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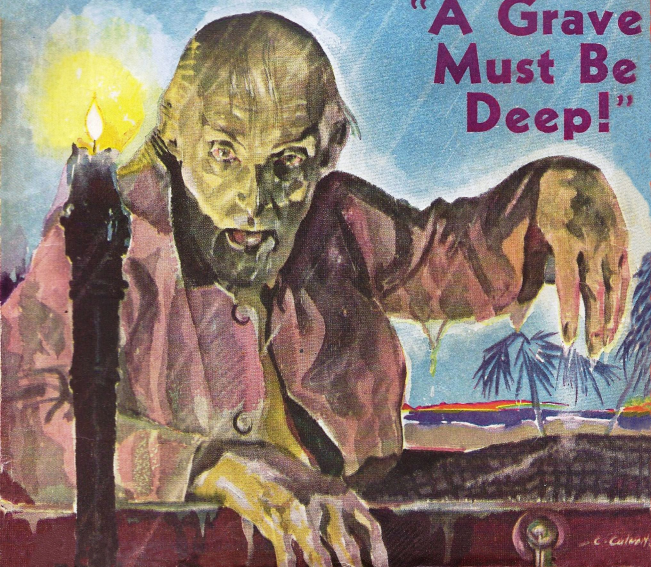
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ARGOSY



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14.00-28	\$2.15	14.00-28	\$2.25
14.00-30	\$2.15	14.00-30	\$2.25
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14.00-36	\$2.15	14.00-36	\$2.25
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14.00-420	\$2.15	14.00-420	\$2.25
14.00-422	\$2.15	14.00-422	\$2.25
14.00-424	\$2.15	14.00-424	\$2.25
14.00-426	\$2.15	14.00-426	\$2.25
14.00-428	\$2.15	14.00-428	\$2.25
14.00-430	\$2.15	14.00-430	\$2.25
14.00-432	\$2.15	14.00-432	\$2.25
14.00-434	\$2.15	14.00-434	\$2.25
14.00-436	\$2.15	14.00-436	\$2.25
14.00-438	\$2.15	14.00-438	\$2.25
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14.00-470	\$2.15	14.00-470	\$2.25
14.00-472	\$2.15	14.00-472	\$2.25
14.00-474	\$2.15	14.00-474	\$2.25
14.00-476	\$2.15	14.00-476	\$2.25
14.00-478	\$2.15	14.00-478	\$2.25
14.00-480	\$2.15	14.00-480	\$2.25
14.00-482	\$2.15	14.00-482	\$2.25
14.00-484	\$2.15	14.00-484	\$2.25
14.00-486	\$2.15	14.00-486	\$2.25
14.00-488	\$2.15	14.00-488	\$2.25
14.00-490	\$2.15	14.00-490	\$2.2

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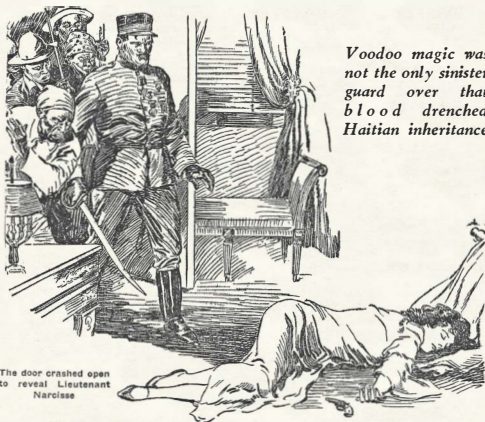
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A Grave Must Be Deep!

By THEODORE ROSCOE

Author of "That Son of a Gun Columbo," "Lady of Hades," etc.



Voodoo magic was not the only sinister guard over that blood drenched Haitian inheritance

The door crashed open to reveal Lieutenant Narcisse

*I Met Murder On The Way
He Had A Masque Like Castlereigh
Very Smooth He Looked, Yet Grim
Seven Bloodhounds Followed Him—
Masque of Anarchy*

CHAPTER I.

UNCLE ELI.

TAKE away those candles! It was that kind of light the first time I saw Uncle Eli; and the last. Guttery, windish light; the sort of glim to cast moving shadows and make the darkness darker than it is. None of that pallid glow for me. I like brighter hues. Reds and

indigos, chromes and autumn brown; the colors of daylight and of Patricia's cheeks and eyes and nose (with freckles on it) and hair. Nothing to remind me of wax or dusk-gray or frogbelly green. I hate black, too, but let's not dispel it with candles. They make me think of Uncle Eli.

Uncle Eli was not my uncle. He was not Pete's uncle, either, by relationship. I'd never heard or imagined such a relative in all those weeks I'd been struggling at her portrait (full length, life size, Pete in a summer frock with a big straw hat swinging in her hand—"Southern Hospitality, by E. E. Cartershall, '34") and

trying not to write valentines to her between poses on the side. I'd been that way about the girl for two years, but Pete was an expert at scorning me, saying love and paints didn't mix.

"None of this artists and models romance for me," she would chill me with a smile. "You've fallen for the portrait, not me. And it flatters my Roman nose."

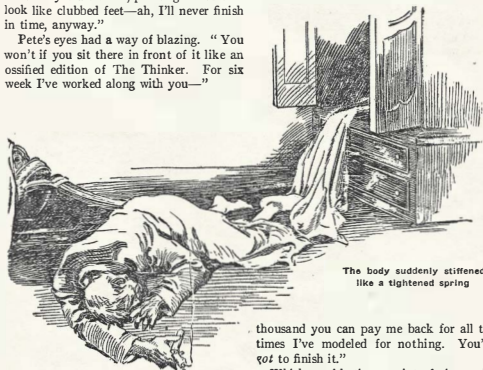
"Compared with you this daub is a cartoon," I'd groan. "Honest, Pete, I don't think it has a chance. I still think the background's too dark and that left hand—my old trouble, painting hands that look like clubbed feet—ah, I'll never finish in time, anyway."

Pete's eyes had a way of blazing. "You won't if you sit there in front of it like an ossified edition of *The Thinker*. For six weeks I've worked along with you—"

form to grab me by an ear. "I'm a model, not a critic, and I don't think this canvas is a masterpiece, but just as truly I think it has a chance. You know you can paint."

"If you hadn't kept telling me that, I'd be making an honest living, house to house, selling vacuum cleaners," I would complain.

"Cart, you've got to finish it! I've put my faith in you, and I'm banking on you to win the prize. Listen—it's a business proposition with me. If you win the five



The body suddenly stiffened like a tightened spring

"That's just it," I had to protest. "You stick with me in this garret and you'll starve. When you could work for Jeff Galata and—"

"Magazine covers! Look here, you! I've stuck so you could do something real. If you finish this for the Academy showing—"

"You've been a princess," I told her unhappily, "and I've turned out another piece of junk. I'll never finish it—"

That would bring her down off the plat-

form to grab me back for all the times I've modeled for nothing. You've got to finish it."

Which would sting me into furious self-reproach, and I'd start over again and paint like a fool until the next argument. Away down under, I didn't think my canvas had a prayer at this showing—one of those free-for-alls sponsored by a fat dilettante with two stomachs and a hatful of coin. Five thousand prize money, and just the sort of rainbow's-end contest to make a lot of hopefuls quit errand boy jobs and waste enough canvas to have rigged the Spanish Armada. My picture wasn't too sour—in that crisp organdie frock with her Leghorn

hat and a suggestion of blue dusk behind her, Pete's portrait might suggest a Watteau. I thought the tilt of the head gave it an air, and the pose wasn't entirely mannered, as the critics say. But I was almost certain the money would go to some Greenwich Village painting of a nude sunset like a fried egg or the Leaning Tower at midnight with no moon.

I didn't live in the Village, but inhabited a brownstone front on East Forty-fifth, five stories up under a skylight with a smell from an East River slaughter house wher. the wind was unkind. Pete washed her own stockings in a rented room on Thirty-eighth. She told me the first night I ran across her in Zoro's that she was an orphan from Miami, Florida, and I knew at once if I ever painted anything that could win a prize it would be a picture of Patricia Dale. As it should have been painted, I mean. Her eyes. Sometimes they were purple, sometimes indigo, when she wrinkled her nose they were blue with sunlight and when she was angry they were coral green. How can you paint eyes like that in a portrait, with only three weeks left to put them across?

"Stop the whining and work on it!" she reproached me, green-eyed, the night the showing was just ten days away. March thirty-first, it was, and in a couple of hours it would be April first (I have every bad reason to remember the peculiar date) and I hadn't touched the portrait for two days. A sour rain was chattering on the skylight and a piece of wallpaper was peeling off the ceiling and the attic was chill and shabby as something from a Russian novel. If I hadn't had a sense of humor and Pete hadn't phoned she was coming over I'd have felt an inch above the curb. Matter of fact, I had a German Luger pistol, relic of the War, in my table drawer, and had gone so low as to wonder if it was loaded.

THE day had started on its left foot with a hangover and a batch of bills and a call from the Greek landlord to ask me why the hell, Mr. Cartershall,

do I never pay the rent. I paid the rent and was sore because there wasn't enough left for an Easter gardenia for Pete.

Then Pete came over soaked in a coat much too thin for the weather, and sat for a while under the electric glare looking paler than was good for her. I tried to get in a mood to work on the expression about her eyes; fussed for an hour mixing paints; then didn't touch a brush to the dry canvas. We quarreled like panthers; I told her for the tenth time I'd never finish the portrait; she pronounced me lazy; and by then the light was too poor for anything.

At nine o'clock by the old grandfather alarm clock, we pushed the paints away and took it easy in front of the gas log, munching sandwiches and beer and smoking cigarettes and listening to the rain. Pete could look like summer, sitting there in her costume with the straw hat across her knees. But her bright smile did not fool me. I knew she was working Saturday mornings in a department store; and she had no business throwing in her lot with a fellow who should have been painting grocery calendars and couldn't do her justice. I had an unhappy impulse to get up and throw that attempted canvas out of the window.

Lucky I didn't. That portrait of Pete was going to have an amazing destiny.

There was a knock at the door. Thump, thump, thump on the panel. Fate was there, but answering the summons I didn't know it. I saw only the unwelcome person of Mr. Diogenes Karkavitsas, janitor, with a card in his hand.

He handed me a greasy, suspicious look and the card.

"Man downstairs, he's asking for Miss Dale. Says she's in your room. I wouldn't let him in, and he give me this."

Pete came over; together we looked at the card. No ordinary calling card, I can tell you, but more like an Easter greeting, engraved with gilt curleycues. Pete made a bewildered shrug at the name.

Maitre Pierre Valentin Bonjean Toussellines, LL.B., Comte de Limonade.

"Heavens, what a name. I couldn't possibly know such a man. French, too. Maitre means he's a lawyer. And Count of Lemonade!" Her eyes were wide blue, staring at the card. "Sounds like somebody from the court of Louis the Fourteenth or Alice in Wonderland."

"A thousand pardons, *ma'mselle*, but I am neither."

THE Greek janitor jumped with a start. So did Pete and I. The voice spoke out of nothingness in the dark hall. Then, in the creep of light from the door, we discovered a shadow in the blackness at the head of the stairs. The glimmer of rainwater on dark cloth. White eyeballs and a gleam of shining white teeth.

"Come on in, we know you, and April fool," I said.

The shadow stepped softly into full light, edged the janitor aside with a dignified gesture; and the April fool was on me. Standing in the room in a rainsoaked and ancient redingote, storm rubbers and stovepipe hat, under his arm an enormous umbrella that looked as if it had just been handed him by Mother Goose, was a little Negro, a dwarf of a man, as black and wizened as a raisin.

"Ma'mselle Dale?" He smiled and his face was all teeth. Then when he spoke it was an underslung jaw with a huge, purple lower lip under eyes like eggs. "Ma'amselle Dale, they told me at your lodgings I might find you at the apartment of *m'sieu*. My apologies for intruding uninvited, but there is need of haste. I come from *Morne Noir* as emissary of your Uncle Eli."

"Uncle Eli!" Pete gasped; and all at once there was a color in her eyes I had never seen there before.

So this is not a story of New York studio life, after all. Instead (if you must have art) it is a story of graveyard birds and gallows birds and the thumping of voodoo drums.

A story of tropic Haiti, and the candlelight that shone on the features of seven

murderous myrmidons and on the wan, green face of Uncle Eli.

BUT, of course, I didn't guess it just then. I fancy I stood staring at this goblin-like visitor and wondering what Aladdin's lamp he had stepped from, and staring again at Patricia, startled by the color in her eyes. For a moment the only sound in the room was the drumming of rain on the skylight, the drip of the umbrella making a puddle at the little black man's feet. Pete frowned.

"Uncle Eli," she repeated. "What is he up to now?"

To my astonishment the little old Negro uncovered a head as blue-black, bald and shiny as an ebony cannonball; crossed himself twice. "You Uncle Eli, *ma'mselle*, is up to nothing. Your Uncle Eli is dead."

"Dead!" Pete put a hand to her throat.

"Yesterday," said the apparition in the redingote. "The funeral will be day after tomorrow."

"Funeral," Pete whispered; and under her breath to me: "Cart, don't go away."

I wasn't going away. It was that thieving Greek janitor of a landlord who was retiring. At the word "funeral" he had let a squeak out of his throat; and we could hear his carpet slippers on the stairs. The little old Negro clapped on his stovepipe hat, crossing himself again.

"*Oui, ma'mselle*. I fear your Uncle Eli—was murdered!"

Something crawled on the back of my neck, and I came out of the trance. The thing was going too far. "Listen, Harlem," I snapped. "If this is a gag cut it short and get out of here before I boot you five flights to the street. Go back to your shine stand and tell the funny man who hired you to come up here in that costume that scaring ladies isn't as humorous as he thinks it is. And close the door."

He closed the door, but continued on the inside. Apparently Pete had not heard my outburst. "Uncle Eli," she was saying to herself. "Murdered. How awful. I suppose there were a lot of people who didn't like him."

Great Scott, maybe the thing wasn't a wheeze after all. The gnome ignored me with a blink. The purple lower lip was speaking again.

"Forgive me for startling you, but times flies. Four hours after your uncle's regrettable death, *ma'mselle*, I hurried from Cap Haitien. The fastest plane to Miami; on to New York. If I had not had to spend the early evening seeking your address—"

"How—how did *he* know where I lived?"

"How, *ma'mselle*? That I do not know. Your Uncle Eli came several times in the past few years to this city on business. There were, I believe, agents—"

"Oh—"

"You are unaware, perhaps, of the magnitude of his interests. Morne Noir, *ma'mselle*, is one of the largest estates in our Haitian Republic. There are many acres in cane. There is a sugar mill. *Alors*, there are his fishing interests over in La Gonave, also fifty thousand *gourdes* on deposit at the bank in Petianville and gold bonds in the Banque Nationale. Although sugar is down and the American exchange doing deplorably with many of his securities there, your Uncle Eli died a man of wealth, leaving a noteworthy fortune. The château at Morne Noir and an estate of some hundred thousand dollars."

"I'm not interested in Uncle Eli's estate," Pete said coldly. "If he was killed I'm sorry and hope justice is done. Thank you for bringing the—the news."

"As your Uncle Eli's lawyer and executor I was so commissioned. *Ma'mselle!* It was your uncle's instructions that I was to communicate with you immediately, if, when, and at such time as he should die. Yesterday afternoon it was, when your uncle was discovered seated in the library, dead with a book in his lap. It was his habit to go there during siesta hour and read. He was found by his personal physician, who, coming from the hospital at Cap Haitien, stopped in to call. Shot in the head. *Mon Dieu!* But no one was in the house at the time, *non!* No gun was dis-

covered, no tracks, nothing. His face was covered with blood. I saw it. In fact I followed the doctor into the house, arriving on the scene just after he extracted the bullet. A bullet from a nine millimeter automatic. The body was stiff. Dr. Sevestre said it had been dead one hour, and prepared it at once for burial. The police? *Poof!* The fools know nothing. Suicide, perhaps. Bah! Of that I will speak later. I can only say, *ma'mselle*, that you should feel interest in the estate as you have been named a possible heir."

PETE shook her head. "Not by Uncle Eli."

"In writing, *ma'mselle*. Along with several others."

"I'm not—"

"Pardon me," the lower lip said. The old man set the umbrella against the door; dug wildly in the bosom of the greatcoat, to produce an impressive envelope. A big white envelope sealed with a red rosette of sealing wax. He held it toward Pete. "*Voilà!* Here is the money, *ma'mselle*; more than adequate to take you by express plane to Miami and Cap Haitien. My instructions were to deliver this if you will go. *Bien.*"

Pete regarded the envelope with an expression of unbelief. "For me? Uncle Eli left money for me? To go to Haiti?" She threw back her head and laughed. "Pinch me, somebody. A hundred thousand estate! Uncle Eli! Oh, my!" She waved the straw hat at the ceiling. "Whee!"

"You will go to claim your legacy?"

"Will I go? Well, if I've been left some money I don't see why I shouldn't—"

"Then you must hurry, *ma'mselle*, for there is barely enough time. There is a plane for Miami early to-morrow which you must take. In Miami you will take a plane to Cap Haitien, and no time can be lost. Myself, I must leave to-night. I will be in Cap Haitien to meet you and will, myself, conduct you to Morne Noir. Attend! You cannot miss to-morrow's plane."

Pete stood very still. "To-morrow's plane?"

The little old Negro nodded. "For if you are not there to hear the reading of the will you forfeit any heritage. Such are the written instructions of the deceased." Another paper came out of the redingote. The white eyes travelled down the document, reading.

"The will now on file with Maître Tousellines' (at your service) 'is to be opened and read by said Maître Tousellines just prior to the burial service which is to be held in the library of Morne Noir on the midnight of the third day after the death of testator. The reading shall be made by Maître Tousellines to the heirs or devisees named and in the presence of my personal physician, Dr. Sevestre, as witness, and any other witnesses attendant to the burial service. An heir so named who fails to hear the reading and remain present throughout the funeral is automatically disinherited, with his or her share of the estate, as bequeathed in the will, reverting to the local government.'"

The old man droned the paragraph; yanked another leaf from his coat. "I have here the list of possible inheritors, the devisees, *ma'mselle*. Your name is included."

"And to collect my share I've got to leave for Haiti to-morrow and be there at the funeral."

"As stipulated, *ma'mselle*. I can only advise that the fortune is considerable, and it would be to your interest to go." He handed her the envelope with the money; stowed the papers back into the redingote; adjusted the stovepipe; clutched up the umbrella.

As for me, I was dizzy. The rain was still drumming on the skylight; that was real enough. But I would be disappointed if the darkey did not say "Abracadabra!" and vanish.

He opened the door and stood, crow-like, in the frame. "I will await you at the *douane* in Cap Haitien, *ma'mselle*. Permit me to remind you, if you do not go you forfeit your rights to a bequest. *Bon soir, ma'mselle*."

Pete stood looking at the envelope in her hand. I jumped to the door. "Wait a

minute," I called. "Any objection to Miss Dale's fiancée coming with her?"

Eyes looked up the stairs. "There are none so stipulated by the deceased, *m'sieu. Bon soir*."

"HOLD on," Pete said, as I closed the door. "Get that—that African lawyer back here. I'm not going to need this traveling fare because I can't go."

"Can't go? With a crack at this uncle's fortune of yours?" I blattered the King's English. "With this chance at a hundred thousand!"

Pete made a face. "He wasn't my uncle, Cart. Not really. Not even a close relative, thank God. I—I hated him."

"Who was he?"

"A fifth cousin of dad's, perhaps. And when father died he left me in the care of this hawk, Eli Proudfoot. He was my guardian. Ugh. Skinny. Big Adam's apple. Must have been fifty, then. Little glassy eyes like camera lenses. Kind of sneaked when he walked."

"But he's leaving you this—"

"I guess he had some money, even then. We lived in a mouldering old Florida house. I can still remember how his lips would sort of purse when he'd kiss me. I was ten. When I was seventeen he tried to make love to me—asked me to marry him. One of those horrible old Romeos. I couldn't stand it. I slapped his face and ran away. He simply boiled with rage, and threatened to have me brought back. I hid. Then I heard he'd gone to this place in Haiti and become sort of a white Emperor Jones or something. I haven't heard of him since. I don't wonder, really, that somebody took a shot at him. Once I saw him jab a lighted cigar into the flank of his saddle horse."

"Sounds sweet," I said. "But just the same he's relented, and cut you in on his will. A hundred thou—"

"I'm not—"

"You bet your sweet life you're not going down there alone. I'm going with you. I've got just time to borrow the fare from a friend and I can pack in a—"

"I'm not going, Cart."

"With that money just dropping in your lap?" I capered. "Don't stand there—" Then I saw where her eyes were. "Lord! Don't tell me you're thinking about that damned painting!"

"Cart," she said firmly, "do you think I'd step out on you just when you're getting it finished? You've got to work every minute of the next few days."

I could have wept. "Do you think I'd see you lose a fortune so I could miss winning that fool prize?"

"Listen," she blazed. "You told that black lawyer you were my fiancé. Well, E. E. Cartershall, you're not my fiancé. You've asked me to marry you often enough, but I'll tell you one thing right now. You'll never get an answer from me until that painting is finished!"

"But we'll take it with us," I hollered. "Look! I'll take it off the frame—it's dry, and won't hurt it a bit—and I'll carry it rolled up and when we get there I'll stick it on another frame and I'll paint while we're there and no time lost at all. I'll work in Haiti, see? Holy mackerel! don't toss any hundred grand for anything as simple as that. I won't let you. You're going, and I'm going with you."

"I won't go," Pete said.

She wouldn't have, either. And to tell you the truth, I was a little blue about all that money, because I knew what it meant. This business of the poor artist and the rich—but I didn't hint any of that in the argument.

CHAPTER II.

DEATH WATCH.

NOT many hours after that we were driving in a buggy through the dirtiest black rain I've ever seen, on the darkest road to any place but one. Maître Pierre Valentin Bonjean Tousèlines, LL.B., Comte de Limonade, drove what we could see of a horse, and was speaking of murder. Pete sat with her eyes glistening. The more I was seeing of Haiti the less I was liking it, the gladder I was

I'd insisted on coming with Pete and the brighter I felt for remembering to stick my Luger automatic in my Gladstone.

The rain was falling with a swishing sound, and away off in the blackness somewhere there was a faint *tumpy-bum-bum*, *tumpy-bum-bum*, like the beating of a heart.

When the wind blew the rain sheeting across the road the sound faded, and when the rain swung back in a drizzle the sound grew louder. You couldn't see your hand before your face outside the buggy curtains, but you could hear that sound. It was there like a presence. It had come with nightfall, along with us and the rain and the buggy-ride. I didn't like the sound and I didn't like the buggy-ride. I hadn't wanted to leave the seaplane out in the bay and go ashore in the rowboat to meet the little black lawyer—

The plane had come into the cape at twilight, and there was Haiti with darkness already pooling over the town along the shore. Palm trees and white roofs. A sort of hothouse steam in the air. A smell they told us was Cap Haitien. Jungle-green hills swooping up behind the town and steep mountains scowling high up in the dusk with clouds mumbling among dark cliffs. Pete was on needles and pins to get ashore, and fascinated by a ruin we could dimly see at the top of a distant mountain.

"Yeah," the pilot told her. "That's Christophe's Citadel. La Ferrière. This Christophe was the black king, emperor of Haiti around the time of Napoleon. Built that fort up there. Used to order his soldiers up there for discipline, an' command them to march off the cliff."

Pete nodded, "So that's the place. This Caribbean climate seems to make them grim."

"Yeah. This Christophe shot himself with a gold bullet, and they buried him in a lime pit up there," the pilot chuckled. "They say the hand didn't sink. They say it stuck out and reached at the sky. But you know these black Haitians. Believe anything. Voodoo charms and all that. You'll hear the drums, most likely. My-

self," said the pilot, "I don't like it here. Well—have a nice honeymoon."

"You're not even close," Pete told him crisply. "We're going to a funeral."

"I feel a little as if I were going to my own," I had to mutter later on when we were being sculled ashore in a red rowboat by a tan Negro in a pair of violet pants. The scene was done in shades of blue, blue-gray and green. The headlands of the cape were shadows; the purple mountains looming taller and darker as we neared the foreshore; the boat burred in a bay like dark wine. In the dusk I could make out our Senegambian attorney in the stovepipe hat, a silhouette on the dock. We were Charon's customers going to the Land of Shades, and there was the mortician waiting for the tickets.

"I DON'T know about this," I said to Pete.

"About what?" She sat with her feet on the luggage, my paintbox in her lap, the unfinished masterpiece hugged under her gabardine.

"About landing in this Negro republic after dark like this."

"I thought you were all for coming. Not scared, are you?"

"My teeth," I bowed haughtily, "are chattering. All the same, young lady, don't forget I'm—"

"You're not responsible for me, Mr. Cartershall. I'll take care of myself and you'll take care of yourself. All you've got to do is keep your mind on your business and paint."

Life does have its surprises. One evening you're under a skylight on Forty-fifth Street; two evenings later you're under a mountain range fringed with palm trees. And there was something somber about those hills. I was glad I'd had brains enough to wireless from Miami and ask the authorities about Master Tousellines. I hadn't told Pete; but the reply was in my pocket.

Master Tousellines, as far as the consular service knew, was a barrister in good standing.

He doffed the stovepipe to Pete, and without further greeting hurried us from the dock to an old Buick. We drove past shabby walls, down shabby streets in a darkness that prevented sightseeing. Pete exclaimed over a donkey cart under a street lamp and a Negress with a rooster perched on her turban. I glimpsed a couple of grille doorways I would have liked to sketch. Then we were on an open highway, and the landscape was gone.



CART

The black boy at the wheel drove like an idiot. The car squealed on the curves. Master Tousellines sat in silence in the front seat beside the chauffeur; and Pete and I were two sparks from cigarettes in the back seat. Three hours through the night at about sixty miles an hour, climbing most of the way. Now and then the headlamps picked out a palm tree, a dim wall or a pig, not stopping for the pig. At last the car halted in the middle of Nowhere. There was a huge gray tree bearded with Spanish moss, a bony horse tethered to a lower limb, a buggy posing for a case of rickets. Everybody out. The black chauffeur piled our luggage to the ground. Our guide indicated the buggy.

"We proceed, *ma'mselle*, in the carriage."

Pete appraised the vehicle doubtfully. "If that's an example of Uncle Eli's estate—"

"It is the only means of travel in this section, *ma'mselle*. By horse. The roads about Morne Noir are exceedingly difficult." He mined from his coat a silver watch as old as the buggy, the night, the tree and himself; snapped open the lid. "*Alors!* We have a trifle over an hour. Excuse me, but we must hurry."

SOMETHING wet splashed on my face, and away off in the dark I heard a faint, muted thumping. "It's going to rain," I growled. "And what's that sound?"

"It is the season of the *avalasse*, the bad weather," was the intoned response. "I fear we may be caught in the torrent. The sound, *m'sieu*, is that of a Rada drum."

"I could do without it," I confessed.

"So could I," Pete admitted, edging a little closer on the seat. "Cart, did you ever see a night as black as this?"

I never had. The buggy lamp was Futility on the dashboard, hissing in the rain. We were drawn by the steaming hindquarters of a horse into the blindest midnight that ever congealed under a waterfall. Maître Tousellines was the Invisible Man. There didn't seem to be a profile between the shadow of his coat-collar and the brim of the stovepipe hat. The reins and the whip appeared to move in midair of their own volition. Eyes and white teeth were all that remained of his face save when the lampshine touched with a radium-like luminescence his swollen lower lip.

The lower lip moved. "It is only the Rada drum. The plantation hands, *m'sieu*, are having a dance. It is a custom of the funeral ceremony in our country. You do not know of the Rada drum?"

"What's it about?" I asked.

The white eyes rolled, uneasy in their sockets. "There are three of them, you comprehend. *Maman*, *papa* and *boula*. Mamma drum, papa drum, baby drum. There will be a service in the *houmsfort* on the Morne, an invocation to Damballa. The drums are asked to ward off evil spirits from the dead, and you hear them replying, *mamma*, *papa* and *baby*."

"Cute," Pete said.

We drove in the pitch black rain listening to *mamma*, *papa* and *baby* warding off evil spirits. Water flogged the buggy-top, whipped the sidecurtains, spattered in brown showers over the dashboard. The buggy was a frail thing in that downpour, a flimsy trap of wheels and sticks swimming us uphill. I made three attempts to light a fresh cigarette in the wet, and gave it up. I could feel Pete getting mad. There wasn't any road; only the *clap, clap, clap* of our soaked beast and the *thumpy-bum-bum* going on in the blackness.

"Myself," said the Invisible Man beside me, "I do not believe in such things, you comprehend. I am an educated man, *m'sieu*, and have studied law in Paris and New Orleans. Perhaps it is well for me to warn you that the Haitians of the district about Morne Noir are those of a peasant order. I can assure you I have no faith in their primitive beliefs and will do all possible to felicitate the business of *ma'mselle* at hand."

"You don't expect any troublesome delays?" I snapped.

"*Mais non, m'sieu*. Only—Haiti is a, I am sad to confess, country the somewhat primitive. In the matter of a homicide, for example."

"You were going to tell me something about Uncle Eli's demise," Pete remembered.

THE white eyes revolved in the blank between the tophat and the collar.

"It is only that I do not trust the ability of the local gendarmerie, *ma'mselle*. The inspector from the Garde d'Haiti was working on the case when I left for New York. A clear case of suicide, he reports. But the facts are as I have told you. *M'sieu* Proudfoot had gone to the library as was his custom for the afternoon siesta. The house was empty. Dr. Sevestre found *m'sieu* seated in a chair with a book in his lap, his face streaming blood and a bullet in his head. I entered not ten minutes later to see the doctor plucking the bullet from the forehead of the deceased. The

doctor covered the face with a handkerchief and together we carried the corpse to a room where the doctor set about preparing it for burial. The body was very stiff."

"Nicy story for a rainy night," I said.

"It doesn't sound like Uncle Eli to commit suicide," Pete suggested.

"He was in excellent health, *ma'mselle*. And then, as I pointed out, where was the gun? *Non!* the doctor had the bullet which was later determined of nine millimeter calibre. But no gun. I made a tour of the library, and later a quick search of the grounds beyond. No gun, no tracks, nothing. I have learned that there was an *enquête* (which corresponds to the inquest of your country, only there was at *Morne Noir* no coroner) during which the police hinted at Dr. Sevestre. Perhaps the doctor, on entering the library, had fired the shot. But I saw the doctor enter the house, and I stood without on the veranda for some ten minutes. I heard no shot. And then the body was exceedingly stiff with rigor mortis. It was, I assure you, an unhappy sight."

Pete made a little sound in her throat. "I'm sure it was."

"But the police, bah! they are only capable of arresting chicken thieves. That inspector. His decision was of the most pompous. If there are no traces of a murderer found, says he, then who can say there is murder?"

"I asked about the gun. *Alors*, is his reply, perhaps one of the servants stole into the library, saw the gun, picked it up and fled in fright."

"Can't say as I'd have much faith in the local constabulary," I said.

"They are blacks, *m'sieu*, of the most thick-headed. I said as much to this inspector. The case is to be closed as suicide, he told me. He said that was the only possible explanation. That and—and—and one other explanation—"

Rain swirled through the buggy, and gave us a dousing. The lamp *szzzzzed* and went out, and everything vanished. "Woosh," Pete spluttered dismally. "And what explanation was that?"

"He said—" the voice beside me lowered, seemed to sink into something hollow, "the inspector said your Uncle Eli might have been murdered by a *zombie!*"

"What's a *zombie?*" Pete questioned him.

"A *zombie*," the hollow voice sank almost below the black rain, "a *zombie*, *ma'mselle*—but understand that I, *Maitre Tousellines*, am a man of education and do not believe such things. But the Haitians of this district, *ma'mselle*—in a case like this—well, *ma'mselle*, as your Uncle Eli's lawyer it is scarcely—it is scarcely conformant for me to speak so of a client, but *M'sieu Proudfoot* was a hard man. Of a temper, you comprehend me. In matters of discipline. There were several whom he punished most severely, and two, I believe, he killed in self defense—"

"What's a *zombie?*" I demanded.

"A *zombie*, *m'sieu*," the hollow voice bassooned to a gurgle, "a *zombie* is one who has died but is not dead. A corpse resurrected by witch doctor's magic from the grave. A living dead man who returns as the slave of some master, who may labor in the field or walk unseen with silent steps on errands of revenge. It is the unfortunate belief of the Haitian inspector, *ma'mselle*, that your Uncle Eli—but I do not believe such nonsense—that your Uncle Eli may have been murdered by a *zombie*."

There was a tremendous spate of rain during which the buggy seemed to go sweeping up the road; then an abrupt drizzle and the pitch dark filled with the booming of drums.

"But here," said *Maitre Tousellines*, "we are."

I looked up and saw an angel.

IT was standing beside the buggy with its head floating high in the mist; a giant of a thing some twenty feet tall, arms folded and chin bowed on chest, wet robes hanging limp to the sandals, wings swooped together at rest, sentinel on a massive cube of granite. Light, sifting watery through a fan of patent leather trees, made to glis-

ten the brook that ran from the angel's nose; touched a shine to the massive sad face. The sightless eyes looked down at me. The thing must have weighed in at six tons. Too heavy for the wings, so the fellow got around on rollers that stuck out from under the granite platform, and, attached to his ankles, a block and tackle.

"Well, hallelujah!" Pete looked out at the angel. "That's not Uncle Eli's ghost?"

The lawyer said no, the angel standing watch in the rain beside the road was not Uncle Eli's ghost. It was, said the lawyer, Uncle Eli's *pierre tumulaire*.

"His tombstone, *ma'mselle*. Some months ago he ordered the marble and had the cutters contrive this monument. Perhaps you know M'sieu Proudfoot was given to, one might say, the eccentric. It is my opinion that death, these last several years, had been preying on his mind."

"Not getting religious, was he?"

"Then he ordered a coffin, a rosewood coffin, built by the local carpenter. He locked it in his private store room and often, I am told, would sit alone with the casket, reading the Bible and sometimes other—other books. About the grave and the interment his instructions, in writing, are most explicit. He marked out the spot, himself. On the *morne* a half mile from the house, a place overlooking the sea. Under an ancient silk cotton tree, and the grave must be ten feet deep."

"Cart," Pete whispered to me, "does it strike you this affair is getting a trifle morbid?"

That was how it struck me. The old black lawyer was nodding to himself. "I have instructed the gravediggers."

"Let's get on with it," I snapped. "Do we get out here?"

We got out. I stood up to my shoetops in mud and helped Pete from the buggy, while the wet stone angel looked on. All the time the drums were tubbing louder and not funnier, and, no matter the shine sneaking through the trees, there wasn't enough light to see a match by. I could hear water guttering and draining, and

the air was vaporous with smell of woods, dank green. Then a lantern came swimming through the gloom, bringing an old man. A thin, cordovan-leather Negro in a flag-striped suit and a floppy sombrero, with a whisker like a goat's tuft on his chin. He bleated Haitian at Master Touselines, who promptly snatched the lantern.

"This is Cornelius. Your Uncle Eli's house boy."

"Then he didn't kill Uncle Eli," Pete nudged me. "Servants never turn out to be murderers in mystery plays."

WITH that woody smell and the stone celestial looming in the gloom, it was like disembarking in a cemetery. The lawyer consulted his timepiece. "*S'il vous-plait*, it is nearing midnight. If you will follow me."

We followed him while the tufted Cornelius brought up the rear, towing the dilapidated rig. Single file we ascended a soggy path through a bowered corridor of mossy trees flanked by tall, wet ferns.

"Ugh," Pete breathed. "I feel as if I were stepping on frogs."

I didn't breathe anything. That newlywed couple of drums and their infant were breaking a lease, and I didn't fancy the neighborhood. The path made a wriggle; entered a valley cleared for a broad sweep of compound. The valley was like a great bowl scooped out under the sky, with a crust of jungle timber on its upper rim and its curved sides dim with mist. A row of shabby plaster huts were hugged together near our path; outbuildings, cookhouses, hencoops, servants' quarters. The largest hut in the huddle was agog with sound and lights.

Bonfire yellow streamed from the crooked windows; the boom-thumped air shook a parade of dancing shadows across the bright door. I glimpsed a roomful of blacks, crones and children cavorting around what might have been an altar. Candles winked in smoky fists, black arms grabbed at the ceiling; a white goat stood on the altar and said, "Baaaaaa!" One couldn't spy the drums, but the whole val-

ley vibrated with the racket. The place smelled.

"*Voilà!*" our guide informed us, revolving his eyes. "It is the *houmfort*, the temple of mystery. I do not, myself, approve of voodoo. But the *château*, it is not far—"

We hurried through what once had been a garden and was now a ruin of shrubs, muddy cornfields, hodge-podged with hydrangea, breadfruits and flower beds, passing a weedy-smelling pond outlined by a concrete walk. The *bassin* where we could bathe, Tousellines announced. The swimming pool.

"Don't they ever stop drumming?"

"It will continue for a while, *m'sieu*. A ceremony that will last for a day after the burial. But then"—we were crunching up a curving gravel drive—"here is the *château*. Welcome to *Morne Noir*."

We couldn't see much of that manse in the darkness, but I had the impression of a ship that had somehow drifted inland on the rain and keeled on its beam against the hillside. Two stories of gargoyles and ramshackle gingerbread, fronted with a tiered veranda that lost itself around either end, the wings blotted out in night. The walls were a sprawl of dim plaster; Spanish moss dripped from the upper gallery; thick vines screened the veranda like weeds on the hull of a sunken vessel. Shrubs clung around the lower part of the house, and to one side I made out a hydrangea bed and a thicket of coconut palms.

A coach dog that had apparently ossified to green iron stood guard on the terrace. The door was lighted by a red globe such as one used to see on fire-boxes. The red glow sifted out through the gloom; and I didn't need to go into the reception hall to know it would take a heap of living to make this house a home.

The hall smelled like an old hotel. There was an impressive stairway swooping down from a mezzanine; a barn-high ceiling and an upper gallery that ran around the hall like the one on the outside of the house. Electric grape chandeliers clustered under the ceiling. Sliding doors closed near the

entryway, and a glimpse of more closed doors above and below.

PETE said, "Who!" taking off her hat and shaking her hair. Cornelius bell-hopped the bags up the stairway, and I tossed my wet hat on a horsehair settee, listening to Tousellines advising us we were to have the two large front rooms in deference to the lady guest.

Pete regarded the paneling. "Mahogany, too. Notice the carving, Cart. That's French. What's that sound?"

It was not the inescapable drumming, but an eld, clicking sound that came from a door down the hall.

Tousellines waved. "It is the billiard room. The other guests are there. I have assigned them to rooms off this lower hall so you may have the upper house to yourselves. *Dieul* we have but five minutes before the funeral."

"Where—is Uncle Eli?"

"All is ready, *ma'mselle*, in the library. I suggest you and *m'sieu* enter at once while I summon those others. *Bien!*" Shedding the stovepipe, he stepped to open the sliding doors. I took a breath and Pete's arm, and we marched in. Into a long, misty-lit room with tall, blinded windows, walls regimented to the ceiling with dark books, everything exuding a nostril-clogging aroma of decay and fust. A man in a white linen suit stood engloomed at the elbow of a gigantic leather-and-buttons armchair.

Maitre Tousellines exclaimed: "Dr. Sevestre!"

The man looked up. His face, in that light, was mulatto-saffron, Aryan-featured. He wore a black toothbrush mustache. His eyes were shoe buttons. He tossed something from hand to hand, gave Pete and me a swift scrutiny, nodded at the lawyer.

"It is time?"

"In a moment. This is *M'sieu Proudfoot's* niece, Miss Dale, and her fiancé."

"You're the doctor who found Uncle Eli?" Pete said.

"He was seated in this very chair, *ma'mselle*. It may have been suicide,"

the doctor spoke loudly, "but," his voice lowered to a whisper, and I could hear Maître Tousellines' footsteps retreating down the hall, "but such is not my opinion. Your uncle's spirits were good; health excellent. Barring a slight cirrhosis of the liver and a beginning aneurism of the heart, which I disclosed by my autopsy, his condition was sound—"

Pete backed away from the chair. I saw the doctor was tossing a bullet in his hand.



PETE

Only it wasn't the doctor, capturing my attention right then. It was the scene at the other end of the library; the huge rosewood coffin mounted silent before a half-circle of empty chairs.

It was stark. No flowers. Nothing. Just the coffin and the chairs and the four giant candles that stood, two at the head, two at the foot, of the casket. The candlelight wiggled, and the pale glow fell on the wan, green face of an old man. It was not a nice face, even in death, at a distance. The eyes were shut tight, the blue mouth was a trap, the head was bald but for a few white wisps, the nose was sharp as a blade. The skin was stretched like tinted writing paper over the bony cheeks, and there was a strip of adhesive tape on the prominent forehead.

The coffin dwarfed its occupant; he looked like some unwholesome doll in a box too large for it; his pillowed profile casting a goblin shadow on the wall, like a silhouette scissored from black paper and

pasted there. It was too late at night for this sort of thing.

"Poor Uncle Eli," Pete said quietly.

"I told the mourners not to start a game of billiards," the physician scolded.

Drums muttered softly beyond the shuttered windows; and I stared at the dead man's folded hands and wished for a cigarette. Somewhere a clock began to grind and strike; loud voices were moving up the hall. I turned to see Maître Tousellines march through the portals, watch in palm; and herded at his heels such a group of persons as I never hope to see feregathered anywhere again. There were seven of them.

As Pete whispered to me afterwards, "Somebody must have left the door open at the jail."

THERE was a bony man in a plaid cape, rumped evening clothes, black spats and one of those peaked Sherlock Holmes caps you see only in England and cartoons. He strolled in chewing the Ivory knob of an ebony stick, a diet that couldn't nourish his pinched, old maidish face with the type of nose generally characterized as a snout, and eyes that were little triangles of blue water under hairy brows. We were asked to meet Sir Duffin Wilburforce, K.C.S.I.

He said, "Cheer-o," to me, and, "Charmed, my dear," to Pete. He screwed a monocle into his eye. The eyeglass flickered like a dim lamp in his face. A pale thread of a scar running from his eye down his jawbone was the electric wire to the lamp. He bowed over the stick. "I knew your uncle well, my dear. Gad! Doesn't he look natural?"

I'm sure the sailor who followed this Briton was announced by a name, but I was to remember him merely as "the Ensign," accent on first syllable. A square, copper-faced man wearing what seemed to have been an American naval officer's uniform. Gold frogs were frayed on the sleeve, but the buttons were missing, allowing the coat to flap open and give outsiders a peek at a naked stomach and a chest covered with hair and tattooing. He carried an

oilskin reefer over an arm and wore one of those cod-liver-oil sou'westers aft on his head. His eyes were Alice-blue, and I didn't like them or the heavy revolver slung on his bullet-heavy belt.

"How they goin'?" he said in a voice that made nails of the words and grinders of his teeth. Leaning against a shelf of encyclopedias, he plucked a pipe from his pants and began to load it as if it were a gun, stuffing ammunition from a red tobacco can. I could have said, "Not so good," for I was meeting the man entitled Ti Pedro.

Ti Pedro said nothing at all. He didn't like me, either. Six feet of coffee-colored gristle speckled with green freckles, he stood with hands a-dangle; stared thoughtfully at Pete and me. He was naked to the middle save for tiny gold earrings and a hardboiled egg depended by a string from his throat. Dominican, Maître Tousellines told us, and at some time or other in a glamorous past, the tongue had been cut from his mouth. A mutilation which seemed to have deprived him of his speech.

"And this, if you please, is Ambrose."

WELL, I didn't please, but it didn't mean a thing to the tubercular-looking boy in the green jersey and slicker-bottom pants who sidled forward to stare at Pete. His hair and eyelashes were white, albino, loaning his eyes a sleepy, feathery look that was nasty. He carried a billiard cue in one hand and ran the back of the other across his mouth, fanning his eyelids at the girl. "Geez, it's been a long time since I seen a pretty twist." Then his eyes were here, there, everywhere, running like caged mice in his head. "Let's go—that stiff kind of gets me."

"They're getting better as they go along," Pete whispered. "Look at these."

These were an Aunt Jemima done with a ton of charcoal, leading a tame gorilla. Only it wasn't a gorilla, and I was to discover it wasn't tame. Instead it was a woolly headed Jamaican Negro with a face like a moose on the shoulders of a colossus.

Never able to support such shoulders, the legs bowed outward to form an "O," giving him a rolling gorilla walk to match the face. Maître Tousellines called it Toadstool, and we met its mother, the Widow Gladys. A billow of melting milk chocolate dressed up in chintz and a polkadot turban. A mouth like a slice of watermelon and teeth that were black seeds. Her five chins dripped in the heat while she studied us with eyes the color of tea. She had but one arm—the left being a dimple in a stub of shoulder—and she cuffed the ineffable Toadstool out of her way, and trampled forward to wish us a good evening.

"Cut it short," Ambrose whined out. "Get the Nazi in here and let's start the show."

Spurs clinked down the library, bringing a shadow straight at us from Unter den Linden. Tousellines said, "This is Manfred." He came at us with an odor of rum, stalwart and Prussian from toes to faded tassels. The uniform, the mustache, bullet jaw, trained scowl were ghosts from Berlin, the sort of ghosts that used to frighten the Allied staff during the War and precisely the kind you'd never expect to be haunting the island of Haiti. Iron crosses on his chest, a black automatic on his hip, he was grim enough without that angry, liver-colored birthmark blotched across his cheek. And he was drunk as a toper. Standing very straight, he belched, "*Gesundheit!*" and saluted the coffin.

"Sit down," Maître Tousellines ordered querulously. "I am going to read the will."

There was a scramble for the chairs.

CHAPTER III.

REST IN PEACE!

"I ELIAS PROUDFOOT, being of sound mind and healthy body—"

Three pictures, that midnight, were to nail themselves in the gallery of my memory. The first was that row of so-called faces, ranged half-moon before the coffin— The Englishman's electric light monocle; the En-sign's pipe; Ambrose's

fluttering eyes; Ti Pedro's tongueless mouth ajar; Toadstool's leer; the sweat-pearls on Widow Gladys's chins; Manfred's birthmark glowing like a stove burn—that batch lined up as if to start a game of Going to Jerusalem, and the little old lawyer, front and center, to referee the fun. When the lawyer faltered among “wherefores” and “hereuntos” to draw his own breath, nobody breathed, and the room was abysmal with the echo of pounded drums. And then the face of Uncle Eli with its blade-like nose poked above the cowl of the coffin, that strip of adhesive mending the punctured forehead, and the silhouette behind it on the wall.

“*Do hereby set my signature to the following last will and testament drawn by me in accord with the laws of the Republic of Haiti—*”

Cornelius was an ashen shadow hovering against the Complete Works of Bulwer-Lytton; and Dr. Sevestre stood behind me with legs apart, pitching that lead pea from hand to hand. Pete tightened her fingers on mine.

Maitre Tousellines untangled red tape in the preamble, and arrived at the body of his document.

“*It is therefore my command that if, when or at such time as I die: A—My body be autopsied and embalmed by Dr. Sevestre. B—Burial shall take place no sooner or later than three days after death. C—The funeral be of Voodoo ritual conducted by the hogan, Papa Leo, in manner of the Service Legba. D—That I shall be buried in my rosewood coffin in the assigned spot chosen by me on the morne, the grave to be exactly ten feet deep and the monument immediately mounted on the grave. E—That an iron stake exactly eleven feet long shall be driven down into the grave through the exact heart of the buried casket. Any omission or addition to the above renders this will null and void.*”

The old lawyer's voice had ducked into his collar again; he stopped to fish it out. Beyond the window screens the drums were taking a quicker tempo; and an uneasy stir passed down the line of chairs.

“Well, the *verdammte* old fool!” The harsh outburst exploded from the German. “A stake in the grave, *hein?* He was afraid they would get him for a *zombie!*”

“Stow it, Nazi,” the En-sign advised. “Can't you see the boss has a relative here?”

At the word “relative” the mourners leaned forward to stare at Pete. Sir Duffin picked the glass from his eye and winked his triangles solicitously. “Pay no attention to the Boche, my dear. The blighter is drunk.”

“Who is drunk?”

“You are!”

“Pipe down, swabs, this is a funeral.”

“Hush yo' mouf,” the Widow Gladys injected, slapping Toadstool a maternal smack on the ear. The black boy had been staring at Pete.

Ambrose whinnied, “That stiff is givin' me goose pimples; can't you snap into it, Lemonade?”

MAITRE TOUSELLINES flashed the youth a sour glance; turned several pages of manuscript. “The clauses of the will shall be executed, *messieurs*. It will be necessary to drive the stake in the grave.”

“He was afraid they would catch him for a *zombie*,” the German repeated with a sullen wag of the head. The seven faces stared at the casket. Ti Pedro, the coffee-colored Dominican, fingered the egg on his wishbone, mumbling under his breath. Pete hugged my arm and tried to look as if she'd spent many an evening at similar funerals.

“But this is most absurd,” the doctor spoke out behind me. “Attend, Tousellines, cannot you omit these details? For the sake of *ma'mselle?*”

The lawyer mopped his blue-black forehead with a lavender handkerchief. “It is the will and my instructions were to read the same.” His eyes rolled down the arc of chairs. “Stop that noise, Ti Pedro. Have you forgotten that such talismans are against the law?”

“The hell with the law,” the En-sign

gestured his pipe. "What is this, anyhow? Did the Old Man leave us anything or not?"

"We now come to the devisees. To claim heritage they must hear the reading of the will and remain throughout the funeral ceremony. I ask you to give complete attention. It says: '*To each of the following named who shall remain at Morne Noir for the appointed period of time, I do devise and bequeath as follows—*'"

And then it was that the extraordinary cadaver in the rosewood coffin tossed its verbal bomb. One hears the term "mouth-piece" for a lawyer? I know where it came from. Lawyer Tousellines swivelled his eyeballs at Sir Duffin Wilburforce, and it was as if the little black man speaking was the dummy, but the ventriloquist lay in the rosewood casket, jerking the invisible strings.

"*To my overseer, Sir Duffin Wilburforce, I leave my entire property, real and personal, valued at one hundred thousand dollars, provided the heir so named does not leave Morne Noir in any way, shape or manner for twenty-four hours after the driving of the stake in my grave. Should the heir so named fail to carry out this stipulation, the estate falls to—*

"*Number Two: My plantation manager, Ti Pedro, provided he does not leave Morne Noir in any way, shape or manner for twenty-four hours after the driving of the stake in my grave, in default of which the estate falls to—*

"*Number Three: My master pilot, Ambrose Jones—*"

Provided he did not leave Morne Noir in any way, shape or manner for a similar period, in which case the estate went to Number Four: one stable boy, named Toadstool. If Toadstool defaulted the heritage fell to Number Five: his mother, the Widow Gladys, housekeeper. The Ensign "business manager" was listed Number Six. Captain Manfred von Gottz, "bodyguard," Number Seven. "*With the estate falling to each so named in numerical succession in event of default by the preceding heir, and lastly to my ward,*

Miss Patricia Dale. So reads my last will and testament. Hereby subscribed and signed by me—Eli Elijah Proudfoot.'"

That was Uncle Eli's will! Maître Tousellines stowed it under his coat tails with a nod, and for a minute that funeral parlor had all the atmosphere of a spider's dream. Rage, disappointment, jubilation, unbelief capered across the features of heirs numbered One to Seven, flushed their faces all the colors of the rainbow. Toadstool leapt to his feet and his mother struck him down. Ambrose was counting on his fingers. "I'm sixth," came the Ensign's sardonic drawl. Sir Duffin Wilburforce whipped to his feet, monocle blazing. "Don't worry, you rotter! Or any of you. It'll never get to you. I'm first, first, first, d'you hear? It's mine!"

OUTSIDE the drums were bombing and booming. The mourners shouted. A chair went over. There was powder in that last will and testament, and I wanted most strenuously to get Pete out of there, and by the look in her eyes she wanted to go.

But the spider's dream went into a spider's nightmare; and an ancient Negro in an unscrupulous flannel nightshirt was standing in the library door.

"Papa Leo!" Maître Tousellines croaked.

The Haitian priest started forward, chanting. He wore a wreath of yellow daisies on his head, carried a dead white goat under his arm, a big red candle in his hand, and was followed by four black stevedores in nightshirts. These golems came down the library, lifted the rosewood casket to their shoulders without so much as a by-your-leave, and staggered, grunting like piano movers, for the door.

Ambrose cried, "Let's go!" and I felt the way I did when I smoked my first cigar. The mourners dashed out like rats on the heels of the Hamelin piper, and Pete and I were deserted among books and overturned chairs and blue shadows.

"Those brutes!" she tugged my sleeve. "All they want is his money. And he—"

it's pathetic the way he wanted them at his burial service. Cart, the least I can do is go; see him to his—"

We left the château and tagged the professional into the night. The drizzle had terminated. A cheesy moon lurked behind curdled clouds; the landscape was gray. At the bottom of the compound the drums were going like express trains, hurrying the black priest with the candle, the sweating pallbearers, the trailing crowd. That's the second picture I won't forget. That funeral cortège. Papa Leo in the lead; the trotting stevedores, casket swinging aloft; those seven outlandish mourners doing no mourning in the wake.

The parade cut crosslots through the wet, leafy black; taking that path where Pete had thought she was stepping on frogs. When he came to the station where the angel had stood, I saw the celestial had departed (taking fright, I had no doubt) leaving deep ruts in the mud. Farther on we overtook the angel, impelled uphill by a team of twenty black mules, a great to-do of equally black muleteers, much cracking of whips and jangling of harness and laying on of hands. Screeching and squealing on wooden rollers, the monument mounted the slope, a knot of glistening darkies shoving and cursing the thing on its way.

Then picture the noble brow of that hill above the bowl of the valley, with a great tree standing lonely against the sky, the moonray silvering the skinless limbs, the Caribbean curving beyond. Two half naked blackamoors panting on long-handled spades, and a black rectangle like a shadow across the earth beneath the tree. I don't know what morbid impulse moved me, but I remember taking a nervous peek into that grave. A deep excavation with brown puddle water glistening on the bottom.

Papa Leo, the *hougan*, hung the dead goat on a limb of the dead tree; then stood over the grounded coffin, waving the dripping candle and singing *gulaba-gulaba-gulaba-gulaba* like a wattled turkey, while the four pallbearers bayed on their knees: "*Moon li mort! Moon li mort!*" which was Haitian for "the man is dead."

Meantime the angel came barging up the heights, the drums throbbed like aching teeth, the presumptive heirs waited eager-eyed, candlelight fluttered on the wan, green face of the old man in his pink long-box. I wasn't sorry when the black priest hushed his liturgy, and the pallbearers set to work nailing a massive lid on that rosewood casket.

I WASN'T sorry to see the coffin lowered down the grave; to hear the hollow thump of earth-clods on its cover. But then we must stand there till the grave was filled, the mound levelled off, the earth packed hard; stand there and watch the business of the iron stake. Maître Tousellines, a shade lighter in color than before, fetched that solid crowbar from behind the tree. The gravediggers produced sledge hammers. Papa Leo held the monstrous spike in place.

W/sang, bang, whang, bang! You've seen them drive tent-pegs in the circus? But this wasn't the circus. This was a new grave high on a night-swept bluff and an iron post sinking into the dirt. When but three feet of stake remained above ground, its point encountered a subterranean obstruction down below. Pete turned away, and I wish I had. The hammer blows fell harder; there was a sudden give—a sort of *wkuff!*—and the stake drove level to the ground.

"*Dormie pa'foom' M'sieu Proudfoot!*" was Papa Leo's benediction. Maître Tousellines crossed himself, and echoed the blessing. "Let the dead sleep sweetly—"

We got away from the hill just as the mules were hauling the six-ton angel into his sentry station atop the grave. The mourners scattered on separate paths; I don't know how they reached the château. Picking our way through the dark, Pete and the old lawyer and I made the journey down the valley in dismal silence.

IT was two o'clock when I stood in that mouldy upper room with Pete, and grabbed into my Gladstone for a quart of Scotch. "Sleep sweetly," I had

to comment. "Well, I must say your uncle fixed it so he'd be the only one after his funeral who could. Do you want yours straight or without ginger ale? I'm sitting up all night. To-morrow we clear out of here."

Pete frowned. "Maybe it hasn't occurred to you, Cart, but—"

"But what?"

"I—I spent all my money coming down here. There wasn't any return fare. And



SIR DUFFIN

you heard uncle's will. No chance—not that I'd want any part of it—of my inheriting the estate, but it looks as if I might have to stay the twenty-four hours, anyway and— Cart, where's the painting? I must have left it with my things down in the hall. If anything happens to your canvas—"

She was gone before I could swallow, the door blowing shut behind her. I listened to her quick steps down the stairs; capped the bottle and tossed it aside; ran to the door. Dampness had warped the sills, and I had a moment's tussle with the knob.

Bam! Wham! In the night somewhere there were two jarring reports. I whirled, sped across the room, kicked open the blinds, stepped out on the upper veranda. And that was the third picture I was to remember of that night. The lawn below eerie with moonlight. A man in white linen suit reeling drunkenly across the turf,

crossing the gravel drive, wavering to pat the iron coach dog, then turning half-buckled to fall face-up on the grass. He drew up one knee, then lay still. It was Dr. Sevestre.

And a man I never saw before crashed out of the veranda below, raced headlong across the terrace. He was a brown man in a brown uniform, all buckles and Sam Browne belt. "I saw it," he bawled in English. "I saw it, in the name of the Law. This is murder, and no man may leave the premises!" He waved a bright sabre and his cheeks pouted on a whistle. Boots ran on the gravel. Presto! the lawn was crowded with uniformed men.

CHAPTER IV.

NOBODY CAN LEAVE!

PETE had run up the stairs. When I ducked back into the room she was wide-eyed in the doorway, the rolled canvas under her arm, my case of paints in her hand. It was no moment for oil colors, either. Whistles were shrilling in the night; boots racing all over the chateau. Down the compound the drum family continued its bolero, while a dead man watered the lawn with his blood.

"Right here," I told her, "we say good-by to Haiti."

She dropped her bundles on the bed. "What's happened? I—it sounded like shots."

"Somebody just got Dr. Sevestre."

Handkerchief to lips, she stared at the opened shutters. "That's—that's awful. What are we going to do?"

"Pack up and clear out," I said, fiddling at my suitcase.

There was a step in the doorway behind Pete, and a big Negro in a canvas uniform, Rough Rider style, with broadbrimmed hat and leather gaiters, stepped into the frame. "*Ou là! Allons!*" He presented arms with a bayonet, grinning like a dental cream ad. "You and *ma'mselle* come."

"Who says so?" I objected.

"Haiti police. You come."

Pete clung to my arm. and we walked out on the gallery, descended the mahogany stairway down into the hall. A squad of black gendarmes were cackling at the front door, and I was ready to clout somebody. That Pete and I were in this devil's mess was more or less at my own insistence. A midnight funeral as grim as Uncle Eli's, followed directly by a homicide, was overdoing the thing.

So was the scene prepared for us in the library. The funeral parlor had become an impromptu morgue. Dr. Sevestre was stretched on a wooden fireplace bench, his face covered by his linen coat. Dark-skinned police were fetching the various members of Uncle Eli's funeral party from different quarters of that wretched house; no mourner, it appeared, had taken leave to depart. Toadstool and the Widow Gladys, routed from rooms somewhere in back. Ambrose out of the billiard room. The Ensign strolling in, pipe fuming in a pleasant smile. Manfred flushed from a door down the hall with a Bacardi bottle in his fist and his boots unsteady. Ti Pedro making dumb noises in his mouth and fumbling the egg under his neck. Sir Duffin Wilburforce arriving, indignant in a soiled undershirt with a bib tied under his chin, a shaving brush in his fist, one side of his jaw foamy with lather. Entering the library, they were ordered in line against the bookshelves by a tall, cocoa-colored darky corporal with a hare lip—as evil a batch of fish as any drag-net could hope to catch.

As Pete and I stepped into the scene the brown officer with the cavalry sabre was shouting at Tousellines: "I want everybody, you comprehend! All of them!"

Maitre Tousellines, yellowish at the temples, introduced us, in turn presenting the officer. "This is Lieutenant Nemo Narcisse, Inspector-Chief of the Garde d'Haiti in this district."

THE officer glared at me and I glared at him. I don't know what he saw in me, but I saw a pompous little man composed of French and African blood, his skin the color of an Alexander, a plump

face with two quick black eyes, pomaded curls, a handkerchief up his cuff, his pouter-pigeon bosom wearing more medals than the Emperor of Japan. He made a very polite bow, showing very white teeth. I wondered if this were the policeman who had handed down the suicide report on Uncle Eli's demise with the reservation that he might have been killed by a *sombie*; and my heart sank for the third time. Politics in a police department are bad enough, and superstition could be worse. If the Law of Haiti believed in witchcraft, Justice might be a ghostly affair.

I started the one about American citizens.

He thrust a hand in his bosom, Napoleon style, and nodded perkily. "*Tiens*, I am the authority here. You and *ma'mselle* are in Haiti now, you understand, and both under suspicion of murder."

"Miss Dale and I had nothing to do with—"

"It is the Code Penal," the officer dimpled. "Unfortunately all suspects are guilty until proved innocent."

"But it's two o'clock in the morning. This lady is tired—"

He waved a hand to indicate that in Haiti there was always plenty of time. His super-important air heated the skin under my collar.

"I want to get in touch with the American consul—"

"In due course, *m'sieu*," he nodded, "and meantime *ma'mselle* perhaps would like a chair." He pointed at the leather-and-buttons armchair in which Uncle Eli had been found with a bullet in his cerebrum.

"Thanks," Pete declined. "I'll stand."

"And now we're all on deck," the Ensign spoke out harshly, "why not cut the comedy and tell us what's it about. I see somebody pinched out the sawbones, but does it mean I gotta stay up all night? I ain't cryin', because I never liked Sevestre, myself."

"I will take that into account," the officer said softly, balancing himself on an arm of the leather chair and sending a slow

glance up and down the line. "I will take into account that none of you liked Dr. Sevestre. His murder, I believe, is not the only crime in this nice little household of Morne Noir. I am convinced, *messieurs*, that M'sieu Proudfoot, himself, was the victim of an assassin's hand."

"What could that have to do with Mr. Cartershall or me?" Pete interrupted with spirit. "We weren't in Haiti when—when *that* happened. If you will only let us telephone our consul—"

"Presently," the lieutenant bowed. "May I remind you, *ma'mselle*, the innocent—do they have cause for alarm? But no. I shall also expect their aid in this evil matter. I came here to-night because I am most certain your uncle was the victim of foul play. Was I so foolish as to believe M'sieu Proudfoot a suicide? *Non!* As for the *zombie* story—I spoke of that to put the real assassin off his guard. But then, we know the good doctor has just been slain, and I think he lies dead because he knew too much, eh? Do you see what I am getting at?"

Sir Duffin Wilburforce spluttered. "Who did him up, then?"

"That, *blanc*, is what I—Lieutenant Nemo Narcisse—am at your service to discover." He fixed his glance on the Englishman. "Perhaps you were not aware I was on the side veranda when those shots in front were fired? My men were stationed across the compound. I was also in the hall to-night while the will was being read in the library. What is more, while the funeral party was at the burial, I was searching your rooms, here. Perhaps I know more about you, my friends, than you would like to believe."

HIS speech sent a little flurry down the line-up; and I was beginning to think the Haitian police weren't so foolish as their minstrel aspect might construe. The lieutenant went on in his liquid voice.

"*Eh, bien*, I am on the side veranda, and I see all of you return and enter the château. Ambrose came first, then the

others, lastly M'sieu the Américan, and the girl. It was Dr. Sevestre who remained outside for a stroll on the lawn. He passed me where I was hidden on the side veranda, walking toward the terrace in front, and just as he moved beyond my sight I heard the two shots. I did not see them," the officer patted his oily curls with a dramatic gesture, "but I know they came from inside the house. *Voilà*, here is a child's problem! Some one of *you* fired those shots."

"Then that lets me out," Ambrose shrilled. "I was in the billiard room practicin' masse shots when I hear the guns, see? Why'd I want to croak the medico, anyhow?"

"Is it that he knew too much about the death of M'sieu Proudfoot, then?"

"I tell you I was in the bill—"

"But who was with you in the billiard room, *m'sieu*?"

"Nobody. I was takin' masse—say, what the hell are you—" The boy stepped out of line, his colorless eyelids fanning, his thin head sunk turtle-neck in his jersey collar, face inflamed. "What the hell are you tryin' to pin on me? I ain't got a rod and never carry one, see?"

Lieutenant Narcisse blinked sleepily. "How were you employed at Morne Noir? In what capacity did you serve M'sieu Proudfoot?"

"Pilot," the youth snivelled. "Run a launch over to La Gonave. Three days ago I hear the boss has croaked, and that Lemonade lawyer sends word I'm to be at the funeral, same as the rest of this crowd. That's why I'm here, and you ain't got nothing on me."

"And you," the officer turned suddenly on Sir Duffin. "You were overseer, here? Also, it seems, you are first in line to inherit the estate. Where were you when the doctor, to-night, was shot?"

"My dear fellow, where does it look as if I was?" The wry Englishman ran a hand across his jaw, scooped a palmful of soap-froth, slung it at the floor. "Naturally, I was in my boudoir, shaving. My ears, you know, being filled with lather at the time, I did not hear the shots. There-

fore, I cannot imagine their origin." His triangular eyes watered with amusement and perplexity. "You notice, also, I am unarmed. At least, my only weapon at hand was a razor, and since the worthy healer's throat was not cut—"

"I notice," the officer interrupted the Briton's obnoxious levity, "that your room is near the front door."

"But of course I was in the throes of a shave, eh, what?"

"It would appear you choose an odd hour of night to shave."

"The funeral of my revered benefactor and employer had fatigued me, lieutenant, and I wished to be refreshed after sorrow."

"Permit me also to refresh your memory." Lieutenant Narcisse plucked a little book from a breast pocket. "The day of your employer's death I consulted the British agents at Port au Prince, wiring for information about you. I am advised you came to Haiti ten years ago from England; more explicitly, you came from the English prison, Dartmoor, where you had served a twenty-year sentence for murder."

THERE was a moment's silence in the library; then the Englishman blew up. The man's fury was extraordinary. Shaving soap bubbled with an apoplectic foam from his lips. "Well, what of it?" he screeched. "Suppose I was, you blasted fool! What would it prove?"

"Only that murder is no stranger to you, Sir Duffin. Only that you are already the criminal. Only that you might shave to provide for yourself a handy alibi. But you are not the only criminal before me, *non!* This Ti Pedro. This tongueless scoundrel from Santo Domingo—" Turning from the spluttering English caricature, the plump lieutenant poked his sabre at the Dominican. "You cannot speak, but you can hear. Then hear that I know you shot a Spanish captain, a few years past, in the Dominican army. Is not your room the room next the Englishman's? Answer me!"

The dumb one nodded.

"And you are *second* in line for this Morne Noir estate. Ha! You killed the doctor, too, *oui?* You sneaked down the hall, fired through the door, fled back to your room—"

Ti Pedro shook his head.

"Do you know the murderer, then?"

Ti Pedro blinked his eyes.

"Comedian!" the officer raged, "if you had the tongue in your mouth I would have you talking like a parrot. I am not finished with you yet." He made an angry flash with the sabre and wheeled suddenly at Toadstool. That bow-legged gorilla with the monkey shoulders split his moose face in a grin and began to chat in creole at the officer. Instantly the Widow Gladys brought up a palm and calmly shut his mouth with a resounding clap. Her son's skull smacked the bookcase, bringing down several volumes, while the vast widow opened her milk chocolate lips and filled the library with a guffaw.

"Quiet!" Narcisse scowled fiercely. "You will answer in turn, speak English and one at a time. Every one among you will hear what the other has to report, *hein!* and if there are any lies I want to know of them." He prodded the sabrepoint in Toadstool's black midriff. "Now, then, ape! You were with your mother in her room at the back of the hall?"

"Yessuh."

It was the first time I'd heard Toadstool's speech in English, for his mother had rigidly enforced the dictum about children being seen and not heard. Now his voice was thin and piping, pixie-queer in that black-bleb body.

"Did you hear those shots?"

"Mebbe yes; mebbe no. Toadstool hear Rada drums."

"Son of a two-headed bat, did you or that black mother of yours come up the hall and shoot Dr. Sevestre?"

ANTICIPATING a slap, Toadstool ducked sideways; then said no. Widow Gladys giggled through a triumphant smile. "Toadstool and him mamma, we stay close our room, yes *suh!*"

"Listen to me, you fat crow. You and that rascally Caco boy of yours will be sorry if you try any tricks on Lieutenant Narcisse of the Garde d'Haiti. I am aware of how the British police in Jamaica had you exiled from their island for peddling drugs and *bocor* charms. Criminals, both of you!"

The Negress snickered.

"*Poissard!*" the officer scolded querulously. "How are you employed in Morne Noir, you and that ape of a son?"

"Toadstool he'm stable boy, fine boy, know horses. Widow Gladys cook, wash, handle low plantation nigger, sometime midwife."

"Sell the field hands evil charms and drugs, that is more the truth. *Dieu!* I am surprised M'sieu Proudfoot should name you in his will."

"Him my good friend. Maybe sometime Ah owns Morne Noir."

"Maybe sometime you go to the guillotine and have your head examined. Witch, do you have any idea who it was killed Dr. Sevestre?"

In the shadows that smelled of books, the billow in the chintz swaddings slowly wheeled. The little tea-colored eyes were almost lost in folds of melting chocolate. "Ah thinks him, Nazy, p'raps kill doctah man."

Manfred, who had been propped against the shelves like something preserved for a war museum in alcohol, roused with a shout. The Iron Crosses tap-danced on his gusty chest. "How dare you, you pig of ink! How dare you say Captain von Gottz slew that swine of a physician?"

"Ah hears, that's all. Quarrels with that doctah, yessuh. Two days ago. Doctah, he say Massa Proudfoot been murdered by certain kind of bullet. Nazy, he tell'm doctah keep him mouf shut or maybe he learn some more about bullets."

"Shades of Friederich Wilhelm, but I will cut this female hippopotamus into barbecue!" The German's eyes sizzled. Rushing forward with a bawl, he brought his rum bottle crashing down on the polkadot turban. Glass exploded in a bright

shower of amber fluid. But the Negress took the blow like a rock, threw up her arm and slapped that lavender birthmark with everything she had. Everything she had was plenty, too.

It was a nice sort of caper for that library scene at three in the morning after a funeral. Hurling backwards by the blow, Manfred went tripping and crashing into the bench; outsprawled across the body of the murdered doctor. Dead man and German sprawled on the floor. Bedlam swept into the library. "Ki yi yi yi!" That was Ti Pedro laughing. A shout of mirth from the En-sign. Sir Duffin squealing applause. Gendarmes jumping with fixed bayonets and Lieutenant Narcisse yelling for order, and Manfred, on hands and knees, sober as ice and tiger-mad, and Dr. Sevestre watching with impersonal, sightless concentration.

Pete put her face in my shoulder, while I stood like a cigar store Indian, nerves going like a thousand mandolins. Then the German was back in line, the doctor back on his bench, and Narcisse assuring us the next one to move would be sabred.

RUMPLING the feathers of his hair, the officer strutted the floor like an angered guinea hen. "How dare you outrage the dignity of an *enquête*? You German dog, jump out of line again and I will cut a bung-hole in the rum cask that you are, and let something more than Baccardi out of you!"

Manfred swayed, steadied, stood clenching and unclenching his fists, his jaw thrust like a quivering red cobblestone. "That female mastodon would try to frame me, *ja!* I would not be surprised if the black monster had shot the doctor, herself."

"While you, of course, are the soul of innocence. Blood of Saint Robert, but one would believe Haiti the stamping ground for the dregs of the white race, come here to pollute the brown. Why did Germany send you into exile for the mere matter of three wives, butchered one after the other in Berlin—"

"That is a lie!" Manfred snarled.

"The German agents at Port au Prince do not think so. So you had words with Dr. Sevestre?"

"The swine tried to tell me the bullet in Herr Proudfoot had come from my gun. Pah! I was on my way to Miragoane when I heard of the murder—and I wanted the physician to understand."

Lieutenant Narcisse glanced sideways at the body on the bench. "So you sub-



LIEUTENANT NARCISSE

scribe to the poetic notion that 'the dead understand all things.' A very pretty sophistry, captain, and one that may cost you your head. Observe." He picked his breast pocket. "This lead-nosed pea was taken from the dead doctor's grip. It is a dum-dum bullet, nine millimeter calibre. The doctor told me he removed it from the head of M'sieu Proudfoot, and that it had been put there by a Lüger automatic, such as the one you seem to be carrying."

"There is more than one gun in Morne Noir," Manfred snarled. "I was Herr Proudfoot's bodyguard, and I ought to know. All these swine are armed."

"They will not be when I am through with them, *oui!*"

"Are you trying to tell me the bullets in Sevestre are also from my gun?"

"I have not examined them as yet, but I am quite ready to believe it."

"I did not kill him," Manfred rasped,

"because I was in that room down the hall, asleep. I did not even hear the shots."

"Can you produce a witness to your peaceful slumbers?"

"No."

"And you," Narcisse twisted his plump torso in the En-sign's direction. "You who are named sixth in the will and declared as M'sieu Proudfoot's business manager. Are you also the sleeping saint? But I have listened to rumors on the contrary. *Par example*, that you are a deserter from the American Navy."

The En-sign grinned, sucking the pipe and making little concave cones in his sunburnt cheeks. "You seem to of been doing a lot of snooping, Sherlock. I guess you're right. I got sick of working for Uncle Sam, so I went to work for Uncle Eli."

"I believe you already told me that on the day of M'sieu Proudfoot's murder you were in a fishing boat off the coast."

"I'm sorry, I was alone an' there weren't no witnesses."

"Where were you to-night when Dr. Sevestre was shot?"

The En-sign chuckled. "The gent's room, an' there weren't no witnesses, either."

CORNELIUS, next to be questioned, stammered information that he had gone down the hall to prepare a couch for Maître Tousellines. He had heard the two shots, bleated Cornelius, and thought it better to observe developments from under the bed, the haven from which the gendarmes had dredged him forthwith, Narcisse focussed an eye on the little black lawyer.

"*Bien*, Tousellines, what have you to say? You did not retire, then, immediately after the funeral?"

The lawyer's sausage lip trembled. "On returning from the burial I escorted the other guests to their appointed bedchambers; then went to M'sieu Proudfoot's office under the stairs across the hall from the library. I was alone there, depositing certain documents, mainly the will, in my

late client's safe. I had just opened the safe, m'sieu the lieutenant, when I heard footsteps rapid on the stairs. They appeared to stop in the hall—then I—I heard the two shots. I locked the safe at once and darted from the office. I am desolated to tell this, but Mademoiselle Dale was, at that moment, running across the upper gallery, and she went, I believe, into m'sieu the American's room."

The whole rotten line-up turned to glare at Pete when this bit of information was divulged. As for me, I could have wrung that raisin-headed avocat's neck for him, but Pete took it standing up. I never could have painted her eyes, the green flash in them right then!

"I had gone down to the hall after a package I'd left on the settee," she said evenly. "I was near the door when I heard the shots—they seemed to come from the library. But the library doors were closed and I couldn't be sure. I ran straight upstairs to Mr. Cartershall's room."

The Haitian officer bowed. "Thank you. And was m'sieu in his room when you arrived there?"

"He was."

"Certainly. And I am afraid I must ask you what it was you journeyed down the stairway to obtain. The package left in the hall?"

"A picture."

"Ah, but then, *ma'mselle*, you say no one quit the library?"

"Some one could have run out," Pete said, "but I couldn't have seen them from the upstairs gallery."

"*Ma'mselle*, was M'sieu Proudfoot your—eh—guardian?"

"He was at one time. I had received no word of him in a number of years."

"You did not like your uncle?" the officer smirked.

"I never said that," Pete countered. "He wasn't a close relative. After he came to Haiti I never heard from him until his lawyer came to me three days ago in New York."

"One thing more, if you please. Did it not strike you as strange that he should

list you last as a possible heir to this estate?"

"Listen," Pete commanded. "I don't care about the estate. I came here because it was a last request and I wanted to see what Haiti was like. Now I'm seeing, I don't want any of it. I can't help the police. I don't know any of these people or—or anything. I want to leave as soon as—"

I said, "And that's that. Miss Dale and I aren't in this. Get us out of here."

THE officer's black eyes settled on me, filmed opaque. "You are the fiancé of *ma'mselle*?"

"Yes— No—I'm with her as a friend. If you don't give me a crack at that telephone so I can get the American con—"

"I am sorry to incommode you, m'sieu," the pudgy man said with mock French politeness, "but for the information of the Law I first must inquire into your business."

"I'm an artist," I sneered.

My self revelation brought a grunt of disdain belching from the German at my elbow. The En-sign rolled an Alice blue eye at me and tittered, "One of those, blow me down!" Ambrose said, "Yoo-hoo!" and the Englishman dealt me an insulting ogle through his shiny monocle. Any one short of a professional garroter seemed to rate low in this Morne Noir ménage.

Narcisse did not seem impressed. "You paint the pictures?"

"Masterpieces," I corrected savagely. "So what?"

"Exactly that, my friend. So what. So what were you doing on the gallery outside your room while Dr. Sevestre lay dead on the lawn below?"

"I wasn't out there when he was shot," I bristled. I explained how I had heard the shooting and dashed through the shutters. From the glint in the Haitian's eye I knew he did not believe me, and I went on to add I didn't care a damn. I broke down further to admit that I didn't like the looks of any one or anything in Morne Noir, Haiti, and the sooner he allowed me

to telephone for money and help to get Miss Dale and me away, the better.

"Maitre Tousellines invited us down here. The authorities in Cap Haitien can check up for you. Now I want that telephone!"

The American consul would climb out from under his mosquito netting with a hangover and grumble in the phone, and I would holler for the U. S. Marines. Far in the distance bands would play "The Stars and Stripes Forever" and at dawn Old Glory would come bannering through the palms. That's according to Hollywood, but it wasn't according to Haiti. Not that night!

"I will call your American representatives, myself," Lieutenant Narcisse, Inspector-Chief of the Garde d'Haiti, told me with a bow. He strutted from the room. He was gone from the library about two minutes—a hiatus during which the darky gendarmes held the room at bay with bayonets, the air soured with breathing and the tension of those unstoppable Rada drums—and then he was back in the doorway, his dignity out of shape with rage.

"The telephone is dead! It is the only telephone between here and Le Cap, and some one in this house cut those wires!" He smashed his sabre into the scabbard on his belt with such vehemence that it started to rain outside. *Clang!* and then the deluge. Water slashed the library shutters; gushed with a cloudburst roar. The room filled with the sound. An unhappy clock over the marble fireplace went ding-ding-ding-ding, and the old clock on the stairs, à la Longfellow, wheezed out a rusty "Four!"

Boots splayed, thumbs jammed in belt, medals dancing all over his bosom, Narcisse was speaking. "A murderer stands among you in this room. Those of you who think there is no law in Haiti will find to the contrary. I am certain M'sieu Proudfoot, whom you buried to-night, was assassinated. I know that of Dr. Sevestre. I know any one of you could have crept to the front of the house; fired those fatal

shots. I am sorry, Mademoiselle Dale, but I must examine your story at greater length. Nor am I satisfied with m'sieu the artist. As for the rest of you—by L'Ouverture's rotting bones!—I would as soon trust a jar of snakes."

His black eyes glittered at the line-up. He was thoroughly enjoying authority. "By the *Code Pénal* all are guilty until proved otherwise. It is a matter for the General of the Garde, and until I can summon him from Port au Prince the lot of you will remain under arrest in your rooms. Meantime my men will be pleased to relieve you of your weapons. Any one seen thereafter attempting to leave Morne Noir will be shot. No one can leave!"

"Don't worry, skipper." The En-sign stood forward and gesticulated his fuming pipe. "It's in the Old Man's will. They won't any of 'em want to leave Morne Noir. Not for twenty-four hours. Try an' get 'em out. They won't any of 'em want to leave in any way, shape or manner!"

But one of that little menagerie of heirs was going to leave before another hour was up. And the way, shape and manner of his going was no *bon voyage* departure, I can give my word on that!

CHAPTER V.

ONE DOWN!

HOUSES, like people, are known by the company they keep; and that Morne Noir château was nasty, particularly in its upper hall. Once it had been a manor of considerable pretensions; French colonial, I suppose. There had been elegance and pride. But it had taken to wine and knavery and bad companions. Damp rot had crept through its foundations; it had learned to sneak. High living in the tropics had undermined its character and now, like a white man decadent, it had stooped to murder.

My nerves were just unhealthy enough to catch the mood of gangrened velvet portières and mouldering tapestry, dark panels and the sound of gurgling on tiles. Wains-

coting had scabbed; woodwork assumed the stain of old iodine. Once mahogany, the doors to the bedchambers opening off the mezzanine had been varnished black. They looked as if they hadn't been opened for a long time, and there's something about closed doors. All the upstairs doors over the well of the hall were closed. Like evil thoughts masking festering schemes; and I'd feel easier knowing what lay behind them.

"Empty rooms," answered Maître Tousellines, trailing us upstairs. "Only the three front rooms were furnished."

Since Pete and I were to be lodged side by side in two of the fronts, I wanted to know who inhabited the third, the one next to mine on the right.

"That? That is M'sieu Proudfoot's bed-chamber. Since his death it has remained closed." He paused with Pete at her door; begged permission to wish us both a good-night. "I am most unhappy about this affair *miserable*," he quavered apologetically. "It was desolating that I should be forced to speak of *ma'mselle* running on the gallery."

"Never mind that," Pete said, "but how soon can you get us out of here?"

"I am sure it can be arranged as soon as—"

I said, "Now look here, Tousellines, you're responsible for Miss Dale's being here. You're a lawyer and you can start pulling strings and arranging passage for New York toot sweet."

He blinked unhappily. "Had I foreseen what was to occur to-night I should never have urged your arrival, *jamais de la vie!* Unfortunately, although M'sieu Proudfoot's legal adviser, I was not entirely familiar with his—this household. There were some matters in which I did not entertain his confidence. Matters—eh—somewhat the disturbing—"

I could see the little black man was worried. I leaned over the balcony rail, looking down into the hall. I turned back at him. "What are you trying to tell us?" I prodded, firing a cigarette to pretend confidence under stress. "Let's have it."

Whatever it was, the clack of military boots down below altered his intent. He swallowed solemnly. "I only wish to assure you, *m'sieu*, I will aid you in any way I can. You may have confidence, also, in Lieutenant Narcisse and his men. As a former interpreter and guide for your United States Marine Corps, when it was stationed here, the Inspector-Chief proved a man the most competent. He is starting a gendarme at once for Le Cap with a message for your consul. *Bon soir, m'sieu—*"

As we found out later, the gendarme never got to Le Cap with a message for any consul (because in Haiti you start off doing one thing and end up doing something else) but I heard the clatter of a horse Paul Revereeing off through the night and rain, and felt better, knowing the rider had started, anyway. Maître Tousellines traveled down the stairs, and a black policeman tramped up half way to stand sentinel on the landing.

I DUCKED Pete into my room, switched on the bulb, and for the second time that night we were closeted alone. One thing I wanted, and I fetched it out of my Gladstone with a silent oath of relief. The old Luger gun was pretty shabby, but there were shells in the magazine.

"There! They frisked all the others and dug up enough guns from their rooms to arm the peace conference at Versailles. Did you see the Tommy gun they found in Ambrose's duffel bag? Thank God they didn't discover this."

Pete watched me snap off the safety. "Cart, you don't think—"

"I'm through thinking," I told her, one eye on the closed door. "All I know is there's hell and high water, the dirtiest batch of week-end guests I've ever seen, and a doctor in the house. Take it."

"I don't need it," she shook her head. "The place is teeming with policemen. If I don't get some sleep pretty soon—" Her forehead puckered as if she might cry. I felt helpless and furious.

"You won't go alone to your room!"

"Of course I will. I've seen a funeral, a murder and an inquest, and I want a chance to let down my hair and smudge beauty cream under my eyes and cry a little, and that's something no artist's model does in front of her employer. I rather imagine those brutes downstairs will be snoring like cherubs the rest of the night, and Hallowe'en is over. Cart, do get some rest. You're losing weight." She smiled and patted my cheek. "Like a good boy."

I took her to her room; made a survey to see that the blinds were locked, the door would bolt on the inside, and there weren't any skeletons in the closet. After all, I was in the next room; and I planned to leave my door ajar and stand guard in the crack. Probably no soldier in the Allied Armies missed as many of the enemy as I did, but my mind was made up this time. Man or boy, the first individual who came up those stairs unannounced was going to get shot.

"Don't think I'll go to sleep," I complained sternly. (And then, to my undying shame, I slept like a Congressman.)

I left my door open five inches; pulled up a horsehair chair, and sat with a view down into the hall. I could hear Lieutenant Narcisse poking about, saying something about the scuttled telephone. A mysterious grinding, as if he were working the call-handle in a final attempt to wake up central. I'd glimpsed the phone on the wall at the foot of the stairs, one of those rural affairs with a wooden box under the mouthpiece and a little crank on the side. Apparently the local phone service had been put on the spot with the same neat dispatch which had finished Dr. Sevestre.

Lieutenant Narcisse abandoned his tinkering; went through a door somewhere. The sentry on the landing leaned on his rifle and yawned. Pete was right about the cherubic guest-list; the snoring from the rooms under the gallery sounded like a Pullman car made up at Buffalo. The house took on the drear complexion of any place late at night with the lights left on. Humid. A smell like wet shingles. A bannister creaking. Rain guttering and

draining, guttering and draining. And faint through the walls that constant *tumpy-bum-bum*, as if from drums at the bottom of a well.

MY eyelashes were sticks. I uncorked the Scotch; tried to locate the soft spot in the chair; wished the drumming would stop and the woodwork in the big square room behind me would quit squeaking. With the shutters closed the room was dopey, airless. Now and then a warped timber would crack, and the sound would lift me out of the chair by my hair.

I patched my unraveling nerves with another tug on the bottle; and then got to thinking about Uncle Eli's last rites. Easy to understand how an old man could get voodoo-minded living in a boneyard like Morne Noir. One could even believe the house had driven him to suicide; though why he had surrounded himself with such a batch of abnormal, invited them to his entombment and remembered them in his will I couldn't fancy. Had one of those heirs-apparent murdered the old man; then taken his doctor for a ride? I didn't put it past any of those seven.

Sir Duffin Wilburforce with his master's degree in homicide from Dartmoor. There wasn't a grain of truth in those triangular little eyes; and he stood to inherit the estate. Ti Pedro with an equally sinister record, not quite as dumb as his maimed mouth made it appear. The tattooed Ensign? A navy deserter with a Jack-the-Ripper leer; and the others, somehow, were afraid of the merry-eyed man. Toadstool and his one-armed mother looked capable of anything from torch murders to cannibalism. As for Ambrose, I had made up my mind the minute I saw him never to let him get behind my back; while the pickled Manfred with his Prussian uniform and marred cheek was an exiled Bluebeard too sanguine for my stomach.

I tried to get my mind off those rogue-gallery faces, and every time I did I saw the funeral procession on that bald hill, the voodoo priest with the diadem of daisies

on his brow waltzing up to hang a dead goat in the tree. Mules were dragging a stone angel up the slope, and black gravediggers hammered an iron stake into spaded earth. The room creaked, and another stitch came out of my nerves.

I SAMPLED the Haig and Haig. My spine wanted rubbing. It was four twenty-eight by my wrist dial. The gendarme on the landing yawned. I yawned. That wouldn't do. Better take a turn around the room. If I had something to read— There was a solitary book on the antique table by the bed. I took it back to the door-crack, sat down, knuckled a sandy eye. The book was old, vellum-bound, and left a brownish dust on my fingers. I blinked at the French title.

"*Histoire de Culte Vodou—par Hugo Catraville, 1848.*"

"History of the Cult Voodoo by Hugo Catraville, 1848." Just the title one would expect in such a house. In the mysterious way books have, the volume opened by itself in my hand. Bookworms and stencilled little crescents on the page, but I could dimly fumble through the French, and it wasn't my idea of a bedtime story.

"Although, as we have noted, the religion of Haiti is nominally Catholic, Voodoo is practiced by the majority of natives, and Africa still casts its shadow across the Caribbean. Macandals, ouanga charms, talismans are commonly worn by the Haitian Negro; drums sound nightly in the hills. Contrary to popular belief, Voodoo is an established religion with a highly organized theology and priesthood. Priests are known as *papaloi*, priestesses as *mama-loi*, there is also a higher priest called the *hougan*.

"The Voodoo religion, in a manner somewhat similar to Christianity, is divided into two distinct branches or creeds, Service Petro and Service Legba, which in no circumstance must be confused with the Culte des Mortes, that dreadful Society of the Dead which claims to sorcerous power over corpses and is feared by Voo-

doo and Christian worshippers alike. The extraordinary machinations of this sinister cult have frightened not only natives of Haiti, but men of science who have studied the island's history. The sorcerers, known as *bocors*, hold secret meetings in the jungle, feast on human hearts, cast magic spells, and, it is claimed, have been known to raise the dead from their graves and enslave them in their power. These living corpses, called *zombies*, pass year after year in hopeless slavery, victims of their inhuman masters, lost souls robbed of either life or death.

"White men who have seen *zombies* tell with terror of their sluggish, obedient movements, their mute mouths, their glazed, sad eyes. Haitians live in constant fear of the Culte des Mortes. So it is we see in Haiti graves by the roadside, on the hill, in the open where no sorcerer may dig for the body. So it is we see relatives of the dead on guard for twenty-four hours in the cemetery. It is also believed that the beating of Rada drums, the suspension of a dead goat in a near-by tree or the driving of a stake through the body in the grave (a custom not unlike that employed by the peasants of Rumania, Russia and Transylvania to ward off werewolves) serves to frustrate the evil Death Cult.

"But the question of *zombies* is not to be taken lightly. No less an authority than General Galrileun, who fought on the island under Napoleon, tells of a soldier who died of scourge, was buried with honors, only to be seen months later wandering darkly in the woods, his face—"

But that was in 1848.

Or was it?

I didn't know. I was asleep. I was asleep and dreaming. I was painting a picture of Pete on that hill under the withered tree. No matter how wildly I brushed, I could only paint a filthy red smear on the canvas, and Pete was calling to me, telling me to hurry. I wanted to cry out and tell her about a horrid gray shape that was rising like steam from the earth behind her, but it seemed I couldn't tell her until the painting was finished, and the

oils were smearing red. All the time the gray figure was getting closer, a monstrous seven-headed thing wearing a stovepipe hat and its arms outstretched like a cross. It had seven faces, yet I knew it was Uncle Eli and I was getting smaller and smaller and farther and farther away, and the gray arms had closed around Pete and she was screaming and screaming. "Cart, Cart, Cart—"

Who! I bolted upright in the chair, icicles starting from my pores, those screams freezing cold in my ears.

"Cart! Help! In here—"

Good God! That wasn't a dream. Those were real screams and the voice was Pete's and it seemed to come from Uncle Eli's room.

THERE wasn't any time to wonder where the gendarme on the landing had gone to. In my confusion I left my pistol in the chair and dashed out with the book; then had to make a flying leap back for the pistol. Pete's voice had stopped when I got to the door at the gallery's end, and I hit the knob with a yell. The door flew open with a gust that pitched me headlong into a scene I will remember until the day I'm dust! To this hour the smell of a room that has been too-long closed starts a melting sensation under my ribs. To this minute I can see that bed-chamber with its curtained Napoleonic bed standing like a catafalque against one wall, its ghostly coterie of shrouded chairs sitting around in the blue dark like old ladies holding a veiled séance, the wakeful windowblinds chattering, the corners black as caves.

Pete was standing backed against the wall, ivory white in an ivory white lounging robe, her loose hair like a shawl about her shoulders, rigid with shock. In her hand there was a nickel-plated revolver about the size of a toy. She was pointing the gun at a gaunt walnut wardrobe that loomed like an upended coffin at room's end. The wardrobe door hung open, and a figure stood in the frame with a candle in his fist.

Darkness enveloped the lower part of the figure, but the flittering candleglow traveled upward to illumine a face as gaseous, misty-featured and spectral as something just summoned from the Astral plane, forty degrees north of Death. The face was all mouth, and the mouth was one nose-bleed red wound.

The vision in that wardrobe would have made the Cabinet of Dr. Caligari an Easter gift-box by comparison. I saw it, and stood. A faint clamor in another quarter of the château seemed twelve thousand miles away. Pete was whispering, "Don't move or I'll—shoot!" and the mouth in the wardrobe door smeared with a smile like an incision for appendicitis.

"Do not remain in *Morne Noir*," it said in a belly-deep, undertone that hung the hot darkness with icicles. "Go straight-away. I am the ghost—the ghost of the wronged—the ghost who returned and killed your Uncle Eli—"

At that instant a soggy wind soughed from the wardrobe like an exhalation from an opened tomb. The candle went out and the face went with it. The hall door slammed on the draught, extinguishing the room with midnight. There was a piccolo screech, and a single shot that thundered in the black like a charge of dynamite. When that was gone, something whacked the floor. Then the hall door crashed open, releasing a dam of light, noise, faces and Lieutenant Nemo Narcisse.

I STOPPED my hysterical shadow-boxing and found the light switch beside the door. Pete lay on the carpet, fainted, and across the room a body was spilled out of the wardrobe, face to the floor, shoulders, crumpled, a broken candle smoking in one veiny fist. The body said, "Don't!" twice in a whisper muffled by the carpet; then stiffened like a tightened spring. I swung Pete to a stand, and she came around with her head on my shoulder and asked me if it was gone, while I glared stupidly at the faces strung across the doorway like so many wind-tossed Benda masks.

The En-sign's blue eyes twinkled at me; Toadstool and Ambrose and Ti Pedro were there; Maître Tousellines burlesquing in a nightcap and lilac pajamas, and the Widow Gladys cackling and colossal in a gruesome salmon-pink wrapper too short to hide vast, greasy black-and-brown bare feet. I was too sick to take any of this Barnum and Bailey, and glad when the gendarmes herded them aside with shouts and bayonets. I remember picking up Pete's nickel revolver, pocketing my own gun and dully watching Lieutenant Narcisse overturn the body of the ghost who claimed to have killed Uncle Eli. There was a big, red hole blown under the ghost's left shoulder-blade, and it wasn't a ghost in the glare of the electric lights.

It had been my imagination and something I hadn't eaten and the man's dramatic ability and something later determined as pain from my box of oil paints. An illusion dispelled by the lamps overhead, and the nimble black eye of Lieutenant Nemo Narcisse.

"Sir Duffin Wilburforce!"

The Englishman on the floor could not open his painted old maid's mouth to answer.

I YAWPED at the body on the carpet, wondering where my nightmare had left off and reality begun. The entire night was assuming the chameleon quality of a dream. In fact, one of those brittle little lizards was upside down on the ceiling over the dead man, watching the room with bright inquiry in its wee eyes and changing color with a sorcery all its own. I glared at this diminutive bogle, expecting to learn that the present scene was a mesmeric mirage emanating from its lizard mind.

Sixty seconds ago somebody's ghost had spoken from the otherwise empty wardrobe. A candle blows out, gunfire explodes, and an Englishman lies dumped on the floor by a bullet in his back—Sir Duffin Wilburforce, apparently, but not the Sir Duffin of the wake, the funeral, the three o'clock inquest. Not by a long shot or (for that matter) a short one! Narcisse, stooped in

puzzlement over the Tory face, turned with amaze-lifted eyebrows.

"Red paint is smeared over his mouth. What devilment goes on here?" Hand on sabre-hilt, Narcisse paced and ranted with the fury of a stock company actor. "Another murder. Do not move, any of you! *Blanc!*" he spun on me. "Drop both of the guns—"

I tossed the nickel revolver and my automatic into a chair. Narcisse made a snatch for them. "How did you come by these weapons?"

"The Lüger belongs to me," I said, wishing sweat-beads wouldn't sprout on my upper lip, "and I don't know where the revolver—"

"It's mine," Pete said.

"Why did my men not take these from you in the library?"

"I left mine in my room," Pete said. "Nobody asked me."

"And mine was hidden in my suitcase," I said honestly, "and by God if I'd known what we were getting into I'd have brought a cannon!"

Narcisse narrowed his eyes to Chinese slits. "You have brought quite enough, my American friend. Will you be kind enough to tell us what you and *ma'mselle* are doing in this room with the dead Englishman?"

Pete stepped in front of me, shading confused eyes with a hand and pointing at the thing on the floor. "I was here first. I came in the room and saw—saw *him* standing in that wardrobe! I—I was too frightened to run or scream. I—I guess I did scream, though. Then Mr. Cartershall came."

Narcisse looked steadily at her, picking the handkerchief from his cuff and scrubbing his pink palms. "Why did you come to this room?"

Pete's head-shake was bewildered. "Honestly, I don't seem to remember—yes, I do! After I went to my room to-night I couldn't sleep. I got to thinking about all that had happened—to-night—and I was so tired—I just sat up for a while. I thought I'd give myself a manicure to see

if it would make me sleepy, and while I was doing that I had a feeling—I heard something—”

“Something, *ma'mselle*?”

“I'm not sure what. This house, noises on the stairway, as if the whole horrible place was alive and tiptoeing. Anyway, I—I took my gun and walked out onto the balcony—”

I turned at her. “Why didn't you call me?” I demanded.

She gave me a wry smile. “You were snoring so, and I didn't want to wake you. I thought it was just nerves. Then I saw the policeman who had been on the half-way landing was gone—”

NARCISSE rolled black pupils at the hare-lipped gendarme. The hare-lipped gendarme took off his broad-brim and ploughed up his forehead with uneasy wrinkles. “Hones' to de Saint, I t'ink I hear noise same as white *ma'mselle*,” he husked in guttural English. “Little noise maybe rat in wall along stair. Maybe like somebody walk, too, creak, creak.”

“In the wall?” Narcisse gritted.

“*Oui*, *m'sieu* lieutenant. Maybe rat, maybe *non*! I go down hall below look for you in library. You not there. I'm Louis in library when hear screams and shot.”

“I was hunting the outside veranda for exploded shells,” the officer said furiously. “*Nom de Marie!* but the next man to leave his post will find a most hard one in the guard room. Go on with your tale, *ma'mselle*.”

“But I was going back to my room,” Pete went on in a colorless tone, “when I was sure I heard a door open in Uncle Eli's room, here. Not the hall door. A door inside. I opened the hall door and came in. The squeak I heard was that wardrobe door swinging open and—and candlelight came creeping out. I—I was petrified. The wardrobe opened up and—and that man was standing there with a candle. Then—Mr. Cartershall heard me—”

Narcisse examined me with a thin smile, wet-lipped.

“*Ma'mselle* made an outcry that woke you from sleep, eh?”

“Yes,” I ground out. “I'd been sitting by my door, reading.”

The lizard came skating down the wainscoting to hear better. The Barnum and Bailey onlookers jostled in the doorway, muttering.

“*Alors*, you rushed to this room and saw *ma'mselle* confronting the Englishman, painted as he is, in the wardrobe.” The officer stuck out a thumb.

“That's a fact.”

“Undoubtedly you know the reason for this Mardi Gras and why Sir Duffin should be standing in this cupboard with a candle?”

“For all I know he was waiting for a street car!” I snarled, sudden nausea reeling through my head. “I'm telling you, I ran in and saw it like Miss Dale tells it. Pete—Miss Dale—said don't move or she'd shoot, and that masquerading son of contamination said for us to go away from *Morne Noir* because he was the ghost of the wronged who had killed Uncle Eli—”

“*M'sieu!* Do you mean to tell me Sir Duffin said that?”

“Word for word,” Pete cried.

“Then it went black as pitch,” I shouted. “A lousy wind came out of the wardrobe, doused the candle and blew shut the hall door. I was too popeyed to move, or I'd have shot that skylarking English fiend, myself.”

“Blow me down!” the En-sign spoke out from the doorway, rubbing his hands, his copper face creased with amusement. “This is gettin' good!”

Pete started to say something; but Lieutenant Nemo Narcisse interrupted her intent by turning his back on her, stepping gingerly over the corpse and into the wardrobe, where he let fly and explosion of staccato French oaths. Next minute his hands, pressing a panel at the back of the cabinet, had opened a door in the wall—a shadowy parallelogram about the size of the door to a broom-closet—and once more

Uncle Eli's bedchamber was alive with that clammy, green wind.

THE Haitian went through with a stifled shout; the panel closed behind him; the wardrobe was empty as the feeling under my ribs. We could hear footsteps tapping behind the plaster wall; footsteps that died away, then came back rapidly like the fade and recurrence of volume in a radio. The panel reopened, exhaling stale breath and the perspiring person of the Garde lieutenant. Dusting cobwebs from his medals, he stepped with drama from the wardrobe and walked straight to Maître Tousellines.

"M'sieu the avocat, when you left the office under the stairs to-night, did you lock the door?"

Tousellines, licorice and lilac, bit his sausage lip. "The door to M'sieu Proudfoot's office? I—I did not think to lock it."

"That is how Sir Duffin gained access to the wardrobe in this room. A passage in the wall, descending to the office below. He stole from his appointed quarters without being seen by my gendarme on the landing; crept into the office and came up by way of the wall passage. But Louis heard him creeping up the inner steps. *Voilà!*"

Pete could hold quiet no longer. Fixed on mine, her eyes were shiny, almost gray with wonder. "Cart!" she cried. "Didn't you shoot him?"

I dizzied at her, "Me? But I thought you—"

"I couldn't shoot him," she whispered. "And if you didn't—"

Who did? Who shot Sir Duffin Wilburforce if Pete hadn't shot him and I hadn't? I stared at the body on the floor, my ears still ringing from that dynamite-clap in the dark. I listened to Lieutenant Narcisse telling me how neatly he had disarmed the rest of the household and locked their hardware in the office safe. I listened to Maître Tousellines babbling how he alone knew the combination and the safe in the office below was securely locked. I listened to the hare-lipped gendarme corporal, Louis,

go down the stairs and come up the stairs with the information that the safe had not been opened.

"But some one," I heard myself croaking, "must have come up that passage behind the English freak and fired from his rear—"

The lieutenant promptly launched a cross-word puzzle. The room filled with the barks, bleats, whines and growls of the Inquisition and the sound of wind-thrown rain pounding the shutters. The lizard, reckless from curiosity, fell to the carpet, broke off its tail and fled under the houdini wardrobe. Drums beat a throbbing undertone to the game of question and answer, eyes went haggard and voices hoarse, but the answer, like the atmosphere in Uncle Eli's room, remained at zero.

Tousellines had been asleep in an alcove bedroom.

Manfred, Ambrose, Ti Pedro, Toadstool, the En-sign and the Widow Gladys, so help them God, had slept in their respective rooms, dreamed like babes until the moment of the gunshot. That was their story and they stuck to it. Furthermore, the lot of them were unarmed, were they not? Furthermore, a count of the guns stowed by the police in the office safe showed them all there. As Narcisse pointed out, *Voilà!*

"Ja!" Manfred concluded his confession of sanctitude, "but we agree on one thing, Herr Lieutenant. Somebody killed the British swine and it was done with a gun!"

"Miss Dale and I didn't shoot him!" I lashed back at the hint. I frowned at Narcisse and Narcisse frowned at me. "Look here," I hazarded, "if these—these sleeping beauties didn't kill Sir Duffin, and we didn't, how about somebody from the outside?"

"Quite impossible," the officer sneered. "Since midnight the château has been completely surrounded by a guard. A rat could not get by my sentinels. On my faith, it does not seem necessary. The rats are already in the house." His black eyes blurred with anger. "Attend, criminals! All of you! I am going to put a guard over

every curst one of you; from now on it will be like the Siamese Twins, each one of you with a gendarme, *oui!* Two murders this night! Two under the eye of Lieutenant Nemo Narcisse, Inspector-Chief of the Garde d'Haiti! Do you think you can play with me like that? One of you shall pay!

"The one who shot down this Englishman, who killed Dr. Sevestre—when we find that one, on my word! I think we find the killer who put M'sieu Proudfoot, also, in his grave—"

Lighting his pipe, the En-sign gave a hoarse snicker. "You better stop your bluffin', Sherlock, an' find him damn quick," he said to Narcisse in a furry tone. "Take a hint from this limejuicer, here. My bet is he was shavin' an' swabbin' paint on his pilot-house to put on a spook

act an'scare the rest of us outa here. Why? Because he stood first to rake in on the will, that's why, an' he wanted to chase off the competition. But the competition don't chase, an' Sir Duff gets kissed good-bye with a bullet. Ti Pedro's in the hot spot, now. Myself," the sailor turned on heel and gave me a venomous, blue wink, "myself, I'm glad I ain't first in the will. I've a hunch it's like a football game I once played the Quantico Marines. One down an' six to go—"

The old clock on the stairs bonged six. Thunder tumbled wooden blocks around the sky, and the windows rattled under cloudbursting rain. Storm-sound echoed through the nooks and halls of Château Morne Noir, and a voice called up the stairway from below.

"Breakfast am served—"

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

The Ship That Was a Rock

THE H. M. S. Diamond Rock, a man-of-war in the British Navy List of 1805, was really a rock. It is a small island within a mile of Martinique, about a mile round, 600 feet high. Difficult of approach at all times, accessible only from one side, it was of such strategic value that Commodore Samuel Hood, in the H. M. S. Centaur had two 24-pounder guns mounted at the base of the rock, and two 18-pounders hauled up to the summit despite tremendous difficulties. With no good water on the rock, a constant supply by ship being problematical, the garrison of 120 men relied on rain water caught and stored in tanks. Full navy discipline was maintained on the H. M. S. Diamond Rock, run in every way like a man-of-war.

Allen Fiske.

"Bottled from de bar'l"

The biggest money's worth is Crab Orchard, straight Kentucky whiskey. No artificial aging, no artificial coloring, bottled from the barrel, priced low enough for everyone.

Crab Orchard

STRAIGHT KENTUCKY WHISKEY

Accept no substitute

PRODUCT OF NATIONAL DISTILLERS



This advertisement is not intended to offer alcoholic beverages for sale or delivery in any state or community where the advertising, sale or use thereof is unlawful.



STRANGER than FICTION



By JOHN S. STUART

EVIL SPIRITS OUTWITTED

CHINESE prize their male heirs. So fearful are they that something might harm him, they even give him a girl's name in order to deceive the evil spirits!



FIVE—NO MORE—NO LESS

IN the Sudan, the Bagaririni tribe consider five children an ideal family. So when a mother has presented a father with her quota, she is permitted to return to her parents, leaving her children with the father!

THE FIRST BEER

BEER first brewed in America was made by Governor Wilhelm Kieft, the third Governor of New Netherlands (New York). He erected his own brewery on his estate at Staten Island, N. Y. The Governor forbade the tapping of beer during divine services and after one o'clock at night. All liquor previously, with the exception of what the Pilgrim Fathers made, was imported.

ONE OF NATURE'S PUZZLES

ONE of nature's curiosities is the difference between a mother kangaroo and her young. The mother stands four or more feet high, and weighs in the neighborhood of 200 lbs. The young when first born are a little longer than one inch and weigh less than a mouse.

This feature appears in ARGOSY every week

EAST AFRICAN CUSTOM

CHILDREN have strange diets sometimes prescribed for them. Carrots it is said will improve the complexion. The children of the Suk tribe in British East Africa, are given the heart of a lion to eat. They believe this will make them strong and invincible if they are not told what the diet consists of, otherwise the proper effect will be lost.

WOMEN SEIZE GOVERNMENT

IN the year 1105, Emperor Henry V, with a band of 12th century cutthroats, took possession of a castle at Rouffach, in Alsace. A young townsgirl was kidnaped by the mediæval racketeers. Mothers of the town organized, armed themselves, forced their husbands to do likewise, and stormed the castle. Henry fled and the hardy townswomen captured his crown and scepter. From that time on, women took precedence over men in the administrative affairs of Rouffach.



FREE TICKETS FOR HONEYMOONERS!

ALL the world loves a lover, but most of the world tries to make him a sucker, too! Not so, Margate, one of the popular seaside resorts in England. Margate is celebrating June as "Honeymoon Month" when every couple will have free admittance to theaters, piers, moving pictures, and other entertainment!

To Hell for the Devil

By RICHARD E. WORMSER

Into the hell of the Foreign Legion came Detective Cafferty to solve a famous kidnapping case

Novel—Complete

CHAPTER I.

TRAILING A KIDNAPPER.

THE midwestern newspapers raved that Ludwig Hummel had been released on payment of a quarter of a million dollars ransom and Joe Cafferty took a taxicab, through a midwestern drizzle, to the airport.

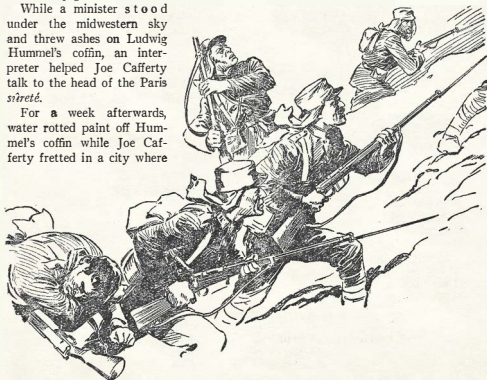
When the same newspapers proclaimed that Ludwig Hummel was in a hospital, as a result of his treatment at the hands of the kidnapping gang, Joe Cafferty and a New York detective were giving the works to a stool pigeon.

While a minister stood under the midwestern sky and threw ashes on Ludwig Hummel's coffin, an interpreter helped Joe Cafferty talk to the head of the Paris *sûreté*.

For a week afterwards, water rotted paint off Hummel's coffin while Joe Cafferty fretted in a city where

neither the Hummel family's money nor his own private detective's badge did him any good. And his bullet head, his pavement-pounding feet, his imposing middle-aged girth didn't help him. Not here—not in France, where he knew only a few words of the language, and none of the ways.

Then, some very battered United States money was changed into French francs, at Marseilles, and eventually news of this reached Joe Cafferty's friends at the *sûreté*. Joe headed south. Africa was then, to him a place where they had darkies and the French owned a desert.



The sunlight at Marseilles was very warm and very yellow. It made Cafferty's derby and his neatly pressed, grey business suit look somewhat out of place. He used his soldier's French on a gendarme, directing traffic in front of the railroad station and, eventually, he was closeted with an agent of his Paris friends.

The Frenchman, luckily, spoke English—good English. "Let me understand this," he said, twirling his long mustaches. "You seek a man named Pestalozzi."

Joe Cafferty nodded his bullet-shaped head. "I think that's his name," he said, slowly. "He went under the name of Pestal, in the United States—'Pistol Pete Pestal.'"

"It has a certain

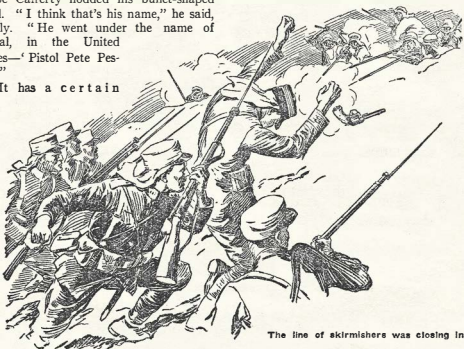
this Pestalozzi was the contact man in the case—the boy who got the ransom."

The Frenchman's eyes sparkled.

"Ah," he said.

"Yes," Joe told him, wearily, "I've chased the guy over half the world, now. If I have to, I'll chase him over the other half." Of course Joe didn't mean that—then.

"When Hummel was taken, his family didn't dare go to the cops. They were afraid if a lot of flatfeet got around the



The line of skirmishers was closing in

euphony," the French detective agreed, "and you have a warrant for the arrest and extradition of this 'Pestal' Pestalozzi?"

"No, I haven't," Cafferty said. "It's like this. You've heard of Ludwig Hummel?"

The Frenchman nodded. "Of course," he said, "the young banker who was kidnapped and tortured by his kidnapers, so that he died later. A terrible case. A shocking case. The worst since that of Colonel Lindbergh. Were you to solve it, you would be famous—renowned—"

"Exactly," Joe told him, crisply. "Well,

the kidnapers might bump off Ludwig, so they sent for me."

He coughed, deprecatingly. "I'm a private dick, you see, from New York. I wasn't known in Hummel's city, so I came on. But I'm known in New York—and when I get this Pestal—"

"Well, they got the dough together, nothing larger than hundred dollar bills, and all of them battered and old.

"Then they ran an ad, telling the kidnapers they were ready to pay the dough. I hid outside the house, under a hedge. After a while, the guy came along, goin'

fast, in a roadster. He threw a stone through the window, with a note tied around it. I didn't hang around—I followed him.

"After a while he parked the bus—it was a stolen car—and went to a movie—just like that.

"But I got to see his face, when he was buying a ticket. I couldn't put the finger on him then; to have pinched him would have been to kill Hummel."

Joe laughed, bitterly. "Though a lot of good it did Hummel. He croaked two days after the rats gave him up."

The Frenchman sighed, sympathetically.

ANYWAY, it was four days between then and the time they got the ransom money into the gang's hands. I spent that time looking at the rogues' gallery. Finally, I got a picture of this Pestalozzi. I showed it around.

"I missed him by six hours, the day Hummel was released. He had taken a plane out of the municipal airport. I'd been lookin' for him in more hidden places and he'd moved in the open and fooled me. I flew to New York, but he disappeared there.

"Another guy and I—a dick on the police force there—we started asking the stool pigeons questions."

Joe Cafferty broke off to look at the bright Mediterranean sky, framed in a window behind the Frenchman's head. "You know what stool pigeons are?"

The Frenchman shrugged, and spread his hands wide. "Know them?" he asked. "I use them."

Joe grinned, that same humorless grin.

"I guess it's the same, all the world over," he said, slowly. "Well, anyway, after a while we found a stool pigeon who knew a guy, etc., etc. And, eventually, we found an egg who had been a forger. He had made up a passport for Pestalozzi, bought him a steamer ticket.

"That took me to France, to Paris; and I lost the trail again there. After that, you know the story."

"Yes," the Frenchman said, "I know

the story. There are not so many Americans in France now. When my friend in Paris told me to watch out for a lot of American money, I did.

"Some bills were cashed. It looked like, what you call, ransom money. Old bills. Battered bills. And so you are here."

"And so I'm here," Joe agreed.

He reached into a pocket of his grey suit, brought out a heavy manilla envelope—not big. From this he produced a photograph. Flopped it on the desk.

The Frenchman nodded his head, gravely.

"It is not a pretty face," he said, after a while, "No, I would not call it a pretty face. Criminal. Definitely criminal.

"No," he pushed the photograph back, "I have not seen him. But then, I cannot see everyone."

He reached behind him, to a costumer, for a fuzzy, velour hat. "Come," he said, "we will go and see the money changer."

Joe Cafferty settled his derby more firmly on his head, and they left.

Marseilles was hot; Marseilles was brightly colored, and drenched with sunlight. Their way took them past the waterfront, where ships were preparing to leave for every corner of the globe. A dozen languages were spoken within a radius of fifty feet of Joe Cafferty's derby.

None of this impressed Cafferty. He was a dick—a man-hunter, and it was his job to bring back a man named Pestalozzi—a man who had been involved in the worst kidnapping of a year when kidnappings had been frequent and horrible.

They stepped into a money changer's office, and the Marseilles detective laid the photograph that Joe had given him on the counter.

The money changer nodded. Yes, he had seen that face, not two weeks before; had changed a twenty dollar bill for the man.

Five other money changers recognized Pestalozzi, too. But none of them knew his name.

Outside, in the hot street again, the Frenchman faced Joe Cafferty.

"You see, my friend," he said, "there is no use going further. There is no doubt that your man was here. Where he went from here, no one can tell."

He shrugged and ran a sweeping arm along the vista of the waterfront.

"That boat ships for China; that one, for Africa; another goes north, to Norway, for a cargo of butter; that one, to Australia. Marseilles is the departure point for every place.

"There is Monte Carlo, not far from here. Why do you not go there? That would be a place for a man with wealth—*such* wealth—ill-gotten wealth."

"Naw," Joe Cafferty said, "he wouldn't go to Monte Carlo; that's not Pestalozzi's way. He's not goin' to go some place where he'd *lose* money. Give me back my picture and if I get in jail, will you get me out?"

The Frenchman stared at him for a moment, said, "Perhaps," and turned on his heel.

Joe stood in the hot street, staring after him. In some way he seemed to have offended the French detective.

Then the dick chuckled. He'd gotten along without police cooperation in the past, he'd get along without it in the future. Detecting was a system—you used the methods that had worked before—and stuck to them. Then, if you could stand the gaff, you won.

He looked all around him. What he saw must have pleased him. Of all the towns in France, this was the easiest one for an American to work, for Marseilles has no nationality. It is a sailors' town.

IN a shop, Joe swapped his hard derby for a seaman's cap. He chucked his grey coat for a sloppy looking white jacket. Then he started strolling the waterfront. Pestalozzi would have done that—looking for liquor and women. Cheap crooks always did look for those things when they came into the dough. And a smart dick could, by acting like a cheap crook, catch one every time.

By nightfall he had a general, vague

plan in his mind, of the underworld of Marseilles. He sought out a photographer, on one of the cheaper streets. In his rough, dough-boy French, Joe explained what he wanted. A picture of two men with, perhaps, a girl. He got the picture.

"Now," he said, "I want the men's faces in this changed. One of them must look like me, the other one like this photograph here."

The photographer studied, then he said, "It can be done. First, I reduce this photograph to the size of the head in the picture, then I take a picture of you, the same size, yes? Then I reproduce them."

"Good work," Joe said, after a while, "I'll be back at nine o'clock."

After that he roamed the streets of Marseilles again, stepping into alleys, when the gendarmes went by. For all he knew, his erstwhile friend at police headquarters had sent out an order against him.

He knew the French didn't care for foreign detectives working on their territory.

Shortly before nine, he sent off a telegram to the Hummel family, four thousand miles away. "TRACED MY MAN THIS FAR GETTING HOT" he cabled. The fates, if there are fates, must have laughed at Joe's phrasing. He was hot—but he was going to be hotter—hotter with the heat of Hell. Then he went over to the photographer's and picked up his picture.

The photographer had done a good job. The whole print that he handed Joe was so scratched that it was hard to tell where the heads had been inserted.

Joe paid him, handsomely, for a silence he knew the photographer wouldn't keep, and then Cafferty strolled down stairs again.

The Marseilles night was cool and fragrant, but the Café de la Nuit was not. Joe found himself a table, ordered a drink.

A girl strolled over, sat down at the table across from Joe. "American?" she asked, brightly.

Joe looked up, as though surprised. "Yah," he growled. "What's it to yuh?"

The girl answered in what she believed

to be American slang, "You buy chicken a drink?"

"Sure," Joe said, and thereafter relaxed for an hour while the girl plied him with liquor.

The girl bored him, and the liquor was bad; but he was not being himself now; he was Pete Pestalozzi; doing what Pestalozzi would have done.

At the end of the hour, she must have believed him drunk. At any rate, Joe started boasting.

"Say," he boasted, "you should have seen the girl I had in Cherbourg last year."

His companion was coy: "She was not prettier than me, no?"

"Well," Joe told her, "judge for yourself," and he produced the photograph of himself and some strange girl, and Pestalozzi.

The girl in the photograph was not pretty. His companion got mad.

"Look," she cried to a passing waiter, "this is what this species of an American considers nicer than me. Consider it, will you? Consider it!"

The photograph passed from hand to hand and, before it had covered half the café, someone had recognized Pestalozzi, as Joe Cafferty had known they would. He knew his Pestalozzi, knew his American crook; knew this would be the sort of place the fugitive would run to. This was only confirming his tried methods; they hadn't failed him—yet.

And the man who recognized him gave Joe all the information he needed. Though it was in French, the dick recognized it.

"That's the Italian," the man said, "who joined the Legion last week."

By such simple tricks had Cafferty followed his man so far.

CHAPTER II.

A WAIT OF FIVE YEARS.

JOE CAFFERTY bounded up the steps of the office of the Marseilles branch of the *sûreté* with as much jubilation as he ever allowed to get into his cold eyes.

"Look," he yelled, "I've got our man—I've got him located." But the mustached, French officer looked up with some annoyance from the newspaper he was reading.

"I see here," he said, mildly, "that the American police are baffled, that no arrests have been made yet in the Hummel case."

"That's right," Joe Cafferty told him exuberantly. "You see, with Hummel dead, there's no way of identifying the men who held him. Pestalozzi is the only one we've got anything on, and I know where he is."

The Frenchman rose, picked up his ridiculous hat. "Very well, then," he said, "we go and arrest this man. Where is he, did you say?"

"I didn't say," Joe Cafferty told him, "but I've heard. He enlisted in the Legion. I guess that can only mean your French Foreign Legion, eh?"

The Frenchman sat down again, and reached behind him, to hang up his hat. He set his hands firmly on the desk and stared up at Cafferty.

"Americans are not admitted to the Legion any more," he said.

"So what?" Joe Cafferty wanted to know. "Supposing he told them he was an Italian? The guy speaks wop, I know that."

The Frenchman cleared his throat and stared at the spotless blotter on his desk. Then he smoothed his mustache with both thumbs, and, always avoiding Cafferty's eyes, made a little speech.

"It is, indeed, Monsieur, regrettable. There is nothing I, a father of a family, abhor more than a kidnapper. Nevertheless, there is, regrettably, nothing I can do to help you."

"What do you mean?" Cafferty asked. "All you have to do is wire the commanding officer to hold him until we get there. It's in the bag—he's as safe as though he were in a cell on Centre Street right now."

"But the Legion," the Frenchman explained, "does not release its soldiers for trial by civil court, in other countries or in France. The Legion, as you may have heard, is the port of wanted men—their

haven—their refuge. Five years from now, when Monsieur Pestalozzi's enlistment is up, you may come back to me. Then you and I will take great delight in going to Sidi-Bel-Abbes and arresting this monster, this creature, this murderer. Until such time," he shrugged and spread his hands wide.

Joe Cafferty blew up.

"Five years!" he bellowed—"Five years—five years of sitting on my tail in Marseilles to see that this guy doesn't slip away—five years, while the rest of his gang in the United States take it on the lam and slide out on me. Five years—hell! You might as well have said fifty!"

He whirled on his heel, headed for the door. "Well, anyway," he barked, "you can do this for me. Keep your hands off and I'll get him myself."

He slammed the door behind him. The Frenchman looked at the quivering pane of glass and then shrugged. "Not even that can I do," he whispered. "It is the law, and I am an officer of the law."

OUTSIDE in the street, Joe Cafferty stood still for a moment, his anger dying within him, abruptly.

For the first time, the loneliness of his position descended on him. In a strange country, the language of which he only understood a smattering, operating under a strange law that seemed, to Joe at least, to be all in favor of the criminal, with not a break for the dick.

He could, he told himself, go find himself his own equivalent—a French private detective, but, like the best of his profession, Joe Cafferty had little use for the casual private dick—professional divorce-getter, document-stealer, fixer.

He could fight the case up the line—that was his second idea—go over the head of this Marseilles dick—go to his friend in Paris—go to the President of the French Republic, if necessary. Tell them about Ludwig Hummel—what he had looked like when the Pestalozzi gang had released him—how he had died—work on their sympathy.

And then the cold truth beat down on Joe Cafferty's head. He was no fool. He read the newspapers. France had an empire to maintain in Africa. To do this, they needed troops, troops that didn't mind dying. Troops that could be starved, and exposed to the sun; and worked until they dropped, without fear of political reprisal at home.

Such troops could only be gotten at a sacrifice. The sacrifice, in this case, was the Legion's boast that it would not give up its men to anyone. That the Legion stood by its own. To release one criminal to the law, no matter how horrible that criminal was, would be to cause enlistments in the Legion to drop off sharply. Joe could see that. For the other crooks, the rats, the fugitives, whom the French beat into soldiers, had no assurance for protection from their past misdeeds, once the Legion broke its rule.

No, he could expect no help from the government. Besides, it occurred to him, ironically, Ludwig Hummel was born with a German name. That certainly wouldn't help any.

Disconsolately, he walked along the waterfront. Five years, he told himself. In five years he himself might be dead. Pestalozzi might die on the desert. The Hummels would have forgotten Ludwig.

He dropped down to a stringer of the wharf—gazed across the water. Out there lay Africa. Some place in Africa would be Pestalozzi. That was Joe's next step. A boat would take him there—but when he got there? Joe had been in the A. E. F.—he knew his army. A helluva time he was going to have.

BEHIND him came the shuffle of many men walking together. He turned and stared. Under the guidance of a squad of smartly uniformed soldiers, a bunch of dock rats, gutter snipes, were shuffling down the quay. A little fellow, standing near Joe, emitted a strange noise, the French equivalent of a Bronx cheer. Joe strolled over to him, shoving the white cap back on his bullet head.

"Who were they?" he asked. "A bunch of convicts for Devil's Island?"

The loafer turned, eyed Joe up and down.

"No," he said. "A bunch of new recruits for the Legion, going out to die in the sun for the glory of France. *Vive la France!*" he added, ironically.

Joe said, "When do they sail?"

His companion did not answer directly, but asked for a cigarette first. When it



JOE CAFFERTY

was given to him, he lit it, quickly, then shrugged.

"They sail tonight, *Monsieur l'Americain*," and followed down the quay, still making jeering noises at the Legion recruits.

Joe stared after them, scratching his head, slowly. In such a squad of nondescripts, Pestalozzi had marched, not very long ago—marched to a ship that would take him to—what was the name of the town that Frenchman had mentioned? Yes—Sidi-Bel-Abbes.

Slowly, Joe turned again, and walked in the direction from which the recruits had come. They wouldn't keep those recruits in Sidi very long, he knew. They'd ship them away. He had to get there. But the French were fussy about their military forts. They'd balk at letting an American into them—an American with no legitimate purpose he could tell them—and an illegitimate one to conceal.

Joe scratched his head, then asked a question of the first gendarme he saw. The gendarme directed him to a musty office on a side street.

Outside, in the street, he tossed his white sailor cap away, loosened his necktie, further vilified his appearance. Then, like a man slowly going to the electric chair, Joe Cafferty, private dick, climbed those stairs. He had no plan, then—except to stick to his old line; see what his quarry had done, where he had gone, and look at things with the crook's viewpoint.

At the top, a French soldier eyed him with a bored expression, motioned him, with a thumb, towards an office. Joe went in, joined a half dozen other men waiting in a room. The half dozen other men had not washed in weeks.

He found that out when he had been in there a moment or so. One of them had a scar that ran from his right eye to the left corner of his jaw. Pestalozzi would have fitted into that group—the rat had chosen a good hole.

A French officer entered, pointed at Joe, and then stepped back into another office. Joe rose and shuffled after him. The Frenchman had seated himself.

"Name?" he asked.

"Joseph,"—the officer didn't ask for his last name, but started writing.

"I came up to see about,—" Joe went on. The officer cut him short: "Nationality?"

"Irish," Joe said, abruptly. This thought he wanted to join the Legion. Well, why not? He'd get out again—he was the old Houdini for getting out of things.

"Age?"

He was in this thing, now; he'd go through with it. But his heart was cold within him.

"Thirty-five," Joe told him, lying by five years.

Joe Cafferty was thumbed into another room, prodded and thumped by a doctor, had something read to him in English and French, that he didn't quite understand. Finally, he signed his name, then was

shoved, roughly, into another room, empty, except for three wastrels of the wharves.

THE realization of what he had done was cold within Joe, but he was not a thinker—he was an actor, along regular laid down lines. When he had seen that there was no other way of going after his man, he had taken the one course left. Now the future could look after itself. Guys got out of Sing Sing—and there was no wall around the Legion, no guards around Africa.

The one figure kept dinning through his head—"five years—five years"—he lowered his head into his hands.

One of the unwashed waifs across the room jeered.

"What's the matter, recruit?" he said. "Sorry, already, you joined the Legion?"

Joe turned and looked up, snarled, then composed his features. His faith in himself was returning. He'd find a way to get his man, and get out of the Legion too. It had been the only course, he told himself, the only thing he could have done. But the Legion was big, and spread over a third of a continent. What the hell? There was some way of getting from unit to unit.

The thought of Ludwig Hummel's face on the night when Pestalozzi had released him returned to strengthen his determination. He looked up. The man who had jeered him was standing over him, looking down. It was the man with the scar.

"Not so bad, recruit," the man said, in French. "Five years in the Legion isn't much. If the sun doesn't get you, the bullets will; and if the bullets don't get you, the corporal will; and if the corporal doesn't get you, the *cafard* will."

"*Cafard*?" Joe Cafferty asked, dully.

"Surely," the other recruit told him. "Desert madness, you know."

He flexed his muscles, rolled the whites of his eyes up, like a mad man. Then he regained the natural aspect of his features and said, "Have you got a cigarette?"

Joe offered him one. The recruit grabbed the package, started to cross the room with it. Joe caught him by the back

of his neck, snatched his butts back, sent the man whirling. The other recruit sat down, abruptly, in a corner.

The door opened and a man with corporal stripes was standing there.

"You'll make a legionnaire yet, Private Joseph," he said. "Come on in here—"

And Joe Cafferty started out to extend his hunt for Pestalozzi to the third continent he had covered so far. He'd get the devil, he told himself, grinning mentally.

But he didn't know he'd have to go to Hell to do it.

CHAPTER III

"YOU'RE IN THE LEGION NOW!"

JOE CAFFERTY'S sense of humor was, in some respects, incomplete. Therefore he saw nothing incongruous in the fact that the very generous salary and expense account which the Hummel family were paying him was piling up in the *Credit Lyonnaise*, in Paris, while he did the hardest work of his life for the few sous a day that the Legion pays a recruit.

For Joe Cafferty had gone through with it. There had been a time, he found, when he could have backed out. The Legion gives its recruits time to think it over. But he had made inquiries, discreet ones, to be sure, and he had confirmed what he had already expected—that, not only the Legion would never give up Pestalozzi, but that it would be extremely hard for Joe Cafferty, as an American citizen, to get into the back country forts, where Pestalozzi was sure to be stationed.

Joe Cafferty was once drilled to be a soldier in the United States Army—had once worn the blue uniform of the New York police force, and was now being made over into a soldier of the French Foreign Legion. It was not easy work, but he took it.

The scar-faced man, with whom he had squabbled in the enlistment office, had been assigned to the same company Joe was in. They were stationed for training at Marakech, in Morocco. Scar-face's name, it

developed, was Arversac. He was a Belgian, and he had taken a particular dislike to Cafferty. Joe Cafferty told himself that it was because Arversac could smell a cop twenty miles away. The little Flemish man had, undoubtedly, been fleeing from justice when the long arm of the Legion had accepted him. So had many of the other members of the company. Joe told himself it was a fine place for a cop.

They were drilling, one morning, under the orders of the sergeant, out in the hot sun of Northern Africa, when Lieutenant Vigneron appeared.

The Lieutenant was a small, dapper Frenchman, a type that Joe had always particularly detested. He called the Sergeant aside, said something to him. Then both the officers looked at Joe Cafferty.

Arversac, standing next to Joe in the line, nudged the dick.

"They're going to make you an officer," he whispered, sardonically.

Joe stood up, stiffly, at attention. There was no doubt but that his superiors were concentrating on him. He wondered, feebly, if it were because of his military appearance. Two weeks in the Legion had sweated fifteen pounds off the middle-aged detective.

Then, suddenly, a beatifical smile spread over the face of the Sergeant. He turned to the Lieutenant, whispered something; Vigneron nodded his small, dark head, then he, too, grinned.

With the training of a confirmed jail-bird, Arversac spoke out of the corner of his mouth, without ever moving his lips.

"They're training you to be an officer, Irish; they want to sweat you down to the Lieutenant's size."

Joe Cafferty didn't answer but, at that moment, Vigneron's voice said something to the Sergeant, and the Sergeant's voice cracked out, hard.

"Legionnaire Joseph."

Joe Cafferty stepped two paces forward, came to attention.

"You were talking in the ranks," the non-commissioned officer snapped. "You

will take sanitary duty for a week, and extra guard mount for four nights. Dis-missed." And the squad broke up.

BEHIND him the men began to laugh, to chaff among themselves, but Joe Cafferty stood there. He had gotten along well in his first two weeks in the Legion. His natural cop's scorn for a crook told him that he was head and shoulders better than any other man in his enlistment party. He had hoped to get promoted soon, to the point where he could have a little more freedom to push his investigation further afield, to find out where Pestalozzi was stationed.

Blindly Joe told himself it couldn't be that he was a worse Legionnaire than this riff-raff of humanity whom he served with.

Lieutenant Vigneron was striding back to his quarters, slapping his neat gloves against his neatly pressed khaki breeches. Cafferty strode after him. The Lieutenant entered his quarters. Joe Cafferty settled his uniform into shape, wiping off the sand he had acquired in skirmish drill. Then he rapped at the Lieutenant's door.

"Come in," the officer called.

Joe entered and saluted. He kept his hand at the peak of his cap for at least two minutes before Lieutenant Vigneron deigned to reply and thus allow the hand to fall to Joe's side.

"Legionnaire Joseph wishes to speak to the Lieutenant," Joe told him.

The Lieutenant stretched his legs and smiled a little. It was customary for such requests to come through the company Sergeant, and he told Joe this, in a purring voice.

Joe said nothing, just remained at attention. Suddenly Vigneron grinned again.

"No doubt the Legionnaire thinks himself persecuted."

Joe said, promptly, "No, sir."

Lieutenant Vigneron smiled, became cat-like, diabolic.

"I did not ask you to speak, Legionnaire," he said, "So—I find on your enlistment paper, Legionnaire Joseph, that you are Irish."

Remembering his lesson of a moment before, Joe didn't answer.

"However," Vigneron said, "I have been in Ireland for the Dublin Horse Show, and you do not speak like an Irishman to me, Legionnaire."

Joe swallowed twice, then, in the stoic tone of a good soldier and a good dick, said: "No."

"No," Vigneron said, "you speak like an American. In fact, though I have never been to America, you speak to me like an American—how you call it"—he broke into English—"policeman. That is right, Legionnaire Cafferty?"

The world sank away around Joe Cafferty's big feet, as he realized what had happened, that the detective officer had sold him out, had told the Legion to look out for him. Otherwise, how could Vigneron know his real name?

"We do not encourage our legionnaires," the Lieutenant went on, "to practice the pursuits they followed in civil life. You can see, as a policeman, Legionnaire Joseph, that this would lead to serious trouble, considering the previous occupations of our other legionnaires. However, were it to be known that one of the members of this company was a detective, how long do you think, Legionnaire Joseph, that man would live?"

Joe Cafferty swallowed. He knew, none better, that three quarters of the members of his own company were being sought by detectives some place in the world for something. If it were known that Joe Cafferty was a dick, looking for a man, every one of those gutter rats would think he was the one.

But Lieutenant Vigneron was waiting for Joe to answer, evidently. Cafferty braced his shoulders, a little. "He might live through the day, sir," he said, "but not through the night. Never through the night, my Lieutenant."

"Precisely," Lieutenant Vigneron said. "And so, Monsieur Cafferty, I believe it would be advisable for you to abandon your plans, for five years, at least."

Joe said nothing. "You do not agree

with me, ch?" the Lieutenant said. "So—let me tell you, you will be watched, carefully. Unfortunately I have not a photograph of the man whom you seek, but you will be watched, none the less, and kept away from him when we do decide who he is. You are dismissed, Legionnaire Joseph."

Joe Cafferty turned on his heel, after saluting, and carried himself steadily out of the Lieutenant's quarters. He passed the Sergeant and, remembering in time, saluted him, as privates must in the French army.

"Sanitary detail is looking for you, Joseph," the Sergeant said, snappily, and Joe turned in the direction of the latrine.

This was insufferable; not only had he ruined his chances for getting away when he had his man, but as soon as the Legion could get a photograph of Pestalozzi they would make very certain that he and Cafferty never met for the five years that each had to serve.

AND then suddenly Joe Cafferty snapped his fingers. Red tape. Red tape, which he had incurred in his days on the force, in his days as a private dick, was about to come to his help. It occurred to him that, if the Lieutenant was ever going to have a picture of Pestalozzi, he'd have it now.

In some way the exchange system between the Marseilles *sûreté*, the American police force and the French Foreign Legion had slipped up and no photograph of Pestalozzi was available.

It occurred to Joe Cafferty that he still had a chance—a desperate chance—but still a good one. Deliberately he turned his back on the direction in which he had been walking. To hell with the Sanitary Detail—to hell with the whole French Foreign Legion. For it had entered his mind that if being a good soldier wouldn't get him his man, being a bad one might, always provided that he could take it. And Joe Cafferty prided himself on being a dick who could take it.

There was always the malignant figure of Pestalozzi dancing before Joe Caf-

ferty's eyes. When he had been with the New York City police he had known detectives who had worked on cases for eight, nine and ten years; had run down every clue that came up in all that time.

He himself had only been on this case a few weeks now, which wasn't so bad. It was so fresh that he imagined the papers in the United States still mentioned it. He couldn't know—he was cut off from all his past life. When he'd left it had been page one from coast to coast.

Deliberately Joe Cafferty picked a spot in the middle of the parade ground. He procured a box in which soap had come, set it up there, sat down and rolled a cigarette. Then he waited. He didn't have long to wait. An Adjutant, the highest non-commissioned rank, came storming across the parade grounds.

Joe Cafferty did not rise, although the Legion had already drilled into him the fact that a non-commissioned officer was entitled to the fullest respect of any legionnaire.

The Adjutant was a big man—a German. He pulled back his heavy military boot and let fly, not at Joe, but at the soap box on which Cafferty was sitting. The soap box went sailing across the parade grounds. Joe sat down on the ground. He continued to sit there.

"Attention!" thundered the Adjutant. "Attention! What are you supposed to be doing here?"

Leisurely Joe raised himself to his feet. Without saluting he drawled: "Sanitary detail, my Adjutant."

The non-com became purple with rage. "Sanitary detail?" he roared. He cursed for three minutes,—in English, out of respect to Joe's nationality,—in French, out of respect to both their uniforms and in German because he knew more words in that language.

When he finished he demanded furiously, "What type or species of sanitary detail do you call this?"

"Airing myself off, my Adjutant," Joe responded, slowly. "I find it more pleasant than cleaning out latrines."

The Adjutant gasped, and swore in Arabic, this time. Then he blew his whistle, sharply. Two sentries came running.

"This man is under arrest," he snapped.

THE sentries made a dive for Joe. Joe side-stepped neatly and one sentry ran into the other. Then they both whirled, and a shower of blows, from the flats of their bayonets, descended on Joe's back.

He pitched forward onto the sand, sprawling on his hands and knees. The Adjutant kicked him. Red flames licked up inside Joe's head. He was tough and he was Irish, and every instinct told him to get on his feet and use his dukes on these bozos.

Only by the strongest exertion of will power did he control himself. To have hit the Adjutant, or a sentry on duty, might very well mean that he would make them mad enough to kill him outright, and he had to stop short, just short, of that.

With lips firmly clenched between his teeth, face claret, he was rammed away and thrust into the brig.

The brig had a corrugated iron roof. It had tiny cells. It was unbearably hot. Joe Cafferty sweated there.

After a while his hands unclenched, his lips came out from between his teeth again. He sat there, trembling all over.

He was a violent tempered man. The experience he had just gone through, the self-control he had had to use, had tried him more than any other experience in his very checkered career. The picture of Joe Cafferty, ex-Sergeant of the twenty-seventh division, ex-Lieutenant of the New York police, and present owner of his own very large agency, sprawling on the desert sand, while two low-born frog-eaters belabored his rear with the flats of their bayonets, was almost more than he could bear.

The cold sweat of furious, trembling anger forced the hot perspiration from his brow, and he was in this mood when Lieutenant Vigneron entered.

"Legionnaire Joseph!" The erstwhile Joe Cafferty did not rise but sat, perched

on the edge of his cot, clenched hands between his knees.

"So," said Vigneron, good naturedly, "we do not rise in the Legion for an officer any more, hein? This is an innovation. Let us hope it does not spread among the ranks."

Cafferty controlled his voice, with effort. He looked up. "Hi, Louie," he said. "Have a seat."

The Lieutenant's face blazed, his eyes were like cold steel. Striding to the cell door, he slammed it, boomed orders at the



PESTALOZZI

sentry in the corridor to back away out of ear-shot; then came back.

"Legionnaire Joseph," he said, "Monsieur Cafferty, listen to me, and listen to me closely. I see through your game. It is your intention to make yourself such a nuisance that you will be tried, and then you will presume upon your United States citizenship. But listen to me, Legionnaire Joseph, when you signed those papers, you killed all your past. You are no longer Joseph Cafferty, an American policeman,—you are one Legionnaire Joseph, country of origin, Ireland. You know why we ceased to take Americans in the Legion?"

"Sure," Joe said; "because you couldn't kick them around. The American Consul General didn't like it."

"Precisely," Lieutenant Vigneron said. "There are still Americans in the Legion,

but the paper you signed attested that you are a citizen of the country whose name you gave, and that you waive all appeal to the authorities in any other country. You understand that?"

"Yeah," Joe Cafferty said.

"So," Vigneron told him, "you are no longer a privileged character. Go back, serve your sanitary detail, Legionnaire Joseph.

"Be a good soldier and in time I'll see you are raised to Corporal, in my detail, always provided you forget this mad idea of arresting a fellow legionnaire, and taking him back to justice."

JOE CAFFERTY said, "Nuts," and the Lieutenant's face twisted up. Joe had spoken in English.

Vigneron went on, smoothly. "I don't understand that word," he said, in slow French, "but I do understand your tone, and it is insolent. I am going to have you taken out of the guard house, Cafferty, and sent back to your barracks and then I am going in there and tell the men who you are—that you are a detective, looking for someone. As you say, you might live the day, but not the night, never the night."

Joe Cafferty rose. "OK., Lieutenant," he said. "Let's get goin'."

The Lieutenant was astounded, amazed; he stepped back.

"You do not fear death, Legionnaire Joseph, horrible death, death that comes in the dark?"

"Hell no," Joe Cafferty told him. "I know you're bluffing. Listen, Lieutenant. Do you think I was a big enough sap to enlist in your tin pot little Legion without telling someone first? O.K. Say I did sign away my citizenship. How'd you find out who I was? Some one must have written to you, or wired you. And do you think you're big enough, and fast enough, and smart enough, to cut off all the red tape in the French army? And get that wire back? No, you're not. When my body's dead, and buried under this desert, some one in the United States is goin' to start an investigation. They won't bury you in the desert,

Lieutenant Vigneron, they'll bury you on Devil's Island,—the officer who let his men kill a dick,—a policeman, as you say,—when he had been informed, officially, that the man was an American.

"You don't think the people in my country are going to care about some silly little rule of the Legion, do you? Did you ever hear of Ludwig Hummel?"

The Lieutenant shook his head.

"Well," Cafferty said, "Hummel was a victim of the worst kidnapping since the Lindbergh case. It's his murderer, his kidnapper, I'm after now. Don't think this won't get plenty of play in the American papers, and don't think that if I'm killed by your men the French government won't be down on you.

"There we are, trying to give them a reduction in the matter of the War debt, and a swell chance they'll have when this breaks. Why, this will blast your whole shoddy government, Vigneron."

The Lieutenant said, chillily, "No man speaks of the French government before me that way, and gets away with it," and Cafferty backed up a step.

"O.K." he said, "I'll take that back, but I won't take back what I said about what will happen if I get croaked. And here's another thing, Lieutenant; the reason you don't want me to get my man is because it will be bad publicity for the enlisting department of the Legion; because the crooks and rats and murderers and gutter snipes that fill your ranks, won't come in if they know that you let a detective in. So what? Supposin' I live the night. Supposin' I'm man enough to back down that bunch of wharf rats that I share a barracks room with. What then? They'll desert in droves because they'll think that you allowed a dick in to watch 'em, pinch 'em. You better think twice, Vigneron, you better think twice."

Joe Cafferty had risen during the speech. He was backed against the wall of the cell, now, leaning under the little barred window, completely at ease.

Vigneron stared at him. "All right, Cafferty," he said, "you win. To-morrow

morning we ship you back to Marseilles, return your enlistment papers and you are out of the Legion. The French government may not be big but it will be big enough to see that you never land in any of its possessions in Africa again. Does that satisfy you?"

The Lieutenant laughed. "When you started talking, Cafferty, you made me mad, and I was going to send you to the labor battalion. But you talked too long, Yankee. You talked me into anger, then you talked me into thinking. I know, and you know, that there is a rule that when a man goes to a labor battalion he can never be returned to his own company. You were in hopes of being sent some other place where the man was that you wanted. You were going to keep on getting yourself transferred via the labor battalion until you did find your man.

"But you talked too lengthily, Cafferty. You talked too long and you gave me a chance to think."

Overhead there was a groaning noise—a throbbing noise. Cafferty half turned and stared out of the window.

An airplane was flying overhead. The nightly patrol from headquarters, bringing up messages.

Vigneron said, "There is a party going back to the coast in two or three days and when they go, you are going with them. Until then, Legionnaire Joseph, Mister Joseph Cafferty, you can sit in your cell and fry. I bid you good afternoon." And he left Joe Cafferty.

Outside a sentry's voice spoke to the Lieutenant, "Orders from headquarters, Lieutenant. The airplane dropped them."

Cafferty sat dully in his cell. The labor battalion transfer had been his idea and it hadn't worked. He was going to be shipped back to Marseilles, to wait five years for Pestalozzi.

And then a reprieve—

The Lieutenant's voice calling, "Sergeant, get the men to quarters. We march for the interior in the morning." And a bugle blowing. That could only mean one thing,—trouble, trouble with the natives

and hope rose in Joe Cafferty's breast. His luck was holding,—the luck of the Irish.

CHAPTER IV.

TOWARD THE BATTLE-FRONT.

A WEEK later the man who had, in some dimly remembered past, been Joe Cafferty, stumbled over one of those curious quartz-like formations known as desert roses. He cursed, briefly, in a low growl, and Legionnaire Arversac laughed, shortly.

Joe Cafferty didn't hear him. He was staring, squint-eyed, at the sun, while he logged along,—staring at it, until it pulsed, throbbed in his vision, seemed to grow larger, seemed to be descending on an earth that was already too hot.

That sun was the legionnaire's torture and their only hope.

While they marched, it beat down on their heads, parched their bodies, until their veins felt like strings of cord drawn through their protesting flesh.

But when a certain amount of it, a tremendous amount of it, had sunk below the horizon, then the Sergeant, striding casually ahead, would call a halt and, after a while, night would fall.

With the exception of the non-coms, this platoon of the Legion were all recruits,—city men and farm boys,—and they were taking the forced march hard. But none so hard as Joe Cafferty,—Joe, the tough dick who had, nevertheless, slept in a bed every night and eaten three meals a day, every day, for the last ten years now,—that made a difference. Success had softened him.

Ludwig Hummel, the kidnapped boy, and "Pistol" Pestalozzi, were only names that rattled around in the hot area under Joe Cafferty's scalp. Arversac and sand, desert roses, and Lieutenant Vigneron, were realities. Those and the sun, always the sun.

Vigneron, with malicious humor, had coupled Joe Cafferty with Arversac, in the ranks, Arversac who, from some crooked instinct, hated Joe Cafferty's sight.

Ahead of this pair, two legionnaires talked,—talked with the lip-sparing motion of men who, for many years, have had to converse without their officers, or their keepers, seeing them.

They talked with a peculiar, breath-sparing inflection of men to whom moisture is precious and who have learned that every breath evaporates a fraction of a drop into the desert air. The result was, peculiarly, the voice of the Legion.

"The Lieutenant is walkin' us for exercise," one of them grumbled. "If there are any Arabs, why don't they shoot and get it over with?"

The other one was a philosopher.

"They brought us to El Harit by car, didn't they?" he rasped. "Think they send out cars to start exercise marches?"

"He doesn't think," Arversac chimed in. "We none of us think. We're just dirty, pack-carrying, sand-kicking sons of the Legion." He did not mean the phrase dramatically.

All this entered Joe Cafferty's head,—his ears,—but not his consciousness. At forty a man can't switch from being a pavement pounder to a desert rat. Joe was learning this.

His feet, kicking up the rustling sand, said something to him, "Pestalozzi—Pesta—lozzi,—left,—right,—P e s t a ,—lozzi." He'd forgotten what it meant.

Lieutenant Vigneron rode by. He, alone, of this platoon, had a horse. The Sergeants, and Corporals, and the Adjutants, walked with the men.

"Legionnaire Joseph," the officer called,—Joe Cafferty slogged on.

"Legionnaire Joseph,"—Vigneron said, again, more peremptorily.

The sound, like all the other noises around him, like the men buzzing, like that soft refrain that his feet beat up, entered Joe Cafferty's head. It didn't register.

Vigneron rode closer, and tapped Joe's shoulder with his riding crop. "Drop out, Legionnaire Joseph."

It registered this time. The platoon marched by. Each man had two little fountains in front of him—two little foun-

tains of sand, generated by the toes of his boots.

WHEN the rear guard corporals had passed, the Lieutenant unbuckled a canteen, handed it down to Joe. Cafferty drank, gratefully. The Lieutenant sat on his horse, looking down at Joe Cafferty. Joe's eyes fastened on a bright metal disc on the horse's head stall. It bore the arms of the republic of France. Surprisingly, the dapper little Lieutenant's voice was soft when he spoke.

"How old are you, Legionnaire Joseph?"

"Forty," Joe said, dully.

He reached for the canteen again. This time Vigneron snatched it away. "Easy, my friend, not too much, at first."

"Cafferty," he went on, "there is an airplane going to contact us to-night. It goes back to Sidi-bel-Abbes after that."

Joe rested on his rifle and said nothing. Water was seeping into his tissues now. He was not as acutely conscious of his veins.

With a slight touch of acerbity the Lieutenant went on.

"You know, Legionnaire Joseph, it is not customary for an officer in the Legion to talk so to an enlisted man."

That registered with Joe Cafferty. He snapped to attention.

"No," Vigneron said, "not that. What I meant is this. Men of education in the Legion are rare. Good soldiers, yes, but executives, no. At Sidi-bel-Abbes, a clerk could be used. Stand at ease, Legionnaire Joseph."

Joe relaxed and looked ahead. The platoon was a quarter of a mile ahead, over the sand. A little perspiration broke out on his brow. He had been too dry to sweat before.

"Cafferty," the Lieutenant said, sharply, "don't be a fool. I took you out of the brig, brought you back here, because the Legion can use you. Give me your word of honor you'll abandon this idea that brought you into the Legion and I'll send you back to Sidi-bel-Abbes in the plane. It's a chance for you. An office and a desk to work at, and no pack to carry."

Joe Cafferty straightened up, looked at his officer. "May I rejoin the platoon, now, Sir?" he asked.

Vigneron nodded slowly. "My policeman,—my fool," he said, "do you know where we're going?"

This was a direct question. Joe Cafferty said, slowly, "No, Sir. None of the men in the ranks seem to know."

"It is the Ain Berkas," Vigneron told him. "Those men up there, they don't mind dying, there's nothing waiting for them at home. The officers and the Sergeants, they don't mind either, because they're dying for France. It's their profession,—they are soldiers. But you,—you have got something to live for. Go back to Sidi-bel-Abbes, Cafferty; I say this, not as your officer, not as an officer of the French Foreign Legion, but as a friend."

Joe Cafferty looked up and when he spoke his voice was no longer the grating noise of the desert rat, but the voice of a dick, of a big shot. He remembered that he was going to bring in the prisoner who'd make him the top detective of his country.

"Detectives can die, too," he said.

"You fool," Vigneron snapped.

JOE CAFFERTY turned, dully, started moving over the sand. The platoon had a seven block, or eight block, lead on him now, he told himself. That stretch seemed as long as eternity.

Vigneron paused, came alongside. "Take a stirrup, Legionnaire Joseph," the Lieutenant commanded, and the horse dragged Joe Cafferty to his command.

Falling in, next to Arversac, the dick was silent. His scar-faced file mate was saying, "Did the Lieutenant offer to change jobs with you, fat boy?" Arversac laughed.

Cafferty didn't answer, but the thought flashed through his mind, "I'd like to have this scar-faced punk in the shower room of a precinct house, and me with a rubber hose in my hand," which was peculiar, because Joe Cafferty was not a bloodthirsty man.

"Did the Lieutenant tell you where we're goin'?" Arversac gibed, further.

Absentmindedly Joe Cafferty answered. "Yah, it's the Ain Berkas again."

"The Berkas?" a man ahead of him said. "Hey, comrade, did you hear? It's the Berkas again."

"Boy," his companion grated, "that means a concentration of the whole Legion, and the native troops, as well. Boy, we're gettin' our fighting early."

Slug,—slug,—slug,—Joe Cafferty went along, the toe of each boot shooting up a fountain of sand. Thirty fountains had risen into the air, and died again before the meaning of all the gabble around him penetrated his head.

A concentration of all the Legion. That meant,—why,—suddenly Joe Cafferty's shoulders went back. Fountains of sand rose higher before his shoes until the man ahead of him said,

"Take it easy, Joseph. You've plenty of time to die."

Hardly hearing, Joe Cafferty dropped back into place. There was a grin on his face now. The same grin he'd worn when he'd gone up against the Scarsey gang, in Detroit, that time. The same grin he'd worn when he crashed a farm house to pinch the Woodside bank robbers.

A concentration of the Legion meant that Pestalozzi would be there. "Where do these Arabs hang out?" he asked Arversac.

The scar-faced man didn't know, but the more learned legionnaire ahead answered, "They lie in the hills between here and the Spanish territory, around Tindouf."

Joe Cafferty got it. The brain that had raised him to the top of his profession clicked on that. No wonder Vigneron had been so damn kind. No wonder Vigneron wanted to send him back to Sidi-bel-Abbes, and a cool office. They were going to fight on the border, between the French possessions and the Spanish, and Pestalozzi would be there. Luck was playing into Joe Cafferty's hand.

"On the Spanish border, huh?" he asked the man ahead of him. The increased vigor in Joe's voice made the legionnaire twist his head around. He winked at Arversac and Arversac said, dully,

"Don't let it get you excited, comrade Joseph; we're going into action and the legionnaire who tries to desert in action gets shot. Anyway, we got a treaty with the Spaniards. They return deserters from the Legion."

Joe Cafferty said, quickly,

"I wasn't meaning to desert," but the scar-faced countenance next to him looked incredulous.

When, finally, the sun had completed its tortuous, slow descent to the proper point, and the platoon camped for the night, the word had spread among the legionnaires that Legionnaire Joseph, that smug Irish son of a camel, was going to desert before the fighting started. And, after that, his platoon companions who had resented Joe before, because he was better than they were, because he had kept himself cleaner and didn't bear the marks of a jail bird, resented him even more, because now they looked down on him; looked down on him as a coward, a man who was afraid to go into battle.

The airplane came, and went, a little before sundown that night. The non-coms rationed out a little water and food and Joe Cafferty sat down alone, over a desert fire, to eat his supper.

CHAPTER V.

MAD-MAN CAFFERTY.

MORE time passed. The death of Ludwig Hummel had never meant as little to him.

Time ceased to mean anything to Joe Cafferty, towns ceased to mean anything to him. The small amount of food he was issued every night, he couldn't swallow. Once he had been a tall, jovial man, the very model of the ex-copper turned prosperous private detective. Now he was lean and hard-bitten.

In one sense it was like becoming a child again, for his consciousness narrowed down in precisely the same way that a child's consciousness expands. One day the child knows these things; its mother, its nurse,

its crib; the next day it has added its father, or a window, to the things which it knows. Thus, one day Joe Cafferty knew about the sun and the sand, and Arversac, and the two men ahead of him; the next day he knew only of Arversac, and the sun, and the sand. After a while, only these two things—the sun and Arversac's face.

And finally there was just one object in Joe's mind,—a ball of blazing fire, with a scar across it. Arversac and the sun had become one thing.

The men, younger than Joe, tougher, talked about the time when there had been rivers and mountains, and cars to carry them. Joe couldn't even remember back to El Harib, where the army cars had let them off, from which they had walked.

Then, one day, he didn't know how many days after he had left El Harib, Arversac nudged him, "Lookie, fat boy," he said.

Joe looked, dully. Coming towards them was what looked like a big dust cloud. It was. It came closer and closer all that day. Finally, it fell in with them at night. Another platoon of the Legion. The next day a whole full company deployed behind them.

They were quite a column now. And, that afternoon, they sighted trees, water, grass.

Surprisingly, the very sight of this revived the men. The scar disappeared from across the face of the sun to Joe Cafferty, and went back on Arversac's face. Arversac became real.

They marched on, after the cool of the evening that night, trying to make the river. Joe Cafferty knew about the two men ahead of him now. Knew about Vigneron. They hit the river and town. A sergeant said, "Drink hearty, boys, we'll be in Tindouf to-morrow," and, before he fell asleep, Joe Cafferty knew who he was and what he was after. He remembered Ludwig Hummel; the face of Pestalozzi, memorized from a photograph, and branded into his memory, came back.

Joe Cafferty arose from his bed—went wandering around the camp. Legionnaires from the other three platoons were fra-

ternizing. Only his platoon was formed of recruits. The others were old friends.

Joe wandered here and there. He didn't see Pestalozzi, so he went back to sleep again.

THEY marched into Tindouf next day. The city was deserted—or so it seemed at first. Later they found out that the women and children were hiding indoors, the men in the hills. They filtered back in slowly.

The natives spoke no French. Joe's rookie platoon didn't speak enough Arab to do them any good but by now they knew that Ain Berka Arabs were rising somewhere along the river there, and in the mountains that bordered the river, and the Legion was going in to shake them out.

Lieutenant Vigneron spoke privately to the Corporal in charge of Joe's squad and, as they camped in the city, the Corporal came around and spoke to Joe.

"You're under arrest, Legionnaire Joseph," the Corporal said, abruptly.

Joe stiffened to attention. "What the hell?" he asked, slowly.

"Insubordination, back at the barracks," the Corporal told him. "Your sentence was suspended because of war conditions, but you are to remain under guard all the time we are in Tindouf."

From somewhere came the rumble of guns. A half dozen airplanes flew over the strange, oriental city. Joe looked up at them—blinked.

"How long do we lay over here?"

The Corporal snarled. "Until your betters decide to move you out, Legionnaire," he said, and then locked Joe up.

The prisoner was given plenty of food and water but Joe could see the purpose. Vigneron had no intention of allowing Joe to wander around the city and stick his nose into other legionnaires' business.

For half the Legion must have been concentrated in this southeast corner of the Sahara. Pestalozzi would be there; Pestalozzi, the man for whom Joe had crossed three continents.

The name rattled in Joe's head for a

while, as all things had rattled there for so long. Pestalozzi. Sure. Pestalozzi.

It was cool in the cell, and a man could sleep. A forty year old man who was, for some reason, a legionnaire. A man who hadn't slept for an interminable number of short desert nights.

Legionnaires passed in the street that opened off the courtyard. There was a constant patrol of the town. The Ain Berkas were filtering in, leaving their arms hidden out in the desert. They were spies and agitators, of course, but until they were armed, the soldiers couldn't shoot at them.

For this town would have to be French again when the insurrection was over. And the Legion had to observe a code of military ethics of which these Arabs had never heard, or, otherwise, the place could never be made peaceful.

But Joe knew none of this. He slept. And that night, for the first and only time in all those horrible weeks, he dreamed in French. A stupid dream—a dream of walking into a café on the *Boulevard des Italiens* in Paris, and drinking beer.

But just as he was raising the cool stein to his lips, a man with a familiar face came up, said: "You're Cafferty—" and slapped the beer away. It gurgled across the floor.

And then Joe knew he could never drink again until he had caught that man—it was Pestalozzi. Joe woke up remembering who he was, and what his mission was, and what he had to do. He looked around. The room in which they had put him opened on the courtyard of a native house. It had a window, about two feet high and two feet wide—barred. It opened on a quiet courtyard. There was no furniture in the cool room, except Cafferty's pack.

Quietly he felt the bars—there were three of them. They were loose in their concrete, as one would expect them to be. The desert air dried everything—mortar set too quickly.

LEGIONNAIRE JOSEPH, one time Joe Cafferty, took up his rifle. The butt of it swung again and again against the bars. One of them cracked. Joe Caf-

ferty swung himself high into the window, battered another bar, got it out, stuck his head and shoulders out. A whistle blew. Someone came rushing.

Squeezed, as he was, into the bars, Joe couldn't get his arms up in time. A rifle cracked him on the head. He slid back into the cell, unconscious.

Afterwards the world was made of water. Bucket after bucket of it. Joe lay on the floor of the cell, half drowning; came to, to find three legionnaires standing over him, dousing him with water. One of them was Arversac.

"Lieutenant Vigneron's compliments," Arversac stated, his scar glowing, and he tossed a bucket of water into Joe's face.

Cafferty got it. Vigneron was taking no chances on the dick dying before the battle day. After that, Joe made no further attempt to escape. He'd learned his lesson. He'd wait. The fact that they were going into battle meant nothing. The desert had burned away all thoughts but one—the thought of Pestalozzi.

From his cell window, Joe Cafferty could hear guns biting holes into the hill along the river. Occasionally airplanes flew over head.

Joe had experienced the world war—he worked out what was happening as his mind opened up again. Somewhere along that green river and brown country, the Arabs were rising. The troops who had gotten there first, the regular garrison at Tindouf, the men from nearby, were holding. Joe's gang had been brought up from further for reserve. Finally they came and took Joe out of his cell. "Fall in in half an hour, Lieutenant says," a Corporal told him, and ran away.

Joe promptly put the pack on his back, grabbed up his rifle and started a patrol of the streets of Tindouf—up one street, down another. Perhaps his march in the sun had maddened him—at any rate he was all dick now—looking for his man.

Ahead of him there was a square. From it came a hubbub of noise. He walked a little faster. The place was filled with white garmented natives surrounding a man

standing on the edge of a fountain, making a speech.

Joe Cafferty was looking for Pestalozzi. He didn't care about all the Arabs in the world. He started to shove into the crowd. Someone hit at him—someone tried to snatch his rifle away. Instinctively Joe pulled it back. The Arabs descended on him. He backed down the street, moving like what he was—a man in a nightmare.

SUDDENLY, behind him there was a sharp order in French. A man in Legionnaire uniform lined up beside Joe and he could see the Arabs ahead of him backing up into their square again. The whole thing had no meaning, no significance to Joe Cafferty. He turned on his heel, started to elbow his way through the platoon of rescuers. He was looking for Pestalozzi.

An officer was shouting at him, wanting to know what, in the name of the seven kinds of sun-baths, he'd been doing in that end of town.

Joe came to attention then, suddenly, snapped out of it again and was running, running towards the other end of the platoon for, there, falling into the rear squad, was a man with a face that Joe had seen before—a face he'd seen once in the flesh—many times in photographs—a swarthy face—a face suitable enough for the Legion—a face that, though it was not beautiful, had lured a man half way around the world—the face of Pestalozzi.

Instinctively Joe Cafferty groped at his hip for the gun that a dick ought to have—didn't find it—used his rifle instead.

He brought it up, pointed it at Pestalozzi.

"Put 'em up," he snapped, in American, and the legionnaire turned and stared at Joe, unrecognizingly.

Even had he known Joe Cafferty before, he'd never have recognized him in this gaunt, sunburned, string-bean of a legionnaire, pointing a rifle under eyes that were like burning coals.

Pestalozzi backed up—not because he feared arrest—not because he saw in this

fellow legionnaire the arm of the American law, but because he firmly believed he was faced by a mad man.

A Sergeant knocked Joe's gun aside. Two military policemen came running.

"Return this mad man to his platoon," the Sergeant ordered. "He tried to shoot Legionnaire Lozzi, there."

One of the military policemen was from a platoon that had encamped with Joe's the night before. "He's crazy," this cop said, "but the Lieutenant seems to like him."

"Yes," the Sergeant agreed with him. "I've heard one mad man will give a command luck. Me, I've never tried it."

When the military policeman turned Joe over to Vignerón, the Lieutenant simply said, "What company was it? Five? Hell. See that my mad legionnaire stays away from company five."

On the hills outside Tindouf the Ain Berkas were massing. In Washington a government big shot was telling reporters that kidnapping must cease. In the mid-west, Ludwig Hummel's mother bought flowers to lay on a rain-soaked grave.

Two crooks, in a coffee pot in Kansas City, were talking. "They got away with the Hummel job, didn't they?" one of them said. "Why can't we take this guy and do the same way?"

Joe Cafferty sat on his pack in a cell and waited—

CHAPTER VI.

SEARCHING FOR LEGIONNAIRE LOZZI.

LIUTENANT VIGNERON had left his horse in Tindouf. As he faced his men now the dapper little Lieutenant had ceased to be a dandy, was all soldier.

"The zero hour, my legionnaires," he said, "will be in five minutes. When I've finished talking to you, you will form a line of skirmishers and move forward. The Ain Berkas are massed behind that hill over there. Our objective is to get as near to the top of the hill as we can, and then dig

in and hold it. Remember, these Arabs are fighting with their religion and their country. They'll be mad, crazy. If you are taken prisoners, you'll have no chance."

His eyes wandered down the line of his platoon, came to rest on Joe Cafferty. Speaking almost directly to the American legionnaire, Vigneron went on. "You have only two choices; to win this battle, or to die. At ease, men. You have time for one cigarette." And he turned his back on the platoon.

Up and down the line men were lighting butts. Other men were testing their bayonets, fixing them to the ends of their rifles. Arversac, next to Joe Cafferty, was working the action of his rifle over and over again.

The rest in the cool cell had done Joe Cafferty good. He realized that the Lieutenant, for once, had spoken the truth. Slowly, he lit a cigarette. When it was half burned down, the Lieutenant blew a short blast on his whistle. "Form line of skirmishers," he ordered. "Forward, march!"

The cigarette snapped down to the ground. The Legion moved forward. Behind them the long line of pressed-out butts showed where they had been standing. Ahead of them, the heat waves on the desert danced and shimmered.

Over the brow of that hill there were palm trees, sloping down to the river that led into Tindouf. In that valley was the only water in the French possession, and the river was valuable. If the Ain Berkas got it, they could force the French back a hundred miles, almost to El Hario. So the Legion had been sent out to hold that green line of mountains and river and palm trees, for France.

Joe Cafferty, tall and lean and sun-bitten, carried his rifle easily. Suddenly the sand in front of him danced. A half dozen puffs of smoke arose, lazily, over the brow of the hill. The Arabs had opened fire.

Joe Cafferty raised his rifle, a little. A head appeared, over the brow of the hill.

Joe halted, pointed carefully, and fired. Through the telescopic sights of his rifle he saw that head split and then he put the rifle back in its skirmish position. The man he had killed was only a tiny spot on the hillside. They still had plenty of distance to go.

A half dozen other rifles had cracked down that line of skirmish. The Legion moved on. The puffs of smoke and the spurts of sand at the legionnaires' feet, grew more frequent as they crossed that space.

The men began to double over, walk bent forward; as though into a heavy rain.

"Those Arabs," the Lieutenant called, "are bad shots. *En avant, mes legionnaires!*"

And then suddenly the man at Joe Cafferty's left stopped walking and went down to his knees, precisely like a man in church beginning to pray. His hands came up in the attitude of prayer, his rifle sprawled in the hot sand. Joe wasted a glance out of the side of his eyes. The man was not praying—he was pressing his hands to a hole that had suddenly opened in his throat. The first Arab bullet had struck.

The Legion moved on, step after step, without anyone saying anything. They were going slower now and that line of skirmishers was a little shorter, as men closed in to take the places of their wounded comrades. A half dozen men were down already.

The man at Joe's left was sobbing, bitterly, but not from fear. He was crying with strange, bitter tears that some men shed when they go into battle—tears of excitement. A strange picture crossed Joe's memory—a picture of the tall man, in fighting trunks, under an arc light, in the middle of a squared ring, beating another man to pulp, while tears streamed down his face.

JOE CAFFERTY laughed, wildly, brought his rifle to his shoulder again. He muttered to himself. "That's funny—I ain't thought of that

guy since 1917." And he remembered that every time he'd gone across the top, in France, that same picture of the crying prizefighter had come back to him. He had never been able to remember the box fighter's name, but that one prize fight personified, for Joe Cafferty, battle and warfare and sudden death.

The rifle was up to his shoulder now. He squinted through the telescopic sight, still walking, then came to a halt. A head bobbed across that sight. He pulled the trigger, slowly. Sand spurted up, near the head, but the Arab was not touched.

Joe Cafferty swung his rifle down again and moved back into place, next to Arversac.

Suddenly, Arversac cried out, doubled up—his rifle pitching forward in front of him and, looking back, Joe saw the scar-faced legionnaire clutching at his shin. Arversac's foot was five feet away; and the Legion moved on.

A hundred and forty-two men had started in that line of skirmishers, probably seventy still walked along behind Lieutenant Vigneron. The ground was beginning to rise under their feet. They were starting up the slope of the hill. And then, for a moment, there was respite from that deadly hail of lead. The Arabs, shooting down hill, were shooting over their heads, too high. But they got range again, in a moment, and the line of skirmishers became shorter and shorter, as men, automatically, closed in.

The platoon had left a path behind it. Then, the man at the left end of the platoon contacted a man at the right end of another platoon. The Legion had moved in, in a semi-circle around that hill and whoever had planned that walk of death had made allowances for casualties because the line of men still left just neatly fitted the hill and, as they climbed higher, and the circumference of the battle-front became less, the line of skirmishers became shorter too.

Lieutenant Vigneron still walked at the head of his platoon. There were three

holes through his uniform but Vigneron seemed to lead a charmed life.

Joe Cafferty's rifle was never far from his shoulder now. He had accounted, he told himself, for five Arabs. The dick was swearing softly, but he didn't know that. The battle madness had seized him, as it had seized all the rest of the Legion. Even Pestalozzi was driven out of his mind in that intense desire to get up that hill and get at 'em!

Vigneron twisted his head over his shoulder—his revolver dangling loose in his hand. "You're a fine marksman, my legionnaire," he called to Joe Cafferty.

Joe Cafferty's lean face split into a grin. "Give me that gat," he said, in English, "and I'll show you what real shooting is."

The Lieutenant smiled back, sympathetically—and then, suddenly, went into a dance—a wild dervish of death. A bullet had caught his shoulder, sent him spinning around and around. When he finally collapsed on the sand, half his chest was gone.

JOE CAFFERTY, stopped by the Lieutenant, dropped to his knees, and quickly unbuttoned the Lieutenant's tunic. The man was dead. Joe took his cartridge belt and his revolver and left his own rifle there. This was his own weapon, now. The big New York Irishman took his place in the line of skirmishers, revolver held ready.

The ground had become steeper and steeper under his feet. The Legion was nearly to the top of the hill. The revolver in Joe Cafferty's hand was hot. His face was blackened with the discharge from the discarded rifle—his hand was bluish-gray with burnt powder from the revolver he had stolen from the dead Lieutenant.

The line of skirmishers was closing in now. Joe looked to the right—the man there was a stranger. All of Joe's own platoon, from himself down to the right, had been wiped out.

Suddenly, a whistle blew, the line of skirmishers halted, dropped to their faces.

"Dig in," the non-com cried. Then those legionnaires were like terriers, throwing up the sand, behind them, as they dug themselves a shallow trench. No man stood up. No one had told them not to stand up, but they all knew what it would mean.

Behind them, on the plain, Arab women, from the city, were stealing out, robbing the dead. No man looked behind him. They just dug in.

The edge of the sun was gone behind the top of the hill. Joe Cafferty got his legs and hips into the hole he'd dug, settled back.

A strange man at his right suddenly heaved a long sigh, called over, "We made it, Buddy."

Joe Cafferty said, "Yeah," and groped for his canteen. Water sloshed and gurgled down his throat. He sat back, revolver ready in his hand, looked along the line of fox holes. Forty men of his platoon, he counted. The big German adjutant was dead. The platoon was commanded by a sergeant, and two corporals, and no other officers or non-coms. Arversac was dead, the two men who had walked ahead of Arversac and Joe Cafferty were dead.

The stranger on his right called over, in French, with an Italian accent, "How about a drink of Cognac, comrade?" and a small canteen came hurtling through the air. Joe caught it, drank, tossed it back.

The sun was sinking lower now. They'd made their objective.

When night fell, Joe knew the Arabs would give up fighting for wild dances, celebrating the death of so many of their enemies, and the legionnaires could rest for the night.

He lit a cigarette, holding its light cunningly in the palm of his hand, so as not to attract fire, blowing the smoke down inside his tunic so it wouldn't rise and disclose the whereabouts of the fox hole.

Night came, and with it the end of Joe Cafferty's only real service with the Legion. Up to the start of that walk

across the plain he'd remained himself, Joe Cafferty. He'd had an identity, and a past, that separated him from the men who dragged themselves across the desert with him.

But with the fall of the first legionnaire—the man who had gone down as though praying—Joe's past had burnt away and he'd become a unit of fighting mechanism. He didn't know this had happened, didn't know it had happened to every other recruit in the line.

But as the excitement, the blood-lust, of the battle died down, each man in the line started thinking of himself again. All except the old hands of the Legion. They'd been through too many of such battles to ever be any good again except as puppets of Republic of France.

To some men, the reaction meant bitterness, so some triviality. Thus, one man might think that if he'd not taken that drink at that braustube, he'd not have hit that schweinehund. And if he'd not hit quite so hard, there wouldn't have been the knives, and the schupos wouldn't have come—

And another man along the line of fox holes might return to thinking how some day soon he'd steal that watch of his comrade's—

But to Joe Cafferty, the coming of night meant, could mean, only one thing. He crawled out of his hole, wriggled over to the right.

"Hey, comrade," he asked the Italian, "where's the fifth company? Do you know? I've got orders for them."

"One of their platoons," the Italian told him, "lies over on our right. What do you mean, you got orders for them? Where do they come from?"

But Joe Cafferty was gone. Crawling on his belly, fox hole to fox hole. Over the brow of the hill the Arabs were singing and dancing their wild dervish of death. Down on the plain, Arab women were still looting the dead. Joe Cafferty, revolver in hand, had ceased to be Legionnaire Joseph again.

"This the fifth company?" he asked a

man. The guy said, "Yeah, what do you want?"

"Looking for Legionnaire Lozzi," Joe told him.

CHAPTER VII.

"WHEN DO WE EAT, COPPER?"

IN Chicago it was four o'clock in the afternoon. The Sunday editor of one of the largest papers in the world scratched his head and frowned at his assistant.

"All we got left to do now," he said, "is figure up something toothy for page one of the magazine."

The assistant dragged cigarette smoke far down into his lungs. "Give them the Ludwig Hummel case again," he said. "We could put a new slant on it. Did some monster from the jungles of darkest Africa slay Ludwig Hummel? There was a dick on the case who disappeared, wasn't there? His name was Cafferty."

"Yeah," the editor said—"a great big, fat man—used to be a cop in New York. We could run a picture of him."

Joe Cafferty, lean as a hound dog, crawled from fox hole to fox hole, under that bright, African moon. The French line covered three quarters of the hill, just below the crown. The fourth quarter, the easy slope of the hill—down to the river, below the crown—was still in the possession of the Berbers.

From fox hole to fox hole, legionnaires chattered, their voices high, strained and, though it was night, no man slept for, over the hill, the Ain Berka tribe were celebrating; screaming that many legionnaires were dead and the death of so many infidels would surely be a pleasure to Mahomet.

There were these two noises then; the brittle conversation of the step-sons of France, and the wild chant of their enemies. And there was a third noise; the steady whispering of Joe Cafferty as he went from dug-out to dug-out, looking for Legionnaire Lozzi.

One man said that he thought he had seen Lozzi fall that day—on the plain—and Joe Cafferty rolled over to stare back at that moonlight stretch of desert sand.

Lozzi dead was of no use to Joe Cafferty. The man had to stand trial in an American court room to make a deal with the state. His life against the names of his confederates.

It was true that many Legion bodies scattered that plain, and clustered around each one were two or three Arab women, stripping those bodies of the white breeches, blue tunics, of the valuable leather boots.

Joe crawled on. He would not go back to that plain until it was certain that Lozzi was there. And then a legionnaire said, "He's in the next hole, I think, comrade. Why?"

But Joe Cafferty had sneaked away through the moonlight. His revolver was in his hand, his sunburned face was grim; lips pressed down to a paper thin line. Now was his man five feet away—four feet. Joe could see the moon shining on those features that had dragged him half way across the world. Two feet away.

Lozzi heard him coming, jerked his hand around, brought the rifle up. Joe got his legs under him, plunged into the fox hole next to his quarry, the man who had been Pestal, in the United States, was Lozzi in the Legion, had probably been born Pestalozzi.

That man turned his head and laughed.—"Hell," he said, "you gave me a scare, legionnaire. Why don't you sound off before you come dropping in on a man?"

Joe Cafferty said that he was sorry, tersely. His eyes were narrow. He was waiting for Pestalozzi to lay his rifle down. The kidnapper did, and then turned again. "Got a drink with you, comrade?"

Joe Cafferty whipped his gun up—the gun pressed Pestalozzi's stomach, and, suddenly, the kidnapper's features changed, twisted into strange contortions. "It's the mad man," he gasped, "the man that tried to kill me in Tindouf!"

"No, it isn't," Joe Cafferty drawled back. "I'm a dick from the United States, and you're under arrest, Pestalozzi."

For the briefest fraction of a minute there was silence there on the hill. The Arabs had ceased their chanting for a moment. Then they resumed again immediately. And in that space of time, Pestalozzi's Adam's apple jerked twice, as though from terror, sheer terror. Then he laughed, but his eyes were those of a haunted man.

"It's the sun, Buddy," he said, in American, "or maybe you've been reading too many detective stories. I'm not wanted in the United States. And if I was, the Legion wouldn't give me up, and if they would, who the hell are you?"

There was no thunder in Joe Cafferty's voice when he answered, "You *are* wanted, badly. I'm not asking the Legion's permission to take you. I'm a dick, hired by the Hummel family."

THAT word, "Hummel," was what did it. It knocked the goofiness out of Joe Cafferty's story. No man could be rotten enough to have done the job that was done on Ludwig Hummel and not have some bad nights after it. And all those bad moments, all the fear of detection, were burned in Pestalozzi's face in the brief moment before he flung himself across the fox hole, there in the desert, grabbed up his rifle and clubbed at Joe's head.

Joe stepped in under him, swung hard with his left fist, putting all his weight behind it. Lozzi was slammed against the wall of the shallow fox hole, bounced off it, came at Cafferty again with his rifle raised high.

The barrel scraped Joe's shoulder. Then he stepped in and brought the barrel of his revolver down, again and again, on Pestalozzi's head. The kidnapper crumbled at Joe Cafferty's feet. It was all as simple as that. Joe had made his pinch at last.

It was simple, simple as finding a

pick-pocket at Coney Island, on a hot summer day.

And over the hill were Ain Berka tribesmen. To the right and left was the Legion. Behind that plain—behind Tindouf, was the Legion reserve. It was simple.

The river, Cafferty knew, lead to Spanish territory, and through the Spanish province known as Rio de Oro, to the sea. He wondered, vaguely, if the river had a name at all.

Then he was bending over his prisoner. Joe Cafferty, the detective, knew his business, although this long, lean, gaunt man in the Legion uniform did not look like it. Those strong, sunburned fingers ripped Pestalozzi's tunic to strips. One hunk was thrust into the kidnapper's mouth—another one tied and held it there. Then other strips bound Pestalozzi's wrists together.

Afterwards Joe Cafferty felt around the fox hole until he got hold of his own canteen and that of Pestalozzi's. He slung these to his belt, held his companion over his shoulder and climbed out onto the moon-bright sand.

A revolver dangled from his right hand, his left hand supported Pestalozzi on his shoulder. First Joe Cafferty slid down hill. He had to get away from that line of fox holes, for he was outlawed now; by the simple act of knocking out Pestalozzi and tying him over his shoulder, he had cut himself off forever from the Legion, had become a deserter.

HE knew the penalty for desertion in the face of the enemy. It was the same in all armies, every place. Death.

Down—down—down the hill; then around to the right. The weight on his shoulder was tremendous.

Then, suddenly, there was a sharp cry through the night—in French—"Halt!"

Joe dropped down to the sand. He cursed the moonlight but he could not have afforded to waste another night. Reinforcements would be following across the

plain, he knew, soon as it was daylight. And besides, it was only by luck that both he and Pestalozzi had come through that day alive. The next day of fighting might have cheated him of his quarry, or of his own life.

He lay on the sand, next to the kidnapper. That sharp voice wanted to know again who was there. He held Pestalozzi by the belt, ready to sling him up again. The man squirmed under his touch. Pestalozzi was coming to. The sentry saw that movement, fired. The bullet sent up a little shower of sand. It spurted into Joe's face. Swearing, the New Yorker slugged down on Pestalozzi's head again, with his pistol and, as he did so, he told himself this would have to stop. He didn't want to drive Pestalozzi slug-daffy.

Now he had thrown up his prisoner, caught him on his shoulder, was trying to run. Bullets kicked up sand at his heels, as he galloped along the slope of the hill, sidewise, towards where he knew the river was.

Then, suddenly the bullets ceased for just a second; then came at him with renewed force, from the front this time. He had run into the Arab outpost in the night.

A bullet flicked at Joe's leggins. Instantly he dropped to his face, throwing Pestalozzi down under him. The revolver came up, he waited. Steel glinted in the moonlight. There was a flash—Joe fired, caught up Pestalozzi and, with gun dangling, ran toward the Arab sentry. He had no way of knowing whether his shot had taken effect, but it had to. It was, for the moment, his only chance of life.

He landed like a ton of bricks on the Arab sentry, crouched behind a crease in the hill. The man was still warm, but there was no question of his death. The bullet had entered between his eyes.

Quickly Joe Cafferty stripped off the Berber's long white gown, pulled it over his own head; pulled the hood on too. His legionnaire's boots and leggins projected below, but that didn't matter. Many of the natives wore French foot-gear, taken on the field of battle.

These Arabs never walked, he knew; somewhere, nearby, there'd be a horse picketed for the use of the sentry whom he'd killed. He could ride that horse, and Pestalozzi could be carried, slung across the saddle bow.

But the question of what Pestalozzi was to wear consumed a few minutes. Finally Joe Cafferty left him in his legionnaire's uniform.

Then he found the horse and turned him loose, sure that the animal would head for the water, as all desert animals would.

The beast was an Arab, a little too lightly built to carry double, and it was a long time since Joe had ridden a horse, but he urged him on into the moonlight night.

NOW they were beginning to pass groups of Arabs. The Mahdis, native priests, moving through the camp, chanting of the death of the legionnaires. They had the men in a state of hysteria.

They had not noticed Joe.

He rode on and on. Then there was the river, glinting at his feet—a narrow little water-filled ditch between the mountains, that was Morocco's idea of a valuable water shed.

Joe turned his horse into the water and rode upstream, rapidly. A shout on the bank caused him to thrust his heels home. The horse stumbled in the water and Pestalozzi was slipping on the saddle bow till he almost got out of Joe's grip.

Joe raised his bridle hand in what he supposed to be an Arab greeting. It didn't satisfy the man on the bank, for a rifle spat. He guided the horse as best he could with his heels, sent it faster and faster up the stream.

After a while the shots died out again, and then he rode on, his Arab robes fluttering. Had he tried to go back to Tindouf, the Arabs would have killed him. But the Ain Berkas were not going to waste time chasing a single man even though they suspected him of being a legionnaire. Not with all the juicy infidels on the hill that they could kill.

The night wore on. Following the river was the only idea that Joe had.

And then, just before dawn, the horse stumbled again. Joe was pitched into the stream and came back to find Pestalozzi with his head under water, struggling furiously. Joe pulled him up, ripped the gag off. A stream of American profanity poured out of his prisoner's lips. The man had nearly drowned, bound as he was and falling into the stream—drowned in a foot of water.

Joe left him standing knee deep in the water and went back to the horse. The animal was done for. Joe had pushed him too hard under his double burden.

Joe used his pistol to force Pestalozzi ahead of him to the bank.

"We'll creep in for the day," he told Pestalozzi, "and move out again tonight. There ought to be Arab scouting parties all the way through here."

Pestalozzi said nothing but looked sullen. Joe made a sort of cache of rocks and hunks of sandstone and forced Pestalozzi into it.

"It will be hot," he said, "but it won't be as hot as marching across the sand was a couple of days ago. We got water here, anyway. I won't put your gag back, because if you yell, we'll be killed. So I don't think you will yell. But I'm going to keep your hands tied, just in case."

Pestalozzi only snarled. Then he looked at Joe Cafferty with undisguised hate in his eyes, and said, "When do we eat, copper?"

Cafferty laughed, without humor. "We don't eat," he said. "I didn't have time to stop at the grocery store on the way out."

CHAPTER VIII.

PICKED UP.

IT was not quite as bright that night. When Joe Cafferty plodded Pestalozzi out of the stone cache and said, "Let's get goin', tramp," Pestalozzi just stood there. His little rat-like eyes darted from side to side. Then he grinned, but not humorously.

"No, copper," he said, "I ain't goin' on. We ain't got no chance. We'll be dead before we make the coast."

Cafferty threatened with his gun. "Get movin'," he said, again.

Pestalozzi grinned. "Go on," he said, "kill me, copper, go on. Why don't you pull the trigger? Are you yellow?"

Joe Cafferty didn't answer. "I know you won't croak me," Pestalozzi said. "You played your cards wrong, big boy. If you want me for the Hummel job, it's to make me squeal on the rest of my gang, and I can't squeal when I'm dead. No, copper, you won't shoot me—so—what?"

Joe Cafferty topped his prisoner by a head. Once he had weighed half again as much as this Pestalozzi to whom he was chained. Now there was not that much difference in their weights. Pestalozzi had ten years on the cop, in age. He was thirty, to the forty years that had dragged Joe Cafferty down on the desert, down to the point where he was sick, and sun-dried to the point of exhaustion.

But Joe stepped into the little man—fists flailing. Pestalozzi ducked and the hard-fisted blows went over his shoulder. Then the kidnapper came boring in—plugging for Joe's stomach. A fist landed on Joe's hip—another one on Joe's rib—but there was no force behind it. The sun had gutted the legionnaires of their strength. Both of the men were very feeble.

Joe managed to push a palm into Pestalozzi's face, sent the little man reeling a foot or so away. Pestalozzi just stood there, and then Joe pulled his gun, came at the kidnapper again.

"Listen," he spouted, "I've gone through hell to get you, dirty nose. I don't want to croak you but—I may not remember, Pestalozzi, I may not remember."

Pestalozzi said, "Go on, croak me, then. It's better than what will happen if you take me back to the States."

Joe Cafferty looked up at the sky. The Africa moon seemed to be mocking. Red rays beat down on his head, flooded his mind for a moment, and he found himself, pistol in hand, striking out blindly,

doing what he had never done before, gun-whipping a man.

He stepped into the stream and cool water on his ankles checked him up short. He looked at Pestalozzi. Two gashes, starting at each of the kidnapper's ears, met at Pestalozzi's chin—two gashes made by the sights of the gun that Joe had taken from the dead Vigneron. Blood ran down these gashes, like the water in the river, to meet at the point of the chin, and drip—drip. Pestalozzi was babbling.

"I'll walk, copper," he screamed. "I'll walk. Let me go, let me go!"

Joe took a deep breath, then said, "O.K., kid, let's walk."

The stream was narrow and the sand in its bed better footing than the bank. They thrashed on down the stream.

WHEN the first faint flush of dawn streaked the sky, Joe prodded his prisoner to the bank. Pestalozzi pulled himself up on the dried sand, fell over—was instantly asleep.

Joe Cafferty squatted next to him, nursing a pair of feet from which the water had rotted away leggings and boots. The sand had cut his feet to ribbons. Blood must be flowing down the river to the sea—blood that had come from his feet and Pestalozzi's feet.

That day had been torture and how far had they gone? Joe Cafferty shook his head dolefully. They couldn't have covered more than five miles. And it must be all of two hundred and fifty to the sea, and to Cape Noun, where Joe thought there was a port. They'd never make it—never make it.

Fifty more days like this—fifty more days without food—without shoes.

Joe washed his feet free of sand, and lay down next to his prisoner. His hand closed on the back of Pestalozzi's neck, and he slept like that, holding the prisoner he'd come half way across the world to get, even in his sleep. The sun came up. At noon Joe Cafferty was awakened from his sun-baked dream, by voices. He sat up, his head reeling, staggered to the stream and took a drink of water. But the

voices didn't go away. They came from up stream. On his hands and knees, cautiously, Joe started creeping along the bank of the river. His long Arab robe got in his way. His foot caught in the hem and the robe tore. He crept on. Pestalozzi was safe, he knew; the little kidnapper was nearly exhausted, as nearly as a man could be and still live.

Around the bend of the stream a maze of uniforms danced before his eyes, and voices. He shut his eyes against the hot sun. His ears worked better than his sight did. And he heard the most awful sound in the world to him.

For it was polyglot conversation—Spanish, French, English, German. A detachment of the Legion had come after them and caught them, and all his work—all his horrible privation—had been for nothing.

Five years, he told himself, five years he'd have to serve, in the labor battalion, for desertion. Desertion. Joe Cafferty's mind reeled. His crime was not desertion—but desertion in the face of the enemy. He'd be shot—stood up against some sun-baked wall and shot down. He and Pestalozzi, side by side.

Ponderously he turned around in the stream and started to wade back to Pestalozzi. He'd get his man and beat on down the stream. Maybe he'd find some hiding-place. But even as he thought it he knew it wasn't possible. They'd come out of the hills—out of the rock country. There was nothing but water and sand here, and not much water.

He plodded on through the stream—a foot, two feet, then a voice behind cried, in French: "My, Lieutenant, look at the Arab—" and feet came splashing through the stream. Joe tried to get to his feet to run—fell forward in the water. If his strong hands had not caught him, pulled him over on his back, he would have drowned—drowned in that few inches of moisture that trickled through the desert.

He had the sensation of being carried some place. Heard, vaguely, someone cry, "There's another one—a legionnaire, by Gar!"—and knew that his captors had

also captured Pestalozzi. Then he knew no more for a while.

HE dreamed he was lying on a roof in Chicago, with a machine gun. In the street below the elevated railroad thundered and across the street a building rose one story above the El. Pestalozzi's face appeared in a lighted window of that building, and Joe Cafferty squeezed the machine gun. Glass splintered and Pestalozzi disappeared. "Missed," Joe Cafferty whispered to himself.

And then he dreamed he was talking to a Sergeant of the New York State troopers, in the Catskill Mountains. "Pestalozzi is in a farm house on the top of that mountain," the trooper told him, "but we can't get anybody to climb the mountain." "I'll do it," Joe Cafferty said, but when he went to climb he found the mountain was made of smooth slabs and he slipped back and back.

He dreamed he was in Detroit, during the years of prohibition, and stood, with some Federal agents, on the shore of the big lake there. "Pestalozzi's running rum in from Canada," a federal agent told him. "His boat will be back, in ten or fifteen minutes. We'll get him then." But when the boat appeared it was leaking and it started to sink and Joe Cafferty said, "I'll swim to him." But when he tried to swim some one caught at his ankles and held him back.

And then he dreamed that he was standing in the Police Commissioner's office, on Centre Street, a long time ago. He was very young and the police commissioner was Theodore Roosevelt, who was going to become one day President of the United States. But young Joe Cafferty didn't know that. He stood at attention while Roosevelt said, "So you want to be a policeman, eh, Cafferty? Well, the first duty of every good cop is to arrest Pestalozzi." And then, Joe Cafferty opened his eyes.

Instead of the grinning, toothy face of the young Roosevelt, he was confronted by a lean, sunburned visage that had not been shaved in some days. This face said, "So,

my legionnaire," grinning behind its stubble of beard, "you must have wished very badly to desert." All this was said in French, but even Joe Cafferty could tell it was bad French. And that was funny, for the officers of the Legion were always French nationals; Joe Cafferty's eyes wandered down.

The man was not dressed in the khaki uniform of the French, but in a grayish green uniform, not unlike those worn by the German troops during the war.

Joe Cafferty said, feebly, in English—"Who the hell are you?" And the man smiled a little.

"So," he said, "you speak English. That is better. My French is not so good. But my father—he was Consul General in New York once—"

"Who are you?" Joe asked. "That uniform—"

"Lieutenant Estantia," he said, "of the Spanish Foreign Legion."

Joe said, "Thank the Lord," and started to sink back into sleep. But before he did so, he said, "How's the other guy—still alive?"

And Estantia answered, "Yes. He's tougher than you are, legionnaire." Then Joe Cafferty slept, and this time he didn't dream.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SINGLE-STARRED FLAG.

WHEN he came to again, his bed was jouncing and bouncing around. Joe Cafferty sat up and was nearly thrown into the stream. He was on a litter tied between two horses, going down stream, some place. It took him a moment to place himself.

Then a horse flashed up alongside, and a voice said, "Lie easy, Yankee, we're goin' to camp in half an hour."

Joe waited; the entire platoon of the Spanish Legion into which he had fallen, was mounted now. Horses must have been brought up from down stream.

After a while, a whistle blew and the

horses turned out of the stream onto the sand bank. Fires were made. Joe Cafferty's litter was unhooked. He staggered to his feet.

At a fire, some distance away, Pestalozzi was crouched, ravenously eating some kind of mess out of a tin cup.

To the first legionnaire who came near him, Joe Cafferty said, "Take me to your Lieutenant, please," and in a few moments was in the presence of Estantia, squatted over a fire.

Joe Cafferty saluted, smartly. Estantia looked up. "So, you feel better, legionnaire, eh?" he said. "Well, if you'll give me your parole not to try to escape I won't have to have you hand-cuffed or put under arrest."

"Where are you taking me?" Joe Cafferty asked.

"Cape Noun," the Lieutenant answered. "A boat's going to pick us up there to take us to Villa Cisniros. You'll be held in jail there, until a boat's going to some French port. And then you'll be turned back to the French Foreign Legion."

Joe started to protest but Estantia raised his hand. "You have not escaped, legionnaire," he said. "We have a treaty with the French—they return our deserters and we return theirs."

Joe Cafferty just stood there a moment, at attention, then he said, "Have I the Lieutenant's permission to speak?" and the Spaniard nodded.

Joe Cafferty said, "Did you ever hear of Ludwig Hummel?"

The Lieutenant looked somewhat annoyed. "I am not in the mood for stories," he barked. "I've treated you nicely, legionnaire, because you were sick and I was sorry for you, but—"

"Let me finish, please, Sir," Joe Cafferty begged. "Ludwig Hummel's father is a banker in the mid-west of the United States."

The Lieutenant shrugged. "And you are Ludwig Hummel, I suppose. And your father will pay me—"

"No," Joe Cafferty told him. "Ludwig Hummel's dead. He was kidnapped

and the gang beat him to death before they turned him loose. I'm a cop—private detective—know what that is?"

"Of course," Estantia answered; there was a little more interest in his eyes.

"That man there," Joe said, pointing to Pestalozzi, at a distant fire, "was the head kidnapper. I've followed him across the United States. Followed him to France. Followed him into the Legion—and I finally made my pinch—my arrest—you understand?"

"Go on," Estantia said. He was grinning now.

"Next to the Lindbergh case," Cafferty told him, "there's no criminal the United States wants more than Pestalozzi. Now, I've got him, and I think my claim on him is stronger than the Legion's."

Estantia started to laugh. "I've been," he said, when he could get control of himself, "an officer of the Spanish Legion for three years now. I've heard many good liars, legionnaire, but never before have I heard one like you."

He rose, suddenly, his voice barked, "Back to your post, deserter; you'll be put in jail at Cisniros."

Joe Cafferty saluted, and turned on his heel.

AND so they slogged on down hill—down stream, to Cape Noun, on the border line between Rio de Orio and Morocco.

Joe Cafferty's body grew on the march. He had plenty of water and plenty of food and a horse to ride now. But his spirit was dull within him.

At Cape Noun they lay over a day and then a boat came along—a little coast-wise steamer, that carried them into Villa Cisniros.

Joe Cafferty didn't see much of the town—he was thrown into a cell in jail there by two of Estantia's legionnaires.

Pestalozzi was put into another cell and that was the only hope that he had. A day passed, two days passed, then three. A jailor came to Joe Cafferty one day and said: "The French are sending for you

tomorrow." And Joe Cafferty's last hope died within him.

The next morning, early, before light had filtered into Cafferty's cell, he heard the noise of the lock being opened and Estantia stood there, and a man in another kind of a uniform.

They entered and sat there. "The boat is waiting, deserter," Estantia said. "This is our local chief of police." Cafferty nodded, sullenly.

"I want you," Estantia said, "to tell the chief the story you told me. We don't often get a laugh here in Rio de Oro."

Joe Cafferty stood up. "Hell!" he said. "Isn't it enough to blast a man's career—to ruin his life—to defeat a country of its justice without making fun of them?"

Estantia looked at him. "Even if your story were true," he said, "what could we do?"

"We have to live next to France—they're our neighbors, and with the United States we have no touch, here in Rio de Oro. Tell your story."

Joe Cafferty said, "All right. If you ghouls will laugh at it, might as well some one have some fun." Then, briefly, firmly, he told the story.

When he had finished the Chief of Police turned to Estantia, "Yes," he said, "that is indeed quite a story. Come on. To the boat, now."

They brought Pestalozzi out of his cell, manacled him to Joe Cafferty, marched the two of them out of the jail, into the street.

It was still early in the morning, in the dreary little African town. No one was stirring, except some Arabian laborers, who looked up sullenly from their work to watch the two men marched by, by the two officers—the policeman and the Legion Lieutenant.

"Convicts," the Chief of Police provided.

Pestalozzi shambled along at Joe Cafferty's side. As the water and the salt air from the docks hit their faces, Pestalozzi looked up at Cafferty. "Well," he said, "I got you, didn't I? We're going back to the Legion, and you'll never last five years there, copper. You're too old—can't

take it. And, anyway, they'll shoot you."

JOE CAFFERTY grated between his teeth—"I can take it, Pestalozzi, if it's ten years, and the worst work I can think of, I'll live through so I can pinch you when it's all over. And I've gotten out of worse jams than this." But his voice lacked conviction. The Chief of Police laughed.

There were the docks and there was a ship, flying the French flag. Back to prison for Joe Cafferty—prison and a wall, unless he could escape from the ship—

But they didn't go aboard the French boat—they turned to the left and went on. There was a tiny, battered steamer, filthy with rust and scale. Estantia gestured—"Your carriage awaits you, Sir—" he said to Joe Cafferty. Joe didn't answer. He was tense, waiting for a break.

They started climbing up the gang-plank. At the top of the plank a negro sailor stood, watching them. Joe and Pestalozzi, handcuffed together, stumbled up the gang-plank—the Chief of Police and Estantia walking behind them.

At the top the negro said, "These the men, Lieutenant?"—but he said it in English.

Estantia said, "Yes—the tall one is Señor Cafferty." The negro stuck out his hand—"I'm Captain Grant—of this ship—Mr. Cafferty. Glad to know you."

Joe put out his right hand—the one that was not bound by the handcuff, and said, "What is this? You talk English."

"Why shouldn't I?" Grant said. "I'm a Liberian. My grandfather was a slave in the south and some people from New York set him free and sent him to Liberia." Cafferty turned to Estantia—his eyes wide—"Then we're not going back to the Legion?" he blurted.

Estantia was grinning. "No," he said. "The Chief of Police here checked up on your story. He got a picture of Pestalozzi and it checked with this man. We got a picture of Cafferty, too. He didn't look much like you,"—he was laughing as he said it.

Cafferty said, "If you're ever in New York, Lieutenant, look me up. I'll look more like that picture then."

"We gotta sail," the negro, Grant, said. "We got to contact the United States rubber boat at Monrovia; she's sailing for New York next week."

He blew a whistle and negro sailors, at the head of the boat, pulled up the anchor.

Estantia and the Chief of Police shook

hands with Joe Cafferty and turned back to the gangplank.

And Joe just stood there at the rail, looking at the flag snapping at the mast—the single starred flag that denoted that Liberia was a protectorate of the United States of America.

At his side, Pestalozzi was weeping and yelling. He knew what he faced, but Joe Cafferty just stood, looking at that flag.

THE END

Siamese Prize Fights

MORE than one Siamese cauliflower artist has been carried from the arena stone dead. Instead of gloves the battler wears tough cords woven between the fingers and knotted just above the knuckles. Murderous weapons, but the public won't stand for any sissy business. Over their trunks the fighters wisely wear a protective frame of wire and straw. A round lasts five minutes. There are no rules, except that it is not considered sporting to kick or bite a man when he is unconscious.

Entering the ring, both muggs kneel and pray that Buddha will accept their souls if necessary. The timekeeper raps an oblong drum.

Traveler J. S. Childers has described a typical Siamese bout. The battlers put on fierce expressions and slowly circled at a crouch, occasionally feinting. One shot a brisk left to the other's stomach. The punched man lowered his defense—and the aggressor shot him a smart kick in the face, bowling him over. Rising, a head blow struck him in the middle; but he had enough presence of mind to dig his enemy's nose with an elbow.

The crowd shouted for action. After a few wild kicks the maulers stood toe to toe and slugged faces. The fans yelled for more violence. One kicked; the other grabbed his leg and twisted it and as he fell, socked him a terrific knee blow. After five minutes of this a drum rattled, ending the first of eleven rounds. The winner got \$30, loser \$20. *J. W. Holden.*



"Boy! I can breathe now!"

QUICK RELIEF
for stuffy head

VICKS
VAPOROL
for
Nose & Throat

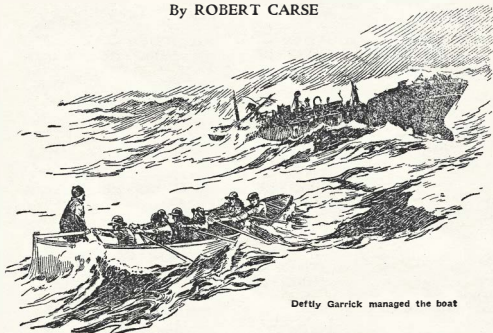
JUST A FEW DROPS
UP EACH NOSTRIL

two sizes, 30¢... 50¢

HELPS PREVENT
many colds

Glory Grabber

By ROBERT CARSE



Defly Garrick managed the boat

Sure, Mike Garrick liked to save lives—but how he loved the fame that went with it!

THERE was a wild slash of half sleet, half snow constantly across the fore deck and bridge. When Mike Garrick came into the wheel room, then to the door of the chart room, there was a thick white rime of the stuff on the visor of his cap, his eyebrows were frozen lines, and his long watchcoat was stiff, and crackled when he moved.

"Well," he asked slowly, "what's it all about, Ben?"

Ward, the captain, stood with his feet widely set against the violent, sharp pitching of the ship, his elbows hooked on the edge of the chart table, a slide rule and a pair of dividers in his hands.

"I'm not positive"—he was look-

ing up intently at the other man—"but it looks like a darn bad job."

Garrick had his cap off; was rubbing the frost out of his eyebrows, and warmth up into his cheeks. He grinned.

"Shucks," he said, "we're the nearest ship, aren't we? The only guys who can pull the rescue?"

Ward said, slowly, "Sure." He was putting down the dividers and the rule. "You and I have been shipmates since we were fo'c's'le hands. You know this Western Ocean as well as I do—and you can figure up as well as I can just what a chance, what a beating, we're going to take when we go to stand by that poor little Spiggotty freight packet. She was out of Car-

tagna, bound for Halifax. She dropped two blades off her screw this morning; just about an hour ago she lost her rudder and almost all her deck houses. Those Spigs must be coated in ice a foot thick. Still, you seem to find it somehow kind of pleasant, hombre, this job we're going into—taking off her crew, before they're frozen stiff, or drown."

Garrick did not speak for a moment. He stood still against the door side, his long, handsome head back, his eyes steadily caught with the eyes of the squarely built, brown faced young man who was his captain. When he did speak he had chosen his words with some little care:

"Listen, Ben; I've seen just as much deep water as you have. I know just how tough it's going to be, us standing by that Spig. But, fella, it's going to be a break for you."

"How, 'a break'?"

Garrick had started to smile, as he first heard the question; then, rapidly, he checked it back, kept his face solemn, quiet. "You said part of it for me, just now, yourself. We're the only ship that can make the rescue; we've got to do it. All right. But if we do, there should be a whole lot of good publicity in it for you. The public's getting to be 'rescue conscious'—they like it, ashore, reading or hearing about a good, salty, seagoing rescue. If you pull this one, and use your breaks right with the newspaper boys in New York, why, you'll be a big-shot skipper overnight. Then they'll have to give you the big one, the Atlas, and make you commodore. How about it?" He was leaning forward now as he spoke, eager and intent, using one of his long hands to gesture a little.

But Ward was laughing at him, rather quietly. "Do you think I'd grab

off any phony glory from this thing, just because I have to do my job? You're tellin' me to do that, Mike?"

Mike Garrick's answer came slowly. "No," he said. "Not unless you see it that way yourself, fella. But . . ." He was silent; Ward had just leaned over, taken his shoulder, looking up into his face.

"If there's any glory that's coming out of this job—catch it if you want it! *Sabe?* Me, I'll just be drawing my pay, doing my job."

"Uh-huh. But I'll be taking the boat away, when we get alongside her, won't I?"

"That's it," said Ben Ward. He was not smiling. "You're chief mate; you'll take the boat away to bring off her crew."

Garrick broadly smiled. "That's the boy!" he said. "If you don't want a little glory—I do. Now, where is she?" Speaking, he leaned forward over the charts with the other man.

"Here." Ward indicated a little pencil mark with the head of the dividers. "Right here—if the position her skipper has been sending out is right; he's been drifting since noon, but I think that's about it."

Garrick had picked up a pencil and a scratch pad, was swiftly figuring out a rather difficult problem. "That puts her about a hundred and fifty, a hundred and sixty miles to the south-southwest o' us. Which means about ten hours before we get alongside."

"More than that. We're not good for more than sixteen knots an hour right now, and we'd be walking right into the heart of this stuff, just where it's blowing full-gale strength."

"True. But you heard from the passengers yet? Have they agreed to take a knocking around like that—and get into New York a day late?"

"To hell," pronounced Ben Ward, "with the passengers! I run this ship. And this job has got to be pulled, or I wouldn't be doing it. I've heard from 'em; yeah. They sent up a petition that I make the rescue, about two hours ago, more than two hundred of 'em. But that's a lot of bilge. And you get below, and grab some shut-eye. I'll have Broderick stand your watch; I'll be wanting you bad around dawn. I guess that's when we'll heave in alongside of her, near dawn."

Back in the doorway, Mike Garrick stood hesitant for a moment, as if eager to say something more, in explanation of restatement of his former words. But Ward's eyes were on his face, calm and quiet, and a little mocking. So, solemnly, in a short little movement, he placed his fingers at the visor brim of his cap, turned, and went rapidly out through the sliding door onto the snow-licked bridge.

THE Spanish ship lay very low in the sea. Both her masts were gone, and her stack, all her boats. Her bridge structure, the entire forward house, were gone; the seas crashed blackly where they had been. She canted far up on one side, so that when the combers subsided for a moment, they on the other ship could see her reddish, scabby flank, below what had been her water line. But, aft, at the break of her main house, there was a black, slow-moving huddle of men, and the sodden scrap of a flag still stood stiffly forth in the gale's fury.

Ben Ward stood in the wing of his bridge, watching her. He had not slept in nearly twenty-four hours. He had been awake and on watch all night, driving his shivering, stumbling ship here, directly into the gale.

A leadenness of exhaustion and ex-

posure locked his powerful body now; he held the binoculars steadily at his eyes with a supreme sort of contempt for the aching in his arms, his shoulders and his eyes. Then he turned his head, looking behind him in the strange gray light of the new and sunless day at Mike Garrick.

"Break out a rocket, Mike," he said in a thick and slow voice. "I don't want to go down-wind any closer than this to them, and I don't think they could hear the whistle, or read blinker-light signals, or the flags." Then he dropped the binoculars to his chest on their neck strap, stood very still, waiting.

The rocket broke, spat up, green, quickly sweeping, dropped in a twitching of sparks into the lead-dark sea. From below, where they crouched as close as they could to the foot of the bridge ladders on the promenade deck, a fierce kind of hysterical shouting came from the grouped passengers.

"Applause," whispered Ward to himself, "from the cash customers. Almost like they were at a football game, with a touchdown being made." He turned his head again; a weak sputter of rocket fire, in answer to his signal, had just risen up from the swept deck of the Spanish ship. "Come here, will you, Mike?"

Garrick came forward again swiftly. He was alert, lithe, quick in all his motions. He was dressed in oilskin trousers and a short oilskin jacket, a woolen helmet which covered his ears and most of his face. A cigarette stub was stuck forgotten in one corner of his mouth; he had lit the thing and put it there after his breakfast twenty minutes ago, following Ward's call for him at the end of a night's deep, calm sleep. "Doesn't look so good, does it?" he said.

"No." Ward was gazing at the foundering ship. "It doesn't. And I'm not going down the wind any more than this; I might foul with her and stave in a couple of side plates, lose my own ship, if I did."

GARRICK took out and tossed away the cigarette stub. His eyes and his face were grave. But before he spoke he stood still for an instant, listening; from the promenade deck below he could hear the whine and click of little personal motion-picture machines and cameras, in the hands of the passengers. Then he felt Ward's eyes upon his face, and spoke:

"You can't put a Lyle-gun rocket and line aboard from here, though, Ben. Not even with this wind to help you. You're about fifty or sixty fathoms to far to wind'ard of her; the line would carry astern of her, in the wind."

"I know that," said Ward in an even voice. "But I'm going to float a boat down to her on a line. That's what I called you for now; go get Number Four boat out and over the side. You know the job."

Garrick put a hand on the other man's shoulder, where the flat shoulder strap with its four gold stripes and anchor rested, slick now with frozen spray and sleet.

"Listen," he said. "That won't work, Ben. If you did that, the boat would only come up on that guy's wind'ard side, and would smash all to bits before they could grab onto it and lead it around the stern, into their lee and calmer water. But, even if you did do that, I don't think those birds have got the strength to oar the boat and row her back to us. And we couldn't haul 'em back on the line we sent the

boat down-wind on; we'd drag 'em right under."

Ward had swung in the bridge wing, so that he might stare right up at him. "How else," he asked, "are you going to do it? I wouldn't order any boat crew of mine away in a sea like this. The chances are ten to one against it even getting over there, and I'd bet nothing at all about its getting back."

"You don't have to do that."

"Huh?"

"You don't have to do that. No need your commanding the boys. They'll go without being ordered. They're all lined up now—volunteered. And the pick of 'em, too. Five of the best A.B.'s, the deck watchman, one of the quartermasters, and that Finn bosun's mate. I'll take 'em; I'll handle the boat . . . Ben, that packet over there isn't good for half an hour more; look at the new list she's taken, even while we've been standing by, here."

Ward lifted his eyes gradually.

"You ask any of 'em to volunteer, Mike?"

"Sure; a couple of 'em. The Finn wasn't so eager for it."

"All right." Ward swung his arm and pointed, toward the low, terribly beaten hulk. "You want to make a grandstand play for the passengers—you want to grab yourself off some glory. Well, there it is—go get it! I'll hold her as steady as I can, right here, for you. And if you can't make it back up-wind, I'll swing down for you, and give you a new lee to come in under. . . Don't let those guys go into the boat with life-belts on; if any man goes over the side in this sea, he's licked as soon as he hits the water, and the belts would only get in their way while they're on the oars. So beat it—hero!"

"Aye, aye!" said Mike Garrick, grinning, and beat it.

Ward leaned far out from the bridge wing to watch him take his boat away. He did it very smoothly, pretty close to perfectly. "He would, of course," husked Ward. "That guy was born a sailor..." The steel boat was away from the black sheer of the ship's side now.

As one great wave caught up under it, Garrick had given the order to row, and the long blades had licked in, and bent with the force of the straining men behind them, the blunt bow had swung, pitched up, pitched down. Then the full force of the wind had flailed the men and the boat. They and the boat spun reeling from sight behind a black comber shoulder, rose again, fell from sight once more, rose again... Mike Garrick, in the stern sheets, the long haft of the steering sweep under his arm, could be seen last, calm, strong and confident, then the spindrift and sleet clashed in between, and they were gone from immediate sight.

WARD stood with his glasses poised, counting the minutes from memory. Then, for nothing more than a fraction of an instant, he could see the white flicker of the boat, the double line of bowed heads, just as Garrick pointed his craft in a swift, shrewd tangent across the wind and in under the Spaniard's stern. Ward relaxed his grip, dropped the binoculars thudding against his chest. "The son of a gun!" he said.

A low, mumbling voice of apology came from behind, in the bridge wing. He heeled around. The chief steward stood there, clinging to his cap, very red in the face and with moisture starting from his eyes in the wind's lash. The steward made a fumbling gesture

which he meant as a salute. "Beg pardon, cap'n, but the passengers ain't been able to see clear from down on deck; but they want to know—did Mr. Garrick make it all right—to the Spigoty?"

Ward put back his head in the wind and laughed at him. "Tell them," he said, "that I say my chief officer and his boat crew have just come in under the Spanish ship's side all safely just now. And, if they want to get any good pictures of the boat's return and the rescued crew, to stay just where they are; if any of them make a break for the well deck when Garrick gets back, I'll put 'em in the brig until we hit New York! Now, get off the bridge!"

The crew of the Spanish ship were numb with exposure, weak with fear and hunger, stupid with suddenly revived hope. None of them except their captain and first mate were any good at the oars. Garrick brought them back crouched down against the floor boards of his boat, or hunkered right between the straining knees and feet of his men. But Ward brought his ship down the wind, within a short line's throw of the now high-lifted and lashing stern of the Spanish ship, and there swung around, made a lee for the beaten boat, and got them all aboard.

They came over the side in cargo nets rigged from booms, and up sea ladders, on life lines made fast under their arms. The boat Ward left to whack itself grinding against the side, then drift away, swing broadside to the wind, and rapidly fill and sink. Ward was content. He had his men back again, and all the Spaniard's men, and his own ship was still safe and sound.

"All of us," he told Garrick when

he met him again on the bridge, "aren't as lucky as you are. What's a thousand dollars' worth of lifeboat against six hundred lives and a million and a half dollars' worth of ship?"

"That," croaked Garrick. He snapped his fingers, grinning. "But, come on down now; the passengers want to take a picture of you and me together, with the Spig skipper and her chief engineer."

Ward could not smile at him. "Go ahead, Mike; alone. I don't want any of that hooley 'glory.' Anyhow, it's all yours—now."

Garrick failed to answer him. He just nodded soberly and went on, down the ladders, where the passengers waited, already cheering him.

GARRICK kept it all together in a big manila envelope: the pictures and motion-picture reels the passengers had taken, the newspaper clippings, the medal the mayor of New York had given him, the souvenirs of the dinner, then the advertisements he had been paid for—one a brand of cigarettes, another for a candy bar, the third with his picture in color and in uniform, for a motion picture he had not seen but had highly recommended.

He had them spread out on the desk in his room one night on his watch below while the ship was on her westing, bound home from Southampton, when the door opened and Ward came in.

"Sit down," Garrick told him, nodding toward the bunk. "Take yourself a cigarette."

Ward took one slowly. "Don't you," he asked, "even smoke the kind you advertise for, Mike?"

"No." Garrick looked up at him. "Why?"

"Nothing but curiosity. But why don't you take all that bilge and frame it, hang it up on the bulkheads in pretty little gilt frames? And, that one there, of you in uniform, you might have that dame in the tattooing joint in Bremen do that, lifelike, on your back—not your chest. You'd want the candy bar gadget on your chest; that paid you more, didn't it?"

Garrick pushed back his chair. He looked quickly around at him. "You're kidding me, hombre."

"Sure, I'm kidding you. You deserve it. '*The most superb bit of motion-picture drama I have ever—' Sailors are known for big appetites, and many a cold, dark night at sea I have reached into my pocket for a quick bite of a Nibbley—'* That's hooley, Mike; all hooley."

"Maybe so." Garrick was smiling. "You're not the guy I'm going to deny it to. But it got my name known all through the country; folks who take trips to sea now want to know just who Mike Garrick is, and why. Maybe I didn't get a ship out of it right away, a command. But I got something like four thousand bucks, cold, hard dollars. It lifted the second mortgage clean off the house in Astoria, and it got the wife a new fur coat, and the kid one of those swell perambulators, the kind that folds up."

"Kid and all, huh? Well, you're right about one thing: the folks who buy tickets in the line now sure have heard about you, and want to know why. Boy, and how! You should see the prize I got to sit at the head of my table in the dining room saloon this trip."

"Who—Vincent Saint-Vincent?"

"Yeah. That big swab."

"Hey, listen, fella. That guy's shot full of money; he's a little bit bow-

legged from even thinking of carting some of it around. He owns darn near half a solid block, on Park Avenue, and that yacht of his draws almost as much water as this packet does."

"To listen to him, you'd think it drew a whole lot more."

"Listen to him, then; that won't do you any harm, and a whole lot of good. He's got an awful lot of drag, ashore, in Washington."

"You're telling me. He's a yacht sailor, that baby, if he's that. But he's been telling me ever since he got into the ship how he handles that private scow of his, and how I should run this one. Last night at dinner he began to tell me how I should've handled that rescue."

"Let him. That's no big lot of skin off the back of your neck. He's a big customer. Just take it, and laugh to yourself at it . . . Listen, fella!" Garrick leaned over to tap him earnestly on the knee. "You and I are following the sea because we're born sailors, and 're good for darn little else. And there isn't much money in the trade, anywhere, anyhow. But the pay in the passenger ships is a darn sight higher, and the runs, for a married man, a whole lot better, than in most freight ships."

"So, you've got to play ball with the passengers. That's part of the job, and no small part, either. A guy like Vincent Saint-Vincent can do you a lot of good, if you handle him right, or a whole lot of harm if you get sore at him and short-hauled, when he tries to tell you how to run your ship. Savvy what I mean?"

"Yeah; I speak English. But I'm getting to be not so certain in my own mind about it's being worth it, this playing around with the customers. Not after three days and nights of Mr.

Vincent Shore-locked Saint-Vincent. I'm a sailor, and no stooge for a dim-witted shallow water boy like him. That's no part of my ship's articles, or job. He pulls it again, to-morrow night, so help me, I'll rub his long snout in the soup!"

"And you'd be a thick son if you did. And probably lose your command, after working twelve-fourteen years to get here."

Ben Ward was getting up, moving toward the door. "Take a 'Nibbley,' he said, "and shove it whole down your throat. 'Way down—you sea-going diplomat!"

VINCENT SAINT - VINCENT was a large man, with a big, round nose and the same kind of a face. He sat next to Ben Ward at the captain's table in the dining saloon. He was talking about Ben Ward's rescue of the crew of the Spanish freighter; had been talking about it almost constantly for more than half an hour now.

The table stewards had already cleared away most of the courses, but Vincent Saint-Vincent still preserved a roll and a knife and fork, a butter plate. These he had arranged in a very precise and careful pattern. He squinted up at Ben Ward and smiled upon him.

"You see, captain, you could have done it this way—couldn't you?"

Ben Ward was silent. He did not move. He did not even look at Vincent Saint-Vincent. His glance was down the table, on his other guests there. They also were silent, listening to Vincent Saint-Vincent. That man cleared his throat, then moved the fork, which represented, in this tableau, Ben Ward's ship.

"You've told me," he said in a

strong, resounding voice, "that you were afraid to come any farther downwind toward that Spanish vessel. So, you forced Mr. Garrick—and a very brave and competent chap he must be, too—to cross a mile or so of raging seas in a small boat. While your only excuse is that you carried some six hundred people in your own boat—ship—and were afraid you might lose them. But if I had been commanding, in your place . . ."

Vincent Saint-Vincent reached out his hands for the butter plate, the roll and the rest of it. A wave caught up under the bow; the ship rose and fell with an abrupt, jouncing pitch. The butter plate and the roll slid from their positions across the table. Vincent Saint-Vincent tried to catch them. He caught the roll. The butter plate and his water glass, butted into by his elbow in his reaching, dumped spinning into Ben Ward's lap, wetting and smearing the front of his freshly cleaned and pressed, best uniform.

"That's all right," said Vincent Saint-Vincent. He waved his free hand. "You can clean that off later. But a man who knows as much as you do should really know this. You see—"

The butter plate made a crashing sound as Ben Ward smashed it on the deck. He was on his feet. He looked down at Vincent Saint-Vincent.

"You lunk," he said distinctly. "You conceited, stupid, shore-going lunk! A guest at my table, in my ship—and you have the nerve to try to spring this kind of bilge on me! Why, it's all you can do to find the leeward side on deck!" He swung his head, looking briefly at the other open-mouthed members of the table. "If he tries it on you, when I'm gone—just brain him!"

Then, grabbing his cap from the staring steward behind him, he turned from them and went rapidly up the staircase, out of there.

Mike Garrick was working at his copy of the scrap log when Ward yanked back the wheel-house door and entered. Even in that dim light Garrick could read the expression of the other's face and eyes.

"What've you done now, guy? You haven't—"

Ben Ward hit him a hard, friendly blow on the shoulder. "Yeah, I have. Look." He pointed to his blouse front. "My old buddy, Vinny, did that, while telling me how to run my ship. Didn't even ask my pardon, or permission. So I just told him how to clamber ashore. Plenty how!"

Mike Garrick started to speak. Ward spoke first.

"No, nothing doing, guy. I just can't and won't take it. I'm a sailor, no more, no less. I'm quitting when we hit New York, and before they can fire me. But you like and can take this kind of stuff. You'll darn probably get the ship, now that I'm through."

Garrick nodded, began to speak.

Ward shook his head at him. "No, don't tell me you're sorry, Mike. You're not, and I know it. And this is your luck—so stick with it!"

THE quartermaster who was on the wheel watch when that scene happened between Mike Garrick and Ben Ward on the bridge told it as soon as he came off duty and below into the petty officers' mess room. Of course, it was exaggerated and expanded, almost at once, and far more so when the ship made New York and the company received Ward's resignation as captain. But, from that moment on, all through the company, and later

throughout all the American flag ships running the Western Ocean trades, Garrick became known as "Lucky Mike."

He deserved his title; in the next three years, commanding Ward's old ship, he made four daring and adroit rescues at sea. Things happened just that way. The luck was his. Then, though, naturally, and little by little, just as Ben Ward's unusual procedure had been, he was forgotten; the blaze of glory began to dull and die.

But Mike Garrick laughed at himself. He wouldn't be forgotten. Not forever. Not as Ben Ward had been. That poor guy hadn't been heard from in two years, and the last story then was that he was the chief mate in some little freighter running coastwise to Central America. But with him, Mike Garrick, it was different. The company had increased his pay twice, after those rescues; all he needed now was just one more chance to hop back into the limelight, with a real good rescue. Then they'd have to give him the big one, the Atlas, make him commodore of the line. The rest, after that, was gravy. For the first time in his life Mike Garrick sat back and really took his time.

The chance came toward the end of his fourth year of command, and in a howler of a midwinter Western Ocean gale. When the second radio operator came into his room, awoke him, and handed him the sheaf of flimsy messages, he showed no surprise; he was ready, waiting. He swung his legs over the bunk side, spoke briefly to the operator.

"That's no real S O S. She's just warning all hands that she's in trouble. 'Number One Hatch smashed in. Down badly by the head. Filling forward. Pumps clogged and jammed.' How did that come in, strong?"

"Swell, sir."

"O. K., then. She's still got power on her, and can keep her head up into the wind, or away from it. But that's no sweet spot to be in. Hop along and tell 'em we're changing course, so if it's necessary I could stand by before noon to-morrow. Wait a minute; I'll check on that." Over the telephone Garrick spoke briefly to his watch officer on the bridge. "That's it," he told the operator. "Tell that guy if this doesn't get any worse, and if his position is right, I'll be by him by noon to-morrow."

GARRICK went carefully through the marine register when he went up onto the bridge, checking the code number and the ship's name. "Hot damn!" he said when he put the book down. Then he smiled broadly at the watch officer, his second mate, who had been fourth mate when Ward held command in the ship. "You know who that guy is, in trouble over there?"

The second mate appreciated his commander's luck.

"Not," he asked instantly, "Ben Ward, is it, skipper?"

"You nailed it cold. Just that . . . the old shell-backed son . . . S. S. Coango. Registered out of New Orleans. Benjamin Ward, master and owner. He must have been doing some fast clam digging to pick up a wagon of his own like that, in less than four years. But she's old and small; and it looks now like he might darn easily lose her. . ."

Then he was silent, staring forward over the bows, where the gray, dark seas piled high and thundering. For the idea had come rapidly and completely into his mind. He smiled a little bit; Ben Ward, his old skipper;

and this, Ben Ward's old ship—and rescued by the man who had once been his chief mate. Clearly he could see the newspaper headlines. . .

Toward dark Garrick went out into the bridge wing to study the wind, the sea. He did not at all like what he saw. If he turned and ran for where Ward's ship lay he would be heading away from the storm, with these violent, chopping seas racing after him, catching him on the stern and the proppers, the most vulnerable part of his ship. And in the event that he did so change his course and make up for the Coango's position and get there before noon to-morrow, he would be forced to drive his ship wide open and quite dangerously. Beyond that, too, he stood a very good chance of wrecking her. But standing there in the wind and the sea, he finally smiled to himself.

"Come on," he muttered. "It's your luck—push it hard!"

There was an extraordinarily good and representative passenger list in the ship, and, despite the weather, most of them were there in the dining saloon when he came below for dinner. They stood and cheered him, as he came down the staircase. It was the chief steward who jumped forward and handed him the long petition they had all signed, asking him to stand by the Coango and save his old captain and shipmate, his old shipmate's officers and crew.

"It worked, hey?" he whispered as he took the still wet petition sheet from the steward.

"Smooth as silk," said the steward, a fat and sly man. "All I had t' do was tip a couple of words t' Joey, the barman, in the smoke room: 'Sinkin' ship,' and 'Ben Ward, skipper's old captain, and the fella who used t' be skipper here.' So—"

But Mike Garrick had gone on past, as if he had not heard. But the people at his table talked about nothing else; a number of them had made an appearance there solely to talk about the rescue.

Mike Garrick picked his words with care, addressing most of them to an ex-United States Senator from California. The Senator, his wife and daughter were just coming back from a trip around the world. The Senator was, in his own words, deeply interested in everything about the merchant marine. Garrick took great trouble, right then, to tell the Senator all the dangers and risks such a rescue might mean in the existing weather. He spoke of the facts that he carried mail, perishable cargo, might get into New York late.

The Senator waved his big hands at him. He told him not to be foolish. "Isn't that," he asked loudly, so all the table and most of the saloon might hear him, "an American ship out there? And all her boys Americans? Captain, go ahead; make that rescue. I'll radio Washington right away; I'll tell 'em what I think, and what the rest of us people here think, too. Don't you worry about anything. We've heard about you, all of us, and now we're here, and have the chance, we want to see you make this rescue—insist that you make it!"

"You save those boys, how can any one, anywhere, say anything? How could they say anything?"

With care, Mike Garrick began to say several other things. The Senator waved him down; he pointed to his daughter. "She's got a motion-picture machine. She's taken pictures with it all around the world. Now, she'll have a real, thrilling sea rescue in it—climax for it all, that's what it'll be. Captain,

I and these good people insist: you make that rescue—right away!"

MIKE GARRICK stayed awake and on his bridge throughout all that night. They were uncomfortable and nervous hours. Twice, between midnight and dawn, the chief called him up from the engine room to ask him if he knew, didn't he, that he was knocking her all cockeyed down below? Garrick was short in his replies to that question; cursed the chief the second time he hung up. Then, near dawn, when two of his watch officers were on the bridge together with him, they both came close. The senior one, his chief mate, spoke first.

"She's taking it over aft, mister. Those seas are broaching right in over the fantail. That'll bust her up, in time."

Garrick nodded. "Thanks," he said. "Now you can shove off below and get some sleep; you'll be taking the boat away, later."

The chief mate did not start for the ladder head at once. "Skipper," he said slowly, "from all the wireless stuff I've seen, that packet, the Coango, hasn't sent out a real S O S yet. She just said she's in a bad way. But the glass is going up a little bit, and the weather reports from outside these lines say this stuff is falling off; it might quite probably be calmed down a lot, by the time we heave alongside that wagon."

"It might," said Garrick, "and it might not. But I've got permission from New York, if I see fit—to pull this job off, and that packet is still 'way down by the head, her pumps still jammed, and she's still got something like a twenty-degree list. So, go get your shut-eye while you can, mister; I'll run this ship."

It was much later than noon of the next day when Mike Garrick raised and came down toward the Coango; during the morning hours one of his propeller shafts had stripped and was now wholly useless. But he saw, drawing in a long and deep breath, that the freighter was still topside-up, and there were men aboard her, for a signal-hoist was immediately run up as soon as he brought his vessel within reading distance.

He cursed, though, as he decoded the flags in the semi-darkness of the late, cold afternoon. Aloud, muttering, he read:

"Keep away from here, Mike. Still all right. Send no boats away. Think can last out night. Not worth your chance. Wait."

Fervently, and to himself, Garrick cursed again. Then, though, he turned around, changing the expression of his eyes and mouth, and told the nearest quartermaster: "Tell him 'O. K.'" Then, with a gesture of his hand, he called his chief mate over.

The chief mate came slowly. He was scowling. Mike Garrick scowled back at him.

"I'll give you an oil slick on the lee side here in about five minutes. Take any boat you like, but be quick about it."

The chief officer lifted his collar against the wind. He spoke in a mild tone.

"This a volunteer job?" he asked. "You can call it that."

"I won't, mister. That guy was breaking out his flag-hoists pretty fast, but I could read 'em. I don't volunteer. You order me, of course, why . . ."

Mike Garrick's lips formed a narrow, pale line. "Get that boat away! And handy with it! Take whatever men you want!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" The chief officer's salute, his smile, were perfect. But six minutes later, as his boat slid jerking down the davit falls, somehow it thumped heavily crashing in against the ship's side, stove in, and left him and his oarsmen dangling from their life-lines. They were all brought back aboard with difficulty, and leaning out from the bridge wing, his megaphone pressed hard against his cheeks, Garrick shouted at the bosun to cut away the falls, let the smashed boat go.

HE was turning from doing that when he saw a new set of flag-hoist signals on the deeply listing freighter. They said, swiftly and unmistakably:

"Keep your rescue for some other sucker. We're all right for now. Break out a sea anchor and wait the night."

Mike Garrick dropped his megaphone back into the bridge-wing box with a clatter. He cursed, but under his breath this time; he had just heard the puffing ascent of the ex-Senator from California up the bridge ladders. The Senator wore a wool scarf tied over his ears, his derby hat jammed down on that. He carried his daughter's little motion-picture camera in his hands.

"What is that fellow saying, with all those flags?" The Senator pointed. "Doesn't he want to be rescued, after all you—we—have done for him?"

"He's going to be," said Mike Garrick quite softly. Then he raised his head, to look past the Senator at his chief mate, just newly returned to the bridge. "You," he told the chief mate, "have got a master's ticket. You're in command here now; I'm taking my own boat over there. Savvy?"

The chief mate could say nothing; he numbly moved his lips, his frozen

eyelids blinking, while Garrick ran by him, for the ladders.

DESPITE four years' absence, Garrick had not lost his skill in the handling of a small boat. He brought his boat and his sullen-faced crew in under the stern of the Coango very neatly, very surely, then in along the drunkenly canted lee side. Several men shouted down at them from the rail above, but Mike Garrick did not answer any of them until he was up there, and then he sought out Ben Ward.

Ward was also red-eyed from sleeplessness, wore a tattered oilskin coat and no hat, smelled strongly of bilges, even here.

It was he who spoke first, making a motion a little like a salute. "Well, the big hero. What are you trying to prove, anyhow, right now?"

Mike Garrick stood downwind from him; he had to shout in a high voice to make himself heard. "I'm here to prove plenty, yuh lunk! I've all but wrecked my wagon getting here, to stand alongside of you. If I don't pull this rescue, if I don't get you back aboard my ship, I'm through—licked. Come on; tell your hands to abandon; get into the boat!"

"Hey," said Ben Ward in the same level voice, "I thought you were a friend of mine, and a sailor. And who do you think owns this packet here? I do. Me, all alone. Every dime I ever saved, every dime I've sweated for in the last four years, is in her. I'm not leaving her; my hands aren't, either—not now, and not if I know it. You've let this hero hooey get to your head; you've let a lot of passengers talk you out of your natural savvy. It's darn near put you on the beach now, guy, and it probably will. I didn't send you

or anybody else any S O S. Nor will I, until I really have to. My ship is all right, below decks. Just the bilge pump lines leading into Number One and Two holds are jammed. If I can clear those, I'll be all set; she'll right herself, and I can go on my own way, under my own power again. No 'rescue' stuff, no 'abandoning,' no nothing.

"So take an old shipmate's thanks, Nibbley, and push on back where you came from. Get me?"

"Yes," said Mike Garrick, "I do." He was starting forward, and reaching toward a side pocket of his coat, as though he carried a gun there. "You'd crack smart now, would you?"

"Not smart," said Ben Ward. He side-stepped him very neatly on the wet, tilted deck. "But you need a little object lesson—because if you go back now, with or without your rescue, those other guys will ruin you . . . Believe me, Nibbley, I don't want to do this; it's no pleasure, but, hombre, it's going to be the greatest favor of your life!" The blow came from down by Ward's knee; it was sharp, and satisfactory. It caught the point of Mike Garrick's chin, cracked his head back, knocked him end-for-end, sliding and unconscious, back into the scupperway.

Ben Ward stood over him there. He looked from him to the men of the passenger ship's boat crew.

"This guy," he told them, "is staying here. If you lads want, you can start back for your own ship right now, if you like the idea of rowing against that seaway in the dark. Or, you can stay here and help my lads, down below in the holds, cleaning out those pump lines. Maybe you savvy, huh?"

Yes, they told him in a kind of cho-

rus, looking down at Mike Garrick, they were all sure that they did . . .

MIKE GARRICK came to in the galley' of the Coango. No one was there with him; he found no one in any part of the ship until, slowly swaying, he entered the foreholds through an alleyway from the engine room. Lanterns burned there in the moist, thick darkness, and by their light he could see scores of figures, prone among the sodden, awry cargo bales and cases. It was not until he got right to the ladders leading down through the 'tween-decks to the very bottom hold that he came across Ben Ward and the men of his own boat crew. The master and owner of the Coango was out, deep in a sleep of exhaustion; his matted head twitched as the ship rolled. But the men of the boat crew sat upright, and a bit apart from the freighter's men, and they stared at him with blinking eyes.

"Well," he asked them, "what are you waiting here for—to make a daisy chain?"

One of them, an Irish-American quartermaster, answered him. "No, we ain't found no daisies yet, skipper. But we been down below, workin' like dogs there, with these guys. And while them pump lines is all but cleared, when this one rolls you never think she's gonna come back. If she ever did go, when we was down there, in that bottom hold, there wouldn't be no chance at all. Then, we ain't rightly belonging to this ship; we saw this fella here sock ya down. An' all night long they've been makin' blinker signals at this ship, tellin' us t' get back aboard just 's soon's we can."

"Uh-huh." Mike Garrick had made his hands into fists. He moved them so that the group of men might see them.

"We're going back aboard. But not now; later. I've been wrong, I have, for a long time. And it took this guy here, an old friend of mine, to show me I was that—by socking me on the jaw and making me stay here until there wasn't anything else for me to do but see I'd been listening to a lot of hooley about being a hero and pulling great big rescues. Now, I can't pull any more of that stuff; I'm through with it. I owe that guy a debt for that. Now I'm going to pay it to him, and you're going to help me. When we've got these pump lines fixed, and this one on an even keel, shipshape, we'll go back aboard. . . . So get up; turn to! That is, if you want to; I'm through asking any man anything, any more. But—" He lifted his fists. "These guys may not need rescuing now, but they sure need a lot of help. What d' yuh say?"

They grinned at him, and then nodded and went down the narrow little steel ladder one by one, but quickly. . .

It was high noon, the gale had dropped to a low and softly whimpering breeze and the seas had slid into long, slow, blue combers which span-gled in the sunlight, when Mike Garrick came back aboard his own ship. He was rowed by men from the Coango; Ben Ward sat at the steering oar, his eyes on his work.

"I'll stay here," he said as he swung her in against the ship's side, "unless you want me. But I don't think you'll be needing me."

Mike Garrick only nodded, going up the sea-ladder. The Senator was at the rail, and packed behind him, all of the passengers. Mike Garrick spoke to none of them, brushed the Senator quietly aside. On his bridge the chief mate and his chief engineer were waiting for him.

"You've done it now, all right," said the chief mate quickly. "The tail shaft dropped right off that port propeller during the night, and you've got no more chance of making a big sea rescue than a brass monkey's back foot. Tie that in with the facts that you left your own ship during a gale and that she'll have to be towed into port now, disabled, and at salvage rates. And then splice in the fact that you're carrying government mails and big-shot passengers, all of whom have got important dates in New York, and will squawk loud and long to the company—now. There isn't any—"

"You're right," cut in Mike Garrick. "Right in saying I'm through with this packet. But, Ben Ward just promised to tow this scow into New York, for no charges at all. The Atlas, the flagship, is right behind us now, and she can stand in and take off your mails, and your swank passengers. As for me, mister—don't you cry. When we hit New York, you or some other deserving, polite guy can have this job. I'm going over in Ben Ward's wagon as his chief mate. Maybe you've forgotten, fella; but once I used to be a sailor!"

THE END



The Rats of Mahia

By RALPH R. PERRY

Author of "Blood Payment," "The Jungle Master," etc.

A necklace of superb sapphires was the South Sea stake which led to murder—until Bellow Bill Williams faced the murderers

Novelette—Complete



The other rats crawled closer

CHAPTER I.

DEATH STALKS A DINNER.

THE tail end of a hurricane was lashing Papeete when the guests of the French Consul General took their seats at the gala dinner given to Colonel and Lady Bailey-Nickerson. The curtains swayed in the gusts that blew through the cracks around the windows. The bamboo jalousies clashed outside, and on the long table the candles guttered.

Yet neither wind nor gusts of rain had prevented the guests from dressing in honor of the occasion. Around that long table was the cream of the society

and wealth of the South Seas. Men who possessed orders wore them on ribands slanting across white shirt fronts. Women gleamed with gems or glowed with the softer luster of pearls, but the acme of the display glittered around the throat of Lady Bailey-Nickerson, at the right of the host.

For pearls are almost a commonplace in the South Seas, and by comparison with the visiting English yachtsman and his wife none of the guests was rich. Where they possessed francs or dollars, she owned pounds. The necklace of sapphires around her throat was like bits of starlit winter

sky against her milk white skin. Twenty inches at least in length, fashioned of gems none of which was smaller than two carats, and cut from the superb sapphires which are more valuable weight for weight than diamonds, the necklace represented a fortune which made women jealous and the eyes of men narrow.

For a short time—a very short time—they were dazzled. The soup was still on the table when a window burst inward with a clash of breaking glass and a gust of wind extinguished half the candles. Through the aperture leaped a frizzy haired Melanesian, naked save for a *lava-lava*, black as soot. He carried one of the terrible half-moon knives that are used for splitting coconuts. Before a man could rise he was behind Lady Bailey-Nickerson's chair.

One black hand tore the necklace from her throat. As she screamed, the half-moon knife chopped down upon her blond head, cutting through scalp and skull. The consul snatched for the murderer, and staggered back, one hand almost severed from the wrist by a flash of the reddened steel. With a single leap the black plunged through the broken window. He was gone while women still screamed, while men were kicking clear of their chairs.

Yet pursuit was delayed only during the brief, vital seconds while the quick-witted were impeded by the slow, and the young men thrusting themselves clear of the old. Man after man followed the Melanesian through the window. Outside were gendarmes, whose concern up to that moment had been to keep out of the rain. The foremost glimpsed a dark figure sprinting away into the night. As the chase fanned out the savage had obtained a clear lead of perhaps fifty yards.

That was enough to make shooting guesswork, but not sufficient to let the target vanish. Darkness aided him, yet he was not running through a wilderness, but through cultivated gardens where to hide meant eventual discovery. The black must have realized that, for he ran straight as an arrow toward the water front, trusting to his speed of foot.

Yelling and shouting, lancing the night with revolver shots, the chase swept by a sailor's café, picking up the seamen who poured out of the door to join the hue and cry. At once a bull-like roar rose above the clamor. Past panting men sprinted a giant in white ducks who ran at a pace almost incredible considering his height and breadth of shoulder. The bellowing roars that commenced to urge on the pursuit had a snap and a command that made men forget weariness.

Ahead was a low cliff which marked the water front, and a wide stretch of sloping, sandy ground. Across it flitted a dark figure, with a taller shape in white plunging behind. Straight over the cliff edge into the tossing sea dove the black. Without hesitation the white figure followed.

THE rest of the pursuers stopped at the cliff, and stood panting and peering. An occasional drop of flying spray wet them. They could see nothing, except dark shapes on the foam streaked water called up by their imagination.

"Who was that—big man?" gasped a dinner guest.

"Bellow Bill Williams, the pearlin' skipper," panted a Cockney. "Gord, didn't yer 'ear 'im 'oller? Hain't two kin yell like that south of the Hequator! 'E's a good man, Bill is. 'E'll get the bloody black swine, 'e will."

Minutes passed. The boom of the surf washed out all other sounds, but suddenly a huge hand appeared at the edge of the cliff. A curly head and shoulder that could have blocked a door followed. Bellow Bill Williams drew himself up and shook the water out of his white ducks like a huge, angry dog.

"Boats!" he commanded in a rumbling growl. "The motor police launch will do. Come on. That black had an outrigger canoe waiting to pick him up. What'd he do?"

Half a dozen voices told him. He nodded and made a stride toward the harbor.

A gendarme caught his sleeve. "But m'sieur, you 'ave done enough!" he protested. "Eet ees now ze affaire for ze police."

"It's a job," Bellow Bill retorted in a thunderous growl, "for a sailor." He towered above the crowd, a huge figure, dimly seen. "There were two more men waiting in that canoe. Both natives. Could three black fellows sell a necklace—except to the white man who made murdering cat-paws of them?"

"But one cannot find a canoe in ze dark, ze storm! Eet ees folly!"

"For cops," Bill rumbled. "That's why I'm going along." He paused, and into the deep voice came a lilt that was almost laughter. "If we can't find a boat, can they? Use your head, gendarme! The wind's offshore, and they can't sail a canoe against it. Are they steering out into the South Pacific? On the tail end of a hurricane? That would be folly, right!"

"Zey seek ze shelter? Ze rendezvous at ze harbor?"

"I would," Bill purred. "And if they don't, either they'll drown or we'll pick them up to-morrow by cruising

around at sea. Folly, eh? This thing was meant to look like a piece of savage madness. A black runs amuck, and when he's chased he commits suicide by diving into the sea. Only I got close enough to see that canoe . . . and I know of an island that's down-wind and close enough for three black fellows to find on a stormy night."

"Mahia!" shouted a voice from the crowd. "The plantation on Mahia's been abandoned for years."

"There's some devil of a white man on it to-night, waiting for a necklace," Bill rumbled.

With long strides he set off toward the harbor. The gendarme trotted at his elbow like a dog that has found its master.

CHAPTER II.

OLD KNIFE-HAND.

BELLOW BILL WILLIAMS stood six feet three and weighed two hundred and forty, all muscle. From the waist to the neck and wrists tattooing made his skin a pictorial record of travels from China to the South Pacific, and north to Bering Sea. He had never met a stronger man and he enjoyed danger.

To dive off a cliff in the dark, to swim after an armed murderer and a canoe full of accomplices, was characteristic of the pearling skipper. To be cocksure that he had outguessed a criminal and certain that he had made a difficult case almost absurdly simple, was not.

He was still a proud man at dawn when the police launch, held back by persistent engine trouble and the heavy seas, crawled at last within sight of the low atoll of Mahia and its tossing coco palms. For about three

miles from the island a schooner was close hauled on a course to Papeete. A patch of reddish brown canvas in the mainsail identified the vessel.

"That'll be Knife-hand Foster, the blackbirder," Bill rumbled. Complacently he filled his cheek with fine cut chewing tobacco from a hip pocket. "It would be . . . there's a guy that can make savages take orders, and with the guts to do dirt most men wouldn't tackle."

"*C'est vrai*—true, true, m'sieur," muttered the gendarme.

Bill enjoyed the look of admiration, in which the other two gendarmes who formed the crew of the launch joined. It was the pearler's last complacent moment.

For the schooner, instead of veering off to escape, suddenly hoisted the police flag. More, it turned toward the launch—not only summoning assistance, but seemingly eager to obtain it at the earliest instant possible. As the two boats drew together the schooner heaved-to, but still no one was visible on her deck.

"Lend me a gun. Keep off, and keep your heads down," Bill rumbled to the gendarmes. Light as a huge cat, despite his bulk, he caught the rail of the schooner and swung himself aboard as the vessel rose on a big wave. Swung aboard—and checked himself, the revolver swinging level with a movement wholly involuntary.

For he had jumped upon the shattered wreck of an outrigger canoe, lying on the deck behind the rail. Beyond that, propped against the low side of the cabin farther aft, were three Melanesians.

Dead. Very dead. The throat of one was cut through jugular and windpipe. Blood had gushed over the dirty, hairy body, and had not yet dried. The two

others were shot. Bullet holes showed black against black skin. Here was the murderer of Lady Bailey-Nickerson. Here were the two accomplices. They had met a more sudden, more deadly killer.

"Know 'em, Bill?" rasped a voice. "I hope so. Damned if I ever craved to see a police launch before. Take a reef in your jaw and shove that gun back in your pants."

Out of the companionway poked a bald head, sun tanned to the color of a saddle. Two jutting, pointed ears; a thin face with pale blue eyes. Knife-hand Foster was over sixty. He was not large. No one ever thought of him as large, or small. How big is a cobra? Who knows, or cares? It is deadly. So was Foster.

He was mounting the companion steps slowly. His left hand was hooked in his belt, near a holstered gun. His right hand lacked all four fingers and half the thumb. The injury was old, years old; but the maimed stub was smeared with fresh blood.

To the inner side of his right forearm was strapped a metal tube. Within that, as Bellow Bill knew, was a ten inch knife blade, two edged and needle pointed. With a jerk, Foster could snap the knife forward. A catch in the tube would lock the blade fast, projecting behind Foster's fingerless hand like a bayonet. Some said that Foster could throw the knife as well as snap it into position for use, but Bellow Bill had never believed that. The metal tube was a scabbard for a knife-hand, nothing more.

"Where's the necklace, Foster?" Bill boomed. "Killing those three black tools to shut them up ain't going to do you any good."

Foster's left hand moved to the buckle of his belt. The gun at his hip

dropped to the deck, holster and all. He advanced a few steps, far enough away from the companionway to be unable to snatch a hidden weapon.

"Why, Bill," he said, "you ain't a new-chum. You ain't a damned frog gendarme, without brains. Take another look at those blacks. I killed them more than an hour ago, and considerable time before I sighted your launch. You'll find the blood on them is starting to dry, even though the sun ain't up yet."

"THE necklace?" Bill boomed, though a quick second look at the bodies revealed that Foster was speaking the truth. Even to get the wrecked outrigger canoe aboard would have taken one man more than an hour, for it was a block-and-tackle job.

"I wish to hell I had it," Foster said. "Likely there'd be a reward for returning it. Here's the facts, Bill: I sailed from Moorea to Papeete, and in spite of the hurricane I'm pretty well on my course, as you can see. Just at the false dawn I make out an outrigger canoe, cracking on sail and driving themselves half under with every sea. That don't look right. You know natives don't put to sea too soon after a hurricane."

"Yes, I know that," Bill rumbled.

"I yell to them to come aboard. I want them, because I'm short-handed. I lost my deck hand in the blow. They're not anxious for help, but I show a gun. Of course, their canoe gets battered up some against the side of the schooner, but what's that to me? I got to have deck hands. The leader of the three is scrambling aboard. The schooner is pitching, and so is the canoe. His G-string slips, and I saw something flash against his black hide.

Bill, it was like a gleam of blue fire! My eyes must have popped like a calf's—and he damn near got me while I was realizing it was gems he had.

"He swung at me with a coco knife, Bill. I just ducked. Then—" Foster jerked his right arm, and bloodstained steel snapped beyond his maimed hand swift as a snake's tongue. He made a sweeping slash at the air. "Then—I got *him*. He tumbled back into the canoe, and one of his chums snatched a necklace out of his G-string. Both of them jumped for the rail with knives, Bill.

"I had to shoot. I got them both, but the black with the necklace dropped it when my bullet hit. It fell into the sea, Bill. I could see it sink. Down, down into blue water. Forty, fifty fathoms of water, Bill. I didn't even bother to buoy the spot. It was too deep for a diver, and I wanted to kill that black all over again. Instead I damned near broke my back getting them and the canoe aboard. I figured I'd better, because questions was going to be asked. I could guess they'd come from Papeete. They'd have to, with the wind as it was."

Foster paused, pressed the catch of the knife with his left hand, and shook the weapon back into the tube.

"And you expect me to believe that?" Bill boomed.

"I don't give a damn whether you believe it or not," Foster rasped. For an instant a line of white showed beneath the iris of his pale eyes, as the eyes of a horse show white before it kicks. "It's the truth. If you don't believe it you can search me and the ship."

"Where?" Bill rumbled.

His eyes wandered to the wind-tossed coco palms of Mahia. A complicated problem of time was in his

mind. By how many minutes had the canoe beaten the launch to the island? How long would dead bodies last under a tropic sun? Had Foster intercepted the canoe, as he claimed, or had the blacks helped him to hoist it after it had been battered in the surf around Mahia? Had the blacks attacked Foster, or had he suddenly set upon them with knife and gun, after learning that Bellow Bill had seen their canoe in Papeete?

The offer to search the ship was safe to make. To be thorough, a search would require a dozen men, and the schooner would have to be hauled out of water to make certain that the necklace had not been stuffed into an open seam and held in place with a handful of tar.

Foster's story was just possible, but Bellow Bill believed there had been quick thinking and quicker knife-play there in a gray dawn. Foster had moved his pawns over the sea. At the first hint of a counter-move he had swept the pieces from the board. Who in Papeete would blame him for killing the black who had chopped open Lady Bailey-Nickerson's skull? No one.

"You're a good man in a fight," said Bellow Bill calmly. "It takes us old-timers to savvy some things. I'll bet it was hell watching that necklace sinking in deep water. Some will say that you'd have followed gems like those to hell, Foster. But you and me are sailors, eh?"

IN the half-smile that creased the face of the blackbird Bill read defeat. The necklace wasn't on the schooner. Foster had submitted to arrest too tamely. Bellow Bill grinned back—and with a sudden inspiration let the grin stay on his face, a twinkle creep into his eye. With the utmost de-

liberation he signaled for the gendarmes to come aboard.

"Put Mr. Foster in handcuffs," he ordered. "You'll know why when he's told you his story. Not for all the blue blazes of hell would I interfere . . . with the law."

Bill was grinning. The gendarmes stared goggle-eyed at the corpses.

"And right now," the pearly rumbled, "make a very careful search for the necklace—in the dinghy."

"Ze dinghy—ze smallest boat alone, m'sieur? We search the whole ship!"

"Later—if the police desire," Bill purred. "Right now the dinghy will be enough for me." He had his reward. The half-smile was gone from Foster's face. A rim of white showed beneath the pale eyes.

Still grinning, Bill strolled below. He found nothing, though he picked up a heavy diver's knife and added it to the revolver in his belt. Yet when he came on deck again the gleam was still in his eye.

"I've been looking at your deck hand's bunk." He purred—and re-examined the beaker of water and the can of hardtack in the dinghy, though the gendarmes had already probed these, as they had searched every cranny and seam of the tiny craft.

"What the devil are you getting at?" Foster rasped.

Bellow Bill bent slowly and grasped the dinghy by the two gunwales, amidships. With a quick heave he lifted it into the air and tossed it over the rail of the schooner, jumping after it and alighting into the little boat with dry feet.

Two ordinary men would have strained to duplicate that launching. Not one sailor in twenty could have made the jump without capsizing the little craft.

"Why, the necklace isn't in the dinghy—is it?" Bill boomed at the gendarme. "I'm just rowing ashore to search the island. It's my—duty." He was grinning.

"Eet ees to search ze needle in ze haystack!" howled the gendarme, uncertain of what to do.

"Well, if I do, it does that interfere with the police, then?" Bill boomed in reply. "Don't sail till you hear from me again, though!" Mighty strokes at the oars were opening a gap between the dinghy and the schooner. The bald head and pointed ears of Foster stuck far out over the rail. To shout to the blackbirder to take a reef in his jaw was in Bill's mind. He refrained. He didn't hope to find the necklace ashore. In the tangled underbrush that covered twenty acres beneath the neglected coco palms such an effort would be folly indeed. No plan lay back of Bill's grin. His inspiration had been merely to take all the pleasure and assurance out of Foster's victory—to prove that another old-timer who saw that he had been outwitted could do the unexpected.

The dinghy was in shallow water now. A commotion in the water caused by fish rising to the surface, an unusual thing after a storm, caught Bill's eye.

He let the dinghy drift, and peered over the side for what must have seemed endless minutes to those on the schooner.

Down below dogfish and sandsharks were tearing at a mass of flesh, already shapeless. Smaller fish, attracted by the blood which spread in a reddish cloud over the sandy bottom, were constantly being chased away by the snapping jaws of the smaller scavengers.

Was that six-foot mass of flesh a fish injured by the gale? Perhaps—

though there is little blood in fish. With his diver's knife Bill could have plunged to the bottom safely and discovered whether or not he had found Foster's missing deck hand. He was content to stare, to pick up his oars at last and row ashore.

For the body was already so mutilated that the cause of death could never be known. The shark-gnawed bones of a brown deck hand would never pin the murder of Lady Bailey-Nickerson upon Foster. Only the recovery of the necklace could do that.

And for this same reason Bellow Bill did not even attempt to enter the tangled thickets of Mahia. Instead he kept to the beach. He walked entirely around the island on the rain-beaten sand.

He was not looking for hidden men, but for any sign that a boat had been brought ashore and concealed. That task the very thickness of the vegetation, which grew to the edge of the beach, made simple.

There was no boat. Half an hour later Bellow Bill was back at his starting point. The gendarme meanwhile had sailed the schooner close to the shore, and secured the police launch astern, ready to be towed.

"No one's here," Bill thundered across the water. "Go on back and report to the prefect of police before the sun gets at those bodies!"

"But m'sieur!" wailed the harassed gendarme.

"I'm all right. Plenty of hardtack and water!" Bill roared decisively.

"But m'sieur, you stop! You look in ze water—"

"Did I? Hell, I was just resting after chucking the dinghy overboard," Bill roared. "Go on back to Papeete, Jean. They'll make a sergeant of you for catching that murdering—Mela-

nesian. This island is swell for an— old-timer!"

CHAPTER III.

THE FANGS OF THE ISLAND.

BELLOW BILL, believed in the dying gambler's advice: never play the other man's game. Because Knife-hand wanted him away from Mahia he was determined to stay. As far as he had a theory, it was that the necklace must be hidden either on the island or in the waters around it. If the latter, the necklace would be marked by a buoy held under water temporarily by a bag of salt, which would come to the surface when the salt melted. Bill could get the cache when the buoy rose. If an accomplice of Knife-hand's landed, Bill figured he could get him; but the pearler did not anticipate anything save the boredom of a lonely vigil with hardtack and water for rations during the remainder of that day at least.

His first care was to hide the dinghy by carrying it across the beach and concealing it in the brush beside an overgrown trail which led to an abandoned and rotting bungalow. He had not staggered into the shade of the coco palms, bent double beneath his unwieldy burden, before he observed that Mahia was cursed with far more than its proper share of rats.

All coco plantations are plagued by rats more or less. Rats live on the nuts that fall, and will even climb any palm with a slanting trunk. Tin rat-guards placed around the trees are as much a part of a planter's equipment as hoes to keep the weeds down, and rats and weeds had both swarmed on Mahia unchecked for years. There were obscene squeaks behind the leaves along

the trail. A rat stepped into the path ten feet ahead, rose on its haunches to flash beady eyes at Bill—and vanished. He set the boat down in the path.

At once the squealing ceased. From foliage still damp from the night rain he breathed an odor of decay. Close to the ground a sharp nose poked out; a pair of beady eyes. As he remained still he glimpsed another rat, and another. Watching him. So fearless or so desperate from hunger that they dared to watch. Within a yard of his feet, in broad daylight. . .

The thought of sleeping on the ground in such a place made Bill's toes curl. He could imagine the beady-eyed, brown-furred army bellying closer and closer as he lay unconscious. At last the boldest rat would bite. . . Bill would thrash in the darkness. . . the rats would scatter. . .

On impulse he took two thwarts from the dinghy and improvised a deadfall, using the boat to weight the trap, and the painter as a trigger-line. A piece of hardtack served as bait. He had hardly moved away the length of the painter before a rat was gliding toward the biscuit. Bill jerked the line.

The deadfall was slow in action. The thwart, thudding against the earth, barely caught the haunches of the rat as it leaped to escape. The animal's back was broken just above the hips. For an instant it writhed in the path—then brown streaks flashed from beneath the leaves. Half a dozen rats were biting and worrying the wounded victim. It lifted its head to squeal, and sharp teeth closed in the light colored fur under the throat.

Bill snatched the diver's knife and hurled it into the mass. The blade, quivering in the ground, scattered the rats. He kicked the bloody body as far as he could into the underbrush, and

stood with clenched fists while it was torn to pieces to an accompaniment of shrill squeals. That was a matter of minutes only.

Bill thought of sleeping on the beach. On sand that was clean. Yet he might have to remain on Mahia for days. No one knew better than he how silently a boat can steal in to shore. On the sand his body would be no better than a target, even at night. No. He would have to sleep among these vermin. Repugnance twisted Bill's mouth. He concealed the dinghy, kicking out savagely when he stepped into the weeds, though that necessitated some careful work to rearrange the broken stems and the tangle of vines which he had disturbed.

He picked up his knife and walked toward the ruined bungalow. He was watching the path for tracks, though the recent rain had blotted out all traces—if, indeed, Knife-hand had followed the path at all. The necklace was no longer uppermost in Bill's thoughts. After a glance he decided that the bungalow was so rotten and tumbledown that it was liable to be more rat-infested than the open ground. The sagging posts of the veranda did afford, however, material for building a sleeping platform raised above the ground, such as natives use.

Bill commenced to cut down a patch of weeds with his knife. He selected a spot close to the path and the bungalow, where four palms grew close together, with vines passing between them that would serve to lash his platform in place. One large vine was dead, but that would give him firewood.

THE work went slowly, for the knife was too short and light for the task. The best Bill could do was to hack down the tallest of the

weeds. He stopped to eat at noon with only four beams of his platform lashed into place. The sun was close to the horizon when he finished. He went down to the beach and circled the island to see if any ships were in sight, or if a buoy had risen to the surface. The ocean was a complete blank. Bill took a swim to cool himself, tied two vines across the path, ankle high, and returned to his platform. It looked as welcome to him as the hotel at Papeete to a tired man. He was rather surprised at the extent of the clearing he had made—but he hadn't cleared too much! He could hear the rats squeaking in the weeds. With a grunt he climbed off the ground, ate hardtack and drank tepid water, and settled himself for the night.

Darkness fell. He was dozing when he caught the sound for which his ears were subconsciously attuned—the creak of a block as a schooner shifted sail to run in to land. He slipped from the platform and stole down the path, kicking his trip-vines out of the way.

Already the schooner had launched a boat. Two men were crossing the beach in the starlight. They passed so close to Bellow Bill that he might have touched them as he crouched in the underbrush. He let them go—to rise, silent as a huge shadow, to step back into the path, to follow them, perhaps twenty feet in the rear.

He knew them both. The white man was Babson, the blackbirder. Behind his squat, long-armed figure strode Uri, Babson's giant negro mate. The pair were rivals of Knife-hand in the recruiting of labor—and almost never, so far as Bill could remember, did their schooner touch at Papeete.

The pearler cursed Knife-hand's cunning. Collusion with Babson was the last thing he had suspected, yet it

was obvious that while Knife-hand engineered the crime, Babson had lain-to to run to the island and secure the loot in case of a slip-up.

At the edge of Bill's clearing Babson halted—suddenly. There was a gleam in the starlight as he jerked out a revolver.

"By God, Knife-hand's been double crossed!" he whispered. "There must have been a settler here."

"A settler would have store lying around. Can't be no *settler*, boss," Uri muttered.

"That's true! Some beach comber, then. And he's got it! Knife-hand didn't meet us. He must have cached it." Babson paused. "Get the crew ashore," he commanded. "We'll search the island first for a man, and then—"

He checked himself. "—for a man that may not have known what he was doing when the cleared that tangle," he added slowly.

Bellow Bill thought fast. The crew of a blackbirder rarely consisted of more than two or three men. If the skipper and the mate didn't come back the natural thing for the crew to do was to come ashore one by one to see what the matter was. To overpower one man in that brush-grown path would be easy—absurdly easy.

"Drop that gun!" Bill rumbled.

Both men swung toward the sound of his voice. The ambush was perfect. Slowly the revolver slipped through Babson's fingers into the weeds.

"Reach high!" Bill rumbled.

They started to obey. The sudden push which Babson gave Uri, hurling him toward Bill, was as unexpected to the perler as to the mate.

"Rush him!" Babson screamed—and threw himself face down in the weeds.

Uri charged as Bill fired. The bullet smacked into the big negro's chest. He swayed—but from the weeds flame leaped to answer the flash of Bill's gun.

Babson's shot ripped Bill's arm from wrist to elbow. He gave a roar of pain. His gun slipped from his hand.

BABSON leaped up. A bound carried him into the thicket. He crashed through the bush, firing as he went. Wild shots that missed Bill, who picked up his gun with his left hand and fired as wildly. Uri had fallen backward. He was dead. Sacrificed.

Bill discovered that, and twisted his shirt around his bleeding arm. Grimly he strode down the path and stepped aside in the brush near the beach. For the second time he had been out-generated by cold blooded murder. For to push Uri toward him had been murder. Babson had not even tried to fight after the first shot. He had fled, had dashed into the sea without pausing to launch his boat. Bill could hear him calling to his crew to hoist him aboard. A moment later the schooner's sails were trimmed. She moved toward the shore in grim silence till her bow grated on the sand.

"A hundred pounds for the man that gets him!" Babson screamed. "Jump, you black devils!"

Four men leaped from the schooner. They carried rifles. The manhunt was on.

For Bellow Bill the temptation to blaze away with his few remaining cartridges as the four crossed the beach was almost irresistible. But many fights had taught him the bitter lesson that he was a poor shot. His huge body tensed in the underbrush like a coiled spring. The four blacks realized that they were advancing into darkness

against an armed and ambushed enemy. They drew together, shoulder to shoulder, the rifle barrels jerking in nervous hands. Step by step they advanced.

With a bound Bellow Bill was among them. He dove beneath the rifles as a halfback dives at interference. One shot from his revolver sped before him, one black toppled with lead crashing through a naked chest. Then Bill's shoulders struck black knees. His huge arms, outspread, holding gun and knife, gathered in legs as he brought the natives down in a screaming heap.

Beneath the mass his knife slashed. His gun jabbed and swung in six-inch, crippling blows. He did not pause to kill. Thirty seconds of wild work that left him drenched with blood that he had shed, thirty seconds punctuated by agonized screams, and he jumped erect in a circle of writhing figures.

Feet were pounding forward on the deck of the schooner.

"Hold him! Hold him! I'll shoot him!" Babson was howling.

A leap took Bellow Bill beneath the schooner's bowsprit, which projected over the beach. He paused to jerk once upon the martingale—a pull that was transmitted to the jib, and made the head-sails shake as though he were climbing aboard over the bow. But with a splash Bill dove into the shallow water. For an instant or two he was exposed as he crawled rather than swam aft, his shoulder scraping the side of the schooner.

Then he was swimming beneath the surface through water that grew ever deeper—swimming aft, with the hull at his shoulder to guide him. His hand touched the rudder. He reached up, caught the rudder chains. He had boarded a schooner against an armed

man in that way before. He gripped his knife in his teeth, shook the water from the barrel of his gun. One huge, tattooed hand gripped the edge of the deck at the stern. One foot was on the rudder chains.

With a swift lunge he flung himself over the taffrail, dropping on hands and knees, crouched, ready, the knife gleaming in his teeth.

BABSON was forward. He fired. The bullet whanged through the brass of the binnacle. Bill fired back, missed, scrambled behind the wheel, fired again, and heard the hammer click on a cartridge spoiled by water. The wheel shook as a bullet from Babson smacked into the oak.

"Ha!" Bill roared, deep-toned, voice fierce with battle-lust. Out from the shelter of the wheel he charged, bent double, low to the ground as a charging lion, keeping the mainmast between Babson's gun and himself. The knife gleamed in his right hand. The gun he did not mean to use again until its muzzle touched flesh was shifted to the left.

Babson's shot was wide. He still might have shot it out. Twenty feet still separated the two as Bill charged past the mainmast. Twenty feet—a brace of seconds—the certainty of a knife in the guts if a bullet failed to stop that huge onrushing figure. To kill was not enough. Bill might drop dead—on Babson's disemboweled corpse. In the face of cold steel Babson faltered. A gunman to the core, he wanted space, time to take sure aim. With a wild scream he leaped down the fo'c's'le hatch. With an angry roar Bill leaped after him, lashing out with knife and gun in the thick darkness below decks.

The blows were wasted on empty

air. In the darkness a steel door clanged shut. Bill hurled himself at the sound, and recoiled, half stunned, as his forehead struck a metal barrier bolted and immovable as the side of the schooner. Behind him, at the hatch, sound the rumble of a sliding door, a second clang of metal. The faint glimmer of the stars was blotted out.

Bill jumped for the hatch. His groping fingers found the spring which had pushed a steel plate across the hatch when Babson tripped the catch, probably by electricity, from a push-button amidships. A dry cell and an electro-magnet working like a trigger would have done the trick. The schooner was a blackbirder. Steel door that could be slammed shut in an instant from far off were useful to keep kidnaped, maddened natives below decks.

For there was no lock on the under side of the hatchway. The steel plate was held shut by a spring catch on the upper side.

Bellow Bill exerted all his strength, and stepped back, panting.

He thrust knife and gun in the waistband of his trousers; filled his cheek with fine-cut chewing tobacco soaked by the sea.

"You win, Babson," he boomed. "And you're a damned sneaking coward."

Through the steel door Bill knew that Babson could hear.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRICE OF A NECKLACE.

THE blackbirder did not answer. Indeed, the silence was so absolute and so prolonged that at last Bill groped for matches, and lighted a hurricane lantern which swung from

the deck beams overhead. Light only emphasized the hopelessness of his predicament.

The fo'c's'le was equipped with deadlights, not portholes, and the bunks and mess-table were built of thin pine boards, much too light to be of any help in battering down the doors.

There was a peep-hole about an eighth of an inch in diameter in the after-door, and below this a three-quarter-inch hole, closed by what seemed to be a flat steel bolt, or bar. This, however, was immovable. Bill broke more than one finger nail proving the fact.

Babson must have had sufficient confidence in the fo'c's'le as a jail to go ashore, for although Bill heard the wounded natives drag themselves onto the deck, and lie tossing and groaning on the planks over his head, an hour or more passed with no sign from the white man. Bill had stopped swearing; had begun to wonder if one of his shots had taken effect, if a mortally wounded man had slammed the steel doors around him . . . when for the second time he heard a rattle of blacks as a schooner approached the island.

Fiercely hope flared up—to die at rasping words in the voice of Knife-hand Foster:

"Well, then, damned if you ain't a better man than I thought, Babson! I figured Bellow Bill would eat ye! *Kai kai* all the same one fella, *poi*, like mush. I *had* to get back!"

The answer was inaudible. With nasty self-confidence Knife-hand continued:

"Him? Why, of course he has! You leave him to *me!*"

The trader rapped on the deck to attract Bill's attention.

"Know you can't get out, Bill, eh?"

"I'm waiting for you to get in," boomed the pearer.

"You would be." Knife-hand's tone was worse than nasty. "Well, I ain't comin'. Figure I've got to get rid of a schooner. Might as well burn this one. An' how'll you like *that*—old-timer?"

Bill shifted a quid which had suddenly become tasteless.

"How'd you get rid of the gendarmes?" he rumbled.

"They forgot that a hand with the knuckles gone slips through handcuffs. They were nothin' but landlubbers, Bill. Two of them were asleep below. I knocked them on the head, because I figured that was what you would have done if you wanted to get shut of them; and the third come below to see what the noise was about. He's driftin' around now in the launch with the other two. The Consul General will think you done it, Bill. I used a hammer on them."

"And you waste time talking to me?" growled the pearer. "The hell you would! Ain't you got matches? You'd burn this schooner for the fun of it."

Slow seconds ticked by in silence. "Aye," rasped Knife-hand softly. "I would. We ain't new-chums, Bill. I ain't goin' to talk bilge to you. I've got to kill you, but I won't hurt you, Bill—not if you're reasonable."

"Reasonable?" Bill boomed.

"Aye. Back up slow against that after-door until your shoulders touch it. That's bein' reasonable. Otherwise—you roast."

"I'm backing," Bill boomed. Like a flash he blew out the lantern, and whipped out knife and gun. He strode to the door, but though his flesh crawled at the touch of the cold metal, it was his chest he thrust against it, not his back. Muscles

braced, he waited the slightest movement of the steel.

THERE was none—only a click, and in the same split second the jab of a revolver barrel through the lower hole against his chest.

"Got him!" Babson screamed.

"Shoot if he moves!" yelled Knife-hand from the deck. He threw the hatchway back and leaped into the fo'c's'le, slamming the steel hatch shut as he jumped. The certainty that the least movement meant death held Bill rigid. Knife-hand swore in the darkness. A match flared, and simultaneously the point of the knife, fastened bayonetwise to the maimed arm, pricked Bill's back.

"You would try something!" Knife-hand snarled. "Now—where's that necklace, Bill? By God, the papers said it was worth sixty thousand pounds. I'm sick of stealin' stinkin' natives for a few shillings a head. I'm going to have it!"

Bill thought like lightning. "I buried it in the beach sand," he growled. The knowledge that death was to be delayed at least was like a blaze within him. Babson must have double-crossed Knife-hand. That must be it—and Babson, at the first opportunity, would have to kill his leader. Bellow Bill meant to give that opportunity. He dropped the knife and gun to the deck, relaxed his straining muscles.

"I damn near got away with it, at that," he growled.

"Hold him, Babson," Knife-hand rasped. He stepped back, lighted the lantern, and picked up a length of rope. Bellow Bill reached back his hands to be tied. He winced and his heart sank as Knife-hand passed turn after turn of rope around his wrists, too

many for his strength, and with utter disregard for his wounded forearm. If Babson had double-crossed Knife-hand, why had he delayed so long at the island? Because his crew was wounded? Or because, with Bill in the fo'c's'le, he had a bear by the tail? Neither explanation was wholly satisfactory.

As the knife-point prodded him up the fo'c's'le ladder and onto the deck, where Babson joined them, it was some relief to see the two surviving deck hands huddled by the rail. They shrank aside as Bill passed. The fight was out of them. They were apprehensive of the pearler even though his hands were bound behind his huge tattooed back. So, for that matter, was Foster. He kept the knife so close that Bill was cut again and again. Blood trickled down his back in tiny streams. His wrists grew sticky.

At Knife-hand's command Babson jumped from the bow of the schooner first. He waited on the sand, hand on gun, while Bill jumped. Knife-hand swung himself down, watchfully, taking no chances. As they passed the two dead natives near the water's edge, a dark, squeaking mass that hid the outline of the bodies broke apart and fled with louder squeaks of rage—obscene, gibbering shadows which ran no farther than the brush. Bill shuddered.

"Damn!" Knife-hand grunted. "Shove those stiffs in the water, Babson. Sharks and dogfish have got teeth that are clean, anyway. The tide's goin' out. They won't be found."

The blackbirder obeyed. He paused to rinse his hands when he finished—and to the delight of Bellow Bill he remained a few yards away from the trader. Was it the instinct of the gunman? The desire to have space to draw

and shoot? Knife-hand hesitated—only momentarily, yet perceptibly enough to force Babson to step out slightly ahead of the other two.

"I won't stand for being run around too long," Knife-hand warned.

"You won't need to," Bill rumbled. He stepped out with long strides, hoping to pass Babson, but the blackbirder kept ahead. Bill swore under his breath—but after all, even with the starlight reflected from the sea and the sand, the beach was dark. . .

ABRUPTLY Bill halted where a frangi-pani, in bloom and scenting the night with its perfume, afforded a recognizable landmark which he might have used.

"About here," he rumbled, kicking at the sand with his toe. "And about six inches down."

"Dig, Babson," Knife-hand grated. The prick of the knife moved Bill aside two paces. Babson fell on his knees and clawed at the sand. In the darkness the sweat broke out on Bill's forehead. In imagination he could feel the white-hot burn of a knife slipping between his ribs, but his only movement was a very slight, a perfectly controlled inclination of his body forward, as though he were watching Babson. His real movement, when he made it, was quicker than the thrust of a knife.

Sidewise and forward he flung himself, diving at the sand at Knife-hand's feet, twisting as he fell, pivoting on a left leg suddenly doubled, landing on his back and the point of his shoulder with an impact that knocked him breathless—but with his right heel flying waist-high, kicking out as he fell.

His heel caught Knife-hand in the stomach. It was the terrible half-turn

and kick known to *savate* as *le coup au ventre ou diable*—the kick to the stomach or the devil, which cripples if it succeeds and leaves the man who dares to use it lying helpless on his back. Knife-hand doubled up and went down.

Babson leaped back. The starlight flashed on his gun. In the same split second Bill saw that Knife-hand was unconscious, that Babson was not going to shoot, was leaping, not at Knife-hand, but at him. Then the revolver barrel smacked down on Bill's head. . .

Slowly he came to, conscious first of feet that kicked sand in his face. Dimly he became aware that Babson was wrestling with the trader, preventing him from driving the knife into Bill's chest.

"Snap out of it!" Babson was panting. "Of course he's hidden it somewhere! My God, you were unconscious ten minutes! Why'd I lie to you now?"

Knife-hand said nothing. Like a demon he struggled to get free.

The breath whistled through his nose, and though Babson calmed him at last, he continued to breathe like a madman.

"Where—where—is it?" he panted, glaring at Bill.

"I don't know," the pearler rumbled in a bitter growl. "I thought Babson had it, and had guts to take it all when I gave him a safe chance."

CHAPTER V.

THE BLOOD.

HE made a motion that commanded Bellow Bill to rise. He pointed back toward the schooner. In silence the three men tramped

over the sand, Bill first. With a touch of the knife-point Bill was halted while Babson got a rope from the schooner, then was prodded up the path through the brush and halted again by his sleeping-platform. The knife pricked his shoulder at the base of the neck, forcing him down until he was sitting with his back against the trunk of a palm. The rope was passed round and round, and knotted. All in silence.

"You looked for the necklace?" Knife-hand demanded. Of Babson, not Bill.

"Sure! But it was already dark. I only had a ship's lantern—"

"Yes, we need light. Pull that contraption down. Pile the timbers around him."

The thump of the first beam that dropped by Bill's feet made the rats in the underbrush scamper and squeal.

"Look here," Babson objected. "When you get in a dumb rage like this, all you think about's killin'. A fire is a signal of distress. It'll bring any ship that happens to be passing quicker than anything."

Knife-hand said nothing.

"Maybe he didn't find the necklace. Maybe he just lost it," Babson persisted. "You put it where you said?"

In the gleam of the starlight Knife-hand's bald head moved in a curt, savage nod.

"There was a dead vine between these palms," said Babson to Bill. "Hollow, and split. He twisted a joint open and slipped the necklace inside. It was hanging in mid air, savvy, and any tracks that he might have left would seem to be goin' right by. People look in the ground for things that are hid. That's why he picked the vine, but the necklace could have slipped out, easy, when you pulled the vine down. It was pretty rotten. I found lots of

pieces of it, scattered around. I searched the ground all around, too. But maybe you can remember seein' something, Bill. Out of the tail of your eye, like."

"I don't," Bill rumbled. Most fervently he wished that he had.

In silence Knife-hand dragged a pole off the platform and cast it down.

"Don't be in such a damn hurry!" Babson swore. "We got all night. You knocked those gendarmes on the head so the consul would look for Bill, didn't you? You weren't dumb-mad when you thought of that. How's it goin' to help us to have his scorched guts found here? Give him time to do a little rememberin'!"

Knife-hand broke a dry stick in half.

"How about the rats that were chewing Napavi and Tolo?" Babson ejaculated. "Hell, there's worse things than fire! Bill's bleedin'! They'll get to him! Wait, Knife-hand, wait!"

The palm tree quivered as Bill lunged frantically against his bonds. The ropes gouged his chest, but did not slacken. No hope. No hope. In the starlight the bald head jerked upward like that of a thirsty horse which scents sweet water. Softly, caressingly, Knife-hand spoke.

"Once in a while you really get an idea. But we'd have to leave Bill alone. I won't."

"Why must we? Here's his platform! We can climb up there and lie comfortable," Babson urged. "Hell, we can lean over and see his legs! Let's try it an hour anyway!"

"Right!" Knife-hand agreed.

The palm tree quivered to Bill's lunges as the two climbed over his head. He had a mad, a frenzied idea that by movement he could keep the

rats away. The very violence of his efforts revealed the futility of that. He could move—a few inches, twist his body toward and away from the trunk, kick his legs. And a few minutes of violent effort left him panting. Break loose he could not.

"Better start remembering—old-timer!" drawled Knife-hand.

That mockery restored Bellow Bill to sanity. The sweat on his face turned cold, but he remained still. Though muscles jerked uncontrollably under his tattooed skin, limbs and body did not shift. Still. So still that from the weeds a rat lifted its head.

A big rat. An old rat, incredibly thin, that moved forward a foot like a flash and stopped like a shadow, sniffing. Behind the big rat were others, ready to sneak forward but afraid. The big rat was afraid. It circled behind Bill, circled until he could no longer watch it, though he turned his head till the neck tendons ached. Still it was creeping forward. Bill could sense that. The advance, inch by inch, belly to the earth, dirty teeth bared. Starving, desperate, still not sure he was helpless. The other rats were nearer, too. A yell would scatter them. Bellow Bill's throat swelled—and relaxed. Sweat runned down his cheeks and dripped from his chin. Bill did not move.

EVEN when a scaly paw touched his back he did not flinch. He felt the rat's fur against him: He heard its teeth come together—but—but he did not feel a bite! Eyes bulging, jaw locked, determined to endure the bites without outcry, Bill could not understand. Seconds passed. The rat was gnawing—*on the bloody ropes twisted about his wrists!* Desperate with hunger though it was, the rat was

too cunning to attack living flesh while there was other food. Yet the taste of blood would embolden it once the smears on the rope were gone.

Bellow Bill's head twisted. His bared teeth closed on the flesh of his own shoulder, and bit deep. Agony made his legs jerk, but a trickle of blood started down his arm toward his bound wrists. His body remained rigid.

"A rat bit him then!" Knife-hand gloated.

"Sh!" Babson warned.

The big rat had retreated. Yet only an inch or two. It was back, gnawing, gnawing at the body rope. Its teeth made short work of the outermost strand. Bill felt the cords slacken, but the rope that bound him to the tree remained. He could untie that knot, given a second or two. Though not—not with the blackbirders within a few feet of him.

"Good God!" he bellowed. The rats scampered. "I've remembered something!" Bill went on in a hoarse rumble. He had no need to simulate mental agony and desperation. "I didn't find the necklace myself, but I think—I'm sure—I know what became of it. The rats carried it off!"

"Keep on thinking. Maybe you'll remember something I'll believe," retorted Knife-hand with savage sarcasm.

"Don't be a damned fool!" Bill raged. "You knifed the man that was carrying the necklace, didn't you? I'll bet there was blood on the stones when you hid it, and when it dropped to the ground the rats carried it off because it had the smell of something they could eat. For God's sake, give me a break! Why should I be burned or eaten alive? The rats wouldn't take it far, but they'd drag it away from the spot where Babson expected to find it."

There was silence for two, three, four seconds. Abruptly Babson slid off the platform, moved to the edge of the space Bill had cleared and leaning over, struck a match.

"Bill may be right, at that," he urged. "Shall I get a lantern?"

More slowly Knife-hand climbed to the ground.

"No," he contradicted. "Rats could not drag a necklace as long as that far without its tangling on something. Matches will do." He struck a light and bent forward, searching.

As match after match flared, the light of each temporarily blinding the eyes of the two blackbirders to an object in the darkness, Bellow Bill shook the cords off his wrists and untied the knot of the rope. The turns passed around his body gave him more trouble. Each turn was a quick, breathless task synchronized with a flare of light. At last he was free. He remained seated. Arms held close to his body kept the rope across his chest. His feet, however, were drawn beneath him.

Knife-hand uttered a yell of triumph. He pawed at the earth. When he rose something dangled from his hand.

"Blue babies!" he gloated, and let the necklace swing against his cheek. "A house in Sydney, that's what you are! And wenches—white wenches and whisky! No more trade gin!"

Babson snatched at the string. "Hi! They feel slippery and cold!" he cried out. "No wonder people call 'em ice. God, look at them shine in the stars!"

"Aye," Knife-hand rasped. He thrust the gems into his pocket. The brief outburst satisfied him. His tone stopped Babson's exultation like a dose of cold water. "Let's get underway. We can use both schooners now."

Safer. Won't start tongues rattling. I'll attend to Bill."

WITH a *click* the knife snapped out of its metal sheath. He walked across the little clearing, neither fast nor slowly. He had business to do. He did not need to taunt his victim to enjoy it. He caught Bill by the hair, jerked his head back to expose the throat.

A huge hand flashed upward. Iron fingers buried themselves in Knife-hand's neck. A fist closed like a trap on the maimed knife-arm. It was done so suddenly that the blackbirder did not cry out. Only the agonized writhing of his thin legs as Bellow Bill rose, lifting him into the air, made Babson cry out, sent a hand streaking to a gun.

"Drop him!" Babson yelled. He sprang backward, hesitating to shoot.

The lean, bald-headed figure spun in Bellow Bill's arms. Perhaps Babson thought that Bill was dropping his partner. The movement was too quick, the night too dark to see that Bill had only whirled him around, that his back was now against Bill's chest, that the hand which had gripped the wrist was now hugging the skinny waist, that the hand which had been at the throat now held the skinny forearm to which the knife was strapped.

But at the flash of steel in the starlight, at Bill's leap forward, Babson understood. With his partner hugged in a huge arm to stop the lead, with his partner's knife pointed forward like a spear, Bellow Bill was charging him. In the brush he could not run. Babson cried out, and fired. He got in two shots. Then Bill dove headlong. The knife drove through Babson's body as they fell.

A fist like a mallet smacked down on Knife-hand's head. Bellow Bill struck Babson, and then got slowly to his feet. Across one huge, tattooed forearm was a painful bullet gouge. That slug had gone on through Knife-hand's heart. The knife had caught Babson under the breast bone and, pointing downward, had ripped him to the belt. He had not been dead when Bill punched him. But he would never recover consciousness now.

The huge pearler shuddered, and reached for fine-cut. His mouth was too dry to moisten the tobacco. He blew it from his lips, bent, and with a grimace of distaste, took the necklace from Knife-hand's pocket. A little later he picked up Babson's gun, stuck it in the waistband of his trousers, and, sure at last that Babson had died, picked up both men, a hand in the belt of each, and carried them back to the schooner.

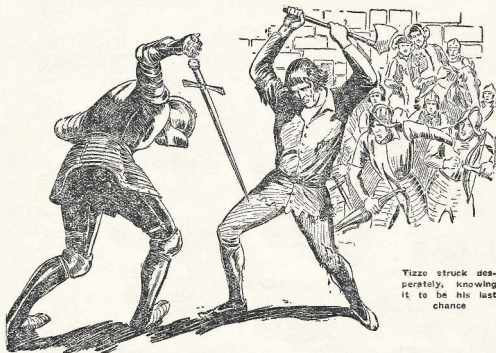
One after the other he tumbled them over the rail and climbed aboard himself. At the sight of the bodies the wounded blacks had groaned. They shrank back against the bulwarks as Bill's great shoulders rose over the rail.

They were too frightened, too certain he had come to kill them, to plead for mercy.

"Be easy, lads," Bill rumbled. "You ain't sailing with Knife-hand any more. I'm taking you back to talk to the Consul General at Papeete, that's all."

He walked aft, leaving the sentence unfinished, and swung the main boom to back the sail so that the wind might draw the schooner off the sand as soon as the tide served. Even in Papeete Bellow Bill never told the details of what had happened on Mahia.

THE END



Tizzo struck desperately, knowing it to be his last chance

The Firebrand

By GEORGE CHALLIS

Tizzo, the Firebrand, fleeing his enemies in ancient Perugia, finds he has blundered into the House of Death

LEADING UP TO THIS CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT

THE only name he had was Tizzo, which means "Firebrand," and that had been given him partly because of his nature, and partly because of his mop of flaming red hair. As a young waif he had been taken by Luigi Falcone, a wealthy old warrior whose estate lay near the town of Perugia, in medieval Italy, and Falcone had brought him up to young manhood, making of him a master swordsman.

There came a day, however, when the quick-tempered Falcone, bested in a duel with his protégé, believed that Tizzo had been toying with him, and, in a rage, the old man told Tizzo he was free to leave his house whenever he chose.

Reluctantly, because he loved the old warrior, Tizzo departed. He went to a near-by inn, where he had heard that a certain Englishman, Henry, baron of Melrose, was looking for a serving-man. Tizzo offered his services, and was promptly rejected. He challenged the baron to a duel and they fought, with the baron finally besting Tizzo, although not before the latter had almost killed Melrose.

They became sworn companions on the spot, and Tizzo agreed to follow Melrose on a secret mission, after first becoming reconciled with Luigi Falcone. Not far away, the baron's companions awaited him, with a lad named Tomaso, whom they had apparently captured in Perugia and were

This story began in the *Argosy* for November 24

spiriting away. That night, Tizzo learned that Tomaso was in reality a girl, and he helped her escape. Tizzo himself escaped, and the next day went on to Perugia in search of the girl. There he approached old Ugo, a beggar, and asked news of the girl, whom he described. Ugo bade him wait, and promptly went to Astorre Bagnioni, one of the most powerful men of Perugia, brother of the Lady Beatrice, the girl Tizzo had helped to escape from her kidnapers. With Astorre at the time was Mateo Marozzo, a young swashbuckler who had been wounded by Tizzo when he made a futile attempt to rescue Lady Beatrice. Mateo recognized Tizzo by the description Ugo gave, and he begged that Tizzo be handed over to him. In the meantime Tizzo waited at the Sign of the Stag, unaware that he had been betrayed.

CHAPTER VIII.

MELROSE TO THE RESCUE.

AT the Sign of the Stag a man whose face was roughed over with beard to the eyes was talking loudly in the big tap room. He had on a long yellow coat and pointed shoes of red; and he walked back and forth a little through the room, while all eyes followed him. The afternoon had grown so dark with rain that lamps had been lighted in the room and these cast an uncertain and wavering light. Tizzo followed the movements of the tall stranger with interest because he found the voice vaguely familiar, but not the face. He was wondering where he could have seen before that shaggy front; and in the meantime he sipped some of the cool white wine of Orvieto and listened to the stranger's talk. The beggar, Ugo, surely would soon return.

The man of the yellow coat was a doctor, it appeared, and he was peddling in the tap room some of his cures; for instance—"A powder made

of the wing-cases of the golden rose chafer, an excellent thing for cases of rheumatism. Let the sick man put four large pinches of this powder into a glass of wine and swallow off the draught when he goes to bed at night. The taste will not be good but what is bad for the belly is good for the bones." Or again the doctor was saying: "When old men find themselves feeble, their eyes watering, their joints creaking, their breathing short, their sleep long, I have here an excellent remedy. In this packet there is a brown powder and it is no less than the dried gall of an Indian elephant, which carried six generations of the family of a Maharajah on its back for two hundred years. And then it died not of old age but fighting bravely in battle. Now the merit, relish, and the source of an elephant's long life lies in its gall; and in this powder there is strength to make the old young again, and to make the middle aged laugh, and to make the young dance on the tips of their toes."

An old greybeard lifted up his head at this announcement, and wished to know the price. And in another moment the doctor, producing a very small balance scales, had made the sale and weighed out a portion of the powder.

Continuing his walk and his narration of wonders, the doctor happened to drop one of his many little packages on the floor beside the chair where Tizzo was sitting. And as he leaned to pick up the fallen thing he muttered words which reached Tizzo's ears only.

"Up, you madman! Away with me. Your face is known in Perugia and every moment you remain here is at the peril of your life."

The doctor, saying this, straightened

again and allowed Tizzo to have a glimpse of flame-blue eyes which he remembered even better than he had remembered the voice.

IT was the baron of Melrose who had come into the city of his enemies in this effective disguise. Was he risking his life only for the sake of plucking Tizzo out of the danger? The heart of Tizzo leaped with surprise and a strange pleasure. A moment later he stepped into a small adjoining room which had not yet been lighted. He had been there hardly a moment before the doctor entered behind him. He gripped Tizzo by the arm, exclaiming in a quick, muffled voice: "Go before me through the court and down the street towards the northern gate of the town. There I shall join you."

"I cannot go, my lord," said Tizzo. "I must wait here to learn—"

"You must do as I command you," exclaimed Melrose. "You have given me the pledge of your honor to serve me; we have made a compact and have shaken hands on it."

"I shall serve out the terms of the contract," said Tizzo. "I swear that I shall hunt you out tomorrow, but today I have to find the lady."

"What lady?" asked Melrose.

"That same 'Tomaso.'"

"You betrayed me, Tizzo," said the baron, angrily.

"It is true," answered Tizzo, "and I shall betray you again if you give me the work of harrying poor girls across the country, robbing them from their homes, leaving their people—"

"Hush!" said Melrose. "Tell me—when did you know that Tomaso was a woman?"

"When I grappled with her at the moment she dropped to the ground."

"Not until then?"

"No."

"I understand," said the baron, "and any lad of a good, high spirit might have done exactly as you did. Tomaso turned into a lady in distress and the gallant Tizzo sprang to her rescue—but if I had overtaken you that night—well, let it go. She told you her name?"

"No," said Tizzo.

"But you came here into Perugia because she herself invited you!"

"I was to find her in Perugia, but I could not hear the name she called to me. The horses drowned it, thundering over a bridge."

"You came into this big city to hunt for her face? Are you mad, Tizzo?"

"I think I am about to see her," answered Tizzo. "I was able to describe her—"

"My lad," said Melrose, "if you try to reach her, you'll be caught and thrown to wild beasts. She is the Lady—"

But here a voice called from the lighted tap room, loudly: "He was in here. He was seen to enter in here. A young man with blue eyes and red hair. A treacherous murderer; a hired sword of the Oddi. Find him living or find him dead, I have gold in my purse for the lucky man who will oblige me!"

Tizzo, springing to the door, glanced out into the tap room and saw a tall, dark, handsome young man in complete body armor with a steel hat on his head and a sword naked in his hand. Behind him moved a troop of a full dozen armed men. They came clanking through the tap room, looking into every face.

"That's Mateo Marozzo," said Melrose, "the same fellow you bumped on the head yesterday. Run for your life, Tizzo. Try from that window which

opens on the street; I'll make an outcry to pretend that you've escaped into the court on the other side."

"My lord," said Tizzo, "for risking your life to search for me—"

"Be still—away! At the northern gate as fast as you can get there—hurry, Tizzo!"

TIZZO jumped into the casement of the window at the right and looked down into the rainy dimness of the street. One or two people were in sight; and the drop to the ground was a good fifteen feet. He slipped out, and he was hanging by his hands when he heard the loud voice of Melrose shouting inside the room: "This way! A thief! A red-headed thief! He has jumped down into the court—"

There came a trampling rush of armed heels, a muttering of eager voices. And Tizzo loosed his hold and fell. He landed lightly on his feet, pitched forward upon his hands, and then sprang up, unhurt. But from the entrance gate that led into the court of the tavern he heard a voice bawl: "There! That is he Messer Mateo wants. Quick! Quick! There is a golden price on his head!"

It was the old beggar, Ugo, who fairly danced with excited eagerness as he pointed out Tizzo to a number of loiterers about the gate.

The whole process of betrayal was evident now. One glance Tizzo cast up towards the high towers of Perugia, now melting into the blowing, rainy sky, and in his heart he cursed the pride of the town. But they were coming at him from the direction of the gate; and other yelling voices of the hunt issued from the tavern into the open of its court. They would be on the trail in another moment. He

turned and ran with all his might, blindly.

It was clumsy work. He had to hold up the scabbard and sword in his left hand to keep it from tripping him; the steel breastplate which he wore under his doublet was a weight to impede him; but he held fairly even with the foremost of the pursuit until he heard the clangor of hoofs on the pavement, and he looked back to see mounted men behind, and one of them in the lead with three flowing plumes in his hat.

That would be Mateo Marozzo, of course!

He could not outrun horses, but he might dodge them for a moment, so he turned sharply to the left down a dark and narrow lane.

It was a winding way, as empty of people as it was of light, and when he turned the first corner he saw that he was trapped, for the foot of the lane was blocked straight across by a great building.

All other doors were blocked except to the right, where two figures in black hoods stood as if on guard, one of them constantly ringing a little bell. They made an ominous picture, and inside the open door of the house there was a yawning, a cavernous darkness. But Tizzo sprang straight toward this added moment of safety. In front of him, he saw the dark forms lift and stretch out their arms.

"Halt!" cried one deep voice. "Better to die in the open under a clean sky; death itself is waiting inside this house."

But Tizzo already had brushed past the restraining hands. He entered the dimness of a long hall with the ringing hoofbeats coming to a pause in front of the entrance to the place. And he heard a long cry from the street

that might be triumph, horror—he could not tell what.

A STAIRWAY climbed on the left. He went up it on the run towards the greater light that came through the upper casements of the house. And at the landings of the stairway he saw bronze figures covered with the dark green patina of great age. That was sure proof that he had entered a house of the greatest wealth; none other could afford sculpture of the Greeks or of the Romans.

He sprang into an upper hall hung from end to end with magnificent tapestries, but empty of all life. There seemed to be no servants in the great mansion; none except the two grim doorkeepers at the entrance. And as he ran past a long table in the hall, he saw that the surface of it was dim with dust.

Through the first door he turned into a chamber with brightly frescoed walls and a number of crystal goblets set out on the table. The glasses were stained but empty. A decanter lay broken on the floor.

He ran on into a bedroom with embroidered hangings over the walls, the windows, the doors. The bed itself was raised on a dais above a floor of wood mosaic; a heavily carved canopy rose above but from it some of the curtains had been torn away. These and the covers of the bed streamed out on the floor as though some one, desperately struggling, had fallen from the bed not long before.

But the dust was deep, everywhere.

A strange, oppressive odor made the air thick to breathe. And a chill of dread passed suddenly through the body of Tizzo, and through his spirit.

He no longer ran, but crossed that

room slowly. The doorway on the far side, yawning like a dangerous mouth upon the unknown that lay beyond, made him draw his sword before he would cross the threshold.

He listened for the sound of pursuit, but there was no beating of foot-falls on the stairs. He heard no more than a dim whisper through the room, and this came, he saw, from the wind which he had brought with him as he entered and which still made the rich hangings of the apartment sway slightly.

When he had passed the door into the next room he found himself stepping on the skins of leopards. A service of massive silver, now dim under tarnish and dust, stood on a sideboard; and on a central table a huge jewel box lay overturned. Red and green and crystal-bright, the jewels streamed across the table and lay scattered on the floor. Here in the palm of one hand there was wealth to make an entire family rich forever. But the beauty frightened Tizzo more than it excited him.

He remembered what the man had called to him in the street—that with-in the house was death itself.

He saw a Madonna in a niche at the end of the room, a beautiful carved image, but there was no taper burning beneath it. And then, compelled by a sudden cold horror in his blood, he turned and thought that he was looking into the eyes of death itself.

CHAPTER IX.

PLAGUE!

IT seemed to Tizzo an apparition which had not been in the chamber before; suddenly it appeared as a young man who sat in the depths of a

chair near a casement. He was dressed very richly. About his neck shone a golden chain that supported a great jewel. But his hose lay wrinkled over his wasted legs; his neck was shrunk to hardly more than the bigness of a man's wrist; and his face was a death's head in which the eyes were deep caverns of unlighted shadow. Like a death's head he grinned, or seemed to grin, at Tizzo. And to crown the horror some great red patches appeared across his forehead and down one side of the face.

Then realization came over Tizzo, and blew through him like the empty howling of a winter wind.

"The plague!" he groaned.

He looked back.

He had crossed many thresholds since he turned in from the street and each one had, in fact, brought him farther into the maw of death.

Far better to have turned and faced the riders in the wet street, dying obscurely but with sweet air in his nostrils. Now he was confined where every breath might be planting the horrible infection deep in his lungs.

He gripped his head with both hands, and he set his teeth to keep back a yell of fear.

"Welcome," said a husky voice hardly louder than the stillness of thought. "The last of the Bardis of Perugia gives a kind welcome to the last of his guests!"

Such a sickness of spirit troubled Tizzo that he gripped the carved back of a chair and supported himself. He wanted to sink on his knees and implore Heaven for succor.

"I should rise to welcome you," said young Bardi, "but I lack the strength to do anything except crawl to the bed where my father and my grandfather have died before me. I

should offer you wine, but it is consumed. I should offer you food, but there is nothing in the house—except the rats and even those must be a little thin, by this time. But if you can catch one of them, you are welcome."

He made a slow movement of one hand to indicate the treasures of the table.

"If you are a thief—for you seem to have been driven off the street into this charnel house—you see there enough to make you rich. I cannot eat or drink the jewels. I cannot take them to hell with me. Therefore you are welcome to everything you see. They are all yours. Be at ease, and consider the house as your own."

Tizzo passed the tip of his tongue across his dry lips. He wanted to turn and flee but a powerful instinct made him walk straight up to the spectre in the chair.

"If you come near my breathing, you are probably a dead man," said the young Bardi.

"If I am to die, I shall die," said Tizzo. "If I am to live, all the plagues in the world will not touch me."

"You talk like a brave man, but that is because you are cornered," declared Bardi. "But you will have this comfort: When I am dead you may throw me into the foulness of the cellars where the rest of the dead are lying; and then for a few days you will be the heir of the house and the master of it."

TIZZO, forcing himself to step still closer, peered at the red blotches on the forehead and face of the other.

"Those sores are dry," said Tizzo. "And that means you are recovering from the plague. It is starvation that kills you, my friend."

"It is as good a way to die as any other," said Bardi.

"You must have food," said Tizzo.

"I have prayed for it; there is no other way to come by it," said Bardi.

"If you are healed of the sores, all the world knows that you are a clean man again," said Tizzo, remembering the dreadful stories of the plague which he had heard.

"I shall be dead of the famine before the sores disappear from my face," said Bardi. "And you—whether you take the disease after the third day or not, you will starve here after me. And another month will go by after your death before brave men will venture into this rotten hellhole. What is your name?"

"Tizzo."

"Tizzo, I have told you your future. Accept it."

"It is better to run out on the street and die fighting."

"So you think now; but every day a strange new hope will come up in you, and you will cling to your life for another twenty-four hours—until you are too weak to hold a sword."

"We could steal out through some secret passage underground."

"There is such a passage; and it has been blocked to close up the rat-trap. My kind uncle, who wants this house and everything in it when the plague has finished its work, saw to it that the secret passage was stopped."

"We might be able to slip away in the dark of a rainy night like this."

"My good uncle and the city of Perugia keep guards at every door, day and night."

"Yet I was allowed to enter?"

"It would never occur to them to try to stop a man from entering; their care is to keep any one from getting out."

Tizzo nodded. He attacked the last possibility.

"We may be able to get to a neighboring roof."

"From the eaves of this house to the nearest, there is a span of thirty feet. I have thought of all of these things. There is no hope. I sat at that table with my own father trying to plan. There was no hope—"

His voice, which had raised to a great outcry, suddenly stilled and the Bardi fell sidewise across the arm of his chair.

Was he dying? Was he suddenly and mercifully dead?

It seemed to Tizzo that he could not force himself to touch that body, still no doubt reeking with the mortal presence of the plague; but he could not stand by and leave the helpless man in that position.

Besides, since Tizzo was in the house, since there was hardly a chance in a hundred that he could pass the crucial three days without becoming infected with the sickness, he felt that he might as well open his arms to the horrible danger. He deliberately picked up the wasted, skeleton body of Bardi and carried it back to the bedroom which he had noticed before. There he stretched the senseless man on the bed where his father had died before him. He arranged the clothes, opened the window to allow more air to enter, and listened for a moment to the breathing of the sick man.

He was alive. He was barely alive.

WATER would help. Presently Tizzo found the door which opened on the well-shaft and he wound up the long, long rope that carried the bucket up from the depths below.

It was good, clean, bright water.

Tizzo took a swallow of it himself and then carried the bucket in to poor Bardi. A few drops on that bruised, tormented face roused Bardi.

"Ah!" he said, looking at Tizzo. "You are going to be fortunate. I dreamed that I was in heaven and saw you there."

It was a dream of a sort that Tizzo did not exactly appreciate. However, he talked with Bardi for a moment, bade him try to sleep, and then went back to the well. The length of the rope had given him thought. He unwound the long rope and put his weight against it; it held him easily.

So he stumbled and fumbled his way to the top of the house and there reached the roof.

It was not quite full darkness. The night, like an ugly smoke, steamed upwards, as it seemed, to Tizzo. When he stood on the roof, he could see dimnesses of light far down in the streets; voices rose to him very faintly.

Far, far away—for the house was very tall—he was able to look through the dimness of the late twilight and see a small glow of lights. That would be Assisi. He thought suddenly of the picture he had seen in the upper church, there — St. Francis and the birds. But of that peace and brotherly love which the saint had preached, what remained on the face of the earth? All was swords, poison; and the devil walked the earth breathing plague even into the faces of the innocent.

CHAPTER X.

A DARING CLIMB.

TIZZO looked upon himself as already dead; therefore life was a casual thing to be risked as he chose. Otherwise perhaps he would

never have dared to attempt what he now tried.

There were watchers on the ground, an ample posting of guards, of course, as young Bardi had said. But were there watchers from the nearer houses? No, all of the windows had been closely shuttered as though to keep off the terrible breath of the infection from that pest-house. So he measured the distance to the nearest roof and guessed it, with a fair accuracy, to be the full ten paces which Bardi had mentioned. Well, it was not an insuperable distance, after all.

He made a loop in the end of the well-rope and tried to cast it over the nearest chimney on the adjoining roof. But his stand was precarious on the slant of the tiled roof. The rope was heavy of its own weight and the damp it had absorbed; the frayed strands of it caught the wind and always it fell short or far awry. He worked until his arm was weary before he surrendered that project.

As he sat down in the cold of the rain to try to think, he pictured Baron Henry of Melrose at the northern gate, waiting. And his heart swelled in him. Every sword in martial Perugia would be sharpened for such an enemy and yet Melrose had actually penetrated into the city for the desperate purpose of finding a companion so young and one who already had betrayed a great trust. It seemed an incredible thing to young Tizzo. He shook his head over it. Who could have guessed in the hard-faced English adventurer a profoundness of faith, a greatness of soul such as this?

There was some mystery behind the coming of Melrose. And Tizzo would be dead, of course, before ever he pierced the strangeness and found the answer.

He determined on another way of reaching the house adjoining. He went down the roof of the Bardi home until he was at the rear edge of it. It was perhaps ten feet higher than the roof of the adjoining house, at this point. Tizzo fastened his well-rope over the nearest of the chimneys and allowed some forty feet of its length to fall dangling over the edge. Down this length he lowered himself until he reached the big knot which he had tied in the end. Afterwards, like a boy in a swing, he began to sway his body back and forth until the rope commenced a pendulous motion that swept Tizzo farther and farther; in a greater and a greater arc across the rear face of the Bardi house.

Above him, he could hear the rope grating against the cornices, he could feel the shudder as the strands of rope began to fray out with this continual, heavy rubbing. At any moment the rope might part, he knew. But, since death was almost certain anyway, it was well enough for him to come to the end of life by the merciful swiftness of a fall to the hard pavement.

HIGHER he swayed. The rope flexed and bucked at the end of each rise. He could look up the slope of the adjoining roof, now. Then he could touch it with his feet if he cast them up.

Now, dimly, he could make out the hollow of the stone gutter that circled the edge of the roof.

A greater effort—and as the arc of the swing lengthened, he gripped a hand and arm inside the edge of the gutter. The strain was tremendous for an instant only; then he was up on the roof, holding an end of the rope in one hand. If it were impossible for him to find a way down into the house

from the roof, the rope must serve as a bridge by which he could return to the house of Bardi. It was barely long enough to enable him to tie it around a chimney pot. It slanted up at a rather steep angle towards the Bardi roof above, but for one of his great activity of body and strength of hand, it could easily be traveled.

He began the search of the new roof at once. It was very wet, and where lichens had grown on the tiles, they were as slippery as though they had been oiled.

He had to watch himself carefully, for the pitch of the roof was, in addition, quite sharp. But he found on the other side of the crest of the roof what he had hoped for—a trap door which opened to the first pull.

He passed down a ladder into darkness thick as that of a wall. He found himself in a room cluttered with odds and ends, with a smell of mouldy old cloth. Perhaps battered furniture was stored here. After he got to the wall he had to fumble carefully along it until he reached a door. It was not locked. He pushed it open and found himself in an upper hall, very narrow, long, bare. Down this he went to a stairs which communicated with a far more spacious hall beneath, and here the odor of cookery greeted him. It was, of course, far past the time for the dinner of Italians; but the first door he passed was a big upstairs kitchen such as the clever Italians continually built in their larger houses so that the servants need not climb the great distance from the cellar kitchens to serve meals.

There was no one in this part of the house. Voices and laughter sounded farther down in the building, but Tizzo paused an instant at the kitchen, his teeth set.

He needed no food for himself; but he could not help remembering the gaunt body and the skeleton face of Bardi, in the pest-house. To return to that place, now, seemed worse than giving up life itself. What man would be generous enough to dare such a thing? How could it be expected of anything in nature?

So Tizzo argued with himself, briefly—and then he remembered how the Englishman had adventured into Perugia—truly as dangerous as any plague spot for him!

He took a quick breath and made up his mind though his hair prickled in his scalp at the thought.

There was a slowly steaming bowl of soup near the embers of the fire, but of course such a weight as soup would be a waste of effort. Instead, he found a great ham such as might have come as the prize from a boar-hunt. He cut a heavy quantity of this meat from the bone. There was good whole-wheat flour. He took a bag of that, also, and even placed a flask of wine in his pocket.

He had some thirty pounds of provisions 'on his person, and if he could haul himself up the rope with that freight, it would keep the life of poor Bardi in his body for a fortnight, at the least.

He returned to the roof by the way he had come, found the rope, and began to climb, his body hanging under while with hands and pinching knees and a leg twisting into the slack of the rope he struggled up to the Bardi roof.

He was so exhausted when he reached that place that he had to lie flat on his back for a time; there was a tremor still in every limb when he started on again. But he went rapidly, now, forgetful of his own return-road to liberty and thinking only of the in-

credulous joy of Bardi when the food should be brought to him.

DOWN from the roof through the upper passages and into the dark of the bedchamber he went. But he had marked a lamp, before leaving, and this he now lighted. Young Bardi gave proof of life, groaning as he heard the clicking of the flint against the steel.

But not until the fragrance of the ham was in his nostrils and the savor of it was on his lips did he completely rouse.

He looked, then, from the food on the table to the red wine in the flask, and thence to the flame-blue eyes and the red hair of Tizzo.

"God of miracles!" said Bardi, and crossed himself. "Tizzo, have you worn wings?"

"I used the well-rope," said Tizzo, smiling. "It made a bridge for me to the next house."

"But after you reached it—after you were free to go—do you mean that you came back to me, voluntarily?"

He sat up; he stood up; and he supported his unsteadiness by grasping both the hands of the red-headed man.

"There's enough food here," said Tizzo, "to keep you alive until your kind uncle is certain that you are dead. And when he opens the house at the end of the appointed time—when he comes with his heart hungry for treasure—and finds you alive, well, with the scars of the plague disappearing from your face—that is a moment I should like to see."

"Tizzo," said Bardi, "you are going back to liberty. Why? Stay here with me. We'll divide the food. There will be enough for both of us until the time my uncle lets the house be opened,

God will not permit you to catch the plague—”

He stopped himself as he uttered the absurdity.

“Whatever happens,” said Bardi, “to the end of my life half of whatever belongs to me is yours. All, if you need it!”

He made a gesture towards the door.

“There are the jewels yonder,” he said. “Even kings have heard of the Bardi jewels. Tizzo, pour them into your pockets. They are yours!”

And when Tizzo thought of those sparkling beauties, a sort of fire shot up from his heart across his brain. He actually turned towards the door; but then something stopped him.

“This is not for profit,” he said. “This is an offering, Signor Bardi, and a little touch of charity—”

He paused and added, with a certain touch of astonishment: “Only the second kindness that I have done in all my life! May it be recorded! And God take care of us both!”

He slipped away from the gratitude of Bardi quickly. There was still trouble in his mind. And it was true, he could see, that all during his years he had taken, taken, taken, and never given. He had taken from the very beggars in the streets, when he was a child; he had taken from the long-continued charity of Falcone afterwards; and never until he ventured himself for the sake of “Tomaso” had he returned to the world its kindness.

When he got to the roof again, he looked up at the raining sky and breathed deeply. He had a sudden confidence. Fear left him. He could swear that not a shadow of the plague would adhere to him, and that he would make his way again safely down through the house of the neighbor to the street and to the new chance for life which he

would find in it. He could not tell why this certainty was in him; but it was an odd feeling that, having paid, he had a right to expect from fate some kind return.

CHAPTER XI.

DUNGEON.

HE got down through the house without the slightest difficulty, through dim halls, past some brightly lighted doorways, until he came to the ground floor. There remained only the porter at the entrance to be passed, but this might prove difficult since the heavy door was locked. However, he had his sword to cut a way through difficulties and he was about to lay hand on it as he stalked the drowsy figure of the porter, when a door opened at his right and a flood of men and women, richly dressed, came out of a chamber that flared with many lights.

The surprise was so stunning that for half an instant Tizzo hesitated whether to run forward or back; and in that instant a man cried out in a ringing voice of horror: “The red-headed man of the Oddi; the man from the plague-house! We are all contaminated—we are dead!”

The women began a frightful screaming, but as Tizzo turned to flee, half a dozen resolute men sprang out, sword in hand, to pursue him.

He leaped to the nearest door, wrenched at the knob of it, and found it closed. He had barely time to whirl about on guard, with a sense that steel was already entering his body, and catch several swords with a sweeping parry.

His dagger in one hand, his sword busy in the other, he saw that he could

not hope to win without a miracle. For the men of Perugia were all soldiers who had followed the banners of the Baglioni all up and down the length of Italy. These were swordsmen; and in the cramped space of the semicircle that fenced him in, Tizzo could not use that flashing, catlike footwork which was the chiefest grace of his fencing.

More men were coming. The big porter strode with a partizan in his hand, balancing the long handled ax in a powerful pair of hands. In the meantime, feeling that the end had come, Tizzo threw back his head and laughed as he battled. For a frenzy was in him and the joy of the fight shut out past and future. He was to die, but he would do some execution even against all of those swords, before he fell. His body twisted from side to side; twice a lunging sword blade drove past him and shattered its point against the stone wall at his back. The dance of his wild sword parried many a downright cleaving stroke aimed at his head and flicked out a snake-tongue of danger that touched the others one by one. Here a fellow drew back with a slashed forearm; another was gashed across the forehead; a third was stung in the thigh by a lightning thrust.

This incredible resistance brought a great shouting. More men came flocking, and up the great stairway at the end of the hall he could see the ladies, bright as a garden of flowers, standing to watch the fight. Yet, for all their numbers, they drew back from his deadly work a little. Some one shouted to bring a crossbow and nail the red-head to the wall; but here the porter, stepping into the throng, brought down his partizan with a monstrous sweep.

Tizzo warded the stroke skillfully

with his sword, but the blade broke at the hilt and the head of the long ax, turning, descended flat upon his skull. A red sheet of flame leaped across his brain; darkness swallowed him.

When he awakened, he rolled his eyes vainly to find light. All was thick blackness; water dripped, somewhere; and he was lying on a pavement greasy with slime.

He stood up, in spite of his spinning brain, and found that he could touch both walls of his chamber with his outstretched hands.

They had him cooped in one of the dungeon cells, far underground. They might leave him there to die, never opening the cell for a year for fear of the plague; or else they might take him to the torture chamber.

Tizzo sat down, cross-legged, and resigned himself to his fate. The sharpest, the most sudden regret that came to him was that he had not killed at least one man in the battle of his capture.

Afterwards, he began to think of "Tomaso."

HE was very cold, very hungry, when a port in his door was opened, and a ray of light shone in at him. By that light, a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water were placed upon the floor.

"Where am I, friend?" asked Tizzo.

"Ay, you were out of your wits and talking dreams," chuckled the jailer, "when we put you down here. You are in the cellars of Messer Matteo Marozzo. We keep you here for three days to see whether or not the plague comes out on your face. If it comes, why, then we wall up this door and let you rest for a hundred years. If it does not come, you have the pleasure of meeting Messer Marozzo and the torture chamber."

It seemed to Tizzo that the part of good sense would be to end his misery by dashing out his brains against the stones; but he could not smash the bottle and spill the unique wine of life. Hope remained to him, foolish though it might be. And now and again, several times a day, he amused himself with a horrible interest by feeling the glands at the base of his throat. For these were the first to swell when the plague laid hold on a man.

Yet for a third time the shutter of the door opened, and the light struck on his face. Then said the voice of a man beside the jailer: "It is more than three days, and yet there is no sign of the plague in him. You may take him out at once. Let him be washed and have him dressed in clean clothes. He is to come before Messer Mateo!"

All of this was done quickly. Half a dozen armed men—a proof that the desperate courage of Tizzo was recognized—took him from his cell. Under their eyes and the points of their weapons, as it were, he was allowed to strip, bathe, and put on clean clothes. Then irons were fastened to his wrists and ankles with a chain that connected them passing through his belt; and in this fashion he was taken into the great hall of the Marozzo palace, and through this to a smaller room where a tall, very handsome, dark fellow walked up and down; several other men stood back, apparently attendants.

WHEN Tizzo was brought in with clanking chains, the tall man stepped straight up to him; the guards on either side checked Tizzo by the arms.

"Have you put fresh clothes on him?" asked the tall man.

"It is done, Messer Mateo," said the jailer.

"Ah!" murmured Mateo. He stepped still closer and looked into the eyes of Tizzo more deeply, as though he were trying to find words written across them.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

"You are Mateo Marozzo, I suppose," answered Tizzo.

"Have you ever seen me before?"

"With your visor down, Messer Mateo," said Tizzo.

"You know it was I that you faced that day?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Marozzo, stepping back with a smile of infinite satisfaction, "you are now in my hands."

"I am glad of it, Messer Mateo," said Tizzo.

"Glad of it, did you say?"

"I had rather be in your hands than in those of any other man in Perugia. You at least know that I fight as an honorable man."

"Ah, you've been reading stories about perfect knights. Is that it?" asked Marozzo. "Do you think that the spies and body-snatchers of the Oddi are entitled to be treated like men of honor?"

"I know nothing of the Oddi," said Tizzo.

"Am I to believe that?"

"I hope so," said Tizzo, frankly.

"On the contrary," said Marozzo, "I know that you are one of their men of greatest trust."

"I have never seen one of their faces," said Tizzo.

Marozzo laughed in his face in return. "Perhaps you never have seen the mad Englishman, Lord Melrose?" he asked.

"Yes. I know him. I am in his service."

"And he in that of the Oddi. In

fact, my friend, I know that you are one of their most prized hirelings, in spite of your youth. Shall I give you the proof?"

"That you cannot do."

"Presently. When I have sent off to Astorre Baglioni himself a letter from Lord Melrose in which he offers anything for your release. Anything up to his own life!"

"His life?" exclaimed Tizzo, hoarsely.

And a darkness rolled over his eyes. He conjured again into his mind the picture of big Melrose, the flame-blue sheen of his eyes, the reckless, almost brutal face. There was a man to gamble with any chance, but what did he have to gain by reclaiming Tizzo from danger at the expense of his own safety?

Tizzo could make nothing of it.

"If that devil of a Melrose offers so much, you are worth a high price; you stand among the first of the servants of the Oddi. Admit that, my friend, and talk to me freely concerning whatever you know of the Oddi now — their location, their position, their plans—talk openly, and it may be that I shall be able to give you what I have a right to take—your life!"

His glance went hungrily over Tizzo as he spoke. It was plain that he hardly wished to surrender personal revenge to statecraft, no matter how he might be advanced in the eyes of the all-powerful Baglioni.

"Messer Mateo," said Tizzo, "I only repeat what I have said to you before; I know nothing about the Oddi."

"Well," said Marozzo, "then I shall have to see if I can persuade you to talk."

Tizzo knew what that meant. Torture was often used on recalcitrant prisoners and the confessions which

they screamed out in their agony were gravely written down as testimony of the highest value. Torture would be used on Tizzo now, in order to force him to confess things of which he knew nothing. A fine sweat covered his body, gleamed on his face; and his eye looked inward on his soul, wondering how long he would be able to endure the agony without screeching out shamefully. For wild Indians would never be able to reproduce the exquisite masterpieces of pain of which the people of Italy were capable.

But before another move was made, a servant came in haste, carrying a letter on a tray.

"A message from Signor Bardi!"

CHAPTER XII.

SWORD AGAINST AX.

THE very name of Bardi filled Tizzo with a sudden hope, but Marozzo cried out in horror to throw the letter into fire without touching it. The plague might be carried even in the ink with which it was written.

"Antonio Bardi," said the servant, "is pronounced by the doctors free and clean of the plague. This morning the house of the Bardi was broken open. It was thought that every one must be dead of disease or of the plague, but by a miracle, Messer Antonio has lived and fresh food was found beside him. The terrible house is now being cleansed with wine and vinegar; and the first care of Messer Antonio was to send this letter to you."

"Read it to me," said Marozzo, his glance impatiently seeking his prisoner again, as though he was in haste to start a congenial work.

The seal of the letter was broken, and the secretary read:

MATEO, MY DEAR FRIEND:

By the grace of God and the charity of a stranger I have returned from the dead to the living. I was recovering from the disease by dying slowly of the famine when Tizzo, the Firebrand, brought to me food; my house is now open and life begins again. I hear that Tizzo is now in your hands. I know you will use him kindly for my sake until I am strong enough to come to you and tell you with my own mouth how great he is of heart.

(Signed in haste),

ANTONIO BARDI.

Young Marozzo hesitated only a moment. His malignancy was too much roused to permit him to give up his cruel plan. He said: "Send word to Antonio Bardi that you found me engaged and that at my first leisure I shall read his letter; in the meantime I send him congratulations on his wonderful escape.—And now we shall test the greatness of the heart of this Tizzo. Is that rare swordsman of mine prepared with armor in the court? Is he ready to put the question to this man?"

The answer was that Guido, the swordsman, was waiting; so the entire assembly adjourned at once to the courtyard of the palace. Here the superior servants of the household were ranged around the open colonnade; the female servants leaned from the upper windows of the house; and there were at hand half a dozen crossbow men with quarrels ready on the string. In addition, Tizzo saw a tall man armed in complete steel from head to foot, the visor raised to show a lean face except for the bulge of the wide jaws.

"Where is that woodsman's ax?" demanded Marozzo. It was brought at once. "Set the prisoner free. And now, Tizzo, I have seen your tricks

with an ax; I have felt one of them. You shall show them to me once more. Perhaps I shall learn from you something that will be worth knowing. Guido, there, will test your skill. And if his sword begins to enter you, remember that you have only to confess what you know of the Oddi in order to escape from more punishment. If you try to escape, the arblasts will send their bolts through you."

TIZZO, feet and hands free, grasped the ax and saw that in fact it was such a weapon as he had learned to use. And he answered: "Messer Mateo, the ax is for striking blows, and the sword is both a weapon and a shield. I have no armor, but even without it, if you put a sword in my hand, I'll try my fortune against your champion."

"Do you begin to whine, you red-headed dog?" burst out Marozzo. "I should have you in the torture room, pulled by ropes and broken on the rack. Instead, I give you a chance to fight like a man. If you beat Guido fairly, you are a free man!"

Tizzo, running his eye over the bright steel armor of Guido—whose visor was now closed and whose sword was drawn, with a dagger in the left hand—felt that his chance was smaller than that of a naked child against a mounted knight. But yet this was a far better way to die than to lie stretched in the torture chamber. And there was that ghost of a chance that he might escape, after all, to the promised freedom.

He flexed his knees, stretched his muscles as carefully and elaborately as a cat, and then said: "Guido, you have the advantage of weapons and armor; you would not be chosen for this part if you were not a good fighter; but

God and luck fight on the side of the underdog. If you're ready, come on!"

Guido made no speech at all. He merely laughed through the holes of his visor, which was long and pointed like the muzzle of a dog. Then he strode forward with his sword prepared. Tizzo, instead of retreating, moved in a circle, carrying the weight of the ax in both hands.

"Action! Action!" called out Marozzo.

Guido, obediently, tried to close, fainting at the head with a thrust and then swinging his sword in a long sweep aimed at the legs. Tizzo, letting that blow go past him, withdrawing so that the keen edge missed his flesh by the least part of an inch, sprang in and struck.

The dimness of the prison was still in his eyes; and he felt the weakness of his diet for the past three days; otherwise that blow would have alighted exactly on the top of the helmet of Guido and finished the battle at the first stroke.

As it was, the stroke glanced from the head, slipped off the shoulder armor, and almost wasted. Even so, the brain of Guido had received a shock that set him reeling. The people who watched began to shout; and a shrill, tingling cry went up from the women at the upper casements.

Marozzo yelled: "Guido, if you let yourself be beaten, whether you live or not I'll send you back to Assisi to let them hang you for your murders!"

Tizzo had followed the staggering Guido closely, ready to strike a finishing blow, when his foot skidded on a rolling pebble and he half fell to his knees.

Guido was by no means too far gone to throw away this opening. He struck a mighty blow. Tizzo half

turned it with the up-flung head of his ax, but the sharp blade gashed the side of his head.

When he regained his feet and leaped back, blood was streaming down one side of his face and Marozzo began to laugh with joy.

"Now will you talk, red dog?" he called.

And he added: "Well done, Guido!" All the others who looked on were uttering harsh cries of satisfaction like so many savages. And Tizzo felt like a baited bull.

He began to circle Guido again until the man-at-arms, tired of the delay, pressed close in, showering blows. Half of them Tizzo dodged; the rest he put away with the incredibly swift movements of his ax. He seemed to be dancing in the midst of a fire, the sword of Guido flickered so rapidly. And when it was seen that Tizzo actually had escaped harm, a yell of astonishment went up from every beholder, Marozzo himself crying out: "Witchcraft! His life is charmed!"

BUT the red flow down the side of Tizzo's head was a sufficient answer to that accusation. He had been badly hurt; but with set teeth he recovered from his wound and tried a second chance. It was at the very moment when Guido abated his attack for a moment and lowered his sword a little. That instant Tizzo used to make one of his startling leaps forward. The ax flashed in an arc of fire but Guido, recovering himself with wonderful speed, threw up the ward of his dagger and armored left arm to prevent the blow while the sword flashed out in a long thrust. The blow of the ax snapped the blade of the dagger and then was wasted; but the sword of Guido slithered across the ribs of Tizzo.

biting into bone and flesh. One inch inside of his mark, and he would have riven the body of Tizzo straight through the heart.

As it was, it seemed to Tizzo that a great claw had ripped him. His body was poisoned with pain, and the blood gushed from this second wound.

Marozzo began to shout with pleasure: "Well done, Guido! Well done, my friend! You have caught the will-o'-the-wisp! You have notched the wild fire. Tizzo, has the time come when you will talk?"

Tizzo, drawing back a little, closely followed, answered: "The ax talks for me better than my tongue!"

And once more he had to fight desperately, leaping here and there among the thronging strokes and thrusts of Guido. The man was a master of his weapon, and his armor was so perfectly fitted that it did not greatly hamper the speed of his motions, yet the swerving body of Tizzo made a hard target to reach, and the magic dance of his feet carried him in and out from the verge of death as with his ax he strove to get close enough to strike a vital blow.

Bleeding now from three wounds, he retreated, limping; and the spectators suddenly ceased their yelling. The length to which that unequal combat had been drawn out, and the savage courage of Tizzo, together with his skill, had made all men sympathize with his battle. Only Marozzo in a frenzy of delight was shouting: "You have him now, Guido! He cannot keep on dancing with one leg gone. Kill!"

The bright helmet of Guido nodded in agreement, but even so he came in with caution, for his head must still have been ringing from the effects of the first blow of the battle.

Tizzo, favoring his wounded leg,

stumbled as he retreated and sank upon one knee. He could have leaped up, though with difficulty. But instead, he raised the ax above his head as though he were incapable of keeping his feet and so waited for the final stroke.

A great call for quarter went up, now, from the onlookers, but Marozzo shouted: "Now, Guido! The dog is down. Kill! Kill!"

Guido took two quick steps forward and struck with all his might straight at the head of Tizzo.

He was so confident that his victim could not move that Guido launched his full force in that stroke; he was unprepared for the sudden spring that carried Tizzo to his feet, swerving barely aside from the blow.

Guido, grunting with fear, tried to recover and put himself on guard, but for the tenth part of a second his head was unwarded. And in that interval, as an arrow through a slot, Tizzo struck desperately with both hands.

The helmet was not his target, now, but a narrow crevice where the gorget-plates fitted to the helm with rivets. If ever he had struck accurately to a marked line when he amused himself among the woodsmen of Falcone, so now he aimed his stroke with exquisite surety. Well and true the edge of the ax descended. The rivets snapped. The heavy blade of the ax shore almost through the neck of Guido so that his armored head dropped over on the opposite shoulder and a great gush of blood sprang up into the sunlight. Guido fell crashing on the paving, and lay still.

MAROZZO himself, stunned with astonishment, found no utterance for a moment. He then yelled: "Drag Guido away. Fed-

erigo, arm yourself and take the sword. Witchcraft! Black witchcraft if ever I saw it!"

He was still shouting this speech as a crowd of people poured into the gate of the court, the porters instantly giving way before them.

Tizzo, looking up with dulled eyes, saw two men on horseback and a lady riding between them all in green, with a plumed green hat on her head as though she were ready for hunting or hawking.

One of her two mounted companions, thrusting his horse suddenly forward, exclaimed: "What's this, Matteo? We need men in our army. Do you have them killed here for your sport?"

Tizzo looked up into the noble face of a man whose eye glanced and whose head moved as though he were born to authority. Marozzo grew humble before him at once.

"This little sport of mine, Messer Giovan-Paolo," he said, "is something that should please you. Instead of using the torture chamber, to extract secrets from your enemies, the Oddi, I am letting my men use the sword—"

The name rushed strongly on the brain of Tizzo. For who had not heard, throughout all Italy, of Giovan-Paolo Baglioni? With his brother, Astorre, he was a famous leader in war and in the councils of the city of Perugia.

Even now the fame of Giovan-Paolo, and even the half-familiar beauty of the lady in green, was obscured for Tizzo by the sight of none other than Lord Melrose himself, who rode between two knights like a prisoner, the bridle of his horse made fast to those of the adjoining pair of riders.

The Englishman, like a madman, had come once by stealth to rescue Tiz-

zo; and now he had come openly and put himself in the hands of deadly enemies!

It was enough to make the brain of Tizzo reel.

He heard the lady cry out, and her voice staggered him with wonder: "Astorre! Giovan-Paolo! It is he, and they have killed him! It is Tizzo—it is that man I have told you about—and you have let them murder him!"

It was that same "Tommaso." Fine clothes might alter her appearance, but her voice could not be changed even when she was calling out so familiarly by name upon the lords of Perugia. She slipped from her horse and came running, with her hands held out. One of those hands she laid in the blood that streamed slowly down Tizzo's side.

"Tizzo, they have murdered you! They have murdered you!"

But still there was life in Tizzo that made him break out in laughter.

"If I were dying, I would drink life again from your eyes, my lady!" he cried to her.

"Help him!" cried the girl. "Giovan-Paolo! Astorre! If he dies I shall go mad! It was he who saved me! Do you understand? Astorre, if you are a brother of mine, let him be carried to a good leech. Tizzo, lean on me!"

THERE in the court, beneath the arcade of columns, they forced

Tizzo to lie on blankets which were thrown down hastily, while a doctor came in haste. Baron Henry of Melrose crouched on one side of him and examined the wounds with a stern face and with cruel hands until he learned the truth and heaved a great breath.

"Why, Tizzo," he said, "you are going to be as gay as a lark inside of

a fortnight. These are scratches that only make a bloody show."

And the lady, hearing this, cried out happily.

"Is it true?" asked Tizzo, looking up into the brown of her eyes. "Is it true that you are the sister of my lords, Astorre and Giovan-Paolo? Are you the Lady Beatrice?"

She nodded, but added: "I am also your poor friend, Tomaso!"

"If you are the Lady Beatrice," said Tizzo, "in the name of God let no harm come to my friend who has given himself up for my sake!"

She lifted her head and looked a little coldly on the Englishman.

"I would rather be damned than be pitied," said the baron. "And I'm too old to catch the eye of a lady, Tizzo. Messer Giovan-Paolo, you will be as good as your word and make him a free man?"

Giovan-Paolo was frowning in deep thought.

"I may even make a bargain with the pair of you," he said. "You, my lord, are serving the Oddi. But these are days of many changes. Why should you not enter my service?"

To this the Englishman replied: "If I had known you first, Messer Giovan-Paolo, I would be with you. But I have given my word and my hand to the Oddi; and in England a man's hand is more than a written oath. I must serve the Oddi until they prosper or until I am dead."

"And this young man," said Giovan-Paolo, "is he sworn to you in the same manner?"

"If it will help his fortune, I would release him from his oath," said the baron.

"Tizzo," said Giovan-Paolo, "I have heard tales of you from my sis-

ter. I have heard other things, not an hour ago, from my dear friend, Antonio Bardi. I have many good men about me, but what one of them, himself a fugitive in a city of enemies, would have imperiled his life by returning to a plague-house carrying food to a dying enemy? You are a man of war; wars are the fortune of Perugia. I offer you a choice and a bargain also. You have heard Lord Melrose release you from your engagement to him. Now give me your hand as you gave it to him and I shall on the one hand set Melrose free to go where he pleases, even into the camp of my enemies. On the other hand, you shall be my man and of your future I shall take good care. You already have a friend in my house." And he smiled at the girl as he spoke.

"Tizzo!" said the Lady Beatrice.

But he looked from her and from handsome Giovan-Paolo to the grim face and the flame-blue eyes of the Englishman.

"My lord," he said, "you are my master. Tell me what I must do."

"Why, Tizzo," said the baron, "are you as blind as an owl? One of these days we shall meet again; but here is your fortune waiting for you. Take it, in God's name. We shall not forget one another. Remember the secret stroke; it is my legacy to you. But turn your face to the fortune that smiles on you!"

The loss of blood had made Tizzo weak and dimmed his eyes a little but the smile of the girl was so bright that it lighted up his soul. In her it seemed to him that he could see his future, his fortune, his happiness. He gripped the hand of Melrose with one of his, but the other, slowly, he raised to the waiting grasp of Giovan-Paolo.

MEN

DARING

BY STOKES ALLEN

FRANK
CRILLEY

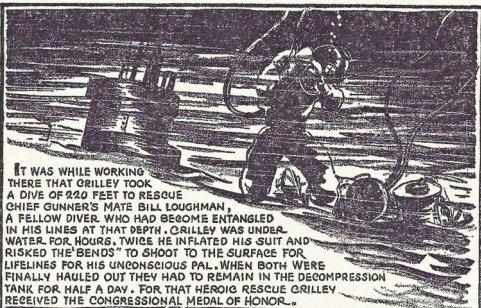
MASTER
DEEP SEA DIVER

FAMED AS THE MOST
DARING DIVER IN THE U.S. NAVY,
FRANK CRILLEY HAS GONE
DEEPER INTO THE OCEAN'S
DEPTHS IN A COLLAPSI-
BLE DIVING SUIT THAN
ANY OTHER MAN.

HE JOINED THE NAVY
IN 1900 WHEN BUT A
CALLOW LAD OF 16. HIS
DIVING CAREER BEGAN
IN 1904 WHEN HE WAS
WITH THE BATTLESHIP
ILLINOIS. HIS FIRST WORK
WAS IN THE MESSINA
EARTHQUAKE IN 1908,
AND FOR HIS BRAVERY
IN RECOVERING BODIES
AND TREASURE FROM
THE FLOOR OF THE
SICILIAN CITY'S HARBOR
HE WAS AWARDED THE
ITALIAN RED CROSS MEDAL.

IN 1915, AT PEARL HARBOR, HAWAII,
CRILLEY DID HIS MOST REMARKABLE
DIVING STUNT. IN SALVAGING THE LOST U.S.
SUBMARINE F-4 HE WENT DOWN 306 FEET
THROUGH A HEAVY SURF, BREAKING THE
WORLD'S RECORD FOR DEPTH BY A DIVER.
SO FAR BELOW THE SURFACE, THE JOB OF
BRINGING UP THE BODIES PROVED TO BE
MOST HAZARDOUS.

A True Story in Pictures Every Week



IT WAS WHILE WORKING THERE THAT GRILLEY TOOK A DIVE OF 220 FEET TO RESCUE CHIEF GUNNER'S MATE BILL LOUGHMAN, A FELLOW DIVER WHO HAD BECOME ENTANGLED IN HIS LINES AT THAT DEPTH. GRILLEY WAS UNDER WATER FOR HOURS. TWICE HE INFLATED HIS SUIT AND RISKED THE "BENDS" TO SHOOT TO THE SURFACE FOR LIFELINES FOR HIS UNCONSCIOUS PAL. WHEN BOTH WERE FINALLY HAULED OUT THEY HAD TO REMAIN IN THE DECOMPRESSION TANK FOR HALF A DAY. FOR THAT HEROIC RESCUE GRILLEY RECEIVED THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR.



HE STILL GOES DOWN FREQUENTLY TO MAKE SALVAGE TESTS AND TO UNDERTAKE RISKY OPERATIONS ON SUBMERGED WRECKS.

GRILLEY WAS THE DIVER WHO LOCATED THE WRECKED NAVY SUBMARINE S-4, IN WHICH 40 MEN WERE TRAPPED AND SUFFOCATED OFF PROVINCETOWN IN 1927. HE HAD BEEN CALLED OUT OF RETIREMENT TO AID IN THE SALVAGE WORK. "RETIREMENT" MEANT SIMPLY THAT CHIEF GUNNER'S MATE GRILLEY HAD LEFT THE NAVY AFTER 21 YEARS' SERVICE, BUT CONTINUED IN THE RESERVE, AVAILABLE FOR EMERGENCY CALL.

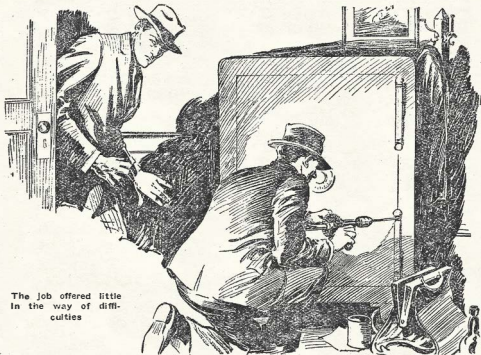


AS CHIEF DIVER OF SIR HUBERT WILKINS' ARCTIC EXPEDITION IN 1931, IN THE SUBMARINE NAUTILUS, GRILLEY HAD TO DESCEND THROUGH THE ICY WATERS TO THE OCEAN'S FLOOR, THERE TO SIGHT OBSTRUCTIONS AND BRING UP SPECIMENS OF SUBMARINE LIFE. UPON ONE OCCASION HE DESCENDED BENEATH AN IMPASSABLE ICE BARRIER, PLACED A BOMB AND TOUCHED IT OFF TO BLOW THE BARRIER AWAY. THE NAUTILUS THEN ROSE TO THE CLEARED SURFACE.

Next Week: Commander George M. Dyott, Explorer

Kid Sheriff

By HAPSBURG LIEBE



The job offered little
in the way of diffi-
culties

Six thousand dollars was the bait, and if fake oil stock wouldn't do it, nitro-glycerin would

HE was worried, this dapper-looking man of thirty-five who called himself Jack B. Morgan. His pal, Arthur Q. Dale—also an alias; he, too, was thirty-five and dapper-looking—had left their third-rate New Orleans waterfront hotel two days before, to rustle a meal stake, and hadn't come back. Not that Morgan had gone without food all this time. Pawning a fairly new automatic pistol is a simple matter in any underworld section.

Dale let himself into their dingy room on the third floor back, at dawn. He was sleepy-eyed, but his manner

was jubilant. Morgan sat up in bed, blinking expectantly.

"Look, Jack!" said Dale, waving a sheaf of beautifully engraved, green-and-gold certificates. "Busted, are we? We are not. The depression for us is past. Now hustle out of that bed. We're going to Tupelo Springs!"

"What—what's that you got there?" breathed Morgan. "Phony oil—"

"Stock," finished Dale. "Nubian Queen. Remember Shiner Odom, don't you? Promoter? Well, he's lost his nerve. He's a wreck. Sold me this, six thousand dollars' worth, for one lone berry! Yes, he was hungry.

Where'd I get the dollar? Trimmed a young squirt from Rio at craps. Coffee-planter's son. Took five hundred from him, in all. Now listen, Jack:

"Shiner Odom had been up to a tank town named Tupelo Springs, and had nursed a rich old jigger almost into buying this stock when a live-wire kid sheriff they've got up there queered the thing. You and me will dress up like a million dollars, buy a fourth-hand Mercedes guaranteed to hold together for a week, drive up to Tupelo and put up at the best hotel and let the news get out that we're big oil men on a quiet vacation trip. Get me? We'll make the acquaintance of Jonathan Ford—the rich old jigger—and slip the hypo into him before he knows it. Get me?"

"And before the kid sheriff knows it," said Morgan. He grinned. "Art, you're a jewel! Hustle, did you say? Hustle is right. All our clothes must be cleaned and pressed. Be piling them out, will you, Art?—and I'll be taking my bath."

He sprang from the bed and made for an old-fashioned bowl-and-pitcher washstand in a corner.

Hasten as they would, they didn't get away from New Orleans in their big, green, used—much used—automobile until noon of the next day.

The sun had set when Jack B. Morgan and Arthur Q. Dale arrived at the ancient hotel that stood directly across the live oak-bordered street from the office of Tupelo Springs' gangling young sheriff. Flashily-dressed, imitation diamonds gleaming, the pair tipped the black bellhops extravagantly, began their wide swath with a bang. Dale, in pseudo-casual conversation with his partner, let fall a phrase or so that the pimply-faced clerk relayed at once—and the strangers were in the town's one small newspaper the next morning.

"Got 'em going already," Morgan said in undertones as they went in to a late breakfast. "You sure are a jewel, Art."

AN hour after that, Jonathan Ford, their would-be victim, was in the lobby inquiring for them. Ford had a brother who'd made money in oil. The crooks were now ensconced in chairs in a corner, scanning *Picayune* stock market reports importantly. The clerk pointed them out.

"Good morning, gentlemen." Ford was a tall, spare, grizzled man. He gave his name. "I have come as a committee of one to welcome you to Tupelo Springs, and to express the hope that your stay among us will be pleasant. Eh?"

Morgan and Dale assumed a bored air, rose and shook hands with Ford, refused politely the cigars he offered. They knew their game.

"The papers," Morgan growled, "always bawl things up for us. We came here for a quiet week, and on our very first morning find ourselves on the front page! Mr. Dale was for moving on, but I"—his shrug was a grand one—"I like the place, and I'm going to make him stay."

"That's fine," said Jonathan Ford. "It is a good town. I was born here, gentlemen. Maybe you noticed the big general merchandise store two doors down the street, to the left. My grandfather ran that, and then my father, and now I have charge of it, and when I have passed my son will run it. The—er—the paper tells me that your line is oil. I've always been—er—more or less tempted to get into oil myself, sort of as—er—a side line, you know."

Dale said, as though reluctantly: "It's a good business, if you know what you're doing. That is, if your

stock is in the right outfit. Otherwise, better let it alone, Mr. Ford."

"A few weeks ago I had a chance to buy some oil stock, and almost did," said Ford, in a burst of confidence. Quickly he went on: "I don't know what became of the salesman. It was Nubian Queen. Do you gentlemen—er—happen to know anything about that stock?"

"Nubian Queen?" Dale looked at Morgan, and Morgan looked at Dale, and each smiled just a little. Perfect teamwork, this. "I should say we do know something about it. That's the stock that made our money for us, Mr. Ford."

"Is—that—so!" Ford gasped. "And I passed it up! I—oh, hello, Jimmy. Come here a minute. I want you to meet Mr. Morgan and Mr. Dale. This is our young sheriff, gentlemen."

The gangling, grinning Linster had a fashion of bobbing up as unexpectedly as a jack-in-a-box. He shook hands with the pair of crooks, measured them swiftly with level gray eyes, waved a hand and walked on to the water cooler. Jonathan Ford looked at his watch.

"I must be getting around to the store. Drop in to see me, gentlemen, any time. Two doors down the street, to the left, remember; biggest store in town. Wait—just happened to think. Would you—er—honor me by having supper at my house this evening?"

Morgan glanced at Dale, and Dale glanced at Morgan. They were not too eager to accept.

"We'd been expecting a wire from Texas around supertime, but—"

"It can wait," cut in the other crook. "Don't forget that business is taking a back seat just now. Mr. Ford, we accept, and many thanks. We'll join you at the store at—say, six o'clock. Suit you?"

"Of course." Ford smiled. "Then I'll see you at six. Good day to you, gentlemen!"

He bowed like a cavalier, and hurried out of the lobby. Morgan cut an eye toward the youthful sheriff, who just then was telling the pimply-faced hotel clerk a joke. "It's like taking candy from a baby, Art," whispered Morgan.

"Don't be too sure," Dale whispered back. "I have hunches, you know, and I'm afflicted with one right now. We're not out of the woods yet. Get me?"

He jerked his immaculately-shaven chin toward the desk. Jimmy Linster, the kid sheriff, had both an eye and a jaw that he didn't like.

SUPPER at the big old Ford home was something to remember. The table groaned under its weight of rich viands, and there were black servants to anticipate the slightest wishes of the two suave and dapper guests. Ford, however, did not mention oil, and neither did the wise ones, Dale and Morgan. As the pair made their way toward the hotel a little later, Morgan told his pal that he had the answer.

"That nosey young sheriff considers himself the guardian of this whole county. He's been butting in, Art."

It was a good guess, if guess it was.

Ford brought up the question of oil three days afterward. Neither of the strangers seemed eager to discuss it. Before the talk was finished, however, Ford had heard many stories of fortunes made in oil between suns. Then Morgan began to "slip the hypo" into the big man of Tupelo Springs. As a special favor to the big man—provided he agreed to say nothing of it—they would sell him six thousand dollars' worth of Nubian Queen.

Jonathan Ford had a sleepless night.

The crooks deliberately avoided a meeting with him the next day, and the next. When he called at the hotel, they were out driving in their big green Mercedes.

Late that afternoon, Dale directed his pal's attention to a matter of prime importance.

"Look here, Jack. We've been spending too much money, and we're nearly flat broke!"

"Well," the other said, "suppose you amble around to Ford's place of business and see what you can do. Be careful, y'understand. Watch your step—and that darned kid, sheriff's."

"Leave it to me," said Dale.

He left the hotel, and came back within the hour. As he locked the door of Morgan's room and turned to Morgan, who sat brooding beside an open window, a sinister shadow appeared in his eye.

"It's not only Jimmy Linster, Jack. It's Ford's son, too. Old Jonathan told me everything. He was ready to grab the hook, when they stepped into the picture and queered it. He's got six thousand cash in that big safe in his store right now—no bank in Tupelo Springs—"

"In his safe, in the store—"

A sinister shadow had appeared in the eye of Jack Morgan, also. His voice subdued, he went on: "Art, we'll have to revert to type, as the nabobs say. We used to be experts at cracking cribs, and we can do it again. If Ford doesn't come across by noon tomorrow, we'll sneak back to N. O. for some nitro, and the next day we'll be safe in Memphis with the six grand."

"Sneak back to N. O. for some nitro, eh?" Dale laughed. "I think faster than you, Jack. I brought some along. And we'll do it tonight. Ten

o'clock is late enough. This town is asleep at ten o'clock."

"You sure are a jewel, Art!" exclaimed Jack Morgan

At 9.50 the two crooks stole out of the hotel the back way, and eased their luggage into the Mercedes, which stood under a shed across the dark alley. Then they stole down the alley and to the rear of Ford's general merchandise establishment. It was no trick at all for Morgan to paste a square of flypaper to a window, break the glass at that point without any tell-tale tinkling, thrust an arm between the window bars and throw the heavy bolts that held the back door.

The safe was very large, but it was also very old, and it therefore promised little in the way of difficulties. The job ready, they piled Ford's entire stock of rugs and carpets over the massive iron structure as a means of deadening the explosion. Dale then took a cigarette lighter from a vest pocket and ignited the fuse.

"Neatest thing we ever did!" he whispered to his pal, a moment later. The blast has been so well muffled that the sound barely escaped the confines of the building.

The two leaped toward the now doorless safe. Three more minutes, and they were leaving the building as they had come in. A pair of tall, dark forms straightened in the alley gloom and shoved revolver muzzles almost against their faces.

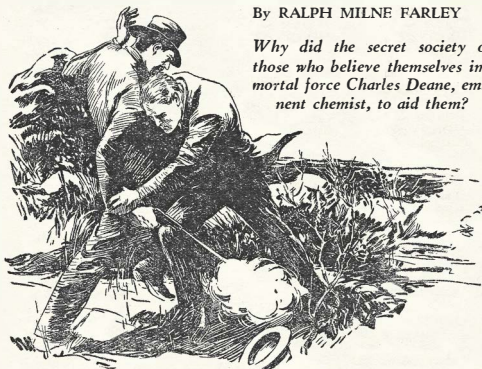
"Up with 'em, quick—higher!" barked Jimmy Linster, the kid sheriff. "And be sure you keep 'em up now! Now, Bud, do your stuff, and shoot if they make the least bobble!"

The deputy, working swiftly, ironed Morgan's right wrist to Dale's left, and frisked them.

The Immortals

By RALPH MILNE FARLEY

Why did the secret society of those who believe themselves immortal force Charles Deane, eminent chemist, to aid them?



Deane found the man's wrist just in time

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

WHEN Charles Deane, distinguished young chemist, discovered a new element, which he named "Stratium," he astounded the world of science. But among the scoffers was Professor Oscar Cairns, who looked upon Deane as a new-comer in the field of chemistry, and was skeptical of "Stratium" as being lighter-than-air. At a meeting of a learned society, Deane exhibited some samples of the new element—only to have one of them missing—taken by some unknown private person.

After the meeting, when Deane returned to his laboratory, he found the dead body of Professor Cairns lying there pierced with a knife! As Deane is examining the body, the phone rings and a mysterious voice informs him that it knows he is in

trouble and wishes to lend him aid. Deane is directed to take a cab, which is waiting for him outside the laboratory. Hesitating at first, Deane does as he is bidden—inasmuch as the case against him in the eyes of the police would look like murder.

The cab takes him to the home of John Cortlandt Maitland, financial rival of Deane's lately deceased patron, Wolf Diggs. At Maitland's home, Deane has a number of strange experiences which lead him to believe that he is not dealing with ordinary people. Deane meets Maitland's daughter, Mavis, to whom he is attracted, and Peter Markham, a shrewd lawyer.

Deane is taken by plane to Maitland's hunting lodge in the Black Hills of South Dakota, where, to his amazement, he finds Professor Cairns and Angus Frazer, his as-

This story began in the *Argosy* for November 17

sistant, very much alive. All are being held captive by Maitland and his lieutenant, Alpheus, for some mysterious purpose.

CHAPTER VII.

"ICHOR."

CHARLES DEANE was dumfounded at now hearing the same voice with which he had talked over the phone after finding the dead body in his laboratory two months ago. A voice he identified later that morning as the voice of the bearded hunched-up man who had been haunting his laboratory. The fact that this same voice was now talking with his patron, John Cortlandt Maitland, was the last bit of evidence necessary to convince Deane that Maitland personally was responsible for all of his troubles.

Accordingly, avoiding the shafts of light which rayed out through the open windows of the hunting lodge, and grateful that he was on the further side of the building from the moon, and hence in purple darkness, he crept forward to listen to what the two men were saying. Not only was he able to listen, but also, without getting in the telltale beams of light, he was able to look into the bright interior.

Maitland sat facing the window, his customary quizzical smile on his bronzed features. Pacing up and down in front of him was a man of about Deane's own age, a lithe handsome dark-haired man. Not at all the bearded hunched-up creature whom Deane had expected to see!

Maitland was saying calmly, and apparently without rancor, "No one but you, Alpheus, would dare to speak to me in that way, for you alone share with me the secret of immortality."

"It is necessary that someone share

it, Chief," the younger man replied, "in order to keep faith with the lesser members of the Order. For even the immortal leader of an order of immortals might suffer accidental death; and if the secret thus became lost, the rest of us would perish. And have I not proved worthy of your trust? Have I not served you loyally, in spite of my not agreeing with your policies? I still believe that we could afford to wait."

"Yes," said Maitland levelly, but with just a touch of a sneer in his tone. "wait like a clam, only to meet accidental death as did our former chief. What is the use of living forever, unless one begins actually to *live*? 'Forever' is a long, long time; and I want to live now, in the present. That's why I revised the motto of our Order."

"As for me," Alpheus replied, shaking his head, "I would rather sit quietly, and study and learn, while my money doubles every thirty years, and the world gradually gets to be a better place to live in. Thus, when finally I become a multi-millionaire by the mere accumulation of compound interest, I shall be fully prepared to enjoy myself in a world at last fully developed to entertain me."

Maitland smiled, and his eyes flashed, as he drew a deep breath. "As for me, I crave action," he asserted. "Why wait?"

The tall dark young man suddenly ceased his pacing up and down, and clenched his fists. "I crave Mavis," he almost hissed.

Maitland cocked his head slightly on one side, pursed his lips, narrowed his eyelids, and nodded ruminatively. To the watcher in the purple shadows outside the window, it was impossible to judge whether the mood of this master mind was menacing or merely amused.

"So?" purred Maitland. "I thought I told you, Alpheus, to lay off of Mavis."

"But why, Chief? *She* is one of us. I am one of us. That fool of a yellow-haired young chemist is *not*."

"*She* is yellow-haired. *Jones* is yellow-haired. You are *not*," mocked Maitland. "I take it, Alpheus, that you do not believe in the Nordic theory."

"But why do you persist in playing with this Deane person? Might just as well call him by his real name, seeing as both of us know who he is. Why do you continue to play with him? He has given you this new metal, strantium; which is all that you needed of him."

"I'm not so sure," ruminated Maitland. "He is keen. I like him. Mavis likes him, too—"

The younger man threw out his hands with a gesture of despair.

Maitland continued relentlessly, "And so I've about made up my mind to offer him life everlasting."

"But what of me?" Alpheus exploded.

"My friend," said Maitland levelly, "you surprise me. Can the gods know love? Passion, yes, and passing fancy; but not love. Love is a biological urge, and can have no place alongside of immortality."

Charles Deane's mind was racing, in an attempt to keep pace with this weird conversation. It was all so utterly absurd, this talk of immortality, as though such things were possible. And yet it was so characteristic of Maitland as to be wholly plausible.

The two men in the lighted room had ceased talking, and were merely confronting each other, staring into each other's faces; so that the watcher outside in the shadows of the moonlit

night had a few moments in which to sum up his thoughts.

A SECRET society of persons who at least believed themselves to be immortals! With that as a clue, the whole jig-saw puzzle of the last few months slipped into place. The strange personality and masterful power of John Cortlandt Maitland. The kidnappings and murders. The altered motto on the wall of the hunting lodge. All fitted into one complete picture of ruthless determination to dominate the world, and of ability to realize that project.

And running through it all, as a connecting pattern, was the strange crimson oxygen-scented "blood." Ichor of the gods, perhaps. Why not?

Deane smiled wryly to himself at the incongruity of him, a scientist, believing such rot. Then crammed his ear to catch the words which Alpheus, in a lowered voice, was now speaking to Maitland. But another voice, sweet and feminine, came to his senses from the dark shadows beside him.

"Charles, dear," it said.

He wheeled, and was about to make some involuntary exclamation, when cool fingertips were laid upon his lips, and a firm slim hand gripped one of his shoulders.

Silhouetted against the moonlit mountainside, he saw the vibrant form of Mavis Maitland standing close to him; and with a sudden urge, he flung his arms around her, and drew her unresistant to him. This was not for that dark-haired Alpheus, if he could help it.

Long and silently they embraced in the purple shadows, while less than twenty feet away, all unknowing of their presence, two others plotted and planned against them.

At length she disengaged herself.

Then, inviting him with a slight side-ward nod of her trim head, "Come!" said she; and taking his hand, led him along the side of the hunting lodge, and to her own cabin.

"Come in," said she. "I want to talk to you." So together they entered.

She was still clad in the filmy white and moon-green of their walk together of earlier that evening; but now, instead of her usual steel-cold poise and self-assurance, she seemed warmly palpitatingly human. Even the cat-yellow eyes beneath her penciled brows seemed for once to have abandoned their intriguing aloofness, and to have become frankly appealing. Deane gasped. Never had he seen her so beautiful.

He held out his arms to her, and once more she swept forward toward him. But just short of his embrace she paused, and wistfully shook her head.

"Just a moment, dear," said she. "Let's talk a moment first."

And gently eluding him, she sank into a chair, and motioned him to another nearby.

"And let us not repeat the error of my father and Alpheus," she continued. "Let us talk in whispers, for fear of eavesdroppers. Fortunately the windows and door of this sitting room are on the moonlit side, and so there is not much danger of any one drawing near unseen."

"Mavis, Mavis, Mavis. Beautiful Mavis," breathed Deane.

"The cold impersonal scientist," she bantered. Then sobering, "And yet, being a scientist, and having heard what you have heard, you already know too much. It would go hard with you if father were to learn that you had been listening at his window."

"And you would tell him?"

"I might, if it suited my ends," she replied with a trace of her characteristic steeliness.

"I don't like you that way," said Deane soberly.

"Forgive me, dear," said she, coloring slightly. "And now we had best understand each other. Just how much do you know?"

"Well, for example," Deane thoughtfully replied, "I know that your father is the head of a secret order of some sort, that that Alpheus person is a member, that they believe themselves to be immortal, and that the secret of their supposed immortality lies in some chemical substance in their blood. The 'ichor' of Greek mythology, which flowed in the veins of the ancient gods."

Mavis watched him intently as he spoke. Then she remarked,

"You know considerably more than you have either seen or heard. That is the scientist in you. I like to watch your mind work. Well, knowing as much as you do, there is no harm in your knowing a little more.—Do you really love me?"

Seizing her hand, he exclaimed, "Mavis, dear, I do, I do. Oh, Mavis, could you marry a nobody like me?"

She smiled a cool smile, like a moonlit ripple.

"I have been waiting for those words," said she.

"But could you? Would you?" he persisted.

"Do you think," she retorted, "that I would have surrendered utterly to your kisses if I did not love you as you love me?"

"Then I shall go to your father—" he exulted.

"And tell him that you will join our Order?"

"You mean—?"

"That you and I shall be together always—forever and ever. Isn't that a beautiful thought? Eternal love! And I had feared that it was impossible, that love and immortality were incompatible. Father has always taught so. Yet Alpheus is immortal, and he loves—loves me deeply. And if he can love, then so can you. Oh, it is going to be beautiful, exquisite—our love together. Kiss me, kiss me, Charles."

She leaned forward, pulsing with life. Then recoiled abruptly, as though a glass of ice water had been dashed in her face.

"Oh, Charles!" she cried. "Don't! Don't look at me that way! Oh, that look of horror on your face! Horror and repulsion! A moment ago you said you loved me. And now you hate me, loathe me. Why? Why?"

"Oh!" groaned Deane, burying his face in his hands. "Mavis, Mavis, forgive me. You aren't real. You aren't human. You're a *thing!* You're a *robot!* I thought you were a woman, and—God help me—I loved you."

"Charles Deane," said she, her face expressionless, her yellow eyes narrowed and catlike, "you can never know how you have hurt me. Your face, even more than your words. Never to my dying day—"

She smiled wryly, and amended it to, "Never, through all eternity, shall I forget that look of utter revulsion in your eyes. When you are old, and gray, and dead—and I am still as you see me now—that look shall still haunt me. If you could do that look to order, you could make a fortune with it on the screen. Well, it should be a lesson to me. Gods ought not to stoop, to mate with mortals."

"But, Mavis, Mavis dear—"

She shook her head. "It is over,"

said she. "Our love is over. But not my love for you. What do you want, more than anything else in the world?"

He raised haggard eyes to hers. "I want you, Mavis—"

But again she shook her head.

"No," she said decidedly. "That is over. What you want is to get away from here. To get out of the toils of the Order, before the Order engulfs you and turns you into a 'thing' like us. And so, I'm going to spare you, and help you to escape, although I feel confident that if I kept you here, I could win you in the end."

"Mavis," he breathed, "you're a brick!"

"I was afraid so," she retorted grimly. "Meet me here just before sunrise, and I'll get you out."

Once more he held out his arms to her, but she sadly shook her head.

"Go!" said she. He went.

IT was now well past midnight. At his own cabin he roused Angus Frazer, and spent the rest of the night in telling the old Scotsman as much as he thought advisable of the present situation.

But he had scarcely embarked on the story when Angus interrupted with, "And how much have you had to drink, Sir?"

"I don't blame you in the least," said Deane, "but it's true, and you've got to listen. You know, we've often tried to piece all this mess together, and now at last everything fits. Cairns is alive. I've a letter here from him to his daughter. I'm going to get out of here—Mavis Maitland has agreed to help me. You're going to sit tight, keep your eyes and ears open, and wait for word from either Cairns or me. If any one asks you anything about my

whereabouts, you just plain don't know. I was still out when you went to bed. I had returned and gone before you got up. My bed has been slept in—that's all you know. We'd better go and muss it up right now."

They did so.

Then Deane resumed, "Remember how we worked over that blood sample on the handkerchief which 'the face' dropped by the door of our laboratory. Remember my telling you that I got smeared with some of the same stuff in my fight in the taxicab. I got some more of the same on my own handkerchief when I—"

He paused and flushed guiltily, then finished lamely, "Well, it's the clue to the whole business. It's 'ichor.'"

Frazer had dourly raised his eyebrows at Deane's hesitation and flush; but now, diverted, he exclaimed, "It's what?"

"Ichor," Deane repeated. "Ichor of the immortal gods."

"Now I *know* you're dr drunk," said the Scotsman.

But when Deane concluded his explanation, even old Angus believed.

"Whateverr they'rre up to, it's forr no good," said he. "I'm with you, sirr. But don't be trrusting any women."

Deane smiled. He had not told his assistant his reasons for believing that he could rely on Mavis Maitland implicitly.

Final arrangements were made.

"Watch for blood samples," he commanded. "Check all the oxides and all the red pigments in the laboratory here, and perhaps you'll get a clue as to how they make this ichor."

Then he shaved and changed his clothing.

The sky was just beginning to turn gray over the mountain tops, when he extinguished the lights, opened the

door of the cabin, and peered cautiously out. The moon had set, but in the early morning light he was dimly able to make out the dark form of a man seated on a huge boulder not twenty feet away!

However, the man gave no indication of having seen or heard the opening of the door. Quietly Deane closed it again, and whispered to Angus, "Man outside."

Together the two friends tiptoed into the back bedroom. All was darkness and silence. The window was open, screened with cloth netting. Whipping out his knife, Deane cleared this obstruction away. Then, after shaking Frazer's hand in mute good-bye, he quietly lowered himself over the sill, and began groping his way along the mountainside.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Jones," spoke a gruff voice out of the darkness. "Mr. Maitland's orders are that no one is to leave your cabin."

CHAPTER VIII.

WAR IN THE AIR.

TAKEN completely by surprise though he was, Deane lunged forward and drove his clenched fist full at the spot from which the sound of the voice had come. The man was nearer than Deane had thought. There was a muffled oath, and then a dull thud as the man staggered backward and fell. Then no further sound.

"Must have struck his head on a rock," said Deane to himself, as he groped hurriedly forward through the darkness.

"Halt!" prepotently shouted the familiar voice of Alpheus ahead of him. "Halt, or I fire! I have an automatic."

Deane stopped abruptly. "I don't

think Mr. Maitland would care for that," he coolly replied. "Besides, I can't see you in this darkness, and so I doubt if you can see me."

"Oh, yes I can," retorted the voice, "for you are silhouetted against the sky."

Deane instantly dropped to the ground. "You can't now," said he, seizing a stone in one hand, and then springing catlike to one side.



MYSTERY MAN

There came a flash and a roar from the automatic, and almost simultaneously Deane heaved his rock in the direction of the flash.

But it clattered on the mountainside, and the mocking voice answered, "No go. I can step aside, as well as you. And now I'll give you one more chance, although personally I'd much rather kill you. Stand up and hold your hands above your head. Otherwise I'll just sit here until I hear the scratch of gravel, and then I'll fire at the sound. I'm a pretty accurate shot, Charles Deane."

Deane made no reply, but cautiously groped about him for another stone. Finding one, he tossed it to one side. Instantly the automatic spoke again.

"Two shots," said Deane to him-

self. "He has only five more, and then he'll have to reload."

But the voice spoke again from the darkness, "I saw you that time by the light of the flash of my gun. A cute trick, tossing that pebble. But it won't work again. Next time I shall fire twice: once at your pebble, and once at you. Better surrender before I get fed up with you."

Meanwhile Deane was groping for another rock. He found two. Tossing one with his left hand, he poised expectant; and, when the flash came, heaved the other. He heard it thud, as it struck his enemy. Then came a second flash and roar, and a bullet brushed his sleeve.

Deane flung himself one side, as the third flash came.

"Five shots," said Deane to himself. "He has only two more."

Silence.

The sound of a click, and then the voice of Alpheus, "In case you are depending on my using up my seven shots, and then your rushing me, it may interest you to know that I've just inserted another magazine. Better surrender."

"All right," said Deane, "here goes."

And with that he sprang at the sound of the voice. He found the man's right wrist just in time. Twice more the pistol spoke, and then Deane bent the wrist backward, until the hand released its grip, and the pistol clattered to the rocks. Deane drove forward with his fist at where he imagined his opponent's solar-plexus to be, and met soft flesh. The body slipped away from him, and thudded to the ground.

Stooping swiftly, Deane swept his hand over the surface of the rocks, and recovered the automatic.

From the darkness at his feet there

came the unmistakable straining groan of a winded man, trying to regain his breath.

Pointing the gun at the sound, Deane announced, "So much for you, Alpheus. I have you covered. As soon as you catch your breath, tell me that you surrender.

"I'll give you a reasonable length of time, and then I'll fire. I'd hate to have to kill an immortal."

The groaning continued. Then it stopped abruptly.

"No monkey business!" Deane warned.

Then the calm voice of Alpheus spoke, "Your gun isn't loaded. I lied to you about the second clip. Feel of the gun with your left hand, and you'll see that the slide is back."

Deane did so. It was.

Alpheus continued, "But I do have a second gun. You are silhouetted against the sky. I have you covered. In your own words, 'no monkey business.' Put up your hands." Deane did so.

"Now march to your cabin. You see, Deane, where your scientific mind failed you was in not remembering that we immortals do not have to breathe. So it does no good to hit one of us in the solar-plexus. You should have tried the chin."

Deane walked with apparent meekness, but alert for a break, around the cabin to the front door.

"Hey, Jenks," called Alpheus.

"If you mean the man who was guarding the rear window," Deane informed him, "he's out cold."

"Oh, very well," said his captor. "Hey, there, Frazer inside. Turn on the lights. I'm armed, and—"

His voice ended in a sudden gurgle. Deane wheeled.

"I've got him, Sirr," spoke Angus

Frazer out of the darkness. "Quick, snatch his gun while I hold him."

BUT Alpheus was unarmed. His second gun had been pure bluff.

In the strong arms of the two scientists, he was helpless; and soon they had him inside the cottage, firmly bound and gagged. They lit up. Then with a flashlight they found the body of the other guard, and brought it in and trussed it up too. It was limp and unbreathing.

"Don't worry about that," said Deane. "These immortals never breathe unless they happen to think of it. His heart is still beating."

Alpheus glared at them malevolently, and mumbled something beneath his gag.

"Well, Sirr," said Angus, "Who have we the honorr of entertaining?"

"This one is Alpheus," said Deane, grinning, "the second in command on Mt. Olympus. I don't know the other, but his name appears to be 'Jenks.'"

Frazer sighed. "I guess I'll have to go with you, Sirr," said he. "Forr, if I correctly rememberr my mythology, it's not altogether healthy to truss up one of the immorrts."

A sudden glance by Alpheus past them, caused both men to wheel suddenly and face the door.

There, in a trim form-fitting white corduroy aviation costume, stood Mavis Maitland.

"Well," said she scornfully, "you seem to have messed things up pretty thoroughly."

"Me?" exclaimed Deane in a surprised aggrieved tone.

"No," said she sweetly. "My friend Alpheus here."

The prisoner mumbled something, and his dark eyes snapped fire.

"I don't get your words, but I catch

the general drift," said Mavis. "You are wrong, my friend. Father will do nothing of the sort. And the next time that you wish to interfere with my plans, may I suggest that you first speak to father, instead of trying to handle the matter yourself in your usual clumsy fashion." Then to Deane and Frazer, "Come on. We've got to hurry. But let's first make sure that our two captives are securely tied."

So saying, she stepped into the room, and deftly inspected the knots. This brisk efficient Mavis was quite different from her usual cat-sleepy daytime self.

"They'll do," said she.

Then, snapping off the lights, she led the way out of the cabin. The first streaks of dawn were showing over the mountain tops, and by now it was light enough to pick one's way across the rocks. Running lightly, Mavis Maitland made for the level floor of the valley, followed by Deane and Frazer.

The doors of the airplane hangar were open, and a small white Wasp plane stood in readiness with mechanics bustling around it.

Waving her hand toward the rear seat, she said in a low tone, "Get in quickly." Then, in a louder tone to one of the mechanics, as she clambered in herself, "I start at once."

"All ready, miss," said he.

She fingered the controls and called out, "Contact!"

One of the attendants spun the propeller. She sped it up to a roar, and the ship pushed against its skids, and tilted forward. She slowed the motor down again, and looked around. Deane and Frazer were wedged tightly into the rear seat.

Somewhere in the distant dark recesses of the hangar a telephone rang. A voice answered it. Mavis slowed her motor almost to a stall, cocked her

pretty head on one side, and listened.

Then, in a sudden panic, she shouted, above the din of the motor, "Clear!"

"But, miss," called back one of the mechanics, "hadn't you better—"

"Clear, I said!" she shouted peremptorily.

The skids were pulled aside, the motor sped up, and the ship taxied slowly out of the door.

Men came running from the rear of the hangar.

"Stop!" one of them shouted. "It's the boss's orders."

A blast from the propeller swept him off his feet, but one of his companions seized the tail of the craft and hung on for all he was worth. Thus weighted, it would be impossible for the ship to rise.

BEFORE either Deane or Miss Maitland realized what he was about, Angus Frazer had leaped over the side. Falling to the ground as he landed, he struggled to his feet, and grabbed at the legs of the mechanic as he swept by.

The mechanic loosened his hold with one hand to strike at his assailants, and lost the grip of the other. Together the two men rolled in the dust.

Suddenly freed of the weight on its tail, the ship took a forward dip, but Mavis pulled back the joy-stick, righted the ship, and then took off the ground.

As she circled, to gain altitude in the narrow valley, she passed close over the hangar. Another ship had been wheeled out, and Angus Frazer was fighting his way toward it through a group of mechanics. He was still on his feet and still fighting, as Mavis and Deane passed out of sight over the rim of the valley.

Mavis turned her head back, and smiled at her passenger.

"Good old Angus," Deane shouted. "Never thinks of himself."

"It's just as well," Mavis shouted back. "Father is going to give us a run for it, and we can spare that extra weight."

She turned her head back, banked sharply, and set her course to the westward.

"They'll expect me to fly east," she called back in explanation. "The nearest landing field is in *that* direction."

And sure enough, when the black ship of their pursuers finally rose from the valley, it was headed east.

But it quickly learned its mistake, and circled to follow them.

"Step on it!" shouted Deane.

The girl gave her ship everything that she had, but gradually the pursuing craft gained on them, until it hung just above and behind their tail. And there it stayed. Deane looked up and back, and saw a machine-gun menacingly pointed at him over the side of the ship above.

"Duck and crawl forward!" shouted Mavis.

And, just as he did so, the machine-gun let loose a blast. The little white plane gave a lurch.

"Oh, my dear!" cried Mavis. "Did they hit you?"

With his head close to the girl's feet, Deane looked up at her.

"I'm all right. Are you?"

"O. K.," she replied. "And so are you as long as you stay close to me. They'd never risk hitting my father's daughter."

"I figured as much," grinned Deane, "or I'd never have taken cover and left you to stand the gaff."

"We're safe so long as we are over

the mountains," she explained. "But as soon as we reach level country, watch out. They'll try and force us to a landing."

For twenty minutes or so they sped on in silence, save for the roar of the motors. By now it was broad daylight.

"Well," said Mavis, "here's the end of the hills. First they'll try to cut off my ignition."

"Shoot it off?" asked Deane.

"No. Counteract it magnetically."

"That's a new one on me," Deane admitted.

"Oh," she airily asserted, "we immortals have made many scientific advances ahead of the rest of the world."

"But how—?"

"I really don't know myself. But, anyway, it won't work on me. At least I hope it won't. For father, fearing that enemies might learn the secret of his motor-stopping ray, has just experimentally installed a hot-bulb ignition on this little boat of mine.—There they go."

Her motor began to cough and sputter.

"And her *I* go."

She threw a lever on the instrument board, and her motor picked up again.

A few minutes later she announced, "Well, they've given *that* up. And now they've started to crowd me. A bit more dangerous than the magnetic method, but just as effective. Hold tight! I'm going to loop."

THE floor of the cockpit suddenly reared up in front of Deane, the ship quivered as though struck; and then it spiraled, bumping Deane against the sides.

"We made it!" the girl shouted. "A half backward loop and a side slip. They grazed our tail, and they nearly

lost control. Had to dive to avoid hitting us. They're nearly down to the ground by now, and we're going up and up. Crawl back into your seat and take a look."

Deane did so. Mavis was driving the wasp upward at a sharp angle, and far below them, headed at right angles to their course, was the black ship of their pursuers, still falling.

The country was level farming land, and far off ahead lay the fluttering pennons of an airport.

"You're a brick!" shouted Deane, but Mavis merely glanced back, pouted up her lips and sniffed. Then Deane remembered that the last time he had uttered that sentiment it hadn't set so well.

He glanced overside again. The driver of the enemy ship appeared by now to have recovered his shattered nerves. He had turned in their direction, and was rising again.

Mavis meanwhile had taken out a little telescope with a vertical circular gauge on it, and was sighting ahead at the airport. Then nodding her head in a satisfied manner, she replaced the instrument in a flap-pocket, shut off her motor, and headed down.

There is no more sickening sound than that of a diving plane. Deane winced and held onto the sides of the cockpit.

Mavis glanced back, smiled, caught his agonized expression and gaily laughed aloud.

"You watch the enemy for me," she commanded. "I've got to keep both eyes on the airport."

Deane turned his attention to the black ship below and behind him, and soon forgot the sensation and the sound of falling.

Finally he announced, "They're gaining. They're a bit ahead of us."

Mavis took one look, then glanced back at her passenger. Here eyes were slits. Her little chin was firm.

"Power dive," she shouted, and cut in the motor again.

With a roar, the ship shot forward. The stays shrieked ominously. Deane glanced up just in time to see a piece of covering rip off the wing. But the girl merely gave the ship more gun and kept on.

CHAPTER IX.

CRASH!

DEANE looked overside; the black craft of their pursuers was being left behind. He looked ahead; the rapidly widening airport was rushing up at them.

"●. K.," he shouted. "We've lost them!"

Mavis shut off the motor, nosed up, circled, and brought the ship down into the wind in a perfect landing. The black ship veered off, and disappeared behind a clump of trees.

Deane sprang out, and assisted his companion to alight.

"Well," she gaily announced, "we made it."

Then swayed against him, and collapsed in his arms. But in a few moments she opened her eyes, and smiled dewily up at him.

"Forgive me, Charles, dear," said she. "I can't faint now."

"It's all right, dear. Go right ahead, if you want to," he encouraged.

"I mean it literally," she said, standing erect. "We, who live forever, cannot faint."

He looked at her sternly, and sadly shook his head.

"Why did you remind me that you are—?" he began.

"Perhaps on purpose."

"All aboard for the mail-plane east!" blared out the loud speakers.

"Just a minute," she called out to the pilot. "We must buy our tickets."

"It's all right with me, lady," said he, surveying her appreciatively.

"After that landing that you made, I'll be proud to have you fly with me."

"You are going, too, Mavis?" breathed Deane hopefully, as they hurried together over to the ticket office. Then his face fell, as he added with sudden afterthought, "But I have no money. No money at all."

"I have plenty of money. Plenty for us both," she replied.

He brightened, but she continued, "But I cannot go with you. I cannot subject you to a life of horror, wedded to a 'thing.' No, no," as he started to protest. "What's done is done, and what's said is said. One ticket through to New York." This to the man at the window. "And here are two hundred dollars for emergencies, and here is a gun." She handed over a little pearl-handled 30-caliber Luger automatic.

At the steps of the mail-plane, she held out her hand to Deane.

"Goodby and good luck," said she.

"What! Ain't yer goin' with us, lady?" complained the pilot.

"Not this time," she sweetly replied.

"Please come!" Deane begged. For a moment she hesitated.

"Come on, lady," urged the pilot.

But she resolutely shook her head.

She was standing below, waving to them, as the plane took off.

Deane was the only passenger. The plane was a relatively small one, with no attendants. Deane sat by the window and stared moodily out, until the airport, with its tiny white waving figure, disappeared in the distance behind

them. Then he glanced up, and swept the sky with his gaze. Just as he expected: the black scout plane was following them.

So he walked forward and spoke to the pilot, "I just thought I ought to tell you that there's an air bandit following us."

The pilot looked up at him and grinned.

"Quit your kidding," said he.

"Don't say I didn't warn you," said Deane, returning to his seat.

The black plane continued to gain until it came alongside. Its pilot waved to the mail pilot until he attracted his attention, and then pointed downward with a forcible gesture. The mail pilot shook his head. Whereupon the black plane once more unlimbered its machine gun. Deane promptly dropped to the floor, and crawled forward.

"What did I tell you?" said he.

"You'd better get ready to bail out," was the reply. "Parachutes are under the rear seat. Directions on the package. If they get me, open the door and fall out backward. When clear of the ship, count three *very* slowly, and then pull the rip-cord."

"But, man, it's me they're after, not you," Deane guiltily objected.

"That's all right. It's all in the day's work. You do as you're told. And anyway, they're probably bluffing. No one would dare to shoot down the U. S. mail in broad daylight."

Deane crept back, found the parachutes and adjusted one on his shoulders. Then he looked forward at the pilot, who just at that moment was thumbing his nose out the window. There followed a couple of bursts of machine gun fire, barely discernible above the roar of the motors; and a sputter of glass above Deane's head.

The pilot shouted back reassuringly,

"They're just trying to scare me, but it doesn't work."

And then the motor stopped.

The pilot worked violently with his instrument board.

"No use," Deane shouted. "They've cut off your ignition with a magnetic ray."

"Hell!" ejaculated the pilot. "Then you'd better jump. Though I'll try to make a landing."

The soul-chilling wheeee of a motorless falling plane smote on Deane's ears as he staggered erect and groped for the door.

The last thing that he remembered was frantically trying to turn the handle. But the door would not open.

THE next thing he knew, he was lying in a most uncomfortable position, bruised and scratched. Nearby could be heard the crackling of flames. He opened his eyes, and something sharp struck into one of them, causing it to water profusely, and nearly blinding him. He tried to turn over in bed, and was poked with sharp sticks in a dozen places.

He was about to groan with pain, when some sixth sense restrained him. His arms seemed tied to his sides, but finally he found that by patient effort he could move them through the obstructions which held them, until at last he got both hands shifted to a protective position in front of his eyes. Then cautiously he opened his eyes again.

He was lying in a thick brush, through the branches of which he could just barely make out the rough outlines of the scene before him; the mail plane, nose down and tail in air, blazing hotly away; and a safe distance to one side of it, the black plane of the immortals.

Two figures in aviation helmets scouted around between his bush and

the blazing pyre, and he heard one of them say, "I could swear I saw some one fall clear. But I guess I'm wrong. There are no survivors."

"It's just as well," rejoined the other. "Dead men tell no tales."

Then they passed on, around the fire, and back to their own plane. The motor started again, and they were off.

Deane waited, in an agony both physical and mental, until the black plane became a mere dot in the sky, before he stirred. Then very cautiously he stood up, and took an inventory of himself. Scratched and bruised and lame though he was, nothing appeared to be broken. So, slipping the still unopened parachute-pack from his shoulders, he tossed it into the dying blaze of the mail plane.

"Sunk without trace, eh?" said he grimly. "Well, so be it. Let the pursuit end right here. Later I may decide to be a witness for Uncle Sam, but not just now." Then, as a sudden thought assailed him, "And thank God that Mavis did not come along! I hope she doesn't blame herself for my death. I'll get word to her, as soon as I'm safe in New York."

So saying, he started limping across the prairie toward a line of telephone poles which he saw in the distance.

The poles proved to indicate a railroad, and along this he trudged eastward. The sun rose in the sky. The day got hot and hotter. Deane lost all track of time, as he stumbled on.

He was practically out on his feet, when a noise behind him gradually began to obtrude itself upon his senses. Suddenly awake and alert once more, he recognized the noise as the puffing of a freight train, a freight train slowly climbing an upgrade. He looked around—he had left the prairie behind him.

The sound of the train came from the westward, so Deane hurried ahead, until he reached some bushes by a culvert, and there he lay and hid.

He had difficulty in keeping awake, and in fact was just dozing off, when the arrival of the freight awakened him. It was a long freight, and was moving very slowly. So, as soon as the engine was safely by, Deane crawled from his place of concealment, ran alongside, and swung aboard.

NEVER had he ridden a freight before, but he had read about such things in the magazines, and so he knew that underneath the cars there were parts called "brake-beams," upon which beams hoboos comfortably ensconce themselves for trancontinental trips. So he stepped around onto the ladder which ran up the end of one of the cars between it and the next car. Then scrunched down, and peered beneath the car.

But there was nothing there to resemble even remotely his idea of "brake-beams." The nearest object in view was the rotating axle which connected the two rear wheels of the car. Beyond that was the solid structure of the rear truck, completely obstructing any forward passage beneath the car, and in itself affording no place whatever on which to sit or lie.

It occurred to him as a bit embarrassing that he, a scientist and hence supposedly a keen observer, had never taken note before of the exact construction of a freight car. Running one hand several times through his tousled sandy hair, he cogitated for a moment; then shifted his footing to the stirrup on the outside of the car, and peered ahead of the rear truck. Nothing there either on which to sit or lie.

So he swung back between the cars.

As he remembered the train, as viewed from his recent hiding place in the bushes, it contained no flat cars, no tank cars, and no coal cars. No cars of any sort on which he could find a comfortable resting place. And even if there had been such a car, he would certainly be discovered on it by the brakemen of the train.

Then he remembered that one of the side doors on the car ahead of the one on which he was now riding had been slightly ajar. So he clambered to the top of the ladder, and poking his head cautiously above the level of the car-tops, he glanced hurriedly in both directions. None of the train crew in sight.

So he finished the ascent, and ran along the top of his car and the next one ahead. Then lay down and crawled to the edge. Yes, the side door was a few inches open. Reaching over, he pushed it open about two feet; then, backing over the edge, he swung himself through the opening and landed on the floor of the car.

It was empty, save for some excelsior, hay, and pieces of burlap; so, first closing the door again, he gathered a pile of this material together, and lay down on it for a much needed sleep.

The next thing that he knew, he was awakened by the sliding open of the door of his car. It was dark outside, but the feeble beams of a lantern penetrated the interior. Instantly alert, Deane drew some of the nearby burlap over him, and then lay motionless.

A voice spoke outside, "This one is an empty. You must have got your numbers twisted, Mike."

Then the light disappeared, and departing footsteps on cinders could be heard, growing gradually fainter.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint



ARGOSY pays \$1 for each letter printed. Send your letter to "Argonotes" Editor, ARGOSY, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

WHITE MULE to a good use:

Mill Valley, Calif.

I am so glad that Stookie Allen included Dr. Whitman in his "Men of Daring." My grandfather knew Dr. Whitman, and told us many stories of his courage and perseverance. One incident I particularly remember. It happened on January 13, 1843, during Whitman's memorable and almost incredible journey from Oregon to Washington, D. C. . . . W. and his guide were in the mountains of Arkansas. The heaviest snowstorm ever known in that region was in progress, and they had become confused as to their direction and finally gave themselves up for lost. They were expecting death to overtake them when the guide noticed that his white mule was acting in a peculiar manner. He gave the animal its head, and it led them back to their camp of the night before, where they were able to pick up the trail.

My grandfather always insisted that a white mule saved Oregon to the United States

GENE LYTELL.

A RACECOURSE birthplace:

Sidney, N. Y.

Have just read in "Stranger Than Fiction" in ARGOSY for Oct. 27 about America's first race course. I was born on the old race course, in what was called the "Cupola House," in 1802; and later my mother built a home there, where I lived until I was grown up. It was always called the "Old Race Course Property," but I never knew why until I read it in the ARGOSY. I cut out the item and sent it to my sister, who still lives in Hempstead.

I enjoy reading "Stranger Than Fiction," and I find many things of interest there

HARRIET L. COLE.

CORROBORATION:

Stamford, Conn.

The article printed in Sunday's New York *Herald Tribune* describing the progress of the new tunnel under construction under the Hudson River authenticates the technicalities of the cur-

rent serial, "East River," by Chase and Doherty. An exceptionally fine story. Congratulations!

I have been, and will continue to be, a reader of ARGOSY for a good number of years.

J. E. MCGEE.

OLD-TIMER'S pipe and magazine:

Lincoln Park, N. J.

Any room for an old-timer in that there "Argonotes" section? If there is I just want to say a word to you young whipper-snappers who have been reading ARGOSY for only twenty years or less. I see where lots of you are sending in letters saying that you don't like this or that. Well, let me tell you something. In all the years I've been readin' ARGOSY, I ain't never yet found a story therein that was so bad that it wouldn't be called a darn good story in any other magazine! So stop barkin' up the wrong tree and let an old man enjoy his pipe and his ARGOSY in peace in his reclining years

JACQUES SEARLES.

SUPPLEMENTARY reading:

Little Rock, Ark.

It was in Sunnyside High School, Bedford, Va., in 1804, that a class of bumptious boys were wrestling with Shakespeare's great play, "The Merchant of Venice." The ARGOSY came in for discussion, although until that time I had never known the history of ARGOSY. I was doing my best to understand. "He had an Argosy bound for Tripoli," when my seatmate Joe Gish whispered: "I have an ARGOSY more interesting than Shakespeare's!" This aroused my curiosity, and when Gish and I returned to our seats we hid Munsey's ARGOSY below the top of our desk and read to our complete satisfaction. Prof. Alexander Eubank thought we were studiously pursuing Euclid or Bingham's "Latin Grammar."

That was forty years ago. I am still wrestling with literature, but nothing gives me more satisfaction than to read the ARGOSY. I have taught school for thirty-five years, and frequently I have used ARGOSY as a supplementary text in literature.

R. J. HUBBARD.

TRAVELER *versus* Armchair Adventurer:

Baltimore, Md.

In a recent issue of your wonderful mag I noted a letter by M. Stone in which he stated that it is people like him who really appreciate ARGOSY, for he would like to travel but is handicapped. So he has to enjoy himself by going on a weekly adventure with his favorite authors in ARGOSY. But that is where he is wrong, for I enjoy ARGOSY as much as any one man could, and for many years I've been traveling from one end of the world to the other. I have seen much of life; and I intend to travel some more, as soon as I get a little money ahead so that I have something to fall back on if things are not quite right.

I think a man can enjoy a story more if he is acquainted with the country and knows something about it and the people in it. I realize that we all cannot be roaming the world; some one has to stay at home. But I'll let the other fellow stay at home, and I'll continue to ramble as long as I'm able to, for I always like to see what is on the other side of the hill or ocean. I have never missed a copy of your mag since I started reading it, but at times I have had to hustle around some to get back copies that I had missed (not intentionally), for I think too much of ARGOSY to miss a single issue.

STEVE P. RESKO.

GRATITUDE — and congratulations:

St. Petersburg, Fla.

Some one on the crew of the ARGOSY is deserving of a promotion in rank. He is the person responsible for the recent appearance of the sketches of the characters in each long story. These drawings are well done, and not only do they add a bright spot to the dull monotony of printed words, they also serve to bring the reader closer to the story. "One picture is worth a thousand words" is applicable here. Congratulations—and my thanks!

H. A. BOOKMAN, JR.

ARGOSY at Bowlder Dam:

Los Angeles, Cal.

I worked for a year on the Bowlder Dam project, where they have a large recreation hall and reading room. I was curious to note which magazines out of the thousands bought by the men and left on tables for others to read were most popular. A check-up showed ARGOSY leading by two to one. It is my favorite periodical because it is so well balanced; it runs the gamut from fact stories to those of extreme fancy. Most of your authors are artists in word-painting

N. H. YOUNG.

LOOKING AHEAD!

RIVER TUNNEL

When sandhogs bore against time to break an under-river record, catastrophe is likely to rush in upon them . . . But neither fire nor flood could stop these tunnel heroes. A tremendous and dramatic novel by the co-author of "East River,"

BORDEN CHASE

"Your Witness, Mr. Hazeltine!"

The murder was set to music—but Gillian Hazeltine had his ear tuned to catch certain overtones of evidence. A complete novel by

George F. Worts

All the Breaks

The cry of these auto racers was the old cry of the War, "They shall not pass!"—And it was war—a feud of the dirt track. A novelette by

Richard Howells Watkins

COMING TO YOU IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY—DECEMBER 8



**WHEN YOU FEEL
"ALL IN" —**

CRAWFORD BURTON, gentleman rider, twice winner of the Maryland Hunt Cup, dean of the strenuous sport of steeplechase riding ... a Camel smoker. Everyone is subject to strain. Hence the importance to people in every walk of life of what Mr. Burton says below about Camels.



**GET A
LIFT
WITH A
CAMEL!**

Copyright, 1934, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company



MRS. CHARLES DALY, housewife, says: "Camels pick up my energy ... and have a delicate flavor that a woman likes."

**HAVE YOU TRIED THIS ENJOYABLE
WAY OF HEIGHTENING ENERGY?**

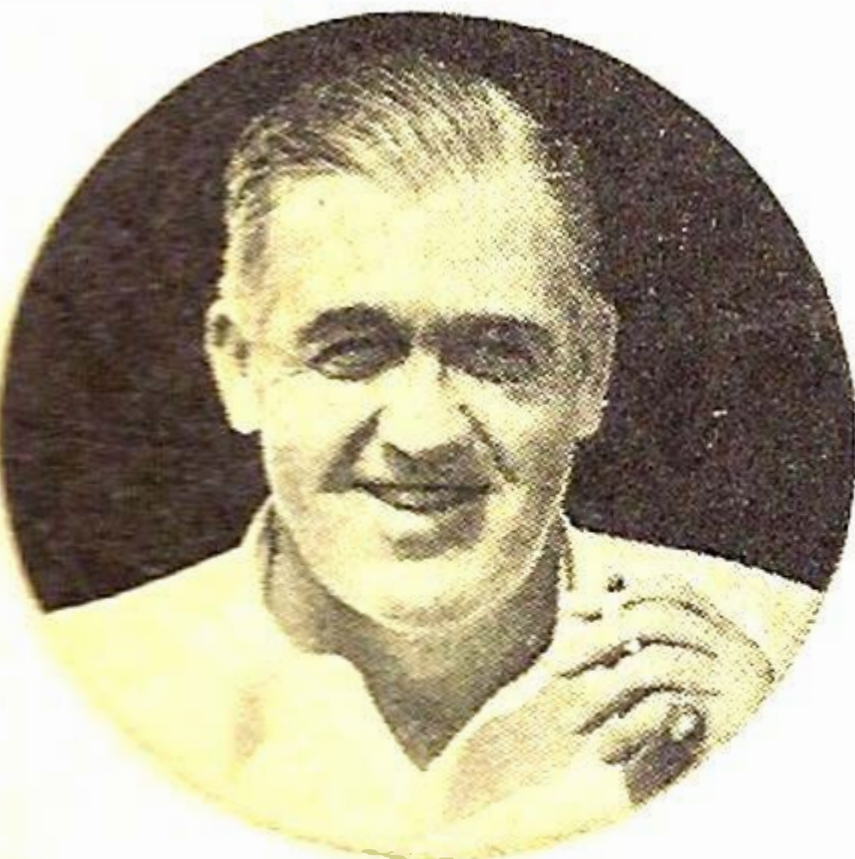
Mr. Crawford Burton, the famous American steeplechase rider, says:

"Whether I'm tired from riding a hard race or from the pressure and tension of a crowded business day, I feel refreshed and restored just as soon as I get a chance to smoke a Camel. So I'm a pretty incessant smoker, not only because Camels give me a 'lift' in energy, but because they *taste so good!* And never yet have Camels upset my nerves."

You have heard the experience of others. Science tells us that Camel's "energizing effect" has been fully confirmed. You can smoke as many as you like. For Camels are made from finer and **MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS.** They never taste flat...never get on your nerves.

**ALL TOBACCO
MEN KNOW:**

*"Camels are made from finer,
MORE EXPENSIVE
TOBACCOS—Turkish
and Domestic—than any other
popular brand."*



REX BEACH, famous sportsman, says: "When I've landed a big game fish I light a Camel, and feel as good as new."

**Camel's costlier Tobaccos
never get on your Nerves**

