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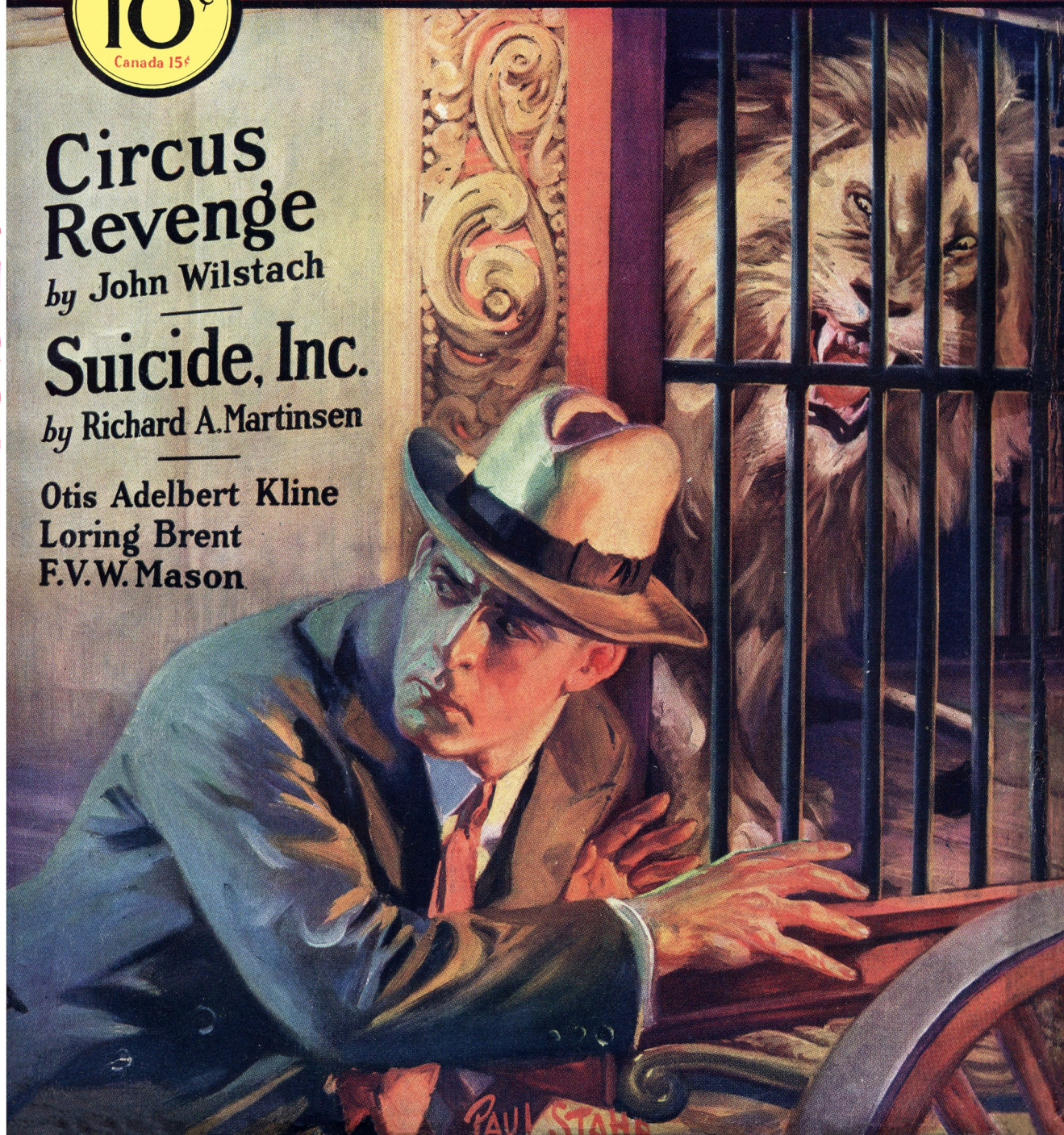
## Suicide, Inc.

by Richard A. Martinsen

Otis Adelbert Kline

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PAUL STARR

MAY 2, 1931

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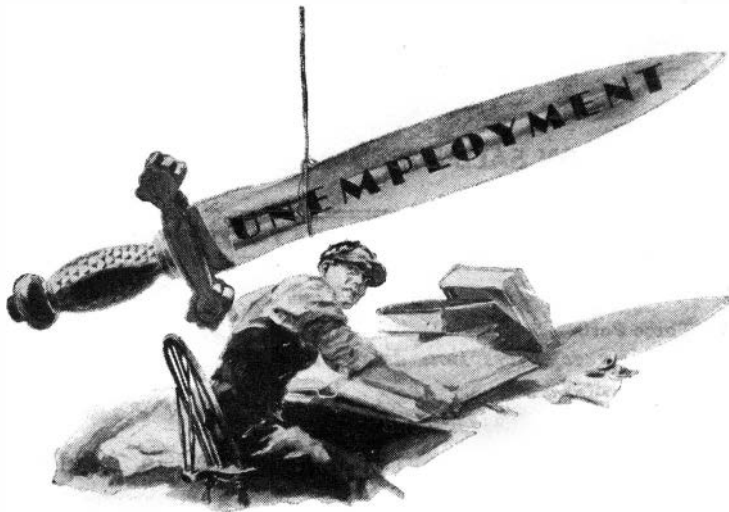
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# ARGOSY

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VOLUME 220

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That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders, owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are:

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That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company, but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.  
C. T. DIXON, Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of April, 1931.

GEORGE H. BOLLWINKEL, Notary Public,  
Queens County, Term expires March 30, 1933.  
Certificate filed in New York County, Queens County No. 170, Queens Register's No. 5208, New York County No. 117, New York Register's No. 3858.





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## Splashers vs. Lollers

A bit of quiet research among the bathers of America has revealed two rival camps of behavior—

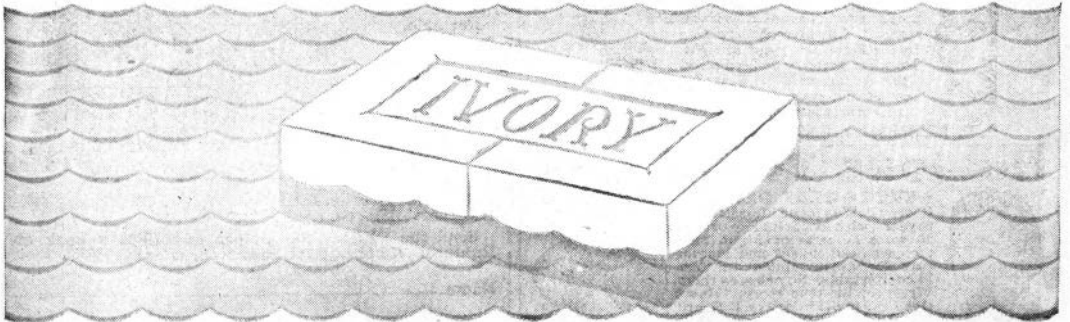
The handsome gentleman who heads the first group believes that bathing should be in the active mood. At 7:00 a. m. he becomes unseen but *heard*. From the bathroom come the echoes of hearty splashes and noises that sound like a floor polishing machine. (Our hero is stirring up a fancy Ivory frosting with a stiff-bearded bath brush!)

The spokeswoman for group 2 shudders at the thought of such athletic goings-on! She insists that bathing should be a restful interlude

in water as warm as a rippleless sea. And Ivory will float like a lily pad in this bland pool of content . . .

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# ARGOSY

ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

VOLUME 220

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NUMBER 5

## Suicide, Inc.



*Larry was catapulted over the smashed windshield*

*Larry Bellew, reporter, piloting his ancient tin chariot San Francisco-ward, bumps into a kidnaping party—and discovers some strange things about suicides*

**By RICHARD A. MARTINSEN**

*Author of "The Gravy Train," "Beans for Backbone," etc.*

### CHAPTER I.

#### HIGHWAY ADVENTURE.

THE sun danced gayly on a flivver jolting and swaying and clattering along the Sacramento highway.

The flivver was way-torn, war-torn; dilapidated if loyal. But there was nothing dilapidated about the young

man whose trim, athletic figure reared as gracefully over the wheel as though he were guiding a blooded charger.

Larry Bellew, cub reporter, was rambling along the royal road to action, adventure—mayhap danger. And if that road, at present, was only a paved highway, the brilliant-hued rainbow of San Francisco, at the foot of it, was none the less beckoning.

Many a frankly admiring glance was cast at the young man by the fresh, fair country girls as their cars passed him by. And though his mind was focused on his objective—the Golden Gate city—with an intentness that made his clean-cut face almost grim—he nevertheless returned those glances with interest. Young enough was Larry Bellew to be ever on the alert for a princess-in-distress to rescue, despite the mission that apparently was absorbing him.

But there appeared no princesses, alas, to be rescued. The highway on that morning was quite peaceful.

The Sacramento valley is a broad one, the road passing for miles between level rice fields, and in July it is as like as not to be hot as Hades. It was so now. And gradually Larry's collar wilted, in due proportion as his lusty appetite increased.

Thus, when he espied near Vacaville a structure of considerable pretension, with a sign in front of it announcing, "The Log Cabin — Breakfast, Luncheon, Dinner—Dancing," it looked very good to him. He parked behind a Cadillac sedan—a classy job he eyed admiringly—and entered.

The main saloon of the Log Cabin was long, narrow, and even at this hour somberly dark; an atmosphere the proprietors of such dance oases appear to cater to. A maze of streamers stretched from walls to rafters, and big Chinese lanterns lent a touch of bizarre color. This, and the pervasive odor of stale perfumes and smoke, indicated that at night the place was quite a whoopee-joint. But jazz enthusiasts and road-house patrons not venturing abroad much at noonday, it now gave an appearance of dead desertion.

Two or three tables, however, were in use, Larry noted after seating him-

self. The one at his left was occupied by two ladies and a male escort. His glance, straying casually over the party, abruptly focused; in fact developed into a wide-eyed stare, while he sat up rigidly. Both girls were comely. But the nearer one! Speak of your princesses!

She was tall, slender, the epitome of unstudied grace. Her face was oval, creamy as a cameo, tender, spiritual and withal spirited. Larry thrilled to the cool radiance he visualized in her sweet eyes—which he couldn't at the moment see. Her dark hair, combed tight to her shapely head, was lustrous; gleamed like a raven's wing. Her—

"Yes, sir?" murmured a waiter in Larry's ear.

"Steak, French fries, coffee, chocolate ice cream," he stated rapidly and mechanically, without shifting his absorbed gaze.

The girl opposite the princess was pretty, too, of course; but she didn't have such character. And her quiet, unobtrusive dress—by golly, that was it! Mistress and maid. Unquestionably.

With a distinct jerk Larry forced himself back to earth, broke the prolonged scrutiny and turned to his own affairs. But his susceptible soul had been transfixed by a cruel barbed dart. His lunch, when it came, hit the right spot all right; but his interest in it didn't compare with the allure of the fair unknown, at whom he continued to cast covert glances.

He was about half through the meal when the third member of the near-by trio, the man, really impacted on his consciousness; and impacted with a rude jar, most unpleasantly.

The dark princess was toying with a



fork, on the table before her. Suddenly a hand, brown and hairy, entered Larry's focus, and closed over hers. The dark princess, with an involuntary move of distaste, broke the contact, lifting her arm. The brown hand followed like a claw.

"Please!" Larry heard, in quiet protest, as the girl leaned well back in her chair to keep away.

"Uh-r-r-r!" growled young Mr. Bellew, underneath his breath, and glared fiercely at her boorish persecutor.

He saw a specimen quite in keeping with that hairy paw; a short, stocky fellow of Slavic hue and thin, sharp features that were redolent of power, but decidedly not gentleness. The white line of a scar, stretching from temple across the high right cheek-bone, did not add to this lupine individual's attractiveness. He was carefully and expensively dressed; a bit too flossily for a real gentleman, Larry Bellew estimated.

Also—and Mr. Bellew noted this fact with vast contempt and rising spleen—the fellow was pretty well liquored. A big silver pocket-flask was displayed beside his plate, vulgarly. And, as Larry watched, he sat back with a short, sharp laugh at the dark princess—meant to be tolerant, no doubt—and poured himself another shot.

Larry snorted to himself once more, then concentrated on the remainder of his steak with savage gusto. None of his affair—this isn't the age of chivalry. It's U. S. A., Twentieth Century, where girls are fully qualified to take care of themselves, and young bucks well advised to mind their own darned business! Especially when their business is grimly vital. All right to look for romance, but — Larry's jaw

set as he remembered his purpose in coming to San Francisco.

AND then it happened. There was a clatter of silver, a crash of breaking glassware, closely followed by a cry of feminine alarm.

Up snapped Larry's head.

Scar-face apparently again had groped for the hand of the dark princess; possessed himself of it decisively. The girl had struggled for freedom, at first silently, then with a startled exclamation that brought Larry right up on his toes. He saw the girl fling back, in an access of scorn and physical revulsion so violent it brought the man's body dragging half across the table. But he hung on, lips twisting in a derisive smirk.

The chair of the dark princess went clattering as she sprang erect. The other girl sat rigid, powerless, one hand over her mouth as though to restrain a cry of terror.

With flashing eyes the bold Larry made his feet; took two swift steps, then halted uncertainly.

The moment of drama had ended as suddenly as it began. The last, quick jerk of the dark princess had broken the clutch of Scar-face. She stood now proudly erect, beside the table. To the other girl she said quietly:

"Come, Therese. We are leaving."

And to Scar-face, coldly, haughtily:

"We do not desire your company any longer. I've seen enough of you."

"Oh, is that so?" the man retorted sneeringly. "Well, guess again."

The dark princess turned her back on him. The girl called Therese arose and joined her meekly, and the two walked leisurely toward the door.

A waiter, attracted by the rumpus, hovered near their table. To him Scar-

face beckoned peremptorily; produced a roll of bills and flipped a couple on the table with a wise wink. He waited until his late companions were half-way to the door, then jumped up and followed purposefully.

A few yards after him, like an avenging shadow, strode young Mr. Bellew.

The girl, Therese, opened the front door of the sedan Larry had admired, and entered. The dark princess climbed lithely into the driver's seat. Her foot trod on the starter. The engine caught and purred smoothly. She was in the act of throwing the car in gear when Scar-face arrived. His progress from the café had not been altogether steady, but there was no uncertainty in the grip which circled her wrist, on the steering-wheel, or in his insolent drawl:

"One minute! One minute, sister. Not so fa-ast!"

She stared at and through him.

"Remove your hand!"

"Sure! Sure! When I'm good and ready. Say, what's the idea—"

"Remove your hand—you scum!"

"Scum! *Scum*, huh! Why, you little—"

He choked and turned red, but neither from lack of appropriate adjectives nor apoplexy. A strong young hand had fastened in his collar, and with a vigorous twist cut off his air.

That same hand jerked with equal fervor up and backward. Scar-face promptly lost his feet: sailed through the ozone like a dummy and measured his length, heavily, on the graveled drive.

**O**VER he rolled, snarling anathema. But he was not at the end of his resources. And for one in his apparent condition he was fast, too; exceedingly. One revolution of

his rolling body sufficed for an ugly black automatic to pop into his hand.

Bolstering his weight on an elbow he leveled the weapon. But no lead spat from it, because young Mr. Bellew was no man's fool when it came to scapping, and pretty fast himself. He, too, zoomed through the air—in a flying tackle that impacted on Scar-face with a hundred and seventy pounds of lusty flesh and muscle behind it, and all but smeared that prostrate individual, gun and all, into the ground.

Scar-face emitted "Who-osh!" and then relinquished the automatic pistol. The bite of four hard fingers and a thumb into his wrist-muscle helped him along in this. Thereafter Larry slapped his face, a stinging blow with open hand, jumped up, and inquired cheerfully:

"Now how about it, fella?"

Scar-face was momentarily discomfited, but somehow he looked far from apologetic. Or beaten either. In fact, he looked altogether vicious, more dangerous than ever, as he clambered upright and bit out throatily:

"You damn buttinski! Do your laughing now! I'm tellin' you it's goin' to cost you plenty!"

"Aw, barkin' dogs—" grinned Larry; then stiffened, and with narrowed eyes leveled the gun point-blank. "Now g'wan an' chase yourself!"

Which the other, with an incoherent growl of anger, promptly did; betaking himself at a swaying dog-trot along the highway, in the direction of Vacaville.

Larry scrutinized the memento he had left behind him, the automatic, an instant appraisingly, then turned back to the sedan—for the first time to meet the eyes of the dark princess. So far beyond his expectations were they—so deep, so tender, so radiant with gratitude—the breath caught in his throat.

"I—I—" she began. "I don't know how to thank you. I—"

"Then please don't bother. I mean it," he grinned. "Honest, it was lots of fun."

"Fun? But he might have killed you! Glory, I can't understand why father sent a snake like that to—"

Again she broke off, in obvious confusion; more from the near revelation of her affairs to a stranger, than reaction to the late excitement, Larry thought. Tactfully he helped her out.

"Well, it all ended hunky-dory. I got some exercise I needed, and—exit the villain, unsmiling. . . . It might be good policy, though, if you were to hie yourself onward before he musters his black forces—they're always supposed to be lurking just off-stage in cases of this kind, aren't they?—and pesters you again."

Once more their eyes met and clung, until a wave of crimson suffused the strained whiteness of the girl's face. In that instant more passed between them than there are words in a dictionary. But it ended all too soon. And with a strange abruptness.

A flicker of something akin to haunted and deep-seated alarm passed over the face of the alluring girl. She cried:

"You're a dear boy! Thanks! Good-by!"

And stepped hastily on the gas. The car leaped forward, swung right on the highway toward San Francisco, and dwindled rapidly.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Larry, staring ruefully after it.

**T**HE trouble with modern adventures, he concluded as he returned to his table in the Log Cabin, is that they don't end in the good old-fashioned style. The dark princess

might at least have given him her name and address.

Oh, well. . . . all in a lifetime. If a fellow bumped into such action, way out here in the country, San Francisco itself ought to prove dog-goned interesting, no? He had an idea it would for him, anyway.

So presently, when Larry had paid his bill and climbed into the saddle of his charger, his spirits once more soared sky-high. He spent many miles amusing himself by building up colorful identities for the dark princess and the villainous Scar-face, and weaving the pair of them into an even more colorful, not to say melodramatic, plot.

Yes, it had been a diverting incident—not altogether without its hazards, thought Larry, tapping the automatic in his pocket—and he intended to make the most of it.

That adventure had its elements of realism. But you can't always tell about realism in the land of the romantic old Dons. Or perhaps the High Gods of Adventure, having already singled out this trim young cavalier for their attentions, decided to do him up brown.

Rattling and clattering along the highway on the outskirts of Benicia—site of the great railroad ferry across Carquinez, this one of the wonders of the Sunshine State—his roving gaze was attracted to a queer traffic jam a couple of hundred yards ahead. What the newspapers invariably describe as a "long, black, high-powered touring car" had shot out of an intersecting dirt road, and presumably stalled or broken down inconveniently square across the main line, at a point where it blocked passage of a small bridge topping a drainage culvert.

A large machine, traveling west, in Larry's direction, already had been



halted by this obstacle, and the occupants of the touring car were grouped beside the front seat of the latter machine.

Thus the situation analyzed itself at Larry's first casual glance. His second, however, revealed somewhat more; indeed, caused him to snap alertly up-right.

That second machine was a Cadillac of distinctive and familiar coloring. Moreover, the group by its front seat—three husky men—wasn't engaged in idle converse. They heaved and buckled mysteriously.

Larry gave his gas-throttle a vigorous jerk. The flivver responded noisily but nobly.

The front door of the Cadillac burst open and a girl popped out—not voluntarily; impelled to the roadway by rough, peremptory hands. From the interior of the sedan issued a muffled but piercing shriek, as this girl was half-dragged, half-carried toward the touring car.

**T**HEN a thunderbolt burst from the blue and hurtled on the scene; the Ford, with throttle wide open.

"Watch it!" howled one of the men, loosing his clutch on the victim and bounding aside.

His companions jumped galvanically after him. The girl, free, tried to turn; lost her balance, fell, and rolled on the highway.

Larry had accomplished his purpose too well. He bore desperately on the brakes; checked his mad speed sufficiently to swerve away from the sprawled form, but not enough to prevent a sharp skid after this.

The Ford plunged for the right-hand ditch. Savagely Larry wrenched at the wheel, avoiding stark\*disaster by a hair's-breadth. The Ford swerved vio-

lently across the highway to the other side. Another wrench. It careened on two wheels, half-straightened, and with the remainder of its momentum smashed broadside and heavily into the touring car.

Larry had tried to brace himself. To no avail. He sailed in a ludicrous somersault over the Ford's windshield, and over the touring car as well, landing on the highway beyond it.

He heard a chorus of hoarse curses and a vague shuffle of milling feet.

It was no time to be a casualty. He shook his head to clear it, and scrambled around the touring car. The husky trio had snatched the girl up again, and were now hauling her back to the sedan.

Swaying a little, for he was still dizzy, Larry raced at them. His fist connected with a bony and painfully tough jaw. One of the would-be abductors tumbled over in one direction. Larry's impetus sent him floundering groggily in another.

He heard a sharp crack, and something chipped a splinter of paving from the highway close by his ear. He rolled over and squirmed to his knees in time to see one of the remaining bravos leveling his pistol for a second shot. Larry flipped sidewise a split-second before a lance of flame stabbed from the weapon. The bullet missed, but the breath of its passage fanned his cheek unpleasantly.

He scarcely realized he had jerked Scar-face's automatic out of his pocket until the gun was in his hand and cracking viciously.

That put a different aspect on the matter—judging from the actions of the beetle-browed thugs. They dropped their victim and dodged for cover, returning Larry's fire on the run, erratically.

It was quite probably not his exchange of lead with them, and certainly not his marksmanship, which was awful, that capped the climax, but the approach of two westbound cars.

"GET-AWAY, Red!" Larry heard an urgent shout. Then two forms dashed for the intersecting road, the third ruffian—who had recovered from Larry's wallop sufficiently to use his feet—bolting at their heels.

The touring car was out of action. A few yards down the intersecting road, however, was a small garage, with a machine standing by a gas pump in front of it. The owner of the garage, or of this car perhaps, had popped out of the structure to see what the excitement was about. The thugs bowled him over like a ten-pin, and piled helter-skelter into the car. In an instant they were mingling with the distant scenery, the bereft owner waving his arms and bellowing lustily after them.

Larry picked himself up. The dark princess had staggered to the running-board of the sedan, where she sat weakly. He walked over to her with a reassuring grin.

"Twice in the same place," he observed. "I told you there'd likely be a pack more villain's lurking off-stage. . . Um-m, yes. I gather you're exceedingly popular to-day. Perhaps you'd better let me escort you from now on, wherever you're going."

There were tears in her eyes, but she tried to smile bravely up at him.

"I—I'll never forget it, if you only will! Honestly, I don't know what it's all about, but—but—oh, you were wonderful, Mr.—"

"Uh—Larry Bellew."

She extended her hand, which trem-

bled only slightly, and was amazingly warm and soft.

"I'm Helena Hopkins. I'm going to San Francisco, and if you *could*—well, sort of keep an eye on me—"

"Tickled pink!"

"But what about your car?"

"Hm-m. Not much left of it, I reckon. Anyhow, I can leave it for the garageman yonder to patch up." He helped the girl solicitously to her feet.

"Listen, Helena." The name came naturally. "You climb in and lend whoozus — Therese — your smelling salts. She needs 'em, what I mean! I'll help clear away the wreckage, and be with you in two shakes. We can talk later. Getting too darned public around here—and I'm keen on easing you out of the picture before a few million cops dash up. . . an hour late, as usual."

## CHAPTER II.

### EXTRY! SUICIDE!

**A**N epidemic of scurrying newsboys seemed to have struck Market Street. They brandished green newspapers—familiar in San Francisco, that color, as the dress of the late edition *Times* — frenziedly overhead and yelped a wild jargon in which, to the lay ear, only the words: "Wuxtry!" and "Big Suicide!" were distinguishable.

Larry, pausing by the door of the *Times* office, almost had a paper thrust into his face. Instinctively his eyes caught the blood-red, double-decker headlines:

#### **BIG STEEL MAGNATE BELIEVED SUICIDE!**

Scarcely less prominent, below this, a name popped out at him: "Cadwal-

lader J. Hopkins mysteriously missing from his Burlingame mansion; servants express fears. . . .”

“Great Jupiter!” gulped Mr. Bellew. “Hopkins — and Burlingame. That’s where she lives. I wonder if it could be a relative? Poor kid! What rotten luck! What day is this, Friday the thirteenth? Nope . . . By golly, she’s jinxed, just the same.”

With that he put Helena temporarily out of mind; at least subordinated her to the more urgent business of landing himself a job, preparatory to starting in on the problem which had brought him here. Mr. Bellew was a fast worker, and he had lots of pep. Two hours in town and he’d already visited four newspaper shops. Strangely enough, though, there seemed no great demand for cubs, however peppy, from the great corn fields of the Middle West. The city editors of four of them, instead of welcoming him with open arms, had told him more or less politely to scat.

The *Times* was the fifth chance, and the last. Resolutely he ascended the ramshackle wooden steps to the editorial floor.

He knew that if he gave his name and mission to a phone-girl he’d probably never reach the city editor. Hence he edged past the glass-enclosed switchboard, deftly unhooked a wooden gate, and wandered through a maze of clicking type-mills and desks to the central rostrum of that city room god.

It was near the dead-line of another edition, and the blond-thatched city editor was a whirlwind of activity, apparently taking phone calls, editing copy, and snapping orders at various henchmen all at once. Larry paused discreetly in the offing until the minion now standing at the throne side should be chased away.

Presently the city editor barked something, and the reporter departed briskly. Larry was just stepping up when another figure, incoming at an even brisker clip, thrust impolitely by him. He saw a tall, dark, graceful young man of pleasing and resourceful countenance stoop toward the editor and heard him announce quietly:

“He left a suicide note, all right, Jim; I found it on his desk—”

“Copy it?”

“Sure. . . . And he’s been missing since Saturday. Still, I don’t like the looks of this somehow. Sounds fishy. Wish to the dickens I could have a talk with his daughter.”

The city editor grinned. “Fishy, huh? Ye-ah, they’ve just fished his body outa the bay! Pound out a new lead on that note, Ramy, then hop it for the beach—they say there’s plenty of proof of identity. . . . Hopkins’s daughter, by the way, ain’t in town yet. Now shake a leg, kid.”

**T**HE young man jumped for a typewriter, which he whipped into furious life with the forefinger of each hand. In a few moments he tore the copy from the roller, rushed it to the city editor, and pointed swiftly for the door.

“Say!” called a voice. “What’s the first name of the Hopkins girl? Know it?”

Aramis Ware poised like a bird in passage. “Huh? Oh, Helena. But she hasn’t reached town yet, old son.”

“Oh, yes, she has,” Larry interrupted. “I rode in from Benicia with her this afternoon.”

“The heck you snort!” Ramy looked at him with new interest. “Work here, do you?”

“Not exactly, but I have hopes.”

“I getcha. Thought you might be



a new one," Ramy grinned. "Well, young-un, I've got to hustle. How's to ride out to the beach with me? You can elucidate on the way."

"Okay."

"Come a runnin', then. Gangway!"

It was almost a run, down the stairs and around the corner, to where Ramy's roadster was parked. And after that, for some moments, Larry's tongue clove to his mouth roof, for the newspaper man drove through traffic like an insane fire chief.

"Lucky the cops know me," he chuckled, whirling on two wheels into Van Ness, with the lights against him. "All right now, buddy. Easy sailing, and a clear field ahead. Let's hear about the Hopkins girl. She wasn't at the house when I was, bet on that."

"She should have been," said Larry. "How far is it to this place, Burlingame?"

"Fifteen miles or so."

"And she dropped me off on her way there, all of two hours ago."

"Umm. Well, maybe she ducked me . . . How'd you happen to meet her, anyway?"

Larry grinned. "It was sort of informal. I dropped in for lunch at a roadhouse near Vacaville, saw a hard egg getting rough with a couple of women, and gently chased him off. Later, near Benicia, I rambled up in time to behold one of these same ladies getting herself kidnaped by three more yeggs. My flivver got tangled up with their car, and there was a little shooting pro and con. When the smoke cleared, the bad boys were beating it in a car they'd—uh—borrowed from a garageman, and had left the girl for me. That's how I met Helena Hopkins—and oh, man, ain't I strong for her!"

Aramis was listening with such ab-

sorption he'd actually cut down their wild speed.

"So that's what caused the rumpus at Benicia, huh?" he observed. "A wild yarn was phoned in to us, but nobody seemed to know the why and wherefore of it all."

**N**OT surprising, since the principals didn't loiter. I didn't want to get Miss Hopkins in the papers, or in the hands of the police," Larry told him. "The funny part is, the girl herself has no idea what it was all about. She said so fervently, and I'm convinced that she's sincere. It appears she was driving home from some high-hat college in New York, and her father wired he was sending a man to Sacramento to meet her. He'd explain later, he said. Well, this emissary was the bird who started getting familiar at the roadhouse—the bird I had to chase away."

"What was his name?"

"Let's see. James—Barton. Something like that, anyway."

"Never heard of 'im . . . How about the kidnaping?"

"Black mystery, she says. Everyday thugs, those fellas. Don't know whether it was just plain coincidence, or Scar-face put 'em up to it."

Aramis shot him an oblique glance. "Scar-face?"

"The guy at the Log Cabin. He was dark and mean-looking generally, with a scar running from temple to chin."

Ramy looked as though about to speak, but checked himself and for a moment focused intently over the wheel. Then:

"I hope you'll see that bird again, some day, and point him out to me," he remarked quietly. "Mmm. Had lots of fun, didn't you? I'd like to dig into it a little more."

"So'd I. And I was going to—tonight," averred Larry eagerly. "Miss Hopkins invited me to call, meet her father, and hear explanations. But now, of course—"

"I dunno. Maybe we'll call, anyhow," Ramy murmured. Larry thrilled at that "we." And his pulse quickened as the other went on. "What is your name, buddy? . . . Mine's Aramis Ware. Aramis, because my folks were addicts to Dumas— What? You like him too? Shake! I have a hunch we're going to know each other better . . . Whoa-up! Here we are." He stepped heavily on the brakes. "Stick around, Larry, until I'm through here, will you?"

They had passed the Cliff House like a rocket and reached a point somewhat beyond the more frequented portion of the famous beach. Nevertheless, here too had mysteriously gathered a crowd of some proportions, pressing against a rope which barred off a certain portion of the water-line, with several uniformed policemen to back it up.

Ramy breezed through the cordon. Lacking his authority, Larry mingled with the common herd, looking curiously after him.

**A** CITY ambulance was drawn up beside the water. Near it, on a stretcher, lay a grim object covered with a sheet.

Ramy hailed the ambulance doctor. "Hi, doc. I'm lucky. Thought you'd be long-gone for the morgue."

"Would 'a' been, but for the poor saps who hauled the body ashore before we got here!" The doctor snorted indignantly. "They tore off half his coat." He waved a hand at a couple of launches rolling in the swell beyond the surf-line. "The boys have been fishing for it half an hour . . . such luck!"

"We ought to have a trained floater squad, huh?" smiled Ramy.

"Not a bad idea, at that. I bet this city has the floater record of the world . . . ah, they're giving it up. Thank goodness! We didn't need the darned thing anyway."

"Got plenty of identification?" asked the reporter.

"Plenty." The doctor, who also represented the coroner's office, drew him to the ambulance and produced a soggy leather bill-fold. "Look-it. Club cards, driver's license—everything. Oh, it's Hopkins, aw'right, although the crabs and so forth did their usual stunt."

Ramy grimaced. "Bad, is it?"

The doctor shrugged. "Been in the water a week. You've seen 'em. His own mother wouldn't know him now."

"Ahr-r-r! You've got a sense of humor like an oyster," muttered the reporter as he turned away.

"Have to have—else you darned news-hounds 'd drive me nutty," grinned the doctor after him. He gave orders to the stretcher-bearers, who picked up their sodden, gruesome burden gingerly.

Larry, at first following proceedings with the fresh eagerness of an embryo star reporter, had soon absorbed his fill.

The sight of the ambulance, the stretcher beside it, and the launches with their grappling hooks depressed him. He was glowing with abundant vitality, with youth—which oftentimes tingles with a fierce urge to kill, yet shudders at a dead body.

He turned with a sense of acute relief from death to life; to watch the milling crowd. A varied throng pressed against the ropes of the main arena. Still others hung wide-eyed over the railing which edged the drive about the beach.

Larry strolled leisurely toward the highway. It occurred to him that he could wait for Aramis more comfortably in the roadster.

His face was sober and abstracted; the sight of that grisly object on the sand had turned his thoughts once more to the dark princess. Poor Helena Hopkins! Hadn't this been a day of sad adversity and misery for her!

He began to climb the steps which led from the sand to the drive palisade. Halfway up them, however, he stiffened suddenly. His square chin thrust out and his eyes began to sparkle eagerly.

Amid the curious watchers, grouped at the railing near the stairhead, a face had leaped out, impacting on his consciousness; a dark, thin, saturnine, predatory face; a face on which Larry, even at that distance, caught the white glint of a rakish scar.

**S**CAR-FACE—out here, by George! The fellow must travel by air mail!

Larry took two more quick steps upward; checked himself as swiftly, and half turned. What was it Ramy had said about the roughneck? "Wish you would point him out to me." . . . Yep. And Larry had sensed something behind the quiet remark.

He darted a brief look over his shoulder. Scar-face was still standing there, all right, staring in the direction of the ambulance. Chances were he had not seen Larry at all; that he'd stay put awhile.

The young man made his way with assumed casualness once more toward the rope barrier, without another backward look—hence he didn't see the hand of the dark man at the railing flash up and wave sharply, as though

signaling some one on the sand below, or the two stocky forms which promptly elbowed their way from the crowd near the water, and began furtively to converge on him.

He pushed his way through the crowd to the ropes, and almost rammed his shoulder through the chest of a policeman who heaved up belligerently before him.

"Back, you!" growled the officer unamiably.

"I want to speak to a reporter in there."

Larry advanced again. The policeman stepped over to block him.

"You got a press badge? Then stay outa here!"

"Aw, piffle!" grunted Larry. Then, spotting Ramy in the distance: "Hey, Ware! Oh, Ware . . . Step this way in a hurry!"

"Step this way yourself," growled the policeman, and, extending an arm, lent brawny emphasis to his words. "Back! What's the matter, deaf or somethin'?"

"All right, all right." Larry saw that Aramis was coming, waved at him and started to back-track out of the crowd.

A sudden, sharp cry welled over the general murmur of voices: "Hi—watch it, kid!"

It sounded like Ramy. Larry twisted around curiously.

Out of the corner of his eyes, even as he turned, he caught a blur of motion; a black form swiftly closing in from each side.

"That's the guy!" a hoarse voice grunted. "Let 'im have it!"

Instinctively Larry ducked. Too late.

A sledge hammer seemed to smash down brutally on his skull. A blaze of sparks and fire-rockets swirled before his eyes.



Then the whole world exploded and all lights went out . . .

CHAPTER III.

ALL FOR ONE!

**W**HEN presently Larry recovered consciousness—a most unpleasant process—he found himself occupying a stretcher in the morgue ambulance. From near by Ramy Ware bent over him—face quiet and self-composed; dark eyes withal reflecting a solicitude so friendly and sincere, an affection that was to prove abiding—that it instantly took root in Larry's heart.

"Okay, doc," spoke Ramy over his shoulder as the other's eyelids flickered. "He's in our midst again." And to Larry: "Close shave, youngster. But you can take it easy now."

"Oh, man!" Larry grimaced. "What a rap!"

"Yep. Professional touch, with a sandbag. But you were lucky at that, m' son. There were two of them. You can thank Donnelly—the big cop you had the run-in with—the other didn't slip his knife into your carcass. He certainly wanted to . . . Whatever have you been a-doin' of, bub, hey?"

"I'll bite! Say, did you see that johnny with the scar?"

Ramy's eyes registered with a new interest. "Umm—uh—was he, by any chance, leaning over the boulevard rail?"

"You said it!"

"There might have been more than one, of course. The chap I spotted is Keefe Flaherty. And if he's the road-house roughneck of your noontime adventure—well, well." He broke off thoughtfully.

"Who is he?" Larry persisted.

"Oh, a private detective. Quite a celebrity—of sorts—hereabouts. He wasn't the one who cracked you, though."

"No-o. But something tells me it was done with his compliments."

"Possibly. It 'll stand looking into, anyway. I note Keefe hasn't lingered . . . The cops are after your little playmate—"

The ambulance doctor thrust his head out of the vehicle and queried strenuously:

"Say! We got to stick around here all day?"

To which a muffled voice responded, with growing reluctance:

"Aw'ri. G'wan, then! We won't need you. They've made a get-away, I guess."

Ware nodded calmly. "And if Keefe is in it, I fancy they'll keep away."

The ambulance started up, clanging furiously. A reek of formaldehyde suddenly smote Larry's nostrils, and he sat stiffly upright.

"Say—are we travelin' with—"

Ware pushed him back smilingly.

"Keep your shirt on, Larry. We are. But you'll never get far in the news game if you can't swallow worse than that . . . We'll drop off at the beach emergency station, get a bit neater job of gauze and plaster tacked on your skull—"

"Hey, what's the matter with 'at job?" the medico demanded indignantly.

Ramy raised a monitory hand.

"Shush! Mustn't excite the patient." His face remained elaborately sober as he added: "It's not a bad job, of course, for a bird who got his experience laying bricks—"

"Waugh! That's what's needed, working on guys like you flip reporters!" snorted the doctor.

And then all three of them chuckled heartily.

LARRY entered the beach emergency hospital under his own power, albeit still a bit shaky, and Ramy sprinted for the nearest phone. Larry could hear snatches of his conversation, from the next room where the interne worked on him.

"Ye-ah, plenty of identification, Jimmy . . . They've taken him to the morgue till further notice . . . Yep, I'm at the beach. That all for me to-day? Good . . . Nope, I'll be busy to-night, Jim. Pleasure, nothing! . . . Aw, don't get too curious! . . . 'By."

He looked Larry over coolly when he returned. "Well, that's some better. You can get your cap on now, anyway . . . Yours very truly, doc."

One of the policemen had driven the blue roadster in from the beach. Ramy smiled his thanks and pushed Larry aboard it.

"How's for some dinner, big boy? My treat. I owe you that much for getting you made a casualty."

There was not much conversation until they had threaded their way back down town to the States—in earlier time called the Hofbrau Haus—where both men did justice to the liberal meal Ramy ordered.

"That rap on the coco certainly didn't hurt your appetite," smiled the reporter, when they had reached the black coffee stage. But with that his levity vanished. He sat forward and regarded Larry earnestly. "Would you really like to hook on with the *Times*?"

"Absolutely!"

"I'm not the boss, y' unnerstand. But I can pull a few strings, and I'll do it—if, in the meantime, you'll toss in on a little private job with me."

"I'm your man, Ware. Name it!"

For a moment Ramy toyed thoughtfully with a spoon.

"I'm not so sure this Hopkins business is as cut and dried as it appears to be," he murmured, almost speaking to himself. "I knew old Cadwallader, as it happens—a hard-shelled but likable cuss. And a fighting fool from way back. He wasn't the type to commit suicide."

"But that note—"

Ware blinked a moment at the interruption, then shrugged. "Yes, I know. Ill health, loneliness—an old war-horse turned out into the pasture, and breaking his heart over it—the usual thing. It sounded reasonable. And he hadn't been home since Saturday. The servants were scared stiff—too scared to notify the police until this morning . . . oh, yes, it all sounds pat enough. The other papers will sit tight and handle it with gloves on. But I'm not satisfied, Larry. It's not in keeping with the old-timer's character . . . And then the daughter's preposterous adventures on the Sacramento highway. I'm strangely interested in that. And Keefe Flaherty. Yes, Keefe, by all means. He's managed to keep out of jail so far, but he's a bad egg, m' son."

"I'll say he is!" agreed Larry, his fingers gingerly probing the knob on his head.

Ware's dark eyes began to glow.

"The other papers don't know about that highway business either. And that, my friend, is where you come in—if you care to."

"Go on!" begged Larry.

"You were invited to call on Miss Helena Hopkins to-night. I want you to do so, and take me along . . . Oh, I know it isn't sporting to intrude upon her grief, and so forth, but it's the

only way I see to get a few words with that girl . . . I don't usually take much stock in hunches, but I've got one now. A first-class hunch, equipped with tingles and everything, and—well." He paused and drew a deep breath. "How about it?"

"You're on," said Larry simply. "When do we start?"

**R**AMY glanced at his watch. "Seven fifteen. It'll take us the best part of an hour to reach Burlingame, so now's all right."

Hence in a few moments they were working Ramy's blue chariot through the traffic, out Market Street.

It was a few minutes after eight when they reached their destination. The Hopkins mansion, well back in its grounds, looked black and deserted.

"Nobody home!" exclaimed Larry.

"Must be," Ware declared.

They parked the roadster beside a row of eucalyptus trees, on the highway, and after a moment of deliberation turned into the graveled drive afoot.

"Look out!" cried Ramy a few seconds later, and pulled his companion abruptly to one side.

Larry heard the staccato drone of a racing motor. A low, sporty roadster swung violently into the drive and careened past them. The driver, hunched over the wheel, did not see the forms of the two young men tensed in the shadow of a lilac bush; or, at all events, gave no indication he had noticed them. But they got a good, albeit hasty look at his profile as it flashed past.

"Scar-face!" exclaimed Mr. Bellew.

"Flaherty!" echoed Mr. Ware.

They stared after him as the car skidded to a halt at the main entrance of The Castle.

A block of pale light shone out as the massive door swung open. An instant later it closed behind Flaherty with a sharp, definite thud.

"Can you beat that!" cried Mr. Bellew. "After what happened at Vacaville!"

Ramy nodded. "Well, pal—we've found out one thing. There's somebody home all right."

Larry frowned, and started in the wake of the roadster, with his chin at a hostile slant. After a few quick steps, however, he pulled up, relaxed, and grinned.

"That bird won't linger in there very long. Not if I know the fair Helena. Betcha he comes out—on his ear—inside of three minutes."

"Will he?" Ramy murmured. "All right. There's no hurry. Suppose we wait and see."

They sauntered back to the drive archway, with its ponderous wrought-iron gates, and loitered three minutes. Five. Ten.

"Confound it!" burst from Larry. "I lose. And it's peculiar, what I mean. Let's go—"

Ware dropped a hand on his elbow.

"You don't suppose Helena has forgotten and forgiven?"

"I do not!"

"Then," said Ramy quietly, "I'd give an eye to find out just who Flaherty is palavering with, in there, and why. We'll not accomplish that by barging headlong after him. Suppose we try a little pussy-footing around first."

"Okay, Ware. It's your party."

"Sometimes," observed Ramy, "folks forget to draw window-shades. No lights showing in the front, that's evident; but there are four sides to every house. You scout around the left wing. I'll take the right. We'll



both keep our peepers open and meet back here at the lilac bush."

**T**HE element of sleuthing appealed to Larry. He set off eagerly, slipping from shadow to shadow in what he hoped was phantom style. The grounds of the Castle were spacious and elaborately landscaped. There was plenty of cover all right. With no moon, and the sky opaque and fog-pallid, it was an ideal place for detective work.

The left wing of the mansion thrust out substantially, and Larry had to cut a wide and somewhat blundering circle to get around it. He hauled up, presently, in the lee of an elder bush trimmed into a great ball, to peer at the silent building. He could see no lights anywhere; not even a stray beam filtering between some window ledge and shade.

As he loitered, to catch his breath, however, a twig cracked sharply and significantly a few feet in front of him. The sound of a muffled footfall followed this, and he glimpsed a black blur of motion.

Larry's first reaction was one of indignation. Why should Ware get mixed up on his own orders? Then his spine tingled. Ware wasn't as big a boob as all that!

He stared in the direction of the flitting shadow. There it was again. . . Two shadows, by George! There were other night prowlers besides newshounds abroad in the murky grounds of The Castle!

An atom of low, guttural sound drifted toward him. The two men of mystery were holding whispered consultation. In a moment their blurred outlines loomed larger. They had turned; were coming his way.

Larry decided he had gathered quite

enough data for the moment. It was time to withdraw discreetly, report back to Ware.

Half-crouching he stole from beneath the box-elder away from the looming forms.

His retreat, intended to be noiseless, was too hurried. He stumbled.

From behind him surged a sharp, startled oath. This was promptly answered by a low, whistle, dead ahead.

"The woods are full of 'em!" thought Larry, swinging hastily from the new menace.

The woods were so. As he loped past an innocent-looking cedar, a pair of arms reached out and clutched his body around the waist.

"Got him!" grunted a voice. "Here y'are, boys!"

"Got me? Not yet!" breathed Larry, and turned loose a driving left-hander.

It connected flush. There was a whimper of pain. The arms entwining him sagged.

**H**E twisted out of their grasp; took two swift steps, and went down under the impact of a heavy, plunging form. Another one!

They rolled in a squirming tangle of arms and legs upon the dew-moist grass. A noisy scuffle, which advertised itself so effectively three other stocky shadows closed in on it. No word was spoken as these piled on, grimly seeking to crush and collar their lone foe.

Their very numbers served Larry for an instant. He writhed out from the dog-pile, tore free, and darted for the cover of the house wall. He had felt at least one blackjack whistle past his head. Since they were so keen to get him, he wondered why they didn't shoot.

The phantom foemen continued to hold their fire, but they meant business all the same. They blocked off his escape, left and right. He had to rest content that his back was now against the house-wall—to await their rush.

It came swiftly. A wave of plunging bodies. By sheer weight it bore down Larry's guard, closed over him. No chance to squirm out of that. He lowered his head to the rain of blows, pumping back with both hands, but growing dizzy, momentarily weaker.

As from a great distance he heard a deep voice boom clearly and cheerfully: "Oh-ho! So that's your game, me lads!"

The screen of bodies stifling him ripped away as though a gale had struck it. He was vaguely aware of a big hand on his shoulder, a big head, set on a massive torso, quirking down at him.

"Who 're you, kid?" boomed the cheerful voice.

"Nobody—much," Larry gasped.

There was a mubbling laugh. "Well, come on, nobody. We've got to make a break for it. This place is plenty full of dynamite."

His rescuer swung and led the way along the house-wing at a lumbering but surprisingly swift gallop. Larry staggered blindly after him.

But their adversaries, bowled over like ten-pins by the first rush of the amazing giant, had not yet given up the fight. By no means. The lawn trembled with the drum of their pursuing footsteps.

After a short sprint, Larry began to lag. He couldn't make good time. He was exhausted. Too many adventures, he'd had, for one day. His battered head throbbed, and the breath wheezed in his tortured lungs.

The giant noticed his distress,

stopped and passed a brawny arm about his waist. Thus handicapped, however, the speeding pursuit began to catch up on them hand over hand.

"Can't make the gate," observed the giant, unruffled. "Too bad. The highway's right out yonder. If we could bust through this hedge...nope, darn it! Nothin' doin'. Back up against it, sonny—right beside me. We're due to emulate Custer's last stand..." He raised his voice. "Here we are, boys! Come one, come all—you dirty roughnecks!"

They did. At least, another wild rush started. But a new voice, spitting out sharply, meanly, raspily, from the darkness behind the grouped men of mystery, halted them almost in their tracks.

"Beat it, yuh dumb-bells! Keefe says to beat it! The cops are comin'! Duck, yuh bozos! Duck!"

**A**GAIN the turf shivered with a mad drum of racing feet. The sound, however, did not on this occasion well toward the two men backed against the hedge, but away from them. The phantom foemen had obeyed the urgent behest of that snarling voice.

The form of Aramis Ware materialized unhurriedly beside the panting Larry.

"Another close one, eh, kid? What d'ye think of my hard-guy voice? Mmm. It's worked—for the moment, anyway... Hello, who's that you've got with you?"

"Ho-ho!" chuckled the giant, cavernously.

"Well, I'll be damned!" cried Ware. "Thor Larson, of the *Star*, me bitter rival!"

"Nope, Ramy. Not your rival—after that neat life-saver. They'd have

got us sure, but for that," boomed Thor. "Say, all kinds of excitement around these parts t'-night, huh?"

"Ye-ah. Too steep for my blood, Thor, I don't mind telling you."

"Ho-ho! Perhaps not for the three of us... Sa-ay, we're all after the same thing, I'll betcha! Why not join forces—for this gay old evening, anyway? What-ho! Three musketeers, eh, Aramis?"

Larry felt a surge of wild elation. The whole thing had seemed unreal, impossible; smacked of the Arabian Nights. But here they were, the three of them, with romance brought to life!

"And you're Porthos!" Larry cried to the giant. "Porthos—every ounce and sound of you!"

**A**ND you," said Ramy to him suddenly, "remind me very much of D'Artagnan. We don't need any Athos. We're three: three musketeers. That's it for to-night, Thor! Odds bodkins and blades!" They had started the idea half in newspaper men's mockery of this fantastic situation; but now a burst of strange emotion seemed to overwhelm him: "Out rapiers! One for all—"

Like three gallant cavaliers they flung their sword-arms upward. Almost one could see the flash of glittering steel as their three lusty voices rang out simultaneously the last phrase of that stirring, dauntless war cry:

"And all for one!"

Amazingly sincere, that call of three young blades to romance. And dramatic, too.

Not so much so the quick speech of Mr. Ware which followed on the heels of it:

"Ps-st! Listen... Holy mackerel! The gang's found out I tricked 'em. Here they come again!"

"All clear to the gate," averred Thor, cocking his ear in that direction.

"Then for the love of Mike let's beat it and get organized!"

"Them's wise words, friend and brother!" Larry cried.

Thus the first act of the three noble musketeers of San Francisco was to beat a swift and ignoble retreat.

## CHAPTER IV.

### LARRY GOES ALONE.

**T**HEY halted, at length, in the haven of a beer-garden, conveniently situated a half mile down the highway. Here Larry got his first real look at Thor Larson, and the resemblance of the brawny, bulging reporter to his concept of the Dumas immortal dumfounded him. Yes, Thor was the giant musketeer Porthos, all right. His eyes were blue and almost childishly innocent, but in their clear depths lurked a mighty spirit, while dogged power and an unlimited endurance were bespoken by his blunt features and massive, square-cut jaw.

The gallants cooled the heat of their exertions with foaming flagons, set down the glasses, regarded each other and burst into hearty laughter. Thor's clarion guffaw bid fair to shake the rafters, in fact, and prompted glances of alarm from the few patrons at the far side of the large room.

Aramis introduced Larry to Thor.

"Now," said he, "inform us, Thor, how you chanced to drift out here."

The giant sobered. "Same way you fellas did, I'm bettin'. I followed Keefe Flaherty... Say, Ramy, don't it strike you Keefe is takin' an awful lot of interest in suicides these days?"

Ramy deliberated a moment. "I don't think I get you, Thor."



"Aw, say! Keefe was the egg who brought in the news of the Graham tragedy, wasn't he?"

"By George!" exclaimed Ramy. "Right. I'd forgotten." He noted that Larry was sitting up, tense with eager interest, as if this new development intrigued him deeply; and he added: "Some story, that ghastly business. You weren't here, of course. Thor, sketch it over for him, will you? I wouldn't mind hearing the details again, either. It opens up an interesting train of thought."

Thor gazed at him an instant perplexedly. "Why the devil were you birds trailing Keefe, if you didn't—Oh, well. One thing at a time, huh? The so-called Graham tragedy—it really was a combination of accident and suicide—happened about nine months ago, Larry. Here's the dope: Walter Graham, before his retirement, was the shipbuilding nabob of the Pacific Coast. He's worth about as many millions as there are gray hairs on his dome—although naturally I've never had a chance to count 'em.

"Last July Walter's lone daughter, Evelyn, was wedded to one James W. Trelawney, a nice clean young fella and a wow at polo. He didn't go in for much harder work because he didn't have to—he also being well heeled with a fortune some fond uncle left him, and a couple more in his own right.

"Well, Jimmy wedded Evelyn, and five minutes after the ceremony they vanished from the ken of men—and reporters. We naturally thought they were honeymooning incog, somewhere. So, presumably, did Pa Graham, for a while. But when suddenly, a month later, Graham offered a reward of twenty thousand cash dollars for information as to their whereabouts—we sat up and gasped, I'll tell yuh.

"It seems Pa Graham had had every private sleuth in California hunting his children, with no results at all. With the cat out of the bag the newspapers got busy—and they didn't connect either. Not one blessed clew. In the end it was Mr. Keefe Flaherty who found them. He was supposed to have been working for old Walter."

"HE wasn't, though," Ramy interjected.

"Nope. So it developed. Out on his own, for the reward, Keefe stated modestly. Anyway he found Evelyn and Jimmy—or what was left of 'em—in the charred embers of a cabin deep in the Sierra Nevada. They'd been burned to death. The girl had, anyway. Trelawney was polite enough or fool enough to leave a note—apparently scribbled in the middle of the holocaust—to the effect that the flames already having devoured Evelyn he didn't care to live without her. Stuck it into a tin box on the table, it would seem, and plunged into the fire. Legally, therefore, he was a suicide.

"As it turned out, Jimmy's note did more than give a suicide angle to the story. It established prior death for the woman. Thus Jimmy's estate—he being an orphan, and not having made a will—instead of going to Evelyn's side of the family, reverted to a first cousin in the Middle West. The cousin—Lawrence, I believe his name is—arrived in San Francisco presently, and petitioned the court to appoint the Honorable Joseph Winship administrator of the estate until it is probated. The event will occur before long now—and that's that." He sighed, then bellowed lustily for another schooner of the illicit golden beverage.

"It's a sad story," Larry remarked, after a moment, "but it sounds open

and above-board. Flaherty may be a better Sherlock than you give him credit for. Or it may have been bull luck. Anyway, I don't see anything peculiar about it."

"That," said Ramy slowly, "is because you've not yet had sufficient experience of Mr. Flaherty—or mayhap because you don't know the Honorable Joseph Winship."

"Well, who is he?"

"The Honorable Joseph erstwhile adorned the Senate of these United States. He still is extremely influential in State politics, although he doesn't appear actively, devoting his time and wealth to yachting, racing, and other high-hat sports, and occasionally to the law. Yea. Verily, he is a personage of power and prominence. Also he is—"

Ramy broke off and looked across the table at Thor. A singular glow began to sparkle in the eyes of both of them. But Ramy, for some reason, didn't carry on as Larry felt sure he had intended. His slight shrug struck young Mr. Bellew as significant, particularly when he left the sentence unfinished.

"And there were other angles to the tragedy that jarred the funnybones of Thor, myself, and one or two other boys," he continued thoughtfully. "I recall them plainly now. That suicide note, for instance, on which hung the two-odd millions of Trelawney's fortune, was pat; entirely too pat. Can you imagine a man, heart-broken, girdled by leaping flames, finding time to write a thing like that?"

"Didn't they verify the writing?" Larry asked.

"Oh, yes. And pronounced it genuine, with due allowance for emotion, the circumstances, and what-not. Also the identification of poor Jimmy and

the girl was bullet-proof. Graham recognized his daughter's rings. And Jimmy's bill-fold was there, half-consumed, but with several papers recognizable. There were even ten thousand-dollar bills—all genuine—still in it. That was amazingly pat, too, when one considers how completely the bodies were destroyed. Also, we wondered, some of us, why Jimmy's roadster was subsequently found in San Francisco Bay—more than two hundred miles from the place he died."

"Stolen?"

"PERHAPS. At all events they fished it up with cars that had been stolen beyond doubt. The bay's a favorite dumping place for such, after they've been stripped. Trelawney's hadn't been stripped, though. Ah, well. Time's too precious to waste in idle speculation. Our various and respected editors were willing to let things ride. Too damned willin'—eh, Thor—when you consider that note and a few other things? Lots of the boys thought so. But, heck! We're only wage-slaves, when our bosses say nix—and they did that. Ye-ah. They called us off proper, the moment the Honorable Joseph Winship bobbed up on the scene."

"The point is," Thor rumbled, "that Keefe Flaherty appears to be specializing in big suicides. 'At's why I trailed him out here, kicking away four bucks in taxi fare, by jingo! Worth it, though. After what happened back on that lawn to me an' Larry—ho-ho! My bean's a-buzz with curiosity! Now, Ramy: your turn. We weren't following the same line a-tall, apparently. Come on, boy. Show *your* hand."

Ware smiled, and softly described the roistering adventures of Larry up-

on the Sacramento highway, together with their not-so-pleasant aftermath upon the Cliff Shore Drive. Thor's eyes were round when he had finished.

"Uh-huh!" he nodded slowly. "The soup thickens."

"You said it, Thor. I'm frankly itching to learn why Milady Helena should be willing to entertain Sir Keefe so cordially this evening—after Larry had to lick him, for her sweet sake, no later than this afternoon. Also why two-fisted men of mystery so closely throng The Castle grounds."

"Ho-ho!" cried Thor. "Musketees and loyal comrades—we must get at the root of this! Look here: a pox on skulking! Let's assault the drawbridge: all three of us march boldly up to the front door and demand audience with milady!"

"I somehow opine that more could be accomplished with less martial tactics," averred Larry.

"For instance?" demanded Thor.

"Why not let me go in alone? She knows me, and I think she likes me. If there's really something funny stirring—why, I'll have a darned good chance to sniff it out."

Thor blinked inquiringly at Ramy. Instinctively both the others had conferred leadership upon this quiet and composed young man.

After a moment Ramy nodded.

"You're elected—D'Artagnan. You can brave The Castle. But Thor and I will linger in the near offing, somewhere, just in case of need... All right, then. Let's get along."

Thor peered up the drive. "Ah-ha! Flaherty's car is gone!"

"Not surprising," observed Ramy, "after the row we staged. Those were his men. It was obvious from their conduct when I yelled his name. So he'd soon learn about it."

"Those strong-arm gents gone, too, d'you reckon?"

"I doubt it. My hunch is they've been posted to discourage prowling on these grounds to-night. Why—and whom—I wonder? They couldn't have been expecting us... Perhaps no one in particular... And it doesn't follow that Keefe himself has left The Castle, because his car is gone. Anyway, Larry can soon find out. Hop to it, son. And remember, if anything should break wrong, we're right here."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.



### *Skiing on Sand Dunes*

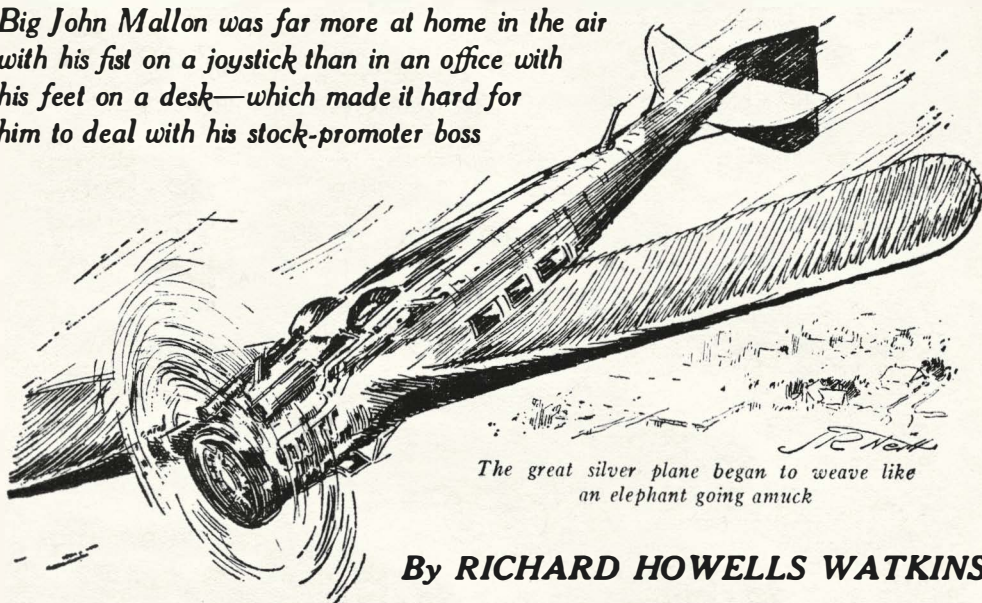
ONE of the latest sports in southern Colorado is skiing on the great sand dunes there, which can be done any time of the year. The famous sand dunes of the San Luis Valley are a vast area of pulverized sand over twelve miles long and six miles wide, dropping for over a thousand feet from the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in a gradual slope. The sand dunes contain many natural ski courses, with plenty of hazards in the form of small hills and wide crevasses. A number of ski enthusiasts who have tried the sand dunes claim that the sand furnishes ample sliding surface, and that it affords sport just as exciting as the snow courses. The State Highway Department is building a paved road to the dunes, which geologists claim were the bottom of a great inland sea many centuries ago.

*F. S. Reynolds.*



# The Barnstormer

*Big John Mallon was far more at home in the air with his fist on a joystick than in an office with his feet on a desk—which made it hard for him to deal with his stock-promoter boss*



*The great silver plane began to weave like an elephant going amuck*

**By RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS**

**B**IG JOHN MALLON sat at his mahogany desk on the forty-seventh floor of the Preston Building and grinned broadly at his fingers.

To the casual eye those digits were no laughing matter. They had much the appearance of normal fingers magnified to two diameters, with sundry old cuts, dislocations and callouses almost disgracefully apparent.

What pleased Big John was that for once his fingers were quite devoid of oil or grease, and moreover, the nails were manicured to a state of absolute perfection.

"I'm goin' to keep them this way, too," Big John stated. His massive jaws shut with all the determination of the steel doors of a vault.

Had Big John been able to survey the remainder of his person he would have grinned even more proudly. For his weighty, sinewy body was clad, not

in his usual khaki shirt and khaki knickers, liberally and evenly spotted with grease, but in a light-weight, blue-serge suit creased only where it should be creased. Also, he wore a most conservative maroon necktie, tan silk socks and tan oxfords.

Though Big John could not see all this, Spider Simmons could. A small wrinkled man was Spider, and he made himself even smaller by sitting on the edge of his chair in a slightly crouching position, as if prepared for anything. No emergency was apparent in the ornate office, but nevertheless Spider's seamed and weather-worn countenance mirrored habitual apprehension. One acquainted with Spider's experiences through seventeen years as an airplane mechanic would have said that he was entitled to that expression.

"When you're sitting prettiest, look out for rocks," said Spider Sim-

mons solemnly. "When your motor's hitting like an eight-day clock, keep your eye peeled for a landing field."

Big John Mallon laughed. The mouthful of battered teeth he displayed hinted, like his hands, of many mistakes.

"When they got you nailed up in your coffin, worry about it!" he retorted. "I'm sittin' soft, with both feet on the ground, for the first time in my life. The guy that wants to get me back into barnstormin' is up against more than gravity."

The door into an adjoining office was tapped upon gently and opened with soft efficiency to admit Stewart W. C. Kensmore, president of the Mallon Monoplane Company.

**A**BOUT Mr. Kensmore there was nothing of the promoter, as imagined by the general public. He was neither fat nor flashy. His gray business suit was a miracle of good taste, and his manner was the exact opposite of that of the high-pressure salesman. His broad, white face gave an impression of unchanging benevolence.

"Ah—Mr. Mallon—if I may intrude," he said, with proper deference, "there is a lady desirous of interviewing you for the *Express*, a Miss Miriam Bell."

"Shoot her in, boss," Big John directed. He opened a desk drawer and drew out of it several sheets of paper clipped together. "No use feeding her any of this technical guff, hey? I'll just unload some flying field chatter on her."

"The—ah—informal, rather than theoretical, matter might be of more interest to her," Mr. Kensmore agreed. "Especially"—there was a tender reproach in his refined voice—

"as I am not quite satisfied that you have absorbed the—ah—theory of flight in toto . . . And—ah—Mr. Mallon, if I may suggest—the tip, rather than half the handkerchief, should be seen in the breast pocket."

Hastily Big John stuffed his protruding handkerchief back into his pocket, straightened his tie and vigorously polished his spotless shoes on the back of his trouser legs.

Mr. Kensmore remained for an instant motionless, in rapt inspection. Big John breathed heavily during that instant.

"Please remember to rise when the lady enters the room," Mr. Kensmore said and withdrew. He failed to see, however, the suspicion of a smile that crept into the face of Big John as he turned to Spider.

"There's a guy I heard of once that you remind me of, since Kensmore dollyed you up," Spider Simmons ventured.

He rose, with his forehead creasing and uncreasing vigorously as if he were attempting to massage his brain. Failing to arouse the organ to remembrance, he moved toward the outer door of the suite. "I'll hang around outside till you've buzzed the dame," he said. After peering suspiciously into the hall, as if for lurking murderers, he slipped noiselessly through the door.

Big John, thrusting his prompt sheets into the drawer again, waited confidently. Mr. Kensmore himself escorted the interviewer into the office.

**N**OW here," said Mr. Kensmore, permitting a proud quaver to enter his voice, "is Mr. Mallon, our chief engineer and vice president in charge of operations. I

will not embarrass Mr. Mallon by referring to him as the holder of the world's one-man endurance record, made in the ship of his own design, the Mallon Mono."

"It would be quite unnecessary," Miss Miriam Bell agreed. "Who does not know of Mr. Mallon's many feats in the air?"

"Aw, heck—uh—go on," stammered Big John modestly. He cast an anxious glance at Mr. Kensmore. But Mr. Kensmore, with no reproof whatever visible on his countenance, smiled pleasantly and shortly left them together.

Big John, gazing with approval at the level blue eyes of the fair oval face of his interviewer, prepared to enjoy himself. The girl was quite business-like, sitting there with her hands grasping a notebook in her lap and her feet planted tightly on the carpet, but she was also most decorative.

"Mr. Mallon," she said abruptly, "there are many wonderful achievements in your career—the non-stop transcontinental flight, the Atlantic flight, and dozens of others. But what interests me most of all is how you managed, in your active life as a pilot, to become such a splendid aeronautical engineer and to design so wonderful a plane as the Mallon Mono. Was mathematics your *forte* in college?"

"At what? My what?" Big John muttered. "Mathematics?" He drew a quick breath, smiled genially and at some length and then went on rather slowly: "Yes, I was always a bug at mathematics. I could make figures curl up and die, so of course designin' a ship was a cinch."

"I thought it must have been genius rather than mere talent," murmured the girl. "I, too, am a student of the theory of flight—a most humble and

ignorant one, I'm afraid. Mr. Mallon, would you mind explaining to me for my own satisfaction the principle of dynamic similarity?"

Big John Mallon sat appalled, staring at his manicured finger nails. They did not help him in the least. "It—it would take too long," he said heavily, at last. "Can't waste your time that way. Uh— Here's a funny thing. Did you know it was the upper side of a wing that did most of the liftin'?"

"Oh, yes," said the girl, without interest. "Another thing that has always bothered me is aspect ratio. I know it's quite simple, but—I'm rather forgetful. Would you mind just clarifying it in a word or two?"

"Aspect ratio," repeated Big John Mallon very slowly. "Aspect ratio. Well, sister, it's this way: If you see a ship a long ways off, why, it looks smaller than it does close up."

"Oh!" said the girl. "I am dumb—positively dumb! Here I've been thinking it had something to do with the ratio of the square of the maximum span to the total area of an aërofoil."

"Uh-huh?" burred Big John. In his ears were ringing the prophetic words of Spider Simmons: "When you're sitting prettiest, look out for th' rocks."

He glanced down at his manicured hands in sudden distrust. They were still white and well-kept. He clamped his jaw.

**S**UDDENLY the girl abandoned her position of prim efficiency and leaned forward to look searchingly into the confused countenance of Big John.

"Mr. Mallon," she said earnestly, "you're a well-known flying man: a national hero. Why do you let a man



like Stewart Kensmore, a scheming rascal whose god is money, use you in this stock-selling swindle of his?"

Big John stood up. He loomed over the girl like a leaning tower, but, save to raise her head, she did not move.

"Stock-selling swindle!" he thundered indignantly. "We've got a field leased and a site picked for the factory. We've got a ship that's got an edge on anything that ever bounced off an airdrome. We've got—"

"Did you design the plane?" she cut in. "Did you?"

"I—" Big John hesitated and stared longingly at the door that connected his office with that of Mr. Kensmore. He drew out his handkerchief and swabbed his brow frankly, in a manner of which Mr. Kensmore would not have approved.

"Did you design the plane, or did Howard Inman bring the plans to Mr. Kensmore, hoping to interest him, only to have Kensmore steal them?"

"I never heard of Howard Inman!" Big John said with fierce emphasis. Here was something he could deny. "Who—who in—Who's Howard Inman, anyhow?"

"Howard," said the girl, in a sudden burst of vehemence, "is one of the greatest aeronautical engineers in this country, even though he is young and isn't known. He's done vital work for several designers—virtually made them—and then, when he designed this plane—the plane you call the Mallon Mono—Kensmore stole it outright from him. That's who Howard is!"

Big John, who had been listening apprehensively to this outburst, smiled humorlessly at the end of it.

"Howard, hey?" he repeated slowly. "Sure you don't call him 'Howie dear'? Well, if I've done anything to

Howie, why don't he come around here to see me himself instead of sending his girl to do it? Send him round! Be glad to see him. And tell him it's only forty-seven floors to the ground! That ain't much for an aeronautical designer."

"Oh!" cried the girl. She leaped to her feet. "Oh! You—you beast! You bully! Oh!"

For a moment she stood poised, viewing him with unutterable loathing. Then, in a flash, she was at the outer door and away.

Big John, though ordinarily somewhat quicker than high voltage, stared numbly at the closed door. That last "Oh!" had been an epithet and a summary of her opinion of him.

**I**N less than a minute Spider Simmons poked his head cautiously through the door and entered. "Some looker, that girl," he conceded reluctantly. "Nice high color. But who do you suppose was waiting for her by the elevator? Howard Inman."

"Who in blazes is Howard Inman?" Big John rasped angrily.

"Aeronautical engineer, all brains, no face," Spider retorted, reseating himself doubtfully on the edge of his chair. "Blushes and runs if a cockroach scowls at him, but they say he's there at a drafting board."

"Never heard of him," Big John growled.

"You've flown some of his ships," Spider replied placidly.

"That—that nosy girl says he designed this Mallon Mono and Kensmore stole it from him."

Spider conveyed his ignorance by a shrug. "Kensmore had to steal it from some one—and Inman's a nice, easy guy to swipe things from," he pointed out. "Say, you better fix that hand-

kerchief straight before Kensmore gets back."

Big John profanely dismissed his handkerchief from consideration.

"Because a guy's bashful it don't mean he isn't crooked, too," he muttered. "Inman may be foolin' that girl."

Spider yawned. He made it plain that he was not interested.

"You think Kensmore's crooked?" Big John demanded.

Spider Simmons bent on him a glance of pure astonishment. "Quit your kidding," he rebuked. "I suppose you think he's straighter than a circle."

Their conversation was interrupted by the soft tap of Mr. Kensmore's finger nails.

"Good interview?" he inquired brightly.

Big John grunted.

"Who is Howard Inman?" he inquired.

Mr. Kensmore's features became instantly more absent-minded than ever. He tilted his head.

"Howard Inman, did you say? A—ah—visionary fellow who pestered me persistently about the time I entered the aeronautical world," he said. "A dreamy, impractical fellow. Why do you ask?"

"She mentioned him," Big John answered briefly.

Mr. Kensmore came rather quickly toward the desk.

"In what connection?" he asked with a benevolent smile.

"In—sort of in connection with designing airplanes," Big John answered. "I told her I'd never heard of the lad."

"Quite right," said Mr. Kensmore, with approval. "Ah—Mr. Mallon, I've been thinking—" He continued to

do so, wide-eyed, smiling and exceedingly pleasant in appearance for a long two minutes. Then, abruptly, he raised his head.

"Mr. Mallon, I've decided to advance the date of our little public 'jubilation' and laying of the corner stone of the factory," he announced. "We will have it this Wednesday, instead of next week. I will notify the newspapers and arrange to have their representatives present."

"How about the sale of this stock we're going to let the public have?" Big John inquired.

"Oh, I'd quite forgotten that phase of it," murmured Mr. Kensmore. "We'll have to advance the date of the opening of the subscription books to Thursday. It isn't fair to keep people in suspense too long. I'll—I'll—ah—attend to that now."

But at the door he stopped and looked back at his chief engineer and vice president in charge of operations.

"No other reporter has asked you a thing about this man—ah—Inman?"

"Not one," Big John answered. "Say, if some of 'em should get too inquisitive about the finer points of slingin' a ship together on a drawing board, hadn't I better say I left the detail work to a helper?"

"A very good idea," Mr. Kensmore approved. "A subordinate in charge of technical details, we may say. I—ah—Forgive me, my dear Mallon, if I venture to suggest that your knowledge of engineering has, on occasions, given me twinges of anxiety."

"Same here," Big John answered. "And the name of this guy that helped me—Who is the lad that really designed this Mallon Mono, anyhow? We can use his name, can't we?"

Mr. Kensmore coughed. "Certainly," he replied, when he had recovered. "A splendid suggestion. I—ah—will give you his name later. Just now I must—"

He opened the door and vanished.

"Why didn't he say 'Smith,' and let it go at that?" Spider Simmons muttered. "Smith don't sound too much like Inman, does it?"

Big John Mallon did not answer. He was busy examining his fingers, so astonishingly clean and unsullied by recent work.

**M**R. KENSMORE'S jubilation, as he delighted to call it, was nominally the laying of the corner stone of the factory of the Mallon Monoplane Company. As a matter of fact, the corner stone of the Mallon Company had been laid some months before, when Mr. Kensmore had extracted Big John Mallon from the midst of a highly erratic, poorly paid and very dangerous career as a freelance pilot who devoted himself to shooting at records.

Mr. Kensmore had provided Mr. Mallon with a very good plane, turned him loose on one more record, the one-man endurance record, and then anchored him to the ground with a title, a salary and a reputation as an engineer. Mr. Kensmore knew that the public would believe anything it desired to believe, and would not blink an eyelid at the sudden transformation of a popular stunt pilot into a clever engineer. The fact that a pilot is no more an aeronautical engineer than a sharpshooter is a munition manufacturer would not bother those to whom Mr. Kensmore was addressing his efforts.

The promoter well knew the impossibility of bribing the newspapers, but

nevertheless he determined to make it very difficult indeed for the reporters and photographers assigned to his little celebration to see his company in any other than a pleasing light.

On Wednesday, large, fast, expensive cars conveyed the newspaper men from New York direct to the flying field. There, under a bravely striped tent, skillfully waited on by colored servitors, they lunched at length and at leisure. Nobody pestered them with speeches or mimeographed statements about airplanes or corner stones.

Mr. Kensmore and Mr. Mallon, with other less important members of the company, such as Spider Simmons, lunched with the reporters and saw to it that they enjoyed themselves. Mr. Simmons sat upon the edge of his canvas chair and surveyed the adequate tent poles with a suspicious eye. His attitude, however, was unnoticed in the general relaxation.

The only hints of the business to come were a mason with some mortar, a large and undeniably handsome corner stone and two airplanes that stood side by side upon the edge of the field in front of a canvas hangar.

One of these planes was the Mallon Mono, certainly a handsome craft. The Mallon was simply a wing, a gleaming, silver metal wing. The motor was a stream-lined forward projection and the cabin a backward extension of the all-embracing, beautifully curving wing. True, the landing struts and wheels, composing an ugly angular structure, supported the curving wing, but this jarring apparatus was drawn up into the fuselage once the ship mounted into the air.

Beside the Mallon Mono was the other plane—a thing like a wire bird cage which has been kicked about in an open lot for a year or so. It was



an ancient training biplane, paintless, curveless and rickety, with landing wires, flying wires, inter-wing wires and control wires shamelessly offering air resistance in every part of its anatomy. The motor looked like something which had been assembled from pieces collected in the dark at an automobile graveyard.

In short. Mr. Kensmore had provided his guests with contrast. The old and the new. Flight before and after the coming of the Mallon Mono.

THE luncheon was a decided and loud success, so much so that Spider Simmons was able to reach Big John's side and speak to him without fear of being overheard. His countenance was triumphantly uneasy.

"That girl from the *Express* and Howard Inman are outside," he warned the vice-president. "They've been talking to a few of these guys—the ones with the longer faces and the shorter appetites."

"Let 'em talk," Big John retorted. In his well-tailored gray flannel suit his dignity and distance from vulgar, manual labor were strikingly enhanced. "D'you think any of this newspaper gang would dare call us crooked on the word of that little skeezicks that blushes when any one looks at him? Not a chance!"

Spider Simmons grunted almost regretful assent. "I was just telling you," he said gloomily.

Big John glanced around the tent. Everybody seemed quite happy. He arose.

"I want to talk to that bird, Inman," he said to Spider. "You tell the boss I've gone out."

With a casual nod to the nearest lunchers he slipped through the tent flap.

By the ropes inclosing the shining splendor of the Mono from irreverent hands he saw the slim, upright figure of Miriam Bell. Beside her, drooping in a sort of trance, with his admiring eyes unwaveringly upon the plane, was a blond man not much taller than the girl.

Big John stopped. Miriam Bell turned and saw him. Instantly she placed herself between him and the little man so utterly absorbed in the plane. Quite unaware of how ridiculous her opposition to that grim giant must appear, her eyes challenged him. She was like a mother wren defying a hawk.

Big John in his two strides had evaded her. His large hand fell ruthlessly upon the small man's shoulder. "You got a card of admission to this field, brother?"

Miriam Bell uttered a cry. "Howard!" she exclaimed, with a catch in her voice. "Be careful! It's Mallon!"

"Mallon himself," Big John confirmed, glowering down into the face of Howard Inman. "Designer of the Mallon Mono. An' what are you doin' here?"

Mr. Inman did not explain. He uttered a small squeak, such as a mouse might emit when its tail was caught in a trap. Then he left the ground and impinged upon Big John's powerful chest. Clinging like a bat, he began, hastily and vigorously, to punch, scratch, jab, pound with his head and kick with his feet all available portions of Big John's body. And he uttered no other sound.

"Here!" roared the big pilot, staggering under the assault. His huge hands reached down and relentlessly peeled the airplane designer off his chest.

Mr. Inman, still silent, continued his efforts with a concentration of purpose that, in other circumstances, might have been admirable. Just now it was merely effective. Even when Big John held him out at arm's length the little man still wreaked what vengeance he could upon the arm.

Miriam Bell, who had remained motionless during all this, suddenly intervened with blazing eyes.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Let him alone, you great bully! Stop that! Howie, has he hurt you?"

"Hurt him!" rasped Big John, pulling Howie from one arm only to have him fasten as venomously on the other.

Gently the girl laid both her hands on one of Inman's arms and disengaged it from the fray. An instant later she had the gasping designer entirely withdrawn from action. Her wide, blue eyes, horror-struck and accusing, continued the assault upon Big John where Howie had left off.

"Not content with stealing his plans—with posing as the designer of this plane—you must add physical violence," she said with deep reproach. "Oh, how could you—a man like you—twice his size! Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Oh, be damned!" Big John retorted. Nursing his lacerations of the spirit and body he turned his back on them both and returned to the tent.

**H**E found Spider was peering out of the tent flap.

"And I thought Inman was bashful," Spider muttered. "A guy that can kick like that is positively—what d'you call it?—obtrusive, like."

Big John growled. "He certainly acts like he thought he'd designed that ship!" he muttered.

Spider stared. "If that's what you wanted to know you took a tough way

of making sure. Satisfied? You don't look satisfied."

At that moment Mr. Kensmore joined them.

"It's going off very well," he said with a most genial smile. "Are you all ready to—" He ceased to speak abruptly as his eyes, wandering toward the plane, fell upon the distant Inman.

"Oh—I don't like that!" he muttered. "That fellow Inman! A trouble-maker! A trouble-maker if ever there was one! I shall have him put off the field before the—"

"That newspaper girl brought him," Big John put in, without much interest in his voice. "If you have him run off you'll make her sore and maybe the rest of 'em. What are you worried about? He hasn't the front to convince anybody he could design a tin whistle."

"True! True!" Stewart W. C. Kensmore admitted. He wiped his forehead with his unblemished handkerchief. "We will ignore him, then. And if he should make a disturbance I shall have one of the men—"

"One of the other men," Big John amended.

"—one of the other men gently draw him away."

"Be sure you tell him to do it gently," his chief engineer advised and returned to the tent.

**N**OT twenty minutes later the real business of the afternoon began.

Mr. Kensmore made a speech. His benevolent, wandering eyes passed over Howard Inman, who sat beside Miriam Bell and glowered in the background.

"We have something here to show you, not to talk about," Mr. Kensmore said. "The ship in which Mr. Mallon made his remarkable duration flight

was but the forerunner of this plane you see before you, the finished product. This is the ship which we will produce in quantities at this factory."

Mr. Kensmore waved a hand toward the shimmering silver wing and the sad-looking wreck beside it. "You see here the Mallon Mono—the plane of the future—and you see, too, the plane of the past. Compare them. Mr. Mallon will fly the Mono."

He stopped for a moment to smile broadly at the ancient bird cage. "Any one who wishes may fly the other."

He raised one hand impressively. Instantly the starter of the Mallon Mono whirred and the motor burst into roaring life. Simultaneously mechanics began, not too energetically, the task of getting the engine of the ramshackle bird cage to clanking. More contrast.

"Wait a minute!" shouted Big John, as the well-fed and peaceful reporters lifted a dutiful cheer. "Cut that motor! Gentlemen, this here is a corner stone layin', but it's also goin' to be an initiation. Our president, Mr. Kensmore, has not up to now ridden in an airplane. Maybe that's because the Mallon Mono has just been built and he didn't like the other ones. Anyhow, I'm goin' to take him up for a short hop to-day by way of usherin' him into the aeronautical world. I hope he likes it."

Another cheer rose from the newspaper men.

Mr. Kensmore turned a quick, amazed countenance toward his chief engineer. Big John grinned back at him and then laid a hand on his arm.

"You can't back out now," he said softly. "It would be too much like knockin' your own ship. I'm goin' to take you for a ride."

There was something about that last sentence, some disagreeable meaning

and possibly some unpleasing tone, that did not appeal to Mr. Kensmore. But, as Big John had said, he could not back out now.

"I do not like these surprises, Mallon," he muttered rather pettishly, as his chief engineer escorted him over to the plane. "I do not, indeed."

"You don't know whether you're goin' to like it or not," Big John answered and again there was that something about his voice. "I do."

Although the Mono was a cabin ship, Big John Mallon in person fastened a safety belt about his chief. This somewhat reassured Mr. Kensmore. An instant later, catching sight of the brooding eyes of Spider Simmons, he felt worse.

Big John snapped another belt about his own middle, revved up the motor and took off in his usual businesslike way.

For several thousand feet of climb his handling of the stick was perfect. It was not until he had reeled in the folding landing gear and looked over the side of the ship carefully that a slight waywardness came into his piloting.

The great silver wing oscillated in the air, much as an elephant, about to go amuck, weaves in his chains. Then, with a zoom skyward, a stall and a swift, arresting tail slide, Big John started work.

**I**T is surprising how many evolutions a man of experience can make an airplane perform. Even more surprising is the short space of time in which a man may reveal all that he knows about stunting a ship. Though Big John, in addition to the usual stuff, did a number of things for which there are no words in the language of aeronautics, he found that he was repeating



himself before he was halfway back to earth. So, realizing the effectiveness of the old-fashioned tailspin, he put the glittering ship into one and rested on his stick.

The ground corkscrewed up toward them, reeling and staggering. Nearer and nearer it leaped. Big John watched its approach with attention, even with interest. He unreeled the landing gear. He was almost over the luncheon tent.

With quick decision he picked his trees. They were not big trees, but nevertheless they could not be called saplings. They were perhaps fifteen feet apart, and formed part of a row along the near side of the field.

"Good enough," he muttered, approvingly, as he ruddered sharply with the control stick in neutral.

The ship came out of the spin, but Big John had drawn it rather close. So close, in fact, that in avoiding the refreshment tent his landing wheels slicked through the top of the canvas hangar.

This rendered even more spectacular the wind-up. The fuselage of the ship passed between the two young trees in the row, but the broad wing did not. Each stout tree trunk did its duty perfectly. The wing was sheared off as cleanly as if it were removed by knives.

The fuselage bounced tremendously. It shot along on the landing wheels, then it hit a slight bump in the field and nosed over in a ground loop. The Mallon Mono was no longer an airplane.

The volume of noise from Stewart W. C. Kensmore reassured Big John as to his essential safety. He did not attempt to release himself and Mr. Kensmore from the overturned fuselage. He wanted to give the guests a moment to reach them. One of his

hands was bleeding and the gray flannel coat had been ripped in the crash. But it had been a thorough crash.

The guests were not backward. They streamed out over the field with all the speed of starters in a road race. In no time at all the wreckage of the Mallon Mono was surrounded by breathless observers. Spider Simmons condemned the battered ship as junk in one lugubrious glance.

Big John Mallon unsnapped his belt and extricated Stewart W. C. Kensmore from his upside down position. He hauled his blue-faced, now speechless chief up on top of the capsized fuselage. He held him there with one hand tucked in his coat collar and raised the other in an imperative demand for silence.

"In case you haven't guessed it yet, Mr. Kensmore has retired from the flying business," he announced grimly. "In fact, he sort of dislikes it now, and by the time I get through—"

He thumped his chest vigorously to indicate himself. "I'm out of the Mallon Mono Company myself. Why? Because this ship never was the Mallon Mono. I hung up a record in the ship, but it was another man's design—not mine, not Kensmore's.

"Kensmore pinched the ship—or the plans for it—from another guy, and passed on the glory of designin' it to me. I was the show window and he was the lad that was goin' to sell the stock. Well, if he double-crossed the guy that designed his ship—what was he goin' to do to the public? You answer that one."

**K**ENSMORE writhed, mouthing imprecations, but Mallon merely tightened his hold. He looked out over the excited heads around him and perceived the small figure of How-

ard Inman fighting his way through the crowd.

"Here comes the guy that designed this plane," he said, pointing a large, spotless finger. "I couldn't give him back the ship, but I guess now he can take his plans to some other—"

The small designer had torn his way through the open-mouthed newspaper men. His red-rimmed eyes fell desolately upon the silver ship. One lightning glance he gave it, and then, with a shriek of rage, sprang up on the fuselage with clawing hands.

"My plane—my beautiful plane—you—you—"

His voice was agonized. It was plain that ownership meant nothing then to Inman; he mourned the destruction of the concrete expression of his dreams, even though it had belonged to the thief. He leaped, not at the man that had despoiled him, but at the man who had crashed the ship.

Dextrously Big John Mallon sidestepped. He swung the struggling Kensmore between him and the infuriated little engineer. The two men crashed together, locked arms to preserve their balance on the fuselage and slid, still entangled, to the ground.

"Don't he act like he'd designed it?" Big John demanded. His eyes passed above the heads of the reporters, to where Miriam Bell stood alone.

She was quite motionless and the blue eyes were fixed upon his. One hand lay on her breast as if to still some inner tumult.

He thumped his chest again with his bleeding hand and spoke, above scores of ears, to hers alone.

"Me, I'm a pilot—a dirty, ignorant bum of a pilot. Say anything you want about me in the papers to-morrow—I reckon I deserve it—but say I'm a pilot, too."

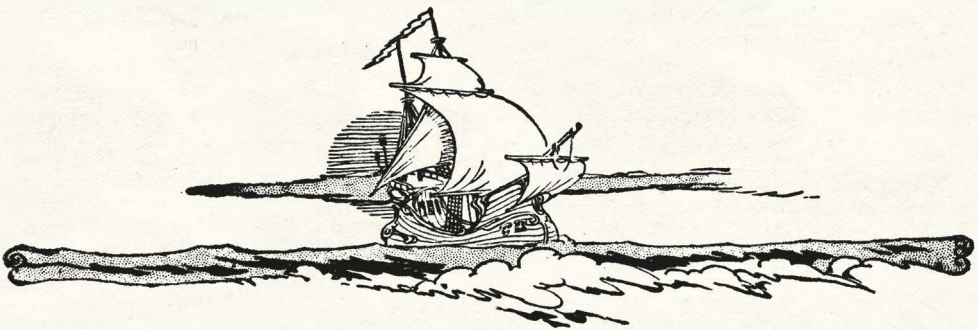
He jerked off his flannel coat and flung it down on Kensmore. Then he jumped almost onto the heads of the foremost of the crowd and breasted his way through, like a liner among tugs.

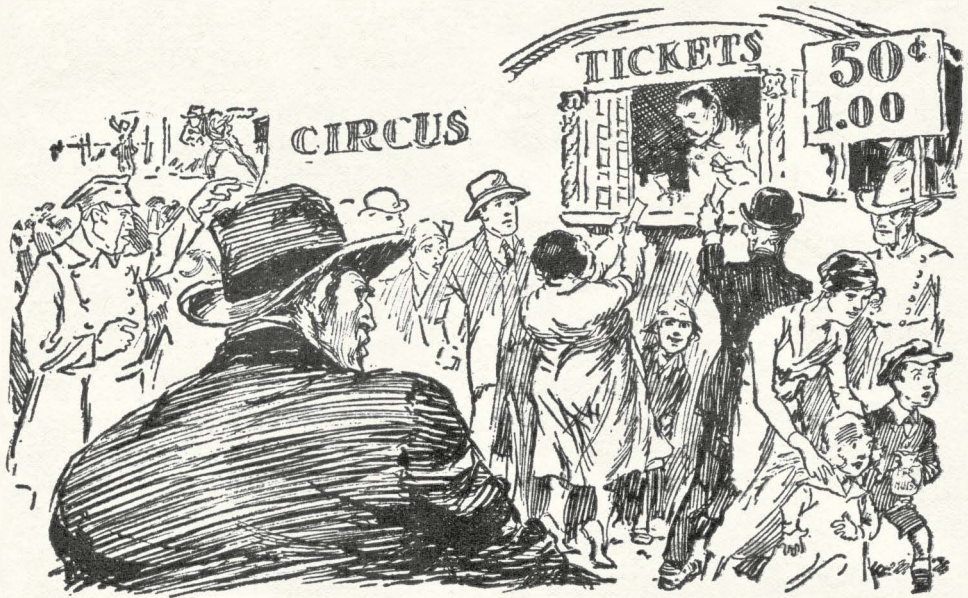
"And if you don't believe I'm a pilot, watch me fly this thing," he said, over his shoulder with his grim face turned toward the girl. He headed for the ancient wreck that denoted most strikingly the past of aviation. He laid a soiled but competent hand on the rim of the pilot's cockpit and pulled himself aboard.

In the forward compartment Spider Simmons lifted his head. Though, in that coughing, unairworthy ship, he sat on the very verge of eternity, he sat back comfortably.

"Let's go, boss!" he said, estimating the western horizon with a shrewd eye. "It looks dusty ahead, but let's go."

THE END.





# Circus Revenge

*Jack Graham was torn between two purposes—his fierce need to mete out stern justice to a murderer, and his early and deep love for the circus world which that murderer ruled*

**By JOHN WILSTACH**

*Author of "Circus Blood," "Hey, Rube!" etc.*

***Novelette—Complete***

## CHAPTER I.

### MURDER IN THE SAWDUST.

**T**HE gray dawn dissolved in the sky. White spears of radiance lighted the room. Jack Graham stretched, broke the cobwebs of sleep. He heaved himself from his cot in one swift motion, reached for his clothes. An alarm clock wasn't needed this morning. The circus was coming to town! That was enough for a fellow who had been wild about the "mud opera" ever since old enough to carry a pail of water for the elephants.

That was years ago, since he figured he was a man now at the age of nineteen. But the smell of the sawdust brought the same allure.

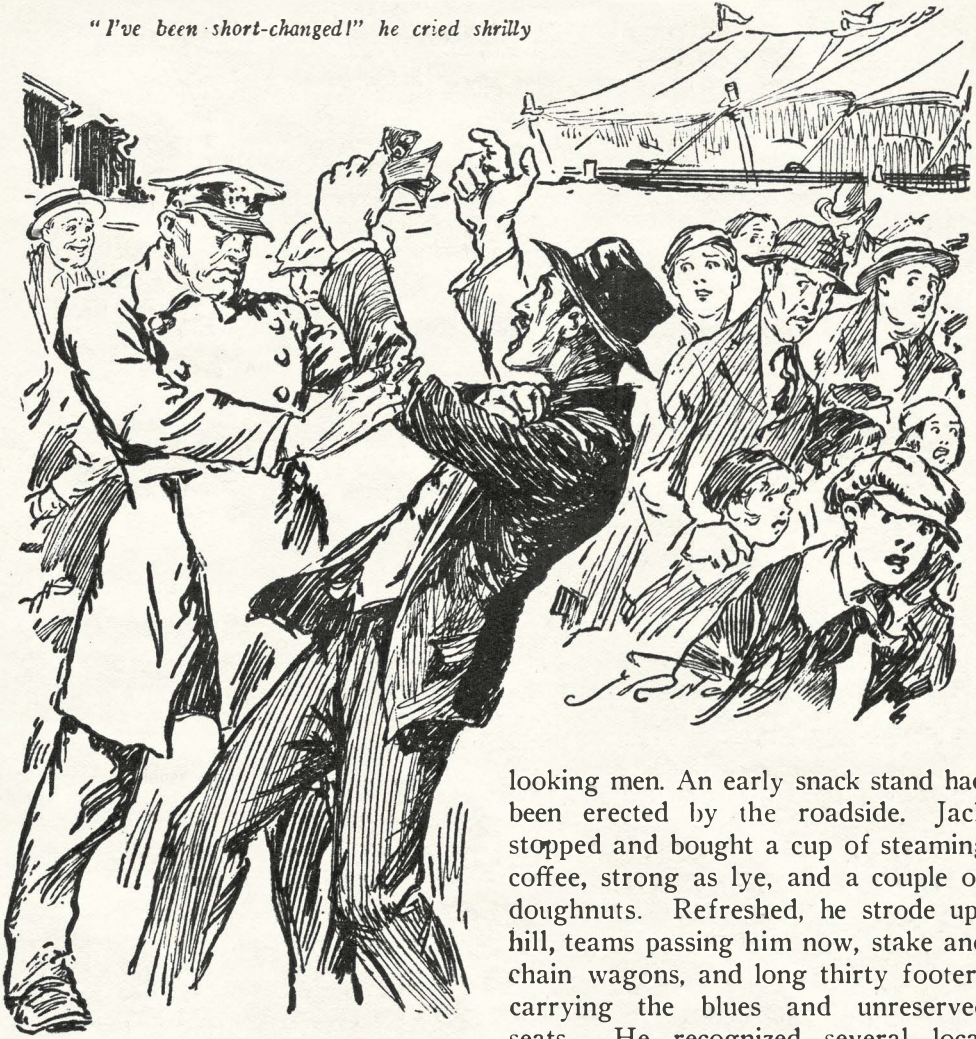
As he quickly dressed, Jack little dreamed that to-day's annual visit to Peaseville and the Benson & Burley Circus was to be a tragic turning point in his life.

Holding his shoes in one hand, he tiptoed downstairs. His father didn't work at the mill on Saturday. Still there was no need to rob him of his early morning sleep.

Unlatching the front door of the



*"I've been short-changed!" he cried shrilly*



little bungalow, he closed it quietly behind him, sat down on the lower step to the porch and slipped on his shoes. Then he started toward the circus lot, out by the ball field, taking a short cut. The air being chilly, he turned up the collar of his coat, waved his arms against his shoulders to start the blood circulating.

Nearing the lot he met signs of the circus. First there were teams of baggage stock, being watered at a stream; huge, shaggy animals led by rough-

looking men. An early snack stand had been erected by the roadside. Jack stopped and bought a cup of steaming coffee, strong as lye, and a couple of doughnuts. Refreshed, he strode uphill, teams passing him now, stake and chain wagons, and long thirty footers carrying the blues and unreserved seats. He recognized several local carts, carrying provisions, hay, and fodder, which must have been ordered by the twenty-four-hour man, traveling that much ahead of the show to contract for the daily needs of the circus.

At the rise of the hill the enormous lot hove into sight, a scene of what seemed frenzied confusion, but really was orderly activity. Smoke was rising from the back of the cook tent, and he speeded up to wander behind it. There stood the great traveling kitchens, huge pots to cook fifty gallons of

coffee, metal containers to boil eggs by the hundred. Inside he could see long tables already being set for breakfast, for the kinkers must eat before the parade, and working crews would be busy for hours before the call to scoff came again.

Next to the cook tent canvasmen were erecting the menagerie tent, and there, too, the animal kingdom was ready for chow. He watched the zebra grooms marshal their charges, called "convicts," and the elephants being fed after the head bull man yelled "Hay Up!" which was the cue for feed time. The lions were asking for breakfast. He remembered one of the cat men telling him, last year, that the voice of the king of the jungle goes four ways; a protection nature gives him, so that it is impossible to tell just where his roar comes from.

**O**VER where the Big Top would be erected, canvas was already going up. Side walls were fluttering into position, and the main and lesser guy wires attached to the ringed collars of the center poles.

Jack watched the stakes being driven, fascinated by the order in apparent disorder. Everybody was pulling together in a coöperation wonderful to behold. Gee, a fellow that didn't see the big show come into being, as if by magic, was missing something about the circus very worth while!

He could see where the entrance marquee would be now, by the position of the red money wagon, the first on the lot. That was the show treasury, as well as the place where reserved seats were sold. He had been told, several years back, that a guard heavily armed was always inside, night or day, for sometimes the trick had no chance to bank for over a week.

It was all interesting, but Jack remembered that he hadn't told dad about this morning saunter. His father was somewhat of an early riser, and he wouldn't want him to worry. The two were very close, but since the death of his mother Jack and his parent had become even closer pals.

Regretfully he turned away, as a line of brilliantly painted parade floats and tableau wagons came up the hill in single file. The horses pulling them hadn't their gay plumes and blankets on yet, but they would have when they cantered down the main stem of Peaseville. To Jack it was interesting to see the workaday circus, the other side of the picture; he liked to watch the wheels work, behind the scenes. He was an all-around fan.

His father had breakfast ready by the time he returned home. Jack said nothing to the elder man, Frank Graham, thin, slightly built, bowed from twenty years of bookkeeping at the mill, about the bite he had relished at the snack stand. Ham and eggs, and coffee that had a wonderful aroma, were ready on the kitchen table.

Between bites Jack told his father of the wonders he had witnessed. Frank Graham smiled fondly. He guessed he was getting too old, or bored, to appreciate the circus, but he would gladly attend the afternoon performance to see the pleasure reflected in the eyes of his only son. Yes, and before they reached the Midway for the performance he would stand patiently in the throng on the main street, waiting for the parade to go by.

**B**EFORE the first ticket rush for the matinee, tough Ed Burley, the only owner on the lot that day—for his partner, Plen Benson, was sick down at the car—strolled over to the



red wagon. The ticket bar wasn't down, yet, nor the window open, so he knocked on the back door. A guard peered through a metal mesh, the lock snapped, and he was admitted.

Bending, he walked to the front, where Loomis, the deft-handed paste-board seller, was arranging his layout of tickets. There was a chart at his right, a flat board pierced with thin slits, that held the blues for the reserved seats. He could spot a location in an instant, no matter how he might lie about it to a customer.

"Hello, Loomis."

"Howdy, boss."

The fingers of the ticket seller placed stacks of unreserved to his satisfaction; then, without heeding the owner, he arranged his cash.

"Say, Loomis, this has always been a bum stand. Have to keep it on the route because of railroading. We've sweetened the local police. Anything goes, to-day, since Benson is sick. I'm tired of his beefing about treating the customers square, the yaps! A little short-changing won't go bad. The band will speed up on the 'Hurry Up' tune, and the cop'll keep 'em moving. Just you and I, Loomis, percentage as usual."

"Guess my fingers are still limber," replied the other, quietly, "and the turn-over trick never fails in a rush."

"No, it's always good. And I'll be on hand with a couple of strong arm roustabouts if there's any squawking."

The ticket seller laughed, coldly.

He stood to one side so that the boss could see him. He laid down a twenty-dollar bill, picked it up and placed it in the cash drawer. Then, swiftly, he assembled two five-dollar bills, one turned over, toward the front. He added to this three one-dollar bills. Then he started to count:

"Five, ten, fifteen, and three makes eighteen. Your tickets were two dollars, sir."

He had counted the doubled five-dollar bill twice. Then he folded the money and appeared to slip it forward.

"O. K., Loomis."

"O. K., boss."

So that was that, thought Ed Burley, as he made his way out of the red wagon. Short-changing could add up fast on two performances, and the profits were shared only between Loomis and himself. In the old days a ticket seller paid so much a week to the circus for the privilege of short-changing! Those days were done away with, on big outfits, but Burley felt that if he hadn't a white-livered partner they would be back on his show. He was of the old school, which meant he dated back to seasons when a circus was an armed camp, and often fought its way to the railroad cars after fierce "clems."

**W**HEN Jack and his father approached the Midway, banners were waving, bands were blaring, hucksters calling their wares with leather lungs; the snake lady was playing with one of her lesser snake pets, while the ballyhoo artist was pleading for the populace to enter the kid show.

"One thin dime, ladies and gentlemen. One thin dime. You'll never miss it, and within are marvels that you will tell your grandchildren about when you are old. The wonders of seven seas and five continents."

He took another breath, but Jack's father had slipped into the line weaving toward the red wagon.

To-day was a holiday at the mill, and Frank Graham had received his salary yesterday, on Friday. As his turn came at the window he stood on



tip-toe, for the window lid that served as a ticket counter was rather high.

"Two one-dollar tickets," he said, clearly, and shoved a twenty-dollar bill toward the man.

"Here you are, friend," replied the ticket seller.

He shoved out two blue pasteboards. Graham dropped them into his side coat pocket.

"And here's your change, brother. Five, ten, fifteen, three makes eighteen."

Frank Graham grasped the money.

"Hurry along, now, hurry along! Other folks want to buy seats!"

What looked like a policeman in light gray uniform grasped him by the arm, propelled him toward the entrance.

The bookkeeper pulled away, started to count his money.

"I've been short-changed!" he yelled shrilly, starting back toward the red wagon.

As he elbowed his way toward the window, a big man in high-peaked fedora blocked his way.

"I'm the fixer with this outfit, mister. Anything wrong? I'll make anything right."

Graham explained, at the top of his voice.

"I work hard enough for my money!" he shouted. "I'll have no white-collar bandit take it away from me!"

"If you'll come around after the show I'm sure the matter can be ironed out," said the fixer, smoothly.

"I want my money now!" cried Graham, and he broke away, rushed to the head of the ticket line. The line broke up and the customers began to mull around.

From the background Ed Burley whispered to two of his men, heavy-

set rascals trained in rough-and-tumble fighting. They jumped at Frank Graham, grabbed him, tried to pull him away. For a man of his inches the bookkeeper put up a good fight. He hit one man on the nose, kicked the other in the ankle. There was a general free-for-all in an instant, for young Jack Graham, throwing customers right and left, joined his father.

He jerked one roustabout by the neck, threw him sidewise, upper-cut the other, who fell back. The gray-uniformed usher entered the mêlée.

So did Ed Burley. The owner pulled a wicked-looking blackjack from his back pocket, the loop firm about his hairy wrist.

Up and down it darted, like a snake, and Frank Graham collapsed like a broken reed. Two men held Jack firmly, one by either arm.

"Take the youngster off the lot, warn him not to come back," ordered Burley, curtly. "Carry that gilly over out of sight, and throw a blanket over him. A couple of buckets of water will bring him to his better senses."

Jack could see part of his poor father's twisted frame, the head lolling, unconscious, a thin stream of blood matting the hair over the forehead.

He was being pulled away. But he jerked a foot toward Ed. Burley, before brawn was too much for him.

"You'll pay for this. You'll pay!" he sobbed with helpless rage. "I'll find out who you are—and you've got a damn' tough revenge bill comin' due to you!"

Half crying, half spitting blood, Jack was thrown off the lot. He wasn't thinking of that, only of his father. He found Frank Graham lying senseless over by the baseball stand. Water on his face did not revive him.

There was no hospital in Peaseville. Jack had him carried fifteen miles to Templeton, where he could receive expert treatment. Three days afterward Graham died of concussion of the brain, without having awakened.

## CHAPTER II.

### TRAINING FOR REVENGE.

**M**ARSHALL MUNROE, the county prosecutor, spread his palms out widely, shrugged his shoulders.

"I'm sorry, youngster, but any chance you might have of bringing your father's assailant to justice has vanished because you didn't report it several days ago."

"I didn't think dad would die," said Jack numbly.

"The case would have been difficult anyway," Munroe assured him. "You say you have no witnesses to the assault, and by the following day, it seems, the circus was out of the State. It would have been difficult to extradite Mr.—er—"

"Ed Burley is his name," grimly. "I found that out by hanging around the Big Top that night, after bringing dad here to the hospital . . . Thanks, Mr. Munroe. I guess this is one of those things that's up to me."

"I trust, young man, you are not holding thoughts of revenge?"

Jack Graham laughed, harshly.

"This is a matter now between Burley and me. A private feud. If the law can't give me justice, I'll have to obtain it—some other way."

He flushed, feeling that he had said too much. After all, Munroe had no real interest in the affair. He had told Jack the legal status, flatly discouraging. Jack thanked the official, left the

city hall, took the trolley back to Peaseville.

His spirit was not crushed, but he knew that he was quite inadequate even to dream of living up to the big words that he had hurled at the county official. Revenge would be sweet, yes, and he would never be satisfied until the day of reckoning. But how could a young fellow, about to go to work as a clerk in an uncle's hardware store, even think of fighting an experienced, hard-boiled owner of a circus?

That was the truth that grated and stayed with Jack Graham during the following month. He knew that he must become cold and hard. The type of man who would grind Ed Burley under foot, squeeze out the last drop of satisfaction, would never be a small-town clerk.

Yet, he did not turn against his first love—the circus. He realized that even though there were unfeeling, cruel men in it, the heart of the show world was sound. Ed Burley was an exception, not the rule.

Four months after the death of his father, Jack left a short explanatory note for his uncle, left Peaseville with a small bank roll and a definite plan. He would go to the nearest big city, get into the underworld rackets, train himself to be tough and unfeeling, learn all the dodges of a predatory class. Cunning and quickness, backed by ruthless methods, would show him the way to win his revenge. Men trained for other things—he would train to crush the murderer of his father.

**Y**EARS passed. Jack Graham had a chum now, whom he had met on a circus lot, but not that of the Benson & Burley outfit. Tom Blair was another brown-haired, blue-eyed

chap, and they might easily have been taken for brothers, particularly as both had the hard lines around the mouth and keen gaze of the racketeer ever on guard.

Five years they had been pals. Now the two were leaving the little city of Hammondton, and they were in a fierce hurry. Jack pushed Tom into their car, threw the suitcases in front of him, jumped into the driver's seat. They had been posing in Hammondton as agents of the great gangster Mal Cantonge, cleaning up by demanding a split on all the local rackets. Now a tip-off had warned them that Mal had heard about their pose and sent his scouts after them. That meant the Tommy-gun, and death.

Outside the city limits now, no longer limited to twenty miles an hour, Graham threw the car into fourth. The motor responded sweetly, and numbers sprinted upward on the speed indicator. Fifty—fifty-five—s i x t y. The breeze whistled sharply, but the roadster held the white road steadily. Finally Jack slowed down to forty, figuring that immediate danger must be passed.

That was when it happened. Another car, a half mile or more behind, had also been making sixty or better. Not anxious to catch up, was the driver of that pursuing car, until the prey was in open country.

A squat figure on the back seat of the pursuing car pulled back a square shutter in the rear of the tonneau, disclosing a steel-framed opening six by ten inches. One leg outstretched to brace him, the other knee on the leather seat, the "chopper" eased a Thompson sub-machine gun from a leather case, held it ready for action.

Graham was still doing forty when the black car drew alongside, passed

him. Then, as his fingers tightened on the wheel, Jack saw that short barrel poked from the oblong window.

At the same instant that barrel started to spout flame. Jack's windshield was shattered as the hot lead sprayed it. His chum, Tom Blair, groaned and doubled over beside him. The wheel twisted from his hands, out of control, the car lurched toward the ditch, turned completely over, and something like a dark curtain was drawn over Jack's mind as he went out like a light.

The murder car turned back. As it passed the wrecked machine, the driver clicked his lips, half turned his head to the operator of the Tommy chopper.

"Good job, Maxie. Hitting the tires after turning the hose on 'em is the dose. I'd stop, but some of those State troopers cycle along this beat."

Their machine was equipped with a device that let out a smoke screen of road-enveloping vapor if they needed it. But Graham had slowed down, most conveniently for their purpose, where the highway stretched a lonely white ribbon north and south. They could go back to Mal and report a nice clean job. Here were two racketeers who would never muscle again into another big shot's racket.

**W**HEN Jack Graham's senses returned to him, he felt as if his backbone was being shattered by a succession of hammer blows, wielded by fiery devils.

He opened his eyes and looked sideways. Beside him lay Tom Blair, sprawled on his stomach, his head bumping up and down on rough pine boards. They were in a farmer's hay wagon. Aside from themselves the back on the wagon was empty. It had no springs, and the jolting was terrific.



They must have been dragged, both unconscious, from the ditch in which their car had overturned. The point was, where were they being taken? Graham raised himself on one elbow, with an effort, for he was strangely weak. His lips were dry and he moistened them, then yelled at the driver's back in a cracked voice. The man couldn't hear him because of the infernal jogging of the wagon, sounding like coal falling into a bin. Finally he shouted loud enough to be heard, and the fellow turned from the front seat.

"Take it easy, young feller," the man said, soothingly. "I'm a takin' you both to the hospital in town. A goin' out of my way means a half-day's work gone to waste, but I reckon you can pay me."

"What town?" asked Graham, hoarsely.

"Hammondton."

In a flash Graham saw them in the hospital. The car would be found, wrecked, no dead men underneath. The news would get around of gunshot wounds, as the authorities reported to the police. They'd get lead poisoning—while being nursed! Only a month ago Mal's men had finished another such kill in a private room, off an accident ward.

"Listen, friend," said Graham huskily, "there's a thousand bucks in this for you—for not taking us to that hospital. We don't want to go there, my side-kick and me. Take us to your home, and stow us away till we can move, and the grand is yours—paid in advance."

The man looked puzzled, started to open his mouth.

"Turn that team around and do as I say. And if you have any horse blankets, throw 'em down to us. Aw, don't look as if I asked you to break

the law. We aren't escaped crooks, nothing like that. Just a couple of bootleggers who got it in the neck."

"Bootleggers, eh? Some folks think they're plumb respectable people, these days. When I pulled you boys from under that car I weren't thinkin' of more than ten dollars, maybe; but if you have reasons to be boarders out of season I guess ma won't kick. Not with all that money a comin' in."

He stood up and threw Graham the yellow blankets he had used to soften the wooden seat. One was thrown over Blair, the other Graham folded over his own form. Now they were hidden from curious eyes.

Jack wondered if his pal were dead. Couldn't tell, yet. Then he felt a stiffness in his own right arm. His fingers, feeling, became sticky and came away wet. That must have been when he pulled the wheel to the right. The top of his head was tender. Knocked out, he guessed, when the car overturned. Gee, he had got off easy! But Blair's face, drained of all color, didn't look so good.

That drive on the bottom of the wagon was torture. He finally managed to wedge himself against the sideboard, so his body did not receive the full force of the jolt and jar.

Aside from the fifty thousand dollars he had put away, Jack reflected, this was far from a pleasant ending to his training for revenge.

Memories of the circus, rum-running, war, following the races, failing as a prize-fighter manager, chased through his mind in confusion. He might, he thought, be feverish.

It must be getting near noon. The sun was getting hot. Graham hoped they had turned off from the main highway. In a few hours the wrecked automobile would be found—and no

dead men underneath in the deep ditch that had saved them from being crushed.

He raised himself on his elbow again, glanced over the tailboard. Heavy woodland and a deep rutted road. He threw off the blanket, and pulled back the one that had enveloped Tom Blair. His friend was breathing a bit, but the face was white as paper. Feeling for a wound, Jack found one in the chest. Might or might not be serious, but a doctor was needed as quickly as possible.

**S**UDDENLY the team turned to the right, and a white dwelling was passed on the way to a big red barn.

Graham tried to be patient while the man put up his horses. Then, between them, they carried Tom into the house. A lanky woman stood by, mutely.

"Martha," the rustic said, sharply, "here's the answer to our prayers, the money to pay for the taxes, the mortgage at the bank, and the chattel mortgage."

"Are you mad, Del?"

"No, but we're in a mad world. Telephone for Dr. Watkins. Tell him to come over right away, to bring all his tools, and that he may be lucky enough to get some of the money we owe him."

"Now, Del, I know you're crazy."

"No, woman, we're goin' to get one thousand dollars, jest for carin' for a couple of sick men. We're goin' to git it, or I'll bring in the police."

"Get along!" gritted Graham. "I want my pal to get into a bed."

They finally lugged Blair into the farm couple's own bedchamber. Graham managed to get his clothes off him. Then he collapsed on an old-fashioned settee.

Whether or not Dr. Watkins was amazed at the message he had received, he arrived within an hour and proved himself equal to the emergency. He asked no questions, but gave Blair a thorough examination.

"Bullet too close to the heart to operate," he said tersely. "He has lost a lot of blood. All we can do is to make him comfortable and await developments."

After giving Blair an injection of morphine he turned his attention to Graham.

"You are lucky, young man. Nothing but a flesh wound in the arm. The bullet went through, so it is only a matter of healing."

He fixed a compress and bandages.

"I wonder you don't ask to have your friend taken to a hospital?"

"Hospitals aren't safe for us, doctor. Oh, no, we're not criminals—you don't need to worry on that score. Watch the newspapers. The police aren't after anybody in this county, you can check up on that. It is one of those things arising out of liquor."

"Humph! There's lots aside from fumes that have risen from it, youngster."

"Can you drop in again to-night, doctor?"

"Certainly, after dinner."

"Then you might cash a prescription and bring along a pint. I feel weak and a spoonful won't hurt my friend, I guess, if he comes to consciousness. Has he much chance, do you think?"

"Frankly, I don't know, but I'm going to be truthful. From the position I figure the bullet lies, it is a wonder he is alive at all. If he dies, of course, I must bring in the county coroner."

Graham nodded. When a doctor spoke like that there wasn't much hope.

"All right, doc, if he dies bring in the proper authorities. I don't know if he has any folks. I'll ask him if I get a chance. But till he does kick off there is no particular reason to broadcast the case?"

"Not if it helps out my friend, Del Cantly. He needs helping. Last year's crop failed, and he is in a bad way. All I desire is my regular fee."

"Thank you, sir. I'll pay you now. When you're dealing with fellows like us, best to get what you can in advance."

Dr. Watkins grinned as he accepted several yellow bills.

"It is unusual for a country doctor to be overpaid—he is much more likely not to be paid at all—but I guess I can stand the shock."

He left Graham alone in the bedroom with his unconscious pal. The air was stuffy, probably had been for a generation, ever since some one had decided that a night draft was unhealthy. He managed to pry open a window, sighed in relief as the breeze blew back the faded curtains.

**B**LAIR stirred uneasily, made a gesture of pushing the covers down.

He started to mumble in delirium, thought he was back in jail again, in solitary for the infringement of some rule of the warden's.

Graham quickly stepped to the door, closed it. There was no key, so he tipped the back of a chair under the knob.

Tom Blair had never spoken much of his past, had acquired the close-mouthed habit of the underworld. Jack, seated by the bedside, felt like telling the delirious man to shut up, that he didn't want to know any of his secrets. But Blair kept on talking, in a weak voice. He was jumping the

years to his boyhood days, now; he was with the circus, helping bring water to the elephants. Then he was watching the big show, trying to keep track of the bewildering entertainment held in the three rings. He talked like an insider, one born to the game.

He repeated parts of conversations, puzzling to Jack because he only heard Blair's remarks and had to fill in the imaginary answers. It was as if the fever had unloosed the flood-gates of memory, buried in the subconscious, and long-forgotten little incidents emerged from the brain cells. Listening was like putting together pieces of a puzzle that sometimes did not seem to fit.

Then Jack Graham suddenly pricked up his ears, and leaned closer to the murmuring, delirious man. For Tom was muttering:

"Damn you, Burley—we Bensons are still running this show! It's going to be straight, hear? What dad says, goes! It's going to be . . ."

His voice died down. Graham was busily piecing together fragments of what he had heard. Why—Tom Blair was old Plen Benson's son! He must have run away some ten or twelve years ago; he'd been in the rackets that long. Graham had known Tom had a strong love for the circus and circus life—that discovery had been their first bond of friendship when they met in gangland; but although Graham had guessed that his chum had once traveled with a circus, it had never occurred to him that he might be the son of old Benson of the Benson & Burley show.

Graham felt like an eavesdropper, and decided that if Tom Blair—Benson, rather—ever recovered from that slug, Jack would never mention overhearing these confidences. He was re-



lieved when Tom turned a bit on one side and fell off into an untroubled sleep.

At six o'clock the owner of the farmhouse looked in, asked his guest if he didn't want a bit of supper. Graham shook his head, but the man did not leave; instead he stood in the doorway, uneasily shifting his weight from one foot to another. Must be waiting for that grand. A racketeer is accustomed to pay his way double. Hardly annoyed, Jack pulled out a roll of bills and counted off ten century notes.

"You might bring me a pot of coffee—and keep your mouth shut to any of your neighbors," he told the other. "And you might pay that doc what you owe him. He's a good skate."

Doctor Watkins came for a second visit and shook his head as he felt Blair's pulse and looked at his watch.

"Extremely weak. I don't think he will last the night."

"Would a blood transfusion help?"

"No, too late for it. The trouble is, I think, a heart-block, a morbid departure from regular action. One can never be sure without an operation, and I would not suggest such a thing even if the conditions were adequate. I am afraid . . ."

"Yes, tell me the worst."

"I don't think your friend will live the night. Do you know his nearest relative?"

"No, but I will try to find out if he comes to."

"He may have some lucid minutes. I will be back around midnight."

**G**RAHAM thanked him, continued his vigil. He sat in a cane-bottomed chair by the sick bed, half drowsy, knowing that if Tom died he must leave in a hurry. The coroner would have to be called in, an investi-

gation reach the newspapers. That would be the tip-off to Mal Cantonge.

Gee, this was tough for a fellow who loved life as Tom did! Wonder if he wanted his father or any other relative notified? Or, under the cloud of his passing, would he rather go to his grave, as so many men had gone, bearing the last of half a dozen monikers?

The June day had died completely. Jack crossed to a small table and set a match to the wick of a kerosene lamp. It threw a yellow, sickly light, but it was better than none.

Suddenly Tom Benson's eyes opened and there was sanity in them.

Bending over the bed, his pal tried to smile.

"Well, Tom, you had quite a time of it. That Tommy dropper got you, but the doc says you'll pull out O. K."

"No, Jack, don't try to give me any oil. I had my eyes closed, but I heard what the croaker said to you. Just as well. I'd rather know I was taking the long dark route. Kid, you take my bank roll; it is yours, and—"

"If you do have to kick off, Tom, do you want any one notified?"

"Not till long after this blows over. I wouldn't want dad to know I died like a gunman; he always thought I was no good, and this would make him sure of it. If you can tell him, later, his name in Plen Benson, of the Benson & Burley Circus. Got a piece of paper, Jack? Good; write down the name and address, and this line: 'I leave everything to my good pal, Jack Graham.' Now bring in some one to witness it."

"Aw, there's no need of that, Tom."

"Do as I say," said Tom, querulously. Graham humored him, brought in Del Cantly and his wife. They watched Tom Benson sign, then witnessed the will, a few words longer than that of

the famous one of Hill, the great railroad man, whose brief testament, ideal in law, was: "I leave everything to my wife." Tom's was as simple, yet quite as legal.

When the couple had backed out from the chamber, Tom Benson smiled wanly.

"Guess, that's all, Jack. Promise me not to be foolish and attempt to buck Mal. I had this coming to me."

His eyes close, slowly, as if he did not have strength to keep them open.

"I am not afraid," he whispered. "I've always tried to be a good guy to those who deserved it. I'm not afraid to take the long count. Be good to yourself, Jack, and if you can't be good, be careful."

He began to breathe, raspingly, and Jack Graham, hard-boiled as he imagined himself to be, felt the tears coming to his eyes. He was waiting the passing of a pal who stood the gaff unflinchingly. Creeping nearer, now, the shadow of death was hovering in the air. Tom Benson was fast going beyond any earthly help or punishment, and his pal turned his wet eyes away from that pallid face turning wax-like. A chill seemed to creep into the room. A little before midnight, when Dr. Watkins came for his last visit, Graham did not need to watch the lifted and dropped wrist to know that his friend had started on the long road each man must travel alone.

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### CHAPTER III.

#### A LONG-WAITED CHANCE.

**T**HERE was a discreet knock on the door of the Pullman compartment. Jack Graham opened the door and the porter came in, carrying cigars that he had ordered. Also an

afternoon newspaper he thought the gentleman might like to see. With a flashing smile a generous tip was accepted.

The sole occupant of the compartment glanced idly at the front page of the sheet, then turned the pages. He wondered if any of the press services had carried a dispatch about Tom Blair. He found none. Must remember he was, by now, eight hundred miles from that farm outside of Hammondton, and the mystery of a man dying of an unexplained bullet wound would not get far.

Though he had paid Del Cantly handsomely for a private funeral for Tom, he had felt like a sneak leaving in the early dawn, hitch-hiking to the nearest railroad station. But he could not stay to answer a coroner's questioning.

Graham's indifferent attention suddenly tensed. He read the headline on the third page quickly, startled by the thought that he might be too late.

#### **CIRCUS MAN SLAIN; POLICE SEEK MOTIVE**

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##### **Well Known Showman of Old School Killed in His Private Car**

Plen Benson, of the Benson & Burley Circus, was found early this morning, when the last section of the show pulled into Wainsport, lying stiff in death beside his berth, by Ed Norren, who entered his private car to deliver mail.

It was found that Benson had been hit over the right temple by a blunt instrument. An old man, he had not been able to survive the blow. Upon the body was a considerable amount of money and a four-carat diamond stud gleamed on his shirt front.

Robbery not being the motive, the police of Wainsport were at a loss to fix on a motive. His partner, Ed Burley, who had played cards all night in the privilege car of the outfit, said

that, so far as he knew, Benson had no enemies. In fact, the old showman, who dated back, in personal experience, to the early days when Barnum ruled the north and John Robinson the south, as regards circus supremacy, was extremely popular with show folks. The heads of departments were all loyal men who had trouped with him for years.

If it were not that the blow which felled Benson was such a vicious one, the coroner might have held that he died from the effect of an accidental fall. However, his face was also distorted in anger, as if he had seen his assailant at the instant of the attack. His fingers were found clenched.

Ed Burley, the remaining owner of the circus, said that he did not know whether his old team-mate has any near relatives. There was a runaway son, not seen or heard of in ten years. Rumors are that the younger Benson is no longer alive.

Graham read no further. Plen Benson's life history could wait. There was a son, eh? No longer alive?

Benson's death would no doubt suit Ed Burley, leave him one and supreme owner of the Benson & Burley outfit.

Hit with a blunt instrument! Jack reflected, and remembered the picture so starkly etched on the background of his memory, of his father near the ticket window brutally attacked by Burley. A blow that had killed one man, a vicious blow from a swinging blackjack, might kill another, yet probably no one now with the circus knew how Burley had killed Frank Graham.

**H**E grabbed a copy of the *Billboard* in the seat beside him. No, he hadn't made a mistake. His ticket read for Sertville, and he would arrive there at two o'clock in the afternoon. The Benson & Burley Circus

played there, for an afternoon and evening performance.

Stepping from his seat he crossed to the mirror above the washstand. Gee, he had changed! The hair that had been tow-colored was now brown, and the soft, pleasant lines of early youth had hardened. When his usual well-groomed self, he had been thought a distinguished figure of a man. Only the eyes were hard and cold, as only blue eyes can be, seemingly reflecting ice, and the tears that had come into them when sitting at Tom Benson's bedside were alien to his everyday nature. His life had made him all fighter.

He did not smile at himself in the mirror, as so many men do. Instead he frowned, and nodded, meaning that he would do. Returning to his seat he picked up the newspaper, read through the article on the murder of the old circus man.

When he had bought a ticket to Sertville, after purchasing the magazine that had given him the route of the circus, Graham's idea had been to see Plen Benson first. He was too late for that. But the intention and motive behind his return to the show lot had not wavered. Instead, they had been deeply intensified.

For now, as Tom Benson's chum, he had a double case against the cold-blooded Burley. And as he had suddenly realized when he looked in the mirror, with Plen Benson, it might be possible for him to pass himself off as Tom Benson to the two or three old-timers who had been with the circus since Tom ran away, ten years before. If he could—and he had much the same color of eyes and hair—he would be in a much better position to drive Burley to the wall.

A grim expression settled upon his face, as he glanced, unseeingly, out of



the window, at the golden landscape. The line of his lips curled in a hard, cruel twist. In pitting himself against Ed Burley he felt that he had two things in his favor: long experience in ways that were devious in gaining an end, including the craft of playing on the weakness of his fellow men; and plenty of money to use as ammunition—golden bullets.

Reaching into his change pocket he drew forth a little golden badge, the mark of identification of a certain member of the investigating staff of the Department of Justice, which had been stolen from him and sold in the underworld at a fancy price. Several times it had come in handy to Graham, when in a tough spot. Maybe it would be a help to put some one else in a tougher one? He shined the metal, a trifle tarnished, on the sleeve of his coat, then slipped it back into his pocket.

"Any means to the end," he murmured softly.

**G**RAHAM paused at the entrance to the crowded Midway, breathing in the mingled odors of the circus, coming from the packed humans, the snack stands where popcorn and hot dogs were sold, and a line of baggage stock which had just been watered.

At the left he watched the huge banners swaying in the breeze before the kid show; on a long platform a ballyhoo artist, with leather lungs, spoke in superlatives of the wonders within, and eager "skills," well trained in leading the pack, planked down their money for tickets. Once inside they would go out the back way and repeat their act of follow the leader.

As the man finished his spiel, four wind-jammers seated behind him

started the old and famous "Hurry Up" tune, and business became brisk.

Memory is a funny thing, as many have felt after going back to the old home town. It seems smaller, dwarfed in comparison to the size remembered. So, to Graham, was the outer guise of the circus. The Big Top that spread a huge billow of canvas under flying pennants, no longer appeared the entrance to a maze of marvels. That red wagon at the right of the marquee was not a treasury that held uncountable gold. That line of gleaming parade wagons, gilded and painted, in rows on the lot, looked clumsy and flat to him. The impression he was receiving was a tawdry one.

Voices were calling from the right of the Midway, hoarse and blatant. He twisted through the crowd toward a line of little booths, and then he whistled. So the circus had taken to running grift joints! A voice above the rest was loudly calling:

"Come on, gents, risk one small dollar. Easy to make it ten, make it twenty. The arrow spins, friends, and the house can't win all the time. You, sir, there, twenty dollars to buy your wife a nice present."

The operator of the string game, which Graham had seen played at carnivals, pulled at the dangled strings outstretched from his fingers. Prizes bounced on the tiers behind him, clocks, watches, silver pitchers, handsome toilet sets, finely dressed dolls, billfolds.

"Put your money on the lay-down, folks, and nominate your string. One buck will win a val-u-able prize. Everything you see, and lots you don't see, goes home with you to-day."

Graham grinned at the "capper" who had received the billfold, opened it at a level with his shoulders and

waved a new yellow twenty-dollar bill, then vanished down the Midway. The well known come-on. He knew that the game was "gimmicked." The operator doubled the ends of the strings that called for important prizes back into his fist, unless he wished one of his paid skills to win. Of course he could shake all the prizes by pulling the combined strings, but the loose ends that he held out invitingly between his fingers called for nothing save cheap gimcracks.

He passed another stand, where a grifter was operating a horse race, the winner determined by a hidden foot spring; then a money wheel controlled by a hidden rod. The spindle seemed to spin freely, but it always stopped in a section on which the least money was bet, through a lever worked by the man's thumb when he decided that it had spun long enough.

Standing on the fringe of the throng, Graham saw a wire-and-stall, a team of pickpockets, working their nimble trade. He grunted in disgust. The Benson & Burley Circus had degenerated into a gyp show, for nothing raw like this could go on for ten minutes unless the crooks paid for privileges direct to the owners.

Indeed, to his astonishment, for it seemed like a fabled thing, he saw the old shell game being operated on a small table, and there was a crowd around it, too; what was good enough for their grandfathers was good enough for the present day generation of suckers. Gee, next he would see some one trotting around selling a gold brick!

Yes, Jack Graham was disgusted, for there is nothing surer to cause contempt in a big-time confidence man than any racket that savors of petty larceny.

In the old days this circus might have been a tough outfit, but not a grifting one. Graham remembered a few lines in that newspaper account; Ed Burley had been playing poker all night in the privilege car, after the show. That must be where the big games were held. The little fry were cleaned out on the lot; any one who looked like large money, who was unfortunate enough to have so-called sporting blood, must be invited down to be taken plenty.

The thought gave him a clew and suggested a plan of action—something he had lacked when he approached the circus lot. He had merely determined to see old Bill Crowcher, the boss canvasser whom Tom Benson's ravings had mentioned oftenest—and after that to figure out how he might best accomplish his double mission of revenge and retribution.

He turned off toward the blacksmith shop, where led stock was being shod.

"CAN you tell me where I can find Mr. Crowcher?" he asked a rough customer he took to be a roustabout or razor-back.

"Sure! See that heavy-set man goin' back toward the cook tent? That's him, but he ain't in good humor, mister."

"Thanks, I'm not going to bother him."

Picking up his steps he strode after the boss canvasser, an impressive mountain of a man. He touched him on the shoulder. The man swung around with amazing agility, considering his weight.

"What do you want?" he growled.

His white hair was cropped close, giving a bony, angular look to his skull. Black eyes glared under bushy brows.

"Pardon me, Mr. Crowcher, but this is a private matter."

"Yeah? I'm thinking there's too much underhanded around this here outfit! If you have anything to say to me, spit it out."

Graham took him by the arm, pulled him away from sight of those within the cook tent.

"I'm going to tell you things that I don't want any one else to hear."

"Go ahead—shoot."

"I would, if everything around this trick was aboveboard, but there has been some mighty desperate, dirty work going on."

"I don't doubt it!" snapped Crowcher. "For the last week, since we turned into a dirty, strong show, I'll believe anything. But where do I come in? I only boss in putting up and tearing down."

"That's one thing, Mr. Crowcher, but not what I wish to see you about—darn privately." Graham lowered his voice. "I want to get you alone for a secret confab—about the murder of Plen Benson!"

Crowcher jumped. "Keep your voice down, if you don't want me to lose my job."

"Oh, so that's the way the land lays, eh? Have you half an hour, sir?"

"Sure, but let's get entirely off the lot. Always a bunch of snoopers about, carrying tales. I saw a stream, back this way, while I was laying out markers for the tents. They are just 'bout ready for the grand entry. Nobody down this way."

They turned down a dirt path, past a picnic ground littered with paper bags and rubbish, came out on a dirt stretch that overlooked a muddy stream. The place was deserted. Graham found a battered soap box and sat down on it.

"Fatty," he said softly, "I want you to be prepared for a surprise."

"Fatty!" exclaimed the big man, glancing down at him in surprise. "I haven't been called 'Fatty' in ten years, not since young Tom Benson ran away, and broke his old man's heart."

"True, old man, but fath—Mr. Benson should never have believed that his son stole that money for 'concert' seats, even if it was found in his suitcase."

"Not a soul knew that," said Crowcher, huskily, "except Plen Benson, Ed Burley and me. Why—"

"Yes, Fatty, though I look mighty different, I expect, after ten years, I'm Plen Benson's missing boy. I ran away after that terrible piece of injustice, and I wouldn't be back now if I didn't think that the same man who plotted to get rid of me, so that I could never take over the show, also killed my dad."

"Burley played cards all night," said Crowcher, as if repeating words learned parrot-like.

"Mebbe he did, and mebbe he didn't. I can't see why he couldn't leave for a minute or two. That isn't why I'm taking you into my confidence, old man—"

"Is it really you, Tom?" interrupted Crowcher, wonderingly. "I'll say that I'd never know you. You have the same blue eyes, of course, and your hair isn't as light, but then, you were only sixteen and suffering from growing pains."

"Remember, Fatty, the time I rode down to the station in the stake and chain wagon, hidden way under some equipment, and nearly scared the living daylights out of Henky?"

"Gee, yes. Henky died the year after you ran away."



"And the day I had a fight with a bully who tried to crawl under the canvas and see the show free? How you got me a piece of raw meat from the cook for my eye?"

"Sure, it's as clear as yesterday, Tom."

The boss canvasman sighed, convinced. "What are your plans, son? Goin' to take Plen's place? You're his only heir, an' he left no will."

"Not yet, old man. I don't crave being popped off. Tell me—I'm only clutching at straws—was there any good reason for getting my father out of the way?"

**C**ROWCHER grunted. "I can't believe that Boss Burley, hard as he is, actually had anything to do with Plen Benson's death. But there was bad blood enough. A row on how the show should be run. You know, Tom, the circus business has been bad; the combine has been taking our best towns away from us, getting in ahead, even if paying a larger license fee. Everything is more expensive, feed, talent, transportation, and the hired help. We've been losing money. I know for a fact that Plen was dead against turning this into a grifting show; back in your time it had been a clean one. Well, Ed Burley insisted upon bringing on a crew of birds that had worked the carnivals; as you know, or maybe you don't know, those gypsy camps got so bad that most towns couldn't let 'em in any longer.

"Well, Burley brought 'em on, fired our old-time fixer, Mark Davis, who knew every crook in the business and ran 'em off the lot on sight; he hired a bird he calls a squeal-squarer, Tim Murphy, an ex-cop—ex, by request. He pays the local police heads and collects from the grifters. I did hear that

Plen swore he would get out an injunction; if that failed he was going to appeal to the government. Gambling devices are against the law, he said, and he wasn't going to have the good name of the show ruined."

"You've given me a motive. Burley was making a gob of dirty money, and his partner threatened to put his foot down. Ed swings a nasty blackjack."

"You remember that?"

"Yes, I saw him slug a customer near the red wagon one afternoon, a poor sucker who never did recover from the effects and died from concussion of the brain." Jack Graham almost choked as he spoke of his father's murder, but hurried on: "That blackjack came into my mind when I read how dad died. That blow on the temple struck me as mighty suspicious, and very like the handiwork of Burley."

"Darn it, you sure figured out something! What you say's possible, if—"

"If he left that card table on the privilege car. I know, Fatty, the private car is at the end of the third section, last on the line, but how far ahead is the gambling going on?"

"Ten Pullmans, but the kinkers would be asleep, if any one walked through. Gee, that car for years was an all-night lunch place for the crew, nothing stronger than coffee! Now—"

He spat out of the side of his mouth.

"You say a guy named Murphy is the new fixer? I suppose he hangs around the main gate. Do you know where he hails from?"

"Had to leave Chi—for his own good, I hear."

"Fine! I can find my way around the Loop. I'll brace Mr. Murphy. One thing, Crowcher; I know that I can trust you, and two others, if they're still living, Mack Smith, the bull

trainer, and Mrs. Maloney, the wardrobe mistress."

"Yes, they're still living—and can be close-mouthed, too," said the other, grimly.

"Then you can tell them, if you think it may help, that Tom Benson's back, but to pretend not to recognize me till I say the word—if I'm alive after it's over. Promise me, Fatty, that no one else learns of my return, or the son may go where the father is."

Crowcher pushed out a huge paw and Graham took it, wincing a bit under the pressure of fingers that looked fat, but encircled his like bands of iron.

"I want to see Plen Benson avenged," said Crowcher, "just as much as you do, and if I can help—"

"Sure, I'll call on you when the time comes, old man. Ed Burley's going to pay, even if the payment isn't exactly legal. You can't always depend upon the law, Fatty."

"No, son, you said it."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### BURLEY'S POKER CAR.

GRAHAM found the fixer lounging by the red wagon. A local tradesman was arguing over payment on feed ordered by the twenty-four-hour man.

"We've given you what Clancey said he contracted," growled Tim Murphy, pushing back on his head the big Stetson popular around circuses since the rodeo became the rage, "and that's all you'll get. I showed you the memo he left, and that's that. You'd think we were a bunch of suckers," he told the world at large. "Better beat it before Boss Burley comes out, if you don't want a shellacking."

The dealer stormed off, muttering to himself. Graham grinned at the squeal-squarer, as if in sympathy.

"Got a moment, Mr. Murphy? You don't know me, but I hear you're from Chi, and you may have fallen in with Booze Moran and Shep Zoring."

He mentioned several gangsters who had been taken the route by Mal Cantonge, after falling under the weight of his displeasure, figuring Murphy must have breezed town for the same reason.

"Yeah, I knew 'em, but I don't know you."

"I'm Jack Graham. Anyway, that name's good enough for me. I heard you had some games on the privilege car and might use a 'house man.'"

"Humph! How'll we know you'll come through with the kale you win?"

"I'll put up a grand as deposit. Fact is," and Jack's voice fell to a confidential whisper, "I have reasons of my own for wanting to travel. But I can play stud or draw poker close to the vest; I've worked the lifts."

"What?"

"The ocean liners," replied Graham, and he exposed a roll of bills and stripped off several yellow ones of large denominations. "Here's the thousand."

Tim Murphy reached for it greedily, glancing the while toward the entrance of the Big Top.

"Don't say anything to the boss about *this*. You'll be down for a hundred and fifty a week, and kick back your winnings."

"Good! This'll be all between me and you."

The fixer shoved the money in his pocket, nodded to a cold-eyed, white-haired man whose huge shoulders were slightly stooped.

"Just a second, boss, I want you to

meet an old pal of mine, Jack Graham of Chi, a wizard with the pasteboards. I'm taking him on as a house man. I'll stand for him."

The newcomer felt eyes boring through him. Ed Burley was giving him a shrewd once-over, his gray eyes piercing. Graham stood the scrutiny with a dead pan, poker-faced.

"All right, Tim, see that he's given a berth. Mallon will show him where to sit in the cook tent."

He turned on his heel, and Graham noticed a slight bulge at his right hip. That must be the death-striking black-jack.

"NEVER said how are you, or how-de-do, or anything," Jack remarked to the fixer.

"No, he ain't what I'd call sociable. His partner died, recent, and he took it hard."

Graham reflected that he wanted Burley to take it harder than that. Time seemed to have only toughened the killer. The white hair made him appear colder, showed no tendency of weakness, that often comes with age. He couldn't have hated so venomously an old, feeble man, nor plot to have him bear the punishment coming to him. So he was glad the object of his vengeance was strong enough to defend himself, and to take it. He dropped his gaze, so that Murphy might not see the hatred that must glitter in his narrowing eyes.

"Got quite a few games on the lot," he said, idly.

"Not bad, not bad. Of course it costs a bit to fix the local justice of the peace, or sheriff, but the boys pay high for protection. But I don't often have to get 'em out of a jam. The big games ride on the privilege car. You know we generally pull out by two in the

morning, and we let the local talent win till then. As the next stand's never over a couple of hundred miles away we tell them, as the train's pulling out, to stay aboard and hold the winning streak—take the railroad back in the morning. More likely they're clean enough to walk back by that time, but that's their business."

"How do you line 'em up?"

"An advance man smells out the home-town sports who have bank rolls. A couple of come-on men check them up when we hit town, from the list, invite them to the show at night. Tickets and snifters free, but after they're edged into a quiet game they pay for it all."

"I get you. Never give a sucker an even break."

Graham chuckled as he repeated the motto of the underworld. Then he replied cautiously, to cautious questioning from Murphy, about Chi and some of the boys. He knew that the fixer reasoned, shrewdly, that for some reason he was on the run. The thousand-dollar deposit was bribe money, and never would come back; if he ever saw any of the hundred and fifty mentioned as weekly salary he would be very much surprised.

It was all right with Graham. He intended to use money, in more ways than one, to bring about his implacable revenge.

That evening Graham nodded to the fixer, at the main entrance to the Big Top, passed through the menagerie, glanced at the cages containing the wild beasts he had so admired as a boy. On one side stood a small herd of elephants, gaudily blanketed. He looked at their small beady eyes, and remembered what he had once read, that an elephant never forgets an injury. That gray-haired man in uniform chatting



with several assistants must be Mack Smith, the head bull trainer. He must obtain a private talk with him, and Mrs. Maloney, to-morrow.

Inside the vast canvas tent he drifted to an unreserved seat near the ground. The lights seemed different, somehow; they hadn't used electricity when he was a kid. But the same three rings were there, if no longer as magical. Yet he enjoyed the show and the music; the numbers played by the wind-jammers served as cues for the acts, and his eyes were bewildered following wire and trapeze troupes, and at the same time trying to keep track of the equestrian marvels in the rings.

Here was the show, wonderful as ever, even to one who had lost a boyish capacity for enjoyment. Why must men like Ed Burley tarnish an entertainment that provided a unique joy to multitudes, by carrying along a crew of cheap grifters and gamblers, pickpockets and con men, the sweepings of carnivals that were dying out because decent towns would no longer give them licenses?

This was an unusual thought from a man like Jack Graham who had been a follower of easy money; but looking at these clean-living men and women performers who must be in strict training to go through their arduous routines, he could not help feeling disgusted to know that larceny was being done out on the Midway under protection of show officials. This was the condition that Plen Benson refused to tolerate; why he had fallen from a blow on the temple.

**A** CONCERT was given after the circus, but Graham didn't stay for it. He strolled outside, watched the kid top, the cook tent, and the menagerie tent, being struck by the

canvassmen under Fatty Crowcher, when stakes, poles, and expertly rolled stretches of canvas were loaded on the long wagons. Indeed, part of the Big Top was torn down before the show was out, and it was a lesson in efficiency to watch each man do his particular task.

Graham strolled down toward the railroad station, following the line of trucks, keeping well to one side on account of the dust. On a siding by the track he saw a section of cars; horses were pulling the wagons up a "skid," an incline, to the flat cars, which were connected by special iron-plate bridges, so that the line of cars was one extended bridge. A useful system, interesting to watch, studied by Continental army officers long before the World War for lessons in transportation.

He managed to find the third section. At the end was the private car which, in Plen Benson's lifetime, was always occupied by one or another owner. Barnum had started having his car at the tail of all circus trains, so that no matter what happened ahead, the general would be in the extreme rear. Other owners had followed the example.

Up ahead, ten cars, was one with narrow slits for windows; bright oblongs of light shot out into the darkness; a huge lantern hung by the hand rail leading to the platform. This must be the privilege car, thought Graham.

He mounted the steps, turned the knob of the door, stepped in with an air of assurance.

This was something new to him, well as he thought himself posted on racks. At the extreme end of the car was a short bar, brass rail, register, and beaming drink-concocter complete. There was room for an exit to go forward. Near the bar was a table bear-

ing a roulette wheel. Farther along stood three green-baize, circular card tables. All were empty, at present, but a thirsty throng fronted the bar. He could, at a glance, pick out the local townsmen from Tim Murphy's confidence workers.

"Come and join us," invited the "main guy," so called from the main guy rope that holds up the Big Top. "Gents, here's a feller with grit; he's stayed along for three days now, winnin' more and more of our money."

"Yes, and I can afford to buy," Jack took his cue. "Set 'em up for the boys, bartender."

There were several rounds of drinks, and then a move was made to the tables. Six men played where Graham sat in. Two of them, besides himself, he figured were house men. He knew the usual plan. Three house men could beat three strangers because, playing together, they could crowd and bluff an outsider holding a winning hand. Aside from that, they were assumed to be better judges of the cards, better "percentage" players, balancing the possibility of drawing against the size of the pot. Only in case of emergency would a "cold" deck be called in. Marked cards and wizards who can deal special hands exist mostly in books telling how to do card tricks.

Burley played banker, and at the start every man bought a hundred dollars' worth of chips. Graham assumed that the house men would get their money back after the game was ended and the pigeons plucked.

The circus traveled in three sections, and the privilege car was on the third. About three o'clock the boss excused himself, saying he would be back when the players cashed in.

He did return, at four o'clock. Before then the local suckers, persuaded

to ride on to the next stand, had been taken to the cleaners. It was only a question of time, against cold-blooded, professional players. Ed Burley, as if big-hearted, invited them to a few hours' sleep in berths in the next Pullman. When the privilege car contained only men on his pay roll they returned their chips, and received back their stakes of a hundred dollars each. As Burley was banker, and handled all the money, there was no chance of a hold-out.

Graham was assigned to the upper berth of a small compartment in an old Pullman. The lower berth was occupied by a sharpshooter who had been at his table; Slim Harvey, he called himself. As they were disrobing for bed the train jostled to a stop. They had arrived at the next stand.

Throwing his folded trousers at the foot of the berth, and hanging his coat beside the little green hammock, Graham pulled the curtains, pushed the button that extinguished the electric light. He turned over on one side and slept until noon.

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## CHAPTER V.

### PECULIAR MONEY.

ONE helpful note, thought Graham, while he stood at a snack stand near the railroad station, drinking a second cup of coffee as strong as lye, this was a night job and the days were his own. He was free to lounge about the circus lot and talk to any one without arousing suspicion, would merely seem to be a grifter passing time.

Considering the men he must use as tools, he had picked on Slim Harvey, his roommate, and Gerry Carter, a tight-mouthed player at the same table.

The last-named because, being in the habit of looking for such signs, he had noticed a perceptible bulge under his left armpit. Gerry must carry a shoulder holster.

No man can be in the rackets long without realizing that what breaks up a mob and ends one man's leadership is dissension within the ranks, a quarrel among those who are always on the outlook for the Big Shot to give them the worst of it. Graham's scheme was quietly to cause such a state of affairs, start forces to work that would bring about ruin. Ruin for Ed Burley, and if any one else had to suffer in the course of his obtaining his ruthless revenge—well, it wouldn't be any honest member of the circus outfit.

Paying the fellow at the snack stand, Graham turned his back on the lines of brilliantly painted cars, bearing in gilt lettering the name of the show, and started toward Millerburg. On the walk there he passed circus posters everywhere, queens of the high wire; equestriennes in ballet skirts, on horseback, about to jump through flaming hoops; clowns of every description; and elephants trumpeting in a square. The billing hadn't changed in fifteen years. He remembered when he had first seen it in Peaseville and tried to absorb all the pictures at once.

The main stem of Millerburg reminded him of the aftermath of a holiday. The circus parade had passed through in the morning, the calliope shrieking above the sound of brass instruments, and the town must have turned out. Paper bags, advertising throw-aways littered the street, and it was strangely empty after the glamour and the glory of brilliant trappings that had swept through with the parade. Groups of boys stood on corners, eyes big, talking excitedly of the wonder

world of sawdust, tinsel and spangles. Graham sought a stationery store. He entered, and a clerk ambled from the back of the shop. His purchases were a fine pen point and holder, a small bottle of green ink and a bottle of red, and a magazine to use as a writing stand on his knee.

Returning to the Pullman where he slept, Jack found that Slim Travers was up and out. Graham locked the door of the compartment, and, sitting down on the edge of the lower berth, started to do a little pen work. This consisted of holding on the magazine one bill of small denomination after another. Carefully, like one who forges, he drew tiny little wavy lines in red and green ink on the white spaces of the bills, hardly perceptible to the naked eye, very like the silk thread that the government plant presses into the currency.

Jack was doing something quite original in his game of deception. He was making perfectly legal tender open to a charge of being counterfeit.

Two hundred dollars, in fives and tens, he lined with thin curves and twists in the faintest of red and green ink, which dried almost immediately. He placed this little bank roll in his left-hand pocket. This was to be the trouble maker.

Not yet finished with the red ink, he placed the bottle in his left-hand side pocket, threw the magazine on the upper berth for future reading, and unlocked the door to the compartment. A smile was on his face, a cruel grimace that had no mirth in it.

**T**HE Benson & Burley Circus had taken a large plot on the outskirts of Millerburg, consisting of a baseball diamond and a picnic ground. A big crowd was surging in the Mid-



way, and Graham drifted with it, his eyes darting here and there, seeking for the pickpockets he had seen working on the previous afternoon.

Finally he found them, on the outskirts of a throng circling one of the games. He placed his hand on the shoulder of the "wire," a thin, wizened faced man who squirmed under his touch.

"No, this isn't a pinch or a touch," Graham assured him.

"Gee, a hand on my shoulder sounds like come-with-me in seven languages."

Graham laughed. "I'll gladly relieve your mind. Fact is, I want to know if you'd like to make some easy dough?"

"Will a duck swim? Lead me to it!"

"Come behind these stands where we can talk without being overheard by the army."

The two men circled the joints.

"Well, what's your grift?" queried the pickpocket.

"That's not your affair, if I pay on the line. This is the big idea. Can you do my job? I want you to get that blackjack Ed Burley, the big boss, carries in his hip pocket, for just thirty minutes, and then return it. There's two hundred dollars in it for you. Can you do it?"

The thief shook his head. "This sounds tricky. What's the idea?"

"That's my affair. Of course, if you pass up the century notes—"

"Wait a minute! I tell you the truth, brother, the only way this take-and-put game can be played is this way: when I get the blackjack I'll have to put another in its place, or he'd feel the difference in the weight and know it was gone."

"O. K. You can borrow a loaded leather, can't you?"

"You bet I can! When do you want that blackjack?"

"Any time this afternoon."

"I'll get two stalls working, and try to do it for you in an hour. I'm A-1, if I say so myself; have worked every big fair in the country. Trouble is, men don't carry wallets much any more. And nine times out of ten the vest pockets are empty or they're wearing a wrist watch. But I can get that blackjack and put another in his hip pocket, then reverse the operation when you're through with his. I haven't reefed a single poke to-day yet, and our mob of cannons has to have money to eat regular. That two hundred will go quite a ways."

"Good, but don't try to cross me with a phony blackjack! I can recognize Burley's, and I want it—for thirty minutes."

"All right, mister, but I'm no bum. I have pride, I have. I'll see you down by the red lemonade stand."

Graham smiled as he gazed after the thief he had hired.

"Even a dip can possess the heart of an artist," he mused. "A hundred to one he'll get Burley's blackjack for me."

It was because Graham liked to see a job well done that he wanted the blackjack. His plan for revenge did not require it; yet somehow this little touch seemed to finish off the task in a way nothing else could.

He was going to douse the leather end in red ink, smear crimson splashes on the sides, and hold it in the sun until they dried.

Dangerous as the pickpocket must have known it was to brace the big boss in person, he did not keep Graham waiting long. Within twenty minutes he returned, the pocket of his coat sagging significantly.

"It was easy," he bragged, "because he wasn't suspicious. My fingers are itching for that two hundred smackers."

GRAHAM had a few minutes' chat with Crowcher, the boss canvasman, and learned that Mack Smith, the head bull man, and Mrs. Maloney, the wardrobe mistress, were brimming with excitement about the return of Tom Benson to the show. They longed to see him.

"Not just now," Graham said, guardedly. "A grifter like I'm supposed to be wouldn't be talking to such heads of departments. Tell them to sit easy. You might ask Mrs. Maloney if she remembers when I hid in the dressing room of Bim-Bum, the clown, and would have smothered to death if she hadn't found me. And tell Mack I hope Black Head, the big bull, remembers me; I always rode in the parade in the box they had strapped on him."

"Indeed, they'll be disappointed, but they'll know it isn't because you don't remember the old days, and they will be patient till you declare yourself."

Graham nodded, in full realization that these three were loyal to the man they thought him. He could hardly wait until the show let out that evening to get into the game and buy a hundred dollars' worth of chips with his marked money.

The third section pulled out of Millerburg at three o'clock. The sporting blood of the local suckers ran thin, and before that time a stiff stud game had taken everything from the outsiders they were willing to part with. After they had left the privilege car Ed Burley returned to each house man the hundred dollars he had put up, openly, carelessly, to show the

town players there was money in the game.

Slim Harvey and Jack Graham both declared themselves tired. Neither even wanted a nightcap, and retired to their compartment.

Once inside, Graham locked the door carefully.

"Never can tell!" he said. "I don't want any one crashing in here."

"No—what's up?" stammered Slim.

"Twenty years, mebbe."

"What!"

"Twenty years in stir, partner. How does that sound to you? For passing money that wasn't made by Uncle Sam. A member of a counterfeiting mob gets no mercy."

Slim dug his hands into his pocket, pulled out hands filled with bills. He scattered them on the berth.

"I don't get your drift, buddy, but you're all wrong if you say I have any queer money."

Graham wondered. He picked up a sheaf of bills, ran them over, looking for one, given back by Burley, that had his green and red wavy lines on them. As the curves were only a quarter of an inch in length, he couldn't inspect the bills very quickly. Finally his heart leaped. He had found two fives, together.

"Well, Slim," he drawled, "you see this finif. Looks all right to you, doesn't it? You'd bet it would pass any bank?"

Slim gave the bill the once-over.

"I wish I had a suitcase chuck-full of them," he declared.

"Oh, that's it! Well, watch me closely."

Wetting his thumb, Graham ran it over the white section of the bill where he had drawn the wavy green and red lines. The ink ran, making small yet visible blotches.

"Yeah, bo!" he said triumphantly. "Did you ever hear of the silk the U. S. stamps into a bill smearing like paint?"

The other's mouth opened vacantly; he appeared sheepish and scared.

"I swear this is the first I knew of it, buddy. Give me a chance. If I've been passing any bum paper, it's been innocently, or let me never see daylight again! You a Department of Justice man?"

"No," replied Graham, carefully, "but there is one on the show. I know him by sight, but he doesn't know me. He belongs to the secret service of the Treasury, and his specialty is bad coin and bills."

"Who is he?"

"I'll tell you if you wait till I tip Burley, a f t e r the game to-morrow night. I figure we'll ask for real honest-to-goodness money after the game, in front of the gumshoe; that 'll prove we aren't confederates of the big boss. What do you say?"

"I say, yes. I wouldn't take a chance of twenty spaces in stir for a million in bum bills."

He was in evident terror, and Graham argued with him that by his scheme they would put it firmly up to Ed Burley and the Department of Justice man, and clear themselves.

"I'll call the play," he told Slim. "You merely back me."

The gambler gulped and nodded.

Graham grinned. Events were shaping up faster than he had hoped.

**A** GROUP two deep stood in front of the little service bar. Graham managed to crowd beside the gun-toting Gerry Carter and slipped into his open pocket the little government badge; he must trust to luck that his fingers did not come in

contact with it during the evening play.

The talk was general, as half a dozen invited guests had their money pushed back to them by the bartender.

"Your money ain't good here, gents," he said to them.

What he meant was that it would be taken, and more too, at the tables, but free drinks had their usual allure.

Graham felt a tingling sensation in his spine. He was like a careful stage manager, he t h o u g h t, who had attempted to overlook no detail; but in this case the human equation was something that couldn't be calculated. When play started he placed the second hundred of doctored money into circulation.

The night s e e m e d endless. The game seasawed for a time, and then slowly but irresistibly the tide turned in the favor of the cooler, more calculating players who only backed their hands for what they were worth.

The game broke up at five o'clock. Ed Burley paid off several of the outsiders who had money coming to them. When berths had been found for them he started to check up with his house men.

Graham glanced sharply at the big boss.

"I don't know what the other fellows think, Mr. Burley," he said quietly, "but I want my hundred in good United States money. I'm not passing bad bills for you or any one else!"

"Nor me, neither!" shrilled Slim, at his elbow.

"What do you mean, bad bills?" stormed Burley. "No one can insinuate I'm passing counterfeit money and get away with it. Put up or—"

"I don't have to shut up!"



While he spoke, Graham had been seeking a doctored bill.

"Look at this!" he snapped, and passed a wet thumb across a white section of the bill, making the ink run. "What do you say about that? You're passing that dough, Mr. Burley, and what's more, we don't want any part of it, for there's a Department of Justice man in this car, going it alone, and somebody is due to take twenty years on the chin!"

There was a tense instant of silence.

"Who's the Federal dick?" snarled Burley. "This is some kind of a frame-up."

"Yes? Then tell it to Gerry Carter. I'll bet a grand he has a department badge in his pocket."

Graham pointed at the gambler, who turned white in his anger.

"You lie!" Carter shrieked.

"Hold him, men," ordered Burley, and two players from another table jumped behind Gerry Carter, pinioning his arms.

The circus boss plunged his hand into one side pocket, then another, brought out the little metal secret service badge and planked it down with an oath.

His hand crept toward his back hip pocket.

"No one is going to frame me and get away with it!" he declared slowly, and his face was frenzied with rage.

"I'm being framed, too!" shrieked Gerry. "That badge was planted on me."

"Yeah, my friend? And what about this queer paper?"

"I—I've never seen it before," said Gerry, "but it looks as if you were passing it and trying to shift the blame!"

"Why, damn you!" thundered Burley, and he swung his blackjack from

his pocket, lashed it back for a downward blow.

"The blood! Blood on your blackjack! Look at the blood on it!" screamed Graham, while in a frenzy of fright Gerry Carter threw off the two men who held him—aided in no small measure by Jack Graham's apparent clumsy bumping of one. The blow that was about to fall did not descend as Ed Burley looked stupidly at the blackjack, stained a bright crimson.

That instant of indecision gave Gerry his chance. With the speed of fear he drew his revolver from a shoulder holster and threw it down on Burley. There was a blast of flame, and the circus owner took it in the chest, plunging sidewise, knocking down a table and falling heavily to the floor.

Gerry was demanding that the house men get out of his way. A path was made for his smoking gun and the door slammed behind him.

Graham was bending over Burley. Blood was staining his chest frightfully.

"I guess they got you, Burley," he said, "that blood on your blackjack was a sign."

The man regarded him blankly.

"I don't understand," he whispered. "I don't understand. I—I haven't used it since the night Plen Benson died. And the blow I struck him, in anger, *brought no blood!*"

"No, I'm darned sure that it didn't. Hear that, Slim? He admits that he hit his partner."

"Yes, but I didn't mean to kill him!" gurgled Burley, and crimson drops of blood oozed down his chin.

"That's what they all say. Benson wasn't the first man you've brought down, Burley, and if you get over that dose of lead I have half a dozen wit-

nesses that 'll swear to your confession. It 'll mean either life or the chair."

Graham's face was distorted with rage.

"And while you're alive I want to tell you you didn't even start to get away with stealing this show. I'm Tom Benson, Plen Benson's son, and I'm back to claim my own!"

But Burley did not hear him. His head had lolled to one side as he lapsed into unconsciousness. Graham had a confession out of him, but he would never bring him to justice.

The rear door of the car opened.

"Some one jumped off the back of the private car!" shouted a steward. "He rolled and rolled down the embankment, and he's lucky if he didn't bash his head in."

"I hope not," said Graham, "for when Burley's record with that black-jack is considered, Gerry Carter's shot was a legitimate case of self-defense."

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN AWKWARD QUESTION.

TWO nights later Graham sat in the private car at the end of the third section reserved for the owner of the show. It had not been difficult to establish himself as Tom Benson, with the backing of Fatty Crowcher, Mack Smith, and Mrs. Maloney.

The results had been quick and to the point, surprising to all, including the man who had framed Ed Burley, now dead from the bullet wound, into a confession.

Tim Murphy was gone, the grifters along the Midway had picked up their gimmicked games and departed, and the privilege car was locked. It would be made into a lunch room for the em-

ployees. The blemish on the Benson & Burley Circus had been removed.

Jack was aware that one of the reasons that no barriers had been placed in the way of his claim to ownership was that circus people have been taught one bitter truth: anything serious of a legal nature ties up a show; it is not allowed to move, and that is a form of slow death.

Indeed, none of them believed he was any one but the dead chum he represented himself to be, except Mrs. Maloney, the wardrobe mistress.

Her doubt was prompted more by instinct than by reasoning. Of course, a boy could change into a man of slightly different appearance, and this Tom Benson could remember a good many incidents of the past that she remembered, too.

But she had loved young Tom Benson in the old days, and love such as hers does not die. Whether she doubted the new owner's right to the name of Tom Benson or not, however, she was delighted with him. Every day he seemed more wholesome and human; he was losing that hard line about the mouth, the keen, hunted look in the eyes. Best of all, he showed every hour that he was on the lot, during loading and unloading and all the performances, that he desired—and insisted upon—a square circus. That alone was enough to endear him to Mrs. Maloney.

Yet she remembered little tricks of manner, little mannerisms, of the young Benson who was. Could she be wrong?

It was late, but she made her way along the railroad siding to the last car of the third section, always occupied by the main guy.

There was a timid knock at the door and Mrs. Maloney stepped into the

private car, advanced toward the leather seat where sat the owner.

"Mr. Benson, I hate to bother you, sir, but there's something on my mind. You'll pardon me if I speak—"

Graham insisted upon her taking a seat.

"Why, Mrs. Maloney, what's the matter? Of course, express yourself."

"It is like this, sir," she began diffidently; "you've done such wonderful things these last couple of days that I simply hate to speak. But I can't live as a hypocrite, I can't. What is on me mind is this, sir: I know you ain't Tom Benson!"

"Now, sir, don't say a word. You could fool those men, like Fatty Crowcher and Mack Smith, and where you got the memories that belong to Tom Benson I can't say; but you can't fool a woman who knew him from a tiny tot until he ran away. I had a feeling you weren't Tom, and that feeling has grown on me. Now, God save the mark, I'm glad Mr. Burley is gone, sir, and this is a clean show again, and I'm sure that a nicer gentleman couldn't be boss, and still..."

Graham laughed gently. "You can expose me, Mrs. Maloney, when you've heard my story, if you wish. Of course I'm not Tom Benson! But my poor dead chum was, who called himself Tom Blair."

He told her of their attempt to escape Mal Cantonge's vengeance by leaving Hammondton, and of the result. He took from an inside pocket the sheet his pal had signed, which had been witnessed by the couple at the farm:

I leave everything to my good pal,  
Jack Graham.

"Now, Mrs. Maloney, I was on the

way to tell Mr. Benson about the death of his son, softening the story, of course—when I read about the father's death, too. I came on to the show in a double determination to get revenge, not only for myself, but for the Bensons.

"Yes, I had a claim on Ed Burley, too. Fifteen years ago my father was short-changed at the red wagon by a crooked ticket seller, when the show played Peaseville. When he said he'd get the sheriff, Burley hit my father with his blackjack. My father died from the effects of that blow. I have avenged that death. My work here is done. It is a question whether that one-line will written by Tom Benson would stand in court. If you wish to expose me I will not try to fight you."

Tears were in the old woman's eyes.

"So you were my Tom's chum!" she said huskily. "The chum he wanted to have his all. And you think that I would stand in the way? Never let such a thing be said of poor old Mrs. Maloney! Stay, sir, as the boss of the show—as Tom Benson. But you won't mind if I ask to come here sometimes, and you and I can talk about the poor lad I loved, who is gone forever, will you?"

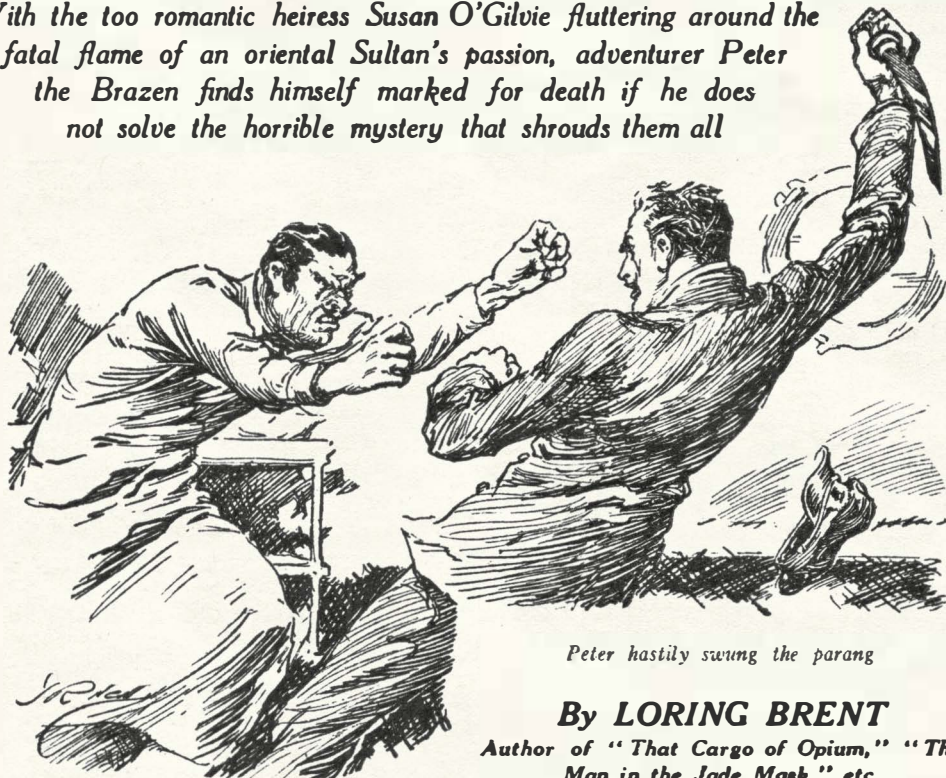
She was crying frankly, now, and the main guy put his hand around her shoulder and tried his best to comfort her. All trace of hardness was gone from his face, as if by magic. He was like a boy again, back with his old ideal, the circus, ready to keep it worthy and untarnished.

He grinned suddenly as he patted Mrs. Maloney's shoulder. It had occurred to him that he knew quite enough about gyps and rackets to keep them miles away from the Benson & Burley lot.



# Vampire

*With the too romantic heiress Susan O'Gilvie fluttering around the fatal flame of an oriental Sultan's passion, adventurer Peter the Brazen finds himself marked for death if he does not solve the horrible mystery that shrouds them all*



*Peter hastily swing the parang*

**By LORING BRENT**

*Author of "That Cargo of Opium," "The Man in the Jade Mask," etc.*

## LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

**O**N the Hongkong water front one foggy night Peter Moore rescued from the river a bloody, half-dead man with a punctured wrist, who gasped a gruesome story of a snake-eyed, hairless woman—a modern vampire—who had been stealing his blood while he was held a captive; and of a yellow man who wanted to scalp him alive. Peter hurried away for some brandy and the police; but when he returned to the Bund the man was gone. A motor boat was disappearing into the fog.

Returning, much shaken, to the

Oriental Hotel, Peter found that an interview had been granted him with the Chinese scientist Fong Toy, whose radio invention Peter had been sent to the Orient to buy for one million dollars. The appointment was for midnight. At the hotel bar Peter was surprised to see in Jeffrey Douglas, retired Chicago lawyer and racketeer, a man who closely resembled himself at a casual glance.

A moment after Douglas had left, an Oriental face appeared at the window, and a swiftly hurled knife quivered in the wall near Peter's head.

This story began in the *Argosy* for April 25.

Then, before he had left the bar, a drunken ship's radio operator introduced himself as Chester Blunt, and made several vague threats which Peter couldn't understand. Peter went to his room, where he was attacked by a mysterious gunman, but escaped harm.

At a ball given that evening in the hotel by Chong Foo Shommon, Sultan of Sakala, Peter was amazed to meet Susan O'Gilvie, his too charming and too reckless companion in many dangerous adventures, who told him that she was engaged to marry the Sultan. Peter was dismayed. The Sultan was by reputation an utterly unscrupulous Oriental despot and barbarian.

The lights in the ballroom suddenly went out, and when they were turned on it was found that Jeffrey Douglas—the man who looked like Peter—had been stabbed. Peter went to his room dismayed. Some one had ransacked all his belongings. Without doubt the assassins in the ballroom had meant to kill him instead of Douglas. When the radio man, Chester Blunt came to Peter's room with something on his mind, Peter sensed that the night's events were all parts of a single great oriental tragedy, in which he himself played some yet unguessed rôle.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### MIDNIGHT.

**T**HE wireless operator was staring steadily at Peter now. He seemed less drunk.

"But I didn't come down here to tell you about how Douglas was stabbed downstairs," he said. "I've come here to talk to you about Susan O'Gilvie."

"Let's not talk about her," Peter said.

"Got to talk about her," Chester Blunt insisted. "She gave me a message for you."

"When?"

"A minute before they turned the lights out."

"Were you dancing with her?"

"Yep. I cut in on Chong—you know, the Sultan. She asked me to look you up and tell you to be sure to come down to the 'Tiger's Den' after you got through with Fong Toy, whoever he is. She says she wants to have another talk with you about something very important. She says you've got to come, and that I'm to bring you myself, by force, if you won't come willingly."

Peter looked at him thoughtfully; wondered if Chester Blunt, too, were somehow in league with Chong. Peter was in a mood now to suspect everybody.

"You run back and tell her I'll make it if I can."

"Nothing doing," said the wireless man. "The party's broken up, and she's gone to her room."

"Where is Chong?"

"He went back aboard his yacht. Susan told me to stay with you. She says maybe you will need somebody around, anyhow, in case you get into a fight."

"Have you a gun?" Peter asked hopefully.

Chester Blunt laughed. "Why in hell should I pack a gun? Say, listen, Moore. Are you trying to kid me? Maybe while I'm riding herd on you you can show me something of this mysterious, evil China Susan was talking about—the China you and she saw. That's what I want to see. Show it to me! Scare me! I wanna be scared!"

"I don't think it's possible to scare you," Peter said dryly.

"China!" the other jeered. "A Chicago killer follows a lawyer to Hongkong and stabs him. That's modern China! I want to see dragons and secret passageways—"

He paused. A man had come down the corridor and was standing behind him; a slim young Chinese, very modern in dress and manner and wearing the tortoise-rimmed glasses without which no modern young Chinese business man seems complete.

He said in a suave voice, "I beg your pardon, but which of you gentlemen is Mr. Peter Moore?"

"There he is," Blunt said; "in the flesh."

The Chinese smiled at him, then addressed himself to Peter.

"My name is Wan Sang. I am Dr. Fong Toy's secretary. The doctor has sent me here to see if you can come to his laboratory immediately. Can you come?"

Peter nodded; picked up his trench coat and hat from the bed. He and Wan Sang went down the hall, with Chester Blunt determinedly following.

**A**LL three descended to the lobby and out to the ricksha compound. Two rickshas came rolling out of the fog, side by side. Peter climbed into one, Wan Sang into the other. Not until later did Peter realize that Wan Sang gave no address, no directions to the coolies. His wits might have been sharper if his brain had not been so full of champagne, bourbon—and Susan.

Wan Sang said: "Who is this young man in uniform—a friend of yours?"

Chester Blunt, overhearing, answered: "A great admirer—that's all. Whither he goest, I goest."

The Chinese was obviously dis-

pleased. Shoe-button eyes behind thick lenses glittered. He said to Peter:

"Does this young man intend to follow you?"

Peter answered: "Don't pay any attention to him."

"That's right!" Blunt snorted. "Ignore me. But lead the way. Lead the way into darkest China! Scare me! Give me a thrill!"

Peter grinned at Wan Sang, but the Chinese refused to see any humor in the situation.

The two rickshas started off. A third trailed them. From time to time, Wan Sang glanced back at Chester Blunt, who was crouched behind the rubber apron drawn up to his chin to protect him against the elements. His wireless cap was cocked jauntily over one ear. Wan Sang would glance at him, then at Peter. He seemed to be in something of a dilemma.

Peter did not remark this at the time, but he did later. In view of what had happened so far this evening, it was a little strange that he was not at all suspicious of Wan Sang's reliability. He had had so many dealings with Orientals that he had learned by what roundabout and deceptive methods they sometimes accomplished their results. But he was too busy thinking about Susan and Chong even to notice where the rickshas were going.

Ghostly shapes seemed to twist and writhe in the fog. It was so dense that, even under street lights, he could hardly see the naked calves of his coolie.

Suddenly the two rickshas, with the third trailing a dozen feet behind, swung into what appeared to be a hole in a stone wall; a high stone wall dripping and green with moss. It was actually an arched alleyway. Peter



tried to orient himself. He suddenly realized that, despite his long familiarity with the twisting alleys, lanes and streets of Hongkong, he had not the slightest idea where in the world he was.

Ahead was dense blackness. Then a pin point of green light glowed in the fog. The light flickered on the wet wall of the arched tunnel; seemed to spill and scatter in green drops like emeralds.

Wan Sang was invisible. Peter sharply inquired: "Is this Fong Toy's laboratory?"

The Chinese did not answer. Peter called: "Blunt, are you back there?"

The answer came jovially. "Try and shake me, big boy!"

**T**HEN a door swung open at the back of what appeared to be a large enclosed yard. It was paved with red bricks. Light glistened wetly on them. Peter drew in quick lungfuls of foggy air and smelled sandalwood incense and the unmistakable acrid scent of opium.

Where in the devil was he?

A man stood in the doorway holding up a brass lantern. He peered into the courtyard. The flickering yellow flame played on his face and made it look like brown lacquer.

Peter, staring at him, felt his pulses leap; felt the wet chill of shock form on his forehead. He was suddenly sober and alert. The man in the doorway was, unmistakably, the one who had stood behind the Sultan when Susan had introduced Peter to him—the lean, brown man with the star-shaped scar!

It was a deliberate trap—another surprise. Chong, having been frustrated three times to-night in his attempts at having Peter out of his way,

had staged this elaborate ambush. For a moment before he acted, Peter wondered how Chong had learned about his scheduled visit to Fong Toy's laboratory. But men with the power of Chong had the peculiar faculty of learning anything they wished to know. Perhaps the note itself was spurious.

Peter's coolie lowered the ricksha shafts to the ground, so that Peter could alight. Peter had no means of knowing how many men surrounded him in the darkness—from what direction a knife might come.

He shouted: "Blunt! We're trapped! Get out and run like Sam Hill!"

Peter heard the wireless man's skeptical laugh behind him, then alighted from the ricksha, but not in the usual way. He leaped out of the seat and upon the back of the coolie. They crashed to the ground, with the coolie underneath.

He had learned, in previous tight corners, that the man who acts a split second sooner than his enemy often carries into a fight an overwhelming advantage.

Peter leaped up from the stunned coolie as men poured from the doorway. He saw the gleam of a curved knife and heard the wireless man say, "Hey! What's the big idea!"

"Get out of here!" Peter barked. He grasped the ricksha shafts, turned the vehicle about so that its rear end faced the doorway, and used the ricksha as an impromptu rolling battering-ram—sent it flying into the midst of the knot of men dashing toward him from the doorway.

A cold, wet hand clutched his throat. Peter swung wildly; heard the satisfactory sound of a sick grunt as his fist smashed into a bony jaw.

Then came the knife. It slashed his coat open from shoulder to wrist, slicing through the flesh at his elbow to the bone.

Peter struck out at this unseen assailant; missed him; struck again, lower, and landed a blow somewhere near an invisible yellow man's solar plexus.

Blunt, behind him cried: "Moore! Where are you? I'm stabbed!"

The man in the doorway still held the brass lantern aloft, shouting orders in Tonkinese. Peter dimly saw a club rise above his head. He grabbed with both hands as the club came down; felt a finger snap, but hung onto the club and wrenched it free.

He heard Blunt's sobbing breath behind him: "Where are you, Moore? For God's sake, where are you?"

Peter brought the club down on a skull, wheeled about and groped for the wireless man.

"Here!" he said. "Take this club!"

He pushed the club into the operator's hand and growled: "Down that alley!"

"They got me in the shoulder!"

PETER heard something go hissing past his ear; dimly saw a grimacing brown face and lashed out at it with his fist. He missed the face, but the brown man ducked and gave Peter an opening. He saw the white glimmer now of Blunt's uniform; grasped his shoulder, gave him a push and repeated, "Down that alley!" His hand came away from the operator's shoulder wet and sticky.

Blunt moaned, "I don't know where the damned alley is!"

Peter gave him another shove; ducked and struck out at another brown face, grasped Blunt's arm and

started him off at a stumbling run down the covered alleyway.

That hurtling ricksha had evidently worked havoc on the scar-faced man's plans. He was shrieking orders now.

WITH Blunt sobbing and moaning beside him, Peter started down the dimly glowing arched hole he had come through a moment before.

The wireless man struck down two men with the club as they started. Then they broke into a run. Halfway down the dark tunnel Peter collided with a man, heard the hiss of savagely in-drawn breath and blindly struck at him; hit him in the face and stomach; sent him stumbling back with a crash against the brick wall.

The two Americans started running again. They reached the sidewalk and continued to run. The fog swallowed them; lent them a cloak of invisibility, but Peter did not permit Chester Blunt to slow down until he had got his bearings.

Peter found that they were on Tung Street, above Upper Lascar Row. Reaching Bonham Strand, Peter was certain that they were, at least for the time being, secure from attack.

Under a street light they stopped and Peter examined the wireless man's wound. Like his own, it was superficial, but bleeding freely.

"I've got to sit down," Blunt gasped. "Boy! That was some scrap! So this is China! Hongkong—hello! But say, what in hell was the rumpus all about?"

Peter told him briefly. "You were wrong about that Chicago lawyer," he said. "That knife in his heart was meant for me. This little party was Chong's fourth attempt to get me out of his way."

The two young men seated themselves in a dark doorway. Chester Blunt lighted a cigarette and expelled smoke through his teeth. He was shaking with excitement.

"I thought Chong was on the level," he declared. "I thought he was a great guy."

"Where did you meet him?"

"At a party Chong threw for a gang of us at Baguio, outside Manila. That's why I missed my ship. Chong told me to come along to Hongkong and catch her on his yacht. Of course, I can't see Susan's marrying him. She's just biting off trouble for herself. But I wouldn't go butting in on her affairs. None of my business."

"THAT'S how I feel," Peter said.

"Chong is a rotten yellow dog.

Susan knows it. She's looking for thrills and she welcomes trouble. She thinks this is adventure. She's going into it with her eyes wide open."

"Yeah," the wireless man agreed. "And she's going to saw herself off plenty trouble. She says she's going to marry Chong to-morrow. I wonder what Anarra will think of that. Ever see Anarra?"

"No. Is she on the Sapphire?"

"Sure, she is! They say Chong is nuts about her. I got it from an American doctor who lives in Bangkok. He was a passenger on the Vandalia last trip. I heard in Manila that Anarra has the most beautiful hair in the world. Well, she hasn't any more. This doctor told me Chong had brought Anarra to him. She had had some kind of jungle fever and lost all her hair and came down with some kind of pernicious anemia, so she has to have blood transfusions all the time. I saw her. She's as bald as a billiard ball. Hey! What's the big idea?"

Peter had savagely seized his arm.

"Did you see that girl on the Sapphire?"

"Sure! I used to see her peeking through a hole in a door when Chong was trying to make love to Susan. She has snaky eyes, this Anarra."

"Didn't Susan ever see her?"

"I don't know. I don't think so. Anarra kept herself pretty well hidden."

"Did you ever mention her to Susan?"

"Nope. I was engaged in minding my own business. Why all the excitement?"

"Listen, Blunt," Peter said. "I hope you're sober enough to understand what I'm going to tell you. This evening, on the bund, I pulled a fellow out of the water who had been scalped. He was babbling about a bald-headed woman with eyes like a snake's. He mentioned a yellow devil who had held him while his blood was pumped into this hairless woman. The scalping was an experiment. I ran to get him some brandy. When I got back, he was gone. I heard them drowning him out in the fog. Do you know what this means?"

The wireless man said, "You don't think they're framing up Susan— Oh, hell, Moore; that's preposterous! You mean, Chong doesn't want to marry Susan, but wants her hair and blood—"

"—For that vampire of his," Peter finished.

Chester Blunt sprang up. His eyes seemed to be all whites. For a moment, Peter was afraid he was going to faint from sheer horror.

"I don't believe it!" the operator stammered. "And if it's true, I—I don't want to get mixed up in this. What do you want to do?"



"We'll go to the Tiger's Den," Peter said.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DREAM DUST.

SUSAN, hoping that Peter's appointment with Fong Toy would not materialize, waited for him in the Oriental Hotel lobby until almost half past twelve. Then the young man from the American consulate who had brought her to Chong's impromptu party, and two of the girls who had come over on the Sultan's yacht from Manila happened along and urged her to go with them.

"Jim Bonner said he couldn't hold a table down there much later than midnight," the young man pointed out.

"But I gave Chester a message telling Mr. Moore I'd meet him here," Susan said.

"You'd better not wait," the vice-consul argued. "He may not show up at all. And it's dangerous to run around after dark in a ricksha in this man's town."

"Leave a chit in his mail box and tell him to come on down," one of the girls suggested.

Susan agreed to do this. She wanted to have another talk with Peter. For very private reasons of her own, she was piqued by his attitude. The one thing she had wanted him to say, the one question she had wanted him to ask, he had failed to utter. She wanted to give him another chance to plead with her. Her campaign so far had miserably failed. She didn't actually love Chong. She had used him simply as a club over Peter's head—and Peter had failed to react according to her scheme.

Susan's pride was now terribly involved. If Peter didn't try in the right way to dissuade her from marrying Chong, she would marry him just to spite Peter.

She seated herself at a writing desk in the lobby and scribbled a hasty note:

DEAR OLD BUM:

Please don't fail me. I feel there are certain angles of this situation which we haven't yet discussed. I am going down to the Tiger's Den now with some of the crowd. If you don't show up by one-thirty, I am very apt to get mad and go home and to bed. Come on! You'll like my gang, and we will have one last dance and one last drink together, for to-morrow we die.

SUSAN.

This note she left with the night clerk at the desk, requesting him to give it to Peter Moore the instant he came in.

"It's very urgent," she said. Then she joined her friends.

THE moment she had gone, the night clerk opened the envelope, copied the message, resealed the original one and placed it in its envelope, pasting down the flap. The copy he gave to a slim, brown-skinned young man who was sitting idly in the lobby and who, clutching the message, now hastened out of the lobby and into a waiting ricksha.

Now, the Tiger's Den in Hongkong is typical of a certain type of native cabaret which has sprung into being in the treaty ports of China as a result of the heavy influx of tourists, especially Americans. Once a third-rate hop joint and native chow house, its antique, Oriental and sinister flavor made it gradually popular as a place for tourists to see native vice at its worst—as they imagined.

Its wily proprietors saw an excellent opportunity to cash in, and cashed in. Retaining the sinister, Oriental and antique flavor, they abolished the opium-smoking stalls, hired a Chinese orchestra and presented for the tourists' enthusiastic approval the kind of chow house Americans can squander money in under the delusion that they are seeing darkest China, and then go home and boast of it.

To this spurious imitation, Susan and her friends flocked that evening to glimpse something of China in the raw. Incense burned in braziers. Lamps and candles flickered on chains from the ceiling and in sockets on the aged sandalwood walls.

The air was thick with incense smoke, cigar and cigarette smoke and the fumes of whisky, gin *bijl* and pungent Javanese arrack. If you wanted *samsu*—Chinese rice whisky—you could have it. Price, fifty cents a drink: worth fifty cents a gallon, and a headache free of charge.

The orchestra, by listening to American orchestras at the hotels, had learned how to imitate American dance music, after a fashion. It was impossible to identify what they were trying to play, but they kept a jiggly kind of time to which it was possible to dance on a floor not much larger than a steamer rug.

Susan had seen enough of the real China with Peter to know that the Tiger's Den was a tawdry imitation, but she loved it, anyway. They had a large table beside the dance floor.

But her fun was spoiled by Peter's non-appearance. She glanced frequently at her wrist watch, tapped a high heel impatiently, and vowed that if Peter didn't show up soon she'd never speak to him again as long as she lived. She had forgotten that, after to-

morrow, she would never see Peter again.

AT a little before one o'clock a waiter came to her side and asked, with a gleaming smile:

"Missy, what name hab got?"

Susan told him. He said, above the shrill din of the orchestra:

"That Masta' Moo', him talkee my, wanchee you that side chop-chop. Can do?"

Simply translated, Peter was outside and wanted to see her.

"You talkee that Masta Moore," Susan answered, "to come this side chop-chop. You talkee him my wanchee him this side. Sabbe?"

"Yes, missy. But that Masta' Moo', he talkee he no can come this side. He talkee you come that side."

It vexed Susan. She said to Jim Bonner:

"My boy friend is outside, but he's too damned shy to come in."

The waiter said anxiously: "That Masta' Moo' say, no talkee. No wanchee bhobbyery. Sabbe? He say, wanchee you come that side befo' he come this side. He say, velly important."

"I don't get this at all," Susan said. "It doesn't make sense."

But she arose and followed the waiter. It made still less sense when she reached the lobby and found no Peter. The waiter gave her his gleaming smile and said, "That Masta' Moo', he outside in licksha. Velly sick."

"Sick!" Susan shrieked. "Why in the devil didn't you say so in the first place?"

She hastened indignantly and anxiously out into Hai-Phong Road. The tall Mongolian doorman stood with folded arms and looked down at her

with the calm inscrutability of a temple god.

"Where's Mr. Moore?" she demanded.

The Mongolian shrugged. "My no sabbe, missy."

Susan peered helplessly into the fog. Several rickshas were drawn up in the mud. Several seemed to be occupied; several, empty.

"Peter!" she cried. "Peter! Where are you?"

Listening for his answer, she heard that disturbing exotic sound Peter had heard earlier in the evening—the far-away, rhythmic thumping of a witch-drum. *Tumpa-dum-dum!* It recalled to her sharply the tom-toms of the Indo-Chinese jungles.

A man had appeared magically at her side. In the light from the doorway, she saw, to her amazement, the round, brown face of Chong Foo Shommon. He wore a black cape over his white clothing.

Her face lighted up. She cried: "Why, Chong! What in the world are you doing here? I thought you were on the Sapphire!"

He had taken her elbow firmly.

"I want to have a talk with you, Susan."

Still smiling, she said, "No, Chong. Nothing doing. I promised to have breakfast with you at ten o'clock at the hotel. And you promised not to interfere with me in any way until then."

**S**USAN tried to shake off his hand. When she could not, she laughed.

"Chong, what's the big idea? Let go my arm. You're hurting me."

"I want you to come with me. Get into this ricksha."

Susan laughed again. It was a nervous laugh. Chong had always been so

amiable, jolly, considerate. She did not know him now.

"Get into this ricksha!" he repeated sternly.

"But why?" she cried.

"I want to talk to you."

"Talk to me here."

"No."

"Then you'll have to wait till breakfast time, Chong. I don't like this. Really, I don't like it a little bit. My friends are inside. I can't run out on them. And I won't. Let me go."

Still she was only surprised; not afraid.

"I said, get—into—this—ricksha!"

Susan was not accustomed to being ordered about by anybody. An American dollar princess, she had always given orders and always intended to.

"I won't!" she snapped. "Chong, what's got into you?"

"You're coming with me."

"But what for?"

"Because I tell you to."

And not until then did the beautiful little thrill-lover become actually uneasy. The look in his eyes was alarming. The expression about his mouth was strange and hard. It came to Susan suddenly that she was tired of this game she had been playing with Chong. Quite as suddenly she realized that she had been playing with fire.

"Chong," she said rapidly, "listen. It's all off. I'm not going to marry you. I don't love you. Let me go."

His grip on her arm tightened. His hand, on her bare flesh, felt sticky. She looked down at it—saw that it was dark red with drying blood.

Susan screamed briefly—a piercing little scream. Chong withdrew his other hand from a fold of the cape; opened it under her face with a curious snapping gesture.

Brownish powder floated in a puff



into her face. It stung her eyes, made her want to sneeze.

Susan's last impression, before the drug sent misty blackness flooding down on her, blinding her, paralyzing all her senses, was of a remote sound—a drum or tom-tom far out over the fog-bound harbor. *Tumpa-dum-dum! Tumpa-dum-dum!*

## CHAPTER IX.

### MISSING.

PETER MOORE and the senior wireless officer of the Vandalia proceeded at a lope down Wing Lok Street to Des Voeux Road until they reached Hai-Phong Street. The Mongolian doorman of the Tiger's Den scrutinized them, glanced with Oriental indifference at Peter's slit sleeve and the wireless man's bloody shoulder, and let them pass.

Chester Blunt, staring out over the smoke-filled, noisy room, exclaimed, "Thank God, the gang's still here!"

Peter followed his eyes and saw the large table. The orchestra was playing a Hongkong conception of "I Love You So Much." The small dance floor was crowded with swaying couples. Peter did not see Susan at the table, and presumed that she was dancing.

The wireless man took him around to the table and introduced him to Jim Bonner, who was a plump, pink-cheeked young man, with a pronounced Harvard accent.

Jim Bonner said that Susan had mentioned Peter frequently. Then: "Did you bring her back?"

"Back?" Peter repeated.

"Sure!" said Bonner. "Back! The party can't go on without Susie. Where is she?"

"Isn't she here?"

Jim Bonner stared at him, then laughed. "Susie didn't tell me you were a practical joker, Mr. Moore."

"I'm not joking," Peter said. "Susan told me to join your party down here."

Further confusion was now added by one of the girls' discovery that Chester Blunt had been stabbed in the shoulder.

"Yeah," the operator said, "Moore and I got into a mix-up with a lot of Tonkinese cutthroats. If it hadn't been for some quick work, I never would have got us out of that jam."

Peter let that pass.

A blond girl exclaimed: "You were hurt, too, Mr. Moore!"

"It isn't anything," Peter said. And to Jim Bonner: "I'm worried about Susan. She said she'd be here. And she's absolutely dependable."

But his remarks were lost. Jim Bonner was now listening to Chester Blunt's exciting account of that ambush in this darkened alley off Tung Street.

"Moore says it's the fourth attempt Chong has made on his life to-night."

Some one cried, "That's ridiculous! Chong wouldn't—"

Peter grabbed Jim Bonner's arm and swung him roughly around. "I want to know where Susan is!"

The smile went away from the plump young man's mouth. "How do I know where she is?" he demanded. "You called for her ten minutes ago, didn't you? You told her you wanted her to come outside a moment, didn't you?"

"I did not."

"Well, I heard a waiter tell her you wanted her outside, and she went outside; and I supposed you and she had gone off somewhere. It doesn't seem to make much sense, does it?"

"Yes," Peter said. "It makes too much sense. Blunt, come on along."

"More excitement?"

**T**AKING him by the elbow, Peter hurried Blunt into the lobby. Then he tried to explain. "Chong must have called for her and sent in word that I was calling. He's taken her aboard that yacht."

"What makes you so sure?"

"Where else would he take her? Come on!"

The wireless man was reluctant. He said: "Listen, Moore; I'm not sure Chong took her aboard the Sapphire. There's dozens of places in Hongkong where he could have taken her. Maybe she framed it with that waiter and went back to the hotel. Shall we try the hotel first?"

"No," Peter said firmly. "Where's the Sapphire lying?"

"Out in the roadstead, between H o n g h o m and North Point—over Kowloon way. But I'm sure—"

"That's where we're going!"

The operator grew more reluctant. He didn't believe Susan was on the Sapphire. "I don't think Chong means any harm to her, anyway."

"We'll find that out when we're aboard the Sapphire."

Peter urged him along Connaught Road until it joined the bund proper. His objective was the sampan jetty at the foot of Peddars Street.

Not far from the street light where Peter had pulled that groaning unfortunate out of the water, Chester Blunt stopped. He refused to go farther.

"Listen, Moore; maybe you're right and maybe you're wrong. I think you are wrong. One way or another, I don't care for any more of this."

"But it's too much for me single-handed," Peter argued.

"That isn't any skin off my back, Moore. I didn't ask for this. Count me out."

"Are you," Peter asked, "going to let that girl be torn apart by these devils?"

"I'm thinking of my own scalp. After all, she's nothing in my life."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to the Tiger's Den. You're crazy. You can't make me believe Chong is such a fiend as all that. It's preposterous."

"So long," Peter said curtly, and abruptly left him.

He hastened out onto the sampan jetty. At the outshore end he was stopped by a red-turbaned Sikh policeman, who was courteous but firm. No one but ships' officers could use the sampans to-night, sahib. The risk was too great. Pirates and harbor cut-throats were too active.

Pete discarded as utterly impractical the idea of telling the policeman about Chong and his vampire woman. Sikh policemen think slowly. This one would take Peter to Police Headquarters. Time would be lost. Unless Peter was mistaken, Chong would lose little time in putting to sea. The Sapphire might be under weigh at this very moment.

Peter obeyed an impulse. It was his only chance now. He ran down Connaught Road toward Hai-Phong Street. Through the fog he heard again the thumping of the witch drum. He all but collided with Chester Blunt, a white figure in the fog, as he swung off Connaught Road into Hai-Phong.

"Lend me that uniform," he said. "Take it off. My clothes will fit you well enough."

The wireless operator looked at him and laughed. Peter slugged him on the point of the chin. And so nicely timed was the blow that he caught the limp

young man neatly in his arms as he pitched forward.

**A** GOLDEN temple spire extended at least five hundred feet into the air. About the base of this great *vat*—far greater than the *Schwe Dagon*, in Rangoon—were smaller *wats*, each containing a deity wrought of the same precious yellow metal. In the foreheads of some of these lesser Buddhas were emeralds, as green as the Java Sea; in the brows of others were sapphires, diamonds, rubies.

The air about the compound of the golden temple was perfumed with the fragrance of jasmine blossoms, with the smoke from incense burners, and it was sweet with the songs of jungle birds.

Susan O'Gilvie climbed up white marble steps to the courtyard and found, to her amazement, that it was paved with slabs of purest silver. As she waited, a butterfly of brilliant blue with wings flapping indolently, floated toward her from the misty greenness of a breadfruit tree. She heard the silvery call of a mango bird.

She had the sensation that she had been in this place before, yet she could not recall just when it had been or what the circumstances were. She was waiting here for some one. It was an appointment. Yet she could not recall the man's name.

As she tried to force it from her memory, the golden scene suddenly shifted. Magically and very mysteriously, she found herself drifting high above the earth, defying gravitation and other earthly laws.

Calm and insistent reason now penetrated these heavenly sensations, and she realized that she was being carried in the arms of some man. Who was he? Where was she going?

Her brain cleared marvelously. It became as clear as a drop of rain water. It was a crystal in which all past events stood out with cameo sharpness. This mental clarity reminded her of the one and only time she had smoked opium, when each thought that came to her was vivid and exciting; yet she could not quite recall where or when she had smoked the opium. It had been on a ship.

Her next distinct impression was that of the gurgling of water. Then she sensed that she was being lowered; that her numb body was being passed from the arms of one man to the arms of another. Her brain was crystal-clear, but her body was utterly without sensation. It was as if she were non-existent from the neck down.

Sounds seemed to come from far off. She heard a familiar sound; identified it as the throbbing exhaust of a motor boat. Then she felt a cool damp breeze against her cheeks. Her eyes fluttered open to encounter perfect darkness, and she wondered if she had suddenly gone blind. All about her in the blackness were strange clankings and soft bellowings. It seemed to her that these bellowings came from the steel lungs of ships, but she could not focus her mind on it—or on anything.

Susan was completely detached from the reality about her. Her brain refused to put obvious twos and twos together.

At length, a radiance fell on her closed eyelids. She opened them to behold what appeared to be a long necklace made of bright lights. Above this was a similar necklace, but not so bright. Far above, two bright solitary lights rode. There were more gurglings; then the far-away muttering of men, and once again the sensation of floating in space.



The necklace came closer. She tried to lift her chin from her breastbone, but the muscles of her neck refused the command. Looking down she saw narrow white planks spaced with black lines. There was something about this pattern that suggested a ship, a yacht, to her; but she could not say for sure just what it meant.

She was vaguely aware, now, that a man was on each side of her—a dark-skinned man. Looking down again, she saw her feet dangling above the narrow white planks with their black spacings. Her feet were not touching the planks. She was floating above them, with a man on each side of her.

**I**N spite of the crystal clearness of her brain, she could not remember when she had been in this place before; yet she had been here before. She recognized a mahogany door, and knew that just beyond it there would be a grass-green carpet, with a mirror in the wall just opposite the door.

The door was opened, and there was a grass-green carpet on the floor, with a mirror set in the wall just opposite. She tried to lift her head, to look at herself in the mirror, as she had always done when she came through this door; but her neck muscles still refused to obey her commands.

She wanted to see her face in the mirror. She was certain that her face was a peculiar sea-green, but she wanted to make sure.

Susan floated down the grass-green carpet to where it came to an end. Beyond that was— What was beyond that? She remembered now. Blue-beard's forbidden room!

The forbidden door opened. She had always wanted to see what was beyond that door. Now her curiosity was satisfied. The first thing she saw was

a woman's tiny feet. They were in golden slippers. Beautifully slim and shapely ankles were attached to the tiny feet in the golden slippers.

Susan could see only as far as the knees. There, the slim legs ended in a fringe of gold and red. Susan was sure she saw rubies, as red as blood, sewn into the fringe, and the authentic blue-white flash of diamonds.

But try as she would, Susan could not lift her head to see above the gemmed fringe.

She was sure she smelled incense. Then, far off, came voices. They tinkled, rose and fell. Somehow they had the sound of waterfalls.

Susan wished that she could see the rest of the woman with the beautiful legs.

Another door opened. Beyond was glittering pure whiteness. Even the floor was white. And the room was filled with strange, somehow familiar objects of white enamel. Chairs. Two long white tables. Cases of plate glass with white shelves on which metallic objects glittered.

Susan tried to move her hands. They were without feeling. She tried to move one foot. It would not move. It was as dead as stone.

The floor wheeled and rose toward her. Her brain tingled with a giddy triumph. She knew that she had been seated in a chair. Now she could look at the woman with the beautiful legs. She could not move her head, but she could move her eyes. They slid from side to side until she found the tiny golden sandals.

They traveled up to the fringe again; were again delighted with the rubies and the sparkling diamonds. They went on up to a slim waist, about which a sapphire-blue sash was tied; on up to a neck.

Now Susan could see all of her. Yet she knew that something was wrong. The woman had no hair. Her face, if she had hair, would have been beautiful. It was delicately chiseled and golden in color. It had all the grace and beauty of a golden figurine. It was a young face, and it was a terribly evil face. The eyes were green, and they held the bright, gem-like glitter of a snake's eyes. The eyes were staring at Susan's hair. Susan tried to smile. The woman bared her teeth, and they were the teeth of a bat.

An unaccountable chill stole over Susan. Something was wrong. Something was terribly wrong. But her poor, drugged brain refused to tell her what it was.

**A** FAMILIAR face floated down and blotted out her view of the beautiful, hairless woman with snake-like eyes. And a familiar voice said:

"Drink this, Susan." She was trying to remember where she had seen the man's face before. It was round and brown and adorned with a black toy mustache.

The man was holding something to her lips—a bright green liquid. Her lips, her tongue, her cheeks were numb. But Susan could feel the cold liquid strike the back of her throat.

Sensation began flowing through her in little waves of fire. She could move her hands, her feet, her head. She clenched her fists, opened them experimentally. Then the fire reached her brain—and the result was chaos. The clearness went in a strange kind of explosion. Things in Susan's brain were topsy-turvy for a number of seconds. Then she shook her head sharply, and realized that the man bending over her was Chong Foo Shommon, the Sultan

of Sakala—the man she had foolishly promised to marry.

Her last distinct recollection was of talking to Chong on Hai-Phong Road, in front of the Tiger's Den. Dimly, she recalled the brown powder he had scattered.

Everything since had, then, been a dream: the golden pagoda; the sounds in the night; the woman with no hair on her head, the gem-bright eyes of a reptile, and the small, sharp, white teeth of a bat.

Susan looked quickly about the room. Instantaneous impressions startled her. This was an operating room! The white tables were operating tables! The glass cases were full of surgical instruments!

Her roving eyes found the girl; leaped from her tiny golden sandals upward to her golden face: her hairless head!

Susan stifled a small scream, and she heard Chong say:

"How do you feel now, Susan?"

Susan cried: "What am I doing here? Where am I? Who is that horrible creature?"

Chong did not immediately answer. While she waited, she heard a familiar throbbing; guessed wildly that she was on the Sapphire. The throbbing meant that it was under way.

The hairless girl now came over and squatted on the white tile floor at Susan's feet, not a yard away, and stared up at her. Her eyes were on Susan's hair. She reached for Susan's left hand; examined it with animal-like curiosity; sniffed at it, then snatched from the engagement finger the sapphire ring which Chong had given her.

Chong looked on with a mysterious smile. He said now: "Susan, this is my wife, Anarra. I am sorry that she speaks no English. You see, she ad-

mires your hair. She has no hair of her own. She thinks you have such beautiful hair."

Susan stifled another scream. Anarra arose, and as if she fully understood what Chong had said, ran her long, thin, yellow fingers into Susan's hair. She loosened it at the back and lifted it in her hands, then said a short sentence in Tonkinese to Chong.

"She says," Chong translated, "it is the most beautiful hair, outside of her own, she has ever seen."

"Tell her to keep her hands off me!" Susan cried.

**C**HONG spoke to Anarra; she answered in a shrill staccato of syllables. Chong said, in English: "I am sorry. She says she likes your hair. She wants your hair."

A sense of the horrible possibilities of this situation struck Susan suddenly. Chong went on, in the same calm, almost humorous flavor:

"I will explain what all this means, Susan. You see now, I do not love you. I do not care for you in the least. It was all part of a somewhat elaborate plan. My wife has no hair."

"What has that to do with me?" Susan cried. She was white. Her eyes were terrified.

"I am trying to explain, Susan. Perhaps, under the circumstances, I should say Miss O'Gilvie. I have never loved any woman in the world but Anarra. No request she makes is too great or too trivial for me to grant. When she said she wished to see a woman with hair as beautiful as her own had been, I set out to find such a woman. I searched Shanghai, Yokohama, Singapore—and in Manila I found you. Your hair is truly beautiful—almost as beautiful as Anarra's was.

"I took some pains to arrange that a number of your friends should travel to Hongkong on this yacht. I took some pains that Anarra should have full opportunity to see your hair, and to see if she liked it well enough to have it for her own."

Susan got out in a strangled voice: "What do you mean? How can she have my hair?"

"One moment, Miss O'Gilvie. You asked for a complete explanation. Permit me to continue. It was obviously impossible to detain you on this boat when your friends went ashore. I know that you are a very wealthy American girl. I have no wish to run into difficulties with your government. I could have circulated the report that you had fallen overboard some night. But that would not have looked well."

"But why," Susan burst out hysterically, "did you want me at all? What are you going to do with me? Why am I here?"

Chong said: "One moment. My assistant wishes a sample of your blood."

Susan shrank back. "What for?"

"We wish to ascertain whether or not it matches Anarra's blood."

"But why?" Susan cried.

"I will explain in due course. Will you let my assistant have a sample—or must we hold you?"

The conversation was beginning to have the qualities of a nightmare.

A man in spotless white whom she had seen casually on the trip from Manila and believed to be a deck steward bent over her now. Too shocked to move, she let him puncture her arm with a hollow needle and draw off a sample of her blood. He went away.

In growing terror, Susan looked at Chong. She said desperately: "Chong! What are you going to do to me?"

Anarra, who had been standing be-



side him, now bent down again and ran her yellow fingers through Susan's hair. They were cold as ice.

"Get away from me!" Susan cried.

Anarra stepped back.

"Chong," Susan wailed, "what are you going to do to me?"

"I will tell you in a moment."

"Are you going to cut off my hair?"

"I will answer no questions until Dr. Ling returns with his report."

Susan was not the fainting kind, but the hideous threat which lurked in Chong's incomplete explanation and in the greedy snake-like eyes of the hairless girl terrified her so that she could not fight off the engulfing blackness. The operating room went gray, then swimmingly black.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE BLOOD RITUAL.

**S**HE returned to consciousness with the pungent taste of brandy on her tongue. She was still sitting in the chair. A man on each side was holding her up. She recognized one as a dining room steward, the other as a deck steward.

Susan saw Dr. Ling come in from a small room full of shelves which glistened with colored bottles, large and small.

Dr. Ling spoke briefly to Chong in Tonkinese. Susan looked from him to Anarra. Her bat-like teeth were bared in an exultant grimace.

"Miss O'Gilvie," Chong said, "I will tell you now why you are here. About fourteen months ago, Anarra all but died as a result of a jungle fever about which doctors know nothing. One of the after-effects of her illness you can see. She lost her hair—the most beautiful hair in the world. The

other after-effect, which is invisible, was an extreme case of pernicious anæmia.

"For a great many months, I have been making experiments with various people in hair grafting. Let me tell you about them."

Susan shrieked, "No! Let me off this ship! Put me ashore! Chong, put me off this ship!"

She knew now where Chong's casual conversation was leading. But the horror, bursting upon her, did not cause her to faint. She wished that she could faint. She wished that she could drop dead. She knew that she was in the hands of an Oriental fiend; a cold-blooded and cold-thinking barbarian from the Cambodian jungles who cunningly concealed his true nature behind a thin veneer of civilization. She struggled against the brown hands holding her in the chair. She was helpless.

Chong went calmly on. He would, she realized, torture her with words first. It would be in harmony with the true nature of the man to do so.

"There have been some amusing experiments," Chong went on. "There was a red-headed Irishman in Singapore, and an Italian from Rangoon with curly black hair. I removed the red hair from the Irishman and grafted it on the head of the Italian, and I gave the Irishman the black hair of the Italian."

Susan let herself go limp. Her heart was thumping laboriously. Perhaps it would stop. If she could only die instantly!

Chong went serenely on: "The operations were a great success. The red hair grew on the black-haired man, and the black hair grew on the red-haired man. I have proved that it can be done. To-night I employed a new

technique, but my specimen escaped. You will not escape, Miss O'Gilvie."

Susan was trying not to listen, but the barbarian's voice reached her clearly.

"You will never see civilization again, Miss O'Gilvie. You will not wish to. You are to be Anarra's slave. You are to be Anarra's hair dresser. To-night, I will graft your scalp on Anarra's. When you have both recovered from the operation, you are to supply her with blood whenever she requires it. Dr. Ling says that your blood matches hers perfectly. We will see that you are fed the proper blood-building foods so that, when Anarra needs blood, it will be pumped from your veins into hers. You will not live long, Miss O'Gilvie, but your life will be, for probably the first time, of some real use."

A kindly numbness, a paralysis, was stealing over Susan's mind, shutting out the horror of this brown barbarian's words. Her eyes suddenly stung with tears of self-pity. Her beautiful hair! But she would never live beyond the operation. Certainly, the shock would kill her. She would not live to furnish blood to this bat-woman. It was characteristic of Chong, characteristic of the Oriental irony of the educated savage, that he should make Susan Anarra's slave—should give Susan the task of dressing her own hair on another woman's head!

**T**HE paralysis increased. Dully, she saw a strange-looking man come into the operating room. His face was shiny and purple with paint. There were black splotches of paint where his eyes were. His mouth was vermilion. He wore a black sarong, and carried in one hand a gourd, in the other a pair of bones.

He squatted down on the floor between Susan and the operating table. Anarra promptly squatted down opposite him.

It was fast becoming a nightmare of the deepest Oriental jungle. The bones in his hand looked like human bones. The lumps on the ends might be elbow joints.

He began beating on the drum, and Anarra kept time to him with her uplifted hands. *Tumpa-dum-dum! Tumpa-dum-dum!*

So it was going to be a ritual! With glazing eyes, Susan watched, and with ears slowly going senseless, she listened. She felt her heart keeping time with the drum. Her head pulsed to its rhythmic measure.

She heard Chong say: "I'm going to give you ether, of course. You will kindly lie down on the operating table, Miss O'Gilvie."

Something in Susan let go. She was on her feet, blindly striking at Chong, and screaming. Her screams were louder than the temple gourd. Anarra sprang up and rushed at her with fingers which were suddenly the claws of a tigress.

Some one struck Susan on the head from in back. The blow did not knock her unconscious. It only hurt her. Her head sang and her senses rocked with the blow, but she did not become unconscious.

With a man on each side, she was dragged to the operating table. She saw Dr. Ling bring an ether cone and a can of ether from the laboratory. She freed one hand and struck out at Anarra. The blow caught the golden vampire full in the mouth. Anarra staggered back and fell across the gourd.

Then strong hands forced Susan down on her back on the table. The cone came down over her face. She

could not even twist her head. As she fought for breath against a sudden sweet stifling, she heard Chong say:

"I am giving you ether, Miss O'Gilvie, simply to prevent you from doing injury to your scalp when I remove it. I have no sympathy for you. None in the least. The man or woman who strikes Anarra dies. You can carry this thought into your sleep. To-morrow, I will take all of your blood that Anarra can use. And she can use every drop of blood in your veins."

PETER ran his thumb along the edge of the knife and knew that it would, if called upon, cleave a head or a hair. It was a *parang*—wickedest knife in the world—with a bone handle which a man could grip firmly, a curving two-edged blade about fourteen inches long ending in a vicious point. The *parang* was a weapon popular with Malays when they ran amuck. Unless Peter was mistaken, he would run amuck to-night.

The light in the sampan's cabin flickered in little golden worms on the keenly whetted blade. Peter, squatting in the stern of the sampan, at the coolie's feet, looked up from the *parang* and said:

"How much wanchee?"

The coolie, not missing a stroke, answered, in a grunt: "Maskee."

Peter said, "Putee book — five dolla'."

"No wanchee," the coolie muttered. "*Parang* b'long my. *Parang* allatime stay mine."

"Ten dolla'."

It was a fabulous price to offer for a *parang*. Both men realized it. Peter suited action to words; drew forth a ten-dollar note on the Bank of Hongkong and said:

"Can do?"

The coolie hesitated; grunted, "Can do." Ten dollars Mex changed ownership.

A black monster loomed up in the thinning fog. A mournful bellow issued from it. Peter made out, dimly, the name in gilt across a flying bridge: Yokohama Maru.

He asked, "Which side Kowloon?"

"That side."

"I thought so. Hurry up! Chop-chop!"

As he spoke, the gleaming hull of the yacht emerged from the fog—twin necklaces of lights. Moving!

Peter shouted again, "Chop-chop!" But the coolie was doing his utmost at the sweep. The gleaming hull, the twin necklaces of lights, glided slowly past. The Sapphire was under way, picking up speed.

It was a question: was Susan aboard, or had Chong taken her to some retreat of his in Hongkong—Kowloon—Macao—Canton? Every logical reason pointed to the Sapphire.

Peter saw that the companion ladder still hung over the side. A deck hand in soiled white was walking slowly toward it, from aft. He was going to haul the ladder in. Peter gesticulated wildly toward the ladder. The blunt bows of the sampan swung to starboard. Peter tossed a bill to the coolie's feet, not knowing what its denomination was.

The bottom platform of the ladder was at least six feet away when Peter scrambled upon the sampan's flimsy cabin roof. He poised a moment for the leap; gathered himself together, and as an afterthought, gripped the *parang* in his teeth. If he missed the ladder, fell, that two-edged blade would slice his head half off.

He leaped; caught at the lower plat-



form and snatched it with one hand. His legs dangled, trailing in the water.

Peter removed the *parang* from his mouth; laid it on the ladder; pulled himself up; picked up the *parang* and scrambled up the ladder to the deck.

## CHAPTER XI.

### ABOARD THE HORROR YACHT.

HE was met there by a brown-faced fury. The deck hand evidently had guessed his designs; had seized from a rack a belaying pin. This crude and burly weapon was swinging up and over when Peter struck down into his mid-section with the knife.

The Tonkinese deck hand collapsed with a bubbling grunt, and the heavy iron pin rolled into the scuppers.

Peter shook blood from the knife and paused for a moment. He did not know the deck plans of the Sapphire, but first he wanted to find the wireless house. As he paused, he heard, vaguely, the beating of the witch drum. *Tumpa-dum-dum!* He thought at first it was in his imagination; then realized that the sound issued from the very interior of the yacht.

He put down the temptation to follow that barbaric sound to its source, espied a stairway and swarmed up it to the next deck. Here were evidently officers' quarters. He strained his eyes into the dimness above, saw a star shining faintly, then others, and found at last that for which he was seeking—the lead-in wires from the yacht's wireless antennæ.

The phosphor-bronze wires came down in a sharp V, terminating at a lead-in insulator of petticoated porcelain above a small, square deck house just forward of the buff-colored funnel.

A light gleamed at a window. Above the measured grinding of the Sapphire's engines, he heard the fine high whine of a dynamo or a motor-generator.

He advanced swiftly to the wireless house door, firmly gripped the brass knob; turned it. The door was locked.

Peter backed across the deck to the white belly of a lifeboat, lowered his left shoulder and charged the door.

It gave with a crash; flew inward in splintering panels and chunks.

A brown-skinned man at the instrument table turned amazed eyes on him. Then he looked at the bloody knife in Peter's hand. From the knife his glance shot back to Peter's eyes. And there he saw, presumably, the look which all southern Orientals hold in the greatest dread—the stark staring look of the man amuck!

He uttered a bleat of terror; sprang up from his chair and executed a neat dive to the deck, via the window abaft the instrument table. It was not a large window, and it happened to be heavily paned; but the Tonkinese wireless man gave no thought to obstructions. He dived cleanly through, carrying shattering glass with him.

Peter stepped outside. He did not intend to stab the terrified man; he wished merely to make sure that the operator did not scream an alarm.

The Tonkinese radio man, misconstruing, seeing only that amok look in the white man's eyes, squealed again, backed rapidly, tripped over the low coaming between two lifeboats—and splashed into Hongkong Harbor.

RETURNING hastily to the wireless room, Peter seated himself at the instrument board and glanced at the operator's log. It was fortunately a well kept log. Somewhat

unfortunately, the entries were in Tonkinese symbols, a picture language with which Peter was not as familiar as he might have been; yet, studying the neat, five-minute entries, he gathered important conclusions.

He studied the neat lists of call letters which the wireless man had so carefully entered in his log, then grinned rather fiercely and flashed out a call.

It was instantly answered. Peter plied the brass key briskly.

"Where are you? How is the weather out there?"

The answer came singing into the receivers he had clamped over his ears; a position report in terms of latitude and longitude, then: "Fog lifted here. Full moon."

Peter briskly tapped out his urgent message. Then he turned off the generator, picked up his *parang* and returned to the deck.

He could still hear the jungle melody of the witch-drum and he set out now to track it down.

He ran aft to a ladder and slid down it to the promenade deck, landing, surprisingly, athwart the shoulders of a stout man with gold on his cap and gold stripes at his sleeves. The captain, first mate, or chief engineer—whatever his status may have been—went sprawling under Peter's weight.

Peter leaped up, with the red-stained *parang* in his hand, and the officer shrank back against the cabin wall with straining eyes and fully indrawn stomach muscles.

"Where is Chong?" Peter demanded in English.

"I do not know."

Peter pushed the bloody *parang* point toward the officer's stomach.

"Wait!" the man squealed. "I will show you! Come! Follow me!"

Peter, with the point of the knife in the small of the officer's back, followed him. His escort trotted down the deck, the back of his neck glistening with sweat. He threw open a door; stumbled over the rain-check into a saloon of luxurious carved mahogany and grass-green carpet.

"Come," the frightened officer said weakly.

Peter, holding the *parang* in place, followed. The way led down a corridor to a closed door. The officer turned a knob and trotted on into the room. Another luxurious room. Had Susan, Peter wondered, come this way? Yes, assuredly, if Chong were aboard!

Another door. Beyond that was the witch drum. *Tumpa-dum-dum!* Peter was sweating now himself. Sweat was running down his face, into the tight collar of Chester Blunt's uniform-coat. His heart was racing with a sick feeling. What would be found beyond that door?

"Don't knock!" Peter snapped. He wanted this to be wholly a surprise attack. "Throw it open!"

"Yes, sair!" the officer hissed. A small round spot of blood had formed on the back of his white coat where the *parang* point had carelessly prodded. That was too bad!

The door opened. The sound of the drum came beating out through the doorway, waves of barbaric sound.

The officer stumbled into the room. The sweet stench of ether stung Peter's nostrils. He observed that a large porthole was open; caught a glimpse of clear moonlit water beyond. The Sapphire was out of the fog! Thank God for that!

An ape-man squatted on the floor beating on a gourd with human bones. *Tumpa-dum-dum!*

Beyond him were two tables—oper-

ating tables. Two slim figures were stretched out on these tables, the face of each covered with an ether cone.

The head of the one on Peter's left was bleeding copiously. Beautiful dark hair flowed down from the head of the other.

Which was which? Had the scalping been completed? Was Anarra now wearing Susan's hair—or was the bleeding head that of Anarra, prepared for the transfer?

Chong, in surgeon's white, wearing thin rubber gloves, was holding a scalpel in one hand. Beyond him stood a slender brown-faced man with an instrument tray in his hands.

**S**TAND aside!" Peter barked at the man who had led him here.

The officer nimbly sidestepped. Peter glanced anxiously through the porthole. Then, before Chong had recovered from his shocked amazement, Peter was within reach of him.

"Drop that scalpel to the floor!"

Chong obeyed him, then abandoned all discretion, uttered a shrill cry and leaped at Peter. Peter, stepping back, brought the *parang* slashing down. It missed its actual goal, which was the Sultan's throat, and its razor edge sliced along Chong's skull bone.

Peter had not intended to scalp him; he had intended that thrust to be a death blow. A patch of hair five inches wide was stricken off and dropped to the floor. Chong sprang back.

Peter knocked the ether cone from the face of the nearest woman. The pale, pinched face of Susan was revealed. Her hair had not yet been touched. She was breathing heavily, stertorously, which was quite natural in a person under ether. But Peter did

not know this. He thought Susan was dying. He leaped at Chong again.

Some one enfolded steel arms about his leg. It was the witch doctor.

Chong said: "Moore, you are a fool." His voice was shrill with pain. Blood streamed down his forehead, ran into his eyes. "You will die for this! And how you will die! I will slice you into ribbons! You will suffer as no man on this earth has ever suffered!"

He touched one hand to that bleeding skull of his and danced with agony.

"How," he squealed, "do you expect to leave this ship?" His voice burst into crackling Tonkinese. Peter caught a word now and then, and glanced at the porthole again. Moonlight on gray steel—a beautiful sight.

Chong was telling his first mate to seize and bind this yellow rat of an American. The first mate looked at the bloody *parang* and shuddered. He wanted none of that steel.

"You stand by," Peter growled.

"Yes, sair!"

The ape-man still clutched Peter's leg. Peter lifted his free foot and brought it down in the witch doctor's face.

Chong sagged against a bulkhead and bleated: "Try to escape from me! Try to get off this ship with her! Try!"

Peter noted that Susan was breathing more regularly. He said: "Chong, I stopped in your wireless room before I came here. I sent a few messages. Look out that porthole."

**C**HONG looked; gasped. What he saw was a gray lean ship, with moonlight gleaming on her guns. The destroyer was keeping pace with the Sapphire, black banners streaming from her funnels.



"That's an American destroyer, Chong. You see, you're in the midst of the Asiatic squadron. They were making for Hongkong, and I asked them to stand by. They're doing so."

Chong wiped blood from his eyes. The other doctor suddenly burst into excited Tonkinese. He ran around the table and snatched the ether from Anarra's face.

Peter glanced down into the golden face of the famous jungle beauty. But it wasn't gold now. An unforeseen alchemy had changed it to silver. And he knew that she was dead, for the dead have a look of their own, an aura that is unmistakable.

Peter did not linger. He gathered Susan into his arms, jerked his head toward the door, and the first mate scampered out ahead of him.

"Get that launch over the side," he snapped. "Stop your engines."

"Yes, sair!"

Peter carried Susan to the wireless room and arranged her in a chair. Then he seated himself at the instrument table and called the destroyer.

"Everything O. K.," he tapped out. "Miss O'Gilvie and I are leaving in small launch. Many thanks for assistance."

The answer came shrieking back: "What do you mean, 'Everything O. K.'? Commander orders Sapphire stopped for boarding party. If you leave in launch, you are ordered to report to American Consulate for full explanation. Can't you stay aboard?"

Peter flashed back: "Still too risky. Many thanks again. Will be camping on consul's doorstep when he opens office. 30. All through." It wasn't risky now, but Peter hated investigations.

The Sapphire's engines were stopped

when Peter, with Susan in his arms, descended to the promenade deck. The ladder was over and the launch was alongside.

THE launch was humming through Tathong Channel before Susan betrayed signs of returning consciousness. She opened her eyes, looked at Peter, on whose lap she sat, and gasped, "Where's my hair?"

"On your head," Peter answered.

But Susan didn't hear him. The ether had only begun to wear off.

They were passing Sywan Bay when she looked at him again and said: "For crying out loud, Peter, where did you come from?"

"I just got here," Peter replied.

"But I was in a horrible white room on the Sapphire! Chong was going to scalp me!" Her hands leaped to her hair. She sighed with relief.

Peter told her briefly what had happened.

"I've had enough adventure to last me for a long, long time," Susan said finally. Suddenly she shuddered. "And enough of love," she added. "Do you want to know what happened?"

"So much happened," Peter said.

"I wanted you to beg me not to marry Chong. That's what happened. You wouldn't do it. It was all your fault. And I was hunting for a brand new thrill. I found it. Peter, one of these days I'm going to get over thrill hunting. Then you might ask me to marry you, mightn't you, Peter?"

"I might," Peter said thoughtfully.

"But until that time comes, we'll just keep on being good pals. Would you like to make that kind of an arrangement with a girl?"

Peter said he thought that would be a perfect arrangement.

**THE END.**

# In Self-Defense

*A duck-hunting preserve became a battleground of wits when old Denny Wayne, Alaska miner, was made game warden*

By

**FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE**



*Despite the firm warning he fired*

**W**HEN Ted Rand completed his big game hunt on Wayne Creek he was so well pleased with Denny Wayne's guiding through the Alaskan wilds and with Fannie Wayne's cooking he wanted to do something about it. Payment in money was, of course, impossible and an insult to their hospitality. He sensed from chance remarks that their mine was pinching out, so he casually observed:

"When are you going to declare a dividend, Denny?"

The old miner laughed shortly and gave his wife a quick glance. Fannie Wayne had followed her husband all over the frontier, but hardships had not soured her disposition. She nod-

ded a white head of bobbed curly hair and smiled brightly.

"What's the joke?" Rand inquired.

"The joke is on us," Fannie explained. "Denny has worked this mine ten years, and it's supported us, but now we're afraid the paystreak is pinching out. Why do you ask, Ted?"

"I belong to the Marshland Duck Club, near Seattle," Rand explained, "and we have a deuce of a time keeping a gamekeeper and cook. The gamekeepers are often crooked and accept bribes to let others shoot. The cooks are impossible. The gamekeeper receives pay as a deputy game warden; the club pays him seventy-five dollars a month and board the year around, and most of his time is his own.

"From three to five feet below the club marsh lands are eighty acres of black loam. For some mysterious reason there is no seepage from the duck ponds and marshes to this loam. It is ideal for farming. Why not buy the property, stock it with cattle, build a cottage, work the farm in your spare time, and act as our gamekeeper? You would be insured comfort the remainder of your days and the club would be ahead a good gamekeeper and the best cook that ever came out of Alaska. Think it over."

Fannie Wayne blushed at the tribute, then turned a sweet, pleading face toward her husband.

"Oh, Denny! In all our life I have never tried to influence you, believing you knew best; but I do want to feel secure, to banish doubt. We are old, Denny, and we have served our time as pioneers . . . Denny."

Denny Wayne grinned as he scratched his head. "That sounds mighty good, Ted. I'll see what the mine does this winter. Do you suppose that eighty acres could be bought reasonable?"

"I'll find out all details," Rand promised, "and write you."

**T**HE mine pinched out in February and in the middle of March Ted Rand met them as their steamer docked in Seattle. They caught glimpses of brawling streams and the blue waters of the Sound as Ted drove them to the duck club. He left the highway, followed a narrow road, timbered with fir trees five feet in diameter and as tall as office buildings, and burst upon a scene of enchanting beauty. A stretch of marsh land lay at their feet. It was dotted with pools, fed by underground springs. The restless waters of the Sound surged along

the peninsula and salmon were jumping off the point. Rand pointed to a rambling building.

"There's the clubhouse. You can live there until your own home is built. That's your property down there. I suppose you'll build the cottage on the timbered knoll. Beyond lie the San Juan Islands."

Fannie Wayne was so silent, Rand was concerned.

"Don't you like it?" he asked in a sympathetic tone.

"I love it!" she cried, then gave him a motherly kiss. "It's all so peaceful. Yes—it's—heaven. But I am afraid it can't last. Happiness such as this has always been denied us. We are pioneers and our lot has been to blaze the way—not relax or rest!" She sighed, as though very tired, and closed her eyes for a moment.

"Nothing is going to spoil this dream," Denny assured her. "We'll buy the land outright, then what can happen? It's something to fight for." There was so much confidence in his words she felt a sweet sense of security.

Lumber was freighted in a week later; the cottage erected and the land made ready for the first crop. One by one the other club members met the old couple. They were pleasant enough, but lacked the warmth of boyish Ted Rand. But the newcomers reasoned this was because Ted knew them better.

The dominant figure of the membership was Kent Laird, the banker. His eyes reminded them of the chill of an Arctic star. He smiled grudgingly and his slit of a mouth covered large, aggressive teeth. He was a man who heard "Yes" much of the time, and rarely "No." City men instinctively feared him, but the frontiersman



could not know this fear, because he had never experienced the power of finance. He would never step beyond his bounds nor — fawn or cringe. Theirs would be the contact of the frontier—man to man.

Summer brought growing things on the eighty acres; several head of dairy stock; chickens and a squadron of mallards that would act as decoys. Then fall and the first flight of Northern ducks—swift teal and lordly mallards, with a scattering of sprig. Wayne posted a notice of legal shooting hours in the clubhouse and set his watch by standard time. Both ducks and hunters would have legal protection under him.

The members arrived for the first day's shooting. Birds were few, but they told themselves conditions would improve. The northern lakes were freezing. A good storm would send the ducks south.

The members smacked their lips over Fannie Wayne's first meal and complimented her highly. Again that night, in her own cottage, she caught her breath quickly and told herself it could not last. But Denny assured her nothing could happen to spoil this dream.

But something did happen three weeks later.

**A** BITTERLY cold wind moaned down from the north, bringing with it an occasional flurry of fine snow. As the ducks started moving, three husky young men crossed the rough bay and landed on a bar exposed at low tide. Here they placed decoys and waited in the line of flight to the club. Their shots diverted the ducks from the club blinds.

Ted Rand grinned. "That's luck for you—the rough weather comes at low

tide and gives the boys a chance before the tide comes in."

Kent Laird lacked such sportsmanship. He stalked to the clubhouse and yelled for Wayne. "Get down there, Wayne, flash your warden's badge, and chase those young pups away."

"I can't touch them, Mr. Laird," Wayne explained. "They have a legal right to shoot on that sand bar, and they know it."

"Get down there and throw a bluff into them," the banker directed. "They're spoiling our shooting."

Fannie Wayne listened near the kitchen door, and her face filled with worry. She knew her husband's answer, knew that he was right; but she also knew few men ignored Laird's wishes without paying a penalty.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Laird, but I can't go beyond my authority. As for bluffing—I never bluffed in my life. I've always made it a point to finish anything I started. And for that reason I've never started anything I hadn't the legal and moral right to finish."

"It strikes me you're not going to be much of a help around this establishment," the banker fumed as he stalked in an angry mood back to the blinds.

He was halfway to his own blind when he thought of something else.

"Wayne," he barked, "if they shoot beyond the legal time, you will arrest them, of course?"

"Certainly!" Wayne answered. "That's what I agreed to do when I was sworn in as deputy game warden."

"Then watch the time carefully, and if they shoot one minute beyond the legal hour, run them in, and I'll personally testify against them in court. I have no patience whatever with these infernal poachers."

"They are not poachers," Wayne retorted. "When you term them poachers, you are inferring I am not doing my duty toward the club. They have a legal right to shoot there."

Laird returned to the blinds, walked by his own and joined Ted Rand. "Rand, this man Wayne is not only independent, but he's downright independent to his betters."

"I hadn't noticed it," Rand answered quietly. "If you expected him to chase the boys off the sand spit, then you have another guess coming. The boys have a right there, and he knows it. And I suggest, Mr. Laird, that you personally use a little common sense in your dealings with Mr. Wayne. For the first time in years we not only have a good cook, but we have a conscientious man who will attend to his duties, who won't get drunk, and who won't permit his friends to shoot when we are not around."

Laird paid scant attention to shooting the remainder of the afternoon, and promptly at quitting time he sought the clubhouse. The crack of shotguns came on the wings of the wind from the spit.

"Where is Wayne?" he demanded of Fannie Wayne.

"He's going out in a boat—just putting out from shore," the woman explained.

"Why didn't he start sooner?"

"He gave them a two-minute benefit of the doubt, so that they could not claim a difference in time," she informed him.

He walked down to the beach and saw Wayne suddenly round the point, pulling hard on the oars, and intercept the three men before they could gather in their decoys and make off. Ten minutes later he returned, bringing the three men and their ducks.

Kent Laird was smacking his lips in satisfaction.

"A good haul, game warden!" he cried. "I shall be on hand to personally testify against these poachers. You will, of course, confiscate their guns and bags."

"Of course," Denny Wayne returned. "That, I believe, is the usual procedure."

Several days later Kent Laird beamed as a stern judge not only confiscated the guns used by the three men in their illegal shooting, but slapped on a stiff fine as well.

THE ponds before the duck blinds were frozen over with a thin film of ice. It was necessary for the gamekeeper to break the ice night and morning, in order that the decoys and wild ducks might feed. There was no wind this day, merely an unpleasant crispness invariably felt in a land that rarely knows freezing temperature. All day the members had sat in the blinds, drinking hot coffee and scanning the sky. The ducks remained well out in the bay, gossiping among themselves. Occasionally the frantic cry of a lonely hen mallard in the blinds would bring three or four suspicious ducks up, flying high.

Kent Laird swore with feeling. "They seem to know the legal time we will stop shooting," he fumed, "and then they come in."

"Yes," Ted Rand answered, "it does look as if they were all wearing wrist watches."

A few minutes later he quit shooting and called it a day. One by one the others followed, until the banker alone remained. His watch lay on the concrete bench beside him, and his eyes shifted constantly from dial to the sky, and back again.

Two minutes before shooting officially ended, some forty mallards swung high overhead, circled, almost settled, then soared away to return when but fifteen seconds remained. Again they swung overhead beyond gunshot, and Laird swore furiously. They were still flying over the bay when the day ended and Denny Wayne came from a near-by thicket, carrying an empty sack in which he placed the decoys as he carried them to their pens for the night.

"Get down out of sight quick! They are coming back," the banker warned.

"It's now past shooting time, Mr. Laird," Wayne reminded him.

"I know that, but forget it!" He turned angrily on the gamekeeper. "Great heavens! Do you think I am going to sit here all day in the cold for nothing? We are feeding those ducks our good grain, and by the great horn spoon, I'm going to pour it into that flock when they come in! For once they're going to be fooled!"

"If you break the law, Mr. Laird," Wayne said quietly, "I shall be forced to place you under arrest."

"What's that?" Laird barked. "You wouldn't do that—that is, not if you know which side your bread is buttered on."

"I arrested those three young fellows the other night for shooting game illegally, and if I am consistent I shall have to arrest you or any other man who shoots illegally in my territory. I am a bit too far along in years, Mr. Laird, to begin to play any favorites."

"I don't believe you are that big a fool," Laird coolly informed him.

By this time the mallards were dropping toward the lower pond, but caution bade them circle once more, and as they came overhead they were

within range. Laird's expensive pump-gun cracked five times, and five green-heads folded up their wings and fluttered into the rushes a few yards away. The remainder of the flock soared in disorder toward the bay. Laird turned a defiant face toward the gamekeeper.

Denny Wayne picked up the five birds, then stepped into Laird's blind and added the expensive pump-gun to his collection.

"Mr. Laird," he said briefly, "you are under arrest."

Beyond doubt the banker was utterly astounded.

"You don't mean it," he spluttered. "Surely you are not going to be fool enough to declare war on the most influential member of this club."

"I'm declaring war on nobody, Mr. Laird. I'm merely playing no favorites, when it comes to illegal shooting. Your birds and gun are confiscated and you are arrested. However, I shall release you on your personal word that you appear in court to-morrow morning."

"If you want me in court to-morrow or any other time, Wayne, you'll have to drag me there, I'll tell you that much!"

Wayne led the way to the clubhouse, then he said as soon as he was alone with his wife: "You'll have to keep an eye on things to-night and to-morrow. I have arrested Mr. Laird."

"Oh, Denny!" was all that she could say for a moment. She appeared to breathe as though with an effort. There was a pathetic droop to her shoulders, as though she were very tired. "I knew this pleasant dream of ours could not last. Life has only hardships on a far-flung frontier for such as we. Even in the twilight we are not fated to enjoy good fortune."

He drew her closely to him, kissed



her, chucked her under the chin, and then smiled. "Don't think for a minute I haven't protected myself right down the line in this matter, Fannie," he assured her.

"But you can't hope to compete successfully with Mr. Laird," she objected.

"I didn't say that I could compete successfully with Mr. Laird," he replied, smiling mysteriously. "I merely said I had protected myself in this matter—and I have."

SEVERAL days later Kent Laird called on Ted Rand in the young sportsman's office. This in itself was an unusual procedure, inasmuch as Laird usually sent for those with whom he wished to converse.

"I suppose you've heard?" the banker queried.

"Yes, I've heard. You were fined, and your gun confiscated for illegal shooting," Rand answered.

"Well, I just dropped in to tell you, Rand, that you needn't try to keep Wayne on the job any longer. I've talked it over with the other members, and they agree with me that he must go."

"I'm not surprised," Rand said evenly. "Most of them borrow from you occasionally, which, thank heavens, I never have to do. Therefore, they must play safe and do as you wish. But, Laird, you know down in your heart Denny Wayne was dead right. Also that your revenge in this instance was pretty small. I have a tremendous respect for Denny Wayne's resourcefulness. If I were you I'd call it all square and quit before he makes you ridiculous."

"Wayne make me ridiculous?" queried Laird. The slit of a mouth drew back over the large teeth in what

was meant to be a scornful smile. "The reason I'm a millionaire many times over is because fools have tried to make me look ridiculous." And with this he stalked from the office.

At the conclusion of the season Denny Wayne was called before Laird, who as manager of the club made all contracts.

"We gave you a year's contract, Wayne," he said crisply, "and it will not be renewed."

"I am not surprised," Wayne returned. "A matter of revenge, I presume?"

"Me? Stoop to revenge myself on a person of your caliber?" He laughed unpleasantly. "Wayne, that is ridiculous."

Later on Laird informed various real estate dealers that Wayne's eighty acre dairy farm would probably be put up for sale.

"But don't handle it for him," he directed, "because he is receiving his water supply from our marshes, and this water supply is to be diverted."

What Fannie Wayne regarded as a final blow fell with the beginning of the dry season. She was alone when workmen on the duck club property began diverting the water into its old drainage ditch which emptied into the bay.

"What are you doing?" she inquired.

"Orders from Kent Laird," the workmen explained. "It looks like he had it in for you people."

Within a week Denny Wayne had sold all of his dairy stock. He acted quickly before buyers were aware it was a forced sale. Then he comforted his dejected wife.

"Don't worry, Fannie," he insisted. "Just you go right along enjoying this summer, as you did last summer. I

have an ace up my sleeve for just this situation."

"What are you going to do?" she inquired curiously.

"I'm going to the upper end of our eighty acres and start mining," he explained.

"Mining?" she queried.

"Yes, mining," he repeated, smiling with surprising confidence.

"Not gold mining!" she gasped.

"There are other forms of wealth in the ground besides gold," he informed her. "Do you really want to know what my plan is? Listen, the walls may have ears, you know." With that he leaned over and whispered something into her ear which caused the good woman to look first startled, then pleased. Presently her laughter filled the room.

"Do you really think it will work, Denny?" she asked.

"It will work if I know anything about mining," he said confidently, "and I've spent a lifetime at it!"

**H**AVING, as he thought, completed his revenge, Laird arranged for a new gamekeeper for the coming season and promptly forgot Denny Wayne and his little wife. In time, of course, he reasoned, they would dispose of their property at forced sale, and would cease to exist, as far as he was concerned.

As for Denny, he sank a number of test pits into the ground, and then rowed the boat across the bay, where he purchased a quantity of blasting powder. A week later a heavy blast shook the peninsula, and when the gases had cleared he descended into the test pit and smiled at what he found. Further interest in mining apparently ceased, as he devoted himself to the task of changing the entire eighty

acres. He chartered a scow and brought in great quantities of willows and rushes from a small peninsula across the bay.

Summer vanished almost magically, and fall brought geese and ducks. Business kept the members of the Marshland Duck Club away from their property until the opening day. A good gamekeeper had been sent on the job a month previous to the opening of the season. The hunters arrived together on a stormy Saturday night. It was their policy to pass up the first two week-ends of shooting, on the theory that the shooting elsewhere would drive the ducks to their own preserve. Past experience had proven this theory to be sound.

"What are the prospects for tomorrow?" Laird inquired.

"Just fair," the gamekeeper returned. "Your marsh was pretty hard hit this summer, and was badly dried up. The fall rains came a bit late to do much good, but the ponds are partly filled, and the ducks are coming in."

"That's queer," Laird answered thoughtfully. "We have had our off seasons, as most clubs have, but this is the first time I have heard complaints about the lack of water."

A driving rain was sweeping across the bay the following morning. Ted Rand, but recently arrived from Europe, ate a poor breakfast, prepared by the new cook, and thought of Fannie Wayne's golden flapjacks, dripping with melted butter and honey. He would run over and see the Waynes later on in the morning. In a round-about way he had heard that the old couple had remained on their dry land. This had not surprised him, knowing Denny's characteristics.

In the light of the new day numerous flocks of ducks flew overhead and

then dropped toward the point. One, perhaps, in fifty, alighted in the club pond. Then the flight ceased, and the ponds were deserted except for the decoys.

"I can't understand it," Laird growled. "I heard the ducks had a very good season in the north. Other clubs tell me they are getting the limit. The ducks are going somewhere."

"Let's find out," Rand suggested, and led off toward a mound that overlooked the point.

An amazing sight greeted their eyes. Gone was most of the pasture land and grazing cows. In its place were shallow ponds and waving rushes. Each pond was black with ducks, and the ponds were numerous and well scattered over the tract. There were also countless and intriguing pot holes.

**R**AND turned to Laird. "I told you to lay off Denny Wayne," he said crisply. "It looks to me as if he has waved a magic wand and swiped our duck preserve."

He struck off toward the little cottage from which a friendly wisp of wood smoke trailed. The others followed, Laird stalking in the rear, his mind groping for means of revenge.

"What was the idea, Denny?" Rand inquired.

"Nothing mysterious about it," Wayne said, with a twinkle in his eye. "I'm starting a duck club. You gentlemen are eligible for membership, providing you pay me a thousand dollars membership fee, which will be returned any time you withdraw, and five hundred dollars a year each for expenses, such as land lease and upkeep. It comes high; you've got the money and the ducks are here. How about it, Ted?"

"I'm member number one," the youth said quickly.

The others followed, with the exception of Laird.

"I don't know how you managed this, Wayne," he half snarled, "but I know you did it for revenge."

"You flatter yourself," Denny softly answered. "Do you think I would go to all this trouble to revenge myself on a person of your caliber?"

Laird swore with feeling, turned on his heel, and stalked away.

"I expected you to outguess him if he got tough, Denny," Rand said; "but how did you work it, if you don't mind telling?"

"When I came here, Ted," Wayne explained, "it was something of a mystery why the duck club ground, which was higher than this eighty acres, was soaking wet, and this dry. Water usually reaches the lowest level. Being a miner, I had a hunch what the answer was. I investigated, and found what we call a dyke, a sort of underground rock dam, you might say, that extended from the bluff and cut diagonally across your property and one corner of mine, and ended somewhere in the bay. All drainage worked to this dyke and stopped.

"With that knowledge I knew that if the duck club's gentlemen, or anybody else, ever tried to freeze me out by shutting off our water, all I had to do was to sink a few holes, touch off a few blasts, which I had the legal right to do, and loosen up that dyke, so the water would seep through. And so, when Laird fired me, that was the only thing I could do in self-defense. Well, come on in, boys, and have some lunch. We've been sort of expecting you. There's a wind across the bay, and the greenheads are flying low."

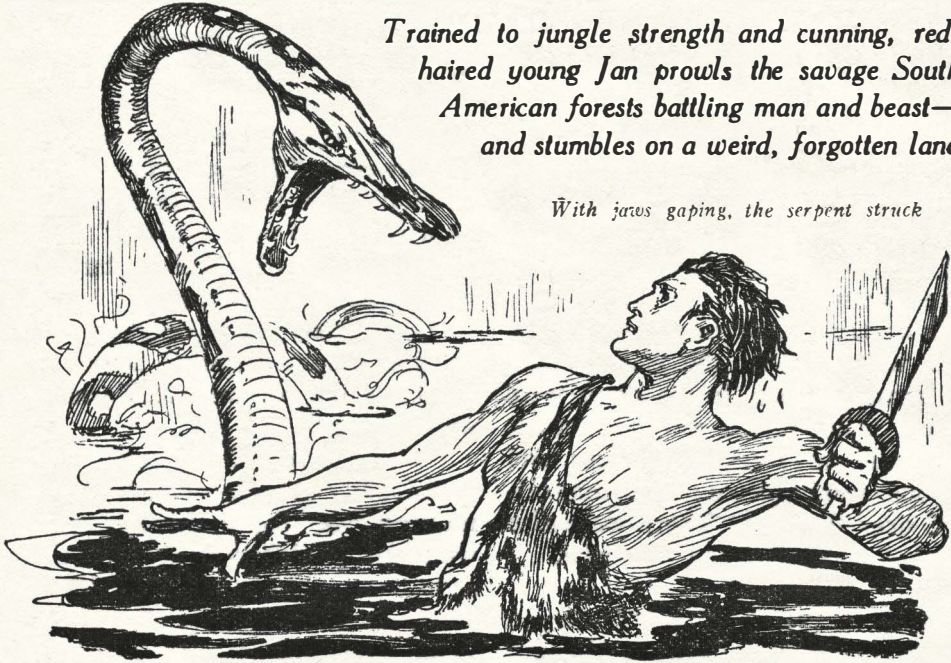
**THE END.**



# Jan of the Jungle

*Trained to jungle strength and cunning, red-haired young Jan prowls the savage South American forests battling man and beast—and stumbles on a weird, forgotten land*

*With jaws gaping, the serpent struck*



**By OTIS ADELBERT KLINE**

*Author of "Maza of the Moon," "The Prince of Peril," etc.*

## LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

TALL, strong, and auburn-haired, the sixteen-year-old youth Jan had never seen a human being other than his kidnaper and evil genius, Dr. Bracken. That half-mad fiend, having been jilted by Jan's titian-haired mother, Georgia Trevor, had stolen the boy shortly after birth. By sewing him in the skin of a baby chimpanzee, Dr. Bracken had succeeded in getting the captive chimpanzee-mother Chicma, to adopt the child as her own. Only two words had Dr. Bracken taught Jan: "Mother" and "Kill!"—and the chief item of his training was to attack a red-headed female dummy. A human being with an ape's mind,

trained to kill his mother—that was the revenge Dr. Bracken planned.

But Jan—named after Jan ibn Jan, chief of the *jinn* of legend—and Chicma escaped from Dr. Bracken's menagerie in the depths of the Florida Everglades; and their capture on the beach by the crew of a Venezuelan trading schooner, just before Dr. Bracken and his bloodhounds caught up to the fugitives, balked his revenge for the time.

A hurricane caught the homeward-bound schooner; and Jan, his chimpanzee foster-mother, and a kindly Haitian Negro named Borno who had befriended the captive youth, were

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washed ashore on the edge of the South American jungle country. Jan, hunting food, was seized by savages lurking in the undergrowth and carried far into the jungle, where he was to have been burned at the stake, along with a captured giant Indian, in a primitive death orgy. But the two victims were rescued by Borno and the ape-mother Chicma, who succeeded in frightening the wrought-up brown men.

Paddling for miles down a great river, the party of four went ashore and got separated—Jan following Chicma when she fled far into the wilderness. For two years man and ape lived in a grass tree hut which Jan built beside a waterfall; while he learned the ways of the jungle. One day when he had wandered a long way Jan came near a plantation, just in time to rescue sixteen-year-old Ramona Suarez—the first girl he had ever seen—from a gigantic puma. Jan could not banish the memory of Ramona's beauty from his mind.

Exploring a cave behind the waterfall, Jan found a series of passages leading to the ruins of an ancient temple. There he was suddenly attacked by a savage band of hairy ape-like man-monsters.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### THE JUNGLE DEMON.

**W**HEN she saw the bedraggled and blood-soaked condition of her charge, Ramona's old duenna threw up her hands and shrieked in holy horror. Ramona's dress was smeared with mud in the back and with blood in front. The cloth which she had ripped away to use for binding Jan's wounds left a

rent that exposed the peach-tinted silk clinging to her trim little figure, which was also considerably spotted with gore.

Don Fernando, who had been walking in the patio near by, smoking one of his long, slim cigars, came dashing up just as Señora Soledade swooned away.

"Carramba!" he exclaimed, dropping his cigar and catching Ramona in his arms, to the detriment of his immaculate white suit. "Tell me what has happened, my little one! Where are you hurt?"

"I'm not hurt, daddy," replied Ramona, "but Señora Soledade has fainted."

"Not hurt! But this blood! These soiled, torn clothes! I don't understand!"

"It is not my blood, daddy. It's Jan's. He saved me from the puma."

"*Madre de Dios!* Jan? The puma? What is all this? Tell me, quickly, or I, too, shall collapse!"

"But first let us attend the *señora*."

At this moment, Señora Soledade sat up and gazed wildly about her.

Don Fernando stood his daughter on her feet, and gallantly hurried forward to help the old lady. But when she saw the blood on his white suit she shrieked, and seemed about to swoon again.

"Come, come," he said. "Be brave. Ramona is all right and so am I."

"But the blood! The—"

"There, there!"

He piloted her gently through the patio gate, seated her on a bench, and returned.

"Now child," he said. "This puma. This Jan. Tell me about them."

"Come with me and I'll show you the puma," she answered. "It's dead."

She related the story of her adventure to her father, as she led him to where the dead carnivore lay. Don Fernando listened gravely to her story, and examined the fallen feline with interest.

"A giant of its kind, that beast," he said. "A terrible foe. And you say it was slain by a mere boy?"

"I didn't say a *mere* boy," replied Ramona reprovingly. "He was magnificent."

"Yes, of course, my little one. A gallant knight who came to your rescue. But for him I would have lost you." He threw his arm around her and drew her close. "I wish I could reward him."

"And why can't you?"

"Your description of him . . . Do you know who he is?"

"To be sure. He is Jan. He told me so."

"Yes, but your description of him: red hair, a garment of jaguar skin. He is the wild boy who has slain so many natives during the past two years. Many strange tales have been told about him. When first seen he had two companions—a giant black man and a great, hairy ape. Both of these wore jaguar-skin garments, also. They terrorized a small Indian community, killing several. Since then the boy has been seen once or twice with the great ape, but mostly he travels alone. No one knows what has become of the black giant. Do you know what they call this boy?"

"No."

"They call him the Jungle Demon. Some say he is half man, half jaguar. He travels with equal facility on the ground or through the tree tops. When an Indian is found dead, stripped of his weapons and ornaments, they say: 'It is the Jungle Demon again.' He is

more fierce, more terrible and more dangerous than the puma he has slain. All men are his enemies."

"But he said he liked me."

"Carramba! Did he? Then promise me this: that you will never leave the house or patio again unless I or one of the men go with you, armed. Some day he will come to steal you—to carry you off to his jungle lair to a horrible fate. It would be a terrible blow to your mother and me, and to poor old Señora Soledade. Won't you do this much for us? Won't you promise?"

Don Fernando had long since learned that threats or commands meant nothing to Ramona, but that she could be appealed to in a reasonable manner, and that if she made a promise, that promise would be carried out.

"I don't know, daddy," she answered. "I so love to get away by myself once in a while."

"Yes, I know. But think of the danger. And think of your mother and father and of your old duenna, who loves you."

"All right, daddy, I'll promise."

And so they went into the patio arm in arm.

**A**S the first man-monster of the ruined temple struck at him with his cudgel, Jan, who had often dodged the swift blow of a jaguar's paw, easily eluded his clumsy swing. The force of the blow turned the hairy one part way around. Jan leaped in and dealt him a blow on the back of his neck with the keen machete. The monster fell on his face without a sound, his spinal column severed by the sharp blade.

With savage yells the other two closed in to avenge their fallen comrade, but Jan was already running swiftly toward the river.



Sheathing his weapon, he sprang from the top of the bank in a long, graceful dive. He swam frog-like beneath the surface until a shadow above him told him that he had entered the underground channel. Then he arose and, turning on his back, inhaled the welcome air.

As he drew himself up on the bank in the semidarkness, he hesitated for a moment. These men were deadly enemies. Being bearded like Dr. Bracken and the brutal Jake Grubb on the ship, they were doubly hateful. He wanted to go back—to stalk and slay them.

But the jungle, his jungle, was calling. Already he was longing to swing through its sun-dappled branches and lianas again, and tread the soft leaf mold in its deeper shadows. And beyond the jungle was a beautiful being—Ramona.

Jan groped his way back to the falls. Then he descended the notched cut in the cliff, dived through the curtain of water into the pool, and came up beneath his tree hut. Shaking the water from his glistening body, he climbed up and found Chicma dozing peacefully in her compartment. She gave a little grunt of greeting as he looked in, then went to sleep once more.

As time went on she had been paying less and less attention to his comings and goings. No longer did she romp with him in mimic combat, or play at tag with him through the tree tops. She liked her soft nest, and rarely left it except when urged by hunger or thirst. Chicma was getting very old.

Jan took up his favorite bow and a well-filled quiver of arrows, and left. As he plunged into his jungle, it was good to feel the soft leaf mold under his bare feet, the cool leaves brushing against his face and body.

He was meat-hungry, and his archery soon won him an unwary curassow. Having eaten, he hurried onward with a fixed purpose—to reach, as soon as possible, the place where he had found Ramona. With Borno gone and Chicma become grouchy and unsociable, he longed for the companionship of a friend. And Ramona was the only other living creature who had shown friendship for him.

She attracted him, too, in a different way from the others. At thought of her his pulse would quicken in a manner quite impossible to explain.

He shortened what had been a four-day journey to three. Arriving at the edge of Don Fernando's grove of young rubber trees, he hurried to the place where he had last seen her. But he found only the gnawed bones of the puma.

Recalling the direction in which she had gone when called, he went that way and eventually arrived at the patio gate. It was made from heavy planks which fitted a high-arched gateway. He looked through a crack between two planks and saw the object of his quest, seated beneath a tree and holding before her the basket of white leaves with little black tracks on them.

Jan knew nothing of the mechanism of the gate, and the smooth, plastered surface of the high patio wall offered no opportunity for a finger hold, but he observed that a branch of the tree under which the girl was sitting overhung the wall near a branch of a rubber tree outside. This made a clear path for the jungle-trained Jan.

**H**EARING a slight sound in the tree above her, Ramona was about to cry out in fear, but she stifled the sound when her knight-errant dropped softly beside her.

"Jan!" she whispered. "You startled me!"

"Come see you," he responded. "Jan like you."

"Shh! Not so loud. You will wake my duenna."

"Jan don' understan'," he said, imitating her low tones.

She rose, and drew aside the branch of a bushy shrub, one of a clump. Just behind it he saw a short and very round woman in black, seated in a gaudily striped lawn chair with her hands folded in her lap, snoring quite audibly. The thought flashed to his mind that this must be some deadly enemy of Ramona's. With a low growl he whipped his bow and an arrow from the quiver, and took quick aim at the old lady.

The horrified girl caught his hand.

"No, no! You must not hurt her! She is my friend. She loves me. But she must not know that you are here with me."

Puzzled, the youth replaced bow and arrow in his quiver.

"Jan try understan'," he whispered.

She laid a hand on his arm.

"Sit here beside me," she said, "so you will not be seen. Then, if we talk quietly, no one will know that you are here, and perhaps you may come again."

They talked for nearly half an hour, Jan asking questions in his limited broken English aided by the universal language of signs, and Ramona trying to explain things to him. He asked her about the little basket of white leaves covered with many black tracks, and she told him the little tracks talked to her. She told him the basket was called a "book," and that the tracks were called "letters," while groups of tracks were called "words."

At the end of a half hour Ramona said:

"You must go now, Jan. As soon as Señora Soledade finishes her siesta she will look for me, and I don't want her to see you. Come to-morrow at this time, and I will be here."

Jan left without protest, going over the wall as he had come. Once in the jungle, he shot a peccary, ate his fill, drank deeply at the river, and crept beneath the roots of a *ceiba* to dream of a pair of lustrous brown eyes.

And Ramona, having sent him away, was thrilled by her power over this handsome youth who, though he was a mighty slayer of fierce beasts and savage men, obeyed her lightest request without question.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### IN A SERPENT'S COILS.

ON the following day, and for many days thereafter, Jan met Ramona beneath the tree in the garden. As she had made it plain that she did not want these meetings known, he always came and went with the utmost caution. The hollow beneath the roots of the *ceiba* tree became his home. The fruit and game of the near-by jungle supplied him with ample food.

On the second day, Don Fernando, walking in the patio with his spotless white suit and smoking his long, slim cigar, had a narrow escape from death when Ramona stopped Jan just in time as he was preparing to launch an arrow. Gradually she was able to make him understand how dear her father, mother and duenna were to her, and that her tutor and the servants were friends who must not be slain or injured.

Much of the time she spent in tutoring him. Jan was an eager pupil, and mastered the alphabet in a few days. Then he tackled an English reader. Ramona's parents, having been educated in the United States, she was able to correct Jan's accent.

He was particularly interested in her books on natural history. Many animals he recognized at once by their pictures, having seen them in the jungle. He marveled at the pictures of the mighty prehistoric monsters, saying he wished he could meet and overcome some of them in battle. He was quite disappointed when Ramona told him they were all dead.

Jan was greatly attracted, too, by Ramona's writing and drawing materials. For many days, he watched her sketch. Then, one day, she gave him pencil, paper, and drawing board, and found that, without training, he could do almost as well as she. His greatest delight was to copy the pictures in the natural history books, labeling each sketch with its correct name, which, having once learned, he never forgot.

Each day Jan brought some offering from the jungle for his little goddess. He sought out the rarest orchids and the most luscious fruits and berries. Once, after an encounter with a Carib native, he brought her a necklace of jaguar teeth. But she did not dare to keep it, much to his disappointment.

Jan noticed that she had in the palm of her right hand, a blue tracing of a many-petaled flower. One day, with pen and ink, he traced a similar flower in his own palm. But to his surprise, the ink soon rubbed off. He tried to find out what made hers stay, but she didn't know. The mark had been there always—as long as she could remember.

One afternoon Jan was drawing,

using a sharp, flexible pen and India ink, when he accidentally pricked his finger. The next morning he noticed a little blue spot where the wound had been. When, after a lapse of several days, the spot remained, he began to trace a blue flower in his own palm in this manner. The work took some time, and cost him a sore hand for a while, but he ended by having a permanent tattoo mark almost identical with that of Ramona, and was delighted with the result.

As soon as he had learned sufficient English, Jan told Ramona about his early life in the menagerie, and of Dr. Bracken, whom he called "Cruel One." He was amazed and deeply relieved when Ramona told him that it was impossible for Chicma to have been his mother. He often wondered after that what his real mother was like, and if he would ever see her.

**F**OR more than two months, Jan lived beneath the *ceiba* near the plantation, watching the rubber workers, the house servants, and Ramona's parents and friends, and stealing in to see her at every opportunity.

To Ramona these secret meetings with her jungle hero were delightfully romantic. She felt a little remorseful about them at first, knowing that her parents would not approve. But she had only promised her father that she would not leave the house or the patio alone, and this promise was being carried out to the letter.

When she had progressed sufficiently with her studies, her parents planned to send her to the United States, then to Europe, to complete her education. At the end of the two-month period of Jan's stay the time for her departure was near at hand. He noticed a change in her and asked what was wrong, but



she would not tell him until the last day.

As she was helping him with his reading lesson, a tear suddenly splashed on the page. Jan looked at her in surprise.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "Why do you cry?"

"I'm going away for a long time," she said. "I may never see you again."

"If you go away I will follow," he replied.

"You must not try to follow," she said. "You could only go along for a little way, anyhow. First we will travel down the river in some of my father's small boats. We will go around the rapids, several of them, the Indians carrying the boats and luggage. Then we will take a small steamer. This steamer will carry us to a seaport where we will take a bigger one that will take us across the ocean, far, far from here. Many thousand of miles."

"But won't you come back?"

"I hope to, some day. But it will be a long time."

"I will wait and watch for you," said Jan.

He stood up and slung his quiver over his shoulder. There was a heavy weight in his breast, and something was choking him.

Suddenly Ramona stood on tiptoes, threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Good-by," she whispered. "Wait for me, and I'll wait for you."

Then she darted off through the shrubbery, light-footed as a young deer.

To Jan, who had never before been kissed, who had not known there was such a thing, it was a most astounding and pleasant experience. For a moment he stood in a daze, gazing after the fleeing girl. Then he scampered

up the tree, swung out on the limb, and dropped to the ground beyond the patio wall.

At last his preoccupied mind thought of Chicma, and he felt a twinge of remorse at having neglected her so long. No knowing what might have happened to her. Plunging into the jungle, he resolved to go straight to his tree hut. Never before had he been separated from Chicma for so long, and though the old comradeship had dwindled, he could never forget the tender care she had given him, nor the many romps they had taken together. He was very sad and lonely, and his mind was filled with gloomy forebodings.

As fast as he had hurried away from the hut, he hurried back.

Late in the afternoon of the third day, he reached his objective. He peered into the hut and called softly in the language of the chimpanzees.

There was no answer. The hut was deserted.

Alarmed, he swung out on one of the upper limbs and called again, as loudly as he could shout.

He was surprised and delighted when the answer came back from almost directly beneath him. Chicma was waddling unconcernedly along the edge of the pool, eating a banana. Then Jan saw a sight that changed his cry of delight to a low, scarcely audible growl.

Swimming swiftly across the pool in the peculiar, zigzag manner of serpents was an immense anaconda. There was no mistaking its purpose. With its massive head swaying on its arched neck, and forked tongue darting from between its scaly lips, it swam straight for Chicma.

Jan shouted a warning, but too late.

For a moment the great head poised above the cringing ape. Then the jaws

with their cruel, back-curved fangs, gaped wide and the serpent struck.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### DR. BRACKEN'S CLEW.

**D**R. BRACKEN knew, when he saw that Jan and Chicma had been carried off on a Venezuelan schooner, that his elaborate plans for revenge had been delayed. He would not admit that they had been defeated. He had always been a man of fixed purpose, and now his determination became so strong that nothing short of death itself could have stopped him.

Back in his office after his fruitless tramp through the swamp, he sat with his feet on his desk, smoking innumerable black stogies and scheming.

At first he thought of taking a steamer for Venezuela and checking up on the arrivals there. But his African trip and some unlucky stock ventures had reduced his fortune to a few thousand dollars, and his professional income had dwindled to scarcely more than a pittance; a trip to South America would be expensive, and perhaps fruitless, as the schooner might have visited and left any one of a hundred other ports before he could reach it. Then, too, Chicma might have died at sea, for chimpanzees have delicate constitutions. In that case it would be almost impossible to trace Jan.

He could look up the names of all schooners sailing under the flag of Venezuela and write letters of inquiry to their masters, offering a reward. But this might implicate him in a kidnaping case.

He decided that his best plan would be to run blind advertisements regularly in the newspapers of Venezuela's chief seaports. So he inserted notices

in all of them twice weekly for several months.

At the end of that time, when no answers had come, he wrote to the masters of all Venezuelan schooners, using an alias and living in Jacksonville for the purpose of getting his mail there under the assumed name. He received courteous replies from every ship's master to whom he had written, but not one could tell him what he sought to know.

In desperation, Dr. Bracken resorted to his original plan, some nine months after Jan's escape. Selling his menagerie and what securities he had, he deposited the money in a Tampa bank, obtained letters of credit, and left.

First he called at every United States port on the Gulf of Mexico. Then he obtained passports and called at every other port on the gulf, the Bay of Campeche, and the Caribbean Sea. Still unsuccessful, but unwilling to give up, he circled the entire continent of South America, spending some time in each port, and returning via the Panama Canal.

Nearly three years after Jan's escape, he got back to Citrus Crossing with his meager fortune dissipated—only to find a letter there, postmarked "Cumana." With trembling, eager fingers he opened it and read in Spanish:

DEAR SIR:

To-day I bought a bottle of tequila, and the man who sold it to me wrapped it in an old newspaper. When I unwrapped it later I noticed your advertisement.

I am the ship's master who captured the ape you mention. With her was a wild boy with red hair. My ship, the Santa Margarita, was driven out of her course and sunk by a hurricane. The boy and ape, together with my first

mate, a Haitian Negro, escaped into the jungle.

Having lost my fortune with my ship, and being compelled to earn my living as a day laborer, I have not had the means to pursue them. But I have heard rumors of their doings, and could easily locate them for you if supplied with the money to finance an expedition into the jungle. I should be delighted to undertake this for a reasonable compensation.

I am, sir, your most humble and obedient servant,

CAPTAIN FRANCESCO SANTOS.

Dr. Bracken thoughtfully stroked his iron-gray beard. Then he lit a black stogie and sat down, puffing fiercely. Fate, it seemed, had not only worked against him, but was now laughing at him. For she at last revealed the one person who could lead him to Jan—but after she had stripped him of the money needed for going after the boy.

The doctor was not a man to accept defeat, however, even from Fate. There would be a way to carry on; there must be a way.

Suddenly he slapped his thigh and laughed. An idea had occurred to him which appealed to his grim sense of humor. By a clever juggling of the facts he felt sure that Harry Trevor, Jan's father, could be made to pay all expenses for the expedition, including the doctor's own.

OVER in the harbor of Tampa the palatial yacht Georgia A. rode idly at anchor, awaiting the whim of her master. This and Trevor's millions would be at his disposal, Dr. Bracken saw with satisfaction.

The Trevors were having tea on their spacious screened veranda when he drove up.

"Welcome home, doc," said Harry Trevor, genially, rising and extending

his hand as the doctor came in. "Have a pleasant trip?"

"Rather," replied the physician, as they shook hands. "As trips go, it wasn't half bad."

He released the young millionaire's hand and looked at Georgia Trevor with an involuntary catch of his breath. If anything, she grew more beautiful year by year in spite of her great sorrow. She was a trifle thinner, a little paler than she had been in that bygone time when his love had turned to hate. But her velvety skin was unmarred by wrinkles, and the shimmering copper of her hair was still untouched by the silversmith called Time. Only in her big blue eyes might one see the shadow of the tragedy that had all but deprived her of life itself—the tragedy which, though she did not suspect, had been brought about by the man who was now smiling down at her, his white teeth gleaming against the dark background of his beard.

The doctor advanced and bowed low over her hand.

"I see you have been busy during my absence," he said.

"Busy? Doing what?"

"Growing more beautiful."

She laughed—a little silvery ripple that had an undertone of sadness.

"What 'll it be, old man?" asked Trevor. "Tea, or something stronger? My bootlegger just brought me some excellent Scotch."

"Tea will do, thanks."

He took a seat at the table and watched Georgia as she gracefully poured the amber beverage. Trevor pushed lemons, sugar and cream before him.

The doctor helped himself to cream and sugar, and stirred his beverage thoughtfully for a moment. Finally he spoke.



"I don't want you to take it too seriously, yet," he said, "for it is possible that I am mistaken. However, I believe I have some great news for you two."

Georgia Trevor leaned forward eagerly.

"It's not about—it can't be about our baby!" she exclaimed.

"Yes."

The teacup dropped from her fingers, and the two men sprang to her support, as she seemed about to faint. But she steadied herself resolutely.

"I'm—I'm quite all right. Tell me!"

**T**HE doctor sat down once more, and Trevor collected the fragments of the shattered cup.

"You will remember that an ape of mine wandered away about three years ago," began the doctor. "A female chimpanzee. She was a valuable animal and a favorite pet of mine, so I spared no expense in my attempts to recapture her.

"I followed her into the swamp, but eventually lost the trail, nor did I hear anything of her for several months afterward. But one day while hunting I met an old 'cracker' who lived by himself back in the swamps. He told a strange tale of having seen the ape, in company with a red-headed youth about sixteen years old, captured by the crew of a Venezuelan schooner. Both were taken aboard the ship, which then sailed away.

"I doubted the tale at first, but as it was my sole remaining clew, I decided to act upon it. I advertised in the leading Venezuelan newspapers without result. But to-day, upon my return, a letter was waiting for me. Written in answer to my ad, it confirms the strange story of the old cracker, who has since died. How this

boy and my chimpanzee came to be traveling together is a mystery. Possibly the same person who kidnaped your baby captured my ape. Perhaps, after becoming friends, they escaped together. At any rate they were really captured together, and together were shipwrecked on the coast of South America. Listen to this."

He took the letter of Santos from his pocket, opened, and read it.

Georgia Trevor turned to her husband, her eyes alight with hope.

"It must be our boy, Harry!" she exclaimed. "I'm sure it is. Can't we go to South America at once and look for him? Oh, I want him so!"

"We certainly can, dear," he said. "I'll send a wire to Tampa, so the yacht will be provisioned and ready. Then we'll drive over in the morning, get aboard, and be off." He turned to the doctor. "You're coming with us, aren't you, doc?"

The physician sighed.

"Like to," he responded, "but I'm afraid I can't. You see, I had a little run of bad luck with stocks. I'm cleaned."

"Don't let that worry you, old man. I want to pay all expenses, you know. Insist on it. And we need you, not only because of your medical knowledge but because you are a seasoned traveler and jungle explorer. I'd like to have you take charge of the expedition on a salary—name it yourself—and all expenses paid. Just tell me how much you need at present, and I'll advance it now."

The details were soon settled. Money was cabled to Santos, and he was instructed to organize and take charge of a party for the expedition, and then to await the arrival of the yacht.

The next morning the Georgia A.

steamed out of Tampa harbor, bound for South America.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE HIDDEN VALLEY.

JAN hesitated for but a moment when he saw the cruel jaws of the immense anaconda close on the shoulder of Chicma. Then, running lightly out to the end of the limb on which he stood, he dived for a point beside the great, thick coils that were slithering up out of the pool to encircle their victim.

Although it was a much higher dive than he had ever made, Jan struck the water cleanly and came up beside the serpent. Whipping out his machete, he hacked again and again at the writhing coils. The waters of the pool seethed with the struggles of man, ape and serpent.

Presently the anaconda released its hold on Chicma, who was, by this time, near the curtain of water dripping from above. She instantly scrambled through it, and Jan was left alone to fight it out with the huge reptile, which had now turned all its attention to him.

With jaws gaping and neck arched above the foaming water, it struck straight for his face. But although the dart of the serpent was incredibly swift, the counter-stroke of Jan was quicker. His machete flashed in a shimmering arc, its keen edge half severing the reptile's enormous head from its body. Feebly, the snake attempted to strike again, but this time the machete completed its task, and the gaping head flew off to sink out of sight, while the scaly body continued to writhe and flounder aimlessly about in the water.

Jan's first concern was for Chicma, whom he had seen as she crawled through the sheet of falling water. Plunging in after her, he found her huddled against the cliff beneath the falls, whimpering and licking her wounded shoulder.

"Come!" he barked in the chimpanzee language. "Let us go back to the hut."

"No. Sleepy One will get me."

"But he has gone to sleep forever."

"I will not go. He might wake up."

He coaxed, but to no avail.

Then he thought of the open valley at the other end of the cavern where he had met the hairy men. Perhaps he could persuade her to go that way. And anyhow, he wanted to explore the valley and to avenge himself on the hairy creatures who had attacked him. He would teach them and their kind to let him alone, as he had taught the Indians of the jungle.

He went back to the tree hut, where he gathered an assortment of weapons: a bow and a quiverful of arrows, a blow-gun with a supply of poisoned darts, and a spear. He also exchanged the machete he was carrying for one slightly larger and heavier.

Returning to where Chicma cowered beneath the waterfall, he said:

"Come. We leave this place."

She followed him obediently as he climbed the notches in the face of the cliff and entered the cave guarded by the hawk-faced and dog-faced statues. She was not afraid to go with him through the dark corridors of the cavern. But she balked when they reached the place where it was necessary to enter the water once more in order to get out into the sunlight. Twice she had been injured by monsters that had come up out of the water—an alligator and an anaconda—and she feared it.

After coaxing and arguing for some time to no avail, Jan decided to take his weapons through first, then come back after her. He made them into a bundle with the *curari*-tipped blow-gun darts on the top, so the poison would not be washed from their points. Supporting the bundle, half in and half out of the water, with one hand he swam out into the sunlight. Making for the shore, he hid his bundle in a clump of reeds, then swam back into the cavern.

Chicma, seeing him return unhurt, finally decided to go back with him.

AS solicitous as a mother for her babe, Jan helped Chicma through the underground channel. She had cared for him in his years of helplessness, and now that she grew more dependent day by day, he felt that come what might he must care for her.

Emerging into the sunlight, they swam for the shore and climbed up the bank. Standing on the top, they shook themselves like two dogs.

Jan gathered up his weapons and they started off down the broken, weed-grown avenue. To the ape, the grotesque images which lined the approach to the temple ruins were only so many oddly shaped stones, but to the boy they were a source of wonder and curiosity. He eyed each one suspiciously as he came near it, fearful lest it should suddenly come to life and attack them. He also kept a sharp lookout for his former enemies, the hairy men.

On reaching the portal of the ruined temple, they advanced cautiously, Jan keeping his weapons in readiness in case some unseen enemy should leap out from behind a pillar or fallen rock fragment.

A large part of the roof had caved in, but many sections were still intact. The walls were decorated with brightly colored murals, and much statuary stood about on pedestals and in niches. The floor was of smooth, well-matched tiles laid in geometric designs. All of these things appealed tremendously to Jan's inherent artistic and æsthetic nature, so that he proceeded slowly in order to gaze his fill at the new wonders constantly appearing before him.

The building consisted of a central auditorium, around which were many corridors and anterooms. At one end of the great hall, on a semicircular platform, stood a colossal image of a man with a thin, sickle-like beard curving outward from the point of his chin. On the head was a tall crown, ornamented on each side with a curling plume and a twisted horn, and in front with a smooth, golden disk. One huge hand held a three-lashed whip, and the other a short-handled crook.

Passing on through the ruins of the building, Jan and Chicma emerged in the remains of what had once been a large and magnificent garden, circled by a high stone wall. Despite the fact that it was overgrown with weeds and creepers, there remained many flowers, shrubs and trees. In the center an ornate fountain of marble and carnelian splashed musically.

At the far end of the garden was a small, vine-covered bower. Jan wandered toward this, admiring several small statuettes which stood along the pathway, while Chicma made straight for an orange tree near the wall.

He had passed the fountain only a little way when he saw something that caused him to stiffen in his tracks, then silently dart behind a clump of shrubbery. A thing inside the bower had moved; an immense thing with striped



sides and back, and a huge, cat-like head.

**L**OADING his blow-gun with a poisoned dart, Jan waited tensely.

The great shaggy head slowly emerged into the pathway, followed by a striped body as large as that of a burro. With tasselled ears laid back and eight-inch tusks gleaming, its appearance was terror-striking.

Jan recognized the creature instantly from a picture he had seen in one of Ramona's books. It was a saber-toothed tiger, and Ramona had told him it belonged to a past age, that there were no longer any such creatures on earth. Apparently she had been misinformed.

The primeval giant cat had evidently been awakened from its nap by the sound of their entrance into its retreat, and resented it. Noting the direction of its baleful gaze, Jan saw that it was watching Chicma as she sat on one of the lower branches of the orange tree, greedily devouring the fragrant fruit.

Jan put his blow-gun to his lips and sped a tiny dart at the monster. The slender missile imbedded itself in the great striped shoulder, and clung. The creature shook itself, dislodging it. Evidently the small projectile had not caused this big cat any more inconvenience or pain than the sting of an insect.

Knowing the usual effect of the *curari* poison with which he had tipped the dart, Jan waited, expecting to see the creature sink down dead in its tracks. But instead, it charged straight for the tree in which Chicma was feeding, uttering a roar louder and more terrible than any Jan had ever heard.

As the beast charged, Jan sent a second dart into its side. He shot a third into its heaving flank as it leaped

for the lower branches of the orange tree.

Chicma had taken one look at the charging carnivore and scampered for the topmost branches of the tree, but when she saw it leaping up toward her she swung over to the top of the high wall and dropped out of sight on the other side.

The poison from the first dart had evidently not been enough to paralyze the motor nerves of the huge beast. But the triple dose began to take effect as it caught the lower branches of the tree. It clung to them for a moment, snarling and roaring, then fell to the ground on its back.

Jan knew that no member of the cat tribe would fall on its back from that height unless it was very near death, so he waited. After thrashing about for some time in the undergrowth, the mighty killer finally lay still.

Before approaching it, Jan fired an arrow into the carcass. As no movement followed, he was convinced that the monster was sleeping its last long sleep, and advanced to examine it. For some time he looked the beast over, marveling at its long, sickle-shaped claws, its bulging muscles, and its immense saber-like tusks. What a fearful antagonist it would make! Jan had fought the jaguar and the puma, machete against teeth and claws, and won, but he felt very dubious indeed about the outcome of such a duel with one of these monsters.

However, it had gone to sleep now, never to waken. He must reassure Chicma. He called to her, but there was no reply. He called again at the top of his voice. Still no answer.

Alarmed, he scrambled up the orange tree and onto the top of the wall. He was looking out over a vast, rolling plain—a savanna of tall, waving grass,

dotted here and there with clumps of trees. Meeting at the point where the river went underground and traveling as far as he could see to the right and left, until lost in the blue haze, was an unbroken line of tall cliffs, encircling the valley through which the river meandered. Beyond the plain before him was a dense forest. Chicma's trail of trampled grass led that way; she had set out for the jungles of this great closed valley.

After caching his blow-gun darts and spear in one of the anterooms of the temple in order to lighten his burden, Jan hurried after the chimpanzee, following the plainly marked trail with ease through the tall, rustling grass.

This grass, with its rough cutting edges, reminded Jan of the sawgrass he had encountered in the Everglades. It brought hateful memories of Dr. Bracken, and the life he had lived as a prisoner in the menagerie.

He had thought he would easily catch up with the aged Chicma in a few minutes, but before he had gone far he knew that her great fright at the saber-toothed tiger had caused her to run much faster than usual. At last he caught sight of her, just passing over the brow of a low hill ahead.

**T**HEN he saw something that checked the shout on his lips and brought him to an abrupt halt—a row of hideous monsters, with sharp horns on the tips of their noses and just above their eyes, were galloping over the hill. Their shoulders were protected by great bony ruffs, and behind these, mounted on their backs, sat men clad in shiny yellow armor and carrying long lances.

Knights—mounted on triceratops! Jan recognized both from pictures he had seen in Ramona's books. But she

had said that both belonged to the past, that such things were no more.

With a shriek of fear, Chicma turned and attempted to flee, but in a twinkling she was surrounded, and a half dozen of the armored men had alighted and were advancing toward her.

Jan's first impulse at sight of that formidable host was to run. But when he saw Chicma surrounded, his loyalty held him. Fitting an arrow to his bowstring, he launched it at the man who stood nearest to the cowering chimpanzee. To his surprise, the six-foot shaft rebounded harmlessly from the glistening yellow cuirass. He released a second, and this glanced off the metal helmet, narrowly missing Chicma.

But the first arrow had revealed his presence to the enemy. Wild shouts of the armored men mingled with the hoarse bellows and thundering hoof beats of their fearsome mounts as they charged. In a trice he was surrounded by a circle that bristled with triple-horned heads and glittering lance points.

Jan dropped his bow, whipped out his heavy machete, and stood at bay. Several of his assailants dismounted and came toward him carrying long, two-edged swords in their hands. A moment more and he would have been cut to ribbons, had not there come a sharp command from one of the men who had remained mounted. At this, the advancing warriors sheathed their weapons and leaped in, clutching him with their mailed hands.

Despite his valiant resistance, his machete was soon wrested from him, his wrists were bound together behind his back, and he was flung into a saddle in front of one of the riders.

As the cavalcade moved away, Jan saw with relief that Chicma, too, was

a prisoner, and not slain as he had feared.

Although the great beasts which carried the mailed warriors were ponderous and clumsy-looking, they traveled across the grassy plain at a considerable speed. It was not long before they reached the forest which Jan had seen from the wall of the ruins. It was much like his jungle of the outside world, though many of the plants were new and strange to him. Here shrub, tree and vine intermingled in such a thick and impenetrable tangle that the riders were forced to pass, single file, along a narrow tunnel which had evidently been cut for the purpose through the thickly interwoven vegetation.

**A** MOMENT later there flashed through Jan's nimble mind a plan for making his escape. They had entered one of the thickest and darkest parts of the jungle when he suddenly pivoted in the saddle, catching the man who rode behind him with his elbow, just below the armpit, and hurling him off his mount to the right. Almost at the same instant, he threw himself into the thicket at his left.

Because his hands were bound behind him, Jan fell on his face in the undergrowth. But he quickly scrambled to his feet and dashed away. The shouts of men, the clank of armor and the crashing of jungle growths apprised him of pursuit, and he hurried breathlessly onward.

Although the swift mounts and heavy armor of the warriors had been to their advantage for capturing Jan in the open, they were a hindrance in the jungle. Soon they fell so far behind that the sounds of pursuit came but faintly to the fugitive's ears. But he did not slacken his pace.

The jungle came to an end with unexpected abruptness, and Jan found himself on the margin of a small stream thickly dotted with water lilies. Just in front of him a black-robed figure—a white man—stood in the stern of a black boat, built and carved to resemble a huge alligator with head and tail up-curved from the water. The man in the black robe, a thickset, ruddy-faced, bullet-headed fellow with a shaved poll, held a long, stout pole with which he was evidently about to push off from shore. But as soon as he saw Jan, the robed man quickly shifted his hold and swung the pole bludgeon-like for his head. Jan dodged, and turned to reënter the shelter of the jungle.

But at that moment his feet slipped on the muddy bank, and he fell, face downward. The boatman's long staff, which he had avoided the first time, swung again as he tried to scramble to his feet. This time it struck him squarely on the right temple, and brought oblivion.

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## CHAPTER XV.

### THE BLACK PRISON.

**W**HEN Jan recovered consciousness once more he was lying in the bottom of the boat, which the black-robed man was poling up the narrow stream. He tried to move, and found that not only his wrists, but his ankles also, were bound. Piled in the boat around him were many baskets of lotus plants which his captor had gathered.

At first they passed only the moss-draped, liana-laced border of the jungle, but they presently arrived at a place where a high wall of black marble fronted the stream. The prow of the boat grounded at the base of a



flight of steps which led up from the water's edge to a massive gate that barred a great arched gateway. At each side of this stood a guard in black armor, holding a long pike and wearing a sword and dagger.

The man in the boat shouted, and the gate swung back. A dozen black-robed figures came through it and down the steps. Some of them dragged the prow of the boat higher, while others took out the baskets of lotus plants. Many exclaimed in apparent surprise as they saw Jan lying bound in the bottom of the boat, but none offered to touch him.

When the cargo of plants had been removed, Jan's captor looped a rope around his neck. Then he drew a knife from his girdle and cut the rope that bound his ankles, signing for him to rise.

Jan stood up, and his head swam dizzily, for it was still rocking from the blow he had received. But his captor, with a hoarse command which he could not comprehend, stepped out of the boat and tugged at the rope circling his neck—an unspoken order which the captive understood very well—and which he had to obey.

After following his conductor up the steps, Jan was led through an immense garden of well-kept flowers, shrubs and trees. It was decorated with statuary depicting some figures of rare beauty and others of surpassing ugliness. And dotted here and there were pools and fountains. In some of these pools were sacred lotuses, budding and in full bloom; in others Jan saw the black-robes setting out the plants which had just been taken from the near-by stream.

Having crossed the garden, they entered a doorway where two more black-armored pikemen stood guard in

an immense building of black marble. Then they followed for some distance a long corridor, the floor of which was of black and silver tiles, and the walls of which were decorated with brightly colored murals. Many doorways opened into this corridor, but Jan's captor did not pause until he reached a great arched opening at its very end.

Here he was halted by two guards, each of whom, in addition to his sword and dagger, carried an immense broad-ax. After exchanging a few words with Jan's captor, they permitted him to pass into a large central room, the domed ceiling of which resembled the sky on a starlit, moonless night. Conspicuous among the sparkling constellations was—though Jan, of course, did not know what it was—a magnified representation of the planet Saturn, showing globe and rings as they would look through a telescope.

Jan stared in wonder and amazement at this vivid and exaggerated representation of the nighttime sky. Then his attention was attracted by a group of black-robed figures standing on the other side of the room at the right and left of a great, black throne.

His captor jerked him roughly forward, nearly choking him, and advancing obsequiously, knelt before the black throne.

**S**EATED on the throne was a man whose emaciated features were of chalky paleness—a white skin stretched over a nearly fleshless skull. On his head was a shimmering silver helmet, the crest of which was fashioned to represent the arched head and neck of an alligator. It sparkled with many jewels, dominated by an immense emerald that flashed above the center of his forehead.

His lank body was incased, also, in

silver armor, and over his shoulders was thrown a long, black cape, broided and bordered with silver and jewels. Depending from about his neck by a slender chain was a ball of silver, circled with many concentric disks of the same metal—an emblem of the planet, Saturn.

As he stared down at Jan, his ghastly features were immobile, inscrutable. Only his sunken eyes, which glowed with the greenish light that characterizes the orbs of night-prowling beasts, showed any signs of animation. And their gaze was baleful—menacing.

After looking at Jan for a moment, he addressed a few words to his captor. The latter replied at some length. When he had finished, the man on the throne made a sign with his right hand. As he did so, the youth noticed that in his palm was tattooed a blue flower like that in the palm of Ramona, a copy of which was in Jan's own palm.

In response to the gesture a fat, black-robed, shaved-headed fellow with heavy pink jowls came and bowed before the throne, extending a metal box with the lid thrown back. From this box the man on the throne selected a jeweled bracelet, which he tossed to Jan's still kneeling captor. Then he clapped his hands, whereupon two armored guards clanked into the room from a door at the side of the dais.

At a word of command from the man on the throne, each of them seized Jan by an arm, and together they marched him away. After they had gone down a narrow and tortuous corridor for a long way, they came out into a sunlit courtyard paved with black granite. Crossing this, they arrived before a massive gate, guarded by four armored pikemen and four axmen.

One of the pikemen drew back a

heavy bar, and the gate swung open. After removing the rope from around Jan's neck and cutting his bonds with a dagger, his two conductors pushed him through. Bewildered, he looked about him as the gate closed behind him.

He stood in a long, rectangular pen surrounded by twenty-foot walls built of large granite blocks, smooth-faced and so carefully fitted together that it was barely possible to see where they joined.

In the pen were several hundred men—not white like his captors, yet lighter in color than the Indians he had encountered in the jungle. Their skin seemed to vary from light tan to yellow. Some of them closely resembled Indians except for their lighter skins, but the eyes of most of them slanted more, and their cheek bones were more pronounced. All wore leather breech clouts and sandals of twisted grass, and some had gaudily colored blankets thrown over their shoulders.

They were squatting on the ground or standing around in little groups, conversing. But as soon as Jan entered he became the target for their glances, and evidently the chief subject of their conversation. Many crowded around him, chattering excitedly, and staring as if he were some strange beast on exhibition. The ring drew closer.

Jan snarled menacingly. He disliked Indians, for with a single exception they had always proved hostile to him, always sought his life. These men reminded him of Indians. But they gave way before him as he strode forward, stiffly erect and alert for attack, toward the gate at the opposite end of the inclosure. Perhaps they were awed by the fire that flashed from his steel-gray eyes. Or they may have been

impressed by the powerful muscles that rippled beneath his smooth skin.

Having crossed the inclosure without being touched, Jan sat down in the shadow of the gate. Although many slanting eyes still stared at him, no one had followed. He considered plans for escape. He could not scale the twenty-foot walls unaided. Furthermore, at intervals of thirty feet around the rim were small sentry towers, each of which held two archers. Great stealth would be required, even on the darkest night, to avoid these alert watchers and escape with a whole skin.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE DAY OF PAYMENT.

**A**BRUPTLY the gate behind Jan swung open. He sprang to his feet as four black-armored men entered, marching abreast, carrying long swords in their hands. Behind them came a file of slant-eyed, yellow-skinned slaves, naked save for breech clouts and sandals. Each slave bore an immense tray on his head, and Jan saw that some were heaped high with fruits, some with chunks of cooked meat, and some with golden-brown cakes. Following these slaves were others who bore large earthenware jars on their heads, and around whose waists cups hanging from wire hooks jingled musically.

As the gate closed behind them, the slaves carrying the trays knelt in a row, still holding them on their heads. Those who carried the jars also knelt, and set them on the ground.

The occupants of the inclosure, meanwhile, hurried to form a long line, jostling and crowding each other for the places nearest the front. Then, at a shout from one of the swordsmen,

they filed past the row of kneeling slaves, where each was supplied with a piece of meat, a cake, some fruit, and a cupful of brown beverage which was dipped from the jars, and which Jan afterward learned was called *chocolatl*. The four swordsmen stood by, to see that no one got more than his share.

Jan was hungry, having eaten nothing since entering the valley. He went to one of the meat trays and was about to help himself when a swordsman shouted something to him which he could not understand, and ran between him and the tray, brandishing his weapon. Under the menace of the keen blade, Jan backed away, the guard following him, chattering and gesticulating.

He was made to understand that he must take his place in the line, at the very end. So carefully had the supply of rations been computed that when Jan finally reached them, but one portion of each thing was left. With his meat, cake and fruit held in the curve of his left arm before him, and his cup of *chocolatl* in his right hand, he made his way through the jostling crowd. The slaves and swordsmen withdrew, and he heard the gate slam shut after them.

Suddenly a brown hand reached over his shoulder from behind and snatched his meat. With a low growl of rage, Jan whirled to confront the pilferer. But there were no less than a half dozen men behind him, each of whom might have been guilty. Each wore an innocent expression, and none seemed to have more than one piece of meat.

Enraged and disappointed at losing his favorite food, but unable to tell who snatched it, he turned away to seek a spot where he might eat the remainder of his rations undisturbed. Then a youth of about his own age stepped in front of him with a friendly



smile and tearing his own piece of meat in two, offered him half.

Jan was nonplused. The anger surging within him made him feel like flying at any one who crossed his path. But his wrath dissolved before that disarming smile and unselfish offer. He accepted the meat, and the two lads sat down side by side to eat, neither knowing that this was to be the beginning of a friendship that would be strong and lasting.

They conversed by signs at first, but Jan soon made his companion understand that he wished to know the names of things, by pointing to or touching them and looking at him questioningly. As he was quick to learn and had an excellent memory, it was not long before he was combining verbs and adjectives with his nouns, and forming short sentences in this new language.

**W**EEEKS passed, and though many prisoners were taken away and new ones brought in, Jan and his companion remained. During this time Jan learned the language of the yellow people, and also a considerable portion of that of their white captors, which his friend taught him.

The yellow-skinned youth's name was Koh Kan, Koh being his given name and Kan both his family name and title. Tattooed in the palm of his right hand was a picture of a feathered serpent, done in red. This, he told Jan, was a picture of Kan, the mighty serpent, earthly representative of the Fair God, Quetzalcoatl, whose abode was in the sun, but who was expected to return some day to earth. Koh's father, he said, was hereditary ruler of his race and High Priest of Kan, so he was Prince Koh of the House of Kan. Jan had only a hazy idea of the posi-

tion of a prince, but he had noticed the great respect shown this one by the yellow prisoners, and judged that it must be quite important.

Koh said his people lived in a great city called Temukan, which was a long, dangerous journey away, beyond an immense, muddy pit in which roved terrible and gigantic monsters. They were always at war with the white people, he said, whose chief city was called Satmu, and who worshiped a number of gods. His people, he said, had but one sect and worshiped Quetzalcoatl in the person of Kan, the great feathered serpent, who was propitiated with human sacrifice—prisoners of war and convicted criminals.

The white people, he said, were divided into four sects who worshiped two gods, Re and Asar; a goddess, Aset; and a demon, Set—whose earthly representative was Sebek, a very terrible living water monster. They also did homage to three minor divinities.

The Sect of Re, he said, wore gold-plated armor, or clothing of a golden yellow color—such as had first captured Jan. That of Asar wore white, and that of Aset light blue. But the Sect of Set wore black.

"You and I," he told Jan, "have been captured by the people of Set."

"For what purpose?" asked Jan.

"Each day," said Koh, "you have noticed that two men are taken away, never to return?"

"Yes, I have noticed that," replied Jan.

"They are fed to the monster, Sebek," said Koh. "Some day we, too, shall be fed to him, as will every man in this place."

"What is he like?" Jan wanted to know.

"There are said to be monsters like him in the great pit of mud which lies

near the center of the valley, but nowhere else," Koh told him. "His head and long jaws are like those of an alligator, but many times bigger. His body is very long, and covered with shiny scales, and his feet are like the fins of a fish. Here, I will show you."

With the tip of his finger he sketched a picture of the creature he had described. Then arising, he continued: "He is said to be this long," and stepped off twenty paces, or about fifty feet.

"But if there are other creatures like this," said Jan, "why is it that they feed men to this one only?"

"He is selected from among the others by the High Priest," Koh replied, "who makes certain tests to ascertain whether or not the soul of Set has descended into him. This only happens about once in five generations, as the beasts are very long-lived, and a

new one is selected from the pit only when an old one dies."

At every opportunity Jan made inquiries about Chicma, but he learned nothing until one day when a prisoner who had formerly been a slave of the golden Sect of Re told him he had seen her, and that she was kept as an object of great curiosity in the royal palace of Satnu, having been presented to the empress by the captain of a band of huntsmen who had captured her.

A few days after that, as Jan and Koh sat talking, four guards walked up to where they sat.

"It is the summons!" whispered Koh. "We are to be fed to Sebek! Farewell, friend Jan. I hope that we may meet and be friends in the next world."

The two lads embraced, but were quickly torn apart by the guards, who hustled them away.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

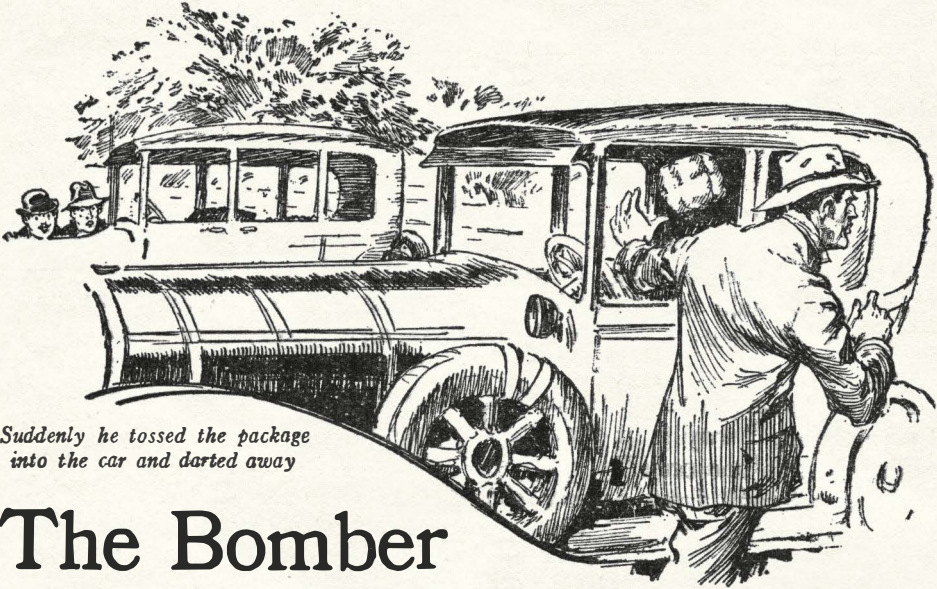


### *The Smallest and Oldest Republic*

**S**AN MARINO, the world's smallest and oldest existing republic, was founded early in the fourth century when a band of Italians led by San Marinus, a stone mason, fled from the persecution of the Emperor Diocletian, to the solitude of the mountains. To-day there is a population of twelve thousand inhabitants within the twenty-three square miles of rugged mountain cut from the Italian kingdom in the northern Apennines almost directly east from Florence and near the Adriatic Sea.

This diminutive republic has preserved its independence and form of government for fourteen hundred years. It is governed by two Capitani Regenti, elected every six months from the sixty members of the Great Council, in which every house has its representative. The city is a medieval walled fortress, high on a rocky precipice, built in the shadow of three protecting castles with three towers, which are pictured on the coat of arms of this tiny republic. Its few streets are winding, narrow and steep—too narrow and too steep to allow the entrance of any kind of automobile. Below San Marino is the sparkling blue water of the Adriatic Sea, which has seen fourteen centuries of history enacted here in the oldest existing republic.

*Bert Morchouse.*



*Suddenly he tossed the package into the car and darted away*

# The Bomber

*Drifters Bill and Jim had no social conscience or law-enforcing instincts to speak of, but the mention of a thousand-dollar reward was enough to sick them on the trail of any lawbreaker*

By **JOHN H. THOMPSON**

**N**OW there's my idea of a real idiot," remarked Bill as he tapped the newspaper spread across his knees.

I glanced idly at the article which he indicated.

"Bomber wrecks another car," proclaimed the headline.

"This bird," Bill explained, "was given the bounce from an automobile factory and he's venting his spite by going around and throwing bombs in cars of this particular make. He's—"

"Why is he any more of an idiot than some of these other guys?" I interposed. "Look at some of the other headlines: 'Rich banker caught in love nest,' 'Bob-haired girl holds up cigar store,' 'Thief robs—'"

"All idiots—all of 'em," conceded Bill, "but this one is bound to be

caught if he keeps on, and when he is caught he'll get the limit."

"Well, they haven't caught him yet," I ventured for the sake of argument. The subject didn't interest me particularly, but the park bench and the warm spring sun made a comfortable combination and I figured that if I didn't keep Bill busy arguing he might start thinking of something which would involve more effort. Bill, like myself, may be a drifter but he's got an active and fertile brain, as active and fertile as a running weed in a suburbanite's garden.

"They'll get this bomber," declared Bill confidentially, "especially with a reward of a thousand dollars hanging over his head."

Bill gazed dreamily at a pair of park squirrels.



"A thousand dollars is a heap of coin," he mused enviously after a pause.

I saw the trend of his thoughts and tried to shift his mind on another track. I knew Bill and feared the worst.

"It's a heap of coin," he repeated, completely ignoring my feeble interruption.

"We've got sixty cents for our suppers. Why should we worry about money?" I interposed.

"The field is open to all. There's no reason why you and I shouldn't nab this bird and get the thousand smackers," persisted Bill.

I sighed dismally. My fears were being realized.

"It ought to be easy picking," continued Bill reflectively. "This fellow is operating somewhere right in this city—"

"It's a big city," I pointed out.

Bill airily waved the objection aside, and picked up the paper for further information.

"He always selects the same make of car—Pluke coupé," Bill said. "He rushes up to the car as it is parked at the curb, tosses in the bomb and then beats it before the owner comes back. The owner arrives in time to watch the police prying pieces of the car out of the sides of the near-by buildings. He's a rather shabbily dressed man, about middle aged, clean shaven . . ."

Bill folded up the paper, shoved it into his pocket and prepared to move.

"The thing for us to do is to find a parked car of this make and stick around until the bomber shows up," he said.

"There's probably ten thousand Pluke coupés in this city," I said. "There's three of them over there in a row." I pointed toward the street which as yet was not hidden from view by the

budding shrubbery. The cars were parked in front of some stores on the opposite curb. I've been on the road so long that I can spot the make of a car half a mile away.

"Three in a row!" Bill chuckled in delight. "Three times as much chance of nabbing the bomber. Come on!" Without further ado he rose from the comfortable bench and started toward the park entrance. I trailed along behind.

"There's only one thing for us to worry about now," said Bill.

I nodded sagely. "We've got to worry whether we can dodge the pieces if the bomber happens to select one of these three," I conceded.

"That doesn't worry me," snapped Bill. "My only worry is whether they'll pay us the reward in a thousand-dollar bill which might be hard to break or in small bills which would make too fat a roll to lug around."

"I'll carry the roll for you if it is in small bills," I promised. "So quit your worrying."

Bill didn't deign to answer.

**W**E took up our station on the park side of the one-way street, behind a sedan—not a Pluke—parked a fairly safe distance from the three cars across the street.

"The police claimed, according to the paper, that officers were watching nearly all the Plukes in the city," said Bill. "But here's three in a row and not a cop in sight. Well, it's all the better for us. We won't have to divvy the reward."

Personally I would just as soon have had a cop in sight for reserves, as it were, in case the bomber should show up.

Nobody was in any of the three cars. For half an hour Bill and I stood on

the park side of the street. At five minute intervals I proposed returning to the park bench, but Bill was obdurate.

"I've got a hunch," he declared.

Slowly the minutes ticked past. Finally a woman emerged from one of the stores, climbed into one of the three cars and drove away.

"If that fool bomber had been onto his job he could have wrecked three cars with one shot," grumbled Bill. "Now there is only two." It seemed to me that Bill's viewpoint was about on a par with that of a ten-year-old youngster watching a three-alarm fire next to a million-dollar lumber yard—pessimistically hopeful.

A second later a man emerged from another of the stores and hurried toward the curb.

"There he is. Get ready for the bang!" exclaimed Bill—but the man merely opened the door of one of the remaining cars, climbed in and started the engine.

Bill growled in disappointment as the car sped away.

"Let's quit and get something to eat," I suggested, jingling my half of our sixty cents invitingly in my pocket.

Bill looked at me in pained astonishment.

"I'm no quitter," he said reproachfully.

I shifted uncomfortably to the other foot, leaned resignedly against the fender of the sedan, and silently prayed for the owner of the third coupé to show up.

A window cleaner armed with a long-handled, T-shaped stick and a tin pail emerged from one of the stores and set to work on the plate-glass window.

"If the bomber shows up, that window cleaner will butt in and we'll have

to divvy the reward with him," I remarked. "He—"

"Look!" Bill grabbed me by the arm.

A rather shabby-looking, middle-aged man darted hurriedly from one of the stores and rushed to the car.

"We might as well be starting along," I said. "There's the owner of the third car."

"He's not the owner!" Bill whispered in excitement. "See the suspicious way he's acting?"

There was no question about it—the man was acting suspiciously. He had paused near the car and was glancing up and down the street. There was a paper-wrapped package partly concealed under his arm. Suddenly he tossed the package into the car, swung abruptly on his heel, after another hurried look up and down the street, and darted into a drug store.

"That's him. He's gone into the drug store. The bomb's in the car."

Bill was so excited that for an instant he was unable to move.

"Looks like we had a mortgage on the thousand," I conceded.

The mention of the thousand electrified Bill back to life. He dashed across the street toward the car.

"Hey, are you crazy?" I demanded. "You ought to be running in the other direction. If that thing blows up it'll take you with it."

"He uses a timer, the paper said," Bill called reassuringly over his shoulder. "If we can save the car and the bomb, too, we'll have A-1 evidence to clinch our claim for the thousand."

IT seemed to me that an explosion would be sufficient evidence, but before I could stop Bill he had opened the door of the coupé and pulled out the package, holding it gingerly at

arm's length. It was about six inches by three, wrapped in dark-brown paper. It looked like a bomb. From inside came a steady *tick-tick-tick*.

"It's an infernal machine all right!" exclaimed Bill exultantly.

"And now that you've got it, what'll you do with it?" F demanded, edging away.

Bill did not stop to answer. He roughly pushed aside the window cleaner who was standing with his back to us, and plunged the ticking package into the pail of water.

"Real presence of mind, if I do say it myself," commented Bill with a note of pride in his voice.

The window cleaner had dropped his T-shaped implement and was rolling up his sleeves, meanwhile eying Bill with fast mounting indignation.

"Whoinell do you guys think—"

Bill ignored him and turned abruptly to me.

"Quick, Jim, run and get a cop before that bird comes out of the store!" he commanded.

"Get one for me, too," invited the cleaner sarcastically. "And you'd better call an ambulance. This guy here'll need one when I get through with him. Pushin' me around and tossin' junk into my clean water." He was sputtering angrily as he looked down into the pail.

I debated whether to stay with Bill and help defend him from the gathering storm or go in search of an officer.

"Quick, Jim!" directed Bill impatiently. "Go and get a cop."

"You wait here, feller," ordered the window cleaner peremptorily. Then to Bill: "Where did you get that junk you tossed into my pail?" His tone was belligerent.

"Out of that car," said Bill calmly, jerking his thumb toward the Pluke.

"Well, you've got some nerve." The window cleaner promptly reached down into the pail, pulled up the dripping bundle and tossed it into the car again.

Bill and I involuntarily leaped backward, for we still heard the ominous *tick-tick*. The water apparently had not percolated through the wrappings. The window cleaner eyed us in astonishment as we walked backward, fingers in our ears, waiting for the blast. Then he calmly turned and resumed his interrupted labors.

"It's too late to save the car now," groaned Bill. "I wouldn't dare touch the danged bomb. It must be just about due to explode. Wonder where—"

He glanced around, and even as he spoke a figure darted from the drug store. It was none other than our fugitive. Instead of running away from the coupé, he brushed past us and hastened toward it.

"If he's blown to pieces we don't get our thousand!" exclaimed Bill. He leaped forward and caught the stranger by the arm.

"Hey, what in thunder are you trying to do?" The stranger swung about angrily.

"You—you threw that bomb in there!" panted Bill.

"Bomb?" The stranger looked at him in mingled anger and astonishment. "Bomb?" he repeated.

"Yes, we saw you do it. We've got you redhanded," declared Bill.

"This is my own car. Why should I toss—"

"Tell your story to the officer when he comes," said Bill with dignity. "We saw you throw it. We heard it ticking. We—"

"Ticking?" Suddenly the stranger burst into raucous laughter. "That's good! That's good!" he ejaculated,



slapping his thighs. "That was a ninety-eight-cent alarm clock you heard. I just bought it over in that store and tossed it into the car while I ran to the drug store to buy a smoke. And you thought the clock was a bomb, thought I was bombing my own car? That's a good one!"

Bill involuntarily released his grip on the arm. The stranger climbed into his car and started the engine. He waved a genial good-by as the car slid away from the curb.

"That's certainly a good joke on you fellows," he called in farewell,

"and there's nothing I enjoy more than a good joke—I'd give a dollar for one any day."

"Well, I'm glad he's satisfied, anyhow," sighed Bill as we turned away in disappointment.

"He won't be though when he gets home and takes the water-soaked wrappings off his new alarm clock," I chuckled.

"I'd like to know why he won't," said Bill with dignity. "That'll be another gol-dinged good joke for him—and it'll be costing him only ninety-eight cents."

THE END.



## *The Generous Oil Palm*

THE African oil palm, which reigns supreme from Sierra Leone down the coast as far as Sao Paulo de Loanda, is the most abundant source of human sustenance on the globe. For there is nothing about this generous tree which cannot be utilized. If there were no other trees or vegetation in this section of Africa, the oil palm could supply the inhabitants with the necessities—and luxuries—of life.

The natives cut planks from its trunk with which they construct their huts. Its plaited leaves supply the thatch. Their river craft are fashioned also from the trunk, while its fibrous bark is twisted into thin, strong rope. In short, the natives go to the oil palm for almost anything they need, whether it be a cooking pot, a mat, a brush or even a musical instrument. Like a generous horn of plenty, it meets their every demand.

Its sap furnishes a sugar of such nourishing qualities that a native can do a hard day's labor on but a mouthful or two of it. The oil from the kernel is not only fat for cooking and eating, but fuel for their crude lamps as well. The large green nut, if gathered when young, before the shell has hardened, is filled with a most refreshing beverage which closely resembles our ginger ale; and no matter how hot the temperature, this liquid is always ice-cold. The natives, not hampered by such a thing as prohibition, also brew a strong alcoholic drink from the sap, called *arrack*. Besides being an intoxicant, it is one of the most effective remedies known against the bites of poisonous reptiles.

The oil palm is also the nucleus of some of our important industries, chief among them being the manufacture of soap. For the benefit of our bathroom the natives of West Africa climb about seventy million palm trees each year, or approximately one million miles. *William David Belbeck.*



"Back, you fool!" snarled the white-robed figure. "Back! You can't save her!"

## Captain Judas

*Slaves of the Mediterranean pirates, Captain Amos Trent and his comrades of the brig Medea plot to escape and rescue his sweetheart from the renegade white who is admiral of the corsair fleet*

**By F. V. W. MASON**

*Author of "Captain Nemesis," "The Tiger of Pnom Kha," etc.*

### LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

CAPTAIN AMOS TRENT, young master of the fleet brig Medea, sets sail from New York for Cadiz and Minorca in the days when Mediterranean traders are perpetually threatened by raids and demands for tribute on the part of Barbary Coast pirates, with whom President Jefferson has yet to deal. Two days before his departure he rescued beautiful and patrician Dorothea

Sayles from a water front mob, and the New York heiress later is forced to take passage on his ship, due to the premature departure of the Finch on which she had planned to sail, under Captain Arnold Estes, an unscrupulous, though aristocratic rival of the Medea's master.

At sea, the British man-of-war Leopard, acting on a tip from the lying Estes whose ship it overhauled first,

This story began in the Argosy for April 4.

halts the *Medea* and impresses fifteen of her most able seamen under the flimsy pretext that they are English deserters. The little brig is left dangerously short-handed, and after a desperate, bloody fight off Africa, it is boarded by a Scotch renegade, named Lisle, and his merciless Tripolitan corsairs. Amos, his loyal first mate, Mac-Cord, and a few surviving men, and Dorothea Sayles and the other women passengers are sold on the bashaw's auction block. Amos, in a desperate effort to gain time and afford Dorothea at least temporary escape from the harem that otherwise awaits her, tells Lisle of her father's fortune, which results in the Scotch admiral's buying her to hold for ransom. Amos is sold to a Moorish ship builder, Hamet Sokna. Dorothea, furious at the lying version Estes gave her of Amos's purpose, spurns him: She is being held for one million dollars in gold—a sum which will bankrupt her father.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THREE DAYS TO FREEDOM.

**B**Y those covert ways and means known only to prisoners, slaves and other unfortunates unable to communicate by direct methods, Amos painstakingly discovered the location of the room in which the heiress of the Sayles fortune was housed. It appeared that she occupied a small, but clean chamber on the second floor of the women's quarters in Lisle's palace.

"Ye'll recognize it by the round grille set into the door," said his informant. "It's to the left of the staircase. 'Tis there she stays till the money comes from New York—if it ever does."

Listening eagerly to these bits of

gossip concerning Dorothea Sayles, Amos toiled with mallet and caulking iron on a certain graceful little galley fast nearing completion on the ways.

"And heard you aught more?" he demanded in an undertone, of the seaman who fed oakum into a seam.

"No, but 'tis thought her father is likely to pay. The answer is due in a fortnight."

For some moments Amos's mallet rang lustily, unaccompanied by speech. "There's some excitement on the mole," he said suddenly. "What would that mean?"

The other turned his sweat-bright face seaward, staring at that long white arm of stonework extending out into the waters of the bay, and saw upon it a great crowd congregated at the extreme tip.

"'Tis some ship coming in," he replied, shading his eyes. "Another damned corsair with a load o' booty and slaves. Ye know, 'tis beyond belief that the great nations of Europe endure it!"

But as the outcry on the mole steadily increased, the slaves, one by one, laid down their tools to watch. Even the overseers forgot their whips and, shading their eyes, stared also.

"*Régardcz!*" excitedly cried a gaunt Frenchman. "A polacca! Ze second mast, she is gone. *Mon Dieu!* See ze great holes in her side! What does it mean? And zere is but one leetle rag of a sail on her yard."

Louder and louder grew the outcry. Then the streets beyond the shipyard became filled with the curious populace and the mole was transformed into a struggling ant-heap of humanity.

"Something strange is afoot," commented Amos to the Frenchman. "They're bringing ill news of some sort."



This he gathered from the absence of the usual welcoming guns; so far, not a single shot had been fired. In the air was a heavy tenseness that increased momentarily. Native Tripolitans, working in the near-by yards, gathered together in buzzing knots while the slaves, thankful for the respite, stood or squatted in whatever shade they could find.

**T**HEN came the startling news that the polacca Tripoli, Captain Mohammed Sous, fourteen guns and eighty men, had been roundly beaten by the United States schooner *Enterprise*. After her surrender all but one of her masts had been cut off by order of the Yankee conquerors, her guns thrown overboard and the captain, with eight men, sent in to Tripoli to bear the news of his disgrace to a furious and astounded bashaw.

Furtive wan smiles appeared on Christian lips that had not laughed in months, and everywhere, on the mole, in the salt mines and along the water front, tall, bony citizens of the new republic in the West covertly shook hands and rejoiced.

"That's just a taste," they promised each other. "We'll larn 'em yet!" Then, best of all, came the news that the *Enterprise* had undertaken a close blockade of Tripoli.

Joyfully, Amos clapped Hudson on the back. "D'ye know what this means? My *Medea*—the pirates call her *Meshonda* now—can't sail till the fleet sails next month, though she's all reëquipped and refitted." The thought gave the *Medea*'s late master immeasurable comfort. He had strangely dreaded that hour when his beloved brig should sail forth, leaving him behind.

As the trim little galley in the ship-

yard neared completion, a new energy dominated the enslaved captain.

"We are nigh ready," he told his followers when they congregated on the sea wall one evening. "The ship should be finished in a week. I say, Hudson, have you spoken to Smalley, Bain and the rest?"

The Rhode Islander's shaggy red head inclined gravely. "Yes, sir, 'tis all arranged. I reached MacCord, your old first mate. He says he'll have five men from the breakwater gang. They've loosened a bar in their prison and are ready for the signal to join us and so bring our number up to thirty."

"If we're lucky—" added one, moodily tossing a pebble into the water.

"Yes, if we're lucky." Amos lingered on the words and frowned thoughtfully.

Luck! That was the one vital element he could not regulate, could not anticipate. He had planned each step to the last detail, shaping everything toward that fateful night when the American slaves of his compact little group would rise in the darkness, smite down their keepers and congregate for escape in the dead of night by the *Fughaa*, the new galley which, by that time, must be ready for the sea.

All of them knew what they risked, for every now and then groups of prisoners, ill-prepared and ill-advised, made futile, pathetic breaks for liberty. Punishment in every case was swift and terrible, and seldom did the slaves survive the tortures meted out to them.

**W**HEN the launching was but a short three days off, Amos called a final council of his lieutenants, and, during the brief period of liberty at the end of the day, the leaders gathered unostentatiously in

the shade of the towering battlements. There were four of them besides Amos; there should have been a fifth, but MacCord, being a state slave and not the property of any one man, was allowed no freedom at dusk.

Slowly Amos regarded those men who were to join him in a daring bid for liberty and felt reassured at their bearing and expression. First was Hudson, with his plain brown face, red hair and steady blue eyes. Under him were marshaled the ten resolute souls from Hamet Sokna's shipyard, detailed with the dangerous mission of overpowering the guards invariably posted on watch over a newly commissioned vessel.

Then there was the gigantic, semi-bald Eric Drummond, fire-eating ex-master of a fast Newburyport schooner. He had languished in slavery for nearly five years.

"If this attempt fails," he had told Amos, "I'll die fighting—I'll take with me as many of the heathen as I can. I'll not bear this dog's existence longer. Count on me, captain, for anything—aye, anything you want!"

Then, there was Johnston, a powerful, broad-shouldered ex-naval boatswain with a face like old leather. He had served with Truxton in the Revolution and was to have charge of the ordnance.

Last, there was a strange, silent individual called Stewart, a man of evident refinement and considerable intelligence, who had been supercargo on a brig out of Charleston, previously captured by Lisle.

**T**HEN 'tis understood," said Amos, "when the drums beat for the third watch in the castle, we'll all start for the Fughaa. Gentlemen, I need not warn you that the least

error or delay will be fatal. We must bear out our several duties with efficiency, resolution and despatch." He paused to sweep the circle of intent, bearded faces with anxious eyes. "Now, I must lay before you an added problem—an added danger." Forthwith, he told them of the desperate plight of Dorothea, spoke of the crushing ransom demanded of her father and dwelt briefly upon the certainty of her suicide should concubinage become inevitable.

Stewart, ever sensitive and generous, was especially moved by the account and glanced about that little ring of fierce half-bestial looking men, whose expressions had imperceptibly softened as the account proceeded.

"Of course," he said smoothly. "It's our duty and I know we're for it to a man, but aside from that, there is another and a very pressing reason why we must storm the admiral's palace."

"And what's that, mate?" Drummond's battered features turned in sharp inquiry.

"Supplies," succinctly stated the ex-supercargo. "We must have 'em or we'll perish before a week is out. Remember, the Fughaa, being new, will have no water or supplies aboard; they're taken on at another jetty."

"Why, then, mate," quoth Hudson grimly, "as you say, here's a double reason to pay that damned, murdering pirate a visit. By the Almighty, I'd welcome the chance of slitting his tough old Scotch throat."

Johnston, too, waxed enthusiastic. "Aye, the palace is just the grocery shop for us. 'Tis well out on the mole and the naval vessels are all anchored across the harbor, 'neath the guns of the castle. But, as Stewart here says, were the lady held in the heart of

Tripoli, she could not be left to death and dishonor."

Deeply moved by the simple chivalry of his rough and ill-mannered lieutenants, Amos silently gripped hands with them.

"My thanks to you," he muttered, "I had not known that slavery could leave men with so much pity for the sorrows of others."

"Tush, tush, man," interrupted Stewart. "Say nothing more, sir. The great night, then, will be the twenty-third of September, will it not?"

"Aye," responded Amos and, too full for further words, he led the way back through the deepening gloom.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE BREAK.

**T**HE twenty-third of September! It had come at last. As Amos watched the dull red sun climbing out of the sea, a wild excitement surged in his veins.

Standing by the recently opened door of the slave barracks, he let his eye wander to where the Fughaa swung at her anchor but a short distance from the ways. Her hull, he realized, was a gem, a perfection of the boat-building art, for on her the Yankee prisoners had lavished their unparalleled skill. Graceful as a swan she rode the placid waters, her gleaming, yellow mast as smooth as marble from the planing and scraping bestowed on it by hands that worked with a deeper interest than the swarthy Hamet Sokna ever imagined.

In enormous pride the Moor strode up and down the decks, while the slave gang was rowing out to begin the day's work.

"*Allahu Akbar!*" he cried jubilant-

ly to his intended captain. "Was there ever such a new moon of a vessel? See, Ibrahim, the sheer is like the thigh of a houri. By the gentle hand of Fatima, I tell thee, this Fughaa will skim the sea's surface as does a gazelle the sands of the desert."

In feverish haste, the American slaves rigged tackle and hammered and caulked to make all in readiness by nightfall. Amos worked with frantic energy at the completion of some oar-ports left unfinished by oversight.

To the last minute of daylight the eager carpenters toiled while Hamet Sokna pulled his curly black beard and grinned in pleasure.

"Mark thou, Ibrahim." He turned to the new vessel's captain. "Said I not these Nazarene dogs are workers? See how they laugh as they toil. I tell thee I was advised of Suleiman to buy them. In all the world, there are no such makers of ships." His blunt features actually beamed down on the naked, wild-eyed fellows driving the last spikes and arranging the gear in position.

"I'm leaving six stout fellows aboard to-night to guard my little jewel," Amos overheard the Moor saying. "Thou'lt have thy crew aboard in the morning, then?" he demanded of the prospective captain.

Ibrahim, vastly pleased to have command of such a masterpiece of boat building, rubbed thin brown hands together.

"*Ya, sidi,*" he nodded, the folds of his dirty white garment swaying with the motion. "*Ya, sidi,* we'll be aboard to take on supplies at the first drum roll. To-night in the mosque I shall deliver thanks to Allah, the Omnipotent, that thou hast seen fit to bestow upon thy unworthy servant this bird boat for a vessel."



"Enough! Enough!" roared the Moor, striking his hands sharply together. "It is nearly night. Enough, I say." Turning to the head slave driver, he said: "Give each slave dates and an extra portion of camel's meat. Hamet Sokna is well pleased with the vessel."

**R**ELUCTANTLY laying down their tools and at the same time memorizing the position of each important article of gear, the slaves wearily quitted the galley and rowed themselves to shore.

After devouring their wretched portion of the food dignified by the name of supper, Hudson and Trent sat together on the jetty talking in low tones and studying the Fughaa with anxious eyes as she swung peacefully at her new cables and anchors.

"Four hours now," remarked the red-headed seaman with a calmness Amos could not but envy, "and then we'll know. Would to God the night would cloud over."

"Aye, but there's little prospect of it." Amos glanced up at the cloudless, deep blue expanse overhead. "I only pray MacCord and the others arrive on time. It's a mercy those slovenly pirates keep no harbor guard worthy of the mention."

"Yes, but to reach the open sea we must run almost under those guns," the other grimly reminded him while pointing at the frowning battlements far across the harbor.

"Have you taken a bearing for the channel?"

To his query Amos nodded briefly. "Yes, I overheard that captain of El Gerid's speaking of it the other day. The course is northeast by north for about ten minutes, then north-northwest. That'll fetch us out of the north-

ern entrance and in the shelter of the mole where the bashaw's guns would have to turn handsprings to touch us."

Presently, after peering about cautiously, the Rhode Islander pulled from his girdle a duplicate of the shackle master key, fashioned from a laboriously procured impression of the original made in a wad of clay. This reproduction of the imprint had been secretly and patiently filed out from a strip of soft scrap iron.

Amos inspected it narrowly, then nodded.

"A' good job. It looks strong enough."

"At the third drum beat, then?" In eloquent silence and perhaps for the last time the two men clasped hands. Then Hudson shuffled off toward the slave barracks, while Amos remained seated to scan for the hundredth time a crude ground plan of Lisle's palace and beheld with a queer flutter of his heart that significant red cross which marked the position of Dorothea's quarters.

"By rowing quietly," he mused, "we should be able to fetch the palace shore unnoticed. Let's see, now; 'tis claimed there are only six guards downstairs in the house and four above. If it comes to a fight, they ought not to last a minute. Now, Drummond's detailed to seize all weapons, Stewart's to gather water and supplies and I"—his heart surged wildly at the thought—"I am to seek out and bear away my glorious Dorothea."

**T**HE succeeding hours seemed to stretch into an eternity, for after the slaves had entered the barracks and had been chained to heavy iron rings let into the stonework there was nothing to do but wait.

But at last he thought he heard a faint *click* in the heavy darkness, and at once his every nerve was on edge. Waiting breathlessly, he detected a sound of stealthy movements above the snores of the sleeping slaves. An age passed; then a calloused hand, groping and invisible, pressed something cold into his fingers. Silently he tested the object—it was the shackle key! The great adventure had begun!

Moving with the caution of one whose life depends upon silence, he sat up, then noiselessly eased apart the cumbersome padlock securing his leg irons. In a moment of breathless joy he felt the steel fall away—he was free once more.

Swiftly, silently, the key passed among the American slaves until the last one, having freed his feet of the shackles, nudged his neighbor, and Hudson, nearest the door, felt a warning hand on his arm. Then he arose and, accompanied by his next bunk mate, tiptoed to the massive steel door at the seaward end of the barracks.

In the Rhode Islander's hands was gripped a curious wooden contrivance composed of a block secured at the end of a stick. In the edge of this block was cut a deep slot, designed to catch and hold fast a bolt handle. So far, everything had proceeded with a military exactness, but the opening of the barracks door was slow, breathless work, and the twelve prisoners waited in a silent, sweating agony of apprehension while one man, previously appointed, clambered on Hudson's broad shoulders, and reaching downward through a tiny, barred window, strove to catch the uppermost bolt handle with the stick and block. They were feverish, anxious moments, but at last the ticklish job was done.

Only men long drilled in their duties

could have moved so noiselessly from the barracks. Under the sheen of myriads of stars they groped their way to the glassy water's edge and waited, staring fiercely into the darkness, dreadfully conscious of the yapping of every distant dog, and of the sleepy voices of guards on watch aboard the cruisers anchored by the bashaw's castle.

At last sounded the soft *click* of one pebble knocking against another, heralding the approach of the second group of three men, headed by Eric Drummond. Hardly had they merged with the shadows below the jetty, when Stewart came wading along the shore, with seven determined men in his wake. These aided in silently putting the slave barge into the water. The twenty adventurers had taken their seats in the barge when MacCord, teeth chattering with the cold and with the battle light gleaming in his eyes, appeared with but a single follower.

"I couldna get the ithers oot," he explained in a whisper. "They were shifted tae anither barrack—so I came as ye see."

IT seemed impossible to Amos that the twenty-two men had actually assembled so silently. Now, still making no appreciable sound, they paddled out to where the Fughaa swung in a mild, offshore breeze, her single mast stabbing like an uplifted black finger at the glowing stars that were perfectly mirrored in the placid harbor.

As the slave barge merged with the Fughaa's shadow, ten appointed men swarmed aboard to deal with the guards under the leadership of Amos who had armed himself with a murderously heavy iron bar.

The Tripolitans stood little chance,

for ten soft-footed scarecrows materialized from the night and dropped like pouncing leopards on them as they drowsed below. There arose but one brief, startled yelp which ended with the impact of Amos's weapon on the guard's skull.

"Neat," commented Stewart with a white grin. "My compliments, Captain Trent, the blow was uncommon neat."

After a brief, whispered consultation, the leaders decided not to risk rowing the galley until well clear of the surrounding shipping. Briefly Hudson pointed out that the harbor was clear to leeward and that a favorite offshore breeze would drift them free without risk of noise.

"It 'll take half an hour to gain the admiral's pier," calculated Amos. "When we pass yonder dismantled xebec, Mr. MacCord, we'll try the oars carefully. Is there plenty of grease?"

"Aye, there's mutton fat tae spare. The locks shouldna creak. Losh, mon, but it's gude tae snuff God's clean air at night."

MacCord filled his lungs deeply as the Fughaa slipped her cables and, like a gigantic black cork, commenced to drift sidewise through the sleeping shipping. Danger existed at this juncture, but it was small, as most of the merchant crews slept ashore, leaving on their ships but a single watchman who, confident of the protection of the castle, slept as soundly as his fellows.

At last, when Hamet Sokna's shipyard was but a dim outline in the distance, Amos deemed it safe to put out three oars on a side. Like shadows the pre-appointed oarsmen slipped into their places on the rowing benches more willingly than any galley slaves had in centuries.

For all their care there was some noisy splashing that made Amos's hair

curl and caused Mr. Stewart to utter pungent oaths, but it was terribly awkward to get the hang of those brand-new oars, and Johnston, in charge of the navigation, was forced to count aloud in a hoarse undertone.

"One, two—steady—back all. One, two—steady—back all."

And so, silently as a ghost ship, the little galley gathered headway and, with Amos at the helm, steered straight for the low, white walls of the *mirant's* palace and for the priceless treasure within.

ONLY the soft, sleepy gurgle of water beneath the galley's stem broke the midnight stillness when the Fughaa drew near the short stone pier which served as Admiral Lisle's private landing stage. Those, indeed, were breathlessly anxious moments, for three or four small boats lay at their painters' ends by the wharf. Alarmed at their presence, Amos peered anxiously shoreward. Was the *mirant* entertaining or were these boats kept there merely for convenience? He pondered on the question while, by pre-arranged plan, the Fughaa was gradually worked in, stern foremost, to facilitate a swift and easy departure in case of need.

Then, looking very tall and commanding in the chill starlight, his superbly muscled torso gleaming dully, Trent marshaled MacCord, Drummond and twelve other men who were to act as the raiding detail. Weapons they had none, save carpenters' axes, crow-bars and a couple of nondescript boarding pikes, but they made a savage, breath-taking array when, at Amos's heels, they commenced a silent advance along the smooth stone jetty.

Stronger grew the sweet, langourous scents of the inclosed gardens, as the



wild column reached the shore, and presently all fifteen raiders were crouched beneath the wall's black shadow. Amos ventured a faint sigh of relief—at least the first wall was safely reached.

Here, by means of a human ladder, one of the lightest men was raised to the wall top. Astride of the summit, his strange, blackly silhouetted figure stood out against the sky, then vanished suddenly. A moment later the dull scraping noise of ponderous bolts being cautiously drawn back sounded in the ears of the raiders, and they took a fresh grip on their crude weapons as they slipped inside. At any instant might come the disastrous barking of a watch dog or the deep shout of some guard aroused from a drowsy reverie. But Fortune still showed her face on the adventurers. Beyond the stealthy footsteps of the breathless half naked fifteen there was no sound.

Crossing the cloistered arcade which surrounded the palace, Amos smiled with grim assurance as he paused before a flimsy, ornate door of elaborately carved wood. Gently he set his shoulder against it, while something like an electric shock gripped his being as he realized that from now on he and his fellows must abandon stealth and fight for life and freedom.

Passing the word around to be ready, he drew a deep breath, hauled back and with a short heave burst the lock amid a crackling splinter of wood that sounded thunderous in the night stillness.

Instantly the *mirant's* household awoke to confused alarm. A black slave, sleeping in the hallway, uttered a shrill, terrified cry and turned to slam another and thicker door which stood ajar for coolness' sake beyond the vestibule in which the invaders found

themselves. But with the lithe, powerful spring of a Numidian lion, Drummond bounded forward, caught the squealing Negro from behind and, with a mighty sweep of his ax, laid him choking and writhing on the mosaic floor.

"Quick now, lads!" Amos called decisively. Gone was the shame of slavery that had eaten cankerlike into his heart; once more he was a fighting man, leading his followers. "Quick, Mr. Stewart! Take first passage to the left. The kitchens are there. Don't take so much as to hamper your retreat, but get all you can. Drummond, your party must keep the line of retreat here in the hall open at all costs. MacCord, guard this stair."

The raiders now found themselves in a tall, domed chamber that appeared to be the axis of the house. Though the heavy, faintly scented darkness was treacherous—for the windows were small and there were no lamps lit—every man knew his part and groped madly forward to carry it out.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### FOR THE SAKE OF DOROTHEA.

**A**LREADY a bedlam of commands, shouts and the metallic clatter of arms resounded throughout the alarmed palace. Pausing just long enough to see Stewart off on his mission for water and supplies, and to direct Drummond's men to rip arms from the bristling panoplies decorating the walls, Trent gathered his picked men and on eager feet bounded up that short flight of stone stairs which should lead to the room of Dorothea Sayles.

His feet spurned the steps in great, powerful leaps, as though something

stronger than his own muscles impelled him upward. But near the summit of the staircase he paused abruptly. The light of a single lamp revealed a figure standing there on guard, with dully gleaming sword half raised. Setting his teeth, Amos took a fresh grip on the cold iron bar between his calloused fingers and darted up.

On the top step he gasped in amazement. The swordsman was not the tawny bearded Lisle whom he had half expected to see, but Arnold Estes, clad in flowing native robes of white and peering steadily at the wild-eyed sea captain. A great feeling of relief welled in Amos's heart. Surely the other would not stand in his way.

"Estes!" he cried. "Estes, stand aside! I'm Trent. I've a ship at the pier outside! Escape with us—but first show me where Dorothea is."

Arnold Estes continued to stand quite motionless, lips slightly parted and sword menacingly upraised. Like a succession of electric impulses, a series of questions and doubts flitted through the brain of the bewildered, desperate man on the stair head. Why was Arnold Estes here, dressed in native robes? Why had he, a slave, a sword in his hand? Why did he not stand aside? Why did he not reply to Amos?

"Estes!" growled Amos in growing alarm. "For God's sake, stand aside! I tell you I'm Trent, Trent of the Medea. Stand aside! Every instant is precious."

Suddenly an expression of mingled jealousy and malice crossed the other's face. "Back, you fool!" snarled the white-robed figure harshly. "Back! You can't save Dorothea! This hare-brained scheme can't succeed. I forbid it."

"But it can," rasped Amos and

raised his weapon. "For the last time, stand aside, you foul traitor!"

For a split second the two men glared at each other.

"Hurry, cap'n! Kill him!" cried a man behind Trent. "He'll cost us our lives."

There came a deep ringing shout from Estes as he whirled up his sword.

"They're here! Guards! Guards!" he bellowed and lunged full at the startled sea captain's naked breast.

A rage, fierce and hot as a volcano's flame, consumed Amos. That dog, that unbelievable scoundrel! For his own ends he would dare attempt to keep Dorothea in slavery—in a pitiable impulse of jealousy he would thwart her rescue by another. Faster than the traitor's sword point, the bar half parried, steel clanged on steel, and a shallow wound sprang into being across the sea captain's chest. Behind him, the five men of his detail paused, fingering their weapons uncertainly.

**W**ITH a sense of desperation, Amos realized that the whole dim palace now rang with shouts, shots and the sound of blows. Already he could hear feet coming along the corridor behind Estes, showing that precious moments of grace were few. Like a straw he brandished the heavy bar, aiming a powerful blow at Estes's head.

Snarling, the other leaped back, at the same time raising his sword to ward off the blow, but the tempered blade was not designed for parrying the sweeping might of an iron bar. There came a crash and the blade tinkled softly to the floor, while Estes stood gazing with horrified surprise at the hilt that alone remained to him.

All the time the distant shouts grew louder. Downstairs as well as on the

floor where Amos found himself, came the resounding noise of running feet, of panting English voices and Arabic curses. As in a dream he saw Estes clawing madly at his broad scarlet sash, and a second later, a pistol exploded with a deafening roar. Something sang by his ear and a scream of mortal pain arose from one of the Americans rushing up the stair behind him.

Maddened beyond words, Amos rushed forward, seeking above all else to stretch that pale, handsome traitor on the floor, for just beyond him he could distinguish the portal of what must be Dorothea's room, with the circular iron grillé set in the door panel.

"Come on, men!" he shouted while the powder smoke eddied about in a choking cloud. "This devil's sting is gone."

As the Americans came on, Estes, uttering a fearful imprecation, wheeled to vanish down a corridor, shouting at the top of his lungs: "They're here! Here!"

Voices answered him—deep, guttural voices of Senussi guards. In a moment they would be on the scene, raging for combat.

"Steady now. Hold the passage!" Amos glanced hastily about and found the dark, vaulted corridors yet empty of Tripolitans. "It 'll take a minute to get the lady and then we'll be off for the jetty."

In two great leaps he gained that door which was his goal.

"Dorothea!" he shouted and pounded in a frenzy of anxiety on the panels. "It is I, Amos! Dorothea, for God's sake open the door!" Instinctively he knew she must be there, but his heart congealed as no reply came.

"Come," implored one of the men in frightened accents. "Hurry, cap-

tain. My God, Joe! Watch out, they're closing in on us. Take that, ye pagan swine! Captain! Come! The hall's full of— Oh, God! I'm hit!"

Beside himself at the delay, Amos beat on the door, then listened, frantic in his anxiety. "Dorothea, it is I, Amos. I have come to save you. Quick, open the door!"

Still there was no reply, whereat, Amos, in a dreadful sense of apprehension that bordered on panic, whirled up his iron bar and, with the strength of an embattled Titan, smashed through the cedar panel with a single blow. With another he splintered its fellow, and with a third, battered down the door frame with magnificent ease. In the hall behind him things were becoming very confused indeed, for the smoke of Estes's pistol still filled the corridor, bringing smarting tears to the eyes of the three remaining Americans.

"Hah! There!" growled one of the fighters. "How d'ye like that? Captain! We can't hold out—no longer." There was a sharp, despairing note in the speaker's plea. "Come, captain! Back, ye black devil! Too late—we're done for."

AS the door crashed inward Amos felt a rush of perfumed air in his face. Suddenly he saw her; Dorothea, standing staring at him like a bemused statue, a Negro slave moaning and whimpering at her small slippered feet.

"Come, Dorothea, come!"

She uttered a brief, strangled cry, then, apparently casting aside a former course of action, rushed toward that wild figure in the doorway.

Not an instant he delayed, but swung about with a curt, "Stay close by me, whatever befalls!"



The uproar in the corridor now passed description. Steel rang on steel with a clangorous shivering noise, while men shouted and roared in the tumultuous gloom. As Amos advanced, there were brief instants of bright light as some guard's pistol or musket cracked deafeningly.

Looking out past the jagged shreds of wood that clung to the door frame, Amos read the hopelessness of the situation in a glance. One of the three remaining Americans was down, but the two survivors fought with the ferocity of despair, lunging, stabbing, lashing about with their rusted pikes, instinctively seeking to prolong life a few precious instants.

In the van, half dressed and directing the attack, stood Lisle and by his side, armed with a fresh scimitar, was Estes. Evidently the house guards were far more numerous than Amos's informant had ever supposed, for, like a pack of snarling wolves, the Senussi yelled and slashed at the last Americans, wounded, but miraculously still on their feet.

To gain access to the hall Amos seized a long ebony bench and hurled it headlong at the dark mass of attackers. For one brief instant they gave back while Trent, still clutching Dorothea's slender wrist, darted out into the disputed corridor, hoping to gain the stair. But the odds were too great. The Tripolitans rushed forward, affording Amos barely enough time to thrust the white-robed girl into a niche behind him. He was doomed—that he knew as he faced the onslaught.

"Now!" he roared, "come on, you Moslem dogs! I'll try to amuse you."

And come they did. Howling guards, fighting under the eye of their master, hurled themselves recklessly

forward, to be instantly beaten to the red tile by the flail-like force of that murderous iron bar. Now the long hours of grinding toil at the oar and the heavy lifting and hauling of the shipyard stood the embattled captain in good stead. Seemingly tireless, he struck, parried and struck again.

The narrow passage resounded with piercing yells and deep groans as, again and again, the irresistible iron baton crashed through all guards and defenses, stretching a round half dozen black-faced assailants, dead and dying. On the floor before the berserk captain a low mound of stricken men grew steadily higher.

"Amos! Amos, fight on, my beloved one," called Dorothea in a low, penetrating voice that ever filled him with fresh vigor. "Fight on until we die together."

**A**MAZED and dismayed at the havoc wrought by that bloodied bar, the attackers at last fell back, panting and staring in awe at the unconquerable fighter across the hall, permitting Amos, for the first time since his own struggle began, to catch the sounds of deadly struggles raging in the great main hall below.

"Trent! For God's sake, come! We're beaten back! Take the ship!"

Unconscious of the terrific drama being enacted in the hallway, David MacCord, bounded to the head of the stairs, brandishing a bloodied ax. A moment he paused, taken aback. It was as though a spell, brief but potent, had fallen over all the actors in that scene. Even Estes glared in silence as he pushed to the front of the dark mass encircling Amos and the girl.

MacCord stood shaggy and menacing, ax poised in mid-air. Lisle stared at Amos—and Amos at MacCord.

Dorothea waited calmly for the end, her beautiful eyes fixed on her lover with a terrible intensity.

Then Estes shattered the spell with a deep shout to the guards.

"Lances! Lances! They can't reach you then. Spear them both—"

He could not finish, for already the glittering spears were sweeping down, and MacCord, reading death on their gleaming points, gathered himself and, loosing a ringing Highland yell, sprang full at Estes with a cry of—  
"At last, ye sharny tyke!"

It all happened in a flash. Amos saw Estes's sword futilely upflung, but he might as well have tried to parry a thunderbolt as MacCord's avenging ax blade. The traitor uttered a scream of mortal terror which ended in a bubbling groan. Arnold Estes tottered, swayed and fell—blood from his severed neck arteries casting tiny, jerky streams of scarlet along the floor.

"An' noo!" MacCord whirled to face a dozen flashing spear heads, hurled his ax at the foremost enemy and swept the steel tipped shafts into his own great chest so that not one reached the appalled couple beyond. So died David MacCord, purchasing with his life a few more seconds of existence for his beloved captain and the girl he worshiped.

"MacCord!" Unspeakable anguish held Amos paralyzed as he beheld the great figure topple over.

"A brave, if fulish mon." observed Lisle in the stillness that followed. "Well, I suppose we must make an end o' this troublesome kerl—"

**T**HE admiral wrenched a spear from the grasp of a guard and, stepping back, hurled it with all his force full at Amos's chest, but the light was bad and Amos, catching the

movement, twitched his body aside just in time, then turned once more to face the enemy.

"Come on!" he mocked, eager to avenge his fallen mate. "Does it take half of Tripoli to conquer one American? Come on, you blaspheming dogs! Come on, you perjured renegade!" He shook a derisive fist at the Scotsman's scarlet, outraged face and raised his bar.

"For that miscallin' ye'll die by days!" Admiral Lisle was evidently aroused at last. Furiously he waved his guards aside.

"Back, ye dogs!" he growled. "Back! I'll deal wi' the braggart mine own sel'."

Struck by an idea, he snatched down a ponderous copper lamp that dangled by chains from a near-by bracket and, twirling it about his head in the manner of a sling, he hurled the heavy vessel full at the tall American captain's head.

Amos saw it coming, yet dared not dodge, for now Dorothea stood directly behind him; if he did not meet the impact she would be killed. He whipped his left hand in a futile effort to ward off the deadly missile and felt the brazen lamp strike his wrist, glance, then crash against his forehead with slackening force. A cascade of fiery sparks dropped before his eyes and, as he sank down, he heard Lisle's voice thundering from afar:

"A perjured renegade, be I? Then, by the beard of the Prophet, I'll make ye a Moslem, too!"

"Nay," cried the ashen-faced girl in a voice that filled the hall like the peal of a war trumpet. "Judge not others by your foul self. My Amos would die ten thousand times rather than forswear Christ by a single word."

Then, suddenly a black flood arose

and erased all sense or thought from the stricken captain's brain.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### LISLE PLAYS TEMPTER.

WHEN consciousness once more returned, Amos thought he was hearing the sullen rumble of summer thunder over Cape Cod. The noise reverberated in his ears and boomed dully in just that lethargic and somnolent manner. It was dark and at first he could see nothing at all, but as his eyes readjusted themselves he came to the realization that he was lying on a pier, bound hand and foot.

By his side lay the unrecognizable body of one of the men who had followed him in his disastrous attempt to free Dorothea Sayles. At intervals along the jetty stood several of the admiral's slaves, holding smoky torches high in the darkness and talking occasionally to others engaged in manning a small boat that lay alongside.

Painfully Amos raised a still ringing head to gaze about. With a pang of supreme despair, he recognized the whitish loom of the admiral's palace, partly revealed by flickering torches at the far end of the pier.

From that instant, his meandering senses steadied themselves to a straight course, while a series of terrible questions assailed him. He was a prisoner; that was certain. But had Dorothea been saved? Had the Fughaa escaped? He doubted it. In the wave of disappointed anguish that gripped him he nearly lost consciousness again.

It was unbearable—the realization that his patiently planned scheme had failed so disastrously, so tragically. Then, struck by a fugitive hope, he inched his head around to face toward

that portion of the jetty where he had last seen the Fughaa and found some consolation in the fact that the trim little galley was nowhere to be seen.

Again that strange summer thunder sounded in his ears, and by straining his eyes, he could see vivid, momentary tongues of fire shooting from below the bashaw's castle and lighting towers and battlements in a brief orange glare. Now other flashes showed across the harbor where various Tripolitan cruisers opened fire. What was their target? At once Amos knew that it must be the Fughaa fleeing for dear life.

"Oh, God, be kind to them!" he groaned. "Let those poor devils escape!" He could picture the fugitives at that moment, laboring, white-faced, at the oars.

At that moment a captain of the guards approached and held a torch so close to Amos's face that it singed his wild, disordered hair.

"Praise be to Allah!" he grunted. "Here's one Christian dog at least that'll live for the torture." He fetched Amos a resounding kick and summoned several guards who dragged the helpless prisoner over rough stones to the pier edge.

OVERCOME with that crushing despair of the hopelessly defeated, Amos, lying in the boat's bottom, recalled but little of the long row across the harbor. He barely remembered arriving at the water gate of the castle where powerful black jailers wrenched him to his feet and, at the point of several bayonets, marched him along dim, foul-smelling corridors hewn by the sweat of countless slaves from the living rock.

Arriving at last in a small, unventilated room, Amos stood dazedly be-



tween his guards. A fat little Turk whose face was covered with a hideous growth of warts sat at a table, writing brush in hand. Silently the guard captain handed the seated warden a scroll of paper which the latter scanned. He eyed the prisoner curiously in the light of a little mutton-fat lamp.

"Hah!" he laughed in a tone that sent shivers down Amos's spine. "A fine strong specimen. At last, we can try the new cells." Chuckling maliciously, the fat chief jailer waddled to his feet. "Free him of his chains, you guards. We'll treat our Christian guest kindly—indeed, we will. He'll need no chains where he goes. Ha! ha! ha! Let us go."

Too weakened, too broken in spirit to resist, Amos stood passive while the prison attendants unlocked his fetters. Then, stripped to a single soiled rag about his middle, he was led forward, teeth chattering with the subterranean cold, down a tunnel so low that he was forced to bend double at the waist. Vaguely he wondered what these silent, heartless fiends planned to do with him.

Then quite suddenly, he was made to halt. Before him was the warty-faced Turk, engaged in unlocking a heavy steel door which was pierced about three-quarters of the way up by a tiny griled window perhaps three inches square. But what instantly struck Amos was the exceedingly low height of this door—it would scarcely fit a cupboard. Then one of the jailers stepped out of his line of vision and exposed, for the first time, the cell in which he was to be incarcerated.

Doubting what his eyes told him, Amos stared aghast. The space where he must stow his body was entirely destitute of covering or furniture and was hewn from the rock itself and but

roughly smoothed; by a refinement of cruelty the cell was not high enough for him to stand and not sufficiently deep to permit real sitting, for the seat tilted upward at the back, so that the wretch within would be forced to lean against the door when it was shut. The only matter other than iron and stone was a dirty handful of straw on the slanting stonework.

"Ah, God! No! Not this!" he shouted in a sudden revulsion. But his instinctive struggles were in vain. A dozen lusty guards crammed his tall, quivering body into the loathsome cubicle and, in a trice, the iron door was banged shut against him. His fate was sealed in the hollow *click! clock!* of heavy bolts sliding into place, reënforced by a ponderous padlock which proclaimed the utter hopelessness of attempted escape.

"There!" chuckled the fat head jailer before departing. "Now, Nazarene, bend thy body in prayer. Ha! ha! ha! Think over thy heathen creed and meditate on the life hereafter."

**I**T was cold; Amos's teeth clicked as the dampness of the rock and the chill iron door bit deeper into his skin. He half sat, half crouched in a darkness so dense that a finger, held but a fraction of an inch before his eyes, could no more be seen than a star at midday. There was no sound to break the monotony, and no smallest space in which to move or to ease a cramped muscle.

After a while, he lapsed into a species of stupor which could not rightly be described as sleep nor yet as a complete unconsciousness. From this stupor rose ghastly visions, realistic, dreadful beyond description. What had become of Dorothea now? It was some consolation that Estes's

cunning lies were forever stilled, but had it not cost the life of David MacCord? Great-hearted, rough-tongued MacCord! The world was that much the worse for his loss.

His thoughts drifted to that other Scotsman, the renegade Lisle. Lisle! Faintly the *mirant's* last furious words sounded in his ears:

"Renegade, be I? Then, by the beard of the Prophet, I'll make ye a Moslem, too!"

Hard on the forbidding vision of the Tripolitan admiral, followed the beloved image of Dorothea. Once more she seemed to cry to Lisle: "Judge not others by your foul self. My Amos would die ten thousand times rather than forswear Christ by a single word."

In his sleep the prisoner groaned, and a jailer standing outside the little door might have heard him muttering: "I'll stand firm, Dorothea. Never doubt it."

Passage of time had no significance in that soul-crushing blackness; to the agonized, back-wrenched, naked prisoner in the cubicle an interval might be a minute or a day. Amos steadily grew weaker. After an interminable period of torture, a feeble ray of light came through the tiny grated window.

Shortly afterward a small sliding door screeched back, permitting a sullen black slave to pass a steaming bowl of bread and soup through the aperture. By an effort Amos raised glazed eyes to peer through the tiny grated window at the other's glistening fat features.

"Is it day or night?" croaked the prisoner in Arabic. "For the love of God tell me—"

The other, for answer, cavernously opened his mouth, raised the lantern and pointed inward. With a shudder,

Amos realized that the Negro's tongue was missing; obviously the fat Turk was taking no chances.

The soup, much to the doomed sea captain's surprise, was fragrant, rich and nutritious—a golden mutton broth in which chunks of sea biscuit had been softened to give it body. After swallowing it voraciously he felt somewhat refreshed, but the slave, with his reason-restoring light, quickly disappeared, once more leaving Amos to maddening solitude.

The deadly chill soon gripped him anew, and the agonies in his cramped back made it necessary for him to concentrate on thoughts of her for whom he had risked everything and failed.

"No," he whispered. "I'll never turn Moslem—to Hades with that devil Lisle!"

**H**IS next visitor was the Scottish admiral himself. Attended by a single, sharp-featured lieutenant, he appeared in the gallery, his blue eyes hard and merciless, as he lifted a lantern to the grated window and looked in.

"Well, Trent," he demanded with a mirthless laugh, "and how's yer back? Ready tae bend in honor o' Mohammed—Allah's one true prophet?"

"No." Amos was almost too weary to reply. "No, damn you, I'll rot a fore I sink to your level."

"Oh, an' wull ye noo?" Lisle made an unpleasant noise in his throat and stared sardonically through the grated opening. "Why, ye're nigh doon tae skin and bone. Hae ye not yet enough?"

Grinning, he waited for Amos's reply.

"Nay, and I'll shrink to a mummy before I'll become a turncoat renegade."

“So?” murmured the admiral. “So ye have not thought of it enough. Still maunderin’ about yon whey-faced lass o’ yours? Ye’re a ditherin’ fule not tae forget her. Why, mon alive! Ye could have a harem o’ dark-eyed lassies, gude provender, a soft bed, an’ all . . . providing”—his eyes narrowed—“ye took the oath to Mohammed.”

Sorely tempted by a racked and aching body, and a soul plunged into the depths of sullen despair, Amos was too jaded, too weary to reply. He merely gazed through the little barred window at the big, hawk-like nose of the Scot and dully noted two gorgeous emeralds dangling from the renegade’s ears. Struck by a thought, his fingers crept up to his own ear and noted with a sense of thankful surprise that his mother’s tiny circlet of gold still dangled there.

Admiral Lisle continued speaking in harsh, not unfriendly tones. “Dinna play the proud fule,” he advised. “What boots it tae rot here in the dark? Twenty years ago I’d the same choice as you. Come now, Trent, join me. Ye’re a naval seaman and a gr-r-rand fighter, as I can vow. By swearing on the Koran, you can hae a bonny hoose, slaves and a stout ship o’ ye ain tae cruise in—”

“To rob and murder my fellow countrymen, I suppose?” growled Amos, at last stung to a retort.

“Why, mayhap, but I’m o’ the opeenion ’tis better tae be a live Moslem enjoying this short life o’ ours than tae be a dead, worm-eaten Christian.”

Lisle bent forward almost to the rusty iron door and gazed shrewdly at the prisoner’s wasted, parchmentlike features.

“Think on it, Trent, a war-r-rm bed, plenty o’ lusty brown doxies and

a palace like mine! I tell ye, ye’re a fule, a dithering fule. Especially noo”—he lowered his voice and became half confidential—“the bashaw has offered extraordinary rewards tae any American that wull turn Moslem. He’s nigh at war wi’ these new States in America and badly needs sea captains understanding the navigation of square-rigged vessels.”

To all this the prisoner listened, his mind assailed by shrieking nerves, by cramped limbs and chilled, agonized body. What was the tempter saying? Comfort? Food? Warm sun and fresh air? What priceless things were these? In a panic lest he surrender, Amos banged on the iron door and shouted.

“No! Never! Get to Hades where ye belong, Lisle—leave me in peace, damn your black soul!”

“I dinna ken why I do not hae ye killed by torture,” the Tripolitan admiral thoughtfully soliloquized. “Mayhap it ’ll comfort ye to know that the others got clean awa’ and that yer fool’s attack on my palace lost me the bonny wench that I bought me at a king’s ransom.”

**I**N his amazement Amos threw back his head sharply and, forgetting the construction of the cell, dealt himself a painful bump on his crown; but he never felt it. Every fiber of his being thrilled. “What?” he stammered. “What? Dorothea escaped? You have lost her?”

“Aye,” snarled Lisle, a scowl twisting his features. “She’s no escaped, but I’ve lost her, none the less—an’ her ransom came but yesterday.” The Scotchman’s face darkened in a snarl of rage and noting that his lieutenant had strolled out of earshot down the gallery he added in a sibilant whisper:



"That damned swine of a bashaw raxed her awa' frae me, cheated me o' my ransom siller tae ship her tae the Sultan as a present."

"What?" A new and deeper anxiety rocked the shivering prisoner. "What? The bashaw refused her ransom? A million dollars?"

"Aye," answered Lisle malevolently, "that he did—gude gold dollars, too. She's destined for the harem o' the Sultan, tae be shipped along with the annual taxes due tae the Sublime Porte."

As in a whirling Stygian river of anguish, Amos had struggled up to this point. He had at least thought Dorothea safe, even at the price of her father's fortune, but now she was hopelessly doomed to the disgrace from which he had defied fate to save her. Once in the clutches of Selim III, Caliph of Islam and Defender of the True Faith, she would be eternally, irretrievably lost.

Subconsciously he knew Lisle was watching his face through the barred window and reading there the final annihilation of hope.

"By the things you hold holy," implored Trent, gripping the tiny cell bars, "is this—the truth?"

Lisle's turbaned head inclined solemnly. "It is, wor-r-rse luck, every word. And noo," he said, "we come back tae our ain sma' argument. In yer childish fashion, ye've freely damned me for a renegade—without kenning the circumstances that forced me. Noo, by the sacred black rock o' the Kaaba, Captain Trent, ye'll do the same and eat yer insolence. Are ye ready?"

"No!" choked Amos in a desperate effort to control his will. "You damned canting turncoat, I'll never do it!"

"'Niver' is a broad statement." Lisle stepped back from the door, a thin smile curving his lips. "Think but anither three days here in the dark, an' 'twill change your mind, grantin' ye're still san' and alive. I'll stop by again sometime tae hear ye plead for the privilege."

"No! No! Never!" Dizzy and chilled to the marrow of his bones, Amos continued to shout the words as the *mirant's* footsteps reëchoed with increasing faintness down the gloomy passage.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### "CAPTAIN JUDAS!"

OF all the men in the Barbary State of Tripoli, none was more surprised than Gregory Lisle, admiral of the bashaw's fleets, when he next adressed the prisoner he despaired of bending to his will. Holding his lantern to the little grilled window of Amos's cell, he blinked in surprise, as though astonished that the stubborn American should be alive. From the fetid blackness within came a voice that sounded more like the metallic clank of machinery than human speech.

"Take me out. For God's sake, Lisle—take me out. I'm ready to—to—God forgive me—I'll become a Moslem."

"Whut?" Lisle's startled accents resounded in the confined area of the gallery like the crack of a pistol. Then in elaborate sarcasm, "What? Do my ears play me false? Is the unco gude Captain Trent aboot tae descend tae the level o' puir Gregory Lisle, the renegade? A domned, perjured renegade? I hae me doots; it cannot be. Why, a renegade was what that righteous gentleman once called me."

"Yes, damn it!" snarled the sepulchral voice from beyond the rusted iron door. "Yes, I'll listen at the feet of your Mohammedan priests when I'm free."

Admiral Lisle broke into a series of throaty chuckles that made his mahogany-faced lieutenant stare in amazement.

"Good!" he cried exultantly. "I'm verra glad ye've come tae yer senses. I've been wanting a mon like you, Trent, this many a year. Yer an obstinate devil, but a great fighter. By the Prophet's beard, I'll no soon forget yer stand at the head o' the stairs. Come oot and we'll put some blood into yer veins and flesh on yer banes."

Lisle clapped his hands sharply, then stepped back to permit the tongueless black turnkey to draw the door bolts. As the iron panel swung wide, screaming shrilly on its hinges, the prisoner tumbled out on the floor, his trembling limbs paralyzed by their long inaction. In the uncertain lantern light the prisoner's skin showed yellow and wrinkled as old parchment, and several wounds, earned on the night of his futile bid for liberty, were blue and purple with cold.

Lisle, hugely delighted at his unexpected victory, clapped his hands again to summon guards who bore the helpless prisoner to a species of ante-chamber. Here the Scot himself held hot broth to Amos's cracked lips. Thereafter, wrapped in warm robes and rowed in the admiral's own barge, he was transported back across the harbor.

**A** FORTNIGHT later no one would have recognized Amos Trent as the very correctly armed and garbed Tripolitan captain who, accompanied by Lisle, his sponsor, was

received in special audience by Yussuf Karamanti, Bashaw of Tripoli. As he advanced to profess his conversion to Islam, he seemed a rigid, picturesquely dressed automaton, rather than a living being.

A moment the brutal-faced bashaw eyed that erect, broad-shouldered figure, from small military turban to red, pointed slippers, with a tight, cruel expression that filled Lisle with apprehension. D'Ghiers, however, bent low and murmured something into the ear of the tyrant, who at last smiled and extended a dark hand that glowed with jewels.

"We are pleased," boomed the bashaw loftily, "to welcome into our service a captain so able and fearless as the redoubtable Sidi Trent. The name, however, is not suitable for a defender of the true faith. From this day forth be thou known by an Arabic name—Mohammed el Kebir. Mohammed, the Lion—I solemnly charge thee to go forth and smite lustily in defense of Allah and the True Prophet for whom thou hast been named."

With all solemnity and moving with natural dignity, Amos advanced farther up the green velvet carpet leading to the dais and, after a solitary salute, deposited between the bashaw's feet two boxes of beautifully wrought ebony and mother-of-pearl. One of these contained salt and the other a handful of earth, dug from the garden of the pleasant little palace set aside for the convert's use.

"*Allahu Akbar!* Live a thousand years, O bashaw, blessed by Allah and Mohammed, the True Prophet of the Faithful!"

A close observer might have seen that the speaker paled a trifle at his last words, but he regained his color as he thrust forward the jeweled handle

of his scimitar—a present from Lisle—for Yussuf Karamanti to touch. His head spun. It was over now—he had forsworn Christ and was actually a vassal of the brutal and degraded bashaw.

Evidently Karamanti was pleased with the bearing of his new captain, for he smiled and turned to D'Ghiers. "As reward for the intelligence of El Kebir in seeing the light, arrange that three of the tenderest and fairest maidens from my harem be sent to share his house and to make delightful his leisure."

Dismayed beyond expression, Amos looked up in surprise and started back a step.

"But harken, O Magnificence," he stammered. "Of such a gift I, thy untried servant, am not worthy. I would not dare to accept thy generosity, having accomplished nothing in thy service."

"Nay, it is my pleasure," rasped the bashaw briefly. "D'Ghiers, see that three of my fairest damsels are conveyed to the palace of Captain el Kebir. I have no fears for this man's prowess."

"My lord's words are as emeralds," murmured the vicegerent. With a deep salaam, he withdrew from the council chamber.

"Ye noddy, Trent!" hissed Lisle in an undertone. "Accept—ye're risking your neck by delay. Ye must accept tae convince him o' your airnestness. They will be braw, bonny lassies, too. Come, smile! Ye'll be grateful soon enough, mon."

In labored, halting Arabic that apparently carried conviction, Amos obeyed, thanking his overlord in many flowery phrases. An influx of petitioners afforded an opportunity to escape, so, salaaming low, the newly

christened El Kebir managed to withdraw.

A FEW minutes later Amos bade Lisle farewell and set off for the white-walled structure that had now become his home. As he followed the narrow streets toward the residential district beyond the city walls, he encountered the first of many recriminations that were to bring floods of hot, shamed blood to his head and a deeper anguish to his weary soul. For to no one could he confide the true reason of his surrender, the desperate hope that, free and granted power, he might accomplish a certain mad purpose.

His road led past a spot where labored fifty or sixty gaunt state slaves whose every rib showed through their skins. Among these scarecrows Mr. Boyd, once supercargo of the *Medea*, feebly swung a stone breaker's maul and, keeping a vigilant eye on the slave driver's whip, paused to wipe the sweat from his face. Then it was he saw Trent march by and stared at the former Yankee skipper as at a ghost.

"Luke! Luke!" He called the attention of another American who had been in the slave hold. "Can that tall Moslem be Trent?"

The other shaded his eyes, the better to view the bearded captain, who with scimitar swinging to his stride, strove to hurry past unnoticed.

"By God!" he gasped. "It is! 'Tis Trent! Trent! Trent!" he shouted. "Come back here!"

Involuntarily, Amos stopped, turned and cast a level glance at his former supercargo, hesitated, then coldly swung on his heel and resumed his course, but not in time to escape the strangled cry that Boyd sent after him.

"Trent! You damned renegade!"



Come back here! Ah-h-h! You indescribable swine, to forswear Christianity! Look at us here, chained and filthy." He raved and shook his chains, though the guard menacingly caught up his whip and started forward. "Traitor! Apostate! Oh-h!" Mr. Boyd writhed and uttered an agonized shriek as the lash stung him.

"Peace, Nazarene swine!" roared the driver. "Silence when a captain of the bashaw passes!"

But Mr. Boyd was not to be silenced. He shook a feeble, quivering fist. "That's it! Order your heathen dogs to beat us! Coward! Liar! Apostate!"

Other Americans, reading the situation, joined in and, from the rich vocabulary of the sea, hurled fearful curses after the unhappy renegade as he strode along apparently oblivious of the insults heaped upon him.

Deep in his soul Amos writhed and, as quickly as he might, got out of ear-shot. Once inside his palace walls he ignored the cool, sweet-scented garden to stalk indoors, there to fling himself upon a divan. For a long time he lay motionless, staring with unseeing eyes out over the bay, while the reproaches of his countrymen continued to ring in his ears.

**T**OWARD sunset one of his servants, Dorérame, a grinning black Mameluke out of Egypt, salaamed in the doorway.

"Sidi?" he whispered. "May Allah make his face to shine upon thee—I have news for thine ear."

In his reverie of despair Amos sat like a man of bronze and did not hear until the black spoke a third time. At last he sighed, raised his eyes and, recognizing the other, sat up prepared to give close attention.

"Ah, so you have the tidings I asked for, Dorérame?"

The other's teeth glinted in a grin. "Ya, sidi—two matters. The first, I have learned from a eunuch of the bashaw—to whom Allah be good—that the lady whose beauty excels the moon is kindly treated. Upon command of his magnificence, she is soon to sail on a ship for Istanbul, together with specie, carved ivory and other costly goods as a present to his splendor, the Sultan. Every afternoon she walks on the south battlement and there speaks long with other Nazarene slaves, asking always for a certain captain whom she believes dead."

Amos winced and nodded. "And this second matter?"

The Mameluke rolled his eyes to the low, lemon-tinted ceiling. "An hour gone—O defender of the weak—came certain guards together with three concubines for thee. They are beautiful as three full moons and are called Chedja, Leilla and Miriam." Dorérame sighed gustily and dropped his eyes. "They await thy pleasure in the court of the flowering almonds."

The lounging figure in white frowned, arose and tossed a silver sequin at the other's feet. "Tell the steward to attend their needs—I will send him orders later." Then, with a resumption of the former topic: "At what hour, Dorérame, does the lady walk upon the battlements?"

"After the second drum roll past midday. Beauteous as a moonlit cloud she appears at the upper gate to look out over the sea and to stroll along the batteries. Always a eunuch guards the lady's presence."

For a long time after the Mameluke had withdrawn, Amos sat on the edge of the divan, head bowed, and with hands locked fiercely together.

"Oh, Dorothea!" he groaned. "They send you to Constantinople and infamy! Where—when—how can I prevent it?"

The solution escaped him entirely; but, ever a man of action, he got up and donned his steel headpiece to march outside. He issued orders that would shortly summon a boat in which he would be rowed out to the vessel he was to command.

His first ship was the *Nsoura*, a swift little galley mounting sixteen guns. Once on board, he curtly summoned his officers and astounded those swarthy corsairs by a practice hitherto unknown in the Tripolitan navy. One gun crew after another he drilled—over and over, driving them, cursing the slow ones, noting with an all-seeing eye those gunners who showed a particular promise.

During the past week Amos patiently had mastered the intricacies of the galley's rig with a thoroughness unknown to corsair captains. He made sure, furthermore, that every oar, rope and plank in his vessel was stout and flawless.

The ensuing days were bitter beyond description, for by that indescribable means of communication every American slave in Tripoli soon learned of his apostasy. On every opportunity they cursed and berated him, for Trent, in spite of Lisle's plea that the insolent ones be punished, refused to raise a finger against them.

"No," he stated in toneless misery. "They speak no less than the truth. I hold they are entitled to their opinions. I've made my choice, so I'll let the poor devils be." Frowning, Amos glanced toward the water front at the busy wharves. "I suppose we'll be getting to sea ere long? I see the merchant ships are preparing to set sail, now

that the *Enterprise* has returned to Malta for water and supplies."

IT was late the following afternoon that Lisle summoned his captains post haste to a conference over which presided the ascetic-featured Sidi Mohammed d'Ghiers. El Kebir sat listening intently to plans for rapine, murder and outrage on a daring and unprecedented scale, his face so expressionless it might have been carved from brown basalt.

"Ye will capture and harry," quoth D'Ghiers airily, "Christian ships, especially those of the United States, for know ye that those spawns of Jehannum, those sons and fathers of murderers have become mad enough to bid defiance to the bashaw—whom Mohammed bless and prosper. But be careful, my captains, that ye do not by mistake take those of the British, our allies. It is a matter of some judgment, for the two peoples, though under different caliphs, speak the same language."

One after another the dark, predatory faces about the table became lit with understanding.

"*Ya, sidi,*" came the replies, "and may Allah be good to you."

Amos, when Mohammed d'Ghiers's eyes were upon him, nodded also.

After the final details concerning stores, munitions, bases and equipments had been decided upon, the conference broke up and the stony-featured captain known as El Kebir wandered to the walls below and there fell moodily to counting the massive cannon ranging the battlements.

He was still standing there many moments later when the movement of a shadow on the stone flagging caught the tail of his eye. He whirled about to behold an enormous, muscular Negro,

clad in baggy red pantaloons, who was standing at silent attention. When the black caught sight of the Tripolitan uniform, he saluted humbly and bowed deep with a murmur of, "Live forever, O gracious captain!"

But Amos scarcely saw him; his eyes were on a tall, slender figure that stood a little beyond—a figure that was as pale and motionless as a saint cast in marble. Though the girl on the battlements wore a veil, Amos instantly recognized those eyes, eyes that were as wide and round as though their possessor beheld a specter from another world. He heard a little breathless gasp, saw one white hand fly up to her throat and the other extend in a frozen gesture.

**A**MOS! My darling! It—it—can't be you!" Dorothea Sayles seemed to be stunned, shaken beyond power of expression. She started forward, crying out incredulously. "Am I mad? Speak, Amos, if you are not dead, as they told me. Speak or I'll go mad!"

"Dead?" Amos took a swift step forward. "No, Dorothea. Nay, alive to love and serve you."

"Oh, Amos!" The guard stepped aside, puzzled, not knowing what to make of the scene. Finding nothing wrong, he looked to the bashaw's new captain for orders. At a brief, imperative gesture from the masterful figure in white, he retired a few yards to gaze upon the sunset-lit harbor with elaborate ostentation.

"Ah—ah, thank God!" Dorothea's joy spoke louder from her glorious eyes than from her mouth.

"Dorothea! I—I—" He halted uncertainly, as she drew back in sudden alarm.

"But—" she stammered, holding up

the sleeve of his garment. "What do these robes mean? And this beard of yours? I don't understand. Why are you in pirate garb and with that vile infidel turban on your head? Have you— Dear God in heaven!" Her slight frame shook as the veil fell from features stiff with dread presentiment. "Don't say that you've—"

The anguish in her voice pierced Amos's brain with lances of fire. There was such a world of shattered illusion in it, such depths of bewilderment.

"A moment," he begged, "a moment, beloved. Let me tell you—"

"Why? Why?" Suddenly ablaze with realization of the truth, Dorothea drew herself up and seemed, in Amos's imagination, like one of those fabled Amazons. "You—Amos Trent—turned renegade? As you love me, tell me it's not true! Swear to me that you have not forsaken our Lord for the false prophet."

Scarlet and dazed at her vehemence, he pleaded. "'Tis true, but, before God, I had no choice if I was to save— No! No! Listen!"

But she had whirled away, her eyes blazing as she jerked her dress from his fingers. "Stand back! Until now I had lived mourning your death as a splendid and very gallant gentleman. I see now, they lied kindly when they told me you had perished in your heroic but hapless attempt to rescue me. Would it had been true!" Her lips writhed in scorn and her face was whiter than her dress. "Better die than live a low and contemptible renegade!"

Once more poor Amos, with the despair of one whose last hope is dying, sought to gain her ear. "I have done as you say—yes, become a Moslem," he admitted with a certain chill dignity, "but for a reason—I—I—"

She would not listen and held out



her hands to fend him off when he would have stepped near. How terrible were her eyes. "Oh, would to God I had a pistol!" she choked. "I'd shoot you like the traitorous dog you've become. For the sake of our Savior, have not uncounted tens and hundreds of our countrymen endured the same shame and agony without breaking? And you—you, whom I deemed so splendid, the very image of courage, must yield! Coward! Faint heart! My ransom is soon here, they tell me—and then I'll be free, but I'd sooner rot in a harem ten thousand years before I'd do what you've done. Captain Trent I loved above all earthly things, but—but—he's become a Judas—Cap-

tain Judas!" She laughed tonelessly, like the clash of steel on stone. "Captain Judas—that's it. Farewell, Captain Judas!"

Tumultuous, lovely beyond words in her shame and ire, she sharply called the slave and hurried from sight with a furious swirl of draperies, while Amos stood rooted to the ground with dismay and despair.

Above his own pain, one great fact loomed large above all others. "Then she doesn't know her ransom's been rejected—doesn't dream that she's intended for the Sultan's harem, poor child. And now I've lost her forever—yes, she'll hate me till all this life of misery ends."

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.



## *The Hudson's Eighteen-Hundred-Foot Waterfall*

FEW people realize that one of the largest waterfalls that ever existed used to be in the Hudson River about fifty miles from New York City. Soundings taken off Sandy Hook have shown the existence of a gorge comparable with the Grand Cañon and a falls that far outdistanced any on earth to-day. At the head of this cañon, the water fell about twenty-five hundred feet in a short distance, forming huge rapids and falls. Five miles farther down it fell in one great drop the immense distance of eighteen hundred feet. One can only realize how high this is by comparing it with Niagara Falls which are a hundred and sixty-seven feet high, and Victoria Falls which are four hundred feet. The volume of the water was also immense, for all the Great Lakes and many rivers that now flow into the ocean drained through the Hudson at that time.

A million years or so ago this part of the country was a mile higher than it is now and the coast was a hundred miles farther out. The present coast was high in the mountains, and Manhattan Island was an isolated mountain range about six thousand feet high. Then the land slowly sank to its present level and is still sinking, so slowly that only scientists know it, so New York will some day be under water. But this won't occur for many centuries. The Palisades were four or five times as high as they are now, and this part of the gorge was nearly filled up with gravel deposited by a mile-thick ice sheet that subsequently covered this region. There is little evidence of all this that the average person can see, but scientists have read the whole history of the region as inscribed in the rocks and soil.

*E. R. McCarthy.*

# The Men Who Make The Argosy

**RICHARD A. MARTINSEN**

*Author of "The Gravy Train," "Beans for Backbone," "Suicide, Inc.," etc.*

**B**IOGRAPHICAL data on Dick editor of a string of all-fiction magazines.

Martinsen:

Did a couple of years soldiering in the late excitement, starting in the cavalry and ending up as a louie in the infantry, with the Q. M. corps and artillery in between.

Went to Stanford after *la guerre*, and, thereafter, being as useless as most birds with a general academic degree, drifted into the newspaper game. Four or five years of that, in every capacity, ending as managing editor of a paper in Santa Barbara.

Did some fiction on the side, to eke out the pay check, and when the yarns began to click with fair regularity went in for it whole hog or none, breaking fifty-fifty.

Decided to see what makes the wheels go 'round in a magazine shop, so migrated to New York and hooked on, eventually becoming managing

Got filled up on the big city, and Long Island week-ends, so cut loose and went back to free-lancing. Later returned to the magazines. Has so far perpetrated a hundred-odd yarns, long and short, and what's more amazing, sold most of 'em. West, Triple-X, Battle Stories, Action Stories, Wings, Over The Top, Complete, and North-West are a few of the victims in addition to ARGOSY.

Likes to spend his summers in Maine, and his winters in Florida.

Is broke most of the time, but fairly contented withal. Breaks ninety in golf with reasonable regularity.

His ambitions, if any, are to break eighty on the golf course; also write a darned good detective novel.

Oh, yes; he's married, and glad of it.

R. A. M.



**DO YOU READ DETECTIVE FICTION ?**

# Murder Maze

By  
Madeleine Sharps Buchanan



“ You give me that gun. I better have it—now ”

*Strange Circumstances about the Seville Night Club Murder  
Point the Finger of Suspicion at Lovely Janine Willows*

## CHAPTER I

### The Club Seville

**M**RS. MALPASS, in charge of the dressing rooms at the Club Seville, read every murder case that ever got into print, and when they failed, she devoured mystery stories. Her small apartment was littered with highly colored magazines dealing with the sort of thing which no one in their senses would expect to cross the path of Anna Malpass.

And yet, so strange is life, that upon

the damp November evening when Mrs. Malpass passed under the gayly striped awning over the brilliant door of the Club Seville, and walked stolidly across the velvet darkness of the foyer, she was headed for her share in the spotlight of one of the most shocking and mysterious crimes the city had ever experienced.

Here is a story of dramatic mystery and desperate intrigue in a night club. It begins in next week's (May 9) issue of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, formerly FLYNN'S.

**Read DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—10c**





# Argonotes

## The Readers' Viewpoint



"THE HOTHOUSE WORLD" made a big hit—and even inspired poetry:

St. Louis, Mo.

For years upon years I have been reading the *ARGOSY*. I have carried it with me in the mining camps—in far timber towns, and in the depths of the ocean on a seagoing submarine, and now that I'm a respectable home-loving married man it takes me out of my humdrum existence back to old ocean trails when I sailed as "Sparks" on seagoing merchant ships and took the wildest adventures as a matter of course.

The only stories ever published in *ARGOSY* I couldn't swallow were those impossible interplanetary tales of science, but at last Fred MacIsaac has captured me in his tale of "The Hothouse World." It's impossible, of course, but it's a great idea nevertheless. Like Rip, the immortal Van Winkle, it ought to be preserved as a really great legendary yarn, and with Fred's permission I'd like to write a poem about:

### THE MAN WHO SLEPT A CENTURY

So this is what science has done to me?  
Born in a former century,  
They've preserved me and brought me in my  
prime  
Of youth, to this desolate age and time.  
A hundred years they kept me there,  
While the world went on, and I didn't care;  
But now that they've given me life again,  
My heart knows only immortal pain.  
For the golden-haired sweetheart I used to  
know,  
Has passed away; and long ago;  
The pals of my youth, have, one by one,  
On that last adventure journeyed on.

I went to the bearded scientist's room,  
And inhaled a rare and strange perfume;  
That put me to sleep, he preserved me away,  
In a coffin of glass, for a future day.  
And there I slept for a hundred years,  
While the world went on with its doubts and  
fears;  
But, by a formula, handed down,  
To a scientist of great renown;  
I've been brought back to life again,  
But only to sorrow—immortal pain.

I live in a hotbed world to-day,  
And civilization's passed away;  
And only a few are left alive,  
That science has managed to survive;  
For the world is weary and growing old,  
The change of planets has left it cold;  
But romance and love that will not die,  
Surges through my veins and I'll have a try,  
At life as I find it—and to the end,  
I'll stick it out with my new found friend.

JOHN A. MILLS.

Marietta, Ohio.

I would like to compare these ten latest issues. First I would like to list those stories that ranked first on each coupon in the order of their merit. First comes "The Diamond Bullet"—these *Gillian Hazeltine* stories can't be beat; "The Hothouse World," I haven't finished it, but it gives great promise; "The Blade of Don Beltram," "The Death Ride," "The Fetish Fighters," and "The Bell of the Lutine." I think your January 3 and 31 issues were just about the poorest, while your January 10 issue was the best, with the March 7 number running it a close second.

MARY MCKITRICK,

Los Angeles, Cal.

The *ARGOSY*, to my opinion, is just like a meal, with Fred MacIsaac furnishing the first course with "The Hothouse World." Second course goes to F. V. W. Mason with "The Tiger of Phnom Kha"; the spinach goes to W. Wirt with such bunk as "Guns of the Americans" and "He's My Meat!" and how I do hate spinach.

The dessert is furnished by just one man—Theodore Roscoe—with such damn fine stories as "Nightmare Island," "The Blade of Don Beltram" and "The Last Battle."

KENNY MOORE.

WHILE this fantasy enthusiast can't see the MacIsaac story:

Washington, D. C.

Fred MacIsaac is your best writer, but for Heaven's sake keep him out of the science-fiction field. About a year ago he tried a fantastic story, which was pretty bad, but this "Hothouse World" is awful.

There are in America four really good writers

of that sort of story. ARGOSY has them all. They are: Ralph Milne Farley, Otis Adelbert Kline, Ray Cummings, and Murray Leinster, with Farley head and shoulders above the rest. His latest, "Caves of Ocean," was superb!

Give us more of Farley, and let MacIsaac stick to his own line, and we'll all be happy.

C. E. CASASSA.

"ARGOSY has steadily descended in the last fifteen years," says this critic:

Brooklyn, N. Y.

I am sending my ten choice coupons for an ARGOSY drawing. As far as your magazine is concerned it has steadily descended in the last fifteen years. Where are your popular authors of years back? To mention a few, Rufus King, remember his "North Star"? Max Brand, Charles B. Stillson, Larry Barretto, Philip Barry, E. R. Burroughs, George M. Johnson, Charles Francis Coe, McNuit, and a host of others. Why don't you reprint your popular serials of years ago? My first choice would be "Unbeatable Bates," by Lawrence. MacIsaac is your ace writer now.

W. SCHWARTZ.

YET here's a reader who finds "the good old days" were something else again:

Fredonia, N. Y.

Knockers sure do get my goat, and this last bunch have run away with it entirely. This is the first time that I have ever written to the "Argonotes," although I have been a reader of the ARGOSY for these many long years, coming to it by way of the *All-Story* away back in 1912 before the *All-Story* married the *Cavalier*. Some of the first stories that I remember were "The Sealed Valley" and "The Huntress," by Hulbert Footner; "Pelucidar" and "At the Earth's Core," by Edgar Rice Burroughs; and "Palos of the Dog Star Pack," by Giesy.

And now for a confession. In company with some of the others whose letters I sometimes see in the "Argonotes" I had, until a few months ago, held the opinion that the ARGOSY wasn't quite all it used to be, and I longed for the good old days. And then something happened. A neighbor of mine was making some alterations on his house, and up in the attic we found a stack of old ARGOSYS. And believe me, they were old. All the way from 1909 away back to 1899 when it was called the Argosy and the Peterson Magazine. Well, I just bubbled over with joy. My friend didn't want them, but I sure did, and I waltzed home with them like a man who had found a treasure chest. But, sad to relate, I had a disappointment coming. I found that although the Argosy of those days was probably a good

magazine for that day and age, yet the ARGOSY of to-day is a hundred times better. So that's that, and another pet theory gone to the dogs.

Well, here's long life to the ARGOSY, and confusion to all the knockers. Keep the magazine the way it is and I'll probably be reading it for another twenty years.

J. H. GIBSON.

GILLIAN HAZELTINE stories are "good all the way through":

St. Louis, Mo.

I have been reading the ARGOSY for some time. I like Mr. George F. Worts's stories best of all, and if he was the only contributor, I would still buy the ARGOSY. I get more keen enjoyment out of one of them than I do from the pen of any author. And he is getting better right along. I feel like I knew *Mr. Hazeltine*, and as if he were a real personality. Some of the other stories are good in spots, but Mr. Worts's are good all the way through. Lots of the stories I read I forget all about in a few days, but I remember all of his stories; they are sort of welded together in a continuous chain of pleasure. To read one of his stories makes the present seem brighter, the past less drear, and the future more promising.

F. D. WATSON.

A STORY for every one — and George Worts writes them for this Buckeye:

Dayton, Ohio.

Impossibles don't appeal to me, but there are always some who care for them, and that is one of the best points of the ARGOSY, a story for every one. But I want to say here that "Seven Footprints to Satan" and "Seal of Satan" were great, and it sure did appeal to me, but that "The Snake Mother" was too much for me, and also others.

The author that appeals to me most is nobody but George F. Worts and his famous *Gillian Hazeltine* stories, and what makes me quite angry is that he doesn't get more notice and credit in the "Argonotes," for I think he is one of the most brilliant authors you have, besides, of course, Fred MacIsaac, Ray Cummings, W. Wirt, J. Allan Dunn and several others too numerous to mention.

NELSON L. MACHER.

SAVED from the discard—or, the making of an ARGOSY fan:

Greenview, Ill.

I have been a reader of ARGOSY for about four years, and I am still in love with it as much as at the first. When I first read ARGOSY it was from the junk pile after the dealer had taken the cover off.

After reading a few this way I took to buying it around in front. At that time the dealer only took the one magazine. I was so pleased with it I passed the good word on, and now I think there are four or five steady readers in our little town. I like Thompson's "drifter" stories best. I also like crime stories. "Dead-Line" was a good one.

P. K.

**H**ERE'S an order for us to fill, from one of our feminine readers:

Johnstown, Pa.

I have long been a reader of the ARGOSY and like it. I would like some more of the Moon and Mercury stories, some more *Peter the Brazen* stories, and some more of them like "The Snake Mother." So please have Loring Brent, Ray Cummings, and A. Merritt get their thinking caps on and their pens working. (Don't call me a "he.")

RHEBA J. GORE.

**L**EGION stories à la Robert Carse are this reader's dish (and there's an unusual one coming next month):

Bronx, N. Y.

I have been reading the ARGOSY for a year and can truly say that I have not found one story which I entirely disliked.

My dish is Foreign Legion stories and plenty of them. Robert Carse writes them as though he has been in the Legion.

In the discussion about Western and impossible stories I side slightly with the Westerns.

*Peter the Brazen, Jimmie Cordie, Captain John Norcross, Bill and Jim, and Bill Peepe* are the most colorful characters, to my mind. How about another story with *Bill Peepe*?

BERNARD LEIRIOFF.

**H**OW a man's last dime was profitably invested:

Lake Placid, N. Y.

It has been about fifteen years since I read my first copy of ARGOSY. I haven't found cause to make a kick in that time, but neither have I sent a compliment, so think it is about time I did so.

Fantastic stories don't interest me so much, when they go away beyond the imagination. Such was "The Snake Mother." However, I just passed that by, as I do any others that don't suit me. I've been here and there considerable in the last fifteen years, and have had some funny experiences getting my ARGOSY.

I was broke and in a strange town not so long ago, but it was Wednesday, and seeing ARGOSY on a news-stand, I spent my last thin dime to buy

it. Needless to say, I didn't starve to death, and had my magazine to read, besides.

I've heard somewhere that editors are busy people, so I'll sign off for now, and if ARGOSY continues as it has for the past fifteen years you'll probably never hear from me again.

Here's to ARGOSY, long may she sail.

L. H. RILEY.

**O**UR ups and downs according to this Missourian:

Wheatland, Mo.

Sometimes I think the ARGOSY is the best magazine. Again I think it is not very good. Out of the last six months' books I have seen a good deal. I find the stories of the ARGOSY good from September to December, excepting "The Snake Mother." From December to the last of February there was not a book that had more than two good serials, in my estimation. I do not like stories like "The Snake Mother" and "Tama of the Light Country."

If things ever do happen like they do in those stories (which I don't think they will), I don't think it necessary to have so many stories on that kind of a subject. Not now anyway. Outside of the impossible stories I think all your other stories are good.

LUCIE PAXTON.

**A** MOUNTY reader finds a flaw in one Northern story:

I am a constant reader of your magazine and like it very much, but would like to say just a word about a story in ARGOSY for February 14, 1931, written by Frederick Nebel, entitled "The Creed of Sergeant Bone":

"Bone stood stock-still, his hand resting on the butt of his Webley service pistol."

Would you kindly ask Mr. Nebel when the police changed their Colt .45's for Webleys? This of course is a minor item, but it really spoiled the story for me, as I am a Mounty and have been for years.

With sincerest good wishes for ARGOSY and all that goes with it,

I am,

R. C. M. P.

**A** SOUTHERN subscriber speaks up:

Richmond, Va.

I am inclosing my renewal subscription for the umpty-umth time—Heaven only knows how many. My personal tastes cover just about the whole book from "kiver to kiver"—include the cover as well. I think I prefer stories of China, the South Seas, Alaska, the R. C. M. P., etc.,



to any others—especially *Jimmie Cordie*, *Peter the Brazen*, and *John Solomon*. Next are the impossible and detective stories, and then the Western and sport stories. There is only one story in about six months that I pass up—and that one is almost always a short sport story, which is passed over because of my ignorance of the sport.

MRS. W. W. HILL.

**M**ORE lumber camp, Northern and Western stories? Sure—on the fire!

Paris, Ill.

This is the first time that I ever wrote in to a magazine company and tell them what I think of their stories, but this is one time that I can't help it.

I have been reading other magazines for about six years and the stories in them all seemed to be about alike, so I changed over to ARGOSY and have been reading it now for the last six months, and when I want a magazine to hold me from the start to the finish I buy ARGOSY.

Please have some of your authors give us more lumber camp stories, Western and up in the Far North. That is about all I have to say this time, and am closing so I can start reading the latest issue.

HAROLD BALLARD.

## YOUR CHOICE COUPON

Editor, ARGOSY,  
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

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4.....

5.....

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Fill out coupons from 10 consecutive issues and get an ARGOSY drawing (not the cover painting) for framing.

This coupon not good after July 25.

5-2



# Looking Ahead!

## FORBIDDEN VALLEY

Young Austin Alvord had heard of the Valley of Old Men, whose grim inhabitants had passed the sentence of death on any reckless young cowpuncher like himself who invaded it—but curiosity and a secret purpose drove him on.

By Frank C. Robertson

## THE CORAL OF IDRIS

Jim Burke found Morocco's cities full of intrigue and peril for an American adventuring into that mysterious land, half French, half Arab. *A NOVELETTE.*

By H. Bedford-Jones

COMING TO YOU IN THE ARGOSY OF MAY 9th

# "What Am I Bid for This Flower of English Loveliness?"

**E**XQUISITELY beautiful she stood on the auction block, shrinking back fearfully as the swarthy Barbary pirates pressed forward eagerly to gaze upon her pink and white loveliness. Here, indeed, was a woman to grace the harem of the richest Mohammedan in Algiers!

There were three who grimly set themselves against each other to bid for this prize—Tsamanni, the agent of the rich Basha; Ayoub, the eunuch, and Sakr-el-Bahr, renegade Christian and idol of the multitude. Each had his own reasons for wanting her and was determined to outbid all.

What conflicting plots and counterplots lay behind this thrilling drama in an Algerian slave market? What chain of strange happenings thrust this favorite of Queen Elizabeth's court into the merciless hands of Barbary pirates? What was to be her fate?

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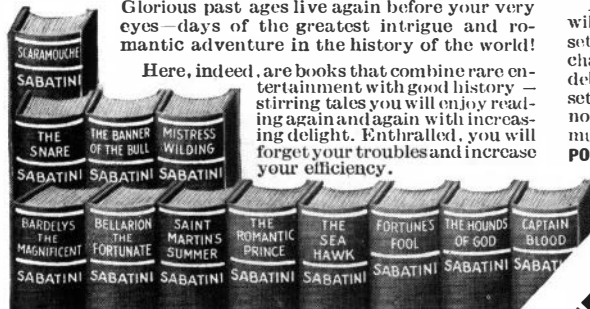
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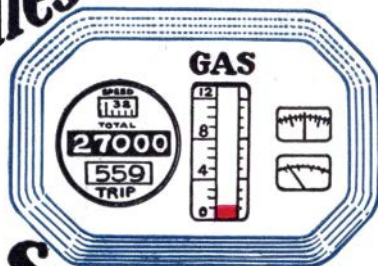
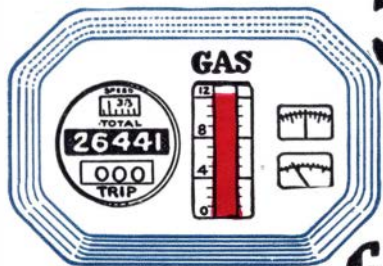
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Whirlwind users, reporting the results of their tests, are amazed at the results they are getting. Letters keep streaming into the office telling of mileages all the way from 22 to 59 miles on a gallon, resulting in a saving of from 25% to 50% in gas bills alone.

Mark H. Estes writes: "I was making 17 miles to the gallon on my Pontiac Coupe. Today, with the Whirlwind, I am making 35 5-10 miles to the gallon. Am I glad I put it on? I'll say so!"

P. P. Goerzen writes: "I made an actual test both with and without a Whirlwind, getting 13 1/2 miles without and 34 6-10 miles with the Whirlwind, or a gain of 21 miles to the gallon. The longer the Whirlwind is in use on the machine the better the engine runs, has more pep and quicker starting. It makes a new engine out of an old one, and starts at the touch of the starter button."

R. J. Tulp: "The Whirlwind increased the mileage on our Ford truck from 12 to 26 miles to gallon and 25% in speed. We placed another on a Willys-Knight and increased from 12 to 17 miles per gallon."

Arthur Grant: "I have an Oakland touring car that has been giving me 15 miles to the gallon average, but I can see a great difference with the Whirlwind, as it climbs the big hills on high and gives me better than 23 miles to the gallon of gas, which is better than 50% saving in gas."

W. A. Scott: "I had my Whirlwind for three years. Winter and summer it gives the same perfect service. Instant starting, smoother running, and what I have saved in gasoline these last few years has brought other luxuries which I could not have afforded previously."

Car owners all over the world are saving money every day with the Whirlwind, besides having better operating motors. Think what this means on your own car. Figure up your savings—enough for a radio—a bank account—added pleasures. Why let the Oil Companies profit by your waste? Find out about this amazing little device that will pay for itself every few weeks in gas saving alone.

### FITS ALL CARS

In just a few minutes the Whirlwind can be installed on any make of car, truck or tractor. It's actually less work than changing your oil or putting water in the battery. No drilling, tapping or changes of any kind necessary. It is guaranteed to work perfectly on any make of car, truck or tractor, large or small, new model or old model. The more you drive the more you will save.

### SALESMEN AND DISTRIBUTORS WANTED

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Whirlwind men are making big profits supplying this fast-selling device that car owners can not afford to be without. Good territory is still open. Free sample offer to our workers. Full particulars sent on request. Just check the coupon.

### WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.

Dept. 535-A, Station C

Milwaukee, Wis.

### GUARANTEE

No matter what kind of a car you have—no matter how big a gas eater it is—the Whirlwind will save you money. We absolutely guarantee that the Whirlwind will more than save its cost in gasoline alone within thirty days, or the trial will cost you nothing. We invite you to test it at our risk and expense. You are to be the sole judge.

### FREE OFFER COUPON

**WHIRLWIND MANUFACTURING CO.,  
Dept. 535-A, Station C, Milwaukee, Wis.**

Gentlemen: You may send me full particulars of your Whirlwind Carbureting device and tell me how I can get one Free. This does not obligate me in any way whatever.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....

County..... State.....

( ) Check here if you are interested in full or part time salesman position.