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THE BLACK LUCK OF THE O'FADDENS
by WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

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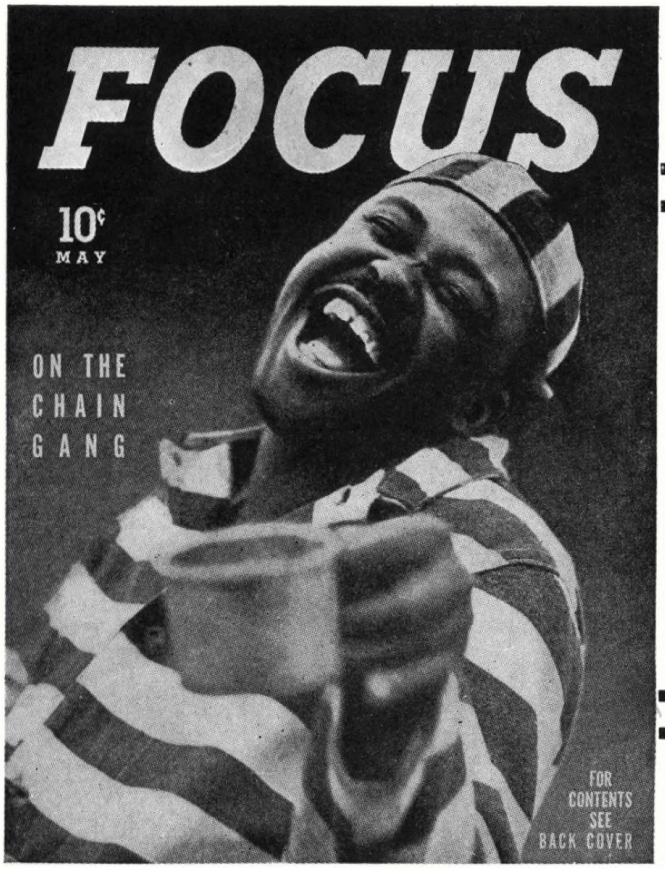

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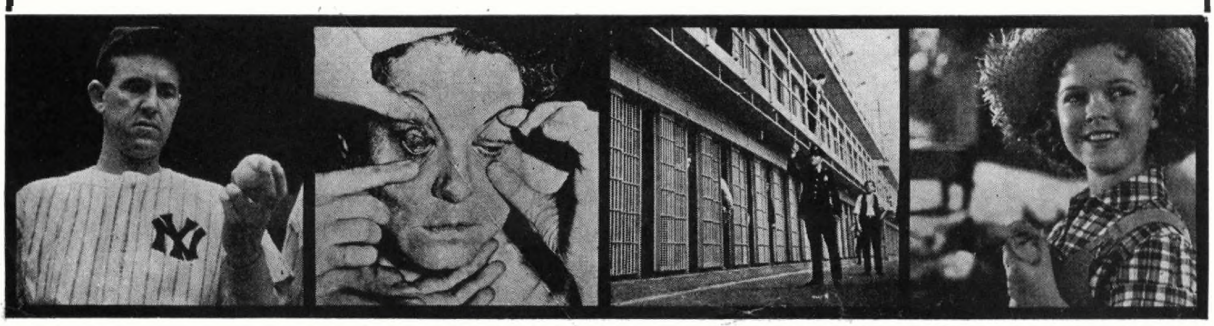

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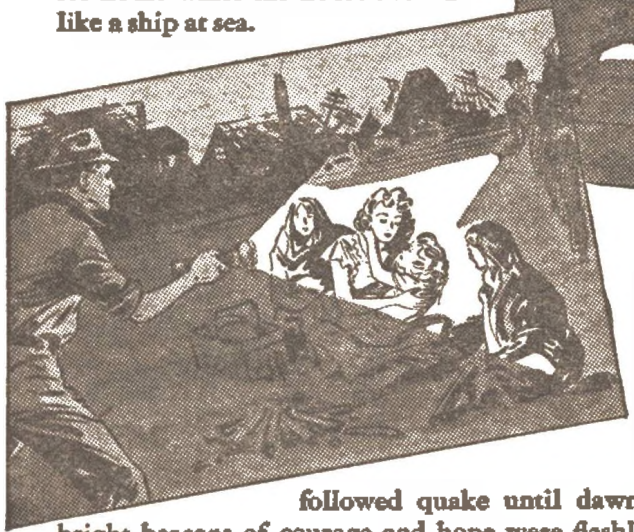
THE HOUSE ROCKED LIKE A SHIP AT SEA!

Writes Mrs. Mildred R. Fredregill of 1239 Ninth Ave., Helena, Montana.

"A terrific roar woke me. Above the screaming of my baby I heard crash of falling plaster. I flipped the light switch but no lights came on... but under my pillow was my flashlight.

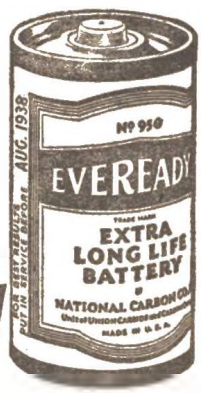
"I rescued my four-year-old from her crib, carried her to the protection of a doorway, huddled there for hours while the house rocked like a ship at sea.



"Finally my flashlight attracted help; we were taken to the safety of an open field.

"Then we spent a long night of horror as quake followed quake until dawn. But everywhere, like bright beacons of courage and hope were flashlights with fresh, DATED 'Eveready' batteries, like the one that helped me save my baby, then signalled our rescuers.

(*Signed*) Mildred R Fredregill"



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THE BLACK LUCK OF THE O'FADDENS

A Novelette

By WILLIAM CHAMBERLAIN

THE story goes that it happened back in the days when St. Patrick was drivin' the snakes out of Ireland. The good saint, Hivin rest him, had been chasin' a monstrous big snake down through County Clare all one hot an' dusty afternoon, an' a tired man he was when he comes to a big bog-trotter who was settin' in front of his house an' lookin' pleased with himself.

"A good evenin' to you, my friend," says St. Patrick. " 'Tis me throat that is parched beyond understandin'. Ye would not have a drop of ale about the house, would ye?"

There are some that claim that the

"It was a great scrap while it lasted, Sergint."

O'Fadden—for this one was the original of the breed—did not know that it was the good saint an' then there are others who say that he did the thing a-purpose an' with malice aforethought. Be that as it may, the O'Faddens have ever been men with a black an' beady eye to them an' small, if any, scruples.

"I have that," says this O'Fadden with a sudden lighting to his eye. "Set, stranger, while I bring ye as good a drink as ye ever waggled your tongue around in."

The good saint sets himself down an' lays his stick across his knees while the O'Fadden goes into his house. An' presently he comes back with two mugs on which the foam is standin' in a way which would do your heart good to see. He hands one of 'em to the saint an' lifts the other.

"To the white whiskers of ye," he says.

"May your children all be born with straight legs," the saint replies to him, an', bein' as dry as one of Father Dugan's sermons, he drains the half of it away at a gulp. Then his face gets red an' his eyes begin to bug out an' he clasps both hands tight across his stomach.

"Arragh!" he says when he can get his breath. "It is water that I have drunk

—water with soapsuds on top! I am a poisoned man!"

The while this O'Fadden is leanin' against the wall an' holding his belly an' laughing the donkey's bray of him so that a deaf man could have heard him in County Tipperary. Great lovers of fun were the O'Faddens in those days, accordin' to the way the story goes.

"Stranger, dear," he says between his hee-haws, "if ye could only have seen the face upon ye! I have seen nothin' so funny since the day last year when me brother Colin fell into the pigsty in his Sunday suit."

Breath has come back into the good saint, Hivin rest him, an' he rises to his feet an' plants his stick an' looks at the O'Fadden with dignity. A stern man, Saint Patrick could be upon occasion.

He says slow: "Ye are a witty an' amusing man, O'Fadden, an' it comes to my mind that ye must be a great entertainment to your neighbors."

"Aye, I am that," the O'Fadden says, still chuckling.

"Then ye will continue to entertain them," the saint says, "ye an' the bog-trottin' O'Faddens who come after ye. I put the black luck upon your name, so that strive as ye will your best efforts will end in clownings. Much amusement shall ye furnish to others, O'Fadden; yourself ye shall not amuse."

"Wait," says the O'Fadden, not laughing now. "It was but a bit of fun."

"A good day an' the black luck be upon ye," Saint Patrick tells him. An' with that he takes up his stick an' goes on down the road, followin' the big snake which has led him through County Clare.

An old wives' tale maybe—an' maybe not.

The fact remains that the black luck has dogged the footsteps of the O'Fadden tribe since. They are earnest an' cheerful little men, with a black an' a beady eye to 'em still, but disaster descends upon whichever enterprise they happen to lay their hands to. It is Murtaugh O'Fadden which calls the thing to my mind.

IT IS in January of 1917 that I come into San Francisco in the old *U.S.A.T. Thomas*, after havin' put in a couple of hitches pacifyin' the little brown brothers in Luzon. I have my orders already, but I report to the sergint-major at the casual base—an uppity little squirt who had been keepin' his pants in place with safety pins when I got my first corporal's warrant.

"First Sergint O'Hare," I says polite, "reportin' his arrival from Manila an' his departure for Fort Custer as per War Department special orders number sixty-one."

This runt does not look up but goes on rifflin' the papers on his desk an' scowlin' important—which is a failin' of people in casual bases, I have noticed. I am about to speak umbrageous to him, but then the door behind me opens an' a big M. P. comes through, draggin' a little man behind him, so I step a little to one side an' watch.

The little man has on a uniform, but he is nothin' much to see, the uniform bein' some missing in strategic places an' the whole of him lookin' as though he had been dumped into a mud bath. One eye is closed tight, but the other is bright an' cheerful an' regards the world friendly.

The M. P. lines him up in front of the desk with a rough hand.

"Well, here he is," he says out of the corner of his mouth. I have never had a friendliness for M. P.'s an' I am beginnin' to warm to the cheerful good humor in the little man's eye. "If ye take my advice ye will take him down an' push him off of the dock before he causes any more trouble, Sergint."

"Where did ye find him, Joe?" the sergint-major asks.

"The boys picked him up in China-

town, where he was causin' riot an' insurrection. As ye can see, he resisted arrest."

"All right, Joe," the sergint-major says then. "Ye can leave him here where the rules an' regulations will be inflicted upon him in due course. It is a good job of work that ye have done in pickin' him up."

The M. P. nods an' goes out an' this pimple behind the desk leans back an' stares nasty at the little man. In the meantime I have a chance to observe him better. He is maybe five feet six an' with bowed legs to him, while the map of Ireland is writ plain across his homely mug. He smiles at the sergint-major an' stands at attention in a way that would break your heart to see. Still, I have a liking for him.

"Recruit O'Fadden," this nasty little sergint-major says, "last night I give you orders to proceed to Fort Custer. Furthermore, I give you money with which to purchase transportation an' subsist yourself enroute. However, you do not proceed to Fort Custer as ordered. You no doubt spend the money upon intoxicatin' liquor an' you involve yourself in a brawl, the same bein' prejudicial to military discipline."

"Sir," breaks in Recruit O'Fadden, "the sergint is misinformed about me activities. It was this way—"

The sergint-major says in a superior sort of a way: "I am not accustomed to bein' interrupted by recruits. Ye will hush the flow of language from the mouth of ye until I have said my say. Do ye understand?"

Recruit O'Fadden smiles cheerful through his crooked mouth. "Yes sir. I only wanted to tell the sergint—"

"Quiet, ye black baboon!" This sergint-major has a skinny neck, like that of a turkey gobbler, an' it begins to get red. His voice squeaks a little, too, which is a poor thing in sergint-majors. "It is time that ye learned the ways of the army! Ye are guilty of desertion, Recruit O'Fadden; ye are also guilty of misappropriatin' government funds, incitin' a riot an' bein' drunk in uniform! It will be me pleasure to see that ye are put away for a matter of years in a place where ye will not trouble hard workin' sergint-majors again! Do ye understand that?"

"But, sir," says O'Fadden.

"Quiet!" the sergint-major yells at him again. Then he turns his head to a fat clerk who is sittin' there with a big grin spread over the donkey's face of him. "Whatley, do ye bring me a charge sheet!"

I SEE that it was time that I took a hand, so I walks forward, gentle an' easy, an' takes up me position beside the sergint-major's desk. Maybe twenty an' a mean little man with sneaky eyes, I note. The kind that boot-lick the officers an' lose no chance to impress their grade upon them beneath them. It was not so in the old army where a man soldiered to win his stripes an', after he had sewed them onto his arms, could look any man in the eye square an' tell him to go to hell if he didn't like the cut of his jib. Howsoever, the old army was already changin', even in 1917; an', as I have said before, casual depots breed a queer brand of cats.

"Well, what do ye want?" he asks, lookin' up at me as though he had smelled something bad all of a sudden.

"A word with ye, sonny," I tells him. "It has been an unpleasant thing for me to stand an' listen to your mouthings at a recruit, but I am comforted when I remember that ye are young an' do things now that ye will blush to recall when ye have grown old enough to wipe the dirty little nose of ye without help. Howsoever, it is beside the point. Did I understand ye to say that Recruit O'Fadden goes to Fort Custer?"

His face is gettin' red all over again an' sudden it begins to swell up until

I wonder if maybe it will bust like a nickel balloon. The thought pleases me some, an' out of the corner of me eye I can see that the O'Fadden is still smilin' cheerful. Then the sergint-major—whose name I learned later to be Gilmartin—is pushin' back his chair to stand up behind his desk. He points a finger imperious.

"Get out of me office!" he says, chokin' a little on the words. "I am not accustomed to takin' impertinence from every bum who comes through here on a transport! Get out of me office!"

I am patient with him.

"Presently," I say. "Ye have not answered my question."

"Will ye get out, ye sunshiner, or will I have to call an M. P. an' have ye thrown out?" he replies to me.

Well, I am not naturally a hard man, but at the time I had been a top sergint for goin' on fourteen years an' was not accustomed to bandyin' words with boy wonders who had been squallin' in market baskets when I campaigned in Cuba or who was dirty-nosed little brats, throwin' rotten oranges at the cop on the beat, when I had rode into Peking with Reilly's Battery. So I talked to him easy, usin' words that he could understand, so that presently he sits down again with the red goin' out of his face an' a scared look beginnin' to come into his eyes. I see that his fingers is shakin' as he picks up a piece of paper on his desk an', behind him, the fat clerk's eyes is buggin' out of his face so that you could have knocked 'em off with a spoke out of a combat wagon. A good first sergint comes to understand the use of language after a while.

"Now, sonny," I concludes, "a minute ago I asked you a question all polite an' easy. I'm still waitin' for the answer to that question, but I ain't goin' to wait much longer."

"Recruit O'Fadden was to go to Fort Custer," he tells me, sullen but polite enough. "Now he will stay here an' stand trial—'tis the major's orders in such cases."

"Yesterday ye gave him money for transportation an' subsistence to Fort Custer?"

"I did," Gilmartin says.

I turn me eye square on him an' say gentle: " 'Tis me recollection that the regulations prescribe that a casual of the grade of Recruit O'Fadden here will be given money for subsistence in such cases but will not be given money for transportation, such bein' purchased instead by the authorities at the casual base an' the ticket turned over to the casual in question. Am I right, Sergint-major?"

"It is customary—" he begins, but I shut him off peremptory.

"This discussion will confine itself to regulations an' not to custom, Sergint-major. Ye will answer yes or no concernin' the correctness of me statement."

"Yes," he says low, an' I can see that the tail of him is down good now.

"Then ye are guilty not only of a violation of regulations, Sergint-major," I tells him soft, "but of gross neglect of duty as well. Ye are, in fact, responsible for the misappropriation of government funds, the incitin' to riot an' the drunkenness in uniform, since ye have put temptation in the way of a recruit—it bein' well known that a recruit has no sense at all. I have known stripes to come off for less."

Well, the conceit is gone out of Gilmartin complete by now an' he sits there lookin' for all the world like yesterday's newspaper left out in the rain. It is a funny thing how that kind wilt when the pressure is put on them. I turn around to the O'Fadden.

"Have ye any money left?" I ask him.

"Never a nickel, Sergint," he answers me cheerful. "It was this way, ye see—"

"It will keep, Recruit O'Fadden," I tell him an' turn back to this Gilmartin. To him I say: "I, personally, will take this recruit with me to Fort Custer, Ser-

gint-major, payin' his transportation myself—which same he will pay back to me come pay day. Ye will forget the matter of the charges against him, fixin' the thing up with the major in your own way, an' thereby ye will retain the stripes upon the arm of ye, although I would not have ye as latrine orderly in any outfit of mine. An' in the future, I recommend that ye walk softly—at least until ye have growed into long pants. A good day to ye, Sergint-major."

The O'Fadden an' me went out, then, closin' the door easy behind us. I looked back out of the corner of me eyes as it shut an' I see that the Gilmartin is still sittin' there with a sort of stricken look on his face, while the fat clerk was shakin' his head as though he had seen the devil an' didn't like the looks of him.

SUCH is the evil out of makin' noncoms out of babies on their first enlistment, for the thing was pure bluff, do ye see? Had this Gilmartin been older an' wiser he would have damned me to me eyes for quibblin' over a technicality an' would have carried the thing to the major. Then, like as not, the O'Fadden an' I would both now be on the inside an' lookin' out.

Well, to go on. Out at the Presidio there was a supply sergint, Tim Drohegan, that I had soldiered with in Mindanao, so I took the O'Fadden out there an' got him cleaned up an' outfitted with a uniform of sorts. It was considerable large, but it covered him, an' that was something his old one hadn't done in considerable more than a few spots. Then, come eight-fifteen that night, we boarded a train for Fort Custer.

I got to know considerable about Murtaugh O'Fadden on that trip. The next day there was nothin' to do but talk—an', as I have said, the O'Fadden was a cheerful an' a sociable soul. He had an optimism to him that nothin' could dent. I figured that I had done a good job back there in the casual depot, for I could see that the man had the makings of a soldier in him.

"It was this way about that night in San Francisco, Sergint," he says to me. "The sergint-major had it all wrong about me takin' that money an' gettin' drunk on it, for I ain't a drinkin' man. The whole thing was a misunderstanding an' I have no doubt that I will get me money back in due course when the lootenant finds out where I am at."

"A lootenant it was, eh?" I asks him. "It is a new wrinkle, but go on with your story."

"Well," the O'Fadden says, "the clock in the station says that there is three hours until train time an', bein' as I had always wanted to see this here Chinatown, I climbed on a street car an' I went down there. I was walkin' along the street peaceful when a big feller stopped me.

"'You're a soldier, ain't you?' he asks.

"'I am that,' I tells him polite. 'I have joined up this day an', come eight-fifteen, I am on my way to Fort Custer. It is a grand life, the recruitin' sergint told me.'

"'Fine,' this feller says. 'Ye are undoubtedly the man that I have been lookin' for. 'Tis help that I need bad. I am a sergint meself, but I wear no uniform, due to the secret an' perilous nature of the duty which I am performin'.'

"'An' what is that, Sergint?'

"He draws me into the shadow of a building an' he speaks low to me thus: 'It is spyin' out the activities of a bunch of nefarious heathen which is plottin' against the government that I have been doin' for the month past. Do ye follow me?'

"'It is as clear as Mother O'Cleary's coffee—the same bein' water an' little else,' I tell him. 'An' where do I come in?'

"He looks all around an' then whispers in me ear. 'Not ten minutes ago I have

found out the lot of 'em is holdin' a confab in a cellar down the street aways. There is maybe half a hundred of 'em there now, makin' unpatriotic noises an' schemin' to strike a mortal blow at Washington with laundry strikes. If there was only forty of 'em I would capture single-handed the lot of 'em. As it is I will need the help of ye.'

"'Plottin' laundry strikes, are they?' I ask. 'It is a vicious thing, Sergint, an' I will be glad to strike a blow against these enemies of law an' order.'

"'Fine!' he says hearty, clappin' me on the shoulder. 'Have ye any money upon your person?'

"'Me transportation an' subsistence money to Fort Custer, the same which I drawed at the casual depot not an hour gone.'

"'Hm,' he says thoughtful. 'It would be some seventy dollars?'

"'Seventy-one dollars an' thirty-one cents,' I reply. 'Besides that I have one dollar sixty cents of me own.'

"Well, this feller scowls an' scratches at his chin thoughtful for a moment. 'That is bad,' he tells me. 'It is likely that there will be rough work for a minute or two, an' there is the chance that ye might lose that money, the same which would constitute an offense against the articles of war.'

"'Hivin forbid!' I say. 'At the casual depot they told me that such was in the nature of a misdemeanor.'

"'Do ye let me think.' Then his face brightens up an' he slaps me on the back. ' 'Tis simple,' he says. 'The headquarters of Lootenant Eiselstein, me commandin' officer, is a block down the street. The lootenant will keep your money as safe as the Bank of England. We will go there.'

"WELL, we went up the street an' the sergint turns into a door with me at his heels. It is a pawn shop that we are in an' I am a little surprised.

"'It is a queer headquarters,' I say.

"'Sh,' the sergint tells me as a tough lookin' man, with a blue shaven chin to him, comes out of a back room. 'Tis a disguise. Like I told you, this is secret an' perilous work. Do ye pass across the money.'

"'Ye want me to keep your money for ye, eh?' the lootenant asks. 'Well, it is a fine lad that ye are to help us out. Do ye hand it across, me friend, an' quickly.'

"I gave the seventy-one dollars an' thirty-one cents, plus the one dollar sixty cents of me own, to the lootenant an' then me an' the sergint went back down the street again. We turned into a little alley an' presently stopped before some steps leadin' down. At the bottom was a little door with yellow light comin' out from around its edges.

"'This is the place,' says the sergint. 'Inside the heathen are makin' medicine against the government, but the two of us will smite 'em hip an' thigh, so to speak. Do ye wait here for five minutes, which will give me time to get to the other door. Then we will assault them simultaneous.'

"'What do I do?' I asked him, the thing not bein' entirely clear in me mind.

"'At the end of the five minutes ye will bust open the door,' he tells me. 'Inside ye will find fellers sittin' in chairs an' listening to the jabber of another feller up on a platform—the same bein' one Wang Chang, the boss-man of the insurrection. 'Tis his arrest that is important. Grab him around the neck an' drag him out into the street an' yell for a policeman. Do ye follow me?'

"'I am close behind,' I answer him.

"'Fine,' he says. 'Ye can start the five minutes now.'

"It was a grand thing, I thinks as I waits, that I should meet up with this sergint. I am wearin' Uncle's uniform not yet a day an' still I am engaged in subduin' riot an' upheaval in a way that would do me old father good to see. At

the end of the five minutes I goes down the steps an' kicks on the door.

"'Open up in the name of the President of the United States!' I says.

"There is no answer, but I can hear a jabberin' from beyond the door, so I bust it open with me shoulder an' go in. There is a narrow room with a couple of dim lights an' I see that there is a half a hundred or so heathen Chinese sittin' on little stools. Across from me a feller is standin' on a platform, just like the sergint says. He turns an' looks at me an' then begins to wave his hands an' make noises like a busted bass fiddle.

"I do not see the sergint anywhere, but I have no wish to fall down on me first job in the army, so I start climbin' across the audience toward the platform. I am hindered some but I make it an' climb up beside this feller, who is still jabberin' an' waving his arms.

"I tell him: 'You come along peaceful with me, John. The game's up an' Uncle's got his fingers on you now.'

"'No savvy!' he squeaks.

"Well, I couldn't waste time talkin'. I grabbed him by the collar an' the slack of his pants an' down into the crowd we went. I was just wonderin' where the sergint was all this time when the roof fell in an' hit me—only it wasn't the roof but one of these heathen with a stool. It was a great scrap while it lasted, Sergint. I had just gotten me second wind an' was goin' good when the M. P.'s arrived.

"'Reinforcements!' I says cheerful an' hits the feller that I had dragged down from the platform with a stool to keep him quiet. 'The peace an' dignity of the United States will be preserved now, praise be!'

"Ye can imagine me surprise, then, when these M. P.'s—instead of assistin' me subdue the heathen—come wadin' through the crowd an' lay hands on me. One clouts me with a billy he is carryin' an' the other gets a strangle hold about the neck of me.

"'Desist,' I tell 'em. 'Can ye not see that I am a soldier an' am perpetratin' the law upon the enemies of the government accordin' to me oath?'

"'Crazy drunk, Joe,' one of the M. P.'s says. 'I reckon we will need the strait-jacket.'

"The upshot of it is that they take me outside an' put me into a wagon an' away we go to the Presidio, where I am locked in a cell—a thing that I cannot understand. In the morning I am taken in to see the M. P. lootenant, a hard lookin' man with an unfriendly eye.

"'So ye are the recruit who starts riots, are ye?' he asks. 'Well, I'll give you all the riotin' that you like.'

"'Sir,' I says, 'it was helpin' Lootenant Eiselstein that I was. We were raidin' a meetin' of foreign heathen who was plottin' against the government.'

"'A meetin' of the Seven Cherry Blossom Debatin' Society, you mean,' he says in a tired voice. 'Sergint!'

"'Yessir,' a sergint says, comin' in.

"'Take this punk down to the casual depot an' get rid of him,' the lootenant says. 'I got troubles enough here without him.'

"It was bringin' me back that they were when we first met up, Sergint."

CHAPTER II

HELL-ROARING HENRY

I DO not doubt the O'Fadden's story, for a look at the open an' innocent face of him is enough to convince even a first sergint, the same bein' accustomed to dealin' with guile in various an' sundry forms. Howsoever, it is then that the first, faint misgivings begin to take hold of me. 'Tis likely, I think as I stuff tobacco into me pipe, that Murtaugh O'Fadden will have his trials an' tribulations with the army. As it turns out later this is somewhat vice versa, the army havin' its trials an' tribulations

with Private Murtaugh O'Fadden instead.

Well, no matter. There is something about the little man which grows strong upon a person. It is a hard quality to put a name to, but ye have seen the same thing in the big, clumsy dog which jumps up an' puts dirty paws on a clean uniform while he tries to lick the face of ye. Hard names ye may call him, but cuff him ye cannot.

During the two days we are on the train the O'Fadden tells me considerable about himself an' I can see that trouble has followed him as a fly follows a lump of sugar.

He has been a lead miner up in Idaho an' the mine caves in upon him, a deck hand on a coastin' lumber schooner an' the schooner goes ashore on Cape Flattery in a gale an' busts into a thousand pieces, a teamster in Seattle an' the union calls a general strike. His wife runs away with a cigar salesman in Oakland an' he breaks his leg in Denver, Colorado. The saloon in which he had been a bartender burned up; the oil well which he helped to drill brought in salt water; the road show in which he was a cornetist was rode out of town on a rail.

"Now," he says, smilin' cheerful, "I have lost me transportation an' subsistence in the amount of seventy-one dollars an' thirty-one cents. Howsoever, I am thinkin' that the lootenant will have forwarded me money on to Fort Custer, hearin', like as not, about me trouble with the M. P.'s. Do ye not think so, Sergint?"

"I do not," I tell him. "I am of the opinion that ye have seen an' heard the last of Lootenant Eiselstein, an' the transportation will come out of the pay of ye ten dollars per pay day."

"No matter," he says, "I have had troubles before." He looks out of the window for a long minute an' I can see that a little of the cheerfulness has gone out of his face. He says then, quiet: "'Tis the black luck of the O'Faddens, Sergint. Maybe ye have heard of it?"

I knock me pipe out an' put it back into me pocket while I remember the story of the good St. Patrick an' the bog-trotter. Me old grandmother told it to me, Hivin rest her these many years, but I put little weight to it, the Irish bein' great ones for such tales.

"I have heard," I tell him.

"'Tis the truth an' well I have reason to know," he says, an' is quiet for a long while, watchin' the trees go by through the window. Then he turns back to me an' I see that the cheerfulness is back in his eye. "There was an old woman in San Jose, Sergint—one who could look at the tea leaves an' predict all manner of things about the past an' future of a man. It was a dollar that she charged me but sure it was worth it."

"An' she told you what?"

"That I would become engaged in a perilous undertakin' an' would meet with financial reverses. Later I would go on a long journey over the water, where a black-headed woman would come into me life. Then I would pass through a period of great turmoil, at the end of which me bad luck would finally explode, at three o'clock of a wet mornin', an' would sail away like a rocket to trouble me no more. The thing was down plain in the leaves of the tea, so she said."

"An' ye believe her?" I ask him.

"Well," he says cheerful, "already I have engaged upon a perilous enterprise an' have met with financial reverses."

There was no gettin' around the fact that he spoke the truth.

We stopped at a little place called Medicine Creek that afternoon. Bein' as it was a ten minute stop, the two of us got off to stretch our legs on the platform. There was a brass band there at the station, for some local bigwig was leavin' on the train, an' I left the O'Fadden watchin' the boys with the instruments—he bein' interested, since he had once played the cornet in a road show—while I went across the street to buy me some fresh tobacco.

When I come back the train was about to pull out. I didn't see the O'Fadden, an' supposin' that he was already on board, I swing myself up an' stand there in the vestibule while the train gets under way. The band on the platform is playin' the national anthem, an' suddenly I am glad to be back home an' a peace descends upon me. But not for long.

The O'Fadden is not on the train.

I GO through it end to end, usin' up the best part of an hour, but no O'Fadden, so I come back to the smoker an' sit down an' speak quiet words to meself. I should have known better than to have left one of his breed alone, I reflect. I wait over a train in Cheyenne, where we turned north for Fort Custer, thinkin' that he might come on, but there was no sign of him, so I go on alone.

Well, I get into Fort Custer the next mornin' an' presently I find that I am first sergint of "D" Company with enough grief on me hands so that I do not have time to worry about Murtaugh O'Fadden for the next day or two. It is maybe ten o'clock of the mornin' on a Thursday when the company clerk calls me to the telephone.

A voice says at me: "First Sergint O'Hare?"

"The same," I say.

"Would ye be knowin' a small an' dirty man with a cheerful smile to him who calls him O'Fadden?"

"Praise be," I answer. "So he is not in trouble after all."

This voice says: "Then ye have scant knowledge of what trouble is. Do ye report to Colonel McGuire at the double, First Sergint O'Hare."

Now I have never soldiered with this Colonel McGuire, but I had heard of him in Jolo, an' a tough one they said he was. "Hell-roarin' Henry" was the name the soldiers knew him by, an' a man does not get called such for nothin'.

Howsoever, there was nothin' to do about it, so I set me hat on straight an' rubbed a rag across me shoes an' went down the line to headquarters without lingerin' on the way.

The adjutant jerks a thumb down the corridor an' I march forward steady an' stand at attention while I knock at the open door. Colonel McGuire is sittin' there with both fists planted on the desk in front of him an' his white hair standin' on end—a leathery little man, he is, with a temper about him. The O'Fadden is standin' at an attention of sorts in front of the desk.

"Come in! What the such-an'-such are ye standin' out there for gawkin' like a big baboon, Sergint?" he says. "Come in!"

"Sir," an' I turns out me best salute, "First Sergint O'Hare reportin' to the commandin' officer as ordered."

He's got a pair of hard blue eyes an' they go over me like a harrow goes over a corn field, but I am too old a hand for him to find me with a button unbuttoned or me collar brass tarnished. Then he turns back to the O'Fadden an' his white hair seems to stand on end straighter than ever. To me horror I see that the O'Fadden is still smilin'.

"This I-don't-know-what," the colonel says, pointin' a finger at the O'Fadden, "I find asleep in me chair when I come to me office. I wake him up, First Sergint O'Hare, for I am not accustomed to findin' such in me chair. 'Good mornin', Pop,' he says. 'Good mornin', *Pop!*' Do ye understand?"

"Yes, sir," I say, but I do not feel cheerful.

"He says further: 'Do ye tell me, please, where I can find First Sergint O'Hare, he bein' a great friend of mine.' He says that."

I take me first good look at the O'Fadden, an' I feel worse, if such a thing could be. His uniform is much missin' again an' is streaked with parallel black bars, so that he looks like he was A.W.O.L. from a nearby penitentiary. One leggin is gone, an' he has a black eye an' a red handkerchief tied cowboy fashion around his neck.

"Good mornin', Sergint," he says cheerful. "I have just got in. I asked a feller outside where to find ye an' he said to come in here an' sit down an', when an old bird that looked like a billy goat came in, I should ask him. I am glad to see ye again."

I HAVE that cold feelin' that comes to a man when he goes under fire for the first time, an' me muscles tighten up as I turn back to look at the colonel again. Nothin' happens for the moment, but I am aware of the deep silence in the adjutant's office outside an' the suspense grows until ye could have cut it with a knife. The O'Fadden, all innocent, is still beamin' happily.

Colonel McGuire says then in a choked voice: "I take that ye do know this —this—" His voice trailed off.

"Yes sir," I say, wishin' that I was back in Mindanao fightin' with the goo-goos, who are peaceable little men in their way. "I convoyed Recruit O'Fadden from San Francisco, but I lost him at Medicine Creek three days ago."

The colonel takes another look at the O'Fadden an' then grabs his white hair in both hands an', for the space of five minutes, I hear a large number of words, some of which I had never heard before. It was clear in the mind of me where the colonel had got the name of Hell-roarin' Henry. I looked for the papers on his desk to curl up an' begin to smoke.

He says then: "An' you lost him at Medicine Creek! Why in the name of thus-an'-so you should ever find him in the first place is beyond me, an' I am an old man. Howsoever, after you did have 'im, why do ye have to go an' lose 'im, so that he comes in here on a Thursday mornin' to sit in me chair an' call me Pop? Pop! 'Tis such practices that bring people like meself to an early an' welcome grave!"

He swings back to the O'Fadden again, who is standin' there with a pleased look on his simple face.

"Ye lose yourself at Medicine Creek, do ye?" he shouts. "Why do ye lose yourself at Medicine Creek? Speak up, man!"

"It is this way," the O'Fadden begins.

"Sir!" the colonel corrects him.

" 'Tis forgettin' that I was, sir," the O'Fadden says cheerful, "an' it is the rules of military courtesy an' politeness that I will be rememberin' in the future, havin' read careful the little book that was give to me by the recruitin' sergint."

"Allah to Allah an' all hands around!" says the colonel. "Will ye get on with it? Why did ye lose yourself at this Medicine Creek?"

"It was the little book, sir, that the recruitin' sergint give me."

I am feelin' slightly dizzy an' the colonel has taken a handful of hair again. You could have heard a pin drop in the outside office.

"Book?" the colonel says.

"It is here that I have it, sir," an' the O'Fadden pulls at a pocket of the disreputable trousers of him an' hauls a mess of soggy paper which I recognize as havin' once been the pamphlet, issued by recruitin' sergints, entitled: "Customs of the Service." In barricks it is known as: "The Recruit's Bible," an is filled with various an' sundry information.

The O'Fadden is thumbin' through it. I do not look at the colonel, but keep me eyes straight to the front.

" 'Tis here," Murtaugh O'Fadden says, happy. "I will read it to ye, sir.

" 'Salutes:—When the national anthem is played a soldier in uniform will come to attention an' will salute with the right hand salute, holdin' the salute until the conclusion of the music.'

"It says such on page thirty-seven."

"Why did ye lose yourself at Medicine Creek?" the colonel says in a strangled voice.

"Why, I have told ye, sir," the O'Fadden answers, puzzled. "I was standin' on the platform when the train began to move, an' I have just lifted me foot to put it on the step of the vestibule. It was then that the band started to playin' the national anthem, so I puts me foot down again, comes to attention an' salutes with the right hand salute, as is prescribed by the regulations an' articles of war. When the music is through I look around an' me train is gone."

There is a long silence an' then the colonel turns back to me an' I can see now that he is an old man. He waves his right hand a little an' there is a tremble in his voice when he speaks.

"Take it away, Sergint," he says. "Ye are the one that found it, an' ye are the one that can keep it—an' the good Lord have pity upon the soul of ye."

WELL, there were times in the days that followed when I had good cause to wonder if an earlier O'Hare had not also had the black luck put upon *him.*

It was not that Murtaugh O'Fadden was not willin'. He was that an' more. The trouble was that his willingness was usually more than somewhat misdirected. There was a little fire in the basement of the senior major's quarters one day an' the O'Fadden climbs up three stories an' chops a big hole in a new slate roof to let the fire hose through while the rest was puttin' out the blaze with a bucket of water. The supply sergeant got in a dozen new rifles, in place of a like number which had been declared unserviceable, an' I detailed the O'Fadden to help clean the cosmoline off of them.

"Do ye do a good job of it," Sergint Donnelly tells him, "an' see to it that them bores are as bright an' shiny as a baby's face when ye are done."

"Yes sir," says the O'Fadden brightly.

It is the next morning that Sergint Donnelly comes to me, an' I can see that he is bein' troubled by a great trouble. His face is plum colored an' he is pickin' at the buttons on the front of his shirt.

"I quit!" he says. "Man an' boy I have been in this army twenty-seven years an' a supply sergint twenty-four of 'em. But now I quit. Do ye give me my discharge papers, First Sergint O'Hare!"

"Easy," I tell him. "It is a war with Germany that we have been in a month now, an' Uncle will think unkindly upon any such procedure. Maybe it is that I can dissipate this calamity that has descended upon ye."

"It is only a firin' squad that could

dissipate such," he answers gloomy. "At that they would probably miss him. Twelve new Springfield rifles, Sergint! Brand new out of the arsenal an' now they are nothin' but junk!"

I sigh a little, for I know what is comin'. "The O'Fadden?"

Sergint Donnelly goes off into a burst of language which leaves him pale an' shakin' while I wait patient. After all, I reflect, I am gettin' used to this thing, an' in spite of meself I cannot help liking the O'Fadden.

"I leave him in the supply room with me twelve beautiful new rifles," Donnelly says finally. "It is me day to turn in salvage bed sheets at the quartermaster.

"'Do ye do a good job on them bores,' I say before I leave.

"'I will that,' he tells me.

When I come back two hours later the twelve rifles is in the racks an' this O'Fadden is sittin' in a chair lookin' pleased with himself. Now two hours is not time enough to properly clean government issue cosmoline out of twelve rifle bores an' I say as much with appropriate language.

"'It is an invention that I have thought up," says this scourge. 'The ramrod was too slow, so I thinks up a scheme which would do the job quicker—an' a good job it is, Sergint, if I do say so meself. Them bores are as bright an' shiny as a new dollar.'

"'What is this invention of yours?' I ask him, an' already I can feel the sickness comin' up from the pit of me stomach.

"'Why, this,' an' he holds up a length of line with a greasy lookin' patch in the middle of it. 'Ye run it through the barrel, do ye see? An' then ye tie one end of the rope to yonder post an' the other to a nail in the wall an' ye rub the gun back an' forth until the barrel of it is clean. The cap'n will be a proud man when he learns of this!'

"I say nothin', but I go over an' pick up the first rifle, pull the bolt an' look down the barrel. I repeat the motion with the second rifle an' so on down the line until I have seen 'em all. Had I had a bayonet handy I would have cut his throat, First Sergint O'Hare!"

"They was clean?" I ask gently.

"They was," Sergint Donnelly tells me grim. "He had used emery cloth for a patch on that rope of his an' it took out the cosmoline. It took out the lands an' grooves, as well. Ye now have twelve new smooth-bores, First Sergint O'Hare. The lot of 'em are worth maybe a half a dozen slugs such as ye put into a slot machine!"

WELL, it was close to the final straw. I calls Private Murtaugh O'Fadden into the office that afternoon. He stands in front of me desk with that innocent an' cheery look of him an' I feel like I am about to tie a can onto the tail of a dog who is expectin' me to give him a bone.

"It is wishing' to speak with ye, Sergint O'Hare, that I have been," he says, takin' the words out of me mouth. "'Tis me belief that I am not servin' me government in me best capacity."

Well, life is full of surprises, bein' one thing after another. I have visions of the O'Fadden askin' to transfer to the Medical Corps maybe, which would be to the good of all concerned, since emptyin' slop buckets would offer small opportunities for trouble, even to a trouble collector like Murtaugh O'Fadden. Howsoever, I proceed cautious with an advance guard out in front of me, so to speak.

"So?" I ask. "Maybe it would be a good thing if ye would enlarge upon the theme, Private O'Fadden."

"'Tis this way," he tells me. "Four months have I been here at Fort Custer now, an' me duties to date has consisted chiefly of peelin' spuds in the kitchen, emptyin' ashes an' performing numerous other menial tasks of a like nature. Now I am readin' in the newspaper a week

ago, come Friday, that the government is needin' specialists, what with this German war goin' on and all."

"An' ye consider yourself to be a specialist, do ye, Private O'Fadden?"

I have a sudden hope that maybe he is a baker an' I can sell him down the river to the Quartermaster Corps; or maybe a machinist—the Ordnance Department might take him if the thing could be arranged sight unseen. He is smilin' at me proud.

"I am a cornetist," he says. "Do ye not remember me tellin' ye of me experiences in Walter Fadd's Troupe of Forty Thespians? It is a fine bugler that I would make an' a great credit to the company that I would be."

Well, it is a sad disappointment to me, but when I reflect upon it I reason that he may as well be a bugler as not. The company is short one of such at present an' there is little expected of a bugler anyway, he bein' regarded as a low form of life by all an' sundry. So in due course of time the O'Fadden name appears upon the rolls of "D" Company as a student bugler.

STRANGE enough, he an' the job seem to fit. A month goes by before I realize sudden that the O'Fadden has not come to me attention in some weeks. The thought makes me uneasy, but it is gettin' along into the summer an' the regiment is beginnin' to fill up with the draft, so that I have scant time to worry.

It is along in August when the word comes through the grapevine that an inspector is comin' to inspect the regiment an', if his report is good, we will be assigned to a division an' sent overseas. There is a great bustlin' around as we get ready, wishin' to leave no stone unturned which might give us our marchin' orders for France. Then one evenin' the colonel parades the regiment an' speaks thus:

"Official word has come," he says, "that General Dodd will inspect the regiment on Tuesday next. I do not have to tell ye that if his report is favorable we will go to France. If it is unfavorable it is like as not that we will sit here for the duration of the war."

Hell-roarin' Henry stops for a minute an' it seems to me that he puts his eye onto each one of us. Then he goes on, his voice soundin' as though he was chewin' the top of a tin can as he spoke.

"I have known this General Dodd since I was a shavetail. He has a nose for trouble an' he is meaner than a sack of rattlesnakes. Let one of ye give him an excuse to report unfavorably upon the regiment an' he will do it—but none of ye will give him that excuse. If one of ye should, however, I will take what is left of that man when General Dodd gets through with him an' I will stuff him into his own rifle an' shoot him out of it! Are there any questions?"

Well, we cleaned the barracks until a man could eat his dinner off the floor of them. We shined equipment an' cleaned rifles an' did squads east an' west until we was letter perfect when Monday evenin' rolled around. I made one last inspection an' then sat at me desk feelin' at peace with the world. If there was fault that even General Dodd could find with the company I did not know what it was. I was not even worried about the O'Fadden.

He was a good bugler—the best in the regiment, on the word of no less than the sergint bugler himself. His calls were a pleasure to hear—which, as he explained to me, was a result of his trainin' with the Walter Fadd Troupe of Forty Thespians. Also he had learned to keep his buttons neat an' his uniforms had lost somewhat the look of grain sacks draped across his shoulders. It was because his calls did not go flat that I had been directed to detail him as bugler of the guard durin' the inspection.

So Tuesday mornin' comes around an' General Dodd arrives an' is given a salute an' a guard of honor an' everything seems to be goin' along fine.

Lookin' back at it calm now I can see that it was the general's fault—he bein', like the colonel had said, meaner than a sack of rattlesnakes. Howsoever, the O'Fadden got the blame for it at the time, which is only another example of the black luck of the O'Fadden tribe.

Along about ten o'clock of the mornin' this General Dodd, accompanied by the colonel an' a half a dozen more, inspects the guardhouse. The guard turns out snappy, an' a fine appearance they make, even down to Bugler O'Fadden, who forms on the left of the line.

"Nice lookin' soldiers, Colonel," says this General Dodd. He is a big man, inclined to bulge in places in his uniform, an' he has a red face which is good humored lookin' an' not particularly mean. Howsoever, you can never tell. "A very smart lookin' guard."

"Yes sir," Hell-roarin' Henry answers him, an' you can tell by the face of him that things is goin' well. "'Tis the sort of a regiment I have here, General."

"Hm," the general says.

He walks down the line a little away from the rest, an' then his eye lights on the O'Fadden standin' there with his bugle tucked under his arm. The general crooks a finger at him.

"Come over here, son," he says.

The O'Fadden steps out smart, an' turns the general out a fair sample of a salute.

"Yes, sir," he says.

"Ye are a good bugler?"

"Yes, sir. I am that." Bashfulness was never one of the O'Fadden's failings.

"Ye will be bugler of the guard at three o'clock this afternoon?" the general asks him.

The colonel an' the rest are standin' a little distance off, fidgitin' uneasy, because the O'Fadden's trouble gatherin' abilities are well known throughout the regiment. The general keeps smilin' though, an' the colonel is a little comforted.

"Yes sir," the O'Fadden is answerin'. "I do not stand relieved until after the general has gone, sir."

General Dodd says: "Hm, I see. An' do ye know how to blow *Fire Call?*"

"I do that, sir," the O'Fadden tells him, proud. "Would the general like to hear it?"

"Presently," General Dodd says. "Do ye now fall back into ranks."

Well, after a bit the inspectin' party moves off toward the Quartermaster corrals, but Cap'n Cole, who is the adjutant, remains behind. When the general is out of sight he calls the O'Fadden over to him.

"What did he ask ye?" Cap'n Cole interrogates an' the O'Fadden repeats the conversation in detail.

"Ha!" says Cap'n Cole soft, "he thinks that he is goin' to pull a fast one on us by callin' a surprise fire drill at three o'clock, does he? Well, it will be a surprise that the old goat will get!"

SO THE word is passed around quiet that there will be a fire drill at three o'clock that afternoon. At two o'clock, then, this General Dodd goes to headquarters for a conference with Hell-roarin' Henry an' the companies get their fire fightin' equipment out of the sheds an' give it a final polish an' spot it behind the barracks where it could be got out quick. At a quarter to three the first sergints had all the men in their places an' we was waitin' only for the first sound of that bugle to come out with a runnin' start an' show one General Dodd how a *good* regiment turned out to meet an emergency. It was to be a sort of a grand finale to the inspection, so to speak.

I had Corporal Pinky Harris posted at a second floor window in the barricks with a pair of field glasses to let me know what was goin' on down at the

guardhouse, an' it was from him an' Sergint John Petlanovich, who was sergint of the guard, that I learned the details of what happened.

At five minutes to three General Dodd, accompanied by Hell-roarin' Henry an' sundry others, come along the walk to the guardhouse. The guard turns out very snappy as before. After he has received the salute the general rubs his chin thoughtful an' turns around to Hell-roarin' Henry.

"Your command has been trained to turn out in case of an emergency such as fire, riot an' insurrection an' so forth, I suppose, Colonel?"

"Absolutely, General," says Hell-roarin' Henry—an' behind him his adjutant is tryin' hard not to look like the cat that has just eat up the canary bird. "Trained to the minute for anything."

"Hm," says the general. "Well, just as a matter of form, I reckon that I had better turn the regiment out an' see for myself." He beckons at the O'Fadden again. "Come over here, son."

"Yes sir," says Murtaugh O'Fadden.

"Blow *Call to Arms* an' blow it loud," the general tells him.

Well, they tell me that the look on Hell-roarin' Henry's face was something that ye would walk a considerable distance to see, an' his staff is standin' behind him somewhat like Lot's wife must have looked after she had taken her little peek. This General Dodd smiles at 'em benign as this O'Fadden lifts his bugle.

He was a good bugler an', I am told, his rendition of that *Call to Arms* was a beautiful thing to hear.

I don't hear it though, since, like the rest of the regiment, I am waitin' only for the sound of a bugle to go into action. I blow me whistle an' wave me arm an' "D" Company lays into the ropes of the hook an' ladder cart an' we go out into the road at the gallop.

We are joined by the chemical carts, which are bouncin' along pretty with the bell clangin' bloody murder an' the boys singin' out strong as they run. The pump truck comes down the street, siren goin' and' her crew hangin' in their places an' adding to the noise; the third battalion comes trottin' out of the upper brigade; "A" Company is armed with fire axes an' the hospital detachment gallops after them with litters to bear off the sick an' wounded.

Well, we form up around the guardhouse with the M.P.'s makin' a fire line to give the firemen room to work. The bucket brigade forms a line an' starts

passin' red buckets, an' presently the hoses are connected up an' we are sprayin' the roof of the guardhouse in a way that would do your heart good to see.

All this while this General Dodd has been standing' there fingerin' at his chin an' with a little smile on his face. Now he turns around to the colonel.

"Hm," he says, "quite the most unique response to a *Call to Arms* that I have ever seen, Colonel. You can dismiss 'em now. Hm."

Well, like I said, it was really all the fault of this General Dodd, who was, in fact, meaner than a sack of rattlesnakes; but somehow the regiment sort of blamed the O'Fadden for it. Maybe it was because he chopped the hole in the major's roof—I don't know. Anyway, there wasn't any orders for France come through for the regiment. Two weeks later, when the regiment was ordered to send five men down to Camp Clark to learn to be bakers an' cooks, Hell-roarin' Henry put the O'Fadden's name at the top of the list.

It was sort of a relief to see him go, in a way.

CHAPTER III

DESTINATION—FRANCE

IT IS along in October that the cap'n calls me into his office an' motions me to sit down. He passes me a cigarette and then leans back in his chair—he an' I have got along well together since I have been at Fort Custer.

"Sergint," he says, "ye would like to go to France?"

"Like a duck would like a pond to swim in, sir," I tell him. "The cap'n would not be jokin' with me?"

"No," he says. "They are makin' up a list of noncoms here to go east to a division which is like to go over seas presently. Things bein' the way they are there is no tellin' when the regiment will go, an' I will not stand in the way of ye. If ye wish it the colonel will put your name on the list—although sorry I will be to lose ye."

"It is a good regiment here an' one that I hate to leave," I answer him, "but I am gettin' to be an old man an' first class wars is becomin' scarce an' far between in these days. I would not wish to miss this one."

Three weeks later I am in Camp Johnson with a new division which, so the rumor goes, has got a high priority on the sailin' list.

To make a long story short we wait around this Camp Johnson for quite a considerable spell of time an' every week there is a new rumor that sailin' orders is out, but the next week we are still on the rifle range or throwin' dummy grenades out of practice trenches or hikin' around an' about across the countryside. I read in the newspaper where me old regiment is assigned to the division then at Camp Clark—it sails for France in February of 1918—an' I am filled with a great bitterness an' inclined to the belief that maybe the O'Fadden left the black luck of him with me when he goes off to the school for bakers an' cooks.

Well, March goes draggin' by an' we get into the middle of April.

Then one evenin', as I am comin' home from the canteen, I hear disorder an' upheaval goin' on something scandalous in the barricks an' I know that the sailin' orders has come through at last. A month later we are in France. I found it to be a different kind of campaignin' to the sort I had been used to, but I got the swing of it shortly. Takin' things all in all, one war is much similar to another.

IT IS in July when the division gets its first taste of battle in the drive for Soissons. It is hard an' bitter work, but presently the thing is done an' we come out with the tails of us up an' a casualty list that reads like a

I gather that the lady is incensed. . . .

city directory. We go down to St. Mihiel, after, an' that is like a mornin' walk through the woods compared with what had gone on in them wheat fields up past Trugny Woods. Then they load us into trucks an' we go north toward Verdun, where we hear that a big push is comin' off toward the Meuse.

We stop for a couple of days near a little place called St. Pierre to refit some an' fill up the regiments with a bunch of replacements that is waitin' for us there. This St. Pierre is not much to look at, bein' broken up more than somewhat, but there is an *estamint* or two an' Gus Borger an' I catch a truck into the place late in the afternoon. Gus is mess sergint of the outfit an', bein' short a cook, he is hopin' to get a look at them replacements an' pick himself out somebody who can put hash together.

We split at the edge of town, Gus goin' off to where the casuals is billeted while I sets out to investigate the *estamint* situation, bein' thirsty after me ride. I find that it is not bad an' am on me third glass of this sour Frog wine when Gus shows up. He looks happy an' it is not hard to surmise that he has found his cook.

"Set, Gus," I says. "Ye have had luck?"

"I have had that, Sergint. I have found the jewel of a cook with papers from a school for bakers an' cooks, no less. Not only that but I have made proper arrangements to insure that this feller will come to the outfit, an' not be snaffled off by some other thievin' mess sergint, when they divvy this bunch of replacements between the regiments tomorrow mornin'. It was a rare bit of work, if I do say so meself."

Well, we have one or three more glasses of the wine an' then start back to where the outfit is. At the edge of town we stop, waitin' for a truck to come along on which we can catch a ride, an' while we wait Gus thinks that it would be a fine thing if we was to get some eggs to take back with us—such not bein' generally included in the ration of late. I agree that an omelet for supper would not go bad, so we walk up to a house, which is a little way off the road, intendin' to inquire about said eggs.

I can hear that there is a terrible argument goin' on inside, for a woman is screamin' something scandalous. The words is in French, which I do not understand beyond certain phrases, but I gather that the lady is incensed an' her language highly impolite.

"I reckon that it is a poor time to ask for eggs," Gus says, sad.

"There is truth in what ye say," I admit.

The two of us are turnin' back to the road when the door of the house slams open.

A man comes backin' out with his hands guardin' his face from the broom which the woman is wieldin' an' I see that he is a soldier. There will be trouble now, I think. The woman drops the broom then an' reaches back inside the door.

"*Cherie,*" this feller begins.

Well, she straightens swift an' easy an' I see that she has got a full slop bucket in her hands. I tell you there was poetry in the motion with which she swung this bucket up an' jams it down over the soldier's head. He tips backward an' sets down, wearin' the bucket like a helmet you see on one of these here knights, while the contents of same make a considerable mess out of the rest of him. The woman stands there for a minute with her hands on her hips while she fills the air with idiom. Then she slams the door an' I am thankful.

This soldier lifts the bucket off his head an' stands up. Then he turns around towards us an' I can see Gus Borger's mouth drop open, startled.

"It is me cook!" he says.

Well, the fact that there was some four million men in the army now had give me a false sense of security. Howsoever, I feel a premonition as I turn to look.

It is the O'Fadden, all right.

MAYBE I spoke more bitter to Gus than I should have as we rode back on a bouncin' Liberty later. After all, Gus didn't have any way of knowin'. The arrangements that he had made was perfect, an' at noon the next day the O'Fadden reports to the company as a replacement. I am sittin' in front of a canned bean box, which same constitutes me office, when he comes up.

"It is glad I am to see ye, Sergint," he says. "It is a grand thing that us old soldiers should fight the war in the same outfit, is it not?"

I winced a little, in spite of meself, but I give him me hand an' make him welcome. As I have said before, I could not help but like the little man, although I knew that trouble had again descended upon me in earnest.

"This is a new outfit that ye have come to, Cook O'Fadden," I tell him, "an' the misfortunes that ye have had in the past will be unknown here. Do ye see to it that similar misfortunes do not overtake you."

"Do ye have no fear, Sergint," he says, confident. "The black luck which has dogged me footsteps for these many years is running' out to an end. It is the tea leaves that have it so."

The thing comes back to me then. "Aha," I say, "it is the prophecy of the old lady back in San Diego, California, that ye have reference to?"

"San Jose, Sergint," he tells me. "An' it was a rare gift for lookin' into the future of a man that she had, too. Now,

I have made a long journey across the water an' a black-headed woman has come into me life, just like she said."

"A black-headed woman, eh?" I ask gentle.

"Ye have seen her back in St. Pierre, Sergint. 'Tis me wash lady an' she is tempermental."

I am forced to agree with him.

Well, orders come that evening an' the next night we move up. Then the Argonne fight comes down on us an' I have scant time to worry me head about Cook Murtaugh O'Fadden. It is hard to recall now, but there was rain an' mud, I remember, an' casualty lists that thinned platoons down to sections an' them scanty enough in themselves. Cap'n Wheeler gets a machine gun bullet through the chest of him an' the lootenants drop off one by one, so that presently I am commandin' the company—what there is left of it.

We have a line along the edge of a woods facin' a little town called Merzey, the same which we have been tryin' to take for the night an' day past. It is maybe a half a mile away but the Boche has twenty-thirty machine guns scattered cunnin' out in front of the place an' a wicked barrage arranged which puts a curtain of fire down a hundred yards in front of them machine guns when needed. Three times we have attacked an' three times have we seen that red S.O.S. rocket go up from the town. Then, in maybe half a minute, that barrage comes whistlin' down with a vicious slam-bang an' the machine guns open up an' presently we are back at the edge of the woods again, leavin' fresh casualties out there in the mud.

I am sittin' in a fox hole about dusk eatin' some corned willie which I have took from the pack of a corporal, this corporal not going to be eatin' corned willie any more, when Cap'n Thompson from "A" company comes up. He squats down beside me an' looks morose at what is left of Merzey across the way.

"Sergint," he says, "we have got to get into that damned town tonight. As it is we've held the advance up for twelve hours. Some brass hat will come up here an' take our hides off if we don't."

"It is a hard nut to crack," I answer him. "The machine guns is bad but that barrage is worse an' I am doubtful if I would have a squad left if it should catch us square."

He nods an' says thoughtful: "How many men do ye have now, Sergint?"

"One hundred an' two, countin' the ration party," I answer him.

"It is the artillery preparation which has been tippin' them off that an attack is comin'," he says under his breath. "It might be that after it has got dark ye could slip up close an' go through them machine guns before they have time to call for the barrage. Once ye are in the town ye can mop it up at your leisure when daylight comes."

"It is a chance," I agree.

"Good!" he says. "Say nine o'clock tonight, then. Have ye a Very pistol?"

"Two," I tell him.

"Shoot up a red signal, followed by a green, when ye get into the town," he tells me. "The companies on the right an' left will start in pushin' forward again when they see it."

"Look for it around nine-thirty," I say, "or not at all, Cap'n."

He nods an' sticks out his hand. "Good luck, Sergint." He goes off to the right through the woods.

WELL, I get the noncoms that are left together an' I explain the thing careful. We'll move out at nine, takin' advantage of what cover there is an' maintainin' the utmost secrecy until we get past the zone of the barrage. When the machine guns start to open up each squad will locate itself one an' work around on its flank until they can rush it an' put it out of action. Afterwards, if there are any left of us, we will go on into the town.

"There ain't goin' to be any great

amount of enthusiasm about this here attack," Sergint Ofie Keeler says glum after I have finished. "Them boys of mine are just plain tuckered out. Let them see that red S.O.S. rocket go up an' they will be back here in the woods in nothin' flat."

"With luck there'll be no red rocket," I tell him. "Any further questions?"

They have not, an' presently they are crawlin' away through the rain. I hunch me shoulders an' wait for nine o'clock to come.

It is twenty minutes to nine by me watch when I hear the sound of someone crawlin' up from behind. A man slips down into the hole with me, gruntin' a little, an' I know that it is the O'Fadden. He had come up with the ration detail.

"What is it ye want?" I ask him.

"Corporal Fogarty sent me, Sergint. He said that you would be needin' a good man with you an' that he had enough to do without botherin' with no cook. 'Tis an unpleasant man that I found him to be, meself."

I make a mental note of certain nasty details upon which this Corporal Fogarty will find himself once we are clear of this mess, but I know in the heart of me that I do not blame him. It is too late to send the O'Fadden back, so I take one of me Very pistols, of which I have two, an' I give it to him, along with a couple of cartridges.

"Do ye stick close to me when we move out," I tell him. "Then, if ye get into the town an' I do not, do ye take the pistol an' fire first a red light an' then a green light into the air as a signal to the battalion that the town is taken. Do ye understand?"

"A red an' a green," he says. "It is a simple thing. Do ye cease to worry about the signals, Sergint."

The hands of me watch have come around to nine o'clock then an' I get out of the fox hole an' blow me whistle soft. I can hear the word bein' passed easy down the line an' presently we move out. I have seen many's the ten-mile stretch of road that seemed shorter than did that eight hundred yards, for it is an unpleasant thing to go fumblin' through the dark an' rain thus while ye wait from minute to minute for the chatterin' of that first machine gun. It was the rocket callin' for the barrage that I feared to see the most, howsoever.

We are halfway across an' the nerves of me have bunched up into tinglin' little knots. Then we hit the outer edge of that beaten zone which past barrages has left—it was easy to tell by the way the ground is torn up. By the little sounds on the right an' the left of me I know that the rest of the company is up. We cross that beaten zone with the care of a man walkin' across Niagara Falls on a tight rope an' I have just thought to meself that we are nearly out of it when the thing happens.

I hear a dull *plop* behind me an' turn quick. What I see turns me cold all over. The black shape of the O'Fadden is there, but above his head, sailin' easy up into the rain, is the glowin' red ball of a Very pistol signal.

"It went off," he is sayin' in a surprised voice.

The rest of the company have seen that red signal an' also they have seen that wicked barrage come down too many times not to know what the red signal means.

A machine gun opens up off to the flank an' I hear Sam Odom yellin' to the left of me. He says: "My God, it is the S.O.S. signal! The barrage is right behind it!"

Somebody else hollers: "I'm goin' into the town an' get me into a cellar! You don't catch me goin' back through any barrage!"

WELL, time stopped hangin' still about then.

Them machine guns opened up with a hell of a racket in front an' the barrage dropped down like you would dump a load of coal down

four flights of iron stairs. It would have been the end of the company, only the company wasn't there.

It was a strange thing, but ye must remember that we had watched that barrage before an' we had felt the weight of it. So when that red signal went up the company took its foot in its hand, so to speak, an' it went in the only direction in which the barrage was not —which was into Merzey. We ran over them machine guns in a way that was scandalous, an' three minutes after the first shell, the town was taken.

The next mornin' we mop up an' consolidate our position, in the process of which I get a bullet through me shoulder an' another through me right leg, high up, which breaks the bone an' inconveniences me considerable. Then Corporal Fogarty comes an' tells me that a fresh outfit has come into the town an' is relievin' us an' that the advance is goin' forward again.

It is an hour later than I am back in the regimental aid station. I have been fixed up an' the doctor has give me a shot of something to keep me comfortable until I am evacuated. I am feelin' comfortable an' content with a blanket over me an' the prospects of a hot meal ahead. I am just dozin' off easy when somebody shakes me by the shoulder.

It is the O'Fadden, an' a fouler sight I have never seen, with the mud plastered in big gobs on him an' his arm in a sling. His face is beamin' an' he is so excited that he can scarce speak.

"Sergint," he says, "do ye know what has happened?"

"Plenty will happen," I tell him, "if ye do not take yourself away from here!"

He pays no attention. "Me black luck has gone the same as the old lady read it in the tea leaves! A period of turmoil, she says, an' then me black luck will explode of its own nastiness an' will sail away into the night like a red rocket. Do ye not see? It was the Very pistol—"

He was standin' close to me, an' I kicked him so that he lifted a little an' skated across the road into two feet of soupy mud. It hurt me bad leg something wonderful but I felt fine for it an' presently I go to sleep.

WELL, I have heard since that it was not an O'Fadden at all who played the dirty trick on St. Patrick an' had the black luck put on him. A feller in Boston told me that it was a family by the name of the McHooleys, an' Paddy Mulligan claims that it is neither the O'Faddens nor the McHooleys but the Mulcahys. No matter.

Two years ago I am in Baltimore when a big car draws up to the sidewalk an' a voice hails me. It is the O'Fadden, dressed up like a plush horse an' ridin' behind a chauffeur. He tells me that he has run his bonus money up into a hundred thousand dollars by bettin' on the horse races.

He heaved up, clawing again toward shore.

TIGER TRAP

By ARTHUR O. FRIEL

THE MAN who killed Thompson has never been found.

He never will be.

It all was one of those queer things that sometimes happen here in Venezuela. And, in a way, Thompson let himself in for it. He rode his luck too hard.

He came off the *Delta*, the old Orinoco sternwheeler that sometimes connects with the ocean steamers out at Trinidad, in a hurry. He scrambled up the steep shore to the Prado as if he dreaded having somebody get ahead of him. He made a bee line for the American consular agency, and another for the hotel. And when he was called back to the *aduana*—the customhouse, you know—he was all of a jitter.

A lanky, nervous lad he was, about thirty, with a nutcracker jaw and long nose and glittery blue eyes, like ice under sun. Made you think of one of those down-East Yankees. As it turned out, he was one, but not a farmer. Farmers usually know how to take their time.

Well, I happened to be hanging around there, and, seeing that he had no Spanish to speak of—or with—I bore a hand and put him through customs. He had expected the consular agent to do that, but that gentleman had a hangover and couldn't be bothered. And we all had a rather queer time, at that. Most of this fellow's traps were just that. Traps.

Steel traps, big enough to hold timber wolves, or maybe bears. And packages of dried baits, and bottles of scent, and chains, and drag-hooks. And skinning knives, and a take-down rifle, and a revolver, and cartridges, and a few clothes. That was about all. All packed in one little trunk that looked small but was heavy as lead.

The customs officers knew what to do with his guns—seize them. But the steel traps were new stuff to them. And to me too, in this country. And while the officials scratched their heads I said:

"If it's none of my business, what the hell is all this?"

"Traps," he said, biting the word off short.

"You don't say!" I said. "I thought they were musical instruments. Traps! Think of that! Are you a trap salesman?"

"What's that to you?" he asked.

"Nothing," I said. "And, thanking you for your kind attention—"

I started out. But before I reached the sidewalk he was after me.

"Oh, say, don't be like that!" he said. "Stick with me, won't you?"

He looked worried, and sweat was running down his long face.

"Why should I?" I inquired.

"Why—uh—white men stick together, don't they?"

"Do they?" I asked.

That stopped him a minute. But then, yanking off his white British helmet and mopping his forehead on his white sleeve, he said:

"I'm new here. You're an old-timer, I can see. And, er—"

He ran an eye down my baggy clothes, made a slow move toward his pants pocket, looked straight at me, and stopped. That saved him.

"That's right. I'm nobody's flunky," I said. "I just want to know, as aforesaid, what you are."

"I'm a tiger trapper," he told me.

I blinked.

"I'm going up this River Orinoco to trap tigers," he hustled on. "For their skins. And say, do you know of a good place?"

I STUDIED him a minute. And I saw it wasn't a cockeyed publicity idea; it was serious business. So I said:

"Take your time. Have you got some letters of introduction, and about ten dollars?"

His eyes turned frosty. But he said:

"Yes. Why?"

"If you want to save time," I told him, "show the officials your letters and slip me the ten. Importation of firearms is pretty serious hereabouts. But I know the head inspector. So—let your conscience be your guide."

He fidgeted. Then he asked:

"Wouldn't five dollars do it?"

"Not so well," said I. "Ten won't do it either, unless it's done right. But I can swing it for you if you want it swung. Make up your mind."

Grudgingly he dug down and peeled a ten off a small roll. Then he marched over and produced his letters. I hung back, so I didn't see them. But from the way the inspectors scowled I judged they were written in English and carried little weight. Then I caught the chief inspector's eye and strolled out into the corridor. He soon followed.

With nobody watching, I explained that this newcomer was a naturalist, after scientific specimens, and the things that looked like guns were only scientific tools. And then I looked down, and there on the floor was that ten-spot, all folded up.

"You dropped something," I said, mov-

ing away. When I looked around the greenback was gone, and the inspector looked very official.

"I shall be working here on my monthly report tonight," he said. *"Buenos dias!"*

So that evening I drifted into a small side door of the *aduana*, and when I came out I had a stiff leg. There was a rifle barrel down inside my pants, and a take-down stock under my coat. And a revolver at the small of my back. He was a good egg, that inspector.

Up at the hotel I told Thompson:

"Put these away quick, and keep them packed till you're up-river."

So he did, hustling them into his trunk. Glancing them over, I saw they were a .38-55 lever rifle and a .22 woodsman's revolver—down-East hunting tools, and considerably worn. The revolver was long barreled and long cylindered, and probably carried the old .22 long rifle cartridge, which packs a fairly hefty punch. But the small caliber amused me, and I asked:

"What's this for? Fourth of July?"

"No," he said, quite chilly. "For trapline killing. Leaves no hole at all, if you shoot into the eye and brain."

"A *tigre*?" I asked. "You're going to trap a *tigre* and then walk up close enough to shoot in his eye? And with a bean-shooter, at that?"

"A bean in the right place," he said, "is better than a cannon ball in the wrong one. Don't worry. And now I'm tired, Mr. Hart. Thanks for all you've done."

So I went. I seldom have to be thrown out of any place. Out on the street I muttered:

"Thanks for that kick in the pants, Mr. Thompson. Wishing you many returns of the same."

BUT the next morning I felt better. After all, he was a stranger in a strange land, and there is something in white men sticking together. And I was curious. On the one hand he seemed tight, suspicious, a bit snooty, and out for himself every minute; ready to use anybody and then drop him quick; a cold, calculating city type. But those guns had certainly seen service, and he himself seemed to know partly what he was about.

So finally, along about ten, I drifted around again.

But I was late. He'd worked fast. He'd gone to the waterfront, looked at *piraguas* moored there, looked at men too, and been sized up by men out of work.

One of them was Diego Ortiz. And he gave Ortiz a job.

Ortiz knew the Orinoco country. And some others too. Too many, perhaps. Some said he was a Colombian; some thought he was from Panama, or even farther north. He spoke English as well as any American. But he was Spanish—white American Spanish. High, hooked nose, thin lips, brown eyes, black hair; rather undersized, and wiry. His face was a mask; smooth shaven, set, not bad looking. A considerably better type than usually hangs around the Orinoco waterfront.

He'd been in the goldfields over east; up and down the Orinoco; assistant on a greenhorn exploring expedition into the Guayana mountains—which smashed up. And so on. And those who hired him once never took him a second time. That's bad. Yet nobody said why. In a way, that's worse. At the end of a job he was just paid off and dropped without any written recommendation "to whom it may concern." Those things carry weight down here. Their absence carries double.

But to Thompson this fellow was the answer to a tenderfoot's prayer. He could get quick transportation up-river. He knew where big *tigres* were, and *leones* too. Would tomorrow morning be soon enough to start? And should he order food supplies now?

By the time I learned what was up

it was all set, and none of my business. But, thinking it all over, I talked to a fellow in town named Dugan. Irish, that's right. We Harts are Irish too. And Dugan wasn't doing anything at the time and was aching to go somewhere, pay or no pay.

He was an American oil man, this Dugan, who had drifted down to the river from the oil fields over at Maracaibo. Quite a husky fellow, who'd gotten into some trouble over there and decided to travel. Fact is, he got liquored up one Saturday night and smacked down a fellow who got nasty. And the other fellow couldn't take it. He had a paper skull, or something, and he never got up. So Dugan took a walk. And now here he was, not much dressed up, but with no place to go.

So then I talked up the general idea to Thompson, without saying anything against Ortiz or too much against Dugan. And when he learned that Dugan would go just for the ride and eats, he snapped me up.

"That's fine, Hart!" he said. "I don't need anybody but Ortiz, but I'll admit that I'd like an American—"

"North American," I corrected him. "These South Americans are Americans too, in a way, and pretty touchy about it sometimes. You might bear that in mind."

He tossed that off as if it didn't matter. He looked Dugan over, and told him to be aboard at sunrise. And so, next day early, they shoved off up-river.

THE boat was a little old *piragua* with rotten sails all covered with patches, but with a rugged hull. She belonged to a petty trader who was acting captain, with a couple of half-Indian peons for crew; and she was none too clean. But she was sailing without stop for the Rio Apure, about two hundred miles up-Orinoco. And Thompson, by advice of Ortiz, had decided to do his trapping south of the Apure.

That's cattle country—flat *llanos*, with several small rivers and *caños* worming around, and some swamp-holes; good grazing, and water enough here and there, though it may get crawly in the worst of the dry season. And, with cattle to prey on, *tigres* and *leones* (jaguars and pumas to you) were said to be bigger and better there than elsewhere in Venezuela or Colombia.

So Thompson was on his way before most newcomers would have even decided just where to go. And if the wind held fair he was likely to be on his grounds before the usual up-river traveler would have started. And, as this was February, hot and dry, the northeast trades blowing in from the northern ocean were strong and usually steady, except for the afternoon *siesta* hours. Even the wind gets drowsy then.

For awhile, Thompson was contented enough, and interested in what he saw. That wasn't much. The wide yellow river, an occasional *playa* of bare yellow sand, the dull dark tree line along the shores, and the empty bluish haze hanging over the *llanos*, beyond the trees—that was about all.

The three travelers squatted forward in the shade of the big squaresail, or lay on the bare planks aft. There was no other place to go, nothing else to do. Amidships was the open hold, with a narrow footway along each beam; and between the bilge and other things below, it smelled. They stayed to windward. And as the days crawled along it all grew tedious. To Thompson, anyway.

Ortiz showed no impatience. Nor Dugan either. The Spaniard showed no feeling at all, and seldom spoke. He lolled around, squatting or lying alone, sometimes sleeping, sometimes looking out and away. Dugan, more active, moved around, hummed a song now and then, passed remarks, and got some responses.

Once Thompson chimed in on a song, and enjoyed letting himself go that far.

His cold eyes warmed up, and while the tune lasted he seemed just a boy. But then he froze up again and asked if this damned tub couldn't travel faster.

"As things go down here," said Dugan, "we're doing fine. Am I right, Ortiz?"

"Precisely," said Ortiz, short and cool. So cool that neither Thompson said anything more just then. Somehow the fellow seemed to stop talk.

After awhile Thompson went below and came up with his guns, which he had kept packed away all that time. He rubbed them over, put the rifle together, and made sure it worked smoothly. Dugan, watching, finally said:

"Those guns look older than you do."

"They are," said Thompson. "They're my father's."

"Oh," said Dugan. "A real outdoors man, I take it."

"Yes," said Thompson, looking down soberly at the rifle. "He was. And a grand old man besides. If I'd followed in his footsteps—"

There he froze again. But Dugan grinned and said:

"Go on. Nothing you say will be used against you."

And Thompson, after one sharp look at the big fellow's grin, thawed out. It seemed that he had reached the point where he had to talk to somebody that might understand. He'd been stuck on that hot little deck for days, and getting more steamed up all the time. Now he let go. And when he'd let it all out there was nothing to be ashamed of—unless going broke is shameful down East. To men like me and Dugan that's just one of those things that happen every now and then.

He had once been a country boy, he said. His father had been a pretty good farmer, and a better trader, and also a keen hunter and trapper. And if the boy had stayed at home he would probably have made a good steady living. But he went away to college. Then he got a city business job, worked his way up, became an "executive"—and suddenly found himself outside in the ash-can. Depression, you know.

Since then things had been tough. But he still had some city connections, and he used them. He had to. His father had died, the old country place had been sold off, and he had no place to go. But between one thing and another he got along somehow. And lately some old fellow with more money than brains had given him this job collecting *tigre* skins.

"What for?" Dugan wondered.

"For his private museum of personal hunting trophies," Thompson explained, his lips turning down. "He's a great sportsman, to hear him tell it. Personally I doubt if he ever shot anything bigger than a pheasant. But he certainly can spin wonderful yarns about himself; even gets his picture in the rotogravures, photographed sitting on an elephant or something. Right now he's supposed to be in here—'hunting in unexplored Venezuela'—while he's really lapping up Scotch highballs in the most expensive hotel over at Barbados."

"Oh, one of those arm-chair adventurers, eh?" said Dugan. "And you have to collect in a hurry, at so much per hide, before he gets tired of waiting. A fancy price for good fresh skins, and the more the better, while he feels that way. That it?"

"Just about," said Thompson. "And—"

There he stopped short. And Dugan, looking around, saw Ortiz lying on the deck close by. The Spaniard had been up forward when they began talking, but now he was at their backs—laid out easy, sombrero over eyes, seeming asleep. But the wind blew from them to him. And they said no more for a long time.

A WEEK after sailing, they were ashore south of the Rio Apure. And two-hundred-odd miles up the Orinoco in a sailboat, with shoals and calms and night

anchorages, and the current fighting every mile of advance, is good traveling in any man's week. Now the *piragua* captain took his pay, dumped them out, and sailed away fast.

On that desolate shore Thompson proved that he knew how to take a pack trail. He cached his trunk, and his white clothes in it. He put on khaki shirt and breeches and high boots, snake-proof. He made three packs out of hammocks and tough blue overalls; packs all equal in weight. Then he slung on his cartridge belt, picked up his rifle, and said:

"All right, Ortiz! Let's go!"

Then and there Ortiz showed why he had never gotten a second job. He had stood around smoking a *cigarrillo*, saying nothing. Now he glanced at one of the three packs and asked:

"Who is to carry that one?"

"You!" snapped Thompson. "Who else?"

Ortiz slowly blew more smoke and said:

"There is a mistake somewhere. I am not a porter. I am a guide. I am a white man. Carrying loads is the work of beasts —*burros* or Indians."

Thompson stared. Ortiz went on:

"There may be some tame Indians somewhere up this river. If you want that load carried you might look around, Mr. Thompson. Otherwise—"

He shrugged. And for a minute Thompson looked dazed. In a mean, narrow way Ortiz was right. He had promised to lead the way to *tigres*. He had not promised to do anything else. Thompson's mind, trained to hair-splitting business agreements, saw the loop-hole and hesitated. Dugan saw too, but also began to see red.

"Oh," said Dugan. "That's the way of it! We fellows, toting our own packs, are just beasts. And you're the proud Spanish gentleman. That's nice. And now, you damned lousy loafer, how would you like to have your guts punched out?"

He swung forward, fists coming up.

"Not very well," said Ortiz, with a nasty smile. "How would you like to have yours ripped out?"

And, quick as a snake, he yanked out a knife from somewhere inside his loose shirt: a double-edged dagger, which he now held low, ready for the up-rip that lets out everything. Dugan stopped. Then he edged forward again, growling:

"Try it, you damned yellow-belly! I've seen steel before. Just—"

There Thompson broke in:

"That'll do, you two! Ortiz, I guess we don't need you any more! Take a walk and don't come back!"

His heavy rifle was up now, centered on Ortiz' stomach. Ortiz stood dumb a minute, looking not so much at the gun muzzle as at the hard blue eyes behind it. Fired like an office-boy, only worse; fired without pay or food, in a wilderness where there were no eats for any man without a gun—he could hardly believe it. Employers seldom do that to a white man down here; they at least carry him to some place where he can beg food. But he saw that this greenhorn meant just what he said. So his knife slid away, his face turned wooden, and he said:

"Oh, very well."

And he took up his pack and walked.

Dugan, muttering something, did the same. And Thompson, toting his own share, walked last, watching. After awhile Dugan grinned and said:

"Apologies, Thompson. Thought you needed a bodyguard. You don't."

Thompson, still hard-mouthed, said:

"Get along!"

That jarred on Dugan, who seldom let any man order him around, least of all, one who was not paying him. But, thinking of what might be ahead, he swung along.

THEY scouted around for a day or two, stopping wherever they happened to; eating dry *casabe* and native cheese, drinking water, hanging their hammocks

in small groves. The weather was bone dry, and the ground nearly so. They saw no cattle, no *tigres*, no track of anything on the hard ground, no cat-sign in the softer spots; only a few big tapir-hoof marks, some dents of small paws, or large bird-prints.

In all that time Ortiz hardly spoke. And the second evening Thompson eyed him and asked:

"Where are the tigers you promised?"

"Here," said Ortiz, waving a hand outward. "I thought you intended to do your own trapping. Do you expect me to drive animals to you?"

"I expect you," Thompson snapped back, "to guide me to a place where they are. And I expect civil answers from you when I question you! Get that?"

"I heard what you said," Ortiz replied. "And I have guided you to a place where *tigres* are—fine big *tigres*. It is not my business to catch them. And I speak as I please. I am a free white man."

His eyes slid toward Dugan, who, the other day, had called him a yellow-belly. Dugan, not liking his words or his look, got up out of his hammock, saying:

"White man? You? You don't even know what the words mean! White men pull together on a job. And—"

But there Thompson asserted himself in that office-boss way of his.

"That will do! Dugan, no argument! Ortiz, you will do your work or quit. I have no place or patience for a shirk, a contemptible time-killer who thinks himself better than his employer. Tomorrow you will produce something or go! That is final!"

Ortiz said nothing. But his eyes glittered with absolute hate. Men like him are like that. A hot row with Dugan might have made him better natured, or dead. But being high-hatted like that, without even a gun pointed at him, turned the bile in him to poison.

Still, he took it. And then luck took a hand.

That night, when all three were asleep under a thin moon, a noise woke them up. It was a whining, gasping, yelping noise, frantic with fear. As they started up, in from the *llanos* ran an exhausted dog, one of the small hunting dogs the Indians keep. And, still yelping weakly, he gave one last jump and landed in Dugan's lap, struggling to crawl in under the big fellow's legs. And hot behind him came a huge spotted cat—a *tigre*.

Down here the big cats do that. Up in the States a yelping cur can run a puma up a tree and hold him there. But that's because the cat has learned that a dog usually means a man and a gun. Down on these *llanos* the wild cats aren't educated yet. And there's a million-year-old hate between cats and dogs. And *tigres* have been known to snatch dogs right out from under their master's hammocks.

This *tigre* stopped short, a rod away from Dugan, and stared. He had lost sight of his dog; and three men were something suddenly new. Blood-mad, he stood there with eyes glaring green, teeth gleaming, jaws drooling, claws digging, tail lashing. Then, maybe scenting his dog, he crouched to spring at Dugan. And then Thompson shot.

The heavy old .38-55 went off like a cannon. Thompson, kicked back by rifle recoil, nearly fell out of his hammock. Dugan did fall out, completely unbalanced by the dog heaving under him. Ortiz, making himself very small in his bed, stayed there. But he yelled:

"Careful, mister! Shoot him again! And again! A *tigre* isn't dead until—"

"This one is," rasped Thompson, now bending over the carcass. "Damn the luck I ripped his hide! It's no good!"

And that was true. Shooting just as the *tigre* crouched, he had missed the head and slashed the skin wide open. Old Man Scotch Highballs, over in Barbados, who wanted perfect skins to shoot his own holes into and thereby prove his marvelous skill, would pay nothing for this thing. That hurt.

But soon Thompson cheered up, grinned at Ortiz, and said:

"Well, there are *tigres* around here, aren't there? Show me some more! There might be a bonus for you if it all works out right."

That may have been what Ortiz was waiting to hear. Anyway, his set face cracked open.

"That," he said, "would be agreeable. And if you want some advice about bait, the best is a live dog. You have one now.

"Stake him out, with traps around. Cut him to bleed slow. He'll howl all night. And between his howls and the smell of fresh dog blood on the wind—"

He chuckled. Thompson and Dugan looked at him, and at the dog now cowering between Dugan's feet. And Thompson said:

"Thanks. But I guess I can find something else that will do."

And Dugan said:

"Ortiz, do you know what a skunk looks like? If you don't I'll lend you my shaving mirror, and wash it off afterwards."

Ortiz looked poisonous, but walked away. Dugan picked up the poor pup and took it to bed with him. It snuggled down under his arm, trembled awhile, then relaxed and went to sleep. In the morning it was dead. Why? Nobody knew. Run out, perhaps, in its last run for life.

THE next day Ortiz really began guiding. Starting early, he walked out alone. Before noon he was back to report live sign. And before night the three were camping in a little new hut beside a crooked, wooded *cañon*—nearly dried up up now—with traps set near a couple of pools, upstream and down, where big cat-tracks showed in the mud.

Dugan built the hut. Ortiz refused to work on it, saying it was quite unnecessary this dry weather. So Dugan made the shelter just big enough for two ham-

mocks, Thompson's and his own. When Ortiz discovered this he glowered; but, saying nothing, he hung his own *chinchorro* between trees some distance away, out of sight. And Dugan chuckled to Thompson:

"That galls him. Halfbreeds, peons, lowdowns, have to sleep like that—away from the master's house, in the bush. And seeing me, an unpaid hand, parking myself beside you makes it go double. But he let himself in for it."

Thompson smiled tightly and said:

"The arrangement suits me."

Then they waited, listening. Thompson had done his own trap-setting, and shown considerable skill in doing it; concealing the traps very carefully, smoothing over the ground with a fresh green brushbroom, and even adopting Ortiz's idea of baiting with dog meat. Now that the dog was only dead flesh, he might as well be used as left for the buzzards. Thompson cut him in half lengthwise, hanging each half up in the air, and then smearing it with some scent out of a thick bottle.

"They say," he told Dugan, "a tiger won't eat old meat, unless he killed it himself. But we'll see."

So, away to windward, they dozed in the dark. And as the night air grew damp with dew they sometimes smelled those baits. Other things smelled them too. And far along in the night the traps worked.

Something suddenly screeched and squalled like a big tomcat a long way off. Thompson sprang up excitedly.

"That's Number One—upstream!" he said. "Come on!"

Flashing on his electric torch, he grabbed his rifle and ran. Dugan followed, gripping the camp machete. Ortiz came at the rear, running silently. Soon they reached the wooded upstream pool. There they found a big *tigre*.

Caught by steel jaws on one leg and held by an iron drag-hook snarled in tough brush, the beast was a ripping, raving devil. As the light found him and he smelled men, he sprang at them, bloody-mouthed from biting at the trap.

Everyone dodged. But the big brute's jump fell short. Weighted down by the trap, stopped by the clutch of the drag-hook on bush roots, he whirled over and smashed down on his back. For a few seconds he lay stunned.

Thompson calmly handed his rifle to Dugan and stepped in with his little long revolver. Suddenly the cat wheeled over, belly to ground, glaring up again at the flashlight. And coolly, carefully, Thompson shot him in one blazing eye.

The devil was dead. Not a kick, not a quiver, not a snarl. Brain smashed—dead meat.

"*Dios!*" muttered Ortiz. Dugan swallowed, dumb. Thompson laughed, high and keen; then, practical again, said:

"All right, men. Carry him to camp. Just as he is, trap and all. I'll skin him there, down wind."

He was already thinking of Trap Two, and he wanted no smell of *tigre* death blown toward it. And after walking around the dead brute several times Dugan and Ortiz worked together, for once. Sure it was dead, they cut a stout pole and slung the carcass on it and marched with it to camp.

There Thompson got out skinning knives and worked like an expert. That old man of his, up north, had taught his boy well. Now the boy peeled that hide without one clumsy cut, while Dugan held the light and Ortiz watched. And just as the job was finished, Trap Two worked.

Down the wind came another screeching squall. And up the wind the three run again. The *tigre* this time was somewhat smaller, and when it was skinned it proved to be a female. Mates, perhaps. Or maybe an unattached female looking around for a big male and putting her foot in it. Those things do happen. Anyway, she was vicious when caught. But she died like the big fellow, from a bean-shooter bullet in the eye.

Day dawned before the second hide

was off. And as the sun rose and the air turned hot, flies swarmed to attack the hides and the carcasses and the weary men. But again Thompson proved that he knew what he was about. From his own pack he produced light screen-cloth and string, which he combined into fly-proof bags. He made pole stretchers to set the hides on. He hung them in the shade, where the sun would not dry them too fast. He used no stiffening salt on them. Instead he coated them lightly with some chemical made by himself, measuring dry powder into hot water in a stew-kettle. At last, hollow-eyed, he said:

"All right, men. A good night's work. Now I have to sleep. Do your stuff. You know what it is."

And he flopped into his hammock and was dead to the world.

AND in the days and nights following, Dugan and Ortiz did their stuff. They hardly spoke to each other, but they pulled together for Thompson. At least, Dugan pulled for him at every turn. Ortiz—Well, wait.

Ortiz worked hard in his way. There was something tigerish about the man, and he proved cunning as a cat in locating new trap-grounds. He found new bait too, and meat for the pot—small marsh deer at a swampy *laguna*, which Thompson shot with his thundering old deer-gun in daytime, when *tigres* don't prowl. When the meat was shot, though, the guide refused to help carry it to camp.

"I have done my part," he would say. And Dugan, who now kept his mouth shut, would sling the little deer over his broad shoulders and make himself a *burro*.

With venison to eat besides the *casabe* and cheese, the men were reasonably well fed. And with deer carcasses doctored by that odd scent of Thompson's, the traps continued to catch cats. What that scent was, he never told; he played all his cards close to his chest, as usual. But to Dugan the smell strongly suggested catnip.

Anyway, it worked. Luck worked too. Cattle, the usual feed of the big cats thereabouts, had suddenly grown scarce. A *morrino*, one of the sudden pestilences that sometimes sweep the *llanos*, had killed off thousands of beefs, fattening the vultures but thinning down the killers that hate diseased meat. Now the *tigres*, and the *leones* too, came upwind to attack anything that smelled good.

So, in a month, Thompson caught and shot more big cats than any trapper could usually expect in half a year. And Ortiz, taking all the credit to himself, told him so. But still Thompson was not satisfied.

"I've got more than enough to fix up Scotch Highballs," he admitted to Dugan, "even if he buys a lot to give away to his friends. But I can sell any surplus to museums or something. Why quit now?"

Dugan looked long at him, and then around at the camp, which was larger now. He, Dugan, had built a storage shed for the big hides. He had toted dead *tigres* in by night, helped scrape the skins clean by day. He had gone out afternoons to hunt more food, borrowing Thompson's little long revolver, and knocking over a big ground bird or a monkey now and then. He had worked like a horse at many things while Ortiz loafed. And not once had Thompson offered to pay him one peso for all his labor.

Dugan didn't mind—much. Somehow he liked Thompson; and he had enjoyed this free outdoor life, especially the sight of Thompson walking in on some trap-mad *tigre* and cracking him down with one shot in the eye. Nerve, that was! But now everything was worn thin, including the men themselves.

Thompson, lanky at the start, was shrunk by heat and work to a jumpy, jerky skeleton. Out much at night, working over hides by day, bolting his food,

sleeping mostly in the afternoons and twisting around even then, he was worn to the bone. Ortiz, who still camped alone, seemed somehow to be burning himself up, perhaps with suppressed hate. Dugan, for no reason he could think of, felt strangely heavy and found himself slow of thought and motion.

Besides, the food was almost gone. Water was so low that Dugan had to dig for it in the drying *caño* bed. And the traps were not doing so much now. The run of hungry cats was ending, if not ended.

"Well, you know your own business," Dugan said. "But the game's about up."

"Not yet!" Thompson snapped. "I've got nearly another month to work in!"

And he marched out alone, threadbare breeches flapping around his bony legs in the morning wind, to move some of his traps. More hides! More dollars!

Dugan muttered something about men who never knew when to quit a game and cash in. Then, looking around, he saw Ortiz squatting against a tree nearby —Ortiz, who was drawing pay and bonus while Dugan, dumb jackass, worked for nothing. Now the Spaniard eyed him, glanced after Thompson, seemed about to suggest something. But he didn't.

THOMPSON came back about noon, heels dragging, but jaw set. After a poor lunch, which all ate without words, he asked Dugan:

"Want to try your luck again?"

"Might as well," said Dugan.

So Thompson handed him the little meat-in-the-pot revolver, laid his rifle in the crotched stakes beside his hammock as usual, peeled off his sweaty shirt, and dropped off into a nervous sleep. Ortiz, smoking his bark-wrapped *cigarrillo*, strolled away toward his own *siesta* place. Dugan went prowling up-creek.

Perhaps Dugan was a born hunter, coming late into his field. Anyway, he had done well at it lately, and he loved it. He had handled revolvers before; had a good eye, a steady hand, and patience. He knew how to stand still and watch, see everything, act quickly when the right second came. He moved very quietly, wearing the noiseless Venezuelan *alpargatas*. So, though afternoon is a poor hunting time for some, he found it good enough; he could walk up on sleepy things that later would be wide awake and wary.

Now he walked alongside the crooked stream-bed for about a mile before beginning his real hunt. At a couple of places he scented a baited trap; and he gave those places a wide berth, swinging away out into the *llanos*, to leave no scent of his own near by. Then, snooping up along the shady side of the tree growth, he managed after a while to start up a dull-witted *pava*—a sizeable ground bird —and knock it off.

By that time the afternoon was half gone, and the queer fatigue that had been growing on him lately made him feel old. So, cutting across the hell-hot open land, he made a bee line for camp.

Once he stopped. From somewhere south, where the *caño* looped far away from him, something seemed to yell. But, listening, he heard nothing more. The north wind, usually weak at this time of day, was strong and gusty this time. And he was tired. So he pegged along.

Into camp he shuffled, hot and dull, half asleep. There he woke up with a jolt.

Thompson was dead. Stabbed in the back.

SPRAWLED on the ground beside his hammock, he lay face down, long arms and legs thrown out like crooked sticks, bony bare back red with half-dried blood. Under his neck was another broad stain on the earth. And when Dugan came out of his shock and looked closer, he found the throat cut.

Stabbed from behind, throat gashed to make sure—it was the work of a human *tigre*. Those murderous cats at-

tack just that way: sneak up, pounce on the back, and slash out the throat. But this cat had used a knife. And Thompson's rifle was gone.

For a time Dugan raged around there like a wild man. He ran to Ortiz' private camp, and found only an empty hammock. He yelled, swore, trampled around; came back, studied everything, and tried to be fair.

An Indian raid? There were bad Indians on these *llanos*—the Cuibas, snaky savages who were almost never seen but could strike like lightning when ready. But they would have killed Ortiz, too, wrecked the camp, and carried off the *tigre* hides. No. This was Ortiz' work.

But why? Why wait so long, then strike so suddenly?

Dugan's head was aching horribly. But slowly he reasoned it out.

Old Man Scotch Highballs, over at Barbados, was waiting for *tigre* hides, eager to pay a fancy price. Ortiz did not know the rich man's name, but he could find him, say that Thompson had died of fever or snake-bite, sell the skins for more money than he had seen in years. And now the trapping game was played out. Thompson's obstinacy was holding them all back. Brooding over this, and eaten out by his ingrown hate, the Spaniard had boiled over, murdered the sleeping Thompson, grabbed his rifle, started hotfoot for the Apure or the Orinoco to find a boat and—

But no. Ortiz, hating Dugan too, would not leave him alive to find his way out and tell. And suddenly Dugan remembered that queer yell.

Gritting his teeth, he ran out again into the hellish afternoon sun. He kept on running until things suddenly went black. Later on he woke up and found himself sprawled out and feeling sick. But he pulled himself together, got his bearings, and traveled on.

Approaching the end of the southward bend in the *caño*, he heard low cries—or croaks. Keyed up again, he sneaked through the waterside tangle. Something was groaning, trying now and then to yell, but making only a cracked hoot like a worn-out steam whistle. And, reaching a tree beside the steep bank and looking out and down, Dugan saw Ortiz.

Or, rather, what was left of Ortiz; only his chest, arms, and head. The rest of him was under what seemed to be solid sand; the sandy bed of the almost dried-up *caño*. But, as he heaved forward, that sand quivered like jelly. It was quicksand.

A few feet away, half gone but still in sight on thicker crust, was Thompson's rifle, its worn old butt sticking up at an angle. And several feet downstream, almost sunk but recognizable, was a curved bit of metal—part of a drag-hook of a Thompson *tigre* trap.

Dugan stood quiet, sizing it all up. And he saw the whole story. Ortiz, after knifing Thompson, had snooped upstream with Thompson's rifle to knock off Dugan. So doing, he had closely followed the bank; and, with mind set only on a live man, he had blundered into one of Thompson's recently moved traps.

Those were terrible traps. And only Thompson's powerful screw-clamps, now far away, could force down the springs far enough to loosen the jaws. Stamping on one spring, with all Ortiz' light weight, would not do the trick. Prying with the rifle would do no better. Shooting the blunt lead .38-55 bullets down on that tempered steel would not work either, and might blast his leg. Besides, the thumping reports would travel far on those silent plains and warn Dugan.

So, still viciously determined to get Dugan, he had picked up the drag-hook, taken to the open stream bed, and hobbled along. Some Spaniards are like that. They can lose both legs and both arms, and still crawl along to sink their teeth into an enemy.

Now Dugan stepped out. Ortiz, struggling, somehow heard him and straightened up, ghastly but grinning. Probably he thought Dugan was just returning from his hunt, with a *siesta* on the side,

and knew nothing about what was down below.

"Ah, *amigo!*" he rasped. "*Muy amigo mío*—good friend of mine—help me out of this!"

He heaved up, clawing again toward shore.

"Sure!" said Dugan, through his teeth. "Just hold steady!"

And with Thompson's revolver and Thompson's quick aim he shot Thompson's last trapped *tigre* between the eyes.

Ortiz flopped forward, face down, hands hooked into the quagmire. Slowly those hands sank, and the dead face drew under too. When nothing was left but shoulders and a mop of black hair, Dugan went slowly back to camp, pausing often to rest. Somehow all the strength seemed gone from his legs.

HE managed to bury Thompson; and then, taking some cartridges and what little food was left, he traveled north. Yes, north—not east, down the Orinoco. To go back alone to a town where he was a foreigner anyway, with no real friends, seemed risky. For one thing, that accident over west, where that fellow had died from a smack on the jaw, would look bad if an investigation dug it up.

And, besides, the man was sick. A touch of swamp fever, it turned out to be, caught while hunting at boggy places, perhaps. He had a tough time before he reached Caracas. But he kept his mouth shut all the way.

So, Mr. Thompson, that's what became of your nephew. And, as I said awhile ago, he really let himself in for it. A little better judgment, a little more consideration, a little less grasping for the last dollar, might have brought him out to—

What's that you said? Wait a minute. Let me get this straight.

You're Scotch Highballs? And the Thompson I knew was always like that? Always a money-squeezer, always a hard driver, always queering himself by handling people the wrong way? And you gave him this job hoping he would get some sense down here or kill himself trying?

I'll be damned. But, yes, it does add up right. Only he killed himself trying the wrong way.

And I think maybe you misjudged him some, mister. He drove himself harder than anybody else; and as soon as he got away from towns, out in the open, he showed a man's nerve and guts. But— Well, it's all over now.

What's that again? How do I know so much, if I stayed behind and Dugan never told? Well, now you've put me on the spot. But now that I know who you really are—

For several personal reasons I use my middle name down here—Hart. But I'm Dugan.

'Bijah maneuvered the whaleboat around the brig's stern to gain a lee for boarding. . . .

THE DEAD GO OVERSIDE

(Second Part of Five)

By ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH

(Begin here)

ABIJAH Mayo's father had gone down with his ship, trapped on a lee shore under the guns of a British frigate. Eight years later, 1820, Abijah commanded a coasting schooner sailing to the Banks from Provincetown, and was known around Cape Cod as a young skipper who'd make his mark.

But that was before he met Lucy Adams, and her father, who commanded the *Sailor's Joy*. Captain Hiram had taunted him: "Milk-and-water sailor! A schooner's one thing, but try to git the canvas off a square rigger, out where it really blows and ye can't lick bottom off a lead's tallow. My gal ain't goin' to

marry a Banker. Keep away from her!"

And that night 'Bijah had told his uncle, "I'm going deep sea, on the first ship out of New Bedford—even if she's a whaler, and I have to go in the foc'sle!"

Destiny and a shout in the night solved that problem for him within the next two days. 'Bijah and an itinerant sea cook, walking down the Wareham road, rescued an elderly man from attack by footpads. The man was Paul Da Souza, wealthy supercargo of the schooner *Diana*, and through him 'Bijah met her captain, Lion Stanford, and signed as second mate for a voyage to the west coast of Africa.

Hardly had the ship cleared port when 'Bijah learned that the trip was not to be without complications. The crew was sullen and fearful. Stanford locked himself in his cabin and drank continually, and in his drunken rages shouted hints of terrible crimes. And sang a song which gave the first dread inkling of the *Diana's* real mission.

We've rum in the cabin,
Black ivory in the hold,
Who wouldn't drink to fortune
And pledge the slaver bold?

Exhausted from the strain of piloting a strange ship down the treacherous Atlantic coast, 'Bijah waited for Lion Stanford to come to his senses.

When Stanford sobered up, 'Bijah told himself hotly, there would have to be a reckoning. 'Bijah Mayo would be a lot of things, but he would never be a slaver.

CHAPTER V

SECRET MISSION

BEING both thirsty and curious, 'Bijah traversed the shallow companionway to the cabin, noting that Da Souza's stateroom door was closed. The cabin was a shambles. Peletiah, huddled asleep on the stern transom, had made an attempt to clean up some of the mess of broken glass and meats and dribbles of liquor, but evidently the task had been beyond his capacity. Sobs wrenched his meager frame, and at intervals he moaned, murmuring disjointedly:

"I seed him plain, I tell ye, and the horns stickin' through his hair! Like as two mackerel in a run they was."

'Bijah found a blanket in Mr. Wells' stateroom, and covered the boy, who accepted the warmth with a sigh of content. Blood crusted a cut on his left forearm, and a bruise was yellowing his right cheek. An empty bottle beside him told something of his condition.

'Bijah swore softly, and thought incongruously of Aunt Tabitha, bustling around her kitchen at that moment dishing up vittles for Uncle Ira. But the thought wouldn't jell into a picture. This was another world.

He awoke in the middle of the afternoon. A basin of fresh water on the dresser indicated that Peletiah had resumed his chores. The cabin was deserted, and once more as tidy as a minister's study. Not a sound came from the deck. 'Bijah shook his head perplexedly and started to shave. He was mopping off his face as Peletiah appeared. There were circles under the boy's eyes, and his bruised cheek was a sight, but he had regained his normal perky manner.

"That were a night, that were," he volunteered. "How ye feelin', Mr. Mayo?"

"I'll do," replied 'Bijah. "Were you as frightened as you said?"

"What do ye mean?"

"Oh, about seeing the things Captain Stanford saw, the man with the horns—"

Peletiah blanched.

"Don't ye say no more, sir," he pleaded. "If the cap'n knowed I'd talked—"

"Nonsense," jeered 'Bijah. "You'll be claiming next it was the devil."

"So it was! Damn my eyes, if I didn't

see him! And some of the others."

"Well, you weren't any more afraid than the captain," 'Bijah assured him, pulling on a clean shirt. "What *is* he afraid of?"

"I guess ye'd be afraid if ye'd done what he's done," Peletiah retorted warily. "Looky, Mr. Mayo, Lew's got a chicken ready for ye."

HE WAS gone before 'Bijah could intercept him, and when he returned with a loaded tray Stanford followed him into the cabin.

"Go ahead, Mr. Mayo," said the captain, biting the end off of the cigarros he affected. "I'm on a coffee and brandy diet. Which reminds me, Peletiah, bring me a bottle of the Napoleon."

The cabin-boy plunked the tray on the table, and sprang to obey. Stanford settled himself in a chair opposite 'Bijah. Peletiah, rising from a locker with the bottle, laid a finger on his lips, staring appealingly over Stanford's shoulder.

But 'Bijah never had a chance to ask the question poised on his tongue. Stanford immediately took command of the conversation. Haggard as he was, pouches dark under his eyes, his hands were steady striking flint and steel; his voice was quiet and assured. It was impossible to reconcile him with the man who had raved obscenely the night long.

"Don't let your food get cold," he urged. "I'll take a cup of your coffee. I told Taney—capable fellow, by the way—to put himself out for you. There's a pie under that dish. And you'll find potatoes and greens, too."

He accepted the cup Peletiah placed in front of him, and laced it with brandy.

"Yes, I'm glad to have a cook like him on board," he went on. "I like a man who can stand long watches, and not complain. And he has a remarkable touch on that fiddle of his. Music is a welcome diversion on a voyage. Sourbellies as my crew are, they'll be better off with Taney in the galley." He tossed off a drink. "What do you read, Mr. Mayo? I can see you've had a decent education."

'Bijah recited a list of works with which he was familiar, and Stanford nodded negligent approval.

"A little on the classical side," he commented finally, "but a solid foundation. Have you any Greek?"

'Bijah owned shame-facedly that he was ignorant of Greek, and not much better off as to Latin.

"Too bad," commiserated Stanford. "But you can easily brush up your Latin, if you care to. Horace is always a delight, and there's Petronius, too—your Yankee divines would have you jailed if they suspected you dabbled in his bawdy humor. But there's plenty of stuff on my shelves to divert you in odd moments. You don't know Gibbon? I thought not. He's another freethinker New England mistrusts. I'll recommend this new poet Byron, also. He has a gift for the apt phrase."

They talked on for a while—or, rather, Stanford did, 'Bijah being at a loss for ready speech and occupied with his food—until the captain had finished a second cup of coffee and brandy.

"Might be a good idea for you to study Portuguese with Paul," Stanford remarked, rising. "Comes in handy in Africa, and there's a poet, Camoens, who's worth exploring. Well, I'm turning in. Take over from Mr. Wells whenever you feel like it, and keep him up to his watches tonight." A grim edge sharpened his tone. "I don't believe you'll have any difficulty about that. And if anything goes wrong call me."

He paused in his stateroom door.

"One thing more. You won't find me lacking in generosity. Technically, you're rated as second mate. But I've learned I can depend on you. On the ship's books you're carried at the same wages, same adventure money, as Wells."

The door slid to after him, leaving 'Bijah strangling over a bite of pie. Pele-

tiah tiptoed closer to the loaded table.

"Ain't he the rare one?" the cabin-boy whispered. "Bet ye ain't never seed the spit of him, Mr. Mayo. Ain't nobody lives as bad as him, only he ain't a mite mean, not when he's hisself. No, sir. He'll make ye rich, he will."

"Out of the devil's money?" 'Bijah pressed at random.

"God be good to us," gasped the boy, crossing himself hastily. "Damn my eyes, how'd ye—Oh, never say it, never say it! Ain't there bad luck and to spare? Would ye have me given to B'Goma, and the tongue torn from me mouth?"

He scuttled out of the cabin without waiting for a reply, and by the time 'Bijah had reached the deck was nowhere in sight.

THE *Diana* presented a spectacle of orderly diligence. Mr. Wells stepped forward to greet his junior with a moderation of taciturnity.

"Be ye rested, Mr. Mayo? 'Tis nigh on eight bells, and if ye please, we'll stand watch and watch from this on. Very good!"

He gave the course, described the work in progress and ducked below, so plainly ill at ease that 'Bijah's resentment against him changed to contempt.

A flutter of sad music stole from the galley door. 'Bijah walked for'ard and stuck his head inside.

"What's wrong, Lew?" he asked. "Don't you ever sleep?"

"Come in, lad," answered the cook. He was lying on a folding bunk by the stove, the fiddle tucked under his chin. I'll pack me a bagful of sleep tonight." He laid aside his instrument, and lifted a bottle from the floor. "Will ye have a dram? No? It's well to go slow when ye ain't used to the stuff. There's one thing I'll say in favor of the skipper and his cabin-boy—they're free with their rum." He took a long pull. "The truth is, 'Bije, I've been lyin' here a thinkin' of those poor female ghosts in the cabin. It drove the sadness into me like a knife-blade."

"Are you serious?" grinned 'Bijah, very brave with the sunlight on his back. "You're as silly as Peletiah!"

"Aye, serious I am," rejoined Lew, stuffing his pipe. "There's more things in natur' than we two know. I told ye my people have the Sight. I've seed—But never mind that." He struck a light. "What else have ye heard aft?"

He listened attentively to 'Bijah's report of his two encounters with Stanford, chuckling at the concluding episode.

"Rates ye fust mate, eh? He raised me this mornin', double wages and a hint there'd be a extry dash of sorghum at the end of the v'yage. Would ye call that brib'ry, now, 'Bije'?"

"I hadn't thought of that," 'Bijah admitted.

"Well, he ain't bribed us yit to do more'n our duty. He sartain sure is a queer feller. Had me git out the fiddle a while back, and listened to it mighty happy. 'Lowed I could scrape it any time I liked, which shows how much ye should heed that big babby, Black Barnaby. The hull crew's the same. Their bones turn to jelly if the skipper so much as looks at 'em. Skeered deef 'n dumb. But don't ye worry, I'll git to the bottom of things." His teeth shone white in the galley's semi-darkness. "Lew Taney's matched his wits with Bow Street runners. He'd oughter be able to figger out the devil's hold on Cap'n Stanford."

"I hope you can, Lew," 'Bijah said fervently. "But get some sleep, now, or you won't be any use at all."

"Boy, I sleep like a cat," grinned the Indian-Gypsy.

THE *Diana* made a good run that day, and the next, and the next. Off Hatteras she struck a wet easter that kept her clawing offshore for its duration, but she sighted the lighthouse on Sullivan's

Island the morning of her sixth day out of New Bedford, and stood in past Fort Moultrie to come to anchor about noon under the guns of Castle Pinckney.

Stanford himself had conned the schooner to her berth. Although he was recovered completely from his debauch, and had shown 'Bijah every courtesy, this morning his attitude was coldly aloof. He stood apart, conversing with Da Souza, both of them at intervals studying through spy-glasses the forts and the wharves of the handsome little city massed around the twin spires of St. Michael's and St. Phillip's behind the green expanse of the Battery. 'Bijah, leaning idly on the starboard bulwarks, gathered that they were perturbed by the delay.

Da Souza suggested going ashore. "It is an hour we are here."

"I wouldn't chance it," Stanford replied shortly. "And what's more, I'm not coming in here again. No knowing—"

He raised his spy-glass.

"Wait. There's a tow coming off. Yes, by God, it's Pinney. We're all right. But I won't do it again. Damned if I will!" He hailed Black Barnaby. "Bosun, rig a block and tackle from the foremast. Lower a Jacob's ladder amidships."

The crew boiled out of their midday torpor into a welter of activity. 'Bijah, shading his eyes, saw an eight-oared whaleboat crawling over the water toward the schooner, a small lighter wallowing astern. The oarsmen were Negroes, their naked backs glistening in the hot sun. A lone white man sat in the sternsheets, and as the tow drew closer 'Bijah saw that he was a singularly unpleasant looking man, very fat, with a purplish, heavy-jowled countenance and a bulbous nose that shone like a battle-lantern.

Stanford sauntered to the head of the Jacob's ladder as the whaler came alongside.

"Stow it, Pinney," he advised. "Have you brought the stuff?"

The man slapped a pair of carpetbags at his feet and jerked a thumb at the lighter, which was stacked with tiers of hogsheads.

"Ample fo' yo' puhpose, suh," he replied. "A line, please."

Stanford lowered him one, which he knotted through the handles of the bags. The captain hoisted them carefully, but when they banged against the schooner's hull 'Bijah heard the unmistakable chinking of silver. More dollars! Pinney followed them up the ladder, sweating profusely.

"'Been lookin' fo' yo' this month past," he grumbled. "'Seems foolish, suh, downright wasteful, to tie up cash money—"

Stanford stopped him with a frown.

"I needed a new second mate," he said. "Mr. Mayo, over there." He waved to 'Bijah. "This is Major Pinney, our Charleston agent, Mr. Mayo."

'Bijah bowed, and would have stepped forward to shake hands, much as he detested the appearance of the man, but Stanford hooked an arm in Pinney's and led him toward the cabin hatch, Da Souza preceding them.

As much amused as annoyed by the unceremonious treatment, 'Bijah switched his attention to the Negroes alongside, who had swarmed onto the lighter and were rigging the hauls to one of the bulky hogsheads, chattering like schoolboys the instant their owner's back was turned. Black Barnaby had the forehatch off, and the hogsheads swung up rapidly, were steadied on the bulwarks, guided to the opening and lowered into the hold, the sailors tailing on the tackle with rhythmic precision, but in the same dour silence which characterized all their joint work.

Out of the corner of his eye 'Bijah presently saw Mr. Wells emerge from the cabin hatch, and squat in a shady spot with a needle and thread and a torn shirt. It wasn't like the first mate to leave his bunk in off-watch hours, but 'Bijah carelessly dismissed the incident

as merely one of the mate's vagaries.

He started to go for'ard to speak to Lew, then noticed that the cook was standing by the galley door, talking to Black Barnaby, and decided to leave him alone, lest intrusion should spoil one of Lew's quests for information. No, he'd go below and dig out the first volume of Gibbon he was reading—with a deal of interest—at the captain's behest.

STANFORD'S voice, low-pitched but distinct, reached him in the companionway.

"—last time, I tell you. It's too risky. I almost believe in the devil when I think of the luck we've had."

"If yo' insist, suh," Pinney answered, with appropriate embroidery. "It can be arranged to put them ashore, say, south of the Edisto. But I assuah yo' I have done my paht. The mahshal's palm is greased. Yo' will find the silvah correct—Am I right, Senhor?"

Da Souza murmured assent.

"The hominy is new-milled, well-packed and sealed," Pinney continued. "It should save yo' expense, Captain, and safeguard yo' cargo. All we ask is that yo' insuah us at least a hundred of yo' prime stock. Yo' Cuban friends need not be so pahticulah, and they will not pay yo'—"

'Bijah hesitated in the cabin entrance, peering in.

"I beg your pardon, Captain," he said. "Do you mind if I—"

Stanford started to his feet, blue eyes blazing coldly.

"What in hell do you mean by this intrusion?" he flared. "Haven't you the intelligence, if you lack the manners, to see that we are talking business? Get out of here, and stay—"

'Bijah could feel his fists clenching. He took a step over the threshold. It was Da Souza's mild voice which halted him.

"I am sure Mr. Mayo intended no intrusion, Lion. You came for the book you were reading, didn't you?"

"Yes," 'Bijah answered chokingly. "But if that—"

"Here it is," Da Souza interrupted. "Come, Lion, you owe Mr. Mayo an apology."

The cold blue eyes and the warm blue eyes clashed and held.

Stanford did not lower his, but he dropped back into his seat, his manner still hostile.

"Oh," he said sneeringly, "if that is so, Mr. Mayo, take your book and return to your lessons."

"I don't want the book," growled 'Bijah, "and I'll talk to you about the apology later."

Climbing the stairs, he could hear Da Souza's voice, no longer mild, and wondered again what could be the source of the old supercargo's influence on a man as ruthlessly egotistical as Stanford.

Lew met him on deck, elaborately casual, a lowered eyelid signaling him to a deserted corner.

"I've been in the for'ard hold," murmured the cook, "helpin' Black Barnaby stow them hogsheads. Know what's in em?"

"Hominy," 'Bijah responded mechanically.

"Yes, and hominy's nigger food. And do ye know what else is stowed there?" Lew didn't wait for a reply. "Lumber, planks and beams, cut to measure. And there's notches in the scantlings and bulkheads to fit it all to for a 'tween-decks."

He paused.

"This here *Diana's* a slaver, 'Bije'."

'Bijah nodded miserably.

"I can see it—ought to have seen it before. 'Black ivory in the hold'. And the way Peletiah sheered away from my talk of the devil's money. We're headed for trouble, Lew."

He gritted his teeth. "I just had a set-to with Stanford. We'll be lucky if we don't hang, supposing we aren't murdered to hush us up. But by God, we're in the open at last!"

CHAPTER VI

LAST VOYAGE

MAJOR PINNEY waddled on deck a few minutes later, wrapped in a reek of brimstone and blasphemy almost as tangible as a fog.

"Don't concern yo'self, suh," he was saying to Stanford. "There will be no difficulty about the necessary clearance. I have influence at the Custom House. And beginnin' six months from today we will have a lookout kep' fo' you', day and night, on Black Sand Head."

He paused, with one foot on a carronade, prepared to mount the bulwarks, and 'Bijah felt the impact of his snaky eyes. His voice was lowered, but a few words carried distinctly:

"—hitch a roundshot to his feet—"

"That won't be necessary," Stanford interrupted coolly. "You exaggerate, Pinney."

The foul-mouthed man wagged energetic contradiction, but Stanford boosted him to the head of the Jacob's ladder before he could speak again, and he vanished from sight in a torrent of curses directed at the Negroes beneath him.

Stanford turned away, dusting off his hands as if he had found the contact disagreeable.

"We'll get up the anchor, Mr. Mayo," he said. "I want to run out with this tide."

He waited quietly by until 'Bijah had the anchor catted, and the *Diana* was standing down-channel for the harbor mouth.

"You have the channel bearings clear in your mind?" he asked.

"I can take this schooner anywhere any slaver can," 'Bijah answered levelly.

Stanford smiled faintly.

"Paul was right when he said you were too intelligent to be fooled for long," he observed. "About that apology, Mr. Mayo. I offer it unreservedly. I know that whatever conclusions you have reached as to myself were not the product of eaves-dropping."

"What you say doesn't mean anything to me," 'Bijah retorted. "If you didn't scruple to ship Lew Taney and me under false pretenses, you won't take an apology or a promise very seriously."

"You are in error," Stanford said without heat. "As for the apology, that is. A promise—Well, young feller, a promise is sometimes a weapon of delay. But the apology is sincere, none the less so because it may have to be repeated."

"It doesn't mean anything," 'Bijah reiterated.

"What have you against the slave trade?" Stanford challenged. "Slavery is a recognized institution in this country. It is essential to the development of the new states. I can assure you that the lot of the slave in this country is infinitely superior to whatever fate awaits him in Africa. You will see as much for yourself in B'Goma Nandi's country. A Negro is fortunate if he escapes the cooking-pot or the sacrifices of the witch-doctors." He chuckled disarmingly. "Why, you'd deny him the blessings of Christianity, boy!"

"I wouldn't deny him anything," growled 'Bijah, "not even freedom. I appreciate freedom, now, myself, since its been taken from me."

"You are as free as the rest of us," Stanford declared, turning serious. "Technically, I'll grant you, the *Diana* is outside the law. I have to operate very carefully, which bores me, but—" he shrugged—"it can't be helped. I wouldn't have signed on any man in New Bedford, who was unknown to me, and told him the purpose of this voyage. I'd have been a fool to have done so. As to you and your prejudices, in the next six months you'll make as much as a master on participation shares might expect out of a two years' East India voyage."

"I don't want the money," 'Bijah cut in. "Second mate's wages, yes. But no shares in black ivory."

Stanford's manner hardened. "In any case, Mr. Mayo, I give short shrift to men who imagine they can make trouble for me."

"Yes, you were talking about a second mate named Cullayne the other night," 'Bijah gibed at him.

Stanford's blue eyes froze into chips of ice.

"Let Cullayne's fate be an object lesson to you," he rasped. "Make the course south east by south after you cross the bar. And don't try me too much. I could pick up a second mate in Cuba, at need."

'BIJAH flushed angrily, but managed to hold his tongue. There was no sense in making a bad situation worse, he told himself, meeting Stanford's glare. And the captain seemed to be of the same mind, for he, too, checked himself by a visible effort, and stalked below, calling for Peletiah. Glasses clinked on the cabin table. Apparently, another drinking bout was in prospect; but Da Souza's voice was raised with an unusual ring of authority.

Stanford laughed harshly.

"All right, Paul, all right," he answered in English. "Matter of fact, you're always right. But there are limits to my patience. If you don't want 'em snapped, you'd better relapse to the role of the fatherly *abbé*, and administer a dash of sound advice. . . No, you don't need to worry about me. I'm going to turn in. That swine Pinney tries me sorely."

After this, 'Bijah wasn't surprised when the supercargo came on deck, the inevitable missal book clasped in one hand. But he was startled by the curt incisiveness with which the old Portuguese addressed him.

"Young sir, when I secured for you this position it was my thought that for saving my life and money I might reward you with a wealth the sea does not often give to those who serve it. I thought that you were ready to follow the advice of age and experience. But what do I find? You act yourself like a young man most liking of his own opinion."

"I wouldn't have shipped for a slaving voyage, if that's what you mean," 'Bijah answered doggedly. "I was raised to be against slavery, and I—"

"You know nothing about slavery," interjected Da Souza. "You know very little of life, if you will permit that I may speak so strong. The Negroes we bring from Africa are much better off than in their jungles. Here we clothe them, we feed them, we train them to work with their hands. Some day they may be free. I do not know. Only God knows, and if it is best God will make them free."

"You are not helping God," rejoined 'Bijah.

"How is that for you to say?" Da Souza parried sharply. "The Negroes we take from Africa are slaves to their chiefs and kings. We take them to a more kind slavery. Now, I have said all I wish. Think on it. And consider, I beg you, you should treat Captain Stanford with respect."

"Are you telling me he deserves respect?" Scoffed 'Bijah.

"I am telling you what is for your own good," Da Souza retorted gently. "He is a man who walks in a shadow. He spurns God. In that he is ignorant beyond many Negroes. But he has a soul to be saved." The brown eyes were warm and liquid. "That is my task, young sir. Not yours. For you it is that you should not try him too much. He has a curse upon him, which he must work out if God pleases. Do you not add to its burden, Mr. Mayo."

"I'm not looking for trouble," 'Bijah said, puzzled why he should feel in the wrong. "But I have a right to resent it that you and Captain Stanford withheld from me—"

"It never came to me that you would have silly scruples," exclaimed Da Souza. "Believe me, I would not have brought you aboard had I suspected

that. You were not told more for your own protection when we were in a Yankee port. And forgive me, but if you had listened with wit you would have understood from what Captain Stanford asked of you that this would not be a voyage of the usual. Now, it is too late that you regret or are indignant. But be of good sense, and in the end you will be wiser, a better officer and man, whether you accept the money you may have or you do not. Let us say no more."

He hesitated.

"No matter what happens," he added, "I am your friend. You are a worthy young man, but you have much to learn."

He assumed his usual seat on one of the lee carronades. In a moment his lips were moving soundlessly over the Latin phrases of the missal, and there he remained throughout the afternoon, remote from the busy life of the deck and apparently uninterested in it, as baffling a figure as Stanford to 'Bijah's eyes.

THERE was no question of Da Souza's influence over Stanford. Throughout the run southward to Cuba the *Diana's* master was on his good behavior. He drank more rum than any two men 'Bijah ever had seen, but it seemed to have no more effect upon him than an equal quantity of wine. Most of the time he left the handling of the schooner to the mates, but he always joined them at noon for an observation, and his deft calculations were the envy of 'Bijah's painstaking mind. After forgetting his initial resentment of the second mate's attitude, he wasn't adverse to devoting other hours to conversations, which never failed to be stimulating. Lew Taney he adopted as court jester, with a lively appreciation of the Indian-Gypsy's fund of robust humor and anecdote.

Occasionally, he talked of himself and his past. He'd served with the LaFittes out of Barataria. He'd commanded a letter-of-marque for Brazil. He'd been a privateersman in the last war with England. Interned in France, he'd been a witness of Napoleon's return from Elba, and seen the collapse of the Empire.

He never, in these moments of normality, talked of his slaving experiences. Indeed, he never mentioned Africa. The exploits which moved him to talk, hours on end, were glamorous, dramatic, in no way sordid. Of the years he spent with the LaFittes, for instance, he remarked:

"The good people called us pirates. I'd say picaroons. We preyed on the commerce of powerful nations. We left American shipping alone. And look what Jean did for Jackson afterwards at New Orleans. He was a sound man, Jean—taught me to range a Long Tom before I was your age."

This was the day they sighted Cape Maysi, at the eastern extremity of Cuba. The crew were drilling at the batteries. Stanford had assumed charge of navigation.

"No reflection on you, young feller," he explained, "but these are tricky waters, and we have to work inshore a few miles south. And while I should have friends on the lookout for me, there are too many real pirates hereabouts, who'd be ready to jump the *Diana* for the sake of her speed alone." He flashed the smile which never failed to win a response from 'Bijah. "Dog eat dog, you're thinking, eh? Well, that's life. As Mr. Pope wrote, 'big fleas have little fleas upon their backs to bite 'em.'"

Toward mid-afternoon they closed the shore, the central mountain ranges a misty blue barrier in the distance, and came to off the mouth of a lagoon framed in a dense growth of jungle topped by feather-crested palms. There were no signs of life, but they had barely dropped anchor when a lugger crept around a green point and stood out to them. Stanford studied it through his spy-glass.

"That's Martinez," he exclaimed with satisfaction. "All's well, Paul."

Da Souza merely nodded. 'Bijah, who had likewise been scrutinizing the lugger,

thought her company an extraordinarily disreputable lot. She had a stubby cannon in her bow, and there was an unmistakable flicker of steel along her crowded deck.

"They look like pirates to me," he said involuntarily.

Stanford laughed, and Da Souza turned away.

"I daresay you'd find them avaricious, if this were your schooner," answered the captain. "They won't make any trouble for us, however."

Nor did they, although on coming alongside their character was all the more noticeable. Martinez, a wiry little man with enormous mustaches and a beltful of pistols and knives, climbed aboard with two other men, and descended to the cabin, where, in the course of an hour, much rum was consumed, and bags of silver clinked on the table. The crew passed up an assortment of baskets of fruit and live chickens, which were eagerly received by the *Diana's* people. At the end of the hour, Martinez departed as peacefully as he had come aboard, to the accompaniment of explosive gusts of Spanish.

Da Souza remained below. Stanford's face had regained its bleak expression. He spat overside disgustedly as the lugger tacked away.

"Nigger flesh isn't worth so much in Cuba," he said. "Too much competition. Well, we'll make that dirty Pinney pay the difference." He ignored Mr. Wells, who was standing nearby. "Make the course south, Mr. Mayo. Keep a smart lookout for *garda costas* and other craft. I don't want to come within gunshot of a sail."

THE mountains of Cuba were swallowed up in the sunset glow, and the shore breeze, strengthening as the twilight darkened, wafted the *Diana* along on its fragrant bosom. The stars shone in tropic splendor. It was difficult for 'Bijah to believe that so much evil could exist on land and sea, that he could have rubbed elbows with a band of throat-cutting pirates such as were sometimes brought to trial in Boston and hoisted gallows-high. But he knew the peacefulness was illusory. For that night Stanford drank deep.

At first, he was contented to intone for himself the thunderous diapason of the Odyssey, but later he made the cabin vibrate with his favorite song.

And if a cruiser takes us
Or pox or fever burn
We'll go to hell in glory,
Each slaver in his turn.

A bottle banged on the table top.

"Chorus," he roared. "Damn you, Peletiah, let's hear you pipe up."

And the boy's voice quavered almost inaudibly with his.

So run the westing down, men,
The dead go overside,
And if the devil spares us
We'll know the parsons lied.

"Poor work, boy," Stanford shouted. "Fetch me Taney. Bid him bring his fiddle. Oh, aye, Paul, I'm moderate, and moderate I'll be. I promised you. I know, I know! But we'll make a night of it, the cook and I. He's a rare fellow. He'll fiddle the devil back into hell."

Lew slipped by 'Bijah, fiddle in hand.

"Never ye worry, 'Bije," he muttered. "I can manage him." And to the tough Liverpool cockney, trembling at the wheel: "Stand by Mr. Mayo, ye miserable scut, or I'll put a black spell on ye."

He made good his boast. The lightsome twanging of the fiddle replaced the ominous tenor below. Lew's persuasive voice drew chuckles and laughter from Stanford. They gammed together like a pair of whalers meeting after years in mid-Pacific. And when they sang, the songs were gay, frolicking pieces of Lew's repertory.

It was the first of many such nights while the *Diana* was weathering the Bahamas and standing eastward into the trades. Then a northwester overtook them, and the schooner drove before its blasts with shortened canvas and battened hatches, and Stanford sobered up like the sailor he was, responsible for his vessel. For five days it hounded them, piling up the waves to mountainous proportions. On the sixth day it blew itself out, and the morning of the seventh was clear and pleasantly cool.

'Bijah came on deck at noon to be received by a hail of "wreck ho!" from the foc'sle. The battered craft was rolling in the trough a couple of points to starboard, both masts gone, a tangle of spars serving as a crude sea-anchor.

"Shall we board her, sir?" he asked Stanford. "There might be some of her people alive."

"Oh, I don't think so," returned the captain.

'Bijah squinted through his glass.

"There's someone lashed to the mainmast stump," he exclaimed.

"No matter," Stanford said coldly. "I'm not in the rescuing business, Mr. Mayo."

"But it's—yes, sir—it's a woman," exclaimed 'Bijah.

Stanford's eyes brightened.

"A woman, eh? You've got good eyes, young feller." He rubbed his hands together. "Very good! If it's a woman, call away a boat and take her off—that is, if she isn't too ancient a harridan. No reason in being cumbered with the relict of some Bristol sea-lawyer, young feller."

CHAPTER VII

OUT OF THE SEA

DESPITE his absorption in the task of getting the whaleboat away 'Bijah couldn't help noticing the perturbation of the crew. They worked willingly, but there were mutters and whispers, and Black Barnaby and the five others he had chosen to man the oars looked plainly worried.

He caught an inkling of the meaning of their attitude when Peletiah rushed up to him with a bottle of rum and water as he was going overside.

"Why in hell did ye have to see her?" the boy murmured. "There'll be trouble and grief for all of us. Why don't ye jest—"

"That will be all," 'Bijah snapped, and dropped into the boat's stern as it lurched up on a wave. But he had plenty to occupy his mind, besides the heavy steering-sweep, during the hazardous passage from crest to crest, now out of sight of the wreck, again peering down at its decks from the summit of a watery mountain.

The woman drooping against the mast was either too weak or too confined by her lashings to make any gesture of seeing them. Her head lolled, and her body swayed soddenly in response to the movement of the derelict's waterlogged hull. She was a pitiable object, he thought, maybe already dead.

Black Barnaby, tugging at the stroke-oar, was of a similar mind. He wagged his shaggy head almost relievedly.

"A good thing if she's gone, sir," he said. "We ain't doin' a kindness to bring a woman aboard the *Diana*."

The words hit 'Bijah with double force. Watching for the passage of an unusually heavy swell, he had maneuvered the whaleboat around the wreck's stern to gain a lee for boarding, and there, staring him in the face, sea-water dripping from the battered golden letters, he read the legend: *Sailor's Joy, Provincetown, Mass.*"

"My God," he groaned, and dug in the sweep with a desperate strength that whirled the clumsy whaler up along the brig's starboard side.

"Catch hold of one of those loose lines," he called to the bowman, himself grasping at another that flailed within

arm's reach. He shipped the sweep, and jumped from a wave's crest to scramble across the broken rail.

Yes, it was Lucy, and for a moment he didn't know whether she was dead or alive. But a touch of her cheek assured him she still had the warmth of life in her.

As gently as he could, he propped her head in the hollow of his shoulder, and poured a quantity of the mixture Peletiah had given him between her wan lips.

She shuddered and coughed, and gradually the limpness left her body. She opened her eyes, and looked up at him, in no wise startled.

"Why, 'Bijah," she whispered.

"Don't try to talk," he said, brushing her lips lightly. She smiled, and he gave her more to drink, holding her closely as she choked again.

He shoved the bottle in a pocket, and worked expertly to loosen her bonds. Presently she was free, and he lowered her to the deck, kneeling beside her.

"How funny," she said. "But I'm glad it was you."

She didn't want to take any more of Peletiah's concoction, but he made her, cradling her head on one arm.

"Ugh," she choked. "Enough. Have you—ship—'Bijah?"

He looked across the angry sea toward the *Diana*, tossing gracefully, her tompioned cannon like bared teeth in the black bulk of her hull. A ship? Yes, a hell-ship! His wits were buzzing frantically.

"It's all right," he managed to say. "What happened?"

Her tired eyes misted suddenly.

"Father died—scurvy," she answered in jerking gasps. "Whole crew—sick—two died. Then storm—yesterday—last washed off—oh, I'm so tired."

'Bijah kissed her a second time, and she sighed happily. He heard a noise behind him, and looked over his shoulder to see Black Barnaby scrambling the side.

"Thought as 'ow 'ee might need 'elp, Mr. Mayo," panted the bosun.

"Thanks," 'Bijah said briefly. "Here, will you hold Miss Adams? I want to take a look below."

Barnaby's eyes widened as they glimpsed the slender form on the deck.

"What a purty maid," he exclaimed reverently. "Blast my scuttle-butt, sir, 'tis a fair shame!"

He knelt beside 'Bijah, and took Lucy in his arms with a tenderness that amazed the second mate.

" 'Ere, now, take it easy," he crooned to her, his gruff voice softly reassuring. "Go a'ead, sir. She'll be safe wi' Barnaby. I only wishes there wasn't—But go a'ead, sir."

His manner made 'Bijah's heart sink deeper than ever. But it was good to be certain that one, at least, of the *Diana's* company could be depended upon for decent instincts. 'Bijah rose, and cast a rapid scrutiny over the shattered fabric of the *Sailor's Joy*. All sorts of crazy ideas were spinning through his head. If it were practicable to remain on the brig! But then he saw how much work there was to be done to repair the ravages of the storm. No man could do it single-handed. It was hard to believe that this was the tidy vessel he had seen sail so nimbly from Provincetown harbor.

HE RETURNED to the deck, and called Black Barnaby to him. The bosun strode to the hatchway, carrying Lucy in his arms as though she were a baby.

"Bosun," he said hoarsely, "would the men overside stand by us to work the brig into port?"

Black Barnaby's hairy features darkened.

"We could make 'em, sir, once we 'ad 'em aboard, but Cap'n Stanford would riddle us, if 'e couldn't board. I knows 'ow 'ee feel, but there ain't nothin' to be done for it. 'E's a bad man to cross, sir."

'Bijah's agony of spirit must have been reflected in his face, for the bosun continued rapidly:

"Mr. Mayo, sir, don't 'ee worry too much. I'll stand by 'ee and the little maid. And so will Lew. We'll do what we can. If we left 'er 'ere she'd die any 'ow." He patted Lucy's salt-crusted cheek. "'Ee wouldn't believe it, maybe, but I 'ad a darter in Bristol town afore I 'ad me trouble. I'll pass me word, Mr. Mayo. I'll stand by, if that—"

The rumble of expletives was no less definite for being pitched low.

"Thank you, Barnaby," 'Bijah acknowledged. "Yes, we'll have to make the best of things as they come. I'm going below again to look for her gear."

"That's right, sir," approved Barnaby. "A maid like this should be proper rigged."

Fumbling through the intimacies of Lucy's cabin, stuffing her drenched clothing into the small horsehair trunk the dead Portuguese sailor had trundled down Commerce Street that day so long ago, yet so recent, 'Bijah had a sensation of committing sacrilege. Her father's oilskins hung from a hook in an adjoining cubicle, and he took them to wrap her in as a shield against prying eyes. What would poor, bigoted Hiram Adams think if he could see the end of his brig's last voyage, if he could know that his daughter's one chance of honor and happiness, let alone life, was confided to the Abijah Mayo he had affected to despise?

'Bijah lugged the trunk on deck, and passed it down to the bow oar of the whaleboat for stowage. Then he and Black Barnaby painstakingly transferred Lucy to the sternsheets, where she could lie on the floorboards, ignorant of the furtive glances of the cutthroats at the oars.

They shoved off from the *Sailor's Joy*, wallowing and breaching helplessly, a hulk that the sea would slowly chop apart until it sank after the men who had been torn from it. 'Bijah was glad Lucy couldn't see it. It was the last link with home. Men had sweated to build it, to work it, to save it from the capricious harryings of nature. Actually, men had died for it, as they died for country and for loved ones. Now it too, would die, sharing the fate of man and all his creations.

THE *Diana* was standing downwind to meet them. Stanford was handling the schooner with his usual mastery. He brought her around to make a lee for the whaleboat, and they came alongside within easy reach of the lines flung to them. Her bulwarks were lined with curious faces, Stanford, himself, appearing with cigarro in hand, Da Souza beside him.

"Was it worth the effort, Mr. Mayo?" Stanford called down. "You took a long time. And was it only my wickedness of imagination that fancied a romantic interlude yonder?"

"She's alive," 'Bijah answered shortly. "Nobody else on board."

He gave a thrust at the steering sweep, which fetched the whaler's stern opposite where Lew craned over the bulwarks.

"Take her, Lew," he called, and lifted Lucy in his arms, all but tossing her light weight from a wave crest into the cook's outstretched hands.

She came to with a low moan of terror. "Oh, 'Bijah! Don't!"

Lew's sinewy arms raised her over the bulwarks as casually as though she had been a doll.

'Bijah jumped after her, going up a line hand over hand. He was on deck by the time Stanford had strode for'ard to Lew's side, his eyes bright with curiosity. They were brighter, dancing gleefully when they encountered Lucy's, wide and a little frightened by the strange faces around her.

"You hurt me, 'Bijah," she said reproachfully.

"I couldn't help it," he answered, very contrite. "There's a sea running."

"What? Old friends already?" exclaimed Stanford, more amused.

'Bijah took her from Lew's arms and turned to the captain.

"We've been friends for years, sir," he said bluntly. "This is Miss Lucy Adams, of Provincetown. Her father was Captain Hiram Adams. The wreck over there is his brig *Sailor's Joy*. Miss Adams tells me they'd been in trouble for weeks."

And he described what had happened, Lucy resting contentedly against him, while Stanford's gaze flitted from one to the other of them, a mocking gleam flickering in his eyes.

"Like a story book," he commented. "You'll have to turn romancer, Mr. Mayo. Will you please introduce me?"

'Bijah complied awkwardly, and Stanford bent low over her hand.

"A great honor, Miss Adams," he murmured. "Welcome to the *Diana*—and my most profound sympathy in your loss. The way of the sea, you know. Well, well! We'll make you as comfortable as we can, although for the time being we cannot provide you with the company or services of your sex." He straightened. "What are we going to do for Miss Adams, Mr. Mayo?"

"I'll put her in my cabin," 'Bijah told him stiffly. "Black Barnaby can take care of her."

"Black Barnaby," Stanford repeated abstractedly. "Why, yes. Barnaby is one of us—But I would suggest that no time be wasted in making Miss Adams comfortable. Those wet clothes. And Taney shall provide her hot coffee."

The bosun swarmed over the bulwarks at that moment, Lucy's trunk clasped under one enormous arm. Stanford hailed him smilingly.

"Barnaby, you are to shift your rating to lady's maid. I hope there will be no complaints."

"Aye, aye, sir," returned the bosun. "If the lady don't mind."

She looked at him, and her head dropped back wearily.

"If I could only just sleep," she said.

"That 'ee shall, my maid," Barnaby promised her. "Will 'ee carry her, Mr. Mayo?"

'Bijah complied without speaking, reluctant to let her out of his arms. Stanford stood back courteously.

"Command me for anything," he said, but she didn't hear him, and 'Bijah paid him no attention.

Peletiah, lurking by the cabin hatch, crossed himself as they descended. Da Souza had vanished. Lew had appropriated the trunk, and was heading for the galley to dry out its contents. The rest of the crew leaped to action under the lash of Stanford's voice.

"Look alive, men. Haul that whaleboat aboard. We can't lose this wind."

'BIJAH'S stateroom was so small that there was no room for Black Barnaby to follow him in. He unwrapped the oilskins, and laid her on the blanket, and then stood for an instant looking down at her.

"Jest leave me with 'er," Barnaby coaxed in the doorway. "I'll fix 'er like 'er own mother."

He shouldered in past 'Bijah, and his thick fingers went to work with a mysterious deftness at the fastenings of her sea-soaked garments. "And mind 'ee, sir," he whispered, "speak the cap'n fair. There's been a sight of evil done aboard this 'ooker. But this little maid ain't like *them*. No, sir."

He peered around at 'Bijah, his face working.

"I should 'ave been 'ung, sir, for what I done, but there were never a man like 'ee aboard, or a maid the like of this. Jest trust to Black Barnaby—"

He broke off as she stirred.

"Better go, Mr. Mayo," he advised.

'Bijah stood in the companionway behind the closed door until the bosun emerged, a bundle of wet clothes under his arm, wrapped in the oilskins.

"I'll carry these along to Lew," he said.

"And arterwards I'll try 'er wi' a sup of coffee."

'Bijah felt abruptly as though his bones had turned to jelly. He remembered the bottle in his pocket, drew it forth, and drained what was left at a swallow. He wanted more, and went into the cabin. Da Souza was sitting at the table, his eyes fixed on the opposite wall. He remained silent as 'Bijah uncorked the bottle which always stood at Stanford's place and drank.

"Senhor Da Souza," 'Bijah said, "I think sometimes that you are an honest man."

"That is a great deal to say of any human being," the supercargo replied, without irony.

"Through no fault of my own," 'Bijah continued, "I have had to bring Miss Adams here—or leave her to perish."

"It is unfortunate," Da Souza conceded after an interval. "For all of us."

"She—I am going to marry her," 'Bijah said defiantly. "I have known her—We were children together."

Da Souza looked him full in the face. His eyes were understanding.

"Feel always that way," he answered. "Be clean yourself, young sir. Be not afraid. Who can say what the future holds?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"But as I have said before, be you wisely restrained in how that you conduct himself."

He muttered a phrase in Portuguese.

"I shall pray," he added, as if it were the solution of a problem.

Peletiah slid into the cabin, a scared glint in his impudent eyes.

"Cap'n Stanford's compliments, Mr. Mayo, and will ye be pleased to come on deck?"

"Very good," 'Bijah answered. "Stay at Miss Adams' door until the bosun returns."

Peletiah wiggled with an emotion which 'Bijah was surprised to identify as denoting pride.

"'Course I will, sir." And as 'Bijah set his foot on the stairs: "Mr. Mayo, sir!"

"What?"

"I like ye a sight more—" the boy swallowed hard—"a sight more'n *him*. That's an awful pretty gal. And—I wouldn't want for her to go like *them*," he gulped. "But don't ye tell *him*, sir."

"I won't," 'Bijah promised gravely.

On deck 'Bijah encountered Black Barnaby returning from the galley with a pot of coffee.

"Bilin' of soup comin' too," the bosun informed him in passing, a reassuring wink distorting the whiskered mask.

Stanford stepped for'ard from the binnacle to meet him. The captain's eyes had resumed their frosty stare, but his manner was cordial.

"How's our acquisition?" he asked. "Did the bosun do a good job?"

"She'll be all right, sir. And Barnaby is splendid."

"Am I to understand that Miss Adams is an old flame of yours?" Stanford continued lightly. "Yes? Damn it, young feller, you're a most astonishing character! I didn't think you had it in you."

'Bijah gave him a level glance.

"Miss Adams' family and mine have known each other for years," he said stiffly. "After she returned from this voyage with her father, we were going to be married."

"By God, it *is* a story book tale," affirmed Stanford. His tone hardened. "But no philandering on my ship, young feller. The *Diana* may be a slaver, but there'd be an end to all discipline if the mates carried on aft. Understand?"

"I understand the remark was unnecessary," 'Bijah retorted. "If it were any use, I'd ask you to trans-ship us at the first opportunity."

Stanford's smile had no mirth in it.

"And lose the best second mate I ever had?" he derided. "Not to speak of the society of a most charming young lady. Not a chance of it, young feller. No, no! We'll furbish up, and try to make a good impression, eh? It should do us good."

"I hope so," 'Bijah answered.

There was no mirth in his smile, either.

CHAPTER VIII

DRAWN BATTLE

LUCY was on her feet within two days. She had grown up on salt water. The tragedies of the sea were an old story to her. She had known many women bereaved in her short life. And the stern exactions of the last few days had made ordinary griefs seem trivial to her.

'Bijah, at the first opportunity, had told her the true character of the *Diana* and Captain Stanford. Perversely, she was thrilled. The slave trade was another old story to her. She had known many a Yankee skipper who had prospered in it.

"My goodness," she objected, "you talk like one of these new-fangled Abolitionists. Father shipped Negroes when he was young. He always said there was more money in trading codfish and lumber to Cuba and the Islands for rum, and rum for Negroes in Africa, and Negroes back again, than in any other trade. Not that he did it after the trade was outlawed. But it seems foolish if we are going to keep on having slavery to say that it can't be done. There are so many slaves, aren't there? Well, what are we going to do with them? And won't the Southern states need more?"

'Bijah was stumped.

"But it's against the law," he pointed out weakly.

"I said it was," Lucy answered. "I don't mean that I want you to be a slave-trader, 'Bijah. I mean that you can't help being on the *Diana*, and the sensible thing to do is to make the best of it. After all, there's this to be said for Captain Stanford: it's silly to recognize slavery, and at the same time prohibit the slave trade. I can see why he and other men feel rebellious about it. Besides," she concluded illogically, "I don't believe he's as bad as you make him out to be. He's very well-mannered."

It was on the tip of 'Bijah's tongue to advise her to withhold her judgment, but he hesitated to give her additional cause for worry. Stanford was very much on his good behavior, suave and pleasant whenever she was present.

"I'm sorry for Captain Stanford," he told her honestly. "He is his own worst enemy. That may sound like taffy, but It's true."

"I think everyone is lovely to me," Lucy insisted. She giggled. "I never had a man do for me like Black Barnaby. He's sweet. And Lew makes me laugh all the time—and I must get his recipe for salt-horse stew. It tastes like shore beef. And that funny little fellow, Peletiah! He's always holding in on his swear words, poor dear, and blushing like a girl when I laugh at him. Even if they weren't so nice, I'd be happy because I have you. Only think, 'Bijah, we thought it would be two or three years, and it wasn't so many months."

They were alone in the cabin, and 'Bijah couldn't help kissing her. As the luck fell, Stanford stalked in as she was returning the kiss.

"I beg pardon," he said. "Hadn't expected to interrupt so charming a scene. This is the first time one of my mates has chosen the cabin for his—shall I say courting?"

He spoke on a note of raillery, but there was a cold ring underlying it which Lucy failed to detect. She laughed, prettily embarrassed.

"You'll forgive us, won't you, Captain?" she begged. " 'Bijah and I had expected to be separated so long."

Stanford smiled, one of his peculiar frosty smiles. "I came for a drink, and I'll make it a toast to your happiness, my dear Miss Adams."

He poured himself a tumbler of rum, and tossed it off neat.

"My sakes," Lucy exclaimed. "I never saw a man drink so fast before!"

"One of my minor accomplishments," Stanford drawled, and stalked out.

"I'm going to mark your face so your young lady won't know you!"

"I don't think he liked what I said," she murmured. "And perhaps—we'd better not kiss each other. Only—give me one more!"

IT WAS one thing for 'Bijah and Lucy to agree to control their affections. It was something else again for them to make good on the agreement. Lucy had the faculty of the sailor's woman of being able never to be in the way, but inevitably they were thrown together all day long; and at night, too, when 'Bijah came off watch and sought his makeshift bed on the stern settee, he must pass her door so closely that he could hear her gentle breathing as she slept.

The average woman would have been embarrassed by the continual propin-

quity with men of every stamp and instinct. But not Lucy. She was accustomed to shipboard life, to being the only woman amongst a crowd of men. Sailors were sailors to her, whether they were drunken, lecherous scoundrels such as composed the majority of the *Diana's* crew, or the decent Yankees who had manned the *Sailor's Joy*. She took them for granted, failings and all, and made them eager for her occasional kind word. That is, all of them but Captain Stanford.

To Stanford, she was a woman he wanted—a woman who was pledged to another man, and what was worse, a man who was his subordinate, a cub without the hair on his face for a respectable beard.

Not strange that it irked him more bitterly from day to day.

As Lew Taney warned 'Bijah a week after Lucy had come aboard:

"He's a-bilin', 'Bije. Watch out for him. He figgers to bide his time, but he won't be able to last out."

And Peletiah a couple of nights later smuggled 'Bijah a pocket pistol from the arm's rack.

The cabin-boy wiggled and scratched one bare shin with the toes of his other foot.

"Ye'll be needin' of it, Mr. Mayo. *He*—" Peletiah always emphasized the pronoun when he referred to his employer—"aims to stretch ye one of these days. I wouldn't be s'prised if he keelhauled ye or—or wuss. And he's drinkin' a mite more each day. And tonight when he had the watch for an hour, 'count of Mr. Wells' belly-ache, he was hummin' that song to hisself. Not singin' it, jest hummin'. But I know how he starts off, and—"

"Put that gun back," 'Bijah said. "I won't need it. But—thanks."

The boy took back the weapon reluctantly.

"I'll take care of him, don't you fear," 'Bijah said, with more assurance than he really felt.

STANFORD'S outburst came as both Lew and Peletiah had predicted. For another week there was armed truce. The *Diana* was running her easting down at top speed, favored by prevailing winds. Lucy had become an accepted member of the company, her appearance on deck no longer a cause for stares and mutters for'ard. But when she was below the taut atmosphere of the schooner sharpened.

The men had gauged the situation. They knew that there was a silent duel in progress between the captain and the second mate. And they waited for it with the muted avidness of men whose lives are drab at best, whose greatest thrill comes from physical combat. Sooner or later, the foc'sle whispered, Stanford would have it out with Mayo to decide which of them should have the girl. They meant no reflection upon Lucy. In their philosophy that was what women were for: to be fought for. It was a tribute to a woman when men cared to fight for her.

'Bijah was more ignorant of this expectancy than anyone except Lucy. His friends didn't point it out to him because they dreaded to see the issue forced.

And in the meantime the *Diana* sailed on, a thing of beauty on an errand most vile. And Stanford withdrew more and more into himself, spending hours alone in the cabin drinking rum as fast as Peletiah could fill his glass.

One day the favoring winds died, as was natural. The *Diana* had penetrated the doldrums—with better luck, it might be claimed, than she deserved. The doldrums were the pet curse of the slave trade, which followed the Middle Passage, the lonely, oily waters of Mid-Atlantic. All trade crossing the Equator must encounter them, but honest trade headed to and from the Horn or Good Hope, encountered them at a minimum of disadvantage. Sooner or later the trade winds blew, to benefit honest trad-

ers. But the slavers quartered the trade winds, pointing for Equatorial Africa. They could not take complete advantage of the trades in many circumstances. So there were times when the doldrums gripped them for weeks, under a baking sun.

Nothing could be done about it but whistle for a wind to break the monotony of the calm, take advantage of occasional errant gusts. For the doldrums might hold in one locality and be conspicuously absent a few miles distant, where the variable trades exerted a regional influence.

The *Diana* slammed into such a belt of airlessness in the late watch of a starry night.

Slowly the wind diminished, died. The sails banged and slatted, the hull rolled on a swell which was emphasized by the lack of wind. Heat that was dank, sultry, oppressive, blanketed the schooner and was like the exhaust of a furnace after the sun started to slide upward into the cloudless sky.

Men rolled out of their bunks to lie on the deck half-naked and throw buckets of tepid sea-water over their bodies. There was nothing else to do, only existence was practicable, although Lew whistled in the galley, and dished out hot food to those whose stomachs craved it. Lew didn't mind it much, neither did Da Souza nor 'Bijah. Lucy wilted, but was brave. Peletiah whined. Stanford, not a bead of sweat on his brown cheeks, swallowed draughts of rum and scowled. Mr. Wells flitted about his duties, so desiccated in soul and spirit that heat nor cold meant little to him.

So one day passed. A second. A third. About dawn of the fourth 'Bijah came on deck to relieve Wells.

One of those brief-lived wisps of wind sailors call a cat's paw was stealing up astern. Wells should have seen it. He hadn't.

'Bijah called up the watch, and set them to shifting sails to catch it—you could never tell where a cat's-paw might waft you. But half the benefit of the breeze was lost. The schooner jerked for'ard, was checked by the swell, fell over on the other tack. It was difficult to know how to play a cat's-paw in the doldrums.

'Bijah took the wheel himself, shouting orders to the men at the sheets, jockeying to gain what advantage he could. In the midst of it all Stanford came on deck, hair touseled, practically as he had tumbled out of his bunk. He grasped the problem at a glance.

"Damn my soul," he shouted. "Any so-and-so 'longshore sailor knows how to work out of a calm! Trim those headsails closer!"

THEY were trimmed, and the schooner fell off. 'Bijah, white-faced and gritting his teeth, caught her with the helm, and hailed the foc'sle:

"Let her off!"

The sailors obeyed confusedly, their sullen eyes on Stanford, who bellowed:

"I command this schooner! Mr. Mayo, did you never hear of wetting down the sails to help them draw?"

"Four men aloft with hand lines," 'Bijah hailed. "A dozen of you pass fire-buckets up to them. Yarely, bosun!"

And Black Barnaby, who had rolled out in his pants and a yawn, echoed him handsomely. The buckets were hauled to the mastheads, the sails sprinkled. But it was too late. The cat's-paw was flicking the swell ahead of the *Diana*.

Stanford stamped up and down the deck, his blue eyes sparking cold fire. One man came in his path through plain nervousness, and the captain buffeted him across the waist to crash into the carriage of a carronade, senseless, his scalp trickling blood.

"Peletiah," he roared. "Damn you, where's my drink?"

Peletiah, half asleep, trotted aft from the galley, where, by indulgence of Lew, he had a bed on the floor.

"Yes, sir," he babbled. "Right away, sir. I didn't hear ye, sir."

Stanford lowered his fist and drove a punishing blow to the chin. The boy collapsed in a heap.

A bombshell of hatred exploded in 'Bijah's mind. Until that instant, he had had himself completely under control, unjust as the captain's criticisms had been. He yanked at the arm of the helmsman on watch, who had stood gaping beside him throughout this scene.

"Take the wheel," he ordered. "Captain," he called, "only a coward and a bully would have struck that boy. You never ordered a drink from him. He was asleep, off-watch."

Stanford smiled wickedly.

"Well, well, young feller," he said. "Asking for it at last, eh?"

And he rushed 'Bijah with a viciousness that was momentarily overwhelming. 'Bijah fought back, but his fists seemed to bounce off Stanford's elbows. Stanford's blows thudded home to his heart and belly. A knee came up, and caught him in the groin. He groaned in agony, wrapped his arms around the captain and hung on for dear life. Fists drummed on his kidneys. He heard a voice a long way off jeering.

"Now, I'm going to mark your face so your young lady won't know you."

He gathered together all his strength, and flung Stanford from him. The captain spun across the deck, crashed into a man, who went down in a tangled heap with him and lay still as he bounded to his feet, kicked the prostrate body and walked to meet 'Bijah.

"I wouldn't, if I was ye, Cap'n," drawled a calm voice.

'Bijah's eyes cleared. The speaker, he saw, was Lew, who stood between him and Stanford, a pot of boiling water poised in his calloused hands. The foc'sle swarmed like a hive. As he looked, Da Souza popped from the cabin hatch, Lucy behind him, eyes wide in fright.

"Leave him alone, Lew," 'Bijah heard himself saying.

"That I won't," Lew retorted hotly.

But it was Da Souza who took action. He walked up to Stanford, and spoke to him in Portuguese. Stanford brushed the supercargo aside, and Da Souza seized him by the arm. 'Bijah, watching intently, felt someone beside him, and a hard object thrust into his hand. It was a belaying-pin.

"Don't let him hit you again," Lucy said.

"You'd better go below," 'Bijah answered.

Da Souza ceased talking, tapped a finger on Stanford's chest and stepped back. The captain stood there, suddenly slack, like a man coming out of a dream. The cold fire charred out in his eyes.

"Very well, Paul," he said dully. And he walked with dragging feet to the hatch and disappeared.

CHAPTER IX

EASTWARD TO AFRICA

THAT night, during the middle watch, 'Bijah stopped in the galley for a snack to eat. Black Barnaby and Lew were sitting on the bunk, pipes glowing, so immersed in conversation that they didn't notice him until he stood full before them. The bosun jumped up, with his usual bow and forelock tug, knocking the dottle from his pipe-bowl on the horny sole of his foot.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Mayo," he said, "but we was jest talkin' of 'ee. Seein' what 'appened between 'ee and Cap'n Stanford, it come over me 'ee didn't rightly know 'ow to use yer 'ands. Not many Americans do, sir, not the tricks of the fistiana. For 'tis all tricks, sir. Take me, now. 'It at me face where I stand. Go ahead, 'ard as ye like. Ye can't 'urt me."

'Bijah hesitated, and Lew spoke from the bunk.

"He means it, 'Bije. Give him all ye got."

'Bijah drew back his right arm, and launched a fairly heavy blow at the bosun's chin.

But the chin wasn't there. Without shifting position, Black Barnaby had swayed his head aside, and simultaneously his open right hand came up against 'Bijah's chin.

"Do 'ee see wot I mean, sir?" Black Barnaby continued. "No offense, but a man who knows the boxing game can outfight a bigger, stronger one every try. 'Ere's 'ee and the cap'n. 'E's older'n 'ee, and no stronger, I make no doubt; but 'e's wot they call a natural fighter. 'E likes to fight, and 'e's been trained by Englishmen who'd been in the Fancy. Also, 'e don't foller no rules. Fair play?" Barnaby spat expressively on the stove. " 'Ee wouldn't 'ave a chance with 'im in a rough-and-tumble. But if 'ee l'arned the tricks of boxing like I could teach 'ee—Well, sir, I wouldn't want to stand in 'is shoes the next time 'ee two crossed rights."

"Where did you learn this?" 'Bijah asked curiously.

"I was a rare good un when I was young," explained the bosun. "Many a likely lad I put on 'is back—the Bristol Boy, the Cornish Terror—oh, a sight of 'em. 'Ee, I've 'ad the gentry of England make the ring for me, and a'terwards a-throwin' golden guineas by 'andfuls on the turf."

He tugged his forelock again, obviously embarrassed.

"I 'ope 'ee won't think I'm takin' liberties, Mr. Mayo, but I know wot a wicked fighter the skipper is. I wouldn't want for to see a fine young man smashed to a pulp for lack of ring schoolin'. Lew and me, we was a-talkin' of it. I thought as 'ow nights we could spar a bit 'ere in the galley. I'd like to teach 'ee to fight in close quarters. And there wouldn't be no 'arm done. It ain't necessary to strike true blows, jest fast open palms, and 'twouldn't be long before 'ee caught on to the bobbin' and shiftin'. Wot I mean is, if the cap'n ever comes at 'ee ag'in, don't let 'im fight close. Stay away and hammer 'im. Wot d'ye say, sir? Fifteen minutes a night, and Lew will stand watch at the door."

'Bijah grasped the bosun's hand, its thick, calloused fingers like miniature iron bars.

"Barnaby," he answered, "I'm glad to think I have another friend on board."

Black Barnaby all but blushed.

"That 'ee 'ave, sir," he rejoined, "but don't put no trust in others, 'ceptin' Lew and maybe Peletiah. The whelp 'as a fancy for 'ee, but 'e's a wild un and no ways responsible. Well, take off coat and shirt, sir." The dark, bearded face grinned, with a flash of white teeth. "I warn, I'll make 'ee sweat 'orrid."

So that night, and every night afterward, no matter how torrid the weather, feet stamped over the galley's constricted floor, two men panted and grunted, and Lew from the doorway watched amusedly, calling time every five minutes. There were no knockdowns, although sometimes one or other of them stumbled or crashed against a wall. 'Bijah wasn't hurt, as Black Barnaby had promised; but many an evening left him with swimming head or sore ribs.

It was splendid exercise, he admitted, both for muscles and wind. He could feel himself growing harder, faster, was proud to discover that it was becoming increasingly difficult for Barnaby to reach him and avoid his counters. Occasionally Lew would interpose to demonstrate to the pair of them some trick of wrestling that could prove useful in a clinch. And gradually the training periods were extended until they were working half an hour a night, with 'Bijah less winded than he had been in the beginning.

It was good mental exercise, too, for it took 'Bijah's mind off his worries, made him so much calmer that Lucy noticed it, and being told of what was going on, insisted upon being a fascinated audience when the training period wasn't too late and Stanford was asleep or pre-

occupied with a book and a bottle.

THE captain was more composed than he had yet been during the voyage. There were no more of his mad outbursts. He continued to treat Lucy with the courtesy he knew so well how to assume when it suited him. 'Bijah observed, however, that Da Souza remained less by himself. Unobtrusive as the old Portuguese was, he was always present, either on deck or in the cabin, when Stanford was out of his stateroom.

But toward 'Bijah Stanford maintained a bleak and unyielding hostility, all the more apparent because it was silent. They clashed openly only once during this last phase of the voyage.

The *Diana* had labored out of the doldrums; having picked up a fair wind south of the Line, she scudded along under full sail day after day, the blue-green swells foaming under her cutwater. One morning, at dawn, in the heat haze which formed with the temporary easing of the wind, the foc'sle lookout hailed:

"Sail ho! Comin' up fast astarn, sir."

The standing orders were that Captain Stanford was to be called whenever a ship was sighted. 'Bijah sent the man below to summon him. By the time Stanford had reached the deck, the stranger, which had caught the approaching wind, was easily discernible, a handsome clipper-built ship, with canvas towering up her spars to skysails. She overhauled the *Diana* rapidly, evidently desiring to speak the schooner.

Stanford scrutinized her through his glass, and the grim look on his features relaxed.

"A merchantman," he said, more to himself than to 'Bijah. "American, too. Humph, nothing to do but wait for her."

'Bijah watched intently as the clipper came abeam, a lovely spectacle, backed her sails and swung up into the wind. A stalwart man mounted her bulwarks, and hailed through a speaking-trumpet:

"Ahoy, the schooner! This is the ship *Daniel Morgan*, Hardiman master, out of Philadelphia, bound round the Cape for China. I've lost one of my mates. Have you a navigator aboard you can spare? I don't care how young he is."

'Bijah started. What an opportunity!

"Captain Stanford," he exclaimed. "Will you put Miss Adams and me aboard her? I should be—"

Stanford stared at him, teeth bared in that smile which was not a smile.

"And have you spilling my business to the first man-o'-war you spoke? No, no, Mr. Mayo! As it happens, too, I have need of your very competent professional services."

"You could find a Portuguese—"

"That will be all, Mr. Mayo," the captain snapped. "You are talking desertion—and desertion is mutiny, which means irons. I would also invite your attention to the fact that, no matter how valuable may be your services, it would not inconvenience me unduly to make a present of you to B'Goma Nandi. He is anxious for white slaves, and he has peculiarly ingenious ways of wreaking his pleasure on them."

Stanford turned his back, and walked to the weather bulwarks. He did not require a trumpet to carry his low-pitched, vibrant voice across the gap between the two vessels.

"I deeply regret it, Captain Hardiman," he said, "but I am short-handed myself. Perhaps you will have better luck at the Cape."

"Oh!" Hardiman's disappointment was plain. "I understand. Shall I report you, Captain?"

"I thank you, no," Stanford replied politely. "We are bound for the West Coast in trade. There is no occasion for reporting us."

The master of the *Daniel Morgan* waved his trumpet in salute, and dropped to his deck. Long afterward 'Bijah heard that the clipper was never seen again. But at the moment he could think only of his consuming hatred for Stanford,

who, ignoring him, slipped lithely down the cabin hatch.

Some measure of his resentment 'Bijah confided presently to Lew, who was disposed to accept the incident philosophically.

"Bless ye, boy," said the cook, "ye might have knowed there were jest two things Mr. Satan would ha' done. Either he'd not let ye go or he'd ha' grinned, and said: 'Sure, I'll send ye off—but Miss Lucy stays aboard.' And then where would ye ha' been, eh?"

Lucy, herself, took much the same attitude.

"I suppose the folks at home would think this was terrible," she declared. "And I vum it is! But Lew is right. We've got to make the best of it. At least, we're together." She slipped her hand in his. "And if things get to the worst, 'Bijah, we'll die together. I shan't live without you."

That was another time 'Bijah broke his rule and kissed her.

THE few remaining days of the passage slipped by faster than ever, with the *Diana* running her easting down at the speed of a four-horse coach on the Boston Post Road. From the observations and study of the charts 'Bijah knew that they were closing the African coast at a point south of the mighty Congo River. From Black Barnaby he learned, also, that Stanford patronized this most southerly dependency of Portugal rather than the Slave Coast, northward on the Bight of Guinea, because it was not so thoroughly patrolled by the blockading squadrons.

They ran at night, now, with all lights screened, and in daylight there were lookouts posted at both mastheads, with a standing reward of a pint of rum offered to the man who first sighted a sail. Stanford was more restless, drinking heavier. He remained on deck during the daylight hours, morose, abstracted, constantly sweeping the horizon with his glass, at frequent intervals challenging the lookouts.

The crew were tense and sullenly vigilant. The guns were kept ready and unbreeched; the tarpaulin was off the Long Tom; powder chests and shot were ranged in the racks under the bulwarks.

'Bijah was conscious of an overpowering sense of menace, a feeling which Lew shared. The Indian-Gypsy would wrinkle up his nose, sniff the wind and say:

"Laugh, if ye will, lad, but I smell trouble. Aye, there's death in the air."

Then there came a day, sultry and sluggish, a day of light airs, the sun bubbling the pitch in the deck seams, the breeches of the broadside batteries hot to the touch. The *Diana* was standing southeastward, wing and wing to catch all the pressure of the breeze. Suddenly the mainmast lookout hailed:

"Land ho! Three p'ints to port."

And the words had scarcely passed his lips when the foremast lookout hailed:

"Sail ho! A big un, comin' up on the starboard beam."

The deck bustled into life, men rushing to both sides to strain their eyes. Stanford, glass under his arm, climbed the main-rigging. Lucy fluttered to 'Bijah's side.

"What is going to happen?" she whispered.

"I don't know," he admitted. "I think you'd best go below."

"I won't," she said. "I'm going to be by you, whatever comes."

The one member of the crew not on deck was Barak Wells, probably snoring in his bunk. Mr. Wells had the merit of not being an excitable person.

Stanford, in the main cross-trees, was studying the sea to starboard. 'Bijah raised his own glass and pointed it in the direction of the captain's. At first, he made out nothing, but in a moment he picked up a whitish pyramid, which lifted and sank behind the heat haze. Yes, it was "a big un." And there was some-

thing strange about the massive cut of those sails, and their brilliant sheen. He wasn't surprised when Stanford called from his eyrie, a note of exultation in his voice:

"Come aloft, Black Barnaby! It's my guess we've got a cruiser to play with."

But he was surprised at Stanford's obvious glee. He had taken it for granted that a man-o'-war was the last object the captain would have cared to see in these waters.

Black Barnaby scrambled up the ratlines, and accepted the captain's glass. It was so still on deck that all could hear him when he spoke after a prolonged survey:

"Aye, aye, sir! I'd say she's the *Falcon* sloop-o'-war. I served in her in '15, and I mind the cut of 'er top hamper. Didn't we 'ear last v'yage she was cruisin' to the south'ard?"

Stanford's response held the same note of savage glee as his previous assertion.

"We did. She's the worst pest on the blockade. And by God, I'm going to teach her a lesson!"

HE TOOK the glass from the bosun, and for the first time scrutinized the land, which 'Bijah could see from the deck only as a faint, low-lying blur. Stanford climbed down to the deck, followed by Black Barnaby.

"We're changing the course, Mr. Mayo," he said, with more cordiality than he had shown in weeks. "A couple of points west of south." And to the helmsmen: "Let her go off. I'll follow on the card. That's good—hold it." He examined the *Falcon* again through his glass. "A point or two more—very good."

The helmsman shifted his quid from one cheek to the other. Nothing Captain Stanford did could astonish his crew. But 'Bijah, who, after all, was the officer on watch, was moved to exclaim:

"Are you going to speak the cruiser, sir?"

Stanford's response was by no means unfriendly, but certainly peremptory.

"Hardly that, Mr. Mayo. But don't concern yourself. I'm taking the schooner." He smiled frostily. "I'm going to have some fun with the—" His eye fell on Lucy, and he checked the expletive. "I'm afraid you'll have to go below, Miss Adams," he said deferentially. "I don't think they can reach us, but there's always the chance that a roundshot will come aboard."

"But what's the use, sir?" 'Bijah asked. "The breeze is freshening. With those sails, she's likely to overhaul us in heavy airs. Why don't we get away from her while there's room to spare?"

Stanford's voice was as cold as his eyes, glittering with icy fire.

"I know what I'm doing," he rasped. "I never miss a chance to mangle a Britisher." And with a sneer: "I hadn't expected your father's son to be so concerned for the people who killed him."

"That isn't it," 'Bijah protested desperately. "It's Miss Adams. And anyhow the War was over five years ago."

"So? If you're afraid, young feller, you can go down to the hold when the guns begin to talk."

Da Souza saved the situation—'Bijah's fists were knotted, his jaw set—by gliding up to the group.

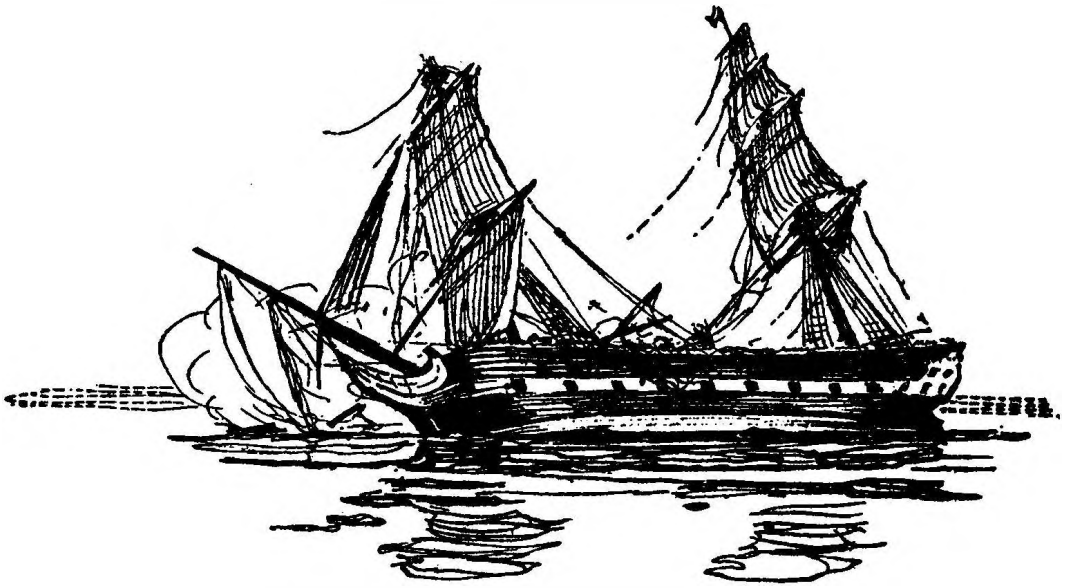
"I would advise that you be agreeable to Captain Stanford's orders, Mr. Mayo," he remarked. "He is familiar with these waters, remember. He knows what he is to do, and what may be the consequences."

Stanford smiled mockingly.

"Well, is it to be the hold, young feller?"

"No," 'Bijah answered shortly. "What do you wish me to do?"

"Stay around, and learn something about ship-handling, if you care to," the Captain said indifferently. "Miss Lucy, I told you to go below." His tone softened. "I'm not trying to be disagreeable, you understand. And don't worry. When I'm finished with the *Falcon* there'll be one less blockader for us to reckon with,



"What an end for a King's ship!"

when we put to sea."

Lucy's head was very high.

"I'll go below when I feel like it," Lucy retorted tartly.

He was amused.

"A good spirit. As you please." And without raising his voice:

"Bosun! Cast loose the Long Tom. Pivot her abeam to sta'b'd. An extra heavy charge. Never mind the broadside guns."

CHAPTER X

THE FALCON STRIKES

THE coast of Africa sank behind the heat haze, which was dwindling to seaward. Lucy had gone below after all. Lew was issuing a special double ration of rum to all hands. The *Falcon* was looming up distinctly on the starboard beam, a soaring pile of canvas, digging along smartly under the urge of the freshening breeze, which was filling every inch of her broad sails.

The two vessels were following opposite sides of a triangle, which, 'Bijah reckoned, must converge if the schooner maintained her course. Forward the long brass muzzle of the eighteen-pounder had been swung to bear over the starboard bulwarks, and two men were busy swabbing out the barrel, while Black Barnaby was making up bags of "great cartridge" to extra weight. Another one was greasing shot to give discharges additional range.

"But this is piracy," 'Bijah said to himself, and did not realize he had spoken aloud until Captain Stanford remarked amusedly:

"Did you ever stop to think that the most abandoned criminals are ready to fight to keep themselves from the gallows? For myself, Mr. Mayo, I don't wait to be attacked. I take the most appropriate measures which suggest themselves to me for self-defense."

He turned to the helmsman, paying no attention to 'Bijah's flush.

"Ease her off a point," he ordered. "So! Hold it."

'Bijah was no fool, and he perceived immediately what these tactics meant. The commander of the *Falcon* had been imagining that he was overhauling the *Diana*. Actually, the schooner had sailed part way to meet him. Having gone so far, Stanford was edging away from the sloop-of-war. And in the course of the

next hour Stanford played the same game to the hilt. He would edge away; then, so soon as the *Falcon* commenced to drop astern, he would point up again. Consistently the *Falcon* seemed to be gaining. In reality, she was being teased in pursuit. And every now and then Stanford would raise his glass and study the oily waters ahead. There was an unusually heavy swell on, which 'Bijah recognized as an indication that they were in shallow soundings. What could it mean?

He determined to bring the situation to Stanford's attention.

"Shall I order a leadsman into the bows, sir? We can't have many fathoms under us."

"Very seamanlike of you, Mr. Mayo," Stanford retorted sarcastically. "But not yet. I can tell when the shoals begin, and I don't want that son over there to spy what we're doing through high-powered glasses. Stand by, and I'll give you the order."

'Bijah felt more drawn to him in that moment than at any time since he had shipped aboard the *Diana*. The man *was* a sailor, and appreciated a sailor's feelings, with all his temperamental deficiencies.

In a queer, out-size way, 'Bijah found himself experiencing a certain sympathy with the nefarious purposes Stanford had in view. It was rather fun to toll a Britisher into trouble. The British had been so damned chesty before the War, and still were a bit too sure of themselves. He watched Stanford's maneuvers with a mounting fascination.

The *Falcon* was beginning to gain on the schooner at a disturbing rate. 'Bijah went for-ard and spoke to Lew, who was leaning over the bulwarks like most of the crew, staring at the sloop-of-war, growing larger, minute by minute.

"What do you make of it, Lew?" he asked.

"You know more'n me, boy," returned the cook. "But I'd say Mr. Satan is up to dukker them Britishers. Very up-and-coming they are, I've discovered, but no imagination, 'Bije'. Fool 'em a mite, make 'em think you think they're as good as they think they be, and they'll swaller yer bait."

A flash and a puff of smoke jetted from the *Falcon's* bows. The boom of a cannon echoed across the waters, and there was a greasy splash of water some hundreds of yards from the schooner's stern. The sloop-of-war yawed, and a second shot was fired, this one nearer.

Black Barnaby, lounging up, spat overside, and observed, as contemptuously as though he had been born in Massachusetts:

"Do 'ee mind the swabs, Mr. Mayo? They ain't l'arned yet that long twelves is children's toys for chase shots."

"But you're an Englishman, Barnaby," 'Bijah objected.

"When they'd 'ave 'ung me for doin' what any right-thinkin' man would 'ave done?" returned the bosun. "Not me, sir. "Blarst me if I know wot I be. Maybe I'll be a bloody Yankee yet."

STANFORD hailed from the little quarterdeck:

"Mr. Mayo!"

"Aye, aye, sir," acknowledged 'Bijah, and hastened aft.

"I want you to take the schooner for a while," the Captain said, almost benignly. "I'm going to indulge myself in some gunnery practice. Look for'ard, please—about two points to sta'b'd. 'See anything?"

'Bijah looked, saw nothing distinctive, snatched glasses from a rack, and stared harder. The water Stanford indicated was roughening slightly, the swell breaking into a cross chop of waves.

" 'Looks like a shoal, sir," he answered.

"Very good," Stanford assented. "That is what we call—for lack of a better name—Dead Nigger Shoal. We were once unfortunately becalmed hereabouts, and had occasion to dump overboard a valuable portion of our consignment. It was costly, but such things happen. Anyhow,

that's Dead Nigger Shoal. I'm luring that damned Britisher onto it. We can tack off to port and cross it inshore, where the depth will take care of us. As the course is, we're all right for the next hour or so. I want you to stand by Tony here, and see that he doesn't deviate from the course. I'll have my weather eye open, and if I think there's need to shift I'll let you know. Understood?"

"Yes, sir," 'Bijah answered steadily.

Stanford gave him one of those baffling looks, half admiration, half resentment.

"What a sailor I could make of you!" the captain said. "Well, you'll do, young feller. Look alive, now. There's going to be iron in the air."

He walked for'ard, calling:

"Bosun! Chock up that Long Tom for a ranging shot."

All this time the *Falcon's* bow-chasers were roaring fruitlessly, their shot splashing close, but never within dangerous proximity to the schooner. 'Bijah wondered what Lucy was doing, and seeing Peletiah's gamin face peeking out of the cabin hatch, went over and rapped the boy's head lightly with his knuckles.

"Stay below with Miss Lucy," he ordered. "What kind of a man are you to leave your action station?"

Peletiah blinked at him.

"Gut me for a lousy fisherman," gasped the cabin boy. "I never thought o' that, sir. I'll take keer o' her. Only—please, sir, call me when we sink them damned Limeys."

He disappeared, and 'Bijah returned to check the course Tony was steering. The Portygee was holding the schooner to it with phlegmatic precision. He was a first rate helmsman, 'Bijah noted, when he wasn't bothered by fear of the supernatural. And glancing forward, 'Bijah saw that Da Souza was equally calm. The supercargo was sitting on the deck under the bulwarks, which the *Falcon's* shot might reach, absorbed in one of his little black books, quite heedless of the booming of cannon and the stream of orders from Stanford, who was having the Long Tom shifted to suit his ideas—"Up another inch, bosun." A sight along the brazen barrel. "Another inch. Good! Now, swing her to the right—not so far. So! Give me that portfire."

And as the schooner lifted on the swell, he touched off. The eighteen-pounder boomed throatily, and the smoke blew over the deck in a sulphurous cloud. 'Bijah, watching as keenly as a small boy at his first rifle practice, saw the shot plunge into the water beyond the sloop-of-war's hull—it must have passed directly over her.

Stanford cursed.

"Too high! My fault, bosun. I don't want to hit her spars yet. You were right. Chock her down two inches. We'll hull—send some of the sons to hell."

The gun was swabbed out and reloaded with a normal charge, and this time, when Stanford fired, a yell burst from the slaver's ruffian crew as the shot went home in the *Falcon's* hull, high up in the bulwarks, with a flash of splinters in the blinding sunlight.

'Bijah was conscious of someone beside him, and looked around into Lew's grinning face.

"How d'ye feel for Execution Dock, 'Bije? Or the yardarm of a seventy-four down to the Cape?"

'Bijah grinned back.

"Do you know, Lew," he answered, "I wouldn't want Lucy to hear me or Aunt Tabitha, but I kind of like to see the Limeys peppered."

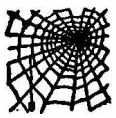
The Long Tom barked again, and this time the shot ricocheted and bounced over the *Falcon's* waist—there was no means to tell whether it had wrought harm or not. But as if in fretful indignation, the sloop-of-war went off the wind and fired her whole broadside, the eighteen-pounder shot from the carronades bounding and skipping over the waves to sink short of the schooner by a safe margin.

Black Barnaby was hopping about the foc'sle like a dancing dervish—"I 'ope

Slingsby's still skipper of 'er," he was shouting. "I 'ope 'e got 'isself a roundshot in the belly. Let's give 'em another dose, Cap'n, sir! Another pay-off for the poor lads 'ave been spread-eagled for the cat."

Stanford's answer came, coolly amused.

"Give me a hand, bosun, and we'll try to please you. Swab out, men. I want to hull him again. Mr. Mayo!" The call was abrupt. "The cruiser lost headway on that broadside. Ease off a mite more. We mustn't let him think we're losing him."



BUT the *Falcon* wasn't losing interest in the chase. She came back on the wind, broke out studdings'ls and stormed into the swell, her plunging bow tossing the spray foc'sle high. Her bow-chasers boomed relentlessly, making better practice with every shot, and at intervals the Long Tom's brazen throat thundered an answer, hulling the target at least once, by 'Bijah's observation.

He was becoming less interested in Stanford's duel, however, and more concerned with the shoal water ahead, which the schooner was nearing with every thrust of her bow. He was fearful lest Stanford's absorption in the tormenting of the Britisher had made him forget the danger confronting the *Diana* equally with the *Falcon*. But he needn't have worried. After the next shot Stanford ordered the eighteen-pounder chocked up for high angle fire, and called aft:

"Very good, Mr. Mayo! We've got the damned fools where we want them. Tack to the eastward as near the wind as you can get. I think the Britisher will strike anyway, but if I can knock a spar off him he's sure to."

The schooner went about with a mighty din of banging spars and slatting sails. She was as nimble as a fox,

The *Falcon* was caught at a disadvantage. It was impossible for her, with her greater bulk and cumbersome spread of canvas, to wear ship so expeditiously. Through his glass, 'Bijah could see the bluejackets swarming her yards to short-en sail. And it was at this moment that Stanford had the Long Tom's muzzle swung aft and, sighting carefully on a target almost broadside to, touched port-fire to vent.

Smoke blanketed the *Diana's* deck, hot and sulphurous. When it blew away her raggle-taggle crew shrieked cheers in a delirium of joy. The sloop-of-war's main topmast had been shot away, and had collapsed on her deck in a welter of tangled wreckage, dragging down with it a part of the gear of the foremast. The *Falcon* had broached to, and was drifting fast before the wind—and probably some unsuspected local current—hard onto that stretch of choppy water which covered Dead Nigger shoal. The *Diana's* people watched her, fascinated into silence.

Her bow swung about, swung back—and she struck, practically broadside on. Down came her weakened mainmast—'Bijah could imagine the death and destruction that that had caused, men crushed, swept overboard. He shuddered, regaining self-control, realizing the lawlessness of the exploit. What an end for a proud man-o-war, a King's ship! There the *Falcon* lay, her wings paralyzed, her body helpless, heeled over to starboard. He heard Stanford's voice, no longer low-pitched, but bellowing, hysterical with the satisfaction of violence appeased—ah, but not appeased!

"Taney! Lew Taney! Where's that cook? Here, Taney, a pint of rum, all hands round. By God, men, this is worth celebrating. Peletiah! Damn the boy! Peletiah, fetch me a bottle—a whole bottle! Aye, we'll celebrate, and then we'll go back, and take him astern and rake him until there isn't a—" he swore, long and fluently—"alive."

'Bijah was glad to see Da Souza rise from the breach of a carronade, stuff the little black book in his pocket and walk forward.

"Lion," Da Souza grated, "there is a limit to whatever a man may do. Men have been made dead on that ship. Men

are dying on her. If you go back it may be that in their desperation they will man small boats, and come against you, and however many you may kill, board you by their numbers. Are you, perhaps, crazy in your mind from killing as you become by drink? I say that you shall not. We have money invested, a mission that we must perform. Go and drink if you please. But I take command. Mr. Mayo!"

"Yes, sir," 'Bijah answered mechanically.

"You will continue on your present course until I give you the order to make change."

"Yes, sir," 'Bijah reiterated with relief.

STANFORD was standing beside the gleaming engine which had made good his egotism. His face was haggard and suddenly aged. The icy fire had charred out of his blue eyes. He seemed at once bewildered and abashed.

Peletiah appeared with an uncorked bottle, and Stanford lifted it to his lips. When he set it down it was half empty. The reckless expression had returned to his features, his eyes were alight again.

"Always the spoil-sport, Paul," he said derisively. "Well—you hold the high justice, the middle and the low. So be it! We'll let the bloody-backs off. But you're not going to cheat us of a celebration. Taney! Where's that rum? Forget what I said about pints. Broach a barrel in the waist."

He began to sing, and after a moment most of the crew joined their voices to his, a little hesitantly when they began, but with increasing confidence and fervor:

And if a cruiser takes us
Or pox or fever burn,
We'll go to hell in glory,
Each slaver in his turn.

"Chorus, men," he shouted. "Did any of you ever see a slaver beat a British sloop-of-war? Sing, damn you!"

So run the westing down, men,
The dead go overside,
And if the devil spares us
We'll know the parsons lied.

He finished the bottle Peletiah had given him at a gulp, and tossed it over the bulwarks.

"The dead go overside," he sang, and strode aft to the cabin hatch, checking an instant at the head of the stairs.

"Mr. Mayo," he stated gravely, "for a psalm-singing New England milksop who doesn't appreciate the virtues of good rum, you have the makings of a man in you, if you can only learn to sin a little. Very like Mr. Wells, damn his sneaking, cowardly heart! Just as well, Mr. Mayo. And permit me to remark that I might have been a young man like you. Instead, I sold my soul to the devil and Senhor Paul Da Souza. I am now going below. Be kind enough to take the schooner, and handle her gently. Remember, she is my *Diana*, the woman of my heart—my constant heart."

He started to go below, and halted, to bow with the same grave dignity he had exhibited to 'Bijah, and Lucy stepped from the hatch, her sweet face so utterly at variance with the crazy scene about her that it made 'Bijah gulp. He started to meet her, but it was Da Souza who took her arm.

"Miss Lucy," he said, "everything is of the all right, as you say. The action has been finished. We are safe until God has decided the contrary. Come, and we will make a seat for you beside the good Mr. Mayo. Captain Stanford is going below."

Stanford laughed wildly.

"'Captain Stanford is going below,'" he repeated. "There is significance in that, Paul. Yes, I have an over-due engagement with Mr. Satan—and perhaps a few of those bloody-backs over there."

He waved an arm toward the tortured hulk of the *Falcon*, still visible astern.

"Miss Lucy, you might not think so, but I have been playing the role of an

angel—the angel of death. Nobody will question that I have been an efficient angel, but never so efficient an angel as yourself. Sit beside your young man, by all means. He is a worthy young man. Sin has only lightly touched his brow. He is fortunate. He, you, we all of us, will presently be in hell, a peculiarly trenchant and dogmatic African hell. Make all you can out of the bright sunlight, the cleanliness of the sea. There is nothing cleaner than the sea. It is the eternal mother, the taker and the giver. If I had taken from it as I might—but I am talking over-long. A form, I trust, of mental, not alcoholic, intoxication." He laughed again. "'Captain Stanford is going below'," he repeated. "Peletiah, fetch me half a dozen bottles of rum, and then leave me to my reflections. I have been a good angel today, and that is a boast I can seldom make with justice."

His head slipped out of sight, and Lucy stared around her dazedly—at the serene, cloudless sky, the hulk astern, the cluster of seamen amidships who were dipping eagerly into the barrel of rum, the brazen muzzle of the Long Tom frowning over the bulwarks.

"Oh, the poor ship," she said. "Did you have to? And won't the men drink too much?"

'Bijah put his arm around her unashamedly, and said gruffly to Tony, at the wheel:

"Go for'ard, and drink a pint—no more. You hear me. No more. Tell that to the others. And send the cook aft."

It was Da Souza who answered her about the *Falcon.*

"In this life, my dear child, there is much evil done. Who can say what is good, what is bad? We have with us an afflicted soul. Be as sympathetic as you can." He paused, and then asked kindly, as an older relation might: "It would be well if you two could marry with each other. Is it possible that either of you has the grace of Holy Church?"

'Bijah and Lucy looked at one another uncomprehendingly.

"Do you mean, are we Catholics?" 'Bijah asked finally. "If so, we are not."

Da Souza sighed.

"Unfortunate. I could have made you one."

"Are you a priest?" asked Lucy.

"Once a priest, always a priest," Da Souza answered. "It cannot be helped. We must take whatever comes. But I tell you this, my two young ones, we will take it together. Ah, here is the cook."

Lew scraped a foot, and knuckled his forelock in travesty of Black Barnaby.

"As ordered, Mr. Mayo, sir. What will ye have?"

"Not drunk yourself, eh?" snapped 'Bijah. "Give 'em one pint apiece, Lew, and if you can't do anything with 'em after that call me, and we'll heave the stuff overboard. Miss Lucy can take the wheel."

"Barnaby and I had that figgered out already, 'Bije'," returned the Indian-Gypsy. "Don't ye worry. Everything'll be all shipshape Bristol-fashion by the next watch."

Below, in the cabin, a vibrant tenor was raised in song:

There's wenches in Havana,
There's girls in Charleston town—

Lucy shuddered.

"I'm going to stay on deck," she said.

(to be continued)

The town man put all he had into a straight left.

THE TOWN MAN

A Novelette

By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

YOUNG JOE HARDESTY was in Bowdry on business. Back at the Mebbyso his partner Bedrock was waiting for some mining supplies.

Bill Tandy, Wash Billings and a half dozen Bar Cross cowhands from Redbank were also in town, but not on business. They were on pleasure bent. Some

of them were already badly bent. As Young Hardesty didn't play cards, get drunk, or otherwise conform to their social standards, the Redbank crowd had never taken him seriously. Yet Young Hardesty was known in Bowdry as a tough kid.

The supplies failed to arrive on the morning freight. Young Hardesty loafed on the station platform.

Bowdry simmered in the desert haze. Uptown Bill Tandy and his outfit were keeping the Silver Dollar bartender busy.

Meanwhile the ten-fifteen passenger train arrived. A tall, slim fellow in a gray suit and tan shoes disembarked. He was so obviously a city man that Young Hardesty wondered who he was and why he had stopped off at Bowdry. The train pulled out, leaving a mail sack and two huge trunks. The stranger stood staring after the train. Finally his gaze swung round to the dark young fellow in Stetson and overalls. "Could you direct me to a hotel?"

"Sure. That's the Bowdry House, yonder. Ain't any other."

"Thanks." The town man's smile somehow made Young Hardesty feel a little more friendly.

"Been here long?" queried the town man, adjusting his glasses.

"Since eight this mornin'."

A kind of lost look crept into the town man's eyes as he gazed about. "It's all so new to me, you know, this Western scene. You see, I'm from the East."

"Yes, I see. You could have missed Bowdry and done better."

The town man was about to ask why when he was interrupted by the noisy arrival of several Redbank cowhands. Bill Tandy cocked his hat over one eye. "Fellas, it's alive!" He nudged a companion.

"It can talk, too," said another Redbanker.

"Wears spectacles and a boiled shirt." Wash Billings walked round the town man, inspecting him solemnly. "Pink face and blue eyes. And it wears gloves." He snatched a pair of brown kid gloves from the town man's coat pocket. The town man, who had thus far ignored Billings, flushed. "Beg your pardon. But those are my gloves."

Young Hardesty surveyed the Redbank hands. Aware that their hazing was merely an excuse to involve him, he accepted the challenge.

"Suppose you hand them gloves back," he said quietly.

Wash Billings stared. "Suppose you go plumb to hell."

Bill Tandy grinned. "Stay with it. Wash. Don't let that dude buffalo you."

Young Hardesty pushed back his hat. "It's me you're talkin' to. Just what you goin' to do about them gloves?"

Just drunk enough to be careless, yet aware that he had to either back down or make good, Wash Billings slapped Young Hardesty's face with the gloves. Bill Tandy's grin faded. Monte Ray, behind him, fingered his belt. Before Billings could make a move Young Hardesty had him covered. "Hand 'em back!" The dark eyes behind the cocked six-shooter obviously meant business.

"The hell I will!" Nevertheless Billings had sense enough to see that the joke had turned sour. His fellows were keeping mighty still. With a curse he flung the gloves at the town man's feet.

No one seemed to actually yearn for the gloves. The town man picked them up. His blue eyes unafraid, he nodded toward the group. "If you gentlemen don't object, I think I'll go to my hotel."

Young Hardesty ignored the lowering Redbankers. "Them your trunks?"

The town man came to with a start. This young fellow, who so obviously had intended to shoot the man called Wash, was now quietly inquiring about baggage.

"Yes," said the town man hesitatingly. "But what's the matter with leaving them just where they are, at least for the present?"

"They might get sunburned." Young Hardesty signaled to a bewhiskered in-

dividual in a rattletrap express wagon. "Hey, Jake. Back up your hearse and pack these here trunks up to the Bowdry House."

Jake responded nimbly. Young Hardesty and the town man started to walk toward the hotel. Behind them trailed the Redbank hands, unloading sagebrush humor in an endeavor to provoke Young Hardesty to argument. But he let the hazing slide off the back of his neck. He had taken up for the town man. His job was to see him safely corralled.

TOWN man and tough kid marched into the Bowdry House.

"This fella wants a room," stated Young Hardesty.

"But first," said the town man, "can't I persuade you to indulge in a little refreshment?"

"I take it you mean liquor."

"Absolutely! I may be a little awkward when it comes to handling intoxicated cowboys, but I'm not the least bit afraid of a bottle."

His elbow on the conventional bar, the town man seemed to feel more at ease. Young Hardesty flipped his drink down and grinned. "What I mean, don't you let them cowchasers worry you. You figured they was tryin' to push your hair back. But it was me they was proddin'. If you hadn't been talkin' to me, chances are they would 'a' left you alone. When Bill Tandy and Wash Billings are lookin' for trouble they don't go gunnin' in no henhouse."

The town man took his drink. "I suppose I did act a bit like a chicken. You see those cowboys rather took me by surprise. As I plan to be here for some time, what would you suggest?"

Young Hardesty laid a dollar on the bar. "Another drink."

"Excellent idea! I—if you don't object, that is—" The town man handed Young Hardesty's dollar back to him. "I should like to finance our introduction. My name is Borden."

"I'm Joe Hardesty. Mostly Joe."

"Back home I'm Will to my more intimate friends."

"That's tough. But mebby it ain't your fault."

Change for ten dollars was coming to the town man. He gestured toward it. "What shall we do with this?"

"If it bothers you to pack it around you could drop it into the spittoon. Or mebby hand some more of it to this here orphan asylum."

"Orphan asylum?"

"Any man that ain't got a home and has to bush in a hotel is a plumb orphan."

"Then I think I'll take another drink."

It was pleasant in the barroom. The young Westerner seemed exceedingly companionable. The town man said he had come West for his health.

Young Hardesty nodded. "Don't let anybody take it away from you."

"I don't quite get that."

"What I mean, just lay low till Tandy and his bunch leave town. They been here a couple of days, rarin' around and gettin' their belly full of splinters. A couple of days more and they'll drift back to the Cross B and start chasin' cows' hind ends around the country. Then you can kind of speculate around town and nobody'll grab your gloves."

The town man pondered. A rather pleasant haze seemed to envelope the surroundings. The bar seemed more polished. Life seemed more rosy. Yet even though the cowboys had been merely using him as a means to provoke this Young Hardesty chap, the fact remained that the unwashed Mr. Billings had deliberately snatched the gloves from his pocket. The thought rankled.

The town man removed his glasses and put them into his pocket. Peering into the bar mirror, he adjusted his tie. He drew a deep breath and nodded as if to himself. "I suppose I'll have to do it."

"Hey! Where you goin'?"

"I am going," said the town man with great deliberation, "to speak to Mr. Billings."

Young Hardesty had no intention of letting the town man tangle with the Redbank crowd, nor was he especially anxious to tangle with them himself. He urged the town man to remain in the hotel. But the other was firm in his resolve.

They stepped out onto the street, walked toward the end of town, the Easterner peering here and there, trying to locate a stocky, unshaven cowhand known as Wash.

"Don't see him anywhere about," he declared. "Have you any idea where we might find him?"

"Probably he's in church, hidin' out."

"Really, I can't swallow that one."

"Mebby he's in the Silver Dollar windin' up his clock."

"That sounds reasonable. I saw the place as we came from the station." Borden swung about.

Young Hardesty turned with him. "Honest, fella, I wouldn't do any combin' this evenin'. Wait till your liquor dies out. Then if you feel hostile you can hunt him up."

"The difficulty is that when the liquor dies out I don't feel hostile." The town man straightened his shoulders. "Joe, I like you. You're breezy and all that sort of thing. But I have a rather silly notion that I must talk with Mr. Billings. To save you embarrassment I shall hunt him up by myself."

"All right. I'll go notify the coroner."

"Oh, I don't intend to kill Mr. Billings. But I do intend to let him know he can't filch my gloves." With a nod and a wave of his hand the town man started toward the Silver Dollar. Young Hardesty took up a hole in his belt and followed. The tall Easterner was becoming a heavy responsibility.

GROUPED at the bar stood the Redbank crowd. Farther along a solitary figure leaned against the end of the bar, toying with an empty whiskey glass. So hard had his companions ridden him about his take-down by Young Hardesty that Billings had got lugubriously drunk. He straightened up.

A cheer broke from the Redbankers.

"Here's your friend!" they shouted. "Mebbyso he fetched little Wash a box of candy."

"Mebby he come to apologize for takin' them gloves away from Wash," cried a facetious cowpuncher.

Wash Billings ceased toying with his glass. Young Hardesty noted Billings' attitude and moved into the room. The town man stepped up to Billings. "Mr. Billings, I have a proposition to make. Lay aside your firearms and we'll settle this, man to man."

"That's the talk!" cried Tandy.

"If possible," added the town man, "without resorting to force."

"Backin' down, eh?" sneered Tandy.

The town man's pink cheeks grew pinker. He turned toward Bill Tandy. "My argument is not with you, sir. It is with your unwashed friend."

The Redbankers hooted and yelled. Wash Billings slammed his gun down on the bar. Thick-necked, broad and heavy, he looked like a bulldog glaring at a greyhound. Expecting to see the tenderfoot turn and hightail it for the open, the Redbank crowd was surprised when Borden coolly raised his hand. "Just a moment. Will you apologize for snatching my gloves?"

Billings swung for the town man's head. But somehow the head wasn't there. A long, slender arm shot out. A compact fist landed with a smack on Billings' right eye. The Redbankers roared with delight.

Billings jumped in, both arms flailing. A wild swing took the town man on the jaw. Billings, in turn, received a stiff punch in the stomach.

His battered eye meant nothing. But that punch in the stomach made him feel queer. He crouched, his hands open.

Borden knew that if this gorilla ever got hold of him it would be just too bad.

Consequently he side-stepped Billings' next rush; putting all he had into a straight left, he again took Billings squarely in the stomach. Billings bent double. With the blind deliberation of a transatlantic passenger who can no longer put off the inevitable, Wash Billings leaned against the bar and became desperately sick.

The Redbank crowd stared. How could a slim, pink-faced dude like that put Wash across the ditch? Aside from a slight swelling on his jaw the tenderfoot seemed uninjured, and evidently ready to go on with the argument. Young Hardesty hoped that Borden would make his getaway while the going was good.

Calmly wiping his hot face, the town man turned to the Redbank cowhands. "Thanks for having remained neutral." With a stiff nod he strode out.

"Where did you learn them punches?" said Young Hardesty as they walked briskly toward the hotel.

"Gymnasium. I'm no boxer, but I picked up a few of the rudiments."

"Now I thought all the time it was the liquor."

"It was. Once started, however, I was obliged to continue. A chap has to back up his potations."

"Meanin' whiskey?"

"Yes."

"I didn't size you up right," declared Young Hardesty. "My mistake."

"Thanks. Now that it's all over I feel rather squiffy. I think I'll go up to my room and rest."

Young Hardesty sauntered over to the livery. The rest of the day he kept off the street. He hoped the Easterner would also lay low. The Redbank boys would josh Billings so hard he would either have to clean the tenderfoot or quit working for the outfit.

THE following morning the eight o'clock freight failed to bring the expected supplies. Young Hardesty had waited three days. He decided to return to the Mebbyso mine. On his way from the station he called at the hotel. Borden was dressed, but lying on the bed. The color had faded from his face, save for two bright spots beneath his eyes.

"Beg pardon," he said as a fit of coughing overcame him. "Morning."

"Feelin' kind of poorly?"

"Rather down. Just before I interviewed Mr. Billings yesterday I foolishly put my glasses in my pocket. During the argument they got smashed. I spent most of the night worrying about them."

"And coughin'," said Young Hardesty bluntly, as he noted the handkerchief Borden had taken from his lips.

"Oh, that? I'm used to it. But my glasses—"

"Coughin' makes a fella empty and weak. What you need is some hot coffee and grub."

"I'll ring for breakfast. Will you join me?"

"You'll have to ring the fire bell to get your breakfast sent up in this dump. I eat at the Chink's."

"Lead on. And damned be he who cries enough."

In spite of his joking, it was evident that the town man was in poor shape. Young Hardesty had seen other pilgrims like that. Up and coming one day, the next, down and discouraged.

"Grand idea, breakfast," said the town man as they sat in the Chink's place. "I imagine the food isn't half bad, either."

"You can eat the half that ain't bad," suggested Young Hardesty.

Borden managed to eat a fair breakfast. He felt better.

"Now what do you propose?" he said as they left the restaurant.

"Me, I'm goin' to hook up and drive back to the Mebbyso."

"I'll go along and watch you hitch up."

The town man helped Young Hardesty harness and hook the team to the wagon. The tenderfoot was handy with hames and traces. Young Hardesty concealed his surprise. Suddenly it occurred to

him that the half-obliterated trade name on the wagon was Borden. The town man himself was gazing at the name.

"Ever see one of these here rigs before?" said Young Hardesty.

Borden smiled. "My uncle manufactures them. I worked in the factory for a while."

"Well, anyhow, they make good wagons," declared Young Hardesty.

He climbed to the seat. "I reckon I'll pull out. If I was you I'd kinda keep off the street for a couple of days. It might be healthy."

"I appreciate your advice. But if I stay in my room I'll feel as if Mr. Billings whipped me. No, I'm afraid I can't do that."

"You don't sabe them fellas, mister. They'll fill Wash up on liquor and tell him he's plumb disgraced, lettin' a tenderfoot wallop hell out of him. They'll be joshin', but Wash will take it serious. When that Bar Cross bunch is liquored up, most anything is like to happen."

The town man gazed thoughtfully at Young Hardesty.

"How much," he said finally, "would you charge to take my trunks out to your mine?"

"What good'll they do you out there?"

"That depends. What would you charge for board and lodging for a person seeking the Fountain of Youth?"

"We ain't got no fountain at the Mebbyso. Got a hell of a good spring, though. Say, do you want to come out to the mine?"

"Of course I should not want to bother you or your partner."

"Bother nothin'! What I mean, they ain't no doctors or drug stores, and no eatin' houses or hotels. And they ain't no place where you could get your pants pressed whatever."

"Even so—"

"Likewise you're a sick man."

"That," said the town man gravely, "is why I want to get away from things. My physician told me to go West, preferably to Arizona, and live in the open. Sleep on the ground, and all that."

"Well, we got plenty of ground."

"And I'm not a pauper."

"I ain't so awful strong on religion myself."

"I was never more serious."

"Well, hop in. I'll take a chance."

"That's awfully good of you! Do you think we might look after my baggage?"

"Sure. I plumb forgot them trunks."

"Understand, I'm not running away from Billings. I'm simply taking the line of least resistance."

"Like that fella yonder." Young Hardesty gestured toward a figure that had emerged from the Silver Dollar and was weaving across the street.

"Looks like Mr. Billings—breasting a hurricane," remarked Borden. "Will he sink, or ride out the storm?"

Somewhat to the discomfiture of the town man, Wash Billings came to anchor in the doorway of the Bowdry House. Young Hardesty drove up to the curb and stopped.

"I'd kind of step around him," he said as Borden got out of the wagon.

The town man tried to do so. But Billings, drunk and belligerent, barred his way.

"Gangway, please," said Borden quietly. Billings leered. He made an unforgivable remark about the town man's ancestry.

"Sorry," said Borden tightly. He planted his fist on Billings' jaw. Billings went down and out. The town man went into the hotel.

The local hardware man came up. Young Hardesty had an inspiration. "Help me pack him into the wagon, Becker. I'll take care of him."

The hardware man was only too willing to oblige. A few seconds later Borden came out. His trunks were loaded in. Several of the Redbankers had emerged from the Silver Dollar and were gazing toward the hotel.

"I reckon we better get a move on," said Young Hardesty.

Borden climbed in, gestured toward Billings. "Just what do you intend to do with this?"

"I'm leavin' it out on the flats a piece. A walk'll do it good."

As they drove past the saloon a Redbank hand invited Young Hardesty to step down and have a drink. Young Hardesty declined with thanks.

"Takin' momma's boy for a ride?" called the Redbanker.

"I sure am." Young Hardesty grinned. "But he's goin' to walk back."

"Who's your lady friend?" called another cowhand.

Borden flushed hotly. "I think I'll get out and speak to that chap."

"Not this journey." Young Hardesty swung his whip. The team jumped.

Borden turned in the seat. "I'm leaving town," he called out to the Redbank hands. "But I'll be back."

ABOUT three miles south of Bowdry Young Hardesty pulled up. The dazed Billings was deposited on the sand. Considerably sobered up, Billings got to his feet. He glared at the town man, at the wagon, at Young Hardesty, and finally at the distant town of Bowdry shimmering in the morning sun. With a curse he named Young Hardesty and the town man collectively. Young Hardesty laughed. "Bowdry is north, mister."

Billings jerked his gun from its holster. The town man went white, expecting to see Young Hardesty drop. But the hammer of Billings' gun fell with a dull click.

"You can't do that!" cried the town man. He leapt toward Billings. Again the hammer fell on an empty chamber.

Young Hardesty shrugged. "Knowed you would try that, Billings. Your gun is empty, same as your head. Get goin'."

Young Hardesty climbed back to the high seat. "Come on, Borden. You ain't paralyzed, are you?"

When the town man turned to look back, Billings was tramping across the desert. Borden heaved a big sigh. "My Aunt's bracelet, but some of these persons are wild and careless! That man would have shot you."

"Only I emptied his gun when Becker and me loaded him into the wagon."

"And he would have shot me. He's a dangerous person."

"Oh, I dunno." Young Hardesty's gaze was fixed on the horses' ears. "If I hadn't knowed his gun was empty when he went for it, mebby I'd a took a hand."

"Oh, I see."

"I'd 'a' had to spoil him. I didn't want to do that."

"Your discretion is commendable."

"Mebby. Only I don't know what you're talkin' about."

The wagon rumbled and bumped along the desert road.

"What I mean," said the town man finally, adopting Young Hardesty's mode of expression, "You're a wise bird."

"Huh! You ought to meet Old Bedrock."

"I hope to. I think we'll get along famously."

Upon arrival at the Mebbyso mine, the excitement and novelty which had sustained the town man evaporated. After shaking hands with Bedrock he stretched out on one of the cots.

"No supplies?" said Bedrock.

"Sure. Plenty." Young Hardesty tallied on his fingers. "Two trunks, one tenderfoot, tobacco, bacon and that bag of canned stuff. Ain't that enough for one haul?"

"We're needin' that cable and the powder bad."

"Sure. But I wasn't goin' to bush in Bowdry all summer. Anyhow, I had to fetch Borden out here to keep him from gettin' massacred."

"What you been up to now, Joe?"

"Just passin' the time of day with Bill Tandy and Wash Billings."

"Anybody get hurt?"

"Hell, no! We was just playin' around."

Borden was not too weary to smile. If Young Joe called it just playing around, what would it be like when he got down to real business?

Bedrock took Young Hardesty aside. "Now you've got him here, what do you aim to do with him?"

"Why, feed him up, learn him the country, and get him tough. He'll do a heap better out here than he would in Bowdry. Anyhow, he's kind of interestin' to have around." Young Hardesty recounted in detail their recent experiences. Old Bedrock smiled to himself. Evidently the town man wasn't quite so much of a liability as he had appeared to be when he stepped wearily from the wagon. In any event it would be good for Young Joe to have the companionship of the younger man.

"He ain't any too stout," said Bedrock. "Suppose he should cash in?"

"He ain't goin' to cash in," declared Young Hardesty. "He's goin' to take a holt, and get goin' good."

Resting on the cot, the town man was aware that the partners were discussing him. He could not hear what they said, but their lowered voices and their gestures made it plain. Already he had taken a fancy to the rugged Bedrock. And Young Hardesty was a hummer. In tune with their mood, the town man himself felt that he would never have a better chance to get strong and look forward to a real future. As to what it would be he hadn't the slightest idea. Let that skein unwind itself. He would follow his luck, play the game, and see what happened.

CHAPTER II

THE OTHER VALLEY

WHEN old Bedrock and his partner worked, they worked hard. Occasionally, when a good excuse offered, they took time off. And they had never had a better excuse to do a little loafing than when the town man began to unpack his trunks.

"Where you goin' to put your stuff?" said Young Hardesty.

"In my tent."

"Where in hell is your tent?"

"In the big trunk. Also my air mattress and cooking utensils."

"You ain't got a horse and saddle in the other trunk, mebby?"

"Fact is I had to leave my saddle horses behind."

"Say, you ain't a circus rider, are you?"

"No. I did some jumping, and a little polo before my Nemesis overtook me."

Borden hauled a silk waterproof tent from the largest trunk. Young Hardesty stared. "Hell, that ain't no bigger than a dish rag. Mebby you sleep on your belly and cover your back with it."

"It expands. Balloon silk, you know. No pun."

Out came an air mattress, an air pillow, blankets, tent stakes, axe, a nested cooking outfit—all the necessary, and a lot of the useless plunder sporting goods houses sell to willing purchasers. The thirty-thirty high power had just come into the market. When Young Hardesty saw Borden's rifle, a light little gun of small bore, he sniffed. "Good for rabbits."

"No. Bad. These soft-nosed bullets tear things up scandalously. I'm told they are powerful enough to kill grizzly."

Bedrock and Young Hardesty exchanged glances. Kill a grizzly with a pea shooter like that! Young Hardesty itched to try the rifle, but his pride forbade any show of curiosity.

Young Hardesty inspected the aluminum outfit. "Them cookin' things, one fittin' inside the other, is all right when they're clean. But when you get 'em smoked up and you put 'em together you mess up the clean inside of your pots."

"Right you are. I hadn't thought of that."

The next trunk was unpacked—hunting boots, a mackinaw, heavy sweaters, a chamois vest, woolen pants, flannel shirts, and innumerable gadgets. The pocket compass, Bedrock declared, would come in handy.

The hunting knife was too big, but it might do as a kitchen knife. He averred that in that country the rod and line was a total loss.

Young Hardesty eyed the huge pile of plunder. Borden suggested that they try out the rifle, but neither Bedrock nor Young Hardesty accepted the invitation.

Borden loaded the Winchester, pulled up slowly and let go at an empty tomato can about a hundred yards down the flat. The can jumped. So did Young Hardesty, at the harsh snarl of the high power.

"Sure sounds wicked," he said. But that wasn't what was in his mind. The tenderfoot had hit the can, first shot. Hadn't raised the sights, either. Young Hardesty ran down and inspected what was left of the can.

"Set up another, about a hundred yards farther out," called Borden.

Again the town man fired. The can jumped from the rock on which Young Hardesty had set it.

"Powerful little gun," commented Bedrock. "I heard of 'em, but I didn't believe it. What say if we go up to the spring and clear out a place for your tent?"

Young Hardesty began to make a mental adjustment. This town fellow wasn't just all fancy clothes. He owned horses, could shoot, knew how to hook up a team, and he sure could punch. If his lungs held out, he'd make a hand. And that little thirty-thirty!

"Say, Borden, where's your glasses?" he said, grinning.

The town man stared at his questioner. "Glasses? My Aunt's bracelet! Why I had forgotten that I ever wore them."

"Wonderful air we got out here," said Bedrock.

"Remarkable! I think the physician that prescribed glasses for my stomach trouble really began at the wrong end. Up to that time I had nothing wrong with my eyesight."

"Mebby now your stomach will get all right," suggested Young Hardesty. "You weren't wearin' your glasses when you put Wash Billings out of business."

Possibly it was the altitude. Maybe it was simply self expression. The town man flung his hat high and whooped like a boy out of school. "Down with dark thoughts! Up with the tent!" He paused, gazed reflectively at the mining partners. "My Aunt's bracelet! I should have let them sell me that folding bath tub."

Young Hardesty gestured toward a smoke-blackened wash tub near the lean-to. "We got one. Only you have to do the foldin'."

LIKE the thermometer, Borden had his ups and downs. Following a deer hunting trip over the mountain, he was obliged to rest in his tent three days. He read, and chatted with old Bedrock. The town man came to appreciate and understand Bedrock's substantial character.

"Medicine in bottles," Bedrock told him, "only puts your germs to sleep for a spell. What you need is to get stout enough so the germs can't dig into you. I never took no medicine, and I never had a sick day in my life."

"But you've got a constitution like the United States."

"Better. It ain't got any amendments hung onto it."

From Bedrock the town man learned much about Young Joe Hardesty's early history, his hardships, his adventures. Young Joe was only sixteen, yet in many respects he was as capable and sagacious as Bedrock himself.

As the days went by, the town man became accustomed to the silences, the

loneliness—for there were times when he felt exceedingly lonely. Although he gained no weight, he was far stronger than when he came to the desert. Occasional bad spells disheartened him. It was then that Young Hardesty "rode him hard to get him out of the bog." When Borden offered to pay for board and lodging, Young Joe refused with profane emphasis. To square his conscience Borden kept the camp in food at his own expense.

The idea of settling on the abandoned homestead south of the mine appealed to him. He wanted to be his own man, go and come as he pleased, loaf when he felt like it and tramp around when the impulse took him. He had no definite plan for the future except to get strong enough to reasonably hope he might have a future. The doctors back East had given him two years to live. Some six months of the two years had gone. In the serenity of the hills and desert his mental outlook changed. He no longer worried about his health. He forgot the calendar.

With lumber hauled in from Grant, and the help of two natives, the town man set about to build a cabin on the homestead south of the Mebbyso. When completed the structure was nothing more than a spacious rough board shack. But to Borden it was an ideal accomplised. His own labor and sweat had gone into the building of it. He owned it. It was his home. With his voluminous camping equipment he was able to manage nicely. In the new corral loafed a stout saddle horse, purchased by the Easterner for trips over the mountain. Bright Navajo blankets, books and a rough stone fireplace gave the main room a comfortable, settled look.

Meanwhile the town man began to realize that he had no definite objective in life. Tired of doing nothing, Borden finally decided to make a lone trip over the mountain. Early one morning he saddled up, and with food, canteen and rifle, he set out. Reaching the crest of the range, he sat his pony gazing across The Other Valley. It was big country. He was alone. Never had he felt so independent, so much his own man.

Hitherto, Young Joe had always been his companion. But when you traveled with him you simply followed, did as he did. Alone, a fellow didn't have to keep to the trail. He could poke around and discover all sorts of interesting places.

Yonder on the far slope of the valley, for instance, was the grave of a prospector who had been murdered by an escaped convict. And down the valley in the rock stream bed was the spot where Young Hardesty and a cattleman named Wilson had lain behind a boulder and battled for hours with the Rucker boys. Still farther south was the trail from the old Rucker ranch to Grant. It would be great to camp somewhere in the valley a night or two, and then take the trail to Grant and so on around to the Mebbyso. It would beat traveling in books all hollow.

AS Borden put his horse down the western slope, he jumped a buck. Unaccustomed to shooting from the saddle, he fumbled. The buck bounced into the brush and disappeared. Still farther down the slope the town man spied the buck partly concealed in a clump of brush. Stepping down from his pony, he took careful aim and fired. The deer dropped.

The buck might be wounded, might jump up and run. Borden approached cautiously. The deer didn't jump and run. He wished that it had. He had shot a fawn-colored short yearling branded Bar Cross.

Unaware that cattle from the Bar Cross sometimes strayed east into The Other Valley, the town man was puzzled. He knew that shooting cattle was a mighty serious matter. Of course if there had been anyone about, he would have explained the mistake, and paid for the yearling. But there was no one about.

And there lay the dead animal. Borden shrugged. This exploring on one's own wasn't always so joyful.

For a moment he thought of taking some of the meat for supper. Young beef was just as good as venison any day. But somehow Borden wasn't meat hungry just then. With a regretful glance at the dead animal, he rode on down to the valley floor. Bedrock and Young Hardesty would give him the laugh when he told them. But why let his mistake spoil the journey? He would simply charge it to profit and loss.

Intent on keeping his bearings, the town man was unaware of the two cowhands riding down the far slope of the valley. Finally he saw them, was about to call them over and explain the situation, when he was overcome by a desire to vanish from the scene. He wasn't afraid of the cowhands, but his pride forbade confessing to such a blunder.

Unaware that the men were looking for strays, he thought that the chances were a hundred to one that they would discover the dead yearling. They were coming down the slope toward the river bed. He had been moving toward them. He reined to the left and began to ride down the valley. In doing so he made his second mistake. He had awakened suspicion. Folks traveling open country didn't avoid one another without some important reason.

He thought he heard a faint halloo. Somehow the call, which he would have welcomed under other circumstances, now made him feel guilty. All the while he was aware that he was acting foolishly. Yet he couldn't bring himself to the point of reining round and facing the music. He had lost interest in exploring The Other Valley. He rode on. He would take the old trail back to Grant and call it a day.

So keyed up was he that he almost anticipated the second halloo—no shout of greeting, but a terse command to halt. Borden turned in the saddle. From the hillside near the spot where the dead yearling lay, one of the cowhands was waving at him.

If they wanted to talk, let them catch up with him. He wasn't traveling fast. In any event, why should he pay any attention to a couple of cowhands just because they happened to be riding in that territory? Running away—for in spite of his reasoning that was exactly what he was doing—only served to increase Borden's feeling of guilt. He was now on the defensive. If those fellows back there happened to be Bar Cross cowhands, let them prove he had shot the animal. Meanwhile they could halloo their heads off for all he cared.

The sound of a rifle shot ripped through the silence. With a quick twist and dive sideways Borden's pony shied. Striking a boulder alongside the trail, the slug had whistled off at a tangent, passing close to Borden's head. Borden found himself sitting in the sand of the river bed.

"They shot at me!" he kept telling himself. He got up stiffly, limped to the pony and took his rifle from the boot.

From the beginning the mistakes had all been his. He had acted like a tenderfoot in running away from something he could easily have faced and explained. Yet he let all reasoning go by the board. The cowhands had shot at him. If they wanted a fight they could have it. Anything that might happen now could not be called a mistake. This was battle.

He led the pony to cover, before he himself lay down behind a boulder, peering round it to see what the men on the slope were doing. One of them, rifle in hand, was standing in plain sight. The other seemed to be bending over something on the ground. "I'll just drop a shot close enough to them to let them know they can't scare me out of the country," muttered Borden.

He took his time, aimed low. Striking a flat rock in front of the man standing, the high power thirty-thirty zinged into pieces. One of the fragments ripped across the top of the other

man's head as he bent over the dead yearling. The cowhand grunted and dropped.

"I killed him," thought Borden. "I aimed too high."

Borden's stomach felt empty and queer. An hour ago he had been riding happily down into The Other Valley filled with a sense of freedom and elation. Now he felt like a fugitive, a murderer. But there was no use thinking about it now. He was in it up to his ears. He would have to work out of it somehow.

"If I should kill that other fellow," he reflected, "the authorities will hang me. If I get out of this alive, I can claim self defense. But to drop two of them. . ."

It didn't occur to the town man that he himself might get killed, until a shot from the slope struck the boulder behind which he was lying, and a shower of granite dust stung his face. That was a close one! He drew back, wondering how a bullet could travel at that angle when the man who fired was directly ahead of him up the slope.

A chill ran down Borden's back as he realized that the shot had not come from directly ahead, but from far to the right. He was being stalked like some dangerous animal. Dangerous animal? Well wasn't he? What difference was there between himself and some wild thing hiding from death? Cornered, it fights, not necessarily to kill some other creature but to save its own life.

The town man shifted his position. Moralizing wasn't getting him anywhere. Now if Young Joe Hardesty had been in his position he wouldn't have moralized, he would have given all his thought to getting out with a whole hide.

THE sun burned down. Borden's shoulders itched. He grew thirsty. He wanted to light a cigarette. More than all he wanted to stand up, see what was round about him, not lie belly-down behind a rock like some escaped convict. But he dare not move. The man hunting him might be anywhere along the hillside, waiting for a chance to get a clear shot. Within a few seconds the other man almost got his chance.

Borden flinched as the slug ripped his sleeve. On his upper arm was a welt from which a drop oozed like red sweat. It was merely a surface wound, but it stung like fire. Again he squirmed round to another position. If he could only talk with the other fellow, explain things.

Borden tied his bandanna to his rifle barrel and raised it as a sort of flag of truce. The response was prompt. A slug whistled over his head and splattered on the rock behind him.

"To hell with chivalry!" he muttered. "To hell with the consequences!" And Borden knew how it sometimes comes about that an innocent man turns killer.

A ghastly business, this. Why, those fellows must have taken him for a cattle rustler! For the first time since the killing of the yearling Borden got hold of himself, employed cold reason.

The cowhands must have been in the valley when he fired. Being human, naturally they wondered what he was shooting at. Undoubtedly their first hail was a friendly gesture. A little later they had come upon the dead yearling, hallooed to him to stop. He had paid no attention. They had fired a shot to halt him. He had returned their fire, and dropped one of them. From their point of view they were in the right. He was a trespasser, a cow thief. Naturally the surviving cowhand wouldn't let up till he got him.

It was all a sort of nightmare, unreal, impossible. What would be the outcome? He had not alone shot a steer—he had killed a man. Long before coming to the West Borden had read of this sort of thing, had been amused, but never greatly impressed. Now he was actually in the thick of it himself. There was no romance in gun smoke. Gun fighting was a squalid, miserable business—butchery.

In comparison, a stand-up fight with fists was a wholesome, hearty affair.

The sun bore down upon him as he lay behind the boulder. The silence was so deep, so all-enveloping that he felt like a castaway on a rock in some vast, motionless sea. He would have welcomed hand-to-hand conflict. This lying still, waiting, got on his nerves. He raised on his elbow, shouted at the top of his voice, "Come out into the open! Show yourself! I'll meet you and have it out with you."

But no sound came. The silence seemed even more intense. What was the other man doing? Was he sneaking round, waiting for a chance to shoot him in the back? Borden glanced behind him. There was nothing in sight down the dry, winding river bed save the hindquarters of the pony as it stood in the shade switching flies.

Inaction became unbearable. Borden rose on hands and knees, peered round about. Glancing toward the eastern slope of the valley, he was able to outline two horses, partly concealed by the brush where the dead yearling lay.

The noon sun had cast a heavy shadow across the spot where the cowhand had fallen. Borden couldn't make out whether he was still there or not. But the other man was somewhere in the brush, on foot. Hitherto the town man had been watching the eastern side of the valley from which the shots had come. He turned and glanced across the river bed. Standing in plain sight behind him was a squat, dark-haired man in greasy jeans and black cotton shirt.

"STICK 'em up!" said the puncher.

The town man didn't have a chance to use his rifle. He rose stiffly, his hands above his head.

"It had to be you, didn't it?" Relief and sarcasm mingled in Borden's voice. The other man was Wash Billings.

"I ought to plug you," said Billings. "But seein' you put me down in Bowdry when I wasn't in no condition to help myself, I'm just goin' to beat you to nothin'."

"Just a minute," said the town man quickly. "I shot that animal up there by mistake. Took it for a deer."

"Mebby you took my pardner for a deer, likewise," growled Billings.

"Remember, you fired first. I shot low, purposely."

"Low, hell! That slug tore the whole top of his head off."

The town man went white. "If that's the case I'm willing to stand trial. I didn't shoot to kill. You fellows started this. I can claim self defense."

"You're goin' to need all the self defense you got, right now!" Billings stumped up, his Winchester on the town man.

"Go ahead. Shoot, if you've got the nerve!" cried Borden.

He could hear the blood sing in his ears. With hands clenched he faced Billings.

Even that thick-skulled individual knew that this town man was not afraid. And because he wasn't, Billings himself grew furious. To kill him with a shot would be too easy. He would knock him down, beat him, trample him into the sand.

Billings swung the short saddle gun. The blow would have brained Borden had he not flung up his arm and ducked at the same time. The barrel of the carbine took him on the shoulder, a glancing blow that all but paralyzed his arm.

So vicious had been the swing that the carbine slipped from Billings' grasp and clattered on the rocks. The town man struck out once, but the punch had no steam. Bending, he jumped in, grappled the cowhand round the waist. With a quick twist he shot his hip under the other's belly and heaved. Billings fell hard, but bounced up and came at the town man, murder in his eyes. Both went down, the town man underneath.

"Got you where I want you," panted

Billings. He grasped the town man's hair and pounded his head on the ground.

Borden could not see, could scarcely hear or feel. There was a warm, salty taste on his lips. But deep down, a still unquenched spark faded and glowed. He wouldn't give in. Dimly he realized that this was the way wild animals fought—fought to kill that they might survive.

With a last, almost superhuman effort Borden drew up his knee. Billings groaned, let go his hold. Borden felt that the suffocating weight was gone. Slowly he raised his head, managed to turn on his side. By degrees his senses returned. Billings lay on his back, his mouth twisted in a queer way. His eyes were open, yet he seemed unable to move.

The town man staggered over to where the Bar Cross man's carbine lay, picked it up and turning moved slowly back to Billings. He said nothing, simply stood looking down at his enemy.

"Why don't you plug him? You'll never have a better chance." The words were distinct enough, but seemed to come from far away. Still dazed, Borden did not even turn his head. His job was to see that the man on the ground didn't get up.

Reckon you got mauled pretty bad." Again the voice. Borden looked up. A few yards away Young Hardesty sat his pony, grinning.

A kind of dull fury overcame the town man. He had been fighting for his life and here was his friend Joe grinning at him.

"Plug him?" said Borden. "I killed one of them. Isn't that enough?"

"You mean Tandy? Hell, he's got a crease in his scalp, and he bled plenty, but he ain't down for keeps."

"Thank God!" gasped Borden. Clutching at the air, he staggered and dropped.

"Fainted just like a lady," said Young Hardesty.

But there was no humor in his eyes as he watched Billings get painfully to his knees, and finally stagger up the river bed toward the horses. The Bar Cross man hadn't even stopped to look for his carbine.

Young Joe wondered where Borden had hit the puncher to jolt him out of his senses like that. Tandy up in the brush with a rip in his scalp, Billings crippled, and the tenderfoot down and out. Hell of a mess! And there would be more of it. Billings would lay for the tenderfoot, bushwhack him, sooner or later. The Bar Cross puncher was a sour, sullen hand. Now Bill Tandy was different. He was wild and full of hell, but he wasn't one to hang in the brush and drop a man. Yet it was a sure bet he would tangle with the town man next time he met him.

Young Hardesty took his canteen, dashed water in Borden's face. Finally the town man sat up. That he was dazed and bewildered was natural enough. But when he rose and stared at Young Joe as if the latter were an entire stranger, Young Hardesty was worried.

"Get on your horse and we'll drag it," he said, picking up Borden's rifle.

"Certainly!" It was only too evident that Borden was delirious, didn't know what he was doing. He stared at Young Joe with unseeing eyes. "Certainly I'll go. But first I'd like to ask you a question."

"Shoot."

"Kindly tell me which way is North."

WHEN the town man awoke in his cabin next morning, he was too sore and stiff to wonder how he got there. The smell of bacon and coffee assured him that he wasn't dreaming. At the fireplace knelt Young Hardesty, manipulating a skillet.

Borden lay watching him. Slowly yesterday's events shaped themselves. He recalled the shooting of the yearling, the battle with the Bar Cross hands, and the arrival of Young Joe. There his recollection ceased. Dully he realized that he had got himself into a nasty

mess. He had half killed two Bar Cross men. Chances were they would do a better job in his case if he ever met them again. He wondered when that would be, and what would happen. Meanwhile he felt weak and desperately hungry. Moreover, as Young Hardesty often said, there was no use packing your troubles around in plain sight.

"Hello, Joe," said Borden. "How did you get here?"

"Chambermaid. Don't you recollect hirin' me?"

"I do not."

"You'll pay me my wages, just the same."

Borden grinned. His rifle hung in its accustomed place over the stone mantel. On a peg near the bed were his clothes.

"Tidy person," he murmured.

"I notice you ain't so loco this mornin'."

"Was I loco?"

"Crazy as a seam squirrel."

"A what?"

"A seam squirrel. Pet name for a louse."

"Thanks. Say, Joe, open up. Talk."

"You better toss some of this into you first," said Young Hardesty, fetching coffee. "Here! Lemme give you a hand."

Propped up in bed, Borden gazed about dizzily. After the coffee things weren't so bad. Yet he was willing to let Young Hardesty do most of the talking. Young Hardesty didn't say much. And he didn't need to ask Borden many questions. From what Young Joe had seen he knew just about all that had happened. While he considered Borden's predicament serious, he made no comment. Nor did Borden himself. He did, however, ask what had become of Wash Billings and Bill Tandy.

Young Hardesty assured him that Tandy would be all right when somebody—and he didn't give a damn who—took a few stitches in his scalp. As for Wash Billings, the last Young Hardesty saw of him, Billings was limping up the river bed.

Young Hardesty cleared away the dishes and tidied up the cabin. He took the bucket and went to the spring. Borden lay gazing at the ceiling. Battered, bruised and weak, he still clung to his sense of humor. He had made a ridiculous mistake. It had all but led to a tragedy. But having missed tragedy by a thin squeak, it was ridiculous, Borden let his fancy roam.

Out West there is a tenderfoot,
Will Borden is his name.
He goes around a shootin' steers,
Instead of shootin' game.

That's what the whole county would be thinking, if not reciting.

When Young Hardesty returned from the spring, Borden was asleep.

WHEN he was able to be about, Borden wrote to the Bar Cross owners, offering to pay for the yearling. Weeks went by and he received no answer. The letter, as often happened in that desert country, either went astray or was lost. Finally the town man decided to go to Bowdry and personally interview one of the Bar Cross owners, who lived there.

Young Hardesty went with him, not because, so he said, he yearned to go, but to keep Borden from shooting up the town.

Their horses at the livery, Borden and Young Hardesty stopped in at the Silver Dollar.

"We'll have that drink you didn't take last time you was in here," said Young Hardesty, grinning.

Borden stood gazing at the floor. "X marks the spot where he fell." The town man was making light of the Billings affair, yet he didn't forget that the present, easy road might have an abrupt turning some day. Borden raised his glass. "Well, Joe, here's to a happy future."

"Suits me," said Young Hardesty. He set his glass down as a noisy group of

riders stepped from their ponies at the hitch rail.

"It says on the calendar it's Thanksgivin' Day," murmured Young Hardesty. Mebbyso."

They stumped in—Tandy, Monte Ray, Billings and a half dozen more Bar Cross hands. They hadn't been in town for a long while. They were obviously ready for a good time. The town man noted that Young Hardesty had his back to the bar and both hands free. Borden himself nodded to the cowhands. "Morning, boys! Will you have something?"

Silently the cowhands moved to the bar, called for their drinks. Glass in hand, Bill Tandy walked up to the town man.

"About that mistake I made, over in the valley—" he began.

Tandy frowned. "You got me, stranger."

"The yearling. You see—"

Tandy closed one eye. "Listen, fella. I got pitched, and busted my head on a rock. Wash got kicked in the belly by his hoss." Tandy lowered his voice. "I didn't report no dead yearlin'. Just try and see how good you are at forgettin'."

"My letter," said Borden, "must have gone astray."

"I didn't get no letter," said Tandy blankly. "What you talkin' about?"

Borden got it. Neither Tandy nor Billings wanted their fellows to know that a tenderfoot had again got the best of them. Why, if Tandy meant what he said, the whole miserable affair was settled! No lawsuit, no trouble, no dead yearling to pay for. Still a mite skeptical, Borden raised his glass. If Tandy drank with him, that would seal the bargain. But Tandy first had to have his little joke. He gestured to Billings. "Come 'ere, Wash. Meet my friend, Mr.—"

"Will Borden."

"Bill!" roared Tandy.

Ringleader in their escapades, what Tandy said went. The sullen Billings slouched up and shook hands stiffly with the town man. But there was no heart in Billings' handshake. He was still willing to carry on the argument, and would be, as long as he lived.

Tandy silenced him. "That's done buried. And this ain't no diggin' party. If you can't take your medicine and smile, fork your horse and fly."

Borden entertained liberally. He felt that he was making up for his blunder in The Other Valley. Young Hardesty stood in, drank sparingly, and wondered what there was about Borden that made folks like him.

Why, even the Redbank rawhides had taken him up. And they weren't joshing, at that. To the contrary, they were joyously and deliberately getting drunk with the tenderfoot. Young Hardesty kept on the edge of things. He had no special liking for cowhands of any brand. Maybe folks liked Borden because, even if he wore a small belt, he had guts. If he stuck around a couple of years and didn't get bumped off, or bust his neck down a mine shaft, he'd make a hand.

About an hour later Young Hardesty and the town man emerged from the Silver Dollar. The sun was bright, the air clear and cool. Borden gazed out across the desert, at the distant Pinnacles shimmering in the sun.

The boisterous welcome of the Redbankers made him feel that he had been accepted—that he would do. He would never become a cowpuncher or a mining man. But he would get to know these folk as he adjusted himself to their ways.

Nor would he lose anything by so doing. To the contrary, he would gain much. Back East he had merely been skimming the ponds and shallows. Here he was in the middle of the stream. The current was somewhat rough and swift, but he liked it. Of course there would always be Billings. East or West there always is a Billings. But that kind of snag could be dodged if a fellow kept his eyes open.

The nose of the Queen was buried deep.

RAM HIM, DAMN HIM!

By H. BEDFORD JONES

HAIKES drew in between two store fronts and once more read the letter before destroying it. That letter had come by some spy messenger through the Union lines. Here in New Albany, on the Indiana shore, it had reached him. He scanned it briefly:

Fleet of Federal rams, reconstructed steamboats—rendezvous at New Albany. Understand they need pilots. Might be worth your while—bring flagship into our lines—permanent position, good pay, assured you in Confederate service—

Geo. Montgomery, Conf.
River Defense Flotilla.

An old friend, George Montgomery, the only one who had stood up for him. That had been two years ago, before the war.

Haikes tore up the paper, fed it into his mouth in scraps, and swallowed it. He felt better when it was gone; that paper had an unpleasant smell of hemp about it. He walked on to the corner, and the scrawled placard tacked up there caught his eye. He paused, to squint with somber black eyes as the words leaped for him in the spring sunshine:

STEAMBOAT MEN WANTED FOR A TRIP DOWNRIVER. COL. CHARLES ELLET.

Steamboat men, eh? That ruffled his bitter thoughts. Uncle Sam could use steamboat men now, after having set the best of them ashore before war broke! Owen Haikes, first-class river pilot, spat his contempt for the placard, and turned to survey the levee.

The smoking, belching stacks of a half score steamboats lying against the shore, with the Ohio current tugging at their low hulls, held his interest. The New Albany levee did not often stage a show of this kind. Haikes paced up and down, hulking, raw-boned; all the sartorial glory of a river pilot had long since been shed. He was shabby.

Get a pilot's job, eh? Might be done, in emergencies like this; there might or might not be any registration lists handy; in war time you could get away with anything. Papers didn't count, only performance. Get a pilot's job and turn over the craft to the Confederates, eh? Damn old George, anyhow!

"I don't love the government, Lord knows," thought Haikes. "But do it for hire, for Confederate gold? Be damned to the lot of 'em! A soldier might do that, a captain or an engineer or a mate might do it—but damned if a master pilot would do it!"

To look at him, it was hard to conceive that he had, not so long ago, been that proudest, highest paid of all river men—a master pilot. But a second look would note something keen and resolute and steady in the eye, a sudden strength in the mouth and chin, a hard, masterful personality. Owen Haikes might be broken in fortune and future, but the man in him had not been touched.

He eyed the river craft shrewdly. Nine steam craft, two coal barges. Two side-wheel packets; *Queen of the West,* and *Monarch,* of the Cairo-Cincinnati run. He knew them well. A small side-wheeler, *Lancaster;* a dumpy stern-wheeler, *Switzerland.* Three tow-boats, *Mingo, Samson,* and *Lioness;* and two little pilot-boats or tenders.

His hungry eyes devoured the *Queen.* Why, she had been like a mother to him! He had been cub pilot aboard her, knew every inch of her. Now what the devil had they done to her and to the *Monarch?* Low and heavy in the water, she rode like a barge, instead of a packet designed for speed, easy handling and scant draught. Pilot house planked up to the ledge panels, rails of hurricane and boiler decks planked up; bow built forward until it jutted like a long, sharp nose. A fighting ship now, a ram.

Haikes edged his way into the groups of curious spectators, kept back from the gang-planks by a few armed guards. He listened to the comments from all around.

"They must be going to run the blockade with supplies, eh?"

"Down the Mississip'? Like hell! They ain't got no guns—them two big side-wheelers are floating barns! The Rebel gunboats will blow 'em sky-high. Who's this Colonel Ellet?"

There was a laugh and a snicker.

"Ain't you heard? Why, he's a bridge engineer; that's the closest to the water he ever got. A fine commodore for a fleet! You know what he's set out to do? I hear he aims to ram a way with these here wooden boats through the iron-plated gunboats, past the land forts, and on to join up with Farragut at New

Orleans! If that ain't crazy, what is?"

"Yeah, he's been advertising for river men—steamboat men, he calls 'em—to serve as volunteers. By hickory, I wouldn't be in ary engine room or pilot house of them floating barns for a thousand dollars gold!"

"Shucks! The Rebels have rams, too, and gunboats, and first class pilots. Remember Jack Hughes? He hailed from Louisville when he was on the lower Ohio run. He's down there. I heard tell."

Haikes suddenly wakened, and turned thundercloud eyes to the speaker. "What's that you said? Jackson Hughes —what's he doing?"

"Piloting for the Johnny Rebs. He joined up with 'em a year ago. Hey! Here comes the colonel now. Got a telegram, but he ain't got his pilot, I bet."

A SLIGHT, stooped, agile man in blue frock coat and colonel's shoulder straps, an eager light on his thinly smooth face, was hastening down the levee, the paper of a telegram fluttering in his hand. Haikes strode out and overtook him at the gangplank of the *Queen*.

"Colonel Ellet?"

"Yes, sir?" The blue eyes were tired but bright with impatience. The long nose twitched nervously; a weary smile touched the large mouth. "What is it?"

"I hear you want river men."

"I did. Now I want only a chief pilot, but I can likely pick one up at Cairo. If not, I'll stand at the wheel myself. I've no time to lose."

"Which boat needs a pilot?" asked Haikes. The blue eyes appraised him.

"The *Queen*, the flagship; she shows the way. Must have a good pilot for her."

"How'll you get her to Cairo without a pilot?"

"I've a Louisville rapids tow-boat man who knows the river."

"A tow-boat pilot on the *Queen*, a big side-wheeler?" The voice of Haikes rasped with unconscious authority. "Where are you bound, out of Cairo?"

Colonel Ellet threw back his head and spoke tartly.

"To destroy the Confederate fleet at Memphis. Who are you, sir?"

"You're talking to a river man. You say you'd take the *Queen* down yourself? Do you know the wheel, do you know the river? It takes a pilot for a big craft like that. Why, you'd wreck her in no time!"

"I can follow the *Monarch* until we sight the enemy—"

"And a hell of a course you'd hold," snapped Haikes. "Let's go aboard. I'd like to have a word with you."

"Very well. Make it short. I'm under orders and we're fired up; but come along."

He briskly led the way past the guards with carbines at the present, up the gang plank to the main deck, up the companionway to the boiler deck and hurricane deck, and on to his own stateroom forward in the Texas, beneath the pilot house perched on the roof. Haikes, who would know the way blindfolded, followed impatiently.

Once in the cabin, Colonel Ellet turned.

"Well? Out with it."

"My name's Smith, Tom Smith," said Haikes harshly. "I'm a top notch pilot, sir. I'm on shore at present and ready for a job. I'll pilot the *Queen* to Memphis for you."

The other grunted. "You have a license—a full master pilot?"

"I'm recorded, yes." Haikes did not say his name had been removed from the registry; that name of his might have been spotted. "I've no papers with me, but what's the difference? Performance counts; anyone could forge papers who had a mind. I know this boat, I earned my license on her. I know the wheel and the river, from Pittsburg to New Orleans. This boat will burn five hundred cords of wood between St. Louis and New Orleans, Colonel. That's

the practical sort of information you'll need to have."

Ellet, he saw at once, knew nothing of river life. Any river man would have asked more questions as to past service and present standing, but Ellet seemed to take any ragged stranger for granted. Perhaps he took the stranger's resolute eye and manner for granted. He frowned and gestured to a seat.

"Sit down. You say you know this boat?"

"I can take her through waters where the catfish are rigged with stern wheels. I was raised aboard her. She's cranky, and her pilot must know her well."

"If you sign on with my command, do you know what you're getting into?"

"Yes and no. I haven't read the news."

"There's been no news, except local rumors, of this expedition." Ellet paused, and Haikes suppressed the smile that came to his lips. No news, eh? But George Montgomery and the rebels had full news. "I was given twenty days to find my boats and refit them as rams; my own idea. The Confederates have steamboat rams; I've improved on them. We're going down to Memphis with Commodore Foote's ironclad gunboats from St. Louis. We're assigned to destroy the Confederate rams while our gunboats fight the rebel gunboats."

"Packet against packet, and pilot against pilot, eh?"

"Exactly. And ram against ram. We have no guns, merely a small force of volunteer sharpshooters to stand off boarders; we're to depend on ramming. Stem to stem, my man. I may lose boats, but they and the enemy boats will go down together."

"What's the matter with using Foote's ironclads alone, sir?"

"The steamboats are too fast for them." Ellet tapped the paper in his hand. "Here are the details of what's happened. The gunboat fleet made a try below Cairo. Two were rammed and sunk above Fort Pillow; the rest put back and left the Confederates to take station. We're casting off at once; the other boats follow as soon as possible. If you have nerve enough to ram or be rammed, you can take the wheel at Cairo; until then, Brazee will have charge."

Ram or be rammed! Suddenly Haikes felt cold; around him was the shudder and give of collapsing timbers, the awful feel of a stoved boat. Whether by his own fault or another's, the spasm of a piled-up boat beneath his feet was something a pilot could never forget.

All the agony of the *Scott* came back upon him full force—that stranded hulk just awash, and the wrecked *General Scott*, that lost him his license and future, made him a marked man on the river, a doomed man.

"The *Queen's* timbers won't stand for ramming," he said, dry-mouthed.

"I'm a construction engineer; we've braced hull and decks with timbers run fore and aft, beam to beam, with bulkheads in the hull forward. We've built the timber braces out beyond the bows, for her ram beak." Colonel Ellet stepped to the door. "You can serve in the engine-room down to Cairo."

"No, I won't; not me!" broke out Haikes. "I'll be up on watch. She'll be crankier than ever, with that nose and extra weight. I'll not have her wrecked under me ahead of time. When it comes to ramming—well, if they catch her broadside on, she'll go like an eggshell!"

His tone, his words, drew appreciation rather than rebuke. Ellet nodded, and left the cabin, pausing for a last word over his shoulder.

"Doesn't matter; our job is to clear the river. Do as you please. You've a few minutes to look around before we're off."

HAIKES, left alone, cursed softly under his breath and went over the boat with grim appraisal. Once trim and spick and span, the old *Queen of the West* was a sight now. Her fancy rails were

turned into timbered bulwarks. She was braced under the decks, the engine room was a planked fort. That damned timber ram, faced with boiler iron! She was heavy in the water, low by the bows, and would handle like a scow. At the first shock she would lose her stacks—

Lose her stacks! Haikes thought again of the *General Scott,* and cold sweat started on his forehead. Her stacks had toppled; one had swayed for the pilot house; his own life had nearly been snuffed out. Those immensely tall iron stacks that carried spouting flame high in air were destroying angels when they went over.

COL. CHARLES ELLET, JR.

Here were bluecoats with new Springfield carbines and six-shooter revolvers, lounging in the cabin, on the boiler deck and main deck. A gabble of talk was everywhere. Another Ellet, younger brother of the colnel and captain in the Illinois volunteers, commanded these "river marines," with headquarters on the *Monarch.*

The talk rose high. The colonel was over fifty. He was no soldier, but a civilian engineer who built bridges; he could not deliver a military order. His brother, made a lieutenant-colonel for this job, was about as river-wise as a hen on a hencoop in a freshet. At the thought of taking orders from landsmen, Haikes cursed afresh.

He stumped up to the hurricane deck, on up the ladder to the Texas roof and the barricaded pilot house. A slim young fellow was here, leaning against the wheel and champing with nervous jaws at his quid—a sure sign that he did not fancy his job. This must be the Louisville man, Brazee; now handling a boat bigger than his measure, and a sidewheeler to boot. He flung a stare and curt greeting at Haikes.

"Who are you? You can't stay in this house."

"I'm the pilot. Taking her over at Cairo."

Haikes bid savagely for the worst, and paused. There was no stiffening of body, no shaming retort. His face meant nothing to the stripling.

"Well, you're right welcome to her." The young fellow spat over the window ledge. "I'll run the rapids at low water, but I'll not stand up here to be rammed, not for Luke Brazee! You heard what was done to those ironclads? The Johnnies in their paddle steamers tore right through 'em."

"Colonel Ellet just told me." Haikes took the seat under the window.

"You're a Lower Mississip' pilot?"

"So I've heard."

Haikes smiled grimly. To be aboard the *Queen* once more—why, he was a new man! Already his lie to Ellet was justified, in his own heart. To reveal his actual story would have meant a curt rejection, would have ruined his chance. And here, he perceived clearly and resolutely, the great chance was offered him; not to redeem himself, for he was guiltless of any fault, but to rise above destiny.

The irony of it! Montgomery fancied he was so far broken and done for as to

play traitor—Haikes spat at the very thought, then smiled again. Sooner or later he must tell Colonel Ellet the whole truth. By then, performance would justify him. Ellet was no soldier, and in this very fact he found fresh springing hope; the man wanted a job done, not technicalities and red tape.

Haikes looked over at the *Monarch*, but could not make out who was at the wheel in her pilot house. Colonel Ellet, with boyish enthusiasm, went running forward on the hurricane deck; with drawn sword he struck the bell framed forward of the stacks, then hopped to the shore rail and his voice rang out.

"Cast off!"

By the squeal of hoisting tackle, the gang-plank was being lifted. The lines were cast off the snubbing posts. The young fellow spun the wheel, and with jerk of the wooden-handled cord gave the backing bell.

The exhaust pipes puffed. The *Queen* trembled as her paddles threshed. The crowd ashore cheered. She backed out and cleared; working ahead and aback with her paddles, she swung her stern upstream. Young Brazee gave her *go ahead;* she bucked as the engine stroke reversed and became sluggish. Brazee cursed as he gripped the spokes. She moved, and he gave her the *full speed* bell.

To Haikes, it was all familiar routine. The *Queen* was ploughing downstream now, the Stars and Stripes whipping from her jackstaff. Haikes sat with one eye on Brazee, glancing now to the wheel, now to the jackstaff ball and the marks upon which it should be held. His eye turned dour and hard. The river was on the rise. Muddied, swirling water coursed swiftly. Driftwood, snags, dead trunks sharply abristle, floated by caving banks sodden with melted snows and spring rains. Snags and deadheads —a chill in the words.

Ellet was pacing his quarterdeck. Suddenly he directed an anxious shout at the pilot.

"Look out, there! Head her off—keep her out!"

With the words, the long bows of the *Queen* thumped, her hull grated. Haikes sprang to his feet. The *Queen* was in a cross current and headed straight for a mud bar, fully covered but betrayed to any trained pilot's eye by a ripple and a cluster of bobbing tree branches.

"Give me that wheel, quick!" he snapped. "You're off your marks and worse!"

"She drags by the bows, blast it!" Brazee's twisted face was beaded, the sinews fluted his bare arms as he strained. "She's hell to steer! You can't manage her."

"I held that wheel day and night when you were in didies," growled Haikes, and took the spokes. He felt her out, steadied her, brought her on the mark, and damned the snags. She fought him, yes. She was not herself; like a hysterical woman, he thought, all out of balance and trim. Still, she knew his touch, and the whiffs of the rhythmic exhaust took on a friendly note.

"Better reduce speed," called the anxious Ellet. Haikes laughed joyously.

"I'll thank you to observe river practice. Don't give orders to the pilot house unless you want to make a landing."

Strange talk to soldier ears, but this was river work. The captain had his place, and so did the pilot; a captain gave no say-so to the wheel. The pilot was the boss of the house, and when the boat was in motion, he ran her. If he wrecked her—then God help him, for no one else would!

The *Monarch* was churning along; a good man at her wheel, whoever he was. In a long clear stretch, Haikes turned the wheel over to Brazee, who admired his work volubly. Thus swapping tricks, hour to hour, with a few snatches of sleep during the night, they made Cairo by the next noon. And there, Owen Haikes realized, he must have a reckoning with whoever was handling the *Monarch*. Of his own standing aboard

here, there was no further doubt at all. Bigger things pended.

NEWS ran riot through the boat, while both craft lay up for refueling. The Federal gunboats were two hundred miles downstream, off Point Craighead of the Arkansas shore; five of them, armor-plated but unable to pass Fort Pillow and the deadly packet-rams. Here were urgent orders to come on with the Ohio River rams. General Grant had opened the Tennessee river for transports; the Confederates were falling back. The rams were needed at once to help clear the river.

Colonel Ellet fidgeted while the wood came aboard. Haikes, however, stepped ashore and strode to the *Monarch*, and aboard her. He had to find out. He could see the pilot, brown of shaggy beard, leaning from the house and puffing at his pipe. Then he recognized the face. Roberts, Bill Roberts, once his partner on the *Queen*. As he strode up, Roberts gave him a nod and a steady look.

"I thought it was you, by the way you handled the *Queen*. More tricky than ever, eh? She must be a job to hold."

"Might be worse," said Haikes.

"I heard about the *General Scott*," said Roberts. "Bad business. They floated her again, but you stayed sunk. I lost track of you. You're on the river now?"

"To serve in a pinch, here."

"Blast it, old man, I don't see how it happened with the *Scott!*" The voice of Roberts, friendly and wise, was warming to the heart. "Moonlit night, clear course, you on watch at the wheel. And by the testimony you stove her on an old hulk, when you had plenty of water either side the bar."

Haikes nodded. "I was in the house, but I didn't wreck the *Scott*. Jack Hughes, the second pilot, swore I did it and that I was drunk. Why? He wanted my berth. He had come on duty a trifle early, and I had turned the wheel over to him, stopping for a chat. The Federal board at St. Louis wouldn't believe me; I was jobbed, my papers canceled, and I couldn't get a hearing at Washington. My appeal's still there, pigeonholed. Yes, the *Scott* struck, all right. I can feel it yet. I dream about it sometimes."

"It's a hell of a thing to remember," said Roberts. "How'll you feel when another craft comes stem on to rip the guts out of you?"

"Probably won't be pleasant." Haikes gave him a look. "Why are you here?"

Roberts pointed with his pipe toward the flag on the jackstaff, mutely.

"I shipped under the name of Smith," said Haikes. The other grinned.

"Suits me, old man. Say, I hear George Montgomery commands the rams below."

Haikes nodded. "George is a good man, a master pilot; he was on the board of inquiry, and the only one who believed me. A Southerner, but good. Still," he added, ironically thinking of that letter from Montgomery, "I guess there's one or two things about a pilot he doesn't savvy."

"Yeah?" drawled Roberts. "I hear Jackson Hughes is down there, too. What'll you do if we run up ag'in him?"

Haikes flushed. "Ram him, damn him!"

"Shake!"

Roberts put out a hand. Haikes met the hard grip with his own; they exchanged one nod of comprehension, and parted.

Wood was aboard, and coal, and a couple of barrels of resin to rush up the steam gauge if need came. Haikes had the *Queen* now; she was his to handle. He heartened to the quick wave of the hand from Roberts, to the faint jingle of the bell, the swift response of the threshing paddles.

The broad Mississippi was less cumbered with craft than the Ohio. The shore marks stirred his pilot's memories, the spokes of the tugging wheel grew

warm to his clasp, the jack staff swung to his bidding. And Montgomery stood ready to let the *Queen* through to a traitorous job, eh? So much the worse for Montgomery.

River marks had changed, but the pilot's trained eye meant more than all else, and this changed not. It was a long watch, with some help from the mate, to the rendezvous off the Arkansas shore, above and opposite Fort Pillow.

The fleet of gunboats built at St. Louis were in waiting, huddled along the shore, squat and black, peaked shed roofs plated with railroad iron. Propeller craft, heavily gunned, but unwieldy, slow in turning.

Here was live news. The Confederate craft had steamed for Memphis; Fort Pillow was cut off and would be evacuated any day now. The *Lancaster* and the *Switzerland* came churning in. The towboat rams were somewhere behind with the coal barges.

Haikes, puffing at his pipe, heard Colonel Ellet's shrill exchange with the gunboat commander alongside.

"I have an independent command. I'll not stay here to be attacked at moorings! My boats are wooden rams, without a defensive gun. By Jupiter, I'll run the fort batteries and get to close quarters with those boats below!"

"You don't know those Rebel rams. They come on in spite of hell," was the reply. "I can't risk these gunboats until your whole fleet is here."

"I know my own boats, sir, and my own men. I'll match steamboat with steamboat. The rebels aren't the only ones in the ramming business!"

IN the June night, gunboats and rams dropped down the river. The transports evacuating Fort Pillow had disappeared around a bend; the deserted fort was silent, dark. Forty miles to Memphis and the enemy fleet!

A dark night and misty. The column crept on at half speed, with lights shrouded.

The gunboat commander seemed to think that the enemy could be surprised at moorings, but Haikes laughed grimly at such nonsense. Not with George Montgomery on watch! A pilot who could not see his river in the night, reading the hushed sounds of current and shoreline, was no pilot. Surprise Montgomery? Not a chance.

The pilot house was high and lonely. Haikes gloried in pitting himself against the current and the cranky *Queen;* she was inclined to yaw like a toad in a hailstorm, but he coaxed her, mastered her.

Robert was having his own troubles with the *Monarch.* For tonight and tomorrow the old *Queen* was his, he reflected, and for the last time. Ram or be rammed, ram and be rammed, wreck her, sink her—crash!

Near midnight they tied up to the anchored gunboats, two miles short of Memphis.

Half past four, and dawn. The sky was brightening, but a white fog lay thick and damp upon the yellow river, veiling the Arkansas shore, dimming the bluff line of the Tennessee shore. The order came to cast off.

Haikes sent the *Queen* ahead on a slow bell. From the pilot house, he could see the low shapes of gunboats in line to port and starboard, could see the spectral shape of the *Monarch* on his starboard beam, the *Lancaster* and *Switzerland* well astern.

The flag on the jack staff drooped with the mist; forward of the tall smoking stacks, between the bell and the jack, Colonel Ellet stood erect, a gamecock alert for battle. He held sword in one hand, speaking trumpet in the other. A fool place! The first shock from bows on would pitch him overboard.

The *Queen* yawed, as an eddy clutched her unwieldy prow. The colonel faced about.

"Straight down the river!" he barked. "Straight, I say!"

"I'm at this wheel," rasped Haikes, all on edge. "You mind your business and I'll mind mine!"

The fog on the river began to settle, disclosing the curve of the Tennessee shore; there grew the Chickasaw Bluffs of Memphis, sprinkled with gables and spires and roof-tops, all sharpened by the sunrise glow.

Five o'clock. The sun was flooding the blue. The fog went rolling in ragged billows before the morning breeze, and here they came sallying out of Memphis—the Confederate craft, not waiting at bay but forging forth to the attack. The upper works of river packets swam upon the fog, moving islands overhung by volcanic plumes of black smoke. The low gunboats were dimmed shapes rifting the swirl of mist.

Haikes caught, to starboard and port, the piping of bosuns' whistles from the Union gunboats, the voices of officers. From his own boat the excited accents of the infantry lieutenant came rocketing up to the pilot house, steadying the sharpshooters behind the forecastle bulkhead and along the bulwarks.

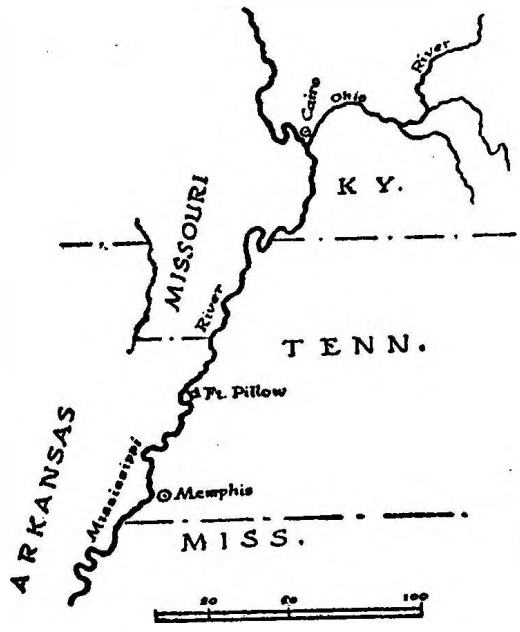
He glanced about. The gunboats were a bit behind. The sidewheel *Lancaster* and the sternwheel *Switzerland* were a third of a mile astern, wallowing as though in trouble. At the forefront were only the *Queen* and the *Monarch;* the latter was slightly out of line, off his starboard quarter.

One hand and a foot guarding the spokes of the big wheel, he seized the spyglass from its hooks and trained it. To his eye sprang the upper works of the steamboats surging through the thinned mist; the names on the panels beneath the house ledges jutted as though embossed.

On the right of the line was the *Beauregard*—a side-wheeler, by the upcurving wheel boxes. She was a big packet, unknown to him, probably renamed for this work. Another side-wheeler sprang into sight—the *General Price.* Haikes frowned as the mist blotted her briefly; his glass swept on. The steamboats *Jeff Thompson, General Lovel,* and others, with gunboats; two lines breasting in, determined, bulking more largely as they shortened the distance to the channel.

He leveled again on the *Price* and *Beauregard.* An interval was between them, a wide and promising interval. He laughed harshly. Montgomery was making it easy for him, eh? No doubt, Montgomery knew by spies who were aboard here—knew more than the colonel in command! Take the *Queen* through, apparently miss his mark, and hand her over, eh? Damn Montgomery! Little he knew of the pride of a pilot!

He returned his gaze to the *Price,* frowning and puzzled. A quick, stabbing breath escaped him. By heavens, the old *General Scott!* The very ship he had been broken for piling up! The crown of her stacks, the large Anchor Line emblem still hanging between those high iron cylinders, the fancy work of her house, the gilt 'S' of the weather-vane atop her jack, where the Confederate flag fluttered out—the old *Scott* herself, rebuilt and renamed, but the same!



He focused upon the pilot house, to pick out the figure at the helm. Suddenly he dropped the glass and braced to his own wheel, as smoke gushed from a gunboat. A thunderclap jarred the air and a shell whined over the fleet. Colonel Ellet, on the hurricane deck forward, lowered his glass, pivoted, and flourished his sword.

"Full speed ahead!" shrilled his voice. "Take the *Beauregard*, ram her! *Monarch* ahoy! Alf!" This to his brother. "Straight ahead and take the *Price!*"

The bellow of cannon shut off his words. Haikes yanked the full-speed bell. The escape pipes belched, the *Queen* trembled to the paddle-thresh, gathered new way. Cinders from the blackly streaming stacks volleyed against the pilot-house. Haikes drove her into the veiling powder smoke. He held the ball of her jack, with the flag flattened out by the breeze, upon the interval between the two opposing packets.

She fought him. Frightened, was she? Dreaded the crash, had no stomach for it; a ship knows, sometimes. He held her to it grimly. Brave men, down there in the engine-room, trusting to him. The infantry sharpshooters—poor devils, waiting for the bows to be stove and the timbers to splinter, tearing flesh from bones! Ellet was facing forward, tense, unfearing, gripping his foolish sword.

The smoke rolled aside. Here they came, parting smoke and water with their rush; *Beauregard* to left, the *Price* to right, clearly revealed. Bulwarked with cotton bales, a brass field piece in the bows of each craft, paddle wheels churning, stems and sides in a slather of spray, pilots aloft bent to the spokes and peering through the windows. That interval—they were leaving it for him! Once he was well into it, both boats would converge on the *Monarch* and smash her.

All in a moment, now. Time was short, space lessened. The racing *Queen* bore on with the current swifter than the pair heading upstream could cleave it. Haikes gripped the *Price* with his gaze. Yes, she was the old *Scott*, for sure. No need of a glass now. Pilot house and pilot's bearded shaggy face under the visored cap shot forward into view like a picture in a stereoscope.

Hughes—Jack Hughes—there at the wheel of the *Price!*

The *Beauregard* was leading her consort. The *Queen*, in a trembling shudder of power, was ahead of the *Monarch*. From the corner of his eye, Haikes discerned the speed of each craft, the intersection of invisible lines; as he gripped the spokes, he knew by instinct what must happen, what could not be avoided. The wheel spun, all his weight suddenly upon it.

Suddenly and swiftly, disregarding the frantic yelp from Ellet, the *Queen* swerved away from the *Beauregard*, cut across the bows of the *Monarch*. Haikes jerked the bell for more speed. His jackstaff ball held for the jack of the *Price*, lined it like a rifle sight, so that the staff cut the face of Hughes at the wheel ahead.

"Ram him, damn him!" The yell burst from Haikes. "You, Hughes, Jack Hughes! Come on, blast you, come on!"

Guns were thundering, carbines and rifles banging away. Hughes must have seen the lean, blazing-eyed face heading for him. Was he game to hold on, take it bows for bows and crash to hell? A hundred yards, seventy-five, fifty—by the Eternal! The *Price* fell off, veered. Hughes, with guilt on his soul—

Twenty yards. A picture of Hughes with an astonished squint, mouth agape, hands twirling the spokes desperately, and in vain! The *Queen's* jackstaff blotted out the 'P' of the "Price" on the paddle-wheel box. A wild, harsh laugh burst from Haikes. Ram him, damn him—no escape now!

Then in, with a heave and a crash that echoed from shore to shore.

PLASTERED against the wheel by the shock, Haikes missed nothing. The stacks wavered but held. Ellet was down on his knees. Men were shouting, but the nose of the *Queen* was buried deep into the splintered wheelbox of the *Price*. The *Price* was heaved up, careening. Her stacks came down with another terrific crash. Hughes barely escaped as he scrambled clear of the pilot-house.

Haikes gave the backing bell. The *Queen* was wedged, hanging like a bulldog, dragging the *Price* with her as she backed. They swung in an arc—then she tore free.

All was smoke and bedlam. Surprised by the sudden move of Haikes, but obeying the orders given him, Bill Roberts had brought the *Monarch* straight on.

The *Beauregard*, over-reaching, had whirled with one engine reversed and wheel hard down; at full speed again, she was lining for the *Monarch*. She was fast, too fast! She would get the *Monarch* broadside before Roberts could head about and straighten out.

No, by God! Back the *Queen* and keep a-backing—stave her in, wreck her! The old girl would prefer it, and would die with honors. She was between the *Beauregard* and the *Monarch* now. Haikes heard bullets whistling and pelting around him as he gripped the spokes for that final spin and twirl.

The *Beauregard* roared in on vengeance bent, bow gun vomiting a shell, rifles spitting and crackling. The shell landed—*wham!* Ellet was down, with a bullet through one leg. The *Queen*, her bow buckled awry, slewed from her rudders; Haikes, with a yell, leaned on his wheel with every ounce of strength. The *Beauregard* loomed to port, shutting out the sky. The gaunt face of her pilot grinned over the wheel-spokes as he spat out his cigar and braced himself for the shock. God help the maindeck crews!

The *Beauregard*, with iron-plated ram jutting, struck.

The old *Queen* took it, but not with her full broadside. Haikes, with his last work at the huge wheel, evaded that. She reeled as beak and bow ripped and ground along her guards, crushing wheel box and hull and flinging her to starboard. The *Beauregard* sheared on, reeling.

The *Queen* swung back to level. Haikes picked himself up, yelled defiantly, and jerked the bell to stop the engines; the one wheel remaining was thrashing wildly. The *Beauregard* had forged into the clear, trying frantically to change course. Too late! Roberts had swung the *Monarch*. He was boiling in to ram; he was not to be dodged. By the Lord—he was into her! He caught her just forward of her wheel housing, full slap!

Haikes shifted gaze to the *Price*. She was low in the water, going under. Who was at the wheel of the *Scott* this time, Jack Hughes? Claw off from that charge if you can!

The *Beauregard* was sinking from her bows, figures leaping over, Roberts backing away and clear of her. The *Queen*, drifting in the current, was wafted about while gunfire billowed. Only a bloody spot indicated the post of Ellet, up forward. Haikes looked at the *Monarch*. A wild, instinctive yell burst from him.

"Bill! Look out!"

The *Monarch* was backing in a circle, clear of the *Beauregard;* but the *Lovell* and the *Jeff Thompson* were racing for her, on port and starboard, to nip her between them—racing straight for her from either side!

Roberts was jerking the bell-cord. Stop—go ahead—full speed ahead! The paddle-wheels of the *Monarch* churned the water to froth. The *Monarch* almost reared up as she fought for way. She moved, took speed, moved faster and faster. Could she do it? She did, by a hair. A wild yell and another burst from Haikes as he saw her clear of that nar-

rowing gap. The *Lovell* grazed her very stern. Then, bows on, the *Lovell* and the *Thompson* rammed each other.

A gunboat shell burst in the bowels of the *Lovell*. Her boiler let go with a tremendous concussion.

The Memphis levee was dense with watching thousands; the rooftops were serried with spectators. At last the tardy *Lancaster* and the *Switzerland* were pulling in, but the enemy signaled quits. A white flag blew on the *Lovell*. The *Thompson* was creeping for shore. The *Price* and *Beauregard* showed only a trace of stacks or upper works. Crippled gunboats and rams made for safety.

Haikes rang the engine-room. The men were still on duty. With her one wheel at slow speed and her rudders hard over, the *Queen* fluttered like a winged duck for the nearest shoals. She was listing heavily.

With a final creak of shattered timbers, with a groan and a lurch, the old *Queen* heaved herself aground and halted. The *Monarch* came wobbling in with crooked beak, and hung poised. Haikes was thinking now of Washington, of his appeal pigeonholed there, of what all this day's work might mean in his future. Then he found Bill Roberts hailing him from the other pilot house, hanging out, grinning at him.

"Hey, there! Need any help?"

"Hell, no!" rejoined Haikes joyously. Roberts grinned again.

"Tit for tat, ram for ram! You missed orders, durn you! I was to take the *Price!*"

"Orders be h a n g e d!" responded Haikes. "You saw what pilot she had, didn't you?"

Roberts uttered a delighted yelp. "You bet. Ram him, damn him—and you done it. Hurray!"

He waved his hand and the *Monarch* sheered off. Haikes grunted.

"Guess I'd better go tell Colonel Ellet the truth, huh? Ram him, damn him! Makes a pretty good motto. . . ."

"My faith in human nature," said Bulkhead Bean, "is badly shaken."

THE FORTUNES OF WAR

By ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN

WHEN the current government of the somewhat unstable republic of Marindella approached Munitions, Inc. regarding a matter of war supplies, Munitions, Inc. took several businesslike steps. They ascertained first that a very healthy revolutionary movement was in progress in Marindella, and so demanded, and received, payment in advance and in gold.

Then they rounded up five thousand rifles, ten field guns, fifty machine guns (mostly old stock), some two million rounds of ammunition, over a thousand tons of dynamite and other high explosives, several boxes of hand grenades, sundry poison gas shells, and along with other such material, loaded the lot on board the *Ivanhoe*, which on behalf of the republic of Marindella they had bought off a scrap heap and registered under the Marindella flag.

That done, they crossed their fingers, looked around for someone crazy enough to take the ship to sea, and finally alighted upon Captain Bean.

"It's like this," said Munitions, Inc. "The officials at Bello Port will pay you a bonus of a thousand dollars as soon as you make delivery of ship and cargo. But we want no funny business."

Munitions, Inc. coughed as Captain Bean looked hurt. "With your reputation the warning seems necessary. According to our records you are blacklisted by all shipping firms and most underwriters, and there appear to have been some very peculiar episodes in your career. However, since no underwriters are concerned in this, there's no argument. We expect you to do your best to deliver the *Ivanhoe*, and possibly later we may find you other employment. Do we make ourselves clear?"

Captain Bean heaved ponderously from the office chair, rubbed his bulbous nose and tucked his stomach back inside his belt.

"Very clear, gentlemen," he said heartily. "But you don't need to worry. Bulkhead Bean always delivers."

"We'll let that pass," said Munitions, Inc. dryly. "Here's an envelope containing your crew's double pay in cash. You can distribute it when you see fit. And—oh, yes. There will be a Senor Manuel sailing with you; probably he's on board now. He is the representative of Marindella, and an expert on explosives. He will take charge as soon as you arrive and will arrange your transportation home."

That accomplished, Munitions, Inc. wiped the sweat from its forehead and turned thankfully to other business, while Captain Bean went down to the waterfront, took a launch out to the *Ivanhoe* (safely anchored away from all decent ships and people), the red danger flag whipping at her halliards, and waddled to his cabin on the lower bridge.

"That outfit seems to think we're a bunch of crooks, Jed," he complained to his mate, who was sprawled on the settee. "Warning me of this and that."

"Maybe they've been hearing things," suggested the mate sourly. He was a tall, gaunt man, very solemn, and surprisingly enough Captain Bean's brother.

"Anyway, it's a job," said Captain Bean amiably. "A thousand dollar bonus, Jed, and I got the double pay in advance."

He poured himself half a tumbler of whiskey and took it without flinching. Jed eased over on one side and hit the cuspidor with a stream of tobacco juice.

"It's that last crack which I don't like," he grumbled. "Double pay in advance. I got an idea them Munitions, Inc. sort of meant it nasty like, so we could have a last bust before the end. They not only wash their hands of us, but they dry them as well."

Captain Bean rubbed his many chins and chuckled.

"It ain't that bad, Jed. Of course the *Ivanhoe* leaks all places, and if we get six knots out of her engines we'll be lucky, but so long as we don't run into any rebel gunboats—why, nothing to it. We just ease her into Bello Port and collect."

"What with all that high-power stuff below I feel like I'm walking on hot eggs," the mate complained. He sat up, jerked his uniform cap lower over his eyes and spat again. "Even the deck's so damn rusty you put your foot through it if you step too hard. It's gonna be a funny trip."

"Take a drink," said Captain Bean reasonably, "and be sensible. We needed a job and we've got one."

"Well, what about this Senor Manuel who's tucked himself aboard? Is he coming too?"

"Ah yes," agreed Captain Bean. "I forgot to mention him. He's the expert Marindella's sending along with us, and he's supposed to know all about explosives."

"I hope so," said Jed sourly. "I'm damned if I do." And he went out to attend to the anchor. Captain Bean sighed and took another half tumbler of whiskey. Jed was often a little difficult.

SO the *Ivanhoe* put to sea and rolled heavily across the blue Caribbean, and her crew were very careful not to drop heavy weights, and not to smoke in the wrong places. Not that any particular damage might have been done, but they were haunted by the idea of the cargo underfoot, and also by the manner in which Manuel, the expert, kept sniffing down the holds and then shaking his head and making audible remarks to the effect he hoped the cargo had been properly stowed.

"This stuff, she's touchy sometimes,"

he declared fretfully. "A case left loose . . . and we roll so . . . and maybe something hits something and we go up . . . poof! I should have attended to the loading myself."

"Then why in hell didn't you?" Jed demanded. "You're making me more nervous than I already am." Manuel shrugged and spread his hands.

"I was so busy," he explained. "A so beautiful senorita!"

"What sort of an expert is that?" Jed demanded of Captain Bean some time later. "Chasing around with girls instead of minding his job. If the stuff isn't properly stowed we probably *will* all go poof!"

Captain Bean blew his nose in an enormous red handkerchief and said mildly, "I wouldn't worry about it. If she goes, she goes, and we'll never even know it."

"Anyway," said Jed, "I don't like that guy."

Captain Bean very amiably let the matter pass, but was inclined to agree that he did not care for Manuel either. He was a young, swarthy man, with annoyingly precise black hair and a wisp of black mustache. He was apparently some relation of Marindella's current president, and had an excellent opinion of himself. None of which would have disturbed the bland calmness of Captain Bean, save for the fact Manuel had introduced him to a new dice game called Biddoo, and had deftly taken fifty dollars from him. And when Captain Bean lost money it was a matter of major importance.

"The way he rolled those dice!" he informed Jed. And he added very seriously, "I don't think that man is on the level."

Which, coming from Captain Bean, was somewhat impressive. For thirty-odd years Captain Bean had bluffed, cajoled and swindled his way through life. He had done everything from running guns to smuggling aliens, and the only reason he was not in jail for barratry, sinking a ship for the insurance, was because he had never been caught.

His very nickname, Bulkhead Bean, which was faintly and not unaffectionately odorous from Shanghai to Cape Town, had been given him from his habit of blaming faulty bulkheads for his several mysterious wrecks and occasional delivery of spoiled cargo which was suspiciously unlike what he had left port with. If he had sold the sound cargo en route and loaded cheap substitutes, who could prove it?

As a matter of fact, no one ever had, but it was, as Munitions, Inc. had ventured to hint, a quite remarkable fact that the captain was blacklisted through all the shipping lines and that marine underwriters invariably winced when his name was mentioned.

Which, of course, eminently fitted him for the command of the *Ivanhoe* upon this particular voyage, which few other seamen would have cared to undertake. But the lack of ethics in others always made him very sad, particularly when he was the victim.

"No," he repeated. "I don't think Manuel is on the level."

"Well," said Jed, gnawing a fresh chew from a battered plug, "we'd better teach him poker. And use our own deck."

"That," Captain Bean had agreed heartily, "has all been arranged. We take the young gentleman tonight. . . . But that can wait. I've been thinking, Jed. We've got a nice thing here."

He eased his brother into the *Ivanhoe's* chart-room, doubled his own bulk over the chart table and picked up a pencil.

"Look," he said mysteriously, jabbing down on the chart. "Here's Barranola."

Jed stuck his hands in his hip pockets and spat into the chart-room sandbox.

"Barranola," he agreed sourly. "It's been there three hundred years. So what?"

Captain Bean flourished his red handkerchief and blew his nose.

"Ain't you got no imagination, Jed? We could find a faulty bulkhead, or leaky tanks, or have engine trouble, and run into Barranola."

"And then what?" Jed demanded.

"I used to know a man in Barranola," explained Captain Bean cheerfully, "who peddles guns up-country." Jed spat in the sandbox again and looked sour.

"I thought this was going to be a straight deal. Bello Port and collect. And then line up for some more of these munitions jobs."

Captain Bean looked hurt.

"Of course, of course," he said reproachfully. "But I was just thinking. We might get a good price for the rifles."

"Listen," said Jed wearily. "Do you figure any port's going to let us in with the load we're carrying? Use your head. Everyone knows by this time we sailed for Bello Port with a floating bomb. What d'you think wireless is for?"

"That," agreed Captain Bean amiably, "is what I've just found out." He fished a flimsy from his pocket and handed it to Jed. "Why not Barranola? The second mate (He was also wireless operator on the *Ivanhoe*, picked that up this morning. The rebels've won, and Bello Port's in their hands. And where does that leave us?"

JED almost swallowed his quid, choked and handed the wireless back.

"You'd better call Munitions, Inc. and ask them," he said grimly. "If we run into Bello Port we'll be confiscated."

"Exactly," agreed Captain Bean. He blew his nose again and waved his red handkerchief. "And they'll probably stick us against a wall. We're a government boat, and now there ain't no government."

"You'd better tell Manuel."

"Not yet," said Captain Bean cautiously. "We'll figger out about ourselves first. There must be a lot of guys who want to start a war and we've got the goods. We can't deliver to the owners, for there ain't no owners now, so it looks like a very nice thing, me being skipper and in charge." He rubbed his hands together and chuckled. "I wonder what price dynamite's fetching these days," he murmured.

"Better wireless Munitions, Inc. before you go off half-cocked," Jed insisted. "We don't want to get into any international mix-up."

Captain Bean frowned and fretted and complained, but finally sent a wireless back, and Munitions, Inc. replied in a hurry.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS OF OURS. SHIP AND CARGO BELONG REPUBLIC OF MARINDELLA GOVERNMENT. USE YOUR OWN JUDGMENT. SUGGEST CONSULT MANUEL.

"To hell with Manuel," said Captain Bean heartily. "I ain't got no owners and I'm sea-loose with a fortune. All we got to do now is find a good war. Let's try Barranola first."

"Barranola?" inquired Manuel when he heard. "You said Barranola, yes?" He was quite mystified. "But we do not go that way."

"Listen," said Captain Bean cheerfully, taking his arm. "Come below and take a drink, a big drink. I've got something to tell you."

"The rebels won," said Jed solemnly, "In Bello Port."

"Won?" said Manuel, dazed. "Are you sure?" Captain Bean handed him the wireless, and his swarthy face shone. "Now all is so simple," he exploded. "Magnificent!"

"Eh?" said Captain Bean. "Simple?"

Manuel laughed and spread his hands.

"Of course," he said impatiently. "You did not think I would turn all this stuff over to the so stupid government? No! We would be met at sea by gunboats,

and all would go for the revolution."

"Hold on a minute," Jed put in. "I thought the president was your uncle or something."

"Poof!" said Manuel. "My uncle! What is that! I am of the revolution."

"And just how did you figger the gunboats would meet us at sea?" demanded Captain Bean, growing a little purple. Manuel snapped his fingers.

"So easy. I read your course. I give the second mate a present to send a friend of mine a message in Bello Port. And then come the gunboats. So easy."

"You mean," said Captain Bean incredulously, "you were going to turn us over?"

"Of a certainty," agreed the jubilant Manuel. "But now there is no need. We are all friends. We sail to Bello Port and are heroes. For the revolution."

Captain Bean looked at Jed and shook his head. Then he blew his nose in his red handkerchief and shook his head again. He looked very distressed.

"He was going to double-cross his own crowd," he said sorrowfully. "Can you imagine that, Jed? He was buying all this stuff with government money and then going to double-cross his own crowd." Jed spat over the rail and stuck his hands in his hip pockets.

"I never thought," he admitted, "that a man could sink that low."

"Bos'n," called Captain Bean sadly. "Put Senor Manuel in the spare cabin aft—the one that smells—and lock him in."

"Aye, aye, sir," agreed the bos'n. He took Manuel by one arm and led him away, expostulating and quite bewildered. Jed spat across the rail again.

"It looks like Barranola," he said absently.

"Of course," agreed Captain Bean. "My friend there can probably use the rifles and such. We must sell them on behalf of the deposed government of Marindella. And possibly," he coughed, "remit to it." He coughed again, and added, "If we can find it."

NOW all this might have been well, save that Captain Bean had overlooked one thing. Sending wires at sea, unless it be in code, is somewhat like shouting private information down a crowded street. Half a dozen operators, sitting by their instruments on half a dozen ships, picked up the *Ivanhoe's* message to Munitions, Inc., and also picked up the report from Bello Port that it had fallen. In their turn the half a dozen operators, gossiping back and forth across the world, as operators will, passed the information on.

And the tale grew. By the time the latest Cunarder out of Liverpool had picked it up the *Ivanhoe* had become a pirate ship, savagely roving the seas and a menace to all. Papers in Caribbean ports came out with startled headlines: DEATH SHIP LOOSE! . . . or VESSEL LADEN WITH HIGH EXPLOSIVES AND POISON GAS SEEKING REFUGE! . . . or . . . DEATH SHIP HEADING FOR BARRANOLA!

The latter information escaped when Captain Bean got in touch with his friend at Barranola. A minor clerk talked too much and as a consequence the populace panicked. A gray-painted cutter met the *Ivanhoe* well outside the port and a nervous officer yelled through a megaphone, his language much to the point and sprinkled with purple oaths. Barranola, in short, did not want any part of the *Ivanhoe*. She was forbidden to enter with her dangerous cargo, and if she persisted she would be shelled at long range.

"They can't do that to me!" exploded Captain Bean. "I've got to enter for repairs. My bulkheads are strained and I'm leaking. . . ."

"Well, they're doing it," said Jed gloomily. "So you might as well shut up. They don't want us in Barranola."

"To hell with them!" snapped Captain Bean. He thumbed his nose at the cutter and went into the chart-room.

"What about Matalano?" he demand-

ed, pawing over a chart. "They're always blowing off steam down there. Let's make it Matalano."

"I've a hunch," drawled Jed as he laid off the course, "we're up against something funny. No one's going to want us."

"I'm carrying a valuable cargo," snorted Captain Bean. "And I aim to cash in on it . . . for the Marindella government, of course." He uncorked the emergency bottle of whiskey which he kept in the chart table drawer and he gurgled for a while. "Well, let's get to Matalano."

Two sleek destroyers which had been patrolling the coast in case the menace appeared eased alongside early the next dawn, and a polite young lieutenant boarded them.

"We trust you are not bound for Matalano," he said regretfully. "It is forbidden. Can I see your manifest?"

"I'm a citizen," exploded Captain Bean, "of—"

"Marindella," purred the lieutenant, pointing to the republic's flag flying aft. "Which government does not exist any longer." Captain Bean blew his nose.

"International law," he said, very dignified. "I demand—" And Jed said wearily, "Why start that? We got ourselves under a flag no one gives a damn about and there you are."

The lieutenant looked over the *Ivanhoe's* manifest and went a little pale.

"If you take my advice," he said hurriedly, climbing back over the rail, "you'll throw all that stuff overside. You've enough on board to blow any city off the map, if you get close enough."

"Listen," said Captain Bean, and he patted the officer's shoulder in fatherly fashion. "I'm willing to sell cheap."

"We're not interested," said the lieutenant, dropping to his boat. "And I warn you against entering the territorial waters." After which the two sleek destroyers hung on the *Ivanhoe's* flanks until she was well to sea again. Captain Bean groaned.

"And I can remember the time when a cargo like this would have meant fat pickings from Vera Cruz to Rio. Let's try Nombre De Santa Juliane."

But that port wanted no part of the *Ivanhoe* either. She was a floating arsenal, and in charge of the infamous Bulkhead Bean, and any little spark might send her in roaring chaos towards the sky. It was a slack period for the newspapers and they made the most of the story. The *Ivanhoe* was solemnly warned by wireless that if she so much as showed her nose in Nombre De Santa Juliane the forts would open fire.

So with an indignant grunt Captain Bean doubled back and approached Porto Castra. But Porto Castra sent out a squadron of sea-planes as soon as the rusty, high-sided tramp was sighted—her description was common property by now—and a small bomb was dropped into the sea off her starboard side. The polite warning impressed Captain Bean very much, and he headed the *Ivanhoe* for Kangdon, the capital of Harve Island, which belonged to the English and might be expected to be reasonable. But the English were more unreasonable than anyone. A gunboat came out and a sarcastic young officer clawed his way up the tramp's pilot ladder.

"Just what the hell do you think you're doing?" he demanded. "Barging all over the place with a cargo like this? I understand you cleared for Bello Port. Well, go there. Let the rebels have the junk or else pitch it away. You're a damned danger to navigation with a crate like this." Captain Bean looked hurt.

"I demand safety of the port," he said. "My bulkheads are strained, I'm leaking, and my engines are liable to fail any moment."

"Well, it's just too damn bad," said the officer. "My orders are that if you wish I shall take off your crew and sink the ship. And even if you don't wish I'll do it if you hold bearings for Kangdon." Captain Bean shook his head.

"Ain't there some place there's a war?" he demanded. "What's come over the Caribbean?"

"You might try Europe," said the officer irritably. "Or stick your nose in Marindella. They're still arguing there and that's where you belong anyway." The officer looked at Jed. "But if you take my advice you'll just dump the cargo. The high explosive, at least. You probably haven't got it stowed properly anyway, from the look of you, and the way the crate rolls—" He turned his palms up in an expressive gesture.

Jed spat over the rail.

"You're a lot of help," he said gloomily, and Captain Bean added with a shudder, "I couldn't throw away all that money." The officer shrugged, "Well, keep away from Kangdon, that's all, and that's an order."

"Well," said Jed reasonably as the officer departed, "it looks like we'll have to unload after all. We only had four weeks' supplies when we sailed and we've been banging around for more than three now. It's either get in a port or starve to death. And if we can't get in the way we are we'll have to fix it so's we can. Dump the dangerous stuff, anyway. Then maybe we can get the ship someplace and sell her for scrap."

Captain Bean took a long drink and considered.

"All right," he said at last, resigned. "How do you dump high explosive? I don't know anything about it. You try it."

"Not me," said Jed hastily. "I'm no expert. Better try Manuel."

"That might be an idea," said Captain Bean hopefully. "If you can talk him over."

"That might take time," Jed admitted, "after us throwing him in the brig because he was double-crossing the republic. How about running into Bello Port after all? Manuel's pals are on top now, and he might not be too sore."

Captain Bean rubbed his chins.

"He might even dig up my thousand dollar bonus from somewhere," he said with optimism. "But on the other hand, once he's safe with his pals he might get real nasty."

"Well, it's all I can think of," Jed said. "We're not gettin' any place wandering around like this. I guess I'll go talk to Manuel."

Captain Bean up-tilted the whiskey bottle again and brightened.

"Sure, go ahead, Jed. And see if he feels like poker. This time we'll take him."

TWO hours later Jed climbed to the upper bridge, pushed open the chart-room door and surprised Captain Bean surveying the Brazilian coast. Jed grunted and spat.

"Not thinking of trying the Argentine too, were you?" he said unpleasantly. "Stick those charts away and come on down. Manuel's decided to forgive everyone if we make Bello Port and deliver the goods."

"And my bonus?" demanded Captain Bean. "Will he guarantee that?"

"I've got the best part of a bottle of brandy inside him," said Jed sourly, "and right now he'll guarantee anything. Of course," he added warily, "once he gets us there he's got us, and maybe he'll back down. And then maybe not. It's better than dumping, anyway."

"Did you ask him about handling the high explosives, and getting them out of the ship? You know, I'm sure I could sell the rifles in Haiti."

"He wouldn't listen to ditching the stuff," Jed scowled. "He wanted it all for the revolution. So come on down. We're all friends and it's all fixed. We go to Bello Port."

"I am a gentleman," said Manuel, weaving, as Captain Bean offered his best cigars. "You have insulted me, no? But I understand it was your sense of duty." He hiccoughed and bowed, and Captain Bean eased him to a chair.

"That was just it," he said heartily.

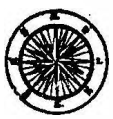
"I considered my cargo consigned to the Marindella government, but since that is no more, why—poof!"

"We are all gentlemen together," declared Manuel, and Captain Bean reached in his pocket for his cards.

"Certainly, certainly," he agreed. "Now if you'll ring for the steward, Jed, and get another bottle of brandy, maybe we can interest Senor Manuel in a little poker."

Manuel tried to get up to bow but decided the effort was not worth it.

"I shall be delighted," he said. "Delighted." And Captain Bean smiled, and patted his stomach. He was going to be delighted too.



THE *Ivanhoe* ploughed up to Bello Port some days later, through an ugly quartering sea that shipped green water aboard every time she dipped, and Manuel, very sober and very voluble, had practically taken charge. He gave crisp orders as to nets and slings for the unloading, strutted on the bridge and generally made himself a nuisance. Jed grumbled but suffered philosophically. Captain Bean consoled himself with numerous bottles and skilfully maneuvered Manuel into further poker games which were all very profitable. Manuel did not seem to mind. He smiled graciously and paid, and complimented the captain on his luck. Which somewhat worried Captain Bean.

"He's taking the harpoons too easy," he complained. "As if he'd got something up his sleeve."

Manuel had. As the *Ivanhoe* clanked her rusty way into Bello Port he appeared on the bridge in a magnificent uniform, all but smothered with gold braid and sundry medals. Jed spat and looked interested.

"Nice," he agreed. "Just like a drum major." Manuel stroked his wisp of a mustache and smiled thinly.

"You are speaking to Captain Jose Maria Esteban de Zamora Manuel, of the Marindella Civic Guard, who will command the city company when the new administration is established. And now I must ask you to hand over your personal guns and any other weapons. You will consider yourself under arrest until my good friend General Espada decides what must be done."

Jed looked at Captain Bean, and Captain Bean blew his nose in his red handkerchief.

"So you're double-crossing us," he said sadly, "after all your promises. My faith in human nature," Captain Bean blew his nose again, "is badly shaken."

The *Ivanhoe's* anchor went down with a roar, and the forts each side of the harbor fired complimentary salutes, having been informed by wireless of Captain Jose Maria Esteban de Zamora Manuel's great achievement in taking the ship single-handed and bringing her in for the Cause.

"It is the fortune of war," said Manuel graciously. "Although my General Espada may be annoyed since we have been so delayed and the early plans were disrupted. You will probably not be given more than five years in the jungle convict camps."

Captain Bean's eyes bulged and his chins shook. He had once had an experience in a convict road camp in the jungle, and it had been unpleasant. He felt annoyed.

"Also, before my friends come on board," said Manuel smoothly, "you will be so good as to return the money you so cleverly won from me at your poker. I do not think the games were honest."

"I resent that," said Captain Bean with dignity, then let out a gasp as Manuel poked him hard in the stomach with a gun muzzle and deftly lifted his wallet from his hip.

"This is also the fortune of war," said Manuel regretfully. "And now comes my General Espada."

A big launch swerved alongside and after sundry important-looking officers

had climbed aboard the *Ivanhoe* there came a white-mustached, pompous little man with a stomach almost as large as Captain Bean's and a nose that was, if anything, slightly redder. He embraced Manuel. Manuel embraced him. And there were torrents of speech and many gesticulations. And finally the general shook his head.

"I should demand a firing squad," he stated regretfully. "But since you say these are your friends we might consider the jungle camp. Poof! We must teach even foreigners to respect the sovereign people of Marindella, for whom you, my dear Manuel, have set a so magnificent example."

"Say, listen here," said Captain Bean. "Is all this serious?"

"The new regime is always serious," said General Espada, bowing. He looked around and wet his lips. "Perhaps there may be a little refreshment to celebrate, eh Manuel? You are sure," he shrugged uneasily, "there is no danger? All this explosive—"

"The danger is past. I have overcome it," Manuel declared with a flourish. "Captain Bean, we will drink in your room. Your so good brandy. You are permitted to join us while General Espada inspects your papers and hears my report.

"That's damn kind of General Espada," grunted Captain Bean, and reached a hamlike hand for Jed's shoulder.

"Listen," he muttered. "And think fast. I ain't letting nothing like this get by." Jed shifted his quid across his mouth and spat, carefully hitting the shiny back of General Espada's military boots as the little man moved ahead. Fortunately no one noticed.

"What the hell can we do?" said Jed gloomily. "The damn ship's lousy with soldiers."

"You listen and shut up," breathed Captain Bean. "I ain't serving no time in jungle road camps." And then he whispered into Jed's ear. Jed grunted, said somewhat absently, "Well, it's your funeral," and eased himself down to the main deck. Captain Bean waddled into his room and produced his best cigars. The steward brought a case of brandy and the party livened up.

"We must consider," said General Espada after his second glass, "the unloading of the so welcome munitions. The dogs who oppose me are still lurking in the hills in force, but with these new guns I shall defeat them utterly." He snapped his fingers. "Poof! Wipe them from the face of our fair republic."

"I," said Manuel, clicking his heels and bowing, "Captain Jose Maria Esteban de Zamora Manuel, will make myself responsible for everything, my general."

Captain Bean blew his nose and waved his red handkerchief.

"You certainly feel good," he grunted mildly, and at that moment bedlam broke loose on the *Ivanhoe's* decks. Men shouted, some screamed, and then Jed eased to the cabin door.

"She's afire," he said sourly. "Fore and aft. Some damn fool's started something."

"Lower the boats!" choked Captain Bean. "We've got to get ashore! She's liable to go up!"

General Espada dropped his glass and came out of his chair with an agility remarkable considering his size.

"Fire!" he croaked.

"Fire!" screamed Manuel.

General Espada made a break for the door, followed by his staff. Manuel clawed after him, but Captain Bean stuck out a foot and tripped him neatly. That done, he bent over with a grunt, deftly recovered his confiscated wallet, and then thoughtfully removed Manuel's too.

Manuel was paying no attention. He was up and out of the door like a rabbit. And Jed and Captain Bean had the cabin to themselves.

"Well," said Captain Bean amiably, "let's go see."

THEY went out on the lower bridge and saw chaos. Thick, greasy smoke was rising from mysterious spots all along the *Ivanhoe's* decks. The *Ivanhoe's* crew was yelling "Fire!" at the top of its lungs and running around with hoses, while innumerable officers and soldiers were diving over the rail and into the waiting boats and launches. They waited for no one, but cast off and headed frantically for the shore. In less than five minutes there was not a citizen of Marindella on board. Captain Bean uptilted a bottle of brandy and took a satisfying drink.

"Get the anchor up, Jed. And tell the chief engineer we need real steam, and to hell with his rusty boilers. No one's going to double-cross me into a jungle road camp. And what about my thousand dollars bonus? We'll go to sea and dump the dangerous stuff whether we know how to do it or not. And I'll sell the rifles and this damned crate if I have to start a war myself." Bulkhead Bean was mad.

The *Ivanhoe's* anchor came up faster than it had ever come before and her whole hull shook as the black gang poured the power into the engines. She backed in the harbor and started to turn, and the frightened young second mate said, "What about the forts? They'll fire on us."

"To hell with the forts!" said Captain Bean. "If they blow us up they'll get the works too."

And he was right. Panic had spread all along the shore as the boats had landed. The death ship was afire! A thousand tons, maybe twenty thousand tons—only God and the newspapers knew—of poison gas and all manner of modern deviltries was to explode at any moment! The soldiers in the forts had left them, running, as soon as they had grasped the situation. If the *Ivanhoe* went up the forts would be leveled like tissue paper. The citizens of Bello Port had grasped the same idea too and were streaming for the hills, mingled with the army which was already in flight.

"See?" said Captain Bean cheerfully. He took another drink. "There ain't a bit of danger."

He must have been slightly foggy in piloting the *Ivanhoe* out of the harbor, for he very neatly ran her onto an ugly shoal in the very mouth, and there she canted and kicked up foul-smelling mud until her engines were stopped, while thick smoke still rose from her decks. Jed came on the bridge and looked disgusted.

"And what now?" he demanded. "We'd better drop the boats and get the hell out of it ourselves."

Captain Bean consulted the brandy bottle and shook his head.

"No," he announced gravely. "We've got the Republic licked. No one's going to bother us—in fact there's no one around."

Jed stuck his hands in his hip pockets and spat.

"You're drunk," he said. And Captain Bean looked hurt. "I may be mellow," he stated, "but I'm never drunk."

"Well," said Jed pessimistically, "it looks like there's a flock of people coming back."

It did. Captain Bean rubbed his chins and had some apprehensions. The last time he had looked at Bello Port he had seen people and soldiers streaking away from it, but now, unless his eyes deceived him, there were a large number of soldiers streaming back. There were rifles barking and a lone, ancient-looking airplane was circling overhead. Jed stared through the glasses and started.

"Say," he said. "That flying orange-box is painted with the republic's flag. I just wonder—" He turned the glasses ashore upon the soldiers streaming into Bello Port. Then he spat aside and looked at his brother.

"I believe," he said, with a faint trace of awe, "you've done it. Them troops heading back, if their flags mean anything, is government ones. They don't

know what the score is, apparently. They just saw the rebels pour out and they just poured in."

"Yes, I figgered on that," agreed Captain Bean. "Anyway, if I didn't I should have." He took another drink.

Jed peered through the glasses again. "Someone's signaling," he said. "Semaphore. It must mean us."

"Well, what is it?" said Captain Bean expansively. "Do they want to surrender?" Jed's lips moved silently as he spelled out the winking flags.

"They want to know," he said at last, "since we're not deserting the ship, if we need any help to control the fire."

"Why don't they come and see?" grumbled Captain Bean. "But flag them back 'no'. It's out."

Half an hour later the same launch which had but recently brought out General Espada slid alongside the *Ivanhoe* again, and a trim young man in immaculate whites came aboard.

"I am the secretary to the President," he informed Captain Bean very politely. "His Excellency would be honored to meet you and to see that all the republic's agreements are honored."

"What about my thousand dollars?" said Captain Bean belligerently.

"That," the other assured him, smiling, "I am sure will even be added to. Your presence in the harbor threw such consternation into the rebels that we were able to retake the town easily. The Republic is your debtor."

"It should be," observed Captain Bean. He suppressed a hiccough. "And don't I get extra for my fire?" The young man stared, and a glimmer of comprehension came.

"Your fire, senor?" He waved a hand around at the still wisping smoke. "Was all this—?"

"What do you think?" snapped Captain Bean. "It did the trick. Cotton waste soaked in oil, stuck in buckets and ventilators and lighted, looks bad. Smoke everyplace and the crew yelling its head off. Why shouldn't Bello Port be uneasy? I'm damned if I ain't worried myself. Douse the smoke, Jed. The party's over."

The secretary to the president of Marindella grew pale with emotion.

"It was, then, what you call the bluff?" he managed. "You are a very great man."

"That," said Captain Bean heartily, "has never been disputed. Jed, tell the steward to shake out my best uniform."

Jed spat thoughtfully and cocked one eye.

"So you're gonna see the president," he observed. "And you leave me here sitting on the dynamite."

Captain Bean took another drink.

"I am going," he said gravely, "to see a thousand dollars. And the dynamite's your job. What in hell do you think mates are for?"

And he went very grandly, if weaving slightly, down to his cabin to change.

The jinx had struck again.

I GOT TO FISH

By ROBERT E. PINKERTON

NILS HAUGEN talked, thought, dreamed fish. Men said he not only knew every fin and scale on a fish but that he had squirmed his way into a fish's mind and understood perfectly what took place there.

Haugens had been fishing since Erik the Red, but none had reaped the sea as did Nils. He welded the bold Norse spirit to the formula of modern industry and caught fish as men make motor cars.

When Nils Haugen fished he fished. He used forty lines, which he called "skates," each 1,560 feet long and carrying 120 hooks. Nils tied eight skates to-

gether to make a "string." Five strings, stretching twelve miles, a fish line long as Manhattan Island with 4,800 baited hooks, all laid out at once—that is how Nils went fishing.

But now those hooks and lines were idle. While other halibut schooners were lashed by salt spray as they drove to the great Alaskan banks for the season's opening, Nils Haugen's vessel lay in tangless lake water. Myths and mysteries that took shape in spindrift when the first sailor ventured from shore, superstitions and fears as old as ships, these defied machine age methods and mocked the fierce Viking strain.

For the *Fairweather* was jinxed. Sound, able, stoutly powered, she had been high boat in her second year. Yet before her last disastrous season had ended, with delays and losses capped by injury of one man and death of another, her crew quit to spread word she was unlucky, a potential killer.

Nils had combed Seattle for two months, and not a fisherman would bring his oilskins aboard. A year earlier all would have welcomed an opportunity to be with a skipper having a touch of fanaticism in his relentless drive. But other skippers drove hard, and in boats uncursed.

The deep slumbering flame of Nils' Norse spirit refused to admit defeat, even when the fleet had sailed. Nils must fish. He had always fished. He kept the *Fairweather* in the shipyard where she had been overhauled, because shifting her to winter moorings meant acknowledgment of the end. For days he sat alone in the after cabin, staring at a big calendar on the bulkhead. The season would open at midnight February fifteenth. Every hook on every schooner would be baited. A thousand men would be ready and eager while Nils sat in his silent ship.

A step sounded on deck one night and a man came down the companionway. Nils nodded. He and Birger Rued had been dory mates before the days of "long liners" and modern efficiency, though never mates ashore. Birger was big, as halibut fishermen must be, but his face was not cast in the rugged Norse mold. His eyes lacked the tranquilly fearless Norse glint. They were sharp and pale and shifted before Nils' stare.

"Couldn't you get in a boat?" Nils asked.

"I'm not afraid of any Jonah," Birger retorted.

"But you heard I'm not fishing."

"I waited too long, thinking you'd go north."

Nils grunted doubt of that. Birger had fished in the *Fairweather* the previous season and Nils was vaguely aware of a smoldering enmity. But the skipper's fervor did not permit heed of petty spite in one whose fishing was without passion.

"All bunk, this jinx business," Birger said. "I heard you was shifting to Salmon Bay tomorrow and thought you'd want a hand with the lines."

He glanced at the calendar and Nils knew what he meant. The next day was not only February thirteenth but Friday.

"No better day to start her rotting!" Nils growled. "Look at her! Cost $40,000. A good season and she'll earn $12,000 for me. Now she's a total loss."

"That's tough," Birger said, and Nils was too bitter to be aware of satisfaction in his voice.

"It don't make sense!" the skipper shouted. "If I'd piled her up on a heap o' bricks it would 'a' been my fault, but I'd have got insurance. Now I can't sell her. Can't get a man to fish in her. She's good as wrecked, and I can't collect a cent."

A weak man's triumph glinted in Birger's pale eyes.

"You got no cause to belly-ache," he said. "Look at Martin Martinsen. His *North Star* burned in Ketchikan today."

Nils Haugen's great frame sprawled in a chair. Like many big men, he seemed

always in repose. Now without apparent movement he was on his feet and grasping Birger by the shoulder.

"A crew on the beach!" he shouted hoarsely. "You want to fish, feller? You've got a family. You're always losing money buying stocks instead o' getting a boat of your own. Get those lines aboard."

Nils started the engine. They slipped down the canal, locked through into the sound and turned north toward Alaska. Nils dropped a wheelhouse window and gulped greedily the cold salt scent.

"I'll fish!" he muttered. "I got to fish!"

Birger snugged down on deck and joined the skipper.

"Those *North Star* boys will figure back that you left Seattle tomorrow," he said.

Again Nils Haugen's bulk belied its apparent inertness. Birger found himself pinned against the bulkhead.

"One word to start 'em thinking that and I'll cut you up for bait!" Nils snarled. "We left two hours before midnight."

"Sure, only—"

"Those *North Star* men ain't going to pass up a chance at fifteen hundred dollars the three months Martin's building a new boat—unless somebody gives 'em a fool reason."

Birger sensed that Nils was stirred by something more than anger. In a thousand years the fierce Viking spirit has been transmuted but not softened. The reckless daring and flaming zeal of early Norsemen have found expression in their descendants' implacable drive for fish, and this flared now in Nils Haugen. Because Birger had always lacked it, its intensity puzzled him.

"All these things fishermen and sailors believe!" Nils shouted. "They're crazy! It ain't killing a gull that changes weather. It ain't some silly thing like a number that keeps fish off a hook or breaks your leg. What gets you fish and keeps you alive is what you got in you and nothing else. Guts and hard work and knowing your business fill the hold and take you safe to port. The other, it don't make sense."

THIS scorn of beliefs encrusted by the sea salt of centuries had its effect when the *Fairweather* reached Ketchikan three and a half days later. The *North Star* men were on the beach and helpless. Nils Haugen's schooner might have a bad name, but she was the only craft available, her skipper was a fishing fool, and a dozen years ago three good months meant $1,500 for each man. Six fishermen, an engineer and a cook came aboard, supplies, bait and ice were taken and they sailed for Portlock bank, 800 miles to the westward.

The next morning when Nils appeared in the foc'sle for breakfast the normal creases of good nature again lined his broad face, and he found men equally elated because they had escaped idleness ashore.

"We lose less'n a week," boomed John Andersen, famed among big men for his size and strength. "What's that in a season?"

"Any luck on Portlock and we'll be back with a full hold sooner'n boats that went to the Shumagins," Lars Reindahl added.

The smile fled from Nils Haugen's eyes.

"What you mean, luck?" he demanded.

"Oh, findin' fish and—"

"Luck don't get fish. It's guts and hard work. Driving! Knowing where to make a set. I heard all the talk about luck I want last season."

"But things happened last year," Jens Jensen said.

The oldest fisherman aboard, Jens had sailed in square riggers as a boy, and his was the gloomy nature sometimes found in his race.

"Things don't just happen!" Nils roared. "When we lost the dories and bait table and gooseneck and a bunch o' gear and broke a man's leg, it wasn't

because somebody brought a cat aboard. It was because I thought I could get in behind Cape Spencer without heavin' to."

The men laughed. They wanted to laugh. They had buried their fears in Ketchikan because they must fish, and now the ugly head of superstition was showing.

"Bet you boys ten dollars apiece we're in Prince Rupert with 50,000 pounds sixteen days from now," Nils challenged.

"I'm on," Lars Reindahl grinned. "And hope I lose."

"Bad luck, bettin' on a trip," Jens Jensen warned.

"How's betting going to keep a fish from takin' hold of a piece of bait?" John Andersen scoffed.

Nils was content in the hoots of the men. He covered their bets, but when he went on deck he did not see that Birger Rued remained to talk with Jens.

The second day they were in the Gulf of Alaska, with Portlock bank and the first fishing less than 400 miles away. An icy breeze blew, clouds were low and the great Pacific swells set the little 74-foot craft to swooping dizzily. But eyes were alight as gear was made ready. Only Jens Jensen's face was somber at supper.

"We didn't see her namesake," he said uneasily.

"What you mean?" John Andersen demanded.

"Mount Fairweather," Jens answered. "I knew a man who fished in this boat since she was built. The first two seasons when they had luck they saw the mountain the first trip. Last year they didn't see it, and look what happened."

"Nobody sees Mount Fairweather this time o' year," Lars Reindahl objected. "Always too thick."

Nils glanced around the table. Faces were tightening.

"Ain't it so about the first two seasons?" Jens asked.

"I saw the mountain this morning," Nils said.

Relief gave a boisterous quality to their laughter.

"Wasn't even looking for it when the clouds split," Nils added, and then he whirled on Jens. "Think halibut on Portlock would know if we saw it?" he demanded.

In the fresh laughter Nils knew his lie had been successful. But he was worried. His old enemy had slipped out again, and the men were only too willing to see its somber shadow.

"Luck!" he muttered when he reached the deck. "They're always thinking it. I've got to give 'em fish."

NILS gave them fish. For six days and six nights halibut streamed over the side. Great Alaskan glaciers iced the wind. Spray slashed mast high and often froze when it struck. Gear was lifted while the *Fairweather* rolled her rails almost under. And as fast as that gear came in, the whole twelve miles of it, hooks were rebaited by frosted fingers and hurled back into the spume of a rising gale.

Soaked in icy water, men worked twelve hours, had six below, returned to the bitter deck and wished only that they could crowd more than 114 hours of toil into a week. Weariness could not slacken effort. Thought of a jinxed ship could not penetrate their inexorable mood. Threat of weather swept heedlessly over them.

This defiance of the sea was personified in Nils Haugen. The mad, endless stress centered in him. Ashore, the big skipper was warm hearted and placid. His tolerant good nature embraced equally John Andersen's exuberance, Jens Jensen's gloom and Birger Rued's sluggish enmity.

But on the banks a grim passion possessed Nils. Men looked up from the well deck to see his face in wheelhouse windows and caught something of the flaming zeal and reckless purpose of this Viking in oilskins.

When the hold was full Nils drove

his little craft back across the gulf into the eye of a southeaster. Weary men listened to the groan of timbers and the terrific pounding of great seas on bow and deck. Each stood his trick at the wheel, but Nils was always there, and if their courage failed he grasped the spokes.

"Fish!" he shouted. "Can't catch 'em if you're hove to!"

Fifteen days after Nils made his bet, the *Fairweather* unloaded 50,000 pounds of halibut in Prince Rupert.

"There's your luck!" Nils roared. "Back for more!"

The fishermen wanted a night ashore.

"Can you get fish with beer mugs?" the skipper taunted, and he took the *Fairweather* out into a black night of rain thick as fog, rain that flattened across the waves with the gale.

Nils had driven brutally in heavy seas in the gulf. Now he fled before the storm with a fine mastery that brought grunts of admiration from wheelmen's throats. Shores close aboard, beaconless islands and reefs, sweeping currents, always the blinding rain—ships do not remain ships if they get off the course in those narrow, twisting waterways of the inside passage.

The *Fairweather* threaded them with the swift, sure dash of a porpoise, and with Nils' heart singing his exultation. He was fishing. Superstition had shriveled in the fire of his resolve.

"Let her blow!" he yelled to John Andersen as they crossed Dixon Entrance after midnight.

The little ship yawed with fierce lunges before the heavy seas or wallowed desperately in savage tide rips. John Andersen struggled with all his strength, but off Cape Fox the bow swung to port despite it. John threw his weight against the spokes. The tiller chain snapped.

Nils Haugen knew what it was but his mind leaped to the jinx. "Things don't just happen," he had proclaimed, and now something had happened.

"This can't lick me!" he muttered, and threw open the port door.

A wave washed him back as the little ship rolled broadside. Nils clawed his way out and past the bait table, slid down the companionway. He thrust startled men aside to get at the gear locker.

"I knew it!" he shouted when he had flashed a light inside. "Bad stowing! Quadrant jammed. Rig this tackle."

When the *Fairweather* was built, Nils had provided an auxiliary tiller and gear for just such an emergency.

Soon they had the boat headed into the wind, and an hour's work repaired the tiller chain.

Triumphant, the skipper returned to the wheelhouse and swung his ship north. John Andersen gripped the spokes more gently, but the men below had scarcely turned in when they were tumbled out again by the shattering vibration of a motor racing until the governor shuts off the fuel.

Nils Haugen's heart missed a beat, with the realization that a tail shaft had snapped or a propeller dropped off with a jagged shore close aboard and a full gale blowing.

And all the portents and omens implanted in men by the sea's mysteries seized Nils Haugen in that moment. He wondered if, after all, mortals were helpless when they aroused the wrath of barbaric gods.

"Right under Cape Fox!" John Andersen yelled. "No chance!"

Nils found only a challenge in the hopelessness of the phrase.

"Why no chance?" he roared. "Set that forestays'l!"

Seas filled the well deck as the *Fairweather* rolled, but John worked his way forward and got help from the foc'sle. Jimmie Stark, the engineer, came from below.

"Tail shaft," he reported. "How close are those brick piles, Nils?"

"We've got room."

"But you can't sail this hooker in here!"

"Watch me!"

Jimmie Stark knew that the two pole masts and few small fore and aft sails of a modern halibut schooner do not make a sailing vessel of what is strictly a power craft, that canvas can avail little in a narrow, gale-lashed channel. He voiced this when he found men huddled behind the house.

"We was crazy to take a chance in this man-killer!" Jens Jensen shouted against the wind.

They felt the boat shiver as the forestaysail was broken out, felt her gather way and come about before the wind. The decks cleared. The *Fairweather* leaped to the blasts.

And Nils sailed her. Reefs and small islands fringed the shores, but he raced her on in that narrowing, winding strip of storm-torn water among the Alaskan mountains.

THE fishermen gathered aft. Two accidents in quick succession had revived all the superstitious fears stifled by the first successful trip. Stories of the schooner's disastrous season the previous year filled their minds and they asked Birger Rued for confirmation.

"Depends on how you look at it," Birger said. "Lot o' things happened. One man hurt, another lost overside—"

"She's jinxed, all right!" Albert Olesen broke in. "And now Nils'll smash us on a reef."

Their fear grew as the *Fairweather* raced on. They sent Lars Reindahl to ask Nils to anchor behind Mary Island.

"If I missed all them bricks off Cape Fox, I can miss the rest," Nils retorted.

"We could play safe, wait for a tow," Lars urged.

"Ever see anybody take fish when he's fast to the ground?" the skipper taunted. "We're going fishing, man!"

Past the lights on Mary Island, Hog Rocks, Angle Point and Spire Island, the *Fairweather* fled before the gale. She threaded dangers in constricted Tongass Narrows, and always Nils Haugen guided her with a fiery skill and an exultant confidence that silenced the fishermen and finally won their admiration.

That same buoyant assurance carried them onto the ways and found a new tail shaft to fit, drove them on from Ketchikan that night with other halibut schooners leaving on second trips.

"We get a late start but we make up for it," John Andersen chuckled at breakfast the next morning.

"But those two things happening," Jens objected dismally.

"Did they stop Nils?" John scoffed.

Men grinned. They loved a driver.

"I don't believe Nils saw Fairweather," Birger said.

All looked at him, startled, suddenly quiet.

"You think she's jinxed?" a fisherman asked.

Birger shrugged. "Last year the crew said she was. They quit. Now, those close shaves in Dixon Entrance—no telling. Next time—"

He left it there. Nils came down to find a gloomy crew.

"Somebody dream o' being wrecked?" he jeered.

Only Jens dared answer. "Those two things in Dixon—next time we won't be so lucky."

"What you mean, lucky?" Nils demanded. "Ask Birger. He knows it wasn't luck. He stowed that gear locker coming north and he did such a lubber job he left that steel cable where it could go adrift in a seaway and jam the quadrant."

Birger's pale eyes glittered but fell quickly before Nils' angry glance.

"And I'll give Birger a chance to prove it wasn't luck," the skipper said. "He's going to stow that locker today and keep it stowed right. Then if anything happens, he's your jinx."

"Birger didn't snap the tail shaft," Jens objected.

Nils laughed. "And didn't Jimmie Stark find a flaw in it? Something happening in a mill back East before the

Fairweather was built—how could a jinx have anything to do with that?"

He taunted them, shamed them back to confidence.

"It's guts and hard work, knowin' how, that gets fish!" Nils proclaimed. "Whistling wheelman, Finn's bottle, carrying a cat aboard instead of letting it come by itself—how's any of them fool things going to do you harm?"

But when Nils was in his cabin aft the wheelhouse he was not so confident.

"They're thinking jinx all the time," he muttered. "I've got to give 'em fish."

Birger Rued pushed open the door.

"You figure I stowed that cable so it would jam in the quadrant?" he demanded excitedly.

"I figure you won't make that mistake again," Nils answered. "Take all the gear out today and stow it right."

Rage lifted Birger out of himself. He and Nils had started equally, and now only Nils knew command.

"You're always keeping me down!" he snarled. "Wouldn't go dory mates with me again. Wouldn't let me buy in on your first boat or give me a berth in her. Knocked me to other skippers."

"If I felt that way, I wouldn't 'a' taken you on last year or this," Nils said coldly.

"You took me on to make it tough for me!" Birger stormed.

"I ain't making it tough for you, but I'll put you on the beach unless you stow that locker."

Birger obeyed. Nils considered getting a new fisherman. But his conscience was clear. He had never tried to injure Birger, and the man's hate seemed so puny.

"Nobody can keep me from fishing," Nils growled.

THE *Fairweather* was still three days from the banks. The skipper was always on the alert for talk of ill fortune and ready with his buoyancy. So eager was he to end brooding with work, he ordered a set when the first sounding showed eighty fathoms.

All day the line was hauled in slowly by the gurdy, but that night only a thousand pounds of fish were in the hold.

From the wheelhouse Nils Haugen had watched the empty hooks come over the rail. He knew he had set too soon and in the darkness he drove farther onto the bank.

But the next night when twelve miles of line were again aboard, more hooks were empty than in the previous set.

Nils ran straight west in a search for fish. He must have fish now. The men were thinking again. He had only to see their sullen faces in cabin and foc'sle.

Barnacled myths flitted through the little ship. But before the skipper ordered the gear set, a stiff breeze had become a gale.

For three days and nights they rode it out. The seven fishermen stood their two-hour watches at the wheel and sat in the foc'sle and drank coffee. The noise of crashing water was deafening there, the motion of the little vessel appalling. But that was all part of the normal picture of life for them. It did not bring fear or discomfort, only resentment that they were idle.

Nils, watching, knew that the ghosts of a thousand ancestors were crowding in to tell how the mysterious sea is governed by forces beyond the understanding of man.

He knew that omens and portents occupied their thoughts, and with the first lessening of the gale he gave the word to begin fishing.

Lars Reindahl dropped anchor, keg buoy and flag light overside and went aft to watch the baited line whipping through the gooseneck as the *Fairweather* ran at full speed. When the skate was nearly out, John Andersen shoved the second into place and made an end fast to the first.

"We'll get fish!" John yelled.

The cold was bitter and flurries of snow drove across the rushing waves. In fifteen minutes a string of eight skates, two and a third miles of line, lay on the ocean floor, held by two anchors and marked by flag light and keg buoy at each end.

Four more strings were laid out, and in the black welter of the dying gale Nils wheeled back to find the tiny electric gleam of the first flag light.

Picking up the gear was difficult and dangerous in those hard driving waves. The upright cane pole rode them, the bulb at its tip rising high above the schooner, then sinking into the smother. Five fathoms from the light and unseen in the darkness floated the keg buoy, solid, heavy, a deadly missile in the catapult of a surging sea.

Nils worked up cautiously. Fierce desire had driven him to action when the weather was still forbidding. The *Fairweather's* bow soared, hung exposed to the wind, dived into the trough. Only skill and experience and a feather touch on the fuel lever could bring the rolling, lunging craft alongside.

Down on the deck, lashed by spray, straining his eyes against the deceptive light of torn water, Lars Reindahl stood with grappling hook and line, fair target for the keg.

But a savage intensity in Nils Haugen's purpose placed his vessel in position. Lars tossed the hook, dragged in flag light and keg buoy. Soon the gurdy was in gear, the line coming aboard.

And with the line came fish. None had seen halibut caught in such numbers. Again and again men stopped baiting to clear the deck pen. The cook donned oilskins to help. Fishermen called triumphantly to each other as they toiled in storm and cold and darkness.

Nils grinned. He had led them to fish. He had driven from their minds all thought of portents and myths. And the wind was dying fast. After he had picked up two skates of gear his watch ended and he went to bed.

Jimmie Stark took his place. Jimmie did not have a thousand years of the sea behind him or Nils' sure touch with controls, and never had he picked up gear in such weather. The night was dirty, with squalls of snow. He was nervous as he approached his first flag light, but he got it. He got the second. Fish poured into the deck pen.

But the wind switched, rose quickly and caused a confused sea. As Jimmie crawled up to the last flag light a squall threw the *Fairweather's* bow over. The engineer tried desperately to swing back. The keg surged high on the crest of a wave and came aboard. It hit Albert Olesen, broke his shoulder. Whether it had broken his head, no one knew for two days.

The jinx had struck again.

Nils took the wheel. The last string was lifted. Men worked in stunned silence as they cleared the deck pens to make room for the endless stream of white-bellied halibut. They had found fish as they never had before, and they could not remain for the rich harvest.

For the first time Nils' fierce spirit did not flare in instinctive revolt against shadowy foes. The courage with which he had always met the sea seemed unavailing. Drearily he turned the *Fairweather* northeast toward Seward and the nearest hospital.

John Andersen came to stand his trick at the wheel.

"I suppose they're talkin' jinx," Nils growled. "Because a man born in Montana couldn't handle a boat in a breeze."

"Something's queer," John said. "You've got *skookum* fishermen. Nothing should happen. But it does."

"What they saying?"

"They think, what's the use? You left Seattle Friday the thirteenth."

Nils did not comment. He had considered Birger's enmity stupid, and as his rage grew it was not against the man but because something so insignificant could touch his purpose. He kept silent until Olesen was in the hospital and the

entire crew was at supper. Then he jerked Birger from the table.

"Tell 'em when we left Seattle!" the skipper roared.

Birger squirmed. Nils flung him into a corner.

"We sailed the twelfth," Nils said. "You can see the slip at the locks. Why else is this boat jinxed?"

He kept at them.

"Birger told us about Mount Fairweather," John Andersen said at last. "About sailing the thirteenth, too. But that wouldn't bring bad luck last season."

"Nothing's brought it!" Nils snarled.

"But all these things happening!" Jens Jensen insisted. "The *Fairweather* had two fine years. Then she got unlucky. So we figure it's some piece o' gear come aboard a year ago."

The fishermen chorused agreement. Three accidents, two sets without fish, gale after gale, a bad record the previous year—they were convinced that the *Fairweather* was jinxed by an article of equipment. Nils' derision could not shake them.

A GALE held the schooner in Resurrection Bay. The crew did not go ashore but sat in the foc'sle. Nils looked into sullen eyes and knew he faced ruin. These men would quit. The *Fairweather* was doomed. She would be shunned forever. He could not fish.

Baffled, Nils quit them to visit Olesen in the hospital.

The wind was so strong in that funnel between the mountains that it lifted a fish box from the wharf and rolled it into the sea. Where the box had been, a rusty shackle lay. Nils would have gone on had he not seen a number on it, stamped in raised numerals—131.

"And no fisherman would touch that shackle if the last figure was knocked off," the small, wandering part of Nils' mind reported.

His whole mind grasped the thought. The shackle would be the same, as strong and serviceable. Suddenly Nils understood that superstition of itself was no longer important. Its truth or fallacy was wholly beside the question now. This evil existed in the minds of his fishermen. There it was true and vital, and ruinous.

And Birger Rued kept it alive. Nils could not understand such enmity, but he did see it as the focal point of his trouble. He picked up the shackle.

In town he bought a file and walked on to a quiet bit of shore. He rasped off the final number. His handkerchief, dipped in salt water, was twisted around the shackle. Metal brightened by the file would rust quickly.

That night they headed into the dying gale. Nils beat down protests by the very intensity of his purpose.

"This ship'll kill us!" Jens Jensen shouted.

"You afraid of Birger's lies?" Nils scoffed.

Birger found strength in the growing dread of his fellows and lashed back. He even proclaimed openly that disaster was sure to come, that only death awaited those who remained in her.

And three days out of Seward the schooner piled up on a reef off the Shumagin Islands.

It was night. Thick fog. Nils had been awakened by an ominous lack of motion. The little ship was not rolling to the ocean swell. As he leaped for the door she struck. She was still grinding her keel on the rocks when he threw out the clutch.

Men did not come coolly to the deck. They came in terror of this ultimate machination of the jinx.

"She's a killer!" Jens shouted. "Get the dories over!"

Deck lights were turned on. Men rushed to the two small boats. Nils hurled them aside.

"Use your heads!" he roared.

"She's a killer!" Jens repeated shrilly.

"What about the lubber at the wheel?"

Nils demanded. "The damned fool didn't have sense enough when the swell quit to know we'd run into a bay."

"But the bottom's out of her!" Lars Reindahl warned. "We got to leave quick."

"No!" Nils Haugen bellowed. "You're gutless, but you've got arms and legs I need. Not a man leaves till she's afloat."

The fierce Viking spirit was rampant again. Fishermen found themselves driven by a fire they could not face. They put a dory over, sounded with a hand lead, felt under the imprisoned ship with a flag pole, finally convinced even themselves that only the keel touched the high point of a reef and that the *Fairweather* was not taking water.

"We can kedge off with the winch at high tide," Nils said.

He called Birger.

"I've got a scheme to rig the cables," he said. "Need shackles. Get 'em."

Birger went below. Nils watched the companionway closely. Several minutes slipped by. At last the fisherman came up the steps, slowly and insolently.

"Give 'em to me!" Nils barked.

Birger's eyes were alight with triumph.

"There ain't any shackles," he said.

Nils grasped the man by both shoullers and jerked his face close.

"You saw it!" the skipper snarled in a low tone. "You saw the thirteen on it! Thought you could wreck me, did you? I'll cut you up for bait, like I promised."

He shook Birger off balance and whipped his right across.

"John! Jens!" Nils called as Birger spun into the scuppers. "This rat won't bring me gear. I want shackles."

MEN watched Birger rise slowly. They muttered angrily, but the skipper only stared back, and waited.

A yell came from below. Jens stumbled up the companionway, John at his heels.

"The jinx!" John bellowed as he jerked a rusty horseshoe of steel from Jens and held it aloft. "Thirteen!"

"In that gear locker all the time!" Jens shrieked. "We said it was a piece o' gear!"

Men snatched at the shackle to examine it. Nils saw their dread give way to rage. John swung upon Birger.

"You cleared out that locker!" he charged. "You knew it was there. You —by God, you planted it!"

Nils stepped back into a shadow and listened to the feverish babble. He smiled grimly when John Andersen hurled the shackle far out into the black fog and the men cheered.

In the next two hours the skipper's curses spattered harmlesly from gleeful backs. Halibut fishermen are strong, and they possess great skill and energy. Those on the *Fairweather* yanked her off that reef and they took her down to Sanak bank and filled her hold in record time.

They filled her hold often that season. Without Birger Rued, without thought or fear of sinister forces, they fished with a glad resistless spirit that matched the fierce zeal of the man who watched from wheelhouse windows.

And when they lifted the last skate of gear at midnight November fifteenth they drove across the North Pacific for Seattle to learn they were third from the top of the fleet.

"We'd 'a' been low boat if we hadn't found that shackle," John Andersen chuckled.

The fishermen laughed. Each had more than $4,000.

"It would 'a' killed us all," Jens said gloomily.

They did not laugh at that. Chill mysteries of storm and fog again invaded the snug cabin and held them silent.

Except Nils Haugen. Nils had fished. He would fish again. Nothing could ever stop Nils Haugen's fishing.

"You got guts, you get fish!" he snorted.

The light grew brighter, and he crawled toward the door.

THE GRINGO HOLSTER

By RALPH R. PERRY

I DIDN'T use to like to be called Doc. Most cow camp cooks are nicknamed Doc, and all veterinarians as a matter of course, and fifty years ago the knowledge that I was Dr. Wesley Evans, M.D. was the most precious fact in my head. I didn't use to care for being the only physician in five thousand square miles of cattle range, or long buckboard rides, or a few dozen other matters which are very important to a young man.

That was fifty years ago. Now I'm Doc Evans—old Doc Evans, who always drives a team of roans. I know the people for a hundred miles north and south, and fifty between the mountains on east and west, as only the man whose hands are the only purposeful ones at birth and death can know people. They count on me to keep them alive, and healthy. Healthy . . . you think of all that word means, as I have for fifty years, and you'll understand why for three days I let my practise go while I sat in a bunkhouse with Slim Malone, even though half an hour would have doctored the gunshot wound in his shoulder. I'm not a doctor only. I'm Doc.

Slim was a twenty-year-old boy that I liked, but never got to know what I would call thoroughly. He was eight when his father moved from El Paso and bought the Bar M, so some other physi-

cian cured his colic and measles and childhood diseases.

He was a grave little gray-eyed button when I made his acquaintance, and he grew into a slender blond gray-eyed man with that eight-year head start on me still intact. I did notice, though, that he could look ahead, and that he could wait, and I claim there's no better hallmark of a real boy or man.

He wasn't remarkable, otherwise. It was a handicap for him to be the son of old Two Star Malone, ex-city marshal of El Paso, ex-sheriff of Pecos County. Two Star had been a famous peace officer, and the steadiness and speed of hand were with him yet. Slim practiced shooting like any other range-raised boy, neither more or less. He'd plugged tin cans since he could hold a Colt with both hands, and he'd done quick draws too—fifteen minutes at a time, days when he felt like it. But he never put calluses on the left side of his right thumb.

Two Star allowed it wasn't necessary. Now that McKinley was elected, Two Star said, the range had nothing to worry about. Beef prices were sure to go up, and there hadn't been any real rustling since '88. A little brand-blotting was to be expected. Sheriff John Slaughter of Cochise himself had no more self-confidence than Two Star Malone.

Why, when Hen Salters bought the Slash C at a tax sale, after three ranchmen had been thirsted out trying to run cattle on range where the only water was a seep like a cowhand's road bottle—always dry when a drink was most needed—Two Star scarcely stirred himself. The whole range could see that Salters had to have the Bar M spring or be sold out like the others the first dry year, but all the old city marshal did was to ease into the tax office the morning Hen was waiting to put his money down.

"Neighbor, if that's what you aim to be, there's just one point I want to make clear," Two Star Malone said. "I hold by the old range rule: graze where you like, but water at home. I run all the cows myself I figure my spring can care for when the dust starts flyin' constant."

Hen was a big man, hailing from the east Texas mesquite. He teetered on his boot heels, and when he hooked thumbs in his belt both of them were over a revolver.

"Neighbor," he said in a damn-you tone, "I hear you, an' I savvy, an' I ask you nothin', now or later. I got an idea, and when the dust gits thick I'll use it. Right now I'm busy, but you wait till I've got these papers signed and I'll give you a drink that's stronger than water."

That was war talk, and Two Star knew it. But he just smiled, crisp as a March morning, and eased out without waiting for the drink. And for two years Hen and he neighbored, without more said. Those two seasons, you see, were wet.

IT WAS the third year following that the yellow dust kept us with grit on our tongues all spring. It was Saturday night, and all the Bar M hands were in Caristo, wishing they drew more wages so's they could enjoy more liquor. Two Star and Slim were at the ranch-house, just rolling them each the bedtime cigarette.

"Hello the house!" a strange voice hailed them.

Two Star flung the door back and stood against the light—why not?—with Slim looking over his shoulder.

"Ride up, stranger, an' rest yo' saddle. I can't see you," he hailed.

There was a flash from the dark and a bullet hit Two Star in the throat. He fell face-down on his own doorstep, leaving Slim standing in the lamplight for the instant it takes to jerk the lever of a Winchester. Then Slim stooped to lift his father inside.

Thinking of his father first saved him. At the shot, most men would either have jumped backward, or stood still, clawing at a gun. Leaning forward and down as he did, the second slug that was aimed true at his heart just ripped the big muscle that lies over the left collar-bone.

He tumbled, but before the bullet shock paralyzed him he got his gun out and shot back through the door at the lamp. Hit it, too—and then he hugged the hard bare dirt, peering into darkness for a target that was invisible.

There were the cold, bright stars, and the black bulk of El Capitan mountain and the horses stamping and milling in the corral, but nothing human he could see. A little yellow-bluish light commenced to flicker on the threshold, so he knew the lamp wick had dropped into the oil of the broken lamp, and the ranchhouse was going to burn. In another minute he wouldn't be in the black shadow of an adobe wall. The fire would silhouette him as perfectly as the lamp had.

Nevertheless he couldn't move. He willed to crawl, but his arms and legs wouldn't answer. He didn't shoot, because he wanted to live that extra minute. He lay still with the hammer of a useless revolver thumbed back, and thought.

It had been a stranger who hailed, yet this killing was undoubtedly premeditated. Hen Salters was the only man who would gain by it, so Hen must have ordered it done. Then Slim remembered Hen had hired a sun-dried Texan named Pardee about a week before. The man had the earmarks of a gunman; he must have been hired to kill Two Star. . . . Slim understood what Hen Salters' "idea" had been, now.

And he knew, in case he wasn't shot, that he had no way to prove anything. A stranger had hailed the house, and murdered his father. A posse can't take the trail on that, no matter how sure Slim and the whole range might be who the stranger was.

The light grew brighter, and he crawled toward the door to drag his father's body out of the burning house. Hours later, the Bar M cowhands found him stretched unconscious across Two Star, just at the edge of the circle of light thrown out by what was then the blazing roof. The increasing light must have tolled him on, and whoever watched him crawling and tugging at a dead weight heavier than himself must have let him live.

He was in the bunkhouse when I arrived, slightly before dawn, and while I changed the bandages the Bar M hands were still circling farther and farther from the house, each with a lantern, hoping to find tracks.

I had hung my own lantern over the foreman's bunk in such a way that the light would fall on Slim's face, though not in his eyes. The wound itself was not very serious, but I didn't like his color; and instead of relaxing into the normal stupor of shock and exhaustion he was keeping himself semi-conscious. His breathing was shallow.

"Doc," he whispered to me. "They'll find no tracks. This was planned."

"You sleep, son," I told him.

"I ain't a son. Not any more. This was planned, three years back." He lay still, with that fluttering breath that kept him from sleeping. "Doc," he said, "you were his friend. Will you get me his gunbelt and holster?"

"Why?"

" 'Cause I'll sleep if you get it."

I humored him, and he tucked the whole heavy belt down inside the bunk with his good right arm. I still thought the request for the holster a sick man's whim, but it proved to be more, much more, for almost instantly he did fall asleep, and when I lifted his wrist from the worn holster and gun he cuddled under his right hand, his pulse was stronger. His face was still like wax, yet a crisis had been passed. I moved the lantern back, knowing I wasn't needed any more, as a doctor, and that I wasn't going to leave.

HE AWOKE at noon, and the cowhands filed in and squatted on their heels at the edge of the bunk—Cayuse Jones, who had been Two Star's friend as well as

foreman; Bill Henry, Pecos Jack and Fat O'Connor.

"Slim, it was Hen Salters, weren't it?" Cayuse stated. All they were waiting for was that one word from Slim. Then they'd ride.

He twisted in the blankets and pulled Two Star's gun and holster closer.

"Cayuse, I'm running the Bar M," he said. "The Malones would never do this to Hen Salters without he asked for it. Now he's got it coming to him. Cayuse, you keep the hands on my ranch, and particular, you keep *your* gun in *your* holster—you hear me, Cayuse?"

"I've et your pap's beef and drawed his pay, Slim. You—ain't countin' on the sheriff, Slim?"

"No," Slim said. "He can't do nothing. Cayuse, the Malones never feared Salters none. I'm going to show you why, so you'll stay peaceable. You've roped and branded till your hands are work-stiff, and I don't want you hurt."

"I'm faster than you'll ever be!" the old man rapped at him.

"Than I was," Slim corrected. "You ain't now. Not since I heired this here." He lifted old Two Star's gun and holster. His lips twisted as though something stabbed him, but his eyes were steady on all of us.

"This is a gringo holster," he said. "The only one west of the Pecos. Dallas Stroudenmire, that was marshal of El Paso, invented it. It's been the secret of the marshals of El Paso, and my pop learned it in his turn. No El Paso marshal was ever faded in a fair draw, was he?"

Cayuse took a step and snatched the holster up, turning it over and over in his hands. His knuckles were knotty from work. "This yere's just a common Mexican holster, only it's been oiled and molded to the gun good. Slim, kid," he said, "yo're sick an' out of yo' haid. You lie back, son, and leave me 'tend to Hen."

"How?" Slim said.

"Well, we'll go foggin' up to his ranch—"

"Just what he expects, and he'll be behind an adobe wall with a Winchester. If you did git him, the sheriff would be bound to hang you."

Cayuse gnawed at his mustache like the hair had turned bitter.

"Well," he admitted, "that might be so. Tell you what: I'll hang out in the Last Chance Saloon till Hen or Pardee comes in—"

"And you'll reach first and they'll shoot first," Slim said.

"I ain't scared of no man—"

"Sure. Sure not: we're all Texas born, I reckon. Ain't none of us wants more than an even break, but we're cowhands, and they're gunmen. They proved it when they gunned my pappy down. You'd be playin' the other fella's game, Cayuse, an' I won't have it." Slim's face was young, but his eyes were grown up. He rubbed the oiled leather of the gringo holster.

"Hen's 'idea' ain't nothing new, only to me," he told us. "Getting a ranch with a gun is old as the West. They killed Two Star, but me they didn't need to bother with. I wasn't fast. Not till I put on a gringo holster that will even everything up."

"But you ain't no marshal!" Cayuse protested. "Slim—kid! Yo're jest the son of a Texan that's moved to New Mexico. You ain't no better nor worse than any cowhand yo' self. You cain't even up with Hen by a trick holster. I'll high-tail to Three Rivers and hire Swede Larson. Now, there's a gun-toter that will eat Hen an' Pardee both. It'll cost yuh five hundred, but the Swede's worth it. He's chain lightning, kid. You don't need to do your own gun fighting—no cattleman does."

"I ain't used to bein' a cattleman yet. I'm just Two Star's son. I don't need no Swede, though, with this." Slim pushed the gunbelt under his pillow and closed his eyes as though his wound were hurting him too badly to let him talk much more.

"Gunmen don't settle nothing," he

said. "There's always a faster one to hire, an' the fight goes right on. Remember McSween, over in Lincoln County? He had Billy the Kid himself, but he got killed and his ranch is broken up. Look at the Wyoming cattleman in Johnson County, Cayuse. They had Tom Horn. No better rider nor faster shot than Tom. But he was hanged, an' what happened to them? A man's got to kill his own snakes, Cayuse, and I aim to."

"When?" Cayuse said.

"Oh, in about three days," Slim muttered without opening his eyes. "My right arm wasn't hurt."

"Lemme see that holster again, will you, kid?"

"No," Slim said. "You did see it, an' didn't see nothing. A gringo holster ain't much to look at." He motioned us out, and eased himself down into his bunk.

Outside, Cayuse turned to me. "He's loco. He won't be able to walk, scarcely, in three days. He'll just get himself killed! We gotta stop him."

I sent my mind back over twelve years. To a tow-headed kid I'd cured of typhoid, and the young man that had broken his left leg twice, and how he had reacted to pain.

"Slim might be right," I said. "He's certainly right about gunpowder ranch titles, and the futility of gunmen. You know yourself that Two Star smelled trouble. It just didn't bother him."

"Why should it? He—"

"Yes, he had the gringo holster," I interrupted. "He expected to do any fighting himself, to stand in front of his son. He cast a big shadow, Cayuse, and he was sure times were getting better."

"He did plenty to make 'em so," the foreman reminded me. "He'd 'a had Hen's hide on the door by now. Point is, Slim's a young 'un. He'll just get himself killed."

"That's not what's bothering him—but it's true; he may," I agreed.

"Well, now, I dunno," Fat O'Connor cut in. "Dallas Stroudenmire was a hellion right, and the El Paso marshals have been hellions ever since. That's real facts, ain't it? Nobody ever shaded Two Star, neither. Wished you'd looked closer at that holster, Cayuse. You should have shucked the gun out. There might be a spring or something inside it."

"I never did see that holster empty," Pecos Jack told us. "It sure is a fact Two Star was plumb secretive about it. All I know is, he could shuck a gun like a cottontail jumps a cactus."

I said nothing more.

THE dust devils were doing a double shuffle across the flats two days later when Sheriff Allison eased his lank six foot six into the Bar M bunkhouse, and the Slash C cows were beginning to crowd the line fence. They could smell the water in the Bar M spring, even against the wind, and the wind brought their moaning clear. That lowing moan is a sound that gets into a cattleman's skull, as the flying dust gets into his eyes—little by little, and more and more irritating.

Sheriff Allison never did anything fast till the last instant. He could say "Well, I reckon not" and make the speech last fifteen seconds.

"Son," he said, and this time Slim didn't wince, "there's times when an oath of office sets on a man heavier than saleratus biscuits. I swore t'uphold the peace, damn it." The dust must have got in his throat then, because he walked across to the water bucket.

"My deputy is over to the Slash C now," Allison said, "prowling to see if maybe some law ain't been broke. Not fo' killing, you savvy, son. Your own cowhands couldn't cut no sign, but maybe Hen's got a case of whisky, huh, which he'd shore be fixin' to sell to the Indians over by Pechacho Canyon?

"Or you know how a branding iron can slip. Surely there's some calf what's got a brand that ain't i-dentical with its mammy. I told Pete to look plumb close."

"Pete won't find nothing. Hen figured on being unpopular," said Slim.

"Reckon not," agreed the sheriff. "Still, the county's got to pay Pete's salary and it was worth a try. But you notice *I* came *here*." He got up and took another drink of water, and lingered doing it.

"Son," he said, "Two Star and I were peace officers, neighbors, and everything. So don't take it amiss when I ask you, official, to give me that trick holster and gun of his. Everybody's sayin' in Caristo yo're going to face Hen Salters tomorrow with some plumb man-killin' harness. Kid, you cain't. I'm taking your gringo holster."

Slim laughed, brief as a coyote yap.

"Sheriff, I was out ridin' this morning," he said. "I lost that gringo holster on the ride and disremember where."

"Yo're going to be like that?" Allison asked.

"Jest like that," said Slim. "I reckon I'm six hours ahead of you, Sheriff."

"Kid, I admire you. But—speakin' as an old-timer, no Westerner that amounts to shucks will think less of you for going slow. If you don't *know* Hen done it, you ain't got no right to use a gun yourself, and if you do, I'm paid to 'tend to it. The real facts about a dry-gulchin' come out eventually. When they do, this range will git the right man."

"Sheriff, did you see a bullet hit my pappy's throat while he was askin' a stranger to light down?" said Slim. "You've asked your question, official, and that's your answer. When you go back to town, tell Hen Salters I'll be in the Last Chance saloon tomorrow at noon exact."

HE WAS two minutes late, as it turned out, though that wasn't his fault. A long ride like the one from the Bar M to Caristo can't be figured down to seconds, and Slim was in plain sight of the saloon by noon.

He had put on a clean white linen shirt, the one he'd bought to wear under his broadcloth coat Sundays, and he had on the black broadcloth pants. His left arm was in a sling made of a red silk bandanna, pulled up at an angle so that his left fist, when he clenched it, was over his heart.

Two Star's gun was on his right hip, butt to the rear, the holster not tied down. There were thongs on it, but Slim hadn't unwound them. Neither had Two Star, ever. The holster was cut out, so that the muzzle of the Colt looked out of the carved brown leather that years of use had smoothed until you could see the design better than you could feel it.

To us that holster still looked like the ordinary Mexican type, but maybe it was half-breed holster. Maybe there was a swivel so Slim could turn it on his hip and fire without making a draw. Maybe there was something better than a swivel.

At the hitchrack in front of the Last Chance he swung out of the saddle and walked rapidly toward the batwing doors, as though he were headed for a drink or a poker game.

Compared to the bright sunlight in the street the Last Chance was dark. For an instant I could see only the shapes of men, not their faces. The place was crowded, but the crowd was divided into two parts, one at each end of the bar. In a cleared space in the center, with his back against the mahogany, stood one man. It was Pardee, Salter's hired gunman from Texas.

"Where's Hen?" Slim said.

"His pony stepped in a gopher hole. He's footin' it in."

"You lie. He hired you for shootin', so he sent you in to get shot. Well?"

Pardee cut his eyes right and left. We were all watching him to make sure Slim got an even break. I watched his chin harden. He was going to draw.

"Hen is keeping hid," said Slim. "You can git, Pardee. You're nothing but a hired killer at the end of your trail. You're losin' nothin' by clearin' out fast."

Slim sounded as positive as a judge

closing a case. His confidence must have gotten under the Texan's hide, for Pardee shrilled:

"Go on, you! Reach! I ain't gonna have yo' friends hangin' me afterward." He was so eager to have the fight over his hand shook.

"Now, that's an idea," Slim began, and right while he seemed to be talking it over, he reached.

The hand is quicker than the eye. Two elbows jerked; there were four shots, and the powder smoke from the guns leaped, met and swirled upward. Then Pardee was rising on his heels with his gun hanging from his forefinger. There were three black holes in his shirt in a line from the belt buckle up. Any one of the wounds was mortal.

By Slim's foot the dust was rising from a bullet groove in the floor. He jerked three shells out of his Colt with the plunger, and reloaded with steady hands, but the pupils of his eyes were still so large that he saw nothing, and his boot toes were still curled to grip the floor.

"Pardee shot first! He drew quicker and shot first!" yelled Cayuse.

"S-so much first that he missed," said Slim. He rammed Two Star's Colt back into that gringo holster, and flung the batwing doors wide with his good arm.

There was the sound of a window pane smashed into tinkling slivers across the street. The falling glass hit the roof of the feed store veranda and broke again just as the batwing door swung, and with that second crash of glass came the report of a rifle and a bullet that knocked a hole in the door slats bigger than a thumb.

SLIM was still standing erect. None of us waited to see more than that—Sheriff Allison was through the door already, and Cayuse and Bill Henry and Pecos Jack and Fat O'Connor and me behind. From a second story window above the feed store yellow-gray rifle smoke was drifting, and behind the broken window I could see Hen Salters snap the loading lever home, and level the rifle barrel.

Allison and the Bar M hands fired in a volley. Which one of them killed Salters I couldn't say. All tried, and two of the shots were fatal. Allison claimed him, and he was sheriff with a legal right to shoot, so we let it ride.

I never probed for the bullets. To a physician, the way a man falls tells its story. I simply took Two Star's revolver out of Slim's hand and stood between him and the crowd that still rushed out of the saloon.

"Steady, boy—easy, now," I said. "It's all right, Slim—all right, now."

Right under my eye was the gringo holster. I had to put the gun back in it, and I looked into the hollow of it first.

It was nothing but plain leather. No secret spring. No swivel. Nothing.

"Slim," I whispered. "Even though you guessed that nervous strain spoils coordination and that the man who hurries himself too much is liable to miss his shot, why did you risk everything on a hunch?"

He faced me squarely.

"*You* knew I had to, Doc," he said. "You knew I'd never be healthy if I didn't step from Two Star's shadow. I thought of it while I lay by the doorway, waiting for them to finish me.

"Didn't I tell you all honestly it was a gringo holster? Isn't a gringo a man who will try a bluff and be ready to pay if he loses? A man that doesn't want help in his own job? All I could do was egg Pardee into trying the fastest draw he ever made in his life, and hope he'd trigger before the muzzle cleared the leather. Me, I was just as fast as I could be—without pressing. There wasn't no other way for me at all but a gringo holster, Doc. I didn't have nothing but a father that had been a man—once."

The Camp-Fire

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

IN the March issue we published an article about Doctor Cook by Ted Leitzell, and in Camp-Fire reviewed a book by J. Gordon Hayes attacking the claims of Admiral Peary, and asked for opinions.

Charles H. Hall, associate editor of *Yachting* and *Ask Adventure* expert on Old-Time Sailoring, turns up with the opinion that we're all wrong. "You may edit out the part about being cuckoo," he said, "if you feel it necessary."

"But that's what you think?"

"I do," he said.

Much as I regret the conclusion, and reluctantly as I have reached it, the evidence of your contribution to the March Camp-Fire seems to point to the fact that you must be cuckoo.

Mr. Leitzell's so-called "fact story" on Dr. Cook is, of course, special pleading and all ex parte statement. He appears to take everything that his hero says as fact. Lots of the rest of us do not. As Miss Jeannette Mirsky says in her excellent book *To The North!* "It is impossible to dismiss him (Cook) simply by calling him a liar. Rather may it be said that he is a great teller of stories, a fiction writer who on a certain amount of fact builds a vivid and absorbing yarn. For a man of his ability and experience he harbours too puissant an imagination."

Did you ever read a little book called *The Shameless Diary of an Explorer?* If you haven't, you should. It was written by a man who was with Cook in his attempt to scale Mt. McKinley. The author says that the excuse for the book is that it is a reproduction of his diary and it shows how he felt *at the time*, tired and disgusted with the leader. Such things are usually forgotten when the formal account of the expedition comes to be written, quarrels are minimized or unmentioned, defects of equipment slurred over and so on. But Cook does not emerge as an heroic figure by any means; far from it.

Most mountain climbers of whom I have read turn out long before sunrise and attack their climb before the sun gets up and starts stones rolling down. Cook lay abed until nine or ten o'clock, and then called it a day. The author states categorically that the party never reached the summit nor, indeed, got much above 10,000 feet.

When Dr. Cook announced his alleged discovery of the Pole, I had just finished reading that book and my first reaction to his story was: "He never did it." And the more I read of the expedition, the stronger that feeling became. I still believe that he didn't do it.

The American people love the amateur, the "Local boy makes good" hero. They will cheer loudest for some chap who goes out unprepared and reaches his goal after hair-raising adventures, meanwhile neglecting the professional who prepares carefully and has no adventures that could be escaped

by proper foresight. Look at the way they went crazy over Lindbergh. They thought that he was an amateur because they knew nothing of his background, his long and thorough training and his meticulous preparation. They thought that he was the "local boy" who took a package of sandwiches and no letters of introduction and hopped across the Western Ocean as a pleasure jaunt.

Well, Peary had been assaulting the frozen North for years. His was the professional attitude. He knew what he was up against and prepared for it. To the public, Dr. Cook was the amateur and they would rather cheer for him than for the less glamorous naval man. (By the way, Boss, Peary was a regular naval officer, commissioned in the Civil Engineers Corps, though he wasn't a line officer.) Few of the general public knew of Cook while Peary's name was familiar. They thought of Cook as the outsider who dashes in and surpasses the regulars at their own game. Perhaps each of us in some way identifies ourself with the hero of such exploits; "Why, I could do that, too, if I only had the time and the opportunity."

Naturally, Peary was upset at Cook's claims, knowing him as he did—remember, they had been shipmates—and he may not have been pleasant about the whole matter. Would you have been, after years of effort, if you had seen an attempt to snatch your prize from under your nose?

As for the navigation, the sights of both explorers were checked by competent authorities, among them, if I remember correctly, the late rear Admiral Colby M. Chester, and Peary's were accepted while Dr. Cook's were rejected. I have not had time to look up contemporary accounts but I think that Cook did not submit his original work sheets, handing in what he said were copies.

As for the testimony of the Eskimo, Fitzhugh Green told me twenty years ago that he had talked to both of them and they told him that they had journeyed out on the ice for a short distance and had then headed south. "Cook never got anywhere near the pole," he (Green) said to me.

Comparing the accounts of the two trips, while Peary's sledge records seem unreal, and he may not have actually reached the pole, he certainly was near it, nearer than man has yet been afoot.

He had worked out a possible way of reaching his objective, using relays and sending back each party when their provisions began to get short, husbanding his own for the dash to the pole.

As for Cook, his description of his return journey and his view of Axel Heiberg Land, after the fog cleared, sounds fine. And, from the position he gives after the fog cleared away, 76° 32′ North, 101° 22′ West, he saw, he says, no land nearer than fifty miles. That was in accordance with the knowledge of the day and checks with Sverdrup's discoveries. However, Stefansson discovered small islands near and, within eight miles of Cook's reported position, Meighen Island rose to a height of eight hundred feet, between the party and Axel Heiberg Land. If they saw the distant land, how did they miss the island?

While perhaps having no particular bearing on the case, Peter Freuchen, in his *Arctic Adventure*, says the Eskimo remember every one of the explorers and have their own opinions of them. Peary is their idol, and next comes Elisha Kent Kane, who went north before the Civil War. They hated Hayes and, although Dr. Cook treated them kindly, none of them trusted him.

So, Boss, let me suggest that you read the three books mentioned above. I think that you'll enjoy them, aside from the information they contain. While I have not read J. Gordon Hayes' book, it seems to me that he adds two and two and gets, not "a dumbfounding four" but something more like twenty-two.

COMRADE M. ALLEN, of Decatur, Illinois, sends us this suggestion of another book to read.

Professor Hobbs, of the University of Michigan, wrote a biography of Admiral Peary last year. In this book, he showed just how Peary reached the pole, and I believe he has the right version. He also disposes of Dr. Cook, giving plenty of evidence. Professor Hobbs is a very distinguished man and his research on the subject is undoubtedly exhaustive. I am enclosing a review of the book, *Peary*. As long as you're interested in this Polar controversy, I think you would do well to read the Hobbs book.

WE have no more Camp-Fire adherents of Peary at this writing, but what promises to be an unusually interesting discussion is on the way from Victor Shaw, *Ask Adventure* expert

on Baffinland and Greenland. Victor Shaw's Arctic experience is very extensive. He was with Peary when the meteorites were brought back, was on the Peary Relief trip to Conger the following year. Later he lived with Dr. Cook, and we gather from preliminary rumblings that he's satisfied that both men reached the Pole. If we have mistaken his attitude from an advance letter he sends, a correction will be made.

Dr. John Walter Goodsell, of Sandy Lake, Pa., surgeon of Peary's final expedition (1908-09) sends us a quartz crystal from Mt. Pullen, Grant Land, the winter quarters of Peary's ship *Roosevelt*. So far he has not commented on the general discussion, but I hope word will be forthcoming.

MAJOR ANTHONY FIALA was photographer of the Baldwin-Ziegler Arctic expedition 1901-02, and commanding officer of the Ziegler Polar Expedition 1903-05 which reached 82°4' North, accompanied Theodore Roosevelt through the Brazilian wilderness 1913-14, and is now a well-known outfitter and adviser of exploring expeditions. He writes:

I am glad to see that there is a change in the opinions of quite a number of people in regard to Dr. Cook.

There has been so much propaganda, however, for the other man that it will be a long time before Dr. Cook gets his just reward.

FROM F. J. Campbell, lawyer, of Galena, Ill., we hear:

With considerable interest I read the article entitled The Adventures of Dr. Cook, in the March number.

I have read many articles maligning and reviling him but until now I have no opportunity to apprehend his side. I am not prepared to say that his side is right, but I am glad to know that he has had the opportunity to have his presentation laid before the public. It gives me gratification to know that any person whosoever, when attacked, may have the vehicle through which he may present his vindication. I thank you.

DR. F. P. THOMPSON, eye specialist, of Chicago and a close friend of Dr. Cook, says:

I read with a great deal of interest the "Adventures of Doctor Cook" by Ted Leitzell.

I know Dr. Cook in all probabilities better than any other man alive today. I have been with him so much and so often that it seems I knew his every thought.

I have never had any occasion to feel that Cook was an impostor. Your comment in the Camp-Fire will be a revelation to not only many of Cook's friends, but also to many of his enemies.

WILLIAM I. LYON, President of the Inland Bird Banding Association, writes from Waukegan, Illinois, of his own meeting with Dr. Cook.

I wish to compliment you on giving Dr. Cook a break.

I am a member of the Chicago Adventurers' Club where I have met Dr. Cook many times. I was greatly impressed with him and succeeded in getting him a date with my Rotary in Waukegan as a matter of helping him out. I think the entire club was impressed with his honesty and simplicity of his speech. After the speech Dr. Cook and I spent considerable time together. I found all his statements very accurate and was very much impressed and I certainly wish to thank you for giving Dr. Cook the break I think he justly deserves.

EXPLORER and lecturer, Alonzo W. Pond, who accompanied Roy Chapman Andrews to the Gobi and led three expeditions in Algeria and Tunisia, feels (and so do we) that a scientific study should be made of the claims of Peary and Cook.

I recall a conversation several years ago at the Adventurers Club of Chicago in which some of the boys expressed the belief that Dr. Cook really had done what he said he had. I enjoyed the way you handled the material. It would be a service to exploration if *Adventure* could be the means of bringing about a sincere and impartial investigation which would give the world the *truth* about *both* explorers and "give credit where credit is due."

HUGO LEVIN, of Chicago, has made a long study of the Polar dispute, and he goes into his conclusions in detail.

I first began studying the careers of Cook and Peary, along with many other explorers, twelve years ago when I still lived in Sweden. There are several important points I want to discuss but first I'll quote from J. Gordon Hayes in a more recent book than his biography of Peary you discuss. It is "The Conquest of the North Pole" published by the Macmillan company in 1934.

On page 47 he discusses Cook, saying "He believed that he reached the Pole on April 20, 1908, and this does not appear impossible, though it may be improbable. His astronomical studies were fuller than Peary's; Cook took longitude as well as latitude observations, and they do not form a bad series, but his chronometer could not be checked and there is no certainty as to the position of his turning point. Apart from this, he made no incredible claims, and his daily distances were not more, on the average, than 15 miles." On the following page, after a friendly review of Cook's story, he submits "1. That, in the year 1908, Dr. Cook probably reached at least as high a latitude as that attained by Admiral Peary the following year; 2. That Cook's statements, except in relation to his attainment of the North Pole and possibly his Glacial Island, may be accepted as substantially genuine, truthful, and accurate; 3. That, therefore, the newspaper and other charges of fraudulence were unjustified."

In his book, "Antarctica", Hayes says on page 58, "In the later example (Carmen Land), as with Dr. Cook's Glacial Island in the Arctic Ocean the formation may be amphibious—a hybrid of sea and land ice."

I quote these passages to show that Hayes gives Cook a great deal of credit; the surprising thing to me, after reading his evidence for Cook, is that he doubts him at all.

I will give you a short outline of the main points in the controversy, and their bearing on Dr. Cook's case.

There are four main points standing out against Dr. Cook's claim.

1. The Eskimo testimony against Cook.

2. Did Cook have food enough on his sledges to travel to the Pole and back?

3. Stefansson's attack on Cook in *Harpers Magazine*, October 1919.

4. The Copenhagen verdict "not proven" after going over Cook's observations and field notes.

1. Not much need to be said about the Eskimo story. Five of them have been published and no two are alike. The first one was by Knud Rasmussen, who heard the story from Eskimos who had learned the news from Cook's companions. This was during his visit at Cape York in the late summer, 1909.

This story corroborates Dr. Cook's in every detail.

The second story is the one published by Peary in the press October 18, 1909.

In 1918 Mac Millan, just back from the "Crocker Land Expedition" published an Eskimo story, the third, in the Geographical Journal, that differs in many important details from the 1909 story, and shows an altogether different route. In his book "How Peary Reached the Pole" (1934) Mac Millan again tells the story, now with an altogether new course and different details. Still he has nerve enough to say that the story of the Eskimos has "not varied one iota."

The fifth story was told by Panikpa, father of Cook's companion E-tuk-i-skook, to the Royal Canadian Police force in Ellemere's Land. This indicates a route that went south instead of north after the crossing of Ellemere's Land and down to Johnes Sound. Since it is proven that Cook reached Svartevoeg this story can be ruled out altogether. None of those stories challenging Cook agree, which shows how very little value they have, specially as the first inquisition by Peary's men in 1909 was held by men with personal interest in denying Cook's story.

The big game hunter, Harry Whitney, a neutral witness, was not allowed to be present. And we have his statement to the press that the day after the inquisition the Eskimos came to him and asked "What Peary's men wanted them to say?"

2. The food question: all that is necessary to point out is that Nansen and Johnsson carried less provisions, on their sledges when they left the Fram for the dash north than Cook had when his two supply sledges turned back three marches out. Still Nansen lived longer in the field before killing his first big game than Cook.

3. And now I will briefly touch Stefansson's so-called proofs against Cook. In his article—series "Solving the Problems of the Arctic" in Harpers October, 1919, he slipped in a few pages of attack on Cook. Stefansson had just discovered Meighen Island (or "Second Land" as he calls it then). First

he gives a hostile outline of Cook's Expedition. By lack of knowledge of Cook's narrative (in spite of his own statement that he had read it), or for other reasons, he makes several false statements in quoting Cook. For one thing he says Cook tells "how astronomical observations were taken with frost-bitten fingers, and is vague only in such uninteresting details as the latitude and longitude that resulted from the computation."

(This statement is copied from Stefansson's article.) This is absolutely false as Cook never mentioned "frost-bitten fingers" and always gives the result of every observation.

Stefansson further tells how Cook's expedition fought their way south under overcast skies, unable to get an observation for weeks.

"The situation was getting desperate indeed when one day the sun of a sudden came out bright and clear." This was the long-hoped-for opportunity and we have as convincing a description as usual how the astronomical observation was taken; but, curiously (and, as it were, unfortunately) we have in this case not only an exact statement of the method used in taking the observations but an actual statement of the result—79° 34′ North Latitude and 101° 22′ West Longitude."

In "My Attainment of the Pole" (the book Stefansson said he had read) Cook writes (page 328) "I took observations. They gave latitude 79° 32′ and longitude 101° 22′. At least I had discovered our whereabouts—."

Not a word about "frost-bitten fingers."

Now Stefansson claims that this point is in the center of the 600 foot high island he discovered (Meighen Island).

When checking on Meighen Island position he gives its southwestern corner to 79° 50′ 24″ North Latitude and 102° 15′ West Longitude. Those figures are in Harpers.

In 1921 Stefansson's book "The Friendly Arctic" was published. Here he gives all his longitude in West Greenwich up to 1916 (the year he discovered Meighen Island). But in 1916 he gives his longitude east or west Cape Isacksson's meridian. So the southwest corner of Meighen Island is given as "Meridian distance about 4° 15′ East Cape Isacksson." In order to translate those figures to West Greenwich we must know the position of Cape Isacksson. On page 506 in "The Friendly Arctic" he tells how he and Carstel took a series of observations at this cape. The result, he says, showed that the cape was farther east than given on the map. Yet Stefansson does not give the result of his observations. In other words (to use the sarcasm he threw at Cook) he describes "how astronomical observations were taken with frostbitten fingers, and is vague only in such uninteresting details as latitude or longitude that resulted from the computation."

Why does he withhold those figures that will make it possible to compare Meighen Island's position with those given earlier? On the maps in the book no point of Meighen Island touches the 100 meridian. So from 1919 to 1921 the island has drifted over two degrees east.

It seems to be the fate of all Stefansson's attacks against Cook to return like a boomerang to the thrower. He says about Cook, "We found that the spot of latitude or longitude given by him (Cook) (79° 32′ N. Latitude, 101° 22′ W. Longitude) did not show any moving sea ice nor any sea ice at all, and it is instead near the center of an island which we have named "Second Land" (later Meighen Island) and seven hundred or eight hundred feet above sea level. We have in this fact, which I trust will still remain a fact when the next explorer goes there, either a proof that obviously truthful narratives are not necessarily true: or else we have here the most remarkable instance on record of that well-known (although in non-volcanic regions seldom rapid) geographical phenomenon of land rising from the sea."

By checking up the real position of Meighen Island and comparing it with Dr. Cook's position we will find that Cook was over 30 miles southwest of the island on the drifting sea ice where he said he was.

To deny Cook's claim to the Pole on the fact he did not see an island 30 miles away is as absurd as to say that Nordenskjold and Nansen did not sail through the North East passage just because none of them saw Northern Land north of Cape Chelyaskin. And even by the first figures Stefansson gave for his island, Cook's position on the ice was at least fifteen miles from the nearest coast line.

I might add that this is a fair sample of *all* the charges against Dr. Cook.

5. And now a few words about the Copenhagen verdict.

After examining Cook's paper the University of Copenhagen reached the judgment "not proven." This is a neutral verdict and not, as Peary's followers claimed, "guilty."

Shortly after the verdict was published, Prof. Henrik Scharling, of the University of

Copenhagen, published a book, or rather a pamphlet, named "Nordpolen og Videnskapen til belysning av Cook-sagen." (The North Pole and Science, and its Bearing on Cook's Cause) (published 1^10). So far as I know this pamphlet was never translated into English and I never saw it quoted in the American or English part of the controversy.

The work is in Dr. Cook's defense, pointing out the impossibility of having the results of observations prove that he arrived at the Pole. He also foresees that Peary's observations will be equally useless, as they later proved to be.

It may be of interest for you to know that both Dr. Cook's Eskimo companions to the Pole are dead.

E-tuk-i-skook died late in 1934 and Ahwe-lak in February, 1935. Both had the highest reputation and fame as mighty hunters and travelers, a well-earned repuation after all the long and dangerous expeditions they had taken part in under so many of the world's most famous Arctic explorers.

I am quite sure that the North Pole controversy will arouse a great deal of interest among your readers. There will be much said for and against Dr. Cook.

Personally, I believe that Dr. Cook came as close to the North Pole as instruments can lead a man, and that belief is based on many years painstaking and interesting research work.

ANOTHER friend of Dr. Cook is Paul Benton, of the Philadelphia Record, who investigated him as a newspaper man. He writes:

I was particularly interested because some six or seven years ago, I think it was in May of '32, I went to East Aurora, N. Y., where Dr. Cook was then living with his daughter and son-in-law and spent some eight hours continuously with him. I was then associate editor of the Gannett Newspapers and had been approached by a man who knew Cook and insisted that he had been abominably victimized. He wanted me to do a series of articles about Cook and his achievements for the Gannett Newspapers. I had agreed to talk with Cook, form my own opinion and either write the articles or not depending upon my belief in him.

When I left East Aurora that night I was as thoroughly convinced as one can be of anything not definitely provable that it was quite as likely he'd reached the Pole as that Peary did and, what was more important, that Cook was an honest and misunderstood man. When he returned from the arctic and the great controversy broke Cook knew little or nothing of the arts of publicity, had no important backing, was hot tempered and smarting under a deep sense of injury. He made many errors of tactics and strategy in his battle with Peary and was faced by the opposition of the Navy, the National Geographic Society, the N. Y. Times which was syndicating Peary's story and other extremely influential groups. I doubt whether it has ever been proved that Cook was untruthful.

At any rate, having met him as an absolute sceptic I became a firm believer in the man. And some twenty years of newspapering has not disposed me to put too much faith in my fellow man, unfortunately. I wrote the articles for the Gannett Newspapers and subsequently a full page article condensing them for the News Enterprise Association which was syndicated to the papers they serve. In our long talk Dr. Cook answered every question, even the most searching and impolite, frankly, without hesitation or evasion. I tell you that man is no shoddy explorer, no cheap liar.

A COMRADE who ought to be rewarded, and to whom I make apology, is James L. Freeborn, of New York. More than a year ago he wrote to ask this question:

What is the proper "dead man's hand" at poker? Is it jacks and eights, or aces and eights?

We wrote that we didn't know but the Camp-Fire followers would, and we'd put it up to them. And somehow the question went into the hell-box, which is an editorial way of saying we plumb forgot, lost or mislaid it. Comrade Freeborn writes that he has looked at Camp-Fire for twelve months, and he'd still like to know about the "dead man's hand."

Will some of you who know be good enough to write in and let us forward this information?

H. B.

ASK ADVENTURE

Information you can't get elsewhere

BIBLIOGRAPHY for a mountain scaler.

Request:—Will you recommend a book or list of titles that covers the fundamentals and more advanced knowledge of the sport of mountain climbing?

—Wm. L. Scholl, Bremerton, Wash.

Reply by Mr. T. S. Solomons:—Two books of late years have been noteworthy contributions to the technique of mountain climbing. "Mountain Craft," by Young, and "Mountaineering", by several authors, a sort of symposium of authority, each in his more specialized line. The former was published in 1920. The latter, published in 1934, includes a chapter or so by the same Young, admitting the value of "piton" craft, which is the comparatively new technical, mechanical aid to the more perpendicular forms of rock-climbing. The second part of this book is devoted to various climbing regions of the world.

Of other recent works more or less technical in their information, there is Irving's "Romance of Mountaineering," 1935, "Climbing Days," by Richards, 1935, and "The Mountaineering Art," by Raeburn, 1920.

Earlier, there is "Mountain Climbing," by Wilson, 1897, and "Mountaineering," by Dent, 1892. There are several books by the Duke of Abruzzi besides his Arctic exploration journals; and Edward Whymper, the great English mountain climber, published a number from 1860 to about 1892. Works on Mount Everest of recent years, which contain more or less mountain climbing lore as applied to the Himalayas are by Hugh Rutledge, in 1934 and 1935; and "The Naked Mountain," by Elizabeth Knowlton, 1933. There are any number of books *about* mountains and mountain climbing that are picturesque, descriptive and adventurous. You seem to have

wanted more the methods, and the above list will give you plenty!

THE best all round gun silencer—the wide open spaces.

Request:—I am under the impression that silencers are not really effective on firearms of a larger caliber than .22, and then only on a rifle or on a single-shot. Recently, however, I read a fact story dealing with the breaking up of a gang of New York thugs and the capture of their extensive arsenal. It included silencers for all types and calibers of revolvers and automatics, as well as one for a machine-gun.

So for my questions: Is the silencer effective on large caliber guns? Can any type with which you are familiar be attached to the muzzle of a weapon without leaving marks that can readily be distinguished? Can a silencer be used successfully on either a revolver or on an automatic? Have you, in your researches, ever known of a silencer being used in the commission of a murder? (My interest is purely academic!)

Nobody up here pays any attention to the report of a shot, and the vast distances would supply all the silencer needed by the most murderously inclined villain. However, I'd really like to know what is true.

I was a member of ADVENTURE'S "Writers' Brigade" in the magazine's early days (1914-'15-'16). Victor Shaw of your A. A. Staff lived across the trail from me in this little settlement for a considerable period, and I've read your published letters with very great interest for many years. Your department is very popular up here, where every second man fancies himself a gun-sharp. It will be a great pleasure to hear from you.

—Ross A. Ellis, Loring, Alaska.

Reply by Mr. Donegan Wiggins:—Silencers for firearms are now prohibited by the Federal Government, and hence can't be had in the open market, although they are still made and sold in England.

I fancy, however, that silencers are being made and sold to certain parties, as the design of the Maxim Silencer was such that it would be a simple thing for a good machinist to copy one.

As to silencing a revolver, it can't be done, due to the fact that gases will escape from between barrel and cylinder in all revolvers, (save the Russian Nagants, of which I know of no specimens for sale in this country). In fact, the only multishot pistols I ever knew to operate satisfactorily with the silencers were the .22 Colts and Reisings, which, with the .22 long rifle, were really silenced. But larger caliber arms just didn't take it, although I have seen illustrations from agents' lists of Luger pistols with silencers, long barrels, .32 shot magazines, stocks, and telescopic sights with sling strap, I never saw one of the pistols so fitted, however.

The machine guns are sometimes fitted with Cutts' Compensators to reduce the recoil, but this is not a silencing device, although to some extent resembling it, and very possibly press representatives, who are low on firearms information anyhow, thought the compensator was a silencer.

I know of only one case of a killer using a silencer-equipped arm. He was a fiend who terrorized Omaha, Nebraska, some years since, killing two men and wounding others for fancied injuries, with a .22 Colt automatic equipped with a silencer. Yes, he hung.

A SNAKE, disaffectionately known as "tommygoff."

Request:—This is another of the old questions of local terminology *vs.* scientific names, and is, I suppose, out of your line, but I would appreciate any information you might have on the subject.

A snake called "tommy gaw" (the spelling by guess) was pretty generally feared and conceded to be deadly. It was, I understand, a Panamanian reptile.

Also, what is a "canejo"?

If any of the old Tabervilla Hunt Club (Balboa) are still around, they'll know what I mean, for I heard these words while hunting with them.

—Frank Dobbins, Washington, D. C.

Reply by Mr. Seymour Pond:—The word "Tommygoff" is the West Indian linguistic word for "snake"—just plain snake of any description. The Chiriqui Indians of northern Panama today refer to several species of snakes as tommygoffs, and thus the word may mean any of several types of reptiles. The word, according to Dr. H. C. Clark of the Gorgas Memorial Laboratory, was carried into Central America in the early 1900's, when the United Fruit Company imported a lot of Jamaican Negroes to work on their banana plantations in the region of Almirante, of Las Bocas or Bocas del Toro on the Atlantic coast of Panama.

At that time there was a snake called the "Horn Palm Viper" about eighteen inches

long, and venomous, prevalent in the country and the West Indians referred to this reptile as the tommygoff. So that this may be the snake to which you have reference.

However, the fer de lance is another reptile very common in that region and Dr. Clark states that the word tommygoff has also been applied to it, while some of the Chiriqui Indians refer to a large snake some four feet long, and like the fer de lance, very venomous, as a tommygoff!

The "Canejo" to which you refer is a herbivorous animal and one most sought in the Spanish Americas as an edible meat by Indian and whiteman. It grows to about the size of a small pig and in aspect is something of a cross between a pig and a rabbit, although resembling slightly a huge rat—with somewhere in his gait the canter of a pig. His flesh is delicious eating, resembling chicken and pork and is one of the most delectable meats found in the tropical world.

DEVELOPING a home movie film.

Request:—I have been an amateur photographer for many years, and I have lately become interested in home movies. Could you tell me the formula for developing 16-mm. films, reversal process, or where I could procure a book on same?

It would be a simple matter for me to make the necessary revolving drum, etc., and if I knew the correct developing agent, I am sure I could develop them myself.

—H. B. Sneesby, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—So far as I know, none of the manufacturers of 16-mm. film has ever released any information about the processing of reversible film, nor is there any book on the subject. Various information on the subject has been published from time to time in *American Photography*, in the department called "The Ciné Amateur," and it might be that by writing to them you could get the back numbers containing this material. Their address is 353 Newbury Street, Boston, Massachusetts. All of this information, however, is the result of amateur experiment, and can hardly serve as much more than a basis for you to do your own experimenting.

One thing I might suggest would be for you to start on the basis of the reversing process recommended for Autochrome color films, but you must remember that your second exposure to light, after bleaching, is not total, as with Autochromes, but must be controlled, depending on the density of the negative image which you have secured in the first development. The Eastman Kodak Company control this in their processing by means of a photo-electric cell, a frame or two ahead of the exposure, which controls a shutter, thus regulating the second exposure.

After all, just why do you want to do your own processing? When you buy ordinary 16-mm. film your purchase price includes the charge for processing, and the differential, which is something like 75 cents per hundred feet, would be more than made up by spoiling one film, so there would be no saving in it.

If you want to do this work for your own amusement, by all means go ahead, but if it is with the idea of saving money or of getting better results, you will do much better to let the manufacturer do the processing for you.

If you decide to go ahead with it, look up the apparatus built by R. P. Stineman, 918 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles. You will find it, I think, preferable to what you would make for yourself.

GRIZZLY details.

Request:—Can you give me any information on the hunting of the large bear in Alaska? Where they are to be found? Are there any restrictions as to the time or number to be killed?

Where can guides be hired? What are the facilities for flying? Can planes be rented? What would be the best place to go in Alaska—Kadiak Island?

Will appreciate any information you can give me.

—E. P. Lawson, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Ernest W. Shaw:—Large bear may be found almost anywhere in Alaska back from the coast towns, particularly along the streams and rivers having runs of salmon. Grizzlies have been shot from Ketchikan northward, and the Alaska brown also, although this latter are more plentiful further north along the coastal range. The Kadiax or large Alaskan brown bear is found on Kadiak Island, Admiralty Island and vicinity.

Brown and grizzly, two per season, except that only one may be taken on Admiralty Island. Season September 1 to June 20. Nonresident: $50 for general license.

Guides can be obtained almost any where in the hunting country, and planes can be hired at Fairbanks for trips into the various sections of the hunting country. There are certain areas in which hunting is either re-

stricted or prohibited entirely, and you can obtain this, and all other information, from the Alaska Game Commission, Juneau, Alaska.

All the required information you desire can be obtained from Alaska Guides, Inc., Juneau or Fairbanks, Alaska. Since it is very desirable for a stranger to employ a guide, I suggest that you write the above office, stating the number of your party, the approximate period in which you desire to hunt, and they will advise you and put you in touch with registered, responsible guides. However, if one should just happen to arrive in the hunting country without advance notice, I think there is no doubt he could make all necessary arrangements for a trip. Taking it up in advance saves lots of time, though.

A CANOE'S a fragile craft.

Request:—We are thinking of a canoe trip down the Missouri River from Butte, Montana, to Saint Louis, and from there up the Illinois and Fox Rivers to Elgin. We plan to carry camping equipment and camp ashore every evening. Any help you can give us will be very much appreciated.

F. Wettin, Jr., Des Plaines, Ill.

Reply by Mr. Edgar S. Perkins:—I do not believe the trip you plan is a very feasible one for a canoe. If I remember rightly, this was tried once in a wooden rowboat and finally done in a steel rowboat. May I suggest that you start somewhere around the Ft. Berthold Indian Reservation, it is a safer place for a canoe.

The Missouri River has the usual sandbars, snags, etc., that any large river of that type would have. You will have to carry your own fresh water supply on the rivers and replenish it at towns.

WHEN deadly weapons were things of beauty.

Request:—In 1927 I purchased in Paris, from an old armorer not far from the Louvre Galleries, a rapier of the XVIth century. He wrote on the back of his card "Epee Renaissance", and told me that the blade dated from about 1580 to 1595. In the groove of the blade just below the hilt on one side is the name "SÆBASTIEN" with the AE a sort of diphthong. In the groove on the reverse of blade are faint letters which look like "NANTES". Almost hidden by the collar with the longitudinal grooves where the two curved cross hilt arms and the various pieces of the wrought member of hilt come together, there is a crest or insignia stamped into the rectangular shank of the blade. Perhaps it could be described as a winged capital "T". Is it possible that the winged "T" indicates Toledo steel? The grain of the blade has no noticeable longitudinal marking such as one would expect to find in the wire-bundle forging of a Toledo.

The fluted ball on end of hilt is of hollow formation, and the handle is wrapped with braided steel wire, which may or may not be as old as the rest of the rapier.

On the reverse side of the hilt, and at the extreme lower part of it there is a plate of steel set into a groove in a framing loop of the wrought material of the hilt. This plate is thin and perforated with many tiny holes, and seems to be of some type of spring steel.

The blade has a diamond section all the way down; and the steel is still so good that the blade may be bent through ninety degrees on the floor, but I am careful not to go too far with such demonstration.

Will you kindly give me any information you can on the armorer and the possible date of fashioning?

Many thanks for your trouble. I would be interested in procuring a mate for this one, from the same period and of about the same length and design. The length from bottom of hilt to tip is just thirty-eight inches.

—Richard B. Black, U. S. C. G. *Itasca*.

Reply by Captain R. E. Gardner:—The rapier, described so well in your fine letter is of Spanish origin and the work of one of Toledo's famed bladesmiths.

You were correct in your assumption that the "T" mark was that of Toledo and I am of the opinion that this weapon was produced by Sebastian Hermandez, the younger, circa 1600-1610.

You possess a fine weapon which appears authentic in all details.

THE weekly suicide of Charlie Noble.

Request:—I should like if possible, to learn something concerning the origin of the term "Charlie Noble" as applied to the galley smokestack. One "old salt" who served two "hitches" in the British Navy prior to the Spanish American War and was in the American Navy during that war tells me that the galley smokestacks on ships of the British

Navy was called "Charlie Noble" at the time of the "Rebellion of the Nore," which he thought occurred in the year 1789. I have talked to other old navy men, none of whom know anything about how long this term has been in use, but all say that it was a well established custom at the time of their service.

I would also like to know if there is any book to be had at the present time that would give any information concerning customs and usages of the navy of the period prior to the Civil War.

If you can either give me this information or refer me to some one who can do so, I will certainly appreciate the favor.

—Nat Williams, Napa, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—Charlie Noble was, I believe, an Englishman who manufactured galley ranges for the British Navy in the latter part of the XVIIIth century. His place was at Southampton (perhaps Gosport) and on each neatly polished copper uptake he put a little name plate with "Charles Noble" engraved thereon. The galley smokestack being thus labeled, soon took the name of the manufacturer and has been called Charlie Noble to this day, in both the British and American Navies.

In the days of wooden steam men-o'-war, some fifty years ago, each Friday night, after the galley fire was extinguished at eight o'clock, a gunner's mate would bring a pistol, with two chambers loaded, into the galley, thrust it up the base of the stack and fire the two shots. The first loosened the soot and the second brought it down. When those two pistol shots were heard, the orderly routine of the fighting ship broke down and everyone let out a yell, half cheer, half derisive. Any recruit would be told: "Poor Charlie Noble's gone; he just shot himself, poor fellow," and so on.

But Charlie is dead today and steam killed him. The galley stack leads into the main funnel nowadays and soon the name may be forgotten.

As for a book, let me suggest one called, I think, "Naval Customs and Traditions." I don't remember the author's name but it is published by the U. S. Naval Institute, Annapolis, Md.

WE ARE printing this letter because it seems interesting to us. But also it is specific. It was sent directly to the expert. The stamped addressed envelope enclosed. Thank you.

Request:—Will you please give my family some information about Madagascar and living conditions there?

If one wanted to take one's family and go there for a rest and incidentally to study agricultural conditions there for a year or two, could one buy a parcel of land cheaply and be self-subsistent while residing there?

What are the natural resources and what are the most healthful parts to live in? How large is the population and to what race do the natives belong?

Are sleeping sickness and malaria prevalent there or is it very healthful? I've always imagined the latter.

Are there cheap native materials of which we could construct a comfortable dwelling?

What is the largest town and how thickly is Madagascar settled? Are any ports unsafe?

Is land dirt-cheap there?

What are the requirements demanded of emigrants by the French government?

—Elizabeth Pyncheon, Flatonia, Texas.

Reply by Prof. Ralph Linton:—It would be decidedly difficult to buy good land. The prices would not be high by American standards, but the native system of land inheritance makes it the property of families rather than individuals and no family will part with its land except in extremity. Moreover, the local authorities, who are extremely jealous of non-French settlers, would certainly make all sorts of difficulties and delays. The only land that you could get would probably be rather dry pasture land and it would take two or three years to get it into production.

The climate and natural resources both vary greatly in different parts of the island. You must realize that the place is several times the size of the state of Texas. On the eastern side of the island there is heavy tropical jungle with almost constant rain. On the south and west the country is arid with genuine sand deserts in the far south. The best part for Europeans is the central plateau, with an elevation of about three thousand feet and a rather dry, temperate climate. This section is good for grazing and for irrigated rice culture. In the south there is some mining for mica and graphite, but the work requires a good deal of capital to start with and the concessions are in the hands of large French companies.

The present population is about three million. Racially they are very much mixed but the people of the central plateau are predominantly Malay while those of the coasts are predominantly Negro. All speak various dialects of the Malay language.

There is no sleeping sickness in Madagascar, but nearly every other disease you can imagine. Malaria is bad everywhere, even in the desert section, and there is a good deal of plague. Water supply is rather scanty in the plateau and all water badly polluted so that it must be boiled to avoid dysentery and typhoid. It is unsafe even to eat raw vegetables such as salads. The plateau climate is no hotter than Texas in summer, with cool nights, but the sun is very bad. An hour's exposure of the unprotected head will give a white man sunstroke. This is not a myth. I have worked a good deal in the Southwest myself and although the Madagascar sun does not seem to be more violent it seems to have a different quality. Fifteen minutes exposure to it gave me headaches when three or four hours of Arizona sun would not.

The native clay soils make excellent adobe and the natives know how to handle it and build their own houses from it. There is no timber in the plateau for cabins, but plenty of stone in places.

The largest town is Tananarive, the capital, which is in the plateau. It has a population of over two hundred thousand with fairly good European stores, etc. The density of population varies greatly but is heaviest in the plateau and along the east coast. The people live largely in villages with long stretches of pasture land between. In the plateau, density must be thirty to forty persons to the square mile.

There are only a few ports, but these have all been improved and are safe enough for small craft.

Settlers are required to have enough funds to pay their return passage to the native country and to deposit these with the government for the first few years of their stay.

I am sorry to say that I have no literature on Madagascar which would be helpful to you, but I strongly advise against your trying to settle there. The territory is extremely unhealthy, with conditions which make it almost impossible for whites to do hard manual labor. Everybody who goes there gets malaria in the first week or two and never gets rid of it. Although it is rarely fatal, it pulls down your resistance and makes it easy for you to catch anything else. The natives are intelligent and hard working and are accustomed to such a low standard of living that they can thrive on wages on which a white man would starve to death. There is no outlet for whites, even in clerical or store work, since there are plenty of educated natives. To try to settle there and make a living by farming would be a good deal like trying to do the same thing in China.

LOST TRAILS

Word wanted of Jack Oliver Hanlon, who left his home in Seattle, Wash., Oct. 23, 1932, and was a regular reader of Adventure. Notify his mother Mrs. W. F. Hanlon, 2821 Fairview No., Seattle, Wash.

Any man who served with Ambulance Company No. 8, First Sanitary Train, First Division, A. E. F., write Archibald B. Oliver, 1747 Kentucky Street, Lawrence, Kansas.

Craig D. Hanson, who left Portland, Oregon, in 1935. Word wanted by G. P. Sylvester, 9535 S.E., Harold St., Portland, Oregon.

Where is Napier Mearns Crosett, his friend, J. Monte Dunstan, 51 South Beaver Street, York, Penn., queries.

Will "Sarge" Ralph Kingsley of Military Specialist Company, A.P.O. 727, write to "Kid" Collins Ewing, Odessa, Mo.

Captain Fred Ewing, Ex-Marine of Santo Domingo, please get in touch with Mrs. Sarrah Olson of 2103 N.W., Hoyt St., Portland, Oregon, or Ethel Ewing, 186-19th St., E., Holland, Michigan.

Eugene Barry, in 1912 Chief Steward *S. S. Byron*, New York to S. America. Later heard of in New York and in the Middle West. His brother, William Barry, Tweenways, East End, Lymington, Hampshire, England, would welcome any news.

Richard H. Wells, Box 154, Clearwater, Florida, seeks news of his friend Lee (Bill) Elliott. Last heard from was in 1922, New York State.

Wm. P. Liebenrood, who worked on construction of Madera-Mamore Railway, last heard from at Puerto Veljo, Brazil, in 1914, please send word to G. C. Hagerman, 700 South Kingsley Drive, Los Angeles.

Mrs. Beatrice Stafford Grigsby, Box 208, Paintsville, Ky., wants word of her son, Jesse John Stafford Franklin, worked in Akron, Ohio, as John Stafford, for Goodyear Rubber Co., last heard of ten years ago.

Word wanted of Calvin William (Slim) Brown, once of Ranger, Texas. By Isaac Simmons, Bloom, Kansas.

Ralph Cornwall or Cornwell, formerly of "American Legion" in Canadian Army, transferred to Intelligence service, reported caught in Germany and shot. Lately reported living. Old buddy, Wayne G. Putnam, R.R. 8, Dayton, Ohio, would like word.

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Send each question *direct* to the expert in charge of the section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. **Do Not** send questions to the magazine. Be definite; explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question. The magazine does not assume any responsibility. **No Reply** will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing or for employment.

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Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, care of *Adventure.*

Camping—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

Canoeing: *paddling, sailing, cruising, regattas*—EDGAR S. PERKINS, 603 Brainard Av., Libertyville, Ill.

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First Aid—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

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Football—JOHN B. FOSTER, care of *Adventure.*

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Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

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Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 11 Park St., Brookline, Mass.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Ave., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No 3, BOX 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiff, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DeB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 980 Northwest Blvd., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, County Office Bldg., Recreation Comm., White Plains, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Authropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Tropical Forestry: *tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, Chapel Hill, N. C.

Herpetology: *reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, care of *Adventure.*

Marine Architecture: *ship modeling*—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mining: *territory anywhere in North America, Mining law, prospecting outfitting; any mineral, metallic or nonmetallic*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

Photography: *outfitting, work in out-of-the-way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Precious and semi-precious stones: *cutting and polishing of gem materials; technical information*—F. J. ESTERLIN, 901-902 Shreve Bldg., 210 Post Road, San Francisco, Calif.

Radio: *telegraphy, telephony, history, receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, 132 Union Road, Roselle Park, N. J.

Railroads: *in the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling—HAPSBURG LIEBE, care of *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—SETH BULLOCK, care of *Adventure.*

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE SUBJECTS

Army Matters: *United States and Foreign*—CAPT. GLEN R. TOWNSEND, 5511 Cabanne Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Federal Investigation Activities: *Secret Service, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

Police, City and State—FRANCIS H. BENT, 251 Third St., Fair Haven, N. J.

U. S. Marine Corps—MAJOR F. W. HOPKINS, care of *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

Philippine Islands—BUCK CONNER, Quartzsite, Ariz., care Conner Field.

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, Port Moresby, Territory Papua, via Sydney, Australia.

★New Zealand: Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 18a Sandridge St., Bondi, Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, "Cardosa," Suva, Fiji.

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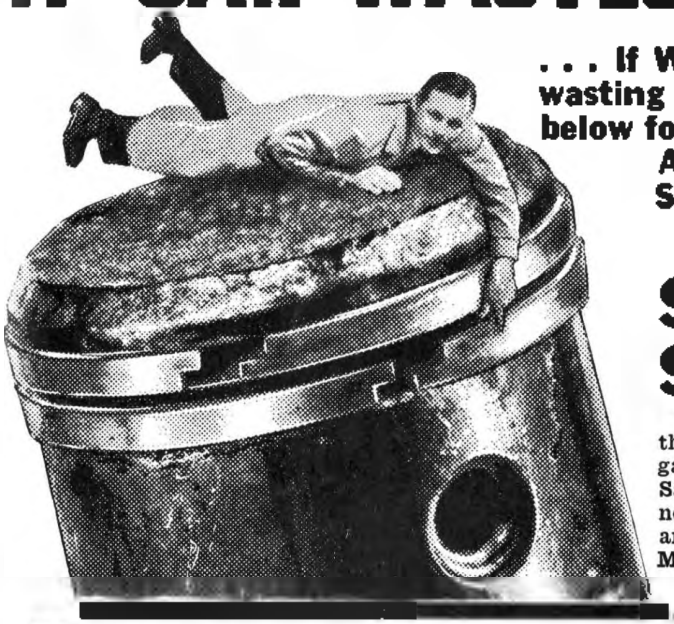

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