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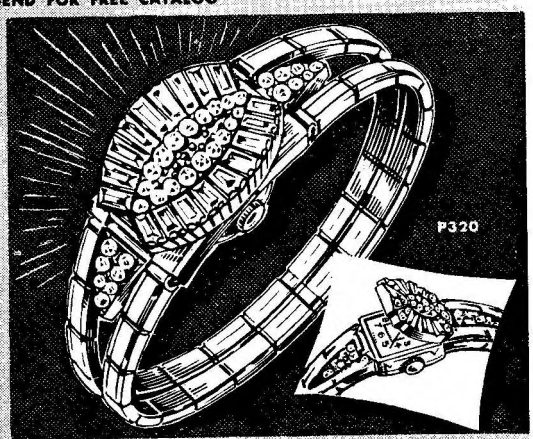

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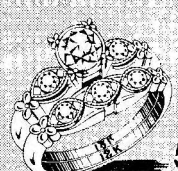

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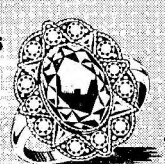

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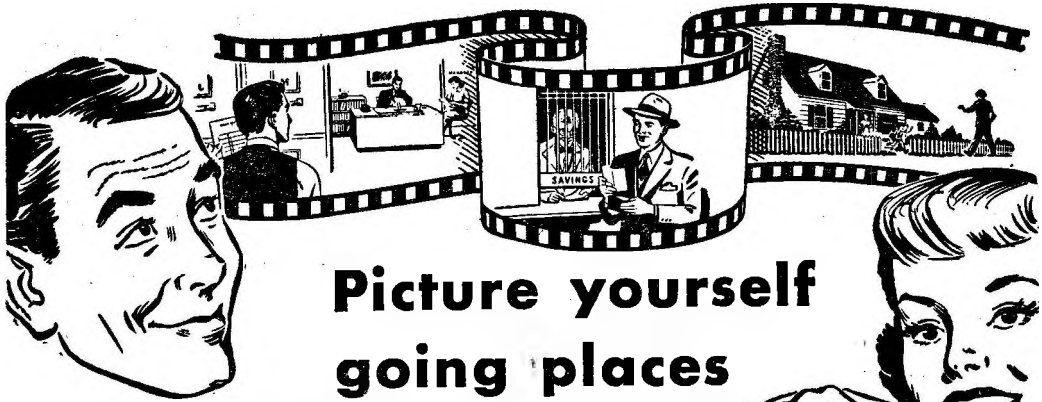

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You've done it often. Call it day-dreaming if you like, but you've seen yourself in a bigger job — giving orders and making decisions — driving off in a smart new car — buying your family a fine home.

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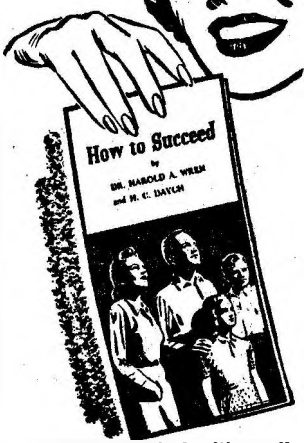

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Adventure
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MARCH, 1953 Vol. 126, No. 5

CONTENTS

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Ejler G. Jakobsson, Editor

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"Got laid off my machine shop job which I believe was best thing ever happened as I opened a full time Radio Shop. Business is picking up every week."—E. T. Slate, Corsicana, Texas.

GOOD JOB WITH STATION
"I am Broadcast Engineer at WLPM. Another technician and I have opened a Radio-TV service shop in our spare time. Big TV sales here . . . more work than we can handle."—J. H. Bangley, Suffolk, Va.

$10 TO $15 WEEK SPARE TIME
"Four months after enrolling for NRI course, was able to service Radios . . . averaged $10 to $15 a week spare time. Now have full time Radio and Television business."—William Weyde, Brooklyn, New York.

SWITCHED TO TV SERVICING
"Recently switched over from radio work and am now holding position as service technician I am still with RCA, enjoying my work more and more every day."—N. Ward, Ridgefield, N. J.

WANT YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

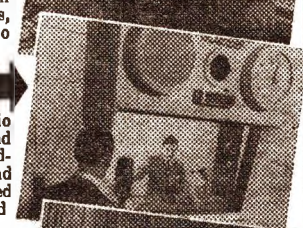
Let the above men help you can be your own boss. Many NRI trained men start their own business with capital earned in spare time. Robert Dohmen, New Prague, Minn., whose store is shown at left, says, "Am now tied in with two Television outfits and do warranty work for dealers. Often fall back to NRI textbooks for information."

1. EXTRA MONEY IN SPARE TIME

Many students make $5, $10 a week and more EXTRA fixing neighbors' Radios in spare time while learning. The day you enroll I start sending you SPECIAL BOOKLETS that show you how. Tester you build with kits I send helps you make extra money servicing sets, gives practical experience on circuits common to Radio and Television. All equipment is yours to keep.

2. GOOD PAY JOB

NRI Courses lead to these and many other jobs: Radio and TV service, P.A., Auto Radio, Lab, Factory, and Electronic Controls Technicians, Radio and TV Broadcasting, Police, Ship and Airways Operators and Technicians. Opportunities are increasing. The United States has over 105 million Radios—over 2,900 Broad casting Stations—more expansion is on the way.



3. BRIGHT FUTURE

Think of the opportunities in Television. Over 15,000,000 TV sets are now in use; 108 TV stations are operating and 1800 new TV stations have been authorized . . . many of them expected to be in operation in 1953. This means more jobs—good pay jobs with bright futures. More operators, installation service technicians will be needed. Now is the time to get ready for a successful future in TV! Find out what Radio and TV offer you.

You Learn Servicing or Communications by Practicing With Kits I Send

This Is Just Some of the Equipment My Students Build. All Parts Yours to Keep.

Keep your job while training at home. Hundreds I've trained are successful RADIO-TELEVISION Technicians. Most had no previous experience; many no more than grammar school education. Learn Radio-Television principles from illustrated lessons. You also get PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE. Pictured at left, are just a few of the pieces of equipment you build with kits of parts I send. You experiment with, learn circuits common to Radio and Television.

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Act Now! Send for my FREE DOUBLE OFFER. Coupon entitles you to actual Servicing Lesson; shows how you learn at home. You'll also receive my 64-page book, "How to Be a Success in Radio-Television." Send coupon in envelope or paste on postal. J. E. SMITH, Pres., Dept. 3BR1, National Radio Institute, Washington 9, D. C. Our 39th Year.

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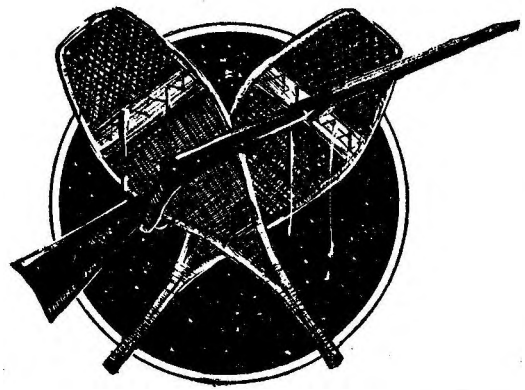

The Men Who Supply It— Page 96

ASK ADVENTURE

HUNTING— PROSPECTING

FAR North calling.

Please send me information on the Yukon such as, coal mining, gold mining, fur trading, hunting, cost of living, etc.

John Krivan
Alberta, Canada.

Reply by Philip H. Godsell: All the large-scale gold mining in the Yukon is being done by the big companies, the principal one being the Yukon Consolidated. Most of the work is done with powered dredges and by hydraulics, and the old-time pick-and-shovel is a thing of the past. Of course there are still the old rock-rats and placer miners but you don't see many of these gentry around nowadays.

The Hudson's Bay Company has a number of posts in Yukon Territory, and there are also a considerable number of small indepedent fur-traders scattered through the country engaged in trading furs from Indians and buying the white trappers' catches. But at the present moment the fur trade is very much in the doldrums and has been for three or four years. In fact, prices for staple furs are and have been so low, while the cost of living has been increasing so rapidly, that many professional trappers have simply thrown up their hands for the time being and are working at whatever they can to eke out a living. This condition is not confined only to the Yukon but has affected the fur trade throughout the neighboring Mackenzie River region and the rest of the north. Eventually fur prices will improve, but right now furs are worth only what you can get from them. Recently silver fox pelts that were worth from $75.00 up could be purchased from as low as $10.00 to $15.00 with no takers, and white foxes which not so long ago ran into high figures were being sold by the Eskimos of the Delta for as low as $3.00 apiece.

The cost of living in Alaska, the Yukon, and the North West Territories was always high, and now it's proportionally higher than in civilization. The hunting in certain parts of the Yukon is excellent, but you have to confine yourself to the open seasons and game regulations and, as an American, you would need a special hunting license.

MINE detectors—and mining.

Would an Army mine detector be all right for locating minerals such as magnesium?

A. Todd
Ft. Fairfield, Me.

(Continued on page 8)

In This Month's ASK ADVENTURE

YOUR CHOICE OF TWO GREAT BOOKS

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Gil Vine, the house detective with the fanciest title in the business, is really earning his salary these days. The unknown beauty, Teresa Marino, is enough to cause an epidemic of loss of sleep in her own right; when her true identity becomes known, it is evident that big things are at stake. Radio and Advertising V.I.P.s who must be handled with the utmost delicacy becomes involved in an unsavory murder which challenges the talents both mental and physical of Gil Vine who, while a great respecter of persons wasn't made security chief for his good looks alone.

Gil Vine's investigation ranges over the length and breadth of Manhattan, with side trips to Lexington, Kentucky and Long Island, to gather evidence, and to round up suspects.

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OR

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(Continued from page 6)

Reply by Victor Shaw: The Army mine detector uses the same principle as the Fisher and Heddon instruments, that can detect most any metallic deposit underground, and are used a lot by many city gas-and-electric companies in the U.S.A. to pick up buried iron pipes for repair, etc.

It's based on the principle of magnetic induction, and is also employed by prospectors to discover veins of metallic ores which don't outcrop on surface. But, its use for this is rather limited, since it also will operate where there are two types of rock which are of different conductivity, but have no specific ore value.

Manganese is a metal often found with iron ores, and its chief ore is pyrolusite used to alloy with iron. As such, its presence may be found by the above detectors properly used. Get instruction circular free of Fisher Research Laboratory, Palo Alto, Calif. Their instrument costs about $100, but the Army one does the same work for the same reason.

GEM stones are a girl's best friend?

My hobby is collecting gem stones. Several years ago my husband made me a cutting table. Up to this time I have been buying my material from Oregon and Washington. We have recently moved to the above address from Northern Pennsylvania, and I find that I have quite a bit of free time and I would like to prospect for my own material.

Are there any deposits near the Camden, New Jersey or Philadelphia, Pa. area? Are there any books regarding gems found in these areas?

Mrs. Merle A. Sherman,
Riverton, N. J.

Reply by Victor Shaw: New Jersey has a wealth of semi-precious stones with many of gemmy quality, also much cutting material including agate, jasper, chalcedony, serpentine, and even some corundum. But due to the rapid spread of gem collecting in recent years, there's been a lot of prospecting in this state as well as in all New England and eastern states to the south, especially where pegmatite abounds, since this is one of the best sources of gemstones.

A study of local geology will help you to select areas for search. In N.J. you'll find pegmatite (a form of diorite and granodiorite) confined to the north counties; southwest to Camden there's only Triassic red sandstone in spots, but mostly sands, clays, and cretaceous marls, most of it sterile for agriculture and covered with pines. Can't give you any hope from Monmouth County down to Delaware Bay.

I could list all minerals in northern counties, but it'll take much space, so you'll be better equipped by getting the only book on this I know of—*Gem Hunter's Guide*, by Russell P. MacFall, sold by Science & Mechanics Pub. Co., 450 East Ohio St., Chicago.

Near Bound Brook, Somerset County, there's lots of agate, chalcedony, and jasper—corundum (Sapphire) and radite garnet spinel. There is some fire opal at So. Amboy.

Here's wishing you luck.

BOAT BUILDING

BUILDING your own pleasure launch.

As a subscriber to *Adventure* I am asking my first question of one of that publication's experts. Can you tell me where or from whom I might secure plans for a wood motor launch of some thirty feet length and nine or ten feet beam? Not interested in cabin space or anything fancy.

I live on a nice lake about fifteen miles long and would like to have a boat holding some ten or twelve passengers.

R. H. Alexander
Scott, Arkansas

Reply by Colonel Roland Birnn: This is in reference to your request for plans for a 30 x 9 or 10 foot open motorboat.

First about plans. For a general purpose or utility boat such as you wish it's the height of extravagance to have a naval architect make plans to your individual order. Better to find some naval architect —that's a kind of high falutin' term for a pleasure boat designer—who has already drawn such plans and buy a duplicate or one of the many copies he has already made from those originals. Unfortunately for you, a boat such as you desire is not a common type.

The Douglas Fir Plywood Ass'n., 848 Daily News Bldg., Chicago 6, Ill., will send you free, on request, a catalog of 240 boat plans for boats that may be built of plywood. Plywood boats are okay if well made and handled with reasonable care and are certainly economical and easy to build.

The Cleveland Boat Blueprint Co., Cleveland 13, Ohio, will send you a *Build A Boat* catalog for 25 cents showing many different plans. They sell full size paper patterns cut to shape for their boats.

Here are several boats somewhat like the one you want that have been designed.

A 34 foot x 6'8" shallow draft utility boat, built by Charles Fuss of Massapequa, L.I. N.Y. and designed by Carter and Wittholz, 5 Balfour St., Valley Stream, L.I., N.Y.

A shallow draft (tunnel stern) sport fisherman, 29' x 8'6", by Wm. Atkin, Box 7, Noroton Heights, Conn., described in *Motor Boating*, Jan., 1949.

(Continued on page 103)

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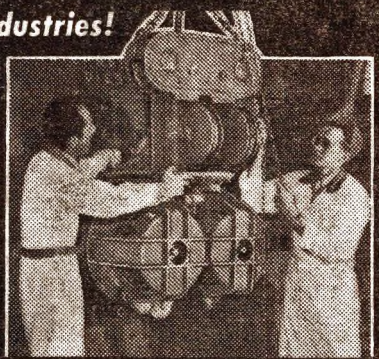

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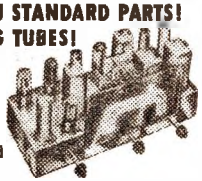

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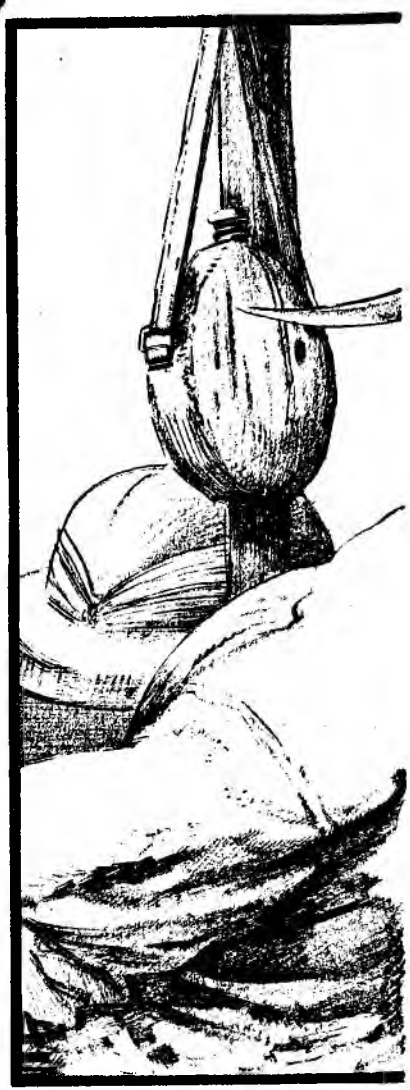


By
ALEXANDER WALLACE

The two must die together, or not at all—Halliday in the jungle, and the jungle in Halliday. . . .

IT WAS at Chimao that I made John Halliday's acquaintance. He came to me in one of my darkest moments, like an angel from heaven—and I shall begin by telling you about that.

I came to Portuguese Manicaland to install new machinery in an abandoned stamping mill up on the Inyasamya River. An American syndicate, after outbidding several rivals, had acquired the concession from the Companhia de Mocambique, and the job was wished onto me because, I suppose, I'd worked for them in Brazil and had a fair knowledge of Portuguese.

CHIMPOLO INCIDENT

It was a tough project that they handed to me—the case of Miles Downly left me with no illusions about that. Downly, a young construction engineer, with the ink scarcely dry on his diploma, had undertaken the job before me and it had broken him. According to record, young Downly had got himself into serious trouble with the Manicas, a tribe of proud, Zulu stock that ranged the Inyasamya valley. There had been some shooting for which the *Comandante* of the *prazo* Inyasamya had held Downly responsible. It had all happened before the outbreak of World War II; and, consequently, at the time, I was not conversant with all the details of the incident. But the fact that young Downly was still serving a long term of imprisonment when I first set foot on the Dark Continent—nearly seven years after the event—was sufficient to plant serious doubts in my mind as to whether my undertaking was as simple as my employers seemed to think it was.

Sometimes I wonder about financiers. They do such queer things, and how it is that they get rich and manage to stay that way is quite beyond my understanding. For instance. . . .

Prior to my arrival the machinery had been sent up from Beria on flatcars and then shunted onto a siding a couple of miles from town. And there it all was, just as it had left the ship's hold, in crates, a hundred of them, ranging in weight from ten pounds to ten tons. Of course, it all had to be broken down into loads that could be manhandled and then transported through several hundred miles of trackless jungle. I saw at once that it would take a small army of porters to keep it moving at a snail's pace.

It would have saved my employers a good deal of money, and me much grief, if they had given a little more thought to the labor problem involved in the unpacking and re-packing of that machinery.

For it was the situation that developed when I began to look around for labor that nearly broke my heart at the onset. The local population, apart from a few white farmers, was made up of *civilizados,* mission-educated natives, all very conscious of their Portuguese citizenship, and all equally endowed with a fine conception of "squeeze." They knew I was green, and they were quick to take advantage of the fact and of the sudden demand for labor. When at long last I got a gang started on the unpacking job—at twice the customary rate of pay—it was only to discover that they were wrecking my precious machinery for its brass and copper parts.

I FOUND out about that one evening when I met a couple of dusky belles on the trail which led from town to the siding where I'd pitched my camp. One of them had a length of quarter-inch, copper pipe wound around her leg, from the ankle halfway up to the knee; the other had a small pressure gauge suspended from her neck by a string of beads. I could get nothing out of them, so I promptly escorted them into town and hauled them up before the *Intendente.* A few questions backed up by threats brought to light the fact that quite a brisk traffic had developed between my camp and the town, an exchange of brass for beauty. And a check of my spare parts, on the following morning, made it self evident that it was the odd man among my gang that had failed to attain his heart's desire.

The *Intendente* gave them all a tongue-lashing, threatening them with everlasting chains if they did not produce the missing parts forthwith. But it was futile. No one knew anything about those parts, and every man questioned was reduced to tearful indignation by the mere suggestion of theft. It was a hard thing—oh yes, it was a bad thing to work so hard for a *bwana* who could think such evil of poor, honest black fellows!

The crisis came when I refused to pay wages and to issue rations until the parts were returned. Outraged, they sat down on the job, and left me to fret and fume in my tent for three days. I was ready to throw in the sponge when Halliday stepped into the picture.

He ducked into my tent and came to stand before me, a tall, black-bearded fellow, squeezed almost to gauntness by the sun. I judged him to be about ten years my senior, a hard-looking forty, with the blue of his eyes accentuated by his swart coloring. He wore a wide-brimmed felt hat, and a shapeless, corduroy shooting jacket with bulging flap pockets.

He said, "Palahares, the *Intendente,* tells me that you've got some trouble here, Mr. Bryce." His voice was low-toned and res-

onant with a nasal twang that echoed familiarly, and very pleasantly in my ears just then.

"Why, you're an American!" I gushed, and jumped up from my cot to offer him my hand. "My home town's Dover, New Hampshire!"

His grip was firm and friendly, but his expression remained extremely non-committal.

"It's a small world," he said. Then, after a pause: "My name's John Halliday, and if you're looking for a man to boss your gang, I might take you on."

He said it as if he thought he were doing me a big favor, and that and his unresponsiveness nettled me a litle. It was on the tip of my tongue to say something asinine, like: *My good man haven't you got the cart before the horse?* But my good angel was at my elbow.

Aloud I said: "I need an experienced man to organize a safari. You may be that man, and it could be that you don't know what you're up against."

"Palahares told me all about it." He jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "You want to move all that stuff up to Chimpolo."

"And you think you're the man to do it, eh?"

"Sure. It's just a matter of time and money."

Not very long ago I'd heard the same thing said in a beautifully furnished New York office. Smiling inwardly I got out my map and unrolled it on the camp table. "It's not quite as simple as that," I told him. "For one thing I've got a sit-down strike on my hands. And for another, you see—" my finger traced out the course of the Inyasamya—"You see, that's all jungle country, which means that we'll have to slash a road—"

"That won't be necessary," he interposed.

My eyebrows lifted. "No? But the map shows no road beyond Humbe, Mr. Halliday."

"There's a hell of a lot more it doesn't show, Mr. Bryce."

"Indeed. You know the country better than the cartographer, eh?"

The twinkle in his blue eyes told me that he was smiling behind his beard. "In this case, yes," he told me. "That map is based on a survey I made for an old friend of mine, Senhor Botellho. He used to be *Comandante* at Fort Luis Filippe—there, just about where your finger is now."

That settled it so far as I was concerned. A man who knew the country sufficiently well to make maps and who counted *comandantes* among his old friends was worth his weight in gold to me just then. I made my decision upon the instant.

"All right, Mr. Halliday, get those fellows out there to work and it's your baby. Just do that, and then name your own price."

He merely nodded his head and ducked out of the tent. The next moment I heard him shouting orders, mouthing the incoherent vowels of the Manica dialect like a native.

That evening he presided over a big palaver, and our campfires burned late into the night. Everyone had something to get off his chest, and none of it made sense for me; but from that time on our camp began to hum with activity. All I had to do was to stand around and look wise. And one morning when I stepped out of my tent into sunlight and clamor, I nearly fell over a considerable pile of copper and brass which had been heaped up in front of my tent some time during the night.

IN LESS than two weeks we were ready to start. The last day was spent in organizing the safari. Special men had to be selected. Special men to go ahead to make camp, special men to stay behind to break camp. There were tribal taboos to be avoided, questions of precedence to be settled; for your African porter is as class-conscious as an Oriental despot. That last day was a day of tumult, with the camp full of excited, sweating blacks.

But M'wembi, a grizzled old gunbearer who had been with Halliday for a long time, could outtalk and outswear the whole pack of them together, and he was right handy with his little bamboo cane. The boys would take a cut from him and grin, whereas if I'd done it they'd have sat down and sulked for a week.

At four A.M., when the guinea fowl calls in the African bush and when the carded mists hang in shreds from the trees, we started to trek, with drums beating and horns blowing to scare off the evil spirits left behind by the night. As a dawn wind

blew out the stars one by one, Halliday fell into step beside me.

"On this trek we'll shoot no elephants," he announced.

"Oh—why?"

"Well, our boys have consulted the local wizard, and he says elephants are taboo for us. They've got a long, hard trek ahead of 'em, and the idea is that, if we promise not to wound or kill an elephant, the elephants will get to know about it and make things easy for us. See?"

I shook my head, grinning. "No, not quite. I can't see how the damned beasts can get to know about it. You tell 'em to put the hex on something else, Halliday. I want to bag a couple of prime tusks—trophies to show my grandchildren."

"If you take a potshot at an elephant, you might not live long enough to have grandchildren, Bryce."

"Oh, come off that! You can't tell me that you believe in that stuff!"

"What you and I believe isn't important here, Bryce. What they believe is. Try to get their slant on things. Learn to walk softly in the presence of their gods, and you'll get to where you want to go a lot faster."

It was not the first little lecture he'd given me, and I can't say that I deeply appreciated his efforts to enlighten me at the time. Somehow it all made me feel that I'd got into long pants too soon. But he knew his job, and I was content to let him do it his own way.

"All right," I conceded. "No trophies this trip."

"Good! You'll understand a lot better, Bryce, when we get into real jungle country."

We lapsed into silence and trudged on.

It was a long, weary trip up the valley of the Inyasamya. The whole country was jungle, honeycombed with streams that ran through the green bush like veins in a great leaf. Day after day it was the same thing, with a monotonous rhythm to it all. Make camp, break camp, heave and haul, sometimes up to the waist in green slime under which God only knew what lurked. Toil and sweat in the hot-house heat of the jungle, with a handful of *mopani* ants down your neck, and the bite like a spot of fire. And snakes! Always I've been afraid of snakes, even of the harmless kind that inhabit the woods back home, and the thought of sharing my cot with a black mamba or a cobra made a palpable horror of my nights.

And the worst of it was, our boys soon got wise to my horror of reptiles in general. Often, when we were on the march, someone behind me would suddenly shout: *"Mamba, Bwana! Mamba!"* just to see how close I could come to jumping out of my white skin. By the end of the first week they nearly had me in a state of nervous collapse.

And then we struck an elephant trail as broad and solid as a paved street. Great engineers those elephants! I'll swear that they studied the gradients and contours, and never led us up too steep a slope. We made steady progress in their wake. The hazards which had once beset our path vanished as if by magic and, after what I'd been through, it would not have taken a great deal of argument to convince me that our Manica wizard actually was *en rapport* with the intelligent beasts.

The easy going gave me the opportunity to get better acquainted with Halliday, and the more I got to know of him the more I wondered about him. He had the tranquillity of a very patient man; and yet, when provoked, his blue eyes would come alight and burn with an inborn fire that made you feel that, under his calm exterior, he was as explosive as a keg of gunpowder. And mine was not the only mind upon which his dual personality had impressed itself, for his native name was Zinga Intombi—that is to say, Sleeping Thunder.

He never spoke of his pre-African background, and his reticence upon that subject gave me the impression that he was a resurrected man, a man with memories he did not choose to share. Even when he spoke of his African adventures it was as if he spoke of a stranger, and a stranger to himself I thought he was. He didn't seem to have any interest in the things men usually strive for, or to have any clear idea as to why he had spent half his life wandering among the tribes of Mozambique. And yet he could have made a fortune as a trader, because he had penetrated into country where no white man had set foot before, even into those secret forest seminaries where the witch doctor learns his craft. There was no doubting the truth of what he said. He knew the jealously guarded drum-codes of a half-dozen tribes and, cer-

tainly, there was something of wizardry in the power he held over our Manicas. They respected him and and they feared him, and just how much he did know about the witch-doctor's craft was brought home to me in a way I'm not likely to forget.

FOR the most part our porters were Manicas, good fellows with a lot of hard work in them, if treated with a reasonable degree of firmness and consideration. But they were not black angels and, if judged by European standards, they were all born sneak-thieves. However, there was only one really vicious character among them, and he was a Zanzibari, with just enough white blood in his veins to mottle his black skin with pinkish blotches.

He was a squat, powerfully-built fellow and he answered to the name of Ahmed. He had seen some service in one of the Portuguese native regiments, and he thought he was entitled to special privileges on that account. He never had much to say when Halliday was around, but whenever Halliday was out shooting for the pot he came to me full of trouble, the self-appointed spokesman of his fellows. He could be as persistent and as irritating as a crowd of beggars, and sometimes his importunities bordered on downright insolence. He was a thorn in my side, and the festering trouble of him came to a head one day when we were camped on the Inyasamya near a small native village.

Halliday had left camp early to shoot for the pot, leaving me to sleep off a mild attack of fever. Shortly after noon I awoke, feeling much better, and hungry. The camp was silent; our porters were sprawled out in the shade of the trees and tents, peacefully sleeping through the heat of the day. I decided to disturb no one, to rustle a cold meal for myself.

We kept the food for our own table in the big, square mess tent, and for that reason it was taboo for all but M'wembi and our mess boys. Its contents must have been a sore temptation to our porters, but for all that I'd never seen one of them snooping around it.

So, when I walked in on Ahmed, to see him standing with his head thrown back, his ugly mouth pursed around the neck of a bottle of my whisky, I think I was more surprised than he was. He gulped down a mouthful of the whisky, and then stood glowering at me. He was feeling the liquor he'd drunk—the way he swayed on his feet told me that.

"Put that bottle down and get out—quick!" I told him.

He continued to glare at me. His brash eyes rolled in their sockets, and his mouth worked, though no audible sound came from him. He was scared, but obviously working up his nerve to defy me.

"Get out!" I roared at him.

"You make no trouble, white man," he said thickly, in broken Portuguese. "You not fit for to drive me. Me b'long Portuguesa."

My gorge rose at his insolence. I took a step toward him, my fists clenched to strike. He went for his knife and, in the next instant, the blade was flashing upward in a ripping stroke. I jumped back with a sharp intake of breath that sucked my belly flat against my spine. Steel clinked on the buckle of my belt and flashed before my eyes as it swept upward in a vicious arc. And then I hit him.

It was a good, hard blow. It caught him off balance and, before he could recover from it, I nailed him with a left and a right that dropped him on all fours. He had dropped his knife. I kicked it out of reach and, as he lurched to his feet, braced myself to meet his attack. But the fight was out of him. He backed away as I advanced.

"No trouble!" he mumbled with a placating gesture. "No more trouble!" He edged around me toward the opening of the tent. I let him go. I didn't think I'd have any more trouble with him before Halliday got back.

But I was wrong about that. By the time I'd finished my cold lunch the whole camp was full of black commotion. I stepped out to see that Ahmed was at the core of the excitement, all our porters gathered around him in a close-packed circle. Ahmed was making a speech. He was a good talker, and soon had his audience spellbound. What he was saying was all Greek to me, but he kept pointing in my direction and, as often as he did so, heads turned to look at me. As he warmed up to his subject the porters became more agitated and a few of them turned to spit in my direction. From that and the sobbing note that had come into Ahmed's voice I gathered that they were hearing a heart-

breaking tale of the white man's injustice and brutality.

An ugly situation was fast developing and I was trying to decide just what I ought to do about it, when Halliday sauntered into camp, M'wembi close at his heels. At first sight of him Ahmed choked off his impassioned denunciations and effaced himself among the crowd. Halliday stood looking around for a moment and absolute quiet came to the camp. Then he said something to M'wembi and came over to me, a frown between his eyes.

"What brought this on?" he asked.

I told him, and he said, "Well, we'll have to get rid of him."

"That suits me. Call him over and I'll pay him off right now."

"We'll wait and see what M'wembi has to say first. How about a sundowner? You look as if you could use one."

It struck me that he was taking it all very casually.

I said, "He came within a hair's breadth of disemboweling me, you know?"

"Yes. Quick with a knife, those fellows. It's the Arab blood in 'em."

Cursing him under my breath I followed him into the tent. I kicked the bottle Ahmed had dropped from under my feet and got another bottle from the case. We drank in silence until M'wembi came to make his report. They jabbered together for quite some time, their faces grave. Then M'wembi's expression changed and broadened into a grin as Halliday gave him careful instructions of some kind. Finally the gunbearer went out, chuckling to himself.

"What was all that about?" I asked.

"Oh, Ahmed has talked the others into believing that you gave him a raw deal. Now they all want to be paid off."

"No, they can't do that to me—or can they?"

"Sure. They can sit down just as they did at Chimao, Bryce. You see, they've got into their heads—or I should say, Ahmed has put it into their heads—that you're a bad man to work for. They haven't forgotten the trouble you had with them at Chimao, and—"

"But, damn it man, you're not going to let them get away with that, are you?"

"It's been a hard trek so far, Bryce, and Ahmed has got the idea across to them that you are *najahe*—bad luck. We've got to get rid of that idea—or they won't move."

It seemed to me that I was holding the dirty end of the stick. I said with some bitterness, "Well, that's gratitude for you! What am I supposed to do? Increase their pay and rations?"

"No. We'll beat Ahmed at his own game. There will be a palaver right after supper. M'wembi will look after the details." He paused, then asked suddenly, "Are you still afraid of snakes, Bryce?"

"You know damn well I am! But what's that got to do with it?"

"Well, there'll be a sort of trial by ordeal. Ahmed'll be the plaintiff, and you'll be the defendant. There'll be a snake involved. You'll have to handle it and—"

"What kind of a snake?" I asked with a mental shudder.

"Oh, a black mamba, if M'wembi has any luck."

"A black mamba!" I gulped. Then: "Why, that's the most deadly—no! I wouldn't touch one with a ten foot pole!"

"There's no danger," he told me calmly. "It won't bite you. But of course, if you don't feel that you can't trust me, well—" He broke off with a shrug that told me only too plainly that the alternative was to pay off my porters, and then concoct some story that would explain the loss of time and money to my employers. I had no choice. The snake was the lesser evil.

AN HOUR before sundown the subdued beat of a drum called us to the palaver. Our porters were gathered in the center of the clearing in which our camp stood. Everybody looked up as we stepped into the ring, and I felt their eyes land on me with an impact that was almost physical.

Ahmed stood a little off center. He seemed uneasy, shifting from one foot to the other. Then my attention came to focus on M'wembi, or rather upon the writhing snake he had pinned to the ground with a forked stick.

It was a black mamba all right—not an uncommonly large one, but it looked as big as a boa constrictor to me.

The drum stopped throbbing as Halliday lifted his hand and started to talk. He kept talking for some time, and a murmur of approval rippled from tongue to tongue when he fell silent. But Ahmed did not like it. He started to protest, and there was real histrionic talent in his gestures

and facial expression. He was heard with increasing signs of restlessness. They wanted the show to go on and, presently, they gave tongue to their impatience and howled him down.

The drum started to pulse, softly, rhythmically. Halliday moved over to M'wembi, stooped quickly, seized the snake by the neck and held the hissing, writhing horror up for all to see. Then he came walking slowly over to me. I thought I saw him spit into its gaping jaws. But I was only vaguely aware of this, for I was in a cold sweat, fighting down the panic that was in me. And then he was standing in front of me, with the snake held in both hands, offering it to me.

"Take hold of it," he said quietly, "then hold it up above your head."

I lifted my hands to take it from him, only to jerk them back and to shake my head. His blue eyes bored into mine.

"Don't lose your nerve, Bryce!" he said sharply. "They're all watching you. Come on, take it—quickly!"

Over his shoulder I saw Ahmed shifting his position to get a better look at me, and the smug grin on his ugly face put the necessary starch into me. I took a deep breath, shut my eyes, and held up my hands. Halliday put the snake across my palm. To the touch it felt cold, slimy—loathsome. Somehow I managed not to yell and drop it. Then I opened my eyes and stared. The thing lay across my palms like a knotted stick, motionless, rigid!

"Hold it up above your head!" Halliday prompted. Like an automaton I obeyed, and a great shout went up.

"Good boy!" Halliday slapped me on the shoulder, took the snake from me, and advanced slowly upon Ahmed. And when he came to a stand in front of the Zanzibari that snake was a writhing fury, and hissing like a leaky steam valve.

Ahmed backed away from it, his eyes bulging. A moment of tense silence came to the clearing. Then Halliday said something, snapping the words out like the crack of a whip. Ahmed looked about him frantically, jerking his head this way and that.

Then, of a sudden, he let out a shriek of terror and bolted. No one tried to stop him. A gap in the circle opened and he went through it in headlong, panic-stricken flight.

Halliday turned to grin at me.

"There goes your bad luck, Bryce."

Carelessly he dropped the snake. It coiled and struck savagely at his booted leg. I didn't have anything to say. Speech was quite beyond me until I got a couple of stiff drinks under my belt.

Then I asked, "Just what happened out there?"

"I told you. A trial by ordeal. The snake trial is their way of settling an argument of that kind. The snake won't bite the innocent man and—"

"I got that part of it all right. But you can't tell me that the damned thing turned into a stick at the touch of my innocent hands! What about that?"

He told me that it was an old witchdoctor's trick. It was performed by spitting a drop of nicotine into the snake's mouth. A drop of oil from a foul pipe was enough, and the effect was almost instantaneous. The creature's muscles became knotted into lumps, but a little rubbing between the hands soon restored it to its usual state of animation. Of course, he said, the same effect could be produced by opium, or some other narcotic.

"Well, I'll be damned!" I murmured. Then: "But suppose Ahmed had taken hold of it?"

"That seldom happens," he said with a chuckle. "I'll give you odds that Ahmed hasn't stopped running yet."

"Maybe," I said dubiously. "But it couldn't work out that way all the time."

His face sobered. "That's true," he admitted. "But as a rule the witchdoctor knows who's guilty before the test. He ferrets out the truth in much the same way as we would, by shrewd cross-examination of witnesses. Yet everything depends on his sagacity. Sometimes he's honestly mistaken, and sometimes he's susceptible to bribery. But then, it's my opinion, that a man standing trial by jury is confronted by precisely the same risks. Your predecessor, young Downly, would agree with me, I think."

HE SAID it with a peculiar emphasis that caused me to give him a sharp look.

"You knew Downly?" I asked.

"Yes. Before the war I knew him."

"And you don't think he was responsible for that fracas with the Manicas?"

He communed with himself for a time,

frowning and blowing smoke rings up at the ceiling of the tent. "Downly's mother was a misionary-doctor," he told me at last. "He was born and raised in a native kraal, and he knew the Manicas as well, if not better than I do, Bryce."

I uttered a short laugh and said, "That doesn't prove anything. I've heard of missionaries who were cooked and eaten by their converts. Understanding does not always beget understanding, and—"

"You don't know what you're talking about!" He came back at me, with a flash in his blue eyes. "Downly was an engineer, like you, full of ambition to build bridges and dams. But he'll have wasted fifteen years, the best fifteen years of his life before he gets out of jail. There's nothing funny about that, Bryce."

The sharpness of his rebuke startled me into silence, and in silence we smoked for a long time before I ventured to ask, "What do you think happened?"

"I don't know. I was in Egypt with the King's African Rifles at the time. And, if you don't mind, we'll let it rest at that, Bryce." And with that he got to his feet and walked out on me.

Two days later we came out of the bush and up onto the high-veldt, and the worst was far behind us. In this weird upland country the ant-hills looked like gigantic mushrooms, and the zebra and the springbok flashed across our path in flashing stampedes, leaving behind them, in the tall grass, a swath like a ship's wake. Families of lions lurked in the black pools of shade cast by flat-topped trees, and baboons glided among the rocks.

Soon the veldt began to heave and roll itself up into the first folds of the Inyamya Range. Hills swart and naked bared their scars to the sun. Between them and into them we went, followed by our long, straggling line of porters.

"We should make Chimpolo before sundown tomorrow," Halliday announced on the night of the third day. A gauze of moonlight lay over the clearing in which we had pitched our tents, and fire-shadows moved mysteriously through the camp. The noise of the river was loud in our ears, shutting out all other sounds.

"The old diggings are a dozen miles above the native town," he went on. "That means that we'll have to stop there and talk things over with old Sekgoma."

"Oh, what's he got to do with it?"

"Quite a bit. He happens to be the paramount chief of the Manicas. You'll have to pay off your porters at Chimpolo and hire what labor you need there. Sekgoma's the man to say whether you get it or not. You'll have to grease his palm, of course."

I frowned. "But what about the *Comandante* of the *prazo*, Senhor Joao de Azeveda? I've got a letter addressed to him from the Minister of Colonies at Lisbon, and I was told that he was the man I'd have to deal with."

"That's good. But, I dare say, you'll have to grease his palm too."

"So? What kind of a man is he?"

He threw more wood on our fire, and took his time about answering, while the flames danced and emphasized the lean hardness of his profile.

Finally he said, "I can't tell you. Never met the man. But if I were you, I'd keep young Downly's experience in mind."

I gave him a sharp look. Downly again, with the same dark hinting at a miscarriage of justice.

Knowing that he would clam up if I came at him with a direct question, I kept him talking about the Manicas for a while and then asked suddenly, "It was de Azevedo's report that convicted Downly, wasn't it?"

"It was."

"And you've got nothing more to add to that?"

"Not at the moment. Just take it for what it's worth, Bryce."

Late afternoon on the following day saw us within sight of Chimpolo. The town crouched in the shadow of a grassy hill. Its huts, shaggy with palm thatch, covered a considerable area, and the whole was encompassed by an oval *boma* of thorn bush, pierced by gates at opposite ends. Moving patches of color indicated herds of cattle grazing along the river, which curved around the base of the hill, flashing like a drawn saber in the sun. We left M'wembi to pitch camp about a half-mile below the town, and advanced along the river trail, followed by a half-dozen porters, bearing our gifts of cloth, copper wire and beads.

HALF the town's population came forth to meet us, amid a great ostentation of drums and horns. Old Sekgoma was carried shoulder high in a chair lashed to bam-

boo poles. The symbol of African royalty, an unmbrella with a yellow fringe, protected his venerable, white head from the sun and, in his voluminous robes, he looked like a nut that had dried and shriveled in its shell. His escort of young warriors came prancing to encircle us, their white plumes like wind-swept foam on a crest of a black wave. Red dust rose under their splay feet as they swirled around us; the sun flashed on their spear heads as they tossed them up and shouted: "Sekgoma! *Hou hou,* Sekgoma!"

Silence came as the chief's bearers lowered his chair to the ground; then, at a signal from Halliday, our porters ran forward to place their loads at the old man's feet. He signified his acceptance, and then Halliday made a long speech, to which Sekgoma replied at equal length. He fell silent, and all eyes came to focus on me.

"Say something—anything," Halliday prompted me.

I uttered what I thought were a few dignified words, very suitable to the occasion, but Halliday expanded them into another long speech. Laughter came as he finished —a great burst of it that subsided gradually into little, chuckling eddies. I gathered that Halliday had made a very witty fellow of me, and I smiled and bowed around like a politician at a party rally.

The formalities over, Sekgoma was lifted to the shoulders of his bearers, and we all moved off slowly in the direction of the town.

Within the *boma* all was sunlight and clamor. To the cacaphony of drums and horns there was now added the bleating of goats, the shrill cries of pot-bellied children and the chatter of women, naked but for a wisp of cloth before and behind. The sun hammered down on offal and the excrement of animals, and everything simmered like an unsavory stew in a pot. But in the palaver house, into which we filed on the heels of Sekgoma and his headmen, there was permanent dusk and comparative quiet.

For an hour I sat cross-legged beside Halliday while each headman had his say. They were long-winded fellows, and their eyes shone in the semidark with inborn passion. When Halliday got into the debate it became more heated, and so did the bodies of the participants. Strong body odors mingled with rancid palm-oil to create a stench that would have turned a hyena's stomach. It forced me to make an undignified and precipitate exit.

Outside I gulped air and looked around. In the center of the *kraal,* facing the door of the palaver house, a big drum stood in the shade of the village *ju-ju* tree, a monstrous, spreading baobab. Strips of colored rag and other charms to keep off the evil spirits hung from its branches. Blue smoke uncoiled from the roofs of the huts before which men and children squatted while their womenfolk prepared the evening meal within. I moved into the shadow of the *ju-ju* tree and sat down with my back to its trunk.

The drum caught my interest. It was a hollow log, turned to an oval shape, its ends plugged with softer wood. A slot, measuring about the span of a hand at the wider end, which was the male voice, and tapering to a mere slit at the narrow end, which was the female voice, ran the full length of it. A solid trestle supported it, and the crude carvings covered its surface. But time and weather had smoothed their contours so that, from where I sat, I could not tell whether they represented men or beasts. Halliday had told me that no two drums spoke with the same voice, and I wondered what sort of a tone this one had. With the idea in mind of giving it a couple of sharp raps I got to my feet, walked over to it, and thrust my hand into the slot to take out the drum sticks.

And just as I did so shouts rang out. People came running from all directions to crowd around me. I froze where I stood, my hand still in the drum's slot. A grim-visaged, young warrior stepped forward and came to a stand facing me across the drum. He snapped something at me; then, as I stared at him stupidly, he reached across the drum, placed a big, black hand on my chest, and sent me sprawling backwards with a powerful thrust of his arm.

As I picked myself up Halliday came running from the palaver house. "What's happened? What have you done?" he asked.

Dumbly I pointed to the drum, and his eyes widened in sudden alarm. Presently a gap opened in the crowd and Sekgoma came through it. At his sharp spoken command the crowd about me broke up and melted away. He looked me up and down, shook his head, and then said something to Halliday.

"What did he say?" I asked.

Halliday pushed his hat to the back of

his head, and looked at me with a twinkle in his eyes. "I should have had better sense than to let you out of my sight," he said. "What in heaven's name put it into your head to beat that drum?"

I'd had a bad scare and my nerves were still on edge. Blood rushed to my head and I flared at him: "You blasted ape, why didn't you tell me it was taboo?"

"Sure, I should have done that," he said. "I'll explain now. It's quite a story—"

"Skip it," I snapped. "Right now I'm getting out of here." And without another word I started for camp at a fast walk, leaving him to take formal leave of Sekgoma and his headmen.

THAT night over our campfire Halliday told me about the palaver. We were alone. I had given our porters an advance on their wages, and they had gone to town possessed of enough copper wire and beads to seduce half the girls and wives of Chimpolo.

"We've got trouble, Bryce," Halliday said.

"What's wrong?"

"The Manicas don't like their *Commandante*. Some trouble over taxation. It may take a couple of days to talk them into working for you. You'd better move on to the diggings in the morning. I'll stay here and do what I can."

"Whatever you say," I agreed. I stirred up the fire, coaxing a flame from the logs that oozed smoke from their charred ends. Then: "I'm curious about that drum. Let me have the dope on it," I invited.

Originally, he told me, the drum had belonged to Gungunhuna, a famous Manica war chief who had given the Portuguese a bad time back in 1898. He had sworn to drive all white men out of Manicaland, and he had been well on his way to doing just that when he died, to the long grief of his people. He had been a man of force and character, and it was only natural that legend and folklore should make of him something more than human.

I said, "I take it that your Manicas have made a sort of god of him. Apotheosis, I believe, is the technical word for the process."

"You've got it!" he approved. "Well then, Gungunhuna's drum has become a symbol of his power, and when it speaks the Manicas believe that his spirit speaks to them. Only his legitimate heirs may beat that drum, and only once during their lifetime. When the old chief dies his successor beats out the phrase: *"Ba, ba, mote*—Fold his hands across his breast." Thereafter the drum is silent until the next man dies. Now you can understand what all the excitement was about, eh?"

"Sure. But for Pete's sake, why don't they put a fence around the damn thing?"

"I'd say that there was a fence around it—the fence of *ju-ju*. As I've said, only the heir to the chieftainship may beat that drum. And, you see, it's firmly believed by the Manicas that if anyone else were to do so he'd fall down dead on the instant. That may sound like superstition to you, but there's more to it than that. In Africa, as elsewhere, the succession to power is too often settled by conspiracy and assassination. But since Gungunhuna's time nothing like that has happened among the Manicas. That's the real significance of the drum. It has made peaceful succession to the chieftainship the rule in Manicaland."

It occurred to me, as I stretched out on my cot, that the only thing that had prompted Halliday to take me under his wing was the conviction that I, like Downly, would surely blunder into trouble with his beloved Manicas and, subsequently, bring the wrath of government down upon their innocent heads. Nor, in the face of recent events, could I feel that he was far wrong in thinking that.

I awoke before dawn, with the dance drums of Chimpolo still throbbing in my ears. Throughout the day our porters came drifting into camp, bleary-eyed and walking with the unsteady steps of men still half asleep. Halliday advised me to let them rest until they had recovered from the night's debauch. Consequently, I did not get started until the following morning.

A three-hour march brought me to the old diggings. We wiggled over the shoulder of a hill and came down into the broad valley of the river. The company's stamping mill, a dilapidated building of corrugated iron and veldt-stone, occupied what had once been a fair-sized clearing but which was now overgrown with vines and bush. And there was a roofless bungalow, standing aloof on a knoll that overlooked the remains of the huts that had housed the company's laborers.

I had our mess tent pitched on the knoll fronting on the west end of the valley which framed a magnificent view of Wyatsue Peak, with a cushion of clouds around it, a high seat for a lazy god.

As soon as the noon meal was over, my porters clamored to be paid off. The flesh-pots of Chimpolo were still strong in their nostrils, and only M'wembi and our personal boys elected to stay on the job. It had been a long, hard trek, and they had sweated manfully for me. I gave them a bonus and we parted good friends. After that there was nothing I could do but wait for Halliday to come in with a new gang.

TWO days later he arrived, with fifty Manicas singing at his back. My heart lifted at the sight of them. They were all big fellows, young, with a fine, healthy sheen to their black skins. Immediately Halliday put them to work, repairing the huts.

"Looks like a good gang," I said as we sat down to lunch.

"Hand-picked. But I don't know how long we'll be able to keep 'em." He paused. Then: "Our friend, Senhor Joao de Azeveda, has increased the hut-tax, and they don't like the idea of working for you to pay him. I promised that you would talk to the *Comandante* about the tax, and they've agreed to work, pending the outcome."

"Hm-mm—do you think de Azevedo will co-operate?"

A frown changed his eyes. "From what I've just heard of him—no. But the Manicas may be prejudiced, and you'll soon see for yourself."

"He's coming here?"

"That's right. He's got a steam launch. He should make it by sundown."

He was right. We had just settled down to enjoy our sundowners when the hooting of a steam whistle shattered the evening. By the time we got down to the river the little steamer had nosed into a sand spit. He stood on the bank, a tall figure in a tight-fitting white tunic, white topee and knee-breeches. He waited for us to come up to him, slapping his high, shiny boots with the brass-tipped cane he carried. With a click of his heels and a stiff military bow, he introduced himself as Major Joao de Azevedo, Commandante at Fort Luis Fillipe. And we got off to a bad start.

"Who is in charge here?" he demanded without further ceremony.

"I guess that's me," said I. "I'm Richard Bryce."

He had a pair of black, snapping eyes, and his thin lips made a straight line under his hooked nose. He didn't like my casual mode of address any more than I liked his coldly arrogant air of owning the world. He looked me up and down with obvious distaste, then his cane darted out to tap Halliday lightly on the arm.

"Your name, *senhor?*"

"John Halliday."

"Halliday?" His cane tapped his right boot as he frowned over the name. He subjected Halliday to careful scrutiny. Then: "I cannot recall your name, *senhor,* but we have met somewhere before, I think."

"You are mistaken, *Senhor Comandante.*"

"So?" He shrugged and brought his attention to focus on me. "Were you not informed, *senhor,*" he asked, "that it is required that you present your credentials to the *Comandante* upon entering his *prazo?*"

"I was so informed, *senhor,*" I told him. "I have a letter from Dom Andrade, Minister of Colonies, and it is addressed to you."

It gave him a jolt, but he made a quick recovery. "With your permission," he said, with his stiff, little bow, "I will read the letter, and look over your papers, *senhor.*"

In silence we filed up the steep path to the mess tent. I poured out drinks while de Azeveda looked over my papers.

He read them through twice before he said, "Everything is in order, *senhor.*"

We settled down, and our talk became less formal as the contents of the bottle diminished. De Azevedo's attitude toward me had become conciliatory. Instinct should have warned me against it, but now that I had him softened up, I thought it was a good time to broach the subject of taxation, or rather the bonus I hoped he would allow me to pay my Manicas to cover it. I explained the situation to him, and made my offer.

He was silent for some time, turning it all over in his mind.

Finally he said, "*Senhor,* you misunderstand my motive. My object is not to increase the revenue of my *prazo,* but to bring

these savages into a proper state of obedience. These Manicas are more difficult to manage than ever they were. It is, in part, the aftermath of your predecessor's shortcomings. Senhor Downly, you must understand, was incompetent, intolerant and—"

"That's a damned lie!" Halliday snapped the words out in a way that made my spine tingle. De Azevedo came up out of his chair as if someone had jabbed a needle up through its canvas seat. Halliday was on his feet in the same instant. De Azevedo still held the cane and, whirling around, he slashed savagely at Halliday's face. Halliday ducked, and then launched a blow that had all the power of his straightening leg muscles behind it. De Azevedo fell flat on his face at my feet, out cold.

Speechless, I stared at Halliday. He was looking down at de Azevedo, and the twin pin-points of distilled hate in his narrowed eyes were unnerving to watch. Then he looked up at me, his mouth awry, and, without uttering a word, went out.

De Azevedo got to his feet in time to see Halliday's tall figure vanish into the dusk. A nerve jerked at the corner of his thin mouth, and gave to it a malevolent twist.

"That man—*Deus me!*" he breathed.

"Senhor Comandante," I said soothingly, "I cannot say how much I regret this unfortunate incident. I have a job to do, and my only concern is—"

"I understand, *senhor,"* he interposed coldly. "I think it is bad policy to pay this bonus. Give these savages an inch and they will take a yard. However, I do not forbid it. *Adeus!"* He picked up his cane and topee, clicked his heels, bowed, and left me.

HALLIDAY came to stand beside me as I watched his team launch back out into midstream. Her lights winked at me like yellow, baleful eyes, and in my ears her whistle sounded like a shrill malediction.

"Why did you do it?" I asked, gloomily. "He'll make trouble for us now."

"He was born to make trouble, Bryce. And he'll get a bellyful of it this time before the Manicas are through with him."

His prediction was soon confirmed by events. De Azevedo did not interfere with us directly, but his uncompromising policy toward the Manicas swiftly produced a situation full of menace for us and everyone else in his *prazo.* And of the moves and counter-moves in the developing struggle between them we had a day-to-day account through the medium of the Manicas' drums, or more accurately, through Halliday's interpretation of the daily broadcast.

De Azevedo was adamant in his determination to collect his increased tax; the Manicas were equally determined not to pay it, and soon proved themselves to be not a bit less ingenious than their more civilized brethren when it came to evading payment.

De Azevedo went hooting and tooting up and down the river in his steam launch, but the Manica villages were always forewarned by lookouts. Somewhere in the jungle a drum would start to throb and, when de Azevedo arrived with his black troopers it was to find the village deserted. The Manicas simply dissolved into the green mists of their jungles, and there they stayed until their lookouts' drums beat out the "all clear," joyously, mockingly.

For the Manicas it was an amusing game of hide-and-seek, but it drove de Azevedo mad. He initiated a minor reign of terror, burned a couple of villages and captured and hanged one headman. And when that did not break the Manicas' will to resist he tried to force old Sekgoma into open hostilities by a surprise attack on Chimpolo. As always the Manicas were forewarned, and Sekgoma was too wise to lead his young warriors into battle against rifles and machin guns. He abandoned his capitol and fled into the hills with all his people and livestock, a jump ahead of the *Comandante's* punitive column.

De Azevedo went after him, and for a couple of weeks he marched hither and yon. But out in the hills, where their hunters had ranged since childhood, the Manicas were as elusive as shadows. They ran the column down to its knees. De Azevedo was forced to give up the pursuit, and he led his weary and tattered troopers back into Chimpolo toward the close of the dry season.

"You know, Bryce," Halliday said, "if this goes on much longer, you'll have to pack up and go home. I won't be able to keep our gang together much longer. A half-dozen have already slipped away to join their families in the hills."

We were sitting in the mess tent. It was an hour after sundown and, with the evening breeze, from far out in the hills, came

the *tack-tack* of a Manica drum, sounding so like the clicking of a giant telegraph. I had just brought my diary up to date. It was a discouraging record. Everything was behind schedule, and the delay was costing my employers a mint of money. I slammed my book shut and swore.

"Damn him! What's he trying to do anyway—ruin me?"

Halliday gave me an odd look. "I've been wondering when the idea would strike you."

"What's that mean?"

"I mean that de Azevedo could be playing the same game with you as he did with Downly," he told me quietly.

No such idea had occurred to me, and I stared at him with my mouth open, and he went on: "Trouble with the Manicas forced young Downly's outfit to abandon this concession, and you're up to your neck in the same kind of trouble right now, Bryce. Now, remember that your syndicate was not the only one to make a bid for this property. The *Companhia de Nyasa* has always been interested in it, but they've never had the capital to outbid their rivals. If they had the right man working for them, they might end up by getting it dirt cheap. Put all that together, and it adds up to something."

It did, but my mind was slow to accept the answer. I balanced it in my mind, then asked: "You're saying that de Azevedo deliberately stirred up trouble with the Manicas in order to force Downly's outfit to abandon this concession, and that he's working for the *Companhia de Nyasa.*"

"That's right."

"All right," I challenged him. "Then tell me why the *Companhia de Nyasa* didn't grab the concession when Downly's outfit pulled out?"

He gave me a patient smile. Then: "The war, Bryce. Naturally they'd wait until they knew which way the cat was going to jump."

"But good Lord, I can't believe that de Azevedo would—"

Just then the hoot of a steam whistle brought me to my feet with my lips rounded to an oath.

"Talk of the devil!" said Halliday. "I am going to tell him—"

"Oh, no you're not! I told him sharply. "You haven't convinced me of anything. You're going for a walk—a long one."

He hesitated, frowning at me. Then: "All right," he said and went out.

De Azevedo greeted me with sober cordiality. I took him up to the mess tent and got him settled over a drink. We chatted amicably for a few minutes.

Then he asked suddenly, "Where is Halliday, *senhor?*"

I lied glibly, "He went down to the native quarters some time ago."

"Ah, then perhaps you will send for him? I must talk with him. It is urgent, *senhor.*"

I couldn't see any way to get around that; so, for appearances' sake, I called M'wembi and dispatched him on the errand. Just about two minutes later Halliday came in, wearing pajamas and slippers, and I was mad enough to hit him. De Azevedo gave me a queer, little smile, but made no comment. Instead he got to his feet and offered Halliday his hand.

"*Senhor,*" he said with a smile that showed a fine set of white teeth, "I am not a man to nurse a grudge. I have come to make amends and, incidentally, to ask for your help."

My jaw fell open. Halliday blinked his eyes, took the other's hand, and murmured: "Advice is cheap, *Senhor Comandante.*"

"Perhaps, but expert knowledge is not. You have the confidence of the Manicas, and that is something I am in sore need of just now. Frankly, I am at my wits' end. This game the Manicas play with me—*Deus me,* it could go on forever! It is chaos, and I must bring order out of it. You understand?"

Crinkles of humor showed about Halliday's eyes. He said, "I see what you mean, but I don't see how I can help you."

"You do not think that it is possible for me to come to an understanding with Sekgoma, *senhor?*"

"Well—no. But he's no man's fool. It would depend on what you have to offer him."

"Just so!" De Azevedo put down his glass and fastened his eyes upon Halliday's face. "I am prepared," he went on carefully, "to make concessions. It is my hope that you will act as conciliator. If you agree, I shall be willing to reduce the hut-tax to a nominal payment. Also, I undertake to consult with Sekgoma and his headmen upon all questions relating to the welfare of his people."

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered Halliday in English and sat down.

De Azevedo lifted his eyebrows enquiringly. "You do not approve?" he asked.

Halliday shrugged. "It's not for me to say, *Senhor Comandante.* It's up to Sekgoma and his headmen."

"Precisely so! However, my difficulty is to make contact with the Manicas, to arrange a meeting with Sekgoma and his headmen. I am convinced that you can induce him to consult with me. I must add that, if you undertake to do so, you will act as my official emissary and, of course, you will be compensated accordingly."

Halliday considered him, keen concentration in his blue eyes. Not a word was spoken for some time.

Then Halliday asked, "Where would you want Sekgoma to meet you, *senhor?*"

"I suggest Chimpolo. But I leave both the time and the place an open question. Upon that point, I will approve any agreement you come to with Sekgoma."

Again there was a long silence while Halliday communed with himself, the lids of his eyes closed down, concealing his thoughts. "I can promise nothing, *Senhor Comandante.*"

"But you will try?"

"Yes."

"Ah, then it is as good as done!" He raised his glass. "To the success of your mission, Senhor Halliday! *Se Deus quiser, amigo. Saúde!*"

"*Saúde, Senhor Comandante!*" we said in chorus, and downed our drinks.

When we were alone I said, "That knocks the props from under that fantastic theory of yours, eh?"

"That's the way you've got it figured?"

"Sure. Your Manicas have smartened him up. He's in a tough spot. He knows it, and you are his only out."

He looked dubious, but he said, "You may be right at that. Anyway, we'll soon find out."

HE LEFT camp with M'wembi that night, and me to my own devices for a week. Under Halliday's direction the work had gone forward as smoothly as could be expected, but I ran into serious trouble as soon as his back was turned. My gang was willing enough and, considering that most of them had never seen a bolt or a spanner in their lives, they were amazingly quick to catch on to what I wanted done. But when it came to teaching them how to heat and drive a rivet—well, the fellow that undertook to build the Tower of Babel could not have been more thoroughly baffled than I was. Work on the boiler, which we'd brought up in sections, came to a standstill. Delay was running expenses up to a figure far in excess of anything my employers had anticipated, and I was in a savage mood when Halliday came back.

He came into the mess tent just as I was finishing my lunch, and: "What the devil kept you so long?" I greeted him.

"It could have taken longer," he said complacently.

I glowered at him, waited until he got settled in his chair over a cup of coffee.

Then I asked, "Well, what happened?"

"There'll be a big palaver at Chimpolo in a couple of days. I'll be going along to keep an eye on things."

All the worry and fret of the past week came out of me in a bellow: "Like hell you will! Who d'you think you're working for—me or the Manicas?"

"Something wrong?" he asked mildly; then, before I could catch my breath: "You seem to have done all right. I saw that you've got the boiler set up, and—"

"That damned thing will hold water like a sieve!" I told him. "Now look, Halliday, you're not being fair to me. There's been nothing but delay, and it's costing a mint of money. If I don't make a better showing, this'll be my last construction job. They'll blackball me. You don't understand. You're just a jungle tramp, with no—"

"Keep your shirt on, Bryce!" he cut in; then softly: "I understand, and I'll stick around."

What I saw in his eyes made me regret my outburst, made me feel ashamed.

The day of the palaver came, and that evening we sat under the fly of the mess tent, waiting for the drums to broadcast what progress had been made. The moon, which had been a pallid crescent all afternoon, faintly illuminated the summits of the hills as darkness rose like a tide in the valley. The stars were set in the face of the night, so low that the Southern Cross seemed to hang like a string of brilliants from the branches of a nearby tree. Our boys sat on their heels about their cooking

each with a skin *kroos* about his shoulders against the sudden drop in temperature which always comes with darkness on the high veldt. They were chanting an interminable song, beating out the rhythm on a couple of discarded biscuit tins. Of a sudden they fell silent as, somewhere out in the hills, a manica drummer forced time and space to speak his mind.

The message was completed and, as its echoes faded into the unlimited silence, Halliday began to swear, softly, but with such concentrated fury that something inside me winced away. He was cursing de Azevedo as I had never heard a man cursed before.

His words were drowned out by the sudden commotion that broke out among our boys. They had bunched together, their voices shrill with excitement. Then there was a general movement in our direction, and in the next moment they were all around us, gesticulating and jabbering like a cage full of monkeys. Halliday quieted them down, and then M'wembi stepped forward to speak for them. He had a good deal to say, and from Halliday's deepening frown I gathered that I was about to hear some more bad news.

"They want you to pay them off, Bryce," he told me presently.

"No!" I said firmly, and shook my head and scowled around me. I got scowl for scowl.

"Get out your cash box, Bryce," Halliday told me curtly. "There's nothing else we can do now."

I looked at him, hot words on the tip of my tongue. But his blue eyes were as hard as steel. I changed my mind and asked, "What's happened?"

"De Azevedo has arrested Sekgoma and all his headmen," he told me in a curiously toneless voice.

It took me a moment to grasp the full import of those words. When I did grasp it I knew that he had foreseen just such an act of treachery. That was why he had wanted to go to Chimpolo to "keep an eye on things." But I had talked him out of it. I couldn't think of anything to say to him just then and, with a sickening sense of defeat, I went to get my cash box.

Our gang left us at dawn, and then we were alone, except for faithful M'wembi who squatted over a fire, cooking our breakfast. I sat under the fly of the mess tent, looking around the deserted camp, fathoms deep in a fit of depression compounded of a profound sense of defeat and a sudden awareness of our complete isolation.

I LOOKED at Halliday, and saw his face through a veil of pipe. smoke. We had not exchanged a word for half an hour, though I wondered what was going on behind his half-closed eyes. I sensed that inside he was wound up like a clock, yet there was no outward sign of agitation. No sleeping beast could have been more still, but I felt the tension in him—felt it as when the thunder rumbles behind the hills and the thirsty veldt awaits in breathless stillness for the first flash of lightning, for the storm that will bring the rain.

The impression was so strong that, when a drum began to throb back in the hills, I jumped to my feet with a stifled cry on my lips. Halliday opened his eyes wide, blinked at me, but did not speak until the drum was silent. Then he grunted and got to his feet.

"What now?" I asked.

"They're calling for a big palaver back there. A sort of gathering of the clans."

"Does that mean they're going on the warpath?"

His smile was grim. "That's how it will end," he said, "if de Azevedo has his way. He's hell-bent on it."

We fell silent for a time, then I blurted out the thing uppermost in my mind: "If I'd kept my mouth shut, this might not have happened!"

"So that's what's bothering you!" He paused to slap my shoulder. "Forget it, Bryce. You didn't talk me out of anything."

"But you were suspicious—"

"As you know I've been suspicious of more than that for a long time, Bryce."

I was still unwilling to believe that de Azevedo was an undercover agent for the *Companhia de Nyasa*. That sort of thing belonged to the days of the cloak-and-dagger, and my prosaic mind refused to accept it even in face of what had just happened. I shook my head, and a gleam came into Halliday's eyes.

He said, "Well, we'll soon know for sure. This is the payoff, Bryce."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to Chimpolo, and I want you to come with me."

It took no further argument to persuade

me to go along. Halliday's suggestion that the Manicas might be about to go on the war path had brought vividly to mind certain accounts of native uprisings and massacres I'd read, and I felt uneasy in my white skin. If there was a better place to go to than Chimpolo, I couldn't think of it. There at least, if the worst came to the worst, I'd have de Azevedo's troopers and machine-guns between me and Sekgoma's blood-lusting spearmen.

We got started shortly after noon, leaving M'wembi behind to guard the camp. The sun was balanced on the western hills when we came in sight of the town, and our shadows followed us palely down the river trail. A little farther on a trooper challenged us and, after a brief discussion with the corporal of the guard, we were escorted into the *kraal* by a natty little trooper, *sans* boots, but with his black, bowed legs encased in puttees.

De Azevedo's tent was pitched in the shade of the *ju-ju* tree, facing the palaver house, before which armed guards paced to and fro with measured step.

"He's got Sekgoma and his headmen in there," observed Halliday.

"Don't let that give you any ideas," I warned him with a sharp look.

Before he could answer de Azevedo stepped out of his tent. The trooper saluted and was dismissed. De Azevedo's white tunic was spotless—not a fleck of dust on his high, polished boots.

"Boas tardes, senhors!" His heels clicked, and his stiff back bent a little at the middle. He pushed aside the mosquito-netting which hung before the opening of the tent, and stood aside for us to enter. Within, he seated himself behind a camp table, with a gesture that invited us to be seated on his cot.

He gave Halliday a cold, blank stare, then addressed himself to me in his stiff, formal way: "How can I serve you, Senhor Bryce? Be brief, if you please."

On the trail I'd rehearsed what I was going to say to him, and it wasn't brief. It was quite some speech; and I left him with no reason to doubt what was likely to happen if I was forced to return to Chimao, leaving behind me a small fortune in machinery to rust in the jungle.

He heard me out patiently, then said, with exasperating calm, "Compose yourself, *senhor*. Your threats do not disturb me. I understand your need for labor, but a serious situation has developed here, and it is one for which you, yourself, are partially responsible."

"What?" I gasped. "Say that again!"

He smiled thinly. Then: "You Americans, you have had so little experience in colonizing. You do not understand native psychology, and you will not learn from others. For instance: I warned you against paying your Manicas a bonus. But you ignored that warning. And now, consequently, these savages think that they can have anything they want for the mere asking."

There was just enough truth in that to make it a dangerous lie. Instantly it flashed into my mind that something very like it must have happened to young Downly, and that really made me burn. My Portuguese fell far short of expressing my opinion of him, and I concluded by flourishing my letter under his nose, and pointing that any complaint I had to make would be addressed to the minister at Lisbon.

My tirade did not produce the desired effect. He said with unruffled calm: "The Manicas are in a state of open rebellion. If it is not dealt with promptly, it will spread to other *prazos*. I am confident that my superiors will approve of any action I have taken so far, or may take in the future. However, I assure you that I will do whatever is necessary to protect the Chimpolo concession."

"Protect it for whom?" I flared at him. "The *Companhia de Nyasa?*"

His eyes jumped, but in the next moment he was smiling and saying: "You are very angry and confused, *senhor*. I am an officer of the Portuguese army, and I represent the government of Portugal."

I THINK I knew then that Halliday was right, but I was too burned up inside to do any clear thinking about it. I spread my hands in a helpless gesture, and looked to Halliday for support. He nodded his head, then turned to face de Azevedo.

"Senhor Comandante," he said, "what you have done will not prevent a rebellion, but provoke one. Treachery rankles in the heart."

De Azevedo's eyebrows arched. "I made use of stratagem, *senhor,* and a very old one. Moreover, I am dealing with savages who know no law but their own primitive im-

pulses. It is impossible to observe the moral standards of the civilized when dealing with a people who live according to the standards of the Stone Age."

"I am not a Manica," Halliday said quietly. "But you dealt in the same—"

"You are worse than a Manica!" de Azevedo snapped. "You are a renegade. Over the cable I have been making some inquiries about you, Senhor Sleeping Thunder. You have served a term of imprisonment for smuggling."

I was not surprised when Halliday did not deny it, nor did I think less of him. In a country where a custom's officer can live like a prince on the salary of a pauper, smuggling is no crime.

"That is beside the point, *Senhor Comandante,*" Halliday said. "I want to say that, in arresting Sekgoma and his headmen, you are asking for trouble."

"So?" De Azevedo leaned back in his chair, smiling over something that was honey in his mind. "Then I must correct you, *senhor,*" he went on. "As an African expert it should interest you to know what I propose to do. It is my intention to depose Sekgoma, and to set up a *civilizado* in his place."

"That is easier said than done."

"Do you think so? But surely you have forgotten the legend of Gungunhuna's drum?"

I saw Halliday start as if something had bitten him. De Azevedo's smile broadened into a grin. He was like a cat over a mouse, and thoroughly enjoying it.

He said, "Ah, I see that you have not! Yes, *senhor,* superstition is a two-edged sword. I shall beat that drum out there and, when I do not perish on the spot, I shall have destroyed Sekgoma's power and that of his headmen with one stroke, as it were. Yes, I shall sever the root from the branch, and so destroy him. Then the Manicas will come to heel, my friend."

Halliday's gaze had become fixed on some distant object beyond the mosquito netting. He was silent for a long time, absorbed in some inner vision.

Then he got to his feet, tucked his rifle up under his armpit and said evenly, "Well, a fool must pursue his own folly, even to his own destruction."

De Azevedo threw back his head and laughed.

He said, "I think you really believe that! Yes, you have lived among savages too long, *senhor*. You have come to think like them, to believe in their black magic. Well, the little exposé I have arranged may do you some good also. An hour after sunrise, tomorrow, I shall beat Gungunhuna's drum. I invite you to witness the ceremony."

"*Adeus, Senhor Comandante,*" said Halliday, and turned away.

"One moment." De Azevedo drew an envelope from his pocket and offered it to Halliday, saying, "I take this opportunity to pay for your services, *senhor*—" he chuckled—"in case I should not survive tomorrow's experiment."

Air came out of Halliday's lungs, hissing between his clenched teeth. The muzzle of his rifle swung up, and steadied level with de Azevedo's forehead. And if ever I saw hate and sudden death in a man's eyes, I saw it then. It was a palpable, paralyzing thing to see, and I knew then that no mere insult had put it there. It was too fundamental for that.

I wanted to step forward to strike up the barrel of the rifle, but my limbs seemed suddenly to have lost all power of movement. De Azevedo sat like a stone image, staring into the black eye of the rifle's muzzle. Then Halliday caught his breath again in a kind of shuddering sigh and, without a word, turned on his heel and left us.

"*Deus me!*" De Azevedo started to breathe again. "For a moment I thought—phew!" He pulled out a handkerchief from his forehead with a hand that shook.

"You asked for it, and you'll get it yet," I told him bluntly.

He gave me a startled look; then, with a muttered oath, jumped to his feet and dived out of the tent. A blast of his whistle brought a trooper running over to him. When I got up to see what was going on, the trooper and I confronted each other, the veil of mosquito netting between us. He held his rifle at the ready, and shook his head to indicate that I was to remain inside.

Over his shoulder I got a blurred picture of Halliday striding toward the far gate of the *kraal,* de Azevedo following him on the run. As they neared the gate de Azevedo shouted an order, and guards stepped into Halliday's path. I saw him hand his rifle to de Azevedo and then, with a trooper on each side, he was marched back to the palaver house.

When, about fifteen minutes later, de Azevedo came into the tent, with Halliday's rifle in the crook of his arm, I asked: "Am I to understand that I am under arrest, also, *Senhor Comandante?*"

"No, you are not under arrest, *senhor,*" he said. "But I must ask you to be my guest for an indefinite time."

"And if I refuse?"

He put the rifle down on his cot and considered me, frowning. "You are an American citizen, *senhor,* and, if anything should happen to you I would have to answer for it. Therefore, I must insist."

I though this over in silence.

"What about Halliday?"

He frowned. "That man is dangerous. You are witness to the fact that he threatened my life."

"Not without provocation, *Senhor Comandante.* You have treated him and the Manicas badly, and I shall be a hostile witness."

"But of course! You are his countryman and his friend, and due allowance will be made for that." He flashed me a smile. "Meanwhile, let us agree to disagree like gentlemen."

I was willing to let it rest at that. He produced a bottle, and we settled down for the evening. He could tell a good story, and he might have been a good fellow, if only he could have forgotten the impression he was making. Later, with a twinge of self-reproach, I thought of Halliday and manfully asked if I might spend the night with him in the palaver house.

"You would not be able to sleep there, *senhor,*" he told me suavely. "The place stinks, and it is infested with rats and snakes."

At the mention of snakes my heroic impulse dissolved, and I did not press for an affirmative answer.

Darkness had come while we talked. A trooper came in with a lantern, a ground sheet and blankets for me. De Azevedo went out to make his rounds, and I rolled up in the blankets, and fell asleep wondering what the Manicas would think, and what they would do, when Gungunhuna's drum set their jungles to echoing at the touch of a white man's hand.

I AWOKE to the thin, clear notes of a bugle. A slanting ray of sunlight struck through a gap in the flap of the tent and lay on the floor like a bright dagger. As I dressed I heard de Azevedo's whistle trill; then a sharp-spoken command, followed by a loud slapping sound and the thud of many rifles butted to the ground. I shrugged into my jacket and went out.

My first look around was all inclusive. De Azevedo's troopers were formed into a square, enclosing the *ju-ju* tree and Gungunhuna's drum. Old Sekgoma and his six headmen stood facing the drum, wooden-faced, motionless. Halliday stood with one shoulder against the tree. He had a native *kroos* draped about his shoulders, and was quietly smoking his pipe. De Azevedo was pacing slowly to and fro, a white paper fluttering in the hands he held clasped behind his back. There was a rustle of movement as I walked diagonally across the square to join Halliday. In response to my greeting he merely grunted.

The sun stood on the rim of the hills, like a huge copper coin balanced on edge, but as yet there was no warmth in its rays. The morning breeze had the chill of the high-veldt in it, and the leaves of the *ju-ju* tree whispered in sly communion above my head as de Azevedo came to a stand, confronting Sekgoma and his headmen across the drum. The *tap-tapping* of his cane on his boots was almost an intolerable irritation to my taunt nerves.

All eyes were fastened upon him, watching, waiting. The silence became intense, like a steel wire stretched to the breaking point. Looking around at the troopers, I got the impression that they were not happy in the performance of the duty their commandant had imposed upon them. As for de Azevedo, he was obviously pleased with himself, savoring the honey of triumph. He glanced at his wrist watch, flipped his cane up under his armpit, and snapped out an order. The troopers came smartly to attention, and a sergeant stepped forward. De Azevedo gave him the paper he held. Again the sergeant saluted, and spun around to face Sekgoma and his headmen. Then, in a monotonous, high-pitched voice, he gave tongue to the contents of the document in the Manica dialect.

"What's he saying?" I asked Halliday in a whisper.

"It's a recitation of Sekgoma's crimes, the reasons for his removal from the chieftainship—the usual legal nonsense," he told me.

I looked at Sekgoma. The old fellow seemed to be taking it all very calmly. Only once his eyes flashed, and he drew his robe of bleached calico about his skinny frame in a gesture that was full of pride. His headmen stood behind him, their black faces set in lines of studied immobility. And when the sergeant had finished, not a word of protest was uttered.

Yet there was no suggestion of submission in their quiescence. The silence had the quality of a challenge in it, and in its unexpectedness it was more effective than shouted defiance, than the blaring of horns and the rumble of war drums. I sensed that it was part of a preconceived plan, and it struck me that de Azevedo had made a serious mistake when he had put Halliday under guard with Sekgoma.

The same idea must have occurred to de Azevedo, for he was looking in our direction, his scowl black. Something had gone wrong with his show, and he was raging inwardly. I saw his lips round to an oath as he moved toward the drum.

Quickly Halliday stepped into his path. *"Senhor Comandante,"* he said, in a loud, clear voice, "a few words on behalf of Sekgoma."

"I am listening," snapped de Azevedo.

"Senhor Comandante, in Sekgoma's own words: " 'I beg the Sakali not to beat Gungunhuna's drum. It is sacred to my people. I am old. Soon I must die, and it does not matter what happens to me. Therefore, let my son, N'koti, beat the drum, so that he may sit in my place, according to the law of the Manicas. Let this be done, and there will be peace between us. I have spoken.' "

De Azevedo looked at the old man sternly and shook his head. "Tell him," he said to Halliday, "that he has heard my proclamation. I am the law here, and as I have written so I will do. The palaver is finished."

Halliday faced about to translate, and still no word of protest was uttered. Halliday turned to face de Azevedo again, a question in his eyes.

"That is all. Stand aside," de Azevedo rapped out.

Halliday stepped back to collide with the

drum. His *kroos* fell from his shoulders across it.

"Do not attempt to leave this *kraal, senhor,*" de Azevedo told him crisply. "You are under arrest." Then, as Halliday picked up his *kroos* and moved away, he stepped up to the drum and thrust his hand into the slot, feeling for the drum sticks.

And in the next instant he jumped back with a sharp cry. His cane dropped from under his arm, clasped one hand in the other and stared at it, his eyes bulging. Then suddenly, he ran for his tent.

Sekgoma started shouted something in a piping, sing-song voice. His words threw the black troopers into a state of near-panic. They broke ranks and started to mill about, tossing their arms this way and that in grotesque gestures. I looked around for Halliday, but could not see him. I knew what had happened. I shouldered my way through the crowd of excited troopers, and then ran to the tent.

I FOUND de Azevedo on his cot where he had fallen. His limbs were quivering. He couldn't speak. He had managed to drag out a first aid kit from under his cot before he had collapsed.

The effect of the venom of some vipers upon the system, I knew, was exceedingly swift, giving rise to paralysis of the nerve centers. De Azevedo's right arm was already swelling, and he was on the verge of convulsions. I got the hypodermic needle from the kit and filled it with anti-snakebite serum. I was bending over him, about to jab the needle into his arm when my wrist was seized from behind and held in a grip of steel.

"Let me have it, Bryce," said Halliday.

Something in the way that he said it made me tighten my grip on the needle, then a quick twist of my wrist forced me to let go and sent me sprawling on my face. I scrambled to my feet cursing him.

"Keep out of this, Bryce," he warned.

He wasn't going to give de Azevedo the needle, I saw it in his face. De Azevedo was groaning in agony.

Struggling to keep my voice steady, I said, "That was a hell of a thing to do, Halliday, and if he dies, I'll see you hang for it!"

"Keep your shirt on, Bryce."

"Like hell I will!" I blazed at him. His rifle lay against the foot of the cot. I snatched it up, and pumped a shell into breech. I think I would have used it, but his next words stopped me cold.

"It's a hell of a thing to send an innocent man to jail for fifteen years, Bryce. *And that man happens to be my son.*"

He spoke the last sentence in Portuguese, with his eyes fixed on de Azevedo's distorted face. The shock of what he just heard seemed to pull him around, and he sat up and stared at Halliday with his mouth agape. He gasped and another convulsion seized him.

Halliday stood looking down at him, implacable, merciless. The spasm passed. Halliday held up the needle and said, *"Senhor Comandante,* without this you are a dead man, and you will soon be beyond speech. Are you ready to talk?"

De Azevedo groaned, then: "Yes—yes! The needle, *senhor*— ah, for the love of God—quickly!"

"Give him a good shot of whisky, Bryce," said Halliday calmly. "Then get your notebook out and take down what he says."

De Azevedo gulped down the whisky, the glass rattling against his teeth. And then the whole rotten story came out of him, in jerky sentences. Sweat ran into my eyes as I wrote it down, and my hand shook. It was as Halliday had suspected. De Azevedo was an undercover agent for the *Companhia de Nyasa,* and he, not Downly, had been responsible for the shooting that had sent the youngster to prison. Halliday was deaf to his pleading until he had affixed his signature to the confession.

When that was done Halliday put my notebook into his pocket. "He won't die, Bryce. I know my snakes." Then his blue eyes came alight with a flame of anger. "But he's lucky. I'd have used anything that came to my hand, a black mamba or a cobra!" He went out, leaving me to think what I would of it.

I did what I could for de Azevedo, and then went out to look for Halliday. There was not a soul in sight, and not a sound. And then my narrowing eyes came to focus on the vacant space where Gungunhuna's drum had been less than an hour ago. Before I could grasp the significance of what I saw Halliday came into view from behind one of the huts.

"How are you feeling now, Bryce?" he asked with a grin.

"So they walked off with that damned drum, and de Azevedo's troopers didn't make a move to stop them?" I asked incredulously.

"Of course not! They're Manicas, and once a Manica always a Manica. They helped Sekgoma, in fact."

I asked, "How do you happen to have a son by the name of Downly?"

He squatted on his heels like a native, filled his pipe, and when he had it going to his satisfaction he said, "The boy's mother died when he was eight years old. I sent him back home to her folks. Then, as de Azevedo told you, I got into serious trouble with the Portuguese customs—smuggling diamonds across the border from Rhodesia. They put me out of circulation for some time. When I got out I thought it would be best for the boy to use his mother's name and forget about me. Then the war came, and—well, you know the rest."

"You haven't seen your son since then?"

"Not since he was eight years old. When I got into trouble it was better that we should not meet. Give him a better chance, if you see what I mean."

I saw it all right, and a good deal more. I understood why Halliday had attached himself to me, and nursed me along. He was part of the jungle and, as de Azevedo had said, the natives knew no law other than instinct. That we were still friends was a matter of chance. He had trekked through my problem much in the same manner he stalked his game—for survival. A man's son, I've heard, is his passport to eternity.

And yet I was keenly aware of the fact that, but for Halliday, I'd still be sitting on my backside in Chimao. And it seemed best to let it rest at that. And I still had a job to finish.

"What happens now?" I asked.

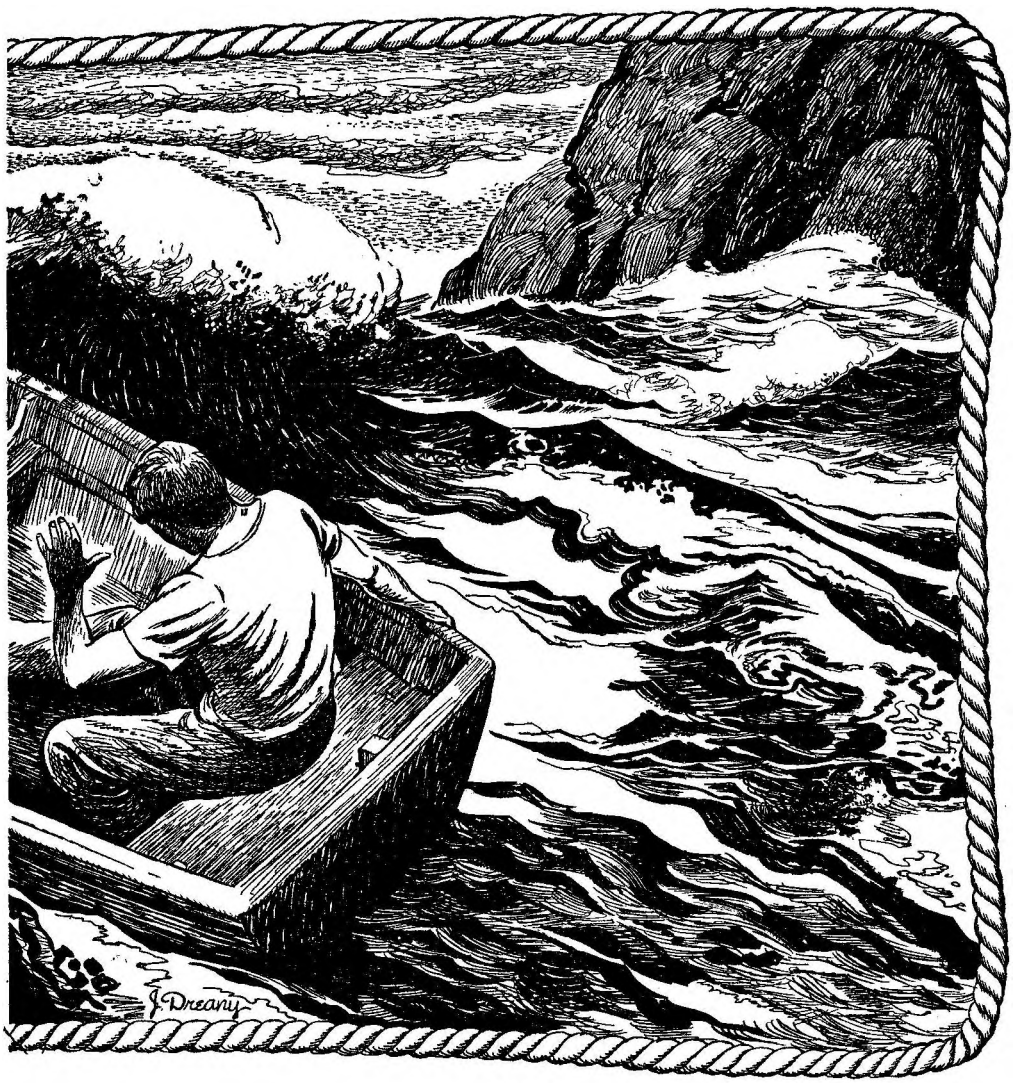
He jerked his thumb in the direction of the tent. "We'll get him down to Fort Luis Filippe. From there I'll get in touch with the governor at Lourenco Marques, via the cable. He'll send up a commission to investigate. With you as a witness to de Azevedo's confession we'll have that boy out of jail in a couple of months. Meanwhile, suppose we get on with your job?"

"It's about time we got around to that," said I. "Let's go."

HELLWATER RUN

By HAYDEN HOWARD

Deeper than the sea was the hate between Balk and Frenchy—stranger than death their last gift to a friend!



The skiff butted through the first wedge of broken water, making slow progress....

DIPLOMATICALLY arbitrating all decisions, even such important ones as whether the bacon grease should be poured off twice or once during the frying of the bacon, Joe Stranghetti postponed Balk's and Frenchy's murdering each other.

With white-toothed grin and restraining hand, brown as his cigar. Joe was as vital to the three-man jig boat, *Chubasco,* as the quick brass swivel is to an albacore rig. Balk was like a giant sea bass snagged on the feather jig, determined, heavy and twisting. Frenchy was shrill and tense as a wire leader. Joe Stranghetti swiveled between them shrewdly, easing the strain.

But eight days south of San Diego when the ammonia compressor broke down, while failing to fix it, he slashed open the heel of his hand to the tendons.

Another dawn and another, with Baja California edging endless blue teeth along the starboard horizon, the sun rising brassy

and hot, thickening the odor of fish no longer refrigerated. When Balk and Frenchy opened the fishhold the stench rose like smoke. Cursing, they drew on their hip boots. Each blamed the other for neglecting to refill the oil cups of the ammonia compressor.

The pelicans wheeled and flopped upon the *Chubasco's* wake. The men were dumping tons of bad fish—overboard went two weeks' work, a thousand wasted miles of gas and oil.

Joe Stranghetti worked cautiously. He complained his hand felt hot. The next day he stayed in his bunk and watched a slim blue line crawl from his wrist to his elbow. When he announced his armpit was beginning to swell, Balk wrinkled his forehead at Frenchy and Frenchy got out the navy binoculars and anxiously scanned the seaward horizon for a tanker or fast tuna clipper. They muttered at each other for being too cheap to install a ship-to-shore radio that would work. And down below, Joe Stranghetti moaned and tossed.

During the night Balk crouched beside him, cooling his forehead with a damp rag. By the time dawn silvered the porthole, Joe was emphatically gasping: "Lissen, lissen, don't want to be dumped overboard for the crabs to eat. Lissen, I want to die on shore. Take me ashore in the skiff."

"We're only a day out from San Diego," Balk lied gruffly. "Hang in there, Joe. You'll get to a hospital." He dipped the rag in the bucket again and squeezed it out.

Roaring, the slipper-bowed jig boat slithered down into the great troughs and up the greenly translucent crests of the Pacific, eight knots per hour, an eternity of waterless desert to the starboard, no penicillin in the cactus spines.

By noon Joe's lips had shrunk to a skull-like smile. Now he hardly tossed at all. "Lissen, lissen, bury me on shore, anywhere—the desert's okay. I don't want to stink up the boat all the way to Dago. I don't want my wife to look at me."

When Balk called Frenchy down from the wheel, Frenchy stared and crossed himself. "I'll get a piece of canvas."

"Hold it," Frenchy intruded fifteen minutes later as Balk sewed up Joe's body. "We got to put a weight at his feet."

"The hell we do."

"You mean we should put him in the fish hold and bring him home so nobody will think there has been foul play or something?"

"No, we're going to take the skiff through the surf and bury him ashore."

"Here?" Frenchy shrilled. "Listen, if we hammer down the fish hatch real tight, he'll be okay. We could even salt him. There's no reason to try to land here." He made a horrified gesture at the ragged blue coast with its white mustache of surf. "What if we knock a hole in the skiff? There's no fresh water ashore. No nothing!"

"You swim good enough," Balk stated, and climbed heavily into the whel house.

THE *Chubasco* made a foaming arc toward the cliffs of Lower California while Frenchy muttered to himself and vigorously shook his head. The groundswells, though lifting the keel no higher than usual, seemed swifter and farther apart. The light breeze, surprisingly, was in Frenchy's face, dimpling the landward sides of the swells. It was warm with a dusty smell, and he judged there must be a whirling storm on the Gulf of California side of the peninsula to explain the wind's blowing from land during the afternoon.

Normally, the land breeze came only just before dawn when the cold, heavy night air flowed down through the mountain passes. During the day, when the sun heated the rocks as hot as frying pans, the air above the peninsula ballooned upward, and cooler sea air blew in off the Pacific. So this dusty wind from shore made Frenchy shake his head with wonder.

There were no offshore kelp beds here to guard an anchorage. Once the bottom shelved off it did not rise again. Balk steered the fishboat toward the center of a long incurve between two promontories. Here the white band of surf was narrowest because the beach was very steep.

While the more gradually sloping underwater extensions of the promontories had three white ranks sweeping their backs, the steep beach exploded its waves one at a time and was done with them.

The *Chubasco* came about and Balk growled her into reverse gear. "Get that claw down, Frenchy."

The *Chubasco* backed away from her anchor until the hawser straightened at a thirty-degree angle to the water. Frenchy

made it fast to the bitt, and the propeller flurried for a moment. Then the motor died.

While the boat tugged and creaked, clipper-bow dividing the swells, Balk nodded to himself. The bottom here descended like steps, so the boat would never drag in her anchor and go ashore.

He ran aft past the live bait tank. "Hey, shake it up, give me a hand with the skiff."

Silently Frenchy helped him right it and shove it overboard. When Balk came topside again with the ax and the crowbar, and a big spoon and a skillet, Frenchy shrilled suddenly: "Hell, Balk, we better take him home. We haven't even a pick or a shovel. You can't dig a grave with a spoon."

"Keep your bait on," Balk snapped. "Get below and give me a hand."

When they had lowered the canvas-mummied body into the skiff, Balk fitted the oars and sat down on the thwart, looking up. "Well, what are you waiting for, Frenchy?"

"The hell you say. When we're ready to come back, who's going to shove us off the beach? Those waves aren't small. The skiff is going to need a running start. Taking a boat through big surf is a two-man deal. I row. You push." Balk raised his bushy eyebrows. "And by myself, how you expect me to get Joe's body up the cliff?"

"Up the cliff?" Frenchy shrilled.

"I'm not going to bury him at the bottom where the tides will dig him out."

"I better stay," Frenchy repeated. "See the hawser slacking off?"

This was true. A quickening of the land breeze had given the stern a push seaward and for an instant the boat walked toward her anchor. But the drag of the next flowing swell drove her stern shoreward. She pivoted on the end of the taut hawser so the bow swung out to sea again.

"Come on, come on, it's nothing," Balk shouted. "The wind will change anyway. We got to get started. Look how the swells are packing taller. There's a storm out there." He jerked his chin toward the gray-blue horizon band where sea and sky merged imperceptibly. "Out there, storm wind is starting these swells and pretty soon it will catch up with them. This land breeze won't last."

"I don't want to get marooned on this coast," Frenchy announced.

"You scare easier than a news commentator," Balk retorted. He clambered laboriously up into the *Chubasco* and disappeared without a word into the wheel house.

He reappeared with Joe's revolver. "Now do I have to tell you to get in?"

"You wouldn't shoot me," Frenchy replied. "Look, you're making a mistake if you think when we smash our skiff we'll be able to swim back." He pointed out to sea.

Balk started to look but didn't. His mouth twisted in the direction of a humorless smile.

"Oh, well," said Frenchy irritably. "I'm not going to jump you." He climbed down into the skiff. "There's one hell of a big shark out there. You just look and tell me if I'm wrong."

Balk looked. Three, then four triangular fins milled fifty yards out from the *Chubasco's* bow. He judged they were above where the anchor securely gripped it's underwater ledge.

"They don't come in close to shore," he stated, and thumped weightily into the skiff, freed the painter and grinned at Frenchy in the stern, who gave the skiff a hard shove away from the *Chubasco*.

WITH short but powerful strokes, Balk drove the skiff toward the inner curve of the beach. Looking forward from the stern seat where he sat with Joe's canvas-wrapped body between his knees, Frenchy noticed with relief there was a landing strip of steep, wet sand before the cliffs leapt straight up.

He twisted, looking seaward. "Here comes a big one."

"We're still a long way out," Balk puffed reassuringly.

The swell heaved under the skiff, growing taller, piling up on itself as it dragged the inclined sea bottom. A few strokes closer each swell began to look so steep that surely it would break, but Balk was not bluffed by this illusion. Over his shoulder he could see the waves were not breaking until they were within ten yards of the steep beach. Its steepness was emphasized by the counter-swells that rushed back as though the waves were rebounding from a vertical cliff. Sometimes this backwash swept diagonally and mysteriously through

the oncoming, but as yet unbroken, waves and continued seaward, where it added a jerky bounce to the skiff's roller-coaster progress. At other times it rammed the waves head-on in geyser-like explosions.

"Here comes a monster," Frenchy yelled.

"It won't break," Balk shouted as it towered above the stern, translucent green with a silhouetted school of sardines frantically swimming higher than the men's heads.

The swell shoved the skiff's transom, lifted the boat with the stomach-clutching acceleration of a high-speed elevator. As they teetered on the watery pinnacle, Balk backwatered, slowing their forward rush and the giant wave swept from beneath them, lowering the skiff into the trough. Frenchy, looking shoreward, watched it rise, until for him it blotted out the lower half of the cliff. It arched its back, brown with sucked up sand, and collapsed downward with a thunderous boom that tossed white skeletons to the wind. Flattening, it rushed up the beach like a great, brown, foam-wreathed stingaree.

Balk was still backwatering as the skiff's stern ascended the next giant. When this wave lifted them, left them behind and broke, it struck the returning backwash of the first. The high-tossed sea rained down upon the skiff. Balk kept backwatering, grinning with excitement.

"Cut those groundswells a little fine," he shouted.

"Try stern first," Frenchy yelled. "If one of your so-called swells climbs the transom we'll swamp before we reach your breaker line."

"No! When I see the wave I want, I'm going in like a sucker on a shark. No time for second-guessing these babies. Crawl past me to the bow where you can do some good."

He waited the skiff out there, holding its position, studying the advancing swells while they were still three rows back. When a slightly smaller series appeared over his low horizon, he began to row in on the back of the large preceding one. But he let it leave him behind. The next wave bulked under the skiff, dragging them forward again.

"Back, back!" Frenchy screamed.

Balk took a tentative forward stroke. The third wave loomed above them, wedged under the stern until it tilted higher than Balk's head. As the crest hissed under the bow, the skiff leveled and Balk pulled a tremendous, long driving stroke that drove them on the back of the wave. Rowing desperately he held the seaward slope of it while the next wave mounted and curled behind and Frenchy yelled: "Slow down! don't dive!"

The skiff's forward momentum was overtaking the crest of the wave. The bow poked over the brink of the abyss. Frenchy, crouching there, stared straight down to the brown backwash rushing into the foot of the toppling wave.

Balk backwatered so hard he half rose, forehead veins bulging, and the skiff raised its nose, so instead of diving down the collapsing face of the wave, it let the wave lunge forward from beneath it. On even keel, the skiff dropped like a paratrooper.

Bounding and swerving, with Balk pulling one oar then the other to straighten it, the skiff rode where a moment before beach had inclined. The bow slammed the steep angle of sand, pitching Balk against Frenchy's legs. Frenchy vaulted overboard and heaved the boat forward perhaps a foot as the crest of the following wave plunged downward.

On that steep beach the bow was high above the stern of the stranded skiff. As Balk stepped over the side, the next roller boomed in, overflowing the transom.

The two men worked the water-filled boat in broadside, letting each successive breaker help them. Frenchy carried the oars and ax up the beach. He came back for the crowbar and skillet. The spoon had disappeared.

He threw the metal up the beach and together they lifted Joe's body. The sea rumbled in, slamming the skiff against their shins. They dropped the long canvas bundle. Cursing, Frenchy dragged it up the beach.

After turning the skiff on its side to dump it, they hauled it to the base of the cliff.

"Now we got to find a way up," Balk gasped.

WRAPPING the painter about a massive boulder, Frenchy looked up mournfully. The overhanging cliff sliced the bowl of sky in half. The land wind was sweeping brown dust off the edge. He peered out to

sea where the *Chubasco* was performing strange acrobatics, yawing violently as the strengthening land wind shoved it broadside to the line of swells, only to have each swell shove it straight again.

"Whatever you do, let's hurry it up," he shrilled.

It took them half an hour to find a goat trail up the cliff, another half hour to carry Joe Stranghetti's body. As their faces rose above the edge, the strange hot wind from the mountain passes sprayed them with dust. Heads bent, they carried the body to a narrow arroyo, lowered it and piled rocks on top until the canvas was invisble.

On that windswept shelf there was not even a stick large enough to make a cross. Balk pounded the head off the ax with the crowbar, planted the crowbar among the rocks and with his belt lashed the ax handle horizontally across it, one-third of the way from the top.

"So long Joe!" he shouted earnestly.

Frenchy crossed himself and muttered something. Then they ran to the edge of the cliff. They saw the land wind had finally overcome the push of the swells. The stern of the *Chubasco* had come around facing the Pacific.

Straining at the hawser, the bow pointed landward into the wind.

"Is she dragging?" Frenchy screeched.

Balk gave an open-mouthed, wide-eyed shrug and scrambled and skidded and clutched his way down the goat trail.

That the *Chubasco* seemed farther out could be explained; now she was wrenching at her anchor from the opposite direction.

As they dragged the skiff to the edge of the surf, Frenchy yelled: "She's creeping all right! She's going to drag her anchor off the ledge!"

Balk ignored him, staring at the incoming waves. From the top of the cliff they had looked smaller, not at all impossible to cross. But at sea level they towered majestically into the blue sky, leaning and crashing at nine second intervals. Straight down they seemed to plunge on the steep beach and bounce, brown with churned-up sand.

The men walked the skiff knee-deep along the backrush of a wave. Balk vaulted to the rower's seat while Frenchy held the stern, his eyes staring wildly over Balk's shoulder.

"Farther out," Balk shouted, and Frenchy ran the skiff forward. The backwash escaped to join the in-breaking wave, clumping the bottom of the skiff on the steep sand, bow two feet lower than the stern. The rolling water swept over it, lashing Balk's back and swishing aft between his legs. He cursed and struggled overboard. The forward half of the skiff was filled. They had to drag it back and dump it.

They took a breather.

Next time, they did not walk the boat out so far. Though momentarily stranded, the bow successfully split the inrush of water. Balk yelled and Frenchy pushed, running hard behind the boat, shoving, while Balk rowed blindly toward the incurling giant. As Frenchy hoisted himself to the stern seat, the bow started up the mountain of water.

They almost made it.

Halfway up, the mountain became a cliff, and then an overhanging cliff. Frenchy dove sideways off the stern as the skiff began its end-for-end flip. Upside down it dropped with the plunge of the wave and disappeared in the white and brown explosion. The stern rose like a cubist's sea monster, fell toward the beach, and the skiff yawed wildly in, right-side up, filled to the gunwhales.

The sea covered them.

Balk's head appeared in the greener water, ducking as the next wave fell on him. By the time he staggered up the beach, Frenchy, who had swum blindly in on the welter of the first wave, had rescued both oars.

"We got to wait for more of a lull," Balk coughed.

Frenchy pointed to the *Chubasco*. The sea around her flurried with wind. Each swell lifted her stern, then heaved up her bow and hauled her anchor. The pressure of land wind was stronger against her topside than was the opposing friction of swells against her keel. So she was dragging her anchor out to sea.

Balk knew as she dragged her anchor off each stair-step ledge into deeper water the angle of pull became steeper. The drag became a lifting motion. The farther out she drifted, the faster she would go until finally the anchor trailed with only water beneath it, and the *Chubasco* sailed stern first and lonely into the Pacific.

FRENCHY pointed behind them on the beach, at the lines of stranded seaweed. "The tide has turned. It's running out. That's part of it."

He pointed at the skiff, but Balk shook his head and waited. Frenchy argued, hands jumping and jerking at shoulder level.

"We can't afford to gamble that they will get smaller instead of bigger," he screamed. "There's no fresh water here, no nothing. We're gambling with our lives."

Balk glared at the incoming wrinkles on the Pacific. They were not getting any smaller. "Now's the time," he announced. "We hold up the bow."

Standing well forward on either side of the skiff, after they had run it farther out on the backwash than the time before, they lifted the stranded bow above the sand so it mounted the broken wave. Balk vaulted in; Frenchy ran the boat out, working his hands aft along the gunwhale until he was pushing from the stern. Balk shouted for him to straighten up. He began thrashing the water with his oars, while looking over his shoulder at the wave. He could see that they were not going to make it, but his arms kept rowing.

This second start was slower than their first. They did not get out far enough to be flipped. The wave fell on the bow. The skiff vanished, emerged tumbling sideways on the broken face of the sea.

"I'll pick the next one," Frenchy shrilled as they dumped the water and sand. "One wave in nine is bigger than the rest, another wave in nine will be smallest."

Balk scowled at him as they walked the skiff out part way. "Go ahead, pick one," he bawled.

While the *Chubasco* drifted farther and faster, Frenchy counted waves, and found no rule of nine, nor any rule of waves at all.

True, the size of waves runs in cycles. But there may be half a dozen cycles laid upon each other, mixed together. Where the crests of two or more cycles of waves coincide, there will be a short succession of very large waves. Where the crests of one cycle overlap the troughs of another, the waves will be partially canceled.

Waves, radiating from a moving and irregular storm at sea, can be analyzed by a pressure recorder with revolving record wheel and photo-electric cell aided by tuning forks and attendant mathematician. Frenchy picked his wave by eye-estimate when it was one row back, and seemed smaller than the preceding one. But he could not know and did not see that the fifth and seventh waves back turned out to be smaller yet, because by that time he was stumbling up the beach, coughing sand and water, chasing the oars.

After they had dumped the skiff again, he gasped, "We got to try a different place. By the point maybe. On this steep beach, even though the waves come one at a time, they come too fast."

Balk glared at the promontory where three white ranks of sea swept in, chasing each other. On that shallower sand, two waves were tumbling, while the third and farthest out arched to break.

"They start busting a hundred yards from shore," Balk yelled. "The busted rollers would swamp us before we ever got where the swell start to break."

Frenchy shouted a meaningless obscenity in his face, walked up the beach and sat down. Balk sat down on the stern of the skiff facing him. When he glanced over his shoulder he saw the *Chubasco* had doubled her distance from shore. She was bouncing in a jumble of whitecaps. She was going as fast as a man could swim.

Belatedly he thought of swimming. In his anger with himself, he slammed his fist against the stern seat. Sharks or no sharks, he should have started swimming the first time the skiff was flipped. Now it was too late.

Drawing the sand-clogged revolver from his pocket, he stalked toward Frenchy.

"Get up, you lazy stone-sucker."

When Frenchy shouted angrily at him and did not rise, he ran forward and kicked him with his bare foot. Frenchy jerked his legs from under him. He let go of the revolver and, falling, turning on his side, clubbed Frenchy's black, sand-matted head with his fist. They both sat up and glared at each other.

"To hell with you," Balk grated.

Ignoring the revolver on the sand, he got up and tried to drag the skiff alone. Expressionless, Frenchy hooked his fingers under the opposite gunwhale and they walked the skiff into the backwash. Again Balk took the rower's seat, the skiff bottom clumped on the sand as the backwash de-

serted it, the broken wave rolled in, piling an inch of water over the bow as Frenchy started pushing.

They went out on the run, with Balk straining frantically at the oars. He caught a crab, the skiff swerved. The wave came down on the helpless boat and rolled it.

Balk found bottom, stood up and the following wave knocked him down. In defiance of the inevitable, he had remained seated in the skiff while the wave devoured it. He had not jumped, but miraculously the skiff had failed to club him. He wallowed and waded toward shore.

As he looked for the oars, his mouth opened. No sign of Frenchy.

THEN Balk saw his bare back drifting across the shallows. Splashing to the limp man, he dragged him out of reach of the waves. Arranging him head downward on the steep beach, he pressed on his back in artificial respiration.

"Hey, you're breaking my ribs," Frenchy's voice wheezed unexpectedly.

Balk got off him and watched him sit up and massage his head. Then Balk stared out over the surf to where the *Chubasco* blew lonesomely small.

The whitecaps from the land wind were larger, if anything. If the hot wind did not change in a few hours, the jig boat would be over the beach's low horizon.

"We'll try the point," Balk announced, as though it had been his idea.

He began pushing the boat along the beach on each inrush of water. When Frenchy came down to help him, he waved him away.

"Walk the wobbles out of your legs."

The closer the skiff approached the promontory, the shallower the beach became and the longer the slack water lay on the sand, so that Balk could push the skiff almost continuously now. He stopped short of the extreme point because there the waves swept in from two directions, clashing like white stags.

When Frenchy arrived and sat down beside him they talked it over. The swells were breaking a hundred yards from shore, where there was a good many feet of water under them. They curled and sloped down gradually in surfboard waves. Their broken water swept in wedge-faced, instead of abruptly as a wall.

But while one swell was breaking, two broken waves were rolling in. Here the barriers to escape from shore were multiplied.

Balk shook his head. "There's no way to judge when to start."

Frenchy moved his gaze from the tiny *Chubasco* to the outermost line of white where the big swells lurched up, broke and began their inward rush. "We've got to ram through each growler as it comes, and keep rowing out until we're almost to where

(Continued on page 111)

ALL OVER THE

Faster than sound – faster than any man had ever flown. . . . When Pete walked out on his Kathie he joined the flying saucers and such unnatural phenomena. . . .

So motionless that his imagination might have painted it there, was the strangest craft he had ever beheld. . . .

SKY —

By CEDRIC R. MENTIPLAY

IN A theoretically heatproofed shack in the middle of a certain desert six men perspired gently. The yellow, rockstrewn plain outside could have been the surface of some dying planet, baking slowly to oblivion under a merciless sun. Inside, the temperature hovered around a turgid ninety-five degrees, but this alone did not account for the way shirts were sticking to backs and temples were gathering moisture.

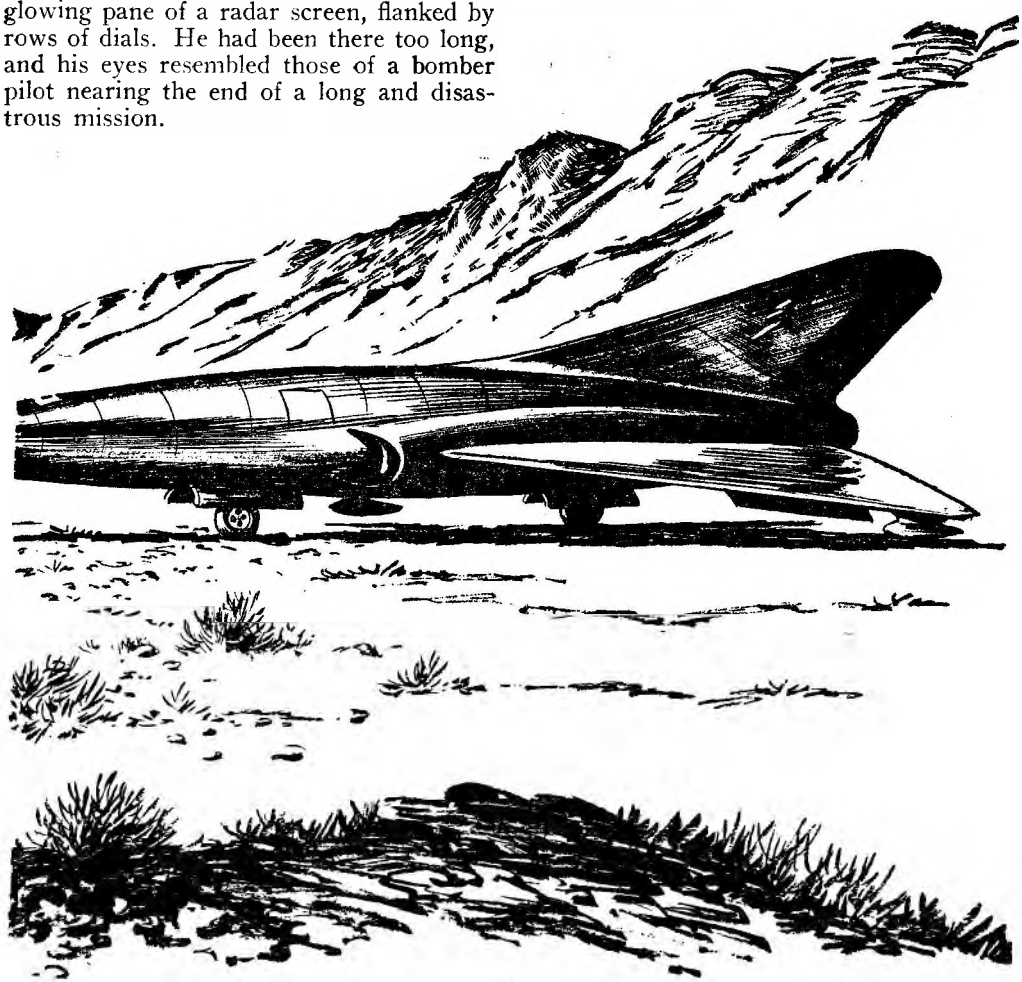
One man crouched forward in the replica of a pilot's seat, his hands grasping what could have been the control column of an aircraft. Before him was the green-glowing pane of a radar screen, flanked by rows of dials. He had been there too long, and his eyes resembled those of a bomber pilot nearing the end of a long and disastrous mission.

"Search again, Crowther!" barked a short, heavy man whose shoulder-tabs were stiff with rank insignia.

The operator craned further forward, his eyes on the radar beam as he moved the column. He began to intone softly, the throat-microphone bobbing on his Adam's apple.

"Bobo to Oscar. Report position. Report position. Have you seen *Hornet?* Over."

Static crashed and wailed in the shack. Then a voice came through the amplifier—a duplicate, voice, hiding weariness:



"Oscar to Bobo. Position one-three-five-eight-seven-two-six-four. *Hornet* unsighted eleven minutes. Last seen headed northeast, but erratic. Speed constant at eighteen hundred. Over."

In the silence the operator's voice was unnaturally loud. "That was the monitor plane on the perimeter. I'm afraid we've lost her, sir!"

"Afraid, are you?" the stocky officer exploded. "Look at that map reference! She's way off the range already, running wild at nearly three times the speed of sound—and you're afraid!"

He controlled himself with a visible effort. "All right, man. Wrap it up. Take what precautions you can."

The operator's hands were flickering over the controls. "I've cut the motors, sir. The flaps are down, and she's trimmed for landing. There is no guarantee, of course, that she's receiving my signals—"

"Stay on the controls, then. I'll send a relief."

The officer turned towards the other occupants of the shack—two elderly civilians, a full general, and a fleet admiral. His face reflected elaborate unconcern.

"We had hoped, gentlemen, that this experiment would be more conclusive. But—imponderables, you know—imponderables. Er—I think the refreshments will be ready now in B Mess. If you will kindly come along—"

Imponderables? You can't quite say that about the ionosphere, that vast envelope of ionized particles enclosing the Earth, through which no radio wave can penetrate. Thanks to men like Peter Underwood, the ionosphere is becoming more ponderable every day. We know, for instance, that by its action in reflecting radio waves back to earth it makes radio transmission possible, though we can't quite account for its behavior most of the time.

And then, of course, there are theories. Every astro-physicist has one. Peter Underwood's used to be that the fluctuations of the ionosphere have more effect on human fortunes and conduct than do the much-publicized phases of the moon. He doesn't talk about this one any more, for he regards it as proven. You see, the moon had a lot to do with his meeting the red-haired planet Kathie, and falling under her influence in the conjunction known as marriage; but the ionosphere. . . .

It was really acting up that day. It pulsated around the skull of Earth like the father of all hangovers. Press messages, stock exchange reports and musical offerings dissolved into cacophonous bedlam. Those fortunate enough to possess television exercised their second privilege and switched off their crazily-performing screens.

NOT so Peter Underwood. His worry needed no television assistance. It was Kathie. It was always Kathie. There didn't seem to be room for anything or anyone else these days. Stretching himself in the armchair on the veranda of the old homestead, he passed a long hand through his shock of sandy hair and began arguing with himself—a very recent habit.

Supposing he were back with the old squadron over Germany, with the sleek Messer jets coming up, and the fat tails of the bombers to protect—was that so good, except in memory? Was it so bad that he was overage for Korea? Would it have been fair to Kathie, after all, to take that job with the Long-Range Weapons Establishment?

"What are you screaming about?" he asked himself. "You got what you wanted—a place of your own, well away from engine-noises and laboratories—and Kathie. Kathie!"

He mellowed as he expanded that thought. He loved Kathie, loved her even more than the day he'd married her. After all, you can't completely love a stranger, even though that stranger has shining copper hair, and green eyes, and a nose just so, and more curves than Einstein's latest theory. And it's not quite a bad thing if, on closer acquaintance, she gets just a little bit possessive. He sighed reflectively, and turned back the manuscript on the desk before him.

Then Kathie arrived—the eternal Kathie, slim and dynamic and faintly hostile, breaking the mood as effectively as a lone Focke-Wulf power-diving into a group of homing bombers. She slapped a sheaf of letters on the desk.

"Here. More excuses for you to sit and dream rather than get out on the farm. Must be very important work you're doing—darling!"

He grinned up at her. "Could be, Kathie. Just an exercise, you know, but somebody has to—"

"And it must be you?" There was no mistaking the edge of her voice. "I suppose it's some highly evolved project like bouncing radio waves off the moon—and incidentally, it may be news to you that our kitchen set is on the blink!"

"Nothing like that," he told her. "I'm correlating all the known facts about—er, what they call 'Flying Saucers'—and seeing what I can make out of them. Really, there are some tantalizing conclusions—"

Her little fists were planted firmly on her hips. "And who will be buying this masterpiece?"

"Why, Kathie—I hadn't thought of that angle. Maybe the *Monthly Digest of Science* will run it, but of course they don't pay anything. It's just something to pass the time."

"Pass the time!" Her voice went up a few decibels. "Cables, airmail letters all over the world! Long-distance telephone calls! And saucers, he says—saucers! To pass the time! Why does the time need passing?"

He looked at her and felt rebellion stirring. "I find it a bit lonely here, Kathie. This is your father's farm, and Jim Lomas has managed it all his life—and well, too. I can't be any help to him. It's not my line."

"What is your line?" she flared. "You'd be getting yourself killed over Korea if I hadn't let the Air Force people know your right age. You'd be stuck out in the desert with your ghastly figures if I hadn't put my foot down—"

"You—what?"

He towered over her, his big hand reaching for her shoulder as the manuscript pages sprayed across the veranda deck. She was frightened now, wide-eyed, her fingers knuckled too late against her lips.

"I had to do it, Peter. It was for you. You've done enough for them. Isn't it time you lived for yourself—for a change? Isn't it, Peter?"

There was nothing mild about those eyes now. They peered at her as if she had suddenly developed horns and a tail. Anger was there, and disgust, and contempt, but they were all under tight control. Here was a man she had never known, and yet here was the Peter who had become lost to her somewhere in the last few months. She found herself hoping desperately that he would ball up one of those big fists and let her have it, right between the eyes. Anything but this. . . .

"You call this living for myself?" he asked her, his voice only a little raised. "I was a pilot, and I'm flying an armchair. I was a scientist, and I'm writing papers for a hobby. At thirty-five years and three months—not a day more—I've had it! If you loved me, Kathie Miles, why the rebuilding job? And why work so hard to protect your investment?"

"But Peter! I was only thinking of you—"

But he was gone. When she reached the steps he was already striding down the path into the dusty road. She waited, hoping desperately that just once he would look back. He went on, a tall, spare man in shirtsleeves and faded suntans, his gaze fixed on distance.

Kathie ran inside, threw herself face downwards on the bed, and had a good cry. It helped a lot. She was ready to admit, although only to herself, that perhaps she had taken too much into her own hands. And was it wholly bad to have made him angry, just this once? At lunchtime he would be back, and there would be some retractions, with reservations, and things would be much, much better. She would not be too hard on him.

But at lunchtime Peter was unsighted. At teatime she was crying again, and making desperate bargains with herself and Providence. If Peter had walked in about then, giving no advance notice of his coming he might have been able to dictate his own terms. But by that time Peter was very far away indeed, and the ionosphere was reaching the peak of its frenzy.

ITS turbulence matched Peter's thoughts as he walked through the late morning into the afternoon. Without half realizing it, he had been missing all those things—the whine of warming jets, the comradeship of the service, the quietness of laboratory work, and the breathless pursuit of theories in the field. Planes and science—they were his two lives. He could have lived one without missing the other. But now this third existence, the

sweet aimless one with Kathie, was proven a fraud and a sham.

Inevitably he began to make allowances. Maybe it was true that Kathie was trying to protect him. Maybe the poor kid was frightened her husband would smash himself. Not a complete excuse, of course, but not so bad—not bad at all. Besides, time was getting on, and he was rather hungry.

He was a long way out, and the road had dwindled to nothing more than a jeep-track, skirting the edge of the old dustbowl area. He had come in a half-circle, so the shortest way home would be across the diameter, which was a flat, slightly undulating plain of sand and eroded earth. He struck out boldly, glad to be heading home again.

Now that was settled, his mind was free for other things. Those everlasting flying saucers, now—what was the score on them? All those people could not have been mistaken. What could they be, then? Some unexplained natural phenomenon? Visitors from outer space? Something new in aviation?

And then, topping a rise, he saw it. Below him was a long sandy depression. In the middle of it, so motionless that his imagination might have painted it there, was the strangest craft he had ever beheld. It was like a great silver marlin, or a giant dart, one of those the boys used to play with back in the pubs of Old England. From the fishlike body a long spear thrust out forwards. The fins, or dart-feathers, or whatever they were, curved through deep arcs.

He started down towards the apparition, half expecting to see oddly-clad figures armed with ray guns deploying in defence. But the scientist in him was working double-time. This comic-strip aircraft was built for high-speed flight. From certain angles it would look like a disc or half-disc, from others like a cigar—two popular forms of flying saucers. It could be. . . .

Nothing stirred as he reached it. The machine sat securely enough on two tandem wheels half-buried in the fuselage, and leaned gently on one wingtip skid. He breathed more easily as he noted the long tracks of its landing run and the fact that sections of the trailing edges of the wings hung down as obvious air-brakes. Twin jet-pipes flanked the tail.

Just forward of the wing he found the outline of a squarish hatch. He dug at a recessed handle, and sprang back in alarm as the hatch dropped open with a clang. In the dusk of the interior nothing moved. The scientist in Peter Underwood grabbed him firmly by the slack of his shirt and hustled him forward. A foot on the lowered hatch, a hand on a gleaming metal brace, and he was inside.

No little green men, alive or dead, were in evidence. In fact, there was scarcely room for Peter himself to turn around. Sunlight, which filtered in through a single small panel of heavy glass set in the nose, revealed a tiny cockpit packed with masses of instruments and indicators. Some of these seemed familiar, but he passed over this fact for the moment as he dropped into the single bucket seat.

Before him was a control column flanked by a dozen levers. At eye-level a suspended screen gave him a disturbingly clear picture of the valley ahead. He blinked, then guessed that this was the viewing end of some sort of periscope. Flying this thing would be like navigating an aerial submarine—but the idea was logical. He felt down the side of the column, closed a switch, and through the open hatch saw the starboard air brake rise into the wing.

"The controls are man-size, anyway," he murmured. "A trained pilot should be able to get this crate off. But—it would be polite to ask permission. Wonder where he went?"

He climbed outside again and walked twice around the machine, peering thoughtfully downwards. Then he swung back into the cockpit and sat there whistling softly. The hair at the base of his spine showed a tendency to rise, and his skin prickled with cold sweat. The ground about the plane was sandy, and should have showed footprints—but there were none except his own.

He clamped the hatch shut. Obviously there was nobody in the plane—there just wasn't room for anyone else. Obviously, too, the pilot couldn't have fallen out during the early stages of the landing, for the hatch had been firmly closed. More mystery meant more need for a solution, if a man valued his sanity.

He stooped to his task. The lower part of the control column was encased in a metal box, in which it moved stiffly. Some kind of mechanical control, he guessed. He

began to test the levers one by one. A pull on the third one brought a sudden vibration, coupled with the whine of a highly geared starter motor. A whistling roar, and the quivering evened itself out into an impatient trembling. Two needles began to jump around their dials. The jets were warming!

A kind of intoxication was on him now. Grinning, he checked the periscope screen to see that the machine was still anchored. A pressure on the double throttle, and the song of the jets climbed up the scale. Instinctively he sought and found the web harness hanging from the seat and cinched it into place about him. Then he went on exploring the levers.

He knew well enough when he hit the brake. The fierce acceleration as the machine lunged forward drove him back into the seat. His clawing hand smacked the throttle through its quadrant. He was pinned there like a moth on a board, a mad flickering picture racing before him on the screen. The starboard wingtip hit twice and bounced upward. The tandem wheels felt as if they were coming straight through the steel floorboards.

With infinite effort he lifted arms that weighed a ton and locked clumsy fingers about the column. Better now. The picture steadied. A line of low hills was racing towards him. He eased back on the column, and felt himself crushed down into the seat with all the power of a hydraulic press.

IT SEEMED a long time later that he came back to something approaching consciousness. The periscope screen showed milky nothingness, and so did the panel ahead—just a long glittering beak reaching into space. He tried putting the column forward. The earth swam back into view—a grayish-purplish mass on which no feature was distinct.

The jet noise was a pale whisper, overshadowed by the rushing sound of air against smooth, welded plates. He was alone, utterly and completely alone, and beyond the help of anyone. Even the memory of Kathie was shadowy now and, try as he might, he could not remember the words of their argument. It had been so long ago. The silence began to lean in upon him.

"So!" he murmured. "You can fly the thing. And what does that get you? A nice deep hole in the ground when she goes in. What's wrong with flying an armchair?"

And then it seemed as if he were no longer alone. Somebody, something, was peering over his shoulder into the periscope screen. He glanced behind him. There was no room for anything between the back of his neck and the metal bulkhead, but he could still feel that hot breath. And there were other strange phenomena. The metallic paint about the base of the beak, just visible through the panel, seemed to be flaking away, the beak itself to be changing color.

He placed a hand against the quartz-glass, snatched it away hurriedly. That glass was hot—hot! So was the skin of the hull around him. It was already unbearably close inside the cramped cockpit, though the outside air temperature at this altitude must be near zero. Of course! Skin-friction, generated by the passage of air past the hull at high speed, would cause heat. How fast was he going? He had no idea, except that it was well over the best he had done in his jet-fighter days. Something had to be done.

"Pete, old boy," he told himself. "You've got a choice—dig in, or frizzle. Maybe you'd better cut the jets and take some of the heat off."

He reached for the throttle. It no longer moved freely, but appeared to be anchored at its maximum. He tugged at it until the sweat poured into his eyes, but in vain. And then, as he sat back, gasping, the stubborn lever eased a notch, another. He seized it again. It was immobile. The hair at the nape of his neck was crawling.

That was when he felt the control column stir in his hands. As the jets slowed their thrust the plane began to turn as though in perfect control. He fought to straighten it up. As though in exasperation, the column banged across and back, and the machine lay over in a steep verage. The pressure pinned him to the seat, helpless and nearly blind as the blood drained from his head and upper body.

In a moment the column moved again, very surely, carrying him with it as the plane leveled out on a new course. But now Peter Underwood no longer cared. Somebody or something else was flying the machine. Some intangible, invisible power had come out of space and taken

the controls from him. It was sitting in the same seat with him, sharing his body.

The scientist in him kept telling him that this could not be so, but the voice was growing weaker as the combined effects of heat, high altitude and that last deadly turn began to make themselves felt. He wanted only to rest, to sleep, to forget. . . .

JUST before Peter reached this state, the man Crowther, still on duty in the desert shack far to the south, began reacting strangely. First he stared blankly at the radar screen, in the top left-hand corner of which an unmistakable white pip was showing. Then, with extreme concentration, he moved the throttle that was set before him on the panel. He waited, then edged the control column across. The next swing of the scanner showed the pip turning through a wide arc.

Crowther threw a switch, spoke excitedly into his throat-microphone. His voice boomed in the mess-shack, startling the officers and dignitaries, and rattling the glasses and coffee-cups.

"Sir! Sir! *Hornet* is back on the screen! She's fully under control! I'm bringing her in!"

Inside thirty seconds the stocky officer was peering over his shoulder. "I don't believe it!" he stormed. "Quite impossible! Why, her fuel must have given out hours ago!"

Crowther's face was blank. "All I know is, something's coming down the beam in full control at 1350 miles an hour. I'm going to drop it on the tarmac right outside here in twenty minutes flat. Let's hope it's the *Hornet*—sir!"

And twenty minutes later Crowther did just that. For the final approach he switched to another screen, and the view he saw before him was the same as that reflected on the periscope screen which floated before the eyes of a weary, unemployed scientist called Peter Underwood. The *Hornet* came in at a stalling-speed which was near the maximum of a wartime fighter, slapped her tandem tires on the strip, and ran off her speed. A swarm of mechanics and officials started towards her.

The hatch dropped open. Men froze in their tracks, gaping. A lean, sandy-haired fellow with a startlingly ruddy complexion swung out and dropped limply to the ground. He was evidently glad to see that ground, for he patted it affectionately before reeling to his feet again. Then he focused with difficulty on the crowd, and particularly on the stocky, gold-tipped officer.

"Tubby Brace!" he murmured. "Good old Tubby, of California, Biggin Hill, and the Berlin marshaling yards! Old Wun Wing Low, the Chinese ace! Who'd ever have thought they'd give you two stars?"

"Peter Underwood!" The general's face was turning purplish. "This is crazy! Where—where'd you come from?"

"Well, you see," prattled Peter, feeling absurdly light-headed. "I was doing some field-work in the ionosphere when this thing flashed by. Jumping into my saucer, I—hey, Tubby! You should have known better than to pick a day like this for it. Haven't you any good top-weather men?"

He sat down very suddenly, and continued in a whisper. "Got to get back to Kathie. Got to tell her—all right. Poor kid, she's been protecting me from—this sort of thing. How right she was! Want a phone—a car."

At that point the doctors, ambulance men, and several unidentified characters in blue suits with significant bulges, moved in. They carried him firmly away, gave him improving draughts and sedative needles, and laid him on a white cot in an isolated building which could have been a hospital. It could also have been a gaol, for it had guards, barred windows, and barbed wire. But by then Peter had given the whole project away again.

It is a matter of record that at that exact time the ionosphere was back on its best behavior, except in one particular sector. Things were still turbulent over a certain homestead far to the north, where a tearful Kathie was desperately trying to get news of her departed husband. Finally she called a city daily newspaper.

"Peter Underwood? Isn't he some sort of scientist?" asked the voice on the wire.

"He's a very good one," Kathie said proudly. "He does things about flying saucers, and ions, and—"

"Ions? You mean he's an atomic scientist?"

"Yes. He does atoms too. You see—"

"And he's been on this flying saucer business? He leave any papers—maybe some notes?"

"Why, yes. Only just today he was finishing—"

"Hold it, girlie—we'll be right over. Joe! Joe!"

PETER was still under guard when he was marched to the headquarters building in the morning. He was fighting fit, bruised and belligerent after a restful night followed by some hours of frustration. He ignored the others in the group which awaited him.

Tubby Brace was his meat.

"Tubby!" he roared. "When do I get out of here? What is this—a slave state? I bring your crate home for you, and what do you do—throw me in the can! I want out—now!"

Tubby grinned uncomfortably, and glanced at the civilians to left and right. "I'd like to do it, Peter," he said, "but you're a marked man. You know our most valuable defense secret. And incidentally, you've traveled faster than any other man in human history, and lived to tell about it."

Peter was slightly dazed. "That thing? Faster?"

"You know what it is—the latest in long-range, remote-controlled guided missiles. That model had been flight-tested by a pilot, at half-throttle, hence the controls and gear. With an atomic warhead—Peter, we can't let you go!"

Peter gulped. "But that's absurd. You can vouch for me. I'll swear not to say anything, and you can drop me back home today. Nobody outside here knows your bird got loose, and nobody knows I've been away."

Tubby shook his head sadly and held out a newspaper. The headlines leaned out of it and screamed:

ATOMIC SCIENTIST VANISHES—BRILLIANT WARTIME ACE SNATCHED INTO THIN AIR

Beside a blurred likeness of himself was some typescript which he recognized as the beginning of his flying saucer article, and under it was the caption:

This was his last work before the Cloak of Darkness fell. Did the Flying Saucers take Revenge?

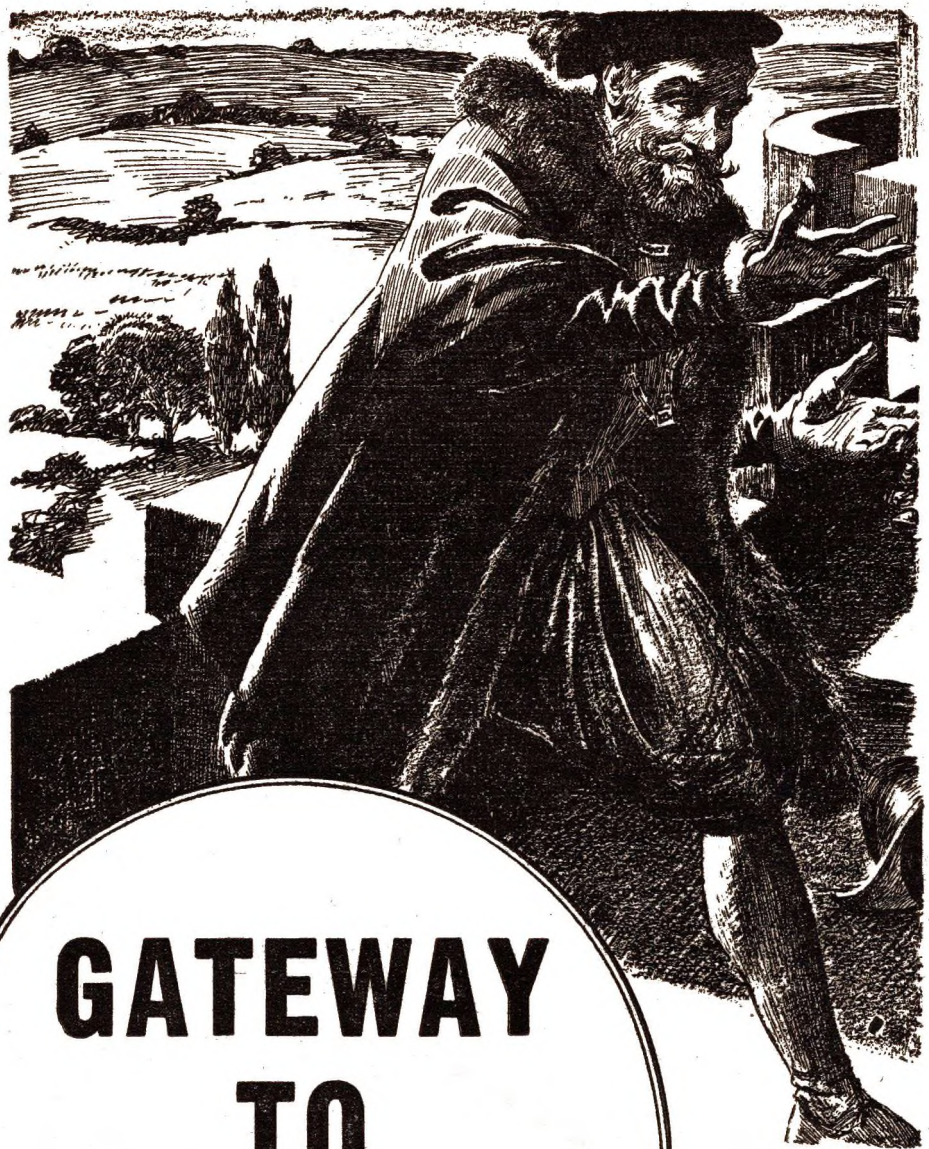
"Um, I see." Peter said dully. "A celebrity. Wrong people get to know. You're afraid I'll really disappear if I go back, eh? You think the Other Side might want to know the score? Okay, where's the iron mask?"

"There is an alternative Mr. Underwood," interposed one of the civilians. "I understand that yesterday's experiment went astray largely because the staff here has insufficient knowledge of upper air conditions, a fact upon which you commented when you—ah—arrived. We have also investigated your record and attainments quite thoroughly. My department would be glad to make use of your talents, at a fee which I believe you would find interesting."

Peter whooped. "Would I? Do they have married quarters here? Just a shack in the desert would do, with a picket fence, and a barbed wire twined around the door—"

A little later he got through to the homestead with a long-distance call. His voice was crisp with a new authority.

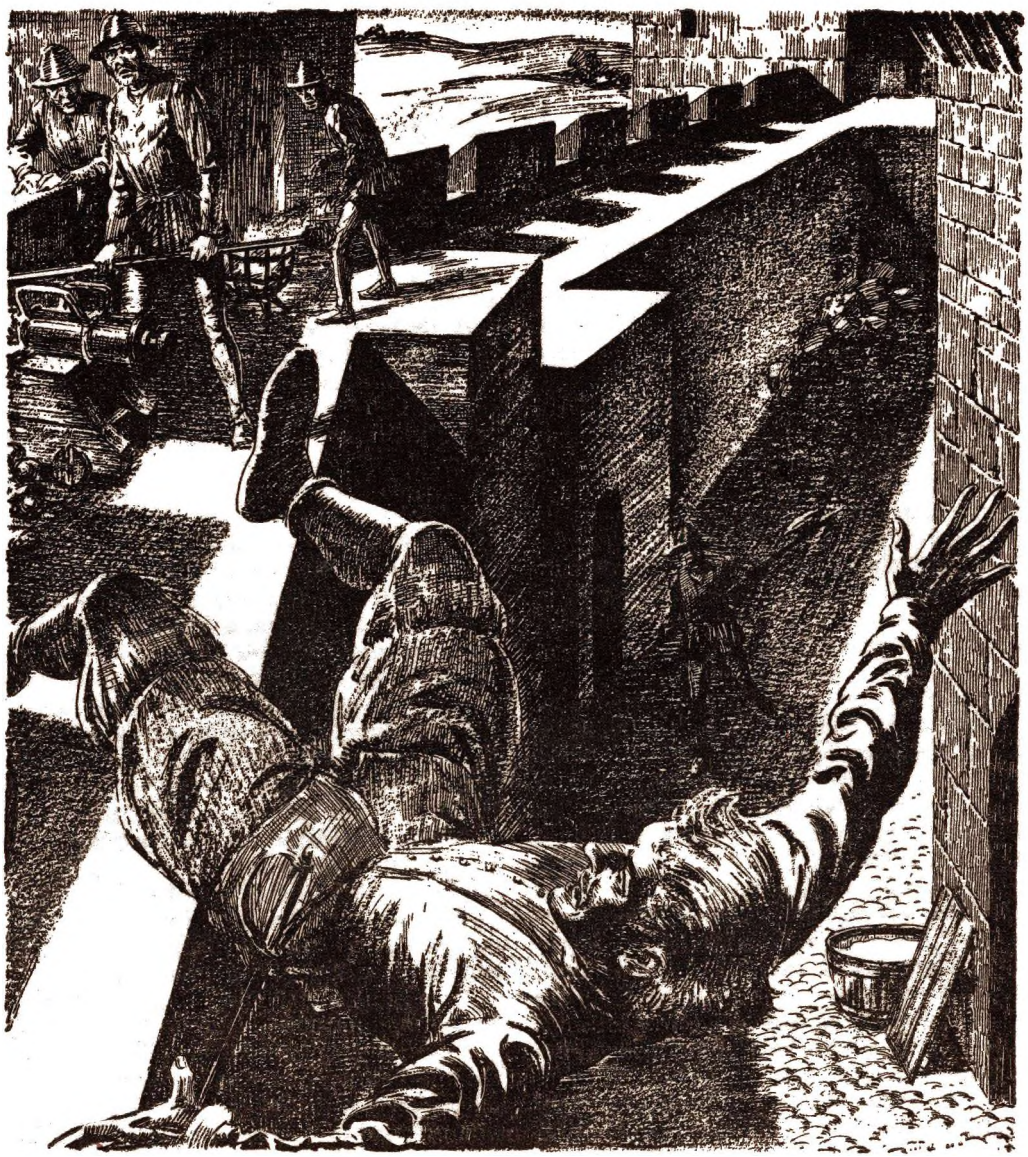
"Kathie? Peter here. Of course I'm all right. Quiet, now. Quiet! Pack your bags. Two suitcases for you, one for me. A car will pick you up. We're moving out to a new job. Where? The ionosphere, of course. No, it won't be crowded, and I don't think you'll need your fur coat. Saucers? Oh, I understand they'll be provided."



GATEWAY TO TREASON

A Caradosso Story

By
F. R.
BUCKLEY



While Lieutenant Matteo was laughing, I threw him over the parapet. . . .

TO HIS Lordship, my Especial Good Lord Pietro IV; of Rometia Duke, Count of Costecaldo, etcetera etcetera; from Luigi Caradosso, sometime Captain of the Guard, these:

Sire:

It is most condescending in Your Grace to ask my advice (albeit with no intention of taking it) in the matter of the new guns. At the age of eighty, an old soldier needs something to warm the cockles of his heart; and since my pension doth not suffice to buy drinkable wine, I am the more grateful for proof that my sixty years of service are not forgotten.

So it grieves me to confess that I never was much of a cannoneer. Your Highness hath been misled, perhaps by memories of playing peep-bo with me around the mounts of the battlement guns (Your Grace being then aged three and very wet about the

nose) but indeed, as a cavalryman, I have always condemned and detested those foul tubes. It is true that in the early days of the Duchy—when it was in the making by Your Lordship's grandfather— we made use of two guns to shower rebels with stones, old spurs, jug-handles and pewter mugs with holes in them; howbeit the cavalry had always to finish the work, with the rebels more rebellious than ever and our horses slipping in the blood. I was myself thus thrown at Costecaldo in 1534 and came to with a yokel hammering my helmet in such wise as to give me a headache which lasted three weeks and a loathing of artillery enduring to his day.

Prejudice aside, however—is it not obvious that, to be acquired, land must be occupied? And that it can be occupied only by troops, first cavalry and then foot, with civilians crawling in later? And that all the guns can do is clear a lane for the cavalry—whereas self-respecting cavalry in sufficient force can clear a broad highway for itself?

But oons! Rereading Your Eminence's letter, I see by the postscriptum that these guns are for the defense of a new fort! And I redouble my protests. For the price of a fort's guns (especially now they have taken to casting the barrels with serpents on them and naked women in high relief as if on purpose to distract the gunners' minds) Your Highness can raise and equip two squadrons of cavalry, and I implore that this be done. If some noble hath the presumption to offend Your Serenity, let not Your Lordship think of defences, but clatter forth like your ancestors and leave it to the miscreant to skulk behind walls amid stinkpots and their sulphur. For mark you, this gunpowder is treacherous stuff, my Lord—a soldier swears loyalty and kills your enemies, but this black muck owns no allegiance and at the dropping of a spark or the flawing of a gun-barrel will destroy friend as willingly as foe.

I could advance legions of argument, for this quirck of Your Excellency's makes my blood run cold. But since at Your Lordship's age man learns not by reason but by catastrophe, I will instead tell of a catastrophe long past; in the hope that it may save Your Grace from experiencing the like in time to come.

A Duke of Rometia arming for defence! God have mercy on us! Well—

IT WAS on a bright morning in 1523, or perhaps 1524, that I obeyed a summons to the cabinet of Your Lordship's grandfather, to find him in his gown and biting of the feather of a pen. These were two ill omens; the gown denoting that he had slept badly, and the pen-biting that this wakefulness had not been of the kind proper to young noblemen, but rather of a political sort, probably periling my skin.

It will be hard for Your Grace, born to a Duchy established and prosperous, to believe how poor we were at that time. By divers devices, including matrimony and what some called murder, your grandsire had indeed added six fiefs to his original Rometia, but they were not sufficiently pacified to be taxable. Our only sizable revenue was from the wool-trade with Casatico; and to defend it and all our new lands we had no more than a hundred and fifty horse and perhaps three hundred foot levies, all raw. We had had two guns, as I mentioned, but one of them had lately burst, killing twelve men as against two wounded by the mob in that particular riot. We had been unable to enlist fellows to work the other gun; we had made offers to certain condemned criminals, but they had said they would rather hang. Aha!

"Look you, Luigi," says the Duke.

This was another bad sign—his calling me by name meant there was something singularly damnable to be done.

"Ye know that old castle at Sorli?" says he, spitting feathers.

I did indeed. It lay astraddle our trade route to Casatico, just where the road goes through the pass. We had talked of seizing it and should have done so ere that (it being empty) save for two considerations; first, that the Council of Nobles was looking greenishly at Pietro's activities just then; and secondly, that the bursting of that accursed gun had lodged a pound of brass in my belly, bedding me for ten days and quenching my interest in anything beyond the door of my quarters. The Duke and the devil therefore alone knew what was toward at Sorli; and from both of them I feared the worst.

Not without reason.

"Ye know also Matteo Bordoni, the freelance?"

"By repute, Sire," says I, swallowing spittle, because this was my first time out

of bed and Bordoni's reputation was of the most savage.

"And his lieutenant, Paolo di Rosso?"

"Also by repute."

Now I sweated, because Rosso's repute was worse than Bordoni's; he had red hair and a cross eye and laid claim to noble blood. Can Your Grace imagine a worse combination?

"We-e-ll," says my lord, spitting out the last of the feather and smiling at me. "It seems this Rosso hath murdered Bordoni, sold the band's horse and foot to some ruffian whose name escapes me, and himself decamped with the artillery. Eighteen guns."

With the stripped quill of the pen he traced designs on his desk top, smiling all the while. The sweat now began to run down my back.

"Which would be no business of ours," says the Duke lightly, "were it not that Messer Rosso, presuming on his nobility—at which I spit—and threats he holds over certain of the Council of Nobles, which is more serious—this Rosso, I say, hath installed himself and his band of rogues and his eighteen guns in that old castle; and hath written me saying that all our wool going to Casatico must henceforth pay tribute to him. What think'st thou of that, Luigi, hey?"

Striving to digest these horrid tidings, I saluted. At once, His Grace seemed to go (with due respect) mad.

"Death and mutilation!" he shouts. "Am I to ask how I may avoid ruin and be answered with a slap and a jingle? Speak, thou lump, thou mute ass, thou—"

"Under favor," says I, as his rage choked him, "I am but five minutes risen from a sick-bed, Your Grace—"

Now he smiled again.

"—and wilt therefore be unfit to lead my forces against Sorli and its eighteen guns, eh?"

Had anyone but the Duke made that imputation, he would have eaten it, with my dagger for a fork. As it was, I felt my breastplate grow tighter, seeming to drive all my blood to my face.

"Glower not at me, fellow," says His Grace, leaning back and ceasing to smile even as he had been. "I'm not demanding that thou earn thy pay. Nay, otherwise! I'm to promote thee, Captain. Thou'rt to be an ambassador."

I once hanged a poisoner whose whim was to administer arsenic in honey. I thought of him at that moment.

"Lookee, Caradosso," says His Grace, leaning forward across the desk. "Look and mark. We cannot march against this rascal; imprimis, he hath the Council of Nobles by the short hairs, and secundo we cannot afford a siege. On the other hand, I will not pay him the toll he demands, the beggarly, upstart, insolent cur. What remains? We must practise against him diplomatically. Since my rank forbids me to meet him myself, I will send a plenipotentiary to reason with him—and who more worthy of the honor than my trusty good captain of the guard?"

I saluted again. Twice, simply to make sure.

"Well?" says His Grace.

"Under favor," says I. "I am but a plain soldier—"

"Very plain," says Pietro. "Well?"

"Meseems," says I, stammering despite myself before those glittering black eyes, "that for a dip—diplo—a delicate matter—perhaps Your Grace's secretary—one of the Councillors—"

"Luigi, Luigi," says my lord indulgently, "these be all old men! Canst imagine Valdifiore with a sword in his claw? Or any of the council alone in that castle with two hundred cutthroats?"

"Under favor," says I again, "ambassadors do not bear arms."

"Nor wilt thou," says His Grace heartily. "Nor wear armor. Thou'll have a surcoat with my arms thereon, and credentials with my seal and superscription, so that anyone who hangs thee will be blameworthy. and—"

"Sire," says I, "if I am not to be armed, what am I to do?"

"Thou'rt to carry my soft reply to this filthy brute," says His Grace, rising to show the audience was ended, "which will gain thee admission to his presence. Once inside the castle, thou'rt to assure that this rogue and his eighteen guns interfere no further with my commerce. Thou hast authority to use any persuasions that may seem suitable; provided they cost me no money and embroil me not with the Council of Nobles. Thou hast full powers."

He picked up a bit of string from his desk, and noosed it round his forefinger; all the time regarding me with those black eyes.

"And mark you," says His Grace, drawing the noose tight. "Fail not!"

SINCE as an envoy—or ambassador, God save the mark—I could not myself go armed, I set hopefully forth with an escort of four sergeants—desperate dogs shorn of their rank-badges and told to sit their horses like recruits—it profited me nothing at all. The sentry at the castle gate turned out the guard—as murderous a lot as ever I saw—and the sergeant sent for the lieutenant (one of those girl-faced youths who sometimes boil their grandmothers) and the lieutenant, having consulted someone within-doors, came back with glad welcomes for myself, but regrets that there was no accommodation for my escort.

"We are but a poor bare fighting castle," says this lieutenant—he had a charming smile but a weak chin, which I noted for the future, "and we are heavily manned. Even Your Honor will lie rough compared with Rometia."

There was no use in arguing. I saved my breath, dismissed my men and dismounted; one obvious assassin holding my stirrup and another receiving me in his arms. As for the escort which led me to Paolo di Rosso—it seemed woundy strange to be walking behind such faces. As officer in charge of executions, I was so accustomed to march ahead.

It seemed strange again when Rosso invited me to sit; I had never sat in the presence of even a doubtful noble before; nor can I remember, in sixty years' service, having done so since. It was my surcoat, of course; and His Lordship's seal. Rosso scanned the one and broke the other and read Pietro's letter twice through and then again, frowning. I may say that though receiving an unarmed envoy, this Rosso was not himself unarmed. A pistolet lay on the table to his right; he was wearing a dagger big enough to gut kine withal; the top links of a mail shirt were visible at his neck and throughout the audience two guards stood inside the door, a pike's length from the back of my chair.

"His Grace seems to say no more than that he will not pay toll," says Rosso, "whereas I say that he shall. Thou, it seems, art to reconcile these points of view, *signore*. Well?"

There seemed no hope at all save only that lieutenant's weak chin.

"If it please Your Excellency," I therefore said, quavering to the best of my ability, "I had my instructions but this morning. I am new risen from a bed of pain, and it would greatly oblige me if I could be permitted to arrange my thoughts overnight. As the proverb hath it—sleep brings counsel, and after today's long ride I am in need of rest."

"Of facts to consider, also, perhaps," says Rosso. "By the way, Signore Caradosso—hast thou by any chance a brother?"

"No, sir," says I, quite truthfully; and curse me if I would call him "my lord."

"I knew—or knew of—a man of thy name," says Rosso. "A soldier, he was, a desperate fellow. Best swordsman in Tuscany."

It was a struggle not to correct that Tuscany to Italy, but I restrained myself.

"However," says Rosso, looking at his nails (he bit them), "all you really need to know, *signore*, is that I am lawfully seized of this castle, in right of the second cousin of my aunt under the law of tertiogeniture, now deceased, or some such rubbish; that the road to Casatico runs through my lands; that none may pass without my permission and upon such terms as I may decide; and that I propose to maintain this state of affairs by force of this castle, two hundred and sixteen men, all hard soldiers; and eighteen guns. For which—" he picked up a paper—"I have at this moment five hundred and three stone and iron cannon balls, not to mention great heaps of iron scraps; and fifty-six—and ten—and three—sixty-nine barrels of gunpowder. I perceive that you are not fond of artillery, *signore?*"

Porco di porco! From Pietro to this devil, who could read minds! I felt like a grain of wheat between millstones.

I mumbled something about military matters—not saying they were beyond me, in case the rogue knew more than I prayed he did—and let fall my head on my hand.

"Ah—we'll talk tomorrow," says Rosso. "For the present, *signore*, favor me by resting and refreshing yourself."

He struck a bell and the lieutenant appeared.

"The *signore* to his quarters, Matteo. He is not well. Be careful of him."

The lieutenant saluted and helped me out of my chair. Also he gave me his arm down

the corridor, which was filthy like the gateway and the courtyard; in the midst of it I halted and said I thought a cup of wine might do me good. That was no lie either; a skin would have been the whole truth, but a cup was one seventy-seventh of it, provided their wineskins were the same size as ours.

"If your quarters are nearer than mine," says I, well knowing that they were, "perhaps I might be allowed—"

"I shall be honored," says the girl-faced youth; and thus it came about that we drank together—he had a full skin hanging in a window—and, of course, we talked. At this distance of time I forget just what I said; it was cautiously put, of course, with no word that could be taken amiss or in less senses than three; but the upshot was that of all things desirable for a pretty young man with a weak chin, the most desirable was betrayal of that castle. I was much encouraged when my young friend, having pondered my last few words (which I forget) proposed that we should take a walk on the battlements.

"I think the cool evening air will benefit Your Honor," says the youth; to which I was tempted to reply, *And walls have ears, eh?* and slap him on the back. But I did not and we went forth together.

HE, I recall, was whistling *The Baker's Daughter*, a tune no longer in favor with the ordinary people, because of the great cruelties done to them by Bordoni's band, who had used it for a marching song. I had heard details, and this whistling reconciled me somewhat to my mission; Duke Pietro might have his foibles, but he was preferable to these flayers and ravishers and their cross-eyed chief.

And so we came to a dirty great culverin at one of the four angles of the wall. The guns we had so far passed were breeched and secured; this brute was naked and its crew was sitting in the emplacement with a little brazier burning to light their portfires withal!

"You apprehend attack?" says I, amazed.

"Nay, nay," says the lieutenant. "Your Honor is not familiar with soldier routine."

He looked at me damned odd.

"There are always sentries," says he as if to a child, "but since we are cannoneers, ours are armed with culverins instead of arquebuses or pikes; one loaded and ready at each angle." Here he licked his lips and smiled. "Let us suppose that some noble, having tried to suborn treachery and failed, should decide to try force. Would it not appear to you that we are ready for him. Cap—*signor?*"

And the young devil looked me straight in the face and laughed.

"Anything moving, Michele?" says he to one of the gunners, still looking at me with that wicked grin.

The gunner laughed. He saluted also, but he laughed; for which any proper officer would have broken his nose. But among fellow-felons, how can there be discipline?

"Old woman and her cow in a field, Lieutenant," says the gunner. "Nothing more."

Young Matteo's eyes were still fixed on mine; still full of that menacing mockery. He had been leading me on, the cursed brat; listening to me so that he could report my attempt to Rosso—who may even have been expecting some such, so evil is the mind of man.

"Michele!"

"Sir!"

"I think we might give Cap—Signor Caradosso a sample of our shooting."

The gunner stared at him.

Matteo turned from me now, and I followed his gaze. Sure enough, in a field at extreme cannon range there was a white cow; and behind it, half a dozen ells, walked a crone bent with age, a shawl on her head. The sun was setting.

"Couldst pick off the cow without killing the old hag?" says girl-face.

"The cow, sir?"

"Yes, blast you. Art deaf?" snarls the lieutenant. "Prime the gun!"

I could not believe he meant it—though oons! that change in his voice! The gunners knew it; one hastened to spill powder on the breech; two others busied themselves with training of the piece and a fourth plunged a portfire in the brazier.

"Look you, lieutenant—" says I.

"Hast not yet said enough tonight?" he asked me; not smiling now, but laying hand to his sword. In the pause, one of the men training the gun dared speak.

"If the lieutenant permits," says he.

"Well?"

"The—the old woman is closer to the

cow. Very close now, Your Honor."

"Then aim the more carefully. Unless you want her on your soul. Not that she looks like any great weight."

"Now, by God—" says I, starting forward; and found the boy's sword-point at my throat.

"I command here, Captain Caradosso," says he. "Wilt get thy gullet spitted for a cow?"

I need not tell Your Grace that to a peasant a cow is riches; the loss of one, starvation—nothing in between for an old woman such as yon. If she slew her cow, they had better shoot ill and put her out of her misery, and I was about to say as much to those gunners when the gun went off with a roar and they shot well—I saw the ball strike the cow in the ribs and burst it into a shower of blood and flesh, which fell on the old woman.

WHILE Lieutenant Matteo was laughing at which, I took him by the hair and one knee and threw him off the battlements into the courtyard and jumped down after him, landing with my feet in his belly and dragged him upright and hit him in the face. And when he drew his dagger I twisted his wrist till his arm broke and then threw him down and hammered his head against a rock until he died.

I do not think I did this because he would betray me to Rosso, but because he had killed the old woman's cow; that is what I think, Your Grace, but God will judge.

I was consequently surprised to find myself—at once, meseemed, though I now judge it must have been after a quarter of an hour—held by two men at each arm and two more on each of my legs, menaced from in front by a dozen rogues with petronels and pricked in the back by other louts with pikes. Around the group thus formed, there appeared to my astonished eyes fifteen or twenty other men of the garrison, some recumbent and motionless as if dead; others on all fours or their knees, striving to rise and moaning as if in pain. While at some distance beyond the fringe of these I perceived Paolo di Rosso, brandishing a sword and shouting imprecations from which I gleaned that I was held responsible for this sad scene!

Now, as Your Grace well knows, I am a man of mild manners—I had, it is true, been somewhat annoyed by Matteo, his cruelty to the old woman, but I had expressed this feeling to him frankly and honestly and was, I am sure, turning away from him without malice to anyone in the world. I can only imagine that some fellow who loved violence for its own sake (seeing that a lieutenant has no friends) must have thrown himself on my back or suchlike; that while I was reasoning with him, some comrade must have come to his aid and another to the rescue of these twain—and so on. I did not thus sort the matter out at the moment; nor did Rosso, albeit he must have seen most of the proceedings, have the courtesy to explain them to me. Instead, dancing up and down until his red hair fell over his cross eye, he accused me of murdering the lieutenant and proposed that I should forthwith hang!

"No, sir," says I. "Not so."

"No?" says he.

"No, sir."

"And why not, Captain Caradosso, may I ask?"

Ah, how it reassured me, that bandying of words! This was no proper noble.

"Because, sir," says I, "in the first place it would be ill proving that an unarmed man murdered a trained soldier in half armor with his sword drawn."

"I am lord here," says Rosso, meaning that he could hang me without trial—which was true.

"Yes, sir. But I am an envoy of His Grace the Duke of Rometia—"

"Y'are captain of his guard!"

"—which places me under the protection of the Council of Nobles. Your Honor hath heard of Gianni de' Castello Nero, who stabbed the herald?"

He was visibly slavering for my neck, but that made him swallow his froth. Little was sacred to the Council of Nobles, but without envoys they could neither make war on each other nor divide the spoils; wherefore they were urgent for the safety of such persons. This Gianni had been a fine drunken fellow, well liked; but they had had his head off.

"I have already been assaulted and my surcoat torn," says I, improving the advantage, "and I complain formally to Your Honor that at this moment I am being held by eight of Your Honor's servants and menaced by as many more; against the

Duke of Rometia, his peace and dignity."

"Let him go," says Rosso as though the words were being wrung out of him, and as I stood free—the pike points now six full inches from my back and the muzzles of the pistolets lowered a fingerbreadth from the level—he stood there in the dusk, staring at me and chewing his thumbnail.

"Ha!" says he at last, then smiled and wiped his wet thumb on his hose.

"Your point is well taken, Captain," says he. "Or I should say *signor*—your martial prowess made me forget for a moment your standing as envoy—I crave pardon for my hastiness. Certes no one hath the right to hang you but your own duke, whom report makes quite a hand with a halter—but let us hope that when we resume our parley tomorrow the result may be such as to please him."

O wicked man! Much chance had I now of persuading him, by words or steel, out of those duties on our wool; much chance likewise of placating Pietro if I returned unsuccessful; and much chance of earning a living—or continuing to live—if I absconded under the duke's displeasure. My heart, lightened by the recent exercise, descended into my boots.

"And now," says Rosso, "Your Excellency's health being what it is, you will doubtless wish to retire."

Back went the thumbnail.

"Here again I am in a difficulty," says he, leering, "for that, with the utmost shame, I have no worthy accommodation to offer Your Excellency. I have searched high, I have searched low, and I find the only chamber not occupied six deep is a vault. Even of that, cramped quarters compel us to use a considerable part as a powder magazine."

The vault would be the old dungeons. He was going to lock me up for the night —and still he was not done.

"I regret this the more because I know Your Excellency is afraid of gunpowder," says he, "and the more still since the great danger to Your Excellency should a spark be struck by accident in the night, compels me to make sure that Your Excellency hath not on his person—by inadvertence—any means of making fire—any morsel of steel, for instance. Thus if I cause Your Excellency to be searched, it is in all benevolence and solicitude, as the Council of Nobles must agree."

HE SAID no more, but waved forward a couple of pistoleers, whose comrades meantime regarded me most evilly. Sire, as I write this, near sixty years later, I sweat at the thought of that humiliation. There was naught I could say to the point, so I stood mute as those low fellows ran their hands over me; finding the mail shirt I had worn (from force of habit) under my surcoat, and taking it from me; and the small knife I had chanced to have up my left sleeve—and so on and so on until finally I was led to my dungeon quarters in hose and boots only; and they'd have had the boots save that they were of the soft cavalry kind, all sewn.

I will not inflict on Your Grace's tender feelings the mockeries of Rosso as he wished me good night, pleasant dreams and a happy reception from my duke when I should return to Rometia on the morrow— I knew, without being a prophet, that by morning my surcoat and sleeves and so forth would have been mislaid and that I should be sent home not only empty-handed but half naked and a disgrace to my master, such as he could not brook. And so did it turn out, after a night of horror with the dusty stink of powder in my nostrils and in my mouth the dusty, lingering taste of death.

Late in the morning, when plenty of folk would be about on the roads, a guard headed by the new lieutenant came and with great ceremony escorted me to Rosso's cabinet, where he sat eating. Sure enough, he grieved that my clothes had by mistake been burned that morning and that my knife and shirt could not be found; he was astonished that none had thought to give me breakfast, though he was sure I should not wish to wait for it in his poor castle now that our business was concluded —for, woe was him, he had come to a decision and there was no more to be said. The wool-duties would remain and my duke might take what measures he chose.

"You might aid his choice by telling him at what range we shot the cow," says Rosso, rising to dismiss me, "if he gives you time."

I had thought they would have stolen my horse and have sent me home on some nag or perhaps a donkey. But no—Rosso was cleverer than that. A scarecrow on a donkey would have attracted no attention;

whereas a half-naked man on a fine charger. . . .

My escort marched me, with utmost formality, down the stairs from the cabinet to that dirty corridor which led on the one hand to my dungeon and on the other to the courtyard. They led me through the courtyard shouting, "Way for His Excellency the Ambassador of Rometia!" while the rest of the garrison sniggered. They helped me to my saddle, on its cloth embroidered with the Rometian arms, and the lieutenant himself took the bridle and led us forth of the gate; whereafter, as my horse pranced the first few steps across the cobbles away from the gate, the guard presented arms—upside down.

They were laughing as they did this, and I hope they were really happy, because at that moment the castle blew up and that was the end of them. I was just round the corner of the wall and sheltered—I was flung to the ground and deafened, but that was all. They, on the other hand, were in the gateway and the blast from those sixty-nine barrels of powder rushed through the arch and swept them away like leaves. It was curious to see the tower in which Rosso had so lately received me going straight up in the air with him in it; and most odd to see those eighteen famous guns flying through the air like birds. The curtain walls stood as (they being sixteen feet thick) I had thought they might—that is why I had moved away from the gate—but within them nothing at all was left of the castle or its garrison or its guns.

So see, Your Grace, what treacherous stuff is this gunpowder! Nothing—as I have shown—could have exceeded the precautions taken by Rosso and his rogues to prevent my blowing them up at the cost of my own life—as if it were of no more value than theirs. Yet it had not occurred to them that I might (as I did) fill my cavalry boots with powder and bite a hole in the heel of one boot so that wherever I walked on their foul floors I left a trail of powder leading to the magazine. They had taken every tiny bit of steel from me and had given none back, the damned thieves; and yet the prancing of my horse on those cobblestones had struck sparks enough to fire the train and blow them all into the Everlasting Mercy.

Sure that Your Highness will refrain from trafficking in such perilous stuff and raise at least one troop of cavalry instead, I herewith present to Your Highness as a willing recruit the bearer of this letter; a strong youth, Beniamino by name, twenty years of age and with some notions of soldiering; the son of a poor widow of this village and a sort of nephew of

Your Lordship's Humble and Most
Devoted Servant to Command,
L. Caradosso
Captain.

ENDORSEMENT BY THE DUKE

Enrol him. How many of this old devil's children have I now in my guard?

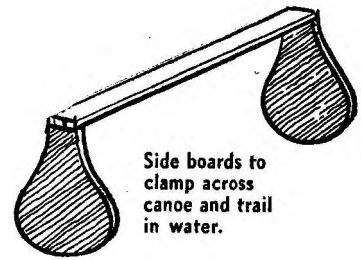
REPORT.

Kissing Your Grace's hands: Seventeen.
M. Caradosso
Lieutenant.

AND NOT EVEN TAXES. . . .

Government manufacture of coins is so ancient an institution that any private coinage is now automatically regarded as counterfeit. Yet so recently as 1860, when Colorado was producing a flood of wealth in gold, the private firm of Clark and Gruber, finding no law to stop them, set themselves up in the minting business in Denver and turned out great quantities of pure gold coin which was accepted as legal tender by everyone. The Government was forced to call on Congress to pass a bill to forbid the practice, which bill became law in 1862. Clark and Gruber coins are still in existence, and will bring from eager collectors up to 30 times their face value.

CANOE SAIL



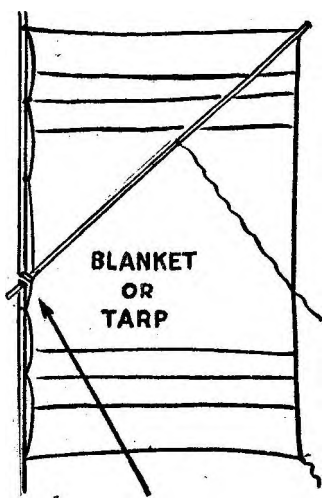
ON LONG canoe trips, where portages make the bringing along of an outboard motor a hardship, *Adventure's* Northwoodsman, H. S. M. Kemp, suggests a squaresail fashioned out of a blanket, which you would have along in any case. The accompanying diagrams are Mr. Kemp's, who spent many business years canoe-sailing through the northern wilds.

"My canoeing in the North was strictly utilitarian," Mr. Kemp writes, "but we sailed every chance we got. And though sailing was only a means of getting from one place to another, I always got a tremendous kick out of it."

The mast is stepped well forward—about 3' from the bow—the boom tied to the mast so it can swing. Both mast and boom are discarded at each portage.

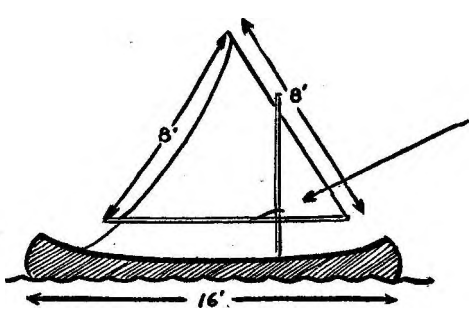
A more elaborate—but no more effective—sail is the lateen rig, also illustrated. The sail should measure ½ the length of your canoe along the boom, and the same in height. The sideboards are optional, if you *must* carry stuff. They stop drift in close-to-wind sailing. The two wings are hinged to the cross-piece, for independent movement, and the cross-piece is clamped across the canoe, amidships.

Rough Square Sail

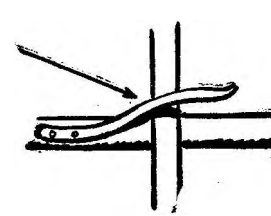


Loop of twine to hold boom so that it can swing.

Lateen Rig



Mast clip



MORE THAN THE

A TALE OF THE DESERT

FLESH

By
William Ashley Anderson

WHEN you come ashore at the Abkari landing in Aden, if you are well informed you'll turn right and drift into the Union Club which is today as nearly a cross-roads of the Empire as any place can well be. Sooner or later every arm of the service of empire rests an elbow on the bar to steady a Johnny Collins or a burra peg of Scotch with its rapidly dissolving ice. Within three minutes any war correspondent who is fortunate enough to come up from the Indian Ocean with the salty dankness of the monsoon still on his collar, or down from Egypt and the holy lands blistered by sand of the *khamsin*, feels the hackles rise upon his neck—for here he is behind the scenes, and all the actors are talking freely. Here are the stories that don't get into dispatches. Here are the men whose names you never hear but whose unrecorded deeds have turned the trick or saved the day when all seemed lost.

You've all read of the Italian conquest of

Bunji did not move as he watched his master's figure sliding and bouncing down the slope....

Ethiopia which started the last bloody mess. Though details may be vague in your mind today, at the time you were probably dismayed at the way the Italians chased the British out of Somaliland. And let's hope you were proportionately delighted when the British came back again and not only recaptured British Somaliland, Eritrea and the whole empire of Ethiopia, but also Italian Somaliland. You may have read about — and forgotten — the part Ravenscroft played, and Bunji, the gibbering little Kavirondo who helped see him through when the going was bad. If you're ever in Aden you may meet Ravenscroft at the bar, blandly downing his tenth with shaking hand—but not shaking from drink. He has a legitimate right to drown an endless thirst. Here's how he acquired that thirst—and contributed to the deathless lore of what may be a dying empire.

RAVENSCROFT was one of the veterans of the King's African Rifles, crocked by too much old-fashioned campaigning in German East when an army moved on boots and all transport went forward on the sandaled feet of porters. But he was a first-class Intelligence man, and Ethiopia was his meat. That's why Italy's entrance into the war found him out on a limb on the eastward escarpment of Ethiopia, trying to imagine in a wilderness what bombers might some day do to hypothetical airplane bases in the highlands. The day came when Ravenscroft had all the information but he was stymied, literally, between the devil and the deep Red Sea. So there he sat looking eastward, brooding.

He made no attempt to rationalize the impulse that had induced him to take Bunji with him that day; but he knew his hunch had been right when at high noon the withered old witch-doctor stirred from his heat-trance and sighed.

"Strangers in camps!"

The big Englishman rubbed both hands over his red, sweating face and through the long, graying hair still streaked with the golden glint of youth. The blue eyes he turned on the witch-doctor never failed to agitate the old fraud. Bunji's lusterless eyes in his incredibly wrinkled face blinked rapidly. He folded his skinny arms like an old dog baboon and nervously scratched gray lines in his leathery skin. His long lip grew longer and he grinned placatingly, disclosing yellow snaggled teeth.

"Always seeing trouble!" growled Ravenscroft, but he no more doubted the information that had come to Bunji out of the heavy static than if he had read the message on ticker-tape. The sensitiveness of Bunji's perceptions was simply keener than his. It was no more remarkable than Ravenscroft's own ability to prognosticate phases of the moon on the dial of his grandfather's Swiss watch, looped by a lanyard to his belt. Nor at this moment did it seem incongruous to the Intelligence officer that the only man upon whom he could depend was this old black, soaked in sorcery.

The rumor of Italy's declaration of war against France and Britain had already reached them, even at this remote edge of the Ethiopian Plateau. That meant only a matter of time before an Italian patrol would jump his camp and learn he had been plotting the locations of every possible airfield along the eastern fringe of Ethiopia from which Italian bombers could fly across the arid Danakil Desert, and across the Red Sea, to drop bombs on the British port and fortress of Aden in Arabia, which guards the southern approaches of the Suez Canal and the sea route to India and the Far East. How vital this information might be Ravenscroft knew well, with the picture of Dunkirk fresh in mind.

Lighting a cigarette with hands that had a chronic tremor, he leaned back in the shadow of the rock and stared moodily down into the heat haze that simmered over the land of the Kanakils. He knew he had no choice. He would have to get his information to Jibuti, the port of French Somilaland, on the African side, across the way from Aden.

The route across the Ethiopian highlands was impossible. Every mile of his safari had been under covert surveillance. Though the suspicious Italians had dared no overt act until they knew whether Britain was to be an ally or a foe, now that Mussolini had moved there would be no risky attempt at capture. Not of Ravenscroft! They would shoot him from ambush or in the open on the run. Ravenscroft thought of this only incidentally, as a Manchester merchant might weigh the risks of a shipment of Kanzas to Zanzibar. It was all part of the bloody business. No risk, no gain—

He flipped his cigarette into the pebbles.

Bunji pounced on it, held it with distended fingers to his puckered lips, sucked the smoke deep into his lungs with eyes closed in ecstasy.

"Ruddy ape!" snorted Ravenscroft. "And I've got to count on you!"

"Yes, yes, yes!" Bunji coughed and sputtered.

RAVENSCROFT considered the leathery old bag of bones wrapped in rags of leopard skins. These and the loose sandals that protected his splay-toed feet from gravel and scorpions were the only things that distinguished him from a wild animal, except, of course, the grimy little *bouda* bag that hung by a cord of woven hyena hair from his tortoise neck. The *bouda* bag contained the tools of his witchcraft—nonsensical scraps that gave him power over the little devils in all the things that plague mankind. No, Bunji was not a wild animal. He was a spiritual complexity encased in withered flesh, a spidery organism whose nervous feelers reached out like a protective aura, incredibly sensitive to living impulses. His kinship to the things of the bush had been useful to Ravenscroft who accepted it naturally as an understandable and useful fact. Could he not himself smell birds and snakes and distant habitations, reacting sometimes unconsciously to their presence? Did he not instinctively awake in the dark to unseen menaces? These were things the atrophied or jangled nerves of civilized man cannot feel.

He knew that Bunji could certainly cross the plateau without discovery, but Bunji could not cross the Danakil. That required physical and moral strength beyond the African's capacity. Ravenscroft frowned at his own trembling hand, annoyed at his own limitations. Lifting his chin he drew a long uneven breath as he pressed his hand in an unconscious gesture across his bared chest.

In order to understand the hell Ravenscroft faced, place your clenched fist a few inches from the outer edge of the table. Your fingers and knuckles are the buttresses of the Ethiopian Plateau that rises five thousand feet above the Danakil Depression, lying like a hot, seared wound between the plateau and the ragged western shore of the Red Sea. The plateau is the pleasant, well-watered and productive mountainous territory of Ethiopia; but the Danakil Depression, much of it below sea level, is the most forbidding gash upon the earth's surface, spotted with the dry pustules of dead and dormant volcanoes, crusted with honeycomb lava; black, knife-edged basalt splashed with iridescent manganese and red and yellow ochre, and scaled with vast flat stretches of sun-baked white clay and powdery sodium.

Much of this is dead as the moon. Incredible heat rolls over it, pressing down like a cauterizing iron. Where subterranean waterholes ooze through the broken cliffs, mesozoic life appears in the form of white scorpions, giant tortoises and serpents that feed on sun-blinded desert quail. There are human beings who live in that desert, live in temperatures of sixty degrees above blood heat. They are the demons of the hell—thin, bronze-colored, with black mops of hair. They have one dominating purpose in their precarious lives; namely, to hunt their fellow man and adorn their spears and bodies and bleak tombs with the trophies of their victims.

Across this glaring region, like a wavy black line upon a piece of paper, flows the muddy Awash River from a gorge in the plateau to the Oasis of Aussa.

Ravenscroft looked out in the direction of Aussa, thinking of the desert as a map, plotting a course across it.

"Look here, Bunji," he said. "There is no escape for me across the Danakil." Bunji opened his mouth wide, pursed his lips and let out a low incredulous whistle. "But," continued Ravenscroft, "you go southward to where the railroad to Jibuti crosses the gorge of the Awash River. Then you must follow the railroad to Jibuti."

He took a sheet from his field book and wrote names and information on the air bases he had scouted from Sakota to the Dessie. He stared at Bunji. How the devil would the old man carry it? Normally, he would carry a message in the split end of a long walking staff, waving it like a flag for all to see! He might cram the despatch in the *bouda* bag but it would soon become an undecipherable mess among Bunji's treasured bugs and beetles. With a look of mingled resignation and disgust at the grimacing witch-doctor, Ravenscroft reluctantly loosened his Swiss watch and folded the message inside the gold case. That

would both authenticate and protect the report.

"Hand this," he said, "to the Englishman in the house where the English flag flies in Jibuti."

Bunji's claw-like hand darted out and seized the watch.

"Mane . . . mane . . . mane!"

"Oh, it's good!" snorted Ravenscroft resentfully. "Well, you're making a farce of this bloody show, that's what you're doing! Look here," he added in Swahili, "only Englishmen must see this! If Ethiopians see, if Italians see, if Arabs see—surely you will die!"

Bunji contorted his face and spit out the thought. "No die. Death—he gone!"

This was the tie that held the two together.

RAVENSCROFT had first discovered Bunji abandoned by a group of Italian and Ethiopian road-makers. An old slave from the Equatorial Provinces, he had recognized an Englishman and beseeched his help in Swahili. His left shoulder and back were swollen taut as a mango and he was in agony. Punctures and all his witchcraft had failed to release any pus.

Diagnosing the ailment as gas gangrene, Ravenscroft had taken the moaning creature to his tent and slashed him with a razor from shoulder to waist. Eventually the pus oozed out and Bunji survived, the physical and spiritual slave of the Englishman whose master magic had opened him like a bag to let the spirit of death escape! Still, Bunji was Kavirondo born, Ravenscroft reflected, and no Kavirondo would overlook a chance like this.

"You old devil-dodger," he said, "you'll not dodge me! I have given you my *bouda*. Now you give me your *bouda* as a token!"

Bunji recoiled on his haunches as if struck, chattering with horror, grasping the *bouda* bag at his neck with his free hand. That bag of tricks was infinitely more to him than a mere symbol. It was his means of communion with the little devils in things. It was his power over darkness. That dirty little bag held the souls of his wild friends and he clung to it with beseeching desperation.

Incongruous racial indignation and family pride exploded in the Englishman. His husky voice rose to a smothered roar: "Come on! Come on, you Little Thing! You Little - Thing - Without - Teeth - To - Gnaw-A-Tail! You dare match your *bouda* against my *bouda?* Why, my ancestors brought my *bouda* down from the snow-topped mountains! For generations it has shown the moon the way across the darkness! And what virtue is there in your *bouda?* Bugs! Little bugs and feathers that couldn't keep death from crawling into your own armpit!"

Bunji whimpered, squirming, looking at Ravenscroft's red-white-and-blue face with fascination. With a spasmodic gesture he jerked the dirty little bag from his neck and handed it over with violently tremblingly hand. Ravenscroft felt only momentary compunction as he slipped the cord around his neck; but when the coarse hair rubbed against his sweating skin he shivered as if a snake had touched him. Every disease in Africa must have come in contact with that *bouda* bag. With what unholy benedictions it must have touched the bellies of women and the war-bonnets of warriors! Ah, well! Ravenscroft stood up reluctantly with hand pressing upon his chest. Damn that shaking hand! Damn that swollen heart!

Ravenscroft looked down into the soupy atmosphere with humid spirals floating up like steam above a pot and he had no illusions. The sun was declining and pursuers would soon be on his spoor. There was no thought of courage in his going. It was simply the thing to do, and his nature knew no choice but to run the game to the end.

Well accoutered with safari tunic and slacks tucked into heavy ammunition boots, he carried water bottle, matches, odds and ends, and a sporting rifle with five extra clips in his pockets. He took a cigarette from a pack and tossed the remainder to Bunji, as he stood up reluctantly.

"Kwa heri!" said Bunji in plaintive farewell.

"So long," said Ravenscroft, adding grimly: "You'll be getting your *bouda* when, as and if we meet in Jibuti!"

"Ai-yee!" squealed Bunji. He did not move as his eyes followed the master's dusty brown figure sliding and bouncing down the long slope until it vanished in waves of heat and dust. Only then, as if the enormity of his loss had just burst upon him, Bunji went into violent tantrums. He jumped up and down, stamping with head tilted back and arms wrapped tight about

his body. He fell down and beat the ground with hands and feet. He rolled over and over, kicking and squealing. Finally he lay quiet, staring out from under his crooked arm, out with unseeing eyes across the desert where Ravenscroft was starting his oblique march to the steaming sea.

All at once a faint electric vibration passed through Bunji. He had become aware of the faint ticking of the watch against his body. A living impulse was there! The Englishman's *bouda* was talking to him! In sudden exaltation Bunji wondered if his *bouda* would speak as clearly to the white man. Bunji's entrancement was interrupted by a noise from above. With the sharp coughing bark of a sentinel baboon he faded slowly and reluctantly among the rocks.

RAVENSCROFT knew it was most unlikely that he himself would ever arrive in Jibuti but he didn't stop to think of that. His method was to fix an objective and keep going until stopped. What he felt was that if any white man in Africa could make that trek, it was he. He continued the downward scramble with outstretched arms.

No lone man had ever crossed the Danakil; yet strangely enough he felt no loneliness—rather a sort of stimulating excitement—and a feeling of companionship with Bunji whose *bouda* bounced upon his chest.

What you have learned of the Danakil presents the worst side of the story. Ravenscroft, who knew all the facts and could read the desert as if it were a man, saw a more hopeful prospect. He had reports of the Italians pushing a roadway southward from old Eritrea to carry supplies for the attack he foresaw on French and British Somaliland, and to strengthen their control over the Antari of the Oasis of Aussa. This road might save him suffering but it would get him shot in the end. Instinctively recoiling from the desert, he felt his best bet was to keep close to the base of the highland escarpment, striking out into the desert so that he could reach the Oasis of Aussa without being cut down, he might lie doggo in the river jungle of the Awash and there refresh himself before undertaking the final leg through the rock and thornbush of the Balalu Plain that stretches away in wild confusion to the narrow gauge railroad from Addis Ababa to the sea. Once in the French right-of-way, he might have a chance.

Twenty years ago he would have faced the march defiantly, matching his strength and wits against anyone or anything in Africa. Now his body was only a vehicle with a crocked engine. One thing he could count on. His legs would carry him with the automatic tirelessness of a migrating animal, if only he were not called upon for sudden violent action.

The sharp downward slope made his accouterments seem light. Though he was soaked in sweat, his breath came easily.

By nightfall, with the escarpment towering like a city above him, he had got something of the feel of the country. The sun slipped behind the mountains as if a giant door had slowly closed, plunging the white-hot plains into sudden darkness—a hot dank darkness that made a man struggle for breath. The first darkness was intense but a monster moon of mother-of-pearl soon rose out of Arabia and the silent, grotesque world was flooded with a brilliance that made light and shadow as sharp as the striping of a Grevy's zebra. Bathed in moonlight, the escarpment now seemed like a high bank of luminous clouds. It was not difficult for Ravenscroft to keep direction among the dried-up, boulder-strewn watercourses and faint ancient trails that paralleled the base of the mountain wall.

There was life about him in the scurryings of marmots and ground squirrels underfoot; in the occasional appearance of flat-topped mimosas and the uplifted hands of giant euphorbias; the thin wisps of odors that told of the passing of unseen forms; and once a wave of overpowering sweetness that was the fragrance of a desert plant appealing to the bees. This was easy; but he knew it was only a breather, for even here, not once through the night, did he smell water.

AS THE red fury of dawn slashed out across the desert, soon the blast of heat drove Ravenscroft to shelter among some rocks where he rested, drinking his precious water in miserly sips. Utterly relaxed but with mind and senses alert, he had learned by three of the afternoon that no one was following his trail, though there were domestic goats and a human habitation not far away. Before sunset he discovered an Ethiopian *tokhul* up a narrow chasm where a fugitive from the plateau led a precarious

life. When the native's terror abated and he recognized a friend, he overwhelmed the Englishman with the hospitality of his loneliness, begging him to remain in hiding with him. He pointed out that not even the salt caravans from Assah that passed through the Oasis of Aussa, passed in safety.

"They come out of the desert like madmen," said the hillman, "those that come out at all."

"There's a trail then?"

The Ethiopian sighed and described the bearings of the salt trail that led from the plateau to the big bend of the Awash River, beyond which was the Oasis of Aussa.

"Italians are there," he said.

"Holy Jo," said Ravenscroft.

"Well, if you must leave the trail, bear to the right. In time you will reach the Awash. If it's in spate from rain on the plateau, I don't see how you can cross it."

"I shan't complain of water."

"You are mad—for even when it falls from the sky, it falls as mud. The dust of the *khamsin* soaks it up as it falls."

Provisioned with a lump of goat cheese, some tough sheets of peppery bread, a gourd of curdled milk and fresh water, Ravenscroft made tracks that night, holding up again in the heat to conserve his strength and body moisture.

He was not yet lonely and he found sardonic amusement in thinking of Bunji on the plateau above, skipping along like a limping raven, fretting for the precious *bouda* bag that hung on Ravenscroft's chest. There was a sensory impression of aliveness in that touch of soft pliable skin, as Bunji's hand were actually on the halter of hyena hair. But that night it appeared that the guiding hand was none too dependable.

It had been tough going for Ravenscroft —feeling his way out obliquely into the desert—feeling his way through a debris of black, knife-edged rocks that clinked metallically underfoot, walking down timeless corridors walled with black basalt and floored with colored marbles, eventually emerging upon a flat floor of white clay with a light covering of sand that hissed under his boots like snakes in the oppressive silence. This led in turn to a group of low hills touched with opalescence in the moon light. At length he found himself on a recognizable trail. It was just before dawn. Energy was at its lowest ebb but darkness was precious and he continued on. Half asleep as he slogged along with weary head drooping on his chest, he walked straight into an Ethiopian patrol which was planted across the trail to intercept him.

His first dash was a wild spasmodic rush to escape. He ran with bullets about his ears. There was no place to make a getaway. They were too quick for him. He bolted with a tremendous burst of speed but by the time he got into the clear his lungs were bursting, his heart pounding painfully, his legs crumpling under him. With the Ethiopians and a shouting Italian at his heels and the light of dawn now brightening about them, Ravenscroft had neither chance to hide nor time to unsling his rifle. He stumbled towards the black of a wadi that lay like a gash on the white plain.

Here he turned, cursing, wrestling frantically to free his rifle while the shouting Italian and his askaris leaped to seize him before he could defend himself. In that instant Ravenscroft had the curious impression that a dark wall rose up before them flinging them back on their heels. This was only an impression, for all the rest was confusion.

The ground dissolved beneath him. He fell into soft, black-cushioned darkness. An acrid sweetness was in his nostrils and there was a vibrant hum like the singing roar of sand before a hot wind—but this vibration was a living thing like the sweeping chords of an impassioned symphony. With earth falling down on him in an avalanche of cork-like fragments, he rolled frantically. Hunched in a ball, he rolled until he brought up against a rock. With face buried in the crook of his arm and his topi protecting his head, he prayed God the earth would bury him—but not too deep—for the living clouds of bees that sucked the sweetness of desert acacia and mimosa meant death to all who walked into their ancient lair.

ALL day long Ravenscroft lay there, immovable as a dead man except for the pounding of his heart that slowly, painfully settled to a normal rhythm as time passed. The depth of the wadi and the blanket of earth saved him from the worst of the heat. A hundred red-hot needles were in his hide but the coating of friable earth protected him from the death that roared and hummed

in explosive clouds above him. He lay there, tortured beyond belief by heat and thirst and the agony of inaction, until dark. Then he thrust forth his hand and nothing assailed it. So he rose to his feet and passed quickly across the wadi and out again upon the plain.

Once in the clear, he did a characteristic thing. Instead of hurrying along the trail, he scouted back upon the encampment of the patrol. The bivouac was still complete, as if life had suddenly been suspended—but life was no longer there.

"They ran straight into that barrage!" he muttered.

By the aid of a lantern he found what he wanted—a gourd full of *tedj*, the flat sour honeymead of the Ethiopians, and several packs of cigarettes. He drank the beer in long gasping draughts, feeling his belly swell with it, feeling it spill down his chin and run in rivulets over neck and chest. He wrapped a piece of cotton sheeting round his head and body. Then, lighting a cigarette, he walked steadily on his way, curiously elated, certain now that no patrol would intercept him or overtake him without a delaying brush with that rear-guard of bees lying in ambush in the wadi.

This day he walked in daylight and soon dread of the desert rose like nausea within him. The boulder-strewn ravines and basalt cliffs here were calcined into dust by the merciless heat. The blistered white soil was delicately crusted, and crumbled into powder underfoot. He could see no limit to the dead plain, he could hear no sound but the hiss of his own feet and the slow thump of blood in his ears. The heat seemed to have him by the throat. Only constant sucking of a moistened rag kept the gluey mucus from sticking when he gulped. When the moon rose that night he continued on, the heat like a hairy cloak upon him, for in the Danakil night brings no coolness; the porous surface pours out imprisoned heat. When daylight came, he still went on. The silence of death was on him and there was no hope for life until he reached the Awash River somewhere ahead in the blinding whiteness. He had difficulty now keeping direction. The light of the sun was diffused in a terrible glare. He seemed to be walking endlessly on one spot. His strained vision became clouded with strings and moving rods and circles as if he were looking through a microscope.

Still he moved on.

Ravenscroft was nearing death from thirst as another dawn ran like crimson bush fire under the sulphurous pall of night. The sudden light of day struck vibrations on the flat land. Ravenscroft's heart now felt the flutter of terror, for his rheumy eyes gazed on nothing but boundless aridity. Then, far out on the plain, he saw an ant-like line of wild asses. This was life. Lifting his gaze with a flicker of hope he saw in low silhouette the two dead mountain cones that stand bleakly in the middle of the desert north of Aussa. If these truly were Kulsu Kuma, then somewhere to the southward, off to his right—and there it was! A faint grey-green line like vertical chalk marks on a drawing board, a fringe of dusty tamarisk along the Awash!

Instinctively Ravenscroft dropped. With water come the violent dangers of steel and fang. He stuck it out until the heat of high noon when all Africa sleeps; then he walked in a coma until he reached the tangled bush by the river's edge. Here he found a way through a matted meadow and slid down the long clay bank to the water. Unmindful of crocodile or lurking Danakil he floundered in and soaked up the life-giving waters. Afterwards, aware of the imminence of danger, he found shelter in the crotch of a large tree where he dozed through the day, intending to come out after nightfall; but with the going down of the sun he was shocked into alertness by the most terrific jungle uproar he had ever heard. It was as if all the creatures of a vast area had followed the receding waters of a flood and were fighting for survival at the last water hole. The jungle shook with the rush of shrieking monkeys, escaping snake and leopard. Crocodiles splashed and bellowed in the water beneath him. He could feel the vibration of the hyena's gibberish bark; the shrill bedlam of toads and insects, of startled birds and darting animals.

When the quartering moon rose in the first hush of the Hour of the Dog, he slipped from his perch, aching in every joint, and made his way out into the peace of the desert, where, spread upon a boulder, he was reasonably safe until dawn.

RAVENSCROFT continued in this place for two days until strength was restored, not daring to fire a shot or light a

fire. At any hour a savage might discover his spoor and track him down. He knew that the settled part of the oasis, lower down, was pastoral country and partially cultivated. He could forage there more safely than he could stalk game, without shooting in that murderous belt of jungle. That evening, while speculating on how far he must go to reach a village, he heard the Antari's trumpets, sweet, high-pitched—a poignant reminder that where there were men there were mounted warriors armed with lance and rifle to ride him down. Ravenscroft's first thought was that he might steal a horse!

Taking his position from the stars, he left the river course and made a wide sweep that brought him, well past midnight as the waning moon was rising, to scattered huts and high thorn-fenced zarebas protecting horses and cattle. Luck was with him, and he found a gourd of mealies by a hut. Emboldened by this he drifted like a shadow among the huts, feeling a curious, calm detachment, as if a clear simple plan had been laid before him. Emptying the grain into his pockets, he approached a zareba and without too much difficulty tore a gap through which he reached the cattle. He found no horses; but he calmed the doubts of a sleek-humped cow that would have graced a temple in Benares and managed to fill the gourd with milk. This was too easy! The smell of the wild was on him—the smell of bees, the jungle, his own strange odor and that of the unclean *bouda* bag with its string of hyena hair—yet the cow stood docilely as he milked her!

Now there was a change. Prickles of fear ran up his spine. Like a thing of the wild he turned in unthinking panic and dived through the hole he had made. He was rattled, frightened. A fire stirred into life as a herdsman awoke. Ravenscroft pressed his hand to his straining heart. The *bouda* bag was gone!

Every taut nerve urged him to bolt for the bush. Yet he stood there. After all, that *bouda* bag was precious to Bunji—and he had staked his British honor on returning it if possible. With the village awakening about him, Ravenscroft turned back to the zareba, searching frantically in the dim light until, hanging there like a fig on a thorn, he found it.

Then he bolted, the gourd of milk in one hand, the *bouda* bag in the other, his rifle thumping between his shoulderblades, the cotton sheeting streaming behind him like a comet's tail.

He got away without discovery but he had left spoor. With daylight they would be tracking him. It came to him now that they would run him down on camels or horses, and he was of a mind to turn back and fight for a horse and make a dash southward into the Galalue Plain which he still had to cross in order to reach the railway. But this was gambling too much on one throw. There was a possibility of eluding pursuit by heading upstream, following the left bank, since this would be the route they would be least likely to expect him to take. Even a breath of air obscured tracks in the dust and he might get away through the glare of the day.

The line of the river, marked by violet and gray strokes of trees against the desert whiteness, was spotted with wider patches of dusty green that were the tangled jungle. Between these isolated patches were open stretches where nothing but a few tamarisks grew. Once in the tangled jungles he might just as well be suffocated in a haircloth sack. The smaller patches afforded temporary shelter but there he could easily be surrounded and starved out. Still his only hope was to keep near water until the last possible moment when he must make his break southward.

So he moved like a sluggish dust-devil, with the dirty cotton sheeting streaming from head and shoulder, from shelter to shelter. Physical and spiritual depression crushed him. His senses became dull. He grew careless. In order to make better time he took a straight line across a bend of the river as sunset closed down like the lid of a box. When well out in the open he was discovered by a band of horsemen.

THE sight of palpable life, of human enemies, revived Ravenscroft. He took his time unslinging his rifle, opening the breech to blow out dust, shooting the bolt back with a reassuring snap. He had time to observe the horsemen with the same detachment with which he had watched the file of wild asses on the plain. These men of Aussa, mounted on light, nervous horses, were not the Danakil devils of the wastelands, though just as deadly in intent. The bells and strips of leather and red cloth

that caparisoned the crude Arabic saddles and bridles were trophies of the slain. They rode like American Indians, shouting and making fantasia with their horses, then turning suddenly to swoop down on Ravenscroft where he stood like an anthill on the flat plain now rapidly sinking into the dusk of evening. There was a flicker of orange light and a sharp ringing crash from Ravenscroft's rifle. The leading horse somersaulted in a cloud of white dust. That stopped the first charge.

Ravenscroft turned and loped for the river, not extending himself, running with face over his shoulder, feeling the hackles rise on his neck at the crackling of the Aussan guns, at the yells and shouts that brought a hush to the jungle life.

He halted twice more to fire, the bright dots of his rifle flashes bringing the horses plunging back on their haunches as another ploughed its neck in the dust.

Darkness was now rising in a mist about them. The waning moon would not show until late but even so Ravenscroft knew that with the horsemen converging in on him he was pinned against the river like a fox before rushing hounds. Once in the water they could ride him under, drowning him or stabbing him with their spears. If he could hold them at the river's bank he might have a chance to escape another day.

In the dusk, he pumped a clip at them, adding to the din of the fusillade about him. Frenziedly he rammed home a fresh clip and plunged into the stream up to his armpits.

Floundering across, he had gained the edge of the opposite shore when a horseman splashed down on him, yelling and lunging with a spear. Ravenscroft thrust his rifle against the man's body and blasted him from the saddle. In the same instant he flung himself at the horse, seizing the brutal snaffle with his left hand and flinging his right arm over the saddle without relaxing his grip on the rifle. The water, the slippery clay of the sloping bank checked the frantic beast. Ravenscroft was dragged to a firmer footing, his face buried in the horse's neck, curiously aware with a sense almost of gratitude of the friendly smell of horse sweat in his nostrils.

As he mastered the trembling horse his first impulse was to scramble on its back and make a blind dash for it through the bush. *Oh, God,* he thought, *if I could only hold them back for three minutes!* Then, almost as if an order had been shouted to him, he knew he must try to halt them. He must halt them at the bank! If he could shake himself loose on horseback, at least the men of Aussa would never catch him in the night. Drawing the horse's head against his shoulder he got in another burst of shots at the dark fringe of the opposite shore. Even as he fired he was aware, from the flashes of the Aussan guns, that no more of them had yet entered the water. The loud fusillade continued but they were not actually pushing home the attack. They were checking.

A coolness came over his steaming body. Instead of plunging and fighting, the horse was standing quietly. In that instant it seemed to Ravenscroft there was an unseen Presence in the bush around him. He had known the feeling in a line of skirmishers at night—the awareness of unseen comrades fighting beside him. Awed and puzzled, he looked about—and saw the darkness of the bush, right and left, punctured with flashes. Amid the uproar of rifle fire from the opposite bank, he could not distinguish the sound of firing near him; but then, he thought with an incredulous gasp, neither can the men of Aussa! How could they tell in the darkness that Bunji and other refugees escaping to the coast were not with him?

Flinging a leg over the horse, Ravenscroft worked his way through the fringe of bush until he reached the open. Taking his direction from a star, he cantered southward, hoofbeats muffled in the sodium underfoot. When at length he drew down to a walk, he was gasping and laughing hysterically:

"Like a bunch of *ruga-rugas!*" he choked. "Shooting at fireflies! I'd never have believed it! Shooting at fireflies! That's one for the book . . . . *Along about the sunset. . . . Won't you listen to my story?* Bloomin' fireflies!"

HE PUSHED southward all night, cantering in the open Indian style without stirrups, for he couldn't put his ragged boots in Arab toe-rings. He drew the horse down to a walk only when it was necessary to thread his way along ground littered with basalt and lava rocks. His wet garments and the horse's plunge in the river kept

them reasonably fresh and Ravenscroft rode under the stars with rising spirits. For the first time he dared hope he might actually make it, though the dreadful Galalu Plain still lay between him and the railroad to Jibuti. Dawn came with opalescent light touching the Sibabi Hills to the southwest. Then he saw grim Mt. Ayelu where explorers from the south had been massacred before him; but; then, he reasoned, if they had got that far, approaching from the southward, he might back-track along their trail.

Dark clouds hung in the sky through which solid shafts of sunlight revealed black canyons and fantastic cliffs like old wood-cuts in the Bible. He saw zebras and ostriches drifting toward the river depression and recalled the gratitude that he had crossed the Awash before it had swollen with rains from the plateau. He wondered how Bunji would fare in the rains. He wondered if he might beat him to Jibuti after all!

There was no water on the plain. Ravenscroft was terribly tempted to risk turning toward the river. But certainly there were Danakil villages there. Despite all suffering, it was safer on the plain. Once he found some *kart* bushes on which the horse fed ravenously. He, too, chewed the pulpy leaves until almost stupefied from the narcotic weed.

When his horse fell on the third day, Ravenscroft shot him with his last bullet. The rifle was now too heavy to carry. He staggered on, the soles of his boots flapping, his scorched mouth hanging open, his blue eyes glaring bleakly from the smudged blackness of his face. But he moved forward steadily; for Mt. Assabot was now before him—and Mt. Assabot looked down upon the Jibuti railroad.

It was daylight when he stumbled upon the iron rails.

Under normal conditions there were only three trains a week. War and the development of the Italian port of Massawa far to the northward had diverted traffic. Then, too, the Danakils were constantly raiding the line for iron and the precious copper wire of the telegraph. Ravenscroft saw now that the wires were down. What had happened to the railroad while he was in the wilderness?

There was nothing he could do but turn eastward in the hope he might find some isolated station by a water-tank. He told himself that with the wires down a maintenance crew must be on its way by train.

The heat came on like the roll of a drum.

By ten o'clock the world looked like the face of a brazen planet. There was no sign of vegetation here. Volcanic rock, flaming red and yellow, boiled up in a dead sea of lava dust. Again the heat was a physical force pressing down on him, sucking at his withered body, gripping his heart. The crushed and ragged helmet drooped upon his head; his rusty beard spread down upon his chest; and chest and stomach were bare to the waist, wet and pallid. His garments hung in tatters. Out of the dirty shadow of his face, his eyes looked like white lights.

The *bouda* bag, hanging like an amulet upon his sunken ribs, gave the final touch of authenticity to this wild *mullah* who had come out of the desert.

As minutes passed into hours and nothing appeared, Ravenscroft walked on in a daze. All at once he came to a halt. There was an emptiness before him. The rails had ended. After a moment he raised his eyes and saw that the trestle that had spanned a deep dry wadi had disappeared. Along the bottom of the ravine, crushed and scattered like the dessicated segments of a snake in the sun, were the remains of the up-country goods train—stark, silent, stripped clean as bones where vultures and hyenas have feasted.

Ravenscroft looked down with strange detachment. The utter absence of life or movement of any kind made the picture unreal. There was no informing sound. There was no smell, either of life or death. The box cars were so many empty pasteboard cartons; the locomotive an empty oil drum. The boxes that once held merchandise and the broken crates that had been alive and clamorous with livestock and barnyard fowl were but a dusty litter. It was hopeless to look here for life, and no one could have escaped into the hills. In the moving waves of heat there was not even a perch where a bird might light.

But within the iron of the locomotive there was water!

WITH life restored by the hot and rusty liquid, Ravenscroft's thoughts began again to run clearly. Turning away from the wreck to escape the silent horror, he climbed

a low hill from which he might look for signs of a relief train or signal an airplane. From this point he moved uneasily to a higher hill standing like a monument above the others. With aching eyes he stood there, immovable, staring eastward where the heat lay like a sea of heaving glue.

He could hear his own breath wheezing. He could hear his heart pumping in his ears. He could hear the roaring of the silence. He could hear the movement of a pebble. A feeling of peace was upon him; but he could hear the movement of a pebble. He could hear the rattle of an unseen pebble!

Ravenscroft's sagging body slowly stiffened, fearing the shock and consequence of a sudden move; for as he turned his head he saw shadows in motion among the rocks, shadows glossy with sweat and grease. Sunlight flashed on reddened steel. He stood stupefied and apathetic, as a man does when face to face with a swaying hamadryad, the instant before death strikes.

With senseless, photographic clarity he saw seven Danakil spearmen rising from the rocks below him, noting how true to race they were, Hamito-Semitic, fuzzy-headed demons with an almost effeminate delicacy of feature. With curious detachment he saw the stains upon their skinny bodies; the sunlight making reddish auras about the lime-bleached shocks of hair; the slimy trophies hanging at their waists; the big lumps of amber hanging on cords about their necks even as the *bouda* bag still hung on his own. He saw the spears and curved knives; the big mouths and the wild eyes fixed hungrily upon him. He saw this all with an aloof and dumb fearlessness—as if it were a thing unreal—as if . . . .

If only he remained quite still, some barrier might rise to interpose itself again and this agony, too, would pass. Then, as he stood unmoving, it appeared to him that the Danakils were making no further move forward but were staring at him with widened eyes rolling their sockets.

Instead of rushing forward to flesh their spears, they stooped warily with blades drooping at their sides, staring not at him but into the sky directly above his head. It is an airplane, he thought, but there was no sound of an airplane. There was no sound at all except the blood pounding in his ears and the rattle of a pebble. Yes, there was a sound! There was a soft whirring sound of something above him—a soft fluttering sound. He lifted his face; and a pigeon, fluttering out of the glaring sky, settled on his shoulder. Instinctively, Ravenscroft's hands went up, pressed against the dazed bird, capturing it.

He remained standing there until the Danakils melted away among the rocks with long murmuring sighs, and a great peacefulness descended upon him.

The whistle of a train shattered the silence. Shouts rose from the valley. Helmeted heads bobbed among the rocks where the Danakils had disappeared. Ravenscroft hoped the newcomers were not Italians.

They were French railwaymen from Jibuti. As they examined the wreckage, the train conductor took Ravenscroft by the elbow and pointed to the empty crates.

"There's where your bird came from! Pigeons from Italy consigned to the Governor General! That pigeon must have been half blinded by the sun—like desert quail fluttering down to a water-hole. It simply thought you were a tree stump or an ant-hill and flew to rest upon you!"

"That's one on Badoglio!" said Ravenscroft in a rasping whisper.

The Frenchmen were dejected by news from Europe and harassed by native raids inspired by Italians. They were fearful these raids might be extended into campaigns against Jibuti itself and British Somaliland—as indeed they soon were. Ravenscroft, therefore, was but one of the few fortunate ones who had escaped, and so he reached Jibuti without attracting extraordinary attention.

At the house of the Englishman in Jibuti

Statement required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Acts of March 3, 1933 and July 2, 1946 (Title 39, United States Code, Section 233), showing the Ownership, Management, and Circulation of Adventure Magazine, published bi-monthly at Kokomo, Indiana, for October 1, 1952. 1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York. Editor, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York. Managing editor, None. Business manager, None. 2. The owner is: Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York. Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York. Shirley M. Steeger, 205 East 42nd St., New York 17, New York. 3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. Paragraphs 2 and 3 include, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting; also the statements in the two paragraphs show the affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner. Signed, Henry Steeger, Publisher. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 7th day of October, 1952. Eugene Jelinek, Notary Public, State of New York. Qualified in Bronx County, No. 03-1962300. Certificate filed in Bronx and N. Y. counties. My Commission expires; March 30, 1953. (Seal)—Form 3526—Rev. 8-50.

he found an admiring A.P.O. who had come over from Aden to help with his despatches and to see he got aboard safely.

After handing over his field book, Ravenscroft sank into a tub bath where he lay blissfully in soak while an Arab barber worked on his head and a Hindu boy poured pegs of Scotch and cold water within reach of either hand. When he appeared again in soft white drill he was a different man, except for his whispering hoarseness and the tremor of his hands. His shaven neck and chin had a piebald effect and his eyes were badly bloodshot and puckered. Otherwise he was all right. At that time he didn't think much of his own information.

"What!" protested the A.P.O. "After what happened at Dunkirk, it's priceless! We can let them have all Somaliland if they want it, but we must keep command of the sea and air. Now that we know exactly where their nests are we can keep them off Aden. And some day, by heaven, we'll bomb them to hell with our own planes."

"Some day," Ravenscroft yawned. He was distressed that no word had been heard of Bunji. Apparently the old man had never reached Jibuti.

"No use waiting here for him," the A.P.O. suggested. "You never can tell, the way things are going. They may intern us. We'll start inquiries for Bunji—and let's you and me hop over to Aden."

"Well—" Ravenscroft demurred, rubbing his chin.

"Well, why not?"

"He's got my gold watch!"

The A.P.O. laughed loud and long.

TWO weeks later, in Aden, the A.P.O. dropped in on Ravenscroft in his quarters. Bunji had been picked up in Zeyla in British Somaliland, trying to sell Ravenscroft's watch to a Banian trader.

"The bloody thief!"

"Oh, no! He claims it's all your fault. You cheated him. He says your *bouda* showed the moon the way until he got to Dire-Dawa—and there it died on him—just died! And the moon didn't fall from the sky—and the sun rose just the same as it always does."

"It was an eight-day watch," Ravenscroft said, abashed. "I forgot to tell him about winding it." He put his hand to his mouth to keep from laughing, because he felt rather shocked. In a way he had indeed cheated the old man, gambling his life on a childish story.

No, it wasn't so funny.

He slowly poured soda in his whiskey. "Sorry about that. We swapped *boudas*, you know. I expect he really had faith in his *bouda*—and he took my junk on faith too. Didn't he ask about his *bouda* bag?"

"Oh, didn't he! He says you're a master magician—and a master cheat. So far as he's concerned to hell with his *bouda*, says he. It appears you squeezed the last pippet of usefulness out of his *bouda*—and now it's as empty of power as an old sock."

Ravenscroft let the long drink pour down his delighted throat as he opened the drawer of his desk with his free hand. He tossed the *bouda* bag before the A.P.O.

"I've got a lot of drinking to do," he said. "Here, take a dekko at this."

The A.P.O. shook the contents of the bag upon a blotter and adjusted his monocle to examine the scraps under the lamplight. Not satisfied, he picked up a reading glass.

"Hum," he observed. "I wouldn't give a penny for it myself. They sometimes have nuggets and crystals in 'em, you know. This has only bugs. Let's see. Well, here's a piece of beeswax—wild bees, I judge. Some insects—look like fireflies to me. And a few feathers—just ordinary pigeon's feathers."

Ravenscroft choked over his drink, trying to croak out some words.

"What?" asked the A.P.O. sharply.

"Cursed palsy," Ravenscroft sputtered. "Name those things over again, will you?"

Turning the scraps over thoughtfully with a pencil, the A.P.O. repeated: "Mess of wild bees . . . some fireflies . . . five or six pigeon's feathers. Absolutely all. What's the matter? Does it make sense?"

Wiping his wet lips with the back of his hand, Ravenscroft dared not look at the A.P.O. His gaze became fixed and distant, clouding with a sudden vision. He saw wild bees. He saw fireflies. He saw a pigeon coming out of an empty sky. Reaching for the whiskey, he cast an indignant look at the A.P.O.

"Not at all! Not at all!" he growled. "I was only thinking what amazing allies the bloody empire has—and they're never going to be mentioned even in despatches!"

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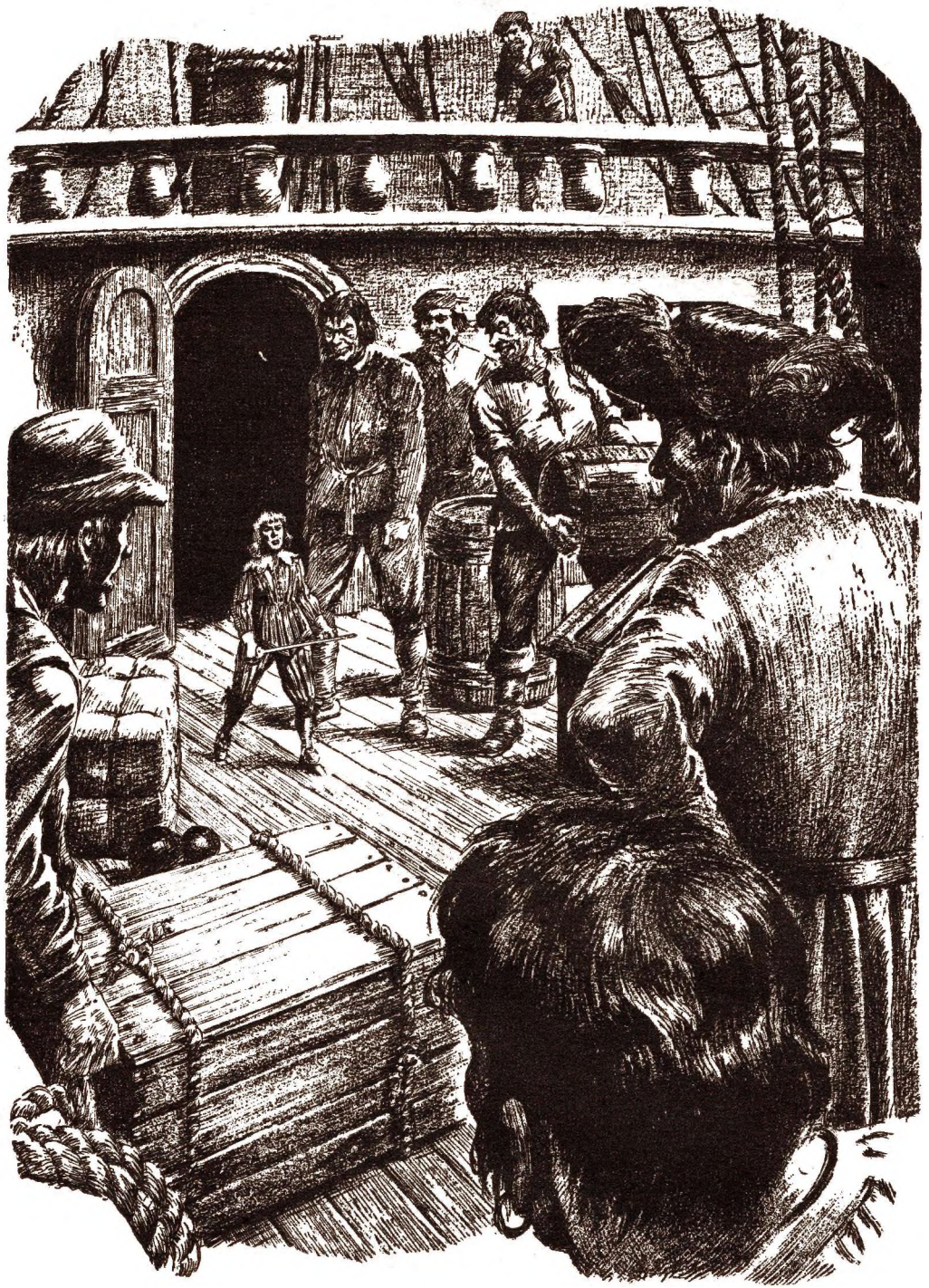


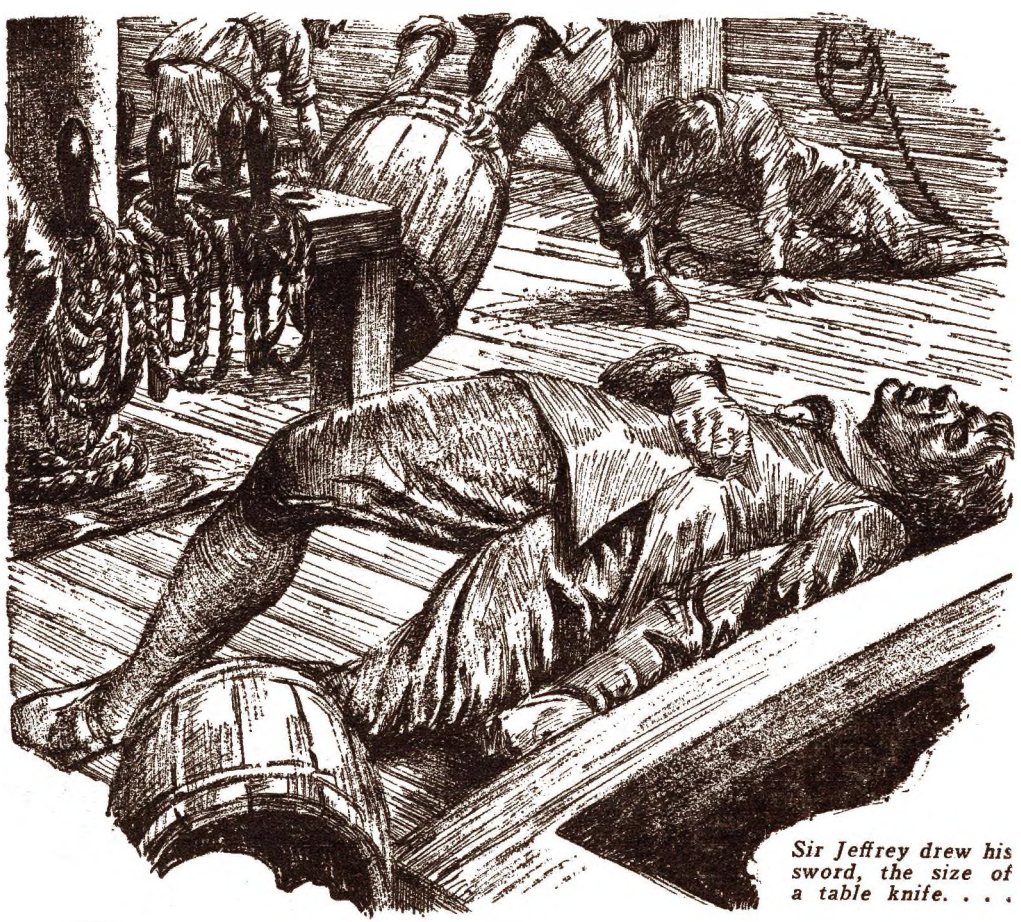
COCKSPARROW CAVALIER

The Story of History's Mightiest Mite

HIS Royal Majesty's face was red from good cheer and good wine as his queen cast arch eyes at their host. The host, thinking discreetly of how a sovereign's favor might be used for further advantage, clapped hands in imperious command.

Two serving wenches appeared, carrying between them an enormous pastry in a gaudily-ornamented, solid gold pan. Behind them walked a huge man, bearing a razor-sharp slaughter knife in his bulging right paw.

His Majesty frowned, having the petulance of a Stuart about social form and the impatience of one born to the purple with parvenus. "Methinks," he growled to his equerry," the butcher does his work in the abattoir and not in the dining room before my lord's guests." Then the King was



Sir Jeffrey drew his sword, the size of a table knife. . . .

silent, remembering with the satisfaction of a smart trader the handsome price paid by this George Villiers to be endowed as first Duke of Buckingham.

The wenches placed the vessel on table, trembled appropriately before royalty, and withdrew. But the butcher looked rakishly at the distinguished company of princes and peers, his eyes measuring a little too frankly the appetizing plumpness of the queen. The crust of the cold pastry quivered for a minute as if disturbed by the tread of the officiating giant. When the knife cut it in criss-cross lines, it began churning like a creek resisting the rape of a whirlwind.

The Lord Archbishop of York let out an oath, hardly clerical, when a flying spatter of dough descended on his black silk stole. The pan spun violently, and women shrieked as something shot up like a jack-in-the-box from its inside.

Then a great roar of laughter shook the board and the king led in the applause. Standing in the center of the table was a tiny dwarf child, no bigger than the imported Flemish dolls sold in London's better shops, but perfectly proportioned in trunk and face like them.

The mannikin pulled a snowy lace handkerchief from the pocket of its velvet jacket, the size of a doll's coat. Fastidiously, it wiped away particles of crumb from the garment. Afterwards it bowed saucily to the king and queen, the duke and duchess, and the assembled company before breaking into a pirouetting little dance that caused the board to jiggle daintily. Following the performance, it seated itself on an overturned sugar bowl and gazed about.

When the ovation died down, the butcher came forward again and bowed low before his master. "Accept this my gift, Your Grace," he purred. "Accept my son Jeffrey, who will afford you much diversion from the cares of rank."

Whereupon the small one sprang gracefully from his resting place into the lap of the duke. His Grace's thick frame shook with laughter as his hand stroked the dwarf's blond curls.

"My mountain yclept Hudson," he cackled, pointing to the butcher, "some nine years since sired this mouse. Observe, Your Majesties, my lords and ladies. The mountain lacks but little to stand full seven feet. The mouseling, without the help of shoes, spans but one foot and six."

In the excited comment that followed, the duke saw the queen staring enviously at his prize. The seventeenth century was an age when royalty collected freaks as business magnates today collect match covers. Britain's newest peer had carefully noted that dwarfs swarmed under his feet like tame conies the last time he'd visited court.

Whoever presented the queen with a pixie likely got in return a generous slice of some business controlled by her as a state monopoly. The duke's eye was out for business when it looked into the smoldering, inviting eyes of his liege lady.

"Your Majesty," he murmured, "is a connoisseur of such elfin ones. Permit me, Madame, to add this gem." He pushed Jeffrey in the direction of the woman who'd been the bored French princess, Henrietta Maria, before marriage to Charles Stuart the First had made her the grasping English queen.

His Grace guessed that his reward would not be long in forthcoming when Jeffrey was lifted into the royal coach bound for London, next morning. Most urchins in the dwarf boy's native county of Rutland were content with their hoops and their catechisms, that eventless year of 1628. But what the butcher's son would learn at the cynical, lascivious court of the Stuarts was hardly to be gained from toys or books.

"I'M GOING to London to make my fortune," he hummed as he sat perched with the driver in the coach box during the long jaunt. "Going to London to make my—" He was still breathing snatches of the ditty when the roach rolled across the cobblestones of the city, and stopped at the marble gates of the palace.

A great sleepy-eyed hulk of a man, towering higher than Jeffrey's father, shuffled forward and began unloading baggage. Tom Evans, the palace porter, stood eight feet high and had once been England's main circus attraction. Then Her Majesty had bankrupted the show by commandeering him for her menage of human curios.

Now the largest and smallest of her subjects were measuring each other for the first time. The giant let a trunk drop heavily to the ground when he caught sight of Jeffrey nestling beside the coachman. Her Majesty, lighting from the carriage, tittered behind

her fan as she watched the mutual inspection of pygmy and titan. The dwarf child showed no fear as he gazed at the broad dull face of the monster. The big fellow inched forward, staring in stupid amazement at this creature, smaller by a foot than any dwarf currently in the queen's collection.

Jeffrey broke the silence. "Fee, fi, fo fum," he piped. "Spare the blood of an Englishman."

The giant let out a rumbling chuckle. He grinned like an amiable big dog as he held out his great arms. Jeffrey sailed from the box with the sureness of a sparrow in flight. Tom Evans barely felt the weight of the boy as he carried him, like a fragile babe, upstairs to the dwarf quarters with its tiny beds and furniture scaled to the size of the users by the queen's own craftsmen.

Pee-wee Jeffrey had made his first conquest at court. Wherever the dwarf went, the giant trudged lovingly and obediently behind. It was Jeffrey's voluntary slave who rescued him from drowning in a washtub after he'd gone down the third time. It was Big Tom of the dim brain and powerful biceps who disentangled him from a shrub as a high wind threatened to blow the mannikin into the flooding Thames. And the poor dolt's devotion never wavered, not even when his "master" tortured him with the outrageous pranks played by those cheated in stature on those whom nature has overblessed.

Power counted most in this world—and Big Tom made him realize that size had little to do with who held the whip hand. Power had to be backed by hard coin of the realm, and this was rapidly accumulating to the account of Master Jeffrey Hudson in the royal treasury.

Two years after he hit London, the dwarf had more money than his father had ever seen from baiting bulls for the duke's tournaments or butchering them for the duke's belly. He was the outstanding favorite of the court, and jaded, guzzling noblemen tossed him bags of golden sovereigns for reviving them with the bawdy songs of the city streets.

Other money came his way for passing on tips about profitable undertakings for gentlemen adventurers in the Americas and the Indies. His "investment counsel" came directly from hints dropped in his ear by the queen. And, in time, he became the confidential adviser for her love affairs, whose range extended from pantry boys with soot on their faces to foreign ambassadors with braid on their shoulders.

He was just fifteen and grown not a whit when the queen entrusted him with the first of many delicate missions of state. Her Majesty, weary of the tepid English balls, commanded him to repair to France and locate her old dancing master. "So that I can show this barbarous island what feet were made for," she said in a growling purr. Of secondary importance was the task of finding a suitable midwife for her approaching confinement.

Jeffrey welcomed the assignment because it might mean money in his small, itching palm. He had twenty-five hundred pounds—roughly twelve and a half thousand dollars—to invest in expensive Parisian perfumes and cosmetics that could be retailed at a sky high markup to the ladies of Britain's nobility.

After he'd anchored his chartered ship at Dunkirk, Jeffrey tracked the dancing master to a tough waterfront dram dive. There, a surly barmaid grabbed the queen's emissary by the seat of his velvet pantaloons and tossed him nonchalantly in a wine vat. The dwarf boy was bobbing up and down like a drowning fly when Big Tom, never far behind, entered the place.

The giant lifted his master, dripping with burgundy, from the vat and sat him on a shelf to dry. After which, he calmly reached out one hand and tore half the bar from its moorings. Six brawny specimens who objected sailed through the window in as many seconds, while an interfering gendarme landed with the howling barmaid astride the rafters.

Then the mighty one tenderly hoisted the tiny one from his perch and placed him pick-a-back on his shoulders. He stooped down and dragged the dancing master from under a table where the rum-soaked artiste had slept blissfully through the bout. He placed the Frenchman sideways, like a log, under his right arm. Bearing his double burden, the big man strode in quick, powerful steps toward the ship.

With the maestro safely deposited under guard in a stateroom, Jeffrey attended to the matter of a midwife. He hired an estimable lady who boasted of delivering six princes and seventeen viscounts. Now

while the ship waited, he was free to go to Paris for his business deal.

The Parisian merchants scowled when the dwarf, flanked by the giant, swaggered into their shops. "No alms for circus vagabonds," more than one said gruffly. "Begone, or the magistrates will refresh you with crusts in the Bastille!"

But insults turned to bows and scrapes when Jeffrey, with appropriate flourishes, produced his credentials from Britain's queen.

France's biggest shipment of boudoir geegaws was stowed in the hold of Jeffrey's ship when he set sail for England. He was sitting in his specially-built cabin, twice the breadth and height of a doll's house, busily figuring his future take, when he heard a cannon ball explode across the stern.

FLEMISH pirates were swarming on deck as he rushed up in short, hopping bounds. His crew of nondescripts, far from presenting cutlasses, were cheerfully helping the buccaneers move his precious cargo to the robber vessel anchored alongside. The redoubtable Tom lay stretched unconscious on the deck, having been hit with too many belaying pins at one time. The dancing master was blearily trying to understand what was happening as a dense fog of brandy trickled from his mouth to the chaste blouse of the shrieking midwife.

Jeffrey drew his sword, the size of a table knife, and advanced toward the burly pirate skipper. "Ho, my bantam!" the freebooter snorted in contempt. "A brave cockerel you are. But should you not confine yourself to crowing?"

The skipper signaled to his mate. "Put our chick in the coop," he laughed. "At my leisure, I shall fry him for my dinner."

The six-foot mate bent down to seize the dwarf. Jeffrey's little sword flashed, then traveled the length of his would be captor's arm. The pirate jumped back, staring in horror at the blood gushing from the ripped artery.

The buccaneer subaltern had groaningly bled to death when Jeffrey, Big Tom, the dancing master, and the midwife were set adrift in a rowboat on the open sea. Only the queen's papers found on Jeffrey and the consequent fear of full-force retaliation by the Britsih Navy had kept the pirate chief from condemning them all to the plank. A French fishing schooner picked them up and carried them back to Dunkirk. From there, a Scottish merchant ship gave the ill-matched quartette passage to Britain.

The pygmy's name and deeds were on every tongue after he got back to Britain. Street hawkers peddled broadside ballads about his heroism after he'd boastfully recounted his slaying of the pirate. At a royal revel that topped Nebuchanezzar's in Babylon, the king climaxed the feast by having the midget kneel on an embroidered silk cushion.

His Majesty's unsteady hand missed two or three intended strokes when he drew his jeweled sword. Finally, it descended lightly on the tiny one's waiting back.

"Rise," hiccuped the august ruler of Britain. "Rise, Sir Jeffrey Hudson, knight of the realm."

England's smallest and youngest nobleman posed and preened like a stunted turkey gobbler during the years that followed. His wealth grew with his influence at court. His fastidious little suits were fashioned by the finest tailor in London, and Big Tom shone in reflected glory as his handsomely-liveried valet. Determined to maintain the tradition that a knight was a man of arms, Sir Jeffrey learned to handle expertly rifles and pistols whose weight nearly ruptured him.

"Strenuous Jeffrey" was eighteen, that year of 1637, when he won his soldier's spurs as a campaigner in Holland. He was in that English company of volunteers, led by the Earls of Warwick and Northampton, which assisted the Prince of Orange in the historic Siege of Breda. Tradition has it that Jeffrey scrambled up a tree outside the city's walls and sniped three Spanish generals strutting on the inside.

The Prince pinned a medal of honor on his chest when he sailed home. Dutchmen asked the shrewd dwarf to handle their English dealings at fat commissions as their agent. One of Britain's greatest artists humbly accepted the honor of painting the gallant knight's picture for a best-selling book about Sir Jeffrey's life and adventures.

Then the midget cavalier found himself one of the main props of the tottering Stuart throne. The King's ministers grumbled jealously because His Majesty always con-

sulted the dwarf before checking on matters of state with the cabinet. Dour Puritan divines, led by an increasingly troublesome squire called Oliver Cromwell, thundered from their pulpits about "the pernicious influence of the cursed one on our country's affairs."

When the king planted his standard against the rebels at Nottingham in 1642, Jeffrey was present, newly-commissioned and newly-unformed as a captain of light horse guards. For two years, he led his company in fierce battles, himself personally dispatching half-a-dozen high-ranking Puritan officers at the battle of Edgehill. Cromwell offered a reward of eighteen pounds—a pound an inch—for him dead or alive. The knight's dignity was affronted and he sent a challenge, never answered, to the Protector demanding that they meet personally on the field of battle.

It was Captain Jeffrey and his cavalrymen who guarded the queen and the young crown prince, later Charles the Second, on their flight to Pendennis Castle in June, 1644. It was he, as Her Majesty's closest friend, who escorted them to Paris before the Puritans triumphed and severed the king's head from his shoulders on January 30, 1649.

Sir Jeffrey, now thirty, became a leading figure in the ever-growing colony of English royalist emigrés. His property at home had been confiscated by the victors. But the queen's mother, Catherine de Medici, took a special fancy to him and put him in the way of several lucrative propositions.

HIS spectacular success as a Parisian business man rankled Lord Crofts, a member of the Queen's exiled retinue. His lordship took counsel with his moody, ill-tempered brother to eliminate the dwarf. Presently the brother met Jeffrey on a boulevard, smirked at him, then saluted him:

"Good morning, Monsieur Mouse? Scouring the pavements for bits of cheese?"

The little knight's face turned as red as the blood that dripped from the chopping block when Charles Stuart had bowed his head before the axe. "You will live to regret that, sirrah," he said quietly. "My seconds will wait on you."

Two days later, every man in the English colony turned out for the duel scheduled to be fought in a secluded wood outside Paris. The seconds on each side performed the futile gesture, required by the code duello, of trying to reconcile the principals. Jeffrey and his tall opponent advanced with pistols to ten paces of each other.

"Fire!" the referee shouted. Jeffrey's pistol blazed at the same instant that a spurt of water flew into his eyes, followed by another which drenched his face. He heard a huge roar of laughter from the crowd. Stamping with rage, he wiped away the water with his hand. Then he let out a shrill little bellow when he saw the weapon flourished by Crofts.

It was a child's squirt gun.

Jeffrey turned coolly to his main second. "See that the gentleman's friends provide him with a proper pistol," he directed. "And let the duel continue to the death."

Crofts sent word that he refused to battle further with a man of unequal size. "Very well," answered the dwarf. "We shall remedy that."

He climbed into the stirrups of a friend's horse. The pony was small, and Jeffrey was on a fair level with Crofts as he eased himself into the saddle.

Crofts advanced on foot to meet the mounted midget. At the second fire, his bullet missed the dwarf by a wide margin. Then he stumbled and fell dead to the ground as the bullet of his tiny antagonist entered his chest.

A few hours later, Lord Crofts, stung with shame, went to the Paris police and accused Sir Jeffrey of murdering his brother.

To escape prison, and to save the exiled court a sensational scandal, Jeffrey fled Paris and took passage on a Mediterranean ship bound for Spain. The hour was a sad one when he said farewell to his queen. Pacing the deck of the ship, the dwarf realized, with the fatalism of the world's odd people, that his great days were over.

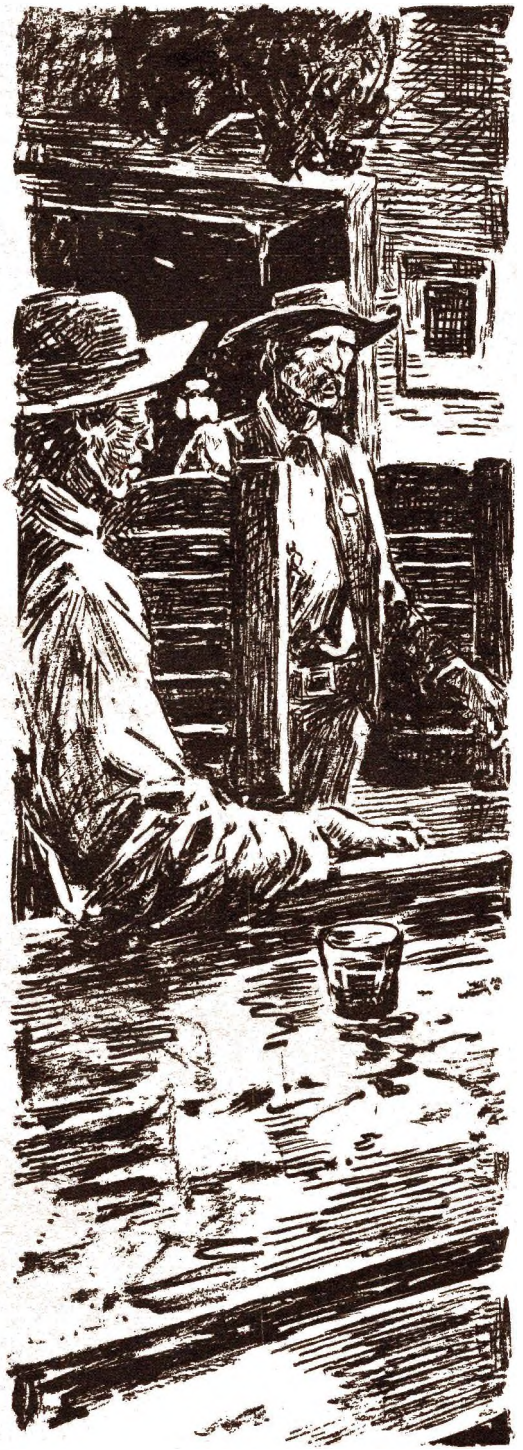
This time he was unaccompanied by Big Tom who had died fighting for the

(Continued on page 110)

Killer IN THE STREET

By

WILLIAM HEUMAN



QUINN sat in the barber's chair with the white apron pinned up around his neck, his head tilted back, and a pearl-handled Colt .45 laying loosely in his lap under the apron. The chair faced the door the way he always insisted that it did when he had a shave or a haircut.

He could watch the front door this way, and the street. There were two chairs in this particular shop, and he'd taken the chair farthest from the door. Once he had not been so particular about the chair, but in El Paso a bullet had been fired at him from the second floor of a building directly across the road from the barber shop. If he'd been in the rear chair on that occasion *the gunman in that window would have* been unable to get him in range. As it was, the bullet had grazed his left arm, and he still bore the small scar, a constant reminder that in his profesion he could not afford to take the minutest chances.

The barber, a short, fattish man with a semi-bald head, a little nervous because this was the first time Quinn had come into his shop, said, "Enjoying your stay in Rimrock, Mr. Quinn?"

Quinn strode up just as Billy Hand turned around, the glass still in his fist. . . .

"Some," Quinn said. He watched a buckboard pulling up in front of the barber shop, a lone man in a faded gray flannel shirt and levis up on the seat. He noticed everything about the man in one quick glance—his height, his age, the way he moved his body, the gun on his hip, the make, caliber, the way the holster was worn. He noticed other things about the man, the buckboard, the two dapple grays pulling it, but particularly he noticed the gun and the way the man wore it, whether it was new or old, and whether there was any quickness in the owner of the gun.

He sometimes forgot a face, but he never forgot a man's gun and his holster, his gunbelt. Even some of the men he'd shot, if their ghosts came back to haunt him, he would be able to identify only by their guns—Remingtons, Colt .45's, Colt .44's, Smith & Wesson, the big, blue-barreled Navy Colts, and even some of the older weapons you didn't see so much any more—the Wells-Fargo models.

The man on the buckboard got down, tugged at the rim of his black Stetson, and stepped into the dry goods store next to the barber shop. Quinn's long, slender fingers relaxed on the pearl handle of the Colt gun in his lap. His heart had started to pound a little because the man on the buckboard was young and lithe, and his jaw was lean. He was a total stranger, too, but that did not mean anything. Many total strangers had tried their luck against him—like the fancy Russian Count in the saloon in Prescott, who had started to imagine that he was a gunfighter. He had been big and blond, and a fine looking man, rigged in the best that the clothing stores could provide. He was dead now, but he'd made a very presentable corpse, the undertaker having taken great pains with the hole in his forehead.

The barber said, "Pretty quiet town, Mr. Quinn. Ain't been much doin' since that bunch from Central City broke into the Cattleman's National Bank. That was two years ago, Mr. Quinn. Could o' used a man like you here in them days. Yes sir—"

He went on, but Quinn wasn't listening to him. Two boys had stopped outside the barber shop door and were looking in. They were about nine or ten years old, scrawny, tow-headed kids in worn levis and patched shirts. One of them undoubtedly was wearing his father's cast-off boots. They were several sizes too large for him, worn down at the heels.

They knew him, too. He could tell that from the expressions on their faces. Somebody had told them that he was in the barber shop, getting shaved. They stared in at him, that queer look on their faces—the thing he always saw on the faces of grown-ups, too. They looked at him the way they would look at a crazed animal, wondering how he'd gotten that way.

Then there was something else, too. That was always present, in the grown-ups as well as the children, a kind of awe and fear, and admiration. It was this last which made life tolerable, gave it some small flavor.

Quinn stared back at them, his lean hawk's face expressionless—a thin-lipped man with a black mustache, and hooded eyes which had no color. As the two boys looked at him he discovered that he was basking in this atmosphere of juvenile adoration, and for a moment he was ashamed of himself.

Another little boy joined the two outside the doorway, and then a fourth, a red-haired boy of about twelve or thirteen. He stood behind the others, hair mussed, freckle-faced, in baggy overalls, mouth open.

Quinn said tersely, "Get them the hell out of there."

The barber stepped to the door and the boys moved away. Quinn saw them a few minutes later on the opposite side of the street, still looking toward the barber shop. The smallest boy was practicing drawing an imaginary gun from an imaginary holster. His mouth shaped explosive sounds.

The barber said jocularly, "Staying in town long, Mr. Quinn?"

"Depends," Quinn said. He said no more. He didn't have to say any more; he didn't have to give this man an answer. He was Quinn. He'd shot and killed sixteen men; he was reputed the fastest man in the southwest with a six-gun.

Sitting in the barber chair, his face lathered, listening to the barber strop his razor, he wondered, himself, how long he would stay in Rimrock. He had no town, and he had no home; he had no friends. He had no profession either, unless shooting other men with a gun could be called a profession.

Once he'd been a town marshal, and they'd hired him because of his proficiency

with a six shooter, but that job hadn't lasted long. The town had quieted down because none of the hardcases wanted to test him out.

He was fairly good with cards, and recently he'd been making a decent living on his income at the poker table. He played poker the way he lived, unsmiling, taciturn, an aura of danger always hanging over him, and he knew that this helped. Poker was a game of bluff, and he could bluff and get away with it because men were afraid of him. He could see it in their eyes as they sat opposite him across the tables; he could tell from their talk—the forced gayety.

They played with him because they wanted to tell their friends, maybe their grandchildren, that they'd played poker with Quinn, the gunman. With him they did not particularly play to win.

HE WAS watching the street again now, watching the few people who passed the window to look in at him, watching the occasional buckboards, and the riders moving along the dusty road.

The barber, who was a talkative man, had no more to say, so he whistled. Other men had found it difficult trying to talk to him because there was no basis for conversation. He was different, and they recognized this fact.

Quinn looked out through the open doorway of the barber shop, with the flies buzzing in and out, and the heat devils dancing above the dust of the road. A beer wagon had pulled up in the alley next to a saloon across the way, and two men were unloading beer barrels, rolling them in under the batwing doors.

Then a rider on a buckskin horse came into view, a tall rider, young, with a new black hat, and a new checked shirt. His gun wasn't new, though, and the holster showed signs of wear.

The rider was sandy-haired, of light complexion, twenty or twenty-one years of age, a cigarette dangling from his lips, and his hat pushed back slightly on his head. The holster was of black leather, and he wore it low on his hip. It was bound to his thigh with a leather thong, an affectation of some gunmen.

Quinn said suddenly, "Who is that?"

The barber licked his lips. "Billy Hand," he said. "Rides for Double Bell."

Quinn knew then that this was the one. He'd suspected it from the first glimpse he'd had of young Hand. Every town had one—at least one youngster who fancied death as his sidekick. He'd either killed a man already, or he would like to kill a man with his gun. His holster was worn because he'd practiced for hours on end, drawing his gun, firing a bullet into a target, doing it all in one motion, legs spread a little, body hunched, but that right arm loose, flexible, completely relaxed.

The short man with the barrel chest who'd stood outside the Empire Saloon in Bisbee had not been relaxed. He'd been tense, his muscles as tight as a bowstring, and when he'd gone for his gun he'd fumbled on the draw. The weapon had been cocked at a crazy angle, and he'd been trying desperately, feverishly, to bring it under control when Quinn's first bullet went through his middle, breaking his spine.

"Billy Hand," Quinn murmured. He watched young Hand dismount in front of the saloon where the beer wagon had stopped. The sandy-haired young man stared insolently across at the barber shop, and Quinn's fingers tightened around the butt of the gun in his lap. He heard the barber breathing heavily, and this was the confirmation that young Hand was the one. That had been the talk in this barber shop during the few days Quinn had been in town. Billy Hand may have done some talking, himself, and the boy had come into town now to brace him.

Quinn watched young Hand duck under the tie rack in front of the saloon, and then push in through the doors. He was tall and loosely-built, and it was conceivable that he would be fast with his gun, but he was young, and the very young were always a little too fast for their own good—like the young man in Brownville who'd shot twice before Quinn got off his first bullet. The young man was dead.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon, and other men started to drift into the saloon across the way as the barber finished shaving Quinn. Before they pushed in through the doors many of them glanced across the street toward the barber shop.

When the barber took the apron away, Quinn got up from the chair. He slid the gun back into the holster which he'd hung from a hook on the wall. His black coat and his black, flat-crowned hat hung on

other pegs. He put on the gunbelt first, adjusting it properly, and then he slipped into the coat.

When he paid the barber, the man said, "Thank you, Mr. Quinn. Hope you enjoy your stay in Rimrock."

Quinn nodded. He went out to the street, and he knew that the barber was watching every step he took from the door, and that other eyes were watching him in this town. A group stood on the porch in front of the saloon into which young Billy Hand had gone. They pretended to be talking, but they watched him. Others watched him from inside the saloon.

Storekeepers watched him from inside their shops, and the little boys the barber had chased away sat on the edge of the boardwalk across the road—sat in a row, three of them now, staring.

THERE was a lunch room a few doors down from the barber shop, and Quinn had eaten there before. He turned in at the lunch room, picked out a corner table, and sat down. Automatically, he'd picked out a table which commanded the door from the street, and the door leading from the kitchen. He had his back to the wall so that no one could get behind him, and he sat with his gun hanging from his hip, in such a position that he could swing it up out of the holster without loss of time.

The owner of the lunch room, a stove-in cowpuncher, shuffled up to him and he said, "Ham and eggs."

He was sitting near a window here, too, and he could look out. He could see the saloon—the Mustang Saloon—into which Billy Hand had gone. The group of men still stood on the porch, talking, gesticulating.

Young Hand came out, the cigarette still in his mouth. He'd had a drink or two and he was feeling brash. Quinn watched him chatting with the men on the porch, laughing, waving his hands as he spoke. He sat there with no joy in his heart, and he started to wonder how this had all happened.

He had to go way back—back to his boyhood, to the slim, timid boy who'd been kicked around by a brutal hostler in a stable; who'd been jeered and insulted by stronger comrades. He'd never had a fight as a boy, although there had been plenty of invitations. He'd run away from them, and they'd jeered him the more in that hot, dusty Kansas town, end of trail for the Texas drovers.

When he was fifteen he'd picked up a broken six-gun and a discarded holster, and in the gloom of the livery stable where he'd worked he'd practiced hours on end, whipping the gun from the holster the way some of the Texas gunmen did. He'd practiced till his arm became so heavy he could scarcely lift it above his shoulder. But something else had risen in him instead—a strange new exultation which men call courage.

He'd seen some of the great gunmen of the day, and he'd aped their actions. And after a while he'd been able to buy a real gun and a box of cartridges. He'd gone back into the hills and used up the entire box, and many other boxes after that, practicing that smooth, flawless draw, getting the bullet off the exact moment the muzzle of the gun came up on a line with the target.

The first killing had been the hardest because he'd still been afraid even though he knew that he drew a gun faster and shot straighter than most men he'd seen in the town. He'd still been the coward right up until the time he squeezed down on the trigger against the red-headed Texan who'd become drink-nasty and quarrelsome, and who the previous night had picked on Quinn. Drunk or sober the Texan had been no match for the pearl-handled Colt which Quinn snaked out of his holster with incredible swiftness.

Men had seen that draw and had marveled, and so the legend had grown. They'd blown it up to vast proportions, claiming that he'd killed two dozen men before he was twenty-one. It had been less than a dozen, and in the past nine years only four more.

There had been other fights—other attempts to knock him off his pedestal. He'd wounded some men, putting them out of the fight. One man he knew of still sat in a wheelchair eight years after he'd pulled a gun in a gambling house in Albuquerque.

Quinn sat heavily on his chair in a corner of the lunch room, the corners of his mouth down because the room was empty and the owner had gone back into the kitchen. He was going to kill young Billy Hand across the road—probably some time to-

night. For the first time the thought of killing another man nauseated him. During the past few years he'd discovered that he no longer looked forward to an encounter with a gunman who fancied he was faster on the draw than himself. He didn't avoid them because that would brand him and give the other man the big advantage of confidence. They would think he'd lost his nerve with a gun, and that small doubt in their minds, which gave him the advantage, would be gone.

The lunch room man came back into the room with his ham and eggs. He wiped the table ceremoniously with a wet rag and said, "Hot afternoon, Mr. Quinn."

Quinn just nodded. He looked at the food and then he picked up his knife and fork and started to eat, and there was no taste to the food. His mind was already being keyed up to the other thing which made the tastes and the appetites of normal men flat and insipid to him. He'd discovered that about women, too. He'd had very little to do with women in his life.

He sat there, eating slowly, chewing his food, and occasionally looking out through the window. Several people came in—a rancher with his young daughter, a pretty girl with auburn-colored hair, the color of a big gelding animal Quinn had owned years ago.

If he'd ever loved any living thing he'd loved the big gelding, and he'd found it dead in its stall one morning. Someone out of meanness, out of spite and hatred for him, had shot the horse through the head. He'd never found that man.

The girl wore Eastern clothes, and the chances were that she'd just returned from the East, coming in on the train which had pulled into Rimrock ten or fifteen minutes ago.

They sat down at a table on the other side of the room. The rancher had spotted Quinn when he came in, recognizing him as everyone else did in Rimrock. The rancher said something to the girl, and after a while Quinn noticed that she turned her chair slightly so that she could glance in his direction.

He pretended to be eating, looking down at his plate, but he saw her stare at him, her eyes wide, and he wondered how many killings her father had attributed to him. Undoubtedly, the list had been long, because her eyes had mirrored fear.

Finishing his meal, Quinn took out a cigar, bit off the end, and lighted it. He sat back in the chair and wondered what he would do this evening. Young Hand would not brace him for some time to come—not until the town had filled up more. Billy Hand was still young enough to want a good audience—young enough, too, to have friends, and the feeling of well-wishers around him.

In another hour or so the poker games would start in the Yankee Saloon, and he'd been in the habit the past few nights of sitting in on one of the bigger games. There was little else that a man could do at night, unless he wanted to sit in his room at the hotel and think about the guns of the men he'd shot.

With the cigar half-smoked, Quinn got up and walked toward the door. The lunch room was about half-filled now, and heads turned to look after him as he walked. The girl with the rancher father was staring at him openly now. She would have something to tell her friends when she returned to the East.

It was cooler outside than it had been an hour ago. The sun was still quite high in the sky, but much of the heat had gone from it. The windows in the buildings facing west were reddened by the sun. A slight breeze moved in from the high-ridged Bannister Mountains to the north. The breeze cooled Quinn's face, and he was grateful for it.

He had a glass of cold beer at the bar of the Yankee Saloon, and then he sat down at a corner table to play solitaire until the poker games started.

The bartender who served him the drink said, "A nice evening, Mr. Quinn."

To everyone he was Mister Quinn—not Quinn, or Jack Quinn, always that term of respect which once had pleased him, but which he now found annoying. It was not used out of sincere admiration for his qualities, but a respect born of fear.

No one came over to talk to him as he dealt out his cards on the table, his long fingers manipulating the deck, never dropping a card, never hesitating, even his eyes were constantly shifting toward the door, toward the bar, noting every one who came in, labeling them immediately.

A battered derelict of the trails, an old man with gray hair, dirty, smelling of liquor and the stable in which he slept, came

through the doors, glassy-eyed, spotted Quinn at his usual table, and weaved that way, his lips working, slavering his mouth. Quinn knew what he had come for even before he mumbled it.

The old man said thickly, "That young Billy Hand is talkin' like he figures on bracin' you tonight, Mr. Quinn. Thought I'd tell you. He's in the Mustang now."

Quinn looked at him, slippd a hand into his vest pocket, came out with a half dollar, and placed it on the table without a word. The drunk snatched it up greedily, wheeled and headed toward the bar as if drawn there by a powerful magnet.

Quinn looked down at his cards, no expression on his long face. He took a gold watch out of his pocket and looked at it. It was after seven o'clock now—still very early.

He heard riders coming in, tying up at the hitch-rack outside. Buckboards went by, wheels crunching the dry dust. A baby was crying in a house up the street, and a piano in a saloon across the way started to tinkle—softly at first.

The smell of frying food came to him, of hot coffee and bread, of home and of children—the things he would never have in this world because he had on him the mark of Cain, sixteen times over.

IN A HALF hour a poker game started at a nearby table, and one of the men called cordially, "Join us, Mr. Quinn?"

"Glad to," Quinn nodded. He got up and sat down at the table, and it was still the chair which faced the door, and there was no one able to sit behind him.

There were three other men in the game—solid, respectable Rimrock business men. He drew several fairly good hands, and won the first two pots. One of the players—a man by the name of Hanson, a lawyer in town, said laughingly, "Your luck is good tonight, Mr. Quinn."

Quinn shrugged. He murmured. "The night's not over."

He wondered about that after he'd said it. Some day, sooner or later, his luck would run out. He would run up against a younger man with faster reflexes, one who'd practiced drawing his gun and firing it at a target as many hundred hours as he had. In one of these towns he would meet someone who was not afraid of him inwardly, as many of the others had been, and whose aim would be true. He wondered about these things, and discovered to his surprise that he did not care greatly any more.

Because life held so few attractions for him, he was not afraid to die, and it was this fact which gave him the great advantage over the others who held life more dearly. Having nothing of great value to lose, he was able to risk more.

The Yankee Saloon started to crowd up, and he knew the reason. The word was spreading through Rimrock that young Billy Hand intended to brace him tonight, and the audience was gathering. When they came through the doors they looked at him first—they bought their drinks at the bar, and they talked with each other, but they kept turning constantly to look at him.

He could feel the pressure beginning to build up in this place. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke and the thick beer smell, but heavy with something else, also. The blood smell was here, thick and heavy, and evil, and it drew men the way real blood drew flies around the butcher's shop.

Mr. Hanson said, "How many cards, Mr. Quinn?"

"Pass," Quinn said. He rested his shoulders in the rounded back of the chair. His black coat was open as usual, and the Colt gun hung clear.

On the next hand he drew a pair of aces, and he wondered idly if he would draw a pair of eights with it—the dead man's hand—the hand Wild Bill Hickock had held when he'd been shot in the back in just such a friendly poker game as this. But Hickock had made his mistake letting a man get behind him in a room. In ten years Quinn had not done that.

He did not draw the eights, but he won the next pot with a third ace, which put him about a hundred dollars ahead for the evening.

He looked at the chips as he pulled them toward him, at the discarded pasteboards on the table, the next dealer picking them up, at the stains on the battered wood, stains from beer and liquor glasses, at the piles of colored chips in front of each player, and then the desire for gambling left him, and he wanted to go away.

A kind of panic swept over him as he thought of this, knowing that there was no

place for him to go, nothing for him to do. He sat there, sick at the thought, the complete uselessness of his life plain before him.

Weatherly, the dry goods store owner, sitting at his left, looked at him curiously.

"Not feeling well tonight, Mr. Quinn?"

"I'm all right," Quinn said a little gruffly. He picked up his chips and cashed them in at the bar and said, "Whiskey."

He did not want to kill young Hand, and he was going to if the boy tried to brace him. He could kill any man he chose to kill because he had the confidence. He knew that his bullet would go straight to the mark.

Nor was there a way to avoid young Billy Hand. Running away would be a victory for Hand, almost equivalent to an actual killing. He would be pointed out as the man who'd braced and made Quinn back down. Quinn cursed inwardly the order of existence which made such things possible, and he cursed himself because men like he were responsible for it.

Someone touched his arm at the bar, and he turned and looked into the whiskery face of the old man to whom he'd given the half dollar.

The old man mumbled, "Reckon he'll be comin' soon, Mr. Quinn."

Anticipation was in those veined, lead-colored eyes, and Quinn tore away from him, cursing, walking swiftly toward the door, nearly upsetting a waiter carrying a tray full of drinks.

HE PUSHED out into the night, giving the doors a hard shove, and went down the steps and out into the road. A horseman coming down the middle of the road at a fairly hard gallop nearly ran him down. He walked without seeing, and the horseman, not recognizing him in the night, cursed.

Quinn went up on the walk on the other side and to the Mustang Saloon. He spotted Billy Hand immediately, standing with his back to the door, a glass of liquor in his hand. The boy was talking to another man at the bar, and the place was quite crowded.

No one had had the opportunity to chase across the road to warn Billy Hand. Quinn's exit from the Yankee Saloon had been abrupt, unexpected. Some of them had watched him stupidly from the doorway of the Yankee, and now a man started calling from there.

"Hand—Billy Hand!"

Quinn strode up just as Billy Hand turned around, the glass still in his fist. He looked into Quinn's face, mute astonishment in his eyes. He had pale blue eyes—nice eyes, and Quinn wanted them to stay that way.

Quinn's long arms shot out. He grasped Billy Hand by the shirt front and spun him, jamming him back against the bar, spilling the liquor from the glass.

He hissed, "You damn fool kid. Do you want to be like me? Look at me."

His face was only a few inches from Billy Hand's, mottled with his own anger, the bitterness, the frustration in his eyes. It was an ugly face, a hideous face, a death's head.

"They call me Mister Quinn," the gun man rasped. "Mister Quinn! But they hate me. You hear that? They want to see me killed just as they'll want to see you killed after a while."

Billy Hand gulped. He didn't try to break away because Quinn held him in an iron grip now, and the boy sensed the fact that nothing was going to happen to him.

"You want to shoot Mr. Quinn?" Quinn snarled. "Go ahead and shoot him, but you can't hurt him, boy. He's dead already." He said it more slowly the second time, "Dead already." Then he let his hands fall at his sides and turned slowly and walked toward the door, for the first time in ten years putting his back to another man.

There was no noise in the Mustang Saloon. When he came out into the night he saw the crowd outside the Yankee across the way. They'd been waiting for the sound of shooting, but they hadn't heard any and they were disappointed. They stood there along the wooden boardwalk and on the steps of the porch, looking across the road.

Quinn walked back toward his hotel, this one great truth hammering through his mind. When you kill another man you also kill yourself. This fact was an inescapable as death itself—the mad dog death which sooner or later would come to Jack Quinn.

He had this consolation, though. He'd done a r i g h t thing tonight, and that would bring him no little satisfaction until the day the killer's bullet snuffed the light from his body.

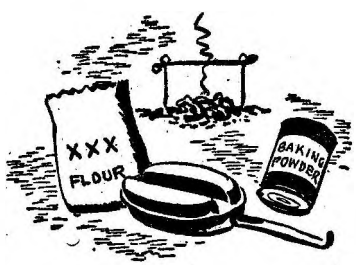
• • • ALONG THE

OIL and WATER

TO GET the most out of your Christmas outboard kicker during the coming season, a few helpful hints on the oil-gas ratios which may vary according to the purpose for which the motor is used. Each manufacturer, of course, has his specifications for his motors. This dope should be followed rigidly, **except:**

1. If you race your engine, running it at top speed for long distances, better use slightly more oil than the specifications call for.
2. If you troll slowly for long periods, use a little less oil than for normal use (but with this mix do not run home, after a day's trolling, at full throttle).
3. On a mountain stream, at altitudes above 4,000 feet use more oil than at sea level.
4. If you have souped up your engine and made

SOURDOUGH BREAD



IF YOU'RE an old-time reader of ADVENTURE, just skip this one. However, people keep asking us and we want to do something about it. So we'll tell you how to make sourdough bread.

To get the sourings started, mix four cups flour, two teaspoons salt and three tablespoons sugar with enough warm water to make a thick batter. Put in warm place—behind the stove, in the sun, etc.—and leave to ferment. In around 48 hours it will be "working" and will smell to high heaven. The neighbors may even think you are starting a batch of home brew.

When ripe, add a tablespoon of melted fat, a teaspoon of baking soda and enough more flour to make a smooth dough. Form into small loaves and set in

MINERAL IDENTIFICATION

MOST minerals can be identified by their characteristics of hardness, luster, transparency or opacity, by their cleavage, their manner of fracturing, by coloration, and especially by a knowledge of their crystal forms. Other characteristics are play of colors as in fore opals, chatoyancy as in tiger-eye and cat's eye, and asterism in star sapphire, and some others.

Hardness is determined by the use of the Mohs scale, which starts at talc, as #1, calcite as #2, going up to feldspar, #6, common quartz, #7, corundum, #9, and diamond, #10, at the top of the scale.

Luster is the surface appearance in reflected light, such as vitreous (glassy) as in quartz, or greasy as with jade. Cleavage varies a great deal so is quite an aid to identification. Some minerals, like caleite, split easily in 3-4 directions, but topaz splits parallel

a racing engine out of it, you might well use almost twice the normal amount of oil in the gas.

5. In breaking in an engine, for about the first ten hours' running after it comes from the factory, use about twice the normal amount of oil in the gas.

Motors with roller, ball, or needle bearings need less oil than others, as a general rule. Never use leaded gas in an ordinary outboard motor. The tetra-ethyl lead in the gas will form a lead oxide bridge across the spark plug points. White (marine) gas is the best to use.

Above all, do not use detergent oils. If you cannot get outboard motor oils, use the ordinary oils sold by any of the first class filling stations. Most motors take SAE 30 or 30 grades.—**Col. Roland Birnn.**

a warm place to rise. In an hour or so it should have doubled in size and be ready to bake. Baking takes from 45 minutes to an hour in a medium oven.

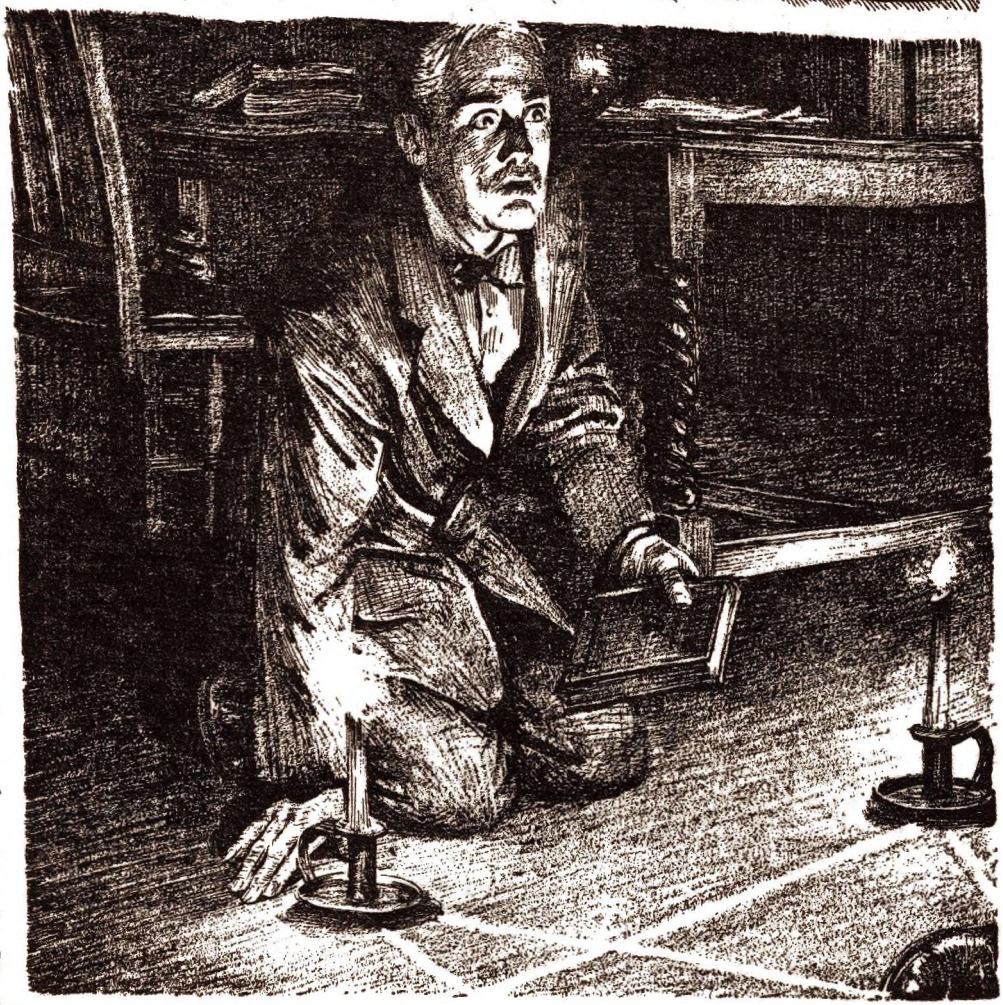
If you want to keep it going, keep out a cupful of the sourings, and add ingredients as originally. This new batch should be ready for use overnight. This process can be kept going indefinitely, but if you want to keep it a while between usings, it might be better not to keep it in too warm a place, but add a trace of water and a little flour from time to time.

One way of baking and avoiding unnecessary luggage is to use the mess-kit as a baker. An aluminum one is preferred to steel. Put the bread dough in one side, clamp down the lid, and bury the whole thing in the coals.—**Paul M. Fink.**

to the base of its crystal. Fracture refers to how a mineral breaks, as a conehoidel fracture of agate, or splintery like jade, etc.

In the crystal types, also, the angle of cleavage counts—calcite, for instance, splits three ways, but never at a 90° angle. Many minerals, like iron pyrite, show no cleavage. The cleavage in quartz is in six directions, with a diamond chiefly in one.

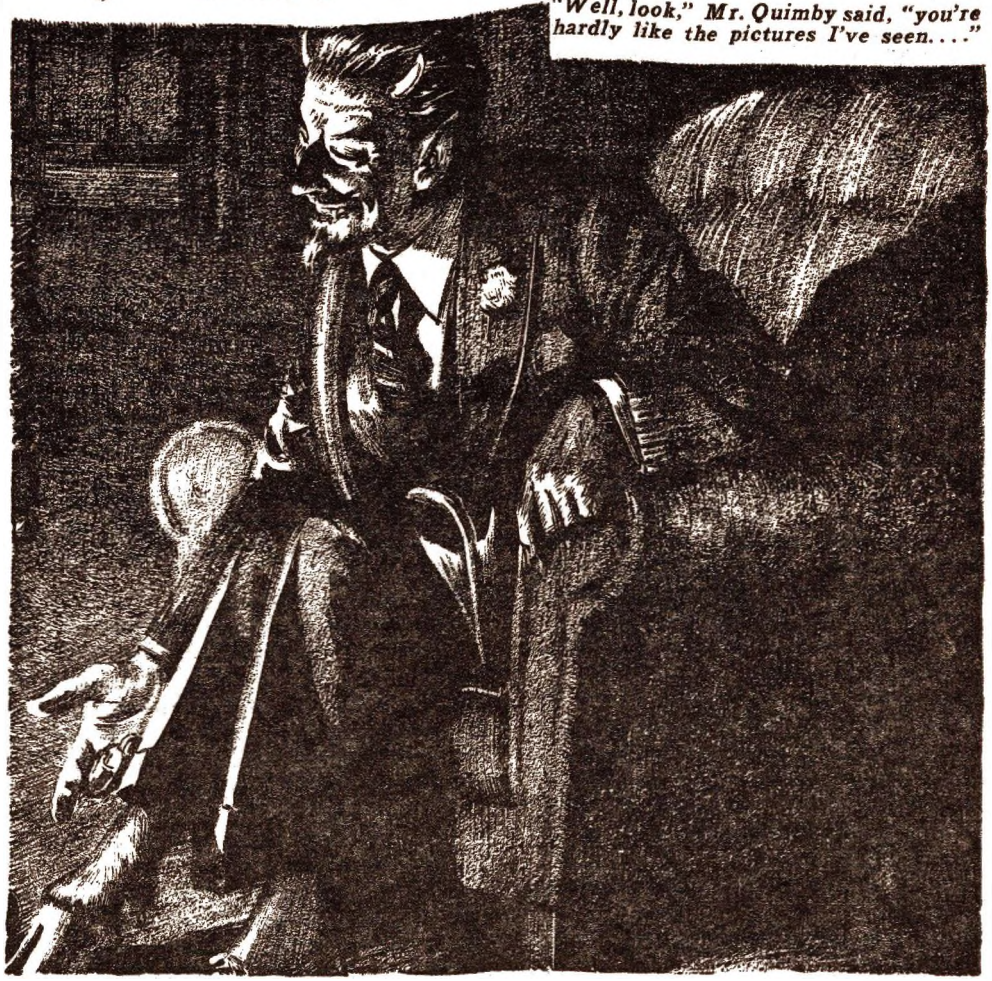
There are two types of jade: jadeite and nephrite. Both are similar in coloration, and have a similar compact texture and cleavage, but they differ in toughness and coloration. On this continent there is very little true jadeite, but there is much nephrite in various areas, especially around Lander, Wyoming, and Jade Mt., in northern Alaska. Jadeite has been found in the Clear Creek branch of San Benito River, San Benito, Co., California.—**Victor Shaw.**



THAT DAMNED

MR. QUIMBY was frightened. In fact, Mr. Quimby was so frightened he was almost paralyzed. You see, Mr. Quimby had walked open-eyed into a situation which might mean his life.

The hour was four and the time, morning. Mr. Quimby had just come home from his number two job and was flopped back in his easy chair, wondering if he had enough strength to sleep the four hours left him before he had to dress and leave for work again. In the bedroom Uriah muttered and tossed and whimpered in his sleep and, almost idly, Mr. Quimby wondered what his four-year-old stepson could be dreaming about. Probably about pulling wings off flies, if he were any judge of the little devil. And thinking of little devils made him think of big devils, and being reminded of big devils caused him to turn his head and regard a worn, tattered book in his small library.



"Well, look," Mr. Quimby said, "you're hardly like the pictures I've seen...."

MR. QUIMBY

By WILBUR S. PEACOCK

Inkantashuns, Rites, Philterr Receipts, ran the title of the book, with the subtitle, *Majick by Maldini.*

Mr. Quimby reached out a tired hand and took the book from the shelf. He opened it at random and stared blindly at the words.

> . . . taking one part of frog heart and two parts of powdered unicorn horn, blend into the paste of virgin tallow and . . . .

Mr. Quimby grinned faintly and flipped pages. A crude illustration met his gaze. "Faustus!" he muttered blankly, seeing the devil rising amidst weird cabalistic figures. Then he shrugged ruefully, recalling this book predated Marlowe by quite a few centuries.

He looked at the text below, reading the Latin easily. There was a lot of double talk, but the thing seemed simple enough. There was the business of the pentagram and the use of a few exotic herbs and roots and six

candles. There was the incantation, starting with the Lord's Prayer said backward, and ending with a choice group of Latin phrases.

There was also Maldini's (whoever he was) grim warning that:

> . . . this inkantashun is danjeros, for once the Demon is conjered, a packt must be made. . . .

Mr. Quimby chuckled harshly and threw the book across the room. He lit a cigarette and considered going to bed without hot tea. Then his gaze wandered to the book again. Slowly he arose and retrieved it and spread it in the light again. "Hmmmmmm!" he said several times. And then he laughed aloud at his own stupidity, made a short list of items on a scrap of paper and left the apartment.

He felt half-foolish and half-bold. His twentieth century mind completely rejected the thing he was about to do; and then some atavistic memory stirred lethargically and told him all things were possible. He hurried down the outside steps to the street and went directly to the old-fashioned pharmacy two blocks away.

Great green and red bottles were in the window. The sign said: NICHOLAS BEAL, PHARMACIST, and inside, a white-haired old man dozed jerkily beside the warmth of an old-fashioned coal stove. He awoke at Mr. Quimby's entrance and tottered to a place behind the counter.

"Yessir," he said in inquiry, "what can I do for you?"

"Have you these things in stock?" Mr. Quimby asked.

The old man looked at the scribbled items, snowy brows lifting in polite astonishment.

"Funny list!" he said, almost to himself.

"I'm a chemist," Mr. Quimby lied bleakly. "Have you got those things?"

"Somewhere, young man," the druggist said, and after a great deal of hunting and tugging and blowing dust, he laid the items desired on the counter.

"Chemist," he said absently, totaling up the cost.

"Yeah!" Mr. Quimby said and, paying hastily for the items, he almost ran from the store.

And behind him, the snowy-haired druggist beamed at nothing, idly scratching his forehead where the horn-points kept trying to break through the skin. *One, tonight,* he thought, and absently shooed his pet salamander back into the flames of the old-fashioned stove.

IN HIS dismal flat, Mr. Quimby sat wearily on his chair and surveyed the things he had purchased. A shiver walked up his back, clammily. Uriah whimpered in his sleep. The kitchen faucet dripped in dull monotony.

"It's crazy!" Mr. Quimby muttered.

And then he thought of his debts and the coming bills, and his resolve grew. He had nothing to lose but his soul, and lately he had been wondering if he even owned that. He thought of his wife in the sanatarium and of the bleak future for her unless he raised money. He thought of a thousand things in a dozen seconds; and then he took the three pieces of colored chalk and laid out the pentagram and its cabalistic figures on the worn floor.

His hands moved of their own volition, or so it seemed, and the design grew swiftly. He followed the direction's in Maldini's booklet; and it seemed to him suddenly that there was no heat in the room. And when at last he was finished, he placed the candles in position and lit them, using three matches, his hands shook so.

Then he turned out the lamp, standing in the flickering light, fear beginning to bubble within him.

Now was the time to quit, he knew, now was the time to admit this was a lot of damned foolishness. A man doesn't just conjure up the devil, despite the fiction to the contrary. The world's a big place and the devil has a lot of business to attend to. To ask him to waste his time and talents on a single man—well—

Almost did Mr. Quimby quit then. Almost did he turn on the lamp and admit he was losing his marbles. Then he saw the mail upon the table, mail which consisted mostly of bills. Grimness came to his mouth and he picked up Maldini's book.

He began to read. Cold came; he could see the frostiness of his breath in the air. Candlelight flickered and wavered; but as he spoke, the flames steadied. He watched the center of the pentagram, then unconsciously tried to reassure himself by looking about the familiar apartment. Giddiness struck, for he could not see the walls—he was alone in ebon nothingness, facing a candle-lighted pentagram, the last sonorous

words of the dead rites rolling from his lips.

He finished. Mr. Quimby finished, screwing up his courage to face the monster he had conjured from the depths of Hades. His words died away and he waited for whatever was to come.

He waited, fear thick in his throat.

And nothing happened.

The candles burned steadily, not smoking. The red and the green and the yellow chalk made a weird pattern upon the floor. The experiment was ended, and it was a failure; and a slow sigh of relief welled up in Mr. Quimby's chest.

He tried to chuckle, but his throat was dry. He hadn't really believed anything would happen; he had just reached the state of desperation wherein he would try anything. And so he essayed a wry chuckle and, reaching behind him, felt for the lamp switch, an incredible weariness creeping through his body.

And the man seated in the worn easy chair laughed scornfully.

"Heaven!" he swore. "You mortals are so blessed stupid, I don't know why I bother with you."

"Ghuuh!" Mr. Quimby said, sheer terror keeping him conscious.

"You're supposed to be in the pentagram," the devil said. "It's supposed to keep you away from my power until we've made a deal."

"Who're you?" Mr. Quimby said, hoping this was DT's or something as innocuous.

"Oh, call me Nick," the devil said in friendly tones. "Nicholas Beal is the name I use most of the time these days."

"Well, go away!"

"Go away!" His Black Majesty smiled. "Are you crazy! You read Maldini's warning. I don't leave until an agreement is reached."

Mr. Quimby swallowed. "Look," he said desperately, "I've changed my mind."

"To heaven with that!" the devil said nastily.

Mr. Quimby's knees gave way. He sat on the floor. Weakly he said, "It was just a joke."

Satan scratched his ankle. "I don't joke," he said impatiently. "Now, what do you want? Millions of dollars? Women? Muscles? A career? To rule the world?" He leaned forward chummily and tapped Mr. Quimby's shoulder. "Not that I advise that last. I've already got a deal set with a guy named Joe, even though I warned him my power really didn't extend that far. He's headed for more trouble than he can handle. Still, maybe I can redicker with him. He'll take half and you'll take half."

"I don't want the world," Mr. Quimby said. "Look, Mr. Devil—if you are the devil—I—"

"What do you mean, 'if'?" the devil said.

Mr. Quimby regained a smidgeon of courage. "Well, look," he said, "no offense meant, of course, but you're hardly like the pictures I've seen. Except for that little Van Dyke and the mustache, you'd pass for any ordinary man, like hundreds I see every day."

"Thanks." The devil grinned complacently and rubbed his hands together. "Mighty nice little compliment there, you know. After all, I want it that way." He shrugged. "Of course I can offer proof."

He kicked off his right shoe and extended his split hoof for inspection. Horns sprouted on his forehead, and a spiked tail ran snakelike up his back and out from under his collar and draped loosely over his right shoulder. Fangs filled his mouth, and sparks flickered from his eyes. The smell of brimstone and burning flesh was suddenly rank and stifling in the air.

"Is that enough?" the devil asked. "After all—"

That's enough!" Mr. Quimby said.

"Good!" The devil reverted to his human form, then extended his hand. There was a brisk crackle of blue flame and a sheet of paper floated onto Mr. Quimby's lap. Writing was there, twisting and curling as though alive, all in a ribbon of yellow flame on black paper.

"What's this?" Mr. Quimby asked.

"The contract, the contract!" the devil said. "Class B, standard formula. Now, what do you want?"

Mr. Quimby hesitated and then plunged recklessly in. "I want whatever is necessary to make my wife well and happy again, to clean up all my debts and leave her enough for the future."

"Is that all?" the devil said in quick disgust. "You brought me here just to ask—oh, very well, now sign."

"But—" Mr. Quimby began, and the devil cut him short.

"Five years!" he said. "Then I come and collect. Fair enough?"

"Only five years? But I thought—"

The devil shrugged. "Look, Quimby," he said, "I've other humans to fry. Take it or leave it."

"I'll take it," Mr. Quimby said—and there was a pain in his arm where a fresh cut appeared, and the blood from it was on a pen that had come out of nowhere into his hand. He signed.

The paper leaped from his hand to that of the devil. The devil waved it airily for a moment. "I figure," he said, "that about eighteen thousand will see you through, remembering, of course, to buy a good insurance policy." The paper flicked out of existence. "See you in five years, Quimby," the devil finished. "Twelve noon exactly, five years from now."

The candles guttered out; there was a rush of freezing wind.

Mr. Quimby was alone.

"Gahh!" he said deep in his throat, hoping everything had been a bad dream.

He switched on the light. The pentagram looked worn and forlorn and amateurishly drawn on the floor. The candles drooped wearily. Uriah moaned faintly in his sleep, and the faucet dripped now in a new rhythm—*pockety-pock-pock-pockety*. . . .

And like a heap of windblown leaves about Mr. Quimby's feet, were bills, bright green, a sort of worn gray, but all good. Mr. Quimby stirred them with a toe, and a fifty dollar bill rubbed cheeks with a hundred and a ten.

"I'll be damned!" Mr. Quimby whispered, and curiously enough, he was.

BUT that was five years ago. Now Mr. Quimby hurried along the street, terror biting at him. He sought the center of the passing throng, hurrying Uriah along with impatient tuggings of his hand. He was searching for sanctuary, for a reprieve, for anything which would get him out of his pact with Beelzebub.

All to no avail, he knew.

Not, you understand, that Mr. Quimby was a welcher. He paid his debts, if not cheerfully, at least like a man. But somehow, he felt that this debt was not legal, even from the devil's viewpoint.

Five years before, when the devil had given him eighteen thousand dollars on a five year loan, Mr. Quimby had not known that one brother had died that day and left him a sizable inheritance, enough in fact to more than meet his material needs for the coming years. The devil had pulled a dirty trick, making an unnecessary pact with him, and knowing all the time Mr. Quimby did not need his help.

Mr. Quimby had been sore. Three times had he marked out the pentagram and intoned the incantations, conjuring up the devil for a quick confab.

The first time, a three-headed demon had popped out of nowhere, gnawing idly on a steaming bone with one hand, sleeping with the second and talking to Mr. Quimby with the third.

"Sorry, old man," the demon had said politely, "but His Devilishness is occupied at the moment. Sends his regards and all that and asks what is your pleasure."

"He knows damned well what I want," Mr. Quimby stated angrily. "He tricked me into a bargain."

"Of course," the third head said amiably. "Naturally the Chief pulled a trick. Heavenly clever, what?"

"Aw, let's eat him," the hungry head said.

"Shut up," the sleeping head woke up long enough to say, "or I'll bite the both of you."

Mr. Quimby stood his ground, which, incidentally, was now inside the safety of the pentagram.

"I want to see the devil," he said. "I want the contract broken."

"Look, human," the demon said reasonably. "His Blackness is up to his knees in trouble. Some jerk named Jonnel, or something or other is organizing down there, trying to get the demons and everybody on a ten-thousand-year day, with portal to portal pay and time off for fire baths, and a lot of other clap-trap. Naturally, the Chief's gotta boil and fry some sense into a few—er—uh—people. He's got no time for you."

The demon vanished in a puff of smoke which set Mr. Quimby coughing madly.

That was the first time.

The second time was different. Well, in a way, it was.

The devil came. He was very human again, dressed in cutaway and striped pants. He flicked a spot of hellfire from his lapel and looked boredly at Mr. Quimby.

"Look, Quimby," he said, "be reasonable.

I can't just jump whenever you whistle. I'm setting up another war for the near future, and don't think those double-talking diplomats don't give me a bit of trouble now and then."

He stretched out his hand, and the contract appeared in a flicker of blue flame. The devil waved it almost under Mr. Quimby's nose.

"I've had my lawyers look at this," he said. "It's airtight. I gave you eighteen thousand dollars and you pledged your soul. We both signed, you with blood and me with a hoofprint. Genghis Khan and Attila signed as witnesses. Now let's have no more nonsense. See you around."

He vanished in a sigh of cold wind.

The third time was the last. Horrors filled the room, almost paralyzing Mr. Quimby with terror. The devil stayed away. After that, Mr. Quimby knew he was licked.

But in the passing years he tried to think of some way out.

He kept the devil's money, locking it away, thinking that, perhaps, if he didn't touch it, he might be able to return it on the day the note came due. He read books on sorcery, haunting bookshops and private collections and museums and the Library of Congress, searching for a way out.

Fiction, he found, plenty of it, in which a clever mortal outtricked His Satanic Majesty. But it was fiction, nothing more. He thought of clever schemes and found the fault in each. He tried conjuring up friendly demons, but none of the incantations worked. He thought of the church—but in some ways he was weak, and so he could not admit to the clergy that he had fallen so far from grace.

But now he was headed for a church. Not that he intended confessing what he had done; it was only that he had read the devil could not enter a Holy place and, further, that a contract with the devil must be collected at exactly the moment it was due or the whole deal fell through.

Mr. Quimby had hurried from the house at nine, thinking to remain in hiding in the largest crowd he could find, hoping that there might be safety in numbers. Surely, the devil could not single him out of thousands, not with billions to worry about.

And then Uriah had intruded upon his day.

"Take him along, darling," Mrs. Quimby had said. "His throat is better, and it will do him good to be out with you." She patted her red-headed demon on his head. "I've fixed plenty of sandwiches and you can buy milk and coffee in the park. Good-by!"

" I want an ice cream pie," Uriah said.

"Shut up," Mr. Quimby answered absently, and hurried down the street.

He went to the zoo. Uriah came along, of course. There was a nice crowd, and Mr. Quimby hunted the thickest portion, ignoring Uriah's pleas for—Item: Ice cream—candy—popcorn—balloons—a ride on the elephant—plus everything else his active little mind managed to think of at the moment.

Mr. Quimby felt safe for fully half an hour. Then a passing stranger grew horns and fangs momentarily, leering at him.

"The Chief said twelve o'clock, Mac," he said, and hurried on, a nice-looking, inoffensive sport now.

"Ghah!" Mr. Quimby said.

He went down town, huddled in a subway seat, searching the faces of fellow passengers with desperate eyes. All he discovered was that he was not unattractive, for a blonde winked at him deliberately, just before the stop where he and Uriah made their exit.

"I'm gonna tell mom you flirted with a dishwater blonde," Uriah said thoughtfully. "You dirty bum!"

A passing cop saved Uriah's receiving his comeuppance. Mr. Quimby quivered in wrath and fear and dragged his son by marriage toward the steps leading to the street. His mouth was cotton dry, and he stopped for gum at a mirrored wall machine. His reflection watched him, then silently mouthed: "Twelve o'clock!"

Mr. Quimby was almost running when he hit the street.

"Hey," Uriah said, "take it easy." They passed a sporting goods store. "I want a bicycle. You promised a bicycle. I want a bicycle."

"Shut up, Uriah!" Mr. Quimby said.

"You hit me!" Uriah said, tears filling his eyes, while he calculated the audience that was gathering. "You smashed me in the mush!"

"What's that, kid?" a man said, stopping.

Mr. Quimby fled, jerking Uriah along behind, the valise containing eighteen thousand dollars tight in the hand which did not clutch the child. Breathlessly, two blocks

along, he leaned against a wall and surveyed the indifferent Uriah.

"You almost caused trouble," he said, breathing hard.

"Yeah!" Uriah agreed, absently tucking a wax paper bag into his pocket and then munching the ham and limburger sandwich it had contained.

MR. QUIMBY surveyed this boy. Small he was, but sturdy, almost handsome, even, with the red hair. He wished, somehow, that things had been different, that they might have been buddies. Now it was too late, for in about ten minutes, Mr. Quimbly would be no more.

Ten minutes. The thought jerked him erect. "Come on," he said to Uriah, and darted into traffic.

Two blocks to the church. It was curious how many things impeded his progress. There was the stalled car, and then the man who bumped him and tried to start a fight. An old woman dropped her purse, and when he darted on, a cop thought he was a purse-snatcher who was trying to escape. And the final fall on the church steps, skinning one knee and tearing his trouser leg.

Devil's work! He knew it, and he almost sobbed when he entered the dim sanctity of the church. He leaned against the wall for a moment, collecting his senses and his strength, and then he tottered to a rear pew and sank to its hardness.

Uriah had disappeared, not that Mr. Quimby cared at the minute. Uriah could go to the—well, to the—let him go where he pleased. Mr. Quimby stared at his watch, seeing the minute hand creep ever slower as it approached the figure twelve.

He didn't know what to expect. A clap of thunder, a burst of flame, the swift dematerialization of himself here and rematerialization somewhere else. He expected nothing and everything.

And then it was twelve o'clock.

Mr. Quimby waited. He shrank into the pew, head swiveling fearfully. Nothing happened. A minute passed, and a second, and now he was free. He said a tiny prayer, much too late, it is admitted, and came from the pew into the aisle.

Free! he thought. *Free, and now the fear is gone and I can go back to my family and live like a normal man.*

He walked toward the entrance; and it was then he heard the terrible scream of fright and saw the body of Uriah hurtle downward from some window above, to land with a sickening thud on the steps outside.

"Oh, dear Lord!" Mr. Quimby whispered, and dashed outside.

"Hello, Mr. Quimby," the devil said, and was at Mr. Quimby's side, even as he bent over what he had mistaken for Uriah's body.

"You!" Mr. Quimby said weakly.

"Me!" His Satanic Majesty said cheerfully and toed the bundle of discarded workman's clothing which had fallen from the scaffolding where men worked on the church steeple.

"But you said twelve o'clock, and—" Mr. Quimby protested, and the devil cut him short.

He clucked sympathetically. "Naturally I saw to it that your watch is a bit fast."

"I'll scream for help," Mr. Quimby said.

The devil straightened his coat. It was a plaid, a bit loud, but suitable. The tiny Van Dyke looked well on his chin, and the wisp of a dark mustache gave mockery to his smile.

"It would do no good," he said evenly. "I've put a wall of invisibility between us and the street." He cleared his throat softly. "Now for payment, Mr. Quimby."

Mr. Quimby almost stuttered in his pleading. "Look, Mr. Devil," he said, "this isn't fair, and you know it isn't fair. You knew I was going to inherit money, and yet you deliberately led me into a pact with you."

"Me!" Indignation squirted a bit of smoke from Beelzebub's nostrils. "Who conjured who up? Who wanted money? Who asked for a pact?" He straightened. "Now relax, this won't hurt a bit."

"I'm an American taxpayer!" Mr. Quimby shouted. "I've got a right to a hearing."

The devil glanced at his wrist watch. "Look," he said, "stop being difficult. I've dealt with billions of people, and you're being ridiculous. In one minute it will be twelve o'clock, Very well, you have a minute to speak."

"Hey, you bum, who you talking to?" Uriah's voice sounded from above. "I'll bet you're playing the nags."

"Go away, Uriah," Mr. Quimby said faintly.

"Phhfffff!" The Bronx cheer carried authority.

"Nice lad," the devil said, glancing upward. "I'll be glad to have him around."

"Please, Mr. Devil—" Mr. Quimby began, and the devil cut him short again.

"All right, you sniveling welcher, I'll make a deal. You wouldn't be worth a blessing in my Kingdom, anyway. You're too soft. But I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll tear up the contract if you'll sign Uriah over to me."

"Sign Uriah—"

"Of course, of course! You're his legal guardian, you have the right."

Mr. Quimby straightened then. He almost towered over Beelzebub. His face was white and stony and his eyes burned with contempt.

"You may go to—to Heaven!" he said plainly. "Now do your damnedest."

"Oh, well," the devil shrugged, "it was worth the try." His hand reached out, and the fire-worded contract appeared at his fingertips. "Mr. Quimby," he began, "I hereby collect—"

The church bell began to toll the hour of twelve.

Mr. Quimby looked around, not hearing the devil's words. *It was a good life,* he thought, *even though I botched it up a lot. Good-by, Mrs. Quimby and Uriah and—*

The church bell slowly tolled its eleventh stroke.

"—as so designated in the contract," the devil finished, and reached for Mr. Quimby.

"Bombs away!" Uriah's voiced bellowed.

The paper bomb hit Mr. Quimby. It broke, and water gushed. The water flooded over him and splashed on the contract. The contract writhed as though it were alive; and then it was only a scrap of sagging paper, the fiery writing gone, the blue flames no longer about its edge.

"Blessing!" the devil swore, beating at the few flicks of water which had touched his natty suit. Steam swirled where they touched.

The church clock boomed its last note of twelve, and now the moment was ended.

"You're too late!" Mr. Quimby said then.

Good humor returned to His Satanic Majesty's face. He shrugged and twisted his mustache.

"Should have thought of that contingency," he said. "Oh, well, no matter. Maybe we'll meet again, Mr. Quimby. Ta-ta."

Then he was gone, stepping into the street throng, merging, blending, fading away. Mr. Quimby's valise went suddenly light, and he knew the money had vanished as eerily as it had come.

For a long frozen moment he stood on the church steps; and then he was turning to run inside, only to meet Uriah being led forth by a priest, his ear firmly locked in the priest's finger, utter indignation on the father's face.

"Sir," the priest said, "does this boy belong to you?"

"He does, and thank you," Mr. Quimby said stoutly. "And from this moment on, I shall be only too glad to take charge."

" . . . AND the bicycle!" Mr. Quimby told the salesman, and smiled at his stepson.

He was a bit bedraggled, for his suit and shirt were still damp; but there had come a change over him, an inward change which would never leave. He had faced the devil and not retreated a step. He was afraid of nothing and nobody.

Even Uriah sensed that some change had come. There was a growing respect in his eyes for Mr. Quimby, which was not necessarily founded in the sound spanking he had endured a few moments before. There would be a change in Uriah and his ways—as Mr. Quimby had put it succinctly—or Uriah would find himself on the short end of a bad predicament.

Uriah was convinced. There would be a great change in his actions from now on, he sensed it. He knew it.

Particularly in the matter of bombing people with wax-paper sacks of water.

Never again would he do that. He had learned his lesson thoroughly.

Water did not belong in sacks. Especially Holy Water, Blessed Water, the cool liquid which lay in the font at the front entrance of a church.

"—and maybe a set of ice skates, eh, Uriah?" Mr. Quimby asked.

"Swell, you—" Uriah gulped, seeing Mr. Quimby's eyes. "Swell, er—uh—dad!" he finished.

Side by side, they stood against the world.

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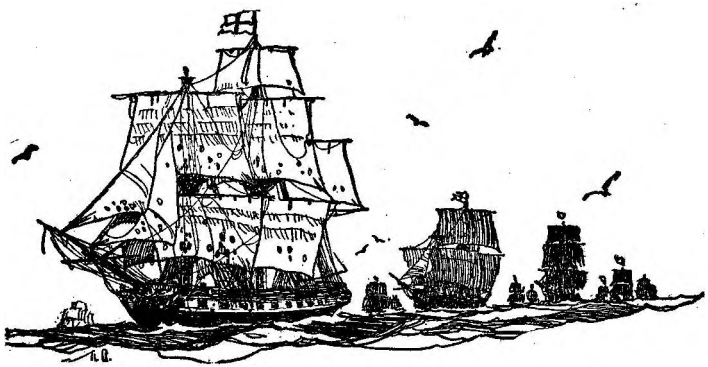

THE CAMP-FIRE

WE'VE chosen four representative replies from the pleasantly prolific reader response to the questions posed in November *Adventure* by Reader E. W. Atties regarding the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affray, which, though it took place in 1807, seems curiously in tune with these restless times. The last stages of 1952 appear to have struck a number of readers as a particularly poignant moment for examining the past.

While all four of our correspondents agree in the main, each adds a little to the composite picture. The first, from Mr. D. M. Conlan, Mansfield, Ohio:

> The *Chesapeake* outfitted in the Washington Navy Yard for a cruise to the Mediterranean. On June 21st Captain James Barron took command and sailed next day with her gun decks filled with baggage stores, etc.
>
> Forty miles at sea the *H.M.S. Leopard* was waiting and sent over a small boat with a copy of Vice Admiral Berkeley's general order to stop the *Chesapeake* and search her for deserters.
>
> Upon receiving Barron's curt note refusing to permit a search, the *Leopard* opened fire. The *Chesapeake* was helpless to resist because of her cumbered gun decks. W. H. Allen, a junior lieutenant, carried a hot coal in his bare hands to fire the only shot returned before her surrender. The *Chesapeake* was a wreck, with three men dead and eighteen wounded.
>
> Four men were impressed and after one was hanged as a deserter, two of the others were flogged through the fleet with five dozen lashes apiece on their bare backs.
>
> Barron was suspended from the service and America protested and made demands for a treaty. Finally His Britannic Majesty "as an act of spontaneous generosity" consented to express regret for the lives of the seamen killed by the *Leopard's* guns.
>
> Decatur was president of the court-martial that condemned J. Barron for unreadiness in the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair. Barron felt this condemnation was unjust and blamed Decatur for his woes. After he resumed rank in the service he did not carry the matter further.
>
> Years later in the feud between Perry and Elliott over the latter's dilatory tactics in the battle on Lake Erie, Decatur took Perry's side. In a letter to Elliott, Decatur pointed out that British officers at Lake Erie had remarked that a captain in their service who had acted as Elliott had would be hanged.
>
> Later, when Decatur as commissioner recommended against Barron's request for command of the new line-of-battle ship *Columbus*, Elliott persuaded Barron to treat it as a personal matter. Barron sneered that a man who knew seamanship would never have lost *The President*, to which Decatur retorted that a man of resolution would have never lost *Chesapeake*.
>
> Barron challenged—Decatur accepted, was shot through the chest and killed.
>
> As Decatur was the best known and best beloved of all Navy Officers, there was a violent outburst of public feeling against the already discredited captain who killed him.
>
> The above information is from *The Navy*, by Fletcher Pratt, printed by the Garden City Publishing Co.

LIEUTENANT Commander Preston S. Lincoln, USNR (Ret), writes:

The action between *H.M.S. Leopard* and *U.S.S. Chesapeake* took place in or off the mouth of Chesapeake Bay on June 22, 1807, as the Chesapeake, a new 40-gun frigate, built at Washington, D.C. and hastily outfitted at Norfolk, Va., was starting for the Mediterranean with Commodore Barron aboard. She left Norfolk a week behind her scheduled sailing date and was utterly unprepared for action because of the haste of her fitting out.

H.M.S. Leopard, one of a British squadron blockading some French warships at Norfolk, stopped the Chesapeake with a shot across her bow and demanded the right to search her for deserters from this British squadron who had escaped to Norfolk. An hour was given in which to accede peaceably to this demand. Commodore Barron spent the hour of grace in making such preparations for action as were possible under the conditions aboard the *Chesapeake*.

At the end of the hour the *Leopard* fired three broadsides into the *Chesapeake*, killing three men and wounding Commodore Barron and 17 others. The *Chesapeake* was able to fire only one gun in return. Abbott's Naval History of the U.S. says this was done with a live coal carried from the galley in the fingers of the first lieutenant. To avoid further and useless slaughter, Commodore Barron ordered the *Chesapeake's* flag struck to the *Leopard*.

A boarding party from the latter identified a deserter from the *Leopard* aboard the *Chesapeake* under an alias, and several pressed American seamen from *H.M.S. Melpemone*, who had escaped to Norfolk and shipped aboard the *Chesapeake* just before she left there. These men were taken to the *Leopard*, where the British deserter was court-martialed and hung. The men from the *Melpemone* were returned to her, and their release was refused when the U.S. government asked for it.

Commodore Barron was tried by a general court, of which Commodore Rodgers was president and Stephen Decatur a member. Commodore Barron was acquitted on all charges except failing to prepare his ship for action, though his main fault was in sailing before his ship was ready for it, and he did the best he could under the circumstances. After the court, however, Decatur criticized Commodore Barron severly and publicly several times, and this led to the duel in which Decatur was killed and Commodore Barron's Naval career was ruined.

Strangely enough, the *Chesapeake* was captured off Boston by *H.M.S. Shannon* in the War of 1812 under curiously similar circumstances. Again she was not fully ready for action, while the *Shannon* was the crack gunnery frigate of the British forces off the U.S. coast.

I would like to see the nominal issue date of *Adventure* more in conformity with the calender. One of your predecessors in the late twenties or early thirties did effect this reform. Your files should show how he did it.

The best story in your November issue is the one about Baron de Fregault, who spruced up a Napoleonic frigate at the cost of permanent disability. I served at Brest and on that coast in 1918.

MR. ALFRED L. JAROS, Jr., of Pelham, New York, cites competent authority, but adds equally competent comment of his own, in the interests of showing both sides of the controversy. To our mind, any man who honestly sees two sides to a question is bound to raise some devil—and hence is by definition an *Adventurer*. Here's to Mr. Jaros!

I have no knowledge or information as to the duel between Commodore Barron and Commodore Decatur, but the following (quoted in part from James Schouler's *History of the United States* will I believe answer all of Mr. Atties's other questions concerning the *Chesapeake* Affair:

"Three seamen, having deserted from the *Melampus*, one of the British squadron whose rendezvous was just within the capes of Virginia, enlisted on board the United States frigate *Chesapeake*, then fitting out at the Washington navy-yard for the Mediterranean. Their surrender was requested by Minister Erskine, but our administration declined, on ample grounds, to comply. . . . Without a treaty no obligation rested upon the United States to surrender deserters from the British navy. Inquiries showed that all these men were colored, and Americans by birth, two of whom had been pressed into the British service from an American vessel in the Bay of Biscay. So far from countenancing British desertions, our executive had forbidden the enlistment of persons in the navy known to be British subjects, a prohibition which did not here apply.

"Sailing from Washington in June, and reporting at Norfolk to Commodore Barron for duty, the *Chesapeake* dropped down to Hampton Roads, and on the morning of the 22nd (June, 1807) set sail, having the three colored sailors on board. From the British squadron, the *Leopard*, a two-decker, mounting about fifty guns, stood out to sea at the same time, preceding the *Chesapeake*, but keeping her in sight.

"The British officers had muttered threats, though giving no clear notice of their intention. Barron, less suspicious than he should have been, proceeded on his course. The *Chesapeake* mounted only thirty-eight guns, some of which had just been put on board. His crew was not yet drilled to the use of ordnance, his deck was littered, and the vessel was alto-

gether unfit for immediate action. At three o'clock in the afternoon the *Leopard* bore down and hailed her; and while the *Chesapeake* lay to, a boat from Captain Humphreys of the *Leopard* brought his demand for the three alleged deserters from the *Melampus*. The British lieutenant, who stepped on board, produced likewise, in token of Humphreys' authority, a copy of what purported to be a circular from the admiral at Halifax. That circular, dated June 1, which was now produced for the first time, recited, in an exaggerated strain, that British subjects and deserters had enlisted on board the *Chesapeake*, and ordered all captains of his command, who should fall in with that frigate at sea, to show these instructions and proceed to search for such deserters—the pretence being added that the search of a national vessel was according to civilized usage, which permitted the *Chesapeake* also to make a corresponding search in return.

"Commodore Barron, though taken by surprise, made a suitable reply, denying knowledge of any such deserters, and claiming that the crew of a United States war-vessel could only be mustered by their own officers. But in his excitement he seemed to forget the sure consequence of such a response, and made his preparations for action quite tardily. The *Leopard's* ports were triced up when she appeared in sight, and while the lieutenant waited half an hour for his reply, the vessel had worked into an advantageous position.

"Humphreys, upon the return of his boat with Barron's reply, called through a trumpet, 'Commodore Barron must be aware that the orders of the admiral must be obeyed.' Barron did not understand, and this was repeated. A cannon-shot across the bows of the *Chesapeake* followed these ominous words, soon another, and then a whole broadside. While our unfortunate frigate was exposed for twelve minutes to a raking fire, a vain effort was made to discharge its own guns; but neither priming nor match could be found, and appliances for reloading were wanting. At last, after the Chesapeake had received twenty-one round-shot in the hull, three of the crew being killed and eighteen wounded, and Barron himself receiving a slight hurt, the American flag descended, and at the same moment the first and only gun on the American side was touched off by one of the officers by means of a live coal brought from the galley. The crew of the *Chesapeake* was mustered submissively before two British lieutenants, who, after a protracted search, arrested the three colored men from the *Melampus*, and one Wilson or Ratford, besides, a deserter from another British vessel, who had hidden in a coal-hole. Having secured these prisoners, Humphreys, with much show of politeness, refused to accept the *Chesapeake* as his prize, and sailed for Halifax. Here the four deserters were tried by British courtmartial and sentenced to be hanged. Wilson, who was an English subject, was executed, but a reprieve was granted to the three colored Americans on condition of their re-entering the British service.

"When the drooping, dismantled *Chesapeake* came back into Norfolk harbor, bearing its dead and dying, no wonder that the smouldering wrath of our sensitive people leaped into flame. Men wore crepe upon their arms to mourn for the slain. In all the chief commercial towns were held public meetings, where citizens, without distinction of party, united in execrating the British outrage. Reparation for the past and security for the future was the universal cry of American freemen—reparation or war. 'This country,' wrote Jefferson, 'has never been in such a state of excitement since the battle of Lexington.'

"A Cabinet meeting was promptly called at Washington, and measures resolved upon in tone with the public expression—not, however, to the extent of declaring war, though from the temper of the new British ministry this was expected to follow. American vessels in distant ports were warned of their danger. Recent appropriations for defense were used in strengthening our most exposed ports, New York, New Orleans, and Charleston. Of the gunboats available for service, most were assigned to New York, New Orleans, and the Chesapeake. Military stores were procured, and States were called upon for their quotas of one hundred thousand militia to be organized and ready to march.

"A proclamation ordered British cruisers to depart from American waters, and forbade all aid and intercourse with them except in case of extremity. On the return of the *Chesapeake* to Norfolk, the inhabitants of that town had resolved in public meeting to hold no intercourse with the British squadron in the vicinity until the President's pleasure was known. This decision was received with contemptuous defiance by the British Commander Douglas, whose squadron remained within our waters, chasing American merchantmen, until Governor Cabell, of Virginia, ordered militia detachments to the scene. There was no naval force on the coast adequate for compelling obedience to the President's proclamation, a circumstance of which British cruisers took advantage; but so long as they lay quietly outside there was no disposition to molest them.

"Orders were at once sent to Minister Monroe, in London, to suspend all negotiations with England, except for a disavowal of and redress for this outrage. The ministry at once disavowed the act, and a conditional reparation was promised. This, however, was never made."

Although perhaps the outstanding one, the Chesapeake affair was only one of many such incidents leading up to the War of 1812. All of them grew out of a single cause—the life and death struggle between England and Napoleon, and the urgent need

of the British to prevent commerce with the French and to maintain their own superiority at sea by obtaining crews for their warships in any manner possible. Life on a British warship in those days was definitely unattractive, desertions were very frequent (and deserters when caught were given frightful punishment)—the British squadrons off the American coast were there to prevent American trade with France, and to their captains the impressing of seamen from whatever source seemed a vital necessity—however indefensible it may seem to us.

AND lastly a note from Mr. Lionel A. Duffield, Kansas City, Mo.

The *Chesapeake* was on her way to the Mediterranean when the affair took place, some forty miles off Cape Henry. She was far from shipshape, with the rammers of her guns buried under a heap of baggage on the gun deck, and without gun locks, powder horns for priming, or firing matches. This was the evening of June 22.

The *Leopard* followed her out to sea, hove to, and sent over a lieutenant to demand the surrender of three of her crew, who had left the British ship *Melampus*. Barron curtly refused. Barron noticed that the *Leopard's* guns were run out, and gave orders to prepare for action, but the British ship opened fire and pounded the American for a quarter of an hour until she surrendered.

Only one shot was fired from *Chesapeake*. A young officer touched off a gun with a coal of fire he had carried from the galley in his fingers. Three of our ship's crew were killed, sixteen or eighteen wounded, among them the captain.

The *Chesapeake* was allowed to limp back home. The three men were taken to Halifax, where one was hanged and the other two flogged through the fleet.

Fletcher Pratt says the *Chesapeake* sailed from Washington Navy Yard, all others from Norfolk. Jefferson does not say what port she sailed from, but gives the date as the 22nd.

Decatur was mortally wounded in a duel with Barron, March 22, 1820. The duel was brought on by a later quarrel.

WE WERE delighted to receive the following communication from Mr. Harry F. Beck, of Whittier, Alaska. Mr. Beck's letter would seem to suggest that we are at last approaching that youthful millenium that seemed so desirable many years ago—a world where fathers follow in their sons' footsteps. A while back we ran a letter from Reader Harry Beck of Cornwallis, Oregon, in which the first Mr. Beck expressed a desire to go logging in Alaska.

The *other* Mr. Beck writes:

I don't remember how long it was that my dad's habit of always having the latest copy of *Adventure* lying around led me into the fold.

But for many years now, I've been a steady reader. Came to Alaska 14 or 15 years ago. Came up steerage on the old *Yukon*. She's laying out here on the bottom only a few dozen miles from where I'm writing this right now. I've fished, hunted, and prowled around a good-sized slice of the Territory. Hope to cover a lot more of it in the next 14 or 15 years. Then go back and take a closer look at some of the choicer spots.

What inspired this letter though, was the letter you printed in the September Campfire from Harry Beck of Corvallis, Oregon. He says he's been thinking of coming to Alaska to go logging. I might be able to show him around a little. Right now I'm Yard Foreman at the Whittier sawmill of the Columbia Lumber Company of Alaska and am fairly well acquainted with many of the opportunities that are available up here.

Also, I am Mr. Beck's son.

WE ASKED *Ask Adventure Expert* Victor Shaw's permission to publish the following letter from Reader Paul W. Cress, of Perry, Oklahoma, for no other reason than that it seems to us to epitomize the valuable service all our experts have been performing for so many years. For this, the Board of Experts deserves all the bows—*Adventure's* editors, none. We hope many more readers will avail themselves of it during the coming year.

Mr. Cress writes:

On April 29, 1952, you sent me a very nice letter outlining a trip to Colorado, pointing out possible places where we might find semi-precious minerals. As originally pointed out, neither my wife nor I knew anything about rocks or gems (and we know very little now, but we know a hell of a lot more than we did when we started).

As you suggested, we went down to Manessa and to the King Turquois mine (we reversed the route suggested by you), and we found turquois. To Salida and Sedalia Copper mines, where we found 12-sided almandite; to Ruby Mountain and found the garnets; to Floressant & Smokey, for quartz and petrified wood; to Creede for amethysts.

Anyway, we did have a wonderful time. We didn't make Mt. Antero but the rest of the places we tried to cover, and we brought back a car full of rocks. Since then, we have been working diligently in

an unused basement room, have secured a second-hand cutting and polishing outfit, and think we are going to have a lot of fun. It is still my wife's hobby, but my daughter got an immense kick out of the whole affair (and so have I.)

Just thought I would drop you a line and let you know what you have started, and probably before next summer, will fire another letter to you asking for directions. Your letter certainly contained accurate and to-the-point information.

SOME time ago we published a short filler by Carl D. Lane, adversely comparing the strength of structural steel today to that of some of the plating of the Lake Champlain paddle-wheeler, *Chatagay,* built about a half-century ago, and some years ago dismantled. It seems we dropped something—with a resounding *clang.*

Reader response has been generous. Of course, we might pusillanimously point out that neither Mr. Lane nor we pretended to maintain that *all* steel made around the turn of the century was stronger than today's—but no! Upon rechecking his authority Mr. Lane, like the conscientious reporter he is, feels that Reader W. C. D. Gordon is undoubtedly so right.

We present Mr. Gordon's letter, after cooling it off some, verbatim:

My God! Who in the world passed this error on steel? Carl Lane is not a steel man, metallurgist, or a careful reporter, or he would not have written it. (Mr. Lane is a careful reporter.—Ed).

He says, "showed it to 'test' 66,000 pounds." The quote marks are mine. Does he mean "elastic limit" or "ultimate strength"? There is as much difference as day and night!

Does Lane mean that present day steel has an ultimate strength of about 45,000 pounds per sq. in.? I'm sure his 66,000 pounds is "ultimate strength." If he or anyone thinks 45,000 pounds is today's steel, he'd better ask Bureau of Standards.

Of course in any discussion on strength the first thing to determine is (1) carbon content, (2) manganese content (less important than carbon). Also, alloy content, if any. If carbon, say above 0.20% is present, or 0.30 or 0.40% chromium and 0.75% —3.00% nickel are present, any metallurgist would ask, "What heat treatment did it get?"

Until chemical analysis is made and heat treatment known it's just plain silly to even talk of comparing strengths.

But in any case, no one in his right mind would state that steel of 1900 is better than that of 1952. I've been in steel from 1917—from ore mines to and through rolling and machining. Had charge of melting (10 furnace shop) 1922-1930, and was manager of plants including melting, rolling, forging, etc.

I thought I had helped in my own small way to contribute to better steel-making practice. Of course there are a thousand or more steel men who have contributed many times more effectively—and thousands of research metallurgists who have devoted their lives to improving steel.

Does Lane think these men in fifty years have not improved steel?

One point I forgot—ultimate strength or elastic limit must always be considered along with reduction of area and elongation. Steel can be heat-treated to several hundred thousand pounds per sq. in., but it may have little elongation (stretch). It would take 10-20 pages to explain.

WE ARE pleased to print the following correction to Vic Shaw's letter on page 8 of the November issue of *Adventure.* The correction was sent in by Mr. Conrad L. Wirth, Director, National Park Service. United States Department of the Interior.

The November, 1952, issue of *Adventure Magazine,* contains erroneous information concerning the collection of mineral specimens in Yellowstone National Park on Page 8 of the "Ask Adventure" section, in answer to an inquiry from Mr. M. O. Pewitt of Oakland, California. The statement reads, in part: "you can have a swell time in the Park and get all the petrified wood you can carry in the Fossil Forests, along slopes of Specimen Ridge."

When one realizes that there are approximately 1,250,000 visitors per year to Yellowstone National Park, it is easy to understand that if collecting were permitted it would take only a few years to make a shambles of the natural exposures of stratified petrified forests referred to in the statement in your magazine.

The legislation under which the National Parks are administered contains a clear mandate to preserve in their natural state the scenic, historical, archaeological, biological, and geological features of these areas. It is, therefore, necessary to prohibit the collecting of rock and mineral specimens other than taking of such scientific specimens as are necessary in connection with scientific research basic to the management and interpretation of the Parks in the public interest.

I know that *Adventure* would be one of the last journals to intentionally encourage despoilment of the unique features of our National Parks, which afford such fine opportunities for outdoor adventure for our people. I am sure that the statement in question was published without realization of its implications to the cause of park conservation.

E. G. J.

(Continued from page 8)

For a boat that is easy to build, holds a lot of people, and is run by one or two outboard motors you can't beat the houseboat *Best Bet*. For a booklet of plans and a description of the boat, send a dollar to Rube Allyn, Fishing Editor, St. Petersburg Times, St. Petersburg, Fla. Tell him Col. Birnn, the Seer of Indian Rocks Beach advised you to do so. This little, chunky boat has a cabin or house, but is just the thing for a picnic afloat on a lake such as you described in your letter.

SCALE-BUILT sailboat.

I wish to make outline drawings of a modern sailing ship, approximately eighteen by twenty-four inches, to be technically correct as regards rigging, sails, reef points, and cordage on same, etc. I also propose to construct scale models of the ship. Could you suggest any book or company having blueprints or sketches that I could rely on, as I will not attempt the work unless it could be above technical criticism.

Harry W. Lilienthal
New York, N. Y.

Reply by Colonel Roland Birnn: Model building is somewhat out of my line but I imagine you use tables of offsets the same as any ship or boat builder.

Now, what sort of ship would you like to build? The American coasting schooner or tern schooner of the U. S. and Nova Scotia is almost extinct. (The lumber "schooner" of the West Coast is a steam or motor vessel and not a sailer). However, the Chesapeake Bay bugeye or its smaller one-masted working mate, the skipjack, is still very much in evidence and as I write this they're just about calling it a season, after their oyster dredging during most of the R months, and going back to the Bay home ports for a summer's hibernation. The bugeye is a beautiful ship to model and you'll find your models will sail nicely and hold their course.

Write to my friend, and fellow yachtscribe, Bob Burgess, Mariner's Museum, *Newport News*, Va. and ask him for information as to where plans may be had. I believe Brewington's book, *Chesapeake Bay Bugeyes* has them, but do not know if they're in suficient detail for your purpose.

Perhaps you'd like to model one of the modern sailing yachts. Here's the type of boat where plans may be plentiful. As you are located in New York you have easy access in the public libraries and/or offices of the various boating magazines to such plans.

Rudder magazine, published at 9 Murray St., New York 7, N. Y., has a how-to-build article in its January 1952 issue on *Matilda*, a 30'2" motor sailer. In the April

1952 issue of *Rudder* are buttock and plane lines of a 40 foot ketch, on page 39.

Yachting magazine (same office building on 42nd St. as *Adventure*) has plans of a number of good ones. You could browse through old issues in the library or visit their office.

Bill Crosby of *Motor Boat* (63 Beekman St., New York 38, N. Y.) has designed a small tabloid sailing cruiser *Pinafore* and her plans are contained in the magazine. (Your letter caught me while cruising the Gulf of Mexico, so I haven't my complete "library" and reference data with me at this time). But if you visit *Motor's Boat's* office they can give you the dope on which issues contain *Pinafore's* lines.

And finally, write or visit Model Shipways, 476 Main St., Fort Lee, N. J. They have, or had, a large number of plans of sailing vessels, adapted for model building. The magazine *Ships and Sailing* may be had at larger newsstands around New York. They usually have a lot of good dope on model building and plans for modeling.

RADIO—METALCASTING

HOW about a car-home radio transmitter?

I am interested in radio short wave transmitters for home and car use, what I want to know is this. How much red tape would I have to go through to get an Amstend broadcasting license? If I'm not mistaken on the dope I've been able to read on radio, I've got to know Morse code. Is that right?

What I want to do is install a transmitter in my home and one in my car and have a range of 15 or 20 miles. Could you tell me the price of such a set? I want to keep expenses down as much as possible. Would army surplus radios be available?

Elbert H. Wright
Kimberly, Idaho

Reply by Donald McNicol: Evidently you are not interested in operating a radio telegraph short wave station. For that you would need to learn code and be able to send and receive at least 13 words a minute. Walkie-talkie sets, or transceivers are used for radiophone operation. I have seen army surplus sets that look good. To use these you would need a radiophone permit. You might write the Federal Communications Commission, Washington, D.C., asking where the nearest inspector's office is to your town. Likely it is Spokane. Transceivers are sold by various companies. One is Concord Radio, Corp., 901 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago 7, Ill.

HISTORIC phonograph.

I'm hoping that you are also an expert on phonographs.

I have an Edison "Amberola 30". There is a metal plate on the phonograph with these numbers: 30—SM-228500. It was made by the Thomas Edison Co., Orange, New Jersey.

This machine belonged to a friend who bought it new about 30 years ago.

Here is my problem. I have 75 of the cylinder type records which it uses. However, every record sounds as though two people are singing—one slightly ahead of the other. Could it be possible that all of the records are worn to the same degree? The needle is the original—supposedly a lifetime needle.

I feel sure that my trouble lies in one of these two things—because that is about all there is to the whole machine.

Could you possibly give me any information on where I might find a needle (I believe the sound reproducer is attached to the needle itself) assembly?

Bill Stoner
Ironton, Missouri

Reply by Donald McNicol: The phonograph model you have is probably 40 or 50 years old rather than 30. The effect you get from the reproducer may be due to the needle or its mounting not being rigid enough, or to slippage of the record on the metal cylinder when playing. If you have a music shop selling records in your town it might be that the person in charge knows of other early Edison machines in the neighborhood, or he may have had similar experiences to yours.

As a first step test the record for slippage and make sure the needle mounting is rigid, and also that the diaphragm of the reproducer connected with the needle mounting is not loose.

METAL-CASTING apparatus at home.

Maybe this is a bit out of your line, but I wonder if you could tell me where I can get information on how to build a small induction furnace? I want to build an induction apparatus to melt small quantities of metal for casting. If you can tell me where I can get this information, I'd be greatly obliged.

Richard B. Stangland
San Francisco, Cal.

Reply by Donald McNicol: Induction furnaces are quite expensive, and to make one would probably cost more than buying one from a manufacturer. They operate on the principle of the old Tesla coil. The General Electric Co., Schenectady, N.Y. makes and sells them.

HIKING

ALONG a historic trail.

I would like to get your advice on making a hiking trip from Mt. Katadin in Maine to Mt. Ogelthorpe in Georgia on the Appalachian Trail.

What would be the cost of food per day for each man? I intend to make it in one continuous trip, as I'll have plenty of time. What period of time would be needed to complete this hike? What articles should be part of each man's pack? Where can I get maps and other information pertaining to this trail?

I understand there is a similar trail running down the West Coast. If so where can I get information needed for a trip over it? Approximately how long would it take to hike its entire length? Would the outfit used on the Appalachian trail be satisfactory in the West? What should be added?

I saw your name in the March copy of *Adventure Magazine*. Thank you very much for your help.

Don Wiltse
New York.

Reply by Dr. Claude P. Fordyce: Appalachian Trail runs from Maine to Georgia. Cost of food can be kept to $2.00 per day if you cook en route. I would count on making about 10 miles a day but take it easy the first two days.

The trail is 2046 miles long.

Write to the Appalachian Trail Conference 1624 H St NW, Washington, D.C. for maps and get a copy of the Appalachian Guide.

The Pacific Crest Trailway is 2,153 miles long and no one but a seasoned and experienced hiker should attempt it, as it is over rough wild country in places. Get suggestions on equipment and maps and other data from The Pacific Crest Trail System Conference, 125 S. Grand Ave., Pasadena, Calif. Get list of booklets with routes and mileages.

Anyone contemplating a hike should get at a library or from the publishers (Harper & Bros., N.Y.) or through a book store a copy of *Hiking, Camping and Mountaineering*, by Roland C. Geist.

THE marching Infantry.

Please correct me if I am wrong, but is it possible for men on a forced march to travel a distance close to 150 miles in approximately 48 hours? Your reply will settle an argument that I have with a friend who,

like me, served in the Infantry in combat. In particular, I vaguely recall hearing of an Infantry outfit during the Battle of the Bulge break-through, most of their motorized equipment having been captured or damaged, doing this on foot. Believe the men walked and double-timed except for short rest breaks the 150 miles to close a gap and take up positions to slow down or stop the Nazis.

Reply by Colonel R. G. Emery: I gather from the context of your query that you are on the pro side of the marching argument. I regret that because I'm afraid I'm contra.

You ask if it would be "possible" for Infantry to march 150 miles in 48 hours. Well —since that is obviously but a fraction over 3 miles an hour, which is within the capabilities of any quality of foot troops—for at least one hour, that is—I suppose it is *possible*. However, to me it is like saying, "If any runner worthy of the name can run a mile in less than six minutes, he should be able to run a hundred in ten hours."

Let's consider for a moment. Stonewall Jackson's march to Second Manassas is generally considered one of the great marches of history. From their bivouac near the Rappahannock to the rear of Pope's army was 54 miles. They took two full marching days to make it.

In WW II, we required a little more of our ground fighters. Table 7 of Field Manual 100-5, Operations, had this to offer:

"The maximum distances that can be covered by well-trained troops making a forced march will be assumed to be as follows:

In one 24-hr period.....35 miles
In one 48-hr period.....60 miles
In one 72-hr period.....80 miles."

The very best marching Infantry I ever saw was a battalion it was my privilege to command early in the war. They were regulars, had been stationed for years in the West, and were 99 per cent hunters and fishermen by avocation. We once marched 32 miles in one day, rested a day, then returned over the same route. Marching conditions of road, traffic, weather etc. were ideal. We had trained for the test carefully over a period of weeks. We still lost a few men.

I served a short hitch before the war in the German army, as an observer. There I was told that a Mannheim regiment had once, around 1912 or '13, done 50 miles in 24 hours. That was pure hearsay. Even so, my informants admitted that three men had died as a result of the stunt.

Men whom I believe have told me that the Chinese Nationalist troops with whom they served could—if decently fed—do 30 miles a day, day in and day out. That, if true, makes the 'bing' the best marching doughboy of whom I've heard. He still falls far behind the supermen who could do 75 two days in succession.

VOCATIONAL

MEXICO—for business and pleasure.

I'm interested in moving to Mexico. The present advantageous exchange rates seem to offer new horizons for investment and living.

I have $5,000 which I could put into either a business there, or into exporting. What opportunities are there for museums of earth science? I have one of the largest earth science exhibits in America.

How would it do, for instance, in Acapulco, in Santa Cruze, or Mexico City? Here we have a 20% excise tax. Would the museum be considered an educational attraction there?

Can you give me any idea of the living costs, and the cost of help—would an American be better off renting or buying a place there? Would the Mexicans honor a long, say ten-year lease?

Do you know of anyone there interested in selling minerals. We are also interested in silver jewelry.

H. Brown
Shell Beach, Cal.

Reply by Wallace Montgomery: In spite of the very favorable rate of exchange of 8.65 pesos for 1 dollar, business risks, that is small business, are greater in Mexico than in the U. S.

The educational program of the government has not reached a point where exhibitions, museums, etc. are popular except in a few of the larger cities, and these usually are free to the public.

I do not believe you could enter your exhibits here without a great deal of trouble. I suggest you make a trip down here, look over the city and visit Acapulco and then decide if you think you should go ahead with your idea.

THE lure of the legion.

I am curious about the requirements and methods of enlistment of the French Foreign Legion. I have the greatest admiration for the Legion as a fighting unit and the type of soldier they produce is, in my opinion, one of the best in the world—a fact which a professional soldier, and I am proud to be one, appreciates. Information concerning the status of the legionnaire, as compared to the French regular army soldier, would also he helpful. The main question is, however, how can I join the Foreign Legion?

Howard F. Derrickson
San Francisco, Calif.

Reply by George C. Appell: You can join the French Foreign Legion by presenting yourself on French soil at a bureau of recruitment. You must be in excellent physical shape and have no permanent disfigurements. The first hitch is for five years; the service is, in the main, tropical.

The status of the legionnaire as compared to a French regular, or *poilu*, is that the legion takes anybody who can fill its requirements, all enlistments being on a voluntary basis; even the officers serve voluntarily. The *poilu* is a draftee—most of him—and serves eighteen months. The legion is actually a component part of the army of Africa, whereas the regular establishment serves mainly in France and some of its possessions. The two are now fighting together in Indo-China, for instance, but the commingling is a rarity created by the world circumstance.

A CAREER with Uncle Sam's finest.

I would appreciate any information you have on the activities and educational and other requirements of the U. S. Secret Service and the Treasury Department. Do you believe there is much chance for advancement and security in either of these occupations? What are the chances of being appointed to these jobs?

Robert Sidwell
New York, N. Y.

Reply by Francis H. Bent: U. S. Secret Service Agent and Treasury Department Agent are one and the same. Merely two different names for the same position.

An applicant for the position of Agent, Secret Service Division, U. S. Treasury Department, must be a citizen of the U. S., between 21 and 36 years old; have at least 1 year of full-time experience in high grade, responsible investigational work, such as investigator in important criminal cases for reputable lawyers, or be a graduate from a recognized school of law with the degree of Bachelor of Laws; have no conspicuous physical oddities; be in the best of health and physical condition.

The following experience is not considered as qualifying: policeman, patrolman, probation or parole officer, guard, raiding or arresting officer, private detective assigned principally to "roping" or "shadowing", or whose major duties are the protection of life or property; investigator of the financial standing of individuals or firms or casualty or accident insurance claims, and other positions the principal duties of which are in connection with the prevention of crime rather than the investigation of violations of criminal laws.

(Continued from page 77)

King at the battle of Marston Moor that had turned the tide of war in favor of the hated Puritans. This time, too, he had no heart to resist when a Turkish sea rover captured the ship and carried him, a slave in shackles, to the Moslem state of Barbary.

His knightly pride would not permit him to ingratiate himself with heathen captors by tricks and pranks. An English nobleman was to spend long hours of drudgery as a scullion and chamber-boy for a master with scant mercy for Christian slaves.

But, suddenly, he began growing for the first time since he was seven. Whether it was the torrid climate that makes all living things taller, whether it was his misery as he himself swore, he sprouted up till he reached a height of three and a half feet. The astonished Moslems had another explanation for it. They swore that Allah had increased the infidel's stature so that he might serve his devout master better.

In some manner that history does not record, he escaped and arrived in England in 1658, his hair as white as that of a man of seventy, his back livid with scars.

His title unrecognized by a triumphant Cromwell, Sir Jeffrey begged pennies for food on the streets of London like any other mendicant. The second Duke of Buckingham, hearing of his plight, passed the hat and the result was a small monthly pension subscribed by certain Royalist gentlemen. This was supplemented during the Restoration by small handouts from Charles the Second. When Jeffrey was nearing sixty, he put on three inches more, till he stood three feet nine.

He was hopeful that he would grow to be four feet till he died, feeble and poor, at the age of sixty-three in the year 1682. He had not only established a record for longevity among dwarfs who generally died at an early age in those days. He had also left a reputation for gallantry and downright good sense that any of his countrymen might envy.

As late as 1891, his microscopic waistcoat, breeches, and stockings, could still be seen in the famous Ashmolean Museum at Oxford. Somebody wrote afterwards what should have been carved on his tomb.

That old chronicler vowed that Jeffrey ". . . though a dwarf, was no dastard."

(Continued from page 39)

the swells break, then hold back, let one break in front of us as close as we dare. Then if we can ride through that broken wave we should be close enough to climb the next big swell before it flips us."

"Easy," Balk laughed in harsh disbelief. "You want to row this time?"

Frenchy nodded and they walked the skiff through the white water, bracing themselves against each surge.

The farther out they worked the higher and harder the white rollers hit. Water boomed over the stem and Balk bailed ineffectually with his hands, his gaze darting to the huge swells standing out to sea.

As the next broken wave thundered against the bow, the skiff bucked and drove through in an explosion of spray, and over Frenchy's shoulder Balk could see a big swell standing up to break, green and dark, crest whipped back by the wind.

He yelled soundlessly. But Frenchy was already backing on his oars. At the last moment, as the white-faced wave collapsed and churned down on them, he rowed the skiff forward, recapturing its momentum. It hit the broken wave, boomed through a rush of sea that rose above Balk's ankles, and sluggishly pulled toward the darkly mounting swell beyond—the wave that would flip them or let them through.

"Pull!"

Balk lunged forward, wrapping his hands about Frenchy's on the oars, pushing his weight into the hurried strokes. The half-swamped skiff waddled up the mounting face of the swell, climbed the mountain, teetering on the rising crest and flopped on the seaward side.

The men kept rowing, racing the next swell to the breaking point. Over it with another resounding flop, the skiff labored out into the choppy Pacific. Balk began to thrash the water out with his hands.

When they had chased down the derelict *Chubasco* and wearily climbed aboard, Frenchy and Balk grinned at each other.

Their swivel, Joe Stranghetti was no longer between them. He had shrunk to a memory, a cross bound from crowbar, ax and leather belt. The pistol lay rusting on a deserted beach.

Until the next silvery dawn, the two fishermen remained on good terms. Then Frenchy fried the bacon too greasy.

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.

Would like to hear from any one knowing the present address of an old friend, Al Andrews, age 52-58, last known address Pendleton, Oregon. A. H. Williams, Route 1, Porkdale, Oregon.

I would like to contact my old pal, Otis C. Black who was in the 19th Bomb Group. We were separated in Japan, and if he or anyone knowing him sees this, please contact Mr. James R. Johnson, 5412 Lynch Ave., Chicago 30, Ill.

I would greatly appreciate any information concerning my friend and brother-in-law, Ernest M. (Shorty) Caldwell. Last heard from in Richmond, Cal, when he was working in the shipyards in 1943. W. N. Williams, Box 357, Victoria, Texas.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing present whereabouts of Robert Holland, formerly of McKeesport, Pa. Known to have been in Hollywood in '48 or '49. Alec Hoyer, 203 States St., San Francisco 14, Col.

Would like to contact Lee C. Hardebeck, my brother. Born 73 years ago, left Morwood, Ohio, in November, 1928. Spent a lot of time out in the western wheat fields. H. C. Hardebeck, 738 Dalton St., Covington, Ky.

LOST TRAILS—I would like to locate some relatives of mine—any of the descendants of Sylvanus or Thompson Crow who left Ohio in 1846 in the company of their brother Milton. They separated near Joliet, Ill. and have never been heard from since. Any one knowing any of these people write to Mr. Louis F. Crow, 319 N. Stanislaus, Stockton, Calif.

It is of great importance to me to find an Alexander "Tiny" Ruffuner, formerly of Chicago, ex-physical instructor, believed to be in business in Southern Illinois. Write to Monroe Nathan Work, 750 S. State Street, Elgin, Ill.

I wish to locate Frederick J. Schmidt. When last heard of, in 1921, he was a piano salesman for Griffith Piano Co. in Newark, N. J. His age would be 73. His crippled sister Anna is hoping to locate him. Write to Joseph Fred Garrity, 28 Prospect Pl., East Orange, N. J.

Sweek, Joseph E., U.S. soldier, U.S. sailor. Austrian-German. Born in Brooklyn, about 1888-1890. Ht. 5' 11", wt. 180 lbs. Dark brown hair. Eyes, gray. Prominent nose. Amateur violinist. Experienced carpenter and plumber. Discharged by U.S.N.—Records Pacific Coast 1917 U.S.S. Benver. Gave New Haven, Conn. as forwarding address but never arrived. May be amnesia victim. The writer offers reward. Write to Tom E. Long, Box 203, Key West, Fla.

I would like to hear from anyone knowing the whereabouts of my brother Jay D. Albert. When last heard of he was in Philadelphia, Penn. Notify B. E. Albert, 13025—25th Ave., N.E., Seattle 55, Washington.

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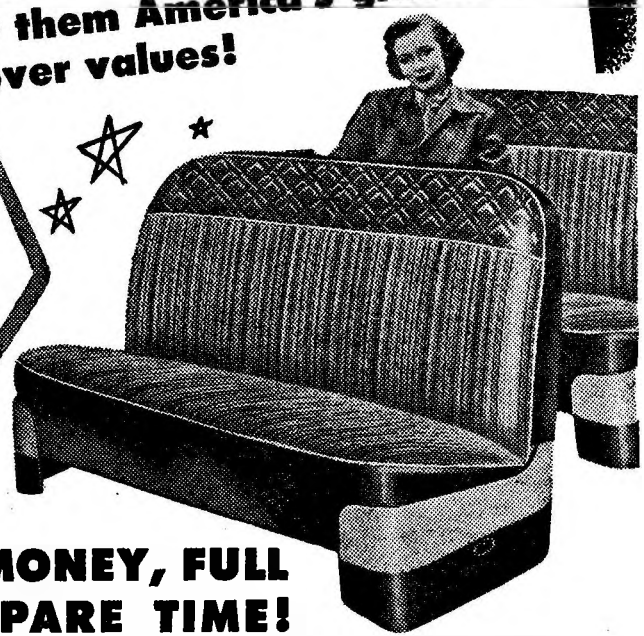

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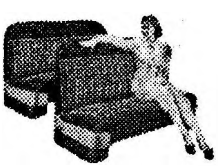

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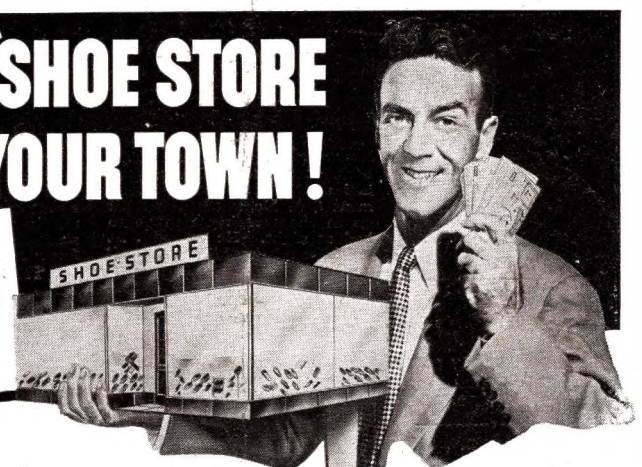

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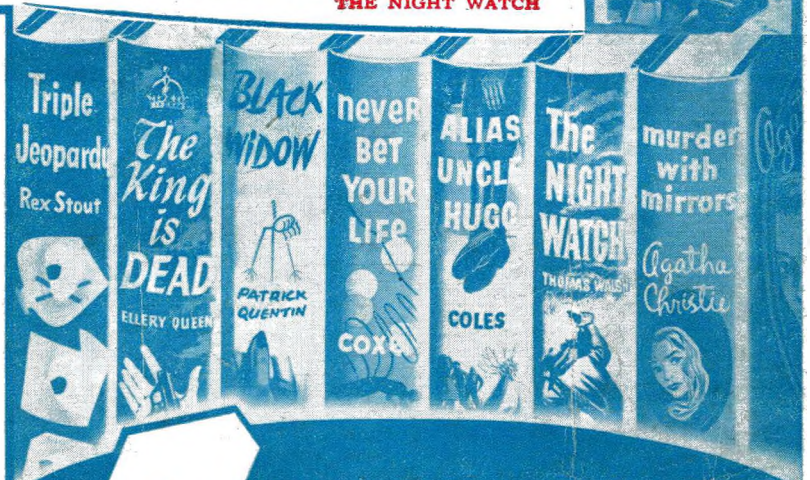

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