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NOVEMBER

SURE-THING GAMBLER
by GORDON YOUNG

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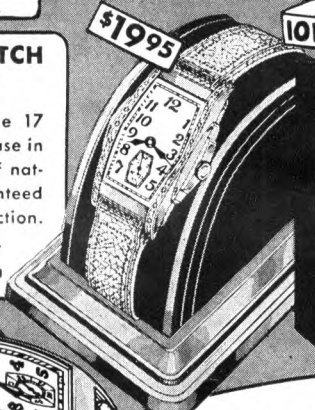

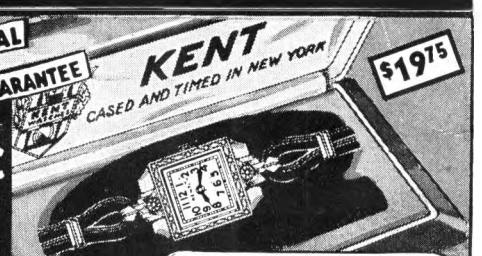

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Adventure

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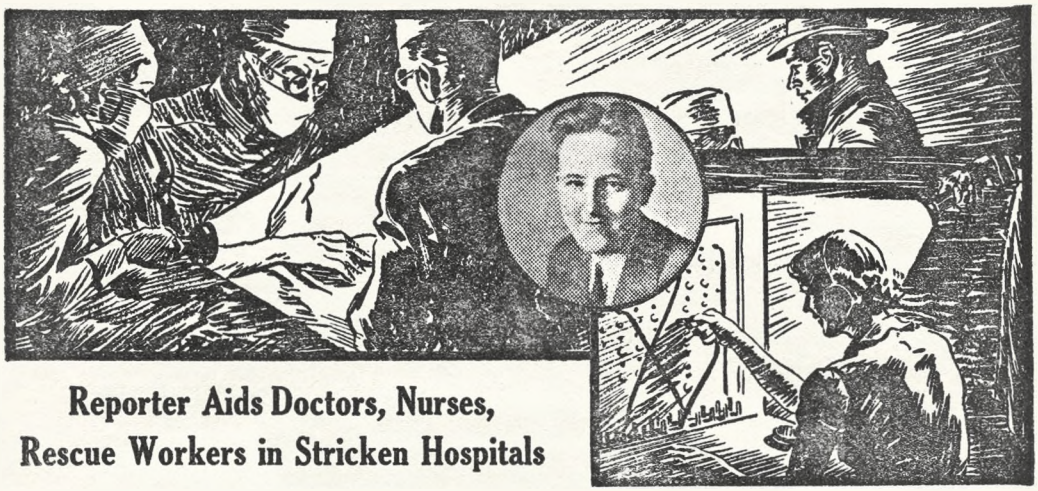
Vol. 98, No. 1 for November, 1937 Published Once a Month

Howard V. L. Bloomfield, Editor

Published once a month by Popular Publications, Inc., 2256 Grove Street, Chicago, Illinois. Editorial and executive offices, 205 East Forty-second Street, New York City. Harry Steeger, President and Secretary. Harold S. Goldsmith, Vice President and Treasurer. Entered as Second Class Matter, October 2, 1935, at the Post Office at Chicago, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1879. Yearly subscription $1.50 in advance. Single copy, 15 cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. Trade Mark Registered;

Death Loses Out in Blind City



Reporter Aids Doctors, Nurses, Rescue Workers in Stricken Hospitals

"Wherever I went that black night," writes Harry Burke, the Newark, N. J., police reporter who scooped the world in 1935 in getting to the bedside of the dying Dutch Schultz, racket overlord, "doctors, nurses, rescue workers borrowed my trusty, battered, six year old 'Eveready' flashlight.

"Under its beams an appendix was removed, wounds were dressed, telephone numbers looked up, and, of course, it saved me a dozen times from barked shins, falls and perhaps even a broken neck during that December night when a power plant failure plunged the whole city of Newark into darkness.

"Thousands of others, of course, turned to flashlights in this emergency. Police unravelled traffic jams with them, chefs fried ham and eggs, barbers shaved customers by their light. And those, like myself, who had *fresh* DATED 'Eveready' batteries, had *dependable* light that saw them safely through the thousand and one perils of the dark. In six years of reporting, that flashlight and *fresh* DATED 'Eveready' batteries have seen me through a lot of tight places, saved a lot of lives, including my own.

(*Signed*) Harry Burke

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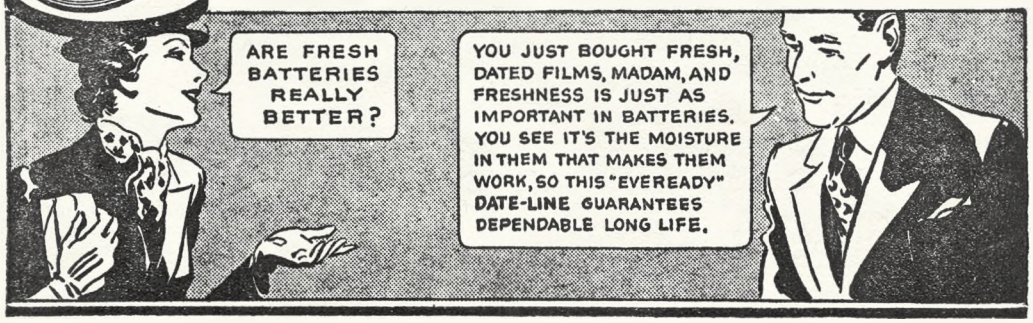


HERE AND THERE

GOLD-PANNING MADE EASY

Gold is collected from streams in Burma by a process well suited to one of the laziest races in the world. A long-haired skin is securely pegged to the bottom of the stream. After a few days it is taken out and dried in the sun. Then the Burmese shake the gold particles out of the skin. A family of four may clean up as much as 25c a day.

A METAL THAT FLOATS

Curiously, the lightest known substance outside of gases is a metal. Lithium weighs less than a fifth as much as aluminum and would float on gasoline or any other liquid. Though there is plenty of it to be made in South Dakota and California, it would never do for airplanes as it is spongy and easily catches fire.

LOST TRAILS

Where is Robert Pinkerton of 131st Company, U. S. Marine Artillery, Quantico, Va., 1917-1919? His friend Thomas P. Jordan, 1523 N. Main Ave., Scranton, Pa., queries.

William L. Harcus, Kerrville, Texas, wants news of his brother Henry (Harry) L. Harcus, Kansas City, Mo., fearing abrupt end of correspondence in 1922 meant sudden death.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank B. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D. Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

Word wanted of Hamilton Redfield Norvell, sometimes called "Reddy" or "Curley," by his brother, Stevens Thompson Norvell, 4449 Howard Ave., Western Springs, Ill. Their father died on Dec. 30, 1936. Norvell lived in Cincinnati until 1932, went to Southern Ontario.

Clarence Bailey, Cherryvale, Kansas, seeks news of Wylie Boss Smith, who sailed as oiler in June, 1934, from New Orleans on S. S. Point Salinas.

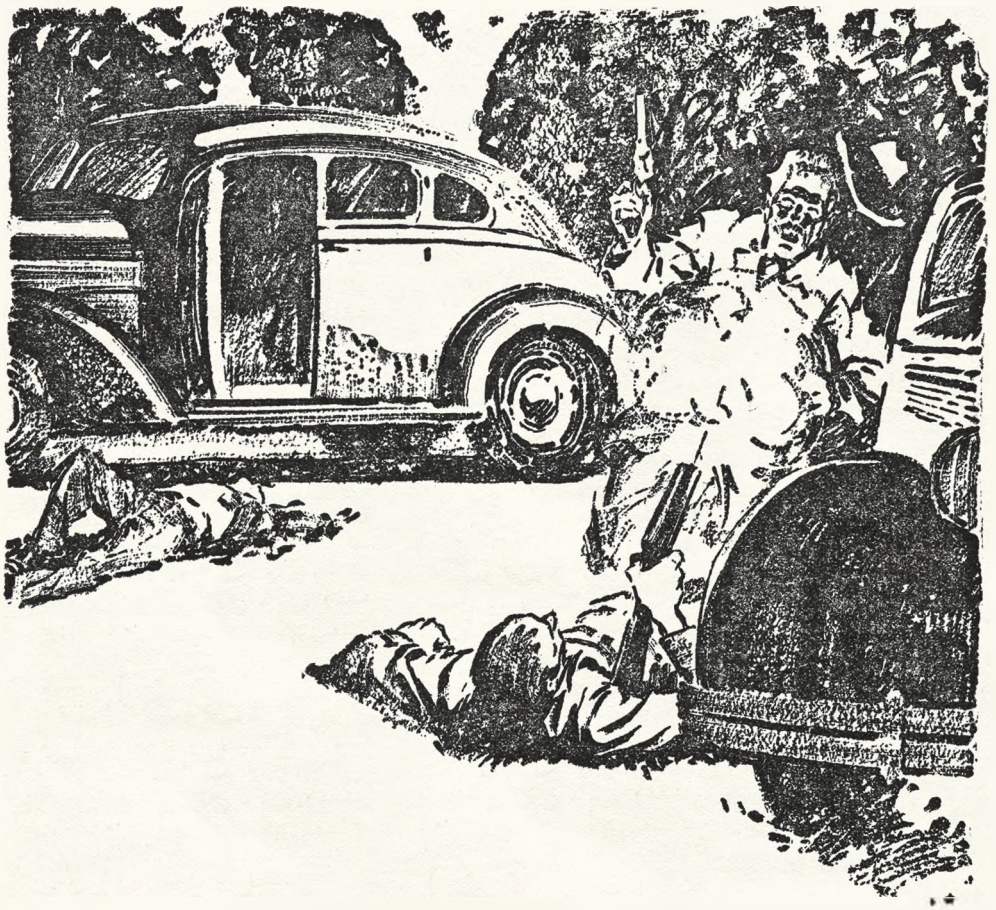
Otho Amos Duckwiler, formerly of Roanoke, Va., joined U. S. Army in 1914. Stationed Texas City, Texas, in 1914. Transferred to Field Artillery stationed Canal Zone 1918, 1919. His sister has died, and her daughter, Virginia Pulewich, 10 East 109 St., New York City, wants to get in touch with him.

Charles W. Cantrell, 8231 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, wants word of Lieut. John Lewin and O'Neil Sievere, who were with him in a filibuster expedition to Cuba shortly before the Spanish American War.

Henry D. McGregor, 1708 Baker Avenue, Everett, Wash., wants to hear from an old shipmate, Gilford John Colvin, pharmacist's mate U.S.N. 1918-1919, later in Spokane, Wash.

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.



SURE-THING GAMBLER

A Novelette

By GORDON YOUNG

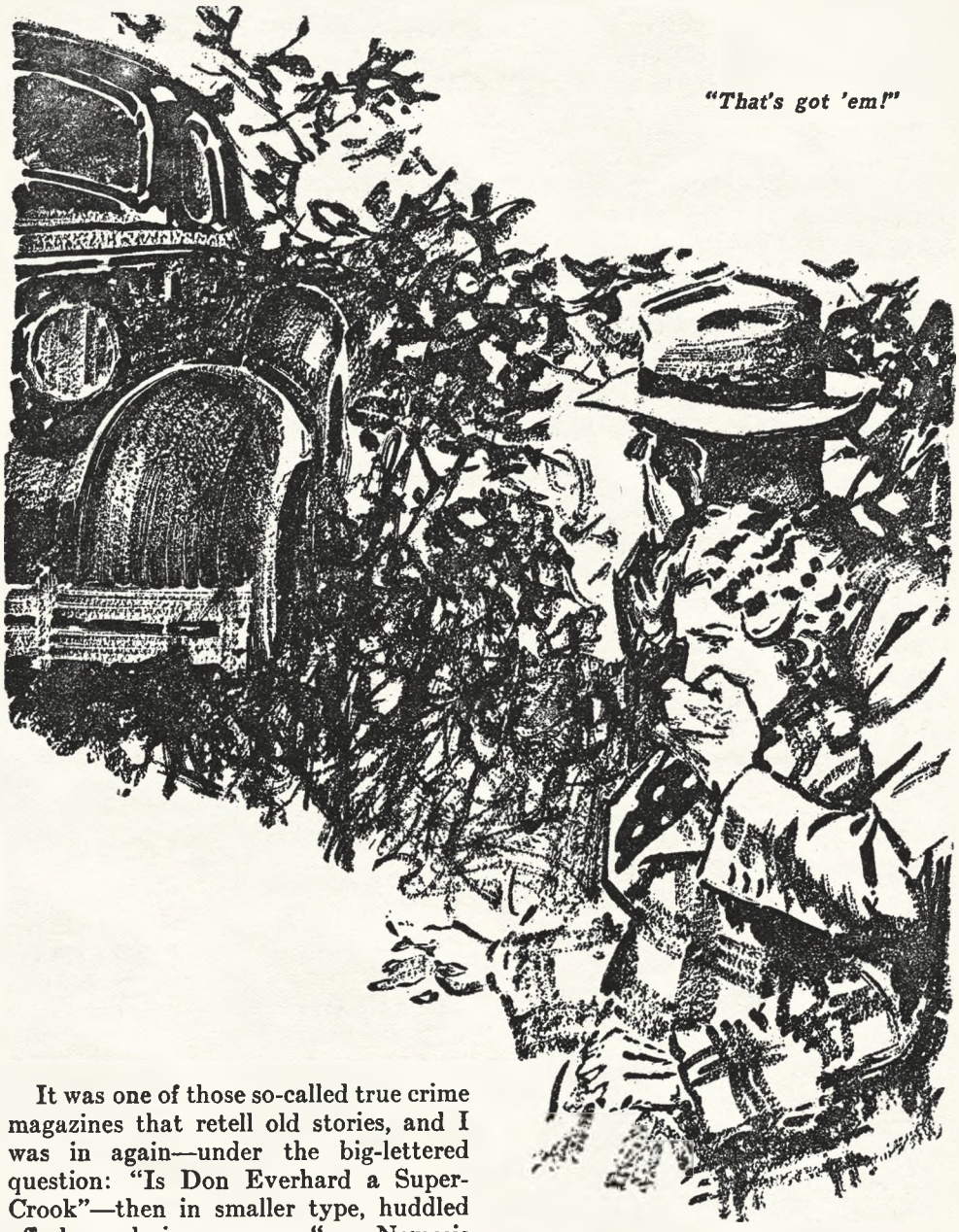
TOMMY BANNISTER came along up to my room, bringing an evening paper, a magazine, and some letters.

Tommy was a nice boy, though a jailbird—a two-time loser. Small, sickly, neat, and if you didn't get him in a corner and start crowding, very polite. He tried to go straight, really tried. I had a bargain with him: as long as he kept to the right, my bank would forward enough to make things easy for his mother. I would have done it anyhow, but being a poker player I didn't let him know that. Chicago was his home town, so during the two or three months I was taking care of some private business there he came in handy by giving me inside information about places and people.

He came in with a ruffled air and a scowl on his face.

"Matter, Tommy?"

He dropped the letters on a reading table at my elbow, threw down the paper and gripped the magazine as if about to tear it in two. He thrust it out at me and when I took it he struck the pages with his knuckles as if punching the editor's head.



"That's got 'em!"

It was one of those so-called true crime magazines that retell old stories, and I was in again—under the big-lettered question: "Is Don Everhard a Super-Crook"—then in smaller type, huddled off obscurely in a corner—"or a Nemesis of Criminals"?

"I'd like to sock the guy that wrote this!" He slapped the magazine.

It was the same old stuff, with a rehash of some of the cases where my name had appeared. The article said I was supposed to be the best poker player in America and made a specialty of trimming crook gamblers; but it asked if behind that poker face I did not have the brain that had baffled detectives and police, many of whom (it said) had sworn to get the goods on me. "Can it be that every time Don Everhard shoots

a man he *does* shoot in self-defense? He is known to have wealth plus influential friends. He has been suspected and even accused of wide spread criminal activity, let is seldom arrested and has never been convicted of a felony."

No doubt about it, the writer thought I was a "super-crook". Said I lived a "life of danger". The biggest mystery about me is, I suppose, that having had all sorts of trouble with all sorts of crooks, I am still alive. As for the "life of danger"—that depends on what you call danger. Having trouble with some bad-eyed fellows who will kill you if they have a chance is not necessarily dangerous: not at all if you out-guess 'em and shoot first.

The story was tied to the Hapsworth affair, which was called my latest "killing." It was as fair a case of self-defense as a man could have; and Jake Hapsworth, dead at forty, had lived about thirty-five years longer than was good for society. But nearly every week, often two or three times a week, I was getting letters from different parts of the country threatening to get me for shooting Hapsworth. Of course they were sent in to shake my nerve. I was sure all the letters were written by one person, who tried to disguise his handwriting and fool me by changing pens, ink, stationery, and perhaps wasn't aware that I knew all about the service for having letters mailed from any postoffice that you wanted.

For another thing, I knew that Jake Hapsworth didn't have any friends. He did have a brother whom I had never seen. They were about as vicious a pair of swindlers as ever strangled a widow for not mortgaging her home to invest in their schemes. Clever devils, too, and, differing from most confidence men, killers.

The previous winter I had been at Miami, posing as a tired business man for the benefit of card-sharpers. One night I jerked a couple of aces from up the sleeve of another tired business man. He made the mistake of pulling a gun and shooting at me. After the smoke cleared away, of course it came out that one tired business man was the notorious Don Everhard and the other tired business man, who went under the name of Smythe, was the even more notorious Jake Hapsworth, trying to pick up a little easy money among good sports.

So I credited all the threatening letters to Bill Hapsworth, Jake's brother.

I gave the magazine back to Tommy and he flung it aside. I picked up the mail, saying, "Maybe there is a note from Jake's 'avenger' to go with the story."

But there wasn't. However, I did take out a typewritten note that contained a crisp thousand dollar bill. I turned it over gingerly, suspecting counterfeit.Frequently I got samples offering packages at reduced rates. I would as soon think of using arsenic to get rid of people I do not like as of using phoney money to hook anybody. Anyhow, I don't need a phoney padding to make my roll look big, and anybody who doesn't think I know how to take care of money is welcome to try and get it away from me.

The typewritten note said: "In remembrance of a little loan you once handed me in time of need. A friend."

The letter had been mailed in Chicago.

"Say," said Tommy, "that's luck. Most guys you lend to, they never remember!"

I turned the note over and over. Lucky? Most of my so-called luck is due to a suspicious caution. When something happens that I don't understand, I shy from it as a wolf dodges a piece of iron, suspecting a trap. Things have to make sense before I accept them for what they seem to be, and this didn't. Be sure of it, when anybody pays you back he is proud enough to put a return address on the envelope and sign his name.

I didn't have the flicker of an idea of what this was all about, but I never take chances with what may be some other fellow's game.

"Tommy, this has the look and smell of a plant."

"Plant? How come? Bill marked or somethin'?"

"All bills are numbered. Maybe it is honest money. Maybe it isn't. Either way, we'll put it where it can do some good."

Right then and there I put on gloves, carefully wiped the bill to make sure my fingerprints were removed, guessing if it were a plant that the sender had used a like precaution. I put it into an envelope, printed the address in pencil and threw the pencil out of the window. Later I mailed it, with gloved fingers, far from the hotel. When I use caution I use plenty.

There was more in the evening paper about the Dunken-Kirk robbery and murder. Dunken and Kirk were brokers. Newspapers, shying from libel, hadn't yet said so, but the brokers were suspected of handling stolen bonds.

According to what was then known of the crime, an out-of-town lawyer had come to Chicago with a stack of bonds. He visited Dunken and Kirk. Of course, between the lines, everybody who read about the case and knew what was what understood that the bonds were probably stolen and the brokers were to act as a fence.

But the lawyer had fallen downstairs, sprained his back, and was put to bed in a plaster cast. He wanted to sell, but wouldn't trust the bonds out of his sight. It was cash on the line—bring the money and put the deal through, or call it off.

It must have looked like a juicy setup. Dunken and Kirk were supposed to be smart, but they drew fifty thousand dollars out of the bank and went to see the lawyer. He was in bed, all right, but sat up with a gun in his hand and a couple of men stepped into the room right behind the brokers.

Kirk had a gun on him and drew it. He was killed. Dunken was slammed over the head, left unconscious. He was so badly hurt that even yet he hadn't been able to give the police a fully coherent story.

"And never will, Tommy, if he can help it."

"What?"

"Give the police a coherent story. My bet is that to do it he'll have to admit he thought the bonds were stolen. When he admits that, he cuts his own throat."

Today the papers had a big follow-up. The lawyer's two helpers, unwisely eager to crack their share of the Dunken-Kirk loot, had gone to a suburban bank, told the story of a lucky win at the race track, and tried to get change. Dunken and Kirk hadn't been wholly boobs. When they drew the fifty thousand they took it in grands and the bank had the numbers. All the banks had been warned by the police. That was how the cops picked up their trail, cornered them in an apartment house, shot it out, recovered twenty-five thousand, and took the hoodlums to the morgue. They were identified as Sim Watson and Larry Connors, wild-eyed dopes, recently paroled from a mid-western prison; but learning their names didn't seem to help at all in learning the name of the 'lawyer'.

THE next morning, early, Tommy was back in my room with another newspaper—big extra—in his hand and he was excited. Good reason why. I took a look at the headlines and started packing.

The 'lawyer' in the Dunken-Kirk case (the paper said), perhaps to ease his conscience, had sent in a thousand dollar bill to the Community Chest. When the bill was deposited the number clicked with the stolen money that had not been recovered.

It was to the Community Chest that I had mailed my mysterious thousand dollar bill.

"What 'n 'ell does it mean?" said Tommy.

"Lots of things. First, you and I have to jump, quick. The cops will make a snatch at me. If they miss, they'll grab at you, just on the chance you know something."

"Who done it?"

"Offhand, I'd guess Bill Hapsworth. Typical Hapsworth job—a confidence swindle backed with a killing when the sucker showed fight. He's probably tried to make good all those threats he has been mailing me. Cops may crash in here any minute. Even if they don't find the money, nice time I would have persuading them. And you forget I'm due in Mexico."

An hour later I was in an obscure boarding house under another name and Tommy was also under cover.

The police jumped—and missed. There was a big hue and cry. The fact that I had run seemed to be a confession of guilt.

Just how strong the frame-up against me was I soon learned from the papers, though they didn't suspect it was a frame. The thousand dollar bill wasn't merely a little plant. The Dunken-Kirk "lawyer" thought deeper than that. His plan misfired for a couple of reasons that showed how little, for all his cleverness, he understood human nature—certainly my nature. He never imagined that I would not keep the bill.

His set-up was this: He had taken advantage of the fact that a lot of people believed I was a "super-crook" to make Dunken and Kirk think I was in on the deal, really back of it. That seems to have helped the brokers fall for his story.

But naturally, when questioned by the cops, Dunken didn't want to confess that he had been dealing in stolen bonds. He tried to stick to the story that he thought he was dealing in honest stuff with a real lawyer. But the police uncovered some stolen bonds in the broker's vault. Then Dunken came through and said he had been given to understand that I was behind the deal.

He seemed to think that guaranteed it as big and safe.

I suppose if I had walked into headquarters and tried to explain that my name had been used, partly to take advantage of the super-crook myth, and partly as revenge for having shot Jake Hapsworth, the police would have put it down as just another Don Everhard bluff, and that they would have kept their hands on me as long as they could.

After all, it was only a guess about Hapsworth. I had never seen Bill Hapsworth in my life; and now he would be deep down in hiding—with some $24,000 that he didn't dare even to try to turn loose. Moreover, I did have business in Mexico City.

I gave Tommy money, told him to keep in the shadows, prowl about for underworld tips, play at being detective, and if he uncovered anything to let me know.

I HADN'T much more than reached Mexico City before I had a letter from Tommy, full of news. Tommy had a girl. Her name doesn't matter, but it was Bessie Lukens, a pretty little ex-crook who was trying to go straight only because Tommy wanted her to. One day an ex-convict who had been Tommy's cellmate got in touch with the girl and said, "Just hand this on to Tommy for what it is worth. That guy Everhard is Tommy's friend, and Tommy is mine, so, Bess, you get this and slip it to him.

"I was once in some jobs with Jake Hapsworth, the guy Everhard knocked over down in Miami. I ain't weepin'. Well, about three months ago his brother Bill sends for me and says, 'Do you know this Everhard?' and asks, am

I interested in some easy money? Me, I says, 'I know Everhard well enough to let him alone. They's nothin' easy about any money you get buckin' that guy.' He says, 'What's the matter with all you hot guns? I didn't think you'd shy from anybody. What's this guy Everhard got that you don't want?' I tells him, 'Make a try yourself— an' get wise, like your brother Jake did!' He says if I'll throw in with him he'll make a big cleanup and frame it on Everhard. I tell him, 'Nothin' doin'.' For one thing, I don't want to do no more business with any Hapsworth. For another, I don't want Everhard havin' some special reasons for not likin' me. Then—now get this, Bess—he asks, do I know Sim Watson and Larry Connors. I says, 'Yeah. They're a couple o' crazy dopes.' Then, just to make him unhappy, because I know the way of a Hapsworth after a job, I says, 'You try to gyp them an' they'll fill you so full of holes your coat'll look like cheese cloth'."

Since the dead hoods had been identified as Sim Watson and Larry Connors, it looked as if his ex-cellmate had given Tommy a straight tip for the identity of the "lawyer".

Tommy wrote me, "A guy like Hapsworth can hide his trail from the cops but not from crooks, and I've got too many good friends not to get a line on him before long." There was a postscript, "Bess sends her love."

I took some weeks to attend to my affairs in Mexico City and loitered about, having a good time, when a telegram came from Hollywood:

HAPS HERE IN HOLLYWOOD DOING HIS STUFF. T. B.

Since there was a hunt on for me throughout the country, I flew the border in a Chinese smuggler's plane. An ex-rum runner's car picked me up in the dawn in a landing field near San Diego, and brought me to Los Angeles.

I registered at a Hollywood hotel as D. H. Rich, of Mexico City. Mining man. That was enough like my real name, Richmond, to make it easy to answer when people said, "Mr. Rich".

I took Tommy's message to Western Union and tried to get his address from their files, but something had slipped and they couldn't find it, or so they said. So I sent off a wire to Bessie Lukens, knowing very well that he would keep in touch with her.

I asked her to wire Tommy to be at the corner of Vine and Hollywood at nine o'clock Friday night. If she didn't know the address it would be a dollar wasted. If she did, it would save a lot of scouting around.

I drove to the appointment in my second-hand coupe—second-hand, because new cars are conspicuous and need breaking in. I circled every block in a way that brought me up to the curb. No Tommy, but every corner was spotted with detectives. I have had to dodge those fellows so much that I can tell 'em from afar off. Naturally, I wondered what the devil?

The next morning I learned why. It was in the papers. Tommy had been murdered at the Greencrest, a second class rooming house in Hollywood, about eight o'clock the night before. He had got it twice in the back. People on the floor heard shots and rushed into the hall. Somebody opened the door and looked in. An open window showed which way the murderer had gone. The Homicide Squad found a telegram in the dead man's pocket from Chicago:

OUR FRIEND ASKS YOU TO MEET HIM AT VINE AND HOLLYWOOD, FRIDAY NIGHT, 9 O'CLOCK. SIS.

Smart kid, Tommy's girl. She had mentioned no name and given Western Union a phoney address. No checkback to her, but detectives, on a chance of picking up somebody they knew, had

clustered there at the four corners.

The police accepted the dead man's name as Terry Banning. Later they might learn more. As it was, all they had on the boy was that he had been loafing around Hollywood, playing with picture extras, that he was quiet, had good clothes and a lot of money for anybody living in a dump like the Greencrest, and must have been a gangster because he had a gun on him.

The *Herald* ran a picture of one Rosalie Dunhaven, an extra who lived in the same house. She had her legs crossed and her skirt up to her knees. She was supposed to have been Tommy's girl; but in Hollywood lots of girls wear black and weep at the funerals of men they scarcely know, just to get their pictures in the papers.

I sent off another wire to Tommy's girl, asking if there was anything she could tell me that would help, gave her my Rich alias and hotel address. Then I paid my room rent in advance, said I would be away for a time and, wearing my least new suit which I mussed up to look as if I had slept in it, I showed up late in the afternoon at the Greencrest and rang the manager's bell.

THE door opened and out came a large antique blonde. The name on the door-plate was Mamie Mashoy. She had faded blue eyes, cold as ice and almost as watery. She wore a black and white checkered suit and bedroom slippers so old and loose that she shuffled to keep them on her feet. She came out of a dark north room on the ground floor. The adjoining apartment house was as near the line as the law allowed. She looked me over carefully, noting lack of baggage and empty hands.

"Room, uh? You in pictures?" She had a husky voice and smiled a sort of cold sympathy. "I got a nice room. Just been all cleaned up today. But that'll be ten a week—in advance."

I suggested that I could pay half now and the rest later. She shook her head, nevertheless took my crumpled bill, smoothed it out, folded it carefully. "Come in an' I'll give you a receipt."

I stood in the open door while she went to a littered imitation mahogany desk. There was spilled powder on the floor about the dresser. Little pots and bottles on the dresser, a piece of lipstick that looked as if it had been nibbled. A musty smell of stale violets. Also almond and rosewater and bath salts.

She led the way upstairs with careful shuffling to keep her slippers on. My room was at the back on the second floor. The door was open and two girls and a man were looking about.

"What are you doing here?" The landlady snapped.

" 'Lo, Mamie. Just having a look." The man turned to me. He was as friendly as a badly trained pup. "This is where that fellow was killed last night!"

The landlady caught her breath, expecting that I would protest.

I said, "What man? Won't you sit down. My name is Richards. I am a stranger. Just moving in."

The landlady said, "Bumps here is a nice boy an' these are two of my girls. ain'tchu? There's the telephone." She started off.

"You ought to get double for this, Mamie!" Bumps called, enthusiastic. "What a thrill! Where there's been a murder!"

"Oh Bumps, you are so silly," said one of the girls, a young discolored blonde with a straight back and smiling mouth. Very pretty maiden, except for a rather flat nose.

Bumps had a pale, pumpkin-like face. He said his name was so and so, but, "Everybody calls me Bumps. Must be 'cause I'm a fall guy! This here beautiful is Miss Cora Laney—"

Cora shook her tangled hair. She had pretty, clear blue eyes and a sweet mouth. "Howdy."

"—an' this eye-full is Miss Flo Gilder."

Flo said coolly, "Pleased to meetchu."

Bumps sat down and pulled the badly platinumed Cora to a knee. She said, "Aw don't, Bumps," but sat there.

Flo had a sharp nose, thin mouth, and the hard glazed eyes of a child that has found out all men are rotten. There was something more than that wrong with her eyes. You can't always tell but usually know when to suspect dope. She sat on the studio couch and pulled her skirt down. There was a run in a stocking. Her hard, glazed eyes stared at me like a small predatory animal's.

They talked about the murder. All of them knew Tommy—or Terry, as they called him. Cora got up, crouched, pointed to bloodspots which soap and water hadn't taken out. She wrapped are arms about her as if chilled and went back to Bumps' knee. Flo said that Rosalie Dunhaven's name was plain Rose Dunn. Also that Rose looked like a simp in the *Herald's* picture.

Bumps said, "Gosh, kids, we ought to have a party. A sort of wake, or something!"

All three glanced toward me to see if I could take a hint.

I asked, "Can you get good stuff?"

"I'll say!" He pushed Cora off his knee and stood up.

I put a hand to my pocket, then let the hand drop, empty. "This Miss Dunhaven. I saw her picture. What is she like?"

Flo sniffed. Cora grinned, as if amused by the weaknesses of men. Bumps had the swaggering aplomb of a salesman letting you in on the ground floor:

"Say, throw a party an' she'll be here with or without!"

"With or without what?"

"Clothes!" said Flo spitefully.

"Bein' asked." Bumps explained.

"But not without Rumsby!" said Cora.

"Must make Rumsby feel good to have her pose as Terry's girl!" Flo thrust out a sharp finger to emphasis the words.

"Don't be a crab," said Bumps. "She glaumed a little publicity, that's all. Smart kid, Rosie."

Cora, having lost Bump's knee, sauntered over and perched on the arm of my chair.

I pulled some change from my pocket. "How much does it take?"

"A fifth for one-fifty. Good gin, too!" He sounded as if giving a sure tip on the market.

Cora took hold of my hand, eyed the money, poked at it with a forefinger. She turned on Bumps. "Play fair. You'll drink most of it. Here's my four bits!" She took the money from her purse and threw it at him with good-natured force. She picked two quarters from my hand, closed my fingers, pushed

the hand away. "This is enough. You'll have to eat tomorrow." She tossed my quarters at Bumps.

Flo snapped, "It's so nice of you, Cora, not to let the boys spend money! Since when?" Cora shrugged a shoulder: "Is it fair to give away my technique?" She asked it sweetly.

I unsnapped my wrist watch. "If I knew where I could hock this—"

"Boy, I know!" Bumps pounced at me with hand out, eager to be of service.

Cora pushed him away, examined the watch. It had no fancy work at all on the surface. She gave me an earnest look. "I wouldn't, honest."

I said, "Just as well tonight as tomorrow," and gave over the watch to Bumps. He studied it with a wise air. "Five bucks'll be a lot, but I'm a good talker!"

Bumps dashed out like a business man about to close something big, calling over his shoulder: "Stick around. You know me!"

Cora stood up, jerked her head. "One thing about Bumps, he'll be back. That more'n you can say for most men when they kiss you good-by."

Flo fretfully chimed, "Ain't it the truth!"

Cora said, "Shall we go see if Rosie's in? Maybe she hasn't got her paint on yet. We can say, 'Dear, are you sick or somepin'? How bad you look'!"

Flo jumped up. "I'll go and bring her back with me."

AS THE door closed, Cora laughed. "Always eager to do her daily good deed." She came to me and without being asked, sat down on my knee, studied my face, shook her head. "You don't belong."

"What's wrong?"

"I can tell."

"Tell what?"

"There's something. I don't quite know. Maybe it's your eyes." She almost touched my eyes with a forefinger. "A dump like this. And that watch, for one thing. My Dad had a little repair shop in Kokomo. When they're thin and plain and heavy they cost money!"

"Do they? It was given to me."

She had blue eyes and rather flat nose. She wasn't a prize winner but was affectionate as a kitten and about as impersonal. She stuck out a foot, saw the slipper untied, leaned back to draw the foot up and jumped off my knee as if pinched, facing about. She said, "God!" frightened and accusing.

In leaning against me she had pressed on the shoulder holster and gun, and she knew what it was.

I looked at her, looked at the bloodstains, back at her and nodded.

Cora said, "Oh." With tone ambiguously balanced between question and statement: "You a detective?"

"Listen, Cora. It was done by some man that Terry Banning knew well enough to let in for a talk. Well enough to let him get behind him. Some of you who knew Terry must also have met that man, or seen him. Make a guess, will you?"

"He was just one of the boys in the house. I didn't know him very well. I liked him, though. He was quiet and kinda sick. Why do you think anybody would have done that to him?"

"I read the papers."

She came back to the arm of the chair, put both hands on it, but did not perch there. "I'm trying to think. I *knew* there was something about you. It's in your eyes, and your collar's clean. There's a phone downstairs. I was waiting one day last week to use it. Terry was talking. I was thinking of my own troubles and didn't pay any attention till I heard him say, 'Dora'. You know, sounded like 'Cora'. Sorta made me listen. He was telling her plenty, but doing it nice. He said, 'No, I don't trust you. Why should I? I've known you a long time.' He said some-

thing about 'with your gifts for picking a poke I don't know why you'd play a shakedown,—something like that. Does it make sense to you? And a colonel—something about the colonel. I wasn't really listening. I just sort of heard. Am I telling you anything or just talking?"

"I don't know, yet. But you have a sweet voice. I like to listen."

"Thank you, kind sir." She started to pat my cheek but let her hand fall. "No, mustn't touch! I might get arrested for slapping a detective! Are you *really* one?"

"Not the kind that minds being slapped, gently."

A moment's puzzled scrutiny. "I think it's your eyes. Did anybody ever tell you you had strange eyes.

I said, "Why the sweet sisterliness between Flo and Rosie?"

Cora shrugged her straight shoulders. "Flo tries, but she's a flop with men. There's a husky guy that has a big sedan, and he must've told her things you don't wanta ever believe. Not after sundown, anyhow. Then this Rumsby met Rose and—the old story! You know, come to think of it, I believe it was Terry introduced 'em."

"Keep chattering, child."

"Why, have I told you something?"

I checked them off on mental fingers: Dora? Colonel? Rumsby? What's Rumsby got to do with that ladies' quarrel?"

"That car. I'd like to drive it myself! My boy friends won't let me take the wheel. Next time I get pinched will you fix it for me?"

"I'll find somebody to pay the fine."

"That'll be fine! Then you aren't a real detective?"

"Private, in a way. Very private."

"Oh." She tapped my knee. "Do you mind?" She perched herself there without waiting for the answer.

"If Bumps comes back and finds you here?"

"Bumps! Know why I like him? He don't pretend to be anything but Bumps. Directors like him for rough comedy stuff. He don't think he's an actor. He just tries and is natural. You know, that's why dogs, monkeys and babies are so good in pictures. Bumps is like that."

"Tell me about Rumsby? Could he have been jealous because Terry may have liked Rose, too?"

Cora pursed her lips and cocked her eyes askance. "I hadn't thought. Maybeso, yet—" She shook her head. "That's out. Couple o' night ago the bunch was in Rose's room. He slapped Terry on the shoulder, called him, 'My little ol' pal'."

"Drunk?"

"Too early. And it wasn't Saturday night!"

"And Terry?"

"Had a shy polite grin. He seemed an awfully nice boy. You know, quiet and—and—what'd I wanta say? Sorta like you could trust him in the dark. Get me?"

"Think Flo is coming back?"

"Sure."

"What's keeping her?"

"Rumsby's there. She's wise-cracking to show him how much smarter she is than Rose. Thinks he ought to admire her—you know—intellect. If men are goin' to admire your intellect it's after you've been in a train wreck and lost your legs. I've got legs all right, but I wish somebody else had this face." She touched her flat nose. "If I ever get money enough I'm going to have it fixed, then maybe—who knows?"

BUMPS burst in, gleeful as Santa Clause, packages under both arms and a little skinny owl-eyed fellow behind him with more packages. Behind him, other people. Bumps had knocked on doors and passed the word, "Party's on!"

Cora got off my knee slowly, swore in questioning puzzlement.

Bumps dumped the packages on to the couch, fished out a bill, thrust it at me.

"There you are, old son? Am I good? Listen!" He hadn't had a drink yet. It was just his way. "I said five. But did I put it over on Uncle? Say, I walks in, put down the ticker, stuck a thumb in my belt and rared back, lookin' dignified, see? Like this! He says, 'How much you want, Bumps?' I says, 'You're tellin' me. Big star up at the Tumblebug is shootin' craps and sent me fer some dough with this. That's that, an' there you are, Uncle!' Uncle pried it open an' must've used the wrong magnifying glass. You know, he screwed it in his eyes, so! Boy, he slipped me twenty-five bucks!"

Cora whispered, "Is he good? Ask *me!* I bet that watch set you back two hundred!"

The crowd squeezed in and made itself at home, crunching potato chips, slipping sliced sausages down girls' backs. Cora tried an introduction or two as a gesture of courtesy toward me, the host, but they didn't pan out. Having the party on the scene of the murder added zest.

Bumps dumped the booze, all of it, into a big bowl that somebody brought on demand. Cora explained that if you didn't, no matter how you watched the bottles, some chiselers would make off with some and hold a party of their own.

Bumps had the grace to give me, among the first, a water glass full of the stuff. Cocktail, he called it. I set it down, turned my back and a fat man with a wen on his neck made off with it, not looking back to see if I saw.

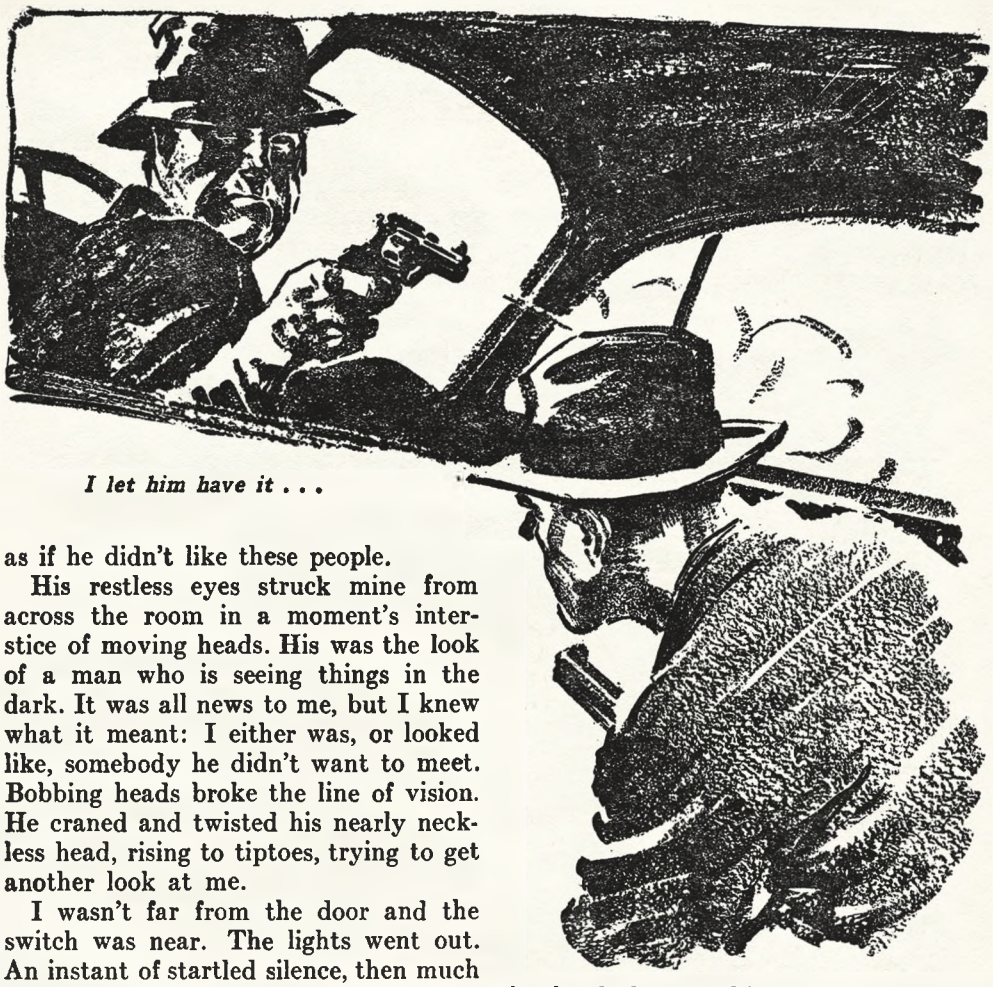
Mamie, in a padded blue kimono but the same old slippers, came up to tell us not to make too much noise. Everybody knew what she wanted. She squeezed in on the studio couch and had several. Presently there was mascara and tears all over her handkerchief. A little later she staggered off with a sort of blind-eyed dignity, reaching out for things to steady her with one hand and in the other carrying a half filled tumbler. She left her slippers behind.

Cora shared a dark skinned boy's knees with another girl. I edged into a corner near the door, held an empty glass and tried not to look entirely sober. Somebody kissed me and said, "Oh, excuse! I thought you was Bob, but you ain't, so it's all right." Bob, if she caught him, had my sympathy.

There wasn't much more than room to squirm. Booze and tobacco made the stale air stifling. Windows were kept down because neighbors might squawk. Bumps acted the clown to great applause. Somebody went down and out. Unsteady friends dragged him out into the hall and dumped him on the floor of the nearest room with door unlocked. It was the fat man with the wen. An overpainted kid stood before a mirror and seemed to mistake herself for somebody she knew and didn't like. What she said wasn't nice but may have been true. Cora led her away and put her on the dark boy's knee, giving up her own seat.

Flo and Rosalie Dunhaven had come in. They pulled the unwilling Rumsby along. He was square-shouldered, short-bodied, had thick legs and not much neck. His black hair seemed glued and varnished to his head. A big thick head. He wore fancy clothes and a big puff green tie. He looked like a bozo that could hold a lot, but he didn't want to drink.

Rosalie Dunhaven was a rather large girl with good features but a coarse look. She was lithe, loud and well-liked. The swing of her body was like the beginning of a certain kind of dance. The three of them must have had a little something in her room before coming—either booze or coke. Flo's eyes were bright and she acted like Rosalie's best friend. Rumsby drank a little and wasn't happy. He kept tugging, wanting her to go. He looked about the room



I let him have it . . .

as if he didn't like these people.

His restless eyes struck mine from across the room in a moment's interstice of moving heads. His was the look of a man who is seeing things in the dark. It was all news to me, but I knew what it meant: I either was, or looked like, somebody he didn't want to meet. Bobbing heads broke the line of vision. He craned and twisted his nearly neckless head, rising to tiptoes, trying to get another look at me.

I wasn't far from the door and the switch was near. The lights went out. An instant of startled silence, then much gleeful jabbering. Some clownish boy slapped his hands together and said, "Don't!" in a falsetto voice. In a minute the lights were switched on again.

Rumsby had got to the door. He stood more than half out and was staring about inside the room for somebody he couldn't see. He turned suddenly and hurried down the stairs, passed the telephone, stopped, turned back, fished for a nickel and dialed rapidly. Nothing happened. He looked at the face of the phone as if about to swear at it, threw the receiver at the hook, and hurried through the door.

He jumped into his sedan, kicked the starter, put on the lights and swung away from the curb. I straightened up in the darkness behind him, jabbed the muzzle of a gun against his neck, just below the ear, and said:

"I nicked that phone wire on the way down, so—"

He said, "God!"

"—so we could talk it over before you called anybody and told that I was in town."

The car shivered in jerks from the trembling of his foot on the gas.

"Force of habit, not locking a car? Afraid you might be in a hurry when you came back? That made it nice!"

His words came out of a tight throat through set teeth: "Listen, you got me wrong!"

I settled back in the left hand cor-

ner of the sedan. "I'm listening. Get going. What about Tommy?"

"Honest to God, I never done it!"

"Then why'd you throw a fit when you spotted me?"

"I—I was afraid you'd think—an' you did! But listen! Me an' him was in a shakedown together an' the guy must've hired somebody to—"

"What about Dora?"

"*Who?*"

"Wake up!"

"Oh, you mean *Dora?*"

"Pickpocket, isn't she?"

"Yeah. She knew Tommy in Chi an'—"

"And had it on the colonel? Does his name happen to be Hapsworth? And was it this colonel that hired you to put Tommy in the morgue? And are you to croak her next, too? Talk fast, or—"

We weren't more than four or five blocks from the Greencrest. Crazy impulse, the hopped-up kind, got the best of whatever good sense he had. He must have thought there was no other chance to dodge a one-way ride; though I doubt if he thought at all—just stepped on the gas and spun the wheel. The car hit the curb with a jolt and crashed to a head-on stop against a lamp post, splattering a headlight. He twisted about, shooting over the front seat.

Dead men tell no tales and I wanted conversation; but there was no time to explain. He burned a pointblank hole in the back of the car right by my head, so I let him have it.

He slumped down with head and arms dangling over the front seat. The gun fell to the floor.

CHAPTER II

PURSUIT

I KNEW that the sound of the smash must have carried like striking iron wash tubs together; that, followed by the shots, would stir up the neighborhood like a stick in an ant hill.

I jumped from the sedan and took a look about. I could see heads already thrust out of lighted windows and doorways being blocked with shadows.

A man yelled, "There he goes!" I could hear the patter of feet as people ran to see, some perhaps thinking they were chasing.

A woman screeched, "Look out, Henery! Oh Henery, don't!"

Evidently Henery didn't, because nobody gave chase as if they meant it.

I didn't know exactly where I was. I jumped into shadows, ran over a lawn, ducked back between two houses, almost had my head taken off by a clothesline, climbed a fence and went round a corner.

There I fell in with a man in a bathrobe and a woman in pajamas on their way to the smash-up.

I asked, "What happened?"

The man said he was trimming his toenails when he heard—and so forth. He was still carrying the open pocket knife and showed it to me so I wouldn't doubt.

The woman said she was just talking about the murder down at the Greencrest at the very moment shots were heard—"Wasn't I, Bill?"

Bill said, "You sure was," and appealed to me with, "Funny, wasn't it? Right that minute! Sure some funny things happen!"

A radio car's siren was heard. People went faster, as if it were important that they be there when the police arrived. In a moment the car went by us with siren screaming. The man and woman ran ahead.

I had my bearings now; taking a roundabout way, I went to the Greencrest, approaching from the back. I had thought things over as I went along, knew I was likely to get into a bad squeeze. I didn't dare disappear. There was Cora to tell what she knew if I

didn't come back. That would start a police search and I didn't want to have to keep in hiding. Too much work to be done.

And if I tried to sneak into my room there might be somebody sober enough to know I hadn't been there all the time. The cops would soon backtrack Rumsby to the Greencrest, to Rosalie and so to my party. Being my party and in the room where on the night before there had been a murder, they might take an interest in me. Any kind of a search would be ruinous.

I knew I had to have an alibi, one that was foolproof. The sort the cops can't crack are all right after your case gets in the hands of a lawyer; but what I needed was one they wouldn't even think about cracking, would just take for granted.

Of course Mamie might raise a rumpus. I was betting heavy odds she wouldn't, not under the circumstances.

I crept on tiptoes along between the two apartment houses. You couldn't have rolled a barrel between them, they were that close. I peered into a window and saw no more than in a mirror when the lights are out. I knew the window was at least partly up, because I could so plainly hear heavy breathing with a touch of snores. The screen sash was hooked. I put my two thumbs against the screen at the bottom of the sash and pushed steadily with increasing pressure until the wire came loose. I slipped my hand in under the loosened screen and pushed the hook from its eye. then pushed up the sash. It was tight in its grooves and squeaked. Mamie moved but did not awaken. The blind was down. I raised that. waited. listening.

I untied my shoes, put them through the window and let them noiselessly to the floor. I squirmed up, getting a purchase against the side of the wall with my toes and wriggled through the window. The room was filled with the stench of bad perfume

I stood for a long time to let my eyes get accustomed to the darkness. From the hall outside I could at times hear voices and feet, not always steady.

I pushed down the rough edge of the screen wire I had torn loose. I couldn't reset it but made it less noticeable. I pulled down the sash and again it squeaked. The breathing changed its tempo. There was a cough, a grunt, the vague stir of a body. I waited, not moving, until the breathing was again heavy. I pulled down the window blind. The closeness of the adjoining apartment prevented any light from coming in. There was no window opposite, either; but I had found the shade down and so put it down.

I got my shoes and put them near the unoccupied side of the bed, setting them as if they were dropped there. Socks followed. I let my coat fall somewhere near a chair. I took off the shoulder holster and wedged it and the gun deep under the mattress. I rumpled my hair and otherwise tried to look bedweary. I lay down cautiously on the edge of the bed and waited.

After a long, long time I heard a car door slam at the curb, and a moment later the march of solid feet across the sidewalk and into the apartment. Then came the ring of the manager's bell. I lay still, not answering. A heavy fist banged on the door.

I shook Mamie, but she did not stir.

"Wake up!" I said. "Somebody's at the door." I said it loud enough to be heard through the door.

A rough voice called, "Come on in there. Open up. We're police!"

I called, "Just a minute!" and again shook Mamie. "Wake up. The police want something."

She grunted and swore and twisted over on her side with a petulant, "Letmelone!"

Another rattle of heavy fists. "Come on, Mamie! Open up!"

I stumbled about in the darkness, got

to the door, opened it, clicked on the light. Two detectives looked me over. One said, "Who are you?"

I told him, at least gave him the name Richards and said, "I can't wake her."

One said, "Yeah, I'll bet!" and the other said, "You don't understand about little things like this." He crossed to the bed. "Me and Mamie are old friends. We were here only last night, weren't we, Jim?" He sat down, put a hand over Mamie's mouth, pinched her nose. In a moment she was struggling for air.

Jim grinned.

"Pete sure has a great way with the ladies," he said.

MAMIE blinked hazily, sat up, pushed her hands through her scraggly bleached hair, looked at the police, then caught sight of me and stared with a kind of intense blankness as if trying to remember something.

"Naw, it's not him," said Pete with vast reassurance, and tipped me a wink. "But what about this Rumsby person?"

"Rumsby? I don't know nothin' about him," said Mamie, staring at me and letting her mouth hang open.

"Wasn't he at my party?" I said.

"Yeah," Mamie groaned. "I remember bein' at your party, but—" Her eyes trailed about the room. She shook her head.

Pete said to me: "Did you give a party?"

"I just moved in today—"

"I'll say you move fast, then!" Jim put in.

"—and it seemed up to me to throw a party. I pawned my watch and everybody came."

"It's a way ever'body has," said Pete. "Rumsby was there?"

"With a girl named Rosalie Dunhaven, and—"

"Dunhaven?" said Pete. "Why that's the name of the girl that was playing around with the Banning boy that got it right in this house last night!"

"Sure is!" said Jim.

"Begins to look like something," said Pete. "What'd you know about 'em?"

"I never saw any of them before tonight."

"Guess we've got what we want, Jim. Thanks for the info. What room's that Dunhaven in?"

I shook my head and looked at Mamie. Her eyes were still fixed on me. She shook her head and waggled a hand. "Third floor front."

"Good. We can find it," said Pete. "If we want anything we'll be back. Give my love to the fam'ly when you write home, Mamie."

"S'long," said Jim. Grinning he shut the door behind him as they went out.

Mamie rested her chin in her palms, gazed at me, vaguely perplexed.

"I don't remember a damn thing about it," she said wearily. "Time is it?"

I turned to the mantel clock. "Quarter of two."

She reached for a cigarette and I gave her a match. "What a life!" She pressed her head. "Rumsby? What they want with him?"

"They didn't say."

We heard a girl sobbing. The voice came nearer with heavy steps on the stairs. The detectives were taking Rosalie Dunhaven to the station. She claimed to be Tommy's girl, and he got it. She played around with Rumsby, and he got it. Naturally she had to be worked on and coaxed. She was sobbing in terror that she didn't know a thing, but that is just the way dames cover up when they know a lot.

Mamie gathered a kimono about her and hurried into the hall to see and hear.

I quickly got my things together and waited. After the detectives had gone Mamie came back in and saw me ready to leave. "Matter?"

I said, "You act as though you had made a mistake."

She rubbed her head. "Yeah. A lot in my life. But I never before have been that drunk. 'Sall right. What a head! I wonder if I've got some aspirin?"

When the hall was quiet I slipped up to my room. It was a mess, that room, spotted in a sort of futuristic decoration with potato salad and liverwurst, cigarettes, spilled powder, empty bottles. Everything was upset and turned about. The air was stale. I opened the windows, left the hall door open for a draft, kicked off my shoes and lay down to think things over. Some day soon Mamie would get a nice present just to ease my conscience.

I heard stealthy steps near the door. I didn't move, just waited. Then a girl's low voice: "Are you asleep?"

"Not yet. Come on in, Cora."

She came, pulled the door to, turned on the light. I got up and drew down the shades. She stared at me, sombre-eyed. Something was coming. She was in pajamas and a flimsy yellow and red kimono—it looked like it had been made from a quarantine flag and a danger signal. Her head was a mass of tangled curls, but badly bleached.

I said, "What's the matter? Sick?"

"You know!"

"I do not."

"S-supposing I told!"

"All right, tell me."

"They've arrested Rosie!"

"They'll also turn her loose."

"How can you be sure?"

"I know cops. They don't frame you unless they think you're guilty. Rosie'll be in the clear this time tomorrow."

"If I thought that—" She stood off as if afraid of me.

"Wait and see."

"But you killed him!"

I picked a bit of sausage off the bed, flipped it at a bottle, missed. "Whom did I kill?"

"Rumsby!"

"Guess again."

"Where were you when—"

I flapped a hand. "The cops know."

Cora came a little closer, held the kimono tightly with one hand, hammered the air with the other.

"Rosie is all I care about! I saw him look at you tonight. He was scairt. I never saw a man look so scairt. Then the lights went out, and you were gone. I know because I tried to find you. He went away too. The next thing—what if I told the police and they examined your gun!" She thrust out her arm, pointing at the shoulder where she had felt the gun.

I made powder of a piece of potato chip between thumb and finger and looked at her. She looked at me. She was a sweet kid, very pretty except for the flat nose, which I didn't mind. I am a pretty good judge about some things, but I had under-estimated Cora's intelligence and knack for observing. I shrugged a shoulder. "Name your price. But be reasonable. That's all."

"Price?"

"Sure. I bet a little now and then. When I lose, I pay. Can anything be fairer?"

"Why did you do it?"

I pointed to where traces of the bloodstains remained.

"Rumsby?" she asked.

"Rumsby."

"How did you find out?"

"I made the guess. He confessed—at least shot first. Same thing in my language. The police are smart. They'll check his gun with the bullets they dug out of Tommy."

"Tommy?"

"Or Terry. His name was Tommy Bannister."

"Oh."

"Let's get going. How much? Will two or three hundred dollars interest you."

She shook her head. "I can't do a thing like that. I've always played

square—you know, not grafted. I didn't like Rumsby and if—You aren't a detective at all, then? Who *are* you and what is it all about, please? Don't you see, I'm sorta in it, too."

I told her the truth but not the facts. I said, "My guess is that Tommy spotted Rumsby as being somehow hooked up with that lawyer person, and sort of cultivated his acquaintance to get information. Just why Rumsby shot him, or at least shot him when he did, I don't know. Maybe he got suspicious. Maybe he told his boss his suspicions and they somehow checked up on Tommy and the boss said, 'Knock him over'. I don't know. I'd say that Dora was in the picture. She knew Tommy from away back. I'll make the guess too that Rumsby had Dora's name on his cuff as one who knew too much. When you monkey with crooks you run into some tangled puzzles."

"Are you a crook?"

"I am not. And I'm still willing to pay a little something to keep your pretty mouth closed. How about it?"

Cora said, "Money? It sounds good, but—" She shook her head. "I can't be like that. I wouldn't cover you up for any amount if I didn't feel you deserved to be. And I just couldn't take money if I thought you were doing right!"

That was straighter logic than I, in many varied and often wayward experiences, have been used to. I suppose Cora would have been down in the Hollywood social register as a little tramp.

I took her hand, turned it palm up and studied the lines.

"In a way," I said, "I'm something of a fortune teller. Of course, you are a sensible girl and don't believe that stuff. But some of your wishes are going to come true. What's your biggest?"

She put her other hand to her face, touching her nose. "I wish I didn't have that!"

The next day was Sunday. By Monday the police knew it was Rumsby's gun that had killed Terry Banning—still Terry to them. His own death had followed promptly. "Gang killing," said the papers, and seemed to think that that explained everything. Rosalie was turned loose and got her picture into three papers. The emphasis was on her legs. They looked so good that a studio sent a car to the Greencrest. She got a part and moved at once to where the atmosphere was more refined. Flo couldn't stand it and went out after some publicity for herself. She steamed herself up with coke and confessed to the police that she had killed Rumsby. She got her picture in the papers, too, but her legs weren't the type. The police listened, grinned, and had her put away for a dope cure.

I was ready to leave the Greencrest, but did not dare to vanish mysteriously and leave Cora loose to brood, make wrong guesses and maybe tell somebody. But I have a way of being lucky—I see to that!

One evening she burst into my room and did a joy dance, called me the greatest fortune teller in the world and how could I have known?

"Matter, kitten?"

"Know Dr. Alexiskow? Know of him, I mean?"

"Who's he?"

"Oh, he's the greatest in the business!" Her fingers fluttered about her face. "Fixes you up. Listen! He takes years off all the stars and does things to their noses and whatever is wrong. And does it cost money! But listen. He sent for *me!* I didn't see him, but his secretary said he had seen *me* and—you know, like an artist, real artist—he wondered if I would care to let him—this nose—it isn't charity or anything like that, she said. Dr. Alexiskow is just an artist and wants to—won't cost me a cent—and she said the doctor knew a lot of directors—" She clapped her hands together

and jumped up and down, spun about dizzily, landed on my knee and kicked my shins out of sheer exuberance.

But on the whole I thought it would have cost me a lot more if Cora had told the police to check my gun with the bullet they found in Rumsby, though my lawyer didn't make a very good bargain with the doctor in arranging for him to use his influence to get Cora a picture contract. The lawyer evidently didn't believe those stories about studios paying real money: he agreed to give to the doctor, as a fee for his influence, a sum equal to half of Cora's first year's contract. The doctor, a good business man, insisted on just that.

THE next morning, in spite of Mamie's willingness to trust me for the rent, I left the Greencrest, returned as Mr. Rich to my hotel and found there, via airmail, letters of Tommy's that his girl had returned with the hope that they might help.

I give some extracts:

". . . who do I bump into but Dora McVey. She says, 'Well well well, Tommy! Let's get somewhere where I can kiss you!' She's looking good. She always does. That's her business. When a sucker reaches for a pocket and finds it inside out and makes a squawk, she's the last one on the street he suspects. She asks about you and what am I doing in Hollywood? I tells her nothing, just waiting for the hot spell in Chi to cool off. She says I'm the one fellow she wants to meet. She says there is a Colonel Bowers in town who's ribbing the big suckers for the cleaners, but to keep hisself in expense money he's playing some poker. Throws big parties. He's no paper man hisself, but uses marked cards just to keep from going wrong. But he's got a fellow named Langborn on his staff. This Langborn, she says, is the best card man in America, made big money on the boats till he got too well known, She didn't say, but I bet he's wanted bad. The colonel runs him in on the game when he wants to make a killing.

"She lied like hell, but I could tell she'd fallen for this Langborn, hard. Imagine this for a set-up. Langborn is putting her up to shake the colonel down or she's to squeal to the suckers about the cards being marked. Langborn can't show his hand, and she says it's not the sort of game a woman can play as well

as somebody like me. Won't I put the squeeze on the colonel? I tells her nothin' doin'. I'm an honest working man—in pictures. That gives her a laugh, but I don't weaken."

A few days later Tommy wrote in scrawling excitement: "Listen, kid. This is *good* or will be if it's what I'm beginning to think. I ain't sure yet but I halfway believe Dora's Col. Bowers is Bill Hapsworth hisself! How's that for a set-up? I'm palling up with a guy named Rumsby that I've seen the colonel talk to on the quiet. Maybe I can pry something loose, and if I do I send Don E. a wire . . ."

Evidently he *had* pried something loose and Rumsby, with the colonel's advice to guide him, awakened to what was going on.

That seemed to take Dora out of the picture; but knowing something about the colonel's methods—if he were also Bill Hapsworth—I wouldn't have been surprised any morning to read that her body had been found in the gutter. As for the Langborn person, what I think of crook gamblers was deepened and intensified by his hiding behind a girl's skirt to wire-pull the shakedown.

I HAD no trouble at all in getting a line on Col. Bowers. He passed himself off in Hollywood as a cattle and cotton man from Dallas. I wired a Dallas bank and got back a triple A rating. That looked too good to be true. I wired again and learned that Col. Bowers was in Europe, in ill health, taking a cure at Royat.

As a con-man this so-called Col. Bowers (whom I believed to be Bill Hapsworth) was pretty thorough. He was tall, not broad, a little fat. He wore a double-breasted black coat, broad brimmed hat and carried a heavy cane. Seemed rather jolly in that he laughed a good deal, but not as if really amused. He had slightly gray hair, a long mustache and shaggy brows above expressionless eyes. At his rooms in the Tertron hotel he served good booze and staged some big poker parties.

Hollywood may peddle hokum to the world, but it's a feeding ground for sucker-catchers. The colonel had let it be known that he was interested, suh, in acquiring an interest in some studio "to produce Westun pictuhs, suh, as an authentic rekohd of the uhly days on the plains, suh." Be sure of it, nearly every studio in town was eager to hook the colonel; and if the more cautious ones had wired Dallas they probably thought the colonel's poker winnings were above suspicion and their losses could be charged off to the expenses of putting over the deal. I don't know what con-game the colonel was ribbing but his poker parties, I am sure, were just a little sideline to pick up money for his front.

It was necessary to find out if the colonel knew me on sight. If so—well, some direct action might be required. If not, then I could try a little of what is called finesse.

The first thing I did was to take a pretty girl to a night club where the colonel was at a table. The headwaiter didn't know why, but I got him to put us right where my eyes met the colonel's. He was with a studio friend of his own, not as pretty as mine, and he looked at me but watched my companion. I have played too much poker not to know when a man is concealing surprise. That's my business, knowing such things. My face didn't mean a thing to the colonel. My companion's did. So I knew he wasn't so very smart after all.

After dinner we went into the game room. The games were as crooked as a bent corkscrew. The colonel knew it as well as I did. He let his fair one lose a few ten spots, but didn't play. I was again smarter than he. I told the pretty little wolf in petticoats that I was financing to put small bets against the big

money at the crap table. She cleaned up a nice handful of small bills.

The colonel bumped against me and said, "Ah, suh, youah pa'don!" I gave it to him. We chatted a little and I went to the telephone. When I returned the colonel rose from a table and signaled. He was opening a bottle of champagne and had already invited little Miss Wolf. I never drink. I joined them, but said, "Doctor's orders." He addressed me as Mr. Rich, so I knew he had already got out of her that I was a mining man from Mexico. "I, suh, am Co'nel Bowers of Dallas." Later he told me he never cared for any game of chance, suh, except a little pokuh now and then. I told him that I, too, played a little poker. That interested him. The colonel said in parting that he was pleased to meet me; that we would have to get together sometime for a little sociable game.

The next day I sent one of the bellboys from my hotel over to the colonel's hotel with twenty dollars and he got a deck of cards, with seal unbroken, from the colonel's white-jacketed Negro boy. In a few hours I could read them as well as anybody.

I turned down two of the colonel's invitations. I wasn't sure yet that he didn't have somebody around who might recognize me. For another, I hadn't yet put over to him that I really did have a lot of money.

I gave one of the dealers in the night club twenty dollars to mention, off hand, to Miss Wolf, who was now the colonel's friend, that he had seen me drop twenty-five hundred dollars without batting an eye. He thought, of course, I was trying to impress the maiden, gave his eyebrows a sneering twitch but took the money. I promised myself that when the war was over I would come back and teach him something. I did—but that's another story.

The colonel's third invitation I accepted, not quite at ease, still uncertain about being recognized. He had three or four fat boys in from the studios. He didn't seem to have made any special arrangements to give me a cleaning. I clapped down a roll of bills big as my fist, said, "You can see, I came prepared!" They played big money, those fellows. But I didn't stay long. I didn't expect to when I came. So when Helen, the night operator at my hotel, called for me, as I had told her to, I pretended regrets, murmured important business, cashed in—a bit loser—and went away.

Those studio boys were playing honest poker. The colonel, with his marked cards, could hold his own nicely and clean up a bit for expenses. With such big money sweeping to and fro across the board they would never give his comparatively modest winnings a suspicious thought. I wanted him to arrange something for my special benefit.

He did a few nights later. I went to his rooms and was introduced to a fox-faced Mr. Macauley, director in the American Cotton Company; and to a Mr. Lang, a youngish man but called an old friend, who was sleek and pale, had eyes like a dead man's and wore some big diamonds. One look and I knew now the stage was set to have me go home wearing a barrel.

The Negro boy served drinks, but I was still under doctor's orders. They courteously suggested that I bank the game. A banker, if he isn't cautiously prudent, gets in pretty deep when losing, as all he has to do to over bet his hand is dip in the long row of chips at his side. Each of them off-handedly gave me a five hundred dollar bill. Whites were ten bucks each. Just a nice quiet little game—for fun.

I DREW my roll. One look and Lang, or Langborn, blew smoke at the ceiling and, I am sure, gave Mr. Macauley a kick under the table. Macauley took a sip of brandy and smacked his lips.

I didn't peel the roll. I put it back in my pocket and pulled a wallet, a fat one, took out a thousand dollar bill and picked up five hundred as change. That let 'em know I was carrying more money than they had even hoped.

Langborn wore diamonds, big ones, on his skinny fingers and moved his hands as if he liked the sparkle and hoped other people would notice and admire. I did, all right. I thought they'd look nice in my safety deposit box.

The game ran for about an hour with some good-sized bets backing small hands. The colonel bought a second stack with another five hundred dollar bill. I was quite a little to the good, which is as often happens with men who lose their pants before the game is over.

Then the colonel's boy came in on tiptoes, leaned over the colonel's chair and said in a low voice, "Miz Dora, she's on the phone again an' says you jus' got to talk to uh!"

The colonel's rather expressionless eyes took on an ugly gleam; a corner of the mouth, overhung with a long, slightly gray, and perhaps false mustache came down in a quivering sneer.

Mr. Macauley looked at Mr. Langborn with startled intentness. Mr. Langborn's corpse-like eyes looked at the colonel with furtive lift of glance under lowered lids.

"Tell her to go to the devil!" said the colonel, forgetting the Southern accent.

"No *suh!* This heah boy won't. I ain't fohgot she poked a gun in mah belly when I said—"

The colonel made a hasty gesture, silencing the boy. I didn't appear to notice. I was intent on counting my chips. Most gamblers think it bad luck to count winnings before the game ends. Macauley poured himself another drink. Langborn fiddled with his diamonds, admiring the glint. The colonel arose. "Youah pa'don, gentlemen, while ah tend to a little pusonel mattah."

The colonel went out, followed by the Negro.

Macauley said, "Think I'll stretch my legs."

"Good idea," said Langborn.

Both left their chairs as if hoping I wouldn't join them. I didn't, being busy picking up a few chips I had knocked over. They put their heads out of the window and talked together in a low tone, perhaps of Dora's chances of making the colonel come through.

While they weren't looking I wrote on the page of a small notebook, tore out the page, wrapped a bill about it and put it into my side coat pocket.

The colonel came back. He looked hot and irritated but tried to seem cheery.

The game went on. Betting got heavier. Macauley had dealt. It was a jackpot with no openers. The colonel dropped his hand palm down on the table, tapped with a forefinger. It was Langborn's turn to deal. He was nifty with cards, far better than most. After giving his signal, the colonel began to tell me a funny story. I smiled attentively. Langborn, also listening or seeming to, took a long time shuffling. His fingers were agile, quick, and the cards riffled with noiseless flutter. I've stacked too many decks myself right under the noses of players not to know when it is being done.

The deal started before the colonel had quite finished his story. He tapped his cards, not looking at them. "Pass—but I'll come in if it's cracked." He appeared not to want to stop his story right on the verge of the joke.

I, listening to the colonel's story, let the cards lie as they fell. All three of them could see that I had drawn a full house, aces across the top. The colonel finished his story and we all laughed.

I picked up my hand and looked pleased. They sipped drinks and looked pleased too. I opened for the size of the pot. Macauley studied his hand, looked at the pot, said, "I'll ride on a chance."

Langborn, having dealt the mess, threw away his cards, murmuring, "Too rich for my blood."

The colonel said, "Well, I promised to come in." He did; then, "Now I'll have a look. May want to boost it a little." He skinned the cards slowly, laid down his hand, said, "Um-hm. I think you boys are maybe running a blazer on the ol' man." He took out a wallet, drew some big money. "Just a little raise."

I saw the raise and slapped back, hard. Macauley said, "I can't play a pair of queens against that," and dropped his hand, face up. Langborn said, "Whew. Glad I didn't wade into this. How about you, Colonel?"

The colonel fingered his wallet, pretended to hesitate. "I'm too far in to back out." It practically emptied his wallet to see my raise, so he didn't jump it.

Langborn picked up the deck. "Cards?"

The colonel said, "Oh, I have enough. Quite enough, thank you, suh!"

I said, "I'll play these."

Macauley whistled. "Two pat hands—and I went to the party with a pair of dames!"

The colonel turned to me with vast courtesy. "You opened, suh. I shall be glad to heah youh opinion."

I put down my cards, letting them slide a little, pulled the wallet and in withdrawing two bills let them see that there were more, lots more, of the same denomination.

THEY eyed that wallet. It seemed too good to be true. Macauley wet his thin lips. Been a long time since he had seen so much money. Langborn rubbed his jeweled fingers together, shot sidelong glances at the colonel. Here was money, big money. It would take twenty thousand or more to tap that wad, and the colonel's wallet was already about empty.

The colonel smiled, stroked his mustache, closed an eye, squinted down at the pips in his hand. "This heah, suh, begins to have some of the symptoms of a real pokuh game—like we used to have down home in Dallas. If I come in, I'll have to raise, sho'!"

I said, "Your privilege, Colonel."

He put down his cards, reached into his pocket, took out a pen and check book. "I'll jus' call an' raise you, suh—ten thousand!"

"No checks!" My voice wasn't loud but it was firm.

The colonel gave a start as if slapped. Langborn and Macauley put on expressions of amazement. "What, suh? You mean—mah check, suh—any bank, suh!" He looked aggrieved and indignant, yet seemed trying hard not to be angry.

"Rich," said Langborn, "the Colonel can write his check any day for a hundred thousand!"

"So can I, but who the hell will cash it?"

"Will you tell me, suh," asked the Colonel in a very hurt tone, "jus' why you refuse to accept mah check?"

"Oh not at all, if—" I too brought out a check book "—you will let *me* pull back all the money I've put into this pot and write a check instead."

The colonel gulped as if a fishbone were in his throat. He took up a panetela, bit the end, shook his head.

"You, Colonel, have always played with gentlemen—before!" said Langborn, giving me a look.

I nodded at the diamonds on Langborn's fingers. "Maybe you would like to back the colonel's hand, with those or money?"

Instantly he began jerking the rings off his fingers. He slapped them to the table. "These stones are worth fifteen thousand, sir!"

I took up the rings, examined each, laid them down. "Only fair. We have diamonds in Mexico, you know. Three

would be a damned big price, too big."

Langborn said, "Why, I tell you I paid over fifteen thou—"

"Tell what you like. I'll accept them at three. No more."

The colonel chewed on his panetela. The three of them exchanged looks, and stared at me as if hopeful of making me feel a bounder. I smiled a little.

"Shall I take back my raise and we'll have a showdown for the pot?"

At that the colonel shouted, "Not by a damn sight, suh!" He struck the table with heavy palm. "I'll coveh youah bet, suh, an' raise it, by God!"

Langborn and Macauley exchanged wondering glances as the colonel, in scornful anger, arose, pushed back his chair and stamped out of the room, leaving the door open behind him.

He returned at once, stamping in, and banged the door to behind him. In one hand he carried a sheaf of crisp bills. He sat down, held them out almost under my nose so I could see they were thousand dollar bills, then flung them into the pot. Twenty-four thousand!

I counted how much of it figured as a raise, emptied my wallet, saw the raise, then drew the roll. "I'll have to give it a little boost."

The colonel, with a bad-tempered groan, said, "That's all I've got."

"Ah, so? Sorry."

"See here!" Langborn again thrust out his diamonds. "I'll bet these on the colonel's hand without seeing it. You've got in my hair, Rich. Five thousand? What do you say?"

"Three's all they're worth."

Macauley protested and Langborn declared angrily, "They're worth ten in any hock shop!"

"Not running a hock shop."

"Three, then!" He pitched them among the money, ordering me: "Cover it!"

"Sure. And you've got some chips. Maybe some money in your pocket. You, too?" I turned to Macauley.

My cards lay face-down on the table, spread a little so they could read the markings on the back. An ace full. Knowing the markings as well as they, I had given the pair of jacks a little more of a spread. Otherwise, from the way I was betting the hand they might timidly suspect there had been a slip-up on Langborn's deal and a fourth ace had crept in. But there they lay, three aces and a pair of jacks.

The fox-faced Macauley eyed my cards, looked at Langborn, glanced at the colonel, said: "Glad you spoke. By God, I'll ride with the colonel, Rich!"

"And here!" said Langborn, shoving out his chips, digging into his pocket.

Macauley and Langborn together didn't have much money behind them, but such as it was it went into the pot, even down to change. While I counted it, putting it into a little pile to one side, the colonel leaned forward, panetela between his fingers and again carefully studied the markings of my cards. Reassured, he settled back, sucked on his cigar, tapped the table with soft nervous pats of palm and smiled a little.

I picked up my cards in my left hand, turned to the colonel.

"All set. What's your bad news?"

"See foh youahself, suh!" The colonel pitched down a ten spot, then another, another, and still another. He tossed the fifth card to one side, as of no importance. "Had 'em all the time!"

Langborn cried, "Good boy, Colonel!"

Macauley said, "That's having 'em!"

Their hands reached out in greedy quickness to gather in the winnings.

"Very nice," I said. "But let me speak my piece." I flipped a card to the table, counted aloud: "Three—four—five—six—seven—all clubs! Thank you, gentlemen!" I nodded. "I had 'em all the time, too, colonel!"

I could have stolen half the deck just as easily. They might have known half the deck was gone but they wouldn't have known where it had gone to. When

"With this gun at your head you'd say anything!"

it came to the fine points of handing paper, they were no better than school kids.

The colonel's mouth opened and stayed open as if he were trying to shout and couldn't. His eyes were fixed with glazed intensity on the straight flush. Macauley's fox-face looked as if suddenly dusted with gray powder. Langborn half rose from his chair, leaning forward. He put out a slim hand in a slow, slightly stupified gesture, picked up one of the straight flush, looked at it, turned it over, stared at the back, dropped the card and sat down.

At a time like that the important thing is not to give crooks a chance to get their wits to working; so, deftly, with quick rake of fingers, I gathered up the money, the diamonds and small change too. I didn't touch the chips, but picked up the money out of the bank, poked the big bills into the wallet, the lesser stuff into my pocket and facing them all the while, was at the door before they quite realized that I was on my way.

"Good night, gentlemen. And thanks! That's what makes poker, you know—not guessing right!"

Three dazed faces looked at me as I backed out of the door. I closed it quietly.

CHAPTER III

COUNTER-ATTACK

OUTSIDE the door the Negro sat in a chair, half asleep over a movie magazine. He looked up with a startled blink

as I paused, dipped into a side coat pocket, drew out a folded bill with a note inside, thrust it into the Negro's hand and, with a gesture that warned him not to speak, went on.

The note told him to overhear everything he could and phone the number I gave him the next day at noon, ask for Mr. Rich; that then another bill, bigger than this one, would come to him.

That is how I know pretty well what happened after I left.

The boy went into the room, bringing bottles. They didn't pay any attention to him, no more than to a piece of furniture.

Langborn was turning over my cards, scrutinizing the backs. They didn't at all have the markings of the ace full which he had so carefully dealt.

Macauley said, "The dirty crook! How did he do it? I'm cleaned, right! Right down to a collar button!"

The colonel's hard eyes gleamed. "You double-crossing—Pull one like that on *me!*"

He jumped out of his chair, lurching against the table. His hand moved backwards and came up with a gun.

Langborn hit the back of his chair with hands up.

"Before God, Colonel, I—we wouldn't do a thing like that!"

The colonel leveled the gun at Langborn's head.

"When I went to the phone you three pieces of lice bait framed it! All right, I fell! Pretended to lose your own rolls —and diamonds! I've played tricks like that on suckers too many times not to know—"

"But, Colonel, before God—"

"Shut up! I'm talking! Thought it was a good joke to clean me, huh? A squeeze play, with me setting here holding fours against the straight flush you put up his sleeve. It worked! But get this: You lice-headed hoods are through! That roll I dug up is so hot I wouldn't have touched it on anything but a sure thing play. The minute any of it gets to a bank, it will be backtracked to me—then—" The colonel looked as if he meant to shoot.

Langborn whined: "Give me a break, for God's sake! I don't know what happened! You've got to believe me—"

"Yes," said the colonel, through teeth on edge, "I believe you!"

"What can we do?"

"Only one thing'll convince me. Croak this Rich, give me back mine, Rich's roll—and your own diamonds. Then I might begin to think you wished you hadn't put it over on me!"

Langborn said, "I'll do it!"

The colonel sneered. "With this gun at your head, you'd say anything! Stand up, you two! Turn around!"

They stood up and turned. He searched them, took an automatic off Langborn, a pearl-handled revolver off Macauley. "Heeled, both of you! If you weren't in the play with him, why'd you let him walk out on you?"

Langborn said, "It was done so quick I—"

Macauley said, "I just couldn't believe my eyes and never thought!"

"Well, I thought," said the colonel. "I knew you were all in the play together and if I tried to stop him and one of you plugged me, you'd all swear self-defense!"

It was at this point that the Negro boy nervously dropped a bottle and drew the colonel's attention to him.

"Get out!" said the colonel. The boy went. He tried to listen through the keyhole but was pretty shaky and didn't catch everything, but enough to hear that Langborn, desperate and logical said something like this:

"My God, Colonel, you're smart! We never saw this Rich till tonight! Even if we wanted to hand you the double X, would we throw in with a stranger and let him walk out with everything—and never see him again? I tell you he must have known something was coming and

palmed that straight flush for the showdown!"

The colonel, no fool, had to see the truth of that and must have been a little baffled. "Yes, but who—"

Langborn said, "From what I've heard of him, it looks like the work of Don Everhard!"

I know enough to know that mention of my name must have set them back on their heels. Crook gamblers hate and fear me as they ought to hate and fear the devil. Mention of my name must have made the colonel wonder uneasily. But no doubt after thinking it over, he would put it down to merely a coincidence. Crooks are too swell-headed to think other people smart enough to see through their cleverness; and he had no reason for imagining that I suspected him of being behind the Dunken-Kirk job, or of even being the fellow who had sent me threatening letters for having shot Jake at Miami.

It was at this point that my black eavesdropper got cold feet. His report was hazy from then on until—well, I'll get to that in a minute.

But from later events I can make a fair guess at what must have happened: none of them liked the idea of trying to put me in the air and my roll. I shoot too quick. If they did talk about giving it to me in the back on the street or some place, they probably figured there would be too much of a crowd for them to have a chance to go through my pockets. The colonel wanted to get back his Dunken-Kirk money and also the wad I was carrying, most of it in the wallet.

Maybe the colonel did think something of tipping off the police that Don Everhard was at the Hollywood hotel. But I might not have been Everhard; and if I were and the police nailed me, he wouldn't be able to get his fingers on any of the money. And to merely tip off the police would not be to avenge brother Jake's untimely death.

I imagine that Langborn reasoned it out something like this:

"This fellow's turned in for tonight. Tomorrow he'll go to a bank to deposit some of that stuff. He'll be smart. To try to grab him and take him for a ride—not so good. But if we could stage a show, get him in a crowd, and send a good dip up against him—"

I am willing to make the guess that the Colonel said, "Hm-mm," took a fresh panetela and puffed, puffed, puffed, then let the cigar grow cold as he reflected. Maybe he vaguely suspected that Langborn was in cahoots with the famous Dora who was trying to blackmail him. His dark opaque eyes were blankly distrustful of everybody. No doubt he regretted that his good gunman Rumsby was dead.

He asked, "Know a good dip. One we can trust?"

Langborn said, "No, I don't. Not in L. A."

The colonel said, "I do. I'll call her. Get her up here. I'll try your plan. If it works, fine. If it don't I'm going to play you for a couple of dirty crossing crooks and give you what's coming!"

The Negro got away from the door and stayed away. But the colonel phoned Dora, and she came. It must have been nice, the four of them talking over how best to finger my roll, with Dora pretending she didn't know her sweetheart Langborn and his friend Macauley. And somewhere at the back of his cunning old head the colonel probably suspected they were well acquainted. That's a guess, but crooks suspect everybody.

THE next day the Negro boy phoned me promptly at twelve. When he finished I told him to go to the post office, general delivery, the following day.

There would be, I promised, money enough for him to take the train to New Orleans, buy himself a new suit and make a lot of girls glad he was home.

I took up my wallet, a broad one of fine Florentine leather. I patted it, not gently, trying to take out the bulges. I put the wallet into my inside coat pocket and slipped it up and down. It didn't come out too easily, and didn't quite stick, which was just as I wanted. If you don't watch closely, a really good picketpocket can take the plate right out of your mouth.

About two o'clock I left my room and went down to the lobby. There weren't many people about. A casual seeming glance didn't spot anybody that looked suspicious. But the moment I stepped out of the hotel door onto the sidewalk some bum, given ten dollars for the show, heaved a brick through the hotel's front plate glass. The crash brought people running. Instead of making off, the bum began a loud speech. People swarmed from up and down the street and out of nearby buildings. I find it always interesting to see how quick a crowd comes. But I did not linger at all, simply moved away and went around the corner to the garage where I kept my coupe.

When I drove out I turned into the street before the hotel. There was a bigger crowd and a police radio car was at the curb.

I drove downtown, not rapidly, and kept a lookout in the mirror for cars behind me. I could not be sure which, if any, followed, but I was sure that some one was.

I parked near Seventh and Grand and went to a seafood place where meals are served at any hour. I took a table with my back to the wall.

I had the waiter bring an afternoon paper and loitered as if I meant to read every word. I knew the delay would make the shadowers nervous, perhaps show their hand.

Three quarters of an hour passed, then in came Mr. Langborn and Mr. Macauley, quite as if merely hungry for fish. In looking about for a table they pretended great surprise at seeing me. They were a little hollow about the eyes as if they hadn't had much sleep.

"Oh, hello there!" said Langborn as agreeably as if he meant it.

"Mornin'—or afternoon, rather!" said Macauley. "Imagine meeting you!"

"You are sure one lucky devil!" Langborn told me with a kind of good-loser's approval.

This was a new and unexpected wrinkle. I supposed they had talked things over with the colonel while waiting for me to reappear and decided on something. I grinned warily at them, and said, "Hello. Won't you sit down?" I knew that was what they had come in for.

They sat. Langborn leaned on an elbow, began coolly: "I've thought it over. I acted like an ass last night. Apologies and all that."

"Here, too," said Macauley.

"Nice of you," I told them.

"Sole, tartar sauce and coffee. Double pot," said Langborn.

"Same." said Macauley. "But orange juice first."

And I said, "Check, please." I knew that would force their hand.

"Don't go," Langborn urged.

I glanced at the watch. "Nearly three. Was thinking of going to the bank." I tapped my coat pocket. "You can guess why."

"Hell, yes!" Langborn was sounding like a good sport. Macauley grinned, foxlike. "Listen," Langborn went on. "We don't know who the hell you are, Rich, but you are good. You socked it to us. See? We are not stalling. Our cards are there!" He swept his white hand over the cloth as if laying out cards, face-up. "We played you for a sucker and you hooked *us!* Okay by me. That's poker!"

"Thanks," I said.

"But the colonel can't take it!" Langborn deplored. "He's sore as hell. I'm telling you. We don't know what he's up to, but damn him, Rich, if he didn't ac-

cuse me and Mac here of throwing in with you last night to rib him! You know we didn't."

I said, "Very wrong of the colonel. What do you suggest?"

"Listen. This is a break, meeting you here. By accident. Honest to God. On the square, we're for you, aren't we, Mac?"

"Sure are!"

"How so?" I asked.

"Listen. I'm a good paper man, Rich. But you're better—the best I ever saw. That's straight. I'm telling you." With confidential coaxing, "How's the chances to do a little teamwork with you? We'll all throw in together—me and Mac, I mean—and take any cut you say. That right, Mac?"

"You'd better bet!"

As he said it Macauley dropped his hands below the table. I told him, and meant it: "Keep your hands in sight!"

He popped up his hands, astonished and hurt: "You don't think I'd—"

"Try to give it to me right in the belly under the table? Make a couple of snatches at my pocket and be gone? No, I don't think it. But I'm a sure thing gambler and do not take chances!"

"Aw, listen," Langborn coaxed. "You've got us all wrong! We're being on the square. We're off the colonel for keeps, and—"

I looked them over and nodded. "I'll give you two something to think over," I said. "If you've got the nerve, go back to the colonel and ask him what he meant by phoning me the tip-off this morning that you were going to look me up and play friendly, try to be pals, get me in a buggy and leave me in a gutter for the homicide squad to look over!"

I grinned at their fear-smeared faces. Langborn looked sick at his stomach. His face was white. His hand shook as he reached for water. Macauley said, "Did the colonel—"

"Go ask him!" I stood up.

Langborn blurted, "The double-crossing—"

I left them, feeling a little pleased with myself. For all I actually knew, maybe they had followed me in on their own to talk things over, but I didn't believe it. Anyhow, it was a good chance to poke a monkey wrench into the works.

I WENT to a picture show. I was sure I was being shadowed, but I did not take any particular trouble to see by whom. The picture bored me, but I stuck it out just to make my unknown trailers the more uncomfortable.

When I left it was almost night. The late afternoon crowd was dense near Seventh and Broadway where it banked up in restive squirming under the eyes of traffic cops to wait for the semaphore's "Go."

The crowd surged forward. A woman, thrown off-balance, stumbled against me with a kind of fluttering clutch. I did not see her face. She struck against my breast as if falling and her head rose against my chin with a blow that was as hard as almost any man's fist. My hand instantly went to the inside coat pocket and closed on a small wrist. The hand at the end of the wrist had the thick wallet half out.

She had been clever enough to get it without looking around, and with a well bred air of indignation she began at once to reproach a stout man beside me with having shoved her.

The stout man stared in pop-eyed dismay. The dense crowd paused encirclingly with noses poked out, hopeful for excitement. There was none. I held to the wrist, unobstrusively pulled it down waist-high and held on, though she jerked and twisted with a kind of furtive struggling. The stout man and those close about got the impression that I was her companion, because I said with friendly impatience:

"Come along, sister. Things like this often happen in crowds. Be a sport!"

I held her tight with one hand and

took her arm with the other, half pushing, half pulling her along. She struggled as best she could without making a scene, saying first with repressed outrage, "Let go! What do you mean?" then thought it over a few steps and said with confidential warning, "I'll scream! I will!"

"Let's hear you."

"Whatever is the meaning of this?" Her tone had a lot of forced amazement.

"Oh, I thought you knew. It's nice to be able to tell a smart girl something she doesn't know. You're a damn clever pickpocket!"

"You can't prove a thing!"

"No, but the fingerprint man can. Scream, and we'll go to the station and see!"

She said nothing for a while. It was not easy to guide her through the crowd. By design or in the awkwardness of being tightly held and forced along she repeatedly bumped against people. I held firmly.

"You are hurting!" she said.

"Never hurt a woman in my life. So why should I believe you, a stranger?"

On we went. From time to time she gave quick little jerks to test my hold. I have strong fingers.

She told me, "I am not really—really what you think. But I am alone. No money. Desperate. Oh, so hungry! Don't you believe me?"

"Of course. That's why I am being so kind."

Somebody from behind threw his weight against me, knocking me forward against people. The woman jerked, pulling to one side, but she didn't get away. People turned, stared, frowned, some thinking me drunk, others noticing that I held the woman.

I straightened quickly, saw the back of a small man that ploughed through the crowd. No use to chase the fellow. It would mean letting the woman go.

I smiled, put my arm about her waist helpfully. "Must take good care or I'll lose you in this crowd."

She did not resist, even snuggled against me. There was the police station and the fingerprint man awaiting her if she acted in a way that made somebody hustle to tell a cop that something looked funny.

I told her, "Better ditch that lunk. Not so good. Used a jostle instead of a blackjack. Didn't have the nerve. Nice girls ought to be more careful whom they trust."

She turned and looked into my face: "And they said you were just a lucky boob from Mexico!"

"From Mexico, yes. And lucky? Of course, to have met you. Informally so far, but as soon as we're out of this crowd we'll swap lies and call 'em our names, and so get better acquainted.

It was then I had a first good look at her. She was doing her best and her best was pretty good if you didn't know the type.

She had an air of cuteness, often rehearsed, carefully studied. Not bad to look at, but if you looked deep enough you knew that she was tricky, dangerous, not to be in the least trusted. She was dressed in tailored gunmetal serge with white silk waist and small chic hat. Very nice, not at all flashy. In a crowd where a sucker belly-ached, she wouldn't be among the first suspected. She now offered me a role of alluring playfulness, tried for a certain half confiding shyness. A corner of her mouth trembled in a venturesome smile. As I looked her over she said, "Well?" good-naturedly, waited for a reply, then, "Well, what's the verdict?"

"You'll do."

"Do what?"

"Oh, most any old thing you shouldn't."

"Is that so?" She laughed. "Feel bad if you guessed wrong?" Her hovering look went all over my face. With seeming frankness, "I think I like you."

"Of course. I've got money. Here's my car. Come along. Hop in."

"Where to?" Laughing. "Jail at last?"

"Maybe. Sooner or later. You and I both."

SHE got in, pulled her skirt to one side as I closed the door. I walked behind the car and stopped. She made no move to get out. The parking attendant, as he came up to take my ticket, looked at her with admiration. I went on around, got behind the wheel. She was peering in a purse mirror to see how she looked. Not bad. As Tommy had written his sister, a big part of her job was not to look bad.

We moved out into the traffic. She asked, as if not caring, "Where are you taking me?"

"It's my turn to ask. How much did they promise you if you nailed my roll?"

She said promptly, "Oh it wasn't your roll."

"No?"

"No. It's those mining papers you carry in your wallet."

I thought it over. Maybe, maybe not. No doubt that was what the colonel told her, but no doubt too that's not what she believed. For one thing, Langborn had tipped her off.

"But how much did they offer you?"

"One thousand little dollars. Which am something in a workin' girl's life, ain't it?"

"You'd have turned it in for that? Or would you have ducked off and received bids over the phone?"

"Benny was right behind me to take it!"

"Who's Benny?"

"One of them things. He gave you that shove." She touched my arm. "I'm glad you caught me. But what *is* your name? The colonel called you several, mostly unprintable!"

"Rich. I hope to live long enough for it to mean something in your life."

"So do I!" She seemed to feel that she was getting on pretty well with me.

"What name did Lang or Langborn call me?"

"Who?"

"Lang or Langborn. Know him, don't you?"

She studied. "No-o-," cautiously, as if ready to change the word if memory brought a Lang or something like it to mind. Then with conviction, "Don't know the party."

"Just as well. He really isn't a nice person. Cheats at cards. How'd the colonel happen to pick on you?"

"Oh, I don't know. Does it matter? I've followed you about all day, waiting for a chance. I'm awfully glad I miffed it—and we got acquainted!"

We were on Wilshire, just beyond the park. A car, going fast, cut in and sideswiped me, smashing a left front fender, scattering a headlight's glass. The fellow drove ahead a hundred feet or so and stopped. I too pulled into the curb.

"Not bad," I said and put a hand on her arm.

She didn't pull away but asked, "What's not bad?"

"The wide-awake way you reached for my wallet the minute the shock of the car pitched you against me!"

She laughed, "How suspicious!"

"So little Benny's on the job again. *He* knows it's not mining papers!"

She said, "You've played damn fair with me. Step out and get his number. Give him hell. I'll be here when you come back."

"He's probably in a stolen car. This is a better trick than the jostle. Just why do you expect me to believe you'll be here when I come back?"

"If we were going to the station, we'd have been there, wouldn't we, by this time? Besides, use your head. For another thing, I haven't your roll—yet!"

"Fair enough." I patted her arm, got out, walked up to where a small man with a big nose and little sharp eyes stood as if waiting for some trouble. He got going before I said a word:

"Why the hell don't you look where you're goin', you big bum! What you mean, cuttin' out an' bumpin' into me? You gotta pay! Of all the damned rotten drivers I ever seen, you're him! I've a good mind to—"

As the fellow talked he looked past me with an expression of waiting for something that didn't happen.

A motor cop glided up to the curb, stopped his cycle, shot appraising glances from one to the other, said, "What's the row?"

I gestured. "Talks like a radio announcer. You know, breathless and excited over nothing."

The big nosed small man dropped his cigarette, changed his tune:

" 's all right, off'cer. I nicked this man's fender. My fault. I'm givin' my name an' address. Have it fixed. 'sall right."

"Yeah?" said the cop, sizing him up. "Down the street a half block I could hear you apologizing. Just what *is* your name and address?"

The fellow gave it. The cop held out a hand:

"License?"

"Sure," said Benny and reached to an inside pocket, poked about, jerked his hand to his trouser's pocket, fumbled, looked blank. "I must've lost it!"

"Yeah," said the cop. "I thought so. Yours?"

I gave it to him. He leaned forward to the cycle's headlight, looked at the date, just issued, gave it back. He said to Benny, "Let's have a look in your car."

"Car belongs to a friend o' mine. I borrowed it."

"Name o' your friend?" asked the cop, mildly.

"Why—"

"Yeah. You'll have a chance to tell it to the judge. Nice man, the judge."

I went back to my car. The girl, seeing the cop's hand on Benny's arm, said, "Some people have all the luck!"

"Luck? In the correspondence course I took on how to make crime pay, it said when you steal a car look at the registration slip, memorize the name and address. Friend Benny's never had the advantages of higher education. He's hot and bothered. Can't imagine why you didn't bolt. He'll turn in a squawk to the colonel that you've double-crossed the set-up."

"Let me get to a phone and I'll fix that."

"I'll take you to mine. Okay?"

"Of course. Why not?"

CHAPTER IV

THE END OF THE ROAD

IN my rooms at the hotel she made herself at home, took off her hat, bunched up her hair with fingertips before a mirror, turned around, looking things over. She dropped into a deep chair, crossed her ankles, blew cigarette smoke, smiled at me. "I'm waiting?"

"Name?"

"Grace McDermott."

"Real name?"

"Grace McDermott."

"Age?"

"Twenty-three."

"Born?"

"New York."

"Ever been convicted of a felony?"

"I have, brother."

"You look smart. How come?"

"Picked up a fat slob in a night club. Hugged me tight in the taxi. I took everything but his belt buckle. How'd I know he was a police magistrate—finding out for himself what went on at night!"

I said, "I've heard judges are very unreasonable. That's why I try to stay away from them. Tell me, just what did the colonel say when he sent you out to string me?"

"Oh my God, I'm a lady. I can't use such language. That reminds me. Where is the phone?"

I went into the bedroom, brought the extension, plugged into the wall by her chair. She said "Thank you," and began dialing.

"Hello? Colonel? Listen—well, listen! I'm trying to tell you. Not so good yet, but not so bad. When I bumped into him the boob took it for an introduction." She lifted her pretty face and gave me a reassuring wink. "He had a safety pin on his pocket. But I'm up in his room now, getting acquainted. Oh, don't worry. He's out scouting a drink. That's how I got to the phone. Doesn't suspect a thing.

"Listen to something else, Colonel. Benny didn't wake up to what was going on and bumped into us with a stolen car, figuring to give me a getaway. Cop picked him up. No license. You'd better shoo a shoeman and mouthpiece over to the jail first thing in the morning and get him out. He played it all right, but didn't know what it was all about. Hm? . . . Um-mm-hm. I'll try, Colonel. Sure he's got it on him. Why the hell else do you think I'd be sticking around! I told you I'd try—anything you say, old dear. Of course I'm on the square. Would I be calling in like this if I wasn't on the level . . ."

"Yeah? Tell it to the judge."

She made a nice play of losing her temper, and getting quieted down. She broke off, pushed the phone well on to the table, smiled at me. "There you are. Now what?"

"Not bad. What did the colonel want?"

"Them there poipers, sir!" She laughed. "But with no Benny tied to my skirt, he's afraid if I get them, he won't!"

"And would he?"

She dabbed a cigarette, took another. "What good are they to *me?*" With a wandering look about: "How about a drink?"

"Never use it myself. But shall I run down to the corner and get some Scotch? Or don't you like it?"

An eager look jumped into her eyes. She coaxed carefully without over-stress. "I sure do need a drink. You've been hard on my heart. Scared me half to death there on the street. I may faint. I faint beautifully. Want to see?"

"I'll go."

In the elevator I gave the boy a bill. "Get a pint, Joe."

When the elevator was down I went to the switchboard. "Helen, anybody using my phone?"

"Why, yes."

"Cut me in, will you? I'm curious."

Helen was a dark-eyed girl who thought I was a nice man. I tipped rather well and never tried to kiss her. She looked about quickly, gestured toward a booth. "Don't ever tell!"

In the booth I picked up a man's voice. No mistaking Langborn's, an excited ". . . I tell you he's carrying over fifty grand, sweetheart. It's worth a play. You and me'll make Europe! The colonel wants you to get him to a roadhouse and slip him chloral, but that's a bum play. Listen, kid, I don't trust the colonel, but we need him on this play. Mac and me'll go right over and be waiting when you phone him that you are making a start. But listen, kid. Me and Mac have been talking over what we wish would happen. *You can make it happen!*

"Get him to drive you through the park, see? Elysian Park, see? Get so sweet on him he'll stop the car there in that bend where you and me go to talk things over. Stop there and just wait, see? Wait! We'll be along and put him in the air. That'll make it ours—just yours and mine! The colonel thinks he's smart, but we'll show 'im. Get me? Be nothin' to it if you do your part. Will you, sweetheart? You trust me, Dora, don't you? . . ."

I hung on to the phone until she, suddenly uneasy, said: "He may bust back up here any minute. So sign off, Berty. I'll try. But be careful. He's no boob!"

I HUNG up the phone and thought things over. Langborn was going to cut the colonel in on a stick-up, hm? Put me in the air? Langborn and Mac distrusted the colonel, completely. I had seen to that. More than half convinced that I was Don Everhard, yet planning to say, 'Hands up'? It didn't make sense at first. But it didn't take long to make a guess that did make sense: Elysian Park at night, parked in a bend on a lonely road, and a lot more than fifty thousand dollars. I nodded to myself, satisfied of the answer.

Back at the switchboard, I asked: "Helen, how much for your hat and coat?"

"You've never been like this before, Mr. Rich!" she said gayly.

"Always. Only I kept it a secret. Cash now, or tomorrow you can go to Madame Odette and order an outfit. How about it?"

"Madame Odette's? Hey! I'm only a poor little workin' girl, but I can cuss like hell if you trifle with my hopes!"

"I'm serious."

"So 'm I—if you are."

"Very. Pay attention. I sent my car around to the garage. Have one of the bellboys put your hat and jacket in the rumble. My lady wears a white waist, so I need your jacket—or else tear the waist off her, which would be bad manners, wouldn't it?"

"It's often done in the best movies!"

"Listen some more. Have the boy also put in four or five pillows. Not white. Get 'em out of the lounge and charge 'em to me."

Helen gaped at me with solicitous alarm. "Lady, white waist, my jacket and hat, pillows not white—honest, don't you feel well?"

"I'm a magician, didn't you know? Do stunts and tricks. Need 'em for a little show. Understand? See?" I held out my palm. It was empty. I turned the hand over, and instantly back. A bill lay there. "Yours." I gave it to her.

She fingered the bill, convinced that I was a magician. "And I was about to call the doctor!"

I entered my room cheerily, bottle in hand. The girl was idly turning the morning's paper, looked up, laid it aside. "Didn't take you long." I brought a glass and poured a drink, a big one.

She said, "Bad manners, making me drink alone. But here's luck," and tasted

the booze. "Not bad." She took only a sip but fingered the glass as if meaning to take more. She took very little more, showing that she was smart enough to keep fit to know what she was about.

I said, "Well, what do we talk about now?"

She leaned forward with confidential smile: "The colonel wants me to get you to a roadhouse. Means to use knock-out drops. How about it? Want to go? Or have you had enough and would rather take me out for fresh air?"

"What do you know about the colonel?"

She turned the glass round and round under the delicate fingers, eyed the booze, shrugged a shoulder, raised her pretty dark eyes. "He's shaken down a lot of big suckers in Hollywood at crooked poker. He's an old con-man." With very personal intonation: "I don't like old men!"

"But why should we do what the colonel wants us to do?"

"No reason at all. Only—well, I'm a working girl. If I seem to do what he wants, I have a better chance to get money out of him." With a clever air of innocence: "If it isn't mining papers, what is it you have the colonel is so desperate to get?"

"Something like I.O.U.'s. He guessed wrong in a poker game."

"I see. Good for you!"

I held out a match for her cigarette. "When do we start?"

"Thanks." She blew smoke at the ceiling. "Anytime you like. But of course, I'll have to call the colonel first, just to let him see, you know, that I'm earning my money. Yeah, and how I need it!"

I motioned at the phone. "Go ahead."

"You mean you're willing to risk it?" There was a mild trace of suspicion that I should be willing to go into what I understood was a trap.

"Risk what?" I asked. "Bumping into the colonel? Can't I trust you to play on my side?"

"You just bet you can!" She said it well. The words sounded resolutely sincere.

"Then let's get going."

She eyed me, quizzical and far from sure. Her cunning nerves vibrated a warning that she felt and couldn't quite read.

But she got reassurance from the thought that after all it wasn't to a roadhouse that she was taking me. She shook her head as if shaking away something that baffled her and said, "You're one good sport!" She took up the phone again:

"Colonel? Little me once more. He has just gone down to the lobby to get rid of a dame that wants to spoil his evening. We're making a start in about, say"—she glanced at her watch, looked sidewise at me—"half an hour? . . . Don't worry. *I'll play my part according to the very latest instructions!* Is that right? Yeah, sure. 'Bye."

From the length of time she paused, listening, I knew that the colonel must be following the suggestion of Langborn and was giving her new instructions; but when she hung up, all I said was, "He pleased?"

"Seemed to be," she said, and sipped whiskey.

"Getting hungry?" I said.

She answered absently with a staring look: "Little, but—need fresh air more than anything."

I dipped into a vest pocket, pulled out some diamond rings. The sight of them stirred her, quite as if her breath were taken. Maybe Langborn had told her, but I doubt it. "Where on earth did you get them? They are—beautiful!"

"Only fair stones. Got 'em out of the same poker game as the colonel's I.O.U.'s. Mug of a crook named Langborn tried to stack the deck on me, and balled the shuffle."

"Oh, I see."

"Look closely, and see something else. If you play fair with me, maybe I'll have

them all made up into something nice that fits this little finger!" I tapped the finger.

She exclaimed, "Why, I'm for you every time and all the way! Don't you believe that?" She arose quickly, stood and looked as if willing to demonstrate.

I said, "That's fine," and waited. She didn't tell me about Langborn but about the "something" in me that attracted her, and so forth and so forth. Very nicely done. I put the diamonds back into my pocket and ignored her look of disappointment.

I had a pretty good idea of what was coming. Somebody was going to be badly hurt. I didn't even yet actually know that the colonel was Bill Hapsworth. I thought so. I would have bet heavily on it; also that he was the "lawyer" in the Dunken-Kirk affair. And if so, his twenty-four thousand dollar bills (that there were just twenty-four helped convince me) were as useless to me as they had been to him. I excused myself and went into the next room. There I segregated those twenty-four thousand dollar bills. I was cautious enough to think it was dangerous stuff to have around. Then I went back and said, "Come along," and we made a start.

MY car was brought around to the front of the hotel. I raised the rumble seat and looked in. I pushed Helen's hat and coat to one side and pulled out some cushions, poked them into the coupe. "Make you more comfortable," I told her. I went to the front and seemed to examine the fender which the garage had straightened a little. Also the headlight had been replaced. With lowered head I swung my glance about, trying to spot the car that would follow, but saw nothing suspicious.

As soon as I got in she said, "It's such a beautiful night. Let's drive about a little. Do you mind?"

"Not at all. Which way do we go?"

"Oh, any nice quiet road. We could sit and talk. There are things, don't you understand, I want to tell you about."

So it happened that under her guidance we entered Elysian Park and came to a sharply winding road. Half way down we came to a place where one side of the road, with a wide curve, came up against the edge of bushes.

She leaned her head against me, murmured, "Let's stop here."

"Suits me," I said and pulled the car into the bend, off to one side. I stopped the engine, dimmed the headlights.

She put a hand affectionately to my cheek, then squealed with pain. I caught the wrist, twisted, opened the door, got out and pulled her out.

"What on earth—"

"Shut up!" I told her. "You know who I am. Not Rich, but Don Everhard."

"Oh my God!" The tone was confessional.

"You've put me on the spot. Okay. I'm willing. And you've just one way out, sister. That's to do as you're told. Otherwise—"

She drew back as if splattered with ice water.

I caught her, tripped her, lifted her, and put her on the ground. "Sit up and stay there."

I moved with half an eye on her to the rumble, jerked out things, went around the car so that with both doors open I could work with her almost before my eyes. I cut string, tied it about the cushions, set them on the seat. I took the wallet out of my coat and put it into a hip pocket, then pulled off the coat and put it about a cushion, with my hat on top of it. I put Helen's jacket about another cushion, set her hat on that one, then caught up a lap robe and spread it in a way to give the look of being about people's knees. I closed the door and stepped back: the impression of a man and woman, sitting close together on the

far side of the car, wouldn't stand much of a scrutiny, but at least the dummy set-up had something of the intended resemblance.

I made her get up and come with me to a clump of holly bushes near the road. I could feel her trembling.

"Why—what—you don't think I—"

"No, not at all. I *don't* believe you put Tommy Bannister on the spot—"

She almost shrieked, would have except that my hand struck her face. I said, "You little fool, live and learn. 'Live' is the main thing—as you'll learn. So keep quiet."

We crouched down together in the darkness behind the holly. I kept a hand about her head, holding it against my shoulder with palm over her mouth. She did not struggle.

The glow of headlights cast far ahead of the coming car, slid over the ground as if with rapid stealth feeling the way.

A big black car rounded the bend, swerved. There was the skidding scrape of locked wheels. A door of the sedan opened as if burst. A man with something black, heavy, stubby in his hands jumped to the ground, hunched himself in an instant, peering at the dimness inside of the coupe. He fired hastily three times, pointblank, through the lowered window of my car with a sawed-off shotgun, and cried: "That's got 'em!"

Then from within the sedan there was a thrust of flame and the report of a heavy revolver. The man with the pump gun jerked himself rigidly backwards, being shot in the back. He screamed some vague curse, half turned and fell. Before he fell, a second shot was fired within the sedan and the man at the wheel, who had opened the door to get out, pitched headlong into the road, also shot in the back. The wink of flame that killed him showed his fox-face.

The colonel, revolver in hand, jumped from the sedan. He stepped over the huddled body below the running-board, stepped around the sprawled length of the man who had blazed into the coupe with the sawed-off pump gun, and, jerking open the coupe door, the colonel leaned inside, with hand out to snatch quickly at something.

He was mystified by what he touched, and snapped on the dome light, then bent forward, terror-rapt. Coats, hats, cushions with string tied about them to give shoulders and heads, were set up dummy-like.

The colonel shrank back, leveled gun in hand, turning this way and that. He had the snarl-look of a wary old wolf that finds himself in a cunning trap, not yet sprung.

In moving backwards he stepped on a leg and, startled, jumped, cursing. The shadow on the ground stirred, rolled over. The sawed-off gun blazed upwards into the colonel's belly.

I had moved forward under the protecting shadow of the car and was near when the colonel was shot. I put a foot on the shotgun and turned the flashlight down into Langborn's face. His eyes that looked like a dead man's anyhow looked natural now, for he was dead: his last vengeful flicker of life had blotted the colonel's murderous double-cross.

I stooped quickly, jerked back the colonel's coat, thrust a sheaf of new thousand dollar bills into his inside coat pocket. I hate giving up money; but I knew that not until every dollar in the Dunken-Kirk affair had been recovered (without in any way seeming to come from me) would my name be entirely cleared of possibly having a part in it.

I QUICKLY half dragged, half carried, the girl to my car, jerked the dummy stuff off the seat, wadding it down on the floor. I got in, doused the dome light, started up and swung onto the road, burning the tires on downward curves.

A minute later I edged into the swift traffic going east on Riverside Drive.

"W-what happened?" she asked.

I reached by her, clicked on the dome light. "Take a look at the jacket."

She glanced down, but did not stir except to turn her face toward me. With low awed tone: "How did you know they would—would try to kill you?"

"Me?" I met the look. She was a good little actress, but I, a wary gambler, would have bet that stare was honest. She didn't know yet what had happened. I said, "They let me walk out on 'em last night without a word, and I was carrying just as much money as tonight. So I knew if they were going to make a try, they would—well, you see, I did guess right! I usually do with crooks. It's easy enough. Never trust 'em. Even pretty ones, like yourself!"

"But I didn't—didn't know they would try to kill you!"

"I know damn well you didn't. Otherwise I would have tied you up and left you in the coupe, along with my coat and hat!" I groped among the stuff about her feet, got Helen's jacket. "Look it over!" I jammed it into her lap. "Learn a lot."

She gingerly fingered the jacket.

I said, "And it was your friend Berty Langborn that used the shotgun! *Me?* Say *us*. Maybe he figured you would know too much. Maybe it was some other woman he wanted to take to Europe. Maybe he didn't want to risk not hitting me by being careful to miss you. I don't know, don't care—"

She gave a cry, let the jacket fall and slumped against me. Her body was as limp as a rag.

I went on until I spotted a drugstore. I drove into side street, stopped at the curb, got out, slipped into my coat that was ragged, as if badly moth-eaten, in the breast.

I went into the drugstore, kept my forearm pressed against the holes of the breast so the clerk wouldn't notice, and bought spirits of ammonia.

When I got back to the car the girl was gone.

"So that was it!" I thought to myself. She had warned me that she fainted beautifully. "Fair enough!" I clapped a hand quickly to my hip pocket. The wallet was gone. I said, "Good girl. Better than I thought," shrugged a shoulder, got into the car and drove away.

I had some little difficulty getting in touch with a smuggler plane—I was leaving town—so it was about two hours before I got back to the hotel to get together a few things I wanted to take. The phone rang.

"Took you a long time to get home!" she said. "I've been trying for hours! Think you're smart, don't you?"

"You think so too, don't you?"

"Listen to me, you! I've got it on you, and you pay *me*. Get that?"

"What's all the fuss? You got the papers, didn't you? Clever girl!"

"Say now, don't wisecrack me. This is business. You come through and come through plenty, or I go to the police. How'd you like to have them on your neck, Mr. Don Everhard?"

"Where do you think I've been the last few hours if not at the police station? Does it surprise you to hear that they'd like to talk to you, darling? Give me your address and I'll send 'em right over."

Darling said "Damn you!"

"And you seemed such a nice girl!" I told her and hung up.

Papers, just pieces of newspaper, was what she had got, and nothing more. About my waist, under the clothing, was a soft wide chamois money belt.

A FEW months later I was back in Los Angeles. No secrecy this time. The body of the dead "colonel" had readily been identified as that of Bill Hapsworth. The twenty-four thousand dollar bills linked him up as the "lawyer" in the Dunken-Kirk affair; and his part in it was cinched when Dunken picked out a photograph of Hapsworth as the man

who had framed the job. And nobody, not even the most prejudiced detective in Chicago, was stubborn enough to think that maybe after all I did have a finger in the deal with the brother of a man I had killed—not when everybody knew how Bill Hapsworth had loved his worthless brother.

One afternoon there was a knock on my apartment door. I opened the door. As pretty a girl as almost any I ever saw in my life jumped at my neck. I hadn't known a man could be kissed so many times in no time at all. "Don't you know me?" She backed away laughing under my surprised gaze.

"Sure I know you."

Cora touched her nose, no longer flat, but just as thin and straight as the daughter of two Bostonian aristocrats ever had. "You did that for me!"

"How'd you guess it?"

"Bumps saw you on the street. Knew you. I mean knew you were the Mr. Richards that had been at the Greencrest. He followed you, found out who you really are, told me. Don't you see? I put two and two together—"

"You always were good at that," I admitted.

"—and so of course saw clearly that the rich Don Everhard had put Dr. Alexiskow up to fixing my nose to—well, you know, sorta repay me for not blackmailing him! Have I guessed right?"

I said, "Be just too bad for the man that marries you to try to step out of line. With your gifts, you'd guess it on the darkest night!"

"Oh how dare you! Bumps wouldn't do a thing like that!"

"Bumps, hm?"

"Yes, we've been m a r r i e d—oh, months! Two almost. You see, after my nose was fixed, the jinx was gone. I didn't have any trouble getting parts. Then—imagine!—Preeminent Studios 'discovered' me! Yeah, after I'd banged on their gates till I calloused my knuckles, they 'discovered' me. And guess how much they signed me up for?"

I shook my head, braced myself, and may have groaned a little, remembering my lawyer's deal with the astute Dr. Alexiskow.

"One thousand a week! Isn't it glorious! All because the shape of this thing"—she poked the perfect nose tip, waggled it—"was changed! And you must come to dinner, right now, tonight. I've come for you. Bumps has discovered a new cocktail. Now that prohibition is over, he can really carry on his experiments! This afternoon he tried 'em on the butler and the butler's out cold. When I left Bumps was in the kitchen feeding 'em to the chauffeur. So, won't you come? Bumps wants you to see a *real* Hollywood party . . ."

"Down with 'em, you scurvy rogue—"

TWO FOR FRANCE

By H. BEDFORD-JONES

OLD CAP'N PENNINGTON, like many another seaman, was laid up in San Pedro by the shipping strike. He was a hefty man with white, square whiskers and a gift of the gab. He came from the west of England and was proud of it.

I ran into him one night, gamming with Louie Bills and Cap'n Sontag, and they made me welcome. The rest of us were not very strong on sailing ships and rigs, though Sontag had a good general idea of such things. Somebody mentioned the old tit for tat—how no rascal could think up a good smart dodge, that some honest man didn't contrive a way to beat it.

"Like luggers and cutters, eh?" said old Pennington. "Smugglers and revenue men. They used to have great times in the old days."

"But the smugglers in their luggers

laid all over your blasted Royal Navy!" stated Sontag. "Why, there's cases where they fought against king's ships and beat 'em!"

Old Pennington nodded. "One case in particular, and it's got a story behind it. From my part of the country, it was. The cutters were really nothing except luggers with extra strong rigging. Smugglers had everything their own way at that, until Mortimer thought up the extra canvas that killed him."

"How did extra canvas kill him?" I demanded. "And what extra canvas could a cutter carry, beyond her usual seven sails?"

Pennington shot me a scornful glance. "Seven? Well, true enough, but it was Mortimer who lengthened yards and bowsprit, and bent on the three extra sail that finally broke the smugglers' backs. Still, it's a long story. Ain't much of it about the sea, neither, except that everything in the west of England is about the sea. It goes back to the Seven Years' War or whatever they call it—just before 1760. That's when Jem Driscoll and his hundred-ton lugger began to make history. The bigger those luggers got, the less they feared the king's ships. But it's a long story."

"The night's young," said Sontag.

"And the bartender needs something to do," I added. Old Pennington wiped his white whiskers and cussed the seaman's strike.

"Well, I got to start at the beginning," he said. "You know, they had a lot o' French prisoners in England back in those days—camps scattered all over. And every once in a while some prisoners broke loose."

"What's that got to do with ships and rigs?" I demanded.

"Well, you got to get the story in your head. I suppose you young fellows ain't been over the old coaching highways? Back at that period, anything could happen of nights. One night in especial, dark and drizzly it was, with the wind coming up from the sou'west like it comes in Devon and such, tingling the trees with the smell of salt water—"

HE painted that wet and chill evening with magic words, painted the old stagecoach with its guard and driver, rolling and lumbering along, painted the rain-wet tang and damp smell of the moors until it hung in the nostrils. His cunning speech fairly made us see that coach laboring up the long grade, bound for Bristol from Plymouth.

No outside passengers this sad and murky night, and but two inside: one a fine gentleman, the other a burly, reticent seaman with one eye. Not even the distant bark of dragoon carbines had roused more than a grunt out of this seaman.

"French prisoners escaped, eh?" said the fine gentleman. "What's the use of our bringing in the rascals if they're not guarded better? In three years I've landed four hundred odd—"

The coach lurched to a sudden halt. There was an indistinct murmur of voices from the wet night outside. As nothing seemed to happen, the gentleman opened the window and put out his head. He sighted the guard descending from above, lantern in hand, and spoke with an impatient oath.

"Here, guard! Why the devil have you halted?"

His words died abruptly. Into the circle of lantern-light had advanced a dark figure. In each hand was a large brass pistol, and each pistol was cocked. The man's face was concealed by a rude mask of cloth. Around the mask showed a stubble of beard.

"Steady, guard, steady wi' the lantern!" he said warningly.

"Aye," said the nervous guard, as he came to earth.

The coach door opened. The gentleman passenger stepped out. Under his greatcoat showed fine garments, but his

features were hard and keen, a trifle too keen if one sought any sympathy or kindness there. He gripped a long cane in his hand, gold-headed.

"A highwayman, eh?" he exclaimed, looking at the pistols and the man behind them. "You rascally blackguard, put down those arms! I'm Captain Sir Hugh Mortimer of His Majesty's Navy, and damme if I don't see you hanged for this! Down with 'em, you scurvy rogue—"

Stepping forward, he lashed out with his cane, insolent and arrogant.

The highwayman laughed a little. One pistol met the cane in midair, as though sword met sword; the cane glanced and slid down. Next instant the long barrel of the pistol hit Mortimer over the head. Under this blow, the man staggered and collapsed, and lay senseless.

"Now, my bullies," said the highwayman cheerfully, to the guard and coachman, "do as I bid and you'll not be harmed. Have you any food and drink aboard?"

"Aye, this gemman brought a hamper," the guard said hastily. "You're welcome to it, and God bless you for a true-hearted man, says I! Bean't that so, Jarge?"

"Aye, as ever was," chimed in the coachman, who had also come down.

"See if this gentleman has any money on him."

The guard searched the senseless man, producing only a few small coins. Few men carried much cash when traveling by coach in this day and age. The highwayman promptly ordered out the other passenger.

The burly seaman came with a growl and an oath and a threat. Under the jests of the robber, he turned out his pockets to show a fat purse. The robber took it and looked into it, and laughed gayly.

"Ha! I'll take ten pounds from you, no more. That's enough for my purpose."

"It's enough to fetch you to the gallows," said the seaman furiously. "And I'm the man to do it! You made a bad mistake when you thought to pluck me, you damned rat—"

In his burst of rage, he actually rushed at the highwayman, who promptly lashed out with a pistol. The seaman groaned and fell.

"Back in the coach with him, lads, and his purse with him," ordered the robber blithely. "Set out that hamper. Cut loose one of the horses and leave him. Then turn around and go back."

"Aye, sir, and easy enough done," exclaimed the nervous guard.

"Don't put that gentleman in until you've stripped him naked. Toss out his hat. Then dump him in and on your way. Quick about it!"

The two men obeyed with alacrity. A hamper was set out, with the handsome beaver hat of Mortimer. The pair set the burly seaman inside, and fell to work on Mortimer.

The latter, stripped to the skin and still senseless, was finally lifted in. A horse was cut loose and left. The coach was lumberingly turned and departed on the back track, leaving the lantern standing there beside the hamper and horse and pile of clothes.

WHEN the rumble of wheels had died, Maurice Garrick stepped into the circle of light, stripping the cloth mask from his face. He patted the horse, then fell savagely upon the hamper, and with a cry of joy attacked its contents.

"Here's luck!" he exclaimed. "And, faith, I need it! After two days of wandering, dodging dragoons and bullets in the rain—ah, claret! Excellent! But I can't change into those clothes until I get a razor and remove this beard. That's the next problem. Better stay in my own rags until the proper time comes. Now to eat, then on to the Bristol road. Once in Bristol, I'm safe."

He ate ravenously, with an eye on the heap of clothes, the watch with golden fob and seal, the fine beaver hat and the greatcoat. These last he presently put on, rolling the other garments into a compact bundle to guard them from the drizzle.

He lingered to assault the food anew. He had robbed the mail-coach, which meant the gallows if he were caught, but bullets would come quicker than hemp. An escaped French officer, hunted by the dragoons near and far, would get short shrift. Until he got rid of his beard, these garments would do him little good. He should have tried to get a razor before the coach departed.

Suddenly he started, leaped to his feet, caught up the bundle and ducked for the horse. That accursed lantern! He had forgotten all about the danger of it. The wet earth carried a thumpity-thump of warning; horses not far away. Dragoons, no doubt. A shout reached him as he swung up to the bare back of the horse and kicked in his heels. Another shout.

He set the horse up the long hill. A carbine banged out, then half a dozen at once. Garrick swayed in the saddle to the shock of a ball, felt no hurt, and was gone over the hillcrest. The horse picked up speed and struck into a gallop. A good horse, fresher than the mounts of the dragoons which had been on the search all day.

On and on, thundering into the darkness. The day had only been gone an hour or so; the entire night was ahead. The minutes rushed past, and the miles with them.

A crossroads now. No need of seeing the signs. Here was the Bristol road, and Garrick took the left turn and quickened his horse again. Another mile; all hills and dells hereabouts, with trees thick everywhere. Suddenly the horse shivered.

Garrick, with the quick premonitory fear of the cavalryman, drew rein. A cold hand seemed to touch him. Another shiver, as he dismounted and ran his hand over the animal. Warm and sticky—blood. One of those balls had gone home. He had quite forgotten about the shock of a ball he himself had felt. Apparently he had no wound.

Already the poor beast was dying. Garrick led the animal out of the road, took his bundle, and went his way. Afoot now—no reaching Bristol ere dawn at this pace. Too bad! It was all arranged, too. Jem Driscoll, with his newfangled lugger that could outrun any king's ship; Driscoll the smuggler, glad enough to earn a fiver by taking an escaped prisoner across the Channel. Well, there was time enough. Driscoll was not sailing until tomorrow night.

"Life or death hangs on a razor and a horse," thought Garrick as he plodded along, precious bundle in hand. "A devilish poor chance of finding either one in the highway! And a worse chance of getting clear, unless I find both before the night's past."

Two pin-points of light were growing, ahead and below. A coach? No, for they did not bob or move about. Suddenly Garrick turned, came to one knee, put ear to the ground. Horses, aye! And coming from behind him.

He broke into a run, desperate. On either side the road was a ditch, brimming with water. Ahead, however, the two pin-points had been resolved into two lanterns, one on either side of an open gateway. Here was the entrance to some estate; close by, lights glimmered from the keeper's cottage.

Like a haven of refuge, those open gates beckoned Garrick. The horses were close behind him now. He had a better chance for life if caught by some of the gentry than by these dragoons. Forgetting that the two lanterns would reveal him, he darted across the road and in at the gates.

A quick shout lifted behind.

Caught, blast it! No going back; he

must take his chance ahead. He bolted like a rabbit, past the cottage and along the drive, running for dear life. It was no use. Lights shone out ahead, but the clatter of hoofs was hard upon him. Luckily it was pitch black here. Frantically Garrick plunged out of the road and pitched in among some brush.

The pursuit swept past. He rose and listened, panting. Back trail? Impossible. Dragoons were on the road. Some had gone ahead. He turned and looked at the lighted building, a great stone house, and a laugh came from him. Why not? Razors were there. Ten minutes alone, and he was safe. Safe, that is, from sudden death.

That evening befell wild excitement at Spence Hall, and the thrill of the manhunt. Gentry and lackeys, grooms and keepers came pouring forth to join the dragoons. Lanterns bobbled about the garden and grounds, powder-horns were brandished, pistols and small-swords took up an excited but cautious search. The first floor of the hall was ablaze with lights, throbbing with music and song and excitement.

Between two of the high windows ran a great stem of ivy. Following this stem, a figure swung and climbed with the blind luck of desperation. An unshuttered, lighted upper window came within his reach.

Garrick tested the window, looked through into an unoccupied room, and scrambled swiftly through as the sash swung. He closed it, moved to one side, darted glances around. Apparently a woman's room, with high bed in one corner, silver candelabra lighting the place richly.

He was scratched, panting, weakened. He looked down at his hand and saw a dark trickle of blood coming from his sleeve. The rude bandage about that wound he had got when escaping had slipped. His head drooped, he could feel his heart hammering.

"Run to earth, are you?" said a voice. "You chose the wrong place, my man."

Garrick turned slowly. A woman stood in a doorway, unafraid, regarding him. He looked at her, caught his own reflection in a long glass, and gasped. This ragged, wet, blood-stained thing was hardly human.

"So you're the escaped prisoner they're after," went on the woman.

"Correct, madam," said Garrick bitterly. "You needn't scream or faint; there's—"

"Why, you speak English!" she exclaimed. "I thought it was a French prisoner—"

"Irish, madam, in the French service. Captain Maurice Garrick."

"What do you want here?"

"Want?" He uttered a low, harsh laugh. "A razor, soap and water, a place to change from my rags, something to bandage a wound—"

He wavered and caught at the wall. Then he found her coming forward, and was aware of her hand on his hurt arm. The pain of it shocked him.

"Oh, you're hurt—clumsy that I am!" she said. "Come into my brother's room. All you lack is here, and a decanter of brandy to boot. This way!"

To his astonishment, he found her leading him into the adjoining room—a man's room, with clothes scattered about, a silver tray with decanter and glasses. She poured brandy and put the glass into his hand.

"Thank you, madam. To your health!"

"When you're ready, come back into my room," she said, and left him.

GARRICK tossed his bundle on the bed. He had clung to it through everything. Strength came back to him, new vigor, fresh hope. Before the fire in the grate, he stripped. As he had thought, the bandage had slipped. Otherwise, he was unharmed. He remembered that bullet-

shock, and frowned. He did not understand it until he opened up the bundle, and the gold watch of Sir Hugh Mortimer tumbled out. Shattering the watch, firmly bedded in it, was a lead ball.

"Devil take me, a lucky omen!" murmured Garrick. "Now for a razor."

He shaved, washed, dressed, drew back his hair and powdered it, all swiftly. He looked into the glass and smiled joyously. Incredibly, a new man had emerged.

A lean, dark face, reckless blue eyes, high-boned features. The shirt of Mortimer was torn and ruined; from an open drawer at hand he got one of fine frilled linen which fit him fairly. Flowered silken waistcoat; the coat was muddied and spoiled, but from an open cupboard he took a handsome coat of maroon brocade which suited him admirably. His shaggy garments he flung under the bed, and went to the door of the adjoining room. It was not quite closed. A sudden rasping voice reached him, a man's voice.

"Why, damme, I say you shall. Mortimer's the catch of the year. Stands well at court, has certain advancement in the Navy—"

A woman's voice, too low and soft to catch. The man went on violently.

"Devil take the banns! A guinea to the parson will fix that. Mortimer will have all the papers with him. We sign the contract tonight; tomorrow, egad, you're wed. You shall, I say! Willy nilly, so no more talk."

"Brother or not, you're no guardian of mine." This was the woman's voice, louder now, vibrant. "I tell you I shan't marry him."

"You vixen! I say you shall, and that ends it."

Hasty steps, an oath, the slam of a door. She was alone again. Garrick knocked, drew open the door, stepped into the next room.

She stood there, white and angry, outraged pride in her face. Her eyes dilated at sight of him.

"Who are you? What do you want here?"

Garrick bowed. "Faith, you asked me that before! It seems you have some need of a friend. I'm in your debt. It'll be a great honor if you'll consider me at your—"

"Oh!" She drew back, amazed. "You —you're not that poor man—"

"Faith, I'm not, and glad of it!" Garrick dusted powder from his sleeve. "I'm Maurice Garrick, lately detained in the camp of French prisoners at Evesham. I'm bound for Bristol, where friends and safety await me. And—" with a laugh, he bowed again—"I beg you to consider me at your service in any way possible."

She stared. His twinkling laugh was infectious. Something in the reckless humor of his lean face matched the keen high spirit of her lovely eyes. As Garrick observed, she was a very lovely woman indeed.

"Then you heard what was said just now?"

Garrick bowed again.

"He struck me—his sister!" she exclaimed passionately. "Oh, if I were a man—"

"I'm one. It would give me great pleasure to kill him, if you so desire."

"Don't be a fool!" she said sharply. "I don't want anyone killed. I want to get out of this accursed marriage they're forcing me into! Bristol, did you say? Why, my uncle lives in Bristol. He'd know how to protect me were I there!"

"Admirable! Destiny is at work, I see," cried Garrick gayly. "We shall go to Bristol together, then. Why not? But wait a moment. Mortimer, eh? Could that be Captain Sir Hugh Mortimer of the Royal Navy?"

"Why, yes! Do you know him? He's coming by coach from Plymouth—"

Garrick burst into laughter. He turned back into the other room, and felt for the packet of papers he had noticed in Mortimer's coat. With them, he rejoined

the young woman, and showed her the packet.

"Your marriage papers," he said, and tossed them into the fire. "So that was your Mortimer, eh? Devil take me! I held up a coach on the way here and he was in it. I took his clothes—"

A sharp rap at the door interrupted them. "Mistress Cicely!"

"Well?" she demanded. "What is it?"

"Sir Henry says the meats are ready and—and he be in a most angry way and won't wait for them that are seeking the escaped prisoner—"

"I'll be down at once, tell him."

She turned to Garrick, anxiously. "Remain here. I must descend at once to dinner. We have many guests—"

"Another dinner won't come in amiss," Garrick said promptly. "Take me with you, present me as a friend of Mortimer's. Trust me to fill the breach! Dinner, eh? It'll not be finished before midnight. Can you trust any of the servants?"

"Yes. All of them," she breathed, watching him wide-eyed.

"Get word to one of them. Have two saddled horses waiting for us at eleven—the ladies will be leaving the table about then. Will ye trust me? Upon my honor, I'll land you safe in Bristol town despite the devil and all his angels! I'm leaving there tomorrow night. Friends have engaged a lugger to take me to France. Will ye trust me?"

She drew a quick, deep breath. "Yes, yes! But you can't go downstairs; it'd be madness! How to explain your arrival?"

"No need. All's in confusion, probably half the guests are outside. They'd not know whether I had just arrived or not."

"True," she conceded. "And yet—"

"Bah! Come along—ah, wait a minute." Garrick regarded her with whimsical air. "Since I'm about to mingle with your company, it might be as well if I knew your name, and where I am! I haven't the faintest idea of either."

She broke into tremulous laughter. It was impossible to resist his faint touch of brogue, his quick assurance. The clothes, the spur of peril, the sparkling eyes of this lovely girl, had evoked the Maurice Garrick of old. He was himself again.

"My brother is Sir Henry Spence," she said. "I'm Cicely Spence, and this is Spence Hall. Is that enough?"

"For the present. Madam, may I have the honor of offering you my arm?"

Still laughing, she accepted.

THE two of them descended the wide, curving staircase to the great rooms below, where a dozen ladies and a few gentlemen stared at them in astonishment. Most of all stared Sir Henry Spence, a man much older than his sister; a heavy-set, slow-witted man of rough and violent temper, concealed behind a bluff outward geniality. Half the guests still being out in search of the escaped prisoner, he had consigned them to the devil and ordered the meal served.

"Ecod!" he exclaimed, his heavy eyes popping at sight of Garrick. "Ecod! Stap me! What the devil does this mean, Cicely?"

She swept him a smiling curtesy.

"It means, Henry, that I've encountered a friend of Sir Hugh Mortimer, who seems to have arrived unnoticed in the confusion. I present Captain Maurice Garrick."

Garrick bowed to the company.

"Faith, what a welcome!" he drawled amiably. "One rogue stuck his head into my carriage, another bawled to know if I were some escaped rascal of a prisoner, a third thrust a pistol in at the other window—and all three went scurrying off at a yell from a fourth! And damme if a soul seemed to know I was in the house. Sir Henry, your servant. I fancy that I left my things in your room."

"Eh? Eh? But where's Mortimer?" exclaimed Sir Henry. Garrick surveyed him with a twinkle.

"There, sir, you propound a stickler, a most devilish quary, upon my word! The last I saw of him, he lay stark naked in the road, while those rascally highwaymen emptied their pistols after me—"

There was a cry, a chorus of cries, exclamations, excited questions. Everyone pressed in closely upon Garrick. He coolly held up the smashed watch of Mortimer, with its embedded bullet, and extended it toward Sir Henry Spence.

"Ye know that ticker? I see that you do. Well, poor Hugh saved my life, no less! When the cursed rascals—aye, we were stopped by highwaymen—when we were ordered out of the coach, Hugh emptied his pockets into my hand. 'Off with you, Garry! Out the opposite door and run for it!' says he, so that's precisely what I did.

"And the rouges sent hot lead after me," went on Garrick to his intent audience. "There's the proof of it. The blackguards stripped poor Hugh, bundled him into the coach, and ordered the driver to go back to the last village. Sink me if I know the name of it. These cursed provincial towns are all alike as two pease—"

The assumption of drawling hauteur was perfect. No one paid any further heed to how or when Garrick had arrived, which was precisely his hope.

The watch and seals were recognized. A hubbub of voices arose. Sir Henry clapped Garrick on the shoulder and bade all the company into the dining-room—only to stop short and stare at Garrick with distending eyes.

"Why, ecod!" he blurted out. "Sink me! May I be hanged and quartered if that scurvy rascal—oh, ho! It's beyond words!"

"Eh?" Startled, Garrick leaped on the alert. "What is?"

"This! This coat!" and Sir Henry touched the maroon brocade. "Why, damme, it's the exact pattern of one I had from Clapham in Jermyn Street, and the rogue assured me on his honor there was not another bit of such damask in London!"

Garrick caught the alarmed look of Cicely Spence, and broke into a laugh.

"Why, Sir Henry, he gave me precisely the same assurance! A cut off the bolt for His Majesty, says he, and this for me, and not another bit in England! The rogue has devilish cheek, eh? More power to him!"

Amid laughter, everyone passed in to a belated dinner.

Most welcome to Maurice Garrick was this lordly repast, the tables groaning under game and fowl and roasts, wines of the best, with Cicely Spence at his side and merry guests around. So long had he starved and shivered in Evesham detention camp that he could have faced a dozen dinners in a row without quailing.

One by one, others of the guests straggled in from the searching parties, and an officer of dragoons came with them; a trifling incident, to which Garrick paid no attention at the moment. He himself was in fine fettle, with his talk of London and his intimate acquaintance with everyone there from the King down—which made a vast impression on the county families present. His wit, his merry reckless smile, and the indefinable something which stamped him convincingly as a gentleman, made an even greater impression; before an hour had passed, he was a prime favorite with everyone.

It was close to eleven when the ladies rose and departed to the drawing-room, while jars of tobacco, long clay pipes and fresh decanters were brought in. A few moments later, Garrick clapped hand to pocket, as though remembering something, and rose.

"Sir Henry! With your permission, I shall seek your sister. I had forgotten a commission from Hugh—a message for

her ear, and a packet for her hand."

"Aye, aye," said Spence, with a wink and a roll of his hand. "Make her heart easy, and rejoin us. Time enough for music and dance later."

In the grand salon, Garrick found the ladies clustered. Under pretence of a message from her brother, he bowed over Cicely's hand and led her aside.

"Ready?"

"Yes, but—" she looked at him, fright in her eyes. "Did you hear what Henry told me? About my uncle. He's gone to Edinburgh on business. He's not in Bristol. And there's no one else—"

"There's Maurice Garrick. Trust to him. Lord, girl! You'd have the devil to face. Come along. You're no child, but a woman grown! Upstairs, and quick about it. Get into clothes suited to the road and the night. I'll wait in your brother's rooms; then you can take me out some side entrance."

She hesitated, tossed her head suddenly, and led the way to the stairs. Their departure was not noticed.

"I have clothes all ready," she said, as they parted. "Give me five minutes."

In Sir Henry's room, Garrick helped himself to a pair of stout boots, took the coat and beaver of Mortimer again, and was ready. For weapon, he selected a stout riding crop, leaving his pistols behind. No more need for them now, he thought.

The door opened. At sight of the girl, his eyes widened. No girl now, but a man, a slender stripling—her brother's garments, no doubt, heavy riding coat cloaking her to the knees, hat pulled low over her face.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed, and caught her hand. Under his admiring gaze the color lifted into her cheeks, then her eyes danced and she turned.

"Come on, before I lose heart and change my mind! The horses are waiting—"

They slipped down the hall together, encountered no one, came to a rear stairs and in three minutes were approaching the entrance court. There a cresset was burning. A number of dragoons were clustered to one side, awaiting their officer; two saddled horses were in the hand of a groom, who touched his forelock as the girl appeared. Evidently this was not the first time she had worn man's garments.

A sudden sound struck Garrick's ear, just as the groom handed Cicely up into her saddle. He turned, staring. Horses were coming up the drive, were almost here, a whole group of them; the light of the cresset was reflected on the helmets and breastplates of dragoons. An officer's voice snapped out inquiringly. The clump of dragoons waiting beside their horses came to attention.

Then lifted a voice that Garrick recognized in stark incredulity.

"Look at him—damme, look at the rogue yonder! My coat, my beaver—the very man himself!"

"Ride for it—I follow!" said Garrick, and slashed at the girl's horse with his riding crop. The animal was off with a leap and a plunge. He jumped for his own saddle, cursing the luck that had brought Mortimer here.

How it had happened was clear enough. The stage coach had run into some of the dragoons, who had brought Mortimer on with them. And now—

Cicely's horse had bolted through the party of dragoons, throwing them into confusion. Garrick shouted at them as he came; the way was barred, his horse shouldered the others with staggering collision. Bewildered, not sure what was what, they opened a way. Next instant, Garrick was down the drive after the girl.

At the gates, he caught up. They were out into the broad highway together, pounding for Bristol, the splendid hunters promising to throw off any pursuit with ease. Free! With wild exultation echoing in his heart the thudding hooves, Garrick checked the first mad

pace. It was a long ride ahead.

IN those cold depressing hours before dawn, one reflection after another weighed down the spirit of the girl, and left Garrick himself none too happy. They could not gain Bristol before noon. That officer of dragoons at the table had seen his face, would know him again. Sir Hugh Mortimer would be after him hotfoot; by this time the whole west country was being roused. Cicely, who might have run away with impunity, would now be hunted down on the charge of sheltering an escaped prisoner. And her brother knew well she would be heading for Bristol, having nowhere else to go.

Garrick made light of it all, with a gay rattle of talk about the sea and the far horizon, Jem Driscoll the smuggler, the wonder ship which could run the legs off any king's ship in the service. In the drizzle of those depressing early hours, when the two of them drew very close together, this cheerful talk of sun and sea was very good for the soul.

While Garrick did not know Jem Driscoll, he had heard much of the man and his ship, a lugger of extraordinary size; and friends outside the prison had arranged for his passage, with every detail carefully checked.

Not that all this helped Cicely Spence very much. She had jewels under her coat, but her brother would now be an inveterate enemy.

"He'll get my estates forfeited and passed over to him—that's what he's been after with this marriage to Mortimer," she said bitterly. "And even if I land in France, what then?"

"This lugger goes to Holland, not to France," said Garrick. "You've done all this for me, you're facing ruin for my sake. Well, separate! Ride for Edinburgh and your uncle—"

"Don't be silly," she said curtly. "That's no solution of a treason charge."

True enough. They rode on, and the dawn came up; still under a drizzle, they halted at a village tavern for the usual breakfast of cakes and ale, and a breath of warmth from the fire. As he looked into her eyes and drank gayly to her health, Garrick felt his heart leap. They had become intimate and old friends in these lonely hours, and danger ahead and behind drew them closer.

"I'm not a poor man, Cicely," he said quietly. "You land in Holland—what then, you ask? You've said there's no man holds your heart, but praise be, you're wrong there. Or will be, if I can make it so. With life and death at stake, it's a poor time for evasion and pretence and pretty words."

"I think myself that it is," she said, looking at him steadily. A little color rose in her cheeks, and his heart leaped again.

"Perhaps peril's a spur to the brain and heart," he said slowly. "Yet what came to me at the first sight of you last night lingers with me—the sharp swift thought that here's a woman to live with and love, a woman to grow old with and die with, a woman keen and fine like a rapier, who'd hold a man's heart and thought to the lofty places and—and—"

Resolve failed him, lest his impulse offend her. Before he could pluck up courage again, he saw her turn white to the lips, heard a scurry and pound of hoofs. A rider went through the village westward full career—a courier, ready enough to kill his horse, since he could get a fresh mount at the next post-station.

"There goes news of us," said she, and rose. "Come."

They left the tavern, mounted, rode on in the drizzle. Pursuit was flung off, yes; but now the news had gone ahead of them to Bristol. And they both knew it.

The morning slogged past on muddy feet. Noon saw the towers of Bristol ahead, and here Garrick drew rein.

"We part and go in separately," he said. "They'll be looking for the two of us in company. There's a tavern here near the canals, called the Royal William. We'll meet there. I'm to find my man Driscoll there. Do you know the city?"

"Very well," she replied. "We'll find a crossroads just ahead, and I'll take a side road there."

They went on, and at the crossroads drew rein. Garrick put out his hand and took hers, and bent his lips to her fingers. Then he looked her in the eyes and smiled.

"Good luck, and God keep you! At the Royal William."

His heart leaped for the third time at the message in her eyes but she turned her horse and was gone without a word.

HE rode on into the town, and no one paid him a second glance.

He found the Royal William, a tavern of no great account near the channels where the ships of wine from Spain and France came right in among the warehouses. His horse he left to the grooms; and striding in, he made query for one Jem Driscoll. He was sent to a room in the rear. He entered this, and saw a man alone at a table—a burly, powerful man with a bottle before him and a black patch over one eye.

"Jem Driscoll?" said Garrick cheerfully. "My name's Garrick. I think you've arranged to meet me here today. The password is Maurice, my name."

"Aye," said Driscoll, and looked up.

He stared at Garrick, a curious expression in his savage features. And Garrick was stricken dumb with recognition. For this was the man with one eye who had been in the coach from Plymouth.

"Aye," Driscoll said again. "Five guineas was the price."

"Here it is."

Garrick counted out the gold. Driscoll pocketed it, and rose. He went to a door across the room and opened it to show a cubbyhole of a closet.

"Best wait here," said he, "until we can go aboard. News of an escaped prisoner came in an hour ago; the town's up and stirring."

Thankful that he had not been recognized, Garrick went to the closet. The door slammed. Then it struck him as odd that he should have to wait here—until the voice of Jem Driscoll came to him from the room, hoarsely exultant.

"Ye think I'd travel wi' that hat and coat from Plymouth and not know it again? Nor your voice? Jem Driscoll's no fool. You're safe, my rum cove, till I tip of the sojers. Rob me, will you? I said I'd see you hanged, and I will—"

"Hold on!" cried out Garrick in sharp panic. "I'll make it up to you, man, and fifty pounds to boot!"

A hot oath answered him, and feet strode away, and silence fell.

There was a faint sweet smell in the closet. Somewhere near by was a hiding-place for kegs of tobacco, ankers of brandy and other smuggled goods. Garrick sank down in the darkness, after vainly trying that barred door. So this was the end! What a damned break of luck—Jem Driscoll that other man in the coach! But so things went in the world.

A scrape of feet outside. "Did ye send the word?" asked Driscoll.

"Aye," said another voice. "They'll not be here for an hour or so; I made sure o' that. I want to move out the spirits and other contraband afore them sojers comes prowling. Hello! What's up?"

A third voice broke in. "Jem! A gemman wants you. Has a voice uncommon like a woman. Good thing you left your missus in Plymouth this trip—"

Cecily! Garrick hurled himself at the door, but his efforts accomplished nothing. The steps and voices receded. He relaxed in bitter resignation of despair.

After a time he was roused by a hasty springing step, a growl, a rasp of the bar holding the door; it was flung open. Garrick emerged to see Driscoll, a flash of grim energy in the savage features, and beside him Cecily, in rain-soaked hat and coat.

"Be un the man?" demanded Driscoll.

"Yes," exclaimed the girl. "Oh, Captain Garrick—"

"No talk! Off with you; Willy, outside, will see you safe to the lugger. We'll go another way. Quick, be off!"

With a flick of her hand and a quick smile, Cecily was gone. Garrick stood under the one eye of Jem Driscoll, and was astonished by the slow smile breaking in that brutal face, and the hand extended to him.

"Sorry, sir," said Driscoll quietly. "I'd see you hanged, quick enough, if it was you alone; but Jem Driscoll ain't the man to part two lovers makin' a break for it. The lass has a mortal sweet tongue, sir. What's more," he added with a practical turn to his words, "she's paid down hard golden guineas. And beyond which, if Sir Henry Spence is after you, then I'm your man. The worst magistrate in the west country, he is, and well hated by more than one honest man."

Garrick took the extended hand in a quick grip.

"You mean you're taking us?"

"Both of you, aye. And sharp about it, sir. The sojers will be here for you—that's something I can't undo now. But we'll make it. There's not another craft in all England could save you this day; but I'll do it. Come along."

Out a rear way they passed, on into another street, and so to a landing on a brick-walled canal, where a boat with four men waited. Driscoll explained that Cecily had been taken direct aboard; he himself must play safe and roundabout.

Half an hour later they were aboard the lugger. Driscoll stood by the girl's side as the brown canvas was run up and she heeled over for the Irish sea, heading under the very nose of a royal frigate. From the castle ashore, a gun boomed out.

"They've guessed it," and Jem Driscoll grinned. "And now ye'll see what not another man in England could do!"

A NASTY sea was kicking up, the wind squalled gustily, and off to seaward were three cutters standing on and off. Through the remainder of the afternoon, Driscoll fought them, in a drift of spray and fine rain—fought them with his tiller, his brains, his canvas, his sharp-slipping lugger. And, as the day died, he was clear of them and running free.

"A good thing our friend Mortimer's not at sea!" Jubilant, chuckling, Driscoll came below to his two passengers, and got his pipe alight. "In that stagecoach he was telling me of his cutter—a new rig he's got on her. Might have to use our guns if we met 'un. Well, see you later!"

He stamped off to his cabin. Maurice Garrick looked at the girl, smiled into her eyes, and asked what was in his mind.

"Clear—bound for Holland and freedom, my dear! Now tell me how you got him to turn me loose, there in the tavern."

Her gaze did not falter. "Why, I told him we were running off to be married; all the smugglers hate my brother, you know—"

Garrick took her hand and touched it with his lips.

"I hope with all my heart you told him the truth, Cecily?"

She colored. "I never tell lies, Maurice. You remember what you said to me at the inn, only this morning—it seems a century ago!—about the first sight of me and what it meant to you? You took the words out of my mouth—"

The morning sun brought over the horizon to windward a sudden white

fleck of sail that widened, and the alarm-shout set men thumping the decks and Jem Driscoll jumping for the tiller as he roared out orders.

The lugger turned and fled, but the white speck grew and grew. Garrick, through the skipper's glass, saw the black-painted hull, the white boats, the red bulwarks.

"It's that damned ship of Mortimer's," growled Driscoll, and roared at his men to clear the guns and load. Five to a side, the lugger carried. "There's the rig he was telling me about—look at them topmasts and yards! And look—"

A gasp broke from him, and small wonder. The huge cutter, with the wind on the quarter, was breaking out square stuns'ls on either side of the square topsail, and above the yard of her lower course was appearing another fleck of canvas, rising to the foot of the square topsail. Driscoll cursed. His men stared and wondered as the towering mass of white canvas filled and flew after them. Cries went up—a square t'gallant sail was coming into view, and now a ringtail set abaft the leach of the mainsail. An oath of amazement broke from Jem Driscoll.

"Ten sails on her—ten sails!" he ejaculated. "What chance has any honest man got wi' that spread o' canvas? For'ard, there! Load them guns, double charges!"

"You're not going to fight a king's ship?" Garrick asked sharply. The one eye of Driscoll flamed at him.

"If I can't run from her, I can fight her," he rejoined savagely. "Nobody ever seed such a rig as that until now, but Jem Driscoll ain't the man to be took."

For all the stories of his wonder-ship, he could not run; this became painfully evident. The enormous mass of sail drove the cutter like a bird. A puff of white broke from her bow, a ball spurted in the water far ahead.

"All hands down!" bawled Driscoll, leaning on the tiller. "Gunners, stand by!"

Cecily was down below, still asleep; Garrick was glad of it: How it all happened, he could not tell, for he was no seaman. The lugger apparently obeyed the order to heave to. Except for the gunners behind the bulwarks with matches alight, her crew had gone from sight. She drifted idly, as the towering white mass of canvas came down at her. The king's ship swung. Men filled her rigging, her sails began to come in. Her commander leaped to her after shrouds, speaking trumpet in hand, to hail.

"All hands!" bawled Driscoll.

Men leaped to the lines. The lugger wheeled as her canvas filled—wheeled, and darted away, swooping past the bows of the cutter. Driscoll bawled again. Gun after gun banged out, the recoil sending her reeling. Then she was flying away and away, with the towering cutter a mass of wreckage.

OLD PENNINGTON sighed a little, for he saw that we had no great interest in his ships and rigs, and he wagged his head at us.

"All you think about is people in love," he said. "I should ha' told less about that part of it."

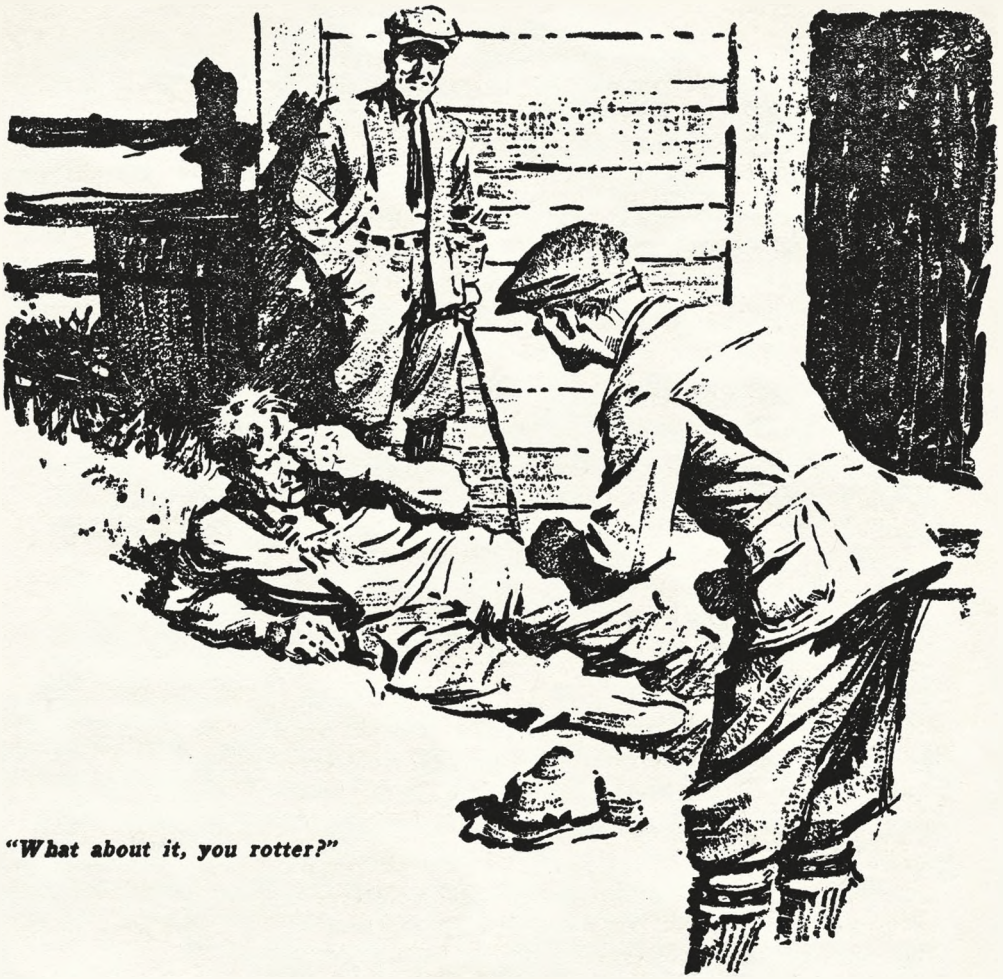
"What became of Garrick and the girl?" I asked. He scowled at me.

"With two such people as them, can't you imagine?"

With two such people? Yes, I could imagine—and envy them. I could not even take much interest in the photograph that he showed us, taken near Plymouth; the picture of a gravestone, bearing the epitaph of Captain Sir Hugh Mortimer, R. N., killed by smugglers in the performance of his duty.

"And they got Jem Driscoll two voyages later—sunk him," said Pennington.

That did not matter either. I was still lost in imagination, and envy. What a woman that Cicely must have been!



"What about it, you rotter?"

REMITTANCE MAN

an off-the-trail story

By BILL ADAMS

IT WAS an afternoon of late May when he arrived in the village. A blazing day it had been, the thermometer at a hundred and ten in the shade. He had walked the fourteen miles uphill from the coast, and on his lean face were streaks where the sweat had dried. The last mile had been a very long one, and steepest of any. But he entered the village with his head up, stepping out briskly. Two loafers at the door of the livery barn stared at him and winked one to another.

He was dressed in a worn Norfolk suit, jacket and knickerbockers, with an old straw hat on his head. Between his lips was a pipe of English briar. In his right hand he carried a walking stick. His shirt, open at the throat, showed a triangle of skin well nigh delicate as that of a woman. A glimpse of his hands was enough to tell anyone that he had never done any work.

"Er—I say," he drawled, addressing the loafers, "Could you tell me where I could find the post office?"

"Er—I say, I reckon mebbe we could if ye wanted to know, but I dunno if ye could find it," drawled one of the loafers. The other grinned.

"I say, what's the joke, eh?" inquired the stranger, staring at them from wondering blue eyes.

"If ye don't know I reckon it ain't no use tellin' ye," came the reply. Looking perplexedly at them, he stroked his blond mustache.

"Yonder's the post office," continued the speaker, pointing up the empty street.

"Thanks awfully, old chap!" said the newcomer, and walked on.

"Another o' they English remittance men," sneered one of the loafers.

"I say—have you any mail for me, please?" he asked at the little window of the post office.

"Name?" asked the thin-faced postmistress.

"Beg pardon. Sandys. Jack Sandys," he replied. The woman handed him a newspaper with a yellow cover.

"Oh, righto! Thanks awfully," he exclaimed, and went out to the street, the postmistress staring after him as though he were a museum specimen.

The loafers were gone. He put the paper in his pocket, and went out to the silent street. The street ankle deep in finely powdered dust. The leaves of the white oaks that shaded the street thick with finely powdered dust. The signs above livery barn, post office, and store, thick with it. The air heavy with the scent of it. The thermometer, though it was after four o'clock, still at over a hundred in the shade.

"Might have asked those chappies about a job," he mused. "Ah, well, pleasure before business. Couldn't get along without the jolly old *London Weekly Times.*" He stepped from the wooden sidewalk into ankle deep dust, and started across the street to the store. Looking up as he entered, the storekeeper muttered: "Remittance man," and went back to arranging the goods on his shelves.

"I say, could you tell me where a fellow can get a—er—a job?" asked Jack Sandys.

"What kin ye do?" inquired the storekeeper, with contempt scarce veiled, and added, "I guess mebbe ye could take care o' young canary birds."

"Canary birds!" exclaimed Jack Sandys. "Do you really mean that a chap could get a job taking care of canaries?"

For a moment the storekeeper regarded him with an expression half pitying, then said, "Feller, the only jobs in this here neck o' the woods is hay balin' in the valley an' workin' on the orange groves up at the end o' the valley. An' ye kin take it from me as they's both of 'em *jobs.*"

The thud of hoofs in deep dust came from the street. A gruff voice called. There was the jingle of a halter chain. Turning, the remittance man saw through a cloud of dust that drifted in at the door a sweat-lathered horse. A prosperous looking man wearing a soft shirt tucked into khaki trousers, with a wide sombrero on his head, tied the horse to the hitch rack and entered.

"Where the devil can I hire a good man, Pete?" called the rancher to the storekeeper.

"Here's a feller as wants a job," replied the storekeeper, with a wink toward the remittance man.

Aware for the first time of a stranger, the rancher stared at him, his expression changing from question to derision.

"Ever done any cultivating?" asked the rancher.

"Cultivating?" exclaimed Sandys. "I say—what the deuce is cultivating?"

"I'm afraid I can't hire you," said the rancher.

"Oh, by Jove! You've jolly well got to hire me!" replied Sandys, and added, "I'm jolly well broke, don't you know! Flattoh!"

The rancher shook his head, but smiled in a manner not unfriendly.

"I can jolly well learn. If I do any damage while I'm learning, I'll work for you till I've made it good, eh, what?" continued Sandys.

Again for a long moment the rancher looked him up and down. Then, "All right," said he. "You can come out to the ranch." He led the way to his buggy.

FOR six hot miles the rancher said but one word, while glancing up now and again from the pages of the *Weekly Times,* the remittance man looked at the dusty weeds at the roadside, at the barbed wire fences, at the billy owls that sat here and there on the tops of fence posts, at the horned toads that scuttled from the dusty road into the dusty weeds. It was when, with arid fields of stubble stretching to either side of the road, he cried excitedly, "A lake, by Jove. Can a chap swim in it?" that the rancher spoke.

"Mirage," said the rancher.

The Englishman returned to the *Times.* The sun blazed on him. His head ached. He felt himself sticking to the buggy seat; dry dust was chafing his dry skin, as though it were being rubbed by sandpaper. Presently he put the *Times* in his pocket. His blistered feet felt as though they were afire. Glancing at the cloudless sky, at the mountains that enclosed the torrid valley, their slopes covered with bone dry sage and greasewood, at the heat waves that shimmered above the stubble, he sighed.

"May in England," murmured the remittance man inaudibly, seeing before his aching eyes mile on mile of hawthorn hedges thick with fragrant blossoms, seeing wild honeysuckle and clematis, and mists low-lying over lush green meadows. His head nodded. When the road began to wind uphill between sage and greasewood, he was unaware of it.

Turning into his ranch driveway, the rancher spoke at last. "You're a remittance man, eh?" he asked.

Sandys opened his eyes, sat up, and looked the rancher in the face.

"I say, suppose that I was—would it be sort of any of your jolly business?" he asked.

"Probably not," replied the rancher.

"Righto!" said Sandys.

Next morning found the Englishman walking slowly up and down, driving a team between long orchard rows. No breath of air stirred. A hundred and ten in the shade. His blistered feet hurt. Now and again he stumbled. When he spoke to the team his voice was hoarse from the thick dust stirred up by the cultivator. But between his lips was his pipe of English briar, and from the pocket of his knickerbockers protruded the *London Weekly Times.*

"Let the team take it easy. Give them a rest every now and then," the rancher had told him. So every now and then he stopped the team, sat down at the dusty roadside and pored over the *Times.* At noon he unhitched the animals, let them drink, tied them at the roadside and gave them their feed of hay.

He was eating the lunch that the Japanese cook had put up for him when a wagon came slowly up the road with a load of grain hay from the bed of the valley. Seeing him, the driver stopped his horses.

"I say—er—what was your school?" asked the driver of the wagon.

"Winchester. What was yours, old top?" replied Sandys.

"Repton," answered the other, and added, "My name's Darling, by the way."

"Righto! I'm Sandys," came the reply; and then, "I say, old man, I was just thinking, don't you know—England in May, eh, what?"

"Er, quite so! England in May," replied Darling, meditatively, and added, "Deuced hot, eh?"

"Quite! Don't mention it. Let's jolly well forget it, old chap, eh?" responded Sandys.

"Righto!" agreed Darling.

"I say," continued Sandys, "None of my jolly business, don't you know, but I'm getting twenty-five dollars a month. Sort of bloody slavery, eh, what, old man?"

"Quite so, quite so!" replied Darling, and added, "None of my business, old chap, but I get ten dollars a month from home."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Sandys, "So do I. Jolly old sort of coincidence, eh, what?"

"Then we each get thirty-five dollars a month. Bally plutocrats or something, eh?" said Darling.

Sandys took the *Times* from his pocket, held it to Darling, and asked, "Get any home papers, old man?"

"Oh, by Jove!" exclaimed Darling. "Could I sort of see it when you've read it?"

"Take it. I get it every week," Sandys replied. Looking Darling up and down, he added, "Sort of deuced rummy get-up you wear, isn't it, chappie?"

Darling nodded.

"They call them denims," said he, "Sort of save a chap's decent things, don't you know. Hate to look like hoi polloi of course, but there you are. Do at Rome as the Romans do, eh? I say, old fellow, might be sort of good idea for you to sort of get some denims, eh?"

"Quite so, quite so! By all means, but I'm jolly well flattoh till I hear from home," replied Sandys.

"Er—you could ask your—excuse me, old top—your bally employer to sort of make an advance, don't you think?" suggested Darling.

"Dashed good idea!" responded Sandys. "He seems to be rather an ass, but not so bad on the whole."

"Deuced extraordinary, these Americans, eh, what?" said Darling.

"Righto again. Just fancy, some of the blighters actually hire fellows to take care of their dashed canary birds," replied Sandys, and added, "I say, where could a fellow find you? Could we sort of get together sometimes, old man?"

"Topping!" exclaimed Darling, "I'm sort of working on a thing they call a hay baler, down in the valley. I fancy it must be about two—" and then he paused, to ask, "I say, is the chappie speaking to you?"

Sandys turned to see the orange grower seated in his buggy frowning at him.

"Something you want, old man?" drawled Sandys.

"I've asked you twice if you think I hired you to stand talking at the roadside all day," replied the rancher.

"The deuce you have? By Jove, I didn't hear you, old man!" replied Sandys innocently. "I say, are you going to the bally village? I wonder if you'd mind sort of getting me—you could charge it against my jolly salary, don't you know—some togs like the chappie wears?"

"You'll get no salary if you don't do some work," growled the rancher.

"Righto! Had to sort of give the old steeds a bit of rest," said Sandys, and, with a wave to Darling, started his team.

THAT night, dressed in stiff new denims, Sandys walked two miles to visit Darling. Till close to midnight they sat talking. Then he walked back, and at six next morning was harnessing his team again. Next night Darling visited him in the orange ranch bunkhouse. Then, since a ranch hand needs some sleep, they agreed to meet on Sundays.

When Sunday came, Jack Sandys, visiting Darling, took with him the latest copy of the *Times*, unopened. "Jolly ripping of you not to have opened it, old top," said Darling. Side by side on a hard wooden bench, they pored over the pages.

"Oh, primroses, by Jove!" murmured Darling, gazing at a photograph of England's countryside.

"I say, look here! Repton beat Winchester at cricket," exclaimed Sandys.

"It says that your old school played a rattling good game, old man," replied Darling, and added, "The game's the thing, eh?"

"That's what's the matter with these dashed Americans. They always have to win, or else the game's no fun," responded Sandys.

Page by page they pored over the *Times*. Looking at the last page, Sandys said, "Sort of nice to see the good old country names, eh, what? Listen to this—

" 'To Shirley, wife of Major John Cole, a son—To Cora, wife of Sir Dugald Cochrane, a daughter—To Sylvia, wife of Humphrey Jopling, a son—' "

Then suddenly Jack Sandys ceased reading. Looking bright-eyed at Darling he said: "Old top, I've got a sort of idea. We can have a bit of sport, eh, what?"

"The deuce, you say! What are you driving at, old fellow?" Darling questioned.

"Bet you there are more sons than daughters born in this column," replied Sandys.

"Righto, by Jove! Taken!" exclaimed Darling, and took pencil and paper to jot down the score while Sandys read the birth column from top to bottom. "You win, old top," said he when Sandys was done, and handed him five dollars, neither of them aware of the foreman and two of the hay baling crew looking in at the open door.

"What in hell you two crazy Englishmen playing at?" asked the foreman, derisively.

Darling turned, looked coolly into the foreman's face, and replied, "None of your bally business."

"Oh, it ain't, ain't it?" sneered the foreman. Pointing to the baling team tied at the corral fence nearby, he added: "Well, here's something as is! That there nigh hoss has got him a rock in his foot. Go take it out!"

Well aware that the horse was a kicker, and had no rock in its foot, the two hay hands winked at each other.

"Oh, I say—you dirty rotter!" exclaimed Sandys, as Darling fell sprawling back.

Limping toward the grinning foreman, Darling said quietly, "Put up your fists, you blighter!"

"Well, have ye had enough, ye blasted Englishman?" asked the foreman two minutes later, and, as Darling silently rose, added, "You be at work at six tomorrow mornin' or I fires ye." Laughing, he walked off with the two hay hands.

Gazing about the torrid valley, Darling, on his feet again, bloody and bruised, said musingly, "England, eh, old chap? Dog roses, and all that sort of thing, what?" Together they returned to the bunkhouse.

"Look here, old man," said Sandys, "About this game of ours—er—just betting as we did today, we don't get anywhere much. Couldn't we make it a bit more sort of—ah—?"

"I get you, old fellow! Sort of more sporting, eh?" replied Darling.

"Suppose—well, I don't know, though! You might not think much of it," said Sandys.

"Chuck it off your chest, old top!" said Darling.

"Well, I sort of thought that whichever of us is behind at the end of a year —well, the other chappie—" continued Sandys, and paused.

"A dashed good idea, by Jove!" exclaimed Darling, "Righto! Whichever of us is behind at the end of the year—oh, simply ripping! The chappie's who's behind sort of shells out all his coin to the other chappie—eh, what, old top?" "And the chap who's in the lead jolly well takes all the coin we have between us—and goes home to England in May,"

concluded Sandys, and held out his hand.

Darling gripped the hand.

"Good luck, old top!" he said.

WHILE the summer grew ever hotter, Darling worked week after week on the hay baling crew. Week after week Jack Sandys plodded up and down the long dusty orchard rows, following his sweat-streaked horses.

On an evening when the thermometer had climbed to a hundred and fifteen in the shade Sandys flung himself down in his bunk, exhausted and white. Too weary to eat any supper, he'd been. At midnight the rancher drove home from a day spent on the cool coast, saw a light in the bunkhouse, and looked in to see him outstretched and motionless. with the rancher was a hulking fellow he'd picked up on the road, a teamster who worked on a ranch close by.

"The little Englishman looks as though he were dead," said the rancher, and followed by the teamster entered the bunkhouse.

"Hey, you poor little punk, wake up!" said the teamster, bending over Sandys.

Stirring a little, Sandys murmured, "England in May."

"To hell wid England, ye little punk," sneered the teamster.

Jack Sandys sat up suddenly.

"Er, what's that you say?" he asked.

"I says, 'To hell wid England, ye poor little punk'," repeated the other.

Sandys sprang from his bunk.

"Put up your fists," said he quietly. The rancher laid a hand on his arm. "I say, is this any of your bally business?" asked Sandys.

"Get out! You can't hit a little guy like him," said the rancher and shoved the teamster from the bunkhouse. To Sandys he said, "It's going to be hot again tomorrw. If you can't stand the heat, I'll have to get a man who can. You can't without sleep. Get to sleep!"

"Righto, old top," replied Sandys and returned to his bunk.

Summer dragged on. Meeting each Sunday, the remittance men pored over the *Times* and bet on the birth column. Fall came, dustier than summer, breathless and still. While, with hay baling done, Darling chopped cordwood, felling great oaks, sawing them up and splitting the lengths with a heavy double-headed axe, Sandys plodded up and down the dusty orchard rows. They were sinewy now, sun-tanned, and hardened by their months of toil.

In mid-November the rains set in, gray sheets driving over the stubble and down the orchard rows. Visiting Darling next morning, Jack Sandys arrived dressed in the shabby Norfolk suit he hadn't worn for months.

"I say, old top," he said, then paused, to gaze surprised at Darling dressed also in Norfolks. "By Jove, this sort of screws things up, eh, what?" he added.

"Quite so, quite so! They gave me the last of my bally salary last night. It seems that these dashed Americans don't work when it's raining," replied Darling.

"Deuced rummy if fox hunting stopped because of a little rain, eh?" said Sandys.

"I fancy it's a case of our having to bally well do as the Romans do. Perhaps we'd better sort of take a tally of our joint savings," replied Darling.

"Righto, old man!" answered Sandys, "If one of us is to go home in May, I fancy we're going to have to sort of—ah—"

"Sort of jolly well get along without too many needless luxuries, eh, old fellow?" suggested Darling, and added, "I've got two suits of light underwear and three pairs of socks. Been sort of thinking I might add to the wordrobe a bit. Fancy I'll manage without."

"Whichever of us goes home will need to get some new duds, eh?" replied Sandys.

"Quite so! A chappie can't go home looking like one of the hoi polloi. Never do! We must make the bally dollars sort of spin out, eh?" answered Darling.

"At all costs. Quite so, chappie! England in May—well worth it, eh?" said Sandys.

"Righto!" agreed Darling.

THAT evening found them in a little cabin they'd rented for two dollars a month.

"By Jove, do you know anything about how to sort of cook?" Sandys inquired.

"You have to peel potatoes, don't you, old man?" suggested Darling.

"Dashed if I know! I fancy you do. But dash it all, sort of the scullery maid's job at home, wasn't it, eh, what?" Sandys replied, and added, "But what about this bally piece of meat?"

"Let's shy it in the pan and stick it on the stove and see what happens, eh?" suggested Darling.

"Righto! What makes the dashed fire smoke so much, do you suppose?" said Sandys.

"Perhaps it's the rain or something coming down the chimney, eh?" Darling replied, and in a moment asked, "This dashed meat doesn't taste of anything but smoke, don't you think?"

"Ever eat jugged hare with currant jelly, old chap?" asked Darling.

"Oh, by Jove! Let's pretend this *is* jugged hare!" replied Sandys.

"How about mentioning to the butler that we could do with a couple of bottles of Bass' ale?" suggested Darling.

"I say, Jones! Fetch us two bottles of Bass, will you, Jones!" called Sandys over his shoulder, and added, in an undertone, "A dashed good egg, Jones!"

"I say, old chap," said Darling when the meal was done, "Do we have to—er—wash the bally dishes?"

"Ought to have Jones bring us some hot water, eh?" suggested Sandys.

"Let's leave 'em till tomorrow."

"Great idea! Cheerioh, old top!" agreed Sandys.

"I say, chappie," called Sandys later from the top bunk to Darling in the bunk beneath him.

"Are you dry down there?"

"By jove, does the bally roof leak?" asked Darling.

"*The animals came in two by two*
"The hippopotamus stuck in the door," sang the two remittance men together, when, with pans set in the top bunk to catch the drip from the roof, both were crowded into the bottom one.

"I say, nursie used to sing me that when I was a little nipper," said Darling.

"Good old nursie," murmured Sandys sleepily, "Did she tuck you up in a jolly old feather bed, old top?"

"Don't mention it! Let's forget it!" murmured Darling.

Dropping some of their English reticence as the days passed, the remittance men spoke sometimes of their people.

"If I should win and go home, my people would be jolly well surprised to see me," said Darling. "They thought me quite a rotter."

"Same here, old top," replied Sandys.

"Gentlemen rankers out on a spree,
Damned from here to eternity,
May God have mercy on such as we,"

sang Darling, and added, ruefully, "Eh, what, old chap?"

"Oh, not quite so dashed bad as that, old fellow," Sandys answered, and added, "Constance was always on the square. She'll wait for me."

"Oh, I say! I didn't know there was a girl!" exclaimed Darling.

"Ever hear of the Cottrells? The Somerset Cottrells, of Grange Court?" asked Sandys.

"Isle of beauty, fare thee well!" sang Darling softly.

"It isn't going to be farewell for keeps, old man," Jack Sandys said, bright-eyed, "Whether for now I win or lose, I'm going home to Somerset some day.

She promised she'd be there."

"I say, look here, old man!" Darling exclaimed, "There isn't anyone that cares if I come home or not. Let's jolly well, if I win, reverse it—and let the loser win."

"Jolly decent of you, but we'll play the game," replied Jack Sandys.

FEBRUARY came. The golden poppies bloomed, the Indian paint brush, mariposa lilies, and wild mountain lilacs. Scare aware of them, the remittance men spoke of the daffodil, the bluebell, and wild wood anemone.

The rains gave way to crystal skies, and days of brilliant sun. Halfway through February, the orange rancher took Jack Sandys on again. Darling looked up the foreman and was hired to plough last summer's stubble. And now again they met on Sundays only.

"I say, old chap," said Darling, when Sandys came one shining Sunday morning, "I've got a little score to settle, don't you know. You come with me."

"Now what in hell d'ye want?" the foreman growled, when Darling rapped upon his door.

"Step outside, you blighter. I'm going to teach you something," Darling replied.

"What about it, you rotter?" asked Darling, three minutes later, the foreman prone before him.

"Enough. You win," answered the foreman, and rising, held out a hand.

"Righto, old top," said Darling, taking the hand.

On April's second Sunday, when they'd read the birth column, Darling said, "See here, old fellow! You've been behind for weeks, and I'm ahead by nine. You simply have no chance. Let's do as I suggested—reverse the score and let the winner be the loser. There's no one waiting for me at home."

"Jolly ripping of you, old man, but we'll play the game," answered Jack Sandys.

Another Sunday came, the last but one. And Darling cried, "By Jove! We tie! The luck has changed. You're going to win. I'm deuced glad!"

His voice, despite himself, was a little tremulous, his eyes, despite his effort to be calm, shining with eagerness.

The next week was a long, dragging week for both. When Sunday came at last, Jack Sandys said, thrusting the *Times* into Darling's hand, "Good luck, old man!"

"Your turn to read," said Darling, handing the paper back.

Shaking his head, Jack Sandys answered, "I'm so dashed rattled. I'm beastly sorry. You read, will you, old fellow?"

Darling removed the wrapper from the *Times*, opened it, slowly read, "Son — son — daughter — daughter —" then paused to say, "Only five births this week. Just one more to read. Wouldn't you rather read the last, old top?"

"Go on! Cheerioh!" responded Sandys.

"You win!" cried Darling, and added, "Look for yourself, old fellow!"

Jack Sandys looked where Darling's finger pointed, and paled.

"I say, didn't I read it right? Oh, dash it all, I am a rotten ass! I thought that it was son!" exclaimed Darling, and bent to look at the paper again.

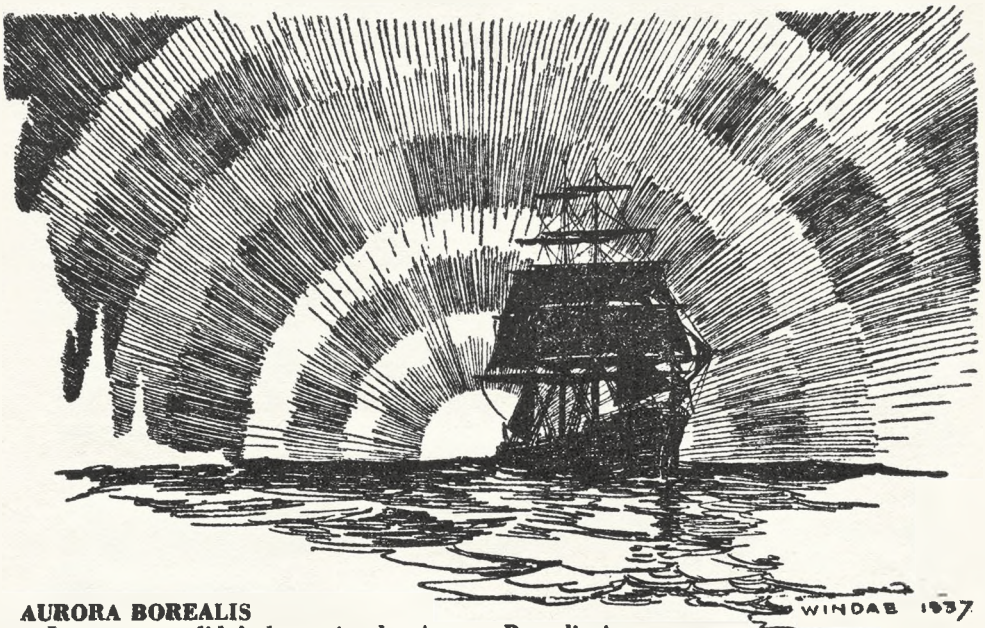
"Sandys, I say! You must be jolly well rattled! It *does* say son" he cried, his finger pointing to the bottom of the column, "I'll read it out to you—listen, old chap!"

" 'To Constance Pritchard, nee Cottrell, of Grange Court, Somerset—" read Darling, then stopped abruptly. And both sat silent, gazing from the open door out to the hot valley.

Jack Sandys rose, held out a steady hand, and said white-faced, "You were right, old chap. The winner is the loser. Good luck to you. I'll be seeing you off—for England in May."

TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS



AURORA BOREALIS

In case you didn't know it, the Aurora Borealis is the reflection of the engine-room fires of sunken steamships deep down in Davey Jones' locker. There the shipowners slave and sweat, keeping the furnaces going (so the Aurora Borealis will never fail) while all good engineers, oilers and coal-passers lie around in easy chairs drinking champagne served by beautiful maidens.

HOLYSTONE

Since the use of the sandstone used for scouring ship's decks always brought a man to his knees, it surely must be "holy."

LOBSCOUSE

An unsavory mess of broken hardtack and chunks of salt-horse boiled together. We grumbled as we ate it, but it was good filling tack.

SON OF A GUN

This expression dates back to when seamen rated as Gunners or Gunners' mates could carry their wives aboard with them. If a little boy was born on the voyage he was referred to (half humorously, half contemptuously) as "a son of a gun."

By the Lord, I will blood one of you. Draw!"

NO QUARTER

Fourth Part of Five

By Maurice Walsh

IT WAS the second day after the sack of Aberdeen, and our Highland men and Irishers were grimly vengeful. Our Captain General the Marquis of Montrose had told us to do with the city as we willed, and it was no safe place for a Covenant man this day.

I went down there with my foster brother, Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh, to find a bit of fun—or trouble, if chance brought it that way. As it happened, we found both. For, outside the kirk, we came upon the public stocks, and a young woman ankle-locked there for the world to scorn. Margaret Anderson, her name was, and Andrew Cant, the minister, was punishing her, Covenant fashion, for not coming to hear his sermons —nor listening to his courtship.

We knew how to handle that sort of thing. We took Andrew Cant's fine coat and locked his bare shanks in the stocks, and the girl Margaret came away with us to camp, for there would be no safety

for her in that city, once our army had gone.

It took us ten months to fight through to Lochloy, where her nearest kin lived. And by that time she had made a place for herself in the regiment and was like to remain.

And later, in the lands of one Rose of Belivat, we ran into more trouble with a woman. She was a prisoner in Belivat Castle, held for one Walter Dunbar, who would wed her. Iseabal Rose, her name was, and she had a mind of her own. So she came back to camp with us also.

And just about then we caught up with the Covenant Highlanders and we had our hands full for fair. The world knows about the battle of Auldearn. I will say only that we fought against brave men, and one time, when the Gordons faltered at the east wall, we saw death waiting for us all. But the Huntly Horse broke through to drive them back, and the banner of the MacRaes went down forever.

In the armies of Montrose, brave women played an important part. They did the nursing and cooking, and they were as seasoned campaigners as we were.

And Margaret Anderson and Iseabal Rose were the best we had, of that little band. So when Hugh Rose and Dunbar showed their teeth at last, and demanded the girl's release, we listened to her instead, and defied him.

Indeed, we were to do a lot of fighting for that strangely assorted pair.

Scarcely had our wounds healed after Auldearn when I learned that Margaret Anderson had been captured by vengeful Covenant neighbors and imprisoned in the Castle of Spynie.

It was a mighty fortress. Even Montrose had refused to attack it in battle. It had a full garrison, and it was in the heart of the enemy country.

But Tadg Mor could not think of those things, nor could I. We had brought the girl to our army, to fight and serve with us, and she had done both. And now she was a prisoner, condemned to certain death.

On a certain dark night Tadg Mor and I made the maddest decision of our none too sane lives. It was two men against an army this night. We had three days to rescue her—and we had to do it alone!

CHAPTER VII (continued)

INDEED and indeed, things had been happening too easily for us all this day and night. Fate, as it were, had stood off and watched us into a trap, and now she pulled the sneck, and there we were close caught, and any way out was by the way of death. For, as Margaret straightened up from the silver buckled shoon we had got her out of Dundee, and said, "I am ready," a sound came through the window bars that struck us to the marrow. It was the clink of hoofs on the paved causeway about the tower. Not the clink of one or two, but the rumble of a whole squadron. There was no mistaking what that meant. The garrison was back from Darnaway. And as we stood stricken, there came through the window the murmur of men's voices, a murmur that carried yet no note of alarm.

Tadg Mor swore hard and leaped for the crusie.

"Come!" his voice grated. "They will be round by the front and I have the keys. We can make the postern before them."

But he was no more than on the top tread of the spiral before a cry and a clangor broke out far below. He checked abruptly at that, and backed slowly into the room, pushing us behind him."

"The door was wide to the wall," said he, his voice even, "and a dead man on the threshold. They have found him."

"The men inside would have called a warning."

He shut and locked the door, and the sounds dimmed. We looked at each other. There was nothing I had to say, but Tadg Mor would not let us yield to panic.

"The game is not played out yet," said he firmly. "We are safe here."

"We can hold the stair against them all," cried Dod Myron, a lad after Tadg Mor's own heart. "We can hold it forever."

"An hour or two shorter will do us as well," said Tadg Mor.

But Margaret Anderson took hold of my arm with her two hands.

"How near is help?"

"Fifty miles."

"Oh, Martin! Am I to be the doom of you at last?"

But I shook her hands off.

"Give me time to think, will ye?" I cried irritably.

I am not, I never was a brave man, but I do not think that I can fairly call myself coward. I have full share of cowardice in me, but most times—not all times—I have been able sufficiently to subdue that cowardice to do a thing calling for some boldness and resolution.

In our present case cowardice—or call it prudence—would not serve at all. Neither, indeed, might anything bold to desperation. Those below would kill us as soon as they could get at us, and courage or cowardice would not avail. And so one might as well face death on one's feet and biting. I wonder, is that a rat's courage? That is how I felt in that corner, a little desperate and in a hurry to get the thing finished.

"Open the door, Tadg Mor," I said, and he looked at me quickly.

But Margaret stopped him. "They mightna ken ye are wi' me."

"That would not serve us in the long run. Open the door for me, brother."

"I will do that," said Tadg Mor quietly, "for I see that you have the bit in your teeth."

He unlocked the door.

"Leave the key in the lock," I told him, "and open the door wide. Ye will do what I ask ye now, and say nothing. Tadg Mor, stand here." I placed him back to the wall by the side of the opening. "Do not be seen and wait on me." Dod Myron I placed at the other side, but behind the door. "Be ready to slap it shut when I tell you." His eyes glared at me as if he saw a stranger. Finally I took Margaret's hand and led her to the corner behind Tadg Mor. "Stay you there, girl."

Her fingers closed on mine firmly. "I dinna mind if I die now, Martin."

"You will not die now, my dear." I was sure of it as I said it, and I softly tugged the plait of her hair.

I lit the tallow dip from the crusie and pushed the table close to the wall so that the light shone through the open door to the head of the spiral. "Make no sound," I warned finally, took up the lamp and went out into the shallow alcove. I put the lamp on the second step of the stairs on the widest part of the tread, and its light shone down into the first curve. Then I took the stand that I meant to keep, at the brink of the alcove, my shoulder inside the rim of my targe resting against the pillar of the spiral. I held my sword in the hand that went through the loop of the targe, and my primed pistol was in my right hand.

I leaned there, my eyes above the studded rim, and I listened with all my might. I was cool enough now, and the blood was no longer surging in my ears, but my mind was busy and intent.

I was, in fact, putting myself in the place of the men in the mainguard, and particularly of the leaders, Brodie and Kinnaird. Whatever they did meantime, they must come to the head of the stairs in the end. They would not know how many had seized the tower. Two men were dead, and the guards had been driven like sheep. Three men could not do that. They would be fearful of

an onset at any moment, and in fear they would face the double stairs and the search of the other rooms.

The turret would come last, though it might be in their thoughts first. That would check the boldest of them, for to get at it, they would have to climb the long spiral that, like all old spirals, gave the defender his right hand against the attacker's left. But they would have to come to it in the end.

I could see them in my mind's eye peering in through the open door at the curve going up into blackness, will and flesh shrinking back from that long climb, with the chance of desperate men lurking above. The man who would lead that climb would be the best and boldest. He would be Brodie or Kinnaird.

THAT narrow well drew sound like a pipe, but for a long time there was no sound at all. And then a shod foot clinked softly far below, and then another, and my ear against the pillar that ran straight down heard or felt the clap of hands or scrape of fingers against stone. They were coming.

I expected that coming to be a very slow and cautious one, but it was not. Whoever was leading mounted steadily, not in a hasty scramble reckless of blows in the dark, but steadily, one foot after another. A man of great hardihood of mind, and no common soldier. The first thing I noticed was a wavering glow of light on the underside of the spiral as far down as I could see. They were lighting the road with a torch and could not be far now. I drew myself stiffly against the pillar and waited.

The leading footsteps sounded firm on the steps just below me. Then they stopped. Whoever was there could see the crusie lamp on the outer tread. If I swung out from the pillar he would see me too, but I remained behind my shield. The footsteps came again—one, two, three. I waited no longer. I leaned from the pillar, my pistol hand forward.

"Stand, dead man!"

The man stood against the curve of the wall and looked up at me. His head was level with my feet, and I could have shot him dead in that instant. He was full in the light from the crusie, and another light shone from below. A helmeted head darted round the pillar, and jerked back again. Though I stood above him I saw that the man against the wall was not tall and that he was slenderly built. A youngish man but bearded. His head was bare; he wore no armor and carried no weapon. There was a white collar at his neck above dark cloth. There was no sound or movement anywhere, on the stair or within the room.

"If you move," I said, "if any one moves, *you* die."

"Am I not still enough for a mark?" asked the man in a calm voice.

"Tell your men to go down four steps."

He gestured downwards with his hand, and I heard a shuffle on the stairs. His men did not want him to die. That was good.

"You are Brodie?" I questioned.

"I am Alexander Brodie. Who are you that kill my men in a strange house?"

"You flatter me, but I am Adjutant Martin Somers of O'Cahan's Regiment."

"I am not surprised. The Irish have had dealings with me. Why do you not kill now?"

And indeed I must have looked deadly enough, with my black eyes and devil-slit chin beyond the rim of the targe.

"If you kill him," a deep voice boomed from below, "you will take a long time to die."

"Silence, fool!" my voice, too, boomed against the wall. "We are dying all our days. Come on up, Brodie, and talk to me."

"I will talk here."

"You will talk inside this room or you will die—and you can please yourself."

His eyes were just above the level of the alcove floor, and he looked past me

into the room. All he would see was the barred window and the candle lighting on the table against the wall. He smiled then at some thought of his own.

"I am in no haste to die," said he, "though death is all about us. I will come and talk to you."

"God, Sandy!" said the strong voice below him.

"Hush, Kinnaird! It is but a poor foolish den of lions."

And he slowly mounted the steps towards me. I backed to the door and stepped aside outside it, but he strode straight in and across the room without turning his head. And that was the bravest thing done that night, for he must know that desperate men lurked within.

I leaped into the room behind him.

"Shut!" I cried. The door clanged, and I jarred the lock of the bolt home.

"A darling bit of work, Maurteen!" said Tadg Mor.

But the Gordon youth leant against the door and wiped his face downwards, and the eyes that looked at me had fear in them for the first time that night.

BRODIE turned round below the window and looked us over, and a little surprise came into his voice.

"Only three? Ye are brave."

"So are you, Brodie."

"Bravery! A virtue of scoundrels, Irish and the rest."

He was a young man still and soft bearded, but his nose had the straightness of strength, his eyes the blue clearness of vision. I knew that we could not persuade this man to do anything that he did not want to do. He ignored us and turned to Margaret Anderson, straight in her corner, not afraid of him.

"Margaret Anderson, do you know these men?"

"My ain men, Laird Brodie."

"Have you lost all shame then?"

Tadg Mor said smoothly, "Softly, my bonny man, softly!"

"Brodie," I cried. "Listen to me for a while."

"I listen," said he. "Your speech has not been idle."

"There are four of us here who wish to leave this tower in safety."

"Four?"

"Five counting yourself, but I speak for four. Listen! We have no reason to trust the Covenant, but though you are a Convenanter we will accept your word. You will give us a safe conduct out of here and one hour's grace."

"You take the woman with you?"

"That is why we are here."

"Then you do not leave here." He turned to Margaret again and spoke her urgently. "Margaret Anderson, you will not go back to that shameful life."

"Shamefu' life! You blind fool!"

Tadg Mor strode across the room and brought his hand down firmly on a shoulder that did not flinch.

"I warned you once, little man, and I will warn you now for the last time. If you speak the bad word of that girl you will mouth her shoon."

Brodie looked at him fearlessly. "I do not speak ill to beseech her not to go with terrible men."

"There is no fault in that," agreed Tadg Mor. "Talk away. I am a patient man."

"I will talk then. I saw your trick and played one of my own, though it may cost me my life. I knew that ye were up here and could not be many, or ye would have attacked us. I knew that ye would not want to die, and that ye would kill many of my men before ye died, if we made the attack. That is why I walked into your midst. You are in a trap. Open that door and ye will face the blast of arquebuses."

"And you will be dead."

"And the only life lost in killing you." He smiled half wistfully. "I do not want to die, and I do not want any more dead men in this tower. That is why I will give you your safe conduct and an hour's

grace. But you leave the woman here."

"Your proposal is a reasonable one," I admitted. "But what will you do with the woman?"

He thought for a moment. "Tomorrow I will send her back to her uncle."

"And will you guarantee her safety with him for three months? Think well. Only three months?"

He considered for a space and then shook his head.

"I cannot do that. I have not the power."

"Your Kirk is stronger than you are. Will the Kirk have mercy?" Tell me that? Will your Kirk have mercy?"

"Our bodies and souls are in the hands of the Kirk for our good."

"And for the Kirk's power. Margaret Anderson's body is forfeit to the Kirk, but her soul never."

But here Margaret Anderson stepped from her corner, her hands out to Brodie.

"Laird Brodie," she cried, "let my men free. I will go back to my uncle."

"A wise choice, my girl," said he.

And Tadg Mor laughed.

"Brother, is she not our own Meg, as we knew her?"

But she obstinately and hopelessly repeated, "I will go back—I will go back to my uncle."

"You will go back," said I, "when we take you, a regiment at your back, and all the pipes playing *Farewell my Fair One.*"

"And she riding on a white horse," roared Tadg Mor, "a Spanish comb in her plaited hair and a silver belt on the span of her waist, like Maeve the queen."

"And, his blue eyes blazing into mine, and his sword keeping time, he lifted up his mighty voice in his old song, so that the bars of the window vibrated:

"And she shall swing a silken gown
A milk white steed to ride upon,
With silver buckles on her shoon
And in her hair a Spanish comb."

I often wonder what the men waiting outside thought of that mad singing.

"Oh, God!" cried Margaret. "The madness of drink is on them again."

"Not so," I protested. "But the fear of death is headier than wine." And I faced Brodie, whose eyes had wonder in them.

"Your game is played, Brodie, but ours is only at its beginning. You are a brave man, and so may rascals be, but you have other qualities as well, and one of them, I think, is the power of drawing men to love you. On that quality I am now going to stake your life and ours. If there is a foe of yours outside that door you are a dead man and we dead with you. First I will tie your hands behind your back."

"Ye are strange men," said he, "and steadfast, but though ye will do your worst on me ye will never leave this tower alive with that woman. Why waste lives, then?"

"We will leave without a life wasted. Tadg Mor, here is my belt; you do the tying."

"Whatever you say, brother," said Tadg Mor, sheathing his sword. "I do not see farther than my nose, but I will put a knot on him for you, and ask his pardon."

He defty strapped Brodie's wrists behind his back to his body sash. Our prisoner made no effort to resist, and I minded the minister we had mishandled at Aberdeen in our first rescue of Margaret.

The Kirk endowed the same stoical quality on all its men.

"Hold him so with your left hand," I directed Tadg Mor, "and put your pistol against him there. That way. Come now."

"Thunder o' God!" cried Tadg Mor. "I see your plan at last."

"See also that your finger does not twitch and sound the death of us."

"It will not twitch till I ask it. Open the door for me."

I PUSHED Dod Myron aside from the door. He had been leaning against the jamb, and his first fine hardihood had ebbed low.

In the rush of onset and plain cut and thrust he was as ready as any man of his breed, but, after all, he was only a youth, and this mad parleying with words in the face of death in a den must unman him. He would again find his spirit out in the open.

I took the bunch of keys from the lock and leant an ear to the keyhole, but there was no sound that I could catch. Then I put my lips close and shouted.

"Kinnaird—Kinnaird!"

There was no answer, but this time I heard a shuffle at the head of the stairs. Again I called aloud.

"Kinnaird, be careful! Brodie is coming out."

I clenched teeth then, unlocked the door and pulled it wide; and Tadg Mor, holding Brodie, stiff-armed, by wrist and sash, thrust him into the opening. I stepped to Tadg Mor's side, and looked over Brodie's shoulder.

The mouth of the alcove was a press of men. Three lay flat on the floor, three knelt behind them, two more on the second step of the stairs; and eight flintlocks were trained on the door. Behind, where the stairs curved into darkness, stood a tall heavy-shouldered man with a black beard above a polished corselet. He was holding the crusie lamp above his head. The muzzles of the leveled pieces wavered and sank.

"I am Kinnaird," said the dark man holding the crusie.

"Listen then, Kinnaird! We are going down the stairs now, and if you value Brodie's life you will send your men down ahead of us. You can see why?"

Kinnaird looked at Brodie, looked at the grim, fighting face of Tadg Mor, saw the hilt of the pistol that was held so firmly against his friend's back. He was a prompt man.

"I can see," said he. "They will go down."

"Kinnaird!" cried Brodie, and he tried to jerk himself free of Tadg Mor's grip, but Tadg Mor's arm was as rigid as a steel bar. "Kinnaird, you will do your duty."

"I am doing that, Sandy. I warned you that your plan would fail against Colkitto's men."

"Let it not fail. These men would take a prisoner of the Kirk—a woman—into their libidinous army. They must not leave here alive."

"And a bigger fool outside it in Kinnaird of Culbin," said that ready man tartly.

"I am your commanding officer." Brodie lifted up his strong voice. "Arquebusiers, attention! Look to me. Point arms! Fire!"

Only one man of the eight wavered towards obedience. But Kinnaird saw the lift of the long barrel, and, hesitating not an instant, brought his gauntleted hand terribly down on the man's neck. Then he caught him by the collar, swung him upright and hurled him behind into the darkness of the spiral. Man and arquebus went crashing and checking, and checking and crashing downwards. and then came stillness. There was no need for a second lesson.

Kinnaird trampled over and through his men and faced round on them.

"Down, down!" he roared. "Down to the guard with ye!" He pushed them with his knees, threw muzzles aside, and did not desist forcing them until they were out of sight round the second curve. Then he came back, still swearing. Strangely enough, the crusie was still alight in his left hand. He glared at Brodie, and Brodie had nothing to say.

"There is my answer for you, foolish man. Do you think we can waste the only man we can trust in Moray for two wild Irishers and their woman?" His eyes met mine over his friend's shoulder. "What do you want, black devil?"

"A safe conduct out of here and an hour's grace."

"And Brodie?"

"We will take him and loose him unhurt at the end of that hour."

He looked at me shrewdly. "How many have ye lurking?"

"They would be here now, and your soul in hell minutes agone."

"You are not wise to be so bold." He considered me a while. "There is no other way," he said then, and shook his head at Brodie. "No need to talk, Sandy friend. I will take every chance to keep you alive. I will ride with you, and if we die we die together."

Brodie said never a word. He had lost his game and won his life.

And that is how we took Margaret Anderson out of the midst of her enemies in Spynie Tower, to our honor.

CHAPTER VIII

HER OWN ROAD

THE short summer night was giving way to the pearl-cold tones of dawn when we came at last to the Ford of Gight.

Two days before we had taken two hours to get to Spynie the safe way round by the coast, but tonight we had ridden back straight and hard in something less than an hour. Margaret rode behind me, her arms round my waist, for I had no belt to afford her grip. My belt still bound the hands of Brodie, who rode in front of Tadg Mor, and Tadg Mor had slipped back off his saddle so that his prisoner might ride easily.

My foster brother's long legs were thrust out stiffly for a balance as we galloped, and he cursed pleasantly once or twice as the going jarred his spine. Kinnaird of Culbin rode ahead on his own horse, and Dod Myron rode in the rear on the horse that was to take Brodie back. I think it strange now that we did not trust these two gentlemen of Moray, but those times had gone mad.

We had ridden holding no discourse, and now I was in no mood to begin any. In silence we grouped and halted where the track turned down the slope; and Tadg Mor unstrapped Brodie's wrists, and swung him to the ground. Dod Myron, already on his feet, held his horse ready. Before Brodie mounted he chafed his wrists briskly and looked up at me, but not sourly. And then his glance went behind me to my pillion rider.

"I am grieved, Margaret Anderson, that I could not ensure your safety with your uncle."

"There is no fear o' me, Laird Brodie," Margaret told him gently.

He shook his head and his eyes were pained. He was so sincere in his regret that suddenly I felt a desire to assure him. I bent down.

"Look at this girl behind me."

"I am looking."

"But you do not see. Look at her eyes; look at her mouth—look at her mouth carefully. What do you see?"

"A young and bonny woman." He looked at me keenly.

"You are a wedded man?"

"I am."

"You are lucky if your wife be like her."

At that his shoulders stiffened, and I had a spurt of anger.

"You are a proud fool and your bloody Covenant has clouded your mind. Listen! If the Irish were the Covenant and you Irish, you would need a fifth life for me to take this chill dawning. You had better go now, for we are often in a sour temper before breakfast."

Tadg Mor was watching Kinnaird with fierce half-humorous eyes, and Kinnaird, his hand on his hilt, was peering amongst the trees suspiciously. This was Gordon country and no safe place for any man of Moray.

"Let no fear be on you, black man," soothed Tadg Mor derisively. "The Gor-

dons are late sleepers. You are safe."

Kinnaird swung his horse round on him, his hand still on his hilt, and Tadg Mor laughed. I knew that laugh.

"Maybe you are not afraid after all," he half-taunted, "and indeed you have cause to be angry. A small blood-letting would do you no harm."

Kinnaird must have been nursing his resentment this past hour. Now it boiled over.

"By the Lord!" he cried. "I will blood one of you, whatever. Draw!"

His sword was out of sheath, his horse leaped to the spur, and the blade went shearing at Tadg Mor's head.

Tadg Mor was ready for it. Kinnaird was a big and powerful man, and the blow was delivered with all his might, but Tadg Mor put such a terrific disdainful vigor into his parry that the sword flew twenty paces out of Kinnaird's hand. And then Tadg Mor, recovering his blade, gave the Covenanter a steady easy point full in the centre of the polished corselet, and the stricken man swayed in the saddle and came upright again. Just as surely Tadg Mor could have pierced him through the throat.

"Next time you have a poor Irishman under your sword," said he, "remember the dent in your breastplate. Dod boy, give him his sword again."

"What for waste time?" cried Dod. "Gie't to him in the thrapple."

But here Brodie, already on his horse, spurred between.

"There have been enough killings this night," said he. "Let us part without blood this time."

And that was how we parted.

WE forded the river, mounted the other slope, and rode, quietly at last, across the level mile or two to the Gordon Castle. And Margaret Anderson had time to draw her breath and review her situation. The first thing she said was:

"Ye were like two wild men. Ye made me shamed, the things ye said o' me—and proud too, Martin."

"You will need your pride."

"What way?"

"Because as soon as we get a quiet place I am going to skelp you proper for all the trouble you were to us."

"And weel I deserve it—but no' ower hard, Martin. Where are ye takin' me?"

"Back to your duty."

"I suppose I must gang." And after a pause. "You are still carrying Mistress Rose's plaid?"

"You are sitting on it and should be grateful."

"She is no' in the camp?"

"She was, when we left."

"But was she no' for Aberdeen?"

"As soon as the road opened, and it is open now."

I wondered where Iseabal Rose was at that minute. Somehow, I could not see her gone. She had made a secure place for herself, with her calmness and her brown healing hands. I knew then that if she went I would miss her, that part of my life would be lonely.

"Was she her use to ye?" Margaret resumed her probing.

"No worse than yourself."

"She and I will no' get on weel thegither."

"That will be your fault."

"You would say that."

"You will be in charge of the women, under me—"

"She will no' take that either, a lady born—"

"I wish that quiet place was at hand. If I have done anything to make you think that I do not look on you as a lady, you can—you can complain to Tadg Mor."

"Tadg Mor is a better man and a trustier, anyway."

"The best man in the world."

"Ye make a pair. Och, Martin! Only jealous I am."

"Jealous of what?"

"Let it be! You wouldna understand, lad."

"Tadg Mor," I called. "She has her hand on the reins already."

"And my ear already dinging," said Tadg Mor, his hand up in the old familiar gesture.

He was riding close ahead, Dod Myron holding his stirrup leather, and Dod was walking head down. Tadg Mor bent down to slap the lad on the shoulder.

"Wake up, Dod boy! You are still alive this fine morning, and a man in your own right as well."

"And a cowardly one," growled Dod.

"As God made me, you could stand at Finn MacCool's right hand."

"No' me! I was feart as a rabbit in yon bit o' a room at the head of the stairs."

"You were not half as feart as I was," Tadg Mor comforted him. "The only man more feart was one Martin Somers."

"The devil out o' hell wouldna put dread on him."

"Whisper, and I will give you our secret. We are so well acquaint of fear that now it no more than steadies us in the gap of danger. There it is for you. But what am I saying? You have the secret yourself. When I saw you at your ease leaning against the door-post, your sword ready, I was jealous of you. 'There,' says I to myself, 'is the coolest young one ever I met.' And were you not the first to blood your sword?"

"I did that anyway," said Dod, and his shoulders began to lift. "If you would be saying a word to Nat Gordon for me he might pick me in the next levy."

"I will say a word to all the world," Tadg Mor promised him, "and, what is more, I will get Ranald Ban MacKinnon to put you in the verse of a song."

And in a little while Dod Myron walked proudly erect.

WE took three days to come up with the army. And in these three days, camping and foraging and talking, our Margaret recovered all her old state. No doubt she had learned her lesson, knew that her only congenial place was in the regiment, and made up her mind to grasp that life close to her. They were three fine free days, and we were half sorry when we rejoined the regiment.

Montrose, after the burial of Lord Gordon in St. Machar's Kirk of Aberdeen, had marched south for the final swoop on the Lowlands and the Border, and we overtook him in camp near Fourdoun of the Mearns.

That was a great day for the army and for us. I do not mean that our arrival was the great thing. The very great thing was the rejoining that day of Major General Alasdair Colkitto MacDonald with his host of Highlandmen: three thousand of them, the finest fighting men in all Scotland—or the world, themselves would say.

We rode into camp early in the afternoon while the clans were parading before the captain general and his staff, each chief being introduced to Montrose by Alasdair and fittingly welcomed. We came in quietly ourselves over the breast of a hill with no wish to make any parade. We looked down over that grand array of fighting men.

"There will be a couple of good hurley teams in that lot," said Tadg Mor carelessly.

And Margaret flung back her hair and sniffed the breeze.

"It is like being home again," she cried. "Already I can smell O'Cahan's Irish."

And whether she could or not, the Irish seemed to smell her. A company of O'Cahan's and its women were sitting about on the grass near the foot of the brae, idly but critically watching the parade of Highlandmen; and before we knew we were close above them. It was Sorcha MacNeill saw us first, and she scrambled to her feet, pointing. They all saw us then, and they were all on their feet and all yelling. I have heard many

slogans in my time, but the high-pitched shrill Irish yell always put a strange terror on me, as, indeed, it did on the regiments that had to face it. Now it brought the parade to a halt.

Before we might do anything a torrent of men and women poured about us. Margaret and I were pulled to the ground, whirled about and winded with hand-clasps; and then before we could even struggle the three of us were lifted high on stalwart shoulders, and the mixed company, falling roughly into formation, marched down and out and across the parade ground, straight for the royal standard. There was nothing we could do there in the face of the whole army. An army could not stop us.

I do believe that there were half a thousand Irishmen and women in our tail as we swept round in front of Montrose and halted. Tadg Mor and I, gripping a tousled mop of hair with one hand, saluted with the other, but Margaret kept her head down, a flame of embarrassment and pride in her cheeks. Colkitto, towering at Montrose's side, his mouth open in laughter, beckoned us on, and our bearers eased us to the ground and shoved us forward, Margaret in the middle.

She lifted her head then, and Montrose doffed his bonnet to her and gave her his half-wistful smile.

"You are welcome back, Mistress Margaret," said he. "We need you and shall need you more."

She gave him her little abrupt curtsey and drew back. She had no tongue for Montrose. He smiled at us too, but a little teasingly.

"So ye are haled before me again. Well! I knew you would not fail. Ye are practised in the art of taking ladies out of strait places." He turned to Alasdair. "She was a prisoner in Spynie Tower, and these two men of yours bring her out of it."

"No trouble at all, Alasdair," said Tadg Mor. "We just stepped in through a bit of a door and strolled out again, and away with her and us."

"If that was the way, red man," said Alasdair laughing, "you would already be boasting sky-high of the men you killed."

"There is a camp-fire tale in this, Martin Somers?" said Montrose, who loved a good story.

"Tadg Mor will have it," I told him.

"Be not in a hurry telling it, O'Kavanagh," Montrose hinted, and gave us a wave of his hand for dismissal.

WE found our way to our regiment's quarters then, in a chosen hollow over a brae, near wood and running water, and there our other friends came round and complimented us: Father MacBreck, our chaplain; my fellow-adjutant, Angus Stuart; O'Lachlan, our quartermaster; and finally Colonel Manus O'Cahan himself, who took the hands of our girl in his own and kissed one of them.

"Our *roisin ban,* our fair rose is just in time," said he looking at me, "for our *roisin dhuv* is out of camp, I fear."

I knew that. She had not come to welcome us, nor was she amongst her women. She might not like our fair rose, but she would not hide herself away surlily; for though she might be a small bit obstinate on occasion, Iseabal Rose was never sullen. Another friend, and our closest, I missed too—Ranald Ban MacKinnon.

"Is Dunbar of Moyness in camp?" I asked our colonel.

"He is, just below us." Dunbar and his thirty always camped near our regiment.

I said no more then, but went about my own business.

An hour before sunset, in the warm evening, I went down through the wood by the burnside below the camp and found a small pool deep enough to take me to the waist, and in it I had a plunge and a fine wash. It was chill water, for it came off the hills. My head was in a

clean shirt, when a voice spoke to me.

"You are back? Good work yon at Spynie."

I thrust my head through the band of the shirt. The speaker was Walter Dunbar, the low sun shining on his fine red hair. He put me a quick question before I might collect my thoughts.

"Where is Iseabal Rose?"

But I was busy getting my arms in the sleeves, and then I felt the smoothness of my new-shaven slit chin. He watched me relentlessly.

"Is she not here about?" I said at last.

"You know that she is not in camp. Where is she?"

"I do not know, but if I did know I would not tell you."

"I will accept that. Do you know that MacKinnon is not in camp either?"

"That is news to me," said I. For some reason the blood drained emptily away from my heart.

"He was to come with me to Lord Gordon's funeral in Aberdeen," went on Dunbar, "but he did not appear."

"You went."

"I did. I have not seen Iseabal or MacKinnon since."

"Are you saying that they are gone away together?"

"That is what I say." He picked my old cloth coat off the ground and reached it to me. "I have kept my word?"

"Like a man."

"If Iseabal Rose is out of camp there is no word to be kept."

"You would desert the army, then?"

"If that is necessary."

"Walter Dunbar," I said, convincingly as I could, "if they are gone away together the game is played and you have lost. Can you not see that?"

"My game finishes with death."

"And your death it will surely be, if you pursue Ranald Ban MacKinnon where he may have gone. Why are you so stubborn? Leave the woman alone."

"God, Somers!" he cried, striking his hands together as once before, "I cannot help myself."

He turned on his heel and strode away up the burnside, while I stayed behind to belt on my coat. I often think since that men of that hair and temper, when they finally set their heart on a woman, cannot see any other. There is Tadg Mor. I know that he has not looked at a woman since one terrible day in Methven Wood.

RANALD BAN MACKINNON had not left the army. He came to me that evening.

We were round our campfire that time, a fine circle of us. Donald Oge of Moidart had brought in cattle from the borders of Marechal Keith, and we were after a good meal of fresh killed beef—new beef is tender enough if cooked before it stiffens—and Tadg Mor, as a sort of after-feast, was picking a rib daintily. Colkitto and Nat Gordon sat at the fire with us, and Colkitto was clamoring for our tale, but Tadg Mor gnawed his bone and kept an eye lifting towards the little brae above us. He was a good story-teller, Tadg Mor, and wanted his full audience.

"There is a lad at Gight, Nat," said he to Nathaniel Gordon, "by the name of Dod Myron—"

"I know him," said Nat. "When do you want him hanged? I near did that for him last year."

"Maybe that is why the Gordons are not so good," said Tadg Mor smoothly. "You hang all your best men. Dod is one of the best."

"You proved him?"

"We did so, as you will see." And then he laughed. "A funny thing! The morning of the second day he says to me. 'Can we be trusting that black lad there; I think his courage is failing him already?' "

In the following laughter Montrose, Rollo, and Maormor Ogilvie strolled down the brae. Room was made for

them, and Rollo set his Indian pipe a-smoke. He was one of the few men amongst us that had the habit, though I have fallen to it myself since then. That was only one of scores and scores of summer and autumn camp-fires that I remember of that year. Montrose loved to sit in the gloaming, bare-headed, his feet towards the fire, and talk from him and all round him.

Tadg Mor had his full audience now and cleared his throat for action. And it was then that a hand touched my shoulder from behind. I looked up to see Ranald Ban MacKinnon, his eyes shining in the red light of the fire. He beckoned with his head and stepped back. I did not want to go, but he frowned at me, and gestured urgently. I slipped back then from the fire, no one noticing me, and followed him into the half dark. He took my arm and drew me farther away.

"Tadg Mor will damn his soul with lies," I protested, "if I am not there to check him."

"Never mind! He will give you your full share of credit."

"You should have stayed to hear of the one time he wished you were with us."

"He will be telling me all about it for the next half year. Come up this way."

He still held my arm, and now I noticed that his feet were not too steady.

"You are right," said he. "I have been drinking hornfuls all the day with the MacLeans out of Mull, but I have slept most of it off."

The clans usually brought a few pannier-kegs of *uisgebaugh* to the hosting, but as Montrose would not permit our baggage horses to carry liquor on campaign, most of it had to be consumed at the first gathering feast. The result was a gay night, and ragged marching next day.

We went up to the head of the brae, and Ranald Ban, pulling me round, bent to look into my face.

"I will be cursed, Martin Somers," said he, "if I can see what women see behind your devil's mask."

"Women see nothing in me, loose-mouth. Mostly they dislike me."

He looked close into my eyes. "Do you believe that? By the Lord! but maybe you do." He patted my shoulder. "Your pardon, Englisher. Let us sit down here for a bit."

WHEN at last Ranald Ban spoke he did not beat about the bush.

"I took *Roisin Dhuv* to Aberdeen," he said.

"Not to Mull?"

"Do not taunt me. I asked her to come to Mull to my father's house, but all she said was 'I will go to Aberdeen now.' And when I said to her, 'Will you not wait till Martin Somers comes back?' she shook her head and said, 'You will take me a quiet way to Aberdeen if you are my friend.' And that is what I did.

"No one saw you go?"

"No enemy. I took good care of that. I made a pretense to go with Dunbar as a bearer of Lord Gordon's coffin, but I let the funeral get well ahead, and then the dumb Fraser and myself took her round about and in by Balgownie Brig, where her uncle has a house."

"Where have you been since?"

"Out of the way." He gestured behind him towards the hills. "Only one hooded crow saw me for two days and admired my hair for a lining to its nest. I was in no humor to meet anyone, and Seumas Graham might not like me to cut Dunbar's windpipe."

"If you were able."

"I could be taking a slash at it whatever, as Finn Coll said to the Irish giant as he cut off his third head."

"A Scots giant, as I heard it."

"I have something here for you," said Ranald Ban, his fingers in his kilt purse. In the half dark I could see that the something was a folded sheet of paper

tied with a dark thread. "She gave me this for you."

I took it.

"There may be a message in it for you," I said.

"There will be no message in it for me. Put it away and read it in your own time." He got slowly to his feet for so swack a man.

I was on my feet and I touched Ranald Ban on the breast. "She will be lonely in Aberdeen, and she will remember your Mull and your mountains and the beach of Iona. Who knows, Ranald Ban—?"

But he pushed me away roughly. "Do not set my dreams running again. I know better. Tadg Mor will have finished his story by now. Send him out to me; I will wait here for him."

It was in the dawn of morning that I read Iseabal Rose's note. It was brief and, though simple, it had hid in it some hidden meanings and a queer brooding finality. The writing was small and firm like the writer herself. This is it.

"Dear Half-Indian and beloved Englisher, I am going to my uncle in Aberdeen and I will not see you again, and for that I have my own sorrow. I will not see any of you again, I think, but you I will not see ever. To that I am resigned as I write this, but how long I may be resigned I do not know, knowing what I am. This writing is to thank you. It is a writing that is trying to thank you, but there is a bitter wonder on me whether I owe you or any man thanks. But indeed you have done all you could, and I do thank you for showing me for a short time a life that I would hold if I could with all the small might in me. Fare-you-well now. But first I will give you my advice, because you need it and are very blind. Give up soldiering and following armies, and send your foster brother home. You will not send him away, but you must for his own sake, for he is a soft-hearted man and easily hurt. After that take to merchanting with Alick Anderson. I will not say anything about any other. But tell Ranald Ban MacKinnon that if I am ever come to the point of marrying a man I do not love—no, do not tell him anything, for he is too proud. That is all I will say of all I would say. Take my advice, for it is given of my blood for one minute running clean.

Iseabal Rose.

I near cried reading it. I read it again and did cry.

Before I come to the difficult part of my story I will clear the ground behind me.

While we were in camp at Dunkeld, north of Perth, Walter Dunbar deserted from the army with his thirty men. We could not waste any force to pursue them if we wanted to, for the Covenant army was threatening us, and we were short of cavalry. We were only waiting for the Gordon horse before striking a smashing blow at the Lowlands.

CHAPTER IX

"JESUS AND NO QUARTER!"

I COME now to the bitter part of my story, and it will not take me long.

Montrose marched his infantry round the base of the Forfar Hills to the town of Dunkeld, and there pitched camp. It was the grandest body of foot he had ever gathered on the field, but he had scarcely any horses, and horses were essential for the Lowland campaign. The Gordons had taken a turn home after Alford, but had promised to return, and Montrose had perforce to wait for them. Then Ogilvie of Airlie brought in a squadron, and, late in July, Aboyne and Lord Lewis Gordon rejoined with four hundred of the famous Huntly horses. Then we were ready for our great drive southward.

But before the Gordons arrived Montrose was not idle. The Covenant Parliament, forced out of Edinburgh and Stirling by fear of the plague, was in session at Perth only fifteen miles south of our camp, and Montrose, half in fun, half in earnest, essayed to put the fear of death in the lairds and ministers plotting hard and praying harder behind their stone walls. These stone walls were guarded by a strong force of infantry, and full five squadrons of horse out-

posted the northern and western marches; but Montrose, nothing daunted, trotted ten companies of Highland and Irish down to Methven and made a display of all the men he could mount within sight of Perth walls.

If Montrose had the Gordon horse at that juncture, before the Covenant army had gathered its final strength, he would have made an end of the parliament, and saved Cromwell that trouble may years later.

But men mounted on baggage horses could do little against squadrons of regular horse, and, having made his display to the terror of the Kirk, Montrose fell back on Dunkeld, fighting a canny rearguard action against Hurry and Balcarres. It was then that the disaster befell our women.

Tadg Mor and I were not in that drive to Methven. We knew it was only a sally not meant to be driven home, and we made a sally of our own westwards towards the Loch of Tay with Ranald Ban MacKinnon and a couple of Clan Finlay bowmen after a herd of the great red deer of the hills. Two companies of O'Cahan's had gone with Montrose, their women with them, to see what might be picked up on the road; and Margaret, with ten of her nursing women, had gone too, in the event of any hurt men in the skirmishing. I told her there was no need, but at that time she was all for duty. Since her return to camp nothing could hold her zest for life; she was flowing with vigor and spirit and white happiness. As she herself said she felt fey. I remembered that afterwards. She was fey.

We spent two nights in the hills very pleasantly, and I saw one of the Farquharsons bring down a running hart at fifty paces with a single arrow. On the third day about noon we came jog-trotting into camp, haunches of venison on our shoulders. The easy jog-trot was our usual pace, and I have seen the army hold it for a day.

"Our Meg," said Tadg Mor, "is dainty in her diet, and will be tired of hill mutton. She will cook this that way she has and give us our share. I can well stand a change."

But Margaret was not in quarters when we got there, though the force from Methven had almost finished streaming in in fast-marching scattered squads.

"She and the women will be an hour yet," O'Cahan informed us. "I told her to circle westwards with them to avoid the horse. They have no wounded, but the women may have a load or two."

We thought little of that delay. The Irish women were old campaigners. Still we grew anxious when the hour passed; and when anothed passed, and no Margaret came, Tadg Mor and I hesitated no longer. We took horse and galloped the road to meet her.

We circled westwards and south through a rugged wild valley that, unfittingly, was called the Small Glen. We met no one until half roads, and then round a corner we came on four women helping along two wounded ones. They wailed wild-eyed when they saw us.

"Oh God! Oh God!" That was Tadg Mor, his voice tearing him.

I quieted the women with an urgent hand.

"Where is Margaret Anderson?"

The tall big-bosomed Ulster woman, Sorcha MacNeill, holding a comrade in her strong arms, looked at me, the tears streaming down her face.

"Where is she, you weeping *onshuch?*" I shouted, and she got her voice.

"She was behind us coming out of Methven wood, and then the bloody horsemen came slashing amongst us. The last I saw of her."

Tadg Mor let one woeful cry out of him and drove furious heels into his leaping horse. And I, forgetting my duty to the wounded, beat and beat my beast into a gallop behind him.

What had happened was plain enough.

"The bloody horsemen came among us slashing!"

This is it. The women, herded by Margaret, had worked westward through Methven wood, and on the margin of it had been sighted by an outriding body of Hurry's and Balcarres' ruthless horse. What followed makes the telling too evil for me. I cannot tell it. By our roll there were exactly two and forty women in that party, and only six escaped death.

Tadg Mor and I did not give up hope. If any wounded women were behind, Margaret would surely be with them. We strained eyes for her at every turn of that twisting glen. But hale or wounded, we met no more women. In time we came out into open swelling country, and saw speared horsemen riding on the horizon eastwards towards Peth. We were desperate now, but as long as there was any hope we would not yield to folly. We threw ourselves off our horses and led them up the course of a stream, the bank hiding us. So we came to a cup in the hills remounting, rode up to the rim of it and on over an easy slope. The country was clear before us now, and across a wide and shallow valley a dark wood of pine flowed over the swell of a low ridge. We made for that wood at a gallop.

We came on one of our women pitifully dead at the edge of that dark wood, her face to the ground and her arms out towards us. Then we came on another, and then, two more. But I will tell no more of that . . . .

WE found Margaret deep in the wood, but she was not dead. She sat with her back to a tree, her head leaning against the trunk. It was as if she had settled herself down neatly for a rest, her lovely linten hair back off her brow, and her skirts down to the silver buckles that Tadg Mor used to polish every morning.

There was no color at all in her face and her two arms were clasped tightly over her breast, as if she were holding something there. Something very precious indeed, for it was her very life she was holding for a little while—until we came. She smiled up at us as we bent over her, and her voice was a whisper.

"My loons! My very ain loons! I was waiting—I knew you'd be."

I put my hand gently on her elbow to unclasp her arms, but, "Dinna, Martin," said she. Her life blood was welling against her sleeve, a frothy, bright red blood—I knew what that meant. She had been pierced through the body in two places and should have been dead long ago. But she had held her life against death with her two strong hands till we came. Now she yielded to that new strong lover.

"Hold me, Martin dear," she whispered, and her head slipped sideways off the trunk. I put my arms gently about her.

She let her arms go loose then, and one hand went out towards Tadg Mor. He took it in his, brought his face down to it, and softly clumped it three times against his ear. And he held his face to a gallant smiling.

"My poor Tadg Mor!" And she smoothed his cheek with her palm.

"I was waiting for you," she whispered. "I kennt ye'd come—ye aye come when I am in trouble. Am I no' the proud one?"

Her brow was cold against me, and she said nothing more for a long time, and then she used the Irish way she had learnt from us.

"But I will be troubling you no more now, Maurteen."

"Hush—hush, girleen!"

"Hush. Ay, put your bairn to sleep."

"Sleep then, and I will take you back in my arms."

"In your arms—on your saddle bow. That will be the way. But will you be missing me a wee small bittie?"

"I will not, for you will be always at my side."

"I will sleep so. Tell Uncle Alick my happiness." And after a while she said, "A' my rough laddies—a' my bonny Irish laddies!" Her lips were close to my ear. "But you were my ain heart's darlin'."

She turned her face in to me and I whispered softly in her ear, and like a child going to sleep she sighed deeply. And was dead.

I looked over her linten hair at Tadg Mor.

"She is gone from us, brother."

"She is gone," said he deeply. And he rose to his feet and turned away from us; and his voice lifted in a strange little lamentable tune that one would sing to oneself remembering beauty.

I took her body on my saddle bow back to Dunkeld.

We overtook the six women on the road; and Tadg Mor rode behind me, a wounded woman in his arms and one behind him, strapped to his belt. When we came to the margin of the camp the four women with us lifted their voices in the woful Irish *caoine,* and Ireland and the Highlands, men and women, swept about us like the waves of the sea. Then did that lament swell and roll against the walls of the hills, and in it pealed a deep and savage note from the throats of the men. It shook all Dunkeld.

Colkitto, bare-headed, came running. Montrose himself galloped on horseback from the manse where he was lodging, his long hair flying behind him. The Irish and Highlandmen stormed round him, and Colkitto, hearing the news, grasped him by the thigh.

"Lead us out now!" Alasdair roared in his great voice. "Lead us out now, Seumas Graham!"

But Montrose struck his hand away, lifted himself in the stirrups, and raised a clenched fist in the air. His face had lost all its fresh color, and his eyes blackened under his black brows.

"The hurt is mine," he cried, and his voice carried across the valley. "The hurt is mine, for Scotsmen did this. I will lead you out and our vengeance shall be full."

And the high maddening Gaelic slogan resounded from all the hills.

That night O'Cahan and fifty horsemen brought in our dead from Methven wood, and the whole army waked them till the dawn. But why do I go on rending my heart? I am crying now as I write.

We buried our dead in the clear cold dawn, and all the pipers marched behind playing the heart-aching *Soiridh*: *Farewell my Fair One.* In Spynie Tower I had promised Margaret that parting tune, and she had it now, though her ears were deaf. And three Irish regiments and ten Highland clams marched behind her; she was wearing her silken

gown but it did not swing, and her silver-buckled shoon were on her feet; but she rode on no white horse, and she had no silver girdle on the span of her waist.

KILSYTH was the vengeance Montrose led us to. And at that battle for the first time since Tippermuir I carried a sword in the line and fought like all the Gaels stripped to the trews; and in me was not fear but a dark despairing anger.

Montrose had the greatest difficulty in restraining the army on the strategic march that led up to the battle. He swung us round the south side of the Ochil Hills through Mar and Kellie country not unfriendly to his cause—but it was Lowland country too, and Highland swords were eager to be at Lowland throats.

Montrose made full use of that mood when the time came. In a final forced march, outstripping his old antagonist General Baillie, who was advancing parallel on the north side of the Ochils, he thrust us at a Covenant force coming across from Lanark. The Lanark men, never too loyal to parliament, did not stand to fight, but fell back as fast and as far as they were able. And then we faced round, established ourselves in the hollow of Kilsyth back off the main road, and waited for Baillie.

Baillie had an army of eight thousand, but he was a prudent man when he was let. He wanted to fall back, but the advising committee of the Kirk insisted on fight. Argyll, the ancient and inveterate foe of Montrose, was sure that he at last had his enemy in his hands, now that he had him lured over the Highland line; and Baillie, when he saw that Montrose had failed to take advantage of ground on the slopes, decided that victory was at least possible.

The disadvantage of our ground was only apparent, and it was no more than Montrose's usual lure. Our position was on a level plain with a stream in front and hills on three sides. On the north side the hills narrowed to a ravine down which the stream flowed. Montrose permitted Baillie to occupy the hill in our front. But the brae steepened so abruptly at the foot that no cavalry dare charge down it. That is what Montrose saw. Also he knew that his own foot, trained tough as iron in mountain warfare, could charge up that brae fleet as deer, and, unharried by horse, could drive the enemy into marshland behind the hill. He would attend to the horse himself.

It was Lady Day in August, one of the hottest days in that hot year of the plague, and we stripped for the fight. We wanted no weight of armor to slow our movements or our sword arms. We wanted only targe and sword and the enemy within reach. The Irish were in trews and shirts, and many of them had cast their rawhide brogans; the Highland men had shed kilt and plaid, and knotted their long bandle-cloth shirts between their legs; the horsemen, to avoid the confusion of friend and foe as at Alford, wore their shirts over their jerkins. Each company or clan carried its colors, and these were the only unnecessary weight carried that day. We must have looked a strange rabble to the orderly army on the hill above us. No one might guess what a weapon of death we were.

Argyll was so sure that he had his enemy in his grasp in the heart of the Lowlands, that, in order to cut off all retreat to the hills across the Highland line, he insisted on Baillie deploying his foot-men northwards round and over the ravine. They made a quarter circle close above us on the hills, and Alasdair leisurely swung his line to conform with theirs as they moved.

Montrose, knowing that Alasdair was the leader for men in our mood, was with the cavalry on the right wing. I was in the front line of O'Cahan's regi-

ment at the side of Tadg Mor, and the men who had lost their women at Methven were about us.

Sometimes I shivered, but not with fear. Manus walked between his lines as ever, but he had no need to clap any man's shoulder. Great Colkitto stood on wide-planted legs, his back to us, head forward and his broadsword softly tapping the ground. His bodyguard had been distributed down the line, and Ranald Ban MacKinnon, leaning forward, caught my eye, and his nostrils flared in a marble-white face.

Half an hour before Nat Gordon had ridden down the line on his black stallion, and the healed gash on his cheek had stood out red on his rigid face.

"O'Cahan," he had said, "I will do what I can to drive Belcarres' horse into the marsh behind that hill."

"We will be there," said O'Cahan, and instead of a shout a low vibrant growl went down the line.

Eager as we were, the battle was slow to begin. The enemy circled slowly above us, and, more slowly, we circled to face him. But, as ever, our eyes fixed on the foe, we kept slipping forward and slipping forward, until only a stony slope with a broken-down dry-stone wall separated us from him. And then a man in our second line, torn with rage and grief and the chance of slaking them, cried out. "Give me room, give me room!" and pushed against us.

And Colkitto chose that time well. Up went his blade and forward in his famous gesture, and he leaped forward, roaring. Then the torrent broke in one shrill slogan. The brae and the stone wall were submerged as by a mountain flood, and there was the enemy line in front of us.

O'Cahan's regiment was in the centre, Clan Ranald and Clan MacLean on either hand, and these three shocked the enemy in line. It was like a torrent striking a bridge of hurdles. It paused at the shock of meeting, heaped for a moment, and then drove straight through. And after that it was slaughter and no quarter. Tippermuir over again, and Inverlochy with it.

Tadg Mor and I charged in the front line of O'Cahan's regiment and we kept our places. More than that I will not say. I know nothing about the cavalry fight, but, I believe, it was hot give and take for an hour, until Nat Gordon turned a flank and drove Balcarres' horse slantwise off the field.

Tadg Mor and I got separated some time, and met again four miles from the battlefield on the edge of the mire of Dullatur. Our fierce company had driven the last squadron of Balcarres in there and killed the butchers one by one. When we met we were both naked to the waist, and if we were bloody the blood was not ours. Ranald Ban MacKinnon was with Tadg Mor, and he was stark naked but for a wisp of cloth on his loins; and his eyes were glazed and a froth dry on his lips. Tadg Mor's broad matted chest heaved, his eyes were sunken in his head, and his sword lax. No one will know the killing these two men did that day. Tadg Mor looked at me out of his sunken eyes and shook his great head.

"Glutted—glutted! And to what end, Maurteen? I will kill no more."

At that something broke inside me and came chokingly to my throat, so that I had to throw up my head and fight for air. Tadg Mor and Ranald Ban pressed close, their arms about me and their targes hiding me, for they did not want any man to see the way I was being torn with dry sobs.

After a time I quieted down and, shoulder to shoulder and very silent, we went back towards the field. But behind us we heard two men weeping terribly.

Montrose, riding ahead of his officers, met us at the back of the last hill. He drew rein in front of us and looked us over, a glow in his darkling grey eyes; and we looked up at him quietly, all emotion drained out of us.

"Ye have killed." That is what he said.

"We have killed," said Tadg Mor slowly, "and victory is dust in our mouths."

And Montrose had nothing to say.

That was the vengeance of Kilsyth.

CHAPTER X

THE ROAD TURNS

PHILIPHAUGH was not a battle, though the Covenant proclaimed it a great victory. It was a surprise of six thousand against six hundred. Montrose had only that small force with him at the time, and though there was no Covenanting army in Scotland fit to face that hardy small force, General David Leslie, a man of many soldierly qualities, but not the important one of honoring his bond, came hurrying up from England with six thousand veterans, mostly horsemen.

Our six hundred were surprised by that six thousand on a misty morning in mid-September two miles out of Selkirk on the slope of Philiphaugh.

Tadg Mor and I saw that victory was hopeless from the beginning. We had many women on our hands, and we tried to save them, but the best we could do was to herd them up the glen of the Yarrow, and scatter them on the hills with word to make for the Highland line and Colkitto as best they were able.

Free of the women, we came back towards the fight, a quiet hopelessness on us. We had some dim notion that we might help to hold off the enemy, so as to give the women as much time as possible to make good their flight, but at the back of our minds we knew that we were going back to die with our comrades.

In the hollow of the Yarrow we met Ranald Ban MacKinnon, bloody and torn, and an Irish cornet with O'Cahan's own colors wrapped round his body. They were on horseback—there were many riderless horses on the field of Philiphaugh.

"Where are you going?" shouted Ranald Ban, barring the road.

"A bit of a daunder—where you have turned your back." Tadg Mor told him with savage irony, and made to go by.

But Ranald Ban caught him fiercely by the leather collar.

"O'Cahan is down. It is all over."

"Let me go, MacKinnon."

"I will not let you go. You would be no great loss, but you are taking your brother to his death."

That quieted Tadg Mor.

"But what can we do?" he cried.

"You can put your foot on mine and get up behind me."

That is how we rode in the end, Tadg Mor behind Ranald Ban and I behind the Ulsterman. Five of Leslie's troopers pursued us out of the glen and were overtaking us, but we tumbled off our horses and pelted their half tired ones with stones. I have often noticed that not even a wicked stallion in the season will stand up to a good pelting. Their horses shied off close in, and stalwart Cornet O'Neill with a young rock brought a trooper out of the saddle. That man died there under Ranald Ban's sword. Another flung himself off his horse to come to his comrade's rescue, and Tadg Mor made sure of him. The others galloped. Tadg Mor took on a little cheer.

"If they would come at us by fours and fives," said he, "we could win this fight yet." But no more came.

We made our way by high and difficult ground through the middle lowlands, and in three days were safe over the line in the hills of Perth; and so came to Struan by the waters of Garry. And it was there, on a brisk morning of October, that Montrose sent us on our own road.

We were not in bad heart that morn-

ing. I do hope that I have not given the impression that we were broken men by this time. The death of Margaret may have saddened my narrative as it saddened our lives many a day, but that was a private grief; facing life we were old campaigners by now. Philiphaugh was no more than a bad morning's work that could be atoned for another day, and another day after that. One brief year ago we had been a ragged handful in imminent danger of throat-cutting, and we had made that year the compass-time of a legend that will go down all the years undimmed in glamor. We could make another year like it, or better. Our heads were beginning to lift.

MONTROSE rode up to our camp-fire, and we came to our feet and saluted him. He sprang to the ground lightly and came to the fire, warmed his brown swordsman's hands at it, and then brought us close about him with a gathering gesture. He was in hard and lean condition, but his white collar was no whiter than his cheeks, and his eyes, that used to smile, were colder than his pale-blue sword sash. He kept looking into the fire.

"We five have been together since Tippermuir," said he quietly, making companions of us. "It was a good year."

"There will be another better," said Ranald Ban.

"There may be, Ranald, but many of my dear friends will not share it. I am the bringer of bad news. Colonel O'Cahan is dead."

"Manus—our Manus!" cried Tadg Mor.

"And my Manus too. Faithful leader of faithful men! Slain without trial in Edinburgh Castle. William Rollo is dead too, and Nathaniel Gordon is doomed to death. My ill fortune has fallen grievously on my friends."

"Not yours the fault, Montrose," said Tadg Mor.

There was nothing I could say. There was a hollow place inside me, and I knew that the parting of the ways had come. Montrose placed his hand on my loose shoulder.

"I am sending you to join Sir Alasdair."

"We would follow you."

"And I would have no better men. But today I am going up to the Gordons, and it would be better for you to join your own people. If Alasdair again joins me, and I think he will, ye will be thrice welcome." And there a little of his restraint gave way, and he brought his hands smartly together. "If only my King would permit Scots and Irish to make a joint cause in this war his crown would soon be firm on his head."

Montrose turned to Ranald Ban.

"Clanranald will come again, fair Ranald," he said, "but meantime you will guide these my friends by the safest road?"

"I will do that, Montrose," said Ranald Ban.

Montrose said farewell then, giving us his hand in turn, and we gave him the kiss of fealty. And he turned away quickly so that we might not see his eyes, and vaulted into the saddle.

Old Maormor Ogilvie leaned down to us before he turned after his leader, and the tears were running from his warrior eyes down his weathered cheeks.

"I was with ye when my son died at Inverlochy," said he, "and here we part. Your deeds will be remembered in Airlie."

I do not know who holds Airlie now. Perhaps he fought at Kikkie-crankie with Claverhouse Graham, and if so, he may be an exile like my grandson, but I do hope that he has tales of the Irish that fought with his forefather.

We three stood there by the camp-fire and watched them till a curve of the glen hid them from our eyes—forever.

(to be concluded)

Quicker than light he struck.

CHINKAPIN

By HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

CHINKAPIN was born in the high country. Although patches of grimy snow still hung in the wooded hollows, the mountain meadows lay clean under the late spring sun. Sired by a fugitive Morgan stallion, foaled by a mare running with the wild horses of the mesas, he inherited both stamina and intelligence.

Fuzzy from ears to hocks, with a tail like an oversize bottle brush, and down his neck a dark thickening of hair that would someday become a mane, he looked somewhat like a caricature of a horse, his real quality concealed by a coat more like fur than hair.

When a month old he was a salty brown. Only when he grew older and shed would his true color show clear. He might become a bay with black points, like his sire, or a blue gray like his mother. Or he might cheat them both and show the color of some earlier ancestor. What kind of a disposition he would develop was also problematical.

Once the unchallenged empire of sires and dams who had survived the vanished conquistadores, the high mesas were destined to become cattle country. But one band of wild horses remained. They were led by a fine bay stallion, a Morgan that had escaped from Hollis-

ter's breeding ranch on the upper Rio Grande. This band became known as the Last of the Broomtails.

About two months after he was born, on a day when clouds hung low over the timberlands and a thin mist of rain glittered on rock and brush, Chinkapin's mother slipped and went over the edge of a canon trail. The band kept on, spreading out to graze in the bottom. Failing to discover his mother among the grazing mares, the colt circled about, disconsolately sniffing the ground. When he came upon her, wedged between two huge boulders, her four legs to the sky, he smelt of her, rubbed his head against her gaunt side, urged her, in his language, to get up and come along with him.

Sudden fear took hold of the brown colt. His mother was there, yet she was not there. Glazed eyes staring blindly, this silent, motionless, stiff-legged creature was nothing to him now. No, his mother was not there. With a distressed whinny he whirled and made for his kind.

Still unweaned, hunger inspired him to solicit an old brown mare. When he ducked his head for dinner she surprised him by briskly nipping his rump. A few minutes later he approached a sleek young gray. They touched noses. This was pleasant enough but it was not what he wanted. He sought his meal with circumspection. The mare's teeth and heels sent Chinkapin scrambling for safety. She was barren.

Chinkapin nibbled a spear of grass. But he wanted milk. He stilted up to a sag-bellied old roan who had lost her colt to a mountain lion. At his first attempt to encourage the proper flow the old mare sidled away. He followed with cautious persistence. Finally he was allowed to draw his rations. However, the roan mare never became more than mildly interested in him. His coat might stand this way or that, he might hush to her in a fright, or be gone an uncoltish length of time, it was all the same to her. He was welcome to a meal when he needed it. The rest of the time he could do as he pleased.

This lack of attention increased Chinkapin's natural independence. He discovered choice grazing by himself. He drank when thirsty, not waiting until the entire band sought water-hole or stream. He soon ceased running to his foster mother with this or that complaint.

When, finally, she refused to let him nurse, he went to grazing like a lawn mower. The old girl could keep her milk so far as he was concerned. At best it hadn't been any too easy to get.

RIDING through the high country about a year later, Steve Raingo, an old frontiersman who had hunted wild horses in the early days, came unexpectedly upon a sight that surprised him. Brown, bay, sorrel, roan, paint horse and grullo, they grazed along the edge of First Mesa—the last of the broomtails.

In the shadow of a giant spruce Raingo sat his mount, watching them, his gaze fixed upon the bay stallion, the sentinel of the band.

Raingo pursed his lips. Either his eyesight was getting poor or he had seen that stallion somewhere before. But not running wild. He also noted a brown yearling, grazing by itself. The yearling was a small edition of the stallion. To Raingo's experienced eye the youngster gave promise of becoming an exceptionally strong and handsome horse. Queer about that stallion. He would ask his partner Purdy about it.

Raingo rode out onto the mesa. With a snorting and rushing the wild horses flung into a run. The wild horse hunter whistled softly. The youngster could travel!

With the approach of winter came a light snow. The ground on the mesas

was frozen. The grass lay matted and stiff. Reluctant to leave the uplands, again the wild horses drifted south. One morning, as the Morgan stallion grazed alone, Chinkapin approached in a friendly fashion.

Laying back his ears, the stallion conveyed a silent message that sent Chinkapin scampering. Collectively colts meant something to the stallion. Singly they were young nuisances. They belonged with their mothers.

At a safe distance, Chinkapin pretended to look for grass, but his eye was on the Morgan. Proud old rooster! Thought he was necessary to guard the mares. Possibly he did watch the surrounding country, but in a high-headed, aloof attitude as if he were lord of creation.

From a fuzz of salt and pepper, and apparently unmanageable legs, Chinkapin had become a sleek, dark brown, with legs set not too far apart, and a fine line from the slope of his withers to his tail. Against the horizon he suggested a heritage superior to that shown by his immediate forebears. The arch of his neck, the clean cut nose, the belled nostrils, the compact yet full muscle that is big but does not look big, and the well set up hindquarters, would have distinguished him among a score of colts. Chinkapin's first great experience began when he was two years old.

With the coming of spring, the wild horses had again drifted up from the desert to graze in the mountain meadows. Poking along the timber edging First Mesa, Chinkapin blundered upon the still warm ashes of a fire, and a small, dirty white tent that looked like a sharp ridged rock.

He nosed about. The tent had a strange smell. But the pack saddle didn't alarm him because it smelled of horse. Nor did the pack saddle pads, nor the headstall. Stilting about with his nose close to the ground, he came upon an odor that was all horse, no sweated leather mingled with it. He followed tracks which led him to a mare, staked in a circular meadow back in the timber. He approached. She eyed him with placid interest, willing to be friendly. As they smelt of one another the stake rope touched Chinkapin's leg.

With a bound he was yards away, eyes flashing, tail up. But something still more startling caught his eye. Among the trees beyond the mare stood another horse. From its back rose a long, queer looking shape such as Chinkapin had never seen. He snorted. He had caught the smell of man, would always know it. That smell meant danger. With a sideways leap, beautiful in its free curve. he fled down the shadowy timberlands.

It was thus Steve Raingo, on his way back to his camp, saw him, recognized him as the yearling he had admired the preceding year when riding through the high country. The youngster had come along. In another year he would be a bigger and handsomer horse than his sire. Raingo rode on past his pack mare and into camp.

Traffic in wild horses had long since ceased to pay. But a special quest had brought Raingo and his partner into the high country. Shortly after discovering the bay stallion running with the broomtails, Raingo had talked with his partner. Purdy knew the horse. It had escaped from Hollister's breeding farm. Hollister had spent much time and money trying to locate him. He had offered a round reward for the return of the animal.

Quietly Raingo and Purdy made ready for a hard campaign. Locating and capturing the runaway stallion would be no easy job. It might take weeks, even months. They told no one of their plans. If he learned of the whereabouts of the stallion, naturally Hollister would send his own men after him.

WINTER had kept the partners from putting their plan into effect immediately. But with the coming of the new grass they made their camp on First Mesa, a great mountain meadow several miles in extent. A dog tent, a pack horse, provisions, extra ropes and a rifle comprised their working outfit.

Like the wild horses themselves, Raingo was a survival of the pioneers. He wore his sandy hair long, topped by a shapeless, narrow brimmed Stetson. Tall, gaunt, slow moving, he rode a wise old mount, its bridle decorated on either cheek with a fox tail.

Purdy, much younger, was short, stocky, strong-necked, with deep blue eyes. Energetic, rather reckless, yet withal a silent man, he was Steve Raingo's right hand. In civilization, Raingo himself was considered queer.

The Morgan stallion had run wild. He was familiar with the country. He had been handled by men. An ordinary trap would be futile. The Morgan never would lead his band into the wings. Raingo decided to use Blue Canyon, which boxed at its northern end, as a natural trap.

He did not propose to disturb the wild horses yet. They would not leave the high country until winter drove them out. The partners set about building a rock barricade across the narrows of the canyon. In the middle of the barricade they left an opening about the width of two ordinary ranch gates. With their experienced mounts, and their ropes, they thought they could hold this gateway in case the broomtails, once trapped, broke back.

The day that Chinkapin fled from his first sight of man, and rejoined his wild kindred, startled mares raised their heads as he raced up, plunged to a stop, whistled his alarm. He had seen a new danger and wanted to tell about it.

The Morgan stallion became uneasy. The two-year-old had spread fear in the air. Although no command had come from the stallion, the mares now grazed nippingly. Moving from place to place, they drifted down the meadow. A silent message ran among them. With a rushing thunder of hoofs, manes, flickering, they were off. Even the older mares, stimulated by fear, showed stride and grace in their going. Chinkapin, who had inspired the flight, ran not far behind the stallion. When the wild horses reached Third Mesa they milled for a while, then settled down to grazing.

Next day at dawn the Morgan stallion left the mares and colts. Some vibration told them they were not to follow. The Morgan strain was strong in Chinkapin, making for independence and individualism. Ordinarily he accompanied the band, but was never an actual part of it. It might be said he thought for himself.

When the Morgan was out of sight, Chinkapin also left the band. The tracks of the stallion led not directly from meadow to meadow, but roundabout through the timberlands. Cautious, deliberate in his quest, the stallion had stopped to survey the country. Chinkapin, however, kept steadily on.

NEAR the meadow where the pack mare had been staked, Chinkapin came within sight of his sire. Striving to catch some hint of an alien presence, the Morgan stood sniffing the light breeze. When the stallion's ears flickered back Chinkapin knew that he had been discovered.

Under ordinary circumstances there would have been a fight or a chase. But the Morgan had caught the smell of wood smoke. Impatiently he again swung round, facing the hidden camp. Through the still woodlands came the clink of metal, a stronger smell of smoke.

A native stallion would have challenged with a snort, or a deep drawn whistle of anger. The Morgan made no sound that would disclose his where-

abouts. Stealthily he slid through the shadows, retreating toward the rim of Blue Canyon. He now knew there were men in the domain of the wild horses.

Reaching the rim of the canyon, the stallion broke into a run. Behind him ran Chinkapin. The fear in his sire had come to him. For the time being he was one of the wild horse band, blindly following his chief.

Back on Third Mesa the stallion gathered his mares and hazed them toward the west. That evening they were grazing in Pleasant Valley, isolated country far from the wild horse hunter's camp.

From the time they arrived in Pleasant Valley, Chinkapin sensed a subtle change in his kin. The wild horses now kept pretty well together wherever they were. Often when nothing startling seemed imminent they raised quick heads and stood watching the distant timber. Frequently, while the mares grazed, the Morgan would round them up with no apparent cause and haze them to another spot in the valley. Meanwhile Chinkapin made the most of the good grass and water.

Predominant, his Morgan blood refined him as he grew. Sired by the same stallion, there were some likely colts in the band, but they showed more of the bronco strain. Their strength was of a coarser kind and obvious, Chinkapin's concealed by symmetry. In the sun his coat took on a warm bronze sheen suggesting intense vitality. Although still a trifle leggy, he had the compactness of the Morgan breed.

On a wooded point Raingo and his partner sat their horses, looking down into Pleasant Valley. Purdy's far-sighted eyes picked out the Morgan stallion. But Raingo's gaze was fixed upon a brown two-year-old. Having located the horses, the partners were about to ride down and head them toward the east and their original grazing grounds. By degrees they would work them into Blue Canyon. The trap was set.

Chinkapin, with his usual independence, had drifted away from the mares. Occasionally he paused to scratch his ear or wipe an offending fly from his foreleg.

He was approaching hazardous territory—the timberlands. He poked along, somewhat like a small boy pretending to look for something lost when his real objective is a forbidden orchard.

Beyond the edge of the timber the dark earth was dappled with light and shadow. Fungus showed brown and white on rotting logs. There was a faint moisture in the air. Chinkapin nibbled tentatively at the moss on a tree trunk. He moved from shadow to shadow, exploring the strangely familiar smells of the forest.

No sound or scent had warned him, yet he stopped. Something was wrong. A blue grouse clucked. A tiny fragment of bark twinkled down through the golden haze. A faint rustling, hardly louder than the whisper of the moving pine tops, and Chinkapin stiffened like a game dog making a point. With the sudden breeze came a musky, animal odor. Across a patch of sunlight lay the shadow of a heavy limb, its middle unnaturally distorted. A gray shape, hurtling through the air, launched itself from the limb.

Whinnying shrill terror, Chinkapin leaped sideways. The mountain lion swerved, his front legs spread wide. Quicker than light he struck. His outspread claws raked Chinkapin's rump. Snarling, he again leaped at Chinkapin.

A sharp explosive sound ripped through the woodlands. Curving in mid air the lion struck the bole of a pine headforemost, slithered down, limp, lifeless. Breaking into the blazing sunlight Chinkapin tore across the meadow, ears flattened, neck outstretched.

Stampeded by the rifle shot, the wild horse band was far down the valley. Over their going hung a thin haze of dust. Out in the open, clear of the thing

that had attacked him, Chinkapin stopped. Yet fear still vibrated in him. With a snort he took after the distant dust cloud.

Back in the timber, Raingo and his partner stood looking down at the dead mountain lion. That Raingo's shot had stampeded the broomtails didn't seem to bother the old wild horse hunter. His mind was on the brown two-year old. He had caught a glimpse of Chinkapin, startled, poised for flight, just before the mountain lion leaped. Alertness, grace, restrained energy, radiated from the young stallion. He had then seemed more than a mere horse—the very essence and spirit of the wild. Among the many broomtails Raingo had captured, he had never seen Chinkapin's equal.

The old wild horse hunter decided he would make the two-year-old his own. He had no special use for him, other than to sell him. But he wanted him, wanted to feel that he possessed something so near perfection. That the shot, fired while the lion was in mid air, had saved the young stallion, seemed a good omen. Raingo felt, somehow, that the colt now belonged to him. He said nothing to Purdy, merely gestured toward the valley. They mounted and rode out into the sunlight. A long chase lay ahead of them. The band might run clear to the desert before it quieted down.

THE high boundaries of Pleasant Valley had melted down to rounded, sandy ridges. The lush grazing of the uplands gave place to wide, gravel-strewn reaches dotted with greasewood and sage. Gradually the wild horses ceased running. The Morgan stallion immediately rounded them up and started them angling northeast from the course down which they had come.

When, late that afternoon, Chinkapin came within sight of the band, he slowed to a lazy walk. He was safe. He nosed about, snatching a wisp of grass here and there. The wounds in his rump had begun to stiffen. He tried, unsuccessfully, to lick them. He would carry the mountain lion's brand as long as he lived. He saw that the band was coming back up the valley, although now moving along its eastern boundary. With slow, deliberate stride Chinkapin advanced to meet them.

The Morgan stallion stopped, his attitude challenging, defiant. Undaunted, Chinkapin approached. The Morgan charged him. It was only too evident that the stallion meant business. With the quick thud of the stallion's hoofs behind him, Chinkapin tucked his rump and ran. Heretofore he had avoided his sire with easy nonchalance. Now it took all he had to keep out of his reach.

Chinkapin pivoted gracefully round as the Morgan ceased chasing him. Excitement bristling in every hair, his head up in a proud fashion, the young stallion faced his sire. Some fifty yards distant stood the Morgan, challenging the younger horse to battle. Chinkapin's surprise was fast giving place to anger. He was no weanling colt to be hazed hither and yon. He belonged with his kind. Now he was being told to keep away. He stood his ground, ready to do battle. Only lack of experience kept him from charging the Morgan. Chinkapin's pride was stung. This was the first time the stallion had run him out of the band.

The Morgan started back toward the mares. Round them he ran, hazing them on. Chinkapin followed. Wherever it might be, the band was his home. This time he entered unauspiciously, by the back door.

The wild horses had become doubly cautious. They were two days making the return journey, and then they did not tarry in Pleasant Valley, but drifted over to Third Mesa. Chinkapin himself took on an individual vigilance. No matter what his kin might do, he was looking out for himself. Gradually he

was shaping into a leader capable of managing a band of mares of his own. Nevertheless he wisely kept out of the way of his sire. In a battle for supremacy the Morgan would have been too much for him.

Manes and tails ruffled by the wind, the wild horses were grazing on Third Mesa. Eyes, ears and quickened movements showed that they were more than ordinarily alert. Chinkapin reared, kicked skyward, cavorted and snorted a challenge to the world at large. With no special animus toward anything, he was ready for a fight or a frolic. His hat was in the ring. He acted as if he thought himself just as independent and smart as the Morgan.

In the midst of these youthful explosions his quick senses caught a taint in the air. Across the meadow the Morgan stallion stood alert, his sharp ears pricked toward the south. Two horsemen had appeared on the edge of the mesa. Without waiting to see what the band would do, Chinkapin struck across the meadow toward the east. In a flash the mares were following him. With a neigh like the blast of a trumpet the Morgan stallion took after them.

Chinkapin was making for the open country beyond the mouth of Blue Canyon. Now riding swiftly, the horsemen kept between him and the desert.

Before Chinkapin could make up his mind which way to turn the Morgan was alongside him. Behind them clattered the mares and colts. The broomtails were rapidly nearing the safety of open country when a sharp, splitting sound, such as Chinkapin had heard when the lion attacked him, brought them up short. South of them a hideous yellow thing was flapping like a great bird. Cut off east and west by towering walls, fleeing from the menacing sound of a rifle shot and a crackling yellow slicker, the band headed up into Blue Canyon.

Raingo and his partner did not crowd the wild horses. The mouth of the canyon was wide. If the broomtails broke back it would be almost impossible to head them and turn them. The wild horse hunters breathed their mounts. It had been a hard run.

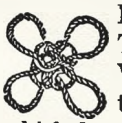
As the band drew near the rock barricade, Chinkapin, too excited, too sure of himself to stop, sped on through the opening, the mares and colts following him.

Suspicious of the barricade, the Morgan stallion had stopped. The wild horse band rushed through the opening. He trumpeted shrilly, as if in protest. He circled and stood looking back down the canyon. Although he could see no immediate menace he knew that the horsemen were somewhere below him.

Wiser, more experienced than his son, the Morgan knew more definitely what the men on horseback meant. Pride of leadership urged him to take after the mares and colts. He sniffed the rock barrier, trotted back and forth, snorting. Whirling about, he again faced the south with far searching gaze. From down the canyon came the sound of plodding hoofs. The horsemen were coming.

Instinct warned him to make for the open. Head lowered, the Morgan stallion slunk through the junipers edging the western wall. He was stealing toward the mouth of the canyon when he stopped, his shoulder muscles quivering. Near the water-course Raingo and Purdy sat their horses, apparently doing nothing.

"West wall," whispered Raingo. "I'll drop back a piece in case you miss." Too clever for them, the Morgan had not gone into the trap.



PURDY took down his rope. The Morgan stood watching. When Purdy was within some twenty yards, the stallion whirled and dashed down the slope. Spurring his mount, Purdy made his throw. The noose caught on a juniper

branch. The Morgan charged on down to the stream bed. From below, Raingo came at him. Raingo's loop flickered.

The Morgan dodged. But the loop was too wide. As the noose choked down, the stallion turned over in the air, fell heavily. When he came up, most of the fight was out of him. He knew better than to go against the rope. The wild horse hunters, however, did not take anything for granted. They threw and hogtied the stallion.

"Let him lay and think it over for a spell," said Raingo. The old wild horse hunter started to ride toward the barricade.

"Where you goin', Steve?" said Purdy.

Raingo said nothing, simply gestured to his partner to come along.

At the upper end of the canyon the trapped horses milled, fearful of the unseen menace. They could go no farther. Finally they stopped milling, faced down the canyon, watching, listening, sniffing the still air.

Chinkapin didn't know what to do. Yet no indecision showed in his mien as he stood, proud and arrogant. Once his sire had driven him from the band. Now he was its undisputed leader. He heard the sound of hoofbeats, knew, intuitively, that they were not those of the Morgan. His tail arched, dropped. He seemed to gather himself together, become more compact. His eye rounded, his nostrils belled wide as he saw two horses, surmounted by strange shapes, coming toward him. Not until then did he realize that he was trapped.

Steadily the strange shapes came on. Ineffectually Chinkapin tried to glean some knowledge of them from the air, but the air was dead. So filled was he with fear and curiosity that he looked as if he might explode. His tense immobility was not lost on the wild horse hunters. For the first time in his life Chinkapin distinctly heard a human voice. "Lay back a piece. I'll get him." The voice stirred a deep tribal memory in Chinkapin. Command, captivity were in the sound. He could not know what these strange creatures wanted. All he knew was that he must escape.

Had he been trapped before, undoubtedly he would have tried to run round the men and take off down the canyon. But he was ignorant of what it all meant. He turned and ran past the mares, brought up behind them at the canyon's north wall.

He wheeled about. Raingo was coming steadily toward him. In a frenzy of fear Chinkapin made as if to leap to the left. As his forefeet struck the ground he leaped to the right. Something whistled through the air. He felt a slithering stroke on the back of his neck. The thing tightened, would not let go. He reared and fought, lunged and fell backward. There was a grim smile on Raingo's face. He had built a wide loop—and the young stallion had run plumb into it.

Chinkapin came up fighting in a fury of desperation. Raingo's old mount dodged, circled, set back. Chinkapin charged, swept past the quick stepping pony, and turned over as the rope sang taut. Rage flaming in his wild eye, he was up and making for his tormentor again. He was not fighting to escape now, but to kill his enemy. Another rope struck his hind legs, drew tight. He crashed down on his side. The thing round his neck was choking him, blinding him. His enemies, the mares, the canyon itself disappeared in a quieting mist.

When Chinkapin again became conscious he at once tried to get to his feet. But his legs were tied, and there was a soft, heavy weight on his head. Never before had he been restrained in any way. The heat of battle had gone out of him. But somewhere deep in his consciousness a spark survived. The rope burns on neck and legs, the bruised shoulders, the cuts from sharp rocks, he did not feel. He knew only that he

could neither fight nor get away. This was the supreme disgrace.

RAINGO, who had been sitting on Chinkapin's head, rose. Cut and bruised, his fine coat grimy with sand, his eye dark, sullen, Chinkapin lay helpless, yet he was all horse. Raingo's gaze swept the young stallion from muzzle to tail. What a fine balance between Morgan and bronco! Sometimes a wild mare foaled a colt like that, but not often.

"I'm callin' you Chinkapin," he said. "Somehow it kind of fits you."

Purdy had never heard his partner speak in that tone before.

It was by no means Chinkapin's last fight. For two days Purdy and Raingo worked on him before he realized that he could not beat the rope. Half starved, sick at heart, finally he gave in to it. Yet his captors never came near him but that he tried to get them with his teeth or his heels.

Not so with the Morgan stallion. Again in the hands of men, his spirit grew duller. Although always up and coming, he submitted to the saddle. On the long journey to Hollister's ranch, Purdy rode the stallion. Raingo took charge of Chinkapin.

Neck-roped short to Raingo's mount, Chinkapin immediately began to fight. Purdy rode in, crowding the young stallion on the other side. Only the bite and sting of Purdy's rope as the wild horse hunter beat him over the flanks kept Chinkapin going. Still sullen at the end of the first day's journey, Chinkapin drank feverishly, but refused to eat. The second day also began with a battle. But Raingo's steady patience and great experience finally won a sort of truce. Once, after a particularly hot session with the young stallion, Purdy voted to quit fooling, and break him for keeps. Raingo shook his head.

Never did Chinkapin actually give in. But he learned much. Like the men riding them, the horses were also his enemies. Evasive enemies who didn't want to fight, but who, under the voice and spur, checked him, headed him, crowded him between them, the Morgan stallion himself flexible, doing his rider's will.

Raingo didn't expect the young stallion to give in and quit. He liked Chinkapin just as he was, laughed at him when he showed sullen, talked to him, tried to make friends with him—always, however, as the boss. But Chinkapin was as near heartbroken as a stallion may become.

On the fourth day after leaving the mountains they arrived at their destination. Chinkapin gazed about with a wide and distrustful eye. It was all new and strange to him—the ranch along the river with its many buildings, the stacked alfalfa, corrals, gates, the fenced pastures, and the great shaggy hounds that prowled about the yard and the stables. The morning he arrived Chinkapin was put into a high-sided corral, alone. Purdy with him, Raingo then rode up to the ranch house on the Morgan. Hollister, a big man, stout, quick-tempered, looked the stallion over, seemed pleased in a grudging sort of way. After the Morgan was also corraled, Hollister and Raingo went into the ranch office. Thus far Hollister knew nothing about Chinkapin.

Alone in the high-sided corral, aware of strange sounds and unable to see what caused them, indifferent to the hay which had been thrown to him. Chinkapin's fear was forgotten in his desire to be free, to see what was going on about him. Now he could see nothing but the heavy, close-set posts and a narrow strip of stable yard beyond the bars.

From another corral came the high, clear neigh of a mare. The spark which had so nearly died in him began to glow. Although Chinkapin could not reason, did not know where he was or why he was here, he was aware of the distant mesas, the timberlands, of his

kindred the wild horses. Here there could be no freedom.

He reared, tried to surmount the high barriers. He struck at the barred gateway. In a frenzy of helplessness he tore round the corral, stopped as he heard the bark of a wolf hound. He smelt of the timbers, tried to find a way out. Men came and looked at him, men he had never seen. Chinkapin was frantic. In them he sensed more relentless enemies from whom he never could escape.

HOLLISTER and his foreman and two stable hands stood admiring the two-year-old. The owner of the Morgan stallion seemed excited. This was no brush country broomtail, but a mount men would covet and fight for. A blind man could see that he was the get of the Morgan. Hollister made his way back to the ranch house. Old Raingo wasn't easy to handle. Fearful of overreaching himself, Hollister felt his way cautiously. "Where'd you get him, Raingo?"

Raingo gestured toward the west. "Picked him up. Back yonder."

"Running with the broomtails?"

"Who, me?'

Raingo's quiet smile did not deceive the stockman. Hollister fell into the huckstering ways of the horse trader. "How much will you take for the colt?"

Raingo's face was expressionless. Whether he had led Hollister on to make an offer, or whether he had other uses for Chinkapin was entirely between himself and that wary old mind of his. He named a price. Raingo's partner so far forgot himself as to show a momentary surprise. It was a long price.

The men moved over to the shady gallery of the ranch house. Milling restlessly, Chinkapin watched them go. The afternoon sun struck hard on roof and wall. The air was moist and hot. For the better part of two hours Hollister had been trying to beat Raingo down in his price. Hollister's face was red and wet. Raingo was as cool as when the argument began.

"That's a highwayman's price," Hollister blurted.

Raingo nodded genially. "Recollect, Mr. Hollister, I didn't ask you to buy him. He's my horse. And it's my price."

"I don't know about that, Raingo. He's a get of the stallion. The stallion belongs to me."

"He does now." Raingo let that sink in. "Who owned the mare that foaled him?"

"Wild horses belong to anybody that can get a rope on them."

"Just what I figured, Mr. Hollister. I laid my twine on him in Blue Canyon."

Hollister's hard blue eyes grew harder. "I didn't see your brand on him."

"Recollect those four scars on his rump? That's a mountain lion's brand. And mine."

The veins in Hollister's neck swelled. "I'll give you a hundred for him. A hundred or nothing."

"Nothing it is, then." Raingo seemed unruffled, entirely satisfied.

Intolerant even at his best, Hollister let his temper go. "You can't run that kind of a whizzer on me, Raingo! The two-year-old is out of my stud. He belongs to me. He's in my corral, and he's going to stay there." He glanced contemptuously at the old wild horse hunter. "Times have changed."

"They sure have," said Raingo quietly. He rose, stretched, glanced across at the corral where Chinkapin stood stiffly alert. "Let's go get our mounts, Purdy." Hollister, followed by his foreman, stamped into the ranch office. To the stout, reckless Purdy it looked as if there was going to be trouble. He was ready to fight. Raingo checked him. "Just slip down to the big gate and open it, Jim. Take our mounts and the pack mare. I'll be along—sometime before sundown."

RAINGO stalked over to the corrals, stood looking at Chinkapin. The young stallion's sullenness had vanished. He was alert, his head high. He glowed in the sun. Instead of running from Raingo, who stood with his hand on the corral bar, Chinkapin, curious, afraid, yet somehow aware that some change had come over this man, lowered his head, took a hesitant step toward his captor. As silent, as rigidly motionless as the corral timbers themselves, the old wild horse hunter gazed at Chinkapin.

Each step deliberate, ready to whirl and run at the slightest motion or sound, Chinkapin drew nearer. He lengthened his neck, sniffed. His quivering muzzle touched Raingo's hand. Raingo did not move or speak. He knew then that if he chose he could make friends with the young stallion. He could break him to the saddle, ride him, or sell him. But times had changed. His old gray would serve him, maybe outlast him. This youngster didn't belong on a breeding farm. He belonged up on the mesas. Quietly Raingo let down the corral bars, turned and stalked toward the ranch gateway.

"They gone yet?" Hollister was saying as his foreman peered from the ranch office window.

"The old woodtick has just been telling the colt good-by," replied the foreman. "I didn't expect him to take your bluff so easy."

Hollister smiled sourly. "It was a bluff, all right. Nobody could prove in court that the two-year-old was out of my stallion. You told me Raingo was queer, to go easy with him. I'm telling you the only way to handle that old buzzard is to ride him and spur him." Hollister lit a cigar. "Well, we got the two-year-old. Go over and shift him into the south corral, where he'll have more room."

When Raingo let the corral bars down, Chinkapin did not at first realize that he was free to go. Fearing some new danger, he smelt of them. It was some moments before he made up his mind to step over them. He did so cautiously, alert for some kind of trap. From the ranch house came a shouting, and the pounding of feet on the hard-baked earth. Hollister's foreman was coming on the run.

With a snort and a bound Chinkapin fled down the long driveway. Like a bronze thunderbolt he swept past Purdy and Raingo and out into the open. Purdy, who could handle only one idea at a time, didn't understand what Raingo had done.

"If I'd a took him," said Raingo, "Hollister could 'a' made trouble for me. If I'd 'a' been obliged to leave him, I'd 'a' made trouble for Hollister. You needn't to take down your rope. Chinkapin knows where he belongs.

Running wide of the road, Chinkapin swept round in a great arc that brought him facing the west. Topping a sandy ridge, for a moment he stood poised against the skyline.

"I reckon it's about time we all got goin'," said Raingo, surprising his old gray mount by digging the spurs into him.

A faint haze of sand hung over the distant ridge. Chinkapin was gone. Over there where the far hills showed dimly in the afternoon sun were the mesas, the timberlands, freedom — and his home.

He suddenly fired into the midst of the group . . .

FORT FLEA

A fact story

By Diomedes de Pereyra

THE calendar of Spain's wars in the Atlas is glutted with fratricidal dates.

Of these not the least terrible may be May 20th, 1919. On that date, while loafing in streets or sleeping the siesta in dismantled forts and unguarded barracks, nine thousand ill-fed and ill-armed Iberian soldiers and foreign legionnaires were slaughtered like goats by Abd-el-Krim's fierce hordes of the African Atlas.

The news of this unprecendented massacre was received by General Sanjurjo at Melilla, where immediately he assembled a posse of six thousand men from civilian ranks.

The general's immediate objective was of course to save the lives of the rest of his countrymen scattered through the coast. Failure to balk the savage push of the tribesmen meant also the shameful ejection of Spain from her mandate of Morocco by a barbarian foe.

Sanjurjo established a thin line of protection along the strategic approaches to the towns, with orders that under no circumstances was any man to

retreat or surrender. Each man had to hold out until he burned his last round of ammunition, then at the point of the bayonet, lastly with teeth and claws. Infraction of this drastic ruling—which more than any explanatory reasons showed the desperate situation of the proud Iberians in Morocco—would be immediately punished with court-martial.

The line held everywhere, but threatened to collapse at a point northeast of Melilla—a certain stretch of flat, though rocky, territory with a hillock in the offing, on whose summit had been built in olden times an important town that for some unaccountable reason had been abandoned till now only its foundations remained.

For an equally obscure reason, the enemy had spurned to occupy this commanding height, but were concentrating around it in strong numbers.

"Take that hillock with this regiment, and stay there whatever the cost till you hear from me," commanded the general to Captain Ardiles, who was given six hundred men—the pick of the trained Spanish soldiers and foreign *legionnaires* who had escaped the massacre.

These troops had been provided with the best rifles and cannon requisitioned along the seacoast forts. Thus armed, the regiment stormed the positions of the enemy—who, to every one's surprise, opened willingly a gap by which Ardiles' seasoned regiment marched unopposed to the strategic hillock.

ALTHOUGH a total ruin, the abandoned town's remaining walls, which had crumbled everywhere to a height of one to two yards at most, afforded excellent protection from even high-powered modern rifles.

Machine-guns and cannon were quickly mounted at points of vantage and the men proceeded to dig in. Meanwhile the enemy had promptly circled them.

Thus the small army of Spaniards and foreign legionaries saw themselves completely surrounded by an elusive army of two thousand Moorish warriors who were not only dauntless savages but also were led with the cunning of the Spaniards themselves, for their ruthless chieftain, Abd-el-Krim, had received his college education in Madrid, and his military training in Cadiz.

During the short time that it had taken to occupy the height in question, Ardiles and his troops had made an astounding discovery. The air around had become thick with swift moving specks that made everything look off-focus, like an old-fashioned movie. They felt actually dizzy from the effect, so dizzy in fact that when they sighted a faction of the enemy looking on curiously within range of their guns, the Spaniards failed miserably to down any of the Arabs, who then hooted in open derision of their bad shooting.

In bewilderment, the Spaniards looked more attentively around them. The very walls appeared to be in some fantastic process of continuous, yet static disintegration.

With unexpected effrontery two Arabs of the Cabylian tribe craned their shaven heads from behind a tall boulder hardly forty yards away from where Ardiles stood.

Captain Ardiles, who, like his men, had vainly resorted to all sorts of kneading and massaging of his eyes to recover from the distressing derangement of his vision, invited the pair to come into the open and speak clearly if they were messengers. One of the rascals did so, after tying a white kerchief to the barrel of his antiquated gun. Mimicking like a vermin-ridden monkey now, he sputtered a vacuous string of one and the same word: "Scratch." Then suddenly he fired into the midst of a group of soldiers, wounding one.

The captain was not caught napping. He had been as watchful of the movements of the rascal as attentive to his jargon. Promptly aiming his pistol, he fired three shots, but to his consternation none took effect, and the tribesmen backed away, hardly taking any precautions from volleys of soldiers' fire.

Several of these soldiers left their shelter and ran after the rascals, who, still jeering and squirming like vermin-ridden monkeys, got safely behind their lines. This sortie cost the regiment another wounded and two dead.

As the first casualties were brought in before the regimental surgeon and his aides, the soldiers who had carried them evinced astonishment mingled with alarm, which was shared by the medicos. A number of the officers milled round the improvised hospital, whereupon Captain Ardiles flared up and made for them, roaring:

"What? You haven't seen a wounded man before? Get back to—" He stopped short.

Grim emotion painted on their faces, the doctors beckoned at the captain to approach.

"Look!" said the surgeon. He thrust forth his hands, completely covered with black vermin—vermin that poured like rain, not only upon the dead and the wounded, but also upon every man alive. "Look! Fleas! By the trillions! They are coming from under this blasted earth. The smell of the blood brought them down."

"*Dios!*" mumbled the captain, "So this is why those devils let us occupy this post, and what the Cabylian meant by 'scratch' . . . *Scratch!*" he presently exploded, as one of the wounded—a fellow who was mercifully at his last gasps—desperately scratched himself about the neck, body and legs. Then, as the agonized soldier suddenly screamed and expired, the survivor called entreatingly:

"Doctor! What in hell is the matter with me? I was slugged twice in the World War, but didn't ever feel like this. Do something about it, I'm going crazy!" He was a legionary and had been shot under the ribs, which under any other circumstances would have kept him deadly quiet, but he wriggled hysterically, quickening his hemorrhage and adding unavoidably to his throes.

Haggardly the surgeon leaned over the prostrate soldier, from whose exposed chest he now raked off with his fingers living packs of ravenous fleas.

CHAGRIN and pity in his eyes, the surgeon turned from his patient, seemingly to give him up, and Captain Ardiles growled: "Well? Can't you do anything for this man? Or is he going to die without assistance, like the other?"

"Captain," the surgeon replied distractedly, "the only thing that my colleagues and I can do in the present circumstances is to advise you to leave this place at once. Let us go back, or none of us will live to tell the tale."

The words first struck the captain as being entirely logical, but their final effect was to stir him to vaulting anger.

"Doctor," he said, "you knew why we were sent here. I await an apology."

The surgeon looked at his colleagues before making a reply. Learning from the deliberation of their gaze their own opinion, he saluted and, after reiterating his statement, himself harrassed beyond endurance by the pests, concluded, fairly shrieking:

"I'm now constrained to inform you that we are powerless against these locusts of the flesh!"

Captain Ardiles bit his lips. He blurted out his decision:

Giving up this post will mean not only the end of our regiment, but also the massacre of the civil population in six of our African cities. Keeping it will at least permit us to engage the attention of the Cabylians until General San-

jurjo receives reinforcements from home. I command you to make every effort to determine the causes of the scourge, then to destroy it, meanwhile holding high the spirit of these men by your example and words, or I will court-martial you." Turning to his subordinates, he snapped savagely:

"Clear up ground for the hospital and call three volunteers to carry a report to headquarters. After this we'll get on to target practise, or we'll be as good here as a pack of neighing jackasses."

BY his time the soldiers, already aware of their tragic plight, had nicknamed the post "Fort Flea," which is as it stands now in the official records of Madrid. Under the spurring orders of the lieutenants, they worked strenuously to prepare the place for a long stay.

Their very labors were their undoing. Perspiration proved to be almost as effective a bait as fresh spilled blood for the fleas, which in thousands upon thousands alighted on the harried soldiers.

Stung by tiny needles, the men smarted, cursed and, finally rolled themselves on the rough ground, bruising their skin fearfully.

The surgeon reported to Captain Ardiles the death of the remaining patient, and apologized for his outburst of the early morning. "Food," he warned, "abundant food will be needed, to counteract the continuous loss of blood through flea bites. Then fresh troops must come to take our place. The men can't keep in fighting condition."

Ardiles said that volunteers carrying the report for General Sanjurjo would leave that night.

After this orders were given to serve the troop generous rations of food and to keep them provided with cigarettes, so as to divert their attention from the scourge.

At mess time several cauldrons of soup were first brought to the soldiers, but no sooner had the lids been lifted than clouds of the fleas, falling in, fouled the food. If the men had felt distressed before, they now became embittered. Harrowed by disaster, not a few of them gave way to utter despair.

The resolute attitude of Captain Ardiles brought these men back to line. New cauldrons of food were brought; the cooks uncovered them this time with the utmost precautions, and the rations were served in tin cups. But now these became black with the vermin, and again many soldiers had to turn from it.

The officers said the honor of Spain was at stake. What was there to be done? Only one thing. Stand firmly at "Fort Flea" until relieved. They had ample food and ammunition. They could hold the Cabylians in leash only by keeping themselves alert and spirited. But if they went on a hunger strike the fleas might accomplish what human enemies could not.

The surgeon added that there was no danger in swallowing fleas. But the men ate little or nothing, and declared they would rather go out on the blasted plain and have it out with the enemy, one way or the other.

Night had increased the numbers of the "locusts of the flesh," and nothing would shake them off the forlorn soldiery for more than a flitting instant.

IT was a dismal lot of unkempt, sickly men who answered roll call the next morning. The captain promptly sent them back to their tents, to shave and put on shirts. Haggard, swollen, and so weary from the long sleepless night that they seemed on the verge of collapse, the soldiers complied with this order.

Wriggling without respite under their shirts, they formed in line for breakfast. As previously, the vermin sprinkled the food. Some men refused it, others gulped it down, and were over-

taken by nausea. The demoralized soldiers sullenly went to dig trenches and dugouts under a terrific sun.

By ten, as they stopped to rest, they noticed that the Cabylian warriors were moving closer to the post. Captain Ardiles thought there was very little danger of an attack. Nevertheless he had wire entanglements set outside the walls.

The surgeon, who had been busy exploring the town since the previous day, now reported having found the source of the scourge. It was a vast gully at the southern end of the town, a gully which had been littered with the filth and offal of some three thousand inhabitants over many years. Appalled, the doctor confessed he had had to run away from the spot for black clouds of insects had darted after him at his approach.

"Good," said the captain. "We'll bury them under tons of earth at once."

The physician shook his head.

"It is too big, and there is but little loose earth," he replied. "The only thing that would destroy them would be fire, but for this we need tank loads of oil and kerosene."

The mental and physical torpitude of the men became such that all seemed to have forgotten that a soldier must eat at least once a day. As night approached they found to their sorrow that it was impossible to temporize with hunger indefinitely.

The captain had a substantial meal served in the dark, giving severe orders against lighting matches or making any comments on the food. Such was their necessity for food this second night that many ate ravenously, but again, nauseated by the peculiar tang of the food, were attacked by nervous intestinal cramps.

At inspection on the third morning, twenty-five men did not answer the call. Two had died, six had wandered mad to the enemy and the others were ill.

By the fourth day the number of sick and dead had more than trebled. The night of the fifth day a messenger arrived with a note signed by General Sanjurjo himself, who had received the regiment's report by only one of the three volunteers dispatched to him.

"If my so-called colonial staff officers," said the brief, "are going to dread insects to the inconceivable point of filing reports on the truculence of the most common of human parasites, what am I to expect from them when they come to teeth with the Cabylians—and what then am I doing in Africa?" In a footnote he had appended, "The king is rushing troops. Carry out your orders to the letter."

Crimson with rage, the captain passed the note to the surgeon, who commented bluntly:

"The blind ass!"

"You relieve me from making my own comment," blurted out the captain, adding somberly, "I fulfilled my duty. We are now facing certain death."

On the next day twelve dead were picked from the tents, and another score of men had fallen ill from food poisoning and sheer loss of blood. Thus the tragic toll increased with each day, until, two weeks after the regiment had arrived at "Fort Flea," only the captain and twenty miserable semi-invalids remained alive.

Sure that these too would perish without the need of firing a shot, the Cabylians waited. They waited patiently for the plunder that was in store for them, in a cruel joy at the fate of the Spaniards.

They waited a day too long, for the continental troops, finally arriving, came to the rescue. But by this time five more had died.

The sixteen survivors were kept secluded in Africa a long time to keep this ghastly episode from Spain and from the world.

"This is not the first time we have looked at death together."

COMPANIONS IN ARMS

By Talbot Mundy

IT WAS as a wave on the face of eternity that the Rajput Royal Horse went oversea, in 1914, to fulfill an immediate destiny, and to fire, in the shell-ploughed Flanders mud, its rifled requiem above the graves of its honored dead.

John Lawrence Burnham joined the regiment in Flanders, nineteen, green from an English public school and Woolwich, rushed through special courses for the war. He had been born in Rajputana. The first words he had ever learned to speak were Rajasthani. His father, who had commanded the regiment, was killed near Dargai, and the only son, aged seven, went to England with his mother, to be schooled and, if he pleased, to forget and to be forgotten. He remembered. He used Rajasthani in his dreams, that were all of turbaned, bearded horsemen, the smell of harness, and the thunder of lance-shod squadrons knee-to-knee.

So, since his name headed the examination list, it was his privilege to be gazetted to the regiment that his father had died leading. He arrived in Flanders when the German guns were devastating everything except the imponderable will to resist.

Burnham was a rather handsome youngster, with romantic eyes which only his mother knew were the masks of an iron will. He looked like merely one more victim for the guns and the gas and the smothering mud. They needed officers who might be safely

strained beyond all human measure of manhood. So he was put under the merciless observation of a veteran Rajput Rissaldar-major, whose ironic eyes judged horse or man with equal candor, and who cared for nothing whatever on earth except the regiment's *izzat*.

Burnham made good. He had not dreamed his boyhood dreams for nothing. The Rissaldar-major's first confidential report of him was guarded, on a note of watchdog undergrowl:

"A boy of few words but a ready disposition, Colonel bahadur. The eyes of a dreamer. The heart, it may be, of a man."

"Very well, Rissaldar-major. Rub his nose in."

So the grim, ungracious business began, unmounted, in the teeth of the German drive. He had vigilant, sarcastic, courteously-worded insolence to take from one who was a subordinate in theory but in practise a merciless maker of men. Try how the Rissaldar-major might, and for the regiment's sake he did his utmost with humiliating irony and subtly unbalancing praise, he could find no unsoldierly flaws in young John Burnham. With the aid of a hundred abrasive oriental irritants, he stripped off the racial surface, and looked, and found a man beneath it.

There was a second report, less guarded, made by night while a German barrage, short by a couple hundred no-man's yards, exploded malice on the tortured mud:

"He is one of us, Colonel bahadur."

"Let the men know."

"Are they blockheads, Colonel sahib? They already know it. Of your honor's favor, may my son be transferred to his troop?"

"Oh. Is he as good as that? Very well."

The young sowar Kangra Gunga was the same age, almost to a day, as Burnham. They were born beneath the same sky, where the wandering Pilgreet River plunges from a mountain's flank, nearby the war-wrecked fortress walls of Gaglajung. As children they had been sung to sleep by the selfsame lullabies, that are ballads of ancient Rajput chivalry. Kangra Gunga was a tall, upstanding youth whose dark eyes smouldered with the ancient pride.

"My one son, Burnham sahib. Demand of him double, that he may honor the regiment's name, and my loins also."

The Rissaldar-major loved the regiment as Cromwell his ironsides: "Ye dead men, who are not yet dead, die clean at the appointed time—aye, die as I will!" Kangra Gunga loved the regiment as a watchdog its home, ferociously obedient, sullen with strangers, uncommunicative. Burnham loved the regiment as a knight his mistress; nothing could be too good for her, no sacrifice sufficient. They were three iron men, allied by one and the same intolerance, and veiled by the same incomprehension of each other's viewpoint. No effort of Burnham's could thaw out Kangra Gunga's occult strangeness. He remained an enigma.

Vigilant, attentive, sullen, the young rajput watched Burnham with a curious gaze that might mean oriental jealousy. It might be the unexplainable hatred such as men and animals sometimes generate toward each other. There were times when Burnham even harbored the disturbing thought that the rissaldar-major might have set the young sowar to spy on him. It felt like being watched by destiny.

The problem could only be pondered beneath the surface of routine discipline, in moments snatched from the incalculable gales of sudden death, in the night watch, or in rat-infested dugouts. A cavalry regiment was teaching itself how to burrow and fight like beleagured rats. Burnham, in addition to that, was studying the men whom he must make himself fit to lead. He was feeling his way toward that middle line between familiarity and

arbitrary wilfulness that is the secret of command. In the ranks of death an officer discovers that line soon, or never. Burnham found it.

But whether in the front line or at the base camp, he could find no key to the puzzle of Kangra Gunga's gaze—always the same, like the gaze of a caged and tameless panther. He gave it up, left the riddle to produce its own solution.

THEN came the day when the Germans loosed their utmost hurricane of high explosive shells and hordes of men, to smash through to the Channel ports. Every available man was flung into the line, to plug gaps where the dead lay thicker than wheat in the blast of hail, and no man knew anything except that he still lived and must hold on.

It was spastic chaos, in a mystery of darkened days and shell-lit nights, where death slew at random. There was no survival of the fittest. They died who died. Flesh and blood, things and theories were buried in one havoc. Entire regiments ceased to exist.

But there remained the incredible, actual fact. The line held. Shattered, decimated, twisted, broken, there was an army still in being. Reserves of men awaited sunset, to flow forward as the tide resumes dominion of a hurricane-swept beach.

Night. What was left of the regiment clung to a couple of hundred yards of shell-torn mud. It dug in. Nearly all the officers were dead or dying. It looked like the end of the Rajput Royal Horse. A wounded, semi-conscious orderly, drunk with pain, crawled forward through the flare-lit darkness, delivered his message and died.

"Hold on until relieved."

Burnham was the junior of three British officers left living. He and the rissaldar-major, on the right wing, hurled by a bursting shell into the same mud crator, crawled out and grinned in the shuddering glare of gun-fire. Kangra Gunga crawled to them and crouched, awaiting orders, that being his job.

There was a hurriedly thrown-up breastwork. There were more or less ninety men. There was a ruined dugout, and no cover for the wounded or the ammunition. But a hundred yards ahead there was a well-made trench that had been taken and retaken before the guns had made it No-Man's Land. It might be possible to seize that still unbroken refuge.

Burnham said what he thought, with his mind made up. He wasn't asking advice, but the veteran, from war-learned habit, gave, with the blunt authority of mentor to a pupil:

"Nay, nay, *sahib*. Keep touch. Better retire leftward, rearward, lose a little ground but—"

"Oh, if you're afraid, I'll hold your hand!"

Burnham shouted it to make himself heard. It did not occur to him that his words were a graceless insult, and that Kangra Gunga must have heard them. Peril and responsibility demanded every faculty he had. He was aware of nothing but shuddering, shell-lit night and instantly determined aim. He gave his orders. He and the rissaldar-major bent united effort to the task of getting ninety men, in darkness, into the new position. Kangra Gunga was an undistinguishable detail in the stealthy, well-disciplined rush, until the trench was gained.

As soon as he could spare time, Burnham worked his way along the trench, speaking to each man by name as he passed. He wanted to consult with the rissaldar-major. He found the veteran dying, the only casualty in that well-handled move that he had ventured almost insubordination to prevent. Burnham knelt beside him:

"I insulted you without meaning to," he said. "I'm sorry. I beg your pardon."

"Granted, *sahib*. Speech such as that at such a time means nothing. It is for-

gotten. Does my son live? Send him to me."

The message was passed from mouth to mouth along the trench, but the rissaldar-major was dead before Kangra Gunga could reach him. The young *sowar* knelt beside his father's body. He looked up at Burnham. A guttering candle-end, and then a Very light revealed his face and the expression in his eyes. Burnham turned his back.

It was the wrong thing to do. An hour or so later, when he had had time to think, he knew it was wrong. But what is said and done, is said and done. Unsaying and undoing are a new beginning, on a new page of the Book of Problems.

The remainder of that night was torment. It swept the past into oblivion as if it were a peopled city buried beneath volcanic lava, only to be tediously excavated, piece by piece in course of time. No one who survived that night was what he had been. New essentials emerged. Burned like scars on Burnham's memory were the unintended insult, the rissaldar-major's forgiveness, and the unforgiving enmity in Kangra Gunga's eyes.

Daybreak found the regiment still holding on, but its living were almost as lifeless as the dead. There was more life in Kangra Gunga's hatred than in Burnham's body. There was more sullen threat in the *sowar's* patient gaze than there was promise in the pale sun peering through the gray rain.

IT WAS their last view of Flanders trenches when some fusiliers relieved them and they dragged their wounded and themselves through miles of mud toward the waiting lorries and the base. It was the last of France. The last of Europe. They were too few to survive as a separate unit. They were sent to Egypt and brigaded with other remnants as emergency forced hurried improvisation. They were lost in the trackless fury of a world-wide war. When peace came, the authorities struck the regiment's name from the rolls.

So the Rajput Royal Horse became one squadron of a mixed-race regiment, containing troops of almost every manly Indian breed that can become good cavalry. Accident, or someone's sentiment or, if the Rajputs were right, their destiny, attended to it that the new composite frontier regiment, of which they were only one not readily distinguishable unit, should bear the old regiment's black, three-headed panther crest and the two-fold motto: "Always. No excuses."

So the rebirth was not without good portent. At the first full parade, when the remnants of other decimated regiments and new, vainglorious recruits rode line on line with them, and all were one, within one discipline, beneath the ancient symbol, the veteran *sowars* jested low-voiced in the ranks:

"Lo, it is born with a caul, this mongrel! Bid the bard sing the Lay of Alha! Pay the midwife double!"

But it was double trouble for the midwife. Major John Lawrence Burnham was the last left living and undisabled officer who had served the old *izzat* and earned the name Companion in Arms. It was upon him that the brunt of the new beginning fell.

The hundred thousand gods of Rajasthan must have had a hand in it, for the new commander was exactly the man to get the utmost out of Burnham, just as Burnham was the man to lick the regiment into shape. Burnham did it in spite of his Rajputs. Their scorn of less lineaged blood than their own, and of chivalry less absolute than theirs, undid a hundred times the substance of the stuff that Burnham spun and wove with all the patience of a poet and the calculating vigor of a blacksmith.

But the core of the heart of the regiment, nevertheless, was those Rajputs. They refused to yield one fragment of their claim to be the regiment itself. On them all other men must pattern their

behavior or be damned. They explained nothing. They excused nothing. They told no secrets. They would descend to no man's level. Let the others reach theirs, if they had it in them.

So the *sowars* of several races in other squadrons, being soldierly and curious, used their imaginations. Burnham was a man about whom it was next to impossible not to invent such tales as Indians love to tell by firelight under the silent, star-hung sky. He was handsome. He rode like a centaur. He had medals, scars and the graceful modesty that maddens women and excites men to observant silence. Kangra Gunga was Burnham's shadow.

Of Kangra Gunga, too, it was easy to imagine tales. He was a gentleman in arms, of harp-sung lineage, who refused promotion. Why? Kangra Gunga kept his thoughts to himself. But he shadowed Burnham, never insubordinate, but always watchful. Guesswork grew into a legend as unshakable as regimental pride, that Burnham had insulted the hot-eyed Rajput under fire, in the presence of death. The merest raw recruit could draw the inference that Kangra Gunga must have sworn by his father's beard, and by his sword-hilt and by the hundred thousand gods of Rajasthan, to be avenged in an hour that destiny should grant.

It was perfectly understood why Kangra Gunga would await an hour of destiny. He was a Companion in Arms. His private feud was his, to be pursued to its end at his own discretion, subject to the regiment's first, overriding claim on his allegiance. He would die ten million deaths and face their consequences rather than betray the regiment's *izzat*. On that score there was nothing to argue about.

None knew, except Burnham and Kangra Gunga, what had been the nature of the insult. None even pretended to know. That Kangra Gunga never spoke of it was reckoned proof that it had cut to the heart of the Rajput consciousness that cherishes its wounds and keeps them unhealed for the day of vengeance.

An impeccable soldier, Kangra Gunga contrived, by the use of all the ingenuities that soldiers learn, to be detailed for every sort of special duty that enabled him to keep his eye on Burnham. With the quiet condescension of a born aristocrat he got on confidential terms with Burnham's body-servant. There was nothing that Burnham did, and almost nothing that Burnham said, that Kangra Gunga did not know. And Burnham knew that. But there was nothing he could do about it. He grew used to it.

OF course the story reached the colonel's ears in time. One evening he and Burnham, on *shikar* together, having slain their boars and dined, sat under a tent club awning and watched the rising moon. Along the foreground fifty yards away the moon and starlight cast the long shadow of Kangra Gunga, standing near the line of tethered ponies. Over beyond the horse line, where the servants' and the beaters' camp-fires glowed, someone was singing. Night and the Lay of Alha wrought their magic. There was intimacy in the air. The colonel, staring at Kangra Gunga, lighted a cigar and broke the long silence:

"That man. What about him?"

"Top hole with the ponies."

"Not bad. Horse sense runs in the blood of that breed from Gaglajung. You'd have had a close squeak this morning, if he hadn't been behind you with another spear when you broke yours. That boar nearly had you."

"Yes," said Burnham. "Kangra Gunga could have ditched me pretty badly. Damned if I know why he didn't. That was a tight place. No one could have blamed him if he'd been a second late."

"What's this queer story I hear about

you and him? You'd better tell me."

So, for the first time, Burnham told the story of the rissaldar-major's death, and of how, in the heat of battle, he had spoken graceless insult, overheard by Kangra Gunga.

"Have you ever mentioned it to him?"

"No. I should have spoken to him at the time. My fault that I didn't. Afterwards, it was too late."

"Any truth, do you think, in the gossip that he's biding his time for revenge?"

"I don't know. He's a thoroughbred. Steel guts. Cast-iron memory."

"We could get rid of him."

"If he were a *badmash*, yes," said Burnham. "But he's a good soldier. Besides, the men would see through it. It would rot morale. They'd say I funked him. Do less damage to get rid of me."

"Have it out with him. I don't want you killed in the night, or poisoned, or any stink of that sort."

"What's there to say to a man who thinks in terms of eternity?" Burnham answered. "He will stand to his code. He will never betray his own *izzat* by an act of treachery. To suggest that one believed he even contemplated that would be a measureless insult."

Take him away alone and have it out with him," said the colonel. "Settle it once and for all, or I will do it for you."

But it was not so simple to have it out with Kangra Gunga as to wish to do it. There was not only the man's absolutely perfect manners, not only the racial gulf between East and West, and the barrier of reserve between rank and file. There was the fact that the regiment watched. Nothing might be said or done that could be misinterpreted by men whose discipline depended on the integrity with which their officers observed the finer points of regimental honor.

Burnham applied for short leave for a shooting trip. He took Kangra Gunga with him, in charge of camp equipment. A visit to Gaglajung and a sight of his home, where tigers were reported to be taking too great toll of cattle, might release emotion. Where Burnham and Kangra Gunga had been born, beneath the same all-seeing stars, beside the same wild river, Kangra Gunga might find speech to relieve the strain of imprisoned hatred.

At last, when they stood alone together by the plunging Pilgreet River, in the place where Burnham's mother's camp was pitched in the week that saw both men born, Burnham broke the long silence:

"We were playmates here. Remember? You pretended to be Arjuna. To this day there's a scar on my scalp where you clipped me with a blunted arrow." He removed his helmet. "Do you remember the lie we told your father, to account for the bit of a wound?"

Kangra Gunga's dark eyes watched the forefinger parting the crisp hair. Burnham continued speaking:

"Splendid man, your father. A grand soldier. Not a scrap of meanness in him, and no vindictiveness. With his dying breath he forgave me for a thoughtless insult."

"Yes?" said Kangra Gunga.

"There's the old scar. Can you see it?"

"Yes." He met Burnham's eyes. He spoke slowly. "My father thrashed me for the carelessness with bow-and-arrow. But he thrashed me twice again for the lie."

"You may speak plainly," said Burnham. "There are no witnesses."

"What do you wish me to say?" asked Kangra Gunga.

"What is this resentment that you hold against me?"

"Nay, nay! Spoken words are not falcons that return to be hooded."

He saluted. Burnham nodded and he strode away to attend to the ponies.

Three days later, a wounded tigress charged from a thicket. Kangra Gunga

shot her dead within a yard of Burnham's back. It was as plain as if his smile had said the grim words, that he would let no brute beast rob him of revenge.

That night Burnham summoned Kangra Gunga to the camp-fire.

Seated by invitation, Kangra Gunga smiled when Burnham asked him point-blank:

"What is the issue between us? Let us speak of it, once and for all."

"I will listen to whatever your honor is pleased to say," Kangra Gunga answered.

"Why have you refused promotion? Why not follow in your father's footsteps?"

"Is it not sufficient that I bear in mind my father's *izzat*? Have I failed of a *sowar's* duty?"

"Look here, now. I admit that I insulted your father. It was unintentional, and I apologized at the first possible moment. He accepted my apology."

"He was already dead when I reached him," said Kangra Gunga.

"You have saved my life twice. Why?"

"Was it not my duty?"

"Very well. I have nothing against you, of course, if you do your duty. Good night."

Burnham had to tell the colonel of his failure.

"But I wish, sir, you could see your way to let it ride a bit longer. I think I'll solve it, sooner or later."

The colonel raised gray eyebrows. "Perhaps too late!"

"For the sake of his grand old father's memory I'd like to see this thing through to its end," said Burnham.

"You mean your end, don't you? Damned ass!" said the colonel.

"If the men should think I'd funked him, that might be the end of their respect for any of us."

"Have it your own way. But remember: slow revenge is slow fire. If he ever kills you in your sleep, don't return from the grave to haunt me for sympathy. You won't get it."

THEREAFTER, a rumor of war obscured all minor interests. There is endemic warfare in the mountains, where the lean Afridi pray to Allah for the coming of the great *jihad*, when they shall plunder India's plains. Hence, frontier regiments.

Beyond the frontier, the crops had failed. Complaining women and the yearning of their own bellies had made the young men pious. Hugging their smuggled rifles, stolen or bought for their weight in silver, they had been listening to the hot-mouthed *mullahs* preaching Paradise for death in battle.

Gathering *lashkars* had been viewed by the Royal Air Force. They had been warned and, since they mocked at warnings, realistically bombed. The high explosives shattered a few sangars, scarred the mountains and raised roaring echoes along valley and ravine. The mocking hillmen had retorted by depositing at Peshawar Gate three severed heads that recently had graced the shoulders of the village elders of a clan that claimed British protection: one last insolence too many.

The regiment prayed to its squadrons of gods to send it first into the field.

Fretful weeks of waiting. Sudden climax. Marching orders. A delirium of joy. And then the easy, affluent outpouring as of well-trained hounds gone hunting.

A mere hill campaign. It barely made the front page, for a day, in a pause in the riot of world events. Success depended on swift and masterly attack, against ferocious marksmen, amid mountains where the droning air force rarely could discover ambush, and the cavalry bore the brunt of reconnaisance as in days gone by. Raw wind and iron rations. Plundered forage for the horses. Blind trails, mapless wilderness and mid-

night sniping. Staff work beyond praise but this side of perfection. Somebody blundered.

There was a retirement, due to a misread signal, amid echoing gorges, where the hillmen had prepared an ambush unseen from the air. Seven officers down. The rules of warfare downwind with the yells of the ambushed hillmen.

Burnham and twenty men, of whom one was his orderly, Kangra Gunga, were surrounded, waterless, within the wall of an abandoned sangar, unseen from the air because a gray cliff leaned between them and the sky.

There was only one thing to be done. Burnham sent Kangra Gunga galloping to ask for aid or orders, water and ammunition. He saw him ride through a hail of flanking rifle-fire and pitch headforemost from his shot horse.

"Dead!" said a *sowar,* staring between piled rocks. "Who next?"

There were nineteen pairs of eyes that glanced at Burnham. Nineteen silent witnesses that destiny had solved a riddle, looking to see how he liked it.

Burnham climbed a rock for a more commanding view. He saw a way of escape. Like many another one-man's fortress in the mountains, this one had a cunningly contrived back entrance. Well hidden by tumbled rocks, along the flank of the overleaning cliff, there was a path that offered precarious foothold for a led horse. One by one the men might steal away, unseen by the enemy. They might perhaps reach safety. It was worth trying. Burnham gave his orders and the escape commenced, one man at a time, at well-timed intervals.

The remainder defended the naked slope by which the enemy must climb. They kept up a hot fire through the gaps in the broken wall; and as they vanished one by one, the others fired the faster, dodging from rock to rock to deceive the hillmen; until only Burnham and two *sowars* held the sangar—and then Burnham and one. He bade the last man go. The man demurred. Burnham spoke sharply: "Obey!"

Two minutes passed. Burnham used a wounded *sowar's* rifle, dodging from rock to rock, pretending to be ten men. At last he drove his horse along ahead of him, because he needed to be free to use the rifle if the hillmen should rush.

Too late. A number of hillmen had climbed for a deadlier angle of fire. Almost a machine-gun gale of bullets screamed from a ledge three hundred yards away and killed the horse. That hitherto unoccupied crag commanded the first fifty yards of the stairway trail by which the men had escaped. To attempt it now was certain death. But even from that high vantage point the enemy could not command the space within the sangar wall. They could not see it was deserted. For the moment, Burnham was safe where he was.

Darkness at the latest would bring the hillmen swarming up the slope to use their steel. So Burnham, taking cover with a rifle on his knees, sat down to wait for darkness—and the end. It might be worse. Hundreds of men of action have had to retire and rot to death, on half pay, in an English suburb. He had got his men safely away, that was the important point. He sat wondering which of the junior officers was alive and would take his place.

HE WAS startled when Kangra Gunga, toward evening, crawled from between two boulders, stood, saluted and came forward, offering his water bottle. Burnham wet parched lips.

"Did you get through with your message?" he demanded.

"Yes. My horse was shot. I crawled until I found a *sowar* scouting forward, and to him I gave the message."

"Very well," said Burnham. "You weren't told to come back here. Couldn't you have escaped?"

"Yes."

Their eyes met in the deepening shadow. A full minute passed in silence, broken by the cat-call laughter of the hillmen, before Burnham spoke:

"We'll be dead in a minute or two, you and I. Care to shake hands?"

"Is it a command?" asked Kangra Gunga. He stood rigid at attention, his eyes glowing.

"No," said Burnham.

There began to be heavier firing, down below in the ravine where the impatient hillmen awaited darkness.

"Stand to," said Burnham. "This looks like the end."

"If you are afraid, I will hold your hand," said Kangra Gunga.

Neither man spoke after that for several minutes. They kept up a steady rifle-fire at hillmen who were dodging up the slope from rock to rock. Below them, the ravine was thunderous. Rifle-firing echoed and reechoed amid crags that deflected the din. It was impossible to see or guess what was happening, except that for the moment the assault, up the narrow approach to the sangar, had ceased.

Burnham and Kangra Gunga faced each other again, and Burnham smiled, a little wearily.

"Have you been waiting all these years for your chance to say that?" he said slowly.

"In the presence of death I have said it," Kangra Gunga answered.

Burnham stared at him. "This is not the first time we have looked at death together."

"Let it be the last time, *sahib!* It is possible to crawl to safety by the way I crawled in. I will hold this sangar while you do it. None will ever know you ordered it, unless you tell it."

"I understand you," said Burnham. "You don't believe that your father accepted my apology?"

Kangra Gunga's eyes had changed. They were the eyes of a man who believed he had made a mistake, but who would take the consequences standing.

"You," said Burnham, "how dare you even think I'd lie to a companion in arms? Take that rifle and go, by the way you came. You hear me? Obey!"

Sudden and terrific squalls of rifle-fire resumed in the ravine. Then a trumpet call, equally sudden, and no mistaking it.

"Open order—advance!"

"That's the regiment," said Burnham. "Find them. Tell them where I am."

Kangra Gunga saluted: "May I speak?"

"Yes."

"Look! They are coming at us again! The hillmen mean to finish us before the regiment prevents. *Sahib—*"

"Obey my order."

"Nay, I disobey it! I will die here. Major Burnham sahib, I had no sooner spoken than I knew it was wrong. But I spoke. I can not recall it. And you answered as a good companion in arms —aye, even as my father might have answered. I am ashamed. I will die here."

"As you were," said Burnham. "You may stay here. Quick now, use your rifle."

For several minutes they lay side by side, firing steadily into the shadows. It was clear now that the hillmen were in full retreat, fighting a rear-guard action. A dozen of them were making one last desperate attempt to storm the sangar. The assault checked, hesitated, dwindled, ceased. Below, the squalls of rifle-fire advanced up the ravine like a hail-storm driven by a high wind. Burnham leaned his rifle against a rock, and again he and Kangra Gunga faced each other. At last Burnham spoke:

"Anything else on your mind?"

"No, *sahib*. I have said what I said. I am ashamed."

"So I was, once," said Burnham. "As your father said to me, it is forgotten. Now would you care to shake hands?"

"Out into the open, Americano! Man to man!"

NOBODY KILLS DON GUZMAN

By Gordon MacCreagh

JIM WESTON bulked on wide planted feet between the stone doorposts of the hacienda. The original vandal who had built it out of the debris of an Inca temple had set those posts purposely narrow, and Weston's shoulders just missed filling the space. His face might have been carved from the weathered oak of the iron-bound Spanish door. Only his hair, sun-bleached to the color of his own prairie grass, indicated that he was not native to this land of darker and much mixed bloods. In his hard Texan Spanish and with a grin just hard enough to show he was glad to do it, he handed on his message—a hard message.

"It regrets me, Don Guzman. Miss Filmore does not wish to see you."

Don Guzman's horse, experienced in

its master's rages, splattered nervous hoofs under his sudden movement.

"*Como dice?* What madness is this? Listen, you!" Don Guzman's eyes retreated into dark dens under his scowl. "I am Don Porfirio Guzman. I have done much business with her father before he died. It was I who sold him this very ranch. I have bought his alpaca and his llama wool. I am an old friend of the family."

Weston remained as unmoved as the stone doorposts.

"It is understood. I have been looking into some of the outstanding accounts. The *Señor* Filmore seems to have been a scholar of the classics, but not of bookkeeping. I have intended to call upon you for some explanation of the system that was so profitable only on the one side."

A hulk of a man, Don Guzman, as big as Weston—bigger round the belt line. His face was more the color of the ancient gods carved in the stone doorposts. Illappa the Thunderer scowled from one of them under his clouded headgear of Quetzal feathers, vomiting his cascades of stone rain. Weston's eyes tightened warily at the sudden thought that, damned if something in Don Guzman's promiscuous ancestry hadn't passed on to him a beaked nose and high cheek bones that made him even look like angry Illappa.

Guzman's bull rage hunched his thick neck muscles. His hand let go of his heavy riding quirt to leave the curling fingers only six inches distant from the butt of a much more modern weapon that was holstered at his saddle horn.

But Don Guzman was alive today because his rage was not so stupidly reckless as a bull's. First his eye flickered to either side to see whether there might be any outside interference.

There was only Olcca Wilkki, the peon doorkeeper who lived in the mud hut outside the wall. Olcca listened with acute animal ears to the hot violence pending between the lordly foreigners, but he never raised his eyes. Whatever their breed or color, they were all foreigners to Olcca Wilkki; *blancos,* white men; they were the *tatancheki capac,* lords and masters of the land that had once been his people's.

Squatted on his heels at the door of his hut, wrapped in his woolen poncho, a scarlet and green bundle with a grotesque floppy ear-lapped nightcap on his head, his body swayed in monotonous rhythm as he stropped an already spotless machete over a slab of gray pumice.

The thin, wide blade and his abstraction in his labor were coldly suggestive of waiting menace. This new *blanco* who bulked in the doorway had given him the machete, told him to use it for cutting the sparse *ccaspi* shrub of the high plateau for firewood, and told him then with princely carelessness to keep it for his own.

Nobody had ever given Olcca a present in all his life before. Olcca would never be able to understand any reason for the munificent gift—it must have been worth all of a dollar and a half. It was like the gods dropping fortune upon a man.

The *blanco* would never understand the dark reasonings of Olcca's mind. But Don Guzman's left-handed strain of the same ancestry was not so tenuous that he could not quite surely understand that there would be no danger of interference from Olcca the doorkeeper with his glittering machete.

So Don Guzman let his hand inch forward till it hovered just an inch over the saddle holster. But his caution still held that last inch.

JIM WESTON stood there so chunkily solid. No man would face him, Don Guzman, so coolly unless he were deadly sure of something. Those Western Amer-

ican men had a reputation for carrying guns and being unbelievably fast with them. And tomorrow was always another day. That was why Don Guzman was alive today.

So Don Guzman drew back and took out his rage in smacking his shiny black boot tops with his quirt.

"*Diantre!* I see how it is. You want her for yourself. The new foreman bars all callers from the door so that he may show his zeal and make up to the rich *señorita* himself."

It was Jim Weston's turn to hunch his shoulders. The big muscles stiffened. Don Guzman's hand let go of his quirt again and hung over his holster. But Jim Weston said only:

"Yes, I'm new in this country, Don Guzman. I do not know the customs. I do not know—yet—whether I ought to kill you for that."

Don Guzman laughed.

"To kill—Me? *Muchos diablos!* Listen, my so foolish friend. I am Don Guzman of Guanada. People do not kill me. When you have lived here a little longer you will know that—*if* you will live here a little longer."

To which Jim Weston said: "It is true, I do not know what other people do here. But I tell you this, Don Guzman: if you try to force entrance here while Miss Filmore says no, it is I who will kill you."

He put his shoulder to the heavy door —like a postern in a castle wall it was —and slammed it so that Don Guzman's horse started again.

Don Guzman cursed. His horse, familiar with the tone, plunged and shied on apprehensive hoofs. Don Guzman knew how to tame that. He hit the foolish dumb animal between the ears with the heavy end of his quirt.

He bit savage words off at the foolish doorkeeper, who heeded his doings not at all.

"*Caipi! Cunallan!*"

Olcca raised furtive eyes. Not smartly, as ordered, but slowly he got up from under his huddle of poncho and came to the Don, his machete loose in his hand.

"Give me that, fool!" Don Guzman snatched the weapon. Leaning expertly from his saddle, he hacked up a slab of resinous *yarreta* moss from the ground. With savage strokes he hewed it into a rough oblong. He stabbed viciously through the tough root and with the blade pinned it to the closed door. Then he lashed his horse and rode furiously away.

DUMBLY, his beaten eyes round with apprehension, Olcca stood staring at his blade, still teetering in the hard wood. Anybody could understand *yarreta* moss nailed to a door. That was pure Indian sign. It meant that somebody would presently be lying stiff under a rough oblong of similar moss. And since Don Guzman had well and amply proven that people did not kill him, it looked like very soon the white girl would be all alone again to try and manage the rancho, and then— But what did any of it matter to a peon?

What mattered in a Quechua Indio's life was a machete.

Olcca's simple soul was focussed on a day a week ahead—perhaps two weeks, or maybe three; the exact time didn't matter. But presently, in the near future, the *blancos* would all ride their sixty or a hundred miles to the big city of La Paz to attend a ceremony of thanksgiving in commemoration of a day when one of their male gods who had died had risen again from a grave in the earth; and then Olcca and his people, peons all of them, would take advantage of their lords' and masters' absence to extract queer carven masks from their hiding places in the thatch of their huts and would fit together the parts of enor-

mous hats, great sunbursts of egret feathers, and would go through the motions of a solemn dance that their fathers had taught them in thanksgiving for the first shoots of green barley that had died last year and were now rising from their graves in the earth.

Olcca did not know the meaning of the masks nor of the sunburst hats. None of his people knew. Probably nobody today knew.

But the fathers of the Quechua had learned the dances from their fathers. So when the green barley came the peons would gyrate cumbrously in their fancy dress to the mournful notes of huge reed pipes. There would be rejoicing in the subdued manner that is the limit of the Quechua capacity, and they would all get very drunk on raw cane alcohol and would forget for a while that they were peons.

But before they all got quite drunk a sheep would be stolen and would be sacrificed to the old gods with the newest, sharpest matchete available in the whole *indio* community, and its blood would be sprinkled upon *mullos*. *Mullos* were very important; they were little slabs of soapstone carved to represent mud huts and fields of grain and young llamas; and, sprinkled with sacrificial blood, they would be planted in the fields as a reminder to the earth gods that just such huts and fields and live stock were required of them.

Olcca was convinced—as nearly as anybody could be convinced who had never before known any luck at all—that the gods had picked him for their favor. They had shown it by giving him, out of a blue sky, that princely machete. If he kept it very bright and sharp for the occasion, maybe it might be chosen by the medicine man for the sacrifice, and that would bring much honor as well as fortune to its owner. Perhaps his *mullo,* receiving the first of the blood, would grow into a sufficient crop of *occa* tubers in the patch that he cultivated behind the hacienda wall so that he would not have to go hungry during the latter part of the year.

Certainly a machete mattered more than anything else in Olcca's world. With an inarticulate ache in his throat he dislodged the blade of all his hopes from the door panel. Pebbles imbedded in the moss roots had cruelly nicked the edge. Olcca inspected it with the dumb acceptance of an *indio's* lot. A fleeting resentment bit his strong animal teeth together. But it was no more than a dull glow of an almost dead spark.

With the dull apathy of a hopeless people he hunched down once more on his heels, to commence all over again his endless strop, strop on the soft pumice that he could pick up anywhere on the barren volcanic plain. He did not even know that within the wall the *blanco* had a stone wheel that would do the job in five minutes.

WITHIN the wall Jim Weston's heavy footsteps sounded going to his quarters in the rear wing of the Hacienda. From across the patio Janice Filmore's voice came, anxious, half fearful.

"You got rid of him, Jim? Was it all right?"

A drawer rattled open; metal thumped heavily on wood before Weston answered. He came across the patio to her, his fingers busy with the buckle of a cartridge belt.

"Just hangin' a gun onto myself, Miz Filmore. I got me a jitter, bluffin' him empty hand. Nor I don't have to be experienced in this country to figure there's goin' to be trouble with that jasper."

The girl's hand went to her lips; a brown hand on which the darker callouses of reins discoloured the first and second fingers. Above them her gray eyes looked at Weston, troubled, but

steadily. Square-hewn, uncompromising, the man was a comfort.

"I'm afraid of him." She was not afraid to confess it. "Since it's come at last, sit down and let's talk it over. Don Guzman wants—that is, I think he hopes—"

"I know durn well what he wants," Weston interrupted her bluntly. He knew very little about women, but he knew plenty about men. He stood, despite the invitation to sit, and frowned down at her from under his sun-bleached brows.

His fingers automatically counted the cartridges in his belt, as they might have been a rosary—six and a space, six more and a space. Just a little trick of his that made for quick loading. Bluntly he faced the hard facts.

"Miz' Filmore, since its' come an it's too late to duck now, let's talk straight, like you said. I can maybe drive some five—six of our crowd to put up a fight, an' we've got a good high wall. This Don Gorilla can round up how many?"

"I don't know. At short notice, perhaps a dozen who'd stick at nothing. Given time, that many more from around the neighboring ranchos who would ride with him for the promise of loot."

Weston's fingers counted with slow deliberation while he scowled. Six and a space; six more and a space.

"Would any o' the more decent *rancheros* send help?"

"I don't know. They're all afraid of Guzman."

"What about the *intendencia?* Does this Don play politics? An' that's a sixty-mile ride anyhow."

"The *intendente* is honest and he was friendly with my father. He would send police—given time."

"Hmh! A couple days after *mañana,* I suppose."

Janice Filmore's eyes were hunted things as Weston's dogged directness brought the situation down to its relentless details. But her lips remained as firm as that photograph of her father's on the mantel shelf.

Weston grunted again. "An' you're the one who wanted to stick it out! Well, you're the boss. But I'll tell you this, Miz' Filmore: I'd yank you out o' here in the half of once, only—"

The girl came to her feet, the hunted look in her eyes all gone. "You wouldn't dare! You—" The fire died out of her eyes, to smolder in angry appraisal. "Would you—against orders?"

"Bet yore best hoss I would. Only you're right; I don't dare. This Guzman rattler would like enough cut us off in the open. You're safer here behind a good wall." Still scowling at her, Weston's fingers took in a hole in his belt. "Miz' Filmore; don't you worry. That's what a foreman's for. I'll go see about fixin' to meet brother Guzman right when he comes."

Vaguely, as he went, Weston was wondering whether that brand of conventional encouragement would fool the girl. And in the next second he was sure that it wouldn't. Thos gray eyes of hers were wide open enough to know what they were up against. The eyes had the steadiness of that picture of the old man who had come so far from home to stake out his rancho along new lines woven out of the shreds of the old that were so nearly dead in his home state.

"Real ol' timer." Weston admired. "Got to fix to pull this fool girl outa this some damn how."

There was little enough fixing that could be done. The hacienda wall was a good twelve feet high and the single door was narrow and strong, a veritable fortress, built for the old unsettled days of Indian uprisings. But a fort's strength is a willing garrison. The Filmore personnel consisted of a half a dozen *indios,* menial hewers of wood and drawers of water. Weston grunted skeptically as he thought of them. Why should they em-

broil themselves with Don Guzman of Guanada, whom people did not kill?

Then there were the *blancos*. As brown as an indio, they, but a strain of white blood showed in their names. There was the *Señor*—and he stood on ceremony about the title—the *Señor* Alfredo Santa Ana Savedra, the *mayordomo*, who lorded it over Diego and Domenique and Jorge, three tawny wool sorters; and Manuel, the more than three-quarters *Cholo* cook; and a stable man. But he, too, wore a coat, a ragged one, and pants, not a poncho. That made him, too, a *blanco* and made all the difference in his outlook on life.

Their response surprised Weston, and their reason for it more so. Not loyalty; not gratitude for kind treatment; a reason that surged spontaneously from the modicum of hot Latin blood that flowed so pitifully proudly in their veins.

Fight for the *Señorita?* But *seguramente;* certainly and without hesitation. *Gran' carallos!* She was beautiful, was she not? As a pampas rose, as a lily that one offered to the Blessed Virgin at the feast of *Conception*. Surely they would fight to protect her from that gross *bandido*, that gorilla. *Como no?* They were white men, were they not? *Pues!* Let trouble come, they would be ready.

TROUBLE came no later than the next afternoon, and they were not ready—not for trouble as brute sudden as that.

Hoofs pounded outside of the door, and there was Don Guzman, truculent with just enough liquor in him to make him reckless. His horse pranced before the doorkeeper's hut.

"*Quichara, alcco!*" He ordered. "Open up, dog."

Dumbly in pantomime more than speech, Olcca Wilkki indicated that the stout door was being kept locked from the inside. Don Guzman raised his voice in a bellow.

"*Hola,* within there! You, *Americano,* who talk of killing me whom people do not kill. Open up. Come out and let us test this shooting of which your cinemas brag so much. Come and show Guzman of Guanada."

Alfredo the *mayordomo* ran to the iron grille and peered out. He turned back and shrugged with hands and shoulders up to his ears.

"He rides alone."

Jim Weston's teeth bit on his lower lip. "Cripes! I wouldn't ha' given the gorilla credit for that much." He spun the cylinder of his gun and scowled at it. He spun it again, staring at it as though fascinated by the whir of its little clicks and the blur of six brass disks against the steel. "Him an' me, by God!"

Alfredo put his hand on Weston's arm. "*Señor.*" His fat little eyes were round with apprehension. "Do not do this thing. It is a madness. That is Don Guzman of Guanada. You are our only hope, *Señor*. If you should be—The good God save us; we shall be lost, looted by his gang. The *Señorita*—alone!"

"You're telling me?" Weston hissed. "And Guzman is their only hope, isn't he?"

Guzman's bellow came again.

"Open up, *Americano*. Man to man, I offer you!"

Alfredo was tremulous with his reply to Weston's question.

"Assuredly, *Señor*. He is the horned head and the black heart and the forked tail of all the trouble in all the *ranchos*. Without him, there would be none here. But it is as he says. Nobody has ever killed him yet. He is too cunning and ruthless as a devil."

Weston's teeth drew away from his lower lip to show a thin, tight grin. He snapped the gun cylinder shut.

"I don't know how good he is, Alfredo. But I'll tell you this: If he downs me, it won't be before he's crippled some himself. So while he's out of business you

can rush the *Señorita* out o' here to La Paz. Understand? You'll get the boys together and kite out pronto, before the gang can organize." He jerked his head towards the door. "Open up, an' keep out o' line."

"But *Señor!*" Alfredo was opening and shutting his mouth and his fingers at the same time. The other *blancos* stood behind him in helpless apprehension. "But *Señor,* if you should—"

"Go on, open up." Weston barked. "Or he'll be hollerin' that I'm scared. I am. But he can't know it."

Mumbling, Alfredo lifted the great wooden latch and gingerly inched the door open a narrow slit.

Weston swung and stood in the opening, his gun shoulder high for a throwdown.

Don Guzman was not in sight. But his voice came from behind the doorkeeper's hut to the right of the door.

"Out! Out into the open, *Americano!* Man to man!"

Weston stepped warily out. "Give 'm credit." His lips were drawn back and he breathed tensely through his mouth. "Smart devil. Right hand shootin' round a right corner gives 'm th' bulge on me." He wasn't giving Guzman quite credit enough for a fair stand-out-in-the-open-and-come-a-shootin'. He flattened his body out sideways and edged along the hut wall.

"*Dios!* Look out!" Alfredo's voice was a choked shriek from behind him.

WESTON never waited to look. He dropped flat, at the same instant that the whang of a big caliber rifle came from the open plain. Out to his left his eye caught a flicker of movement behind a clump of *ccaspi* shrub. Squeezed flat on his belly, he snapped a shot at it. A man lurched up into view and down again. From a clump of eucalyptus trees that masked the mouth of a farther arroyo another rifle banged. A heavy slug blasted a great chunk of adobe out of the hut corner.

Weston scuttled for the doorway. A rifle banged again, but he was in and kicking the heavy door shut as he rolled.

"The bushwhackin', lowdown—"

"Look out!" somebody shrieked again, and there were two men racing in from behind, another just dropping inside from the wall, racing to get to the door.

Don Guzman's voice roared fury from outside. But it was immediately drowned in the uproar from within.

Alfredo and his compatriot *blancos* were plucky enough when it came to a fight, and eager to make good the boast of their white blood. They fought as heroically as ineffectually—to the utmost capacity of their voices. They shouted and swore, and they even clawed and kicked.

But Alfredo and his compatriots had been about their peaceful occupations; weapons were not to hand, and no time to get them. The three raiders were armed with gun and knife; and no one of those men needed to be told what grisly things could be done with knives if the holders were once given a chance to use them.

Jim Weston was in it with fist and knee and foot, with everything that he knew—and all of it vicious, driven by desperation. The others would help, yes—but they were peaceful men, and Alfredo was fat and Diego was old. The win or lose of this mad scramble, Weston knew, was up to him.

Like a magnified ball of fighting ants the confused mob rolled and fought and bit. Dust and dried llama dung hid them in acrid billows. Out of the cloud came the thuds of blows and curses—and suddenly the hot smell of blood.

"He is a devil, this *Americano!* Rip his belly, Juan!"

Whack! Thud! Something hit somebody and he yelled as something broke.

Hands clawed blindly for throats and for each other's weapons.

"Hugh!" Weston's grunt of effort went with his knee. A blurred figure groaned and went down. Somebody grunted, "There's for you." A voice shrieked and somebody yelled triumph.

Furious yells came from outside. The door! Open the door, *amigos!* Lift but once the latch!"

"Hold them!" Weston gasped. "Anything but the latch." Smash!

He felt a surge of thankfulness for that last good one, for the fact that he was a big man and strong. And then, quite abruptly it was finished. Men lay on the ground. Some held others. There was blood. Everybody seemed to be fearfully smeared with blood. Weston bled from a rip in his khaki shirt arm. It didn't matter.

Blood was cheap against the alternative of perhaps having lost that fight for the door.

"Hold them so!" Weston spat sand and debris from his mouth. He ran to the grille, inched his eye round the corner, his gun ready, cursing vicious prayers for just a chance at anything that moved.

There was nothing, of course. Only the appalling blasphemy of which the Spanish language is capable crackled and spluttered over the wall. Don Guzman's voice became coherent.

"*Hola!* Within there! Compatriots! Listen but once to sense. There is no need for you to embroil yourselves with Guzman of Guanada for the sake of a couple of foreigners. Open, therefore, the—"

Weston's hot fury of battle chilled. That was a damnable kind of propaganda that must be stopped at once. He shouted to drown it. A desperate thought, but the first practical one.

"Quick, you fellows! The ladder! Up against this wall! And, Alfredo, the scatter gun! By God, I'll mow them down like running rabbits!"

Don Guzman's oration strangled in throaty fury. True, a head appearing over the top of the wall would offer a fine target. But a shotgun—! He wrenched a crumple of paper from his pocket and smeared it flat on his hat brim.

"Pin this to the door!" He scribbled furiously.

Olcca Willki was standing in dumb inertia beside his hut, staring cowed at the group.

A rider spurred to him, caught him by the scruff of the neck, and with superb ease of balance bent to extract the obvious machete from its wooden sheath.

His machete again! A fleeting instinct of possession impelled Olcca to clutch at it. Between the two men it fell to the ground. The horse trod on it. The thin blade snapped beneath the hoof.

Don Guzman cursed. "Here, wrap it around a stone and throw it over." The paper fluttered over the wall. "Come ahead, *amigos! Ligero!* before that Americano devil shoots!"

The riders spurred away, scant seconds to spare.

ALFREDO the *mayordomo* picked up the message and handed it to Weston. He hardly needed to open it. Everybody knew what it would say.

It was for the *blancos*—the compatriots, not the foreigners. Don Guzman of Guanda, whom people did not kill, had no quarrel with the help of the Hacienda Filamora.

What profit was there in embroiling themselves with him on account of just two no-account foreigners? Let them knock the gringo on the head, open the big door, and turn the girl over to him; and they would all be friends, as compatriots should be; and he would promise them all their same jobs in the hacienda which he would presently legally own. All so simple and logical.

Alfredo was brutally candid. "The invitation comes just a moment late. We have already embroiled ourselves beyond adjustment."

Almost furtively he pointed out of the corners of his eyes, hating to acknowledge the thing.

One of the figures in the dust needed no holding down. It lay with its face dirt-grimed, a knife hilt under its armpit.

"The devil an' all!" Weston whistled through his teeth. "A good job. Which one did that?"

The men looked at it dumbly, the faces of all of them masks of dogged ignorance. The sweat of fear remoistened the sweat of action on their foreheads. Their voices mumbled disavowal.

"It is his own knife. In the excitement —Who knows? That is the one the *Señor* so terrifically hit. Perhaps the *Señor* himself, in his rage—*Dios! Qué calamidad!* That is Estéban Laredo, a cousin of Guzman's and his lieutenant. This will be paid for with blood."

Janice Filmore was unexpectedly behind them. In one hand she held Guzman's scrawled demand; the knuckles of the other were white round the pearl handle of a small caliber revolver.

Weston's lips pinched over something inaudible. He went to her.

"I'm sorry you read that," he said.

She looked at him steadily. "I have known what he wanted all along."

Weston's scowl was unwavering through a long half minute. Then he grunted: "Good kid," and made no apology for the familiarity. He turned away to Alfredo. "Tie up the other two and put them in the well house. Bring Diego into the office and stick-tape our cuts. How soon can Guzman recruit other riders?"

"As soon as he can get a message to some of his good-for-nothing friends in some of the other *ranchos*." Alfredo's hot blood remained loyal, but he was apologetic. "We will fight, *Señor,* as we now must. But if there is any money, we might buy off Laredo's killing, and—"

Weston's grunt cut him short. "And there would still remain Guzman—and the *Señorita.*" His scowl went through Alfredo and out beyond. His fingers flitted over his cartridge rosary. Six shots and a space, six more shots—

Without the door Olcca Wilkki huddled in his poncho, miserably fingering the broken pieces of his machete. Why should the quarrels of these *blancos* always react upon him? What great evil had he done that the gods should take away their favor from him? What great sacrifice had that *blanco* given the gods, that they should so let him smash all of everybody else's hopes?

Weston pointed with his chin towards outside.

"Has he sense enough," he asked, "to cary a letter to the *intendencia* of police?

"Assuredly, said Alfredo. "He is a good *indio;* that is why he was promoted to the office of doorkeeper. Given a direct order, he will carry it out with all the speed and intelligence of a good dog."

"Bring him. He's a mighty thin hope, but the only one we've got. We're bottled, and if we can't get some outside help we're done."

So Olcca was called within the wall, into the aloof precincts of the *blancos'* patio that he had seldom seen, and was given a direct order. He nodded. Certainly he could run with a letter, and if it might be written on the letter for whom it was, doubtless there would be some educated person in the town who could read and direct him.

"See that thou dally not." Alfredo told him. "Stop not to rest by the way; for this must be in the hands of the *intendente* of police this very night."

Olcca nodded dumbly. His only comment on the order was: "A handful

of coca leaf would give speed to my legs." He discarded his poncho and stood in a breech clout, revealing a thick thighs and abnormal chest expansion, the heritage of his forefathers, who had been accustomed to run for the Inca.

The *blancos* stood bunched at the door and watched the bearer of all their hopes across the plain. Weston's fingers left his cartridge belt as he noted the long, tireless lope that never faltered, steadily on, well beyond rifle shot.

From beyond the screen of the eucalyptus grove that grew at the arroyo's lip sounded horses' feet. And presently a rider—well beyond rifle shot—came into distant view, trotting leisurely to overtake the runner. From the grove came Guzman's great bull laugh.

The *blancos* stood helpless and watched. The rider, without troubling to dismount, leaned from his saddle, cuffed the runner about the ears, took away the note, trotted leisurely back.

"Ye-eah!" Weston growled. "Smart as a devil!"

Olcca, more slowly, trotted back to his place beside his mud hut at the door. One *blanco* had given a direct order; another had taken it away from him. What did it all matter? It was the affair of the *blancos*. What mattered was his broken machete that the *blancos* had quite hopelessly smashed.

"Bottled *and* corked." Weston said. "Get back in from that door. Wonder they haven't taken a shot at us already. Come and sit, *hombres*. Let's see if we can dig any good out of talk."

So dejected men sat and talked plans back and forth; the same futile plans around the same old ironbound situation; and all the best of them remained quite as hopeless as Olcca's ruined machete.

"How long," Weston asked, "before Guzman can get a message around to the *ranchos* to call in a few more gorillas and rush this place?"

"Before morning's light, easily." Alfredo mumbled. Heroics, born of hot blood, could easily simmer down to the cold edge of despair. "Perhaps it is not yet too late to make an arrangement and buy free."

"And there would still remain the *Señorita,*" Weston said.

And that was the end of the war council.

Without the wall Olcca Wilkki hunched on his heels in even greater despair and ground miserably at the remnant of his blade. And as the square, jagged end began to shape down to a point, his despair was absolute. What medicine man would ever choose this misshapen tool for the sacrifice? Broken short, stubby, who could hope to hew a sheep's neck through at one clean stroke, as the gods demanded? The thing was good for nothing at all now; except maybe a foolish throwing knife, like that of Thirrpu Nuñes, the halfbreed. Wretched fool, ever to have thought that the favor of the gods could descend upon an Indio—just because a *blanco* had carelessly given him a machete. The favor of the gods was for those who could make them a blood sacrifice. It was for the *blancos,* who had made many blood sacrifices, who had come to the country in the first place as gods. Why couldn't they conduct their lordly quarrels without dragging a poor peon into the whirlwind of their course?"

SO, WHEN the next raid thundered down with the night's blackness, Olcca cowered against the angle of his hut and left them to their affairs.

Horses stamped around the wall and whinnied and plunged. Men jostled and fumbled and swore, secure in the darknesh against the shooting of that *Americano* for which Don Guzman had such a respect. By the sounds alone one could tell that expert horsemen rode

their animals close and stood on the saddles to reach up to the coping of the wall.

A head scuffled up over the edge, a round blob of shadow against the scarcely lighter sky. From inside, the shotgun roared. The shadow screamed and disappeared. By the sounds one could tell that a body fell heavily. Devils howled confusion without, and confused voices shouted from within.

Another head appeared over the coping. Its blind shriek of agony answered the gun's second barrel. Again a head looved over the top. The thin crack of Weston's gun was hardly heard above the uproar. Silently that head fell back into the dark.

Black shadows milled and stamped. Furious voices screamed to each other that the night was not black enough, that shadows against a skyline were always at a disadvantage if shooters kept their heads. The voice of Don Guzman cursed in frenzy.

"*Llevelos el Viejo!* All right, then. Come away there! They have too much advantage this way. We'll take them in the morning, rush the place and get it over with. Some of you will go down; but those who remain, there will be the more loot for them. Come away!"

The sounds of horses' hoofs thundered away to the shelter of the eucalyptus grove. Voices still shouted and cursed out of its darkness. A flicker amonst the high branches indicated a camp-fire.

Within the wall kerosene lamps flared. Men looked at each other, the whites of their eyes big in the uncertain light, flushed with desperate excitement, but not with victory. They mumbled futile plans all over again—the same plans, as hopeless as before.

Jim Weston stood lowering, frowning at Janice Filmore, as though it were her fault. She was able to smile at him, tight-lipped.

"Don't worry about me," she told him. "I have—this." The pearl-butted revolver was steady in her hand. "I'll hold the last shot. I promise." No heroics. Just steady determination.

It came to Weston that just about so her father might have said it, holed up somewhere against whooping Indians—and must have gotten out of the mess somehow by sheer guts.

The voice of Alfredo rose prayerfully in the night, cursing Don Guzman all over again for the beginning and the end of all evil, for the head and the feet and the forked tail of this whole devilish trouble. If the devil, his master, would but blast him from this fair earth, this great hulk of a Don whom people could not kill, this attack would be left without heart or head.

Weston strode to him and took him by the shoulders. There was hard eagerness in his tone.

"Yeh, I've been thinking about just that too. You know the rest of the gang, or you can guess pretty well who's in it. You mean that?"

"But assuredly, *Señor.* As I have already said. He is the heart and the brains of all the evil in all the *ranchos.* If the Devil in his own black night would—"

Weston nodded, his teeth hard on his lower lip.

"All right. I'm going after him. Reckon that's her only chance."

"But, *Señor!* What—"

Weston snarled at him. "I don't know what. Sneak up on him. Kidnap him, or—" He was frankly brutal—"bushwhack him out of the dark. It's him or me, and it's our only chance! As soon as daylight comes they'll pick us off like crows."

He took four long strides to Janice Filmore. Without preamble or ceremony he drew her to him, quickly and close, and kissed her.

Without fuss or false modesty she hung in his arms. Only her eyes closed.

She opened them and looked at him steadily as always.

"I think I have known this all along too," she said.

They held each other so for a moment and then pushed free.

"Don't worry." It came from both of them at the same time. She smiled.

He strode to the door.

"Shut it after me and hold it," he ordered Alfredo. "God knows what for. But hold it."

IN THE eucalyptus grove the scantiest of camp-fires flickered. Shadows huddled about it. Grunts of conversation. Dim forms lay prone. Fumbling footsteps and grumbles came from the farther dark.

Jim Weston crept like a scalp-hunting Indian. Which of those dark bulks would be Guzman? There would be no room for a mistake here. But what a forlorn hope it was, now that he was here, to make no mistake about his man in the blackness that was his only hope!

The fire's thin flicker made shadows jump and move with heart-stopping reality. Low bushes swelled and swayed, loomed close and faded again. Blanket-wrapped bulks lay in shapeless outline. Three black shapes squatted close over the fire, muttering muffled gutturals. The one with his back full towards Weston might be Guzman; he bulged big and his shadow made a great wedge of welcome blackness behind him into which a man might crawl. And if it should be Guzman—what?

Weston's teeth, gritting on each other, frightened himself with their noise. God! He must be silent, sure and deadly silent; otherwise death would be the easiest thing that could happen. It must be Guzman and no other. And then—Holding his breath, he crept closer to a shelter of a blacker shadow.

The shadow rolled over his groping hand and bellowed out startled afright!

Other shadows yelled instant response. Dark masses plunged forward. The night was suddenly full of shadows that shouted and swore and fought.

Someone yelled; "It is the *Americano!*" Someone shrieked in pain. Grunts and oaths and blows filled the darkness.

But that could not last. When the tumult subsided Weston stood in the fire flicker like a bear ringed by wolfish men, held by arms and legs and neck. Don Guzman stood before him and laughed, a throaty laugh of rippling chuckles.

"Amigos," he said. "From a night of weary waiting, the customary good fortune of Guzman has turned into one of great amusement. Go, one of you, to the horses and bring, first, a *riata* to tie him. He is big and strong and will last long."

At which all the other shapes that loomed like lesser devils laughed.

"Hold him well," one panted. "He is fierce and as strong as the father of all devils."

"Cra!" said Don Guzman. "But this is dark. In order properly to enjoy this amusement that Providence has sent to us we must have a good fire. Not only to heat the knife blades, but to see that we do not all at once cut him too deep. Go, another one of you, and bring that fool of an *indio* to cut us some firewood. In the meanwhile let us sit. There is time."

FEET stumbled away. They came back, and naked feet shuffled beside them. Somebody struck a match. Olcca Wilkki was shoved forward by the scruff of the neck so that he nearly fell.

"Firewood," Don Guzman ordered.

It was a direct order from a *blanco*. But Olcca, for the first time in his life, instead of jumping to obey like a good dog when his masters ordered, only stood. Ox dumb. He had no tool with which to cut fire wood. These very men, in their carelessness over such trifles, had

ruined it forever for all such purposes.

"*Carallos!*" Don Guzman himself, in his impatience, wrenched the ruin from its scabbard.

Olcca stood sullenly. His machete again! Always his machete! No machete now, only a stump. Useless for the sacrifice of the *mullos*—useless even for firewood; a remnant reduced down to nothing better than the feeble knife blade of Thirrpu the halfbreed. Nobody could understand the ways of the gods, who had caused the one *blanco* carelessly to give it to him and another *blanco* just as carelessly to smash it. Why should the gods favor an *indio* who could give them no blood sacrifice?

"*Infierno!*" The hell!" Don Guzman laughed. "The thing is useless for anything at all." He pitched it into the outer darkness and with careless habit kicked the *indio* after it. "Come on, *hombres.* Scout around. We must pick up whatever kindling we can find. Our sport waits. Where is Pablo with that *riata?*"

In the further night a sobbing, scuffling sound persisted, like the strangled whining of a dog that is mad. A hulking shadow laughed.

"It is the *indio,* looking for his knife. Fool. In this darkness one could scarcely find a horse."

Don Guzman's face grinned above the lean fire glow. "I will bet anybody a horse he will find it. I know those fellows. He will smell it out like a dog. Go bring him in, somebody. Give him a real blade and make him smell us out some firewood."

Feet moved away, stumbling in the darkness, blundering hopelessly. They came back growling.

"Thousands of devils! How can any man catch that animal of an *indio* in such a black night?"

From out in the blackness sounded a sobbing little yelp. Inarticulate. Like a dog. A dog frantic with joy—or perhaps frantic with fury. There is not much difference in the tones of dogs in the dark.

Don Guzman, who knew so much about *indios,* grinned over the fire.

"There! Didn't I tell you? He has found his knife. I'll bet you."

From out in the darkness the knife came to win the bet. The trifling knife that was good for nothing at all—except perhaps a throwing knife, like that of Thirrpu the halfbreed. It flickered over the lean fire and planted itself with a soft meaty chuck in the throat of Don Guzman of Guanada, whom people did not kill!

A gasp hissed from the throat of every other looming shadow. A quick tension of afright at sudden death out of the dark. And then a slow letting go of pent breaths and a loosening of taut limbs.

And in that moment of opportunity Jim Weston was free. A big man, as strong as the father of all the devils and with something back in the *hacienda* worth fighting the fight of his life for.

Shadows bulked about him, suddenly leaderless, indecisive. Jim Weston smashed all his weight and fury at the nearest. It moaned and dropped to the darker shadows about his feet. Jim smashed at the next. There was no indecision about him or fright. He was strong and full of the fury of all the things for which strong men fight.

From the outer darkness something whined laughter. Not like a dog. Like a man whose faith was reassured that when the gods received their blood sacrifice they always repaid in full.

That lordly *blanco* who had given him the machete in the first instance was making all that quite clear just now. He was as godlike in his fury as in his munificence. Surely he would give a poor *indio* another machete.

The Camp-Fire

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

DIOMEDES de PEREYRA, who used to appear in *Adventure* in the old days, returned recently to this country after some years in Spain and South America, where he conducted research into old military files. He left with us the strange and gruesome article which appears in this issue—"Fort Flea." Of it he says:

In 1930 I was in Madrid doing some investigation work at the Archive of Military Engineers (Archivo de Ingenieros Militares). There I became acquainted with an officer who had been with General Sanjurjo in Morocco. When I asked him whether this general was really the great strategist which many made him out to be, he took me to the map section and, showing me a large draft and several photographs marked "Fuerte de las Pulgas" (Melilla), he told me they represented one item of Sanjurjo's strategy. Then he took me to another room and handed me a filed report to read. This concerned the tragedy described in the article. Finally my informer pointed to one of his eyes and said, "This is one of the minor consequences of that ill-fated expedition to the *Fuerte de las Pulgas* (Fort Flea). I lost this eye, and also my health. I have been given this wretched job of librarian when I should be commanding my regiment. I am one of the few survivors, and I have kept quiet on these things because I wanted to hold my job."

NOW we have the pleasure of seeing another book by one of our *Ask Adventure* experts. This time it is *Snakes Alive—and How They Live,* by Clifford H. Pope. It is an informal and yet complete book which seems to answer every possible question about snakes, contains detailed identifications of all the snakes in the United States, and sixty-five of the most remarkable snake photographs I have seen. And through it run the adventures, the life story, of the man who wrote it, who began to collect snakes as a boy in Oregon and now is a leading herpetologist.

Mr. Pope had difficulties with various headmasters in schools throughout his education because of the snakes he kept in his rooms. His interest led him to take a job with Dr. Ditmars in the Rep-

tile House of the Bronx Zoo, and that work fascinated him to the point where he threw away all other plans for a livelihood and career. He qualified himself for expeditions, and went two years to British Guiana with Dr. William Beebe. Following that he joined the Roy Chapman Andrews Third Asiatic Expedition and for four years collected snakes in China.

I take the liberty of quoting a paragraph which concerns a discussion in Camp-Fire some months ago:

Everyone has seen pictures from India of cobras "dancing" to the music of snake charmers. On the other hand anyone who has hunted snakes has noticed that a basking specimen is not frightened away by talking or even shouting. In an attempt to find out whether cobras actually do hear, Colonel Wall covered the eyes of several individuals with adhesive tape and then made various sounds in the air near them. He could arouse them no more by blowing a bugle than by beating on a large empty tin can close to their heads. If, however, anyone moved a chair or walked along near by, the snakes immediately reared. This plainly showed that any hearing was the result of vibrations carried through solid bodies in actual contact with the snakes. You can hear in the same way a distant train by putting your ear to the track. As a matter of fact sounds transmitted thus travel faster than those carried by the air. The Indian snake charmer is careful to move his arms or legs incessantly or to sway the trunk back and forth while performing, and it is this rhythmic motion that "charms" the highly sensitive cobras and makes them appear to be dancing to the music.

THERE was a large and favorable response by the comrades to that two-part discussion of the fighting qualities of the soldiers of the various nations—"The Soul of a Soldier." It seemed to prove to us on the staff that one of the things men follow with keenest attention is a talk, pro and con, on fighting ability and fighting courage—there's an abiding instinct running deep through all of us when that subject comes up.

Following usual policy, though, of not cluttering the Camp-Fire with advertising for our magazine but keeping it a place of discussion, and correction where need be, we'll take up the matter of the single error in that article. We have this letter from Hillary H. Mangum of Augusta, Georgia:

My interest has grown warmer since you began featuring stories with historical backgrounds, such as the present series by that master story-teller, H. Bedford-Jones.

Because of my love for this type of literature, quite naturally I was attracted by the military essay, "The Soul of a Soldier," by George Fielding Eliot and R. Ernest Dupuy, which appeared in the June and July issues. I consider this one of the most entertaining and informative articles ever published in *Adventure*.

But, imagine my surprise in the second instalment (page 35, July issue) to find the Colonel, after citing how President Davis of the Southern Confederacy bungled campaigns by interfering with his commanders on the field, making this statement: "After he'd replaced Joe Johnston with *Hill* in the Atlanta campaign, with the result that all the effects of Johnston's masterly rear-guard actions were lost by *Hill's* reckless impetuosity, Davis came to cheer up the Army of the Tennessee by a personal appearance."

If I know my Southern history aright, General Hill never held a command in Georgia during the War of Secession. Messrs. Eliot and Dupuy must have reference to General John B. Hood, who replaced General Joseph E. Johnston before Atlanta.

In obedience to President Davis' wishes, Hood, upon assuming command, straightway gave General Sherman battle, and was beaten badly in a series of engagements. The result was that Sherman's Army occupied "The Gate City of the South" on Sept. 2, 1864.

General Sherman well knew the men who opposed him, both Johnston and Hood. He had been deeply worried, and his army hard put, by the slow and stubborn retreat made by Johnston through Tennessee into North Georgia; and there is a tone of relief in his words when, upon learning that Hood was opposing him, he is reported to have exclaimed: "I knew John Hood at West Point, and he hasn't sense enough not to fight!"

Fight was exactly what Hood did, for there was no more courageous division commander in the Confederate army than he; and the result was that Georgia's old men, women and children came to know just what

Sherman had in mind when he said "War is Hell."

The reference to Hill must have been a slip of the pen on the part of the co-authors of "The Soul of a Soldier," for two writers so well acquainted with military history as they otherwise, it seems, could not have made such an error.

IT'S never happened that a slip like that of saying Hill and meaning Hood is noticed by only *one* comrade. We hear from Gordon Gunter, of Palacios, Texas:

In the past sixteen years, I have started to chime in several times on the Camp-Fire discussions, but have never done so.

The recent article on "The Soul of a Soldier" was of much interest and I suppose that for the sake of accuracy it is not amiss to call attention to a factual error in the second part of this writing. Gen. Joseph E. Johnston was replaced by Gen. John B. Hood, not Hill. Johnston's policy of retreat, fight and retreat again was absolutely necessary in the face of the superior numbers opposing him. The people of Georgia brought great pressure to bear to have him removed, but doubtless the weight of the decision lies with Davis, for in the early part of the war he stood steadfast for Lee who was much maligned by Southern newspapers. Davis' experience at Buena Vista evidently gave him the idea that he was a good military tactician and instead of making a good war president of him, it ill-fitted him for the job. His interferences with Generals Forrest, Beauregard and Johnston were very costly for the South and probably were to a large extent responsible for her defeat.

Generals A. P. and D. H. Hill commanded in Virginia under Lee and Jackson. Both, the former especially, were noted for their characteristic vigorous attack in battle. It is said that both Lee and Jackson in the final delirium preceding death called f... P. Hill to bring up his troops and go into action. Hood was also a good fighter, but when placed in sole command was evidently more headstrong than wise.

THANKS also on the same subject go to William J. Metzger of Asheville, North Carolina, and to Erd Brandt of *The Saturday Evening Post.*

THIS issue is the twenty-seventh anniversary of *Adventure.* We won't say this is a long time, etc., but we'll ask a question that arises in an editor's mind every time the mail arrives.

Is everybody satisfied? Gosh, no. That's the kind of magazine an editorial staff will put out in the next world, with the linotype machines running molten gold and the proofreaders, maybe, wearing diamond crowns, and the readers—well, it's hard to picture the readers.

Anyhow, we haven't got that kind of readers now. What we have are a knowing, cantankerous, appreciative, damn-your-eyes, enthusiastic and scornful and generally unguessable and hard-to-fool lot of men who meet here once a month. We don't sail an altogether calm ocean; sometimes, in the words of an old sailor I know, "she's kicking up quite a bubbery." But we're sailing the course that we're sailing, and there are enough of you aboard to keep her headed the way she goes, with the compasses compensated and no more than the usual amount of deviation.

Some time—but we hope not—a month might go without a dissenting voice anywhere, and if that happens, the boss newsdealer will call up and inform us, "Say, you haven't got a single reader left!"

Just look at this letter—from one of our oldest friends too: William M. Mumm, president of Mumm, Romer, Robbins and Pearson, of Columbus, Ohio.

Altho one of the oldest subscribers to *Adventure,* a reader from its first beginnings, usually paying my subscription several years in advance, I have seldom taken advantage of this record to criticize the publication when I didn't like some things about it. The few times I have written it has been for the purpose of commenting or making constructive suggestions.

Now I have a real grievance. You are spoiling the magazine for me and doubtless for many others by running such serials as the present "No Quarter" in *five* installments. That means *five* months from the first installment to the last. How do you suppose a man who is at all busy can keep track of the trend of a story of that kind thru nearly

a half year? I deliver my copies of *Adventure* and other magazines regularly to Ohio Penitentiary or the jail for the benefit of the poor devils in those places. They have lots of time, even for a serial run for a whole year.

On top of that, while historical novels and romances have their place and an occasional one of moderate length may be justifiable in your publication, I still feel there is much better material in keeping with the purpose of the magazine and the tastes of its readers.

Don't point to *Short Stories*, who right now are running a four-part serial. That publication comes out twice a month and the whole four installments appear within sixty days, which is a lot better than your present run of 150 days or more. Think it over and see if you can't cut down the stretch between the "soup and the dessert."

WE'VE had a couple of other letters from Mr. Mumm in the last few years, but we didn't print them—nice letters, not kicking about anything though. And maybe he's not really mad at us now, because we're just a twenty-seven year old young fellow who is the target of a lot of good suggestions and advice from his old man.

But serials are always a problem, because all editors know some of the best stories they ever see are in serial length, and all editors know that some readers never read serials. It's a pity that all the good writing and good story-telling is wasted for some, but it can't be helped. What this country needs is a law to make all the readers read serials.

Being our twenty-seventh anniversary, it's good to have word again from Arthur Sullivant Hoffman—A.S.H.—who was the skipper for the first seventeen of those years, and played such a welcome and friendly role in our twenty-fifth anniversary. He dropped in four days ago. He hates New York, the same as all of us who work here, but that morning the wild geese must have honked high over his country place in southward flight. A.S.H. got out the time table he hadn't used in many moons, and came in for lunch.

He had something to say about this serial matter, too. What he said was that he'd been tempted to write us for advance proofs on the present one, that a month was too long to wait but that he'd finally decided to take his place along with all the other readers and not ask any special privilege. And though it may sound like advertising, which is barred at Camp-Fire, I don't see any way to suppress his statement that in his experience four stories of adventure stand out as great, and this is one of them.

So there's your serial problem. If it's good, instalments are always too far apart. But 'ware the calm without a catspaw of criticism or a gust of disgust.

Among our comrades there are always some who are "kicking up a bubbery." So we'll go right on the way we're going now.

H. B.

Ask Adventure

Information you can't get elsewhere.

WHEN the 'gator's eyes gleam in the night, don't shoot—strike.

Request:—There are three of us—all experienced in alligator hunting here in Florida, but of late we have found the local crop of 'gators noticeably short and we have begun to search for new worlds to conquer and new crocks to skin.

For some time we have had our eyes on Central America. Here, in a nut shell is what we want to know:

1. What are the laws regarding foreigners taking skins?

2. Is there a local market for the skins? How do prices compare with American market prices?

3. What are the laws regarding importation of firearms?

4. Would skins shipped to the United States be subject to tariff fees?

5. Do native hunters use rifles and hunt in the day time or do they fire hunt with shotguns at night?

6. Could we get supplies locally at prices that would compete with American prices?

—A. J. Johnes, Osteen, Fla.

Reply by Mr. Seymour G. Pond: There are two rivers available which contain the greatest number of alligators in them, these are the Magdalena in Colombia, and the Bayano (called by some the Chepo) in Panama. The Bayano has been one of the most lucrative of all, as it is more remote and less popular, few wishing to remain in the Darien jungle for long periods. The Bayano is about thirty miles down the Pacific coast from Panama City. There is also another alligator region (profitable in commercial numbers) and this is Montijo Bay which is also in Panama about two hundred and thirty miles up the Pacific coast from Panama City; a somewhat prettier and possibly healthier spot than Bayano. The Magdalena I understand is quite good but more heavily worked by hunters.

As to market prices I am not in touch with the current rates, but not long ago they varied (according to quality of skins, whether containing ridges or buttons) from eighteen to twenty eight cents a foot, this in the Panama City market; it may be better or worse now. I am told at certain times of the year they get as high as forty cents a foot.

In Central America alligator men tell me there has been considerable battling for preserves, there being no permits taken out frequently, and the alligator men being pretty tough hombres.

The method used in hunting in these waters is a silent one, no guns. After the first shot of a gun the rest of your game has taken to the far parts. There are usually three men in a *cayuco*. One stands in the bow with a bright gas acetylene lamp (sometimes also a small lamp on the hat with a gas line running to a gas container and the

hip). The second stands to one side at the bow with a harpoon ready to aim. The third propels the boat. The harpooner lets drive when the 'gator's eyes gleam into the light beam, aiming at the beast's head just behind the brain. Usually the 'gator 'sounds' and runs. A rope lets him run until he is played. He is then drawn into the boat, knocked out with a heavy axe and his throat slit with a knife, and his jaws bound with heavy wire, so that in case his indomitable spirit returns, he won't do damage. Usually this one is flopped onto the beach and the boat proceeds. Sometimes a second boat is towed to take in the cargo.

Some go in for the belly for shoe leather, and others for the backs for handbags and fancy coverings. Here in the Tropics ordinarily the pelts are rolled, salted, and packed down in hogsheads with more rock salt and shipped as swiftly as possible to avoid spoiling. Some sell the oils for rheumatism medicine manufacturers.

'Gators in these waters grow to about a sixteen foot maximum, the average however are around six to nine feet. They take about fourteen years here to mature. You might be interested to know that the United States bought over 800,000 'gator pelts last year.

Get the booklet from the United States Department of Commerce titled, "The Economic Importance of Alligators" which, while dealing mostly with the domestic product, may give you some helpful marketing hints. I believe the pamphlet is ten cents.

With reference to tariffs on 'gator hides into the States, you must write the Department of Commerce for data on this as it changes from time to time. I believe you would find small difficulty in this regard. You should obtain a permit for firearms before coming here from the Department of Interior, Republic of Panama, and also a hunting permit for concessionary rights, although few do. It is by far the wisest method and you will find the cost of a permit is low.

NO, you couldn't exactly call him a loafer!

Request:—Can you tell me a good food to carry on a long hike? I do not go in much for cooking food over camp-fires, and I made up a sort of pemmican that I liked very well. I take rolled oats, cream with butter, adding all the cocoanut, pecans, raisins, dates, figs that could be held together with a bit of honey and evaporated milk. By varying moisture could turn out either cooky or cake type of very nutritious food. Is there anything besides chocolate, raisins and dates that you could suggest?

Each year there is a trail marathon run at Big Pines, starting 5 P. M. the night of the August full moon, the course covering forty-four miles over the mountains reaching at one point an altitude of 10,080 feet. Contestants carry packs totaling 10% of weight, food and water are additional burdens. Last year I went in at one hundred and thirty-nine pounds, lowest I've scaled in twelve years. (Age 29, 5 feet 7 inches, heavy-boned frame). Not knowing the course I was at some disadvantage. I began quite fagged out, having had to get 110 miles through desert heat by hitchhiking. I held the lead nine miles, drank about two cups cold water at Control Point No. 3, elevation 5,500 feet; started up to Control No. 4, at 9,369 feet, got cramps, had to slow to walk. At the twenty-eight mile mark, being 4th, I dropped out, there being only three prizes, and it being necessary I start one hundred and ten mile hike homeward when we finished. The lightest man in the race, the only outsider (all rest the college trained type), I was in the best condition as regards feet and muscles at the twenty-eight mile mark.

Running in the race brought me many friends; it proved a stimulation I needed. Times have been better for me and I want to go back and trim the fellow who has won the last three years.

What sort of regimen can you recommend for training? The first aid men said I drank too much water. I've always drunk water on the trail when I seemed no less heated than I was in that race and never got cramps.

Last year I averaged 11.5 miles on weekly Sunday hikes, my only training. Now I work on a ranch nine hours daily, most Sundays off; in a few months we'll be working twelve hours daily, two Sundays off each month. My chief need is for methods of home training for sustained endurance at a higher speed than I now average, so that I may cover the course in ten hours.

Will you give me your advice on this problem?

—Charles J Lovell, Castric, Calif.

Reply by Dr. Claude P. Fordyce:—The compact foods which you describe are okay. They are better than any manufactured food I know of and have the advantage of being carried in lighter weight containers. Most of the emergency rations are in heavy tins, and not suited to a hike trip.

The concentration of the foods you mention used without mixing with water and boiling makes them fall into the class of emergency foods and for a prolonged trip do not give enough bulk in the digestive tract for good function. However they do supply sufficient balanced food stuffs. To aid digestion it is wise to have some warm food and even on hikes where I cut down to the limit in equipment I try to have hot tea at each meal. For light weight ration I prefer cheese, raisins and milk chocolate.

On your next trip don't drink too much water and certainly not *cold water.* But for days before look after your condition. Keep in perfect shape. Drink lots of water the day before the trip. On the trail for refreshment suck lemons and melt cube sugar in your mouth. It's a good plan to use much sugar before and right after strenuous physical exertion. Rockne did this with all his teams before and after games. The way to build endurance is by taking long hikes every day. This can be done in the evenings using the heavy socks and shoes you are going to use on the actual trip. Then Sunday a longer trip can be taken. After each night's walk take a bath and brisk rub down with a coarse towel. In the morning jump out of bed and take the setting up exercises.

And the very best of luck to you.

A TOY DOG—but with plenty of hunting instincts.

Request:—Ever since reading about the Belgian Griffon I have been anxious to obtain information about the qualities and temperament of this dog. He is noted for his half human expression and is about the size of a fox terrier.

I should like to learn the name and address of any breeder who may be able to supply pups.

—Gilbert Knipmeyer, Rolla, Mo.

Reply by Mr. John B. Thompson:—You will be able to obtain a genuine Brussels Griffon from Mrs. C. L. Cline, 3231 Sherbourne Road, Detroit, Mich.

These dogs are very affectionate and devoted to their masters, strong and possess quite a lot of hunting instinct. One of the best squirrel dogs I saw in your Ozarks was a Griffon. They have nice temperaments, but are not inclined to make up quickly with strangers.

THE sign language of the American Indians.

Request:—Will you please tell me if there is a book published on the sign language of the American Indian? If so, where can I obtain a copy?

—John E. Bailey, Niles, Mich.

Reply by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—There are two or three books on the sign language of the American Indian.

The most complete as far as description is concerned is "The Sign Language," by W. P. Clark, Philadelphia, 1885. This book was written by Lieut. Clark at the request of the United States War Department in order that army officers on the plains might be conversant with the sign language. Clark and the late General Hugh Scott started out together to learn the language, Clark published and Scott never did. Unfortunately there are no decent illustrations in Clark's book.

Garrick Mallery issued several items on the sign language. "Introduction to the study of sign language among the North American Indians," Washington D. C., 1880. "A collection of gesture-signs and signals of the North American Indians," Washington, 1880. "Sign Language Among North American Indians," First Report Bureau of American Ethnology, Washington, 1881. "Pictographs of the North American Indians," Fourth Rept. Bur. Eth. Washington, 1886 and "Picture Writing of the American Indians, 10th Annl. Rept. Bur. Am. Eth. Washington, 1893.

Of this latter list the 1st, 4th and 10th Ann. Reports of the B. A. E will be more procurable and in the 1st and 4th reports you will find fairly good illustrative material. The 10th report is also good although dealing with comparative pictographic writing rather than sign language.

All of the books to which I have referred will of a necessity have to be obtained through second-hand book shops and the prices will vary from $3.00 to $15 depending upon the item you desire and the book dealer through whom you order it.

There is also a popular book on the sign language issued in San Diego which has gained some circulation. It sells for $1. I have never invested in this but glanced through it and while it is illustrated, the drawings are rather poorly done and copied after Mallery. I do not have the full title of this item but I believe it was issued by a Mr. Tompkins.

BALANCING wild life's book in Penn's Wood.

Request:—I read, recently, an article in which the author stated that parts of our

Eastern states were reverting rapidly to the original condition of Appalachian wilderness; that bobcats, and wild turkey and other of the small wild creatures were returning.

This I hope is true. Can you give me any information on it?

—Elmer Mundy, Philadelphia, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Raymond S. Spears:—When I camped and tramped across Pennsylvania in 1901, I heard the estimate made that in the whole state there were fewer than four thousand deer.

In the Congressional Record, Feb. 5, 1936, you will find:

> In a nine-day season 22,000 buck deer were killed, and in a three-day post season in 14 counties of the State (of Pennsylvania) where deer had become so plentiful as to make it imperative that the herds be reduced, 45,000 antlerless deer were killed.

That is, the wilderness and marginal land area of Pennsylvania supplied 67,000 deer (perhaps 2 per square mile) without harm but with benefit to the wild life. Thus about three thousand tons of venison came to Pennsylvania tables.

Beaver, wild turkeys, elk, and other wild life are being rapidly restored. Three hundred bear were killed in three days. And where the whole state hardly averaged $100,000 in furs before conservation took effect, now year after year, an average of $1,500,000 annual catch is had. Thus professional wildcrafters, sportsmen, nature lovers have by protection of wild life added huge commercial values—wild life, fish, forests, streams, furs, game, non-game wild meat to the state resources.

In New York state where $75,000 fur was the annual take, more than a million is taken now. With bad hungry-moon (January-February snow) conditions New York gets 7,500 deer instead of 3,500 or so. And smaller nonmigratory game has increased marvelously.

But the migratory wild life—ducks, geese, shore birds—are wasted in stupid shooting out of season and overshooting and destruction of nesting places worth millions in wild meat production to make "farm land" that can be used only at a loss by domestic occupation.

While New York and Pennsylvania are conserving their wild life and getting up to hundreds of dollars a square mile from wildlife areas, the Biological Survey of Washington spends $6,000,000 or so a year, of which large sums go to poisoning wild life, fur, game, non-game food animals, and wild life creatures of priceless values as little gardeners—grass and forage growers—in the pastures.

If you and all your friends would write to your Congressmen, representatives and senators, and ask them to save the National Domain from the scandal of poisoned wildlife, citing the enormous good done by the public men of Pennsylvania in saving the wild life of their state, you will have influence—perhaps more influence than you even dream of having in restoring game, fur, wildlife in the vast wilderness domain of the Western States, now shamefully, scandalously, stupidly poisoning off because there is money in handling poisons. In California, where they spend—they boast—$2,000,000 a year in scattering poison to destroy wild life, the state would have to get $22,000,000 a year from its wild life in order to be even partly as good as Pennsylvania and New York. California from three times the Pennsylvania area gets $500,000 in furs.

And the million square miles of the Western states produce perhaps from nothing to $5 a square mile on wilderness, compared to the $50 to hundreds of dollars of wilderness area in your state. Potential production varies from $25 a square mile to thousands of dollars a square mile (specialty muskrat marshes, say).

Of all the states, Pennsylvania, New York and Louisiana have been giving us back our wild life by conservation. In Louisiana conservation is taught in every school.

You have reason to be proud of the Keystone State. Have your State Legislators send you copies of the work of the Forest Fish and Game Commissions of your state and read with pride.

But pity, while you despise, the scoundrels who poison wild life because they think it pays.

THE language of an African savage is a conglomeration.

Request: I should like to know what language is spoken by the Herero tribe of Southwest Africa. How can I obtain a copy of a Herero-English dictionary, if there is such a volume?

And can you name any travel books, or some other source of information, and pictures, of Hereroland?

Guy Holden, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Major S. L. Glenister:—The Hereros are one of the Bantu tribes and

speak the Kaffir tongue generally used by the majority of the native races of South Africa, south of the Zambezi River. A few of the larger native races such as the Basutos, Zulus, Bechuanas, and Matabeles, have distinctive dialects of their own. But the great majority today speak a little English and considerable of the Taal; i. e. Cape Dutch. I do not know of a Herero-English dictionary; probably you could obtain textbooks of Kaffir and Zulu in the Marlborough series published in London. And the offices maintained in New York by the Union of South Africa Government may be able to help you out in this respect. Address them: South Africa Union Dept. of Customs, 44 Whitehall Street, New York City.

A PERCHERON'S a bit of a handful.

Request:—Will you kindly tell me how to make a four year old Percheron Stud pick his hind feet up in a show ring?

—Harry Wood, Monterey, Calif.

Reply by Major R. Ernest Dupuy:—I am not sure from your question if you mean to make the animal pick up his feet one by one for examination, or to step higher. Assuming the former, one can do it in two ways:—

a. Standing by the flank with back to the animal's head, bend till the shoulder touches the horse's thigh, run the hand down the tendons until just above the fetlock and lift.

b. More common: stand as above but with one's outside foot advanced. The hand nearest the animal is placed on his hip, pushing him over and forcing the weight on the opposite hind foot, while the other hand is run slowly down the back tendons, from below the hock. Grasp the leg under the fetlock and raise forward, then slip the inside knee under the horse's leg as if attempting to shoe him.

I realize that with the huge mass of the Percheron this is not simple if the animal refuses to respond. If all else fails, truss him up, in stocks if necessary, and by block and tackle keep raising the foot again and again, each time first running the hand down and lifting before the tackle pressure is put on. He will finally come to the conclusion that it is easier to do what you want him than struggle.

MIX politics with water, and let stand for many years.

Request:—I enclose a photostatic copy of an Old Eight Shilling note which has been in my possession for a good many years. I would greatly appreciate it if you could answer the following questions:

1. Under what circumstances were these notes issued, and were they backed in any way by the governing body of the state?

2. Could you tell me the approximate value, if any, of this bill?

3. Do you know of any firm in my vicinity with whom I could communicate with the possible view of selling this note?

—H. F. Willis, Berkeley, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—The bills of New York Water Works were issued by the City of New York as promissory notes to raise funds for supplying water to New York. They come in various denominations and are dated 1774, 1775 and 1776. I think that comparatively few of these were ever redeemed as they seem to be even today rather common—in fact, I have seen a great many hundreds of these. Supplying adequate water to New York City had occupied the minds of many people from late Colonial days up to 1834 when the building of the Croton aquaduct was approved. This was finished in 1842.

The reason for your note of 1775 was because a Christopher Colles had really impressed upon the city authorities the need of supplying water to the city and work was actually begun, such as laying out sites, buying logs from which to make water mains.

But the proposition fell through chiefly because private enterprises opposed it and a few years later the Manhattan Company got the charter to supply New York with water. Your note has very little value and possibly might sell for 25c. It is interesting, however, from the historical viewpoint.

THE book corner.

Request:—Many years ago I read a classic "The Cruise of the Cachalot," which I enjoyed very much. I would like to reread this book but cannot recall the name of the author. Can you help me?

—E. W. Jones, Harrison, Ind.

Reply by Mr. A. R. Knauer:—"The Cruise of the Cachalot" was written by Frank T. Bullen and has been published in many editions. Dodd Mead & Co., and D. Appleton Century Co., both of New York, put out $2. editions. I understand cheaper editions have been put on the market, too. The Dodd Mead edition is illustrated.

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Archery—EARL B. POWELL, care of *Adventure.*

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.

Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

Dogs—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

Fencing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

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Health Building Activities, Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, care of *Adventure.*

Horses: *care, training of horses in general; jumping; and polo; the cavalry arm*—MAJOR R. ERNEST DUPUY, care of *Adventure.*

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motor Camping and Trailer Camping—MAJOR CHAS. G. PERCIVAL, M.D., 152 W. 65th St., N. Y. C.

Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 32 Mason Terr., Brookline, Mass.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., 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: *skiffs, 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, 1354 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, 125 Lambert Rd., Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

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.

Fur Farming—FRED L. BOWDEN, 104 Fairview Av., Binghamton, N. Y.

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 informa-*

tion—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. Coast Guard—Lt. Comdr. T. F. DOWNEY, U. S. N. ret., 11 Murray St., Wakefield, Mass.

U. S. Marine Corps—CAPT. 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, "Cardoss," Suva, Fiji.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon.*—V. B. WINDLE, care of *Adventure.* **2** *French Indo-China, Hong Kong, Macao, Tibet, Southern, Eastern and Central China.*—SEWARD S. CRAMER, care of *Adventure.* **3** *Northern China and Mongolia.*—PAUL H. FRANSON, Bldg. No. 8 Veterans Administration Facility, Minneapolis, Minn. **4** *Persia, Arabia.*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **5** ★*Palestine.*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya.*—GORDON MAC CREAGH, Box 197, Centerport, Long Island, N. Y. **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans.*—CAPT. BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, care of *Adventure.* **4** *Morocco.*—GEORGE E. HOLT, care of *Adventure.* **5** *Sierra Leone to Old Calabar, West Africa, Nigeria.*—N. E. NELSON, 1641 Greenlawn Ave., Akron, Ohio. **6** *Cape Colony, Orange River Colony, Natal Zululand, Transvaal, and Rhodesia.*—CAPT. F. J. FRANKLIN, Adventure Camp, Simi, Calif. **7** ★*Portuguese East.*—R. G. WARING, Corunna, Ont., Canada. **8** ★*Bechuanaland, Southwest Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa.*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, care of *Adventure.*

Madagascar—RALPH LINTON, 324 Sterling Hall, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

Europe, Part 1 *Denmark, Germany.*—G. I. COLBURN, East Ave., New Canaan, Conn.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile.*—EDGAR YOUNG, care of *Adventure.* **2** *Venezuela, The Guianas, Uruguay, Paraguay, Argentina, and Brazil.*—DR. PAUL VANORDEN SHAW, care of *Adventure.*

★West Indies—JOHN B. LEFFINGWELL, Box 1333, Nueva Gerona, Isle of Pines, Cuba.

Central America★—SEYMOUR POND, P. O. 2103, Cristobel, Canal Zone, Panama.

Mexico, Part 1 *Northern Border States.*—J. W. WHITEAKER, 2903 San Gabriel St., Austin, Tex. **2** *Quintana Roo, Yucatan, Campeche.*—W. RUSSELL SHEETS, 301 Poplar Ave., Takoma Prk., Md. **3** ★*South of line from Tampico to Mazatlan.*—JOHN NEWMAN PAGE, care of *Adventure.*

Newfoundland—C. T. JAMES, Box 2064, St. John's, Newfoundland.

Greenland and Baffinland—*Dog-teams, whaling, Eskimos, etc.*—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

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Alaska—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

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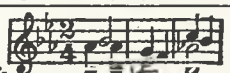

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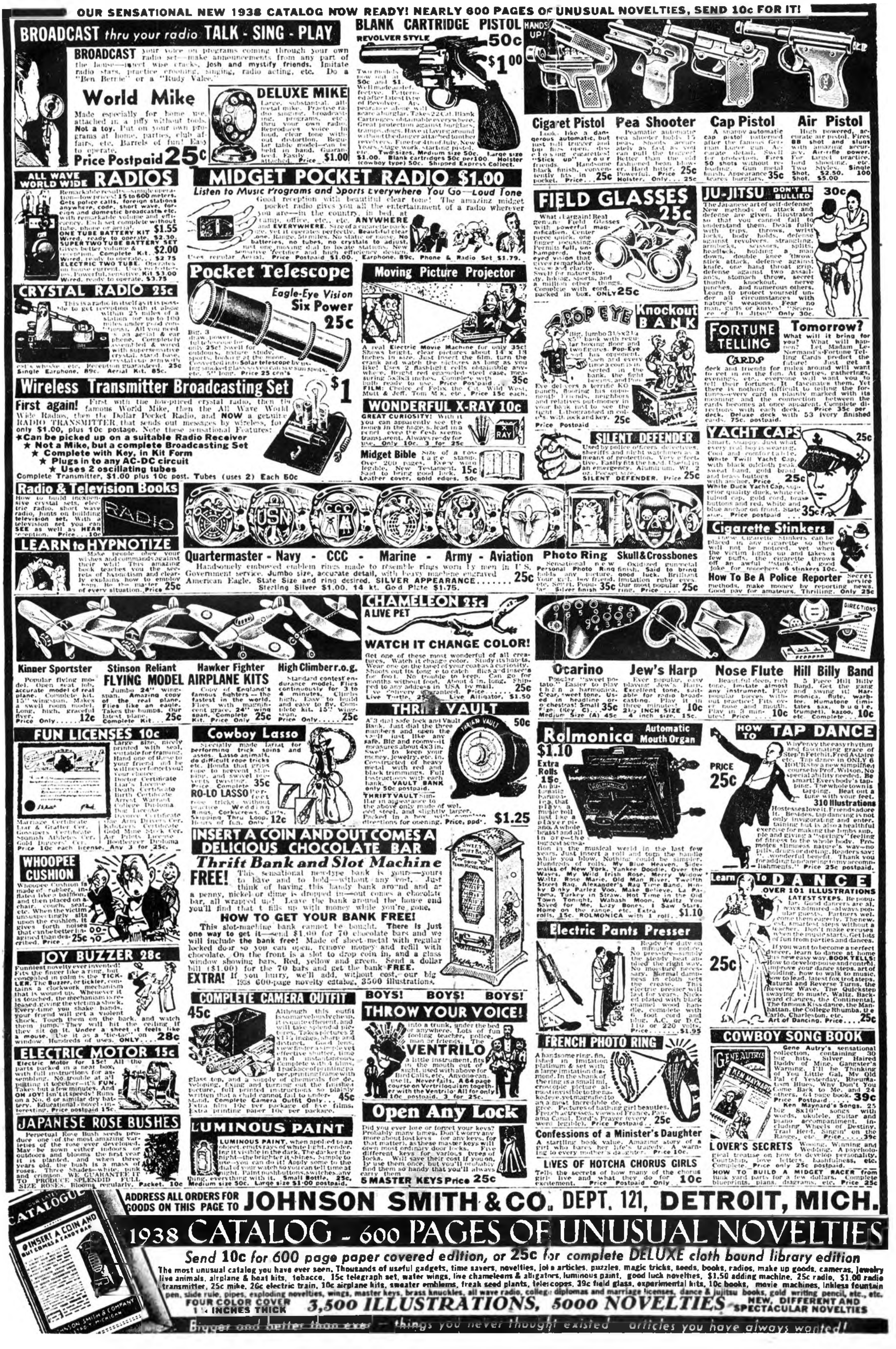

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