark hair, but it was not until she spoke that he fully recognized her.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Davis," she said formally.

"Reverent Davis," Daniel said automatically, blinking at her. This was a far cry from the Juliet he had sparked home from his singing school at High Lonesome a dozen times and more last summer before he got the call. She was pretty then, but now she was—well, Daniel couldn't think of the word as he ran an eye over her figure and back to her face. She had on a summery dress that showed lots of white bosom spilling out above her stays, and it sent crinkles shivering over him, the way her brown

eyes looked at him. He blurted, "How long've I been sitting here?"

"Oh, not so long . . . And if it will ease your mind, I really didn't hear much you were saying."

Daniel was already sweating under his black coat and now he became warmer still. "I was talking?"

"Just something about pretty ankles and marrying someone—"

Daniel said, "Well, I'll tell you. I finally got the call, only I had to promise the Lord I'd take a wife. And—and I reckon you're the one He's got picked out for me!" Yes, it was plain as day now.

Eyes smoldery, she colored at his words, but her voice was even as she said, "Mr. Ambrose Colter thinks the Lord has got me picked out for him, too—and he doesn't like people who disagree with him. And by the way—he'll be glad to see you. That well you witched for him last summer has no water in it."

Daniel was so taken aback by that—for he wasn't in the habit of witching dry wells—that the girl had backed her horse and shot past him in the ditch before he could speak. His first impulse was to follow, but it was just a little piece down the road to her sister's house, to which he reckoned she was going, and by the time he could get turned around and catch her she'd be there. Nope. He had a better idea. He'd just put up at her home in town. Her daddy was a deacon, and the deacons always kept the preachers. So he just watched as her horse clump-clomped down the road but she never looked back—that is, not until just as she was turning out of sight. Then when she saw Daniel watching she whirled back frontwards again mighty quick.

DRIVING around a sow and pigs in a mudhole in front of Ambrose Colter's bank, Daniel drove on down toward where he could see Juliet's daddy sitting on his front steps. A big pile of weathered clay and rock marked the well hole in Colter's front yard. Daniel went by and stopped next door. Juliet's father was holding a yellow game pullet on his knee, and his own sagging wattles quivered a bit as he cast a cold look over Daniel.

And as Daniel got out and went up the path, Deacon Masters said, "My woman says you up an' kissed my daughter last year an' had her moonin' around like a sick calf—"

"I'm mighty sorry about that," Daniel said, critically eyeing the pullet as she pecked at the constable's badge on the deacon's shirt-front. "I—"

"You're goin' to be a heap sorrier, you come foolin' around her any more. I'll give you a hoss-whippin' an' throw you in jail. You hear? I done got her future settled—"

Daniel was trying to think of something diplomatic to say when the deacon leaned forward, eyes narrowing, to peer toward the business section. Ambrose Colter had left the bank and was coming this way fast. And just then old Sam flew up from the buckboard and sailed in, cackling and flapping.

Daniel drew his hand into his cuff and raised it for Sam to light upon, but Sam paid him no mind. He made straight for the deacon who was holding the struggling, squawking pullet to him. The deacon ducked to one side and Sam lit in the breezeway between the two rooms of the house and charged back. Daniel caught him as he flew up at the pullet.

Angrily Masters cried, "Get that ugly varmint away from here!"

Daniel stiffened. "This rooster is from General Jackson's stock, sir!"

"All the worse!" Masters declared, "Jackson had better not show himself here. And as for the rooster, Ambrose Colter has got a real one we're aimin' to raise up some fine chickens from soon as ol' Jezebel here is a few weeks older."

Next door Colter's rooster crowed a challenge. Daniel saw him now, a big white Carolina chicken, in a pen under the grape arbor. But Sam and the pullet were cutting up so that Sam couldn't hear to answer back.

Nearing the gate, Colter cried, "Deacon, he's the one witched that dry well for me. Don't let him get away!"

He came in, drawing a four-barreled pistol, and, hair crawling, Daniel said, "Put that gun away, sir. I've come a-courting Miss Juliet, the Lord having

shown me in a vision she is set apart for me."

Colter stared at him in blank amazement, his wide, dark face slowly reddening, and the deacon cried, "Get out! Get on down the road. First that ruffle-necked varmint is after ol' Jezebel, and—"

"He don't go nowhere," Colter snapped, hunching his big shoulders, the pepper-box cocked. "Not till I get the ten dollars I paid him to witch that well—and what I was out for digging, and the time I lost from the bank. I want fifty dollars from you, mister, or I'll slap enough fraud and misrepresentation charges on you in court tomorrow to keep you in jail for life. You hear?"

Well, Daniel didn't have fifty dollars and if he had he wouldn't have been amind to hand it over. That would have been admitting the charge. He found it mighty hot in the jail, even after dark, for there was no wind to come in through the chinks between the logs. Lying there in the moonlight on the pallet they had let him take from his rig, he lay listening to the trickle of the spring branch out behind the jail, and to the occasional laughter from the saloon up town. He wished he had a drink.

The door of the jail was a trap in the roof and the deacon, in his capacity as constable, had drawn the ladder up after Daniel was in. And he had said, "Tell you what, Reverent, being' as you're a preacher if you'll give me your word you won't run off I'll leave this here trap-door unlocked, jist in case of fire. Reckon if the buildin' caught and you was skeered enough you could manage to clamber out."

So now he knew that what they really wanted was for him to get out and leave. That way, with a jail breaking charge against him, he would never dare come back. They had taken his horse and rig away, which would be profitable to them, to boot. He couldn't do the general any good if he did get out and run off. But on the other hand, in jail he couldn't either. The circuit judge was a Colter man, and if he found against Daniel tomorrow . . . Daniel shook his head and lay quietly watching old Sam, roosting on a cross beam, and tried not to hear the trickling of the spring. Finally, he could stand it no longer, and he swung himself up to the trap door . . .

The deacon was pretty grumpy next morning when he discovered Daniel and Sam were still there. He let them down some corn pone and water, and they were yet at breakfast when the court-day-and-speakin' crowd began pulling into town in wagons and rigs, on mule and horse-back and afoot. Boys came to peer through the chinks at Daniel and make bets with each other other about about what he was in for, and when men discovered that he had come on behalf of General Jackson they expressed grim hope that they could be on his jury whenever his case came up.

The more he tried to convince them that Jackson didn't want to take their land away from them, the less they believed him, and presently he decided he'd as well hush. He kept watching through the chinks, hoping to see Juliet, but he still hadn't had a glimpse of her as someone yelled, "The court! The court's acomin'!"

SURE enough a surrey with the judge and prosecutor and a couple of lawyers was coming, followed by a procession of other lawyers and politicians and hangers on—peddlers of nostrums and almanacs and gew-gaws. But when the procession was all in, he still didn't see Jackson, and a sharp sickness filled him. Here he had got himself into a mess for nothing.

Politicians were back-slapping and lawyers were being collared by litigants and bailed-out offenders whose cases were coming up. A couple of them hustled over to the jail, hopeful of trade, and Daniel asked them where Jackson was—if he'd had a backset of his illness.

"Oh, talkin' to a feller down the road that rid out to meet him," one of the lawyers said, "but you don't want *him*, even if he was takin' cases. You want a *real* lawyer—one that stands in with the court."

"'Ray for Ol' Hickory!" someone shouted. "'Ray for Jackson!"

Daniel saw him riding in on a black horse now, but the cheer wasn't taken up by the crowd. People fell silent, and here and there were hostile mutters. The

pale, emaciated general kept the horse at a walk, bony face expressionless, eyes ahead, sandy hair blowing a bit about his collar.

Daniel clambered up the chinks to where he could catch the cross beam where Sam sat and swung himself up astride it. With Sam on his shoulder, he stood precariously and shoved the trap up and drew himself out onto the roof. People were staring this way now—including the general. The buzz of voices hushed again as Jackson turned his horse and rode toward the jail.

Halting, he said, "Dan'l, what in tunket you doing up there?"

"Been in jail," Daniel said, "me and old Sam."

"What for?"

Daniel saw Juliet in the crowd, now, and as he looked at her her face pinked up till she was as pretty as a pup with two tails. Brashly he said, loud and clear, "For bein' in love with the marshal's daughter, the Lord having set her apart for me—"

A combined snort escaped Deacon Masters and Colter. Then Colter moved threateningly this way. Daniel slid down to where he could hand the rooster to Jackson, and the general brightened, seeming to look better all at once, as he stroked the feathers.

"Come on down from there, Dan'l," he said. "I'll go bail for you."

Masters perhaps didn't hear him. At any rate, he pushed up, exclaiming, "Here, you can't bust out of jail this way. 'Tain't legal."

Ambrose Colter spoke up. "Why not let him go loose? Him talking around on the general's behalf is about the best help I've got."

By late afternoon, court and spectators alike were becoming restless, eager for the speaking to start. People moved in and out of the courtroom. Women started supper fires around their wagons and fed whining children. Still Daniel's case, the last on the docket, had not been called. Several men rose from the bench he was on and he saw Juliet on the other end of it. She hadn't given him a glance today.

Now her attention was on the case Colter was pleading. Daniel slid down to her, but still she didn't look at him, though he could see she knew he was there.

He cleared his throat and whispered, "You—you don't act much like you did last summer, Miss Juliet."

She whispered back, "I wasted a month being nice to you, and what came of it? I'm seventeen years old and not getting any younger and I have to think of the future."

Daniel said, "Well'm, way you acted then—all quivery when I kissed you and everything, I—I thought—"

"I can't help what you thought. Do you know what they're going to do to you? Among other things, they aim to tar and feather you and General Jackson—and I won't care a bit. You better leave while you still can."

Daniel was pretty much taken aback. He said, "If the Lord lets me be tarred and feathered, I reckon I'll have to bear it. But for you to want it—"

Her mouth was trembly all at once. "You—l-left last summer—without saying good-bye—and you never wrote me."

It tore Daniel all up, seeing her like that, but before he could say anything else the judge rapped for order. Hawk eyes lowering over the spectacles perched on the hawk nose, he said, "Ambrose, for God's sake, I been hearin' about that durned hog last three sessions. Whyn't the litigants kill the cussed critter and divide the meat and shake hands and quit fussin'?"

"This is another hog, your honor. That'n died."

"Then if it died, the case is closed. If I'm bothered any more, I'm liable to fine both parties. Case throwed out. Next!"

Deacon Masters said, "State of Tennessee agin Dan'l Davis, about that there well he witched for Ambrose that never had no water in it, the specific charge bein' fraud and obtainin' money under false pretenses."

They had candles going by the time the jury was selected, and then Ambrose told how Daniel witched the well, promising him water at twenty feet, and charged him ten dollars.

"Well," Ambrose waxed indignant, "I'd dug two wells in that there yard down to fifty foot and just had to fill 'em back up, an' I figured all along weren't

nothin' to this, an' sure enough, I finally got down to solid rock at twenty-seven, an' there I quit."

"No question," General Jackson said. "Dan'l, take the stand."

Daniel set old Sam's hand-crate down by the witness chair—and it was just then that he saw Ambrose sniffing the air furtively. And then Daniel caught it—the smell of warming tar from toward the blacksmith shop.

The general said, "You told Mr. Colter he'd strike water at twenty feet?"

"Mighty close to it, I said. I could tell from the pull on the peach limb. Must've been a little wet weather stream running along then that probably later dried up—"

"Hah!" Colter snorted.

"What did you do with the ten dollars you accepted from him?" the general asked Daniel.

"Gave it to you on that pony I drive now."

"Would you recognize that money if you saw it?"

"Yes, sir. When Mr. Colter gave it to me, I remarked that some man named Jabe Shinwell had written his name on it."

That wasn't uncommon, of course. Lots of people wrote their names on their money in case of loss or as insurance against theft.

Jackson suddenly brought a banknote from his cuff and flipped it down the table to Colter. "There you are!" he cried. "A blatant counterfeit, as any banker would know." And then, gesturing toward Colter's slogan on his campaign placards about the room, Jackson said scathingly, "Send an honest man to congress!"

COLTER, rose, swelling angrily, eyes dangerous, and Jackson snapped, "Be seated, sir! Our case doesn't rest on the puny revelation that where fraudulent payment was made, you have no redress. You have assailed my client's character, and I shall clear it in one way or another. I trust you will be alive to know about it . . . Reverend Davis, where were you last night at nine P. M.?"

"He was in jail," Deacon Masters growled.

"On the contrary," Daniel said, "I became very thirsty, and I feared that my rooster, Sam, might likewise be suffering from our confinement so we went out to the spring for a drink and then we walked about the town a bit, feeling the need of exercise. At nine P. M. I was in Mr. Colter's yard, clambering down the ladder in his well to see how deep he'd dug it."

"How deep had he?"

"Why, as deep as he said, I reckon. After that I went back to the jail because Sam kept wanting to kill that white rooster of Colter's, and I had nothing against the rooster. And, although I confess I've been lusting to see a chicken fight, I promised—"

"I resent that!" Colter cried. "That varmint couldn't hurt my chicken."

"Objection," the general broke in.

"Overruled," the bench decreed. "I figger Ambrose is right. I don't keer for the set of this red chicken's head."

In a trembling voice, Jackson said, "How strong do you figure it?" and he brought out a heavy wallet. "How strong, sir?"

"I ain't got but seventy dollars with me."

"Taken!" the general cried. "Who else has money to lose?"

Daniel exclaimed, "Wait a minute, General. I promised the Lord me and Sam wouldn't have any more chicken fights. I appreciate—"

A cry of scorn escaped Colter, and Jackson stared at Daniel in bewilderment, but Daniel forged on: "Besides, it has not been proved, but only asserted by the plaintiff, that his well has no water in it. I promised Mr. Colter a well, and I don't figure the Lord will bless my ministry as long as I don't give it to him. If the court would adjourn to Mr. Colter's yard while I get it going—"

Jackson said, "Oh, yes . . . Your honor, I so move—"

"What is this?" the judge demanded. "Looks to me like—"

A beatific look suddenly replaced the puzzled scowl Colter wore, and Daniel saw him nod to the judge. Lifting Sam's cage, Daniel reached the door before the surprised crowd was on its feet, and as he went outside he caught the tar smell in the thick dusk stronger than ever. At

the blacksmith shop, he saw four men coming out with what looked like a big wooden tub, a pole stuck through the handles.

At sight of the emerging crowd, they scrambled back in. Juliet was right at his heels as they reached the well, and he said, "Kindly hold ol' Sam, will you, Miss Juliet?"

She said, "You better run for it. You better—"

But he peeled off his coat and down the ladder he went and in the gloom he found the heavy drill among the tools—a long, blunt crowbar, in reality—as he sent up a prayer. The first thing he knew the end of the ladder was jerked up past him, and Colter called down, "Thought the ladder might be in your way, Reverent," and he raked a lot of dirt over the edge with his foot.

When the rattle of it stopped, over the beat of his heart Daniel could still hear the faint murmur he had heard when he came down in here last night. He knew what he was going to do had to be done in a hurry before they dumped that tub of tar in here and emptied an old feather bed on him. He pulled his hat down tightly to protect his hair and face, for it took weeks to get all that tar off especially around your eyes, and your head had to be shaved.

He whopped the end of the bar down on the stone bottom of the well, but nothing happened. Colter said, "Reckon he thinks he's Moses bringin' water from the rock," and that got Daniel's dander up, bringing the Bible into it. The anger gave him added strength as he struck the stone again.

The blow was a mighty one. The bar drove through the limestone which had been softened by the water underneath and an icy spray flew out as the bar shot half its length into a crevice. It took Daniel's breath as it gushed upon him. He heard an awed cry from a woman, and then Colter yelled, "We fooled around long enough!"

There were cries and whistlings. "Bring on the tar—"

There were more shouts and then Juliet called, "Look out!" and he saw the women were sending down the ladder. He raced up it, expecting to meet the tar any second, but as he made it over the top he saw that there were only women around.

Juliet said, "I think the men went to a rooster fight."

Sure enough, they had. She was holding Sam's empty cage, and across the yard the men were shouting bets. Daniel ran over there, shivering and soggy, to where the roosters were staring at each other in the light of a pine knot. Then they went at it, and for a second it looked like Sam's long year of peace had finished him. Automatically Daniel cried, "What'd the general think of you, Sam?"

Sam plowed in. They went high into the air and the white rooster's comb spurted blood. Sam went in for the kill. Colter's chicken darted under him and flew up, cackling and clawing and beating his wings to get his balance on a man's hat, and then he sailed to the road, Colter hard after him. Sam crowed lustily.

Daniel picked Sam up and it came to him in the midst of his excitment and pride that here, just as it looked like he was about to get back into the Lord's good graces, this had to happen. He almost fell over the tub of tar, and coming around it was Colter.

Handing his white rooster to a man, Colter said, "All right, preacher, you've had your fun and that's enough. Come on, boys!"

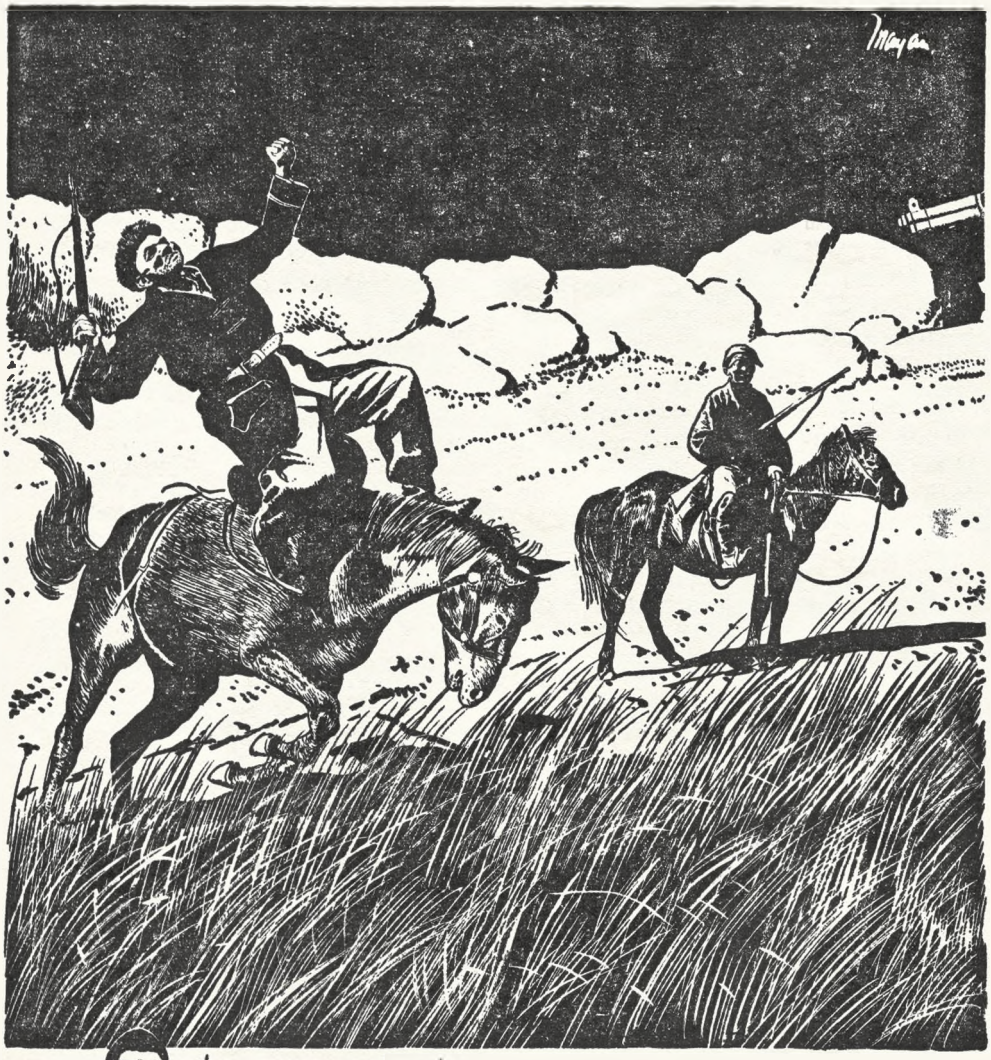
His grip was so mighty that Daniel left the front of his shirt as he jerked free. He hadn't promised the Lord that he wouldn't fight and handing Sam to the general he stepped in and drove his right fist into Colter's jaw and his left one into his ribs.

Colter shook his big head and charged, bearing Daniel swiftly backward toward the gaping well, and they went down together. A flint gouged at Daniel's kidneys as he beat on Colter to make him loosen his bear hug. They rolled over then as he got a thumb under Colter's nose and shoved, and all at once they went into the well.

Daniel caught wildly at the ladder, and, hanging to it above Daniel, Colter trampled on his hands as he scrambled back up. As Daniel made the brink, Colter turned to drive him back

(Continued on page 145)

By HAL G. EVARTS



ESCORT

A VULTURE planed out of the afternoon sun, hovered above the caravan and swooped earthward beyond the next ridge. It was the seventh Gil Lawson had counted in the past few minutes. He glanced ahead at the straggling file of riders and pack animals and kneed his pony out of the trail into the hip-deep grass, pushing to a

ILLUSTRATED BY EARL EUGENE MAYAN

Gil stepped forward, holding his rifle above his head, and called out in the Lolo dialect. At the same instant, Ashbaugh fired.

TO NAMTOK

trot. As he pulled abreast of Chelai, the old Tibetan wrangler turned in his saddle and said one cryptic word: "Lolo."

Gil frowned and rode up the column to overtake the missionary party, nodding encouragement as he passed, more conscious than ever of his responsibility. These people had a core of toughness that amazed him, but the strain and fatigue of two weeks' steady grinding travel had lined every face. He was thankful that tonight, if their luck and endurance held, they would reach the river. Tomorrow they'd be safely across. There, his job, the nerve-wracking part of it, would end.

He waved at gray-haired Dr. Nesbitt,

the group leader, hanging grimly to his horn, and cut back into the trail ahead of Nancy Rutledge. "In a hurry, Lieutenant?" she called.

He was, and yet the last thing he wanted was to alarm Nancy Rutledge, or any of them, unnecessarily. Reining up, he let her draw alongside, and they jogged on knee to knee. He said, "Just curious."

HER hazel eyes held his with a calm faintly questioning look that he found somehow disturbing. A wisp of hair strayed from under her scarf and the collar of a sheepskin coat flared around her face, flushed pink by the raw damp wind. Gil Lawson had speculated before why this slender soft-spoken girl had chosen to leave a comfortable California home to teach here, a thousand miles from her kind. He admired her, but with certain reservations. Unlike the others, she didn't quite seem to belong.

As though sensing his constraint, she said, "It must be deadly for you herding women and children. We didn't expect an Army escort."

"It's not like hunting for wrecked B29's," he admitted. Back in Tatsienlu his colonel, the U. S. Graves Registration Team C.O., had ordered him out of the field and sent him along, ostensibly as guide. The border tribes had been quiet for months, unnaturally so, since all but a skeleton force of Chinese troops had been drained off to the plains, and the colonel had reasoned that in case of trouble, two rifles were better than none. Two rifles to protect the road to an X on the map called Namtok, where this band of Americans would open the first post-war mission in eastern Tibet.

Nancy laughed. "You'll be glad to get rid of us and start back."

Her voice was friendly, but he felt irritation edge into him. Perhaps, he thought, because this land was not for white women. Nancy Rutledge would throw away her youth and her strength, and if she stayed, eventually her life, breaking under the awful loneliness, as his own mother had broken. He said stiffly, "Maybe you will too after a year out here."

The flat report of a rifle crashed across the prairie, echoed by two more shots. Gil swore under his breath and booted the pony to a gallop, gesturing Nancy back. A minute later he topped the swell and overrode Dan Ashbaugh, dismounted beside the trail. The captain gave him a crooked grin and slid his M1 into the saddle boot. "What's the matter, Lawson?" he said. "Got the jitters again?"

Gil let out a whistling breath and squinted across the sea of waving grass with a surge of relief. A patch of gray flagged momentarily on the far horizon and disappeared. "Goral," Ashbaugh said. 'A prime buck. And I had to miss at two hundred yards!'

"Too bad," Gil said dryly. Dan Ashbaugh was his own age, twenty-five, regular Army, a compact wiry man with the cockiness of a prize bantam. All the way across the mountain Gil had tried to humor him, mildly enduring his self-importance and letting him make decisions. But about hunting he'd given Ashbaugh blunt warning. Wind carried the sound for miles, and in the grasslands that could be dangerous, even fatal, for a slow-moving caravan.

"What the hell," Ashbaugh said. "We're all sick of yak jerky and buttered tea."

Gil said, "Take a look." Shrugging, Ashbaugh followed him up to a rocky knoll some distance back from the trail. Both horses shied at a sudden stench of rotting flesh, and a trio of vultures thrashed up from under their feet and took the air with protesting squawks. A half-butchered sheep, buzzing with flies, lay among the scrub brush. "A week old. Maybe less."

Ashbaugh snorted. "So what? These Tib tea trains live off the country."

"Sure," Gil said, "but they take the carcass, horns, skin and all. These Lolos are hit and run boys. They eat a bellyful and leave the rest. Like this."

"Listen," Ashbaugh said, "you know this country. I don't. But I do know combat. Relax, will you."

Gil hesitated. Ashbaugh might know jungle combat, trench warfare, all the textbook varieties. But this was different. This was Apache style, roving patrols and cavalry raids, a kind of

piracy on horseback that had defied entire Chinese armies. On the other hand he could appreciate Ashbaugh's reluctance to take tactical advice from a civilian in uniform, a second lieutenant. He thought, Let it go.

"You worry too much, Lawson." Ashbaugh slapped his reins and rode back to the trail.

Gil waited for the caravan, staring after him across the vast peak-rimmed plateau, filled with a vague uneasiness. He hated this high country, its emptiness and brooding solitude. He told himself he hated it. Once across the river, six more days to Namtok, he'd estimated. Another week before he could turn his back on it for good. And presently, watching the missionaries plod by, he wondered how anyone could put down roots in this hostile barren land.

Dr. Nesbitt, his face pinched and blue from the cold, called out. "Do we make camp soon?"

Gil said, "I'd like to push on a bit farther, sir. If you feel up to it."

"I'm—all right." The minister rubbed a hand over his eyes. "Just these—dizzy spells."

"It's the altitude," Gil told him. "We're crowding thirteen thousand feet. You'll feel better when we reach the bottoms."

Anxiously he drifted back along the file. Fat leaden clouds were massing to the north and a rain smell hung in the air. He exchanged a word with Mrs. Rhodes, stopped to tighten a cinch for one of the Kennedy boys, checked the pack hitches, anything to busy his mind. The horses were restive, spooking and tossing their manes. At the rear he fell in behind Nancy, and they rode together for some distance in silence.

Too abruptly he asked, "What do you think of it now?"

She caught the sharpness of his tone and raised her eyes to his face. "What do you want me to say? That it's wild, savage? That it's—well, rather overpowering?"

What he wanted to say himself, he couldn't. He was not even sure that he knew. But certainly she would misunderstand and, probably, like Ashbaugh, resent him. "It's hard on women," he said.

She held his gaze, smiling. "Any frontier is. My great-grandmother buried her husband beside the Utah Trail in the sixties. She drove a team of oxen alone across the desert. But she made it."

"At least she could give him a cross." Gil swung his arm in a loop toward the mountains. "Five B29's crashed back there, somewhere, during the war. GI's flying the Hump. It's taken us a year to locate three of them. The other two are —just missing. That's the kind of a country this is."

"But you stayed."

"Somebody had to. I was born out here, knew the language, the people." Watching her expression, he felt unaccountably on the defensive, annoyed with himself for having to explain. "It wasn't from choice, believe me."

SHE turned her head away, her smile fading, and as their horses paused, gave a little gasp. Beyond the rise the deep vee of a river trench slashed across the level table land. Far below, a ribbon of water glinted dully in the twilight, belted by growth. Gil made out the pencil line of the bridge and a pale zigzag scar of trail ascending the opposite face of the gorge. Through his binoculars he searched methodically along both banks for smoke or sign of movement, and finding none, rode slowly down to the first switchback.

"If you followed it far enough," he told her, "you'd come out at Shanghai. No man's even seen the headwaters."

In a voice of suppressed excitement she said softly, " 'O Promised Land.' "

Gil grunted. "Don't count on that . . ."

The rains broke during the night. When Gil rolled out at daybreak the river was a swollen yellow torrent and thick mist blanketed the canyon. After breakfast he inspected the planking across the narrow suspension bridge, swung on chains from the rocks, and returned to camp.

Chelai beckoned him aside and pointed to a ring of fire-blackened stones among the alders and willow clumps. Gil bent and picked up a flat slab of slate carved with the sacred Tibetan inscription, *O Mani Padme Hum*. No Tibetan, he knew, would defile a stone

from a *mani* pile. A careless white man or a Chinese might, but only a Lolo would do it deliberately, as a gesture of contempt. He glanced at the wall tent where the group was huddled over a smoldering fire at their morning services, and something like panic rose in him. "Run in the horses, Chelai," he said. "I'll get them moving."

Ashbaugh and Dr. Nesbitt were crouched under the fly of the second tent, a map spread on a pannier between them. The minister looked shrunken and ill. "We're discussing a change in route, Lieutenant Lawson," he said. "Subject to your approval, of course."

Gil stiffened. "What?"

"Right along the river bottom," Ashbaugh said, tracing with a pencil. "There's an alternate trail marked here and another bridge about a hundred miles south. We'll be out of that wind, down where a man can breathe."

The others came crowding around, and Gil caught Nancy's glance from the edge of the circle. Taken by surprise, he said guardedly, "It has some advantages, I guess, but our original route's shorter."

"We're not pressed for time," Dr. Nesbitt pointed out. "Right now the physical welfare of our flock is my chief concern."

Eyeing Ashbaugh soberly, Gil said, "It's mine too, sir. That's why I suggest—"

"I told him all that," Ashbaugh cut in. "It's my personal opinion we won't run into any of those gooks. But if we do—a few shots 'll scare them off." He glanced up at Nancy, an odd dancing brightness in his eyes, and it came to Gil with a shock that, aside from practical considerations, this show of authority was important to Ashbaugh. Ashbaugh intended to get his way and, technically, he was in command.

Checking his temper, Gil said, "It's just a precaution." He didn't add that the river, with only two bridges the length of it, was a natural barrier beyond which not even a loot-hungry Lolo was likely to range. Ashbaugh knew that.

The captain's mouth set. "I agree with the reverend. We can't risk sickness up on top in this storm. No wood, no shelter. It's too exposed."

He had a point, Gil conceded with reluctance. Either way would be wet and miserable, like everything else in this country. But it was more than a choice between speed and discomfort; it was a delicate balance of probabilities. He felt a stir of impatience with Dr. Nesbitt, with Nancy Rutledge, with them all, for involving him in their decision. "I think that's a better risk," he said, "but I seem to be outvoted."

"We're in the hands of the Lord," Dr. Nesbitt said. "If it is His will for us to reach Namtok, we shall."

Ashbaugh folded the map and rose to his feet with a crisp nod. "That's settled then, sir. The river trail."

The conference broke up. Deeply troubled, Gil went to the picket line to help Chelai sling loads for the day's march. The old man listened to him stolidly, spat and walked away. Gil shook his head. He knew that he should have insisted, that he had backed down too easily, but under the circumstances harmony between himself and Ashbaugh was essential. If trouble came, he'd need Ashbaugh's help, all of it, without any grudging animosity.

He saw the captain speak to Nancy, smiling down into her upturned face, and nod in his direction, and a ripple of laughter floated over to him. As the caravan began to form Ashbaugh rode up with a tight queer smile. "How about you riding point for a change?"

"Sure," Gil said. "But you'd better drop back a piece today. I don't like this mist."

"You don't like a lot of things," Ashbaugh said.

The train got under way, sloshing south along the muddy bottoms. Gil took one long backward look at the bridge and headed down the trail at a trot. Within a mile or so, the canyon pinched into a slot, with only a narrow ledge between the river's edge and the steeply lifting cliffs. Rain fell in an intermittent drizzle, so that he had no hope of finding prints, but he watched both sides of the trail for horse signs or marks of a recent camp.

The fire at the bridge might have been last year's. The Lolo party, if one had bivouacked there, might have ridden the other direction, upstream, or back

onto the plateau. They might have returned to their own territory, hundreds of miles to the east; they were, he knew, capable of fantastic marches. Gil comforted himself with a series of possibilities. But as the day wore on, with no letup in the weather, a feeling of depression settled over him and his apprehension increased.

AT NOON he stopped to rest his horse and eat. He was sitting on a driftlog, munching a handful of *tsamba,* when a rider appeared through the mist. Startled, he saw it was Nancy, wrapped in an enormous wine-colored Tibetan cape. "You shouldn't be up here alone," he told her.

"You're not very sociable." She held out a thermos flask. "Mama Rhodes thought you'd like something hot."

He helped her dismount and sipped the sweet steaming tea, letting its warmth seep through him. Regarding her over the cup thoughtfully, he said, "You'd better wait here for the group. The captain might worry."

"Not really." She smiled. "He doesn't think much of your local Indians."

Gil laughed, and suddenly he liked this girl—her honesty, her enthusiasm, her quiet perception. "Your great-grandma," he said, "didn't fight redskins."

"She would have, though," Nancy said.

They rode on single file, speaking only occasionally. The river had risen, flooding over the low areas, and in places they had to swing aside to higher ground, picking their own trail over the slippery side rocks. It was rough tedious going and mentally he added another day to their schedule. In mid-afternoon they entered a huge semi-amphitheater where the walls opened out, and he noticed the mouth of an entering canyon below and on the opposite side where a long gravel bar hooked out from shore. Ordinarily he would have pushed on till dusk, but he stopped now and picked a site among the dripping trees.

He took a handful of dry tinder from his saddle bag, struck a spark from his flint and steel, and puffed it into flame with a small hand bellows. Watching gravely, Nancy said, "You make it look easy."

"It is," he said, "if you learn from the natives. They know every trick of how to survive in this climate."

"That's not enough," she said. "They need teachers, doctors, engineers. I've wanted to come ever since I was a child, to see a raw virgin land. The westering blood, I guess." She broke off with a self-conscious smile. "Sounds silly, doesn't it?"

"No," he said. "No, It isn't silly. In a way my mother pioneered here too. She believed that. She followed my father from one filthy freezing village to another, preaching and nursing the sick. She was a young woman when she died."

"Oh." Nancy's voice was barely audible. And after a pause, "Then you'll be going back to the States—home?"

"Yes." He fed the fire a few more sticks, avoiding the sympathetic interest in her eyes. "I should've gone a long time ago."

The caravan began straggling in then, and he left her to help set up camp. After an early supper he circled the flat uneasily, listening to the pound of the river and the wind sighing among the trees. Satisfied that no one had passed through recently, he climbed up among a jumble of boulders deposited by a bygone flood and sighted back along the hairpin trail. From this point a single rifle commanded the only approach onto the flats from the direction they had traveled. He posted Chelai there and slipped back into camp.

The group was gathered around the fire, etched against the yellow flickering glow. The older Kennedy boy had brought out his harmonica and Mrs. Rhodes was humming some fragment of an unrecognizable hymn, and Dr. Nesbitt was leaning back against a pack frame puffing contentedly on his pipe. Gil watched a moment from the shadows, his glance wandering automatically to Nancy, and his face softened. And then, as Ashbaugh strode toward him across the circle of firelight, his good feeling drained away.

"What's the idea of parking the old man out in the rocks?" Ashbaugh said.

"Nothing much," Gil said wearily. "I thought we'd rotate guard tonight."

"If I want any security measures I'll tell you."

Gil shrugged. "All right. I should have asked you first. It slipped my mind."

"Maybe," Ashbaugh snapped, "if you spent less time entertaining the ladies—"

It was in the open at last, the raw throbbing nerve of Ashbaugh's antagonism, all the pent-up tension Gil had hoped to head off, at least till the river lay behind them. He said quickly, "Forget it, Ashbaugh."

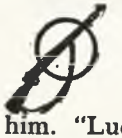
The music around the fire had stopped, and Ashbaugh's clipped voice cut across the silence. "I'm in charge here, Lieutenant, and don't *you* forget it."

Gil eyed him narrowly a second, his cheeks tingling. He drew a long breath. "Yes, sir," he said, and stepped off into the darkness . . .

The rain had stopped overnight, but a thin pre-dawn mist hung over the bottoms. Shivering in his blankets, Gil heard the plaintive cry of a water ouzel, followed by the nicker of a horse. He sat up suddenly and glanced over at Ashbaugh's bedroll. It was empty. He stamped into his boots, stuffed a clip into his rifle and ducked back into the trees. He called Ashbaugh's name softly, peering through the wet matted tangle, and hurried on. Some instinct drove him toward the lookout point and he scrambled up among the boulders. The rhythmic clop of running horses reached him faintly and he slid a cartridge into the chamber.

A moment later two dark stocky men in blue turbans and padded Chinese jackets rode cautiously around the last bend of the trail less than a hundred yards away, rifles slung loose across their saddles. He saw them rein up abruptly, as though suspicious. Movement in the brush below caught his eye, and then he made out Ashbaugh sprawled behind a log. Gil stepped forward, holding his rifle above his head, and called out in the Lolo dialect. The lead horse reared, and the same instant Ashbaugh fired.

The second rider fired back across his knees. A bullet spattered the slope behind Gil and he dropped, shouting for them to stop. The first rider had brought his horse under control, and slammed a ricochet off Gil's rock. Gil cupped his hands, trying to attract Ashbaugh's attention, but too late. He saw the captain shoot high, take careful aim and fire again. One man pitched from his saddle. The other wheeled and raced back uptrail around the bend.



GIL ran forward and knelt beside the Lolo, He was dead, face down in the brush. Ashbaugh walked up behind him. "Lucky I'm a light sleeper," he said thickly.

"Lucky?" Gil looked at him with sick empty sensation. He might, he knew, have been able to buy off the Lolos with horses or food; they wanted loot, not a fight. But Ashbaugh had fixed that. "They were out front scouting. There'll be fifteen or twenty more on our necks any time now."

Ashbaugh wiped the back of his hand across his face uncertainly. "Must've been tracking us. At night, too."

Gil peered up the trail where it squeezed in against the cliffs, and across at the far bank. They were pinned against the river, fifty boiling yards of it. Trapped, all of them, unless . . . He moistened his lips. "How long," he said, "do you think you could hold the trail from those rocks?"

"You're crazy," Ashbaugh said. "We'll run for it."

"Eighty miles to that bridge? With women and kids?"

"We'll ford, then. We can swim the horses across."

"They wouldn't last ten seconds in that current," Gil said. "Not that way."

Ashbaugh's mouth lashed down tight. "I got us in here," he said, "and I'll get us out."

Gil said, "It's a two-man job." He realized that to avoid friction, he had compromised on every crucial issue. He'd let personal feelings color his judgment. In the final analysis he was to blame—not Ashbaugh. "I'm asking you. How long can you give me?"

Ashbaugh didn't answer. He looked down at the body, his face expressionless.

"If this doesn't work," Gil said, "God help us all."

"How long do you need?"

"Couple of hours, at least."

Ashbaugh raised his eyes slowly and met Gil's stare. He thrust out one hand. "Give me your extra clips."

For Gil there was a time after that measure by white frightened faces, the river's steady rumble, ominous stillness in the trees. He worked swiftly, silently, teaming with Chelai. He shot and skinned the largest horse in the string, while Chelai twisted together a basket frame of willow branches and covered it with the still-warm hide, using leather thongs. The result was a flimsy-looking tub-shaped craft—a coracle, the ancient Tibetan lake canoe. He could only pray that it would stand the battering of a mountain river.

He carried it gingerly to the river, tested it, and handed Chelai a flat chunk of driftwood for a paddle. The old man eased himself in and balanced on his knees, studying the current. He made a shrugging gesture and Gil pushed him off.

The river caught him, spun him clear around, and swept the coracle along in a wide rushing arc. It tipped to one side, careening crazily. Chelai righted himself with a stroke. He disappeared into the spray and bobbed up beyond a midstream rock, riding the choppy wash like a cork. Gil saw him shoot into smoother water and paddle furiously for the gravel bar. Then he was there, a good quarter mile downstream, splashing ashore through the shallows with the coracle perched on his shoulder.

While he was walking back up the opposite bank, Gil weighted the end of a double-length picket rope with a stone. His first cast fell short. He coiled in and threw again. This time he made it; they had a line across. Chelai ran his end through a cinch ring fastened to the boat's framework and secured it around a tree. Gil carried his end a short distance downstream, and the coracle came straight to him, sliding along the rope. Moving back upstream to a point above Chelai once more, he made the line fast.

He faced the missionary party. For one bleak moment he wondered at the silence, if he could depend on Ashbaugh even now. Then a shot echoed, answered by the sharper unmistakable spang of an M1.

His eyes shifted from face to face, stopping on Nancy. He said, "You'll ferry over one at a time. Sit still and let the current pull you. On the other side get out of sight fast. Mrs. Rhodes—will you go first."

After the first round trip he lost count. As soon as a passenger stepped out on the other shore he loosened his line, ran down the bank to meet the returning coracle, carried it upstream and sent it off with another load. The current was his enemy, treacherous and swift, playing tricks with his rope. Back among the trees, still veiled in mist, rifles pecked away with growing intensity, and an occasional stray hummed overhead. At each lull he held his breath till the firing resumed.

They went with agonizing slowness, but they went. The Kennedy boys. Nancy. And finally Dr. Nesbitt, until Gil stood alone beside the river. He peered up the canyon, conscious of a dead lull. He snatched up his rifle, about to run back, when the brush rustled behind him and Ashbaugh staggered out.

The captain's face was smeared with mud and his left arm hung limp. He saw Gil and lurched down the bank. "More clips!"

Gil gave him a push. "Get in."

Ashbaugh took one more step and blinked. "Shove off. That thing won't hold both of us."

"It's got to," Gil said, and it flashed through his mind that in one respect he'd been wrong about Ashbaugh from the beginning: Ashbaugh was more than a field manual soldier.

"Shove off!" Ashbaugh swayed on his feet, a drunken glassy look in his eyes. "That's an order!"

Something metallic winked back in the trees, and a shrill gobbling yell carried across the bottoms. Gil swallowed. They would have guessed by now, suspected something, because the mist was beginning to lift. He said, "Damn you, don't argue! Get in!" And hit Ashbaugh's jaw with all his weight behind it.

The captain crumpled soundlessly. Gil dumped him into the coracle and wedged in beside him. He saw Chelai motion

(Continued on page 146)

THE SAINT

Cautiously Teacum peered out at the guard leaning against the wagon wheel.

By
DEE LINFORD

THE STORY THUS FAR:

THE Utah Expedition, sent by President Buchanan to quell the Mormon Rebellion of 1857 led by the fiery prophet BRIGHAM YOUNG, has bogged down at the Spanish River some four hundred miles short of the Mormon stronghold at Salt Lake. Colonel ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON, in command of U. S. Army forces at Fort Leavenworth, suspects treachery within the Army itself. He summons Lieutenant TYLER TEACUM and assigns him

IN THE SADDLE

ILLUSTRATED BY NICK EGGENHOFER

a mission—to investigate the failure of the campaign against the Mormons; and the fate of Major BOGGS and Lieutenant HINES—dispatch bearers who had disappeared somewhere west of Leavenworth.

Posing as a civilian wagonmaster, Teacum sets out for Fort Bridger where he is to deliver his wagon train to Colonel ALEXANDER and wait for Colonel Johnston, who is to meet him there in six weeks and receive his report. One night on the trail, a great bearded man, the notorious trader called BLACK BRAZOS, walks into camp and tries to stir up trouble among the teamsters with dire warnings of the powerful Mormon forces between them and their destination. With Brazos is another man, green-eyed, eloquent and mysteriously well-informed on the political aspects of the Mormon campaign. He urges Teacum to abandon his plan to reach Fort Bridger, and to sell them his supplies. Teacum refuses. Soon after the intruders leave, a Mormon attack is beaten off. During the fracas, Teacum takes a prisoner—a beautiful golden-haired woman, wounded and unconscious. He places her in

one of the wagons until she is able to talk. The next night Brazos' mysterious companion turns up again. He identifies himself as ELDER BOGGS of the Mormon Church, says the captive woman is his wife and insists on talking to her. With the Elder and his wife as prisoners, the wagon train continues on its way. The following afternoon, Teacum detects signals being flashed from the wagon containing the prisoners. The Elder denies the charge but when Teacum attempts to search the wagon, the Mormon attacks him. Teacum is thrown to the ground, his assailant snatches his pistol and Teacum is shot in the head. As he loses consciousness he sees a troop of cavalry approaching. At their head rides Black Brazos. And the full magnitude of the failure of his mission is brought home to the Army lieutenant. It is hard to die thinking such thoughts . . .

PART II

FOR an endless length of time, Ty Teacum lay in a pit of soundless gloom, penetrated by occasional flashes of delirium that stabbed like blades of blinding light. Strange, disconnected visions passed before him during those instants of dazzling illumination—images which were so much a part of the pain in his head that he came to shrink from the visions as from pain itself.

Sometimes it was the face of Black Brazos, the perfidious trader, that leered at him monstrously, with its little pig eyes and its full, feminine mouth. Sometimes it was the Mormon, Elder Boggs. Once it seemed that the elder was dressed in the uniform of a major, United States Army.

Sometimes it was a different face. Sometimes the vision was a lovely woman, with hair like spun gold and eyes whose color he could not distinguish. He knew this face, but he could not think how or when. He chafed because he could not remember. But he did not associate this vision with pain. Instead, his sick brain came to link the golden hair with cool gentle hands and a soothing voice that drove pain back into the darkness from whence it came—and whence it stared at him, with yellow hawk's eyes.

This face defeated pain, and eased the torment of vexation and anxiety which he did not understand, but which was less bearable than pain itself. And when the face was gone, he fretted for it like an ailing child.

Then one day he roused from his bloodshot dream, to find himself in the same wagon he had rigged as an ambulance for an injured woman prisoner, a long time ago. The woman was gone, and he was in the bed he had prepared for her.

It did not occur to him at once to wonder at the strangeness of it. He was tired, and his brain was hot, and it was enough that he could lie there without moving. With no demands whatsoever upon his mind or body.

After a time, curiosity stirred him, and he moved—experimentally. He had both his arms. He seemed to have his legs. He lifted his head to look down, but nauseating pain drove him back upon the pillow. He raised an exploring hand, and found his skull swathed in bandage.

He pondered this new strangeness, and memory flooded his head with images more fantastic than those of his dreams. The signal-flashes from this very wagon, and his search for the mirror. The girl's startled scream, and the elder's vicious attack. The shot, and the scalding pain. The horsemen riding up out of the arroyo, as if they had expected him to be killed, and had been waiting, close at hand . . .

For a long time, then, he lay still, sorting dreams from fantastic and untenable reality. Savoring a staggering discovery. He was alive. He remembered dying. But, somehow, he was not dead. He was in bed, in one of his own wagons, and the wagon was not in motion. He was a prisoner, no doubt, of the men who had ridden up out of the arroyo after he was shot. The men who had captured his train. The Mormons, Boggs and Brazos.

This realization led him into bleak concepts with which he was in no condition to cope, and he gave himself over to the friendly oblivion, into which he found he could sink at will. His next sensation was one of pleasure. Of hands, soft and cool, upon his temples. He opened his eyes, and knew then that he was dreaming. For the girl with the sunlit hair was seated beside him in the wagon. She was bathing his face with coolness, and friendly odors came from a bowl beside her, reminding him that he was hungry.

Since it was a dream, and men are not accountable in dreams, he lifted one hand and sought to capture one of hers in it. His fumbling fingers did touch that hand, and the contact thrilled him in a new way—charging his stagnant blood with fresh warmth and vigor. But the cool hand was quickly withdrawn, and a voice exclaimed above him.

"Mr. Teacum—you are awake!"

CHAPTER VI

WILDERNESS WAR

LOOKING up, he discovered again that the eyes were blue, and he wondered how he could have forgotten. He remembered, too, that this was the first time he had heard her voice. Listening to it, he thought of sunlit crystal, shot through with skeins of gold.

It seemed to his sickened senses that the eyes and the voice both were glad he was alive. Teacum tried to rise, tried to speak. But the cool hands forced him back and sealed his lips.

"You must not move or talk," the voice said gently. "You have been in fever for many days. You must lie very still."

"But—"

"Hush. I will tell you what you are wondering. You are a prisoner of Captain Brazos and Major Boggs. They didn't burn your train. Instead, they are taking it to Brazos' post. We are now camped in South Pass, with the handcart company which is stranded here. They found grass here and are grazing the mules to make them strong again. If you are wise, Mr. Teacum, you will play possum, as I did when I was a prisoner. People are so inconsistent. When you are well, they abuse you to make you ill. When you are ill, they pamper you to restore you—so they can abuse you again."

As she talked, the girl lifted his head gently and put the bowl to his lips. It contained a hot broth, and he sipped at it gratefully. When the bowl was empty, she eased him back to the pillow and prepared to leave.

The whirling chaos in his head now steadied and sharpened into a single urgent question. "My teamsters. What happened to them?"

"Most of them are with us. They accepted employment with the army of Utah, with the understanding that they would be sent on to California, by the Mormon Church. With a bonus of course."

"Most of them? What happened to the others?"

The girl's blue eyes wavered, but steadied. She seemed to brace herself before speaking.

"Your assistant, Barracks, and three others—they resisted when Captain Brazos led his men up to capture the train—after you were wounded. They were killed."

Killed! The loyal ex-sergeant, Barracks. His adjutant. Killed resisting a hundred guerrillas, with three men at his back. And Teacum had suspected him of treachery! There had been traitors in his company, judging from the girl's statement. But Barracks and at least three others had been loyal. With them, Teacum could have held the train. But they had died fighting when they must have known it was helpless to fight. They had died because of his own stupid blunders. Now blood had been spilled in the bloodless Mormon War. Now the shooting war had started. And Teacum was to blame. Teacum and this innocent-eyed girl!

He looked at her with different eyes, remembering. *She* had killed Barracks and the others, and reduced him to his present state. And she spoke of restoring him, so that he could be abused some more!

A wave of savage loathing swept over him, and his feeling must have been written on his face, for she recoiled from his gaze, and her blue eyes were stricken.

"Yes, I have done you a great harm, Mr. Teacum," she murmured. "More than I can undo. But I shall try to undo—some of it!"

Then she was gone. But not Teacum's bitterness. She had cost him everything in the world that he valued. She had cost four loyal men their lives, and Teacum his, very likely. And she spoke of undoing the harm!

For the instant, her words seemed the greatest outrage of the many committed, and he could feel his bitterness in his throat, taste it on his tongue. Then a dis-

concerting question cut through the darkness of his mind like a bar of slanting light. Why should she think of undoing the harm? Why should she have regrets at having injured him and his projects?

He was a prisoner of her husband. "Major Boggs," she had called him. She had been the instrument of his downfall—the bait in her husband's trap. And so much was an inevitable circumstance, he could see, belatedly. Yet she was caring for him now, with a tenderness her husband likely would not approve. Warning him to feign unconsciousness, as she had done while his prisoner, in order to escape mistreatment. Befriending him against her own people. Against her own husband. Why? To restore him for more abuse?

He reviewed in his mind all that she had done, all that she had said, while in the wagon. But there was no explanation there. When she first had talked to him, her eyes and her smile had held something of shyness—something of another thing. A thing he could not identify. But she hadn't treated him as an enemy—as a man she had betrayed and ruined and brought to the brink of death.

Now she was gone. Now Teacum lay mystified and utterly confused, trying to make sense of what would never make sense at all. Staring at the opening in the wagon's hood, where he last had seen her. Remembering she had called him by name.

But thinking started pain's red-spoked wheels to turning in his head, and he gave it up. His mind went blank and wandered without purpose. After a time, he felt a curiosity about the camp he was in. Braving pain again, he rolled to his side, lifted the canvas of the hood, and peered out.

SNOW covered the ground to a depth of several inches on the timbered slopes above the basin that sheltered the camp. About the wagons themselves, the snow was packed by much trampling. From somewhere near at hand came the sound of children's voices.

The government J. Mitchell wagons were corralled by themselves on one side of the basin, and seemingly were under guard. In the center of the corral stood a half dozen Army regulation Sibley tents, looted from the captured train. Men came and went among the tents. Smoke rose warmly from the chimneys which jutted from the tops of the tepee-shaped shelters.

Across a small stream, utterly stripped of its willows, were six or seven gaunt, hoop-tilted Conestogas, in very poor repair. Scattered about the few wagons were upward of a hundred curious rough-wood vehicles—two-wheeled, with low clearance and high narrow boxes, to which was attached a wooden bar, evidently for pulling. The carts were in worse repair than the wagons. Most of the wheels were mere wooden disks, untired, and worn to oblong shapes by countless miles of travel. And Teacum comprehended that he was beholding at last the famed, forlorn Mormon handcarts.

But the thing that absorbed his attention was the poverty and squalor of the camp beyond these vehicles. The converts, apparently several hundred strong, were living in dugouts and caves along the side of the mountain, with less than a dozen ragged wall-tents erected here and there.

Two ox carcasses and one antelope skeleton hung from crude tripod scaffolds in the center of the camp. But these questionable sources of sustenance were under the guard of two armed scarecrows who stamped their sack-wrapped feet on the ground occasionally. Stamped carefully, as if afraid their feet would break off. If the camp possessed other staples, such as flour or potatoes, there was no evidence of such in sight.

In the caves, Teacum could see many of the camp's miserable inhabitants, huddled together under ragged quilts and blankets, ill or seeking warmth. Men with the mark of starvation on their faces shivered at the several fires. Gaunt, hollow-eyed women, some with babes at breast, walked aimlessly or sat like graven images, staring into space. Near at hand, a child with the face of an aged man alternately mewled and licked at a muddy root in its hand.

With such a wealth of food and tents and clothing and blankets in the wag-

ons they had captured, why did the Mormon partisans permit such desperate want and privation to go unrelieved?

Then he saw the wife of Elder Boggs, and in the inexplicable thrill of watching her, he forgot misery and wretchedness—forgot that she had betrayed him and brought him to where he was. The setting sun was on her hair, marking her with a halo of gold. And she seemed an angel indeed as she moved from fire to fire, from cave to cave, spreading sunshine thinly over desolation. Cheering a wraith of a man with a smile and a word. Relieving a tired mother of a crying baby. Filling a cave with laughter which formerly had been silent. Momentarily pushing back despair.

It was perhaps natural that Teacum should compare her with the other women present. To marvel, somewhat, at the contrast. Somehow, if the girl with the golden hair had shared hardship for hardship with the other women converts, she had worn remarkably better. But, to Teacum's speculating eye, the difference seemed to run deeper than mere stamina.

Emaciated and chilled as they were, the other women clung stubbornly to custom and feminine attire, even though crinoline seemed to be unknown among them, and their worn dresses hung on them like sacks, straight from the shoulders to the ankles, with no ingathering at the waists. The yellow-haired girl wore men's clothing, which was suited to the climate and to circumstances generally. And, in so doing, she managed to look more feminine than any of her more orthodox sisters.

The thought was born in Teacum's fevered brain that the object of his interest was out of place in such a company. She was a flower, among reeds and rushes. And he wondered again what circumstances had placed her there.

She deserved better, much better than this. Better than the dubious station of a dubious polygamist's plural wife. Even if she were his favorite . . .

"Well, well," an airy, too-familiar voice exclaimed. "You have awakened, Mr. Teacum. You are inspecting our camp. It is heartening to have you show such an interest in my people."

Teacum had flushed, somewhat guiltily, at first hearing the voice, because of the thoughts it had surprised in his head. But guilt gave way to burning rancor as the voice continued to speak. Then he turned to face his enemy, and guilt and rancor both were submerged in jarring amazement. The Elder Boggs, looking in at him over the wagon's rear endgate, was resplendent in the dress uniform of a major, United States Army!

FOR a moment, the wounded soldier stared in uncomprehending stupefaction. Then a door opened in his memory, and he remembered seeing the Mormon in similar dress, in his delirious dreams. He remembered also that his yellow-haired girl had referred to him as "Major." But what did it mean?

The sickness was brewing in his head again. Maybe he was delirious now. Maybe he was dreaming and in a moment would wake up. Dreaming that the Mormon, like his wife, called him by name!

"I'm glad to see you have noted the handcarts," the voice went on. "They provide a striking symbol of the fervor and fanatical determination of my people. They symbolize a spirit which will not be conquered—neither by mobs nor traitorous politicians nor half-haunched armies. Do you follow me, sir?"

Teacum followed, indeed, with eyes and ears alike. Upon first seeing the splendid uniform, and upon feeling the sickness in his head again, he had lain back on his bed and closed his eyes, hoping that the giddiness would pass. It had not passed, altogether. But certain sounds from the rear of the wagon demanded his attention, and he opened his eyes again to see the elder was climbing up into the vehicle. His manner was still airy, his voice cordial in the extreme. Teacum could not remove his eyes from the uniform. But the Mormon, taken up by a trend of thought, seemed unaware of his preoccupation.

"Consider these carts and what they signify, Teacum. For Zion and the friends of Zion, they provide a most heartening manifestation. For the enemies of Zion, they point up the futility of opposing a movement so vital and so richly appealing as this one. For the enemies who have eyes, that is."

While he talked, the Mormon seated himself comfortably on the bed beside his prisoner. He clasped his hands about his knees, and his dark hair clung to his forehead in damp curls. Beard and all, his face had a strikingly boyish quality in moments of enthusiasm like this. And Teacum could understand how women would be attracted to him. He wondered, idly, how many other wives the man counted in his harem.

"Consider the carts in light of circumstances which brought them into being," the suave voice begged him. "Understand that our missionaries in foreign lands are sending converts to Canaan now by the tens and hundreds of thousands. Many are solvent—some are wealthy. Many others, however, are less fortunate. And it is these latter who provided the church authorities with a challenging problem. But the challenge, as you see, was met."

Teacum, preoccupied in his battle with dizzy pain, roused himself again. What the devil was the elder talking about? Oh, yes. The handcarts. As if they mattered now.

"The Church furnishes transportation to Utah of all converts who are unable to transport themselves," the voice continued, nagging at his attention, somehow aggravating the throbbing in his skull. "Steerage to New York Harbor, in merchant ships. By rail to Iowa City—crowded into empty cattle cars, returning to the West. Until last year, wagon trains met them at Iowa City to bring them on to Utah.

"But, beginning last year, the proselytes began arriving in such numbers that wagon trains could not be furnished to accommodate them all. As a result, the newcomers began to congregate in impossible numbers at the end of track—some to backslide and settle among Gentiles on the plains, some to abandon their religion completely and return to whence they'd come. Obviously, a serious problem. But the ingenious Brigham solved it in a typically practical fashion. Saints without wagons must walk to Zion, transporting their possessions upon those carts you see!"

There was a puzzling admixture of reverence and cynicism in the Mormon's voice which Teacum could not analyze, but which seemed entirely in harmony with the man's whole contradictory personality. But Teacum's interest was not in handcarts and Mormon heroics. He wanted to know why he was not dead. Why the Mormon's youngest wife had tied up his broken head and fed him hot broth, and warned him against her husband's intentions. But the effort of listening was less arduous than that of talking. Besides, if he let the other talk freely, and if he listened carefully, he might get clearer answers to his questions than if he put them directly.

"As one interested in the technicalities of transportation," his informant went on, "you doubtless would be intrigued by the scheme of organization. This particular group is typical. There are some five hundred souls altogether—divided into five companies of one hundred each. A captain, appointed, is in authority over each hundred. And upon leaving Iowa City, each hundred was allowed one wagon with three yoke of oxen, to carry the sick and disabled, and three or four cows, to furnish milk. In addition, each hundred has five tents and twenty handcarts. Each cart, at Iowa City was loaded with a hundred pounds of flour, vegetables, and utensils. Of course, the carts are lighter now—except when the sick must be placed on them and pulled along like so much beef."

Enthusiasm had now submerged the hoar frost of cynicism in the Mormon's tone. The green eyes were bright, the smile genuine and less worldly. And thus, before Teacum's very eyes, the man of many faces emerged in yet a different role. As an ardent tourist guide, imparting knowledge of a curious story-book people. As missionary and super-salesman, selling that people to the world.

"Consider it, sir! Consider walking twelve hundred miles across the wilderness you just crossed in a wagon, pulling your worldly goods in a wheelbarrow! A hardy undertaking, I think you'll agree. And this company has suffered hardships that most were spared. This company had the misfortune to be already on its way when war was decided on. The Army passed it on the trail, and fed off all the grass ahead of it. And Daniel Wells' scorched earth program has handicapped them further. Now

their livestock is exhausted or dead, their wagons unable to move on. They themselves are too weak to walk the remaining miles to Salt Lake. And the Army's presence at Bridger prevents the Church from sending relief. Yet they persist in their faith!"

CHAPTER VII

GATHERING OF THE SAINTS

TEACUM was no longer finding it difficult to listen. He was, in fact, beginning to feel something of the other's enthusiasm—though for reasons which would likely have disturbed the speaker, had they been known.

Teacum was remembering that the yellow-haired girl was a part of the Spartan group described. The fact seemed somehow to deepen and brighten the exciting mystery of her. Was she weary of being a heroine, and did she want to escape the life to which marriage to a polygamous banner salesman had reduced her? Or did she have other motives for befriending Teacum, and saving his life? Was her kindness part of another conspiracy hatched by her resourceful husband?

"Their condition is desperate, as you have seen. Most of them will die in this camp. Yet—" the banner salesman sighed piously with the thought—"there is no despair. In a little while, you will see the fires heaped higher, and the brass band will play. Imagine it! All their possessions must be hauled a thousand miles, on those devilish little carts. Yet, they found means somehow to bring along enough musical instruments to form a band! And when the band plays, those who are strong enough will dance. Those too weak to dance will sing!"

As if to prove the salesman's contention, several hundred voices were raised in song at that moment, off in the direction of the convert camp. The tenors were weak and uncertain, the sopranos scratchy and off key. But the mere fact that song could issue from such squalor as he'd seen in the camp across the creek was startling affirmation of what he had been hearing. The song's words, too, beguiled him into listening.

High on a mountain top
A banner is unfurl'd.
Ye nations now look up
It waves to all the world!

For God remembers still
His promise made of old
That He on Zion's hills would
A banner unfold—

Lifting the wagon's hood again, he looked in the direction of the camp. The sun was still high, but the fires already had been heaped high—arranged in the form of a circle. Inside the circle of fire, huddled together for warmth, the Saints were seated on stumps and boulders, some on the snow-covered ground. In the center of the congregation stood the choirmaster, a tall cadaverous man dressed in somber black, a bright red scarf tied pirate-fashion about his head.

"They are now holding a prayer and testimony meeting," the enthusiast informed him. "The man you see standing is an apostle—one of the Council of Twelve. He is in supreme command of the company. In a moment, he will drill the new converts in their catechism."

Even as the elder spoke, the song ended, and the gaunt apostle opened the book in his hand.

"When," he inquired in sonorous words, *"was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints organized?"*

And the chorus answered in an uneven chant: *"On April 6, 1830, in Palmyra, New York, by the Prophet Joseph Smith."*

"On what authority did Joseph Smith organize the Church?"

"The Prophet had a vision. The angel Moroni appeared to him at the Hill Cumorah, with golden plates, on which was engraved the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites, who inhabited this continent many years ago. The Nephites were destroyed for wickedness and transgression, but the Lamanites endured, and became the Indians who inhabited the continent when it was rediscovered by Columbus."

"By whom were the plates prepared?"

"By Mormon, the last of the Nephite prophets. His son, Moroni, hid the plates in the bowels of the earth, in order that on the appointed day they could be revealed and be united with the Bible in

making known the word of God to His chosen people, in these latter days. Moroni did not suffer death, but was taken into heaven to serve the Lord and wait until the appointed day . . ."

TEACUM dropped the canvas and turned back upon the salesman. He found the green eyes watching him intently, and in their depths he found cynicism again, and something like amusement. The cynicism now impressed him as being somehow sinister and obscene. And then he comprehended.

"By God, Elder," he ejaculated. "I believe you are trying to convert me!"

But the other was insensitive to irony. He nodded with something like eagerness. He was the missionary now.

"Absolutely. Every man has the right to hear the gospel and to accept the priesthood of the true Church. Even the Church's enemies. Why, I myself was among those enemies at one time. Now—"

"To the devil with your priesthood, Elder!" the soldier growled, impatient to be on with things that mattered. "Whom did you murder to get that uniform?"

The clipped eyebrows arched. "Murder? Why, I murdered no one, believe me. That is—" the green eyes turned humorous, the faint smile reappeared—"not to get the uniform. You see, I used to wear it, legally. I told you I was among the Church's enemies, before I was converted. Permit me to introduce myself."

Reaching insde his coat, the Mormon produced a familiar lettered paper and held it out. It was a regular commission form, signed by the President of the United States. It made John B. Boggs a major, United States Army.

The ornate script type blurred in front of Teacum's eyes. The sickness returned to his head, and he closed his eyes to shut out a leering, repulsive face.

After a time, he was able to look at his discovery, if not at the man who had made the revelation. Major John B. Boggs was one of the missing couriers Johnston had dispatched to his vanguard!

"You seem to recognize my name," he heard the voice exclaim. "But hear my story before you judge me. I did come west with the military express. But, west of Fort Laramie, I was captured by Captain Brazos and his company. Before I could escape, they had converted me to their religion. After that, I could not be expected to act contrary to my convictions, could I? The constitution of our country, which the Army is sworn to defend, guarantees every man freedom to worship in one's own way. It is one of the fundamental rights assured every man. Even officers of the Army!"

Teacum was too overcome to say any of the things he might have said. A vast reversal of horizons was taking place in his aching head. He couldn't speak, or even think, until the process had been completed. Until the chaos had been banished, and fresh landmarks established.

But he could remember certain things. Things which should have forewarned him and prepared him for the shock. The man's wife had called him "Major Boggs." But she called Black Brazos "Captain," and Dan Wells "General." Teacum, insofar as he had thought of the matter at all, had taken for granted that the man's rank was held in the rebel's forces, which he supported. The uniform, too. The uniform should have prepared him. But it seemed incredible, and still seemed so, that a traitor-deserter would have the brass to wear and flaunt the uniform he had betrayed.

Teacum could remember, also, this man's noxious and irresponsible charges of treason against his commander and the War Department and the Army generally. He should have been prepared by that. Traitors and other criminals have a convenient habit of justifying their own malfeasance by ascribing more heinous crimes to their victims.

"*Where was the second gathering of the Saints?*" a voice from another world demanded, with what impresesd Teacum as startling disregard of earth-shaking catastrophe. And the obedient chorus chanted back the whiskered, blood-stained chronicle. The tragic words.

"*At Kirkland in Ohio, where a temple was built to the glory of Almighty God. But the enemies of the Lord arose and drove His people on . . .*"

Teacum opened his hot eyes. The other eyes were still there.

"Don't look at me as if I were a snake, Lieutenant. Who knows? We may convert you before we're through!"

Lieutenant!

Teacum had thought himself immune to any further shock, any further bruising of his numbed faculties. But the title of address took his breath away. The hard bed seemed suddenly withdrawn from under him, leaving him suspended in an empty whirling void.

"Does it affect you so, to be addressed by your proper title, Lieutenant Teacum?" the voice was saying, as if at a great distance from him. "A soldier should take more pride in his calling. Or is it merely that you are surprised to hear your name? You underrate us, Lieutenant. Our spy system is very efficient. I've known your identity and the purpose of your mission for several days. That is why I must convert you, Lieutenant. Convert you—or let you die unshriven."

THE mocking voice paused to let him digest its implications. Then it continued, sparked now with good-humored cordiality.

"We could hang you, out of hand, you know—without danger of reprisal. Hanging is the usual treatment accorded spies in war-time. Soldiers out of uniform, posing as non-combatants. Of course, we should try to convert you, first. Zion needs more stalwart sons!"

Teacum was obligated to the monster for taking such a tone. Anger can be a powerful stimulant, and Teacum was in need of such. Anger steadied the drunken world, slowed the whirling in his head. Anger pointed up the landmarks and compass points sought by his groping brains—loosed his thoughts and his tongue, barbing both with poison darts.

"You seem well versed on war-time crimes and punishment. Have you thought of what happens to Army officers who desert in the field, and turn their services to the enemy?"

But the barb was turned, with a shrug. "It has been my observation, Lieutenant, that you must catch before you hang. You have been caught. I am still at large. I intend to remain at large."

Teacum's eyes were lost in two bright pools of jade. The silence in the wagon had become oppressive. And, as one sometimes becomes suddenly aware of the ticking of a clock in a dead silent room, Teacum's ears picked up the irrelevant chant from somewhere out of the hot confused universe in which he revolved.

"Where was the third gathering of the Saints, to worship God?"

"In Zion, the Promised Land: Missouri! Independence . . . Clay County . . . Caldwell County . . . Far West! But the mobs arose. The Governor of Missouri wrote the Order of Extermination . . ."

Then a lone soprano shot up above the rhythmic chant, high and quavering and touched with hysteria. The solo voice in the oratorio. Half a shriek and half a moan. The Mormon Lament:

"I was at Haugn's Mill when the mobbers came. We was warned they'd come. But our menfolks had no guns. They hid us women in the corn, and sought refuge in the blacksmith's shop. The mobbers surrounded the shop, shooting through the cracks. They didn't stop till every man was down!

"Then they found us women. God shouldn't of allowed what they did. Kill the brats, one mobber said. Nits make lice. They took my baby outen my arms. They broke my oldest's back . . . When they was finished with us, we gathered up the bodies. We put the bodies in a well. But the fiends came back. THEY BUILT A PRIVY ABOVE THAT WELL!"

Now the chorus, moaning softly. Now the voice of the catechist. Kindly and resigned. Half a boast and half a prayer. The Mormon Credo:

"Where much is given, much is required . . ."

Teacum heard, and did not hear. Teacum stared at his captor—one question on his lips.

"What do you want with me, Boggs? You tried to kill me, then saved my life. For what? What is it you want?"

"A letter."

"A letter?"

"A little personal letter. Dictated by me. Written by you. Addressed to Colonel Johnston. That is not much, is it? In return for your life?"

Teacum stirred reluctantly. "What would this letter say?"

The green eyes turned bright and wary. But the voice continued light and careless.

"It would inform Colonel Johnston that you are a prisoner of the Mormons—a fact which he already is aware of. You see, I took the liberty of writing the colonel, myself, as a fellow captive. I informed him you had been taken—wounded, by an anonymous Mormon prisoner, for making improper advances to the Mormon's wife, and subsequently made prisoner yourself. Your letter would affirm this, and contain certain additions. Your letter will say that you have seen me, also a prisoner. It will say, also, that you have uncovered certain conclusive evidence showing that Lieutenant Hines was killed by casual Indians—that his dispatches later found their way into Mormon hands."

Teacum was breathing shallowly. The green eyes held his like magnets, reading the thought that was taking shape inside his head. The voice talked on.

"Yes. I was forced to kill Lieutenant Hines, to intercept the second express. My loyalties could not lie in two directions. Unfortunately, Lieutenant Hines had a companion—a meddling civilian who eluded us in the dark. He saw nothing. Knows nothing. But, since reaching Bridger, I hear he is insinuating his suspicions. Suspicions which might easily be put down now, but which—if allowed to blossom untrammeled—might thrive."

The green eyes blurred. Teacum gripped his throbbing head. He couldn't black out now. He had to think.

"I knew you were a madman," he said bitterly. "But I didn't think you were a fool. Did you really think I would write such a letter?"

The other laughed. "Frankly, no. I expected you to refuse. But then, you have not been converted yet. And I've no doubt that you will be. For I don't think you are a fool."

Teacum was coming to shrink from the word "conversion," as used by this man. It brought visions of torture fires and other refined methods of inducement which would occur to minds like this one and the trader Brazos'. But he had to know.

"And if I don't write the letter?"

The tarnished epaulettes moved in the faintest suggestion of a shrug. "We have the precedent furnished by Lieutenant Hines. He too had an opportunity to embrace the gospel. But he remained adamant—to the end. A rather needless end, Lieutenant. Rather painful, too, I'm afraid. He even threatened to ruin me, if he escaped. Needless to add, he did neither . . ."

SILENCE came into the wagon once more. Silence and endless, sad recitation from the convert camp. The ticking of the clock.

"The fourth gathering of the Saints was at Commerce, Illinois, which became Nauvoo the Beautiful, with rock-paved streets, colleges, and churches, and another temple to the Lord. But the enemies of the Lord are legion. The mobs came again. The Carthage Grays seized the Prophet Joseph Smith and carried him to the Carthage jail. There, while praying that the Lord would have mercy on His enemies, he was murdered, and his spirit went to God. The Saints were driven from their city, into the snow. Their tracks across the frozen Mississippi were made in blood."

The solo voices. The melancholy psalms:

"I have seen the stains of his blood in Carthage jail! The mobocrats scrubbed them with soap and lye. But they remain to shame God's enemies—"

"The mobocrats—the Pukes and Carthage Grays—they tried to hide their shame. They built a new floor, over the old. But the stains came up through the new boards. You can see them today—"

"Hosanna!"

Long shall the blo-o-od
Which was shed by a-a-ssassins
Stain Illinois while
The ea-r-rth lauds his fame!

The melancholy ticking faded, retreated before the surge of bitter thoughts in Teacum's bloodshot brain. As if it were of prime importance to his projects, he started to enumerate the crimes to which his captor had already boastfully confessed. Desertion. Treason. Landpiracy. Multiple murder and torture. And still he conspired at greater crimes.

Why? Because of the value of a stolen quartermaster train? Or because of the dictates of his new religion? Both answers were miserably inadequate. Then what end was he seeking, that he'd commit every crime in the book in order to attain it? What vicious conspiracy was he party to, that he'd sacrifice his military career and all other things that a man normally valued, in order to have it succeed?

Teacum knew that he must somehow manage to live long enough to find the answers to these questions. Long enough to place those answers in the hands of Colonel Johnston. And it was that knowledge, desperate and inflexible, which prompted his next question. The trite and futile question of the condemned.

"And if I write the letter, Boggs—how do I know you won't murder me at once, to close my mouth?"

Again the careless shrug. "You have my word of honor."

"*Honor!*" It was too much. Teacum laughed a laugh that pulsed like a hammer inside his head. "Are you sure you know the meaning of the term?"

The other's nod was curt. The dart had struck. But it was not in his nature to admit it.

"I flatter myself that I do, Lieutenant," he said coldly. "It is a flexible and a relative term. It is not affected by the crimes one may commit, but by whether one's crimes are successful. My crimes will be successful, Lieutenant. Your conversion will assure it!"

Teacum nodded. He could not dispute the other's logic. His next question he had to force out of him. Word by bitter word.

"And just how do you propose to achieve my conversion Boggs?"

"Black Brazos is very accomplished in the arts of persuasion and inducement," he was told in a faint wisp of a voice. "Perhaps I shall call on him."

Teacum said no more. There was nothing more to be said. He merely wondered now what end he would meet. Whether his body would someday be found and identified. Or if, like the unfortunate Lieutenant Hines, he would simply vanish from the face of the earth.

Boggs, to Teacum's immense relief, now seemed disposed to leave the wagon. But, posed above the vehicle's rear endgate, the traitor paused again. He didn't speak immediately. He simply looked at his prisoner in silence. And, under that bright incisive gaze, Teacum felt naked and helpless, as if everything in his mind and heart were known to his enemy.

Perhaps his wound, and his utter helplessness contributed to his feeling. Or it may have been the ruthless and implacable ambition which were stamped so clearly on the handsome face.

But it seemed to him in that moment that the traitor was not a human being, with human foibles and vulnerabilities. Rather, he saw him as the essence of evil and malevolence. Unembodied and indestructible. A power over the mind and body. A shadow that moved with the sun and wind, its touch the touch of death.

The voice roused him from his nightmare reverie, demanding to know if he would write the letter.

It was not easy to smile into the bright jade pools that watched him like the eyes of a snake. But he did manage what he hoped was a credibly casual grin.

"I will consult my oracle, Major. I will let you know."

"Consult it soon," the other warned. "I want my answer tonight."

The traitor dropped down from the wagon then. Teacum was alone with the pain in his head and the chant from the convert camp. The tempo was slower now, more gentle. The long sad legend was nearing its end. Resigned as autumn rain.

"Where is the fifth and last gathering of the Saints?"

"The fifth and last gathering of the Saints is in the New Zion, in Deseret. The enemies of the Lord have gathered again. They march across the wilderness to burn and murder again. But the power of the Lord is our safety. His prophecies have been fulfilled. The armies of evil will be destroyed in the mountain passes, and Zion will thrive until the Last Days. The Lost Ten Tribes will come out of the East . . . God's standard will fly from the mountains . . . Satan will be chained for a thousand years . . ."

Teacum hadn't realized the strain he'd

Beyond the fires, a hundred couples jigged about on the snow-packed ground.

been under, until now. The letdown was devastating. The sickness was filling his head, and he wanted to vomit.

But he couldn't be sick. He had to escape, tonight . . .

CHAPTER VIII

BUCHANAN'S BLUNDER

FOR ALL his despairing resolve, Teacum must have blacked out again, after the traitor had left the wagon. Because when next he was aware of being alive, night had fallen in the basin. From somewhere near at hand, a weak-winded band was tooting the Jenny Lind polka.

After a time, he lifted the canvas hood and peered out. The Mormon converts had ended their testimony meeting, but the fires still were blazing brightly across the basin. The music came from a ten piece band, conducted by a dwarfish man in a buffalo coat, who waved a shining ramrod baton. Beyond the fires, a hundred couples jigged about on the snow-packed ground, in a rough approximation of the ballroom dance.

Many sects similar to Mormonism in creed and dogma considered dancing as sinful. But Brigham Young encouraged

the activity among his people, along with singing and story-telling, as healthful diversions from grief and toil. And there before Teacum's eyes was proof of the prophet's wisdom.

Instead of brooding on their misfortune and resigning themselves to the death that stalked them with blizzard teeth, these people momentarily had submerged gnawing hunger and hopelessness in the exertion and merriment of dance. Feet faltered and dancers lost balance, tumbling into the snow. But hearts met the rousing tempo, and death drew back, defeated.

Unconsciously, Teacum's eyes sought a pair of laughing eyes, a head of sunlit hair. Both, it seemed would have added vitality and grace to the scene of forlorn gayety. But the traitor's wife was not among the dancers or, seemingly, among the sitters at the fires. Neither did he see any of his perfidious teamsters joining in the mirth.

The latter fact impressed him as doubly strange. As strange as the fact that the destitute proselytes had not been permitted to share in the plunder of the captured train. These Mormons were a curious lot. Surely, the destitution in Salt Lake City could not exceed the want and privation of the five hundred marooned converts. John Boggs had said one true thing. All the armies of the world could never defeat a people so stout-hearted as to welcome death with a dance—so well-disciplined as to endure starvation, within easy reach of an abundance of looted food. And maybe their discipline would be their downfall. Bodies could not live long on song and dance, whatever prophets decreed.

But such problems belonged to the Mormons, not to Teacum. The traitor

Boggs would be demanding his letter soon, and Teacum too would dance a strenuous jig, if turned over to Brazos to play with. So he dropped the flap and turned his thoughts back to personal affairs.

He could feel the fever hotness behind his eyes again, and he knew that it was madness to attempt escape when he was almost too weak to rise from the bed. But the alternative was too grim to contemplate. Better die in the snow and wind and end up in the belly of a wolf than to be cooked alive on a slow burning fire, while a pair of devilish green eyes gloated.

He still wore all but his outer clothing, and amid the wreckage of the bed he located his boots and hat and greatcoat. He thought wistfully of the guns in the other wagons. But when he had chosen a wagon to convert to an ambulance, he had not foreseen that he would himself be a passenger, and he'd taken pains to be certain there was nothing in the lading which might be used as a weapon. He'd have to get his gun elsewhere.

After much writhing and contorting of his limbs and torso, he was into his boots and greatcoat. But the exertion left him trembling and blind, and he rested a moment before proceeding.

Outside, the dancing seemingly had ceased. The converts, doubtless, had exhausted their meager energies and, like Teacum, must rest. But the brass band tooted valiantly on, veering from Jenny Lind into Stephen Foster's "Camptown Races"—the melody of which this people had appropriated as the air for their battle hymn. And if the dancers had stopped of exhaustion, they still had sufficient breath to shout another of their parody's innumerable verses.

Come, brethren, and hear my song,
Dooda, dooda;
I don't intend to keep you long,
Oh, dooda day!
'Bout Uncle Sam I'm going to sing,
Dooda, dooda;
He swears that death to us he'll bring
Oh, dooda day!
Then let us be on hand—

Pulling himself up to hands and knees, Teacum crept back to the rear of the wagon. Cautiously, he thrust aside the canvas flap and peered out. His breath caught in his throat, and he felt his bones and muscle turn to stone. A man was leaning against the wagon's rear wheel, so close to Teacum that if he breathed the man would feel the warmth on his neck. The man had a rifle in the crook of his arm, and plainly was a guard. A guard posted at the wagon to make certain Teacum did not escape.

WHEN he dared to move at all, Teacum drew back inside the flap and exhaled thinly. Despair knifed at him, and bleakly he cursed his captor's competence. The guard was near enough to him so that he could reach through the flap and take him by the throat. But his hands and wrists were as weak as a child's. That way he'd only alert the watchman and bar the way to escape.

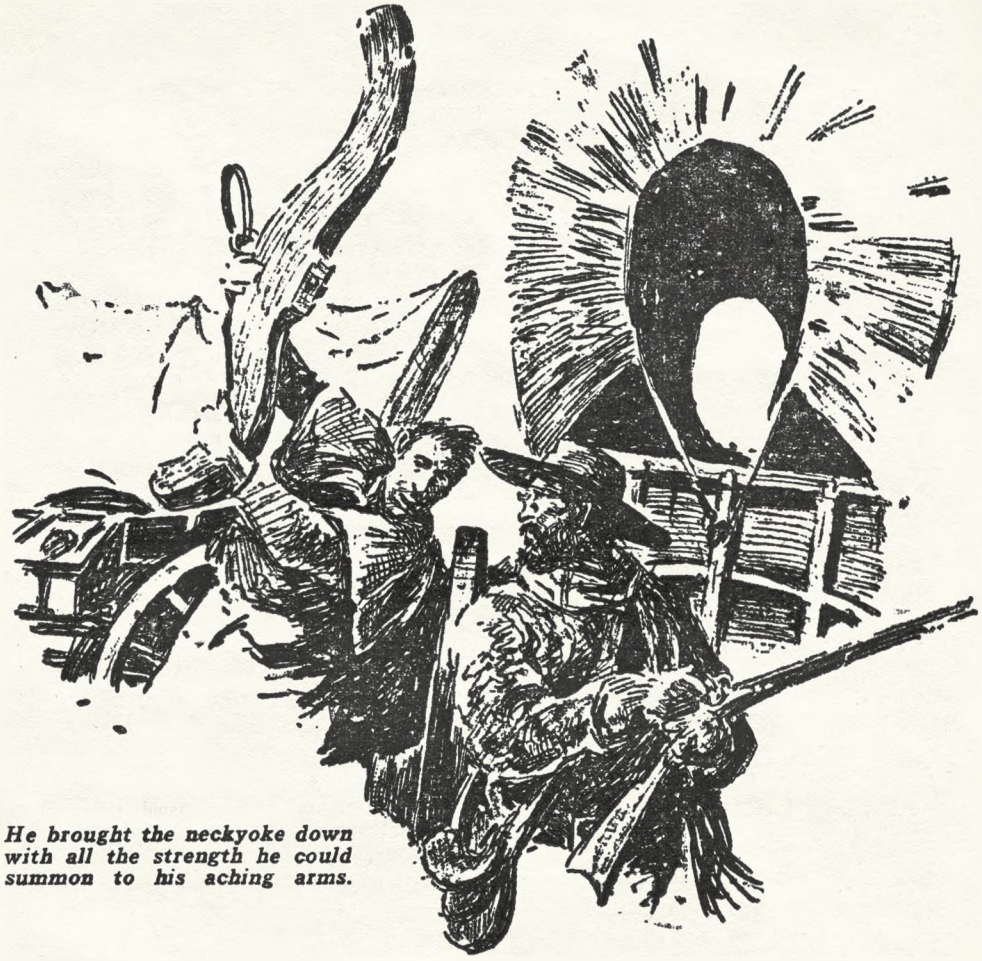
Doggedly, Teacum crawled back to the front of the wagon. It was unlikely that Boggs would detail two men to guard a wounded, helpless prisoner. It was equally unlikely that Teacum could leave the wagon by the front, without being heard by the guard at the rear. But he'd be out nothing to try. Nothing but the pains that every movement cost him.

His groping fingers found the ropes that drew and held the hood. After an agony of fumbling and fruitless tugging, he felt the frozen ropes give. An instant later, he lifted a corner of the hood and looked out. The way was clear.

Painfully, inch by inch, he eased himself over the front endgate. First his feet. Then his legs and thighs. His boots found the doubletree stick. Found it would support his weight. Cautiously, he pushed his shoulders clear, and eased himself to the ground.

He had made it! But the ordeal left him blind and shaking. He gripped the wheel with both hands and closed his eyes. The Mormon band, seemingly sharing his hopelessness, boomed a mournful dirge. Five hundred voices were raised in plaintive lament.

The people of Missouri
Like a flood in all its fury
And without a judge or jury
Swept the Saints and killed their sons!



He brought the neckyoke down with all the strength he could summon to his aching arms.

When the world had ceased its sickening carrousel, Teacum raised his head. The cold wind bathed his face, sharpened the focus of his thinking. The guard had not heard him. But there would be other guards. Teacum had to have a gun.

A heavy oak neckyoke was leaning against the wheel beside him—placed there, out of the snow, by a forward-looking teamster. Teacum weighed it in his hands, found that he could heft it. Courage, born of despair, lifted his spirit and killed despair. Moving with infinite care, he crept up the side of the wagon, toward the unsuspecting guard. The Mormon band, as if now inspired by the soldier's reckless resolve, marched into a lilting quickstep, as stirring as "Dixie." And the obedient chorus shouted defiance to the winter stars.

If what they now propose to do
Should ever come to pass
We'll burn up every inch of wood
And every blade of grass!

The wagon guard yawned and scratched himself as Teacum rounded the rear of the wagon behind him, stepping with tortured care, to keep the snow from squeaking underfoot. When he was just near enough, the soldier paused, inhaled deeply, and swung his club aloft.

The neckyoke's iron rings rattled faintly, and the sluggish guard turned, as yet unalarmed. Then he stiffened, seeing the incredible apparition which threatened him. An instant later, he leaped. Teacum brought the heavy club down with all the strength he could summon to his aching arms. It collided with the

fur-capped head, midway of the lunge. The blow seemed pathetically ineffective to Teacum. But the lunge was broken, and the teamster slumped to the ground, spreadeagled in the snow at Teacum's feet. The band and chorus hooted in ecstasy:

Hey the merry
Aye the merry
Hey the merry Mormon!

To Teacum, the time for ecstasy was not yet. He lifted the club and let it fall again, merely for good measure. A moment's strenuous work, and the unconscious man lay underneath the wagon, out of sight. When he'd caught his breath, Teacum took inventory of his catch. Besides the coveted rifle, the guard wore a brace of pistols and a knife. Teacum appropriated all these, plus the man's scarf and fur cap. The scarf he knotted about his neck and the lower part of his face, both for warmth and security. Then, leaving the hapless man tied and gagged, he crept around the wheel and hauled himself to his feet.

He was not an instant too soon. Muffled footsteps sounded in the snow, and two men advanced quickly from the direction of the convert camp. Two human forms, at any rate. As they drew nearer, Teacum recognized the traitor Boggs and his yellow-haired wife, and his heartbeat hung fire for the instant.

His first impulse was to shoot the traitor and make a break for it. His second was bolder. He stood casually where he was, a pistol cocked behind him, trusting to the fur cap and scarf and the dark to keep his secret.

He need not have worried. The traitor passed him with no more than a glance that took in the wagon also. He had hold of his wife's arm and was half dragging her along, much as he might treat a refractory child. He was speaking, too. The cap covered Teacum's ears, and the traitor's voice was modulated, so that he didn't hear what was being said. But he heard the tone, and it was savagely authoritative. Threatening, he thought.

Then they were past, and Teacum stood watching them, wondering at the nature of their quarrel. At the first Sibley tent, the traitor lifted the flap, shoved the girl inside, and followed her, pulling the flap down behind him. But not before Teacum had caught a glimpse of Black Brazos, lolling on a blanket pile beside the stove, smoking an Indian pipe.

FOR a long moment Teacum stood irresolute. Other than a vague intention to seek out the grazing mules and try to steal a horse for his flight, he had no plan of action in his head. He'd been lucky thus far, and he might be lucky again. But while he had shrunk from looking the fact in the face, he knew that even if he could get a horse, he would never make it to Bridger or back to Laramie. His legs were threatening to cave right now. And always in his brain the hot dizziness kept threatening him.

He watched the tent. Neither the traitor nor his wife reappeared through the flap. If they were quarreling, it might be educational to listen in. Especially if the quarrel involved Black Brazos, who had not left the tent. A man was standing guard outside the flap. But if Teacum's disguise had fooled Boggs and his wife, it ought to fool the guard.

He hesitated another moment, looking toward the bleak white hills that ringed the encampment. That way lay, at worst, a quick death in some wind-scoured gully with the snow drifting warmly over him. This other way led to Brazo's torture fires and the letter that Teacum might write, if the fire proved more harrowing than could be endured.

He left the pistol cocked in his hand, held it down against his leg, and went toward the tent. The light inside the yellow canvas rendered the Sibley a ghostly jack-o'-lantern, without a face, but hollow inside and transparent to eyes without. Three black shadows sat within, around a conical shadow stove. Cooking a witches' broth of treachery and murder and treason. Three quick shots, fired into the jack-o'-lantern from without, would end the unholy black mass. Upset the devil's stew, and extinguish the fires that brewed it.

The man on guard looked at him expectantly as he came up. Teacum halted in front of the closed flap and feigned a yawn and a stretch.

"Boss says to spell you here," he grumbled. "Till midnight."

He recognized the guard as one of his teamsters, a dull-witted Hoosier by name of Teach. He had little fear of being recognized himself. But his voice, bored and disguised as it was, seemed to stir an old memory in the stupid brain. The guard stared at him without moving. Teacum gripped the pistol, ready to swing it against the other's skull.

"O' course," he murmured, "if you want to stand it out . . ."

He made as if to turn, and the Hoosier bethought himself. "Oh no, you don't. I've stood my hitch. I ain't *about* to stand yourn."

Turning then, he shuffled off toward another tent, muttering imprecations. Teacum watched him out of sight, then turned his attention to the tent.

Above the Sibley's flap, a seam had come unsewn, almost on a level with Teacum's eye. He put his eye close, and saw Boggs seated on a flat whiskey keg, his back to the flap. The traitor had thrown off his greatcoat and was resplendent again in the uniform of the Army he had betrayed. He was knawing at a venison knuckle, and the sight of cooked meat reminded Teacum he had not eaten in several days, aside from the broth the traitor's wife had brought him. Saliva filled his mouth, and the clamor in his stomach blinded him for an instant to the urgency of anything but food.

He closed his eyes to blot out the maddening sight. When he opened them again, he looked not at Boggs but at Brazos, who reclined like a slothful bear on his bed beside the stove. He held an open flask in his hand, and his eyes were glazed and blank. The girl sat in the far corner of the tent. He could see her legs and torso, but not her face or hands. She'll be eating, too! he thought savagely. It seemed an unforgivable affront.

"The mules are strong enough to travel," he heard the traitor saying, licking his fingers gustily between words. "We'll start in the morning. Be at Tar Springs in a week."

"What about them whistlebelly Saints over yonder?" Brazos demanded thickly. "We leave 'em set here, they're bound to tell Lot Smith which way we gone."

"Lot will have his hands full with the Army for a while yet," the other said. "Besides, why you think I been wearing these Sunday clothes all week? As far as those converts know, this is a government train, under the command of an Army officer. And my wife there, she won't tell 'em any different, will you, sweetheart?"

Teacum didn't hear the girl's reply. It was low and indistinct. Anyhow, Teacum's thoughts were elsewhere. He couldn't keep his eyes off the venison knuckle the traitor toyed with. He couldn't keep the smell of it out of his nostrils. Raging hunger gave him the instincts and the audacity of a ravenous wolf. He was about to burst into the tent unannounced and take his chances with its occupants when fortune intervened.

"Teach," the traitor called suddenly over his shoulder. He spoke through a mouth half filled with meat, and Teacum at first did not associate the muffled sound with the guard he had sent away.

"Teach!"

The word was shouted now, in dangerous impatience. Teacum reacted as a competent guard should do.

"Comin'," he mumbled, trying the flap with his free hand. It was tied, from within, and the traitor made no move to remedy the difficulty. There was nothing but to drop to his hands and knees and crawl inside, like an Eskimo.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAND OF THE LOCKED DOOR

NO ONE noticed the substitution until he stood up to confront the three of them, over a cocked pistol. And if Ty Teacum had died in that moment for his brazen effrontery, the shocked amazement on those three faces would have almost made the dying worthwhile.

John Bogg's handsome features turned a sickly green, watching in the hue his staring eyes. His mouth gaped open, showing the half chewed meat within. The muzzle of Teacum's pistol was almost touching his temple, where a vein pulsed and twitched. Brazos had started up from his bed, then froze in a half sitting position as the intruder's gun swung

slightly to acknowledge him. His black eyes plainly rejected the apparition as the result of what he'd taken from the bottle. But even in a whiskey trance, a gun was a gun.

Teacum barely glanced at the girl in the corner, but he was conscious that her face was pale, her eyes wide with surprise, perhaps with fear. Yes, the moment was one he'd remember . . .

"It's needless of course to remind you gentlemen that it would be fatal to move or try to call help," he remarked, gratified to find his voice was calm and sharp as a whetted knife. "Don't bother to get up, Captain Brazos. Don't bother at all. And keep your hands in plain sight. Ditto for you, Major Boggs. And now, if that venison knuckle is in your way, I'll be glad to be responsible for it."

Before the traitor could blink a bulging eye, Teacum had plucked the joint from his fingers and squatted on his heels beside the tent flap. He wished he might relieve the others of their weapons. But remembering the transparency of the lighted canvas, the vivid shadow pictures visible from without, he didn't dare attempt it. He himself faced the lantern directly, so that the shadow of his pistol was projected upon his own chest, not upon the tent wall. So long as none of the others moved, their silhouettes would give no alarm to anyone passing outside. It was chancey business, but he'd have to trust to his own vigilance where their weapons were concerned.

He wasted no time with the venison. One hand was enough for the pistol, and chewing did not interfere with vision. Ravenously, he tore great chunks of meat loose from the bone, wolfed it, and filled his mouth with more. His eyes and his pistol paid sharpest heed to his unwilling hosts, and he realized—not without satisfaction—that he offered an incongruous appearance: robbing the traitor of his supper at pistol's point, devouring it ferociously on the spot. But his hunger would not be stayed, and he needed the strength the meat would put in his long-denied stomach. And while he gorged himself in silence, the others had time to

If Ty Teacum had died in that moment, the shocked amazement on those faces would have almost made it worthwhile.

recover from surprise, each reacting according to his personal bent.

The girl merely withdrew deeper into the shadows of the corner, seemingly to watch and wait. Brazos, convinced at last that the improbable was true, had lapsed into an ill-tempered sulk. It was his nature to regard every untoward circumstance as a personal affront. Blizzards, droughts, swollen rivers, balky mules, treacherous dealing—all equally roused his churlish spleen and plunged him into black vindictive despond. While so afflicted, he was as dangerous as a wounded bear, and as unpredictable. He now ignored Teacum to glower at John Boggs, whom he chose to hold accountable for this particular inconvenience. To Black Brazos, no misfortune was ruinous, no position untenable, so long as he could affix blame for it upon another. When he moved, he would move without warning. And he would be as liable to strike at Boggs as at Teacum.

John Boggs was cut of different cloth, his pattern more obscure. Boggs dealt with circumstances as they arose, and no reverse was admitted so long as hope remained. He plainly regarded the present setback as far from hopeless—perhaps as no setback at all. He alone of the three had fully recovered countenance by the time Teacum had polished off the deer bone. His green eyes were bright and deeply speculative. Behind them a sharp intelligence was making shrewd guesses, and devising plans and counter plans.

Teacum saw that the coming engagement would be an exacting one. But the food in his stomach had steadied him. Already, he was aware of a sharpening of his senses, including his hatred for the green-eyed enemy before him. He would welcome a battle of wits with the man who had defeated him so consistently in the past. Yes, and the battle of brawn and weapons that would follow it.

When the bone in his hand gleamed white as a hound's tooth, he threw it over his shoulder and wiped his whiskered mouth on his hand. He even allowed himself a smile.

"You'll pardon me for bursting in this way, Major," he began, "for supper. But you promised to convert me, and I was rather anxious to begin. You believers all seemed so cozy like in here!"

The traitor had a smile to match that of his taunter. "Let *me* apologize, Lieutenant. I didn't realize you had been so neglected by our commissary. As for your conversion—I was about to send for you."

TEACUM'S gaze left the traitor to sweep the tent, feigning pleased surprise. "What? No torture fires?"

The other's smile didn't waver. "Not to begin with, Lieutenant. I intended to appeal first to your intelligence."

"Ah."

"For I believe you are a man of intelligence, Lieutenant. And now that the war is over—"

"Over?" Teacum had thought himself prepared against any surprise maneuver. But he had not expected this. He knew he was staring, even if skeptically. He saw the green eyes glint at a victory scored.

"Why, yes, Lieutenant—all but the formalities," the other qualified. "I thought you'd know. But then, of course, you have been out of touch. If you'll permit me to reach that newspaper, yonder, I will bring you up to date."

"By all means," the soldier assented, alert against a trick. "But do it in such a way that you don't come between me and Captain Brazos. I might want to shoot him. And don't get yourself shot, Major. I am looking forward to being saved."

"I said I'd appeal to your intelligence," the traitor retorted, reaching for the newspaper on a box beside him. "And we were talking about the war. It is becoming very unpopular with the nation, and with Congress, Lieutenant. The European press is offended—and justly—that a government supposedly founded on the principles of liberty and equality should hound an innocent minority of its people to death. Newspapers in this country are joining in the hue and cry, and Congress is demanding that the Army be recalled from Utah. Congress, as a matter of fact, has disavowed the whole venture, and is putting the blame for it squarely on the President—where it belongs. 'Buchanan's Blunder,' they are calling it. And juicy scandals are being unearthed in the War Department, on graft in supply."

Teacum, remembering this same man's

vicious and fantastic slander of other officials at their first meeting, was skeptically silent. But the traitor talked on, seemingly with authority.

"It appears, Lieutenant, that the Secretary of War, your patriotic Mr. Floyd, has permitted certain of his friends to sell the Army large stocks of worthless goods. I happen to know personally that when Alexander's vanguard left Leavenworth it had less than seven hundred blankets for two thousand men. Less than eight hundred pairs of boots and only nine hundred greatcoats. But the supply wagons contained twenty-five hundred pairs of gold epaulettes, and tons of garrison gadgets that are useless in a field campaign! These things are being made known, Lieutenant. There is talk of impeaching Floyd. If that happens, the President himself is going to get muddied. The Democratic party is beginning to see that Brigham Young is going to defeat them in the next election, and the party is disowning the President, He'll never be nominated for another term!"

Teacum found himself interested, but scarcely impressed. He did not doubt that there were many truths and more half-truths in the traitor's charges. But, coming as they did from an officer who was in open collaboration with the enemy, they were to be swallowed with salt, if at all. He was convinced that the whole discourse was stall, and he was aware that his life hung by a thread so long as he remained in the transparent tent. But the deserter's aims and projects were still clouded and obscure. It was Teacum's duty to learn what he could of those projects, and he accepted the risks as the cost of the game. He watched and waited, and let the traitor talk.

"Permit me to read you an editorial from the New York *Times,* of the Third Instance," Boggs continued, spreading the paper in his hands. "Quote: 'It puzzles ordinary men why a hostile army was sent against Utah. If the whole business does not end in a rebellion, it is not likely to be saved from that issue by any special wisdom on the part of the general government' . . . And here, again: 'By and large, the Mormon issue offers all that is needed for the glory of statesmen: Impudent imposture, murders, rape, polygamy, treason, defiance to the government! Nothing is wanting to convert our venerable president into a glorious crusader. An army was sent to chastise rebels before it was ascertained whether there were any rebels to chastise.' And so on."

The green eyes lifted to Teacum's, triumphantly. But Teacum was impassive. The traitor, plainly disappointed, held the paper toward him with one hand, indicating an item with the other.

"Perhaps you would like to read for yourself what the great Texas patriot and Democrat, Senator Sam Houston, has to say about the expedition, on the Senate floor."

Teacum smiled faintly. "I'm afraid you will have to read it to me, Major. I left my glasses in the library."

THE OTHER shrugged and moved the paper back to the light. "I quote: 'The more men you send to the Mormon War,' Senator Houston declared today, 'the more you increase the difficulty. They have to be fed. For sixteen hundred miles you have to transport provisions. The regiments sent there have found Fort Bridger and the other places heaps of ashes. They will find Salt Lake City, if they ever reach it, heaps of ashes. Whosoever goes there will meet the fate of Napoleon's army in Russia; for these people, if they fight, will fight desperately. They are defending their homes. They are fighting to prevent the execution of threats that touch their hearths and their families; and depend on it they will fight until the last man perishes.

" 'As for troops to conquer the Mormons, fifty thousand will be as insufficient as two or three thousand. I say your men will never return, but their bones will whiten the valley of Salt Lake. Mr. President, if you will find out what the Mormons are willing to do, we may have peace. But, so surely as our troops advance, so surely they will be annihilated. These people expect nothing but extermination . . .' "

Once more the green eyes sought Teacum's. Once more Teacum shrugged. "Very interesting, Major," he conceded.

"But how does it convert me to Mormonism?"

The other looked annoyed. "You miss the point, Lieutenant. This war has blown up in the President's face. His party has repudiated him, and he is backing away from his war, fast. He has issued a second proclamation, pardoning all Utah's population, if the people promise to obey the laws of the land. A peace commission has already been sent, to negotiate the details of the peace terms. Judging from the progress Colonel Johnston has made to date, the peace makers will arrive ahead of him. Notices of the proclamation and of the peace commission both are contained in this paper, if you question my word."

Again the traitor offered the paper. Again, Teacum declined it, pistol balanced in his hand. "All you say sounds reasonable, Major. I'll take your word on it. But I'm a little slow tonight. I don't quite see how this is going to make me a Mormon."

"You are *very* slow tonight," the other sneered. "Try to comprehend. I have it on excellent authority that Brigham Young will accept the pardon. He will accept the appointment of a civil governor whose authority will supersede his own, in certain innocuous matters. He will admit the Army into Utah for a token occupation to save the President's face. He will keep the President dangling for a time, the Army in disgrace at Bridger, until spring—to save his own face. But, when the snows melt, and just before the Army is ready to move against him, he will yield!"

Teacum found the news gratifying. But the fact that the traitor should take such pains to inform him was more puzzling yet. These were not arguments to persuade a man to treason. They were arguments against that very thing. The thought crossed his mind that the major was more than a little mad.

"You still do not see it, eh, Lieutenant?" the other said, exuding good will and confidence now. "I will draw you a picture. The Land of the Locked Door is about to be unlocked. The Seeing Eye is about to be blinded. With the Army in Salt Lake, to police Canaan and protect Gentile interests, eastern and foreign capital will pour in, in a golden stream."

Again, the prediction sounded reasonable. Teacum waited warily to have its significance pointed up. Boggs mistook his silence for skepticism.

"Do you know, Lieutenant," he demanded, "that the mountains of Utah are fabulously rich in minerals and ores, including gold and silver and copper? Brigham Young has forbidden its development, because he knows the evils which accompany easy wealth. But the Army knows of these riches, and will encourage their development. Because the Army and the government wish to bring a Gentile population to Utah that will put the Mormon people in a minority, and solve the Mormon problem for all time!"

"You don't talk like a Mormon, Major," Teacum observed, his thoughts in another quarter.

The other smiled. "I am a Mormon. But I'm a smart one. And I'm telling you that the opening of Utah will result in a boom that will make the gold rush to San Francisco look like a bank panic!"

Teacum was remembering the traitor's cynicism when talking earlier of the Mormon church, and a long-suppressed conviction was rising to the surface of consciousness inside his head. He measured the man again. There was no cynicism in him now. His eyes and his voice held the fervency of a man in a vision.

"The first boom will be in transportation. Think of it! People bound for the mountains—by the thousands. Think of the food and clothing they will require, when they arrive. Think of the mining and smelter equipment—the manufactories that will follow. All of it to be hauled twelve hundred miles across the plains Think of the freight lines and stage lines that will be required. A hundred coaches. Five thousand wagons. Fifty thousand horses! I tell you, a man who gets in at the bottom and has the right connections—he'll be rich as Croesus in ten years!"

COMPREHENSION was breaking clearly now in Teacum's head. He glanced at Brazos on the bed, and saw that the trader's sulks were gone. He was

staring up at the speaker like one hypnotized. He was caught up in a dream. A golden dream of empire. Of power and riches beyond his capacity to visualize. In that moment, the trader had forgotten Teacum and the Army and everything but the glittering stakes for which he was gambling. Gambling with death, at the end of a hangman's rope.

For a moment, Teacum himself was caught up by the vision, and he saw the project clearly, in all its sordid splendor. He saw the perfection of a partnership which hitherto had baffled him. The illiterate, bloody-minded trader whose post offered a convenient headquarters for land-piracy, whose renegade brigades provided a ready pool of manpower, for present and future operations. The brilliant, scheming child of fortune who furnished the intelligence and the inspiration behind the dream. He saw also for the first time the true relationship between the partners. Boggs was the prophet and leader here, Brazos the convert and follower.

"I foresaw the end of this comic-opera war, Lieutenant," the traitor continued, confirming Teacum's supposition. "I have financial backing for a transportation company from Leavenworth to Utah. But dollars alone were not enough. The Army—the civil governor—these will have nominal power in Deseret. But the real power, for a good many years, will be the Church. The Church and President Young. The man who succeeds in business, in Utah, will have Young's support . . . Do you know how the great Ben Holladay got his start in transportation?"

Teacum had to confess his ignorance.

"Back in 'Forty-nine, when everyone else was thinking of San Francisco, Holladay took a wagon train of merchandise to Salt Lake City. Gambled his last dollar, and all his friends and backers said he was crazy. Other Gentile traders had tried the same, and their goods had rotted untouched in the damp salt air. But Holladay had once befriended the Saints in a small way, with General Doniphan in Missouri. He reminded Brigham Young of the fact, and Young remembered. Young gave Holladay his public blessing, and Holladay traded out his whole cargo in a week. Made a trader's fortune!"

Boggs himself seemed now to have forgotten Teacum and the Army he had betrayed, the government which would hang him if it could take him. The green eyes were feverish, looking through Teacum to a dazzling promise beyond. The voice was hoarse with a deep inner excitement, speaking more to itself than to Teacum.

"I've enough mules and rolling stock on hand right now to start operations. I am now waiting only for events. And when this war blows up, as it will soon, the Army will offer hundreds of wagons and thousands of mules for sale, at a few cents on the dollar—at Leavenworth and Bridger and Salt Lake!"

The thought suggested itself that here was another suspicion confirmed. Not all the Army's lost J. Mitchellwagons had been burned. All of its lost livestock had not been driven off to Utah. But the focus of Teacum's attention was elsewhere.

He was seeing the man Boggs in all dimensions at long last. He was not merely a traitor to the Army and the nation. He was a traitor, at heart, to the Church he had joined during this insurrection. He was no more a Mormon at heart than Teacum himself. He was an opportunist, an adventurer who had sold his country out for a million dollars. He'd sell his Church out, and just as quickly, when the time came.

He caught himself wondering how the man's wife, the girl with the sunlit hair, regarded her husband's abysmal perfidy. He wondered this so strongly that he looked in her direction for the first time since Boggs had begun his sales talk. But her face was still shrouded in shadow, and told him nothing.

Then he called himself the blind hopeless fool that he was. She needed to tell him nothing. It all had been told. She was in this conspiracy with her husband. In it from the first. What was true of him was equally true of her. And he understood now how she had kept so much better than the other women in the handcart troupe. She was no more a member of the wheelbarrow brigade than Boggs was a member of the Church. She'd been living in comfort with her husband, at Brazos' post, likely helping to plan his pirate raids, and being at

hand when he needed her. Like that night at Devil's Gate!

Somehow, perhaps because she was a woman and Teacum was a man, the realization of the girl's own perfidy put a more repelling face on the whole project. Teacum's hatred for the pair became a black suffocating cloud.

"I believe you have made everything clear, Boggs," he remarked. "You have the backing for your transportation company. You even have a few hundred wagons and teams stolen from the Army, hidden up at Brazos' post. These you'll be able to explain by purchasing surplus wagons and mules at the war's end. You have sold yourself to Brigham Young, and are all set to go. But it's all worthless, unless you can clear yourself of murdering Lieutenant Hines. That it?"

He caught another shift of furtive calculation in the wary eyes. He understood that the traitor had made things a bit clearer than he'd intended, and that he had touched him close to his ribs. But, whatever his inner agitation, the traitor's nod was casual.

"It would simplify a problem, Lieutenant, if you would write the letter I have requested. But understand me further. I am well connected. I could clear myself without your help."

Teacum wondered whether this was bluff. Recalling certain words the traitor had spoken, he decided it was not. Not altogether.

"Well," he maneuvered, "you mentioned converting me to Mor—to your religion. It seems you have converted Brazos, and certain others. In my case, what are the inducements?"

The green eyes glowed again. "Write me that letter, Lieutenant, and I will make you a full partner in my enterprises. As a matter of fact, I should count myself lucky to have you with me. I am an organizer. A manipulator. But I'm no freighter. Neither is Captain Brazos. We need a man to oversee our activities in the field. I know your record in problems of transportation, Lieutenant. And I'm sure I speak for Brazos as well as myself in saying that we'd find no better qualified superintendent in the nation!"

The green eyes were now ingratiating. The sticky words had warmed the chilly smile. And Teacum made the discovery that flattery can be winning or repellent, depending on its source. Colonel Johnston had said similar words to him, and Teacum had been drawn to him. If he'd had the spittle, he would have spat in the traitor's eye.

"And if you distrust flattery," the other added, "remember that I would not employ it unless I considered you important enough to my projects to merit it."

THE REMARK was neatly turned, and Teacum once again felt uneasy under the bright reptilian gaze which seemed to see into the innermost reaches of his brain. He had fancied, at the start of this conversation, that he was dealing with just another soldier, disgruntled at a soldier's pay, and seeking to augment it through channels at hand. Now he knew that the conspiracy had been long and carefully planned. He knew also that he was dealing with an intelligence which was at least equal to his own, and the realization gave him further bitterness.

Ty Teacum had no gift for high manipulation and robber-baron accumulation. But he was familiar with the American tradition of fortunes amassed overnight by enterprising individuals who were shrewd enough to recognize opportunity and vigorous enough to seize it. Utah would certainly furnish such opportunity, just as the traitor had predicted. But was Major John Boggs cut of that magic cloth that made Astors and Vanderbilts and Holladays? Was the man of many faces emerging at last in his true role—that of transportation giant and builder of empires?

He looked like an empire builder. He had the stature. The thin firm lips and zealot's eyes. The profile like Napoleon's. Ruthless as Napoleon, and similarly possessed of the gambler's virtues: boldness and ability to keep his eyes on the main chance; a habit of holding the ace of trumps. The fact that he'd committed treason was beside the point. Astor had been called a traitor for his dealings with British fur companies during the second war with England, but the charges hadn't reduced his profits. George Washington himself might have dangled on a British rope, had his luck gone wrong.

Yes. The traitor Boggs had the look of an empire builder. But there might be an omen in that very fact. Builders of empire rarely looked the part. They were broken-tongued German immigrants, sons of Heidelberg butchers, with a bent for trading and an eye for furs and real estate. They were Staten Island ferrymen, buying another boat and another, so that in the end the title of "commodore" was fairly won and gracefully worn. They were conservative Virginia squires, staid and retiring as their English counterparts, deploring disorder and rebellion, but forging a mob into an army and defeating the crack regiments of Europe when the crisis came.

But the green eyes were waiting, demanding an answer. Teacum spoke half-regretfully. Perhaps the world was to be deprived of a great builder, after all.

"Your dreams are big dreams, Boggs," he said. "I could almost wish you *had* converted me."

"Almost?" the traitor questioned softly. As he spoke, he cut his eyes at the entrance flap at Teacum's side. Involuntarily, though without taking his eyes off the traitor, Teacum turned his head. But only about an inch. His temple had come in contact with frosted steel. He darted a glance from the corner of his eye, and saw a rifle barrel had been thrust through the flap. The muzzle was against his head.

"Almost?" the voice repeated, mockingly.

So Teach, the stupid guard, could be canny too. Or was it someone else, blundering past, who had looked in, sized up the situation, and undertaken on his own initiative to remedy it? It didn't matter. The gun was there. Likely it had been there throughout the long conversation. No wonder Boggs had been cavalier about Teacum's puny pistol!

So Boggs won the game at last. Just as he'd won the dice in every preliminary throw. A single word or gesture from the traitor would loose the death that was poised at Teacum's ear. Teacum could not hope to live. But he could take the traitor with him, in death. He could pull trigger first. The traitor wouldn't expect that. It wouldn't occur to him that a man might choose death deliberately, for the sake of his convictions. It wouldn't occur to him that a man might put ideals ahead of money. He wouldn't prepare against such an exigency.

And that was why John Boggs would never build his empire. Empire builders could not afford to have blind spots. Aaron Burr had learned the lesson, too late. Toussaint L'Ouverture had learned it, and the pirate, Lafitte. None of them had lived to profit from the lesson.

Teacum had heard that men knowing they are about to die capsule their lives into a second's thought, feeling pride and shame at what they see. He found it not so, with him. There was a memory in his brain, vivid and clear. But it had to do with a particular event, in a particular time. It had to do with a drafty converted warehouse at Fort Leavenworth, and a tall, spare man with a face like Hamilton's. It had to do with words spoken by that man, to Teacum, a million years ago.

If you find treason of an urgent nature, affecting the welfare of the Army, you are authorized to deal with it . . .

He was grateful for the memory. It seemed somehow to add meaning and glory to this dubious victory he was about to score, at the cost of his own life. He guessed, he wanted to believe, that Sidney Johnston knew all about his courier's perfidy. That John B. Boggs was one of the untouchables within the Army with whom the commandant was powerless to deal. That he had sent Teacum west to do this very job. That, no matter how clouded and contradictory the reports he'd hear, on arriving at western headquarters, the colonel would perceive what had happened. That Teacum had died in fulfilling his duty.

The traitor's face was directly before his sights, smiling. Confident of victory. It would be a shame to spoil so nice a face. A shame that was a joy to imagine.

Then, somewhere in the infinitesimal tick of time required to telegraph an impulse from his brain to the finger at the trigger, the incredible happened. Another trigger was pulled. Death was loosed from another quarter. Not from the gun at Teacum's ear, but from the corner of the tent where the traitor's wife —the girl with the sunlit hair—had huddled in silence throughout the long negotiations . . .

CHAPTER X

DEATH IN THE SNOW

FROM where he squatted, beside the tent-flap, Teacum saw the lancing, blue-tipped flame, from the gun in the hand of the Mormon's wife. He heard the slug's ugly snarl as it passed close to his head. He heard the familiar squashing thud of metal striking living flesh. The thought crossed his mind that the girl had sized the situation up, and was shooting to save her husband's life. But her slug missed Teacum.

He heard an explosive grunt behind him, and the tent wall bulged inward, under a dead weight on the other side. The rifle which had been at his ear fell muzzle-down into the dirt beside him. He knew then that the slug designed for him had killed his guard instead.

But these were half-formed impressions, registered by a part of his brain which would not remember them until later. Later, too, he would remember making a choice between placing his first bullet in the girl with the gun or in her traitor husband. He would remember selecting the husband as his initial target. But the reason for his choice would elude him, later as now.

The instant itself, following the shot from the corner, was too full of violence and confusion and chest-filling exhilaration to hold any awareness of inconsequentials. As if fired from a gun himself, John Boggs leaped for Teacum, his hands outstretched, his twisted mouth forming words that Teacum did not hear.

Teacum's pistol was still leveled at the traitor's head. Leisurely, he pulled the trigger, savoring a duty. He saw the hole appear in the intellectual forehead. Saw, simultaneously, the stove behind the traitor splattered with a bloody pulp. Saw Boggs fall on his face, halfway to him, as dead as if he had never been born.

He saw Black Brazos rear up from the bed, roaring, brandishing a long-bladed knife. He swung his pistol, pulled the trigger again. Through the smoke that stung his eyes and throat, he saw the knife drop to the bed. Saw the trader stiffen and paw the air for an instant, fighting for balance like a wounded, upright bear. Saw him fall forward onto the black buffalo robe on which he'd reclined a second before—rigid and twitching like a stunned hog.

Then he eared the pistol back to a cock for the third time, and his eyes went a-hunting, in the smoke. Over in the corner, whence had come the shot that had freed him from the gun at his head, his eyes found two blue eyes. The blue eyes were black in the yellow smoky light. But they were steady and unafraid. His eyes flicked downward. The pistol was still in her hand. But it was not pointed at him.

A moment passed. She did not raise the pistol. And Teacum suddenly understood that she had no intention of raising it. He understood that she could have shot him, if she'd chosen to, while he had been occupied with her husband and Brazos.

That was the beginning of comprehension. It began to break clearer then. He began to see, though it was hard to see, that the bullet she had fired had not been meant for him at all. It had been meant for the man it had killed. She had shot, not to kill him, but to save his life. He didn't attempt to understand why. But he did remember what she'd said to him, in the wagon, when he'd first recovered consciousness: *I have done you a great harm, Mr. Teacum. More than I can undo. But I shall try to undo—some of it!*

He remembered that, and the other times she had befriended him. Now she had saved his life again. He couldn't know why. But the facts were there. Somewhere along the line, he had misjudged her, miserably. And there was no time now to ask the thousand questions that crowded his head. Shouts and running feet were converging upon the tent. Hands were tearing at the flap. He remembered they were shadow figures on a lighted stage, and reached for the lantern to extinguish it.

The girl shook her head. "Leave it lighted. Hide your gun."

She put her own pistol in her dead husband's hand. An instant later, she confronted an excited crowd in the open entrance.

"Captain Brazos and Major Boggs have quarreled," she announced coolly. "They

were drinking, and they've shot each other. Someone had better go down to the convert camp and ask Doctor Bond to come up, quickly."

THERE was consternation in the crowd. An uneasy hush fell with the stunning news. Then there were exclamations and growls. There was jostling and craning of necks to see. But no one challenged her openly.

"Will someone go for Doctor Bond?" the girl demanded. And someone turned and set off quickly, as if glad to escape the place. Someone else pointed to the body of the dead Teach, half visible in the light which fell from the open flap.

"An' who killed *him*?"

The question was an accusation. The girl hesitated, thinking of no ready lie. There was a muttering which held an ugly overtone. Teacum, gauging the temper of the assemblage—the uncertainty and suspicion and the rising anger—saw a tipping of the scales. The girl's calm demeanor, the nullifying news she broke, had staggered and confused them. But now they were recovering. In another minute, they might act.

"I killed him," the soldier declared boldly, stepping through the flap to confront them with the weapon of his authority. "I killed him because he tried to interfere when I undertook to free you men and my wagons from those two Jack-Mormon pirates on the ground in there. I'll kill any other man who interferes with our taking the wagons on to Bridger."

There was cunning in his words, implying that he regarded them as fellow prisoners of the guerrillas, instead of the mutineers they were. There was officiousness as well, backed up by an indirect but unmistakable threat. He knew that he'd taken the proper tone with them. He had added to their confusion, if nothing else. But he knew his position was precarious.

These were men of low intellect, accustomed to being led. They had suddenly been deprived of leadership, in a manner which had shaken the ground beneath them. They were still dazed and benumbed and fearful. If one of their number broke and skittered under the nearest wagon, the rest of them would follow. If one of their number raised his hand and his voice, they would charge. Teacum's task was to prevent that one from doing either.

"You men who left Laramie with the train," he continued, still trying to mix confidence and authority, threat and good will, in just the right proportions, "I'll hold you to your contract. The rest of you are free to go or stay, as you wish. But I hope you'll stay. I'll be shorthanded if you leave, and I have to get these wagons to Bridger."

There was still no response. It was too dark to read their faces. But the very uneasy silence which held them was warning enough that the ice was thin yet, underfoot. They did not need to be of high intelligence to understand that they all stood in the shadow of the gallows. One wrong word, one wrong gesture, and they'd be at him like wolves.

"What you goin' to tell this Johnston, when we get to Bridger?" one of them asked sullenly at last, voicing the question that was eating at all their minds. "What happens to us there?"

He saw how all in the group hung onto his answer, and he chose his words with care. He sensed that they would not be misled by blatant promises which they'd know he could not keep. So, while he was strongly tempted to make glib guarantees of blanket amnesty, he resisted it and gave them instead an honest and realistic answer.

"I'll tell Johnston the truth—as I know it. But I was under when the train was captured, and there is a lot I don't know. Johnston will likely ask you men yourselves about that. But if we deliver the train, and a couple of traitors' bodies in the bargain, I don't think we'll have to answer a lot of questions. But if charges are brought, I'll do all I can for you."

He had no response immediately. But, since they had listened to him this long, he was confident that he'd won. The conspiracy was broken. Their leaders were dead. The war was ending, and there would be little comfort for them in Mormondom. Their only salvation now lay in making peace with the Army they had betrayed, and Teacum had offered them a means.

"Sounds right-side-up to me," one said at length.

"Fair enough," said another.

"Then turn in," Teacum commanded, showing none of the relief he felt. "We move west at dawn."

SOMETIME later, after the Mormon doctor had pronounced John Boggs dead and Brazos living—living to divulge the name of the "certain high officer at Bridger" who had shared in the conspiracy—Teacum faced the girl alone in the lighted Sibley. The dead and wounded had been removed. It seemed to Teacum that an hour had struck.

"Should I apologize, Mrs. Boggs, for having killed your husband?" he asked gently, trying to sort and group the many questions in his mind according to urgency and importance.

The girl did not speak at once. Her face was averted. But Teacum could see a slow flush creeping up her throat to stain her cheek. A confusion came over him, and he wondered how he had blundered. Then, still without turning, she replied. Her vehemence startled him almost as her words.

"I have no husband, Mr. Teacum, and had none. If I had been married to him, you wouldn't have killed him. I'd have killed him myself!"

Teacum stared at her. Something chained inside him rose up and burst its bonds, delighting in a new-found strength. He was glad he had not died. Then a darkness crossed his mind. This girl had duped him once, unconscionably. Was this another ruse? If she were not the traitor's wife, then what was she?

The girl faced him then. He was appalled by the hot hatred in her eyes.

"He was a liar and a brute, and a heartless cheat! I am glad he is dead. Five hundred others will be glad!"

Teacum nodded. "I think you judge him charitably."

"My father was dying of starvation and exposure in this camp!" she said. "We couldn't go ahead, and we couldn't go back. I rode to find Captain Smith to tell him our need. But I was caught by your stampeding mules, and brought into your camp."

"The major told me that."

"I heard him tell you. I heard him tell you I was his wife. I thought it was someone to help me escape. So I kept quiet. When he came into my wagon, he told me he was going to capture your train, on orders from Captain Smith. He said if I would help him, he would turn over to me enough wagons and livestock and food to take my company into Salt Lake. I did as he told me. I screamed when you came into the wagon, and he was not there. I didn't know he planned to kill you. But if I had known, I think I would have done the same. You were my enemy. But when we arrived here, he would not give us a mule or a sack of flour. He posted guards around the wagons!"

Teacum remembered the mystery of her kindness and friendship. Her warning him to play possum in the wagon. Her saving his life again, in the tent. All thoughts of treachery, all thought of not trusting and believing her, went out of him. A thousand of the thousand-and-one questions in his head had found their answer in her words, leaving only one. But this one was made up of a thousand other questions, and he didn't ask it yet. Instead, he spoke of another matter.

"Your father?" he said, already having guessed the truth.

"He was dead when I returned to camp. I could not help him. But I tried to get help for the other. The ones who are yet to die. It was denied."

Conventional words of sympathy and condolence came to Teacum's tongue. But he had a suspicion that the girl would be impatient of sympathies. Her concern was for the living, not the dead.

"I will do better than Boggs at paying my debts," he said instead, having had his moment of reflection and resolve. "I will provision your camp from the train. I am headed for Bridger, and Bridger is more than halfway to Salt Lake. We'll travel together—your train and mine. Those of your company who are not able to walk will ride the wagons. From Bridger, you can get word to Brigham Young to send wagons."

It was the girl's turn to show amazement. "You mean—but—I mean, the Army—"

Teacum shrugged. "In a way, it's the Army's fault your company is marooned here. Besides, it's government lading, and we're all Americans. It's the Army's duty and responsibility to defend the civil population, and prevent disasters like this one could be."

And if Lieutenant Teacum were marshaling his arguments, in case his action should be challenged by brass hats at Bridger, he was pleasantly unaware. He and the Mormon girl looked at each other in sheer joyous satisfaction at his inspired solution to the dilemma confronting them.

"Go wake up your camp," he said impulsively. "We'll issue flour and bacon tonight! If we start on the trail in the morning, they will need it."

"I will," she said. "Oh, I will!"

And yet, strangely, she lingered.

Ages ago, it seemed, their eyes had met and spoken. But the words they'd spoken then had been hopeless words. The promise each had seen had been vital, and incalculably precious. But it had been promise viewed at a formidable distance, across an unbridgeable gulf of prejudice and fire and cloud. Now the gulf had vanished and the clouds had dissipated. Now the promise could be viewed at close hand, and other barriers were visible. Barriers which earlier had been obscured by distance and fire and cloud.

Now an unnaturalness of thought and manner kept their eyes from meeting fully. Constraint had thickened to suspense. A question was required, and an answer, before that suspense could be banished.

"HERE I'm about to ask you to marry me," he said suddenly. "And I don't even know your name."

"I was christened Catharine," she said, her voice both eager and shy. "But my friends call me Cathy. Cathy Snow."

"I am your friend, Cathy Snow," Teacum said, his lips delighting in the musical syllables. "Here is my hand on it."

Her own hand was given, and her eyes—fully. The hand was firm, the eyes steady and unguarded. In them, Teacum read fulfillment of the hope he had kept repressed, because of its very fantastic impracticability. Now he saw that it was neither hopeless nor fantastic, but logical and inevitable as tomorrow's sun. The barriers between them had existed only in his imagination.

"Tell me one thing, Cathy," he said, still unable to speak baldly the big question in his mind. "How did you manage to wear so well, when the other women in your company look like walking corpses."

Her shoulders moved in the suggestion of a shrug. Her blue eyes were grave. "I suppose I'm just a hardy plant. My father was a frontier pastor and missionary. As long as I remember, I have eaten at campfires and slept on the ground. I knew what roots could be eaten, which could not. The others—they are afraid of roots. Afraid of anything new, anything strange."

At that, all Teacum's senses merged into one. A burning awareness of her and her worth—of her incredible accessibility, and the true essence of living.

"Are you afraid of strangeness, Cathy?" he murmured through a stricture in his throat. "Would you marry a Gentile, if he loved you more than living? If there weren't any wars or traitors, any wagon trains or people starving in handcart camps?"

He did not regret the words, once they were spoken. He could not regret them. They had had to be said. But the blue eyes flew from his like startled birds, and the life seemed to go out of the hand he was holding. Then the girl was silent so long that his hope shriveled up inside him, and he wondered whether her eyes had lied in telling or his in reading. But after a while she spoke, and her tone was one of absolute certainty, with none of the troubled doubts or hesitations which he would have joyously forgiven.

"There is one Gentile I would marry—war and traitors and wagon trains, and all! But he hasn't asked me. And he can't ask me now, or I'd forget the people in my camp. And they are hungry."

"They will be fed," he said sternly. "But their need is not as pressing as mine."

And he forgot that they were shadow

figures on a phantom stage. Or, remembering, did not care. He drew her to him and kissed her with a terrible strength, and she kissed him.

"Where will we live?" he murmured, a long time later. "Bent's Fort or Salt Lake?"

She drew back in his arms, and he watched her eyes widen, trying to scrutinize his face. When she spoke again, the playful resilience had gone out of her voice, and she was thoughtful, troubled with the seriousness of life.

"Salt Lake? But—but you're a soldier. You wouldn't want to give up your commission—your career—"

"Why not?" he countered, seeking to restore the lightness of the mood he had shattered. "Major Boggs said that Utah will be a land of promise, once it is opened up to Gentiles. Especially, he said, to a man who stands high with Mormons. My stand should be assured, if I marry one. Besides—"

"Yes?"

"If I lived in Salt Lake I could have as many wives as I wanted!"

"We will live at Bent's Fort," the girl said with vehemence. "And you'll keep your commission. You should get at least a brevet captaincy out of this, you know."

"I intend to get more than that out of it," he said ominously. Then he kissed her again.

"I will go now and arouse the camp," she whispered, disengaging her arms from his. But, at the flap she paused.

"You wouldn't really want more than one wife, would you?"

She had meant the question to fall lightly upon the preceding banter. But a solemn and wistful urgency of voice betrayed her. Teacum laughed, in sheer exhilaration.

"Only if they all could be like you, Cathy. And if they all were like you, there wouldn't be any point in having more than one!"

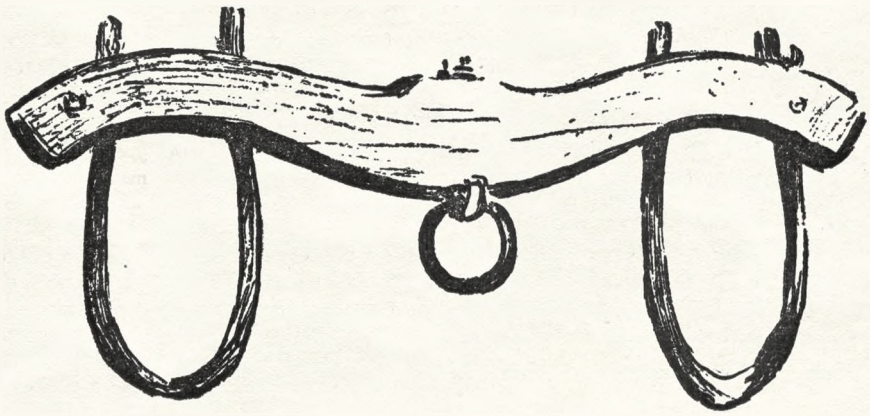
He followed her from the tent, to prepare for the subsistence ration to his unscheduled supernumeraries. But he paused for a moment in the dark, to savor its crisp freshness, the golden warmth of his thoughts and mood.

False dawn was turning the eastern sky a ghostly gray, and wolves were howling on the distant ridges. But Teacum knew the portents all were wrong. Teacum knew the dawning of his hopes and expectation was not false. He had fulfilled his mission, and more than just that. He had done well, for himself and for the Army, and had been gloriously rewarded. The moment was one that would live long in his memory.

He stood a moment looking to the west—toward the Spanish River, where shortly he would keep a rendezvous with his commander.

Then he heard sounds from across the basin. The convert camp was stirring.

THE END



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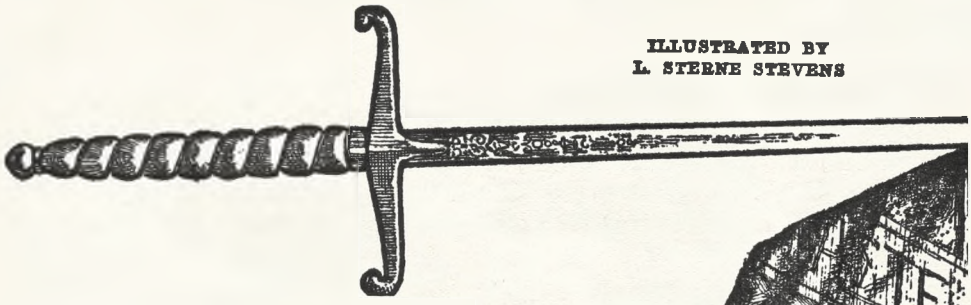

DEATH OF A MATADOR

By
BARNABY CONRAD

"Los toritos de Miura ya no se temen a nada,
Porque ha muerto El Espartero, olé, olé, olé" . . .

THIS popular sevillana song . . . "The Little Miura bulls aren't afraid of anything now, because El Espartero has been killed, he who used to kill them so well" . . . was introduced in Spain after a giant Miura bull named Perdigón killed the then greatest bullfighter, Espartero. That was in 1898.

May 16, 1920, a scrawny, treacherous animal named Bailaór killed the great-

A FACT STORY

Suddenly Manolete was high in the air on the bull's head.

est bullfighter of all time—Joselito. He got his stomach ripped open and some say his gypsy heart gave out on him when he saw his viscera pushing out into his hands; he died in the ring infirmary, aged 24, gasping to his dead mother, *"Mare, me ahogo*—mother, I'm suffocating."

Since then, the great bullfighters who have been killed in the ring can be counted on your fingers—Litri, Sánchez-Mejías, Granero, Márquez, Gitanillo de Triana, Balderas, Guzmán—which is surprisingly few, considering the immense danger of the profession and the many almost-fatal wounds that every fighter receives.

But not long ago many aspirant bullfighters "cut off the pigtail" and took up a quieter profession.

"None of us is safe," they said. For on August 29, in Linares, Spain, a Miura bull killed "Manolete," whom they said no bull could kill.

Manuel Rodriguez y Sánchez was born in Córboda three years before the immortal Joselito was killed. His mother was the widow of two famous bullfighters, the first having been killed in the ring, and the second, Manuel's father, having died in the poorhouse when his failing vision forced him to retire from *"la fiesta brava."*

When his family lost their money, young Manuel (the people from Andalucía pronounce it "man-WAY") was forced to leave the good school he was attending and go to work. It was bitter to discover that he lost his friends with the money. He was a gawky, ugly, sensitive boy, and he took Córdoba's snubs very much to heart; he resolved to make a great deal of money, become very successful, and show them all up. But how? They say that the only people who live well in Spain are royalty and bullfighters. The second classification seemed even more remote than the first, because his father had let him try bullfighting with a small calf once and his awkward efforts had been ridiculous.

His first job was as a hod-carrier, but he was fired shortly because he was too frail and spent too much time daydreaming; generally the dreams were of making a million *pesetas* and coming back to Córdoba to build a house for his mother and sisters and of snubbing Córdoba the way it had them. His second job changed his life. It was a job as day-laborer on the Sotomayor ranch on the outskirts of Córdoba. This was where a famous breed of fighting-bull was raised, and after the day's work was done, Manuel would fool around with a tattered cape and some of the young heifers. His ambition grew, in spite of the fact that everyone made fun of his clumsy efforts and in spite of the bruises the calves gave him everytime he practiced the passes, he decided to go professional.

He scraped up enough money for an old, mended uniform, called himself "Manolete" (his father's *nom de toreau),* and somehow convinced an impresario that he was a sensational new gift to *tauromaquia.* The 18-year-old Manolete was given a place on a small card in a neighboring town where he proceeded to disgrace his family name, get his uniform ripped to shreds, and send the audience into hysteria at his antics in front of a bull. Nevertheless, the stork-like youth managed to get more fights, more for comic relief than anything. For two years he eked out a precarious, ridiculous living in nocturnals and minor *novillada* fights.

ONE day, José Flores Camará, a washed-up, bald ex-matador, went to a second-rate bullfight in Malaga for lack of anything better to do. Fighting that day was a young matador who looked like an undriven nail and whom the crowd laughed at. But Camará didn't laugh, for he saw that Manolete had tremendous courage and that every now and then a spark of elegance appeared between the jerky movements. He also saw that he was trying to do the wrong passes for his gangling frame; he should concentrate on the classical *veronica* and *natural* and leave the cape twirling and "filigree" for the athletes. Maybe he'd better have a talk with this young stork . . .

From the day Camará began managing Manolete, he began to attract attention. Shrewd Camará was right—while Manolete looked ridiculous doing the spinning *chicuelina* and *farol* passes his body

took on a certain gaunt majesty when he stood with his feet together and executed a quiet *verónica*. The other passes with the cape were ruled out. With the muleta, the scarlet rag used in the last third of the fight, Camará would only let him do simple right-handed passes and *naturals*, standing calmly with his feet planted as the bull's horns grazed by him. Camará, of course, couldn't do it himself; he was a failure in the ring because while he had a tremendous knowledge of the angles of a bull's charge, *terrenos*, and *querencias*, he lacked the nerve to stand unmoving as a bull hurled itself at the cape. But he was always there behind the fence, a little man in owlish dark glasses, calling out instructions to his protegé.

"Take him on the right," Camará would say quietly, and Manolete would change his position because he knew Camará had seen the bull had a bad eye. Or he'd say, "Go to your left hand, Manué," and Manolete would take the sword out of the muleta and execute a perfect *natural* with his left hand.

By 1941 Manolete was a full matador and the most talked-of young bullfighter in Spain. He had a regal style and insouciance in the ring that seemed to represent all Spanish arrogance and was in direct contrast to the ingratiating manner of most young *toreros*. Actually, out of the ring, he was shy and gentle, but Camará played up the other side of him for the crowd. The same audiences that had laughed at him a few years before now screamed "Olé!" when he stalked out into the ring and passed the bull so close that the horns took the braid off of his uniform. As the bull thundered by, Manolete's heavy-lidded eyes would look interested, but never excited.

By 1943 he was the highest paid matador in Spain. Some people preferred the flashy styles of the Mexican Arruza or the old tricks of Domingo Ortega, but no one denied that Manolete was the foremost exponent of scientific, classical bullfighting, done with a style that no one could imitate.

The former hod-carrier's prices rose with every year. By 1945 he could ask and get $25,000 for a single afternoon's work; that year he fought 90 times in the six months' season. And then there was revenue from Manolete dolls, Manolete liqueurs, and he made a movie in Barcelona called *"El Hombre Mas Cerca de la Muerte"* (The Man Closest to Death).

Actually, everyone said that no bull could kill Manolete, and that he was farther away from death than any other matador. That was because everything he did in the ring looked easy, every bull looked like an easy one to work with. His detractors criticized him for removing the "emoción" from the spectacle by his coldness and austerity and complete mastery over the bull; the animal's horns, he gave the impression of being as safe as though merely moving through a set of tennis. Nevertheless, he was gored several times and had a great reminding scar on one side of his face.

BY 1947 he was only thirty and had made $4,000,000. He was called "El Monstruo"—not because of his lean, scarred face, but because he was king of the bullfighting game, picking his bulls, and demanding and getting any price he wanted for appearing. He had toured Peru, Mexico, and Colombia, and left the bullfans in those countries weak with the suicidal bravery and arrogant style of his fights.

It seemed time to retire from the game while he was still on top and not maimed. He had a house in Córdoba now—the house he had always dreamed of—and he'd never had time to really live in it. And there was Antoñita Bronchalo, a pretty young Madrileña whom he had loved for years but wouldn't marry because he didn't want to expose her to the wretched life that the wife of a matador must necessarily lead.

He decided to marry, settle down on his country place, and raise bulls for the other matadors to fight.

Camará was rich now too, and he couldn't see why Manolete wanted to retire when he was the highest paid matador in the history of bullfighting. He convinced him that he should at least fight these last few months of the season and retire in a blaze of glory. Manolete agreed unwillingly; he did it

mainly because, while he'd been off reaping laurels in South America and Mexico, his prestige in his own country had dropped considerably. A new young fighter named Luis Miguel Dominguín had been occupying his place as number one *torero,* and with his flashy on-the-knees style and vulgar tricks had won a great many fans to him. People said that Manolete was afraid to compete with the new star. Luis Miguel said it too.

Camará urged him to have just one decisive showdown with Luis Miguel at least—that they would get $30,000 for that fight alone. Antoñita didn't plead with him not to fight; she'd been doing it for too many years. After several warm-up *corridas* around Spain, in one of which he was hurt slightly, he signed a contract which was to be the last fight before "cutting off the pigtail." (This is figurative, since bullfighters haven't grown real *coletas* for twenty years.) He was going to meet Luis Miguel in Linares, on the twenty-ninth of August, with Miura bulls.

Miura bulls are the most famous fighting bulls of all, because they have killed more bullfighters than any other breed.

At one time in history all of the bullfighters got together and agreed not to fight them. For one hundred years they have been bred to kill, to run faster than a race-horse, and turn quicker than a polo pony. Anti-Manoletistas had always said that he was scared to fight them, yet that Luis Miguel's best afternoons were with Miuras. It would be a good way to end up ten years as a Matador—fighting with the famous "bulls of death."

It would be a grand gesture to show up this arrogant newcomer with Miuras, and then retire to Córdoba and never fight again.

One terrific fight, just one more, that was all . . .

On his first bull, Manolete had the audience screaming deliriously. It was as though they suddenly realized that this was truth and classic art, and what Luis Miguel did was trickery. On his second, he was even better, but it was a difficult bull to work with. It was cowardly and uncertain, and it hooked halfway through its charges. Nevertheless, Manolete worked so close to it that blood from its shoulders came off onto his costume, and the cape was like a live thing in his hands. It was easy enough to look good with an easy bull, but to do the amazing things he was doing with this animal was the mark of a genius. The crowd roared as he did the *manoletina,* the graceful dangerous pass that he had invented and which no one could quite imitate. Then it was time for the death; he would really show this Luis Miguel how a brave man and an artist kills.

Holding the muleta extended in his left hand, he sighted down the sword blade and charged at the bull as it charged at him, his body leaning over the horn as it followed the sword in to the hilt.

But then suddenly he was tossed high in the air on the bull's head, and then he was slammed to the ground. The bull was lured away and Manolete was taken to the infirmary. When he could speak the first question he asked was if the bull had died, or if someone else had had to kill it. It had died. A few hours later he began to sink. Antoñita, praying in her Madrid hotel room, had been telephoned, but she didn't arrive in time.

Little Miura bulls aren't afraid of anything now, because Manolete, El Monstruo, is dead, he who used to kill them so well.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

Back to the swampy trails that twine beneath the Spanish-moss-festooned liveoaks of the Everglades. . . . Back where Seminole dugouts slide through 'gator-infested bayous to their ambush rendezvous. . . . Back with Brevet-Captain Carter and his nonesuch Sergeant Grady to carve another notch out of the fetid frontier of the Floridas in—

"TIGER, TIGER"

By WILLIAM DU BOIS

—another exciting novelette in a perennially popular *Adventure* series. . . . It all started nine hundred miles north of the St. Johns at Princeton on the Delaware and Raritan Canal—but tigers lurked there —just as they did in Chief Coacoochee's saw-grass domains and when Jersey orange-and-black traded claw-slashes with Florida's tawny jungle cat it was anybody's trophy till the last fur flew.

Plus "Don't Live Too Long" by Coleman Meyer—another roaring yarn of the two-hundred-horse-power plywood racing boats and the madmen who pilot them. . . . "Never Reach with Your Left" by George C. Appell—a gripping yarn of a Western deputy and his boss, who didn't know dollars from horseshoes and would remain a sheriff till the day he died, or got ambidextrous with his hogleg. . . . "Fabulous Cargo" by Si Podolin—which introduces a skipper who knew everything there was to know about ambergris—including how to cash in on it before he caught up with a sick whale. . . . Stories of Tibet, our Western plains, the South Seas—by John Godey, Dabney Otis Collins, Wilmon Menard. . . . Another thrilling installment of "The Devil's Left Tusk" and a bulging overload of informative fact stories, features, departments and verse. . . . All in the big AUGUST issue of—

ON SALE JULY 9th

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

THE venom, the rattle and the strike.

Query:—At what time does the rattlesnake become poisonous?

Do the rattles on the snake indicate its age?

What distance does a rattlesnake strike according to his length?

—Mrs. Bert Farnsworth
945 E. Whitmore
San Gabriel, Calif.

Reply by Clifford H. Pope:—Rattlesnakes are venomous (poisonous) at birth.

The number of rattle segments does *not* indicate the age, since *more than one* segment is added each year and the segments are often lost or detached. However, the shape of the *whole rattle does* tell whether the snake is young or old.

A rattlesnake strikes from ½ to ¾ of its length.

TOUGH as a Morgan.

Query:—What can you tell me about the Morgan horse? Is the breed still in existence? I have heard that it was the best all-around horse ever bred. I am interested in a breed that is good under saddle and pack and also light one-horse work.

—Robert B. Savage
Star Route,
Midvale, Idaho.

Reply by John Richard Young:—You are on the right track for an all-around horse when you choose a Morgan. The Morgan is in a class by himself when it comes to general utility and all-around excellence. It was said of Justin Morgan, founder of the breed, that he could outwalk, outrun and outpull any horse matched against him. Many of the best-bred American Saddle Horses have Morgan blood. So do Standardbreds. In fact, before the breeding influence of Rysdyk's Hambletonian made itself felt, Justin Morgan's descendants furnished the world's fastest trotters. In earlier times New Englanders could, and did, plow with their Morgans six days a week and race them on Sundays. Morgans have won top honors as harness horses, cavalry chargers, bridlepath hacks, show saddlers, and stock horses. They are noted for their endurance, docility, intelligence, longevity and handsomeness. "Tough as a Morgan" was a byword.

They are compactly built horses, rarely more than 15.2 hands tall and usually smaller than that, around 1,000 pounds in weight, depending on the individual. They are short-coupled and strong weight-carriers—the only breed, besides the Arabian, with one less lumbar vertebra than other horses. In color they are black, bay, chestnut, brown, with very little white. They are remarkably prepotent. No matter what other breed a Morgan is crossed with, his offspring will show marked Morgan traits and characteristics.

The United States Government is a breeder of Morgan horses. The U. S. Morgan Horse Farm, operated by the Bureau of Animal Industry, is at Middlebury, Vermont.

For more detailed information about the breed write to The Morgan Horse Club, Inc., 90 Broad Street, New York, N. Y., asking for their free booklet "The Morgan Horse." A quarterly *Morgan Horse Magazine* is published in Woodstock, Vermont; $1 a year or 25c a copy. An excellent illustrated book on the origin of the breed is Marguerite Henry's *Justin Morgan Had a Horse*. If you can't get the book at a nearby bookseller, write to The Horseman's Book Club, Plant City, Florida. The Morgan Horse Club will also furnish you a list of breeders.

A FLOATING camera fan on the Big Muddy.

Query:—Sometime in late spring I plan to move out on the Missouri River and take up housekeeping on a houseboat. I have at present a Super Ikonta Zeiss Split 120. I can develop these O.K., but you can't tell

much on a half-size print. The question is, how does one enlarge out in the sticks with no AC or DC 110 volt. Or does one use a 5 x 7? I can always buy a portable 110 volt AC plant, but I'd like to save that for the last try.

I've never had any experience with a light meter. I'd like to find a meter that works itself out pretty well. I don't want to read a meter, then consult a chart and data book to get an answer. From what I read, a Norwood or the latest G.E. seem to get pretty close to the requirements. Have you used them, and which of the two would you take, buying it on your own hook?

—Joseph Deutroux
4509 Tod Ave.
East Chicago, Ind.

Reply by Paul L. Anderson:—I'm afraid that the best plan for enlarging, on your houseboat, would be the small 110-volt generator, with, of course, a storage battery to steady the voltage. If you're handy with tools you could rig a secondhand view camera to a hole in a wooden shutter, and use daylight for enlarging, but the trouble with that is the extreme variability of the light, plus the fact that you couldn't work at night. I think the generator set is your answer.

As to an exposure meter, any of those you mention, or a Weston, will do the business for you—but so will an Expophot, which sells for $3.25 instead of somewhere between $20 and $30, or so will a Kodak Exposure Guide, which sells for 10c. For years I figured all my exposures with a Burroughs Wellcome Exposure Guide, which cost 75c. The whole amount of it is that NO meter will give you more than a basis on which to found your own estimate of the required exposure—and if you're going to use your judgment, as you must do, *any* meter will do the business for you. Personally, I use either a G. E. or an Expophot; either one is satisfactory. There is entirely too much reverence bestowed on apparatus, these days; photographers seem to think that their salvation lies in owning all the cameras, lenses, films, tanks, developers, and so on, that are advertised in the magazines. But as a matter of fact, they'd make a lot better pictures if they'd eliminate most of the gadgets, and use a bit of intelligence instead. A friend of mine, a most enthusiastic photographer, is fond of quoting: "Men have invented a lot of things, but no one has ever invented a satisfactory substitute for brains." And that's about right. So get any kind of exposure meter that hits your fancy; learn to use it; and you'll get good exposures.

You speak of the possibility of using a 5x7. So far as my own feelings go, if 5x7 prints would be satisfactory, I'd far rather use a 5x7 view camera, and make contact prints, than use a Super Ikonta and enlarge; I'd expect to get more satisfactory results, and if I ever wanted larger prints, I'd wait until I got back to town (assuming that the houseboat isn't to be a permanent home) and then enlarge from a portion of a 5x7. And if you're using a 5x7, you're going to think about it longer before you make an exposure, and that means that you'll make better pictures.

I think you have a grand time ahead of you—I'd certainly like to spend a year or so in a houseboat on the Missouri! Good luck!

SHELLS for a .410 shotgun.

Query:—During the war my father was unable to obtain regular size .410 shotgun shells, but he did have a supply of the 3" .410 shells. So he had the chamber of our Bridge shotgun reamed out to fit the 3" shells. Is the shotgun to use only with 3" shells or can the regular size shells still be used in the gun?

—Grady Milsap
Route #2
Ballinger, Texas.

Reply by Roy S. Tinney:—Lengthening the chamber of your .410 shotgun to take the 3" shells has not impaired its effectiveness when 2½" shells are used. During the nineteen-thirties I did a lot of test and experimental firing with the .410 and "believe it or not" and "strange as it seems", the 2½" gave more satisfactory all-round results than the 3" shell. In the heavier shell there is a "long column" of shot; that always causes "patchy" patterns. I found the patterns delivered by the lighter load in the 2½" shells were more even (better "density") even though they contained fewer pellets and therefore were more effective.

My experience indicates the .410 does not deliver enough shot to be effective on game and I will be interested to know how it performs in your hands. Find the 28-gauge or a 20-gauge with light loads equally pleasant to shoot and light to carry, just right for "preserve" shooting where birds are still plentiful.

TALCUM for a shiner.

Query:—Were Eddie Cicotte and Claude Williams of the 1919 White Sox spitball pitchers? How many games won and lost had each of them for 1919? Were they right or lefthanded?

—J. H. Sheehan
Box 264,
Schreiber, Ont., Can.

Reply by Frederick G. Lieb:—Neither Eddie Cicotte, nor Claude Williams, of the 1919 White Sox, were spitball pitchers. Cicotte occasionally bluffed a spitter, but

his most effective delivery was the "shiner" or talcum-powder ball. He kept a bag of talcum powder in his pants pocket, and he would permit this powder to transfuse through the flannel material of his uniform. He then would diligently rub one side of the ball on his talcumed thigh, making it as smooth as possible. The natural side of the ball would be rough in contrast, and air currents would make the ball wobble as it approached the batsman. The delivery was outlawed the following year (1920).

In 1919, during a shortened 140 game season, both pitchers had especially meritorious records. Cicotte won 29 and lost 7, percentage: .806. Williams won 23 and lost 11, percentage: .673.

Williams was a lefthander.

AN OUTFIT for surf casting.

Query:—Can you suggest what equipment is necessary and advisable to have for surf casting?

—Edward Mathieu
2027 Washington Ave.,
Bronx, New York 57, N. Y.

Reply by C. Blackburn Miller:—In the selection of adequate tackle for surf casting, I would recommend a split-bamboo rod. The length of the tip as a rule varies with a man's height, being from 7½ feet to 9 feet. When buying tackle it is a great advantage to try different length tips in order to test their length and action. Squidding demands a tip with more spring to it than a rod used for bait fishing. A happy medium is advisable so that it is adequate for both types of surf fishing.

Reels, in my estimation, should be of the simplest kind being equipped merely with a castoff and a leather thumb brake. The more gadgets on a surf reel, the more complicated it becomes and the more trouble from getting sanded. I do not advise a reel with a star drag, for an angler with a heavy fish on has no time to regulate this drag whereas he can employ pressure simply with his thumb to a leather brake.

Line should be of linen or nylon (the latter is very elastic), the size six or nine thread. Longer casts can be obtained from #6.

Leaders should be either of steel wire or, for striped-bass fishing, braided gut as these fish are wary of wire. I have also used nylon leaders with success.

A belt with rod holder attached is necessary as the butt fits into this while you are fishing. These butts vary according to the length of a man's arms and the most convenient place for the reel. When selecting the rod also examine the different length of butts. A complement of hooks are necessary in varied sizes, and pyramid sinkers from 2 ounces to 5 ounces with swivels should complete your outfit.

THE background of Fort Robinson.

Query:—Can you outline for me the historical background of Fort Robinson, Nebraska, as to authentic dates, famous Indians involved, campaigns and recent assignments?

—Mrs. Fred Morgan
Box 1213,
Weed, California.

Reply by R. G. Emery:—Fort Robinson, Nebraska, was established May 8, 1874. A camp had been set up, also called Robinson, sometime in March of that year. Both were named for Flt. Levi H. Robinson, who had been killed on Cottonwood Creek, near Fort Laramie February 9th, 1874.

The post was in the heart of the Sioux country, near the Red Cloud agency. Its establishment immediately preceded the last great Indian uprising in the West. For five years, Robinson was in constant state of war. The battles of Powder R., Tongue R, Slim Butte, the Rosebud, Little Big Horn, Crazy Woman's Fork and Wolf Mountain all involved troops either stationed or based there.

At the end, Crazy Horse, who was first to break through Custer's line at the Little Big Horn, was last to come in and was shamefully stabbed to death in the post guardhouse.

In the post cemetery are buried, I believe, both Little Bat (Baptiste Garnier) and California Joe, famous Indian fighter and 7th Cavalry guide and scout.

The present installation is a part of the Army Remount Service, under the Quartermaster Corps. It is one of the finest breeding establishments in the world, accommodating more than 7,000 animals at capacity.

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS

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. **Air Mail** is quicker for foreign service!

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SPORTS AND HOBBIES

American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure.*

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure.*

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4828 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure.*

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask, Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Dogs—FREEMAN LLOYD, c/o *Adventure.*

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure.*

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure.*

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure.*

Horses and Horsemanship—JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, Timberlane Farm, R 2—Box 364, Racine, Wis.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure.*

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign, wing shooting and field trials*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York, Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal, customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure.*

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure.*

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure.*

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o *Adventure*.

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure*.

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure*.

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. R. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure*.

United States Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure*.

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure*.

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SUBRE, c/o *Adventure*.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure*.

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure*.

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 242 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii—CARL J. KUNZ, c/o *Adventure*.

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 MACGREAGH, c/o *Adventure*. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure*. **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

★Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDEL, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **2** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure*. **3** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **4** ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

Europe, Part 1 ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o *Adventure*. **2** ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, c/o *Adventure*. **3** ★*Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o Alto Tapajos, Rua Gaspar Viana 18, Belem, Para, Brazil.

West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Baffinland and Greenland—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

Labrador—WILMOT T. DEBELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States*—J. W. WHITAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche*—CAPTAIN W. RUSSELL SHEETS, c/o *Adventure*. **3** ★*West Coast beginning with State of Sinaloa; Central and Southern Mexico, including Tabasco and Chiapas*—WALLACE MONTGOMERY, Club Americano, Bolivar 31, Mexico, D.F.

Canada, Part 1 ★*Southeastern Quebec*—WILLIAM MACMILLAN, 89 Laurentide Ave., Quebec, Canada. **2** *Ottawa Valley and Southeastern Ontario*—HARRY M. MOORE, 579 Isabella, Pembroke, Ont., Canada. **3** ★*Georgian Bay and Southern Ontario; National Parks Camping*—A. D. L. ROBINSON, 105 Wembly Rd., Toronto, Ont., Canada. **4** ★*Northern Saskatchewan; Indian life and language, hunting, trapping*—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St. E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada. **5** ★*Yukon, British Columbia, Northwest Territories, Alberta, Western Arctic*—PHILIP H. GODSELL, F.R.G.S., General Delivery, Airdrie, Alberta, Canada.

Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o *Adventure*.

Western U. S., Part 1 *Pacific Coast States*—FRANK WINCH, c/o *Adventure*. **2** *New Mexico; Indians, etc.*—H. F. ROBINSON, 1321 E. Tijeras Ave., Albuquerque, New Mexico. **3** *Nevada, Montana and Northern Rockies*—FRED W. EGELSTON, P. O. Box 297, Elko, Nev. **4** *Idaho and environs*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill. **5** *Arizona, Utah*—C. C. ANDERSON, c/o *Arizona Stockman*, Arizona Title Bldg., Phoenix, Ariz. **6** *Texas, Oklahoma*—J. W. WHITAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex.

Middle Western U. S. Part 1 *Ohio River and Tributaries and Mississippi River*—GEO. A. ZERR, 31 Cannon St., Pittsburgh 5, Penna. **2** *Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG, LIEBE, c/o *Adventure*. **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

(Continued from page 8)

to the effect that there is only a thin line of distinction between raw courage and damned foolishness. Having crossed the western ocean a few times myself on floating vessels a thousand times more stable than a log raft I can only add my tuppence worth. Amen!

ONLY one recruit to the ranks of our Writers" Brigade this month, Barnaby Conrad, who gives us "Death of a Matador" on page 130. An American, he has lived in Mexico, Spain and Peru and fought bulls in all three countries. He became interested in bullfighting as a child in Mexico where his father was in the diplomatic service. He studied the art under Juan Belmonte and Sidney Franklin and is the only foreigner to fight on the same program with the former. He has, of course, fought on the same bill with "Manolete" in Spain and wrote the article we publish this month on the night last August when he heard the master had been killed in the ring in Linares. Mr. Conrad's first novel, "The Innocent Villa"—it's about Spain and bullfighting—will be published later this summer by Random House.

ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN'S name first appeared on *Adventure's* contents page in the issue for October 10, 1922 as author of a short sea story, "The Courtship of Captain Driscoll." "Camel Patrol" on page 78 this month is his fortieth and final contribution to our magazine. Dick died, at the age of forty-seven, in San Francisco on March 9th and we shall all miss him sorely for no other writer we know ever quite caught the spirit of the sea in fiction as he did. He was working on his autobiography at the time he died and it is a matter of deep regret that we shall never have a chance to read his own reminiscent account of his many years at sea and adventuring in the far places of the world. Of his busy life as a traveler and writer the New York *Times* says in part—

Mr. Wetjen, who was born in London, went to sea at 13 and was shipwrecked twice. He came to Canada and then the United States after serving with the British Army in the first World War. He was cofounder and editor of *The Outlander*, a member of the Author's League of America and the British Society of Authors and Composers.

In 1918 Mr. Wetjen fought in a Manchester Regiment of the British Army. Earlier he was one of the crew of the ship that took the Sultan of Zanzibar as a prisoner of war to St. Helena. Migrating to Canada in 1920, he tramped across the border to the United States the next year. After working as a correspondent for Oregon newspapers, he began his fiction career in 1922.

He continued to wander about the world, however, from time to time, his subsequent life containing such episodes as a voyage around South America as a deckhand and work of various sorts in motion-picture studios. He traveled thousands of miles in the loneliest sections of Australia, became a great admirer of the Australian Mounted Police and wrote a series of short stories about them for *The Saturday Evening Post* in the late Nineteen Thirties.

The O. Henry Award committee gave him a special prize for the best short-story of 1926, naming his "Command" in *Sea Stories*. His first book, "Captains All" appeared in 1924. There followed, among others, "Way for a Sailor," "Fiddlers Green," "Shark Gotch of the Islands," "Shark Gotch Shoots It Out" and "In the Wake of the Shark."

Dick, who was a frequent contributor to this department with letters and comment, was always willing to cross swords in friendly *Camp-Fire* fashion with anyone who had a bone to pick, or to add informative notation to any marine controversy which arose out of his vast background of practical and first-hand sea-lore. He would, we know, have enjoyed reading the following letter inspired by one of his own articles—"Harvest of the Sea"—which we printed in these pages recently—

Just had *Adventure* for May and read with interest Mr. Wetjen's article on sea turtles, and in that connection, give you the following:

From about 1911 to 1915 I fished for one or more weeks each year along the coast from Charleston to Savannah and we turned a turtle every now and then. On one particular occasion we camped near Port Royal, S.C., and on a moonlight night, several of us sat on the beach about a ¼ mile apart to watch for turtles coming out to lay. One came out of the water very close to where I was sitting, and I thought might see me and go back in, so I kept still, but she never paid any attention to me. She came out of the water, crawled across the wet hard sand and about 10 ft. into the soft sand, above tide mark. We followed her to watch. When she got to the soft sand she made about a half turn, then with her flipper, right one, made a half-turn scoop, got sand in the flipper, knuckled it down; then with the

left flipper made a half turn, got it full of sand, knuckled down, then with right flipper threw the sand she had in it away, made the motion again, then with left flipper threw sand in it away. Kept this motion up, until she had a circular hole about 18 inches deep, moved up over it and started to lay.

All the while several of us were standing very close watching, but she paid no attention to us, just followed nature's call. A phosporus light would glow and as the egg got out the light would brighten up, and as the egg dropped, the light would go out. When she got through laying, she started putting sand over the nest in the same manner as she dug the hole. Get a flipper full of sand, knuckle down, get the other one full, then empty the first, etc. After the nest was filled to her satisfaction she turned over the nest, then started back to the water.

When she crossed the hard sand, we turned her—weight guessed at 300 lbs.—and we got a water bucket full of eggs. They were larger than a hen egg, in a soft, tough rubbery shell, not much different in eating than a hen or duck egg—except eat them while hot, after they get cold they get raw again, like a frog leg.

When we got more turtle than we could eat, we would take one and drive heavy stakes between the flippers and back parts so it could not crawl and would keep until needed. A vegetable boat would come by once or twice a week and once we got more lettuce and small cabbage than we needed, so we took some of each to where we had a turtle pegged down, rolled a head of lettuce to it just to see what it would do. It took the lettuce in its mouth and sucked the juice out; this suck was a loud drawn-out one, then a rest, then suck again, until the lettuce looked dry, then it dropped it.

We had a good laugh over the light coming on when the egg started coming out—this was something entirely new to all of us, It came on near where the egg came out.

The colored boys we had on the boat were natives of that section of the coast and said there was seven different kinds of meat in a turtle, beef, pork, lamb, etc., but I could not tell the difference while eating; and we had it fried like steak, roast, etc. I can truthfully say when the head was cut off, entirely severed from the body, the head would bite a stick and did not seem to die until after the sun went down. A small land turtle will do the same thing.

—J. J. Conway
88 Penn Ave.
Etowak, Tenn.

Dick would have got a kick out of that signal-light that flashed every time the turtle dropped an egg. We'll have to ask our amphibian *Ask Adventure* expert, Clifford Pope, what the explanation is. Try to let you know next time—K.S.W.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

I would appreciate any information which would help me find my five brothers, George, Gople, R. T., Elmore and Elsie Parker, sons of Lewis Monroe Parker. They were last seen in Portland, Oregon, in 1942. R. T. is the only brother known to be married. His wife's first name is Ethel. His small son's name is Darrell and his daughter's is Wanyelle. My mother's maiden name was McAdoo. Anyone having any information concerning them, please notify Pfc. Herschel Monroe Parker, AF18324708, Hqs. and Base Serv. Sqd., Guard Section, 59th Air Depot, Griffiss Air Force Base, Rome, N. Y.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Walter A. Downer, a native of New York City who moved in the '20s to the southwest and last known in 1942 to be in El Paso, Texas, please communicate with Joseph Davies, Prospect St., Watertown, Conn. His son, Kenneth, should be about 25 years old, and his younger son, David, about 17.

I am trying to locate my buddies, Earl Reynolds, grandnephew of Diamond Joe Reynolds and owner of the Congress Mine in Arizona; Robert Burns, and Jack Coleman, a doctor's son. We were the "Big Four" in 1891 of the Boulevard School in the old town of Highlands, now part of Denver. Other schoolmates were Mori Caldwell, Jim Larmier, Bully McDonough, and Marion Hawkins. Please write Henry B. O'Connor, 1153 Guerro St., San Francisco, Calif.

I am anxious to contact any of the gang who soldiered under Major Archie Van Cleve with the 362nd Regimental Infirmary, Camp Lewis, Washington, during 1917-18. Also any of my pals who worked with me at the Debarkation Depot, Old Sailors and Soldiers Home, Hampton, Virginia in World War I. Write Ernest E. Brockman, Mt. Sterling, Illinois.

I would like to contact anyone who served on the LST 1033 during the time she was first commissioned until V-J day. H. L. Martin, Box 66, Ashland, W. Va.

I am anxious to discover the whereabouts of Melvin Beverley Knox, about 45 years old, 6 feet, complexion dark brown, possibly gray by now, brown eyes, weight 200 lbs. Last heard from in Kalispeel, Montana, though we heard that he worked on the Coolee Dam in Washington. He went to Regina to work on the railroad twenty-three years ago and drifted from there to Montana. Please contact Isaac E. Shirley, R.R. No. 3, Chipman, New Brunswick, Can.

I want to contact Bill Potter, cowpuncher and cartoonist. He was born in Philadelphia and lived at Verona while conducting a doll factory in Newark, New Jersey; worked with me on old "Forest & Stream," at the Essex School of Musketry and the Lake Junior Range, Chatham, N. J. Need more of his illustrations. Also members of the Corps Hudsonia in Hoboken, N. J., particularly Captain Lefevre and Carl Keller, who can provide historical data on American fencing. Write Roy S. Tinney, Recorder, Brielle, New Jersey.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of James Mandow, please write to S. E. Purington, 57 Exchange St., Portland 3, Maine. The last time I heard from him was in 1945. He was in the army stationed in Japan and before that he was living in New York.

Anybody who knows Raymond F. Miller, U.S. C.G., 13th or Juneau District, Nome, Alaska, Box 281 (his last known address), please contact R. V. Webster, 1020 Post St., San Francisco 9, Calif. Miller's hobby is photography and he had a friend in Galveston, Texas, by the name of Elton W. Yancy.

Please address C. B. Stroud, Coral Ridge, Ky., Rt. No. 1, if you know anything about the following: An American flyer landed near Hohen Kemnath, Germany, April 9, 1945, and was taken to the hospital in Kastl suffering with a bullet wound in leg and burns on hands, arms, and face. About April 20, '45, he was moved to the second floor of the hospital at Amberg. About four days later an American lt. col. arrived in a jeep and talked to the wounded man. Two days after that he was taken by ambulance to an American hospital. Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt was in charge of one of the German hospitals. Lt. John D. Stroud, my son, has not been heard of since that time.

I will greatly appreciate contacting any of the following named men who were members of Troop D, 3rd U. S. Cavalry, stationed at Fort Assiniboine, Montana, in the years 1903-1933—1st Lieut. Reginald McNally (Com.), Sgt. Carl G. Day, Sgt. Lawrence Creekhaven, Egbert Ward, Corp. Nicholas Nusbaum, Thurston Thickston (Hosp. Corps), Pvt. Clyde R. Hess, Sam Standley, Clyde H. Shelmester, Ben C. Parrar or any other member of the above outfit. I hope to obtain information needed by the V.A. from the above. Please write Charles M. W. Burden, Box 128, Eddyville, Ky.

W. H. McCarty, 965 Clinton St., Napa, Calif., wants information of his two brothers, A. W. McCarty, whose nickname is "Buck," and W. F. McCarty, sometimes called "Bill."

(Continued from page 91)

in. But Daniel resolved that if he went in he would have to be knocked in, and Colter began giving ground before the straight, chugging blows to his belly and face. Absorbing the ones Ambrose gave him in return, Daniel beat him without let-up.

There came a clear opening then, and Daniel caught him solidly under the jaw.

Colter sagged back and twisted head first into the tar. His feet didn't so much as twitch as Daniel caught them and dragged him out. Tearing off another chunk of his own shirt, Daniel smeared the warm tar off Colter's nose and mouth. He breathed well enough, though making bubbles almost like a brand-new calf.

Suddenly the crowd found its voice. Someone laughed. Someone else said. "Th'ow him back in!" And another, "Was you wantin' to make us a speech, Reverent?" And somebody else, "We'd ort at least to listen to what he's got to say—"

The general came up with Sam under his arm, his hands full of money, and Deacon Masters sidled quietly up to Daniel.

Daniel found Juliet just then. She was giving him a smoldery look, and before he could accuse her of turning old Sam out on purpose to keep them from pouring that tar on him, the deacon caught his arm.

"Listen, Dan'l," he cried, "What kind of proposition would you want to raise some chickens, me and you? You know, we're needin' a full-time preacher here and—"

"Why," Daniel said, "you'd be welcome to all of 'em, unless the general wanted a few, only I don't think ol' Sam would want to go where I don't feel just plumb welcome myself."

"Welcome?" the deacon exclaimed, taking Sam from the general so that Jackson could count his money. "Why, we allus keep the preacher, don't we, daughter?"

Her eyes were still smoldery as she looked at Daniel.

"Yes, Papa," my great-great grandmother Juliet said.

THE END

(Continued from page 99)

frantically, and he felt the current take hold. Slowly the line tightened. They were moving, shipping water, settling deep, but jerking forward. Gil fixed his eyes on the far side and shut them, tight. When he looked again they had crept past midstream, and then, miraculously, it seemed to him, they grounded.

He got a grip under Ashbaugh's arms and dragged him up the bank and back under cover. Chelai slashed the rope. The coracle glided away and swept down-canyon. On the opposite shore a swarm of fierce-eyed men in blue turbans were frenziedly stripping the camp . . .

He stumbled out on the rims in late afternoon, leading the missionaries on foot up a dim game trail. The river glistened distantly below and the grasslands stretched westward to infinity, bathed in sunlight. As they went about organizing camp, Gil watched with a kind of solemn awe. The men piled up brush for an overnight windbreak, and the women gathered firewood, each with a job. Somebody said, "What—no air conditioning?" and laughter spread on the wind.

He saw Nancy, lifting stones to build a firepit, and he came up to help her.

"You haven't changed your mind?"

She straightened and gave him a direct searching look. "Do you think I will?"

"Not any more," he said. These people had lost their food, their belongings, horses, everything. Real suffering and exhaustion lay ahead. But he knew now that they, and others like them, had always reached their destination, whatever it happened to be called. "But nobody likes to admit he's wrong."

She smiled at him. "I know. Sometimes it can be harder than crossing a river."

"Well," he said, "we're both over."

"Yes." She looked away, her face touched with color. "But a long way to go."

"Not so far," he said. "Not if you know where you're going." There was no doubt about it, he thought. He had crossed more than a river; he had crossed a barrier in his mind. He might have to leave for a while, but he would come back, he knew. She had told him so.

THE END

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